



**The London School of Economics  
and Political Science**

*Development in the Mountains of Confusion:  
Guaribas under the Zero-Hunger Programme*

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## **Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the implementation of the Zero-Hunger Programme (PFZ), the Brazilian government's main development project, in its pilot community, the rural village of Guaribas in Northeast Brazil. It examines the economic, political, and social impact of project policies on local institutions and practices, highlighting the discrepancy between PFZ's stated goals and its achievements five years after its inception. Despite the conspicuous shortcomings of project initiatives, PFZ intervention has yielded instrumental "side effects" for the Brazilian government, such as the expansion of state capacity and bureaucratic power, and the conversion of social policy into political capital for propaganda. Recent scholarship on development attributes to these "instrumental effects", which enhance state jurisdiction and social control, the systematic reproduction of development projects in spite of their perceived failures. Similarly, I argue that PFZ is linked to a specific project of governance whose object is ultimately the shaping of human capacities for the production of cooperative subjects. Through the expansion of public education, the calculated use of mass media artefacts, and workshops in "citizenship education", self-esteem, beauty, and hygiene, PFZ aims at a major reform of its beneficiaries' skills, attitudes, aspirations, and psychological dispositions. In this sense, PFZ can be described as the instrument of a civilizing enterprise tied to a project of governance. This thesis contributes to the literature on development, which has typically focused on development projects in South Asia, Africa, and Southeast Asia as vehicles for sociopolitical control, by describing novel strategies of a recent development project in a region understudied by development scholarship.

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# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION. GUARIBAS AND THE ZERO-HUNGER PROGRAMME .....</b>	<b>8</b>
LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CONFUSION.....	10
THE ZERO-HUNGER PROGRAMME .....	18
A BRIEF SURVEY OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN NORTHEAST BRAZIL .....	23
THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	29
FIELDWORK AND METHODOLOGY .....	36
<b>CHAPTER ONE. THE SEMI-AUTONOMY OF THE ELEMENTARY FAMILY IN GUARIBAS .....</b>	<b>45</b>
THE CATEGORICAL SOLIDARITY OF THE KINDRED .....	47
<i>“To the family, none [of its members] are bad, all are good”: the kindred in Guaribas</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Family customs: coffee, beans, blessings, grandparenting, and foster-parenting as</i>	<i></i>
<i>expressions of kindred solidarity .....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Marriage and affines.....</i>	<i>58</i>
“OTHER PEOPLE’S HEARTS ARE LANDS NOBODY WALKS ON”: COMPETITION IN VILLAGE DAILY LIFE .....	61
<i>Fazenda versus Guaribas Two: from kinship to cultural distinction .....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>General hostility between families in Guaribas and in the settlements .....</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Customary practices of competition and conflict.....</i>	<i>80</i>
INTRA-FAMILIAL CONFLICT .....	88
BILATERAL EXTENSION AND THE GRADUAL INSULATION OF THE ELEMENTARY FAMILY IN GUARIBAS .....	94
<b>CHAPTER TWO. THE LIMITED IMPACT OF PFZ ECONOMIC POLICIES ON LOCAL</b>	
<b>PRODUCTIVITY.....</b>	<b>101</b>
FARMING, LOCAL COMMERCE, AND CAPITAL FLIGHT IN GUARIBAS.....	102
“WORK IS BITTER, BUT ITS FRUIT IS SWEET”: WORK AND LEISURE IN GUARIBAS .....	108
FREEDOM AT HOME, SLAVERY OUTSIDE GUARIBAS: MIGRATORY LABOUR IN THE SOUTHEASTERN	
METROPOLISES AS “CAPTIVITY” .....	121
THE DECLINE OF FARMING AND THE EMERGING STIGMA OF AGRICULTURAL WORK .....	127
SHORTCOMINGS OF PFZ ECONOMIC POLICIES: THE CASE OF WORKSHOPS, COOPERATIVES, AND	
TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER .....	136
CONCLUSION: THE WORK ETHOS OF GUARIBANOS IN THE LIGHT OF PFZ CAPITALISTIC PREMISES AND	
PRACTICES .....	152
<b>CHAPTER THREE. POLITICAL CORRUPTION AS THE EXPRESSION OF LOCAL MORALITY AND</b>	
<b>KINSHIP IDEALS.....</b>	<b>157</b>
“IN THE POLITICS OF”: KINSHIP, FRIENDSHIP, AND POLITICAL CORRUPTION.....	159

“IN THE TIME OF POLITICS”: POLITICAL CORRUPTION AS A SYSTEM OF RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE.....	173
<b>CHAPTER FOUR. THE POLITICIZATION OF GUARIBAS .....</b>	<b>183</b>
PFZ AND CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN POLITICS .....	183
PFZ FAILURES: INCREASED STRUCTURAL DEPENDENCY AND LACK OF PARTICIPATION .....	187
OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS AND FLAWS IN PROJECT DESIGN .....	192
SHORTCOMINGS IN INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS.....	200
CONCLUSION: IMPROVEMENTS DESIGNED FOR PFZ ADVERTISEMENT.....	202
<b>CHAPTER FIVE. NATIONALISM, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE EXPANSION OF STATE CAPACITY IN GUARIBAS.....</b>	<b>206</b>
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE LIMITED PRESENCE OF THE STATE IN GUARIBAS.....	206
GUARIBAS AND BRAZILIAN “NATIONAL CULTURE” .....	209
PUBLIC EDUCATION, NATIONHOOD, AND THE EXPANSION OF STATE CAPACITY IN GUARIBAS.....	213
“CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION” AND THE EMERGENCE OF A FOLK MODEL OF CITIZENSHIP IN GUARIBAS ....	218
DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTERNALIZATION OF SUBALTERN STATUS .....	223
<b>CHAPTER SIX. PFZ AND THE PRODUCTION OF COOPERATIVE CITIZENS .....</b>	<b>227</b>
TALHER .....	228
THE STATE AND SUBJECTIVITY .....	231
TALHER’S EXPANSION OF FORMAL EDUCATION: NEW CULTURAL CAPITAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT.....	235
SELF-ESTEEM IN GUARIBAS .....	243
THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PFZ AND THE MEDIA .....	253
LOCAL CHANGES IN CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT.....	269
LÉO’S “LOVE MACHINE”: SELF, CONSUMERISM, AND THE STATE.....	274
LOCAL CURRENCIES OF BEAUTY AND HYGIENE .....	283
THE SOCIAL MARKETING OF DESIRE .....	289
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: MAPS.....</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: PICTURES .....</b>	<b>334</b>
<b>ANNEX: GENEALOGICAL MAPS</b>	

## Introduction. Guaribas and the Zero-Hunger Programme

*“If Pedro Álvares Cabral discovered Brazil,  
President Lula discovered Guaribas.”<sup>1</sup>*

Before the Zero-Hunger Programme (PFZ), very few Brazilians had ever heard of Guaribas, including myself. In fact, it was not until the project was launched in 2003 that the village first appeared in the most detailed national road-map, *Quatro Rodas*. The meteoric rise of Guaribas in the national imaginary began with President Lula’s election in October 2002, an event that would reverberate throughout the country, reach that remote rural village in the Northeastern state of Piauí, and change its destiny forever, as in a fable. For Guaribas, as if winning a lottery it had not played, woke up one day to find itself suddenly hand-picked by the new government to be the pilot-community of PFZ, the Brazilian government’s main development project with an emphasis on food security and emergency financial aid to low income communities. Ironically, Lula’s election was also evocatively portrayed in the media as a fable, a “Cinderella story”. For unlike the long succession of physicians, engineers, lawyers, and generals that preceded him in his post, Lula was born to a poor family in the semi-arid backlands of Northeast Brazil, migrated to São Paulo as a child, was a shoe-shine boy at 12, a metalworker at 14, entered syndicalism and politics, and finally became president in 2002. As a former migrant worker from the Northeast himself, Lula established a very personal connection with PFZ by prioritizing it in his campaign platform, and by selecting for the flagship of national social policy a small village in the semi-arid *sertão* of Northeast Brazil — a region nationally renowned for hardship and underdevelopment with which Brazilians could easily sympathize, and to which President Lula’s possible sentimental, biographical attachments could be politically elaborated.

Immediately after taking office, in the first days of 2003, Lula designated that his recently appointed ministers visit the country’s five “least developed”

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<sup>1</sup> This quote by Adão Rocha, 62, was repeated by several Guaribanos in interviews and casual conversations throughout my fieldwork.

communities in order to witness, first-hand, the dire living conditions of families dwelling there. During this trip, which featured prominently in national and international media as “The Citizenship Caravan” (*Caravana da Cidadania*), Lula and his ministers stopped at several locations, but the tour was organized around the visit to the five pilot communities of the newly released PFZ: Itinga, the slums of Brasília Teimosa and Vila Irmã Dulce, and two small communities in the state of Piauí, Acauã and Guaribas.<sup>2</sup> Yet, from the very beginning of PFZ’s implementation in January 2003, Guaribas gained more attention in the media and in official government mission statements than any of the other pilot communities due to the alarming statistics regarding its quality of life indexes. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics’ (IBGE) 2000 Census, the Guaribas municipality had the worst index of human development (HDI) of Piauí, and the third worst of Brazil.

I was in Rio de Janeiro at the end of 2002, after undertaking a Masters in Cultural Studies at Birkbeck College, and Lula had just been elected president. A certain euphoria still lingered from the first victory of a leftist, socialist candidate in the country’s political history. It was then that, together with a friend, Bruno Campanella, the idea of making a documentary about Lula’s rise to power began to take form. We had both voted for Lula, and were enthusiastic about his unprecedented effort to sensitize and familiarize his staff with the hardships of “the real Brazil” through the Citizenship Caravan. Taking cue from the ministerial trip, we decided to revisit each of the five locations selected by PFZ 100 days after Lula’s induction. We would explore the symbolism of Lula’s election, and of Lula himself, Brazil’s first working-class president, in the common people’s perception; register their reaction in being suddenly lifted from social invisibility and visited by the president, the ministers of state, and the media, which accompanied them; and, finally, inspect the implementation in each community of the Zero-Hunger Programme. The documentary was aired on Brazilian national television (TVE) on November 21, 2004, but, more importantly, it was through it that I first came to know Guaribas.

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, for “safety reasons”, of all these localities, Guaribas was the only one President Lula did not visit.

We almost skipped Guaribas though, anxious as we were of what we would encounter there. It was well publicized in the media that between all five PFZ pilot communities, the destitution in Guaribas was unique, and everywhere we went before, from the shantytown of Brasília Teimosa to the slum of Vila Irmã Dulce, compared to what people had heard about Guaribas, they considered themselves lucky. I recall that in Acauã we interviewed a woman outside her house, a very small, precarious dwelling of mud slapped into a structure of sticks and stockades, and she said: “This is the worst house in this village, but I’m told that this would be the best one in Guaribas, where famine is violent”. Thus we left Guaribas for last, and after negotiating an interminable sequence of apparently bottomless puddles, we finally arrived at the village, whose entrance was marked with a large government poster: “Welcome to Guaribas: Beacon of Development”. As we had not planned to sleep there, we only spent six hours interviewing people and returned just before nightfall. To be sure, Guaribas was the most isolated, rural place I had ever encountered, but after being exposed to the reality of the slums and shantytowns, we were not nearly as shocked as we expected.

After editing the documentary for six months, I returned to London in the Autumn of 2003 to undertake another Masters, this time at the LSE, and in Social Anthropology. It was Professor Chris Fuller who encouraged me to stay on for the doctorate, and to choose Guaribas as my fieldwork site. Hence, in January of 2006 I had my next encounter with Guaribas, now, however, as an anthropologist intending to live there for at least a year.

## Life in the Mountains of Confusion

The village of Guaribas sits in the midst of the Mountains of Confusion (*Serra das Confusões*), an ecological reserve of sandstone highlands every shade of brown and grey, on a plateau enveloped by low, thorny, deciduous vegetation. It is a rural village of about 900 people in a remote region in Northeast Brazil, the semi-arid *sertão* of Piauí. The people of Guaribas (*Guaribanos*) are first and foremost farmers



and herders of goats, pigs, and cattle, who cannot be said to practice integral subsistence agriculture only because they sell a small surplus of beans and corn to outside merchants. Guaribanos descend mainly from three families, the Alves, the Rochas, and the Correia da Silva, the first of which settled in Guaribas sometime in the mid-eighteenth century. Its patriarch, Valentim Alves, a runaway slave and a convict, was enlisted by a priest to lead colonial troops to an Indian hiding place deep in the wild uplands. There, so the story goes, he climbed down the rocks to the valley where the Indians slept, so stealthily that not even their dogs noticed him, and disarmed the whole tribe. For this feat Valentim was given the title of Major and a substantial land donation (*sesmaria*) that comprised Guaribas, where the Alves eventually settled. The sheer amount of land in that *sesmaria*, coupled with fact that the *sertão* uplands have always been sparsely populated, results in a very low demographic density, and accounts for the fact that almost all Guaribanos own a fair amount of land, passed on through generations, which they farm and show with pride. (See Picture 1 in Appendix B)

Guaribanos, like all people of the *sertão*, have a reputation for being as tough as their environment. Indeed, the semi-arid region known as *sertão*, which covers parts of seven states in Northeast Brazil, takes its name from *desertão* (“big desert”), which is how the Portuguese colonizers originally called that hot and dry backcountry. Life in the *sertão* is hard. It must cope with very high temperatures throughout the year, often over 40 degrees Celsius in the summer, when the sun bakes and breaks the earth to utter barrenness. Rainfall is extremely erratic and in some years the rains are minimal, leading to periodic droughts that have caused, historically, large-scale migrations to the urban centres of Southeast Brazil.<sup>3</sup> In Guaribas, due to its altitude (520 metres above sea-level), winter is in fact colder than in other parts of the *sertão*, and the overall fertility of the soil does not demand artificial correction.

The *sertão* landscape is dominated by a type of vegetation called *caatinga* (a Tupi word meaning “white forest”), that like all its inhabitants, is a specialist in surviving the harsh climatic conditions. It is a dense shrub land of thorny trees, thick-stemmed plants, cacti, and arid-adapted grasses that shed their leaves

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<sup>3</sup> The worst of these droughts, between 1877 and 1879, resulted in famines that were said to have killed over half of the region's population. The annual rainfall in Guaribas is under 700 millimetres.

seasonally. From April to September, when unlike the rest of Brazil the *sertão* experiences summer, one can only see sand and endless withered branches in a slow fusion of white and grey. But from October to March, when winter comes, an astounding transformation takes place with the first few showers: the *caatinga* hastens to take advantage of the moisture, and shoots spring up through the sand, cacti throw up their flowers, trees burst into leaf and bloom, and literally, in a few hours, the grey is replaced by a lush green carpet. (See Pictures 2 and 3).

Any person arriving in Guaribas for the first time will be instantly stunned by the natural beauty of the surrounding Mountains of Confusion. Rain and wind have eroded those arenite highlands since they emerged from the bottom of the sea as blocks of packed sand, some 300 millions of years ago, by way of a massive tectonic collision. They have worked on slowly returning those sedimentary rocks to sand, spilling over the plateau a very fine brown dust which nearly camouflages houses and flora, blends with the colours of clothes, tinges the complexion of the people, collects on food and surfaces burdening the women who cook and clean, and lays one day as a fine auburn filigree over the mourned. What work still remains for the elements is called the Mountains of Confusion, the lopsided, dramatic sculpture of erosion that encircles Guaribas. (See Picture 4).

From these mountains, the land appears almost flat and the views are exceptionally extensive, for apart from the 16 settlements that comprise the Guaribas municipality — together with the village of Guaribas itself, the municipal seat — nothing but wild, untamed *caatinga* dominates the panorama as far as the eye can see.<sup>4</sup> Even though the village's isolation should not be overplayed, until 1964, when a dirt trail trod only by animal caravans was slightly broadened, Guaribas was unconnected to the national road network, and no vehicles had ever reached the village. Excepting the dangerous Cajueiro pass, where only four-wheel drive pickup trucks may negotiate the steep ravines covered in fine gravel on which tires hiss and slide, this extremely precarious road remains Guaribas' only connection to the national road network. It consists in 142 kilometres of dirt and sand leading, first, to Caracol, a small town of 7,800 people 54 kilometres to the East that, unlike

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<sup>4</sup> The Guaribas municipality was created on January 1, 1997, and consists in the village of Guaribas plus 16 surrounding settlements: Felizardo, Regalo, Brejão, Zé Bento, Lagoa de Baixo, Boa Vista, Lagoa do Baixo, Sítio Viração, Cajueiro, Queimada do Angico, Tamboril, Água Brava, Capim, Barreiro, Barra, and Baixo Fundo, comprising an area of 3.725km<sup>2</sup>.

Guaribas, still enjoys regular transportation links with the main cities in the state of Piauí, as well as a fairly steady supply of products and commercial services. Ultimately, the road leads to São Raimundo Nonato, a town of 25,000 inhabitants which functions as a provincial metropolis for the region. The full trip — in the overcrowded backs of private trucks or pickups, for no public transport makes the complete journey to Guaribas — usually takes more than four hours, and the road often becomes completely unserviceable from October to March, during the rainy season, occasionally isolating Guaribas from other localities for days. (See Picture 5).

With respect to the village's boundaries, to the West, it ends at the foot of the mountains, and to the East, it extends no further than the new SESC, a modern complex built by the Social Service of Commerce in partnership with the federal government, after the arrival of PFZ (See Picture 6). It boasts two sports courts, a small library, a kitchen, a garden, and facilities with television and VCR where most courses in ceramic, embroidery, and bijouterie-making, for instance — all articulated by PFZ — take place. I have always found it a lyrical coincidence that on Guaribas' East–West axis, the old mountains and the modern SESC, whose architecture and structural design contrasts so much with the rest of the village's, are juxtaposed. Between them, and thrust in the middle of Guaribas, an imposing telecommunications antenna, also built after the coming of PFZ, towers 120 metres above the village. On the North–South axis, the dried Santana riverbed divides the village in two: at its South bank one finds the Fazenda (literally, “farm” in Portuguese) side, which takes its name from the original farm built by the Alves family pioneers when they first settled in Guaribas, and at its North bank lies the newer Guaribas Two side, where the Correia da Silva family settled approximately 40 years later. (See Picture 7). Guaribas' separation into the Fazenda and Guaribas Two sides, however, is much more than a geographical distinction. To begin with, insofar as Fazenda is to this day predominantly populated by the Alves and Rocha families, and Guaribas Two by the Correia da Silva, this division becomes a crucial one in terms of kinship and affinity. Moreover, as each side perceives the other as somewhat different in customs, hygiene habits, and moral character, as described in Chapter One, the division also translates into a cultural one. And finally, as families usually vote in blocks to attempt to secure the most benefits for their kin group, the

geographical division takes on a political significance, with both sides typically supporting opposing candidates and parties, a topic addressed in Chapter Three. Importantly, despite Guaribanos eventually recognizing openly the fissional nature of their community, to the extent that they themselves delight in telling anecdotes about it, they insist just as much that “Guaribas is one single family”. In my first months in the village, the latter version of a united, harmonious community was reiterated to me to the point of sounding like a local mantra, but with time it became clear that a considerable rift underlay the relationship between Fazenda and Guaribas Two. This paradox, however, is hardly a paradox. It merely hints at the complex reality of social life in a face-to-face community where almost all villagers are indeed closely related by way of kinship, *compadrio*, godfathering, and neighbourly ties, whilst being simultaneously segmented on the very same grounds, a subject discussed in Chapter One.

Most houses in the village are built with a sun-baked mud brick called *adobe*, which softens and smoothenes their angles and edges, giving their general appearance a picturesque, organic crookedness. Being the same colour of the surrounding mountains, and of the brown earth on which the whole village stands, these adobe houses create a rather pleasing aesthetic effect, a certain chromatic coherence. (See Picture 8). For even the Guaribanos who choose to paint their houses’ exteriors usually decide to employ tones — brown, pink, red, and all possibilities in their spectra — that compete neither with the brown adobe stucco on the inside of the paint, nor with the brown dust blown mercilessly by the wind which eventually discolours, stains, and dyes façades brown again.

However, it is mostly outside their houses that Guaribanos can be found during both day and night. When they are not working in their fields, which actually accounts for a small portion of their time, Guaribanos are usually outdoors, examining the morning, sitting in front of their houses, deftly releasing beans from their strings into a basin, or simply waiting for a relative or friend to pass by and sit and have coffee. The fact is that the types of crops typically cultivated and the regime of labour in the fields allows for plenty of spare time, which can be spent with family, friends, or in much-loved activities such as hunting, playing domino, climbing the mountains in groups (especially during the rainy season, when the rock pools are brimming with clear rainwater), meeting and talking at the square just after

nightfall, or playing pool at the modest bars in the village. (See Picture 9). In addition, the mode of labour, especially the *troca* (exchange), which will be explained in more detail in Chapter Two, allows for a congenial work environment among relatives and friends, as for great latitude in choosing when and how much to work. Moreover, being owners of their lands and properties, Guaribanos are able to escape the more exploitative work and living conditions that a great part of the peasantry in Northeast Brazil must endure as tenant farmers instead of small property owners.

Mestizos, all of them, Guaribanos are outdoor folk of very varied stock: white, black, mulatto, *caboclo* (of European and Amerindian descent), and *cafuzo* (of black African and Amerindian descent), as well as all phenotypical possibilities therein. The men, most of them, wear trousers and shirts or t-shirts, flip-flops or low-rise boots, whilst shorts, t-shirts, flip-flops, and a few sneakers predominate among boys — who, unlike men, can also be seen bare-chested around the village. (See Picture 10). Older women wear colourful but sober long dresses that extend below the knee, which are complemented underneath with long sleeve shirts and trousers to maximize protection against the sun when working in the fields. (See Picture 11). Fashion for the younger generation of women is markedly different, however. Girls up to their late teens (at which point the great majority of them is already married) enjoy the full spectrum of options in contemporary female clothing: all sizes of short skirts, tank-tops, low-cut neckline blouses, modern design T-shirts with glitter and English slogans, high-heels, clogs, as well as more accessories, such as purses, earrings, rings, and bijouterie of all sorts. (See Picture 12). Significantly, in contrast to the older generation of married women, girls wear heavy make-up; so much so that the number one request of young teenage girls whenever I left the village was a make-up box — which, ironically, some of them could no longer relish when they finally got it, as they converted to Pentecostalism in the meantime.

The local accent is laced with *legatos* and a flowing rhythm quite different from the cadence of other varieties of Brazilian Portuguese, especially those from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, in the more metropolitan Southeast of the country, prolonging words and sentences in melodious slowness. This relaxed rhythmic sequence of speech is however seasoned by local variations in inflection, such as the remarkably high pitches attained in the greetings or long lamentations of women, or

the guttural, low pitches used to deal with animals and to accentuate warnings, quarrels, or disagreement in friendly conversations. Significantly, several dialectal expressions, as well as old-fashioned, archaic Portuguese words — which may have survived in Guaribas due to the village’s geographical remoteness and the limited penetration of media and modern communications until recently<sup>5</sup> — abound in the local prosody. For instance, words like “*labutar*” (to labour), “*adular*” (to flatter), “*zelar*” (to take care of), “*palestra*” (conversation), and “*fadiga*” (fatigue), which have fallen into disuse in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese, are employed colloquially and very frequently instead of their more popular alternatives elsewhere in the country, “*trabalhar*” (to work), “*bajular*” (to flatter), “*cuidar*” (to take care of), “*conversa*” (talk), and “*cansaço*” (tiredness), respectively. Similarly, antiquated expressions such as “*de sorte e medida que*” (to the extent that), “*de primeiro*” (in the beginning), “*como bem*” (for example), “*dar fê*” (notice), and “*valei-me, Deus do céu*” (help me, God of the skies) feature occasionally even in children’s speech. This lends a rather formal character to everyday spoken language in the village, which suits very well, in effect, the local etiquette in conversations, especially among older Guaribanos. There is a certain ceremonious politeness that underlies even the most informal exchanges, and a more or less fixed sequence of qualifications when engaging one’s interlocutor. For instance, before being asked anything, I would be warned that a question was coming, and this only usually took place after I had been thoroughly inquired about my family’s health and wellbeing, as well as praised for my politeness, modesty, and knowledge. In an effort to not come off as prying, Guaribanos would declare “*Eu vô agora lhe procurar uma coisa*”, which in local dialect means “I will now ask you something”, though its literal translation, “I will now *search* you something”, would be nonsensical in standard Portuguese. Yet, this equation of “*procurar*” (to search) with “*perguntar*” (to ask) hints at the local understanding of the process of asking and answering, where the individual is seen as a repository of personal information whose privacy must be acknowledged and respected before she is “searched”. Tellingly, “*procurar*” is locally opposed to “*indagar*” (to inquire), another synonym in Portuguese for “to ask”, which however amounts in Guaribas to the impolite, tactless, and risky talk between drunken men in

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<sup>5</sup> There was no electricity in the village until 1998, and as late as December of 2002, only 20.1 per cent of its households were connected to the electrical power network. See PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 12.

bars which frequently leads to fights. Accordingly, in the course of several conversations, some relative would interrupt us to warn my interlocutor that her son or husband was at the bar “*indagando*”, that is, “asking too many questions”, which meant that she would better go and fetch him before hostilities escalated into a brawl. Thus, asking is locally seen as a delicate matter, which accounts for the procedural qualifications in conversations mentioned above.

Likewise, a seating protocol in conversations further illustrates this concern with politeness, with the owner of the house in front of which people are seated standing up for a new guest regardless of being his senior, or with the almost absolute avoidance of passing between two people talking. Whilst the incumbency of serving coffee to guests can be seen as an issue of cordiality that is certainly not particular to Guaribas, the high degree of concern with having coffee always ready indicates the seriousness with which hospitality is locally taken, as a Guaribano must always offer a visitor or an unknown traveller something to drink (*de beber*), something to eat (*de comer*), or, at the very least, “the shadow of his house”.

Another aspect of local etiquette is humility. In Guaribas, humbleness is a crucial moral value, and the mark of a well-bred person. After inquiring about my mother, my father, and my grandmother’s health as though we had not seen each other for weeks, even though we had sat down and drank coffee only the day before, Filogônio would proceed thus in preparation for his “searching”: “Marcello, you have memory, intelligence, and do things with certainty. You don’t ignore [i.e. reject] anything [from Guaribas]”. What Filogônio meant, and what was frequently reiterated by other Guaribanos with a similar formulation, was that unlike other outsiders, I did not (allegedly) refuse to engage in any aspect of local life, from eating the same food and working in the same way as Guaribanos, to hunting ant-eaters in the mountains and drinking heavily at their *roças* (fields). As a fair-skinned native of Rio de Janeiro undertaking an academic degree abroad, I was regarded by villagers as having a somewhat higher social status than themselves, so that joining them in their lifestyle was locally perceived as humbleness, a quality that endeared me to them perhaps above all others, attesting to the centrality of this value in Guaribas. This can be corroborated by the practice of humbling oneself before a guest. Cristóvão would begin thus a conversation: “I have hunted for a [moral] fault

in you, sir, and have not found it. You have come from Rio de Janeiro to stay in the midst of these Indians”.

Therefore, despite their subaltern status in the eyes of the rest of country for their perceived lack of education and cultural capital, as well as for their work migration to the South of Brazil, where Guaribanos are constrained to take on low income and low status jobs, due to their high degree of hospitality, politeness, and etiquette in everyday life — ironically, and especially in comparison to the informality in models of social interaction that prevail in the very metropolises where they are debased — Guaribanos have always struck me as a true elite. Gentlemen and ladies, one might say, Guaribanos customarily ask before posing a question, excuse themselves in advance for their curiosity, ritually praise their interlocutors, and display a dignified concern for the wellbeing of their guests’ loved ones.

## The Zero-Hunger Programme

The Zero-Hunger Programme is a poverty reduction and social inclusion development project launched in 2003 that, as its name suggests, is chiefly concerned with food security. The programme provides financial aid through family grants called Bolsa Família on a massive scale: in 2006, 11.1 million families with a per capita monthly income below R\$120 (£40) received direct cash transfers totalling 8.2 billion Reais (£2.1 billion).<sup>6</sup> In rural areas such as Guaribas, PFZ’s main objective is to improve the livelihoods of poor farming families by introducing agricultural extension, drought-resistant crops, minor irrigation, micro-credit, livestock development, cooperatives, in sum, technologies to enhance productivity and income generation in general.<sup>7</sup> Other typical PFZ interventions focus on

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<sup>6</sup> “Bolsa Família: Main Results” 2010; “*Água dá vida a Guaribas*” 2005. (Note: unauthored internet articles, such as from governmental websites, are cited by title and year in the footnotes since some of them have very large titles and disrupt the reading if included in parenthesis in the text.)

<sup>7</sup> “Fome Zero: O que pode ser feito” 2005; “Fome Zero: Como a sociedade pode participar” 2005; Betto 2004.



infrastructure and its management; these include the building of model houses by the Popular Habitation Company (COHAB), sewage systems and water supply capabilities by Zero-Thirst (Sede-Zero), hygiene and sanitation training, rural electrification, road improvement, land and population registration, and health and nutrition orientation.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the programme's policies are remarkably similar to those of other development projects I have studied, with an emphasis on the empowerment of local actors, and the centrality of the participatory approach (Ferguson 1990; Mosse 2000, 2004; Pigg 1992; Pottier 1997; Rossi 2004; Woost 1993, 1997).

Additional project objectives are articulated by TALHER, a branch of PFZ responsible for coordinating and delivering social policies which aim at “the eradication of social exclusion” and the transfer of “social technology”.<sup>9</sup> Among its stated goals on the official PFZ website are: “universal access to the rights of citizenship” (through “citizenship education”), inclusion in the national welfare system, the identification and registration of citizens, the socioeconomic emancipation of disadvantaged families, and “the reduction of the social deficit”.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, TALHER is given the unique task within PFZ of “satiating [its] beneficiaries’ hunger for beauty”, a topic which will be analysed in detail in Chapter Six.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst the reason why Guaribas was specifically chosen by PFZ policy designers to be the project’s main target community remains unclear, IBGE and HDI statistics most probably influenced their decision. Apart from the IBGE figures which situated Guaribas in third place in the national poverty ranking, other indicators seemed to confirm the critical situation of destitution and lack of basic infrastructure. For instance, at least until December of 2002, 64.7 per cent of Guaribanos lived with less than the national monthly minimum salary (R\$200, or approximately £48), and 24.84 per cent with less than half of that amount.<sup>12</sup> Even though monthly per capita income jumped from R\$43.8 (£12) in 2000 to R\$78 (£19)

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<sup>8</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 42; PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> “Fome Zero: o que é” 2005

<sup>10</sup> “Fome Zero: o que é” 2005.

<sup>11</sup> “Rede de tecnologia social: princípios” 2005; “Matar a fome de pão” 2005; Betto 2004, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 17; and PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 23-4.

in 2005, Guaribas still retained the sixth position in FGV's (Fundação Getúlio Vargas) national poverty ranking (Murakawa 2005: 90). Moreover, several other indicators were similarly gloomy: the infant mortality rate touched 59.9 per cent in 1998; life expectancy did not exceed 57 years in 2000 (54.59 years in 1991); and the literacy rate for adults in that same year was only 40.98 per cent (22.28 per cent in 1991).<sup>13</sup>

In addition, information concerning the municipality's basic infrastructure supplemented the disquieting scenario conveyed by the above. It was well divulged that until 2005 the only sources of water in Guaribas were shallow water pools (*ólhos d'água*, literally, "eyes of water") in the rocks, located two or more kilometres up in the mountains surrounding the village, to which women and children (according to the local sexual division of labour) flocked day and night, carrying back gallons of water on their heads to ensure their households' water supply. Likewise, before 1997, Guaribas did not have electricity — except for what could be provided by an unreliable gasoline generator — and as late as December of 2002, only 20.1 per cent of its households were connected to the electrical power network.<sup>14</sup> To this date, the village has not been provided with a sewage system, and until January of 2003, 99 per cent of its households did not have indoor bathrooms.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, before 2002 there were no paved streets, waste collection and disposal services, or means of communication with the outside world besides a few scattered and undependable public telephones.<sup>16</sup> There is still no public transportation system in Guaribas, and villagers make do with an informal network of private pickup trucks that renders the transit of people and goods both costly and difficult — especially if the precarious state of local dirt roads is taken into account. And finally, out of the three health outposts that exist in the municipality, only the one in the village of Guaribas is functional, despite being badly serviced and stocked of medicines.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The literacy rate for individuals over 10 years old, according to the IBGE 2000 Census, was only 41.8 per cent (the same figure for the São Raimundo Nonato region was 67.55 per cent, and 71.4 per cent for Piauí). However, the PFZ research team that visited Guaribas before the programme's implementation estimated that, in reality, 80 per cent of the population could not read or write. See PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 10, 19.

<sup>14</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> "Fome Zero muda Guaribas" 2005; "Água dá vida a Guaribas" 2005; PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 12, 16, 22.

<sup>17</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 13

However, even given the actual set of circumstances that qualified the village as a beneficiary of the government's development programme, with its campaign to establish Guaribas as an emergency of which it would take care with PFZ, the government contributed to fixing the village as a trope of misery and backwardness, thus stigmatizing it in the eyes of the nation. For the images of Guaribas that reached the rest of Brazil — first through official government releases, such as the programme's mission statements, and later through the media, by way of newspapers, tele-journalism, magazines, and internet articles — were of poverty, hardship, and shocking lack of basic infrastructure. Thus, in the course of four years making the headlines in magazine, internet, and newspaper articles such as "Misery in all corners: Guaribas, synonymous with hunger"<sup>18</sup>, "Misery Museum"<sup>19</sup>, and "Guaribas, the city symbol of Zero-Hunger, still in misery"<sup>20</sup>, the village became analogous with the word through which it was continually evoked: misery. More often than not, the contents of such articles also did a disservice to actual life in Guaribas and the character of its people, with wild assertions such as "traditionally, the inhabitants of Guaribas do not care for hygiene and cleanliness"<sup>21</sup>, and

[the custom of marrying very young in Guaribas] engenders large, often unstructured families, enforced by domestic violence through the abuse of alcohol consumption as the only way out of the lack of options available in work and leisure, where the victims are generally women and children.<sup>22</sup>

This sort of publicity, together with the immediacy with which the programme was launched, the ministerial trip undertaken, and the portentous names of ministries especially created — such as "The Extraordinary Ministry of Food Security and Fight Against Hunger" — formed an atmosphere of drama and urgency around Guaribas and PFZ, on which the government capitalized in order to convert

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<sup>18</sup> "Miséria em qualquer canto: Guaribas xarás da fome" 2005

<sup>19</sup> Murakawa 2005: 90

<sup>20</sup> "Guaribas, cidade símbolo do Fome Zero, ainda na miséria" 2007.

<sup>21</sup> "A Realidade de Guaribas" 2003 .

<sup>22</sup> This quotation features in a social diagnosis section of PFZ's own Sustainable Development Plan of June 2003; since it is just as jumbled in Portuguese as in English, I have translated it almost literally, without attempting to correct its style.

social policy into political propaganda. For President Lula never concealed his intentions of running for a second term in the 2006 presidential elections, and both the government and the Worker's Party (PT), which he helped to found in 1980, came under a long series of damaging allegations of corruption as early as 2005, which eventually brought down three ministers and personal friends of the president.<sup>23</sup> Unsurprisingly, as the flagship of the Brazilian government's social policy, the PFZ programme in general — and as the flagship of PFZ, the village of Guaribas in particular — have been directly influenced by these political circumstances. For instance, even though Guaribas still lacks, among several other infrastructural investments, a well-equipped health outpost, a location for the administration of judiciary power, or a paved road for the improved transportation of its people and goods, PFZ intends to inaugurate a costly 1.5 km airfield (from which locals would benefit very little) and a memorial to the Zero-Hunger Programme with photographs and newspaper articles that show the evolution in the quality of life in Guaribas" (Murakawa 2005: 90).

The bleak picture one is led to imagine through the Brazilian government development campaign and the national media coverage, as well as through IBGE and HDI reports, however, is not what one encounters in the village. To begin with, regarding the physical aspect of the village itself, there is nothing inherently unattractive in the architecture of houses and the geographical occupation of space, but modest and functional structural design which makes use of local materials, such as adobe mud bricks and stockades, adapted to local environmental conditions. The projection of poverty and misery into those structures and materials is the responsibility of journalists, travellers, and PFZ teams that venture into the area, carrying their own aesthetic notions about the built environment with them — i.e., which designs create comfort and the impression of the beautiful, which building materials display status and wealth, how social and private space should be ordered and experienced, and so on. Moreover, the well-known claims concerning the chronic famines in the village are, at best, incorrect. Excepting sporadic drought

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<sup>23</sup> The *Mensalão* scandal was the first in a series of allegations of corruption and traffic of political influence, and consisted in accusations that the ruling Worker's Party (PT) had paid a number of congressional deputies R\$30,000 (around £7,500 at the time) every month in order to vote for legislation favoured by PT.

years, there has never been starvation in Guaribas, and its very proposition seemed odd to the several Guaribanos with whom I discussed it.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, in spite of the shockingly high rate of infant mortality, the Guaribano family unit is usually large (see genealogical maps) and the 2000 IBGE Demographic Census shows that the municipality's population is surprisingly young, with 72.9 per cent of inhabitants under 30 years of age, and 44.7 per cent under 14. It is a puzzling piece of information that inspires us to be either suspicious of the infant mortality rate data, or impressed with Guaribanos' perseverance and gusto in procreation.

If these were purely romantic considerations, it would be difficult to explain why Guaribanos who leave the village to get special medical attention or undergo surgery in Caracol or São Raimundo Nonato sometimes risk their lives travelling back to Guaribas only a few hours after the operation, facing the bumpy road home with stitches so fresh that a stronger jolt could split them open, in order to return as soon as possible to their land. Several times I travelled with women who had barely woken up from a tubal ligation operation, still dizzy and at times vomiting from the anaesthesia, and when I asked them why they did not wait a bit longer to travel back to their village, most said the same thing: "If I die, I want to die in Guaribas".

## A brief survey of development projects in Northeast Brazil

The Northeast was the first region of Brazil to be settled, and among the earliest areas of the "New World" to be colonized. Sugar cane production started there in 1532, and in less than a century the region became one of the most valuable sugar producing areas in the world (Normano 1935: 19-20). With the expansion of the sugar industry in the Caribbean, however, world prices of sugar fell sharply in the last half of the seventeenth century, and the period of regional prosperity based on

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<sup>24</sup> The only two Guaribanos who assert to have suffered hunger, João Honorato and Geraldo, both in their early seventies, were brothers who lost their father in their infancy, and thus faced singular hardship in their lives. Aside from such exceptional circumstances, the diet of Guaribanos has never lacked beans, corn, manioc flour, and meat, as described in Chapter Two.

sugar and slave plantation came to an end (Furtado 1963 [1959]: 29). At a later stage, cotton agriculture became important, but the Northeast never regained its position of economic leadership in Brazil. During subsequent periods, gold, rubber, and coffee became the country's leading commodities, and the economic frontier, as well as the centre of economic gravity, shifted with the changes in principal products to the Southeast region of the country. The decline in sugar prosperity in the coast caused the Northeastern population to migrate in ever greater numbers to the semi-arid interior of the region, where subsistence agriculture and cattle-raising became the main economic activities (Robock 1963: 58-9).

Brazil's industrialization policy from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century favoured the South and Southeastern regions, which enjoyed milder climatic conditions, were closer to the centres of production of the country's principal commodities, and better prepared for industrialization. Turnover tax revenues, unequal investment, and the transfer of assets from the Northern regions to the South through foreign exchange allocation policies resulted in intense regional disparity (Robock 1963: 108). By the beginning of the twentieth century, discrepancies in industrialization, urbanization, and level of basic infrastructure, as well as vast differences in per capita income and population between states in the Northeast of the country and those in the Southeast (such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais) were already patent. The semi-arid climatic conditions of the Northeast region, and especially the phenomenon of endemic droughts and forced migration, further intensified regional disparity within the country. As a result, stereotyped visions of the Northeast as economically stagnant, poverty-stricken, and culturally backwards became common currency among Brazilians living in other regions, notably among Southerners and Southeasterners (Robock 1963: 7).

Due to the several attempts to contain the drought problem and to correct regional inequalities, the semi-arid *sertão* of Northeast Brazil has a long history of "development" initiatives spanning 135 years. It began with an unusually disastrous drought from 1877 to 1879, which motivated the imperial government to institute a large-scale programme of building dams and reservoirs in the region (Villa 2001). In the first half of the twentieth century, six major drought years led to the creation of

The National Department of Works Against the Drought (DNOCS) by President Getúlio Vargas in 1945. When further droughts occurred in 1951 and 1952, President Juscelino Kubitschek established the Working Group for Northeast Development (GTDN) in 1956, and when another drought year devastated the region in 1958, a new powerful agency was founded in 1959, the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE). At the time, the “New Era” approach and its focus on economic development led the Brazilian government to intensify its initiatives to industrialize the Northeast and nurture regional entrepreneurship, whilst the United States’ growing concern with the Castro-communist threat increased its interest in the region. Thus, beginning in the 1950’s, an influx of foreign aid and external resources for the development of the Northeast reached the region: the United Nation’s Expanded Technical Assistance Program, UNICEF’s maternal and child welfare programmes, as well as development missions from the Food and Agriculture Organization and UNESCO (Robock 1963: 131-142). The United States’ direct economic assistance to Latin America tripled from 1960 to 1961 under the Alliance for Progress setting, and from that period onwards Northeast Brazil became a key testing ground for development policies and experiments, with international development agencies being permanently stationed there.

The projects mentioned above were conceived within the Modernization Approach framework of development, which focused on the transfer of economic and scientific technology, the commercialization of agriculture, industrialization, and urbanization (Grillo 1997: 22-3; Long 1977: 10). Typical of this era was Walter Rostow’s “take-off theory”, which claimed that industrialization and mass affluence would ensue from the modernization of local technology and sociopolitical institutions (Hulme 2010: 64). Following this model, GTDN and SUDENE policies concentrated on large-scale investments and industrial promotion to “jump-start” social development in the Northeast, achieving, however, very limited results (Cavalcanti et al. 1981: 28; Tandler 1993: xix). For instance, Cavalcanti et al. notes that even though the Brazilian government significantly increased investments in the region — to the extent that, in 1965, 44 per cent of the Northeast’s gross capital formation came from federal financing — 70 per cent of the region’s rural population was still illiterate in 1970 (1981: 57). The Modernization Approach’s development paradigm came under attack in the late 1960’s due to extensive

documentation of its failures to transform enduring models of rural surplus extraction, and its preservation of long-established patron-client arrangements in “developing” communities (Hulme 2010: 64). Critiques of development formulated from a neo-Marxist perspective led to the rise of the Structural Dependency Approach in the 1970’s. It claimed that under the cover of neutral, technical missions, development projects incorporated communities into a wider system of international relations of an economic and political nature, instituting “new patterns of inequality and dependency” that perpetuated their domination by external centres of power, causing them to function as their satellites (Long 1977: 71). Though SUDENE interventions in the 1970’s continued to be informed by the expenditure of large amounts of resources to foment regional industrialization, its policies in this period reflected a growing concern with the provision of formal education and basic infrastructure to the Northeastern population (Robock 1963: 143).

From the late 1970’s through the 1980’s, SUDENE policies followed yet another shift in development models, and resumed their emphasis on economic growth. Informed by the premises of the Neo-Liberal Approach, SUDENE concentrated on direct investments and incentive systems to fuel the Northeastern states’ economies, based on the assumption that job creation and increased demand would result in the reduction of poverty and social development. Yet, the outcomes of market-led strategies to liberalize regional economies were slow and often negative for poor people (Hulme 2010: 64-5). In addition, during the military governments of the 1970’s, SUDENE initiatives were further compromised “by scandals of embezzlement and corrupt handling of funds, padding of payrolls, irregularities in the distribution of relief goods”, and the traffic of political influence in the selection of projects (Robock 1963: 108). Consequently, SUDENE became associated with what came to be known in Brazil as “the drought industry”, a collection of sub-agencies, brokers, political intermediaries, and corrupt municipal administrations which capitalized on the Northeastern drought problem to claim and embezzle national resources.

Alongside these federal development plans, the 1970’s and 1980’s saw an upsurge in World Bank programmes in the Northeast. Judith Tandler offers a valuable survey of World Bank projects for the region from 1974 to 1986 in *New*



*Lessons from Old Projects: the Workings of Rural Development in Northeast Brazil* (1993). These attempted to bypass wasteful and corrupt local institutions, and target the poor directly with agricultural production services and subsidies. In 12 years, US\$19.1 billion were allocated to reduce poverty and increase agricultural productivity through the provision of agricultural extension, rural finance, irrigation, farm-to-market roads, drinking water, health, education, electrification, and employment generating projects (Tendler 1993: 3). As described in Chapters Five and Six, PFZ policies are remarkably similar to World Bank initiatives at the time, as are its outcomes, at least in Guaribas. Tendler observes that World Bank projects faced problems due to several factors and shortcomings: “too many programme components, the inefficiency of productivity-increasing packages for small farmers, the absence of beneficiary participation in project design and implementation, a policy environment that penalized agriculture”, and outside pressures for projects to perform (Tendler 1993: xix). She observes that credit extension and fund disbursements do not translate into reinvestment and increased productivity in rural areas, and concludes: “to sum up, there were no projects, components, or agencies that could have performed consistently well throughout the whole period under review” (Tendler 1993: xx).

In the 1990's, national social policy and development programmes were driven by the priorities of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administration, which concentrated on the control of inflation, extensive privatization, and the drawing of foreign investments. Despite its neo-liberal economic policies, the government's public policy agenda from 1994 to 2002 was markedly informed by Cardoso's own writings on Dependency Theory in Latin America, and focused on the national expansion of welfare, citizenship rights, and formal education (Cardoso 1979; Draibe 2003). SUDENE was finally extinguished in 2001, and conditional cash transfer schemes were instituted in the same year which would be taken up by President Lula's administration in 2003 under a different name. Thus the Bolsa Escola (School Grant) cash transfers, which provided money to families with a monthly per capita income below R\$90 (£19) for children enrolled in school, the Cartão Cidadão (Citizenship Card), which gave emergency financial aid to families whose monthly income was lower than half of the national minimum salary at the time, and the Auxílio Gás (Gas Allowance), which granted R\$15 (£3.5) to poor

families to buy natural gas, were all incorporated by President Lula's administration under the Bolsa Família programme. In rural areas, Cardoso's government's public policies included PETI (Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour) and Seguro Safra (Harvest Insurance), which would later be integrated with Bolsa Família into PFZ.

Nevertheless, the restricted result of development strategies for the Northeast can be gathered from 2009 IBGE statistics, which indicate that a high level of regional disparity still obtains between the Northeast and Southeast regions of Brazil, as shown by the table below.

Table 1: Regional disparity between the Northeast and Southeast regions of Brazil

	Northeast Region	Southeast Region
Total Area	1,558,196 km <sup>2</sup>	924,511 km <sup>2</sup>
Population	53,591,197	80,779,802
Urbanization Ratio	72.8%	92.2%
Infant Mortality	33.2%	16.6%
Immigrants by place of birth	59.8%	17.9%
Households with monthly per capita income below half of the national minimum salary	36.3%	12.2%
GNP per capita	R\$7,487.55	R\$21,182.69

*Source: 2009 IBGE Census by Domicile Samples*

In conclusion, despite the long history of development projects in Northeast Brazil, national and international policy prescriptions have consistently met with limited success to transform the infrastructural and socioeconomic aspects of the region.

## The structure of the thesis

This research sets out to investigate the social, economic, and political impact of PFZ on its pilot-community, Guaribas. Yet, it is also an assessment of PFZ development policies at large based on their effects on the village. It could be argued that being a rather small and isolated rural village in the semi-arid backlands of Northeast Brazil, Guaribas cannot be considered representative of PFZ's implementation at the national level. However, I believe this not to be the case for two reasons. Firstly, as described in PFZ mission statements, and reiterated to me by Rosângela Souza, PFZ's chief coordinator for the state of Piauí, Guaribas is PFZ's very own "laboratory of development".<sup>25</sup> Receiving more programmes, project focus, and media attention than any other locality in Brazil, Guaribas is uniquely well positioned to reflect the full impact of PFZ policies, and to portray how they work in conjunction. Secondly, the effects of PFZ in Guaribas, and especially the project's shortcomings, are remarkably similar both to those of development projects in general, and to those of development projects for Northeast Brazil in particular: failures to modernize agriculture, transform agricultural surplus extraction, increase overall productivity and income generation, foster beneficiary participation in policy design and implementation, expand the practices of representative democracy within a short to medium-term time frame, deliver a significant portion of much needed infrastructural betterments, and boost the local economy (Andrade 1982; Cavalcanti et al. 1981; Egler 2003; Gledhill 1996; Grillo 1997; Hulme 2010; Long 1977; Mosse 2000, 2004; Nash 1994; Pigg 1992; Pottier 1997; Robock 1963; Tandler 1993; Woost 1997). In addition, PFZ's "unintended" "side-effects" were similarly in line

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<sup>25</sup> "Rede de Educação Cidadã" 2005.

with those of development projects in general, such as the expansion of state capacity and bureaucratic power, the extension of social regulation over marginal populations, the attempt to incorporate non-state fringes through nationalizing narratives, the relegation of local knowledges and practices, the de-politicization of intervention, and the politicization of the project's results in order to convert social policy into political capital (Escobar 2001; Ferguson 2000; Hobart 1993; Mosse 2004; Sillitoe 1998; Woost 1993). In this sense, the results of development policies in Guaribas are not only representative, but typical of the wider processes of development within which PFZ's policy structure was conceived and designed.

The relevance of this study lies in that it is one of the only two existing ethnographies of development projects in Piauí or the *sertão* region, an area understudied by development scholarship. Even though there are executive summaries and descriptions of the geographical impact of irrigation, electrification, and infrastructural projects in semi-arid Northeast Brazil, there are remarkably few ethnographies of rural Piauí on the one hand, and of regional development programmes on the other. The ethnographies of rural communities in Piauí that exist are unpublished theses by José Costa (1985), Maria Carneiro (1976), and Aaron Ansell (2007). Ansell studied PFZ's implementation in a rural small town which he called "Passerinha", focusing specifically on project initiatives to strengthen "civil society" and dismantle local political clientelism by "replacing vertical political exchanges with horizontal (class and race-based) solidarities that would ostensibly facilitate democracy" (Ansell 2007: 1). He explored the social engineering techniques by which state officials sought to inculcate in beneficiaries the affects and temperaments that would effect this transformation, and concludes that PFZ has failed in changing the intimate power relations of everyday life: "Zero-Hunger Program officials' attempts to eradicate the cultural forms and power relations of rural clientelism did not succeed" (Ansell 2007: 1). In sum, Ansell produces an account of "disjunctive policy implementation", and of specific shortcomings of PFZ intervention in "Passerinha" (2007).

Costa's thesis is entitled "*Índio*", "*Cabôco-brabo*", "*Cabra-do-Canto*": *nomes, manipulações e identidades em uma comunidade rural do Piauí*, and deals with the politics of identity construction in a marginalized community called "Canto" (suggestively meaning "corner", in Portuguese), where descendants of

persecuted Indians who were forced to settle in the village in the eighteenth century are excluded and discriminated against by neighbouring communities. Like Guaribanos, Canto inhabitants are regionally portrayed as “stupid”, “dirty”, “lazy”, “violent”, and “ignorant”, and are both politically and economically exploited. Consequently, residents of Canto have formed what Costa calls a “contrastive identity”, whereby non-Canto regionals are seen as “exploitative”, “arrogant”, “proud”, and “tricksters” (1985: 168). The imagined or shared hybrid Indian background functions to unite Canto members, for as a strategy of identity, it compensates for the disadvantages of marginalization. As a *cabra-do-Canto* tells Costa, “My ancestors were captured with the teeth of dogs and under the hooves of horses (...) If you mess with one of us, you mess with all of us, like a house of wasps” (1985: 167). Costa’s main argument is that the Canto community has devised strategies to endure marginalization and exploitation, the most fundamental of which being an intense framework of solidarity premised upon *de facto* or construed ethnic identity, as well as an intensely personalistic model of categorical bonds based on consanguinity and kinship (1985: 73).

Carneiro’s thesis, *Terra da Pobreza: um estudo antropológico de uma comunidade rural piauiense*, deals with a small community created by a priest in the Gurguéia Valley, who organized through private initiative the buying of plots and their distribution to colonists (1976). The enterprise intended to transform tenant farmers living in typical patron-client arrangements with landowners in Piauí into autonomous small property owners. Carneiro’s analysis inspects the configuration of group membership and the creation of collective identity through symbolic exchanges where money, services, and labour force are traded as “help”, “favour”, or “courtesy” (*agrado*), within a personalistic arrangement of reciprocity modelled on kinship moral obligations. Hence, the diverse modalities of labour contracts and exchange of goods in the colony are subordinated to, and integrated into a framework of familial work, whereby more impersonal obligations resulting from material debt are traversed by a personalistic system of relationships (1976: 102). Carneiro notes that the family is the basic unit of production, as well as the main social artefact to be reproduced (1976: 70-3, 99). Colonists do not confer the same rights to both colonists without families and *arranchados* (whose families reside outside of the colony), ensuring “the conditions for the reproduction of the family as

the basic socioeconomic unit”, as well as reinforcing “the dominance of the family group as the axis of social relationships in the colony” (1976: 70). She concludes that even though land ownership could guarantee autonomy on the level of production, liberating the tenant farmer from bonds of dependency which she was previously forced to maintain with a land owner, the colonist remains tied to a patrimonial structure in the equation of the priest with a “natural father”, as he was referred to by several colonists (1976: 111).

Other studies also highlight the centrality of kinship ideals and practices in all levels of the social organization of small rural communities in Brazil. Woortman, for example, in *Herdeiros, Parentes e Compadres*, investigates the role of kinship for land transmission in two rural communities in Brazil, one in the South and one in the Northeast of the country (1995). Despite their apparent cultural differences, Woortman stresses how kinship principles, and especially prescribed affinal relations, regulate the maintenance of rural property in both communities. A similar concern underlies Moura’s *Os Herdeiros da Terra*, in which she equates land, kinship, and identity in a rural community in Minas Gerais. She emphasizes the importance of land for indigenous notions of identity, and the significance of marriage practices and affinal land exchange for the preservation of families’ traditional estates. In *A Morada da Vida: Trabalho Familiar de Pequenos Produtores do Nordeste do Brasil*, Heredia also addresses the central role of kinship, and particularly of the categorical obligations running through the elementary family, in a rural community in Northeast Brazil. Heredia states that “the domestic group is the dominant unit of economic production, and of physical and social reproduction (...) it is within this group that the physical, and, to a large extent, social reproduction of its members takes place” (1979: 37).

The importance of kinship as the main organizing principle for patterns of social interaction in rural areas of Northeast Brazil where subsistence agriculture predominates is the theme of Chapter One (Amman 2003; Carneiro 1976; Costa 1985; Egler 2003; Faoro 1958; Freyre 1986 [1933]; Nunes 1975). It addresses aspects of Guaribas’ social structure, and focuses on the centrality of traditional conceptions of kinship for perspectives of solidarity, assistance, and economic and political cooperation. The main argument is that the elementary family, represented

by the household group, functions as a semi-autonomous corporate unit, and is the only group to enjoy stable categorical solidarity in Guaribas. This can be explained by the system of bilateral kinship reckoning, and verified through the many instances, customs, and institutions of competition between local families. Accordingly, the chapter provides examples of antagonism between families in different nearby settlements, between families living in the two sides of Guaribas (Fazenda and Guaribas Two), and between related families residing in the same side of the village, in order to conclude that the household group, consisting of parents and their offspring, is a semi-independent social, economic, and political unit. The significance of kinship and its related models of collaboration and conflict in Guaribas is essential for understanding the shortcomings of PFZ's economic and political initiatives. Hence, the following chapters seek to explain the difficulties in policy implementation in light of their discrepancies with the local sociocultural institutions described in this chapter.

Chapter Two investigates the impact of PFZ economic initiatives in Guaribas, and opens with a survey of local productive activities, economic institutions, and work regimes. It explores how the concentration of categorical obligations and prospects of cooperation within the kindred constrains the success of PFZ economic policies, which are based on models of village-wide, collective collaboration. Similarly, it argues that PFZ's difficulty to instil locally a transactionalist, entrepreneurial attitude characteristic of investment capitalism owes to the fact that economic association and the morality of profit cannot be dissociated in Guaribas from ideals of kinship solidarity. The chapter also examines how PFZ's shortcomings in modernizing and maximizing local work and production are due to Guaribanos' work ethos, and their disinclination to abandon the local comfortable balance between labour and leisure which allows for a considerable quantity of spare time. As a result, the chapter describes the shortcomings of a number of PFZ's economic policies, such as the failure to institute local cooperatives, the general divestment in agricultural work, the village's growing dependency on outside markets, and the onset of a local micro recession.

Chapter Three continues to explore the local importance of kinship institutions addressed in Chapters One and Two in the domain of politics,

particularly with respect to PFZ's intentions to expand the ideology and praxes of representative democracy. The chapter investigates grass-roots political practices in Guaribas, such as cronyism, the buying and selling of votes, and political corruption as stemming from kinship ideals that conflict with the principles of national democracy. The primacy of kinship as the main criterion for political association in Guaribas supersedes national affiliation and the idea of "the common good", so that both local politicians and villagers engage in a system of illicit exchanges where the kindred's interests detract from collective interests at village, municipal, or national levels. Political praxis in Guaribas is based on models of affinity, intimacy, and emotional disponibility reminiscent of kinship and friendship registers, indicating a local preference for direct personal interaction (or personalism) rather than the mediation of bureaucracy for participating in politics and securing its resources. The fact that PFZ policy designers tend to treat this personalistic illicit system of services and favours between the population and politicians, which is firmly grounded on local cultural institutions, simply as political corruption and illegitimate practices deriving from distortions in a national process of democratization, accounts for the failure of workshops in "citizenship education" and other PFZ efforts to restructure political practice in Guaribas.

Chapter Four expands on the previous analyses of PFZ operational problems, and connects specific flaws in programme design to the project's politicization by the Brazilian government. It shows how PFZ, from its inception, has been advertised as the actualization of the Worker's Party social agenda, and become important political capital for the party's success in securing the last three presidential elections. In order to convert social policy into political propaganda, and under pressure to publicize positive project results, the Brazilian government hastened the implementation of programmes without appropriate planning, due analyses of their social impact, and resources for sustained supervision. The outcome was the selection of superfluous workshops for villagers whose achievements were partial and short-lived, the lack of participation of locals in project activities, and the multiplication of similar programmes that render each other redundant. Likewise, the chapter shows how unessential infrastructural improvements were selected for the village, whilst important betterments were promised and not delivered. Still, despite their shortcomings, many of these programmes and infrastructural improvements



have boosted PFZ's publicity and visibility in both national and international media. Thus, the chapter concludes that the rationale behind programme selection is to a large extent the advertisement of PFZ, and the political dividends the Brazilian government has been able to reap from its implementation.

Chapter Five investigates how PFZ's usefulness to the Brazilian government goes beyond political propaganda, and how the project emerges as a bona fide instrument for the expansion of state capacity. In line with the recent literature on development, it argues that PFZ policies enhance bureaucratic power, and aim to increase social control over marginal areas of the state's territory such as Guaribas through citizenship education and nationalizing discourses. Thus, the chapter begins with an analysis of the historical factors contributing to the limited presence of the state in the region, and proceeds to describe the policies whereby PFZ seeks to extend citizenship and "nationalize" Guaribanos. It shows how citizenship is primarily equated in both government rhetoric and project initiatives with statutory rights to all kinds of material benefits — emergency financial resources, federal micro-credit, infrastructural improvements, free public education and healthcare, namely, the advantages of state membership — whilst less appealing aspects of state control such as taxation and the imposition of the state's legal apparatus are neither elaborated nor discussed in Guaribas. Consequently, villagers have incorporated the concept of citizenship chiefly as rights (and not as a mode of participation and supervision in representative democracy), which has aided the expansion of state capacity in the village. Government institutions and development initiatives have come to be associated in Guaribas primarily with material benefits and infrastructural investments, and have widely assumed a positive value to locals. This positive evaluation of the outcome of development for Guaribas has generated a concomitant devaluation of village life and Guaribano identity in the past, facilitating locals' openness to PFZ initiatives which aim to impart to them the "modern" values, ideals, aspirations, and competencies of urban individuals.

In Chapter Six, I examine PFZ's endeavours to "socialize" Guaribanos by considering the role of PFZ knowledges and practices in constituting human beings in certain ways, making up human subjects with particular competencies and capacities. Taking cue from Rose's theory that the modern state endeavours to

remotely regulate the subjective capacities of citizens for the maximization of human resources and governmentality, I argue that PFZ can be characterized as a federal vehicle for the production of cooperative subjects (Rose 1999[1989]). I begin by describing the project's concerted effort to expand public schooling and mass media infrastructure, and how these work jointly with PFZ policies to act on the life-career and aspiration models of Guaribanos. I then describe TALHER's workshops and courses on "beauty", "hygiene", and "self-esteem", and the extent to which a partial assimilation of their values and ideals by Guaribanos has taken place. As indications of these changes, I analyse locals' internalization of new aspirations in career and lifestyle enhancement, the rise of habits and practices such as consumerism and conspicuous consumption, and instances of status emulation through the adoption of urban fashion, hygiene, and etiquette.

I suggest in the Conclusion that these gradual and piecemeal reconfigurations of Guaribanos' desires and aspiration models might succeed, obliquely and in the long-term, where PFZ's direct policies have failed, namely, in transforming the local economic infrastructure (i.e., villagers' work regime and surplus extraction). Therefore, borrowing from Ferguson's ideas on the development enterprise, I propose that development projects may not only achieve unintended outcomes through "adverse effects", but achieve intended outcomes through "adverse causes".

## Fieldwork and methodology

Fieldwork was carried over a period of two years and three months (from January 2006 to April of 2008), of which one year and five months were spent living in the village itself. My itinerary to Guaribas remained basically unchanged throughout fieldwork. I would board a plane in Rio and three and a half hours later be in Recife, the coastal capital of the Northeastern state of Pernambuco. Then a rather light and unstable Fokker 50 took me to Petrolina, a city already 700 kilometres in the semi-arid interior of the country, in the *sertão* of Pernambuco. From the skies, the transition from the coast to the interior is a chromatic one: the blue and green

gradually become spotted with white, yellow, and grey patches of dried earth, until a “desert yellow” is all one sees. Once in Petrolina, I would take a dusty old bus for eight hours to São Raimundo Nonato, in the South of Piauí, through a paved national highway so speckled with deep holes that it truly consists in, and sounds like a cheese grater for tires. São Raimundo Nonato is fairly known in Brazil for the natural beauty of the canyons of the *Serra da Capivara*. An ecological reserve, the *Serra da Capivara* park also boasts numerous prehistoric sites and rock shelters decorated with magnificent cave paintings, some more than 25,000 years-old, and for that it was declared a Unesco World Heritage Centre. Unfortunately, due to its remoteness from the more metropolitan urban centres of the country’s Southeast, the lack of better touristic and urban infra-structure (it is a town of 25,000 without sewage system that has been humorously nicknamed by its inhabitants *Urubulândia*, i.e., “Land of Vultures”), and the limited and uncomfortable options for transportation (buses either depart from Teresina or Petrolina, but the roads are equally precarious and the journey equally tiring), São Raimundo Nonato and its national park are not nearly as popular as they should be among national and international tourists.

Now from São Raimundo Nonato one may take one of the daily buses to Caracol, a small town of 7,800 people and the last stop on the way to Guaribas, but that is not a good idea. Not because the bus is a truly run-down, unreliable relic, inside of which thick columns of dust suspended in the air refract sun rays and make breathing difficult (to the extent that experienced passengers resemble Far-West bandits, with cloths and handkerchiefs over their mouths and noses), but because from Caracol to Guaribas there is no further public transportation, and a novice in the journey will get stranded in Caracol. It is in fact much easier to go straight from São Raimundo Nonato to Guaribas, but then one has to know the two private pickup trucks from the village that make the trip, more or less regularly, twice a week. Thus, in my first journey back to Guaribas in 2006, I was stuck in Caracol for two days trying to spot Guaribanos’ pickups that passed by, to no avail. Most of Caracol is paved and its streets are relatively clean and well lit; it has a well tended central square with a newly painted church, and its houses and commercial establishments are made with modern building materials and simple, functional architectural design very much in line with that of any Brazilian small town. My forced sojourn in

Caracol, however, provided me with valuable material regarding how its inhabitants perceived Guaribanos.

Despite its proximity to Guaribas, most residents of Caracol have never set foot there, and recurrently refer to it as “the end of the world”. In effect, a mass of misconceptions and exaggerations about the village, as I was later able to verify, prevail there. It was in Caracol that I often heard the most fantastical accounts about Guaribas: a host of testy, insular people who one must be very careful not to offend inadvertently; widespread malnutrition and eventual famines due to Guaribanos’ own laziness or “ignorance of how to work”; twelve year-old naked kids walking around with revolvers; endemic intra and inter-familial violence, and so forth. These and other sorts of stereotypes are common currency in Caracol, and I began collecting samples that arose in informal conversations, such as: “They roam together, like cavemen”; “They are savages even with each other”; “Indian blood makes them fierce”; “Everybody in Guaribas carries a gun”; “Guaribanos only starve because they don’t know how to work”, and so on. Upon learning that I would live there for a year, some Caracolenses would look at each other and laugh with pure amusement; others would just smile enigmatically and have a blank stare landing somewhere in front of me (which usually preceded some alarming story about Guaribas); some elderly ladies were genuinely concerned.

Once in the village, I decided to live by myself for the first few weeks, for it would be too soon to request any family to take me in. Besides, I remembered from my first visit that the community had some internal divisions and fragmentations, and I did not want to associate myself prematurely with a family that could be in bad terms with others, and hamper my relationship with other people. Also, I did not want to stay at any of the two local inns where all other outsiders — journalists, development workers, and government officials — stay, in order not to be correlated with the media, the development process, or the government as much as possible. Therefore, I found a vacant house at the other end of the Guaribas Two square, only two streets away from it, but already at the fringes of the village’s inhabited area, for behind its backyard stretched out uncultivated lands, and beyond it, Guaribanos’ fields. I was asked by my potential landlord if I was a teacher, and when I replied that I was a student, he remarked: “Thank heavens, I thought you were a new teacher. In this case, you can rent the house”. The fact is that Guaribanos are weary

of teachers, for they are chiefly women from São Raimundo Nonato, the vast majority of whom, in contrast to the ideal of female modesty in Guaribas, smoke, drink, dance flirtatiously at parties, are loud, and don't take proper care of the house, from the locals' point of view. Thus, Guaribas might be the only place on Earth in which being a student is a better qualification for renting a house than being a teacher.

Even though I had been offered two of the new COHAB houses built by PFZ, made with modern bricks, fibre cement roofs, two bedrooms, and an indoor bathroom, I chose to rent an *adobe* brick house with a beaten earth floor. My intention was to surround myself with an austere built environment that was as similar as possible to that of Guaribanos. In effect, I found the house quite picturesque with its crooked angles, and doors and windows assembled with pieces of wood, which lent an organic atmosphere to the interior. It had a spacious backyard — with a papaya-tree, a sugar-apple tree (*Annona squamosa*), two chili pepper bushes, and a passion fruit vine — in which I eventually planted beans, corn, and pumpkin. Above all, because of its location, my backyard gave me a close and unhindered view of the scenic Mountains of Confusion, and of the clearest sky I have ever seen, with long processions of clouds during the day, and spiralling chalky constellations at night.

After seven months living by myself, and hinting as often and casually as I could that I would need, at some point, to reside with a local family, I was finally invited by Dioripe Correia da Silva to move into his house. Coming from the very large Correia da Silva family that originally settled in the Guaribas Two side, having several children himself (seven), typical of the Guaribano family unit, and being married to Eva, a descendant of the traditional Alves family which first inhabited the Fazenda side, Dioripe's household was an especially representative sample of a Guaribano family, and I moved in with them in September 2006. There, I was given my own room, but Dioripe usually slept with Adevogado, the youngest of the family, who was nine years-old then; Eva slept with Elzinha, the second youngest child, who was 11; Baixinho, 18, and Milagre, 16, shared another room; Derivan, 21 years-old, had his own room, though he frequently slept at his cousin's, and; Amigo, 26, also slept by himself in his own room. I never met Dioripe and Eva's oldest son, Bertoldo, who was 28, for he was working in São Paulo throughout my stay in

Guaribas. Dioripe was 56 years-old at the time; a short man with dark brown complexion, he was a playful, popular character, well-known for his fun-loving temperament. But it always seemed to me that he felt the weight of a certain responsibility for upholding an image of seriousness. He spoke proudly and nostalgically of his father, Durval, perhaps the most respected Guaribano of his time, who, together with a council of elders, was regularly summoned to legislate and settle locals' disputes. Therefore, even though he was remarkably fond of his drinking sessions with friends, he very seldom drank to the point of high inebriation, and though he was often teased for chasing women, I was never witness to any such endeavour. Eva was 46 years-old, a quiet and ever smiling woman unanimously loved in Guaribas whom I always thought had something saintly about her, including a peaceful speech with calming, soothing properties — whence, perhaps, her nickname, “Little Bird” (*Passarinha*).

I was determined to establish myself as a resident of the village, to distinguish myself from other passing outside workers who stayed only briefly, and to whose coming and going Guaribanos had already grown accustomed. Consequently, it was not until six months that I left the village for the first time, a decision that proved taxing, but fruitful. My first days there were slow and puzzling, and the solution to the problem was rather unspectacular: time. I gradually joined conversations, drank coffee with local families, had a few beers and *cachaças* (Brazilian sugar cane rum) at the bars, learned names and greeted people in the mornings — a crucial activity in such a face-to-face community — and, eventually, my presence lost its quality as novelty to become more or less routine and familiar. This is not to say that all Guaribanos were comfortable with me. Despite my numerous attempts to explain in the simplest terms what I was doing there as an anthropologist, up to eight months into fieldwork, children were still running up to me, shouting “Journalist!”, giggling, and running away. I also learned later that a few Guaribanos suspected that I worked for the government, and was inspecting the distribution of PFZ benefits in order to cut some of them. As an educated, fair-haired outsider from the South who spoke a diverse sociolect from that of Guaribanos, I was particularly self-conscious, and afraid that I would not be able to mitigate the aspects that rendered me so different, jeopardizing the intimacy and empathy I longed to establish with them. Hence, I adopted local clothing and dialect as far as I

could without falling into the caricatural, substituted flip-flops for tennis shoes, and unlike outsiders and teachers, never wore sunglasses regardless of the blinding glare of the *sertão* sun, for instance. These, however, turned out to be only palliative measures, for as Dioripe told me more than once, it was ultimately my regular hoeing in the fields that bemused Guaribanos and won their sympathy.

Another crucial attitude that helped me to develop a deeper relationship with Guaribanos was moderating my initial neutrality, particularly in regard to politics and development. Perhaps this is the case everywhere, but Guaribanos do possess a special talent for sniffing out hesitation and the careful consideration of words inherent in the refusal to take sides. In my early concern to not affect my informants' responses by either praising or reproving PFZ, PT, and Lula, I momentarily lost sight of the reciprocity which can only take place in the at once rich and risky exchange of sensitive personal opinions — but not my informants. For I could tell that half a dozen of more politicized Guaribanos, who often insisted that I wrote articles for national newspapers supporting their respective claims, and who probed me in almost every conversation for my political inclinations, still mistrusted what they could only have perceived as my calculated dispassionate attitude. To my surprise, a few months into fieldwork, when I began to disclose my personal views more explicitly, which occasionally differed from theirs, our relationship immediately improved. Thus, shedding my façade of neutrality humanized me in the eyes of locals; they could see me as a person, and even if they disagreed with me, speaking my mind more freely made me one in their eyes. In any case, not influencing informants remained one of my central concerns throughout fieldwork, so at least in the realms of politics and development, I chose very carefully where and when to be less impartial.

The vast majority of my data was collected in informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, though I also recorded over 60 hours of them. Whilst most Guaribanos were comfortable with my questions and did not mind my writing down answers or recording them in the more formal context of interviews, I soon gained the epithet of “He who writes down everything you say”. Still, this did not embarrass informants, as most derived a sincere satisfaction in having their voices heard, as well as a certain importance from contributing to a study about their community. Even though I endeavoured as much as possible to balance my data with

an equal amount of information collected from women and men, the older and the younger generations, and Guaribanos from both sides of the village, I actually gathered more material from adult males from the Guaribas Two side. This simply because, firstly, that was the side in which I lived, and secondly, due to a tendency of older Guaribanos to either speak for their wives or interrupt them when interviewed jointly. Therefore, once I became familiar enough with Guaribanos to speak to the wives without the presence of their husbands, I attempted as much as possible to interview them separately. In terms of the younger generations, the information derived from girls' and boys' accounts was well balanced, though the small bias towards Guaribas Two informants still obtained. Consequently, I have strived to adjust the question of skewed data collection by using, in the a posteriori presentation of the material, a relatively larger proportion of the samples representing the groups from which I had gathered less information. As a whole, however, I believe that a fair amount of data from both sides was collected in order to present an even-handed picture of Guaribanos' diverse versions of their community, especially since my best informant, Chefinho ("Little Chief"), a villager in his late sixties blessed with uncanny archival memory, came from the Rocha family in the Fazenda side.

Most quotes in this thesis come from recorded interviews with Guaribanos, but the best part of my information originated from participation in events, routine activities, and informal conversations: working with Guaribanos in their fields; joining them in local Pentecostal services and in the "Celebration of the Word" Catholic gatherings; playing pool, domino, and drinking at the local bars; hunting and bathing in the mountains with different groups of villagers; auditing middle and high-school classes in a variety of different subjects; regularly visiting Guaribanos to complete the village's genealogical maps; accompanying them as they travelled to the local towns to shop for basic needs or luxury products; and attending PFZ assemblies, meetings, events, and courses in the village. My ethnography of PFZ in Guaribas consisted in joining teachers, development workers, government representatives, and locals in general assemblies, Citizenship Education classes, "beauty" and "hygiene" workshops, courses in alternative income generating activities, local cooperatives' meetings, EMATER (Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Enterprise) seminars, as well as PFZ organized events such as the "Active



Citizenship” and “Itinerant Justice” initiatives. Since many of my friends in the village were outside teachers and development workers, especially in the beginning of fieldwork, I spent a significant amount of time talking to them and eventually interviewing them about their experiences, so that a number of my early insights on the village also came from these more seasoned outsiders. In addition, I visited the PFZ headquarters in Teresina, the state capital of Piauí, and interviewed several development workers there, including Rosângela Souza, PFZ’s chief coordinator for Piauí. Finally, especially valuable to this research was the opportunity to witness in Guaribas the 2006 elections for president, federal deputy, and state deputy, as described in Chapter Three.

Initially, I thought it would be a good idea to conduct fieldwork in all or most of the settlements in the municipality, and to distribute my time living in each of them, but it soon became clear that such a study would be lacking in analytic rigour. For not only were the different settlements founded and inhabited by different families with slightly diverse customs, dialects, and access to resources (which affected the material conditions for the construction of their everyday lives), but the process of development was also affecting these communities in distinct ways. Thus, I decided to focus on the village of Guaribas, whose internal partition into two separate sides already presented an intricate level of cultural heterogeneity.

When I set out from London, I supposed that Guaribanos, as most inhabitants of the *sertão*, were tenant farmers involved in traditional relations of patronage with a landed elite. Since this, however, was not the case, some of my main topics of concentration changed radically in terms of how I originally envisioned them in my research proposal. Yet, as I attempted to modify my hypotheses and theoretical frameworks to continue pursuing those themes, the accumulation of information on other, unexpected subjects began to gradually increase until, unsuspectingly, I was studying fresh and new-found topics, such as ritual and local architecture. Even though this divergence between how I initially conceived my areas of study and what I encountered on the ground was indeed perplexing, I found comfort in the idea that, at least, my research was being directed less by my academic interests than by the themes most prominent in the everyday social reality of the village.

*Post-Scriptum: I have made use of pseudonyms to protect the identities of collaborators who have boldly disclosed information which might put either their jobs or their standing in the community at risk.*

## Chapter One. The semi-autonomy of the elementary family in Guaribas

It is not difficult for an outsider first arriving in the village to believe, as I initially did, that “Guaribas is one single family” (“*Guaribas é uma família só*”). This not only because the village is indeed a rather remote face-to-face community, and nearly all villagers descend from only three patriarchal families — the Alves, the Rocha, and the Correia da Silva — but because this assertion is repeated so regularly by Guaribanos as to almost consist in a local slogan. In time, however, I perceived that this claim to extended kinship and widespread social harmony ran contrary to several instances of competition and conflict I observed in the course of everyday life. Importantly, it veils disconcerting fragmentations between families in general, and between elementary families constituting household groups in particular. And yet, it is perhaps in this very contradiction that the claim’s function and *raison d’être* lies: it provides a therapeutic, remedial reassurance that establishes, at least at a cosmetic level, an ideal common bond between all Guaribanos. For how else to explain, if the village were indeed a cordial collection of relatives, the endless sloping fields pierced with sticks, red ribbons, and inverted *cachaça* bottles at the top, local charms against *quebranto*, “the evil eye” of other Guaribanos? Or the partition of the village into two sides, Fazenda and Guaribas Two, a division that underlies the myriad cases of hostility between the different families that inhabit each area? Or the high incidence of theft, the disputes and accusations between families which have traditionally been at odds, and the killings of livestock for violating grazing rights that often lead to inter-familial violence?

All these evidences will be examined in detail below, but the fact is that the longer I experienced life in Guaribas, the more my observations seemed incompatible with the idyllic version of village life I was recurrently given. It increasingly seemed to me that the only group to enjoy a relatively more stable context of solidarity and practical obligations was the elementary family represented by the household group, which is typically comprised by parents and their offspring.

To be sure, the “family” in Guaribas is widely understood as a group much larger than the elementary family, and obligations towards the kindred do sometimes cut across the loyalties and duties due to the latter in the course of everyday life. However, membership to the elementary family as a corporate group does take precedence, to a marked degree, over any other criteria for kinship alliance in Guaribas, and it becomes impossible to understand the workings of social life in the village without a more nuanced view of the family and its implications for the quotidian choices of social actors. I will begin by examining Guaribanos’ conception of the kindred and local understandings of kinship solidarity. Then I will address the widespread competition that obtains between families both in the village of Guaribas and in the settlements that comprise the municipality, underlining how it derives from, and in turn reinforces, a general sense of distrust and antagonism between members of unrelated families. Next, I will proceed to cases of intra-familial struggle and violence, in order to substantiate what is claimed in the chapter’s fourth section, namely, that it is ultimately the elementary family, represented by the household group, which commands true emotional legitimacy in everyday life, and concentrates, almost exclusively, its members’ categorical obligations. Whilst the content of these conclusions might be unexceptional, it is the extent to which they obtain in the village that is significant. The semi-autonomy of the elementary family in Guaribas as a corporate group has momentous consequences for a development project such as PFZ, predicated on collective perspectives of political, economic, and social cooperation. It is the failure to understand the nature of local solidarity and competition that accounts for the project’s difficulties in implementing its initiatives, from the establishment of cooperatives to the strengthening of democratic institutions, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, respectively.

It is worthwhile to note that whilst local notions of kinship, and of how interpersonal relations should transpire between relatives, are predicated on blood ties and affinal relations, the many cases of intra-familial competition and conflict described throughout this chapter suggest that there is a high degree of variance in how kinship is made use of by locals as a code for conduct. Kinship proximity in Guaribas is sometimes manoeuvred and strategically manipulated according to a family’s or an individual’s instrumental interests. Schneider has shown how conceptions of kinship, even when construed as “natural” blood relationships or

“shared biogenetic substance”, may serve a less rigid system of enduring, unconditional solidarity (1980 [1968]: 37). In this sense, local conceptions of kinship, though linked to a discourse of consanguinal or affinal relationships, can be seen as a fictive model for “diffuse solidarity” which uses “biological facts” as a metaphor for emotional commitment and attachment (Schneider 1980 [1968]: 116). Recently, however, because many cultures do not base their notion of kinship on genealogical relations, some authors have avoided the term “fictive kinship” so as not to suggest a dichotomy between “real” and “fictive” kinship, and thus have to distinguish between forms of kinship or social ties that are based on neither (Carsten 2004: 6). Janet Carsten, for example, has tried to move beyond the categories of social (non-biological) and biological kinship by developing the idea of “practices of relatedness” (2004: 10). Conceived in the broadest sense, relatedness “is simply about ways in which people create similarities or differences between themselves and others”, and should be described in terms of indigenous statements and practices, some of which fall outside what anthropologists have conventionally understood as kinship (Carsten 2004: 82). This approach is especially valuable to understand a community such as Guaribas, where, ideally, and according to informants themselves, the calculus for economic collaboration, political allegiance, and association in general follows kinship ties based on blood and affinal relations, whilst, in practice, kinship proximity and its attendant rules of conduct alone cannot explain all the patterns of cooperation and conflict that obtain in the village’s social reality.

## The categorical solidarity of the kindred

### **“To the family, none [of its members] are bad, all are good”: the kindred in Guaribas**

Kinship in Guaribas is conceived as an extension from the family of origin, the limits of the kindred being drawn in one’s own generation at the collateral degree of second

cousin, so that it includes all those “descended from a person’s set of four grandparents and their siblings, apart from the children of her second cousin, the grandchildren of her first cousins, and the great-grandchildren of her own siblings” (Campbell 1964: 36).<sup>26</sup> This is what is locally considered to be the “family”, and it is at the centre of a Guaribano’s social world. Within its boundaries she finds affection, support, and a feeling of moral and practical obligation. But outside the family, this solidarity and intimacy is diluted; there are conventions of conduct, but there is no conscience of obligation towards others in the same manner.

It follows that a Guaribano counts on her kin for practical support of all kinds. In economic matters, she seeks cooperation first, and almost exclusively, from her kindred. When money is needed for an investment, marriage or medical expenses, or to pay outstanding debts to creditors, she attempts to raise it wholly from relatives, and usually receives it, provided this assistance does not clash with the interests of the latter’s own household or more immediate kin. For, as Raul puts it, a relative must “labour in favour of another who is weaker [less well-off], sometimes giving him work, and being compassionate”. It is less problematic to owe a favour, service, or material to a kin, for it does not entail the need for an ostensible display of gratitude, nor does it necessarily imply an admission of *de facto* inferiority and vulnerability vis-à-vis non-kinfolk.

Also, a relative may enter another’s house unceremoniously, cross the living-room unannounced, and proceed to the kitchen for a glass of water or a sip of coffee, actions which would otherwise be offensive and passive of retaliation if performed by a non-relative. Especially so if it were a male non-relative who dared enter another man’s kitchen, the sovereign domain of his wife, which would be tantamount to a violation of his and her honour. But relatives may enter freely and casually each other’s houses, and sometimes borrow, or even take an artefact without qualifying as a transgression. For instance, whenever I travelled back to Guaribas from São Raimundo Nonato, I would bring with me a bottle of *manteiga de garrafa* (bottled butter), a pungent type of butter that remains liquid at room temperature, and that is considered a local delicacy. The whole family would enjoy it at Dioripe’s house, and after our meals, Eva would carefully hide the butter deep into one of the

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<sup>26</sup> In the family of origin, the individual is a child and a sibling, and in the family of marriage, a spouse and a parent.

kitchen cabinets. Even so, the bottles regularly disappeared, and in those occasions Dioripe and Eva would smilingly and nonchalantly remark that it was probably a relative who couldn't resist seeing it in kitchen. "He who eats is hungry", she would simply say. The same was the case with the hot sauces I made from the chili pepper bushes in my backyard, and with tools and DVDs lying around the living-room. Thus, at least for inexpensive articles and possessions of no real material consequence, the lines of private property between relatives are blurred by a prevailing ideal of sharing and partaking.

Consultation between trusted kin about their economic concerns is constant, and in such occasions they share vital information without which they would not be able to conduct their affairs, such as which grazing lands are available to be rented for the best price for their herds, which outside merchants are buying corn or beans for the highest price, and which limited opportunities for micro-credit and government benefits have been made available recently. Intelligence about other families' affairs is also exchanged, for in order to decide what will be most advantageous to do with their lands — to plant corn, beans, government subsidized castor bean, or grass for cattle-grazing — she needs to know which other Guaribanos will be competing with the same products in the common local market, and thus how its prices will fluctuate.

Because Guaribanos compete for the same limited resources in the village (i.e., land and water in the past, and opportunities for micro-credit and government benefits today), and compete with the same produce in a constrained regional market, a Guaribano avoids giving personal information to a non-kin, such as how many animals comprise her herds, how much land she indeed possesses, how many sacks of beans and corn she has sold after a harvest, for what price and to whom, and so on. By the same token, a Guaribano is confident that trusted kin will not disclose private and crucial information about the business of her family, and thus opens her mind to them and is sure that they will use common sense in what they may convey to others. According to Valdecir, "with a relative you talk without 'fright' [sic] (...) you say what you have to say. You don't expect dishonesty from a relative, but with others you can't 'loosen words from inside' because you don't trust them". This is why, according to older Guaribanos, young children were forbidden until not long ago to participate in, or even to play close to conversations taking place between

adults inside the house. Dioripe explains that “young children may hear something, and then spread it around”, hinting at the widespread concern among Guaribanos with the disclosure of what is said in private inside their houses.

Services rendered between relatives are not computed as debts, but performed and accepted as favours springing naturally from the moral obligations between relatives. For instance, as described in Chapter Two, the kindred cooperates closely in a local institution called *troca* (literally, “exchange”), whereby sons, daughters, parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, nephews and nieces, uncles and aunts, and less commonly affines work together in each other’s fields in a reciprocal exchange of services that is seen as a mutual favour or prestation intrinsic to the relationship between relatives. Even though labour at the *troca* is not entirely free, since it entails the understanding of reciprocation, it is regarded as a favour that is keenly offered a relative. In Raul’s words, “relatives owe each other the fineness of being served”.

For this reason, families have traditionally cooperated in the sharing of resources such as meat and water. Until 2001, the village’s only source of water were two shallow water pools incrustated in the surrounding mountains, about two kilometres away from the village. To these rock pools women and children flocked as early as three in the morning, carrying torches, buckets, and all sorts of containers for gathering water. The process was taxing and time-consuming: when it came to a woman’s turn, she would wait by the rock pool until enough water dripped from the rocks and collected at the bottom. Even so, a woman would use her turn to collect water for her closer relatives’ households: “If my family had ten people, I’d only finish filling up when it was enough for those ten people. So, if my mother, my aunts, my sisters came, I’d fill everything up for them, and only when I’d be finished would the mother of another family go”. Similarly, the old custom of *emprestar* (“to lend”) emerges as another instance of kinship solidarity. As older Guaribanos aver, until the arrival of PFZ and its distribution of emergency financial aid to local families, very little money circulated in the village, and the main way to exchange valuable goods such as meat was through a reciprocal exchange called *emprestar*. Raul describes this form of cooperation, and links it directly to the love and bonds existing between kin:



From the time of my grandparents, to my knowledge, it was thus: they raised cattle here, they raised pigs, raised sheep, and there was no way to sell their kilo to anyone for money. I knew three half-kilos of meat when it was called three *libras* [an old Brazilian measure of weight], for 500 *réis* [old currency first instituted in the nineteenth century]. But who had that much money? So they killed a ten *arrôba* [approximately 150 kilos] cow, and “lent” half to a kin, half to another, half to another. And when he killed [an animal of his own], you would get it back. It was thus. So, about love, we continue in this family always united, and giving our hands to each other. (...) I inform well about love because of this. Because we were raised in unity.

As I shall examine in more detail in Chapter Three, politically, too, the family acts as an integrated unit. Because in Guaribas household groups vote in block, with the paterfamilias controlling the votes of all of its members, and because his interests usually converge with those of his siblings and close relatives, families are generally politically aligned. Guaribanos are naturally interested in the welfare of close relatives, and thus wish to secure the most benefits deriving from the political process for their kin as well as for the members of their own household — benefits such as jobs at the mayoralty, resources for house-remodelling, or urban infrastructural improvements for the areas in which they reside.<sup>27</sup> In effect, as Tiago asserts, joint support for a candidate and cohesion in the political sphere are reliable indexes of how socially united a family actually is: “It’s a strict custom. If a family does not ‘vote united’, it means that it’s breaking, and that is a shameful thing for others to see”.

Indeed, any quarrels within the family detract from its dignity and strength, for ideally, relatives must enjoy a priori moral support from each other. When a Guaribano’s honour is at stake through gossip, ridicule, damaging allegations of conduct, or open moral insults, kinsmen come spontaneously to offer advice and support. A relative is another’s *encaminhador* (path-maker): she counsels and has “the right to meddle in her kin’s life” and, in turn, she must be heard, trusted, and

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<sup>27</sup> Even more so because the houses of siblings in Guaribas are generally built close together, and any urban development that will benefit a person’s own household is likely to benefit her siblings as well.

respected. In fact, the protection of a kin's honour is the whole family's business, and reflects on its own standing in the village, so that, more often than not, relatives will come to her aid and defend her case publicly despite her breaches of social convention. News travel in the village with remarkable speed, and in the fora of bars, square benches, groups seated outside their houses having coffee and talking, or the shadow of the church during the day under which villagers congregate to discuss other people's affairs, Guaribanos go in defence of their criticized kin.

In the case of direct physical attack, kinsmen are expected to provide assistance of the kind that also involves physical violence. As older Guaribanos affirm, until very recently, and at least before the establishment of the police station in 2003, villagers settled their disputes mostly amongst themselves: "we were the lawyers, for we didn't have any others", they recall. In an area difficult to police, a man's ability to stand up to and get at another was crucial not only for the maintenance of social face, but for the protection of his family and his property. Thus, to this day, when the men who drink in bars or parties lose their sense of caution and engage in mockery or open hostility towards one another, kinsmen present brace themselves for the fight that often follows. As a matter of fact, if a man fails to defend his honour and does not reply to an affront, he endangers his kinfolk's reputation as well as his own, for no such offense may be taken in Guaribas without implying a dangerous form of weakness. Thus, when a man is physically assaulted in front of his kinsmen, the latter simply cannot stand by, so that a collective brawl usually ensues where pushes and blows are exchanged, and sometimes knives and guns are drawn.

From January 2005 until my departure in April of 2008, there were five vengeance killings in the municipality. Though all of these were triggered by a conflict between the Moraes and Trindade families in the Lagoa de Baixo settlement, a few kilometres from Guaribas, vendetta killings were frequent throughout the region until at least the late 1970's, especially due to the notorious feuds between families in Guaribas and the Brejão settlement, and families in Guaribas and the Regalo settlement. The incidents that trigger such inter-familial violence range from animals being killed for trespassing grazing boundaries and the violation of a wife or sister's honour, to drunken brawls at weddings, parties, or bars — but again, inaction in these cases would be interpreted as weakness by neighbouring groups, and if a

killing occurs, the response must be swift. The repayment for violence of this kind is also not individual, but collective. It usually comes in the form of ambushes (*piquetes* or *tocaias*) carried out by the male members of the victim's family — her father, brothers, cousins, uncles, and less commonly, brothers-in-law — but such parties may also look for their victim at his own house. If they do not succeed in finding the culprit, they may decide to take revenge on any of his brothers, nephews, or close cousins, for “a man's mistake belongs to his whole family, [and] the whole family must answer for his mistake”. A killing demands a counter killing to reinstitute balance in the local calculus of honour, the taking of something equivalent to that which has been taken. The idea of obligation to reciprocal vengeance killings is still very real in the village, and the fear of mutual destruction remains an important injunction against frivolous killings. The importance of this obligation and its central role in the idea of kinship solidarity in Guaribas can be gleaned from the story of Carijó, a villager in his late teens who had suffered a serious motorcycle accident in 2006 and was found paralyzed on the ground by his favourite cousin, Gueba. As Carijó lay there certain of his death, he asked his cousin: “Gueba, if I had died a death by killing, would you avenge me?”, to which Gueba replied in tears, “Yes”. It is revealing that Carijó's last attempt to obtain a comforting confirmation of his cousin's love was framed in such terms, and it indicates the centrality of the obligation to avenge a relative in the local ideal of kinship solidarity.

Thus the mere numerical size of the kindred is an important capital for a Guaribano, a matter of prestige, safety, and economic viability, since she may rely on all the kinds of support mentioned above, from assistance to work her fields and moral and financial support when she needs it, to an efficient information network and manpower to be mobilized in case of a physical attack. A local saying summarizes the above: “The wealth of the poor is children”. Guaribanos with large families, numerous siblings and cousins, feel that they are safe in the potential confrontations with members of other families, and often boast about it using a common formula: “My people are numerous, if I die, I have those who will search [for the culprits]”. These feelings of assurance and trust are prescribed and follow from the simple existence of the kin relationship; they are not conditional, at least in principle, on personal histories or affinity. For this reason, Guaribanos usually refer to their family as their “people”, their “race”, or their “nation”, hinting at the

precedence of the family over ethnic or national affiliation, and, indeed, over any other criteria for social connection in the village.

**Family customs: coffee, beans, blessings, grandparenting, and foster-parenting as expressions of kindred solidarity**

Several customs uphold and give expression to the solidarity of the kindred. The coffee group, for instance, is one of the most conspicuous cultural institutions in Guaribas. It consists in a collection of Guaribanos sat in a circle in front of a house in traditional, square cow-hide stools called *tamburetes*, drinking coffee and talking together. The members of a particular household group, parents and their children, comprise the nucleus of this gathering, with the paterfamilias' favourite siblings and their children also joining them to have the "first coffee" (*primeiro café*) in the early hours of the morning, or the afternoon coffee after the siesta and before dinner. Though the duty to always have coffee ready for guests is a crucial aspect of Guaribano hospitality, an incumbency that reflects directly on a wife's virtue, not all households sponsor an established, popular coffee group, and siblings and their descendants usually gravitate towards the gatherings of a senior, especially charismatic brother or uncle. Importantly, sometimes affines, neighbours, and *compadres* (close friends) feature regularly in a specific coffee group, at the expense of participating in their kin's own gatherings. But the elementary family is always at the centre of a coffee group, with closer kin orbiting more closely around it, and these few eventual affines, neighbours, and *compadres* joining it, drawn by the force of their friendship and affinity to the people of that household. The fact that this last group always features in substantially smaller numbers at any one coffee gathering attests to the centrality of kinship in the decision to participate in coffee groups. In effect, coffee sometimes becomes a metaphor for the quality of a social relationship and the frequency of interaction between Guaribanos. Uíltón once told me, in order to convey his lack of affinity with another Guaribano: "He has never drank my coffee, nor have I ever known his coffee". On the other hand, participation in coffee groups defines, in almost absolute terms (for no other characterization of the

relationship is needed), a good rapport between villagers. As Libório, describing his good relationship with a neighbour, put it on one occasion: “He drinks coffee with us, he is a good neighbour”. Raul asserts that in the past, sometimes as much as eight litres of coffee were drunk during the day at the most popular coffee groups, but sadly, he remarks, this would rarely be true nowadays.

At the time of the harvest, another activity binds the kindred in conviviality, mirroring the institution of coffee groups, and following the logic of kinship as the main principle for participation. This is the act of skilfully removing beans from their strings and dropping them into a basin, which Guaribanos call *debulhar*. More often than not, it consists in a group of a women sat in a circle in front of a house with the basin in the centre, though men casually help when they wish to partake in the conversation. The produce always belongs to a single elementary family and is the product of their own fields, but its members will in turn join another household group and help it unstring its beans in the form of a reciprocal prestation, providing a reason for joining conversation at another relative or neighbour’s house. Again, most people involved in such groups are the siblings, daughters, nieces, and cousins of a set of parents, though the presence of a few particular *compadres* and affines also obtains.

The ancient Judaic-Christian tradition of daily asking for the blessing or benediction of a senior relative, typically of parents and grandparents, a once widespread custom in both rural and urban Brazil, has endured in Guaribas as an aspect of everyday life, and indicates the lasting importance of ritually obtaining the support of an elder kin. It is the expression of a benign wish, invoking the power of God, bestowed on a junior family member through common linguistic formulae, the most common being “God bless you, my son”, “God grant you good health”, and “God give you good luck”. There is a ritualized form to “ask” or “take” this blessing: upon meeting a senior relative for the first time during the day (thus usually in the mornings), most Guaribanos of all ages (excepting the elders themselves, of whom the blessing is asked) and both sexes will extend their lower right arm forward so that it is perpendicular with the upper arm, open their hand with the five fingers loosely pressed together, and pointing in the direction of the senior relative exclaim, for instance, “The blessing, Mother Valda”, or “The blessing, Father Filogônio”. The older relative will then offer the same gestural motion in return, and reply with one

of the formulae cited above, which may or may not be the starting point of a subsequent exchange or conversation between them.

Significantly, most grandsons and granddaughters address their grandparents as “mother” or “father” not only when asking for a blessing, as described above, but at all times, thus conflating grandparenthood with parenthood, and symbolically elevating the former to the importance of the latter. Thus Filogônio is called “Father Filogônio” and Valda called “Mother Valda” by their grandchildren as a sign of proximity and deference. In point of fact, grandparents participate vigorously in the raising of their grandchildren in Guaribas. Chefinho asserts that it is not uncommon for both infant and teenage grandchildren to spend more time in their grandparents’ house than in their own. This I learned from practical experience in the village, for whenever I could not locate one of my friends at home, I would automatically head to her grandparents’ house, and, more often than not, find her there. In effect, Tiago and Milagre, villagers in their late teens, affirm that, at least ideally, an unmarried Guaribano has the obligation to visit both sets of grandparents daily, and that when she foregoes the visit, grandparents worry and inquire whether anything has happened that has kept her from calling. In some cases, a set of grandparents will be altogether responsible for raising a child. Such was the case, for example, with Genílson, Carlota, and Dedé, Guaribanos from three different generations. But such instances are so unexceptional in the village that there are specific terms to refer to grandparents turned parents: *pai-vêio* and *mãe-véia* (old-father and old-mother).

This intimate link between grandchildren and grandparents that ensues from the sheer amount of time spent together from the grandchild’s infancy to her marriage, coupled with the active role of grandparents in educating and raising grandchildren, can also be inferred from the fact that some elder Guaribanos claim to still work in the fields, despite their advanced age, to be with their grandchildren. As João Bertoldo recalls, and numerous older Guaribanos have reiterated, before formal education came to Guaribas with the building of the first municipal schools in 1997, “for boys of eight, ten years of age, the fields used to be the school”. In fact, through the *troca* form of labour — whereby relatives worked together in each others’ lands as a system of reciprocal prestations — the family group created in their fields an important pedagogical environment for the socialization of children. In the absence of public schooling, children as young as eight years-old accompanied their family to

the fields, learning how to use their first tools and work the land by being given light and simple tasks that were not unlike playing. But the technical knowledge of agricultural labour was merely one offshoot of this practical learning environment. For there a child learned to depend on, and in turn contribute to the family group; to respect “the big, the small, the adult, his brother, and the older”, in João Caititu’s words; she learned the value of knowledge and instruction coming from her seniors, and the edifying virtues of hard work, competence, and independence from others which would keep her from “owing and not being able to repay”. In short, a child would learn through empirical example moral values which were associated with, but that extrapolated the intrinsic worth of labour. Of course, she would learn to rely on her hard work and her family to be a capable, respectable member of the community, but she would also gather crucial and all-encompassing moral qualities which Guaribanos call “to walk right” (*andar direito*), for as Caititu recalls being told by his father, and passing it on to his own children in the fields, “he who ‘walks right’ in life has no fear”.

Nevertheless, because taking a minor to the fields today, even if she is attending school, is an illegal practice characterized as the exploitation of child labour, the fields as a traditional medium of socialization and instruction, together with their specific dynamics of imparting local knowledge, have nearly ceased to be. Yet, as mentioned above, some grandparents still insist on taking their grandchildren to the fields after school and upon completion of their schoolwork, though this proves too heavy a workload for most children, rendering the now complementary activity almost unfeasible. Geraldo and João Bertoldo however, brothers who are in their seventies and live with some of their sons and daughters in a more distant part of Fazenda called Lagoinha, believe enough in the importance of the custom to persist in taking their grandchildren to the fields. Despite medical orders, for both men have had their share of strokes and health problems, they can be seen every day leading some of their grandchildren, ranging from eight to 12 years-old, down the sand roads to their fields — old men walking slowly, bent double under the weight of hoe and scythe, with the children prancing along behind them.

Cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces also enjoy the solidarity of the family and the categorical nature of obligations between its members. In effect, the custom of adopting nephews and nieces facing extraordinary circumstances, such as

the demise, the long absence, or the inadequate material conditions of their parents, is not uncommon in the village. For instance, when Adão da Silva's brother died, he and Valda adopted Adriana, who was 13 at the time of my fieldwork, and raise her at present as their daughter. Adriana's two younger brothers, Bola and Prego, were adopted by another couple, Emércio Correia da Silva (the boys' second cousin) and Ceiça Correia da Silva (their first cousin). Likewise, Emércio and Ceiça were given Aldo, Emércio's nephew, to raise due to his father's prolonged absence working in São Paulo. Two generations before, Durval Correia da Silva also took it upon himself to bring up his much younger first cousin once removed, Marli, whose father was frequently engaged in work in São Paulo, and away from the village for extended periods of time. Because Marli was rather younger than Durval's sons, he was the one to remain in the house taking care of the old man until he died, and so much was he regarded as Durval's own child that he was conferred his house when the latter passed away. Finally, similar to this demonstration of solidarity between kin is the custom of entrusting to a sibling or close relative the raising of one's children in case of extreme sickness. Hence when a *dengue* fever epidemic broke out in Guaribas in May 2006, Almir found himself seriously ill, and believing that he was about to die, called his brothers to his bedside and charged them with the responsibility of raising his children.

### **Marriage and affines**

The Guaribano elementary family, understood as the family living together in a single household, has a life of approximately 40 years, the period between a man and a woman's marriage and the partition of the joint household by their married children. It is typically comprised by parents and their offspring, and remains a single corporate unit owning all substantial property in common and managing the productive capacity of its members, until the children move out to marry. Both sons and daughters are then bequeathed by their family of origin a fraction of their lands, and in some cases also a small portion of its flocks, which he or she will add to that of his or her spouse. This process continues until all children are wedded and have



relocated to their family of marriage's house, with the last one to leave, having taken care of his or her parents for longer, being conferred their house when they pass away. The same occurs with an unmarried son or daughter who usually continues living with his or her parents, and who also remains in the house after their passing. However, the son or daughter who inherits the parent house cannot sell it, and if he or she needs money, the siblings will come together to provide financial assistance so as to avoid the loss of their family of origin's house. "It's where we go to have coffee, it's the meeting point", Chefinho explains. Guaribanos are unequivocal about the harmony with which this gradual partition of inheritance ensues, with brothers and sisters gracefully accepting their shares and allotments: "Nobody complains that his land is less [than that of the other], that it's less fertile. 'Let's not fight for this tile', they say".

Whereas the nature of collaboration between affines is not notably different from the kind of assistance given and received by cognatic relatives, it is substantively different in that it possesses a more variable character, since identity, empathy, and categorical obligations between affines are more diluted than between kin. To be sure, affines inevitably deflect some of the attention of an individual from the relatives in her family of origin, for she must invest in her new relationship with the members of her family of marriage, from whom her children will derive half of their own relatives. Yet, whilst in principle she ought to be as cooperative, courteous, and obliging with affines as with the relatives from her family of origin, there is not the same measure of duty and responsibility to an affine as there is to a cognatic kin.

Marriage in Guaribas is first patrilocal and then neolocal, with a man initially bringing his bride into his parent's household for a period of approximately six to 12 months, during which time he builds his own house with the help of his family and friends. This latency period of the new family in the husband's father's house is important, for it is during that time that the in-laws will evaluate their new affine's conduct and character. In their in-laws house, the bride, like the whole family, is under the command of her husband's father, but she must particularly mind her mother-in-law. The latter should receive and counsel her new affine as her own daughter, ensuring that she is well versed in domestic tasks and possesses a good disposition, i.e., that she is helpful, trustworthy, respectable, and dutiful. If not, however, life with her in-laws ought hopefully to convey examples of worthy

behaviour and impart her with ideal moral values. Underlying this custom is the local belief that a child inherits the elements of her character from both parents, and the uncertainty about the moral qualities of individuals socialized in different households, which will be addressed later in more detail. For these reasons, some Guaribano elementary families attempt to minimize the risk of having to adopt an affine who will prove of objectionable values and behaviour by encouraging the marriage of their children with their first cousins, or by selecting another desirable family and arranging marriages almost exclusively between their offspring. This is achieved, of course, through the parents' considerable influence over their children's marriage decisions. In effect, this influence is today only a trace of what used to be absolute power in the past, for in many cases parents were entirely responsible for arranging their children's marriage. As Chefinho, Alfredo, and several older Guaribanos iterate, marriages were negotiations which involved the entire family, and most were arranged until only two generations ago. Thus, two relatives or *compadres* who "liked each other would say 'Brother, shall we marry our children?'" In other cases, João Bertoldo recalls, a father would speak directly to his daughter's potential husband:

You'd raise a child, your *compadre* would raise another; so, when the time came to marry the children, the girl's father would "talk" the boy to marry his daughter. It wasn't the young man who asked, no, it was the father who "talked" him. If the young man ingratiated the father, [he] "talked" him to marry his daughter.

In fact, João Bertoldo revealed that Dioripe's marriage to his daughter Eva, the heads of the household in which I lived, transpired exactly in that manner. Even though he did seek his daughter's consent at the time, João Bertoldo emphasizes that in his father's generation it was solely "the parents who agreed to the agreement: the groom couldn't even so much as 'tweet'. Neither the groom nor the bride". Chefinho adds that "before, the brides didn't know the grooms, it was the parents who made the marriages".

The parents' concern for the family into which their children will marry hints at the local importance of associating with, and indeed belonging to a good family. Possessing the surname of one of the three large, traditional families in the village is also a significant element in a Guaribano's reputation. This is why, despite the fact that surnames are inherited patrilineally in Brazil, several Guaribanos choose to keep their mothers' surname if she, and not their father, belongs to one of those leading local families — the Rochas, the Alves, and the Correia da Silva. Such was the case, two generations ago, with Santos and Miramon, two sons of João da Cruz Lopes and Tereza Rocha, who opted for the Rocha surname when they first registered for national identification cards. Such was also the case with three of the four children of Raimundo Martins Andrade and Catarina da Rocha, and again three of the children of João Francisco Lopes and Ursulina Rocha, who all chose their mother's Rocha surname over their father's, passing it on to their progeny (see genealogical maps). Four generations before Santos and Miramon, all the offspring of João Duarte Nascimento and Francisca Alves also kept the Alves surname, the same as the patriarch Major Valentim Alves, the first owner of the village's lands. And all the children of Edília Matias da Silva, a member of the Correia da Silva of Guaribas Two, and João Pereira Dias also preferred their mother's surname. These are merely a few out of dozens of such examples recorded in the genealogical maps of the Alves, Rocha, and Correia da Silva families. Having thus outlined the solidarity between kin and affines in Guaribas through a description of kinship obligations and the practices that give them expression, I now turn to the subject of inter-familial competition.

### “Other people's hearts are lands nobody walks on”: competition in village daily life

It is impossible to miss the competitive flavour of social life outside the kindred in Guaribas. In every consequential domain of action the world is demarcated with dramatic definition between one's own people and strangers, friends and enemies.

This can be observed in almost every aspect of everyday life in Guaribas, from local customs and conflicts triggered by economic and political competition, to the expression of open hostility between families through the occurrence of inter-familial violence. In this section I will explore the division of Guaribas into two sides, Fazenda and Guaribas Two, and the opposition which obtains between them informed by the rivalry between the Correia da Silva and the Rocha and Alves families; the antagonism between the Correia da Silva and the Caititu families, and, finally; the hostility between families in Guaribas and families in the neighbouring settlements.

### **Fazenda versus Guaribas Two: from kinship to cultural distinction**

The dried Santana riverbed divides the village of Guaribas into two sides: Fazenda, the first to be settled in the late eighteenth century, and whose population is primarily composed by the Alves and Rocha families, and Guaribas Two, inhabited mostly by the Correia da Silva family since it arrived in the village sometime in the early nineteenth century. Between the two banks, the land slopes downwards and upwards sharply, forming an approximately 300 metre wide basin with the riverbed at its bottom. This surface depression, which remained only a thicket until 2000, and is bridged today by only one dirt and one cobbled road, reifies geographically a social rift between the two sides which was originally informed by kinship distribution, but that in time assumed the character of a cultural distinction per se, fuelling today actual social and political conflict.

Politically, as shown in more detail in Chapter Three, because families typically vote together in block, Fazenda traditionally votes en masse for the PT (Worker's Party) and the PDT (Democratic Worker's Party), whilst Guaribas Two votes for the PL (Liberal Party) and the PMDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party), the parties with which each sides' respective candidates are usually affiliated. Just before elections, the atmosphere is always tense between Fazenda and Guaribas Two, to the extent that when supporters of one side dare campaign on the other, as

Isaías recalls, they are cursed and sometimes spat at as they pass. Nenga and Tonho iterated to me that even after Ercílio's election in 2004, the victorious Guaribas Two candidate for mayor, there lingered such an intense mood of resentment that a man from Guaribas Two "would never walk in Fazenda because he'd be scared", whilst "Fazendeiros [people from Fazenda] would come to this side [Guaribas Two], but only to insult people" — an exaggeration, most probably, though a suggestive one. Moreover, when women from one side marry men from the other, they are torn between their past loyalty to their father, the *paterfamilias* of their family of origin, and the allegiance they owe their husbands, the *paterfamilias* of their family of marriage, for both *patresfamilias* control the votes of their entire household, as discussed in Chapter Three. Consequently, in the 2004 elections, for instance, four couples broke up temporarily over disagreements concerning the wives' vote, with one of the wives having what was described to me as a hysterical breakdown.

Furthermore, still during the 2004 mayoral elections, at least one death ensued directly from an encounter between a group campaigning for Elienes, the Fazenda candidate, and another for Ercílio, the Guaribas Two candidate. When the opposing factions met at the Cajueiro settlement, Eliene's militants understood the presence of Ercílio's supporters there as an act of provocation, and the conflict that followed continued throughout the day. In the afternoon, as a result of a bar brawl triggered by the earlier political altercations, a supporter of Elienes known as Cascavel ("Rattle Snake"), is said to have murdered a supporter of Ercílio. He escaped to the *caatinga* wilderness around Guaribas, but was immediately followed there by the victim's brothers, who battered him to death. The Guaribano who told me this story added — significantly, for he was a Guaribas Two resident and an Ercílio supporter — that Cascavel was so "brave" that, before dying, he asked only if "the other one had already died".

This political rift, which intensified after the arrival of the political institution of the mayoralty in 1997, when Guaribas became a municipality, is the effect rather than the cause of this internal rivalry in the village, for it simply sharpened the lines of a prior antagonism, giving it political expression through the competition for a new position of power in the village. In effect, the origin of the nomenclature whereby the village is divided into "Fazenda" and "Guaribas Two" was originally coined by an Italian priest named Eugênio in 1963, who is now widely held

responsible for establishing the terms through which one side becomes the object of the other's hostility. Yet, Father Eugênio merely makes for a convenient scapegoat for the Guaribanos who attempt to explain away the village's fragmentation, for he conceived the "Guaribas Two" name at a time when he was already being pressured by both sides for the ownership of the original statue of Saint Anthony, the patron saint of Guaribas, brought to the village by the Alves pioneers who founded it. The statue used to remain inside the only chapel in village, the chapel of Saint Anthony at the Fazenda side, but when a new chapel was erected in Guaribas Two in 1963, its inhabitants wanted the statue to be moved there, and in trying to manage the dispute, Father Eugênio set the grammatical terms for the village's separation.

In fact, Bastiana recalls that when she first arrived in Guaribas from Bahia, in the early 1950's, to marry Dão Correia da Silva and reside in Guaribas Two, she found an antagonism between the two sides already in place. This antagonism was then already articulated by the people of one side bestowing upon the people of the other a set of objectionable characteristics that composed an overall unfavourable ethos. The people of Fazenda, Bastiana affirms, have always been "backwards" (*carrancistas*), "closer to Indians", and "more closed" towards strangers and new ideas than the people of Guaribas Two. This can be corroborated, Dão notes, by the fact that new families that have decided to immigrate to the village have frequently chosen to settle in the Guaribas Two side, which has always "received more information" (in the sense of more contact with cosmopolitan ideas and modern behaviours) than Fazenda. The claim that people from Fazenda are also "more ignorant" — in the particular connotation that the word "*ignorância*" has in the *sertão*, by which being ignorant means being more testy and irritable, and less reasonable, civilized, and tolerant — is also a common assumption among several people of Guaribas Two. Accordingly, Bengó once observed, when I told him I had spent the day at a barbecue in Peleira's fields (a resident of Fazenda), that "Fazendeiros don't know how to eat meat, they don't. They're all over the meat, it goes fast. That's why I didn't go", confirming the view that Fazendeiros have no manners, and are somehow more "primitive" and "uncivilized" than the "better informed" people of Guaribas Two.

Notions of cleanliness and hygiene, as expressions of ideas of purity and virtue, have also permeated this rhetoric of cultural distinction. Hence the claims by

the people of Guaribas Two that Fazendeiros are in general less clean than them, taking longer to adopt modern hygiene habits, such as brushing their teeth and bathing more regularly: “They spend four, sometimes five days without bathing. Take notice and tell me it isn’t true”, says Tonico. Elias corroborates this perception with a slightly different formulation: “In the beginning, people didn’t bathe everyday. We here [in Guaribas Two] did, but not in Fazenda”. Fazendeiros are also portrayed as taking less care of their physical appearance, such as wearing shabby clothes, walking around with uncombed hair, exuding unpleasant body odour, and constantly exhibiting on their bodies dirt from labouring in the fields (especially on their feet and under their nails, I was often told). In the same vein, I was once asked by a Guaribas Two resident if I had not noticed that more naked and soiled babies could be seen about in the dirt streets of Fazenda. To this image of Fazenda, another resident of Guaribas Two adds the ostensible presence of loose pigs in the streets which, against the mayor’s orders, and contrary to modern notions of public hygiene, Fazendeiros insist on keeping on their side of the village; his commentary, “It seems that they don’t obey the mayor’s orders”, also portrays Fazendeiros as intransigent, reactionary law-breakers.

Probably because Fazenda was the first side of the village to be settled, it has a more unplanned and disorganized physical appearance, its asymmetrical and less uniform urban design crammed with uneven streets which lead but to cul-de-sacs of older, cracked adobe houses. Despite the fact that most public buildings are located there, such as the post-office, the mayoralty, the health-outpost, and the EMATER and Agriculturalists’ Syndicate offices, its aged adobe houses and mostly unaligned, bumpy dirt streets do lend it an older appearance in comparison with the built environment in Guaribas Two. (Compare Pictures 13 and 14). Unsurprisingly, this discrepancy between the overall urban aspect of the village’s sides is also used by the people of Guaribas Two as ammunition to depreciate Fazenda and its inhabitants. In this sense, they seem to conflate the aesthetic appearance of that side with some of the ethological qualities of its residents: unkempt, retrograde, misinformed. To this Dão attributes the general preference of immigrating families for Guaribas Two: the more open and modern mindset of its residents, and its corollary, the more attractive and modern urban look of Guaribas Two. Or, as he puts it, bridging the material and

the ethological domains of imputations against Fazendeiros in one formulation, “The houses in Fazenda are like those of Indians”.

By the same token, Fazendeiros bestow a more or less fixed repertoire of undesirable personal and moral qualities on inhabitants of Guaribas Two, which confer the latter with an equally prejudicial ethos. Guaribas Two residents are seen by Fazendeiros as an interest-driven people, venal and scheming, tricky and duplicitous. Importantly, they are also perceived as arrogant and “wanting to be”, in the sense of having pretensions to superiority, a critical moral flaw for local standards which will be described in detail in Chapter Six. They are seen as less solidary and caring with each other as well, for as a resident of Fazenda once put it, in Guaribas Two, “if someone goes hungry, nobody helps her. I ask, my God, doesn’t she have a neighbour to give her a plate of beans?”.

In my initial weeks in the village, school teachers from São Raimundo Nonato such as Lucilé, Neguinha, Preta, and Clarisse, who were more seasoned outsiders in Guaribas than myself, were the first to be explicit with me about this rivalry between the village’s two sides. They spoke candidly and colourfully about it, and illustrated how this antagonism came to affect them. Preta, for instance, was jokingly warned by Miramar, a resident of Guaribas Two in his late sixties with whom she had struck a close friendship, that if she carried out her intentions of moving from her house in Guaribas Two to another one in Fazenda, she would never see him again. As it happened, Preta indeed relocated to Fazenda, and upon seeing Miramar in the street one day, she asked him why he had “disappeared”, to which he replied: “Didn’t I tell you not to go to those snakes?”. Likewise, Clarisse eventually moved from Guaribas Two to Fazenda, and light-heartedly broke the news in Tonho’s commercial establishment whilst I had coffee with him: “I passed the barricade, Seu Tonho”, she said, smiling, “I passed the Berlin Wall!”. Tonho looked at his coffee, grinned wryly, and announced in his characteristically theatrical way: “Ah, you will become a refined Rocha! But look, just one thing: two Rochas don’t eat from the same plate”. When I later asked him what he meant by that, he explained that when he was a child, parents encouraged brothers and sisters to eat from the same *gamela* (a local wooden dish) to “unite the siblings”, a practice of unity and commonality that Rocha family members were too greedy and selfish to undertake.



I too was affected by this antagonism in my collection of data. When it came, for instance, to learning about the history of the village, I found myself struggling with differing accounts of the families' origins, which would assume laudatory or deprecating notes depending on the kinship position of their narrators. For instance, the story of the Correia da Silva patriarch who killed the son of his twin sister five generations ago, changed his surname to Maia, and exiled himself in disgrace a few miles from Guaribas, thereupon founding the Brejão settlement, was recounted to me only by members of the Rocha and Alves families, and often not without a touch of satisfaction. I was soon able to detect an open competition between my informants in Fazenda, such as Chefinho and Adão da Rocha, and those in Guaribas Two, such as Tonho and Dão Correia da Silva, for becoming my chief source of historical information. Accordingly, when I shared with Dão, still in my first weeks in the village, that I was told to see Chefinho and Adão about the origins of the village, he warned me against it, and implied that they were not trustworthy sources, saying: "In the way they talk you'll sense it. They will say that only they are certain, only they have wisdom". Actually, a struggle for providing the official version of the foundation of Guaribas had already taken place two years before I arrived in the village, when government workers, interested in boosting the self-esteem of Guaribanos by stimulating a sense of pride for their origins, had the idea to display in the newly built SESC centre an official record of the village's history. Both Adão Rocha and Dão Correia da Silva claim to have been the sole source of the account that now hangs on the Centre's wall, and resent the fact that the other claims its exclusive authorship. Yet another object representing the village's history and identity at the SESC centre inspires even more resentment: an approximately two metre-tall statue of Félix Guaribas, depicted as an Indian (though he was of Black descent) holding a *guariba* monkey in his arms. (See Picture 15). Now Félix was the son of Major Valentim Alves, the runaway slave who received the donation of lands which encompassed Guaribas, and Félix was the pioneer who first settled in it and gave the village its name. Hence, because Félix was the Alves patriarch who founded Guaribas and lived in Fazenda, the decision to erect his statue at the Guaribas Two side was seen as nothing short of an insult by the inhabitants of Fazenda, who became embittered with both the people of Guaribas Two and the PFZ initiative through which the latter prevailed.

Whatever the position of the source, however, old stories of the village do confirm this scenario of deep-seated rivalry between its sides. Tandula's foster parent, for instance, a man from the state of Bahia named Olindino, was hired in the late 1940's by Durval Correia da Silva, a resident of Guaribas Two, to teach the children of that side basic mathematics and literacy skills in seasonal and sporadic classes. The local teacher had always been Pedro Segundo da Rocha, an eminent elder of Fazenda, who up to then held equally sporadic classes jointly attended by the children of both sides. Reportedly, Olindino was no "backwoods-teacher" (*professor de caatinga*), and together with the Rochas of Fazenda, the less proficient Pedro Segundo da Rocha felt offended. Thus, besides physically separating the children of Fazenda from those of Guaribas Two in what was previously a collective activity, the importation of a new outside teacher by the Correia da Silva of Guaribas Two further aggravated the strain between the sides. Likewise, sometime in the 1950's, a member of the Correia da Silva family, Cristóvão, built a house, extraordinarily, in the Fazenda side. His attempt to move there was set off by disagreements with his own family, as well as by a peculiar proximity with Bertoldo Conrado Alves, his father-in-law and a much respected patriarch of the Alves in Fazenda. However, as he laid the foundations for his house, a group of five Fazendeiros came to ask him what he thought he was doing. As the harassment continued, one of the Fazendeiros left, and when he returned, probably under instructions from Bertoldo Conrado Alves, he told the others to leave Cristóvão alone. To this day, he is one of the very few Guaribanos who have changed sides in the village for reasons other than marriage.

"Guaribas-weathered" government workers and church officials are well aware of this internal rift in the village, and they usually try not to overstep it, even when it contradicts the principles of general cooperation inherent in the practices and attitudes they attempt to implement. Religious activities organized by the parish of São Raimundo Nonato and the creation of local cooperatives are examples of such endeavours. In respect to the first, officials from the São Raimundo Nonato parish are already acquainted with the fact that people from Fazenda, with very few exceptions, never attend the intermittent masses or religious functions (such as the "Celebration of the Word", presided by nuns) in Guaribas Two, and vice-versa. Therefore, they are careful that any religious activity carried out in one side is also

carried out in the other. Even the nuns that are sent to reside in the village, or the missionaries that stay for the duration of a religious celebration, are equally divided between the two sides so as not to stir sectarian sentiments in the community. Regarding the creation and management of cooperatives, a subject which will be dealt with at length in the next chapter, it is significant that most completely fail immediately after their outset, incurring in deficit or becoming obsolete within their first year. Sebastião, the local EMATER technician, reveals that the attempts by PFZ to establish apiculture, embroidery, or baked goods cooperatives in the village fail because of the distrust that obtains between their members, who belong to different families and household groups. In an attempt to reduce this pervasive sense of distrust within the cooperatives, some of them were formed with an equal number of members of families from each side of the village, but even so, villagers refused to collaborate with their unrelated partners, and soon most of the members lost interest and stopped attending meetings and working together. However, the fact that even in government stimulated cooperatives the rivalry between Fazenda and Guaribas Two has to be acknowledged and considered can be taken as a measure of how deep that division runs in the village. Unsurprisingly, the people of Guaribas Two blame the lack of general cooperation exclusively on the narrow-minded and selfish character of Fazendeiros. A man from Guaribas Two once complained to me:

If I help you, you may help me. But if anything they get there [in Fazenda] comes here, they whine. They don't know anything, they are without culture, and only know how to pull you by the foot [sic]. They don't think like us, they only think about their own interests. But the stronger must forgive the weaker.

The practical materialization of this internal conflict in everyday life through a bitter competition for resources is both current and very old. Water, for instance, has always been by far the most scarce and critical resource in Guaribas, and before the construction of two cisterns in 2001 — one in Fazenda and another in Guaribas Two — the only local source of water were two shallow rock pools in the mountains, as mentioned before. Gathering water proved a strenuous and lengthy task for women, who would wait by the rock pool until enough water dripped from the rocks

and collected at the bottom, whilst being bit by mosquitoes and hurried by other anxious women. They often did not have time to collect enough water for their household's comfortable supply, thus carrying back on their heads insufficient water for their family's bathing, washing, and cooking. Even so, this method of gathering water endured for several decades, and became a traditional practice linked to the local sexual division of labour whose long survival owed no doubt to the patience and resilience of the women of Guaribas. However, as the village gradually expanded and its residents multiplied, demographic growth increasingly pressured the scarce water supply, and eventually fights began to erupt at the rock pools. Because originally, according to local custom, a woman was entitled to use her turn to also collect water for the households of immediate family members, such as her mother's and sisters', even women who were related started contesting the amount of water each other took from the pool. Davina recalls: "There were many fights between women, slapping each other, pulling hair". As conflicts began to escalate in magnitude and occur daily, a fence was erected around the water pools, and male supervision was arranged to organize the water collection by separating the women. Thus the water from the pools were made available on one day exclusively to one group of women, and on the next exclusively to the other. Yet again, the rationale for coordinating the gathering of water became the Fazenda-Guaribas Two division, for, as Almir, one of the assigned supervisors at the time disclosed to me, the vast majority of fights at the rock pools took place between women from the different sides of the village.

More recently, the competition between the two sides for resources has come to encompass the construction of public buildings and the improvement of urban infrastructure. Whenever stones were laid by the side of a street to be paved in Fazenda, residents of Guaribas Two would complain that investments were being unfairly deviated to that side, especially since Ercílio, the mayor, had been supported by Guaribas Two, and was therefore expected by its inhabitants to concentrate resources there. Their disappointment with the mayor only grew when he decided to build the Anésio Correia square in Fazenda in 2006. On the other hand, when the SESC centre was built and the square remodelled in Guaribas Two, Fazendeiros accused Ercílio of "working only for that side", as well as only "giving jobs [at the mayoralty] to sons of Guaribas Two". Throughout my stay in village, the fiercest

competition between the sides took place over the construction of the new post-office. Aware of the mayor's intentions to expand the existing installations in Fazenda, and to use that as a pretext to move the post-office to Guaribas Two, a group of Fazendeiros came together to donate adjacent lots of land to the mayoralty in the hope that the post-office would remain in Fazenda. The mayor responded by ignoring the Fazendeiros' efforts and buying land in Guaribas Two for the new installations, but their indignation was so intense that Ercílio, with an eye on the 2008 elections for mayor, decided to at least postpone the beginning of its construction. To this day, work on the new post-office has not started, a stalemate that epitomizes the continual effort devoted by Fazendeiros and residents of Guaribas Two to the local competition for resources.

Similarly, when PFZ announced in 2003 the construction of 68 COHAB (Popular Habitation Company) houses in the village, Reginaldo, another victorious mayor candidate of Guaribas Two, was in office. Predictably, 49 of the 68 houses were built in Guaribas Two, and upon learning the news from the first workers and engineers to arrive in the village, an infuriated mob of Fazendeiros formed in Fazenda. As I was about to conclude fieldwork in the village in late 2007, I was told by Márcia, a secretary at the mayor's office, that this time she was heading the committee for the future construction of 100 COHAB houses in the village; when I asked her how many families from Guaribas Two would be selected, she answered that about 70, and noted that she would soon not be very popular in Fazenda.

Likewise, when funds were made available through PFZ in 2003 to sponsor a radio station in Guaribas, government workers felt the need for dividing resources by setting one station in Fazenda, *Rádio Esperança* (Radio Hope), and another one in Guaribas Two, *Rádio Progresso* (Radio Progress). Both radio stations competed briefly for the village's audience, but as funds filtered through the mayoralty in the following years, of which Ercílio was in charge, Radio Progress became better subsidized, eventually driving its rival from Fazenda to extinction.

Even much less significant resources become the object of competition between the two sides. For instance, such was the confusion when two gallons of paint (of any colour) were donated by PFZ to each household in the village, that its distribution in Guaribas Two had to be interrupted a number of times to avoid

scuffles, with residents of Guaribas Two accusing Fazendeiros of sending different relatives from the same household to pick up the paint several times, and the latter accusing the former of using that accusation as an excuse to withhold their share of the paint. In a similar case, at a meeting for the distribution of mango tree bulbs, a PFZ initiative to arborize the village, the organizer announced that both sides had received the same number of bulbs, but that five were still left, at which point a man immediately stood up and asked: “Is it three for this side or three for the other side?”. Not to multiply instances, one last mundane example illustrates not only the competition for resources between Guaribas’ two sides, but their mutual effort to sabotage each others’ enterprises. During an interview with Eduardo and Edna, two development workers hired by PFZ’s Programa Produzir (Programme to Produce) to motivate and capacitate Guaribanos to engage in alternative income generating activities (such as producing homemade shampoo and soap, and starting a basic home bakery), they related how one of their endeavours was hindered by a crossfire, as it were, between inhabitants of Fazenda and Guaribas Two. Knowing that they needed an oven for setting up the home bakery venture, a woman from Guaribas Two approached them offering a unit for rental. A few days later, when the time came to negotiate the price and the last details of the oven’s rental, the woman recoiled from the deal and told them: “Look, it’s my mother’s oven, but she said that she’ll not rent it because it’s for the other side”. “It’s for the other side and now she won’t rent it, how come?”, inquired Eduardo, to which she replied, “That’s what she said, if it’s for the other side she doesn’t want it”. Hence, such was the importance to this resident of Guaribas Two of undermining an initiative by Fazendeiros that she preferred to forego the rent, and deliberately sacrifice her own profit for it.

Thus, rather than being only an allegorical phenomenon, a discursive strategy for the creation of identity through alterity, this antagonism between Fazenda and Guaribas Two does translate into deliberate lack of cooperation and actual competition in the village’s everyday life, further demonstrating the existence of this rivalry at a practical and empirical level.

## **General hostility between families in Guaribas and in the settlements**

The previous section showed how a division initially based on kinship became reified geographically, and evolved into actual political and cultural distinction, but at its core is still the general propensity towards opposition that obtains between different families in the village. In order to convey an ample picture of this chiefly competitive stance between kin groups, in this section I will consider cases of antagonism between families in Guaribas, and between families in Guaribas and the surrounding settlements.

Decades of hostility at close quarters, for instance, have overwrought the relationship between the Correia da Silva and Caititu families, both residing in Guaribas Two. Perhaps because the Caititus derive directly from Indian ancestry, descended as they are from Manoel Caboclo (Manoel, the Indian), this has provided the grounds for their alterity in relation to other local families, and contributed to their marginalization in the village. The fact is that several imputations, not only from Correia da Silva family members, are made against the Caititus: that they are responsible for most cases of theft in Guaribas, that they are less civilized than other families, and that they have an obscure acquaintance with witchcraft. For all these reasons, upon learning that I had visited a Caititu household to interview one of its members, I was urged by many Guaribanos never to return, and to curb my relations with them as soon as possible. The Correia da Silva, who reside in the Guaribas Two side with the Caititus, are the latter's most outspoken derogators. They accuse the Caititu of the many overnight burglaries that occurred in Wilson Correia da Silva's bar, reflecting an antagonism that was only catalysed by his niece's rape by a member of the Caititu family a few years ago, and which led to the latter's imprisonment in the neighbouring town of Bom Jesus. The Correia da Silva, as well as the Alves and the Rocha, set the Caititu family apart as trouble-makers who have brought this marginalization upon themselves due to their testy and malicious nature: "Their *nation* [i.e., people] is terrible", they affirm. Years of ill-faith and distrust have rendered the atmosphere between the Caititus and the Correias da Silva explosive today, and I witnessed a few instances of this volatile state of affairs. One time, as João Caititu rode his motorcycle near the square in Guaribas Two, where most of the Correia da Silva live, the front wheel pressed a pebble against the

cobbled pavement, suddenly producing a sound that resembled a gunshot. João immediately threw his motorbike sideways and took cover, supposing to have been shot at from an ambush. Later, at the police station, he accused Nailvo, the raped girl's uncle, of firing at him, whom João thought to be attempting to avenge his niece's violation.

Yet, several prior incidents had already sedimented this family feud. Around thirty years ago, for instance, at the time of Durval Correia da Silva, a young João Caititu badly injured one of the former's cows that trespassed its grazing boundaries and entered his lands. Now since livestock that goes into a fenced field eats and tramples the crops therein, the usual procedure is for the owner of the property to make this known to the animal's owner, who should then reimburse him with half of a 60-kilo sack of beans or corn per animal. Of course, this can, and often does transpire in amicable terms, but due to prior resentment in this case, João Caititu reportedly cut the cow's tail, and further slashed the animal so badly that it died from bleeding. Because Durval was acquainted with some policemen in Caracol, he refrained from dealing directly with João Caititu and instead sought a dispute settlement through legal means. As a result, after being beaten up and shortly detained at the police station in Caracol, João agreed to pay for Durval's cow.

In fact, trespassing grazing or planting boundaries, as well as disputes concerning the rights to particular tracts of lands, often become sources of local conflict. Bahia relates that when people come to complain of an animal tearing down a field's fences and damaging its crops, "they don't come good [calmly], no". Chefinho iterates Bahia's assertion by noting that in such cases it is best to speak with a man's family first, and employ it as a mediator, for if "men who are already in the agony of hard labour get a bad answer, they act [violently]!". The course of a dispute and the means by which a settlement is reached may range from nonaction to self-help, or, in other words, from mutual avoidance through legal prosecution to the deployment of violence. If the latter is not the norm, however, it is certainly no exception. It has led, for example, to a notorious wave of violence between families in Guaribas and in the adjacent Regalo and Felizardo settlements two decades ago. According to many Guaribanos, the families in these settlements "never bred people of any worth", and besides deliberately shooting trespassing animals, they used to set vicious trained dogs upon neighbouring flocks of Guaribano goats. "They would kill



sometimes 12 goats in one go”, Guaribanos declare, recalling that they lost several animals in this way.

In Brejão and Lagoa de Baixo, Guaribanos report, the custom for trespassing animals is to bleed them and cut off their tails instead of seeking peaceful compensation. Thus, returning from Lagoa de Baixo in one occasion, Elias had to inform his brother, Ovídio, that he had seen his missing cow there, and that it had in fact been shot, for it was “full of lead”. I was in the house at the time and witnessed the discussion that ensued. Ovídio was understandably upset, but Elias urged him not to go to the family in whose lands he had seen the cow and blame it on a defective or open fence — which would lay the responsibility for the incident on the family’s negligence rather than on the animal’s trespass. “That’s what they want!”, Elias exclaimed, implying that the Lagoa de Baixo family was in fact looking for such an excuse to create trouble.

Conversely, I participated in conversations in which Guaribanos from different families manoeuvred to set each other up, as it were. Thus, when Ovídio once remarked that his lands were being trespassed by Nenga’s cattle, and that the latter had ignored his appeals to take action against it, I heard Dão, his brother, advise him: “Then let them [trespass into your lands]. Plant some grass and then charge him for it”. In this way, Ovídio would force Nenga into compulsory reimbursement, but he replied to his brother that he would indeed prefer to simply do the same, that is, to let his cows invade Nenga’s fields and eat his pasture.

To be sure, I also witnessed instances in which such matters were solved in friendly terms, but these usually took place within the kindred. Hence when Almir killed a young cow that he believed to be his, but that in fact belonged to one of his cousins, he spoke with relief about the incident: “Thank God, if it wasn’t a relative’s I’d be doomed [*lascado*]. He would charge whatever he wanted for it, and I’d have to pay”. Likewise, when a second cousin of Filogônio, the older of the Correia da Silva brothers, interrupted our conversation to notify that his cows had damaged his crops, Filogônio simply smiled and joked: “Brother, don’t you come here to give me bad news!”. When his cousin related the situation, Filogônio good-humouredly said: “I do have cattle like the ones you describe, I think it good that you came here”. The

man then joined our conversation, had coffee with us, and then left, being first reassured by Filogônio that they would settle this at another occasion soon.

Yet, between non-relatives, and particularly between families in Guaribas and in the settlements, such conflicts have left indelible marks in their relations. For instance, speaking about the infamous hostilities between the families in Guaribas and in the Regalo and Felizardo settlements, Tonho disclosed that to this day they are derogatorily referred to as “the blacks from Regalo and Felizardo”. So prevalent is the bias in Guaribas towards these settlements that children seem to have fully internalized it. For instance, Avoado, Elias’ youngest at nine years-old, once arrived home from school upset with the theft of his course book that morning. He told his father:

It was the Regaleiros [people from Regalo], dad. We insisted with the [school] director, Gandi, to not put us together with the Regaleiros, but it was as if we had asked him to do just so. There are several in the classroom. We all spoke together, asked as if with one single mouth, and what there’s more of in our class is Regaleiros.

I first learned about the hostilities that transpired between families in Guaribas and in Brejão in the early 1970’s before I had even set foot in the village. It was a man in Caracol, whose father had been a local municipal representative, who told me that for a long time people from Brejão who needed to travel to Caracol had to go around Guaribas, through the hazardous Cajueiro pass, lest they be ambushed by Guaribanos. By the same token, he stated, Guaribanos avoided “walking” in Brejão, and “to this day”, he added, “they are distrustful [*cismado*] of each other”. In effect, more often than not, people from Brejão are portrayed in Guaribas in depreciative terms, particularly as “coarse” and “backwards” (*carrancistas*). Allegedly, “in Brejão, a man cannot enter another’s house if he is not home, he must sit and wait outside. Their women can’t even go to their mothers’ house if their husbands don’t let them”. For this reason, it is said in Guaribas that women from the village should not marry men from Brejão, for there, wives cannot talk to anybody without their husbands’ consent, and cases of wife-beating abound. “That’s not a

place of human beings, no”, I was once told in a long conversation with Guaribanos; they described Brejão as a dangerous place (*local periculoso*) of violent folk, a convenient refuge for convicted criminals, and proceeded to enumerate at length all the “peoples” (i.e., families) that were “bad”. They revealed that they didn’t feel safe in Brejão, and were ill at ease drinking there, since “you could be talking to a man, trusting him to be a good man, right beside you, and he could be a criminal”. On the other hand, people from Brejão believe Guaribanos to be more venal, unkind, and heartless. In the words of a woman from Brejão, in her settlement, as opposed to in Guaribas, “people don’t insist in collecting [a debt]. If people don’t have what to eat, others give them food, nobody goes hungry. Whilst in Guaribas people have no mercy”.

Even more uneasy are the attitudes of Guaribanos towards the people of Lagoa de Baixo, whom the first believe to be violent and irascible beyond comparison in the region. Five vengeance killings in the settlement in one year, from January 2005 to January 2006, and recurrent trouble with injured trespassing animals, have but served to impress this estimation in the villagers. It is true that outside debt collectors who have sold on credit to families in Lagoa de Baixo tell stories of being chased from there by groups of armed men, that census workers have also managed to flee from the settlement just before being assailed, and that the police itself often faced “heavy fire” (*fogo pesado*) when it entered Lagoa de Baixo to investigate the vengeance killings cited above. But Guaribanos seem to have composed a rather extreme, homogeneous representation of all families living there. Thus Dão describes the inhabitants of the settlement as “gypsies”, “beasts”, “Indians”, “with terrible nails as knives”, “who only know how to solve things by vengeance (...) and don’t know how to communicate and understand each other”. Vado corroborates this view of their lack of self-restraint and rationality by invoking a local proverb: “There, you can’t let anything [i.e., an offense] pass. Here we negotiate with words. But it’s easier to take a wild bull to a hedge than a brute man to reason” (“*É mais fácil levar um touro a um mourão, que um homem bruto à razão*”). Guaribanos often attempt to put some distance between themselves and the people of Lagoa de Baixo by claiming to have distinct genealogies and cultures. João Bertoldo, an old resident of Fazenda, maintains that “our way of life here is different from theirs. Our blood is also not their blood, no”. Most explanations as to why

Guaribanos are unlike the people of Lagoa de Baixo, however, capitalize on the idea of distinct cultures being created by diverse traditions and preserved by differential education. In relation to the weight of tradition, Davina affirms: “It comes from tradition, it started in the time of the grandfathers. There, anybody is only worth something by showing fierceness (...) If you’re in the wrong, you carry out in the wrong. There’s no other way”. Alfredo’s formulation echoes what I have been told on numerous other occasions by different Guaribanos:

The people there, their culture, their knowledge, is less than [that of] the people here. There, it [violence] comes from families with ‘strong blood’ [i.e. violent] (...) and they praise, value very much the people who proceed in that kind of violence.

In relation to the role of education, João Caititu is more graphic in his depiction of how children are raised in Lagoa de Baixo:

The education parents give in Guaribas is very different from [that of] Lagoa de Baixo, because there, when the son approaches ten years of age, they get a 38 [revolver] or a knife and give it to the child to use. We here in Guaribas don’t do this. The atmosphere here is one of peace, and there it’s one of fighting. Nobody there wants to be ‘soft’ [*mole*], they kill each other over a curse.

And finally, Valdecir adds that in this educational matrix, the families in Lagoa de Baixo “put fire” (*bota fogo*), or stimulate their children to always have the uphand, and to never take an unanswered offense back home with them.

Many other examples could be provided of the general atmosphere of distrust between the families that reside in the different localities that comprise the municipality — examples which include both reciprocal derogatory imputations in the discursive realm and their materializations in the kind of conflicts mentioned above, be they derived from grass-stealing, injury to animals and property, rape, theft, or brawls conducive to vengeance killings. Also, in considering the other end

of the spectrum, that is, contexts of dependence and cooperation between Guaribas and the settlements, it becomes apparent that these are much less customary than scenarios of competition and antagonism. Politically, the settlements traditionally support different parties to compete for municipal resources, as discussed in Chapter Four. Economically, the land is worked by individual household groups with the eventual assistance of the wider family through the *troca*, and all the mainly unproductive attempts to set up cooperatives are localized within either the village of Guaribas or a single settlement, so that collaboration in the production and distribution of goods between different localities in the municipality is minimal. Socially, family members separated by the virilocal pattern of residency after marriage do not visit each other in different settlements with much frequency. Furthermore, settlements maintain a high degree of independence from each other, for most have their own schools, bars, drugstores, and access (or lack thereof) to tele-communications, and rarely do people from one locality travel to attend religious services at another. This has led to a level of insularity which has enabled the development in distinct settlements of different accents, and, to a very limited, though still noteworthy extent, different vocabularies and linguistic expressions.

Just as the division between Fazenda and Guaribas Two is primarily one between families, underlying this division between Guaribas and the settlements is the fact that the latter are mostly inhabited by a few different families. In fact, as Mamá, the post office clerk I befriended early in my fieldwork explained to me, when mail arrives in Guaribas it is chiefly by surnames that its localities are sorted. I still remember when he first instructed me on this fact, which I later confirmed through genealogical maps; as Mamá carried on with his work on the post office counter, he began to patiently enumerate to me: “the Alves and the Rocha in Fazenda, the Correia da Silva in Guaribas Two, the Maia and the Andrade in Brejão, the Moraes and the Trindade in Lagoa de Baixo...”, and so on.

## **Customary practices of competition and conflict**

If the division that motivates the examples of antagonism and lack of cooperation described above seems to be based on kinship, several customs and practices in Guaribas do uphold this hypothesis. For instance, down by the Western end of the Santana riverbed, where Guaribas meets the foot of the Mountains of Confusion, groups of young men descended from different ancestral stock gathered under a thick canopy of mango-trees to fight. They were divided into factions that took the name of a particularly prominent patriarch in the village, a man who had many siblings and descendants, and who would, more often than not, be their grandfather. Thus these groups would call themselves by the plural form of their agnatic ancestor's name: "Durvaleiros" (the descendants of Durval Correia da Silva), "Caitituzeiros" (descendants of Zé Caititu), "Joaquinzeiros" (descendants of Joaquim Salvador Correia da Silva), "O povo do Temístocles" (Temístocles Rocha's people), and so forth. These kin rumbles were experienced by several generations of Guaribanos, and were described to me by Tiago (19), Careca (37), Dioripe (57), and Arnaldo (late sixties). Their accounts reveal that these rumbles maintained a certain common structure through time, which indicates that they indeed consist in an established local custom.

These encounters were not all-against-all rumbles, but regulated by norms that restricted the contest. Firstly, most of the fighters were aged from ten to 15 years-old, with those perceived as too young or too old for the rumbles either refraining from or being refused participation. Secondly, no matter how many groups descended from different patriarchs showed up to fight, they would all be absorbed by two all-inclusive factions, with the group of Durval Correia da Silva merging with that of Raimundo Correia da Silva, for example, or that of Temístocles Rocha drawing other groups of Rochas to its ranks. Thus, when more than two groups turned up for a rumble, the level of kin proximity of their patriarchs would provide the criterion for their alliance or separation. Thirdly, engagement was typically limited to two fighters, one from each group, inside a circle drawn on the ground. They would either volunteer or be selected by their group according to their opponents for, as Tiago stresses, it was always a common concern that the fighters be evenly matched in size, strength, and skill. Fourthly, the engagement lasted until

one of the fighters either gave up or passed out. The winner would then retire in wait for a victor from the other group, whom he would subsequently face in a sort of single-elimination tournament. Since the least successful group would not agree to stop fighting until its defeats were avenged, the engagements would go on until a balanced number of victories, or close to it, obtained between the groups. Therefore, on the whole, the practice usually drove towards an equilibrium between the factions. Yet, it did sometimes happen that most or all fighters from one group were defeated, in which case that group would swear revenge and attempt to arrange a new rumble as soon as possible. All-against-all rumbles were in fact infrequent, and would only occur if, for example, three fighters from a group were beaten consecutively, and its members realized that the score would be far from balanced. Thus, it was only when the level of tolerable retribution became impossible and the balance between the groups too skewed that all-against-all rumbles took place, signalling a breakdown of the contest's usual structure.

Tiago notes that even though one would even spit on the floor after mentioning the name of a rival kin group, most of the participants would otherwise be friends or at least socialize in their everyday village life. Still, he recalls, challenging a member of a rival group by saying "Today by the mango-trees at such and such hour" was all that was needed to set up a kin rumble. In point of fact, the rumbles were a violent affair, and both groups sometimes took knives and sticks to the encounter. Although these would seldom be used, Tiago knows a few people who still have scars from knife wounds. But even in hand-to-hand combat blood was usually spilled at the rumbles: Dioripe remembers people being knocked-out unconscious, and both Careca and Tiago proudly showed me scars on their bodies from their fighting days. Nevertheless, already on the way back to the village from the mango-trees, Arnaldo remembers, members from rival kin groups would make up and shake hands, not only because they would sometimes be related themselves, but also because it was imperative not to let their parents suspect that they had been involved in such rumbles. Arnaldo, Careca, and Tiago have particularly emphasized this point: that they would be fiercely punished by their parents if the latter learned of their exploits at the mango-trees.

Hence, protected from the gaze of parents and villagers by the broad foliage, the rumbles took place outside the social space of the village, suggesting that the

practice was not only located, but also existed beyond the sociocentric forces of parental and communal control. However, even at the mango-trees, where young men were in some measure liberated from normative pressures of civility, and thus partially free to contravene them, what transpired was a re-enactment of the competition informed by kinship that they experienced in their everyday lives in the village, underpinned by a principle of symmetry and balance in this competition.

This competition, however, emerges most clearly in everyday life when resources of various kinds are being distributed in Guaribas, especially in the sense of urgency which queues for these resources inspire in the villagers. The attitude of Guaribanos whilst queuing at the mayoralty to settle some problem with their PFZ Bolsa Família cards, or outside the school in Guaribas Two to get federal documents issued for free through a PFZ initiative, or in front of a house in Guaribas Two to obtain gallons of paint donated by PFZ, usually create an atmosphere of stark competition bordering on chaos. (See Picture 16.) So much so that in the latter two instances the police had to be called to ensure order and avoid scuffles breaking out among villagers. People push and cut in front of others, alternative queues are disbanded only to reappear moments later, men and women shout reasons why they should be attended to first, and disparaging remarks are yelled at those organizing the distribution of the resource.

Rosa, a development worker employed by PFZ to teach pottery and bijouterie making to villagers in order to stimulate them to set up their own enterprises or cooperatives, has been to Guaribas many times, and she revealed to me in an early interview that, in her opinion, villagers lacked a sense of collectivity, and that this was the main obstacle to her work. She was moved when she addressed the subject, and dishearteningly added: “Everybody here is only worried about getting theirs”. Similarly, another government worker, Márcia, who was in charge of PETI, the Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour, once pointed out to me that she spent a lot of time observing local small children playing together at the PETI sponsored playhouse, and noticed that an unusual amount of fighting for toys took place among them. In her opinion, children in Guaribas had a difficult time sharing, for they were not brought up in a way that encouraged an overall partaking attitude. Not even during the 2006 World Cup, when Brazilians everywhere gathered to watch the national team engaged in the indubitably most significant sporting event



for the country, did I observe Guaribanos being inspired by a collective, communal spirit. During all Brazil matches, the streets were empty and the bars closed, as Guaribanos chose to watch TV with their families, inside their households, rather than cheering with other villagers and neighbours.

In effect, though good relations with neighbours is a prized feature of village life, it consists indeed in a markedly more discretionary relationship than that with relatives. Neighbours are by no means necessarily friends, and in several instances the very opposite is the case, as the popular saying in the village that “Neighbours are terrible beasts” avers. For instance, neighbours are frequently suspected of taking fruits and vegetables from one’s backyard, which gives rise to the local practice of eating one’s fruits before they ripen and awaken the desire of others. It also gives rise to the local saying: “He who eats fresh corn is your neighbour”. Thus, whenever my friends came into my backyard and examined my sugar-apple tree, though its fruits were still green, they would urge me to eat them, or at least pick them and let them ripen inside the house. In the beginning, I disregarded their advice, but I soon learned to heed it, for every time I had my eye on a specific nearly ripe fruit I was set to pluck in a couple of days, it would disappear the next morning.

Picking fruits from someone else’s backyard, however, is hardly considered a serious offense, and does not even qualify locally as theft. Yet, theft does occur often in the village, despite the general claims by Guaribanos that it is uncommon. Villagers pride themselves in declaring that, in Guaribas, one may sleep with her door wide open. For this reason, I was surprised to be advised to lock my gas keg inside my house at all times, and to verify that small articles I occasionally left in my backyard overnight, such as knives and tools, had disappeared in the morning. Gradually, I observed various practices and events that implied the widespread existence of theft. For instance, Guaribanos who own motorcycles seldom leave them outside the house overnight, and various houses, such as the one in which my host family lived, have a concrete ramp specially designed to lead the motorcycle from the street into the living room. In addition, when two men were hired to look over the newly built gas station in Guaribas, such was its owner’s concern with the stealth of local thieves that he had them sleep outdoors, in improvised hammocks, to be as close to the station as possible. Likewise, families building or renovating houses must safely store their materials, for even piles of sand, stone, or bricks

laying in front of a construction site “get smaller every night”, as Dioripe puts it. And finally, an incident highly indicative of the local anxiety with theft took place when, after a long rainstorm, two pick-up trucks returning to Guaribas were not able to overcome the steep mud incline at the village’s entrance, and had to be left at its outskirts overnight. Whilst one owner systematically locked all external articles pertaining to his truck inside the cabin, even the large and cumbersome spare tyre, the other simply decided to spend the whole night in it.

A corollary of this general sense of distrust is found in the locally prevalent belief in *quebranto*, the “evil eye” of other Guaribanos. It has spawned the widespread custom of placing in one’s fields protective amulets in the form of a two metre high stick tied with a red cloth that dangles in the wind, and an upturned bottle of *cachaça* at its top. No Guaribano will dare plant in and work a field without a number of such charms spread around its area, which accounts for their presence in grounds that extend from Guaribas to settlements such as Regalo and Brejão. Two perpendicular branches of a local cactus named *mandacaru* sometimes substitute for the inverted bottle at the stick’s top, in which case they are bound together by the red cloth mentioned above. In effect, cacti are locally held to be potent amulets for warding off *quebranto*, and are extremely common inside Guaribano households, attesting to the belief in the existence and power of widespread envy and malevolence in the village.

As Eva warned me once: “Nobody knows who anybody is. The people say this, and I think it’s the most right saying”. Everywhere in the Guaribas municipality, outside of the family as defined above, relations are potentially tense and generally marked by distrust. This can be confirmed by the fact that several Guaribanos habitually carry guns, especially when they are out drinking or at parties. According to Sergeant Ferreira, who was in charge of the four man-strong police station at the time of my arrival, “walking around armed [in Guaribas] is a tradition, a habit (...) parties here are full of revolvers”. He complained to me that the most common and difficult regulation to implement locally is to disarm villagers who possess a gun without a license. In effect, it is significant that I was casually approached three times in the beginning of my fieldwork by different Guaribanos who offered to sell me a revolver. What they all had in common was the understanding that a man who intended to live in Guaribas for an extended period of

time ought naturally to own a gun. The acquisition of a new gun is also one of the preferred topics of conversation between men in the village, and they sometimes delight in displaying it for friends. Thus Casado and Neó, both residents of Guaribas Two, proudly showed me the revolvers tucked beneath their shirts at a number of occasions. I once teased Neó: “Tell me, Néó, what do you think you are you going to do with *that?*”, and he answered that he had a few enemies in Fazenda, and that he needed to be “prepared” at all times.

Geraldo, an old inhabitant of Fazenda, not only iterates the popularity of guns in Guaribas, but also advances an explanation for it:

There was no justice [i.e., presence of the judiciary and the police] here. Security was in Caracol and São Raimundo, and today it's here. Everybody walked around with a revolver. When he didn't have one, he had two, you hear? Knife on the waist, because this was the law. The *peixeira* knife [a long machete], one didn't walk without a knife (...) In Brejão it was nothing but revolvers.

Therefore, Geraldo suggests that the village's distance to judiciary institutions, and to the agencies responsible for the executive administration of justice, hampered the effectiveness of the state to mediate local conflicts and guarantee the individual's rights and safety. Under such circumstances, a man became to a significant extent in charge of his own protection, as well as that of his family and property. To own a gun is to possess the ability to retaliate against incursions by others into one's physical, social, and moral space. For any public loss of social face may be interpreted as weakness, and invite the boldness of others to prevail upon him, thus putting at risk the safety of his lands, his property, his family, as well as his own. This is why an unguarded public remark — and, indeed, the apparently most insignificant and meaningless mockery or disagreement — between men who have drunk to excess, can generate fights that escalate to fantastic proportions, as described in the next section. For this reason, drinking at bars, a situation that may precipitate verbal or physical quarrels, is locally regarded as a rather delicate activity. It is not only that one must respect a certain protocol and refrain from boasting and from *indagar* (the reckless prying and bragging in which drunken men

engage), but that one is only truly at ease to drink profusely among friends. Hence at barbecues in Guaribanos' fields, whenever I was not drinking as much and as fast as the other men, I would regularly be reassured in a way that, at the time, I found intriguing. They would tell me that *there*, with them, among friends, I *could* drink — as if I should not elsewhere. Hence too some bravados I often heard by Guaribanos who were drinking only moderately away from his and his family's vicinity; they would say: "Here I'm taking it easy, but in my lands, I drink with more than a thousand [people]!"

It is no coincidence that it is at bars, parties, or weddings, where trivialities can lead down an inescapable path of violence, that Guaribanos ordinarily carry guns. Fights between young men at the monthly local *forrós* (parties where a Northeastern Brazilian genre of music and dance is performed) are very common, and I was present at a number of occurrences. Guaribanos themselves express a sense of urgency in exponentially reciprocating even the slightest physical assault. I have heard several such pronouncements from young men: "If I get slapped in the face, I don't want to live any more", and "I wouldn't be able to look at the face of a man who struck me. I'd kill myself with my own hand if I didn't kill him!". It is crucial not to be branded as what is locally termed a "*caba di péia*" (someone to be beaten around, a "punching bag"), for that would impinge on a man's ability to be a competent male, to be respected by his family and by the community, and to draw the interest of women for marriage. Raul is explicit about the requirement of the ideal qualities of virility and forcefulness for a man in the social universe of the village: "A guy has to be a citizen [i.e. respect the law], but he also needs to be a big macho. He mustn't show too much fear, otherwise others will step on him". But despite the bravados above, never has any of the fist fights I witnessed escalated to the extremes of violence avowed in them. In effect, much more is said than done in the way of violence both in Guaribas in general, and in these *forró* fights in particular, and it is possibly the widespread phenomenon of villagers carrying guns that contributes to this. For carrying a gun is a symbol of both the capacity and the readiness to reciprocate violence, and the fear of mutual injury or destruction acts as a powerful constraint on gratuitous attacks.

The story of a brawl at a *forró* party in Guaribas between Binha and Dean, which involved some of my local friends, illustrates this symbolic equilibrium

achieved by carrying, and making it known that one is carrying a gun. Almost at the end of the party, a drunk man stepped on Dean's foot and they pushed each other. Because the man was Binhã's friend, he intervened, but as he tried to break up the scuffle, the trouble passed on to him. Since to Binhã's mind there was no real reason for a full-fledged fight between him and Dean, he tried a couple of times to talk to him, but every time he went in the latter's direction, a crowd of "friends", which in fact seemed more like a posse, prevented Binhã from approaching Dean. When it got close enough to an outright clash between posses, for the groups of friends of both young men were by now mobilized, and stood aligned facing each other, Binhã realized it would be impossible to settle the brawl by talking, and suddenly left. At this point, my friend, Neguinho, who was also a friend of Binhã's, whispered to me: "Now Binhã is going to leave and come back, to pretend he's gone for his gun". I asked him "Why pretend?", and Neguinho replied, "Because he's already armed, ôxe! He stopped by the bakery before the party and showed it to us. He just needs people to *know* that he's armed". Sure enough, Binhã came back a few minutes later, riding his motorcycle in an ostensibly fast and reckless fashion. He joined his friends until the very end of the party, but there was nothing in the way of conflict thereafter, with both groups avoiding each other until the music finally stopped and everybody went home.

This was merely one of various other occasions where I witnessed the cessation of minor hostilities at the point in which both men "go for their guns". It is a critical moment of the conflict, one at which a man has to decide whether it is really essential to deploy the kind of extreme violence that is achieved with a firearm. Also, "going for one's gun" affords a moment of pause from the conflict, a few minutes of reflection in which a man may meditate on the full consequences of his future acts, so that, more often than not, cold reasoning, precaution, or fear — and probably a combination of all three — sets in. Also, importantly, when both men return armed, and an equipollence in the means of violence is established between them, an equilibrium is reached, and the conflict ceases to escalate.

Stick-ons of bullet holes in motorcycles, making it appear as if the vehicle has been shot, is another symbol associated with violence and virility very much in fashion among young men in Guaribas. (See Picture 17.) Together with guns, and bravados in the discursive realm, they comprise a universe of mutual self-assertion in

what regards the ability to deploy violence which, however, contributes to stasis rather than conflict. Paradoxically, one might say, the widespread use of symbols and instruments of conflict, and equal access to the means of violence, creates an effective and symbolic equilibrium of opposing forces that plays a significant role in preventing conflict. In other words, overall balanced competition checks full-fledged conflict, the logical extreme of competition. Whilst it is true that some families are larger and have more man-power to be mobilized than others, thus possessing a greater capacity to deploy violence, except for a household group exceptionally comprised of parents lacking male offspring, male siblings, and male first cousins, all families have, in principle, the potential for reciprocating violence.

## Intra-familial conflict

Despite the commanding role of kinship in everyday life — and how the idea of the family theoretically provides the main criterion for association and cooperation on the one hand, and division and competition on the other — in practice, families are also beset by internal conflicts and struggles for resources, thus problematizing any such clear-cut dichotomy of unity and alterity. Disputes between sibling's households, political and economic divergences, and intra-familial violence complicate the ideal relations within the kindred. This is not to suggest that these ideal relations exist only in an utopian, abstract plane, for they do indeed guide the actions of villagers in their daily life, as the many examples of kinship obligation and assistance described above assert. Yet, there is a marked distinction between the solidarity of the family writ large and that of the household group, as will be demonstrated in the next section. First, however, I shall explore a few examples of intra-familial struggle.

I gradually learned that a numerous and central section of the Correia da Silva family, the children of Aberlardo Correia da Silva, one of Guaribas' most renowned and celebrated patriarchs, was fragmented by years of quarrels between its members. Arguments between its married brothers have been frequent, to the extent

that Amado is today ostracized by all his siblings, except for Vicente. Also, when Arranchado's daughter was abducted by his nephew, he was infuriated, and roared curses against some of his relatives in his porch into the late hours of the night. Elias and I joined a group of friends and relatives that gathered at his house to provide moral support, but they soon became the targets of Arranchado's anger, who shouted at his brothers in a revealing display of estrangement: "Pepper in other people's asses is a refreshment". This direct accusation of his brothers' lack of sympathy is, however, mild in comparison to what Rei, another brother of Arranchado, did one night whilst drunk. Brandishing a revolver in the middle of the street where he and his brothers all live, he repeatedly shouted outside of Arranchado's house that he would kill him. Rei was still able to fire a few shots in the air before the gun was taken from him and he was finally appeased. Arranchado, in turn, was very resentful towards Elias due to the latter's close relationship with Reginaldo, the former mayor of Guaribas, who had performed many favours for his friend. Whilst he was in office, Reginaldo had also promised to provide new tiles for Arranchado's house, but as he never made good on his commitment, and Arranchado tore down his roofing in a week of intense rain counting on the new tiles, the top part of his mud-brick house "melted". His bitterness, however, was directed at his brother, Elias, who had benefited from his friendship with Reginaldo to obtain materials for remodelling his house, such as ceramic floor tiles. One day Arranchado got drunk and stormed into Elias' house exclaiming "Brown-nose of Reginaldo's! Son of a mare! Now that you've got ceramic tiles on your floor you lie there, scoundrel!".

Therefore, the rift between the Correia da Silva brothers triggered, and was subsequently aggravated by political disagreements. In the 2004 elections for mayor, whilst Tonho, Dão, and Elias voted for Ercílio, Rei, Vicente, and Arranchado voted for Elienes. As a result, Rei and Arranchado became "*intrigados*" (upset and not on speaking terms) with Tonho and his son, their own nephew, for over two years. The break, however, encompassed all of the siblings, creating two political camps in the family, and further straining an already difficult relationship. In this sense, the fragmentation of the family as a politically aligned block mirrors its social fragmentation, confirming Tiago's formulation that "if a family does not 'vote united', it means that it's breaking, and that is a shameful thing for others to see".

Yet, this Correia da Silva sibling group is not alone in exposing the intra-familial tensions that exist in the village. Once my presence in conversations in Dioripe's living-room was not minded, I witnessed several exchanges whose theme was discontent between relatives. A Guaribano once slandered his own nephew, and urged me not to socialize or even walk around the village with him. On another occasion, a friend confided in me that he was having an affair with his cousin's wife, which I later found out to be a common suspicion in the village. Little respect or concern for a relative was also shown one time by an uncle for his little nieces, to whom he referred as "little prostitutes in the making". When I asked him whether he was not worried with what he believed to be their promiscuous behaviour, to my surprise, he advised me instead to take advantage of it. I was puzzled by these instances which ran contrary to the idealized versions of air-tight loyalty within the kindred I was given, and the many examples of solidary relations between kin that I observed. However, as I would also learn in time, in economic matters too, Guaribano families can be deeply fragmented.

It is not only that in economic transactions between siblings' households — such as renting property, contracting services, buying construction materials or foodstuff on credit, accepting post-dated personal checks as payment, and so on — Guaribanos often complain of being taken advantage of by their relatives, but that these dealings are often carried out in ill-faith. On one occasion, I found out that Patrão was exceptionally overcharged by his son-in-law whenever he was driven by the latter to Caracol on his motorbike. When I asked him if he should not get a discount instead of paying almost double the usual price for the trip to his in-law, Patrão acquiescently replied that "because there's no money in Guaribas, when people here find a way to get it, they always exploit others". Similarly, because Sorriso had just acquired a pick-up truck to engage in the business of transporting people to and from Guaribas, and he did not have a driver's license yet, he asked me to drive him to Remanso, in Bahia, where his vehicle's documents were being issued. He revealed to me during the trip that he had formerly requested his cousin, Alencar, to accompany him to Petrolina, a town 700 kilometres East of Guaribas in the state of Pernambuco, to finalize the acquisition of the pick-up truck and drive it back to the village for him. Since they were cousins, and Alencar told him not worry about the cost of the service, Sorriso was shocked to later be charged R\$500 (£125),



plus expenses, when they returned to the village. Over lunch in Remanso, as Sorriso recounted the story, I asked him if he did not feel particularly angry with his cousin, and if this incident, to some extent, did not also damage Alencar's reputation. He answered that his whole family, meaning Alencar's father and siblings, were "all like that. They don't give a damn about what other people say, not even relatives. They only 'pull the bullet to their own chest' [i.e., are self-interested]. Here [in Guaribas] it's one trying to 'eat' the other".

Another example that conveys the potential measure of distance between kin in economic dealings was a transaction between Vado, Elias' first cousin, and Garnizé, Elias' son. As Garnizé was building a house beside his father's, he decided to buy tiles and bricks from his first cousin once removed with a post-dated personal check to be cashed after the materials were delivered. I witnessed the agreement in Elias' living-room, when Vado came to collect Garnizé's check. As soon as he left, despite being Elias' own first cousin, the talk inside the house turned to Vado's neglect of his financial obligations, his unreliable moral character, and all the relatives therein displayed a high level of suspicion towards his ability to meet his commitment. Garnizé simply remarked that come the day of the delivery, if the materials were not neatly laid in front of his house, he would immediately cancel the check, and would not want to hear one single word from his cousin. As it happened, events transpired exactly as Garnizé had predicted, and despite being a close kin, Vado was treated with no special lenience or tolerance for being a family member.

The phenomenon of widespread intra-familial violence completes this picture of conflict that obtains in Guaribas even within the kindred. Perhaps its most forceful example lies in the very story of the foundation of Guaribas Two by the Correia da Silva family, when José killed his twin sister's son over a woman he coveted, and subsequently exiled himself. Yet, numerous examples can be found in the recent history of the village. Whilst I was in Guaribas, Sabadão, Luma's son, attacked his nephew with a knife, and when his first cousin interceded, he ran after the latter to the square, knife in hand. Seeing that his cousin was too fast for him, Sabadão threw the knife at him, but missed, and the episode ended with Sabadão spending the night at the local police station. On another occasion, Solteiro was at his cousin's bar and engaged in an argument with him over whether the shot glass of *cachaça* he had been given was chipped. The row escalated to the point that Solteiro drew his *facão*

[machete] whilst his cousin's wife ran home to fetch her husband's 12-gauge. I arrived at the square shortly after the fight was broken up by common friends, and since Solteiro and I had been friends since my early days in Guaribas, I sat down beside him to learn what had taken place. Solteiro was completely sober, which surprised me, since brawls at bars are usually fuelled by alcohol, and I asked him how a scuffle like that could have taken place between two close relatives. He himself admitted that it had been over nothing, just a broken glass, but that he would kill his cousin "with a smile on his face" at the first opportunity. I inquired whether he and his cousin had been at odds for long, to which he calmly replied "No! He's my friend, my cousin!". I then asked him if there was no other way to settle this other than by killing, and Solteiro answered that now it was too late because his cousin had pulled a gun at him. After a long conversation in which I tried to dissuade Solteiro from his intentions, I finally reminded him that Guaribas was, after all, one single family. His response was most instructive: "Yeah, but everybody takes care of his own business. That has nothing to do with it. Everybody trusts each other distrusting each other".

The cases of intra-familial violence at the Lagoa de Baixo settlement in the Guaribas municipality, however, have been serious enough to make the pages of *O Globo*, the second largest newspaper in Brazil, based in Rio de Janeiro, under the headlines: "Family war leaves five dead in Guaribas".<sup>28</sup> Even though these incidents took place mostly within the same family, between first-cousin households, they comprise a fitting example of the vendetta-like violence described before, and of the crucial obligation between close kinsmen to participate in vengeance killings — for, as they say, "in Lagoa de Baixo, never does only one [person] die, it's always from two upwards [meaning the victim and she upon whom the first is avenged]". It all began when Salvador, a municipal council representative, and the head of the large Pereira da Trindade family in Lagoa de Baixo, assaulted and seriously injured his neighbour from that settlement, Rômis, in a bar in Guaribas. The original reasons for the brawl are obscure, but informants have iterated that not much is needed anyway to set-off Salvador's testy temperament, for "he is brave [fearless], and doesn't let anyone say anything about him". A few weeks later, during a party to celebrate the arrival of electricity at the settlement, in January 2005, Salvador allegedly sent his

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<sup>28</sup> *O Globo*, February 25, 2006

two sons, Dimar and João, to complain about the noise at their neighbours', a house belonging to the Moraes family, of which Rômis was a member. In the confrontation that followed, Rômis was shot dead and, immediately after, a vengeance party deployed by the Moraes marched into the Trindade household and killed Osmir, Salvador's brother. Reportedly, the killer was Bar, Rômis' brother. Whilst Bar escaped to the *caatinga* wilds, Salvador relocated to Santa Luz, a small village Northwest of Guaribas, taking a part of his family with him. However, Salvador subsequently abducted a 12 year-old girl, the daughter of his first cousin, Ademar, and thus Salvador's own first cousin once removed. As Ademar swore revenge, Salvador engaged one of his nephews to kill him; importantly, since Salvador and Ademar were first cousins, Salvador's nephew was also Ademar's first cousin once removed. On the day of Ademar's murder, Sireno, his brother, was watching television with the killer's brother — thus, again, with his own first cousin once removed — and upon hearing the news, went for his 12-gauge and shot him in repayment for Ademar's death, leaving him for dead and fleeing to hide in the *caatinga*.

In January 2006, one year after the beginning of the conflict, Sireno reappeared to plan an ambush that succeeded in killing Salvador's son, Joãozinho, and injuring Dimar, his other son, Ademar, his brother-in-law, and Salvador himself. Salvador, Dimar, and Ademar then, still bleeding from their wounds and resolved to avenge Joãozinho's death, decided to leave Joãozinho's body by the side of the road, and search all night for Sireno and his accomplices. Failing to find the latter, Salvador and Dimar, enraged beyond reason, arrived at the Lagoa de Baixo settlement in the morning, and decided to take revenge on a man named João Natal, whom they believed to have collaborated with Sireno by warning him and his partners of their location for the ambush. João Natal, according to several witnesses, was unarmed when Salvador and Dimar executed him. Because of the gratuitous nature of this last killing, since it was based on the doubtful assumption that, despite not being related, João Natal was complicit with Sireno, Salvador invited the revolt of Guaribanos and the curiosity of national newspapers, and had to flee this time for a whole month before turning himself in to the police in São Raimundo Nonato. It is worthy to note that nobody has ever been arrested in connection with any of these killings, and both Sireno and Salvador, members of the Trindade family and sworn

enemies, remain at large to this very day. Hence, these events encompass three vengeance killings between members of unrelated families (Rômis, Osmir, and João Natal), two between first-cousins once removed (Ademar and João), and the attempted murders of one first-cousin (Salvador), and two first cousins once removed (Dimar and Salvador's nephew by Sireno).

What can be gathered from these puzzling cases of antagonism within the family writ large in a locality where kinship seems to underlie most practices of cooperation and conflict is that the only corporate group in Guaribas to enjoy a relatively more stable context of solidarity and practical obligations is the elementary family represented by the household group. This is the subject of the chapter's next and last section.

## Bilateral extension and the gradual insulation of the elementary family in Guaribas

Guaribas' kinship system, as that of the Sarakatsani Campbell studied, is predicated on bilateral extension, which contributes to the local focus on the elementary family as the sovereign source of loyalty, allegiance, and solidarity (1964). Kinship in Guaribas is conceived as an extension from the family of origin, and not descent from a lineage or common ancestor, so that, unlike corporate lineages and descent groups based on a principle of perpetual succession, the kindred has no continuity from generation to generation (Campbell 1964: 47). The vast majority of Guaribanos, as mentioned above, recognize as members of the kindred all cognatic relatives as far as the degree of second cousin, that is to say, all those descended from a person's set of four grandparents and their siblings, apart from the children of her second cousin, the grandchildren of her first cousins, and the great-grandchildren of her own siblings (Campbell 1964: 36). Thus, because the recognition of collaterals is increasingly limited in descendant generations, kinship relations, which are relatively wide in a person's own generation, become subsequently narrower

with each following generation. As a result, in the case of the children of siblings, an individual has approximately only half her kindred in common with her first cousin and only one quarter in common with her second cousin (Campbell 1964: 49). This reveals with what speed in this kinship system the common obligations of the descendants of a sibling group dissolve: in the course of only three generations these descendants become formally unrelated. Moreover, children, for instance, share with any one of their parents only half of their kindred, and the second cousins of her parents are already not, in a formal sense, their kin. This limitation implies that the range of collateral relationship that a child may inherit from either parent is greatly restricted. With the passing of time, and depending on the size of the sibling groups of her kindred, a child may throw away as much as three quarters of those kin who are collateral relations of one of her parents (Campbell 1964: 49).

The weak continuity of the kindred in Guaribas due the principle of bilateral extension is aggravated by the categorical duties of parents and children to each other. In Guaribas, because the commitment of parents towards their children, and vice-versa, have an absolute, unqualified character, parents direct their obligations to their own immediate descendants to the exclusion of collaterals. When a Guaribano leaves her family of origin to form her family of marriage, her main concern in life becomes the welfare and social progress of her children. Consequently, since the parent identifies herself, first and foremost, with the interests of her own children, it is inevitable that a certain kinship distance will emerge between herself and any one of her own siblings, the kindred of whose children only partly coincides with the kindred of her own children. She is no longer always free to give assistance to her siblings and cousins, and is now forced to consolidate her relationship with her affines, also for the sake of her children, who derive half of their kindred from their other parent. This she can do only by weakening to some degree the previously solidary relations between herself and her siblings in the family of origin (Campbell 1964: 54). Similarly, in this contest between original sibling solidarity and parental obligation, the descendants of the parent's second cousins, who are no longer kin of her children, also cease to be significant for her and are not recognized as kinsmen. This same process of distancing obtains, as alluded to above, in the case of the grandchildren of her first cousins, and the great-grandchildren of her siblings. Hence, in the transition of Guaribanos from their families of origin to their families of

marriage, as parents turn their loyalty and interests from the collateral kinsmen of their own generation to their direct descendants — and to those collateral descendants who remain relevant for their own children — a generalized diminution of responsibility and solidarity towards collateral relations takes place. This contributes to the isolation of the elementary family group from their collateral kin. Thus Arnaldo recollects the gradual process of separation and loss of intimacy in relation to his cousins:

Our parents, Raimundo Correia [da Silva] and Durval [Correia da Silva] were [first] cousins and brothers-in-law. They were like brothers, and we [their children] were also raised as brothers. We only walked together... Today we've lost that habit of walking together, having coffee together. Today we give less attention to each other, have less of the trust we had in each other, go less to each other's houses. The "house confidence" [i.e. of both being able to visit and be well received in each other's houses] is the same. Now for me to visit him, for him to visit me, it's less [frequent]. I go to a son's house, he goes to his son's house, and we remain like that.

This weak continuity in the kindred is somewhat moderated by the lack of interdiction to marry within the kindred, but this leads to a further isolation between unrelated families in the village. For since in Guaribas the maternal and paternal kin do not form mutually exclusive categories for marriage, families may have a significant part of their collateral kinsmen in common, and overlap considerably. This is aggravated by instances of first cousin marriage, and by the offspring of one elementary family marrying most, or all members of another elementary family, making their kindred intersect extensively, and further curbing the possibilities of wider alliances between unrelated families. Regarding the first, out of 428 unions recorded over seven generations of Guaribanos in the genealogical maps of the Alves, Rocha, and Correia da Silva families, ten per cent consisted in first cousin marriages (see genealogical maps). Concerning marriages between the offspring of two families, in five per cent of the cases, members of one elementary family married exclusively into another elementary family, but the incidences of three or more siblings marrying the siblings of another elementary family are very much

higher. In fact, they are so common that it is not necessary to examine the genealogical maps to find them. For instance, the three brothers of Dioripe, the head of my host family, Wilson, Milton, and Filogônio Correia da Silva, married three sisters, respectively, Domingas, Rosamaria, and Rosemira Matias de Andrade. If it is true that this custom moderates the dissolution of kinship continuity over time, it does not help to increase the span of kinship obligations in the village through the unions of unrelated families, thus concurring for their detachment.

Yet, as indicated above, collateral relations through bilateral extension do decrease over time, and the weak continuity of the Guaribano extended family hinders its effectiveness in providing a framework for close association between its members. In this scenario, the elementary family represented by the household group emerges as the only corporate kinship group to be more relatively enduring, and to inspire the personal and moral solidarity of its members. In this sense, the pattern of social association in Guaribas is fairly simple. The most restricted unit is the most important, commanding the deepest emotional legitimacy. This is the elementary family, which typically consists in parents and their offspring sharing a common household. The elementary family in Guaribas is not only a residential group with mutual affections predicated on blood relationship, it is also a semi-autonomous corporate unit which owns in common all significant property, controls the productive power of its members and (at least ideally) the reproductive potential of its women, and acts together politically.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the elementary family is at once a domestic, economic, and political unit in Guaribas, based on the principles of parental, filial, and conjugal obligation, to which the member owes, almost exclusively, and often to the expense of other social relationships, her moral and practical solidarity. In effect, as discussed in this chapter, despite the common claim that Guaribas “is one single family”, and that nearly all families are related to some degree through kinship, the village operates more as a constellation of mutually opposed elementary family commonwealths competing for scarce resources, such as water and land rights in the past, and federal government benefits and local jobs at the mayoralty in recent times. For despite the existence of instances of extrafamilial

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<sup>29</sup> Costa (1985), Carneiro (1976), and Heredia (1979) have reached similar conclusions in their study of small rural communities in Northeast Brazil. Heredia, for instance, highlights the almost absolute power of the *paterfamilias* over the family in the community she studied in Northeast Brazil (1979: 79).

solidarity inspired by the ideals of extended kinship, hospitality, and general Christian goodwill, in practice, different families related by kinship owe each other only conditional services, and families unrelated by kinship or marriage admit relatively little obligation towards one another. Therefore, the elementary family in Guaribas emerges as a system of centripetal relationships and a social semi-isolate under the recognized leadership of the *paterfamilias*.

Accordingly, economically, as analysed in more detail in Chapter Two, the elementary family strives to become independent and self-sufficient: it plants enough crop for its animals' and its own food consumption, it converts a small surplus of beans and corn into capital for its investments and expenses, and it supplies manpower for its own domestic work and field labour. For with the gradual decline of the *troca*, whereby kinsmen from other households participate in each other's agricultural activities, the burden of working the fields falls more and more exclusively on the members of the elementary family. Also, because the great majority of Guaribanos are small independent farmers who own and cultivate their lands, and there is only a minor diversity of local opportunities for work and employment, there is very little in the way of an occupational dependency in the village that could lead them to cooperation. Furthermore, a competent Guaribano is geared towards her household's subsistence and viability, towards its efficiency and independence, so that most villagers are proficient in what they need to know in order to carry on the business of everyday life in the village: basic construction skills, electrical installations, herding, all stages of agricultural production, slaughtering animals, and so forth. In addition, as it is also the elementary family which receives federal government benefits dispensed through the Zero-Hunger Programme, such as the emergency financial aid card (*Cartão Cidadão*) in the past, and the remuneration for children enrolled in school (*Bolsa Família*) in the present, this further sanctions the idea of the household group as a distinct social body or unit.

Politically, the elementary family acts collectively and votes in block in a much more consistent manner than do the different households of kinfolk that comprise the family, whose political cooperation is sometimes undermined by divergences between relatives, as related above. Also, it is significant that in spite of the solidarity between kinsmen in the lending of moral and practical support in



situations of verbal or physical assault, in practice, the obligation to carry out blood vengeance does not extend beyond the elementary family, that is, fathers and unmarried brothers.

Moreover, importantly, as a unit of socialization and cultural (re)production, the elementary family maintains a high degree of autonomy and independence. Parents explicitly claim to answer only for the education and behaviour of their own children, in a configuration where, at least in principle, the parents' own virtues and deficiencies are inherited by their children. For instance, Raul asserts, addressing what he believes to be the increasing moral degradation of young women:

I have nothing to do with anyone's daughter around, I have to do with my own *house*. With the time we spend thinking about sweeping someone else's backyard or house, we sweep ours, to keep it nice and clean".

This pronounced disinterest for what goes on in other households is a corollary of the belief that the members of each elementary family are exclusively its own business.

The independence of household groups in the process whereby children learn norms, values, behaviour, and social skills in the acquisition of a social identity, leads to a generalized suspicion of the moral qualities of Guaribanos socialized in different households. Tandula illustrates this in his conviction that the cohabitation with affines may have a dangerous impact on the education of his own children: "To mix my family with the children of other families? To put them inside my *house* with my own daughter? No!". Arnaldo, for instance, explicitly equates "respect" with not bringing into one's house what one has seen in the house of other families: "To have respect, respect is needed. What you see in other people's houses, don't bring into your house". In fact, this generalized suspicion of the moral qualities of individuals raised in other households underlies the many examples of first cousin marriages in the village, as well as the custom of the offspring of an elementary family marrying, often exclusively, the offspring of another selected elementary family, so as to at least minimize educational and cultural diversity between

elementary families united by marriage. This common trend, together with the village's system of kinship reckoning through bilateral extension, further closes the elementary family on itself, curbing the potential for wider integration through an expansion of kinship ties between diverse families in the community.

Therefore, the household group in Guaribas enjoys a remarkable level of independence and autonomy in the social, economic, and political realms, which underpins the high degree of village fragmentation observed. The concentration of the individual's significant obligations and commitments within the elementary family has considerable bearings, for instance, on a development project such as PFZ, whose initiatives are predicated on economic and political cooperation at village level. The next chapter explores how these local kinship ideals cut across and undermine the forms of economic cooperation advanced by PFZ in Guaribas. Ultimately, the chapter attempts to account for the limited effects of PFZ economic policies in the village.

## Chapter Two. The limited impact of PFZ economic policies on local productivity

In this chapter I offer an explanation of why PFZ's economic policies have been only selectively integrated by Guaribanos, and why its initiatives to transform local models of surplus extraction have had, in some cases, the opposite results intended by the best laid plans of government officials and development specialists. The first section reviews economic activities in the village, from agricultural work to local commerce. It shows how the extension of lines of credit and the significant increase in locals' purchasing power has generated a capital flight from Guaribas to the larger towns in the region, generating a micro economic recession in the village instead of contributing to develop its internal market. The second section describes seasonal productive activities and what a normal day of work in Guaribas is like. It reveals how the traditional regime of work in the village, despite being protracted and intermittent, provides sufficiently for the local families' welfare whilst affording a notable quantity of rest and spare time, so that, contrary to PFZ's directives of labour maximization for greatest profit, Guaribanos are unwilling to work more. The third section considers migratory work, and explores Guaribanos' conceptions of work at home and abroad, highlighting the significance of "hard work" for local definitions of Guaribano identity. The fourth section explores how the influx of money through cash transfer and micro-credit programmes, the availability of new municipal "desk jobs", the penetration of modern media, and legislation concerning child labour have led to a decrease and a stigmatization of agricultural labour in the village. From being farmers who heavily depended on converting their surplus into hard currency for buying essential goods not obtainable in Guaribas, the recent availability of money, instead of leading to reinvestment and cash-cropping, has led villagers back (according to standard economic evolution theory) to traditional subsistence agriculture, to "just planting enough so that they don't have to buy themselves", in Arnaldo's words. The fifth section depicts the shortcomings of PFZ economic policies, such as the attempt to maximize surplus extraction through technology transfer, and the implementation of alternative income generation activities and

cooperatives. It shows how PFZ programmes are structurally deficient in a number of areas, from the selection of associations, the arbitrary choice of capacitations, the *pro forma* quality of workshops, and the lack of further supervision, to the misappropriation of resources by Guaribanos and the potentially fraudulent services provided by some firms hired by the project. Finally, the chapter closes with an analysis of local practices that illustrate the general work ethos in Guaribas and how it conflicts with PFZ's premises of work maximization, a contingency which the programme's economic policies still fail to consider.

## Farming, local commerce, and capital flight in Guaribas

Guaribas is located in the semi-arid hinterland of Northeastern Brazil, a region called *sertão* which encompasses areas of seven different states, but whose climatic and geographic conditions remain consistent apart from minor regional variations. These conditions create a challenging environment for the people who inhabit the region: rainfall is very low, usually between 500 and 800mm, and the typically high tropical temperatures stay nearly uniform throughout the year, spawning vast stretches of dry, barren, unworkable land. There are only two distinguishable seasons in the *sertão*: a dry season from May to November that is locally called summer, for during that period the rest of Brazil experiences mostly winter, and a short rainy season between December and April that is locally called winter, during which time it is mostly summer in the rest of the country.

Fertile lands with access to abundant sources of water have always been a scarce resource in the *sertão*. With the more productive lands around rivers taken over by powerful cattle barons through the system of land donation (*sesmarias*) since colonial times, the great majority of its population was either pushed into less favoured areas or compelled to become tenant farmers (Andrade 1973: 205-7, 232). It is not surprising, then, that Guaribas' first patriarch, Major Valentim Alves, a freed slave and an ex-convict, received his allotment in the eighteenth century in a *serra*, highlands without access to plentiful water supply and richer soils. Yet, for

Guaribanos, inhabiting the sparsely populated uplands, far from the better irrigated plains of the *sertão*, land has never been scarce. Beyond the farmed areas closer to Guaribas, vast expanses of common, uncultivated land (*gerais*) surround the village, so that, seen from above, it resembles a small populated enclave amidst an endless *caatinga* wilderness. Therefore, the ratio of people to land in the municipality has always been markedly low: according to the 2000 IBGE Demographic Census, a population of only 4,814 inhabited a total area of 3,725.7 km<sup>2</sup>, yielding a low demographic density of 1.29 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. Still according to the 2000 Census, 71.4 per cent of all estates in Guaribas were privately owned, comprising 81.8 per cent of the municipality's total area, and out of 637 land properties, only 20 were between 100 and 500 hectares, the remaining 617 covering less than 50 hectares. Therefore, unlike most regions in the *sertão* where tenant farming prevails, Guaribanos are small scale independent agriculturalists who, for more than two centuries, have owned and cultivated their lands.

Due to its altitude, winter in Guaribas is in fact longer and colder than in other parts of the *sertão*, with the rainy season lasting from early November to late April. Even though the overall fertility of the local soil does not demand artificial correction, not many staples can be adapted to the region's climate, so that beans and corn predominate as the primary crops in Guaribanos' fields. Also, it is a practical decision to plant beans and corn alongside each other, for they can be farmed and harvested at the same time. Traditionally, Guaribanos have sold a small surplus of these crops to outside merchants, converting produce into money in order to buy goods that are not produced locally, such as salt, coffee, clothes, tools, and so on. Yet, local families usually keep from three to four sacks of beans for private consumption throughout the year, and enough corn to supplement their diet and feed livestock as forage. Even the few Guaribanos who have ventured to plant government subsidized sorghum and castor bean after the arrival of PFZ still devote a portion of their fields to beans and corn to keep from having to buy these essential staples in their families' daily diet. For beans are eaten everyday with rice and some type of meat (usually low-cost frozen chicken from São Raimundo Nonato nowadays) for both lunch and dinner, and corn is either consumed fresh shortly before and after the harvest, or turned into corn flower, which is steamed to make *cuscuz*, a sort of corn cake eaten everyday for breakfast, and sometimes for lunch.

Guaribanos complement their diet with other staples such as watermelon, manioc, and sugar cane, which are, however, planted much less extensively than beans and corn, in a small portion of the fields, and always for the family's private consumption. In their backyards, Guaribanos also have a few fruit trees such as banana, mango, physalys, umbu (Brazil plum) and sugar-apple trees, wild passion fruit vines, and a small number of families also keep a herb garden of chives, coriander, and parsley to season their food. Because most families produce the same staples and are self-sufficient in their production, there is very little in the way of an internal market for them, and of all the produce mentioned above, only herbs are sporadically bought and sold between local families. Most Guaribanos also own livestock in the form of chicken, pig, goat, and cattle, but these are only sold or slaughtered when a family is either in need of meat to entertain guests at a wedding or a party, or of money for extraordinary expenses — such as a medical emergency, a burial, a financial crisis, the acquisition of a costly article (a TV set, a motorcycle), and so forth. Therefore, even though there is in fact a local demand for meat in Guaribas, the existence of livestock also contributes little to the development of an internal market.

Local commerce, then, is mostly restricted to goods that are not produced in the village: rice, noodles, salt, sugar, manioc flour, coffee, eggs, margarine, sweets, cooking oil, powdered milk, canned food, crackers and biscuits, soda pops and alcoholic beverages, cleaning materials, toiletries, ready-to-wear clothing, basic cooking ware, plastic basins and containers, rolling and chewing tobacco, rubber flip-flops, etc. These products are bought by the Guaribanos who own a little bazaar in the village either directly in São Raimundo Nonato or from the only retail company that ventures to Guaribas every fifteen days to sell them, a firm from São Raimundo Nonato ironically called Pindaíba. The irony lies in that "*pindaíba*" in Brazilian Portuguese means "dire straits", "hardship", "predicament"; and, in effect, both the variety of brands and goods, as well as their quality, leaves much to be desired. From tobacco to noodles, biscuits, and sweets, the only products to make it to Guaribas are from third rate brands. Transportation also takes its toll, for merchandises for sale often outlive their expiration dates: crackers become mushy, for instance, and chocolates and biscuits melt and resolidify at least a few times before they get to the village, so that they become pale and stale. The same low

quality obtains with low-cost articles of clothing, cheap beverage brands, discount cleaning agents, and so forth. The true irony, however, is that these products are expensive in the village, for not only does Pindaíba hold the monopoly for their delivery, but the cost of transporting them through the rough dirt and sand road to Guaribas greatly inflates their prices. Villagers who buy these products directly in São Raimundo Nonato also need to arrange for transportation in the private bus or the two private pick-ups that make the journey once a week via Caracol, and they similarly transfer the hefty cost of private transportation to their merchandises' prices. For instance, whereas in an equally small village in the region such as Barreiro — which is nevertheless closer to other regional metropolises, and linked to them by a few asphalted roads — a one-kilo pack of sugar, a five-kilo sack of rice, and a can of tomato extract cost, respectively R\$0.50, R\$5.90, and R\$0.50, their prices in Guaribas rise to R\$1.80, R\$8, R\$2, an aggregate average increase of 265 per cent.

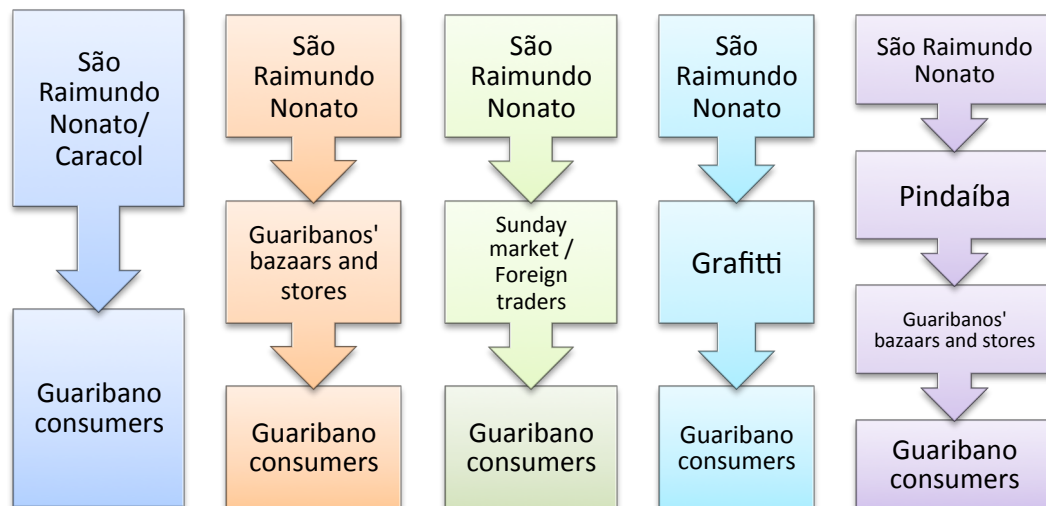
Many of these dry goods stores in the village combine both bar and bazaar, and out of 30 commercial establishments in Guaribas Two, 15 are bars, seven are bars and bazaars, and only three are just bazaars. The remaining five establishments comprise two modest clothing shops, a store selling cheap plastic toys and beauty products (such as nail clippers, cotton balls, nail polish, etc.), a small drugstore, and a recently inaugurated gas station consisting of a single open air pump. In Fazenda figure seven bars, two bars and bazaars, two exclusively dry goods bazaars, two barber shops, a clothing store, and a small auto-parts shop. The same products from the same brands are sold in the dry goods and clothing stores, and their local prices are very similar. Importantly, it is not only price that drives Guaribanos to buy from one or the other store, but kinship proximity and social affinity. For instance, some families, like the one I lived with, seek to complement their revenue by buying gas kegs and frozen chicken from Pindaíba and reselling it to villagers from their own house; most of Dioripe and Eva's clients consisted of close friends and relatives, who would once in a while complain about the higher cost of their frozen chicken, and teasingly warn them that they would be taking their business elsewhere if prices did not drop (even though they never did). The same obtains for bars and bazaars: Wilson Correia da Silva's bar is the preferred spot for his siblings (Dioripe, Patente, Nílío, Milton, Raul) and the offspring of the Correia da Silva family, Tandula's bar

and bazaar is almost the only place where his family from the Regalo settlement can be found when they are in Guaribas, and Emílio's bar is the favourite among his siblings and their families. Needless to say, even though kinship and affinity play a major role in the choice of the commercial establishments with which one is to do business, many other factors, such as proximity to one's household or sheer chance, contribute to their daily selection by different villagers.

Apart from a small grocery shop in Guaribas Two that has recently come to remain open all week, Guaribanos buy groceries and fruits in the Sunday market. Every Sunday, half a dozen outside traders make the trip to the village and set up their stands at the Guaribas Two square. Nearly all the fruits and vegetables sold in the village come from Petrolina, a town in Pernambuco at the edge of the *sertão* surrounded by irrigated fields, via São Raimundo Nonato and Caracol, and since Guaribas is their very last stop, it is basically leftovers that manage to arrive: bruised, unripe, or over-ripe produce that is, nevertheless, expensive. Some of the stands in the Sunday market also sell sundries of all kinds, bags, umbrellas, leather goods, hats, machetes, cheap shoes, underwear, and the like (See Picture 18.) And ever since Guaribanos have become extremely fond of TV's and DVD players — a taste developed ever since PFZ injected extra cash in the local economy through its Bolsa Família programme — a vendor of pirate CDs and DVDs has had one of the most successful stands in the Sunday market.

Cheap appliances such as semi-electric washing-machines, non-steam iron presses, basic DVD players and stereo systems, and pre-fabricated low-cost furniture are mainly bought by Guaribanos from a São Raimundo Nonato retail company called Grafitti that delivers the merchandise approximately twice a month, but some villagers also acquire them directly in São Raimundo Nonato. Regardless of how all these products and viands reach the final Guaribano consumer, money invariably flows from the villagers to the businesses of São Raimundo Nonato and Caracol, as the graph below illustrates.





This capital flight from Guaribas to the larger towns in the region is aggravated by the fact that, traditionally, due to the little circulation of money in the village before the arrival of PFZ, villagers chiefly bought goods on credit, be it from outside traders, outside retail firms, or the local commercial establishments of other Guaribanos. Typically, villagers purchased on credit and paid their debtors at the end of the harvest, when they had converted their surplus of beans and corn into money. Since 2003, however, both local and outside businesses, with an eye on the steady income provided by PFZ policies to Guaribano families, have extended and increased locals' credit to cover expensive articles such as DVD players and motorcycles, causing villagers to become entangled, as never before, with the instalments of high interest payment plans sometimes as long as four years. This drained local resources, causing a kind of recession in the village's commerce: Guaribanos in debt stopped buying or paying their bills at local establishments, leading to the latter reducing their stocks or in turn forfeiting their payment to suppliers. Hence, when I visited Guaribas for the last time in April 2008, after an eight-month absence, a few commercial establishments had been closed or sold, and a pervasive sense of pessimism predominated among Guaribano businessmen. For example, Valdecir's plan to turn his house into an inn with a small restaurant was interrupted by his bankruptcy; Dioripe's intentions to expand his frozen chicken and gas business, and move it from his house to an adjacent open plan brick structure had come to naught; Osório, owner of one of the two private pick-ups that transport

people to and from the village, reduced his two weekly trips to São Raimundo to one; and Tandula's bar and bazaar, built in 2006 to be the largest in Guaribas, and, hopefully, become a pizzeria in the future, was dwindling fast. By April 2008, Tandula had very few products on his shelves, and it struck me how empty his establishment looked. At the occasion, he dismayingly told me that "there [was] no money in Guaribas anymore", for Guaribanos were deep in debt and tied to the payment of instalments to Grafitti, outside merchants, as well as to other Guaribano businesses such as his own. Thus, debt and insolvency had drained local resources, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the meagrely supplied shelves and closed doors of local commercial establishments. I shall return to this point in a more comprehensive evaluation of the overall impact of PFZ on the village's economy. Suffice now to suggest that the influx of money through PFZ economic policies has, at best, not stimulated the development of Guaribas' internal market, and, at worst, contributed to its cooling.

The local commercial activities and enterprises described above, however, amount to a minor part of economic life in the village, for Guaribanos are, first and foremost, farmers and herders. It is not only that all families involved in commerce also work some of their lands, but Guaribanos commonly define themselves by the nature of their agricultural labour, as hard working tillers of the earth (*roceiros*). Therefore, the next section surveys farming activities, and investigates their importance to a notion of common Guaribano identity.

## "Work is bitter, but its fruit is sweet": work and leisure in Guaribas

Guaribanos are subsistence agriculturalists practising slash-and-burn cultivation, and the different phases of seasonal work shape the village's calendar of productive activities. As a result, the seasonality of the crops and the preparation of the fields define to a great extent the quality and quantity of work in Guaribas throughout the year. Beginning the cycle in mid-November, for instance, at the start of the rainy

season, most Guaribanos are planting their first batch of seeds. Since corn and beans, depending on their varieties, take three months at the most before they are ready to be reaped, locals hedge their harvests by planting at two or three distinct points along the rainy season. Hence, the following months are marked by the recurrent sowing and hoeing of crops at various growth stages, planted sometimes in as many as three different fields belonging to a household group. This is undoubtedly the most laborious part of the year for Guaribanos, who must take ready advantage of the rain for sowing in a moist ground, and for better hoeing the weeds that spring from the soft soil. Agricultural matters dominate conversation and gossip alike in this period, with kin discussing the future demand for crops, climatic conditions, the fertility of the fields, and when and how much to plant. This is also the time for those who own cattle to let them loose away from the village's fields — where the animals can find sufficient water and pasture in fallow or common lands until the dry season — thus facilitating the focus on farming during the rainy season. Some villagers also plant pumpkin, watermelon, fava beans, and a little manioc for private consumption, as mentioned above, together with corn and beans.

Even though from April to July, at the beginning of the dry season, the chief productive activity consists in harvesting the ripe staples, a minority of Guaribanos also plant sugar cane and palm cactus which, together with the dried corn, will later become forage to supplement the livestock's diet through the following dry months. Yet, most villagers are done planting and hoeing by now, and concentrate on harvesting and drying their crops. During these months, the village's streets are covered with large canvasses extended in front of the houses, on top of which beans are drying to be stored. Sat at their porch, several household groups can be seen unstringing their beans and removing corn kernels from cobs into basins. Although the produce of a household group's lands belongs solely to that group, the latter is often joined by friends and relatives who form large gatherings to help in the task and to participate in the animated conversation.

From July to mid-November, at the heart of the dry season, all dried corn and beans have been harvested. Some of the corn is left in their dried stalks for the livestock to eat, for the animals must now return to the village's proximity for water and food, the deciduous *caatinga* having turned back to leafless branches and thorny bushes without natural sources of water. The animals are let into the properties,

where they clear the fields of the last dried crops and their droppings fertilize the land. Guaribanos are now mainly deciding which of their fields will be worked next season, the selection of which is a family matter. A Guaribano may consult his siblings and close cousins, and discuss with them, for example, which fields have been left fallow for enough time and are now ready to be cultivated, how much corn and beans to grow, and whether to dedicate a specific portion of the land to planting grass for livestock. Yet, it is the household group that will have the last word on these matters, with the older children and the wife participating actively and giving their opinions to the *paterfamilias*. Even though he sometimes decides against household members' suggestions, more often than not his opinion is informed by considering and partially assimilating their ideas. When a household group has set its mind on a specific tract of land to work next season, it must prepare it before the arrival of the first rains. This preparation involves three stages, clearing (deforesting), fencing, and cleaning and burning. The first phase consists in chopping small trees and generally levelling the fields with a small scythe locally called *roçadeira*. The land is then either fenced for the first time, or an existing fence is reinforced with barbed wire or a palisade built mostly with the chopped trunks and branches. Finally, the remaining debris of dead roots, leaves, branches, and trunks are collected in mounts and set on fire.

Because the household group owns the land and its produce, it is the nucleus of all labour force required for these agricultural activities. Still, through a local institution called *troca* (literally, "exchange"), the household group is assisted by the wider family in a system of reciprocal prestations, where siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and less commonly, affines and *compadres*, work together in each other's lands. Even though the obligation to reciprocate work is implicit in the *troca*, services rendered between related household groups are perceived as favours, as spontaneous cooperation intrinsic to the relationship between kinsmen. In the past, large *troca* work parties comprising more than 20 relatives and *compadres* were very common, but nowadays a household group is typically assisted only by the siblings of the *paterfamilias* and his sons — though it would be possible to produce many examples of different combinations of kinsmen and *compadres*. In the case of my host family, for instance, it was usually joined by Nílío, Dioripe's brother, and his two sons, though most of the work during the entire

season was carried out by the large household group itself (consisting of the father, the mother, five sons, and one daughter). When I worked with Mamona's family, I also went to the fields with him and his two sons, and the same obtained in Valda's lands, where I hoed several times with her only son, Teovaldo. Thus, even though the elementary family, represented by the household group, is occasionally aided in its agricultural endeavours by the kindred through the *troca*, it constitutes, in practice, the basis of all labour undertaken in its fields.

A typical day of *troca* work during the rainy season starts just before dawn. The seeds have been sown after the first rains, and the fields must be hoed at least twice until the time of harvest, in approximately three months. Since the earth in the *sertão* quickly comes to life to take advantage of the moisture after a rain, Guaribanos usually wait until then to remove the weeds that sprout in the damp land and compete with the crops for water and nutrients. It is usually within two days after a rain, then, that Guaribanos choose to hoe their fields. In such occasions, the household group in whose fields the hoeing is to be done is joined by its *troca* partners, mainly comprised of kinsmen, in its kitchen, where all have their *primeiro café* (first breakfast) together. Although the first light of dawn has not yet broken in the horizon, the atmosphere in the house is lively, with relatives teasing each other, complaining that others are late, still sleepy, and will certainly not be up to the task in the fields. There is a busy traffic of people in the kitchen, entering and exiting with cups of coffee, *beijús* (pan-fried manioc flour paste), and plates of *cuscuz* and pork scratchings in their hands. Cooking for the whole *troca* group is the responsibility of the women of the house, and they will still have to provide breakfast, lunch, water, and *cachaça* to the men in the fields before the day is over. According to the sexual division of work in the village, women typically help to plant and harvest in the fields, but hoeing, cleaning, fencing, and clearing are locally considered to be activities too heavy for a woman's disposition, and thus when the *troca* work party leaves to perform any such activities, the women of the household group stay behind to prepare and deliver food to the men in fields, generally with the aid of women from other household groups involved in the labour exchange.

Since the *troca* group is typically called on for hoeing, when there is the need for a more intense, explosive kind of labour after a rain — in comparison with the many months during the dry season devoted to preparing a field, which can be more

easily and gradually taken care of by the male members of a household group alone — let us continue with a typical day of *troca* labour in which hoeing is concerned. The work party comprised of men leaves the house and walks about an hour to the designated field at the outskirts of the village, carrying with them hoes, machetes, old hunting rifles, and large plastic water containers. Most of the men are covered from head to toe, wearing wide straw hats, trousers, sometimes two layers of long sleeve shirts, and plastic or leather boots, to protect them from snakes, scorpions, spiders, large horse-flies, mosquitoes, bees, and irritating plants, most of which are inevitably to turn up during a regular day in the fields. Importantly, their work attire, leaving as little skin exposed to the environment as possible, also protects Guaribanos from the unforgiving *sertão* sun. For the sun is still soft in the morning, from when work starts (usually, just before six in the morning), through breakfast (when there is break of thirty minutes at about seven to have the coffee and viands brought by the women), until just before noon. Up to then, the temperature is milder and most insects are nowhere to be seen, even among the shoulder-high stalks of crops and weeds.

However, from midday onwards, the temperature rises dramatically, a scorching sun shines from the top of the clear sky, and any area of skin directly exposed to its light is soon burning. Notwithstanding the fact that after five hours of labour the hoe indeed starts getting heavier, the elevated heat, the sweltering sunshine, and the swarms of insects that now fill the air make the work considerably harder. Hence, when it is time for the one-hour lunch break at noon, and the women arrive with large basins of rice, beans, braised goat or chicken, and *cuscuz*, the workers are indeed relieved. The men sit on their hoes in large groups and eat with their plates in their hands, talking, laughing, telling jokes, in sum, enjoying the pleasures of commensality among relatives and *compadres*. I have always found the food taken to workers in the fields more hearty and appetizing than that habitually served in the village, which suggests a degree of care and reverence towards the labourers. Still, it is after lunch that the most challenging part of the day begins. For when hoeing resumes, from 1:30 to 3:00 in the afternoon, one must labour under a sun in its maximum intensity yet with a full belly, and muscles that briefly cooled down during the break begin to ache as they are re-called upon. Moreover, in my case, it was always after lunch that, besides experiencing all the symptoms

mentioned above, my hands, unaccustomed to the hoe's wooden handle, would feel its blisters. Consequently, after lunch, water breaks generally become more frequent, and the tempo of work, despite still being not an easy one, subsides to a noticeable extent.

The hoeing itself consists in a line of men starting from the same edge of a field, at the beginning of a straight file of moulds of earth with a row of crops between them, which is not unlike the configuration of a "race". (See Picture 19.) Indeed, the hard nature and the quick cadence of the work are mitigated by the continual joking and teasing between the men, most of which concerns their speed and skill at hoeing. The men thus hoe in rank in a playful competition, with the ones ahead boasting about their virility, and the speed and quality of their hoeing, whilst those behind complain that the first have simply and hastily covered the weeds with earth instead of properly uprooting them. In order to maintain conversation, the hoers attempt to stay in line, and if one of them is clearly falling behind, someone will "steal his row" (*roubar a carreira*) and hoe it, so as to embarrass the "laggard" and compel him to keep the pace. As a result of this light-hearted competition between workers, so many jokes and witty remarks are exchanged along the day that a congenial work atmosphere arises even in the face of such demanding physical effort. As the hours pass, more tobacco is chewed and *cachaça* is gulped down, so that the younger or more inexperienced hoers at the work party (like myself) eventually get dizzy, and promptly become a target of teasing and a source of laughter for the group. Thus, despite the strenuous manual labour, there is some recreation in work too, which I was able to observe not only in *troca* work parties, but also among the members of a household group when it is planting or preparing the fields by itself for the rainy season.

Even though their properties have been passed down through generations of ancestors, local demographic growth has not yet generated an increase in the demand for land that puts pressure on its limited supply. In other words, almost all Guaribano households possess much more land than they are willing to work in any given season. As alluded to in Chapter One, villagers are generally hesitant to disclose their agricultural undertakings, and are especially protective of information regarding the total amount of land they own. Even so, Tora, Dioripe, Chefinho, Mamona, and many other Guaribanos with whom I either worked in the fields or had a closer

relationship, volunteered to me information about it. Most local households have at least three properties where a standard size *roça* (cultivated field) of 20 tarefas (six hectares, approximately) can be “put”, as they say in the village.<sup>30</sup> For instance, my host family, as the great majority of local families, worked but a small fraction of all the land it owned in any season, not only because some fields must eventually be left fallow for a period of time, but also because working the totality of its lands would prove an impossible productive commitment for any household group’s man-power. Even in the case of Dioripe’s household, which boasted four male members ranging from 18 to 26 years-old, besides Dioripe himself, its productive commitments would always be comfortably below the necessity to employ the maximum effort and time of its members. The same obtained for all household groups in the village I knew but one, whose paterfamilias, Nazion, was a diligent Pentecostal who decided to implement all farming techniques and technologies advocated by EMATER, and which functioned, therefore, as a sort of showcase for the latter’s standard practices of agricultural and livestock management. I will analyse in more detail below the failure of Nazion’s example to inspire other Guaribanos to optimize and maximize productive activity, as EMATER originally intended, but the fact remains that, traditionally, subsistence farming in the village has been deliberately “underproductive”.

For a single cultivated area of 20 tarefas will yield, in a typical season, a harvest of more than 60 60-kilo sacks of beans, and in an extremely bad year, one of at least five sacks. Considering that a household group always puts aside three to four sacks of beans for its own consumption throughout the year, the surplus from one single property is at the very least able to sustain the household group with beans and corn throughout the year, the principal staples of the villagers’ diet. In fact, because corn is a more resistant crop than beans, being capable to withhold longer periods with little or overabundant rain without drying out or rotting from soakage, seldom does a household group not harvest several sacks of corn to sell after keeping enough for its own yearly consumption and to feed its livestock. Thus, a regular harvest in a 20 tarefas field will bear a significant surplus of crops for local households. Even though crop traders from São Raimundo Nonato and Caracol

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<sup>30</sup> Guaribanos use a local unit to measure area, the *tarefa* (literally, “task”, in Portuguese). An area of 3.5 tarefas amounts to just under one hectare, approximately, so that a tarefa is roughly equal to 2,900m<sup>2</sup>.



manipulate prices, forming a sort of regional cartel to which Guaribano farmers must submit if they want to sell their produce (for there are no working cooperatives in the village whose members might come together and engage transportation services to seek farther markets where their crops' prices would be higher, or would at least fluctuate freely), they usually make enough money to provide adequately for their families' basic necessities and welfare. For example, in the beginning and in the end of a season, when the supply of beans is scarcer, the market price of a 60-kilo sack of beans can rise to as much as R\$250 (£63), whereas at the heart of the rainy season, when the market is saturated with local produce, it can drop to just over R\$50 (£12.5). Therefore, the surplus of beans from one field alone in a regular year, sold at the usual average price of R\$120 (£30), is R\$7,200 (£1,800). If this amount is divided by twelve months to be compared to the Brazilian minimum wage in the beginning of 2006 (R\$300, or £75), when I started fieldwork in Guaribas, it amounts to nearly twice as much as the latter, in a rural area of Northeast Brazil where its purchasing power is substantially higher than in the more metropolitan Southeast region, and without incurring property or income taxes.<sup>31</sup> This means that the produce from one field alone can provide comfortably for a local family in a regular year with a minimum investment of capital, for the starting seeds are saved from the last harvest, and labour power is mainly co-opted from the household group itself despite eventual *trocas* and the onset of paid labour.

It is not hard, then, to appreciate why Guaribanos decide to invest a judicious amount of time and energy in working their fields. For between preparing a 20 tarefas property for planting, sowing, hoeing it twice, and harvesting, a household group will not have to work on that particular field more than 34 days throughout the three vital months of the rainy season. Other activities such as mending tools and tending the livestock complement Guaribanos' agricultural labour, but even so, an average household group with two sons taking care of a 20 tarefas field will not have to work on average more than three days a week for the rainy season's duration, it's busiest time in the year.<sup>32</sup> This is why employing wage labour at the fixed local rate

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<sup>31</sup> The "thirteenth salary", the mandatory extra salary Brazilian workers receive in December, has also been computed in the calculation.

<sup>32</sup> Though I paid close attention to the local dynamics of work and leisure, I was not able to compile an analytically rigorous record of hours of work per week per household group. There are no fixed days or hours for work in the village, and a household group's decision to work or rest on any particular day is an internal and unsystematic one. Consequently, when I did not go personally to the

of R\$12 (£3) per man per hour, which requires a money investment upfront, at the beginning of the rainy season, exactly when cash is locally in its shortest supply, is avoided by the majority of household groups in the village. Moreover, working too many fields would not only mean additional costs with paid labour force, but it would also entail further investments, such as fencing, which accounts for the single greatest expenditure with material in local agricultural undertakings, with barbed wire coming to R\$120 (£30) per 500 metres. On the other hand, making use of several *troca* prestations, thereby generating numerous obligations to reciprocate services, proves impractical, and is nowadays avoided by some household groups even more than having to employ wage labour, as Tóra avers:

If I exchange [work] with many people, I stand owing the service, and have to go or send my sons to the fields all the time. (...) Besides, I couldn't get my family to do the *troca* with me this year because all

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fields with a *troca* party or a household group, I had to rely either on my discontinuous observation, or on Guaribano's accounts of their own productive activities. Yet, that information proved too imprecise: for one, some Guaribanos tend to exaggerate the amount of work they have undertaken to approach the local moral ideal of being a hard-working person, and for another, leisure and work are sometimes entangled in the same activity — for instance, when Guaribanos spend the day fetching cattle or inspecting the goat and pig livestock at the outskirts of the village, they usually take the opportunity to visit relatives on the way or nearby, and often devote the better part of their time to being entertained. However, according to my observations during work in the fields, a man hoes at a pace of three to four metres per minute on average. As I had no other data with which to compare this index, I took into consideration Filogônio's statement that 40 men may hoe 20 *tarefas* (57,143m<sup>2</sup>) in one hard day of work, say, from six in the morning to three in the afternoon. Discounting one hour and half for breakfast and lunch, it means that a man hoes, according to Filogônio, at a rate of 193m<sup>2</sup>/hour. 193m<sup>2</sup> may be exemplified by an area of 14 by 14 metres, in which there are 11 14-metre long rows with an average space of 1.25 metres between them (this space usually ranges from just over a metre to a metre and a half). According to my observations, a man hoeing at a conservative rate of three metres per minute would take 4.67 minutes to complete each row, and 51.37 minutes to hoe the 11 rows that comprise the area. Thus, my calculations were not very far from Filogônio's statement, the discrepancy being that he estimated a man to hoe 193m<sup>2</sup> in an hour, whilst inference from my records has a man hoeing the same area in just over 51 minutes. This is relevant to test out my imprecise assessment based solely on irregular observation that household groups in Guaribas worked no more than 3 days a week during the rainy season, their most laborious time of the year. For if Filogônio and my own calculations are right, it means that a household group with two sons (thus a work force of three men) — another conservative estimate for the local size of elementary families, which not uncommonly possess more than eight members, as the genealogical maps show — would take 13 days to hoe 20 *tarefas*. As Guaribanos must hoe their fields twice until the harvest, it amounts to 26 days of work during the three months of the rainy season. To that we must add the sowing and the harvesting, which Guaribanos claim to take no more than four days in total, though I suspect that the harvesting, extended as it is for weeks even after the end of the season, must require more than only two days. To err on the side of caution, then, let us double, the time allocated for planting and harvesting, and count it as eight days. Therefore, work during the three central months of the rainy season for a household group with at least two sons amounts to 34 days, yielding an average of 2.83 full days of work per household group per week.

my brothers had other commitments. So I paid 20 men, and not one [of them] bad with the hoe. It's easier, yes.

Libório, Arnaldo, Wilson, and several other villagers made similar claims, highlighting the difficulty in recent times to organize *troca* parties, to mobilize the younger members of households for agricultural work, and to find dates in which all relatives and *compadres* are available and willing to participate.

Therefore, the great majority of household groups in the village attempt to take care of their agricultural undertakings with their own man-power, in spite of the occasional *trocas* and employment of wage labour. The size of a household group, then, generally functions as a limit to its productive activities, with any increase in productivity, be it through the exchange of several *troca* services or the employment of paid labourers, coming ultimately at the expense of its members' time, capital, and effort. But to these directives championed by EMATER, which presume the assimilation of an entrepreneuristic cash cropping attitude (i.e., the maximization of production through the maximum investment of workers' time and effort), Guaribanos have consistently answered with their choice to maintain the local comfortable balance between work and leisure. This to the extent that with PFZ's recent disbursement of financial aid to local families, and the ensuing decline for villagers of the importance of selling crops for obtaining hard cash, there has been a divestment rather than an increased investment in farming, a subject that will be treated in detail below.

Certainly, local subsistence agriculture is technologically simple, with not more than half a dozen households borrowing Nílío's plough and trained mule for planting, and all other tasks being carried out manually with the aid of traditional tools such as small scythes, hoes, and machetes.<sup>33</sup> But if the nature of local agricultural labour is arduous, its frequency is not at all intense. For Guaribanos work hard — chopping down trees to clear a field, tending the livestock, sowing and hoeing for hours under the sun — but not without need. And the need to work

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<sup>33</sup> In fact, the mayoralty received a tractor as a donation in 2004, but it was continuously idle for lack of diesel, spare parts, and tires. During the two rainy seasons I spent in Guaribas, I heard numerous Guaribanos complaining that the tractor only worked in the mayor's lands, and that it only had "tires" and "fuel" when the mayor or his closest collaborators were in need of it.

everyday is something with which subsistence and small scale farmers who own their land, such as Guaribanos, are not usually acquainted. There is great latitude for choosing when to prepare a field, when to sow, and even when to harvest (though the latter's window of opportunity is shorter), and hence no reason to work when one is sick or indisposed. For instance, even though hoeing is sensible a few days after it rains, when the earth is softer and the first undesirable weeds appear, I have seen such work capriciously put off by Dioripe until he and his sons finally felt like it. In addition, the local regime of work, demanding less than an average of three days of agricultural labour per household per week, also leaves quite some time for undertaking other favourite activities, such as hunting, playing domino, visiting relatives, drinking with friends at their fields and so forth.

Therefore, on any given day, walking around Guaribas would provide me with plentiful images of leisure: people languidly sitting in front of their houses talking or simply examining the morning, women gently strolling about perhaps on their way to visit a relative, men gathered in the square playing domino or sat in the shadow of the church discussing the latest news and gossip, the small though always reliable contingent of men drinking in bars, boys playing football, children messing about with sticks, improvised wheels, and plastic bottles turned trumpets, and so on. To be sure, this portrait would not be complete without those returning from labouring in their fields, workers employed by the mayoralty to look after the recently built square, students making their way to school, but I was always somehow more struck by the abundance and the *far-niente* quality of its leisureliness. Consequently, though manual agricultural labour is hard, the local work arrangement conversely allows for a substantial amount of free-time, a fact colourfully illustrated by Arnaldo through one of his father's old sayings: "My father used to say that work is bitter, but its fruit is sweet" — with "the fruit of work" standing perhaps not only as a metaphor for the yield of farming, but also for the leisure and well-being it sustains.

The many intersections between male Guaribanos' accounts of how a regular day of work for a man in the village is allows for the following common formula: waking up at five in the morning to have the "first breakfast" with relatives, going to the fields from six to noon, having lunch at home and taking a siesta until just after two in the afternoon, thenceforth returning or not to the fields to continue work. In

effect, no establishments are open in the village from noon to two in the afternoon (not even the mayoralty), and a good number of them, including dry goods stores and bars, remain closed thereafter until a customer goes looking for their owners at their houses, which are usually either adjacent or at the back of their commercial establishments. Hence, a customary working day is often short, and its activities intermittent and protracted, so that even a demanding day of labour in the fields may be designed to transpire as mildly and unhurriedly as possible. If men labour vigorously one day, they rest the next, and the slightest concentration of charged clouds in the horizon at dawn is enough to put off work in the fields for the day.

To be sure, a woman's experience of work in Guaribas is very different. According to the local sexual division of labour, women are responsible for all domestic tasks — cleaning, washing, and cooking for the whole household group — as well as for fetching wood and water, mending clothes and sheets, tending the chicken, pig, and goat livestock, making *tapioca* (fine, strained manioc flower), and collecting medicinal herbs and tree barks for teas and infusions. Women must also keep the outdoors brick oven going, as it is always busy with the lengthy cooking of beans, and must readily boil water for coffee, which numerous guests and relatives will unfailingly ask for throughout the day. They must also keep an eye on the children, make sure the house is well supplied of drinkable water, and be at home to receive friends (especially her husband's relatives), besides helping to sow and harvest when the time comes. Thus, the work schedule of women in Guaribas is much more intense and constrained than that of men in that there is no relief from domestic chores, irrespective of season or productive commitments: their tasks are numerous, fixed, and cyclical. The family must eat and dress every day, thus they must cook and wash unremittingly. Eva, Dioripe's wife, once illustrated this relentless work schedule in a remarkably evocative way. A few days after I moved into Dioripe's house, I blithely told her that I would follow her around during the day in order to find out what her typical routine was like. She smiled and slowly replied: "Oh, my son. My life is like a soap opera: it's making and un-making".

Naturally, different household groups have different productive commitments, but whatever these may be, each of them functions as an ideally autonomous and self-sufficient corporate unit holding all substantial property in common and managing the productive capacity of its male and female members —

whose work is complementary and vital to its subsistence. As discussed in Chapter One, elementary families are geared towards their households' independence and viability, and nearly all of their members are proficient in what a Guaribano needs to know in order to carry on with the business of everyday life. Consequently, if there is little in the way of an internal market where diverse products can be exchanged between households, since they produce the same staples and are self-sufficient in their production, there is also very little in the way of a specialized division of labour in the village creating occupational dependency and stimulating the exchange of services. Thus, the main work force for agricultural labour is provided by the members of the elementary family itself, with the main questions of production — when, what, and where to plant — bearing directly on how much work the household group will undertake during the season. If a household group's productive commitments exceed the labour capacity of its members, they will incur the extra costs of fronting money to employ wage labour, or the burden of repaying numerous *troca* obligations, in which case its members will find themselves “slaving over work” throughout the season, in Chefinho's words. The ideal, then, is to comfortably take care of productive requirements with labour force co-opted from the household group itself.

Limited in practice by the population capacity of a household's means of production, the amount of labour and productive output in the village are, therefore, substantially less than possible, and marked, according to EMATER, by the under exploitation of productive resources. Yet, if the local agricultural system runs below its technical and productive capacity, it still meets the sufficient means of local livelihood, and Guaribanos' “modest ideas of satisfaction”, to use Sahlins' formulation: hunting, playing domino, visiting relatives, drinking with friends, bathing in the rock pools incrustated in the surrounding Mountains of Confusion, having barbecues at their *roças*, and so on (Sahlins 1972: 41, 65). The “optimum exploitation of land”, employing the maximum effort of the maximum number of members of a household group, would require a major change of Guaribanos' ambitions and ideals, the motivation for which is still only nascent in the village (Sahlins 1972: 49). This can be gleaned from the unwillingness of Guaribanos who undertake the temporary work migration to São Paulo and Brasília to institute locally the work regime they encounter there. In effect, it is precisely what they perceive as

the exploitative and inhuman work schedule in these metropolises that primarily drives them back to the village, despite the substantial amount of money they are able to amass whilst working outside Guaribas. I will now turn to Guaribanos' work migration, and explore the importance of the local work regime for a definition of Guaribano identity.

### Freedom at home, slavery outside Guaribas: migratory labour in the Southeastern metropolises as “captivity”

In spite of its geographical remoteness and the difficulties of transportation, Guaribas' isolation is not as great as one might be led to expect. For instance, I slowly learned that Guaribanos regularly migrated to São Paulo to work, and returned to the village after periods that usually varied from a few months to two years. In fact, this has been so customary since the 1950's that one day, sitting outside with Dioripe, he and an old friend slowly went over the migration history of several men in the village. When they finally finished, they arrived at the conclusion that only five men they knew had not gone to São Paulo, Brasília, or Rio de Janeiro at one time or another. In effect, this custom is so widespread and patterned in its undertaking that one is tempted almost to suppose that it constitutes a Guaribano rite of passage. Typically, shortly after a man marries, or less commonly, when the oldest son of a household comes of age, he will take on the two to three-day bus ride to São Paulo and find work in metallurgy or construction, living in one of the three suburbs in which Guaribanos traditionally settle: Jaguaré, Presidente Altino, or Osasco. These are underprivileged neighbourhoods in the periphery of São Paulo, with high rates of violent crime, where the rent is low enough for Guaribanos, and the high contingent of other Northeastern migrants may afford a feeling of cultural familiarity, if not the comforting presence of well known faces. Still, because Guaribanos wish to either save or send home the greatest amount of money possible, as many as 16 men will crowd a studio with just a gas cooker on the corner and mattresses laid side by side on the floor. Some men migrate with their wives and

children, but a very small minority decides never to return to Guaribas. Hence, because this work-related migration of Guaribanos is not dependent on financial or economic conditions — say, a devastating drought or a contingent need for money — but is undertaken widely, generation after generation, and under a prescribed repertoire of time (coming of age and the theme of maturation), place (a distant metropolis), work (metallurgy or construction), and return (within two years), it has always seemed to me a kind of rite of passage, in which a man will leave his home, face an unfamiliar world, and return with some special knowledge.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this is a case of over-interpretation, but I remember how quickly the news would spread around Guaribas about some young man returning from São Paulo, how his friends would be excited and the girls curious, talking about him all day whilst attempting, in vain, to hide their curiosity. And I also vividly recall the glowing faces of those returning young men in the homecoming parties specially thrown for them by their families, as they were congratulated by their friends with the kind of admiration that admits a slight touch of envy.

Even though this widespread temporary migration, returning Guaribanos have always been rather disinterested in putting this “special knowledge” gathered at the metropolises into practice in their own village. “I spent a few rains [years] in São Paulo and Brasília”, says Arnaldo,

I saw that freedom of women, my God, what a thing! Women came on to us, threw themselves at us. We carried on there, got the gist of things, but Guaribas is nothing like that, no. There, we did as they did there, but after we came back, we left all that there: we became as we were before.

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<sup>34</sup> This special knowledge concerns the different ways of people in the metropolises, how life “really is” in the world outside Guaribas. Guaribanos sometimes spoke with amusement about it, and among their favourite themes were the new opportunities for entertainment, the more liberal and independent behaviour of women, and the (mis)adventures of Guaribanos on the town (a favourite story involved Xeninha fumbling his way into the big arms of a “gorgeous” transvestite in a bar in suburban São Paulo, which becomes hilarious if told by Xeninha himself). Other themes of this “special knowledge”, however, were recalled with less enthusiasm: working long, hard hours even whilst sick, the severity of police treatment, the anonymity and “coldness” of the metropolis, the random and unpredictable city violence (not linked to well-known family disputes or personal conflicts), and so forth.



One aspect of their lives in the metropolises that has been particularly unappealing to Guaribanos is the work regime they found there. To my surprise, all migrants from Guaribas I talked to did enjoy their time in São Paulo or Brasília, but they also missed their mothers, their families, and the tranquillity of their land. Yet, it was about what they perceived to be an exploitative and even humiliating form of work that they usually elaborated in more detail, and for the longest time. Raul, Dioripe's older brother, talking one day about his experience in São Paulo, chose a peculiarly forceful way to put it: "It's a terrible subjection", he said, and he continued in his coarse voice, gesticulating passionately, "It's punching cards, working when it's raining, working whilst sick. Sometimes someone is sick at home (...) and if you call in sick, they deduct it from your pay". During an interview in Chefinho's house, we were joined by a Guaribano returning from working in the fields, and I took the opportunity to inquire once again why Guaribanos very seldom decide to remain in the metropolises after their work migration. It is worthwhile to quote their reply extensively, for they embarked on an exchange of their own shortly after the question was posed.

Farmer: Because you can see the movement [sic] here, the day-to-day living, none of us works eight hours [a day]. When it's ten, eleven [in the morning], we work as much as we want and come home. We go back at noon, one o'clock, if we feel like it, and at two we're home. So we are raised with more suffering, with less development [sic], less advantages, but the freedom...

Chefinho: The freedom... There's freedom.

Farmer: Is what brings us back... Just like you can see. Many, many people here go from the first day to the end of the month and don't get a penny for any work, right? In São Paulo, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup>, the 25<sup>th</sup>, you have money.

Chefinho: Every fifteen [days]...

Farmer: Every fifteen. And here we sometimes go through the whole month... There are many people here — you know the score already, right? — that from month to month don't know what it is to get a salary. But the freedom is great, we subject ourselves to staying here because of the freedom. Because we live by our own will. There aren't many advantages [here] in other developments [sic]... But freedom is good,

everybody wants to be here! There, in São Paulo, you have to work eight hours every day. If you miss one day, you miss three, isn't it? That's it.

Chefinho: It's downright slavery. You are a slave of yourself. In São Paulo you have to be your own slave. You can't miss a working day. Missing one hurts three [days] in the month.

Farmer: You lose a Saturday, a Sunday, or a holiday that might take place. You know this about São Paulo, don't you?

Importantly, it is not the rough nature of labour in construction or metallurgy that seems to trouble Guaribanos the most about the work regime in the cities, accustomed as they are to demanding manual labour, but the long hours of work and their inhumane, predetermined frequency. Accordingly, Alberto contrasts the compulsory clock-driven work routine of the metropolises to not having “a fixed time for anything” (*“não ter hora pra nada”*) in the village, and Miramon capitalizes on the discourse of freedom at home versus servitude abroad by employing the Biblical metaphor of “captivity” to evoke life in the big cities. It is suggestive that local women, when inquired about this tendency of Guaribanos to return to the village after their work migration, usually gave the same reasons as the men, despite their work regime varying much less than the latter's whether they found themselves in Guaribas or in the Southeastern metropolises. Never relieved from their daily domestic incumbencies, and probably encountering a greater volume of work in the village (fetching water and wood over long distances, helping occasionally in the fields, and tending the livestock), women still justified their return to Guaribas through the discourse of “freedom”. Thus Davina maintains that life in the village is “less hurried, and according to one's own will” (*“a vida é menos corrida, ocê fica por sua conta”*), whilst Eva characterizes life in São Paulo as “exhausting”, and “without freedom or safety”. Consequently, for women, the work load seems to matter less for an evaluation of welfare than the idea of “freedom”, of “being at your own will” (*“ficar por sua conta”*). This is in line with several accounts by both men and women that put a premium on an individual's freedom to plan her daily activities, at her own pace, unconstrained by external pressures (apart from nature's bearings on agricultural enterprises), and according to her own will and mood. This articulation of servitude and liberty in the opposition of freedom in Guaribas to

slavery in the metropolises drives the discourse of Guaribanos, despite their idiosyncratic differences, so that it emerges as a common local motif. Thus Tóra, who has undertaken the work migration to São Paulo more than eight times, avows that he never thought of settling there:

Here, it's another life. You go to sleep in peace, it's not like around the world, where you have a fixed time for everything. There, around the world, you don't find a bee to eat its honey, you don't find these beans, any better cut of meat you don't find (...) Going to your fields in the morning is priceless. (...) I want my little field. You work alone, sweating, but knowing what you have in your field. In the fields, if you're hungry, you eat watermelon, roast [fresh] corn, or pick [green] beans. It's another life.

Tóra told me the above whilst we took a break from hoeing in his fields. He guided me along as he inspected his crops, boasting about the extent of his lands, which reached the other side of the surrounding meadows all the way to the Lagoa de Baixão settlement, from where he and his family hailed. I recall eating as many as nine corn cobs roasted over a quickly improvised fire with him that day, and being taken to his mother's house afterwards to have fresh curdled milk and wild honey from indigenous bees, delicacies which he had been fancying all through our working day. Similarly, Raul praises the fashion of work in the village:

All my life I had happiness in this [tilling the fields]. Nor have I desired to have better lands. Because bad it is to live in those places where the fellow... Like in Caracol, where the day you don't work for rent [i.e., sell your labour force], you go hungry. Here we have work to produce many things. So, to live [well] is where a man finds himself free and unconstrained to work at his own will. This life is good. Now if you work punching cards, it's appointed hours, you can't stop for anything, and if you're 30 minutes late, that day you don't go in, you've lost that day. (...) And if you're in your lands, you work to produce things that you must store for your consumption [sic]. I understand that as happiness. (...) You go to work in the fields, but if you feel like walking around, hunting, go, there's no problem. So this is the Holy Land.

The regime of labour in Guaribas, which grants a significant amount of autonomy in choosing the time, kind, and volume of work to be undertaken in a given day, is not only a crucial factor in the decision of Guaribanos to return to the village, but also goes to the heart of Guaribano identity according to the villagers themselves. When I asked what it is to be a Guaribano, a standard question I posed at the beginning of all interviews, the predicate “hard working” invariably came up first, and as the main marker of Guaribano identity, despite the gender and generation differences of informants. Hence, Arnaldo characterizes Guaribanos as

a type of people that live by struggling, by [working] the fields. My father always taught us [Arnaldo and his siblings] and others through work. That’s why I like Guaribas. He who works lacks nothing. I worked with men who were not only good, but heroes in the fields, and nothing was ever wanting. (...) And thus I was raised, and have raised my sons, by the struggle in the fields, with a lot of effort, but also not knowing what hardship is. And knowing it too. Why? Because working the fields is a heavy culture [sic], not everyone can stand the calibre of working in the fields. Because [work in] the field is rough.

Likewise, for Valdecir, Aílton, João Bertoldo, Adão, Geraldo, and many others, being a Guaribano means struggling with the land and tilling the earth: “living from the fields, raising something [livestock] if you can, working hard to raise sons, grandchildren. We are hard workers without education”, Geraldo’s asserts. Filogônio also defines Guaribanos, first and foremost, as hard workers who farm the land because they “do not know another culture, another branch [of work]”. It is worthwhile to note that even though Filogônio, Aílton, and Valdecir have been consistently described to me — sometimes by their own relatives — as lacking the “courage” to work their fields properly, and investing more time in commerce than in agriculture, they still reproduced the standard version of a Guaribano as a hard working tiller of the earth. In fact, as indicated above, tilling the earth is recurrently referred to as a “branch”, a “culture” into itself, of “heavy calibre”, and figures in

villagers' accounts as the basic attribute and distinction of a Guaribano as opposed to the lifestyles of both townspeople in the region (such as Caracolenses and São Raimundenses) and the inhabitants of the farther metropolises.

Considering the amount of leisure and free-time around in the village, I found it difficult in the beginning to make sense of the centrality of “hard working” in the villagers' definitions of a Guaribano. But I realized that “hard working” applied more to the rough nature of agricultural labour than to an unrelenting work schedule. That is to say, the qualification of “hard” concerned the nature of work rather than its frequency. This is why despite the many accounts of how work in the village is protracted and intermittent, Guaribanos still claim to be hard working. Yet, without a major, widespread change in career ideals and ambitions — or the desire to own or do things which can only be attained with an uncommon amount of money for a household group according to local standards — Guaribanos refrain from increasing their seasonal amount of work though they possess the means of production to do so, and in spite of the recent PFZ campaign of incentives to boost local productive output. That change, however, is underway as 1) direct cash transfers from PFZ to Guaribano families boost their income and enable new consumer habits whilst undermining their former reliance on agricultural surplus for obtaining cash; 2) as the recent ascension of Guaribas to a municipality makes several monthly remunerated “desk jobs” at the mayoralty available, and; 3) as the younger generation is exposed to mass media and formal state education, and begin to aspire to lifestyles and jobs that imply a higher social and cultural cachet than their farmer forbearers. All of these factors, I will argue in the following section, undercut the amount and the moral value of agricultural work in the village.

## The decline of farming and the emerging stigma of agricultural work

Guaribanos have reiterated that before the arrival of PFZ and its distribution of emergency financial aid to local families, when there was significantly less money in

circulation in the village, institutions of reciprocal exchange of goods and services such as the *troca*, the *mutirão* (exchange of labour towards house construction), and *emprestar* (diachronic exchange of meat) were much more prominent. Arnaldo, now in his late sixties, recalls that when he was a young man, not only was *troca* more frequent, but the work parties concerned were much larger:

There was no lack [of men] here: it was a group of 20 people or so! Brothers and cousins, everyone. All of Durval's sons went [to the fields] with me. The sons of Jucelino. When we got to the fields, it was a lot of people. (...) Women had the right to stay home; they went to the fields, but didn't go there to work like the men. In the days of planting, and harvesting, she helped. (...) But if I took 20 people to the fields, she, her sisters, needed to help take care of things at home, had to serve lunch and dinner. That was a party we had at home! Sometimes we would kill a pig to roast.

Guaribanos depended then on a good surplus of corn and beans to trade for products such as salt, coffee, and clothes in the nearby villages of Feijão or São Raimundo Nonato. Selling their produce for money to local traders was the villagers' main source of hard currency, and for that they travelled in *tropas*, trade expeditions on mules, through the *caatinga* to the larger villages nearby. Libório recalls that "here, in former times, to wear [clothes], to put on [footwear], one had to make a large *tropa*, and go sell beans, corn, or *rapadura* [blocks of raw sugar] in São Raimundo". Even if from 1962 onwards — and especially after the construction of the village's first dirt trail wide enough for small vehicles in 1964 — local ambulant vendors and crop traders began to travel more frequently to Guaribas to buy the locals' produce, the main way for villagers to obtain hard currency remained the selling of the harvest surplus in regional metropolises. After the implementation of PFZ's monthly distribution of financial aid to Guaribano families, however, the village's monthly per capita income jumped from R\$43.8 (£12) in 2000 to R\$78 (£19) in 2005 according to IBGE, significantly increasing locals' personal revenue and purchasing power in five years. This remarkable influx of money was achieved through the implementation of three cash transfer programmes: Bolsa Família (conditional cash transfers to families with a per-capita monthly income below R\$120 (£40) through a

debit card on condition that their children attend school and are vaccinated, providing R\$45 plus R\$15 for each additional child enrolled per family, up to a maximum benefit of R\$95 (£25); the Auxílio Gás (monthly financial aid of R\$15 for buying gas kegs); and the recently extinct Cartão Cidadão (a card similar to the Bolsa Família's allowing the monthly withdrawal of R\$50 (£13) per registered family).<sup>35</sup> Yet, the increased circulation and local availability of money through these PFZ policies also meant that the selling of their harvest surplus became no longer Guaribanos' sole or main form of acquiring currency.

As a result of this decrease in the importance of agricultural surplus for obtaining money, the great majority of Guaribanos agree that everybody is, in general, planting less nowadays. Arnaldo's formulation echoes what I have been told by several other villagers, and it is worthwhile to quote him extensively:

It's because today no-one wants to work anymore, I'm telling you. The people have changed, they're not working as before, there's very little work in Guaribas now; as I've known work, there is no work in Guaribas. [People] are living in another way: some are in commerce, others have salaries from the mayoralty, others from the government [PFZ benefits], so life's easier now. You can see half of the people wandering around [Arnaldo points to a man lazily sitting beneath a tree in front of his house in the afternoon], this was very difficult here. Everybody planted, and today people are just planting enough so that they don't have to buy themselves.

Likewise, João Caititu maintains that there is no more *troca* as before in Guaribas. He believes that with the increased circulation of money in the village, paid agricultural labour has become a popular alternative for the *troca* form of labour: "If I have R\$100 (£25) in my pocket, I pay four people to go [to the fields] with me. Troca calls for the strength of unity, but now there's only respect for payment. No-

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<sup>35</sup> The Bolsa Família card operates like a debit card and is issued by the Caixa Econômica Federal, a government-owned savings bank. The numbers and programme parameters cited above obtained throughout my fieldwork, though the amounts granted by Bolsa Família were increased thereafter. It currently amounts to R\$22 per child on top of a flat sum of R\$68 for families whose monthly per-capita income is less than R\$140. Furthermore, to families whose per-capita income is less than R\$70, the programme gives an additional flat sum of R\$68 per month. This is called the Basic Benefit, and has no conditionalities.

one wants unity (*troca*) with me anymore”. When I asked several Guaribanos about the increase of wage labour in the village, they reckoned that if the latter was not already the predominant local mode of work, then it would be around a fifty-fifty percentage in relation to any form of reciprocal labour exchange, be it the *troca* in agricultural work, or the *mutirão* in house building. In what regards the *mutirão*, Filogônio recalls that

in the past, to build an adobe house, we made up to 8,000 adobe bricks until noon. Food and *cachaça* were provided [by the future house owner] to all men. Today there’s no more unity; today there’s money, and the contract. But in those days it was a party. [In the *troca*] forty men cleared [hoed] 20 tarefas. But those who have the means prefer to pay already.

If the greater availability of hard currency enabled the increase of wage labour and the accompanying reduction of the *troca* and the *mutirão*, one would expect that paid labour took over those opportunities for work formerly carried out through mutual prestations. However, development workers and locals alike often complained to me precisely about the lack of man-power for wage labour in the village. Both PFZ officials entrusted with agricultural extension and income generation programmes, such as Sebastião, Zé Maria, and Rosa, and Guaribanos such as João Bertoldo, Milton and Tandula, lamented the difficulty in hiring men willing to work for pay in the village: “You can’t find one [man] to give a day’s labour in the fields”, Tandula once put it. Although such a claim certainly overstates the difficulty to hire local labour force, it reflects, in essence, the concern of Guaribanos and development workers with what they perceive as a major reduction of work in the village, be it paid or exchanged. According to João Caititu, besides the rising irrelevance of planting for acquiring money, it is the rough nature of agricultural work itself and the availability of new jobs that accounts for the recent divestment in farming: “In the days of the old-timers life was better because they worked, and today the youngsters don’t want to face work. They want a job at the mayoralty, to work seated, as we are here now. They don’t want to face the fields”.



Since the village became a municipality in 1997, a new range of local jobs rapidly emerged. For as a municipality Guaribas became entitled to federal funds for health (SUS, Sistema Único de Saúde), education (FUNDEF, Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério), and investments in basic infra-structure (FPM, Fundo de Participação Municipal), whose monthly instalments orbited, respectively, around R\$30,000 (£7,500), R\$110,000 (£27,500), and R\$160,000 (£40,000), comprising a monumental sum for local purposes.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, there became available several salaried positions for office clerks, secretaries, drivers, teachers, physicians, nurses, school and square watchmen, among others. To be sure, a number of those positions were beyond the reach of the local population, whose large majority had not completed high-school, and could write, despite a few exceptions, only to a very basic level.<sup>37</sup> Thus physicians, municipal school teachers, and higher-ranking secretaries and clerks were (and still are) mostly recruited from São Raimundo Nonato and Caracol, whilst villagers were hired as drivers to transport the latter to and from Guaribas in the mayoralty pick-ups, as low-grade clerks running all kinds of errands for the mayoralty, as nurses, watchmen, janitors, and builders.

The few exceptions to this were the ten or so teenagers who had just graduated from high-school when I arrived in the village in 2006. These were swiftly employed by the mayoralty mostly as teachers so as to contain the locals' growing dissatisfaction with the most prominent and better paid posts in the municipality being amassed almost exclusively by outsiders. Still, notwithstanding the few high-grade jobs for which they were unqualified, numerous Guaribanos came to be employed by the mayoralty, especially since these stable, salaried posts were, and still are a valuable political currency in the village, being exchanged for votes and political backing during elections, a subject addressed in detail in Chapter Three. For this reason, not only have these municipal jobs always been promptly distributed among Guaribano supporters after a successful campaign, but in order to accommodate most of their collaborators, the three mayors of Guaribas so far have literally conceived either various posts which do not exist, or appointments whose

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<sup>36</sup> The total amount of the different funds fluctuate from month to month, and the indicative values cited above were given me by Ercílio, the mayor of Guaribas, in August 2007.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, the literacy rate for adult Guaribanos in 2000 was only 40.98% according to the IBGE census. Consider, too, that in Brazil any person who can sign her name is not officially computed as illiterate.

holders are simply not expected to fulfil. For instance, Ovídio, Neó, Tóra, and Elias were all watchmen at the Guaribas Two square, responsible for shoeing horses, mules, pigs, goats, and cattle away from its grounds at night. Yet, I have only seen Ovídio and Tóra occasionally hang their hammocks at the square after dark, and drowsily get up to drive the eventual trespassing mule or cow away. Other Guaribanos hold unspecified positions as “office auxiliaries” — handy jacks-of-all-trades, really — whom the mayoralty manoeuvres daily to different tasks and worksites, such as collecting trash, maintaining the two squares in the village, or repairing the dirt road that leads to São Raimundo Nonato whenever it becomes unserviceable during the rainy season. Moreover, I knew at least four men in Guaribas Two who confirmed that they were in the municipal payroll working as “office auxiliaries”, and who admitted to seldom setting foot at the mayoralty.

Municipal jobs have come to be widely coveted in Guaribas, and that is why they easily translate into a political resource, being distributed as “future favours” in exchange for collaboration before and during elections. For these jobs are stable (at least for the duration of a mayor’s mandate, being typically renewed if her future candidate rises to office), well-remunerated, and secure (in comparison with agricultural work and its dependence on an ever later, shorter, and more capricious rainy season). In addition, because these office jobs can only be taken by the more qualified local labour force — those who are better educated and somewhat computer savvy — they easily convert into social and cultural capital, conferring a higher status on those who hold them. Therefore, they appeal especially to the young and better educated generations of Guaribanos who have benefited from the construction of 17 public schools in the municipality since 1997. Villagers now in their late teens, this generation was the first to grow up devoting significantly more time to formal education than to work in the fields. As mentioned in Chapter One, working in the fields used to be an essential locus for the teaching and socialization of children in the past, so much so that several Guaribanos refer to the fields as their “old schools”. Yet, since the first municipal schools were inaugurated, and the mayoralty’s Secretary of Social Assistance began to monitor families whose children were not enrolled in them — threatening to indict parents who took their children to the fields as exploiters of child labour — Guaribanos have enrolled their offspring en masse. Since students are typically excused from agricultural labour, and even those

whose classes take place in the afternoon are seldom expected to contribute as much and as frequently towards farming as an adult Guaribano, study has become much more prominent than agricultural work in the lives of local children and teenagers. Moreover, another cash transfer programme articulated by PFZ called PETI (Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour), which offers families a monthly sum of R\$25 (£6.3) for each child below 15 years of age enrolled in its after-school recreational and “socio-educational” activities, reinforces the drawing off of children and young teenagers from agricultural work.

Whilst some village elders such as Milton lament rather categorically that “the young only study and don’t want to work anymore”, others approve of the local expansion of formal education, but believe it does not offset what they perceive as the prevalent lack of interest of young Guaribanos in farming: “Guaribanos are hard workers who don’t like wrong things”, Adão once told me, before proceeding to revise his statement, “I mean the older [generations]. Now, these novices [sic], they’re not too keen on [agricultural] work at all”. For instance, Tiago, Nílio, Emília, Marciel, Teovaldo, Binha, and Neguinho were all villagers in their late teens who had graduated recently from high-school and had either municipal posts or salaried jobs in commerce. Whereas Binha rarely worked in his family’s fields since being employed by the mayoralty as a driver, Teovaldo was unequivocal about his dislike for manual labour, playfully calling the hoe “his enemy”. Emília, for instance, worked at the small pharmaceutical drugstore in Guaribas Two, and was so fascinated with the glamorous lives of national media celebrities that she could always be seen leafing through the pages of old glossy and tabloid magazines throughout the day. Returning from work in the fields, I often stopped by the drugstore to chat and rest for a few minutes before going home to wash. This would upset her so that I never missed the opportunity to sit beside her in my sweaty and soiled clothes: she would instantly leap up, throwing her arms in the air, and jokingly scream: “Protect me, Lord, from this man who’s dirty all over!”. When we finally sat together, she would beseech me to go home and only come back after having bathed, for she did not want to be seen next to a soiled man returning from the fields. Behind Emília’s playfully exaggerated aversion to being spotted with a man grubby from farming lies the emerging local stigma of agricultural labour, the latter seen as an emblem of backwardness, lack of education, and poverty — as in Geraldo and

Filogônio's combined assertions above that Guaribanos "are hard workers without education", compelled to farm their lands because they "do not know another culture, another branch". Emília, with her mind on the cosmopolitan world of soap opera stars and its sophisticated parties in the Southern metropolises of Brazil, wishfully declared several times not wanting to marry a farmer — despite dating one. Similarly, Sorâmes, Osélia, and Lucimária, unmarried young women in their late teens, often sat at the square after dark criticizing those young men who, even after washing, still looked like farmers. Their targets typically wore flip-flops and old-fashioned shirts sometimes slightly stained or torn, and these were accused of smelling, having rough skin, and not cleaning the dirt from their bodies (especially from under their fingernails) — all direct traces of agricultural activity.

Still, a much more common stance was Tiago's, who evocatively stated that despite being "more pen than earth", he had "no prejudice against the fields or farmers", and actually "thought it beautiful to be a tiller". Nílío, Tiago, and his brother Tcharles, as well as the best part of Guaribanos in their late teens, studied and occasionally contributed to their families' agricultural work, and I have hoed alongside them in a number of *troca* and paid work parties. Yet, one already heard of local teenagers who had never been to the fields, and whenever these observations were made, they were always proffered in a low tone, as if they amounted to a condemnation. Thus it was rumoured that Marciel "never picked up a hoe in his life", and I learned from Aberlardo, Elias, and Vicente that Filogônio, Aílton, and Dudu "have always lacked the courage [energy] to go to the fields".

The fact is that in spite of the advantages and the higher status of municipal desk jobs, working in the fields still retains for the majority of the population — even for those who like Tiago, Tcharles, and Nílío also have jobs at the mayoralty — the quality of bona fide manly work. This explains Caititu's indignation in the quote cited above, in which he vented his disapproval at the younger generation of Guaribanos wanting to work indoors, "seated, as we are here now", which he seems to suggest to not qualify as "real work" at all. As described in Chapter One, labouring in the fields is still a traditional measure of a man's strength and vigour, and the test of a competent male who must be virile enough to protect and provide for his family. The way Guaribanos speak about agricultural work and municipal

jobs reveals a contraposition of characteristics that is essential to their local definitions: whilst the first involves strenuous manual labour outdoors, with produce as its final product, the latter implies “mental work” indoors, comfortably seated in an office, yielding hard currency at the end of every month. These are substantively different forms of work, and now faced with the benefits of the recently available “desk jobs”, Guaribanos find themselves between two conflicting valuations of agricultural labour. On the one hand, even for the younger generation, being a hard working farmer is still at the crux of the local stated ideal of the moral person; on the other, there are signs of a rising underestimation of agricultural work, which can be gleaned from the overall decrease of farming activities, the high demand in Guaribas for non-rural jobs at the mayoralty, the disparaging of those who as much as “look like” farmers by local young women, and its emerging valuation as a trope of backwardness, as the only option for those perceived as lacking education and cultural capital.

In conclusion, agricultural work in Guaribas is declining because 1) with PFZ’s cash transfer programmes, farmers no longer depend chiefly on their harvests’ surplus to acquire hard currency; 2) the recently available, well-remunerated, non-agrarian jobs at the mayoralty appeal to villagers, and especially to the younger generation of Guaribanos, appropriating labour force previously engaged in agricultural work, and becoming a standard of high-status against which the former is deemed backward and the only resource of uneducated, rustic “peasants” (as even old farmers like Geraldo, Arnaldo, and Filogônio reiterate), and; 3) formal schooling and child labour law keeps children and young teenagers away from agricultural activities, further undermining younger Guaribanos’ previous familiarity with and disposition towards work in the fields. Yet, to point out, alongside the accounts of Guaribanos themselves, that agricultural work is decreasing in the village is not to suggest that there ever was a time when locals maximized agricultural production, or exploited the full potential output of their lands. Accounts by older Guaribanos reveal that though there was more agricultural work in the past, production has always been low relative to existing possibilities: “Nobody ever planted to attain abundance”, João Bertoldo told me during an interview,

they [the forefathers] always planted little. Their ideas were weak [sic], they didn't have a mister from abroad to give them explanations. My father did it, I do it the same way. My sons too. It was superstition: if one planted too much, it wouldn't grow.

In sum, though capable of sustained labour, as their effective work migrations to the metropolises aver, Guaribanos have lacked the motivation to do so in their village. It has been a part of their traditional work ethos to preserve the local proportion of work and leisure, and it is the failure to take this ethos into consideration that accounts for some of PFZ's shortcomings concerning the maximization of local production, the imparting of a capitalistic cash-cropping attitude, and the implementation of local cooperatives, to which I now turn.

### Shortcomings of PFZ economic policies: the case of workshops, cooperatives, and technology transfer

From the point of view of local development workers, informed as it usually is by capitalistic work principles — such as the maximization of production for the accumulation and reinvestment of profit — as well as by some metropolitan well-known prejudices, Guaribanos enjoy immoderate standards of relaxation bordering on laziness. In all my interviews with both temporary and permanent development workers in Guaribas, they seemed genuinely dismayed at the locals' reluctance to incorporate technical innovations, if not to internalize the very will to maximize production. Sebastião, Rosa, Aline, Antônio, and Lucilé are agents of different development initiatives who illustrate below how PFZ projects have consistently been less successful than expected in the village. They blame, on the one hand, the locals' lack of motivation to pursue programmes and take advantage of existing opportunities for alternative income generation, and, on the other, the very structure of PFZ projects in their failure to acknowledge and adjust to the locals' way of life.

Sebastião, the local representative of EMATER, the government's division for agricultural technical assistance and rural extension, has lived in the village since the end of 2003, when the recently launched PFZ pressed for the installation of a permanent EMATER office in its pilot community. His role has been to instruct villagers on small-scale, family agriculture techniques to improve their productivity, disseminating simple procedures such as not dropping too many seeds in each open mould and leaving enough space between rows during planting. Ideally, Sebastião reports, each square metre of earth should sustain no more than five corn plants, but Guaribanos commonly sow ten corn seeds, together with a handful of beans, in only half of that area, which exhausts the fertility of the soil and yields weaker crops. According to my observations whilst sowing with Guaribanos from 2006 to 2008, the latter scarcely pay much attention to precisely how many seeds are thrown into the moulds or to the exact spacing between them, so that it agrees with Sebastião's assessment. This, however, leads him to the conclusion that his efforts have had little impact on Guaribanos' traditional planting practices:

They don't invest [in these techniques], they don't believe in investing. (...) They still plant as they planted 20 years ago. The older only believe in the old practices: no [correct] spacing, too many grains per mould, corn and beans together [in the same mould], slashing and burning, things we don't advise. Because when you burn, you spoil the soil, the environment. We recommend the use of fertilizers, but due to the distance of products, they also don't do it.

Sebastião deems he has been equally unsuccessful in introducing different crop varieties of beans and corn, higher yielding and earlier maturing strains which are also more resistant to the semi-arid climate, such as the *caupí* bean. He explains that because *caupí* grains are smaller, villagers have to work harder at removing the beans from their strings, a task made even harder when handling the crops fresh — “green beans” — which the villagers very much prefer to cooking with dried beans. In addition, Guaribanos have told me that their local bean varieties are tastier than EMATER's, and since they seldom differentiate between crops they plant for sale and for private consumption, they simply favour the first in their fields. In what

regards EMATER's endeavours to improve local forage techniques by encouraging the use of sorghum and *guandú* beans, Sebastião declares:

Very few people plant them. Nobody makes use of them. Sorghum is resistant to droughts, and substitutes for corn in almost everything. (...) The *guandú* bean is a plant that remains green all year round, especially during summer, and is rich in protein. But nobody uses them for feeding the animals. It's very few people who utilize our systems [sic].

The same resistance to new agricultural practices obtains in the management of livestock. Silage, a fermented, high-moisture fodder which can last up to five years if prepared and stored properly, Sebastião maintains, "would be the solution for the semi-arid region" in terms of feeding cattle, pigs, and goats throughout the dry summer months, a period of sparse grazing areas which claims the lives of a few animals every year. Corn, sorghum, and cacti (*palma*) can be ground, fermented, and stored inside an improvised silo in the ground, but the process requires the collaboration of at least nine people, and Sebastião only knows of one person who is willing to work in such an endeavour: "In the village, there's only one person who uses it: Nazion. (...) And a *seixo* (a proper machine for silage) is expensive, only an association can buy it. Only Nazion shows any interest in one here". Nazion, as mentioned earlier, is a quiet and industrious Pentecostal who from the very first showed interest in the new techniques advocated by EMATER. Sebastião remarks that from livestock management to planting techniques and new crop varieties, Nazion has implemented almost all procedures with a great deal of success. Under Sebastião's close supervision, Nazion has multiplied his flock of sheep, but even so, his achievements have not inspired Guaribanos to follow his example:

We have a system for ovine management, with a closed compound to separate females about to give birth, and the kids once they're born. The two centimetre umbilical cut... When the kids are born you have to cut the umbilical cord, dip it in iodine tincture at ten per cent. Again, nobody does it. (...) Few people have copied our examples.



And we have been working with Nazion for two years now, right? (...) Those who knew Nazion two years ago, and who see him now, see that he has practically quadrupled the amount of animals he had. Sheep, I mean. You can go there and see that he has a lot of things there. (...) And what we observe walking around here is that few people copied Nazion.

When I asked Sebastião why he believed the majority of Guaribanos still refrained from integrating procedures which so apparently brought greater prosperity to those who applied them, he replied: “They’re afraid of growing. That’s the reality. They’re afraid of growing”. Thus, Sebastião, as many of the development workers considered below, interpreted the villagers’ reluctance to assimilate these new ways of working with animals and with the land — which would, in effect, mean a greater volume of work for locals — as fear of prosperity, prosperity understood as the maximization of production and profit.

Likewise, Rosa, hired by PFZ to direct a complementary income generation course on pottery making and ceramic bijouterie, told me during an interview in early 2006 that “the people [of Guaribas] are not ready for the [programme’s] benefits because they lack education. (...) They need to take on responsibilities and show the will to do [make things happen], but they don’t have the energy for it”. Guaribas, she added, had all the means to be “the city of the future”, but “very little was accomplished” because the population did not “awaken” or “rise” to the undertaking. Evidence of that, she noted, came from how quickly locals discontinued the productive activities taught in these two or three week-long workshops, such as the one Rosa directed, when those in charge of the projects left the village. By the time Rosa arrived in Guaribas, she could already witness the outcome of the first rounds of courses the years before: the groups of apprentices had disbanded and only a few local women continued activities, albeit only on demand; the tools provided had disappeared; and the infrastructure (such as the pottery oven) had not been used ever since. Speaking on the subject in another interview, Lucilé, the mayorality’s unofficial, though de facto Secretary of Social Assistance, explained:

The intention was that there would be continuity to the courses, but they [the local women] say there are no more resources, no money. One of them said that she would share [what was left of the initial equipment] with the others, but it didn't happen. They kept the pliers, the waxed lines, the stones, all of the material. For as much as we work and stimulate them in the meetings, they don't want to have any extra work. Besides, there's no market [for the products], there's nobody to sell to. Only when there's an order.

A similar fate befell almost all workshops sponsored by PFZ: courses on sweets and baked goods, homemade soap, shampoo, and cleaning products, bijouterie making with local seeds, manicure, embroidery and cross-stitch, among others. When I asked Lucilé if she thought that, in general, the workshops failed, she replied:

I think so. No, I know so. And it's not from lack of stimulus from us [development workers], lack of motivation. It's [their] lack of interest, it's indolence [*comodismo*]: the people here are very complacent [*acomodado*]. They want to find everything ready, to have a card to draw some money, buy those little things they're used to living with.

On the other hand, both Rosa and Lucilé do not exempt the structure of PFZ projects from their share of the blame in the failure of workshops. The lack of continued supervision or accompaniment of activities was a pattern common not only to workshops, but also to micro-credit projects, and to PFZ administrative inspections, with the superintendent responsible for Guaribas in the Teresina PFZ headquarters, Jucileide, having visited the village only three times during the course of my fieldwork, from January 2006 to April 2008. Aline, who worked with Lucilé in the Secretary of Social Assistance, was especially critical of this lack of continued direction:

Every once in a while professionals come, give courses, and then leave. This way, it doesn't work. Me, that's my opinion, and I've already disclosed it to the coordinators, that there isn't a more

systematized endeavour. Like, they take a course on income generation, form a group, but then the other part of it is missing: they learn how to make things, but don't learn how to manage it, secure resources to continue production, get a place to expose their products. And there's the question of the accursed road [to Guaribas] too, which is disgraceful, makes everything much harder. If they don't get another capacitation on how to manage their business, the cooperative, the production group, or the association, it's difficult for them to give them continuity. (...) They [development workers] have come with various ideas, like the homemade baking goods course, but there's no market, unless the mayoralty hires them for a party. They were capacitated, learned the course, got a loan from the bank [Banco do Nordeste], found a place to sell their products, but it seems that they argued, I don't know, there wasn't enough group spirit. Then they began to disperse (...) and use the resources acquired for other activities which had nothing to do with the project's. They invested in farming, bought other things, and didn't invest in that which they had organized themselves to do.

Apart from this lack of continued supervision, what takes place in the workshops themselves, their contents and dynamics, is little engaging for locals. Even though the ideology of participatory, bottom-up development is prominent in both PFZ mission statements and the discourse of development workers in Guaribas, what I witnessed during the courses and workshops was a mixture of activities that ranged from group games to "unite participants" to a barrage of technical terms with which Guaribanos are, at best, not generally familiar. From having to play "rabbit-in-the-hole", a children's game which clearly embarrassed a few adults and older matrons, and whose physical contact runs against the typically reserved demure of married women in the village, to lectures which make use of expressions such as "sensitizing for collective action", "denominated methodology", and "capacitation for potentialities", it is difficult to imagine what Guaribanos actually take from the experience. In these workshops, Guaribanos are often instructed to respond in specific ways, such as applauding volunteers who have performed "positive actions" for the community like collecting trash in public areas or removing loose animals from the streets. For most of the time, however, teachers struggle with open talk and lack of attention in the classroom, if not with the cynicism of participants when some questionable ideas are presented to them as self-evident. I recall, for instance, the

reaction to Rosa's suggestion of a collective effort for the arborisation of the village, in which each Guaribano would be responsible for planting and taking care of a few trees, and pay a fee for their maintenance: some villagers smiled, some laughed, and some simply looked at each other and shook their heads. To be sure, Guaribanos, living in the midst of the wild *caatinga* uplands, can hardly be expected to do anything but smile at the idea of paying for keeping trees.

That most of these courses have a pro forma quality, without further supervision and accompaniment, and without an appropriate level of attention to the local socioeconomic context, becomes evident when one considers the choices of courses to be taught in the village. It is not only that pottery making and embroidery, for instance, are advanced as the recovery of local traditions which in fact have never been native to the village, but that some courses completely ignore the high cost or unavailability of their raw products in Guaribas. This can be illustrated by an anecdote involving Neguinho, Tandula's son, who attended the course on homemade sweets and baked goods, and attempted to make *coxinha de galinha* (a fried, wheat flour pasty with a seasoned chicken filling) in his father's bakery. Throughout Brazil, a good *coxinha* is one that has a larger proportion of the more expensive filling to the much cheaper fried dough, but due to the elevated cost in Guaribas of powdered milk (the only form of milk widely available) and wheat flour (in lieu of the local, common, and cheap manioc flour), it is the opposite that obtains. Sampling one of Neguinho's *coxinhas* one day, I complimented him on the flavour of his pasties, but remarked that they needed just a bit more filling to be truly refined *coxinhas*, to which he heatedly protested: "Ôxe, but isn't the dough the expensive [part], that people here like the most?". The fact is that, in the case of the baked goods course, as in that of many others, the cost of raw materials rendered what would elsewhere be a low cost enterprise economically unviable in Guaribas. Without an internal market for products, as Aline pointed out, since no household or family would seriously consider hiring another one to make pasties and pay for the embedded extra cost of profit instead of making them itself, the production of baked goods was left to the three establishments which already sold them in Guaribas.

Still, the critique that workshop participants learned productive activities but lacked the basic expertise to run a business, such as Aline's, must have finally struck

a note at the PFZ headquarters sometime before 2008, for in that year two employees of the Ministry of Social Development were sent by PFZ to Guaribas. I interviewed Eduardo and Edna towards the end of my fieldwork, and gathered from their reports that they were making good progress in their work, which consisted mainly in creating fictitious enterprises to be administered by Guaribanos under their guidance. Villagers were thus trained in product presentation, commercialization, control of finances, recycling of leftovers, cash flow projection, cost reduction, accounting, production prognosis, and so forth. Six groups in the municipality, two in the village of Guaribas and four in the settlements, were tutored for two months and received course materials and basic supplies, but some were already legally constituted associations whose workings “left much to be desired”, as Eduardo put it. Despite their achievements with the apiculture and panification enterprises in Guaribas, they faced some common problems. For instance, without taking into consideration the local sexual division of labour beforehand, they found out in practice that whilst women performed domestic-like tasks, such as washing the honey compound, men conducted the main beekeeping activities, but that they never worked together as originally intended. Conversely, in activities which were locally associated with women, such as panification (cooking) and embroidery (mending clothes), even if a few men did initially show up for meetings, they did not come back after the first sessions, so that the idealized gender integration also did not occur. As regards the people’s drive to carry out the extra work involved in the activities, Eduardo’s account resonated with what I had heard several times before from development workers:

They depend on, and get complacent [*acomodado*] by receiving the money from Bolsa Família. The people of Guaribas have become catatonic [sic]. (...) They don’t see the necessity for integration. Even though they say they’re one single family [in the village], there are several nuclei.

Eduardo’s last observation deftly describes a characteristic of Guaribas already addressed in Chapter One, namely, that the village consists in a constellation of semi-autonomous elementary families, represented by household groups, which

function as corporate units for productive activities and economic collaboration. These nuclei, to use Eduardo's term, constitute Guaribanos' main, traditional criterion for trust, solidarity, and cooperation. Yet, the type of collaboration appropriate for the successful operation of cooperatives and associations, as envisioned by development planners, is predicated more on an abstract, collective Guaribano identity, and on the consideration of advantageous relationships for economic profit, than on kinship membership and proximity. This discrepancy accounts for the difficulty in establishing cooperative efforts between villagers as whole, and for the breakdown of most associations shortly after they become operational. For instance, there are seven associations in Guaribas — three working with apiculture, two with manioc flour production, one with ovine livestock, and one with castor bean cultivation. All of them, Sebastião reports, face serious troubles: members "never get together for meetings", "their management boards have been expired for years", and all are both underproductive and deficitary at some level, with some owing as much as R\$80,000 (£20,000) in loans and supplies. One of the worst cases in the village is the apiculture association:

The project consists in a honey house with five bee boxes [hives] for each family; I've tried for two years to finish the house in a *mutirão* [collective effort] regime, and to this day I haven't been able to. When these projects [for the creation of cooperatives] come, they demand a financial counterpart from the associations, which must contribute ten per cent of the project's total value. This is usually given in the form of labour force so that members don't have to put in their own money. But then we have trouble because when it's time to work, members don't show up. One or two do, but that's it.

Sebastião believes that greatest obstacle for cooperatives is getting villagers to work together, due to what he refers to as "the distrust, the disunion of the people":

Guaribanos don't trust each other, it's complicated. Because if you're trying to work with an association where members don't get along, where one doesn't trust the other, it's difficult for you to work with

that association as you should. That's what we have found in all associations, except in that in the Zé Bento [settlement], which is the only one that hasn't presented this problem. All other associations have that lack of unity: people don't go [to work], take advantage of each other's work [*é um se escorando no outro*], mistrust each other...

The Zé Bento manioc flour association provides a telling counter-example. It is the association with the fewest members, in a small and more isolated settlement of the municipality where all residents are very closely related. Sebastião proposes that, among all associations, "it is the one that works the best because it is the most united, because only relatives are members". Eduardo and Edna confirm that kinship proximity functions as the effective local bond for cooperation with a revealing example. When it came to choosing the tentative names for the experimental cooperatives they set up, the villagers chose the surnames of the predominant local families to which they belonged. Thus the names of all associations in the Brejão settlement were designated by their productive activities followed by the family name Maia, those in the Lagoa de Baixo settlement by the family name Moraes, and a few in Fazenda, such as the panification one, by the family name Rocha. Probably, had the other functioning cooperatives in the village not been named by the government workers which first established them, most would have followed this trend. But this would have taken place if, at their inception, they had been formed with members of the same family, which was not the case in Guaribas, and which led to another problem: the selection of associates at random. "Throughout the Guaribas municipality", Sebastião reports,

all cooperatives were created solely to receive a [specific] project, and nothing more. So no association was created as it should. And some of them were even created through a draw [to select members], which is the most absurd thing to do. (...) Because an association has to be a united group of people, right? On behalf of a common benefit. And those here aren't. The one here in the village [apiculture] is the worst in terms of organization. Its lack of unity began with the selection of ten people from Fazenda and ten from Guaribas Two. The division started with this. The members from Fazenda are more or less united,

but they don't unite with those from Guaribas Two. And it's an association, all had to share the same objective. And this doesn't exist.

When I asked Sebastião if, in this case, the division was fuelled by the well known animosity between residents from the different sides of the village, he replied: “No! It's between all. If they're not from the same family, they don't trust [each other]. And even within the same [extended] family, they sometimes suspect each other”.

The setback here is not only that kinship serves as the main local idiom for solidarity and cooperation, but that a relationship forged solely, or mostly on the basis of personal economic interest is viewed with a certain malaise in Guaribas. The wielding of an instrumental relationship for commercial purposes, for lucrative transactions devoid of personalistic relations — that is, relations based on empathy, intimacy, and affinity, usually associated with those within the kindred — has negative moral connotations. For a person who builds a relationship with another having, first and foremost, her private interests, her own personal advantage in mind is locally called “*interesseira*”, a term for which there is no exact correlate in English, but that can be described as “manipulative”, “self-seeking”, “driven by [personal] interest”. This mindset, however, is not only not morally condemnable according to the principles of economic cooperatives, but is in fact essential to them: members unite because they have common private objectives in mind (i.e., profit), despite their personal relations, and the more they are driven by self-interest to perform their respective functions, the better the whole organizational machinery works. Nonetheless, the idea of a mechanical, instrumental day-to-day interaction between associates based exclusively, or mostly on the advancement of their own individual economic gain is not appealing to villagers, who, when required to cooperate under such conditions, cannot bring themselves to trust and want to work with each other. It is the local legitimate basis for trust, solidarity, and collaboration that appears to be lacking for them. Hence, the endemic lack of “group spirit” in the village, to use one of Aline's formulations above, can be attributed to this, and it is thus not surprising that cooperative members frequently “argue”, “do not share materials”, “don't show up for meetings”, and gradually stop working on behalf of the collective enterprise.



It is also not uncommon for associations to use the money for a specific project to buy things that are entirely unrelated to it, usually goods and materials that can be divided amongst their members and taken home, to be worked and used by their own household groups. Thus it was that the apiculture association in Guaribas suddenly bought *caipira* chicks, a breed that roams free around houses, with the last instalment intended for beekeeping activities. Similarly, the manioc flour association in the Cajueiro settlement employed money for its existing project to allegedly start the cultivation of cashew. Again, without proper supervision, Guaribanos fall back on the pattern of independent household production, or simply use the money to buy goods that bear no connection to any productive activity. Commodities such as motorcycles, DVD players, satellite antennas, stereo systems, and TV's are often the final products of several micro-credit schemes received by villagers for small-scale economic enterprises. The main sources of such diversions of resources are lines of credit offered by Banco do Nordeste (Bank of the Northeast) and PRONAF (National Programme for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture). Through a micro-credit scheme called AgroAmigo, villagers may borrow up to R\$1,500 (£375) for any commercial or productive endeavour, and through another called FNE, beneficiaries may take as many loans as they want at the interest rate of one per cent a year, receiving a discount of 25 per cent over its total value if the loan is repaid within its deadline. Loans over R\$4,000 (£1,000) lose the 25 per cent reduction, but there is no maximum number of lines of credit available. It is very common in Guaribas for households to appropriate such micro-credit loans for productive projects to use in day-to-day expenses, to lend to other villagers at interest rates ranging from 15 to 30 per cent a month, or to buy commodities for leisure or transportation. For instance, Elias had a pigpen with a considerable number of animals, and when he received the money to increase his pig livestock and improve its installations through PRONAF, he sold the majority of his pigs and combined the revenue with the money from the micro-credit loan to buy a motorcycle for his household.

Sebastião believes that these projects are all too generous, and that without proper evaluation and close scrutiny, it is not surprising that beneficiaries misappropriate such easily obtainable resources. This exploitation by locals of micro-credit and cash-transfer schemes is facilitated by the difficulty in ascertaining

the actual yield and revenue of agricultural workers. As it is impossible to thoroughly inspect their economic activities and financial transactions, since dealings are not recorded through bills of sale or in bank accounts (which, incidentally, most Guaribanos do not possess), one must rely on their own reports. Because the chief requirement for these financial benefits is a very low yearly income, Guaribanos regularly manipulate information regarding their harvests and revenue in order to qualify. Chapter Five explores how PFZ's most important cash-transfer programme, Bolsa Família, is affected by this flawed form of assessment, leading to its abuse by locals, development workers, and local politicians. For now, the nature of the discrepancies caused by the absence of proper check-up by the competent officials can be illustrated by Sebastião's two assessments, made in 2005, of Guaribanos' harvests. He told me that when he conducted a survey of castor-bean cultivation, for which villagers would be rewarded for high productivity with continued federal investments and micro-credit loans, production had been far above the expected, with farmers declaring that even though beans had not been their main crop, they had harvested at least ten 60-kilo sacks of it. However, when it came, in the same year, to claiming benefits for Seguro-Safra (Harvest-Insurance Scheme), whereby farmers are compensated for very low yields caused by adverse environmental conditions, Guaribanos uniformly declared to having lost most of harvests due to lack of rainfall.

Antônio, the Ministry of Agriculture inspector responsible for surveying farming and stockbreeding activities in the region, was equally critical of the programmes' defective surveys and lack of continued supervision. He took me and Sebastião to accompany him in one of his sporadic supervision rounds in Guaribas — the only one he undertook throughout my time in the village — which lasted the whole day. I interviewed Antônio at a number of locations, attended the meetings, and also recorded his verdicts in the pick-up truck as we left one location and made our way to the next. Along with the usual objections to the locals' lack of involvement and will to work in the cooperatives, he mentioned that many families within associations misappropriated resources or mishandled the equipment (such as the manioc grinding motor) until it finally broke down. Yet, Antônio was more disapproving of the basic structure of programmes in general, and of the absence of money and man-power for proper follow-up visits in particular. "These capacitations [workshops to motivate locals to form cooperatives] don't work at all. But the people

up there [government officials] think that it's fine, that it's working beautifully, so...". He complained not only that supervisions were few and far between due to the lack of federal funds, but that those that took place were extremely short and ineffective, like the one he was conducting. In fact, Antônio visited so many locations during the day that villagers were caught unawares by his appearance. Most associates were either working in their fields or could not be found in their homes since they were not warned in able time to arrange to be present. As a result, Antônio, pressed for time, found himself talking to only three or four members in any of the associations, the rest of the public being comprised of curious spectators and relatives of an absent member substituting for her. "I'm already used to it", he noted, "I have to 'sell my fish' [persuade] to three or four people, and they have to pass it on to the others".

Chiefly, however, Antônio was there to check up on the progress of cooperatives, and not to capacitate members himself. His main task at the occasion was to inspect the results of a cycle of workshops given to three associations in Guaribas. He explained that three associations from ten municipalities had been chosen through a contract signed in 2004 between the Ministry of Agriculture and the State's Contractor for Food Security and the Eradication of Hunger (Contratadoria Estadual para Segurança Alimentar e Erradicação da Fome), a deal brokered by PFZ, to undergo a three-part workshop programme. The programme's objective was to 1) "sensibilize and mobilize" locals towards the need to associate for economic profit, 2) "capacitate" them for the chosen productive activities, and 3) provide "advice and technical consultancy for the elaboration of viable productive projects", as well as "oversee their successful implementation". To ministrate these workshops, the federal government had hired Fundatec (Fundação Universidade Empresa de Tecnologia e Ciência), or Enterprise-University Foundation of Technology and Science, a non-profit private firm "for the development of people and organizations".<sup>38</sup> When I asked Antônio on what basis the associations had been chosen, he smiled and replied: "I've been looking for that answer myself". In effect, a few criteria he knew to be relevant did not seem to be the ones that informed the selection, for, as he showed me in his reports, all of the associations were deep in debt, which should already disqualify them for new investments. In addition, none of

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<sup>38</sup> "Fundatec institucional" 2010.

the chosen associations showed “a high level of structural organization”, another criterion for selection, and he simply could not conceive of a justification for their choice: “They took ten municipalities because they “liked their looks”. The criteria for picking them, nobody knows...”.

At several points during our visits, Antônio seemed genuinely lost between what he read in his official reports and what the villagers told him. Struggling, on the fly, with the discrepancies between what was to be done and what was actually being done, he learned, for instance, that one association that had already renovated a compound for manioc flour production, reconditioned three old manioc grinding motors, and cemented two spaces for packaging had officially received money for apiculture activities. Similarly, at the apiculture association in Guaribas, Antônio was surprised to find out that the project’s last instalment had been used to acquire 300 *caipira* chicks. At the meeting, he asked the only three members present whether it would not have been better to continue with the beekeeping activity, whether they had benefited from the change, and where the chicks were now. The associates replied that no, nothing had improved, and that only 100 of the 300 chicks were left, the rest had died. What kind of technical orientation did they need, Antônio insisted, to breed chicks and distribute them among associates, but the members remained silent. “So Fundatec received R\$300,000 (£75,000) to teach you how to buy chicks? Did they teach anything else at all?”, Antônio inquired, and one of the villagers answered: “They came once to show how to feed them corn, but nothing else. They came back once after that to give us the certificates”. The meeting ended by Antônio reassuring the by now apprehensive representatives of the apiculture association that he would not recommend that the money received be returned.

Antônio’s suspicions of Fundatec’s services increased throughout the day by the information he gathered at the different associations. Fundatec had received R\$444,000 (£111,000) from the federal government for the three-part workshops in the ten municipalities: R\$50,000 (£12,500) for the first, R\$50,000 (£12,500) for the second, and R\$300,000 (£75,000) for the third — the remaining balance being destined to inflation adjustment and the states’ counterpart of approximately ten per cent of the total. But at every location he learned that Fundatec’s representatives had unexpectedly distributed R\$3,000 (£750) to each association, without further

supervision, which led to the aforementioned deviation from original project activities. Notwithstanding the fact that all associations had indeed composed a final productive project with the aid of Fundatec instructors, according to locals' reports it did not seem that the firm had sent enough teachers for all of the appointed workshops, and that in some cases it had not even provided associates with course packages and other basic materials. It looked as if Fundatec had distributed the unanticipated, unofficial amounts to the associations to ingratiate itself with their members, and buy their silence concerning its inadequate consultancy services. Several times during his visit, Antônio questioned not only the quality of these workshops, but also their necessity, such as in the case of capacitations for manioc flour production in communities that had been working with it for decades. Faced with the results he observed on the ground, Antônio was visibly embarrassed, and he often turned to me with a personal disclaimer: "Understand well, Marcello, it's not up to me, now, to judge whether the capacitation was or wasn't well made. I just have to make a report and recommend, or not, the approval of the stages of the activities". Antônio was thus content in simply ascertaining whether the meetings had taken place; what went on in those meetings, whether they were necessary or profitable for associates, or whether Fundatec's prestations had been fraudulent, were beyond the scope of his work: "We can denounce all that, but it isn't worth it. We here are 'the last drop' [i.e., insignificant, powerless]". Therefore, all the problems Antônio observed in loco were probably left out of his report, among which the arbitrary selection of associations, the failure of those that were chosen to operate properly, the pointlessness of productive activities selected for some specific capacitations, the pro forma quality of Fundatec's often incomplete and deficient assistance, and the general lack of further supervision.

## Conclusion: the work ethos of Guaribanos in the light of PFZ capitalistic premises and practices

A health agent working in the village once told me that “Guaribas suffers from only one, albeit terrible disease: laziness”. One of the most immediate conclusions of development workers, journalists, government officials, and outsiders who spend some time in the village is that Guaribanos work remarkably little either because they are lazy or lack the ambition to thrive economically. Yet, as shown above, though Guaribanos are capable of continuous hard work, they deliberately decide to devote a judicious amount of time and effort to their productive enterprises. If Guaribanos are unwilling to work more it is because they wish to preserve the local balance of labour and leisure, which provides sufficiently for their families’ welfare whilst affording a notable quantity of rest and spare time. As Guaribanos themselves articulate the advantages of their work ethos, they are able to incorporate relaxation, rest, and recreation into their everyday without having to “slave over work” as they do in the metropolises.

To be sure, the quality of local recreation is also called into question by development workers such as Márcia and Lucilé, who interpret the local opportunities for leisure as low standard diversion, and perceive the villagers’ everyday as a monotonous sameness. However, the way spare time is locally consumed, be it in rest, daytime sleep, hunting, playing domino, visiting relatives, bathing in rock pools in the mountains, roasting pigs and drinking with friends in the fields, as well as attending marriages and local festivities, are not so much evidence that villagers lead a substandard existence as indication of their modest ideas of satisfaction. To the question of affluence, with prosperity depending on either producing much or desiring little, as Sahlins put it, Guaribanos answer with the latter option (Sahlins 1972: 2). For what is understood by outsiders as an ascetic conception of material welfare — as in Lucilé’s critique that Guaribanos are complacent in that they only desire “those little things they’re used to living with” — simply means that people’s wants are easily satisfied, and that without having to strain to the limits of available labour and disposable resources. For Guaribanos, she

who “prosper” economically, as conceived by development workers, succeeds at the cost of her own quality of life, at the cost of her own (superfluous) effort. Therefore, it is a conscious decision not to unduly increase the amount of energy harnessed for productive activities since it would disturb what can be termed, to loosely borrow on Bentham’s idea, the local felicific calculus (Bentham 1982 [1789]).

If existing examples mean anything, this underlies the limited success of cooperatives, workshops for complementary income generation, and the assimilation of new productive techniques, all of which demand extra work on the part of Guaribanos. Certainly, to the difficulty in instituting local cooperatives one must add the traditional model of solidarity and cooperation based on kinship which is extraneous to their economic ideology, and to the malfunction of workshops, the arbitrary nature of the chosen capacitations and the deficiency of services provided, but it has always been my impression that at the root of this local disinclination to incorporate economic practices advanced by PFZ is Guaribanos’ deliberate decision to guard what they themselves convey as a “good life”, a life of “freedom” in their lands.

For even prized commodities and local delicacies widely enjoyed by Guaribanos such as *doce de buriti* (a sweet made with the mauritiella palm’s fruit), bottle butter (a rich butter that remains liquid at room temperature), fresh curdled milk, *caipira* chicken, honey from indigenous bees, and chili sauce are seldom locally made, raised, or gathered due to the additional work they require. For instance, whilst most Guaribano households own a few head of cattle, fresh milk is hard to find in the village, and though I put the word out that I would like to buy it whenever available, I was able to get a hold of it not more than three times during my whole stay. Thus, despite the wide availability of the raw product, fresh curdled milk and bottle butter are rare treats in Guaribas. The same obtains with chili pepper and wild honey, both of which do not take much to find in the vast tracts of uncultivated *caatinga* that surround the village, but which, like bottle butter, is only purchased in São Raimundo Nonato. Whenever I came back from the town with wild honey, bottle butter, and chili sauce, and offered it to my host family to be had at dinner, such was the usual accolade that both promptly disappeared in just a few days. In the case of *doce de buriti*, though mauritiella palm trees can be found in the native vegetation, the sweet confection from its fruit is never made locally, but

equally bought in Caracol and São Raimundo Nonato. Finally, the raising of *caipira* chicken, the basis of the much loved local dish that carries its name, Sebastião explains, has never taken off in the village because it is a breed that demands daily care and continual attention from Guaribanos. Thus the predominance in the village of an unproductive, sad looking native breed of chicken which is half naked and half covered in feathers, and which is only kept by households for sporadic private consumption.

Hence, it is suggestive that though Guaribanos are extremely fond of all of these viands, they widely refrain from undertaking the extra work their making entails. Without considering such circumstances, which reveal the particular nature of the local work ethos, PFZ projects for complementary income generation activities achieve only limited results. For how, one may ask, are Guaribanos expected to enthusiastically take on extraneous production activities whose raw products are either costly or scarce in the village, and for which there is an uncertain market, when they avoid the additional work that favourite local delicacies require — delicacies whose raw products are readily obtainable, whose manufacture they are familiar with, and for which there is a guaranteed local demand?

That Guaribanos try to make their lives as easy as possible is difficult to prove, but impossible to ignore. This can be inferred from local proverbs and patterned behaviours which celebrate a rationale of energy conservation. One of the most popular sayings in Guaribas is, literally, “Don’t mess with what doesn’t need [fixing]” (“*Não mexe no que não precisa*”). This saying is commonly employed not only between siblings and friends, but I have also heard parents in countless occasions making use of it to tell their children to leave some work or broken object in need of fixing be. From sharpening blunt implements, repairing crooked tools, hoeing after rains, and putting cabinets in order, to fixing leaking roofs and restoring broken furniture, work is sometimes indefinitely postponed until pressing need presents itself. This penchant can also be illustrated by the chaotic state of backyards, where Guaribanos dispose immediately of all kinds of obsolete articles which they later must negotiate in order to get to their exterior bathrooms and open brick ovens. (See Picture 20.) Likewise, when my friends would visit me in my house, they would nonchalantly toss candy papers and cigarette butts on the floor, something they would also do in their households: “Why pick it up now if it’s going



to be swept later?”, they retorted when I inquired why simply not throw them in the trash. Mãe Valda, who from very early on received me as a sort of adoptive son, introducing me to people and helping me to sort out my rented house, always urged me to hoe my little field of beans, corn, and pumpkin a bit one day, a bit the next, but never to do it all at once — in other words, to postpone and apportion my effort in doses, and to conveniently delay the completion of the work.

Just as undertaking work that is not considered to be indispensable in advance is locally seen as unwarranted, long-term economic planning, or spending time planning in advance for events such as hunts, barbecues in the fields, and trips to the mountains in groups are not characteristic of Guaribanos. A great deal of disorganization obtained in almost all barbecues in the fields to which I was invited, with insufficient provisions, beer and beverages arriving at the venues warm to the point of being discarded, people forgetting to bring the games (cards, dominoes, etc.) that would entertain the gathering, and lack of gasoline for the trucks on the way back. The same disinclination to planning would render all the hunting expeditions in which I participated rather precarious activities. Matches, seasonings, soap, emergency viands, toilet paper, and sometimes even a sufficient amount of bullets were repeatedly forgotten by the hunters. As a result, we occasionally went hungry when game took longer to find, ate bland food about which the hunters jokingly complained, had to make do with leaves as toilet paper and prepare the food without washing our hands, and were reduced in one expedition to starting a fire by shooting at dry twigs with a revolver when the only lighter available went by the second day.

To question what these anecdotes have to do with the work ethos of Guaribanos, they all refer to a disinclination to undertake either work in advance or what is locally perceived as “extra” work — with careful planning being regarded perhaps as extra (mental) work in advance. And, in fact, planning in advance for these events was never indispensable. For not in one of these occasions was the general mood spoiled by the insufficient preparations, or improvisations not quickly made that effectively saved the ventures. The reluctance to engage in what is understood as extraneous labour is at the bottom of this local easy attitude towards both work and leisure, an orientation which conflicts with PFZ’s capitalistic premises of work maximization for highest profit, and which the programme’s economic policies still fail to take into account.

In a similar vein, I will investigate in the next chapter how PFZ fails to acknowledge another aspect of local culture, namely, the extent to which local moral values and kinship ideals inform political practices in Guaribas. Once again, the overlooking of the specific workings of the village's sociopolitical organization has significant consequences for PFZ policy implementation, for, as will become clear below, the political realm in Guaribas is premised on principles which diverge from the ideology and praxis of representative democracy advanced by the government and PFZ. Hence, just as this chapter has shown how the underestimation of the importance of kinship for economic collaboration bears on the very limited success of cooperatives, and how the neglect to consider the local ethos of work compromises labour maximization and alternative income generation activities, the failure to take into account the centrality of kinship for political praxis in the village leads to the difficulties PFZ faces in consolidating democratic institutions locally.

## Chapter Three. Political corruption as the expression of local morality and kinship ideals

Political scientists, development workers, and public policy designers interested in establishing the ideology of representative democracy in places where people seem little familiar with it, tend to perceive local political corruption as one of the main obstacles to their enterprise. They usually treat practices such as nepotism, patronage, embezzlement, and cronyism as glitches, anomalies, amendable malfunctions in the path of a wider process of democratization. These illegal practices, however, are in certain cases not simply the product of politicians seeking illegitimate private gain, or distortions of a prevailing national political structure, but the expressions of a bona fide sociopolitical system already in place. The underestimation of how these illicit political activities can be rooted in the much deeper soil of cultural values and institutions, such as in locally appropriate models of social interaction, morality, affiliation, and cooperation, can perhaps account for the erratic results obtained, at least in communities such as Guaribas, in the attempts to eradicate political corruption and institute the principles and praxes of representative democracy.

In this chapter, I argue that specific forms of political corruption — nepotism, patronage, embezzlement, and cronyism (i.e., partiality to long-standing friends by appointing them to positions of authority regardless of their qualifications) — are enmeshed in Guaribas with traditional norms that regulate social relationships, from kinship obligations to local conceptions of the moral person. I will illustrate this by describing a number of grassroots political practices in the village, such as the buying and selling of votes during elections, the misallocation of public and municipal resources, and the idiom of personal favours, gifts, and friendship in which political support is conceived and articulated.

Much can be gleaned already from how Guaribanos employ the word “politics”. It is seldom used in the abstract, to denote or discuss the conceptual domain of government and public administration. Instead, it is usually employed in

two peculiar expressions: “*na política de*” (“in the politics of”), and “*no tempo da política*” (“in the time of politics”). In the first expression, “in the politics of”, the word “politics” is followed by the name of a person, for instance, “in the politics of Reginaldo” or “in the politics of Elienes”, two common examples figuring ex-mayors of Guaribas. In this manner, “politics” is qualified by the person it “belongs to”, suggesting that the concept of politics is typically attached to the person invested with a public office. The second expression, “in the time of politics”, is also a very common locution in the village, by which Guaribanos simply mean “elections” — as if the realm of politics only existed then. Thus, Guaribanos seem to associate politics with a person *and* with the very specific period of elections. Indeed, it is during elections that Guaribanos are politically active the most. This is because it is at that time that the benefits of politics are directly visible and available to them. It is just before and after elections that resources get more intensely distributed among the people in exchange for their votes, in the forms of money, transportation, medicines, jobs at the mayoralty, and all kinds of favours, such as assistance with funeral expenses, getting a supporter’s relative out of jail, or simply as free drinks or tickets to a local *forró* party. In point of fact, this state of affairs is not uncommon in other small municipalities in the Northeast of Brazil. For instance, in his study of political practices in municipalities in the state of Ceará, César Barreira observes that “a good portion of the population interviewed stated that elections represented a time to “take advantage of things”, a time “for living in a better way” (2006: 158). For locals, Barreira writes, “‘the time of politics’ may lead to the acquisition or remodelling of a house, to obtaining medical treatment, or to being awarded a scholarship. It is the moment to solve or minimise basic problems and needs in health, housing, and studies” (2006: 158). The logic of the gift (*dádiva*), Barreira claims, permeates such exchanges, “where the ‘help’ of politicians is interpreted as an obligation, and always as an act of generosity” (2006: 158).

As Chefinho once put it, “the basis of politics is diesel and medicines” — diesel meaning the pick-up trucks that are lent by their owners to the candidate’s campaign in exchange for money or future jobs, and medicines for the sick, the young, and the elder members of families. “It seems”, Chefinho added with a cynical smile, “that people only get sick ‘in the time of politics’”. By this, Chefinho suggests that the people thoroughly engage in, and even exploit this alternative system of

resource distribution. For instance, I was surprised to learn that it is not only the candidate's intermediaries, the *cabos eleitorais*, who approach the heads of households to negotiate favours and money for their families' votes, but that people seek them out almost with the same frequency. Just before elections, Guaribanos have more bargaining power, and the closer it gets to the actual voting, the more their votes are worth. A single vote in this market may range from R\$50 to R\$300 (£13 to £75), depending on how near and competitive the elections are. This is why Guaribanos usually complained to me that the elections which were to take place in October 2008, "would be no good" ("*não vai prestar*"), for they believed there would either be a single candidate, Ercílio, the present mayor, or a very weak opponent running against him, so that votes would not be scarce resources, and thus not such a valuable currency for exchange. It is worthwhile to mention that the buying and selling of votes is a *tremendously* common practice in Guaribas, one talked about in a very forthright manner, without any embarrassment, and not one member of the community with whom I spoke about it claimed to not participate in it. It is part of an illicit, though de facto system of resource distribution, as I demonstrate below.

### "In the politics of": kinship, friendship, and political corruption

Politicians know full well the extent to which they are also "exploited" in this system, and even come to resent it. I was fortunate enough to befriend Reginaldo, the first mayor of Guaribas when the settlement became a municipality in 1997. Reginaldo was re-elected after his first mandate only to be impeached in 2003 for the misallocation of public resources. A hefty, outspoken, charismatic man, Reginaldo is a born politician, at least one in the context of the village. Though still ineligible for public office, his popularity in Guaribas is such that his support is even now the single most important political commodity for any candidate. I owe a good portion of the insights in this chapter to watching him in action, and as a born politician, he was always in action. On countless occasions, which more often than not involved drinking at bars with his regular entourage, I witnessed how prolifically he spent on

everybody who approached him. He not only bought people drinks, but knew exactly what every person drank — beer, *cachaça*, Brazilian cognac, or soda pop for Pentecostals and children. It demonstrated his familiarity and personal relationship with everyone. And, in effect, the role of affective relations as appropriate emotional registers in this sociopolitical context cannot be overestimated. Also, occasionally, Reginaldo gave people money directly, handing out R\$10 bills, to “help them travel”.

I was once invited to drink with him and his group at the Lagoa do Baixão settlement, a trip that turned out to be a test of his popularity and political support there. We drank at the four bars in the settlement, and Reginaldo and his supporters were careful to ensure that consumption was relatively symmetrical in all of them, in order to show equal regard for the different families that owned them. He turned to me at one point and said: “Wherever I go, commerce prospers”. Indeed, the model of the politician as patron is pervasive not only in Guaribas, but even in local metropolises such as São Raimundo Nonato, where one can see state deputies and mayors as the main sponsors of parties, festivals, barbecues, football championships, and shows, with their names and faces printed on the posters scattered throughout the town announcing the events. It is very common for local politicians to advertise themselves in this manner, and if they find it necessary to subsidize and associate so personally with the distribution of resources — in this case, with the distribution of “leisure and fun”, either through public events or collective drinking sessions — it is to capitalize on a very important local moral principle, namely, that the rich and powerful, and especially the politicians, are expected to be generous and distribute the riches under their possession. In fact, Reginaldo took this moral directive to its logical extreme when he declared to me, though loud enough for all to hear in one of the bars at Lagoa do Baixão, that he had given to the people to the point of financial collapse:

“I was a businessman for 13 years here, I only slept here, I love these people. And how can I abandon the good people of Lagoa do Baixão? I became poor, it’s true. But retailers [*comerciantes*] got rich because of me. People say: ‘Reginaldo

was only bad for himself”. Right. *But you must also thank the people*” (italics mine).

Therefore, politicians are well aware of how costly this exchange of personal favours and gifts can be. Reginaldo, for instance, often complained that he tried to spend more time at his house in the fields and stay away from Guaribas because it was impossible for him to not be accosted in bars, parties, or in the streets by people asking for money and favours. On one occasion, I met him at Wilson’s bar as he left a *forró* party at the municipal nursery only a few moments after it started. He told me that he had to leave early on account of having to pay for too many drinks, let numerous people join his group for drinks, and give out money to all who would ask him for it, “duties” he mastered and saw as obligatory. But even along the two hundred metres that separated the nursery from Wilson’s bar, Reginaldo claimed to have spent R\$250 (£63), and so needed to retire from his social and political responsibilities for the night. In fact, his friends frequently told me that his financial situation was disastrous, for he constantly contracted debts to continue spending on people in order to maintain his popularity. I remarked once that people would hardly vote for someone so deep in debt, for he would be sure to empty the mayoralty’s safe to repay them, to which a friend replied: “But that’s the reason exactly: he owes so much to everybody in the village that they will want him to get elected and return their money!”.

On the other hand, though Reginaldo’s era as a mayor was marked by unaccountability and malpractice — to the point that Ferreira Neto, a federal deputy from São Raimundo Nonato who manoeuvred for his election, paid him a monthly salary to stay away from the mayoralty so that he could control its resources — Guaribanos speak of it with nostalgia.<sup>39</sup> Several people complained that they now had to pay to get into local parties, and that during “the politics of Reginaldo”, these would either be entirely subsidized by the mayoralty, or Reginaldo himself would

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<sup>39</sup> At that time, and until 2004, there was no building or official location for the mayoralty in Guaribas, so that it actually operated from Ferreira Neto’s law office in the nearby town of Cristino Castro. As soon as this situation was disclosed by the media in 2002, a political process was set in motion that resulted in Reginaldo’s impeachment on August 29, 2003. The affair was widely publicized in both national and international media. See “PT perde em cidade piloto do Fome-Zero” 2004.

provide the money for the tickets to those who asked him for it. In order to observe people's reactions, I sometimes noted that he was doing all that with public funds, and thus being generous with the villagers' own money; didn't they prefer someone who managed the mayoralty's resources in an official and accountable manner? No, they unfailingly retorted. It seems that Guaribanos do not see the mayoralty as an actual public institution, nor its resources as the property of the commonweal, to be used in communal investments, such as, for instance, the village's infrastructure. In fact, it is the lack of the idea of Guaribas as a collective entity, the locals' difficulty to imagine the village as one united community instead of a collection of families collaborating or competing for scarce resources, that several development workers with whom I spoke identified as the main obstacle for the establishment of political and economic cooperation in the village. It is worthwhile to recall that Guaribanos descend mainly from three patriarchal families, the Alves, the Rochas, and the Correia da Silva, the first two having settled mostly in Fazenda, and the latter in Guaribas Two, so that the village is geographically divided in two. Far from being a distinction grounded solely on space and kinship, however, this division translates into further political differences between the two sides, for families vote in blocks in order to maximize their chances of securing the most benefits for their relatives and friends — who, unsurprisingly, usually live on their side of the village. Tandula, for instance, always jokes about how Guaribas should in fact have two different mayors.

This difficulty in seeing Guaribas as one abstract entity, as the basic element in the calculus of cooperation and solidarity, undermines the public sphere, and rests on the villagers' idea of the family as the common denominator for identity, the unit which commands true emotional legitimacy. It is highly revealing that in Guaribas, when one wants to refer to a specific kin group comprising two or more immediately related households, one uses the name of the older live ancestor coupled with the words "nation", "race", or "people". For instance, if one wishes to make reference to Libório and his son's families, one would say "Libório's race", "Libório's people", or "Libório's nation", respectively, "*a raça do Libório*", "*o povo do Libório*", or "*a nação do Libório*". Thus, even at the basal level of the local lexicon, the family competes with and supplants other important criteria for social integration such as the political community of the nation, or communities predicated on racial or ethnic principles. To be sure, this prominence of the family leaks into the political realm,



and can also be illustrated by the fact that families vote in blocks. Usually, it is the paterfamilias who negotiates and aligns with a candidate for the whole family, as explained momentarily.

Dioripe, the father of the family with whom I lived in Guaribas, told me that the mayor, whom he supported, asked him to vote for one of his allies in the 2006 elections for state deputy. Dioripe, however, replied that he could not, for one of the other candidates was his friend, and had always treated him with consideration, affection, and deference, taking him to nearby cities, paying for his expenses, and so on. So he told the mayor that if his friend came into his house to ask for his vote, he would have to give it to him, but that he also had many other votes for the mayor's candidate in his house, by which he meant his wife and children's. Yet, his own vote had to go to his friend. Similarly, in the period preceding the same elections, Walmir declared to me that friendship "governed his vote", and described how he had also told the mayor that he would vote for all his candidates except one, for he was friends with his adversary, and valued that first and foremost. He would "give", he remarked, four votes in his household to the mayor's candidate, but not his own.

During the 2006 elections, as I walked towards the voting areas on the Fazenda side of Guaribas, I met two friends on their way there, Edna and Tiago, both in their late teens. I asked Edna who she would be voting for and she said "Lula", but added that she would really like to vote for Alckmin: "I was drooling to vote for Alckmin", she confessed. "Why don't you, then?", I inquired. She replied that her father had told her to vote for Lula, so that was what she would do. On the way back we met again, and Edna said that she had voted for Lula, but made it clear that she was not happy at all about it: "Lula, aaaargh!", she exclaimed, grimacing. I then asked her why she did not vote for Alckmin since her father would never know, to which she retorted that he would, that if he even suspected that she did not vote for Lula, he would kill her, and she laughed. Tiago, on the other hand, had received permission from his father to vote for whoever he wanted since the votes in his household had already been negotiated and settled without computing his. On the same day, I also passed by a man who enthusiastically shouted on his way to vote: "In my house there are six votes for Lula! I'll excommunicate immediately anybody who doesn't vote for him!"

Politics, friendship, and kinship are so enmeshed in Guaribas that Tiago affirms that the Correia da Silva clan has lost the prestige and respect it once possessed because of its political fragmentation, because the eight sons of Aberlardo Correia da Silva, the family's most renowned late patriarch, no longer vote in block. "It's something that has been passed on from generation to generation", Tiago maintains, "it's a strict custom. If a family does not 'vote united', it means that it is breaking, and that is a shameful thing for others to see". Hence, taking cue from Tiago's observation, ideally, in Guaribas, without political unity there can be no plenary family unity, for the first not only reflects, but becomes a requirement for the latter.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, only under great theoretical violence can the realm of kinship and politics be separated from each other in the conceptions and practices of Guaribanos. As another example of this interface between the spheres of politics and kinship, I was discussing cronyism and nepotism with a Guaribano one day when my own convictions in the logic of meritocracy were shaken by the common-sense with which he challenged it: "If you had a plate of food to give to someone", he asked me, "would you give it to your son or to a stranger?" Accordingly, the ideal of the moral person in Guaribas demands that kinship obligations prevail over any other criterion for resource distribution, thus converting meritocracy — the principle whereby those selected or favoured are chosen solely on the basis of their achievements and their ability to perform a certain function — into an almost immoral idea. As a result, when it comes to nepotism in Guaribas, it is hard to outdo with any commentary the effect of the following list of public positions at the mayoralty and their holders, from 2005 to the end of 2007: one of the mayor's sons was the Secretary of Health; another son was the Secretary of Transportation; yet another son was the Treasurer; their mother, the first lady, was the Secretary of Social Assistance; a personal friend of the mayor and loan shark from São Raimundo Nonato who financed his campaign in 2004, became the Secretary of Administration when the mayor rose to power; his wife became the Secretary of Education; and, finally, a municipal councilman and long-standing political ally of the mayor was the Secretary of Agriculture. If one expands the scope of this inventory to include other jobs at the mayoralty besides the major public offices, the list becomes endless.

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<sup>40</sup> Palmeira suggests that it is especially important in such sociopolitical contexts for the family, locally perceived as the sphere of unity and loyalty, to remain united during the "the time of politics", the realm of faction and division, the time for "taking sides" (2006: 141, 143).

Therefore, the essential criteria for a successful campaign in Guaribas, that is, the foremost conditions someone running for office must satisfy to gain sufficient political support to be elected, are belonging to a large family and having very good personal relations with the community as a whole, for, on the one hand, families typically vote in blocks for the closest relative running for office, and, on the other, ties of friendship govern people's votes, as Dioripe and Walmir have conveyed. In effect, the only actual competition for kinship as the chief criterion for political support in Guaribas seems to be friendship and *compadrio* (that is, association and solidarity on the grounds of godparentage and neighbourliness). From the success of Reginaldo's style of doing politics, and from the popularity he enjoys in the village and its settlements, it becomes clear that the particular nature of political praxis in Guaribas is indeed heavily predicated on models of social interaction characteristic of families and friends — a praxis that invests heavily on the establishment of intimacy, empathy, and sentimental disponibility, thus conferring special relevance to affectivity and unmediated interpersonal relations. Whether in bars, parties, feasts, weddings, shows, or simply walking in the streets (the privileged loci of politics in Guaribas, as political rallies are few and restricted to the period just before elections, and public and broadcasted speeches are uncustomary), Reginaldo's carriage and *modus operandi* never changed. And neither did those of the Guaribanos with whom he interacted. In such occasions, people would approach Reginaldo and interrupt him repeatedly, sometimes calling him aside, sometimes whispering secretively in his ear. He was attentive and greeted them by their nicknames, inquiring about their relatives, and recalling problems their families faced or were facing. He was also regardful in his mannerism, and his gestural language — full of smiles, hugs, touching, arms around his interlocutors, and slaps on their shoulders — indicated a closeness and familiarity that was instantly reciprocated by the people. In fact, during the Lagoa do Baixão trip, we were invited to eat traditional *sarapatel* (goat entrails in blood) at so many houses throughout the day that our group had to break into three to meet all the requests. To be sure, hospitality and commensality are also significant practices in this language of personal esteem within which the political game in Guaribas is played. Similarly, and against my expectations, quite a few people would approach our table to either offer Reginaldo a bottle of beer, or contribute money towards the drinking expenses, demonstrating that the logic of the politician as patron and benefactor can also be reversed, thus generating a system of

reciprocal exchanges and prestations in which all engage. Even if it could be argued that the people's primary motivation behind this inversion is to secure the politician's favour, and not to establish or celebrate genuine friendship, the very fact that both the people and the politicians are complicit in fashioning this façade of camaraderie, that all social actors commit to this collective idiom of personal esteem to articulate their particular political strategies, conveys that whether authentic or fictitious, the patterns of sociality inherent in relations of kinship, friendship, and *compadrio* are the dominant models for local political practices.

However, it is not only the performances, but the events and locations in which these take place that suggest intense sociability. It is not surprising that political campaigning generally takes place in Guaribas in informal environments such as parties, feasts, shows, barbecues, bars, and so forth, environments with a natural inclination to foster intimacy and conviviality. That the atmosphere of pleasure and fun, and different levels of inebriation also accentuate the disposition of social actors towards extroversion, companionship, and general trust, also supports the idea that in such places and times men can “let their guards down” with each other, and show personal affection and regard without ulterior preoccupations — in a word, they can be friends. And yet, whenever I was at such gatherings, an uneasy feeling kept me from fully embracing the ambiance of intense sociability that surrounded me. On the one hand, in terms of tactics, I was struck by the role of paying for pleasure, of buying others' intoxication in such drinking rites, and on the other, I was always impressed by the amount of whispering and taking Reginaldo aside for private conversations which, though reinforcing the feeling of personal, private one-to-one relationships, lent an air of secrecy and calculation to those events. At times, I could not but see it as a heavily fake atmosphere in which all feigned solidarity and unconditional political support. Every now and then, it seemed to me that Reginaldo was the prey, though he was perhaps the greater feigner, faking agreement with everybody, using nonsensical circular phrases of agreement after someone's remark like “what is right is right”, or “you, sir, are not wrong”, or “I will not agree or disagree, now I will listen to your talk”, or “you, now, are not lying”.

And yet, at least locally, there is nothing original or distinctive in Reginaldo's way of doing politics. I was also present at drinking sessions with Solon Ribeiro, the former mayor of Caracol who is also popular in Guaribas, and who has

allegedly become bankrupt due to his long and now extinct political career. I could observe the same patronal and personalistic dynamics in his relationship with the Guaribanos who approached his table at Wilson's bar, though his charisma paled in comparison with that of Reginaldo's magnetic, larger-than-life personality. On one occasion, I was drinking with friends at a table beside his, but when Reginaldo arrived and sat with his old friend, he invited me to join them. Solon and Reginaldo are known to drink heavily when together, and when Irabela, Reginaldo's wife, learned that her husband was drinking with Solon, she sent her oldest daughter, Iracelma, to look after him. She sat alone, discreetly, at an empty table a few metres from ours, but Reginaldo knew full well that he was being "babysat", as he put it, by his daughter, and as he gradually became drunker, he began to address her. Now Reginaldo's plan at the time (February 2007) was to bypass the problem of running directly against Ercílio, his cousin, by having Iracelma substitute for him as a candidate in the 2008 mayor elections. Even if that did not come to pass, its prospect was very real at the time, and as Reginaldo became increasingly impatient with his daughter's presence, he began to reproach her, but on political grounds. This yielded an illuminating episode in which Reginaldo tried, in public, to coach his daughter as a candidate, that is, in the virtues of a successful politician. He told her that she did not understand anything, that she thought that money was the most important thing when it was friendship and credit (which, as described below, are intimately related in local politics) that mattered in the end. Reginaldo urged her to be more expansive, to show more regard for people, and to greet them better in the streets. When Iracelma paid for his bill some time later, he became very angry, and even scolded Wilson, his cousin, for accepting her money. He was only finally appeased when Wilson cleverly declared that it did not really matter, for Reginaldo's word was "as good as a cheque".

It is not only the local politician who typically puts a premium on close personal relationships, and sees the political sphere primarily within the matrix of person-to-person interaction. As mentioned above, for the people, the chimerical nature of the idea of Guaribas as one united community renders public institutions predicated on that idea just as abstract and ethereal. Consequently, the domain of municipal politics, as well as the mayoralty and its resources, are commonly associated with the person temporarily in charge of them. As Reginaldo once deftly

observed: “nobody votes for my *administration*, they vote for *me*”. For instance, on separate occasions, I heard several complaints from Ercílio, as well as from some of his chief assistants, that people employed by the mayoralty – from construction workers to office clerks – often stop working when he, the mayor, is away from the village. “Things stall if he travels”, Lucilé, the unofficial secretary of Social Assistance told me, “and I simply can’t get people to work in his absence: not even trash is picked up from the streets”. Thus, it seems that people conflate the person of the mayor with the mayoralty not only when talking about politics, but also when it comes to the recognition of authority. Accordingly, orders must come from the person in charge, for one’s duty is towards her, and not towards an impersonal institution or one’s function in that institutional structure. Politics, and public administration in Guaribas, is not an abstract domain: it belongs to a person and bears her face. In the village, the mayoralty is like a firm of which the mayor is the boss, distributing benefits and jobs, both real and fictitious, and sometimes regulating, in a paternalistic way, the villagers over whom he presides.

For example, Ercílio demanded that all who worked at the mayoralty vote for his candidates in the 2006 elections for president, federal deputy, and state deputy. Due to their relationship with an opposing candidate for federal deputy, Lucilé, Luizinha, and a few other teachers and secretaries were suspected of disobeying Ercílio, and were punished accordingly. The retaliations a mayor has at hand include demoting a higher ranking secretary to a common school teacher, transferring a teacher to a post in an isolated settlement (like Zé Bento, where there is still no electricity or running water), or barring a person from using the mayoralty pick-up trucks that consist in the only regular and free means of transportation to and from São Raimundo Nonato, where most of the doctors, secretaries, and teachers employed by the Guaribas mayoralty live. Because Luizinha, together with some other teachers, had received Ferreira Neto (the main adversary of Ercílio’s candidate for Piauí state deputy) in her house when he visited Guaribas, she and several other mayoralty workers present at the occasion were forbidden to ride in the mayoralty pick-up trucks. I talked to Baixinho, the main driver for the mayoralty at the time, and he admitted that even though his pick-up truck was travelling to and from São Raimundo Nonato half empty all the time, he had been ordered by Ercílio’s Secretary of Administration not to transport certain teachers; although he felt bad for

leaving them behind, he sincerely added, there was nothing he could do. Thus, even if in disagreement with the mayor's will, both the penalized and those used to penalize them accepted their place in the process. Lucilé iterated to me that this was simply the way things were, and not only in the interior of the state, but also in São Raimundo Nonato, where she had also experienced political persecution until she finally decided to move to Guaribas.<sup>41</sup>

If such situations do not give rise to any kind of systematic political mobilization, it is because the mayor's private retaliation with the mayoralty's resources is simply the other side of his personal assistance with the same resources, in the primarily affective way that the people and the politicians of Guaribas conceive their relationship. Again, if it is accepted as a legitimate expedient for the *mayor* to punish with the *mayoralty*'s means, it is because both entities are blurred in the local socio-political context. In point of fact, true to Reginaldo's comment that people vote for him rather than for his administration, the mayor as a person overshadows the mayoralty as an institution in the local political context. This is why throughout my fieldwork in the village, I frequently heard Guaribanos criticising Ercílio's way of dealing with people, and witnessed a gradual but steady decrease in his popularity despite the widespread opinion that he was doing a good job at the mayoralty and modernizing the administration — which, under Reginaldo, did not even possess an archive, or formal records of public contracts and transactions. Yet, Ercílio was actually paying for this modernization in public administration with his own popularity. I listened to numerous people complaining that he was not as simple or unpretentious (*popular*) as Reginaldo, who personally solved his *friends'* problems, and that he had “forgotten” his friends and his obligations towards them (such as distributing jobs, public contracts, and benefits in general, or buying land “for the mayoralty” from them). For instead of meeting personally the demands of his “friends”, Ercílio was directing their claims to the normal bureaucratic process, something that upset and disappointed Guaribanos. For instance, people who approached him to be included in the Bolsa Família programme, or who needed urgent medical help, were told to seek assistance from the competent institutions, that is, respectively, to file a petition to the PFZ

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<sup>41</sup> Palmeira also suggests that this kind of political persecution in small communities in Northeast Brazil is a widespread phenomenon (Palmeira 2006: 147).

headquarters in Brasília, or to face the long queue of the national health system at the Caracol health outpost. Thus, a generalized feeling of resentment towards Ercílio's political style, towards its introduction of more bureaucratic, impersonal relations into politics, eclipsed the positive collective evaluation of his administration, suggesting the prevalence of (the negative assessment of) the mayor as a person over (the positive assessment of) the mayorality as an abstract institution in the people's conception of politics.<sup>42</sup>

In sum, nepotism, cronyism, patronage, and other forms of political corruption are intrinsic, and indeed natural, to a socio-political system in which kinship and friendship inform the predominant models of social organization. For the moral directive to prioritize the interests of family and friends can, and often does collide with principles and institutions of representative democracy such as meritocracy and bureaucracy, which have their own logic and “metaphysic”. By the “metaphysic” of bureaucracy I mean the premises and practices inherent in its ideological universe — the establishment of operations and rules impersonally applied, laws and administrative regulations overriding personal empathy and kinship obligations, meritocracy over affective and personal relations, and the objectification of the other as an anonymous, “universalized” subject detached from her unique qualities, dispositions, behavioural and emotional characteristics, and personal history. All of these principles and practices, at least ideally, run contrary to what Holanda (2006 [1936]) and DaMatta (1979) identify as a peculiar trait of Brazilian social life, namely, *personalism*. In his seminal book *Roots of Brazil*, Holanda maintains that already in the Iberian cultural values transplanted to Brazil during the process of colonization were the seeds of personalism, a tendency to attribute particular importance to the empathetic, intimate, and sentimental bonds of person-to-person relations, stemming primarily from ties of blood and friendship (2006 [1936]: 18). Several factors in the social history of the Iberian nations contributed to the preponderance of such a model of sociality, including the particular nature of their nobility, religiosity, morality, conceptions about work and economic activities, as well as the slow regional development of rural patriarchy

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<sup>42</sup> Palmeira relates a similar case in which a local politician whose administration was deemed good by the population of a municipality in the *sertão* of Pernambuco, but who refused to engage in the traditional exchange of personal favours, was considered by his constituency “a good mayor, but a bad politician” (Palmeira 2006: 146).



into modern institutions, especially in Portuguese society (2006 [1936]: 32-3). Despite the generalizing quality of Holanda's typology, it can be used as a heuristic device to understand how the tendency to emphasize direct, personal, and affective patterns of human sociality in Guaribas are exported to the level of sociopolitical institutions whose principles are not founded on the prioritization of such patterns. In the rational ordering of democratic citizenship, all individuals are potentially equal, their substantive differences disappearing under the agency of convention and law; its basic unit is the autonomous individual and citizen, and not relationships and persons, families and groups of relatives and friends. Accordingly, Holanda describes the causes behind the instances of cronyism and nepotism in Guaribas when he asserts that in personalistic contexts

the choice of men who will perform public functions is made according to the personal trust which the candidates deserve, and much less according to their own abilities. To everything is lacking the impersonal ordering that characterizes life in the bureaucratic State (2006 [1936]: 146).

He argues that primary loyalty to the kin group is often irreconcilable with loyalty to the political commonweal, thus creating an opposition between the family and the state. Indeed, Holanda maintains that “only through the transgression of the domestic and familial order can the State be born” (2006 [1936]: 141).<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, political corruption in Guaribas can be seen as the invasion of the public and political realm by the familial and affective sphere — the private domain of families, *compadres*, relatives, and friends, where association is ultimately determined, or at least articulated on the basis of sentiments and obligations rather than on principles of representative democracy such as “the common good”. As a consequence, collective association is restricted, particularistic, and debilitating

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<sup>43</sup> As scholars of nationalism such as Hastings (1997) and Smith (1999 [1986]) point out, kinship models and national ideology are connected in processes of state formation, in the sense that the abstract idea of the nation often arises from a model of extended, generalized kinship. Yet, kinship and state become at odds in the calculus of social action when limited resources are to be preferentially distributed either to family members according to kinship ideals, or to anonymous fellow citizens according to meritocratic ideals in national states.

rather than reinforcing for integration on a broader scale, be it under the idea of a Guaribas commonweal, as mentioned above, or the even more abstract and distant idea of a national community.<sup>44</sup> For example, in a conversation with Walmir about the upcoming 2006 presidential elections, I asked him who his candidate would be, and who he thought would be the best qualified man to govern Brazil, Lula or Alckmin. He replied that he did not know about Brazil, but that he would be voting for the candidate who would do the most for the village. Importantly, he added, he would also vote for Lula because he had “eaten unseasoned beans”, meaning that Lula, as a poor Northeastern migrant worker, had faced serious hardships in his life, and as such, Walmir identified *personally* with him. It is worthy of note that at the level of national politics, “Guaribas” becomes the chief unit in the reckoning for political association, whereas at the level of municipal politics, the geographical position in the village (the Fazenda or Guaribas Two side), the kin group, and finally the elementary family take on increasing precedence, a contextual rather than absolute calculus of loyalty and solidarity reminiscent of Evans-Pritchard’s model of the Nuer segmentary system of lineage association (Evans-Pritchard 1969 [1940]).

In the next section, I explore how this personalistic model of sociality further infiltrates political institutions in Guaribas, especially during elections, “in the time of politics”. For “if it is possible to consider the period of elections as a defining moment of allocation of loyalty and of belonging” in many Brazilian rural communities, as Irllys Barreira writes, “it mobilizes values created in the realm of kinship and transfers them to the political domain” (Barreira 2006: 301). In this context, Palmeira affirms, “the vote is not, as a rule, an individual choice, but a familial endeavour of ‘social location’ [where] elections are the pretext for the redefinition of belonging and the definition of allegiances” (2006: 137). Though for such small rural communities the domain of politics and the institutional relations on which it is founded seem removed from, and external to the everyday by their temporary emergence only “at the time of politics”, “it is made of the same matter of their day-to-day reality, that is, of personal exchanges, and especially of the personal exchange of favours” (Palmeira 2006: 139). Therefore, political corruption in Guaribas, it will be argued, becomes in fact a way to preserve traditional patterns of

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<sup>44</sup> In many rural communities in Northeast Brazil, Palmeira asserts, “the government is an entity hard to define”, being sometimes seen “as something unknown (*pouco conhecido*) or exterior (*de fora*)” (2006: 139).

social interaction within the appearances of modern democratic institutions, a recalcitrant artifice against the imposition of an extraneous political order (c.f. Barreira 2006: 151).

### “In the time of politics”: political corruption as a system of reciprocal exchange

“The greatest mistake in the world is to vote for a person who doesn’t know that you voted for her”. Filogônio’s statement reveals with remarkable clarity the reciprocal nature of this unofficial system of exchange that obtains between the politicians and the people, for in order to secure resources and benefits from a candidate when she rises to power, one must indeed be personally recognized as one of her supporters. This is merely a corollary of the politician’s popularity suffering if favours granted and benefits dispensed are not personally acknowledged by the people, as in the case of Ercílio’s decreasing popularity due to his more bureaucratic and impersonal form of resource distribution. Political support can be rewarded in many ways, depending on the significance of the contributions made and the level of gratitude they subsequently entail. One may either be remunerated immediately, for instance, with a certain amount of money for her vote, or be compensated later on, when the successful candidate is in position to offer resources only available when she comes into office.

Tica’s story is a typical example of this exchange between the politician and a closer corporate group of supporters that collaborated with and invested more in her campaign, thus showing more commitment towards the candidate. Tica, now in his early thirties, had always been a close friend of Daércio, one of Ercílio’s sons, a relationship further strengthened by their time working and living together in São Paulo a few years before the 2004 elections for mayor in Guaribas. When the elections approached, Tica’s father offered his pick-up truck to be used in Ercílio’s campaign, in such activities as providing free transportation for Guaribanos who needed to travel to Caracol or São Raimundo Nonato, evacuating the sick to the

nearest hospitals, going around the nearby settlements playing Ercílio's campaign tune, or simply taking *cabos eleitorais* (campaign delegates) on their regular rounds to negotiate people's votes. In addition, Tica engaged intensely in all of these activities, devoting himself to the campaign, driving the car all day long, running errands for Ercílio, and working hard on securing votes for his candidate.

As a result, when Ercílio was elected mayor, Tica was handsomely rewarded. To begin with, his father's pick-up truck was *fichada* (hired officially) by the mayoralty to perform such functions as transporting schoolchildren to and from the settlements to study in Guaribas, and teachers and doctors to and from São Raimundo Nonato to work in the village, so that a substantial amount of money would flow monthly from the mayoralty to his family's account. Furthermore, Tica and his two brothers were hired as drivers and paid monthly by the mayoralty. But Tica himself became much more than a driver. His monthly salary, R\$2,500 (£625), was considerable even for metropolises such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, let alone for Guaribas' standards. Tica was also given the municipal concession to the only gas station in the village, and was so involved with essential administrative activities at the mayoralty (however unofficially) that he was entrusted to distribute, every month, the salaries of teachers, clerks, janitors, guards, doctors — in sum, the earnings of any worker whose wages came from the municipality. He sometimes went to São Raimundo Nonato himself to withdraw the mayoralty's money from the Banco do Brasil branch and return to Guaribas with it, an amount that varied monthly, but that usually orbited around R\$300,000 (£75,000). On some occasions, I would see Tica riding his motorbike to and fro, delivering money at people's houses personally; on other occasions, people would flock to his house almost immediately after his arrival to collect their money. I heard several complaints that every now and then Tica also retained a small portion of people's earnings for himself, as a sort of percentage for his services. Ovídio, for instance, told me that he regularly complained to Daércio, the mayor's son and Guaribas' Treasurer, that Tica handed him R\$120 (£30) instead of R\$150 (£37.5), the amount due for his work shooing animals from the square at night. Another telling detail is that besides the mayor, his son Daércio (the Treasurer), and three close cabinet assistants, Tica was the only person to have the keys to the mayor's personal office and the access codes to the

computers therein, so that my requests to use the only internet connection available in the village at the time often depended on Tica's indulgence.

If Tica's case is not the rule, then at least it is no exception. Apart from money, jobs at the mayoralty are the main currency in the bargaining for political support. So much so that the candidate almost inevitably overextends her capacity to keep her promises and accommodate her supporters. Now and again, I witnessed people complaining that not everybody in their households were hired by the mayoralty as pledged. In the same vein, they objected to jobs being given to members of families which were not a part of the corporate political base of the mayor, for it was his moral obligation to recompense friends and allies first. The expectation of rewards for political support and services rendered during a candidate's campaign is widespread, and works as a gravitational force, as it were, that pulls resources from the politician to the people, both before and after elections. "At least here, in these backlands, the votes of poor people have *value*", Sorriso remarked as we discussed the approaching elections in 2006. Yet, he was bitterly disappointed with Ercílio for not giving him or his wife a job after he rose to office, as if his vote had been stripped of its value since his recompense never came. His hopes now turned to the municipality's civil service selection examinations (*concurso público*), he told me, for Ercílio had promised, without fail this time, that he would find a position for Sorriso at the mayoralty. Given that the logic behind civil service tests rests on meritocracy, and that, at least in principle, results should not be affected by the mayor's influence, I asked Sorriso how the personal favour of Ercílio would guarantee his success. He lowered his eye-brows, squinched his eyes, and smirked at me, pausing for a while, a gesture I had encountered many times before in Guaribas, and which indicated that, from my informant's point of view, I had just asked a very silly question. Sorriso's opinion about the civil service examination was precisely the same as that of every other Guaribano with whom I talked about it: there seemed to be no doubt in everybody's mind that Ercílio would manipulate the results to benefit his clients.

Over the weeks that followed the examination, much speculation circulated in the village about the fairness of the selection process, since the making of the exams and their marking were delegated to a personal friend of Ercílio, the director of an elementary school in Caracol. When the results finally arrived from Caracol,

they were already printed on official Guaribas mayoralty stationery, which raised further suspicions as to the impartiality of the marks. In any case, a certain degree of manipulation most probably took place, for some people came to me with the results in order to show me that their scores did not justify their low position in the shortlist for the jobs at the mayoralty, as compared to those of individuals whose positions were much higher in the same list. The examinations, then, served simply to give an official and unquestionable façade for the circulation of personal favours, something for which, before, at least, the mayor himself was accountable. Now, however, it was possible for him to attribute his choices to the impersonal workings of official rules and procedures, thus using meritocratic institutions to protect its opposite, patronage. Surely, this illustrates how patronage may hide under meritocracy, and how bureaucracy and its instruments, such as, in this case, public examinations, can be turned against themselves to legitimate and officialise the distribution of resources on a personalistic basis. At any rate, Sorriso had not passed the examinations, though his wife, Pequena, was bestowed shortly after with a minor salary for “general services” at the mayoralty, a position which in fact only provided an excuse for her remuneration without demanding any specific responsibilities. Still, Sorriso felt that the mayor had given too little for his political support, or, as he himself put it, for his friendship.

The buying and selling of votes, however, is a far less subjective exchange, resulting in a more *quid pro quo* negotiation where the value of the commodity — the vote, the ultimate reification of political support — is established instantaneously by both parties. It is widely known that not only in Guaribas, but in rural areas throughout Brazil, it is a common practice for *cabos eleitorais* to approach people in order to buy their votes. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, I was surprised to find out that, at least in Guaribas, people take the initiative with the same frequency. For instance, I learned that in the 2004 elections for mayor, at the time of Ercílio and Elienes’s very close competition, her political group came up with a last minute, very high budget to buy votes. Elienes was running for PT (the Workers’ Party), the party in charge of both the Brazilian federal government and the state of Piauí, so that it had high interests in electing a PT mayor in Guaribas, the pilot community of its national development programme, and the flagship of the government’s social policy. That budget, according to Tonho and Isaías, totalled R\$70,000 (£17,500), and

it was hurriedly distributed at the abandoned house of Antônia, near the stream's basin, towards the road to Caracol. Though people went there en masse until the night before the elections, Tonho nonchalantly observed, Elienes still lost by four votes.

I was able to witness another instance of the people going to the politician's intermediaries to sell their votes rather than the converse. During the 2006 elections for president, state deputy, and federal deputy, as I walked towards the four voting areas located inside the Reginaldo Correia school in Fazenda, I noticed mayoralty pick-up trucks taking people to vote. Adailton, the capitalist and loan shark from São Raimundo Nonato who financed Ercílio's campaign and became the Secretary of Administration when the latter rose to power, was standing about 30 metres from the school gates, in the middle of the street. He had a wad of money in his hand, which he continually supplied with fresh bills from his shirt pocket, and was distributing it agitatedly, a bit hunched over, suggesting expediency and secrecy. He turned to the left and to the right as people, sometimes five at a time, crowded around him — a mild feeding frenzy was the analogy that came to my mind. When he saw me approaching, he substituted Electoral Justice leaflets for the wad of money, and handed me a few of them. These leaflets contained instructions about how to vote, and were supposed to familiarize the people with the computerized interface of electronic urns (votes are computed electronically in Brazil) by reproducing the screen with the candidates' faces through which the person casts her vote. Yet, the leaflets Adailton was distributing were already filled in with an "x" in the box beside the mayor's candidates, so that voters could take them inside the voting area and not forget which candidate to vote for. This, however, also constitutes an electoral crime in Brazil informally called *boca de urna* (literally, "mouth of the urn"), the illegal act of campaigning in front of voting areas on election day.

Yet, sometimes, *vales* (IOU's) are handed out by *cabos eleitorais* in lieu of money for a person's vote. Still during the 2006 elections, Cabeça told me that at Felizardo, one of Guaribas' settlements, *vales* of up to R\$100 (£25) were being distributed to be redeemed at a local drugstore. *Vales*, I was told, were much more common "in the politics of Reginaldo", when they used to be "as good as legal tender", but Cabeça's news revealed that they were still very much alive as artefacts of the local political process. These acknowledgements of debt presume a system

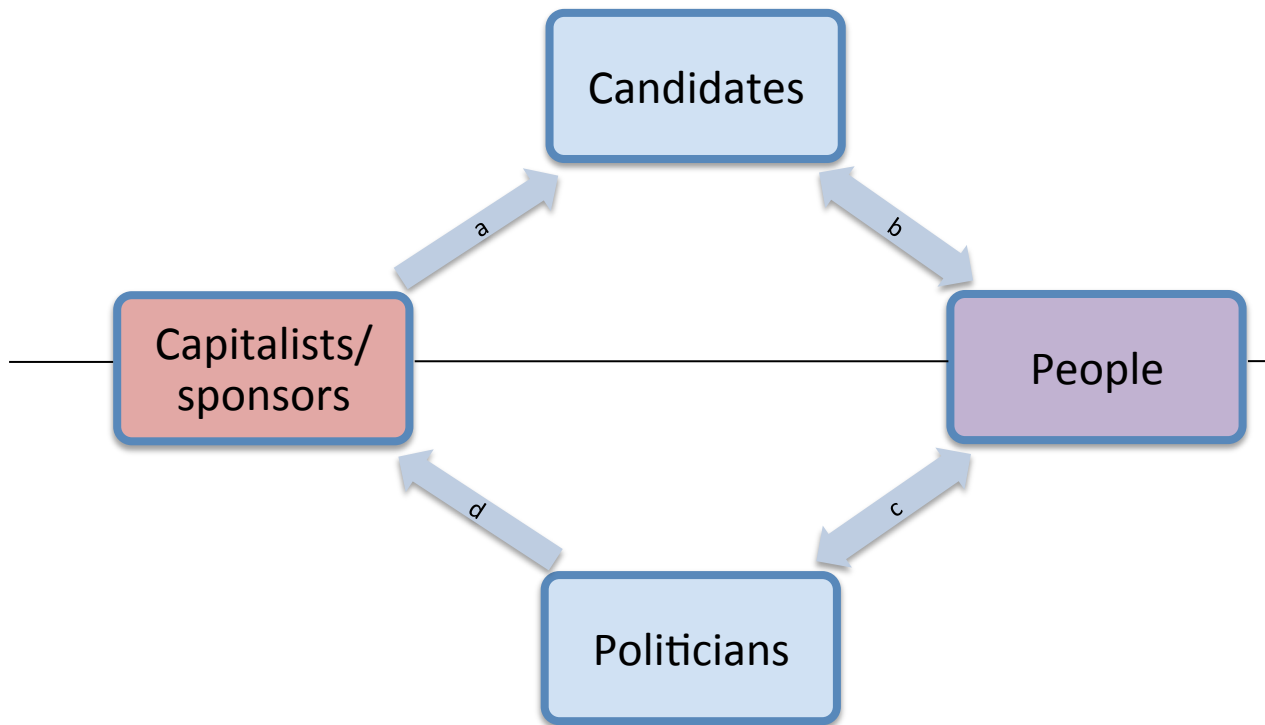
where the vote is sold on the basis of a politician's credit, for the people may redeem *vales* at any commercial establishment supporting the candidate to whom they belong, from pharmacies and bars to drugstores and gas stations. The owners of these establishments, located mostly in Guaribas and its settlements, but also found in nearby villages such as Caracol, can be seen as true capitalists, financing a candidate's campaign by accepting her *vales* in order to collect their investments, plus high interest rates, when these are converted into money, jobs, or favours once she rises to office. Even though some people are widely known for lending money in Guaribas, and some local businessmen are especially recognized as heavier financiers of political campaigns, virtually anybody in the village may invest in politics, so to speak. Amigo and Derivan, Dioripe's sons, for instance, who were, respectively, 26 and 21 in 2007, were creditors of Reginaldo. Amigo had sold his motorcycle and lent the amount to Reginaldo at ten per cent a month a few years ago, so that the latter now owed him a very substantial sum of money. Thus, many of the capitalists who finance political campaigns are villagers themselves, investing on politicians at high interest rates that may range from ten to 30 per cent a month, in order to be handsomely reimbursed once the candidate has access to the mayoralty's income.

Nevertheless, there are several other favours and benefits that can become articles of trade in the votes market. I was once passing by Vado's house when I noticed a large group of non-Guaribanos eating barbecue on improvised tables in front of it. I owed Vado money for meat I had purchased a few days before, so I paid my debt, and he invited me to sit down and have a shot of *cachaça*. I noticed that the group was eating hastily and silently, and when Vado approached again, I asked him who they were. "They're from a settlement in Bahia", he replied, "they were invited by Ercílio, who's paying for the barbecue". That was all the information he offered at the time, despite my attempts to learn more. Shortly after, Vado and two other people disclosed to me that the group from Bahia had been in the village because Ercílio had promised them monthly federal benefits such as the Bolsa Família card — which was abundant in the village due to its status as PFZ's pilot community — if they changed their electoral titles to Guaribas in order to vote for the mayoralty's candidates.



The graph below illustrates this exchange of resources and favours between four corporate groups of social and political actors.

### *Pre-elections*



### *Post-elections*

*Relation a:* Capitalists/ sponsors → politicians (money at high interest rates, credit at pharmacies, gas stations, vehicles for campaigning, etc.).

*Relation b:* Politicians → people (money, medicines, transportation, favours in exchange for votes); People → politicians (votes, money at high interest rates, vehicles, and favours in exchange for money/ jobs at the mayoralty/ subsequent favours when candidate becomes mayor).

*Relation c:* Politicians → people (jobs at the mayoralty, reimbursement of loans, favours); People → politicians (money from mayoralty/ commonweal).

*Relation d:* Politicians → capitalists/ sponsors (jobs at the mayoralty, reimbursement of loans with money from the commonweal).

The graph reveals that where this exchange of resources and favours is not directly reciprocal (relations *b* and *c*), it is one stage in a total circulation of resources that is almost balanced and symmetrical (relations *a* and *d*). Starting from the period that precedes elections, one observes that capitalists and sponsors provide candidates with the means to secure votes during their campaigns: financiers offer money (at high interest rates); businessmen and owners of pharmacies, bars, gas stations, drugstores, etc., offer credit at their establishments; owners of cars and pick-up trucks supply vehicles for campaigning, and so forth (relation *a*). Candidates, then, dispense the acquired resources in the forms of money, free medicines, free transportation, and promises of future favours and jobs in exchange for the people's political support (relation *b*). Significantly, this flow of benefits is directly met by a stream running in the opposite direction, from the people to the candidate, of similar benefits to that of capitalists and sponsors, namely, money at high interest rates, credit at commercial establishments, vehicles for campaigning, and favours in general in exchange for money, future jobs at the mayoralty, or subsequent prestations when the candidate becomes mayor — as well as an additional, crucial resource that only the people possess: their votes. After the elections, it is time for the successful candidate, now a politician, to repay, on the one hand, the capitalists and sponsors with money and jobs at the mayoralty (relation *d*), and, on the other, to dispense to the people the promised favours and jobs, and reimburse their financial investments (relation *c*). Needless to say, the two main resources used by the politician to repay the people and the capitalists, jobs and money, come, respectively, from the mayoralty and the municipal funds, and as such, from the commonweal. Thus, in the period after elections, the politician and the people are again engaged in a direct reciprocal relationship of exchange (relation *c*), whereby, ironically, the politician repays the people with interests, but with their own money.<sup>45</sup>

Other factors contribute to Guaribanos' not perceiving money and resources that come from the mayoralty as belonging to the commonweal. Since the vast majority Guaribanos are agriculturalists whose income make them exempt from taxes, and until very recently, most Guaribanos did not even have official documents

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<sup>45</sup> It is important to note, however, that these corporate groups of social actors are not fixed or static, and that if elections are the only thing that separates a "Candidate" from a "Politician" in the graph, the boundaries between "Capitalists/ sponsors" and "People" are definitely blurred, as many common Guaribanos are capitalists themselves who invest in candidates' campaigns for a profit.

— identification cards (RG, or *Carteira de Identidade*) or financial record cards (CPF's, *Cadastro de Pessoa Física*) — they do not pay taxes. The fact that Guaribanos do not contribute collectively to the mayoralty's funds reinforces their idea that these funds do not come from, and belong to the commonweal. In fact, the mayoralty's income derives not from the people's contribution, but from government institutions (FPM, SUS, and FUNDEF) so that it depends entirely on money deposited monthly in its account from the federal government, as mentioned in Chapter Two. In this sense, the federal government stands in a relation of patronage to the mayoralty as the latter in relation to Guaribanos. The government is seen as a patron or benefactor making resources available in the manner of the local politician, and it would simply be pointless for one not to secure her share of it. As a Guaribano once told me in order to justify his family irregularly possessing more than one Bolsa Família card, "the money is federal [sic], it doesn't come out of anyone's pocket".

To conclude, in this personalistic system of exchange and resource distribution between the politician and the people, no-one is innocent. For Guaribanos are aware of, and fairly unconcerned with the fact that politicians will deviate public funds to repay the debts contracted during the campaign in order to distribute resources among the people. Yet, in a strange, unanticipated cycle, public funds will be again distributed among the population during the next elections. It is a direct system of distribution and circulation, not impartial and reliable, but direct and personal enough, where a person has immediate control over her connection with the source of resources, and deals, without mediation, with another person. Guaribanos know that when a politician rises to office, she recovers the money spent at the time of the elections quickly by appropriating municipal resources, but they are the creditors of politicians too. Still, insofar as politicians and their political allies appropriate more than they distribute to Guaribanos, this system is, in the end, disadvantageous to the people, who receive less than what they are billed for. However, nothing that I have heard or seen on the ground authorizes me to assert that Guaribanos are ignorant of this discrepancy between what they get and what they lose in this illegitimate sociopolitical system. It is as if they were paying handsomely for a personalistic political system which functions with traditional values and conceptions of social interaction familiar to them. It is like paying, so to

speak, a high maintenance cost for a system that works within the principles that underlie their social reality.

In the previous chapters, I have concentrated on Guaribas' "social structure" in order to outline social, economic, and political institutions and practices which undermine locally the implementation of specific PFZ policies. The project's lack of attention towards these aspects of local culture, together with its failure to consider the impact of its policies in Guaribas, accounts for its shortcomings in transforming local economic and political practices. In the next chapter I focus on PFZ policy design and programme structure to offer an explanation as to why the project was implemented without careful consideration of its target communities' social contexts.

## Chapter Four. The politicization of Guaribas

### PFZ and contemporary Brazilian politics

PFZ is a food security and social inclusion development project with an emphasis on the participatory approach. It was created in 2003 by the newly elected Brazilian government as the embodiment of the Worker's Party (PT) social policy, and launched in the same year in Guaribas. Its stated goals are the reduction of poverty, the maximization of local work and production, the expansion of welfare and public education, the improvement of local infrastructure, the transfer of technology, and the strengthening of representative democracy. To that end, PFZ provides emergency financial aid to families through conditional cash transfer schemes, makes micro-credit opportunities available to beneficiaries, and articulates investments in infrastructure and agricultural extension with other government agencies. The project also offers a number of workshops and courses in its selected communities, whose themes range from alternative income generation and the institution of local cooperatives to "citizenship education".

PFZ was the main feature of President Lula's electoral platform in 2002, which focused on the eradication of hunger in Brazil, and quickly became associated with the PT government after its rise to power in 2003. As stated on PFZ's official website,

included among the 2002 presidential campaign pledges, the Zero-Hunger Programme was announced as a government priority in the first speech delivered by the elect president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the morning after the election.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "Fome Zero: the program" 2005.

The programme continued to make the headlines throughout Lula's first mandate, and took centre stage again in the 2006 presidential elections, presented this time as responsible for the encouraging statistics in poverty reduction. In effect, according to the World Bank (IBRD), poverty rates in Brazil fell from 34 per cent in 2003 to 25.6 per cent in 2006, whilst extreme poverty rates dropped from 14.5 per cent to 9.1 per cent in the same period.<sup>47</sup> Despite criticisms of artificially boosting poverty reduction indexes with nation-wide cash transfers and other "welfarist" policies — that is, palliative measures such as donations awarded to poor populations under the banner of welfare expansion — the numbers were so positive that they played a major role both in Lula's re-election in 2006, and in his subsequent unprecedented popularity, with his government's national approval rate reaching 83 per cent on December 7, 2009.<sup>48</sup> During the 2010 presidential elections, the programme remained as newsworthy as ever, for the PT government campaigned heavily for its candidate, Dilma Russef, to succeed Lula in order to complete 12 years in power, advertising PFZ as the actualization of its social policy agenda.<sup>49</sup> In effect, PFZ's popularity was such that, by 2010, José Serra, candidate for the opposition, was constrained not only to include the maintenance of Bolsa Família among his campaign pledges, but promised to increase the amount of money distributed. Even so, Dilma and PT emerged victorious in the elections.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, since 2002, PFZ has represented important political capital for the Brazilian government, and as such it has been manoeuvred both in the political arena and the national media. Unsurprisingly, these circumstances have put such a

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<sup>47</sup> Statistics from the PNAD and IBGE research institutes in 2008 differ slightly from those of IBRD, but all sources indicate a reduction in social inequality in Brazil. According to the first two researches, eight million people have left the "poverty area" (Classes D and E) since the beginning of Lula's government, with the proportion of poor Brazilians in the national population falling from 39.4 per cent to 25.3 per cent, and that of those in extreme poverty from 17.5 per cent to 8.8 per cent, between 2003 and 2008. "Bird vê 'avanços dramáticos' em redução da pobreza no Brasil" 2010.

<sup>48</sup> See 2009 CNI/IBOPE polls. Hall remarks that "it is openly acknowledged even by President Lula himself that his electoral triumph in 2006 to win a second term was due in large measure to the success of Bolsa Família" (2008: 812). Hunter and Power also maintain that the fact that voters were strongly influenced by the government's social policies, and especially by Bolsa Família, was essential to Lula's victory in 2006 (2007: 24).

<sup>49</sup> On June 30, 2010, for instance, President Lula was fined for the sixth time for anticipating support for Dilma's candidacy before the official date for electoral campaigning to begin. See "TSE multa Lula e Dilma por propaganda eleitoral antecipada" 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Hall observes that already in the 2006 elections for president, "so popular [was] the scheme that even opposition politicians vehemently supported Bolsa Família, promising to expand it further still should they be victorious" (2008: 813).

premium on the project's implementation, and on the publicizing of its results, that intervention in several areas was hastened, and carried out without a thorough analysis of its social consequences. Various shortcomings of PFZ efforts in Guaribas may be attributed to this haste in implementing policies for reaping political dividends, several of which will be analysed in detail below.

Accordingly, because PFZ constitutes the flagship of the Brazilian government's current social policy, and because Guaribas is the pilot community of PFZ, the village was exposed to these conditions perhaps more than any other community in the country. In fact, as Rosângela Souza, the project's chief coordinator in Piauí, declared to me in an interview, Guaribas is PFZ's own "laboratory of development". As mentioned in Chapter One, one negative consequence of this exposure for the village has been its stigmatization in the eyes of the nation as a result of the government's diagnostic reports, mission statements, and official press releases, which amplified local socioeconomic problems, conveying Guaribas as a social crisis which PFZ would solve.

For instance, it was well publicized that famine was general in the village, and that "hundreds of families go several weeks without a decent a meal"<sup>51</sup>. That Guaribas, in fact, has never experienced a food crisis except for a sui generis drought in 1954, and that its yearly bean harvest has consistently surpassed, on average, 300 tonnes, seems to have escaped government development planners.<sup>52</sup> The very idea of widespread hunger seemed odd to all Guaribanos with whom I discussed it, and they insisted that before the village became a municipality in 1997, when the keeping of livestock was forbidden within its more populated perimeter, "Guaribas was rich with animals", and "the mountains were white with goats and sheep". In spite of PFZ claims that prior to the project "families only ate meat when they killed an animal to be sold", older Guaribanos' descriptions of the typical local diet when they were young always included some form of meat, and some remarked that there was a greater availability of cattle, pig, and goat meat then.<sup>53</sup> This misapprehension about hunger in the village was reinforced by some locals who, with an eye on government

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<sup>51</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> This estimate has been provided by Sebastião, the EMATER official, himself. Tandula recalls that in the last 75 years, in only eight of them (1932, 1954, 1959, 1970, 1971, 1982, 1983, and 1998) there occurred noteworthy droughts.

<sup>53</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 22.

benefits, confirmed it when interviewed by the first journalists who arrived to cover the story.<sup>54</sup> The end result of this peculiar alliance of interests bent on misinformation — of the government in exaggerating Guaribas’ deprivation for political propaganda, and of some locals in exaggerating their deprivation to secure the most government benefits — can be gleaned from the headlines of articles that answered the sudden rise of national interest for Guaribas: “Misery in all corners: Guaribas, synonym for hunger”<sup>55</sup>, “Misery Museum”<sup>56</sup>, and “Guaribas, Piauí: the symbol of Zero-Hunger goes thirsty and hungry”<sup>57</sup>.

In a similar vein, bleak indexes of human development (HDI) ranking Guaribas last in the state of Piauí, and third worst in Brazil in terms of the quality of life of its inhabitants, were widely circulated in political statements, PFZ reports, and PFZ press announcements, ultimately reaching the national media in the forms of tele-journalism broadcasts, and newspaper and magazine articles. (See Pictures 21 through 23.) Emphasis was placed on the municipality’s lack of running water, paved streets, public transportation, waste collection and disposal services, and its limited electrification and means of communication. Additional facts and figures were summoned to complement Guaribas’ critical situation of destitution and lack of basic infrastructure. For instance, in 2005, Guaribas still retained the sixth position in FGV’s (Fundação Getúlio Vargas) national poverty ranking.<sup>58</sup> Needless to say, restricted local infrastructure, purchasing power, and ownership of consumer goods, the main criteria for HDI assessments, render local material living conditions difficult, but are not necessarily definitive in judging the quality of life of individuals.<sup>59</sup> Yet, the focus on negative aspects of local life so saturated this conception of Guaribas that little space was left for any notion of wellbeing in the village.

If the government constructed a particularly unsavoury image of Guaribas by simply assembling and divulging depressing statistics, it went further by rendering

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<sup>54</sup> “Fome-Zero: balanço” 2009.

<sup>55</sup> “Miséria em qualquer canto: Guaribas xarás da fome” 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Murakawa 2005: 90.

<sup>57</sup> “Guaribas, Piauí: Símbolo do Fome Zero passa fome e sede” 2007.

<sup>58</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> HDI measurements consider three crude indicators for its composite index: life-expectancy, educational attainment, and average income. These and other “objective” criteria selected as indicators of people’s quality of life have been widely questioned (c.f. Du Toit 2006; Sacks 2005; Hulme 2010: 61).



an unfair depiction of Guaribanos and their social lives in PFZ Sustainable Development Plans. Preliminary PFZ studies describe Guaribanos as “passive”, “apathetic”, “isolated”, “unaware of any form of social control”, “lacking skills and information”, “with a weak power of organization”, and “deferring their destinies to external agents such as God and the government”.<sup>60</sup> Concerning the local quality of life, PFZ reports state that “there are no structures or activities that valorise culture and promote leisure”, and that “the population has as its only form of recreation watching television” and “local football matches”.<sup>61</sup> Thus, they affirm, “local culture is latent”, the youth “has no interest in local customs”, and “cultural activities are no longer practised and families are loosing their cultural memories”.<sup>62</sup>

Two important consequences arise from this depiction of Guaribanos and their hardships in exaggerated colours by PFZ diagnostic studies. Firstly, as explained in more detail below, it not only authorizes, but de-politicizes intervention in the village. Secondly, the amplification of Guaribas’ problems equally amplifies PFZ’s merit in their solution, enabling the government to reap more political dividends through the advertisement of its achievements.

## PFZ failures: increased structural dependency and lack of participation

PFZ combines several elements from diverse ideological currents of the development enterprise. With the Modernization Approach, it emphasizes the transfer of “types of technology and associated social organization that characterizes the ‘advanced’, economically prosperous, and relatively politically stable nations of the Western World” (Moore 1963: 89), introducing the modernization of technology, the commercialization of agriculture, and infrastructural improvements leading to urbanization (Long 1977: 10). With the 1990’s expansion of postcolonial “rights

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<sup>60</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 19, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39; and PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 19, 40.

<sup>62</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 19, 39.

discourse” and its paradigm of “empowerment” and “choice” (Gledhill 1996: 630), PFZ strives to “universalize access to the rights of citizenship”, and include local actors in the national welfare system via “the identification and registration of citizens”.<sup>63</sup> In line with Participatory Development, PFZ vouches to promote a “bottom-up debate about the social, cultural, and economic arrangement” by listening to “collective opinion, notably, that of community leaderships”, “seeking the involvement and commitment of local social actors” in the production of policy, and “safeguard[ing] regional particularities”.<sup>64</sup> And, finally, following Structural Dependency’s critique of dependency relations ensuing from the development encounter, PFZ integrates in its discourse the idioms of sustainability, class-mobility, and utilization of local potentialities.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, in incorporating these various ideological orientations, PFZ also inherits the several objections raised against them, and proves, in practice, to be just as liable to them. For instance, the analysis of development as a cultural discourse reveals that PFZ is not different from several other projects which, under the cover of neutral technical missions to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of beneficiaries, consist to a large extent in vehicles of sociopolitical domination. As Poittier’s analysis in Uganda and Tanzania (1997), Woost’s in Sri Lanka (1993), Pigg’s in Nepal (1992), and Ferguson’s in Lesotho (1990) suggest, among characteristic political concerns behind policy goals are the expansion of state capacity and bureaucratic power, and the attempt to incorporate marginal areas and non-state fringes through nationalizing narratives. In this sense, they endeavour to “achieve social regulation”, and “reproduce hierarchies of knowledge”, whilst de-politicizing the enterprise through the discourses of extension of civil rights and transfer of technology (Mosse 2004: 4; c.f. Ferguson 1990). Again, PFZ official mission statements are open about the project’s intention to “increase social control” over its target areas, register citizens, create land and property records for the Federal Revenue Secretary (Receita Federal), and nationalize “excluded” populations through “citizenship education”.<sup>66</sup> In effect, “Social Control” constitutes one of the

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<sup>63</sup> “Fome Zero: o que é” 2005.

<sup>64</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 6. PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 2, 21.

<sup>65</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> “Fome-Zero: Programas e Ações” 2009; PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 47.

four basic axes of PFZ, and the “formation of citizens” figures as the main objective of TALHER (Group for the Capacitation of Citizenship Education), one of its main logistical branches, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Six.

Similarly, despite the proposition of designing policy with local grassroots participation, PFZ plans are informed, as shown above, by clear a priori assumptions about the negative characteristics of Guaribas and Guaribanos. They are prolix in their detection of local sociocultural defects and insufficiencies, and in so doing, openly influence the way people construct their needs and requirements. This is evident in PFZ’s workshops to “sensitize” and “awaken” the population to its “own” needs, and the project’s stated objectives to comprehensively “restructure” local culture and society. Necessarily, only a limited “bottom-up” control over policy design can ensue from such a predetermined repertoire of requirements and priorities, so that participation must adapt to programme planning, rather than planning being shaped by people’s participation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the participation of Guaribanos in the various PFZ gatherings in which I was present was usually marked by apathy and demotivation. This to the extent that, in order to boost Guaribanos’ turnout, development workers eventually decided to lace meetings with treats and refreshments, music and games. Even so, poor attendance remained one of the chief concerns of the development workers whom I interviewed in Guaribas. (See Pictures 24 and 25.) Márcia, Lucilé, Rosa, Sebastião, and Antônio, among others, complained not only of the small number of Guaribanos at their meetings, but also of the general lack of attention and open talk in them. Rosa, the teacher of a SEBRAE pottery making course, honestly did not understand how Guaribanos could be so indifferent to and at workshops: “They aren’t ready for the benefits”, she inferred, “they lack education”. At times, however, as mentioned in Chapter Two, development workers did not help their cause by using technical jargon in workshops as if it were readily intelligible to Guaribanos. Moreover, a few instructors assumed a patronizing posture, and talked to Guaribanos in a pedantically didactic fashion: “The process has three stages. Three. Look at my fingers, threeee”, after which Guaribanos repeated unenthusiastically, “Three...”. Now and then, teachers cut short Guaribanos’ contributions at the meetings, interrupting them, perfunctorily repeating the last

sentence they said, and moving on to the next topic. During a few of these assemblies and workshops, instructors turned and spoke directly to me, as if I were the only one capable of understanding them at that point in the exposition. Also, I recall that twice in the middle of PFZ assemblies, the speakers addressed me to complain about Guaribanos' local customs, in their presence, which made me extremely uneasy. As an audience, Guaribanos are sometimes directed to react in specific ways, such as repeating or applauding, yet, more than occasionally, the propositions of instructors are met with the cynicism of participants. For instance, a development worker once lectured villagers on the "hazardous" and "disgusting" [*nojento*] local habit of eating "loose animals", such as the chicken, pigs, and goats allowed to roam free close to the village: "Who would eat animals like that?", she cued participants, who answered slowly and half-heartedly, though loudly and in unison: "No-one". In sum, participants are often unmoved by the extraneous propositions of development workers in these workshops, which have sometimes the feel of staged, artificial interactions. Whether due to PFZ's explicit imposition of both problems and solutions on locals, the ineptitude of some development workers, or Guaribanos' own lack of interest in the contents and dynamics of meetings, participation in the project sponsored gatherings I attended was restricted.

Likewise, a structural dependency analysis of PFZ shows that regardless of its claims to generate local sustainable development, the village's dependency on regional economic centres has actually been reinforced, as alluded to in Chapter Two. Although this accelerated under PFZ, the process predates the programme, for when Guaribas was more isolated, and transportation more problematical — before 1964 no cars had ever reached the village due to the absence of a wide enough road — local families were self-sufficient in the production of several goods and staples for which they are now dependent on nearby towns. Agriculture was more diversified. Together with beans and corn, which today almost exclusively dominate local production, Guaribanos planted manioc, coffee, rice, cotton, and sugar cane, with which they complemented their local diet, sewed clothes, and made raw brown sugar, for example.<sup>67</sup> Cleaning agents and cosmetics were made with native ingredients, and according to traditional recipes, such as local soap from *angico*

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<sup>67</sup> Though manioc is still cultivated in the village, it is not planted as extensively as before, so that most families buy industrialized and packaged manioc flour nowadays.

timber, “toothpaste” from the *juá* leaf (*Ziziphus joazeiro*), and the preparation from the *mutamba* tree bark which, applied to the hair, makes it smooth and straight. If one extends this analysis to articles of furniture, basic tools and brooms, mattresses, toys, house building, and so forth, which were all made with local materials in the past and are now bought at outside markets, the list becomes extensive. In addition, the decrease in local farming activities has further led Guaribanos to purchase industrialized foodstuff such as packaged coffee, manioc flower, and refined sugar, produce in which they were previously self-sufficient. Moreover, the influx of money and the availability of micro-credit caused a capital flight from the village to regional metropolises where Guaribanos bought commodities not produced in the village, such as domestic appliances, prefabricated furniture, clothing, cosmetics, motorcycles, stereo systems, satellite dishes, and so on. Consequently, a closer analysis reveals that Guaribas’ position of economic satellite in relation to other regional centres has been increasing with its “development”.

Guaribas’ growing dependency on outside markets for goods, however, is less significant than its potential dependency on cash transfers resulting from PFZ’s massive income distribution initiative. As discussed in Chapter Two, Guaribanos themselves admit that the amount of work in general, and of agricultural work in particular, has decreased in the village since the arrival of Bolsa Família funds. After Lula’s rise to power in 2003, these cash transfers immediately became the project’s most controversial policy, inviting continuous support and criticism from the news media and the political arena.<sup>68</sup> Whilst support was articulated around its poverty reduction statistics, criticism was at it for establishing a new form of federal patronage. Hall, for instance, stresses that Bolsa-Família has been “effective in providing short-term relief to some of the most deprived groups in Brazil”, but calls attention to the fact that “due to its popularity among both the poor and Brazil’s politicians, Bolsa Família could greatly increase patronage in the distribution of economic and social benefits and induce a strong dependence on government handouts” (2008: 799). Harsher critics have labelled Bolsa-Família as a specific form of clientelism, as the merely palliative award of economic and infrastructural aid under the banner of welfare expansion, which reinforces the economic dependency

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<sup>68</sup> “Fome Zero: Programas” 2005; “Fome Zero: Food Safety” 2005; “Ao invés de gerar renda, o Fome Zero gera dependência do governo” 2006.

of beneficiaries, and collects political support in return. Suggesting the validity of this latter point, Lula's government's popularity in the Northeast region of Brazil, where PFZ policies are concentrated — four of the project's five pilot communities are located there, for instance — has been consistently the highest in the country.<sup>69</sup>

## Operational problems and flaws in project design

Whether fuelled by political motives, or driven by nobler development aims, the haste in implementing PFZ policies can be seen by the operation of Bolsa Família in Guaribas. Nationally, the Bolsa Família registry for benefit distribution faced criticism from the programme's inception — inefficient inclusion and exclusion criteria, multiplicity of records and grants for the same beneficiaries, frauds — so that it had to be updated twice, but in Guaribas the registry revisions were continuous throughout 2006 and 2007, and I was able to observe its operational problems in situ.<sup>70</sup> Firstly, in June 2006, there were 684 local families qualified for Bolsa Família, and 742 families officially receiving its grants. Workers charged with the distribution of benefits<sup>71</sup> disclosed to me that before the first revision, approximately 1200 families were receiving grants when there were only 970 families in the municipality altogether.<sup>72</sup> To be sure, the multiplicity of Bolsa Família cards and records was largely caused by errors in bureaucratic processing between the municipal mayoralty, the government's Central Corregidor Office

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<sup>69</sup> "Popularidade de Lula alcança maior patamar" 2009. Hall also notes that "in the run-up to the [2006] election, public opinion polls consistently showed that [Lula's] popularity was growing fastest amongst populations benefiting from the programme; that is, among the poorest groups generally, and especially in the Northeast" (2008: 812-13).

<sup>70</sup> First, in 2003, when Bolsa Família incorporated the benefits from the existing Cartão Cidadão, Auxílio Gás, Bolsa Escola, Bolsa Alimentação, PETI, and Agente Jovem — and again in 2006. Throughout 2007, 2008, and 2009, however, there was continuous revising of the Bolsa Família database, with beneficiaries being called on to update their information.

<sup>71</sup> To protect informants who worked for PFZ and the municipality, it is not enough to give them pseudonyms, as providing their functions would betray their identities. I cannot afford to be more specific about their positions, and thus fully convey the weight of their statements, but all the information presented here on Bolsa Família come from senior members of staff directly involved in its processing.

<sup>72</sup> Hall observes that, nationally, the Bolsa Família database had "widely acknowledged targeting errors and omissions, duplication and high implementation costs" (2008: 804).

(CGU), and the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) in Brasília, but fraud remained one of the main reasons for it. Fraud is facilitated, on the one hand, by PFZ's ineffectiveness in ascertaining people's income, and, on the other, by the difficulty in determining the actual yield and revenue of agricultural workers. It is impossible for PFZ staff to thoroughly inspect the lands, economic activities, or financial transactions of villagers, since dealings are not recorded through bills of sale or bank accounts (which, incidentally, most Guaribanos still do not possess), so that one must rely on their own reports. As the chief requirement for PFZ benefits is a very low monthly income, both the people and local politicians regularly manipulate information regarding their harvests and revenue in order to qualify. This, together with errors in processing and in updating databases, led in Guaribas to families that did not qualify for benefits being inserted into the programme, to a number of families possessing as many as three cards when one should be the maximum, and to families without offspring receiving grants for children enrolled in school. When the first revisions during my fieldwork began, in 2006, so many local families were called upon to rectify their irregular situation and return additional cards that Assunção, one of the development workers responsible for the revisions, was threatened by villagers and considered leaving Guaribas. The concern with frauds led the Ministry of Social Development to change its initial policy of letting local committees (Comitês Gestores) ultimately decide on the inclusion of beneficiaries, and to centralize its adjudication in Brasília. But these myriad revisions produced an overlapping of records which aggravated the multiplicity of Bolsa Família grants for the same families, so that cards were sometimes issued in the mother's name, then in the father's name, and then again in the mother's name, without any of the former being cancelled.

In other cases, however, the intentional manipulation of information and political manoeuvring were at the root of irregularities. Guaribanos and development workers alike objected to locally affluent families who had relations in the mayor's office being included in the programme to the exclusion of those of poor farmers in the settlements who were unaware of how to claim benefits. The specific case of a family related to the mayor's which I and everybody knew to possess a large house, a pick-up truck, two commercial establishments, and whose father and son were employed by the mayoralty, was often given as example. Alfredo, a government

technician who has lived in Guaribas since 2003, summarized the concerns of development workers:

Alfredo: I've been around this region and know it well. I can say with 100 per cent certainty that here in Guaribas the programme has been badly managed. Because what you see is that those who really need [the benefits] get none, while we know families that have two people in the same household getting benefits. I know of several such cases and it's a crying shame.

Marcello: And why don't the people in need claim the benefits?

Alfredo: I don't know if this happened because in the beginning it [inclusion in Bolsa Família] was through political indication... What I know is that it would even be easy for the project to recognize these people [who do not need the grants] and take away their benefits. Because I've had access... The general director of EMATER came here last year, in October, more or less. He got the records, gave them to me, and said: "Look, Alfredo, these are all the people in Guaribas who are beneficiaries of some Zero-Hunger Programme card. Try to see which of them really need it and give them the PRONAF [benefit]". Just this way. Then we start looking, and we find a person with two cards. And, in the same house, a husband with a card, his wife with two. And [they were] people who didn't need them.

Marcello: Seu Anésio [a municipal council member]...

Alfredo: Seu Anésio, ha! He's not the only one, no. All the [municipal] council members. The first lady. I don't know if they [her benefits] have been cut now, but she had them. It's complicated... We see that there are many people who don't have them, that are destitute and really need them. At the same time, there's people going around with a car, driving up and down, with a motorcycle, and all of them with a card. So it was badly managed. I've always been against it. This business of distributing money, this income distribution here, gets people accommodated. While you count on having that card, that's it. It gets people totally lethargic.

Indeed, several members of the community who did not qualify for Bolsa Família were beneficiaries, and I was present at a number of occasions in which



irregularities were committed. Throughout my fieldwork, internet access was only possible via satellite at the mayoralty and, since the mayor allowed me to connect my laptop at the Social Assistance Office, I usually set myself up there for about two hours every week. On a couple of those occasions, at the very office where the Bolsa Família processing was done, I witnessed the addition of local politicians and other ineligible villagers into the programme. For instance, I was there when a municipal council member arrived to update his records after the most recent registry revision, for his family had three Bolsa Família cards, and he wanted to ensure the continuation of its inclusion in the programme. Given that it is difficult to establish income in rural areas, one of the strategic questions to which development workers make recourse is how much a family typically spends monthly on food. The council member answered “Around R\$300” (£75), and the worker responsible for entering the data laughed out loud. “If you say this, you won’t qualify for the programme”, she remarked, to which he replied, “Say less then. R\$100, I don’t know”. As the worker complied, Assunção had an angry look on her face, and glanced sideways at me.<sup>73</sup>

On another occasion in which I used the internet at the Social Assistance Office, a meeting to decide which families would be integrated into the PETI programme, another cash transfer benefit articulated by PFZ, was taking place. The mayor’s wife, who had been named by her husband the head of Social Assistance, insisted with staff members on the inclusion of a number of families whose income was much above that of others considered. At one point, a mayoralty employee noted that only one family from the Fazenda side of the village, where the mayor’s political support was significantly smaller, had been included. Another employee argued that they should “stick to programme parameters”, but the decision was left to the end, when I was no longer in the office. The members of staff present told me later that the mayor’s wife had finally had her way, and that these meetings “are marked cards in the end” (i.e., “rigged”, “manipulated”). Lucilé and Aline, who were employed by the mayoralty’s Social Assistance Secretary, were also the heads of

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<sup>73</sup> Hall states that according to a study conducted by de Janvry et al. in 2005, “in 10 per cent of municipalities surveyed, one or more members of the legislature were programme beneficiaries, giving rise to the conclusion that, ‘mayors used the Bolsa Escola program in exchange for support in the legislative branch. . . (and). . . the allocation of these bolsas is used as an explicit element of clientelism and political rents’” (2008: 809).

several PFZ programmes, and often complained to me of their delicate position, being vulnerable to pressures from both locals and the mayor's office to include certain families into PFZ schemes.<sup>74</sup>

The attempts to correct the large number of irregularities in the Bolsa Família distribution rendered quarrels between locals and mayoralty workers who handled claims very frequent. One of the most widespread arguments occurred when two popular villagers with large families, Diana and Dudu, had their Bolsa Família cards blocked. It remained the preferred topic of conversation at Dioripe's coffee group for several days, and almost resulted in the collective beating of Assunção that was being openly organized. Assunção explained to me that their benefits had been blocked for investigation by CGU and MDS not only because their families possessed multiple cards, but because they had no children enrolled in school, regular attendance being the primary condition for a family receiving Bolsa Família grants. The conflict was resolved by Jurema, another mayoralty worker, illegally unblocking their cards.

This type of problem was common in Guaribas, and made worse by the fact that teachers did not keep school attendance records. I recall once finding Ronaldo, the former employee in the Secretary of Education responsible for compiling information about school attendance and submitting it to the Secretary of Social Assistance, at a bar in the process of "getting purposefully drunk", as he put it. He was disheartened because the deadline for submitting the attendance records for PFZ benefit control was hours away, and, as usual, no teachers had sent him any paperwork. He told me that he ordinarily just filled forms declaring that all students had the 80 per cent attendance required by Bolsa Família, but since the pressure for verification had been intensified, he believed that he would be held responsible, for "the rope always breaks at its weaker end" (*"a corda sempre arrebenta do lado mais fraco"*).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hall's article "Brazil's *Bolsa-Família*: A Double-Edged Sword?" also suggests that this is a national trend not specific to Guaribas: "councils have been unwilling to perform a policing role, especially where their independence is compromised by local personal and political links (2008: 810).

<sup>75</sup> In effect, independent research notes that, nationally, "school teachers have been reluctant to register absentee pupils, although this has improved more recently under Bolsa Família (Hall 2008: 810).

Apart from these operational defects in the Bolsa Família distribution, there was the further problem of the explicit manipulation of PFZ benefits for political purposes. For instance, families from nearby villages in the state of Bahia were being invited to migrate to Guaribas, where practically all families were guaranteed PFZ grants, on condition that they changed their electoral titles to the municipality and voted for the mayor's candidates.<sup>76</sup> I met a few of them in 2006, just before the elections for state and federal representatives, at Vado's house, where they had been offered a barbecue by the mayor prior to their meeting. Yet, this political manipulation of Bolsa-Família was not restricted to Guaribas; Hall, for instance, observes that, throughout the country, cases were reported in the press of "political manipulation in the selection of beneficiaries", and of "the scheme being unashamedly used by local authorities for vote-capturing purposes" (2008: 804, 812-13). In addition, other PFZ remunerated positions, such as teacher for the Literate Brazil (Brasil Alfabetizado) programme, were distributed by the mayoralty to Guaribanos whose families backed the mayor and his candidates, turning PFZ resources into local political currency for electoral support. Jair, who had been given temporary pro forma jobs at the mayoralty that were soon discontinued, such as delivering mail to domiciles, got one of the Literate Brazil posts as reward for his family's continued political support. After the elections, however, the mayor's office stopped handing out the resources received from the Ministry of Education (MEC) to Literate Brazil teachers, and he was only paid for three months despite having been asked to sign a receipt for six months' wages at the mayoralty.

Conversely, Guaribanos are proficient in exploiting loopholes and defects in the disbursement of government resources. Lack of supervision and inadequate verification make federal benefits open to all kinds of ingenious coups. Colourful anecdotes abound in the village about inspired performances before the Retirement Board, such as that of Castro, who, in order to obtain benefits for the mentally disabled, did not wash or shave for three weeks, and mixed into his speech words in Italian drawn from a very popular Brazilian soap opera at the time in which a number of characters were of Italian descent. Unsurprisingly, this kind of creativity is also applied to PFZ programmes. For instance, two Guaribano families I knew that

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<sup>76</sup> In 2010, Guaribas had 96 per cent of its population receiving Bolsa Família grants. "Guaribas tem 96% de sua população recebendo Bolsa Família" 2010.

had only one son each to help in their agricultural tasks, but that could also do with the cash from Bolsa Família grants, arrived at an agreement that catered for their needs: one family had its son enrolled in school and split the grant with the other family, while the latter shared half of its son's labour force with the former. Other strategies were less inventive but equally effective. It was common for a family to "lend" a child to her grandparents for them to register as their own and receive Bolsa Família or PETI grants. Giving different name spellings to have multiple cards issued was another approach which the scarcity of federal personal documents in Guaribas facilitated. And, defeating the purpose of Bolsa Família benefits, which were to confer low income families their financial autonomy, some Guaribanos left their cards in the hands of local merchants, who withdrew the money themselves and gave the cardholders credit in their establishments.

PFZ programme design manifests other flaws as well. There are a number of schemes whose objectives, methods, and target populations overlap to such an extent that they render each other redundant. Both Literate Brazil and EJA (Education of Adults and Young Persons) are programmes which aim to impart basic literacy skills to those who are too old, live too far away, or are otherwise unable to attend school regularly. The only difference between them is that Literate Brazil recruits informally qualified teachers from the local population, has them teach students in improvised schoolrooms at the settlements, and pays them a monthly sum based on the number of classes they give and students they are able to amass. This more entrepreneurial character of Literate Brazil, however, generates new problems: the enlisting of unqualified teachers who sometimes have not even completed secondary school themselves, and the programme's complete dependency on their activity reports for payment. As the number of students and classes they declare cannot be verified, it is up to the teachers to inform the programme's direction how much they ought to be paid. Jair, who regularly overestimated the number of students and weekly work hours in his reports, but who, in comparison to other teachers I knew, put up a valiant effort to carry out his function, was himself almost incredulous about the incautiousness shown by Literate Brazil in terms of verification and supervision. Aline once pointed that it would have been preferable simply to expand EJA by introducing more classes in farther localities instead of instituting a new programme

with the same goals. “Literate Brazil is the same or almost the same thing as EJA”, she declared,

it’s an overlapping of programmes with the same target public that I think is unnecessary (...) If we have so many programmes in parallel, it’s difficult to find enough [qualified] professionals to work with, and the tendency is for only a few students to remain in each.

Regarding the lack of verification of activities to which Jair alluded, Aline agreed that the amount of work and payment “end up going according to the teacher. It goes according to her conscience, if she’s doing a good job, or if she’s making things up, which we know is often the case. This is the way things are, unfortunately”. The fault, she believed, lies in that there are insufficient personnel to supervise the teachers’ work:

The technicians who are in Brasília, or at the state level, because they find the locality very far away, don’t come here. And they [the PFZ management] don’t have the resources to deploy personnel to do this kind of supervision.

The creation of equivalent and superfluous programmes, devoid of supervision and vulnerable to exploitation, can be at best attributed to poor planning, and at worst to an effort to multiply schemes and inflate PFZ’s agenda in order to achieve greater political publicity. Guaribanos themselves immediately recognized Literate Brazil’s redundancy. For instance, as Valda served food to the recently arrived Literate Brazil project coordinator, whom I had been interviewing at her inn, she frankly informed her: “Ah, my daughter... Your instructors won’t be able to find any more students here”.

## Shortcomings in infrastructural improvements

There are other ways in which PFZ's politicization affects policy implementation. Guaribas' infrastructure has benefited from the project's investments, but such benefits have been secured at the expense of thorough planning, and have thus been partial or short-lived. Important improvements were pledged and not delivered, whilst some minor improvements were delivered, but never made use of by locals. For instance, PFZ vowed to radically transform the quality of life of Guaribanos by developing the village's basic infrastructure in four major areas. In terms of health and sanitation, it would upgrade the badly stocked health outpost to a small size hospital (HPP, Hospital de Pequeno Porte), build a sewage system, and construct houses with indoor bathrooms for locals. Concerning urbanization, it would extend electrification and telecommunications capacity, bring running water to the whole municipality, and pave most or all of its streets. As regards transportation, PFZ would pave the dirt road leading to Caracol and São Raimundo Nonato so as to connect Guaribas to the national road network, and establish means of public transportation. Finally, it would build a roofed public market, a forum for the administration of justice, and a SESC centre which would house sports courts, a library, classrooms, AV capabilities, and where workshops, meetings, and courses would take place.

As it turned out, apart from some improvements in telecommunications and electrification, providing running water (to the village of Guaribas), and building the SESC centre, the public market, and 68 Popular Habitation Company (COHAB) houses, no other promises materialized. At present, the village still counts on the precarious health outpost as its only medical installation, there have been no investments towards a sewage system, and as the village grows, so do open sewers cutting through the dirt streets. In fact, only a few streets in the village of Guaribas have been overlaid with cobblestone, and of the 142 kilometres that comprise the main road that connects the municipality to São Raimundo Nonato, only 88 kilometres of the section from São Raimundo to Caracol have been surfaced with concrete in 2008, leaving the final stretch of 54 kilometres to Guaribas still to be covered in approximately two hours aboard the few private pick up trucks that

venture to make the trip. Whilst the SESC centre was well received by Guaribanos, the public market has never been used, and the local Sunday fair continues to take place at the Guaribas Two square.

The COHAB houses have met with a similar fate: almost none of the families that received one decided to live in it, usually renting it instead to development workers and teachers from São Raimundo Nonato. The responsibility lies in the planners' insufficient knowledge of local society and environment, and suggests once again PFZ's haste in implementing policies for the government's political advertisement. Because houses in Guaribas are traditionally made with adobe bricks, have no indoor bathroom, no doors separating its rooms, and their height is somewhat lower than that of common metropolitan houses, 68 low cost two bedroom houses were built in the village after 2003 by COHAB. These are manufactured with standard bricks, fibre cement roofs, and divided into living-room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and an internal bathroom with shower and toilet. However, these two bedroom COHAB houses are not only extremely small for the typically large local families, but they are also not "ecologically correct" for a semi-arid region with great temperature variation, heating up too fast during the day and getting too cold at night. The wide, thick, and compact adobe bricks made with local mud and cooked in the sun, on the other hand, absorb and release both heat and cold slowly, so that a traditional adobe house will always be cooler during a hot day, and a few degrees warmer than the outside temperature in a cold July night. Despite the fact that villagers openly complain of COHAB units and continue living in their adobe houses, 100 more of these units were scheduled for construction when I left the village in 2008.

A few other investments in urban infrastructure were made during my fieldwork, but in comparison to other more crucially needed improvements, they cannot be considered of essential necessity. Thus a public square was built in Fazenda to pair with the one in the Guaribas Two side, two snack bars were built in Guaribas Two that added to the several already existent in the village, and a football field was created in the basin that divides Fazenda and Guaribas Two. In contrast, supplying the village of Guaribas with running water and providing hundreds of cisterns to its surrounding settlements was a remarkable achievement, and it is

usually recognized by Guaribanos and government workers alike as the foremost local PFZ improvement. Even so, it is hard to establish which political institution was responsible for its provision. Like many other improvements, such as the Fazenda square, the paving of some streets, and the renovation of two municipal schools, the supplying of running water to the village was claimed by both the mayor's office and the direction of PFZ. Since these two institutions were affiliated to opposed political parties (PMDB and PT), they were constantly at odds, engaged in campaigns of mutual demoralization and accusations of sabotage.<sup>77</sup> Hence, just as the mayor would blame the lack of infrastructural investments in Guaribas on Rosângela Souza, PFZ's chief coordinator in Piauí, missing important deadlines for securing federal funds, or on PFZ's direct misappropriation of resources, so would Rosângela and several other development workers accuse the mayor's office of embezzlement, or of purposely stalling bureaucratic procedures to sabotage the PT government's efforts with PFZ.

The lack of investments in basic infrastructure more than seven years after the programmes' installation remains PFZ's most publicized failure in Guaribas, having been amply exposed by the media through articles with titles such as "Guaribas, the city symbol of Zero-Hunger, still in misery"<sup>78</sup>, "Guaribas: zero hunger, but destitution endures seven years on"<sup>79</sup>, and "Guaribas: the illusions and realities of Zero-Hunger"<sup>80</sup>.

## Conclusion: improvements designed for PFZ advertisement

More suggestive than enumerating the investments that were promised and not delivered is perhaps the examination of more peripheral improvements that were nevertheless considered priorities by PFZ development planners. For example, PFZ

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<sup>77</sup> For instance, in February 2010, PT representatives brought a legal suit against the re-elected mayor of Guaribas, Ercílio, at the Regional Electoral Court (TRE), for electoral crimes such as buying votes, improbity, and embezzlement for a political campaign. Ercílio's impeachment is still sub judice.

<sup>78</sup> "Guaribas, cidade símbolo do Fome Zero, ainda na miséria" 2007.

<sup>79</sup> "Guaribas, a fome é zero, mas a miséria continua sete anos depois" 2011.

<sup>80</sup> "Guaribas, a ilusão e a realidade do Fome Zero" 2007.



originally intended to inaugurate, by the end of 2005, a 1.5 kilometre airfield and a memorial to the Zero-Hunger Programme in Guaribas (Murakawa 2005: 90). Rosângela Souza sees no contradiction in Guaribas having a costly airfield from which common villagers would scarcely benefit, whilst most of its streets and its only access to the national road network are not paved. Though neither airfield nor memorial has yet materialized, the plans have not been abandoned, but merely delayed. Work on the PFZ memorial was about to start when I was last in Guaribas, in April 2008, and there one will find, for example, “the first PFZ T-shirt, given by the ex-minister José Graziano to a local called Carlos”, as well as a collection of “‘memories of events’, with photographs and newspaper articles that show the evolution in the quality of life in Guaribas” (Murakawa 2005: 90).

PFZ’s prioritizing of a memorial to itself and an expensive airfield over the construction of a local hospital or a sewage system, reveals the extent to which the programme has been politicized. In view of the fact that both of Lula’s trips to Guaribas were officially cancelled due to the difficulties of transport, the purpose of the airfield is probably flying in government representatives for PFZ’s advertisement. Nevertheless, PFZ’s concern with political publicity and the management of its image in the media can be further illustrated by the composition of its cadre at the project’s headquarters in Teresina. That head office is responsible for articulating development efforts in Guaribas and in 224 other municipalities in Piauí, and when I visited the premises in September 2007, I was given a tour around by Socorro Landim, one of the project’s coordinators. She explained that 45 to 50 people worked there, and that among them there were no anthropologists or sociologists. A public relations consultant turned project coordinator herself, Socorro told me that the entourage counted among its numbers three journalists, a photographer, a lawyer, a legal assistant, two economists, four nutritionists, as well as several press assistants, social workers, and financial, administrative, and planning managers. Hence, if the constitution of the PFZ personnel in Teresina may be taken to reflect the project’s priorities, it reveals a greater interest in promotion and advertisement, and in organizational upkeep, than in the analysis of its social impacts. “Anthropologists”, I was later told by Rosângela Souza, “are still exotic animals to us”. It is also worthwhile to note that most of the PFZ staff in the headquarters, Socorro disclosed to me, were not professional public servants,

inducted by official examination, but recruited by decree from PT affiliates and political militants; as such, they were installed in their public offices under DAS denominations, or temporary “remunerated functions” (Função Gratificada), which further demonstrates the political connection between PFZ and PT.

In order to fully portray the degree to which Guaribas and PFZ have been politicized by the Brazilian government, I close this section with a report by the Citizenship Education Network, from the TALHER branch of PFZ, which can be found at the Ministry of Social Development’s webpage in the Brazilian Government’s website. Below is the *ipsis literis* translation of PFZ’s mission statement concerning Guaribas:

If there were a political map of hunger in Brazil, Guaribas would be its epicentre. The municipality in the *sertão* of Piauí, the starting point of the Zero-Hunger Programme, seems above all to be the town-laboratory [sic] of the federal government. Life, there, revolves around the Bolsa Família grants and the R\$82,000 [£21,250] that the federal government puts, every month, in the pockets of people who depend on official aid to eat. The town is divided between those who have, and those who dream of having the card. The town itself only began to exist in the country’s eyes in 2003, when it became the shop window [sic] of the largest project to fight hunger launched by the recently elected president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. It is a people that continues to live through God’s miracle. (...) Salvador Pereira Dias, 26, doesn’t understand why, even going hungry, his family has not been “blessed” [sic] with the Bolsa Família card. It suffices to watch his youngest son breast feeding to understand his despair. Domingas da Rocha Alves Dias, 25, the mother, is more bone than flesh. From her breasts, almost no milk flows. Nor could it. Without any form of income, the family only survives from others’ charity.<sup>81</sup>

In this manner, the government portrays Guaribas as nothing short of a humanitarian catastrophe. The emphasis and insistence on the discourse of hunger lays the basis for intervention on ethical grounds that drive political and economic critiques to a level of cosmetic superficiality. For all debate must be put on hold in

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<sup>81</sup> “Rede de Educação Cidadã” 2009.

face of the primary rescue of the immediate physical existence of individuals, against which ideological considerations cannot but appear minor, secondary, and merely academic. Hence, claims about a food security crisis in Guaribas evoke the primacy of material, immediate, and practical concerns over ulterior theoretical objections. In this sense, the Brazilian government renders PFZ intervention virtually unquestionable and unchallengeable, effectively shielding it from criticism. Thus it is that the government de-politicizes PFZ intervention, whilst highly politicizing its achievements.

## Chapter Five. Nationalism, citizenship, and the expansion of state capacity in Guaribas

In light of the shortcomings mentioned above — in the planning and operation of programmes, and in the implementation of infrastructural benefits — one might ask what initiatives have accomplished the stated goals of PFZ in Guaribas. For economically, too, as indicated in Chapter Two, PFZ efforts to introduce new farming technology, stimulate alternative means of income generation, institute cooperatives, increase surplus extraction, maximize the local regime of work, and boost local commerce have either met with very limited success, or achieved the very opposite results (as in the case of the last three endeavours). From above, the apparent answer is that the Brazilian government has succeeded, in any event, in politicizing PFZ and converting social policy into political capital. Yet, several other opportune “side effects” of the programme, for the state’s purposes, have accompanied the local development process. As Poittier, Woost, Pigg, Ferguson, and Mosse propose, two typical political interests behind development objectives are the expansion of state capacity and bureaucratic power, and the attempt to draw marginal areas into the national polity (Poittier 1997; Woost 1993; Pigg 1992; Ferguson 1990; Mosse 2004). I now turn to these two aspects of PFZ: the increase of state control in Guaribas, and the “nationalization” of Guaribanos.

### Historical background to the limited presence of the state in Guaribas

Though the scarcity of legal and administrative state institutions in Guaribas can be attributed to its geographical remoteness and the challenging access to its highlands, it can also be explained historically, through the colonization of the *sertão* in general, and of the state of Piauí in particular. The first expeditions into the territory

of modern day Piauí date from 1606, more than a century after the Portuguese arrived in Brazil. At that time, writes historian José do Patrocínio Franco, the state of Piauí was, literally, “no-one’s land” (1957: 61). For not until 1621 were its lands juridically incorporated into the state of Maranhão, forming a massive extension of territories that included what are today the states of Pará, Piauí, Maranhão, Amazonas, Acre, Rodônia, Roraima, Amapá, parts of Ceará, and the Northern regions of Mato Grosso and Goiás. Its boundaries were dissolved and reorganized in 1652, so that Piauí was integrated to the state of Pernambuco until 1695 (Alencastre 1981: 23). The process of Piauí’s colonization thus begins in 1674, with the first royal grants of lands [sesmarias] issued by the state of Pernambuco.

Its settlement was mainly undertaken by herdsmen from Bahia and Pernambuco who constituted the “cattle raising front”. Their objective was to supply directly the sugar-cane industries on the coast, and indirectly the consumer centres of Portugal and Flanders, with beasts, leather, and cattle meat (Andrade 1973: 226). In order to obtain land for their herds, they “attacked, destroyed, enslaved, and catechized Indians, subjecting the survivors to servitude and captivity” in the newly formed settlements (Andrade 1973: 226). Simultaneously, an “agricultural front” advanced over the Indian lands of Piauí from the South, so as to supply the dispersed villages of the interior with produce, and to found more settlements in its transit towards the coast. However, Andrade asserts, in the chief distribution of land in Piauí, donations (*sesmarias*) were not conceded to herdsmen, but conferred as latifundia to members of the more influential nobility, who enjoyed prestige through the prestation of services to the Crown (1982: 37). These were chiefly cattle barons who had embarked on the *descimento* (enslavement or extermination) campaigns of native populations. Thus, the settlement of Piauí and the demarcation of its lands took place with the formation of extensive cattle farms from the interior to the coast — in contrast to the typical process of the country’s colonization from the coast to the interior — which explains the state’s unique, elongated shape towards Brazil’s Northern coastline.

In 1695, Piauí was dismembered from Pernambuco and annexed to the state of Bahia, until it was again absorbed in 1715, through a royal decree, by the state of Maranhão. As a result, until Piauí was finally emancipated in 1811, authorities from several different states were given the right to grant its lands and adjudicate over its

territory. Mott states that these myriad changes in jurisdiction account for the disorganized occupation of the Piauí territory, which ensued for over two centuries without unified legislation and consolidated administrative institutions for state regulation over the area (1985: 9).

Likewise, Odilon Nunes (1975) stresses the limits to the Portuguese Crown's influence in the process of Piauí's settlement, which took place without the expansion of legal and executive institutions for governance, and without the establishment of a centralized bureaucracy. In effect, Rodrigues points out that not as late as 1690, thus almost two hundred years after Brazil's discovery, were the first judges appointed in the Northeastern backlands in which Guaribas is located. (1965: 75-9). Other authors, such as Amman (2003) and Egler (2003) describe the progression of this "semi-feudal" socioeconomic structure of colonization to a modern form of patron-client relationship in the Northeast of Brazil termed *coronelismo*, whereby *coronéis* ("colonels", or powerful landowners) controlled vast tracts of land and the tenant farmers who lived in them, administering justice in lieu of the central government until the first half of the twentieth century.

Consequently, from the 1840's up to the 1930's, bands of destitute peasants and armed outlaws called *cangaceiros* took advantage of the scarcity of state institutions in the region to raid provincial towns and the estates of wealthy landowners, subsequently hiding from the authorities in the *sertão* wilderness. A major social phenomenon at the time, the *cangaço* banditry was condemned by the contemporary press, but also romanticized by it as a movement of popular resistance against the corruption of the current government, and against the structure of social inequality in the *sertão* upheld by "colonels" and the landed gentry (Faoro 1958: 75). Therefore, the limited presence of the state in Piauí can be discerned from the first attempts to settle its territory, through its process of colonization, to its present socioeconomic conditions.

## Guaribas and Brazilian “national culture”

In the specific case of Guaribas, the further delay in the extension of state capacity may be due to the fact that, as a small population of subsistence agriculturalists with low production and income, the government had no interest in the area for taxation purposes. Though Guaribas’ isolation should not be overplayed, the scarcity of legal and administrative state institutions in the village is apparent even in relation to the neighbouring towns of São Raimundo Nonato and Caracol. Before Guaribas became a municipality in 1997, the village did not have a mayoralty, a municipal council, a police station, a post-office, nor any local establishment for the administration of justice (which it still does not possess). Consequently, very few material manifestations of state presence were, even visibly, available. Indeed, Guaribanos recall that until not long ago, in the practical paucity of state legal institutions, “we were the law, for we didn’t have any other”. As mentioned in the Introduction, a council of prominent elders presided over the villagers’ juridical and affective disputes, so that the local management of conflict and the maintenance of order was dealt with locally, and seldom through the state’s legal apparatus. It is with some degree of nostalgia that many older and middle-aged Guaribanos speak of the demise of this old form of conflict resolution proceeding, for they often resent adherence and subjection to state law. To this day, reporting certain types of offense to the authorities is regarded as a sort of snitching, and the infraction of land and grazing rights, animal trespassing, and conjugal disputes are usually handled locally, with their solutions ranging from nonaction through mediation to self-help. Only grave cases such as murder and rape are taken to the judicial system, but even vengeance killings are, in practice, sorted out locally, and more often than not, with the injured family’s deployment of retaliatory violence.

Whilst this partial detachment from the state’s legal apparatus becomes evident through the local custom of honour, vendetta-like killings described in Chapter One, it is equally illustrated by more mundane incidents of law infringement. For instance, there was the case of a poor farmer arrested without bail because he had forfeited the payment of alimony to his wife, who was also a local, but who now lived in São Paulo with another man and had secured the services of a

lawyer there. This was unheard of in the village, and there was widespread consensus in the community, even among the local police officers, that the situation was wildly unfair; yet, a judicial order left the latter no alternative but to imprison the man in the local police station. The incident mobilized several villagers, who visited the man daily, and brought him fresh food for both lunch and dinner. As general indignation escalated, after the second day of full imprisonment, the police let the man serve a regime of partial confinement, and he could be seen walking in the streets and talking in the square for the whole duration of the day, until the policemen decided to go to bed and he turned in to sleep in his cell. Eventually, after ten days or so, when the situation cooled down and the initial strength of the court order waned, the man was set free, to the relief of Guaribanos.

Therefore, the restricted influence of judicial and executive state institutions, the difficulties in transportation, and the lack of electricity and means of communications until 1998 rendered Guaribas a comparatively remote province of the national territory. As such, a curious state of affairs obtains regarding Guaribas' participation in Brazilian "national culture", as it were. For not only are national holidays such as the 7<sup>th</sup> of September (Brazil's Independence), the 15<sup>th</sup> of November (Proclamation of the Republic), and the 21<sup>st</sup> of April (Tiradentes' Day) not distinguished from ordinary days, but even nationwide cultural celebrations such as carnival and Christmas are not commemorated in the village.<sup>82</sup> Other countrywide important cultural institutions such as the Catholic celebration of marriage, and the cheering for the national football team during a World Cup, as described momentarily, are also not common in Guaribas. No male Guaribanos I spoke to ever served in the national armed forces, nor enlisted for the one-year military service, which is obligatory for every Brazilian male citizen. Similarly, voting, which is compulsory for citizens over 18 years of age in Brazil, and which took place away from the village until 1997 — first, in São Raimundo Nonato, and more recently, in Caracol — was rather "facultative" in Guaribas, being reserved for the few who took the trouble to have electoral titles issued. Typically, these villagers only travelled to the towns to vote in municipal and state deputy elections when local interests were at stake, as when a politician who had ventured to campaign in the village or had

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<sup>82</sup> Except for mayoralty and post-office employees, and school teachers and students, who are excused from their functions on these public holidays.



connections with a local family was running for office. Significantly, the sanctions against evading these compulsory citizenship obligations — not being able to run for public office, get passports issued, and enrol in universities, for instance — had no meaning in Guaribas. Likewise, economic injunctions such as fines for dodging military service and voting also had no bearing on the vast majority of Guaribanos, who did not have bank accounts or financial record cards (CPF) until recently.

In this manner, the local community's participation in institutional and cultural expressions of national life has been restricted, at least, in comparison to other localities in the country. This can also be demonstrated by my experience of the 2006 World Cup in the village. It is unnecessary to point out the role of football in Brazil, and the general expression of national sentiment that takes place when the Brazilian team plays in the World Cup. From the farthest neighbourhoods of the country's largest cities to its smallest provincial towns, the streets are decorated with the national colours, people dress for weeks in whatever green and yellow clothes they have, flags hang down from buildings or are painted in the façades of modest houses and bars, and even banking executives of busy financial institutions and lawyers of top law firms are excused from work for the duration of a match which features the national team. In effect, municipal decrees throughout the country establish *ponto facultativo* ("optional work day") on the days of Brazil matches, by which public servants are exempted from work should they wish it so.

In spite of this, in Guaribas, people were unimpressed with the World Cup event in general, and almost stoically unmoved by the Brazilian team's defeat to the French national team still in the quarter-finals phase. The village itself showed few signs of the event: hardly any banners, flags, or national colours were to be seen, either in the streets, houses, or in the attire of most Guaribanos.<sup>83</sup> Despite a few exceptions, particularly among the male teenage population, most villagers did not change their routine commitments to watch the Brazil games, and talk of the national team far from dominated conversation in the village's square, coffee groups, or bars. In fact, except for a friend from Brasília who lived in the village, thus an outsider, I had some difficulty in finding people who I could interest in a discussion about the Brazilian team's campaign. The Guaribanos who watched the games did so at home,

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<sup>83</sup> Save the Guaribas Two square, which *the mayoralty* decided to paint with green and yellow halfway through the World Cup.

with their families, in a rather private experience, and no collective manifestations of either excitement or disappointment were ever taken to the streets. Except for the afternoon and evening of the day in which the Brazilian team's elimination took place, there was no public expression of lamentation, and the next day in the village, it was business as usual. I should point out here that I am not a fanatical football fan, nor resent Guaribanos, of course, for not feeling deeply the elimination of the national team, but the fact is that a fundamental form of mobilization of national sentiment was absent in the village.

As described in Chapter One, the primacy of kinship relations in Guaribas leads to the concentration of the individual's obligations and commitments within the elementary family, which is the local corporate unit commanding the deepest emotional legitimacy, and which supersedes any form of national affiliation as a criterion for shared identity and solidarity. The fact that Guaribanos usually refer to their families as their "race", their "people", and their "nation" further demonstrates the precedence of kinship over ethnic or national affiliation, and, indeed, over any other basis for coalitional computation in the village. Though the idea of the total community is, of course, important when it becomes a factor for identity in contrast to that of townspeople such as Caracolenses and São Raimundeses, whose values and way of life differ more markedly from those of Guaribanos, the idea of "Guaribas" as a basic criterion for identity and solidarity is a distant abstraction for locals who perceive and experience the village less as a shared, communal monad, than as a collection of semi-autonomous households, a manifold of elementary family nuclei which co-inhabit the same territory. Therefore, if the notion of "Guaribas" is already a vague and rather ethereal concept for villagers, the imagination of identity predicated on a national community is an even more remote ideational construct. For instance, as observed in Chapter Three, just as Guaribanos do not perceive local public resources, such as municipal funds and jobs at the mayoralty, as belonging to the commonweal, so are federal money and benefits treated as belonging to "nobody". Returning briefly to the misappropriation of PFZ benefits by locals, the Guaribanos who irregularly possessed more than one Bolsa Família card did not feel as if they were "stealing", for their families, from either a local or national commonweal; in effect, I was often told, "the money is from the government, it doesn't come out of anyone's pocket".

As Holanda (2006 [1936]), Herzfeld (1993), and other authors have noted, primary loyalty to the kin group or to the political commonweal can be, and often are irreconcilable, thus creating an opposition between the family and the state. For the strong identification of a group of individuals with a political entity defined in national terms must transcend kinship allegiances and individual and local differences, uniting all citizens under a single, unitary identity. In the modern state, which is largely characterized by rational management and immunity to family favour, “those who serve familial interests at the expense of larger, communal ones are treated as though they are guilty of the political equivalent of incest” (Herzfeld 1993: 12). Therefore, to instil a stronger sense of belonging to the national community in Guaribanos, who live in a social environment which already does not encourage extensive cooperation, is seen as a priority by both the Brazilian government and PFZ. Their concerted efforts to increase the capacity of Guaribanos to “imagine” a common national society beyond their face to face community encompass workshops in “citizenship education”, the mass registration of individuals into the state’s bureaucratic system as a reification of citizenship status, and the indoctrination of nationhood and citizenship in public schooling.

## Public education, nationhood, and the expansion of state capacity in Guaribas

Public education is the formal basis of attempts to persuade Guaribanos that they are now also citizens, and of appeals to a national cultural continuity — to a common language, descendancy, and shared customs. Accordingly, the Geography, History, and Social Studies schoolbooks used in Guaribas for both primary and secondary education during my fieldwork — published by FTD Editora and approved by the Ministry of Education’s 2000 PNLD (National Programme for the Didactic Book) — introduced the premise of common kinship, of brotherhood, between all Brazilians, and established their right to a substantial common property, the whole country. In their effort to introduce symbols of national identity, all pedagogic textbooks used in

the village's public schools, from History and Geography to Portuguese and Mathematics, came with the full lyrics of the national anthem on their back cover. The national colours and the flag also featured predominantly in their front cover illustrations. Yet, more specifically, each discipline capitalized on elements of its area of expertise to impart a sense of national character and national belonging. Geography schoolbooks familiarized students with the national territory, "the" map, "the" flag, and the country's typical landmarks, stressing a feeling of pride for the vastness of the motherland's (*Mãe Pátria*) area, and for the wealth of its natural resources, such as fresh water, and mineral, botanical, and wildlife reserves. History schoolbooks celebrated diverse manifestations of distinctive "Brazilian identity", from pre-Cabralian native populations, through the heroism of Independence efforts, to the casting off of the monarchy and the institution of the republic in 1895. From secondary education onwards, development discourse also infiltrated the didactic domain, and accentuated the role of future generations in the country's development towards its promised greatness, actualizing its full economic and political potential in relation to the international community. To that end, a stress on the virtues of work for the formation of "conscious, solidary, responsible, and free" individuals was articulated: each citizen must exercise her function in the nation's "Order and Progress", the very slogan inscribed in the Brazilian national flag. Students learn that they must make themselves useful to the national community and to be "collective individuals", imbued with strong "group instinct" and "community spirit", a pattern of conduct desirable for all members of Brazilian society. In this generic formation of the citizen for the project of a collective nation, which aims at imparting moral and civic habits for the creation of a defender of these moralizing principles herself, the only place for the individual is within the desirable relationship between the citizen and the national social group. This desirable relationship is characterized, on the one hand, by the individual's passiveness, obedience to legal and political institutions, and observance of her own professional and social functions, and, on the other, by her invitation to a limited participation in the discussion and solution of national problems (for these must ultimately be solved by representatives whose function is public administration).

Besides this nationalizing narrative deployed in public education, the attempt to approximate Guaribas with the national community and its public institutions

includes the expansion of state capacity in the village. The registration of individuals into a centralized national bureaucracy produces legal identities proper to states, conferring a particular legibility to the subjects under its rule, and “a standardized, synoptic view of the local” (Scott et al. 2002: 6). Whilst some of its main purposes may be taxation and the management of “an untidy and potentially disorderly element of the population” (Campbell 1964: 16), the modern state’s ideology justifies the control and scrutiny of individuals as a means to social engineering, that is, the fine-tuning of socioeconomic conditions for the improvement of the general quality of life. Along the same line, PFZ advertises what it calls “Social Control”, one of its four main axes of intervention, as a way to promote “social inclusion”, extend social rights guaranteed by the state, and expand the welfare system.<sup>84</sup>

In Guaribas, efforts to register citizens and property were among the most intense and successful, especially because all PFZ grants require basic documents without which beneficiaries cannot be inserted into the federal benefit registries. Documents such as birth certificates (*Certidão de Nascimento*), personal identification papers (*RG*), financial record cards (*CPF*), electoral titles (*Título Eleitoral*), and work cards (*Carteira de Trabalho*), which the majority of Guaribanos did not possess until the arrival of PFZ in 2003, were thereafter continuously issued either in the notaries of the nearby towns of São Raimundo Nonato and Caracol, or in the village itself by the Itinerant Justice (*Justiça Itinerante*). The latter consists in a convoy of vans with satellite internet capacity, operated by officials from the state’s Judicial Tribunal (*Tribunal de Justiça*), which emits these documents in situ and free of charge. Throughout my fieldwork, these vans appeared in Guaribas in the morning and were parked at the SESC centre for the whole the day, where dozens of Guaribanos formed large queues and were offered refreshments for their patience. Similarly, property and land, which were traditionally exchanged or bequeathed informally — or recorded, at the most, at a neighbouring town’s police station — began to be entered en masse into property registers and written deeds in order for Guaribanos to qualify for micro-credit opportunities.

Beyond its significance as a gateway to government benefits, however, bureaucratic registration comes to represent a recognition of citizenship and social

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<sup>84</sup> “Eixo 4: Articulação, Mobilização e Controle Social” 2005.

identity. According to Peirano (2006), Santos (1979), and Reis (1998), historically, the establishment of citizenship in Brazil emanated primarily from the state, and especially through its imposition of professional regulamentation; in such a context, Peirano affirms, documents and papers not only legalize and officialize citizenship, but actually produce it, and make it visible (2006: 28, 34). In Guaribas, for instance, from PFZ meetings and Citizenship Education workshops, through radio and television advertisement campaigns, to public school classrooms and schoolbooks, the idea is persistently reinforced that citizenship (and its materialization in national documents) is integral to achieving the full status of personhood: without it one does not have the qualities, rights, and obligations that grant the legal and moral standing of a competent social being. To not be a citizen is to be “socially invisible”, a notion constantly emphasized both in PFZ mission statements and workshops in the village.<sup>85</sup> This proposition is sanctioned by official state rhetoric, and can be gleaned, for example, from a radio and television campaign sponsored jointly by the Brazilian government and Unesco which broadcasted several public advertisements highlighting the importance of having personal documents, especially the birth certificate. Two of them were particularly forceful. The first opens with the digital animation of a puppet show, and over it, we hear a song played with musical instruments typical of Northeast Brazil, such as the accordion and the metal triangle, and sung by a chorus of children. It opens with the verses: “I have a name/ and who doesn’t have one?/ Without documents,/ I’m nobody”.<sup>86</sup> A second version, also extensively broadcasted during my fieldwork, consisted in an animated cartoon stylized as if drawn by a child, with lyrics sung by a little girl urging her parents to register her. In it we see the sketch of the little girl in the foreground as the background changes from her house, to a cultivated field, to her school, and the advertisement ends with a narration in her voice:

Without the birth certificate, it’s as if we didn’t exist. Without it, we can’t participate in any of the government’s social programmes, nor receive financial help. We can’t enrol in school, nor have any documents. It’s for free, it’s your right. Birth certificate: Brazilian citizenship with name and surname.

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<sup>85</sup> “Povos e comunidades tradicionais: invisibilidade” 2006.

<sup>86</sup> “Eu tenho nome/e quem não tem?/Sem documentos/eu não sou ninguém.”

Though this equation of “existence” at large with “bureaucratic existence” is rather extreme, the message is clear: there is no full, official existence (and, importantly, no federal financial assistance) unmediated by the state. Even though cash transfers provide an unmatched motivation for Guaribanos to disclose and register information about their lands and their families not offered by prior census enquiries — IBGE census workers were sometimes received with gunfire at the Lagoa de Baixo settlement — it is true that several Guaribanos were genuinely proud of their newly issued documents. I recall meeting a friend on the way back from an all-day PFZ activity called Active Citizenship (Cidadania Ativa) at a local public school whose main purpose was to “sensitize” villagers to the values of citizenship and “social inclusion”, and to emit their personal documents. I asked him what he had done there and he replied, with a glow in his face, that his wife had just been given, for the first time, her personal identification card (RG): “Now she is *license plated!*”, he retorted, smiling. On the same day, I met a middle-aged woman who had just received her second personal identification card. When I asked her if she had lost her first one, she told me that she still had it at home, and that she had the new one issued only for “literate” to appear in the document, for the old one had been issued before she had learned how to read and write. In these ordinary stories, two fundamental categories in the development lexicon, citizenship and illiteracy, are invested, respectively, with pride and shame: pride in “social inclusion” and bureaucratic visibility, and shame in being illiterate. Significantly, literacy is also advanced as a condition for full citizenship and political participation, and as a way out of “social invisibility” and “political redundancy”. These instances suggest that the value of citizenship and “social inclusion” imparted by government workers and PFZ initiatives has been at least partially internalized by villagers. Unsurprisingly, for Guaribanos, a population conveyed by the media as “isolated”<sup>87</sup>, “forgotten in a time capsule”<sup>88</sup>, with “children covered in dirt”<sup>89</sup>, by government reports as backwards, “lacking skills and information”, and “lacking any form of social control”<sup>90</sup>, and by their very neighbours in Caracol as “savages”, “Indians”, and “cavemen” “living at the end of the world”, citizenship materialized through national documents is a welcome form of social recognition, if not of status enhancement.

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<sup>87</sup> “Lula visita Guaribas e Serra deve vir para encontro do PSDB” 2010.

<sup>88</sup> “Miséria em qualquer canto: Guaribas xará da fome”, 2005.

<sup>89</sup> “Revista do Ministério do Desenvolvimento: Guaribas” 2009.

<sup>90</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 32-3.

## “Citizenship Education” and the emergence of a folk model of citizenship in Guaribas

The endeavour to build national identity and active citizenship in Guaribas also encompasses meetings and workshops organized by PFZ where development workers, government representatives, and teachers of alternative income generation courses seek to “sensitize” villagers to the importance of social inclusion, participation, rights, and democracy. What Guaribanos actually understand by these concepts, however, demands a closer inspection of the meanings they take and the practices they motivate in the village. There are indications of a selective incorporation by Guaribanos of the values and procedures of democratic citizenship advanced in public education and PFZ workshops. For instance, the notion of citizenship is well received, as mentioned above, as an important marker of social inclusion for residents of a stigmatised locality such as Guaribas, where bureaucratic registration and personal documents come to symbolize a form of social visibility and status enhancement. Citizenship as access to government subsidies and federal financial assistance is similarly well received, which can be ascertained by the fact that the large majority of Guaribanos do claim a variety of Bolsa Família benefits, register for micro credit opportunities, and sign up to receive infrastructural improvements such as COHAB houses. However, the assimilation of the concept of citizenship as participation to claim rights and demand a political entity representative of the commonweal to fulfil its statutory obligations is more problematic.

To begin with, as described in Chapter One, the internal fragmentation of the village into family groups which have different corporate interests and compete for local resources constrains the development of communal interests based on the idea of “the common good”, and thus extensive mobilization based on them. The semi-autonomy of elementary families in Guaribas compromises the notion of a commonweal, and, consequently, of any political entity at the municipal or national level predicated on it. This leads, as indicated in Chapter Three, to Guaribanos not perceiving the mayoralty as an institution representative of the whole community. Instead, locals tend to associate the mayoralty with the personal figure of the



politician who has risen to power, and who represents the particular interests of the families who supported her. The mayor directly distributes public resources to the people, who understand these benefits not as rights due to them by way of their categorical relationship with the state, their condition of citizens, but as favours and services to which they are entitled through their personal association with the politician, and as recompense for the political support offered her.

This particular scenario of political praxis is not unique within the country, and has been described by Sales (1994) as the “culture of favours” in Brazil. In legally insecure environments, with a weak administrative presence of the state, he maintains, there emerges in society a strong reliance on personal relations with more affluent or powerful members of the community to obtain basic services that would otherwise be provided by the government. In this context, though theoretically guaranteed by the constitutional rights of individuals, access to basic health and legal services, for instance, are seen and experienced as favours activated by direct personal interaction with local influential agents rather than mediated by a bureaucratic state apparatus (Lomnitz 1999: 272). Benefits are thus perceived not as rights prescribed by the existence of a relationship with the state, but as favours obtained through a clientistic relationship with powerful social actors that puts a premium on empathy, sociability, and personal connections. Accordingly, as shown in Chapter Three, political practice in Guaribas is based on the ideals and registers of kinship and friendship, which confer special relevance to the idioms of personal intimacy and affectivity in which political support is offered and secured.

DaMatta (1979) and Holanda (2006 [1936]) argue of Brazilian society, that this stress on the sentimental bonds of person-to-person relations, or personalism, is a peculiar trait of social life. Therefore, the concept of liberal citizenship, which constitutes a legalistic and contractual model for the relationship between people, and between people and the state — and which establishes a formal equality between all individuals — emerges as an impoverished category for the foundation of interpersonal relations (DaMatta 1979: 20-1, 135). For the generalized morality on which the solidarity between all citizens is formally founded derives not from personal relations, empathy, or affinity, but from a collective “theoretical relationship to a right” (Lomnitz 1999: 273). Taking cue from DaMatta’s analysis of the Brazilian adage that says “for my friends, everything; for my enemies, the law”,

Lomnitz describes the notion of citizenship as “a degraded baseline, or zero-degree, of relationship, a fact that is visible in the day-to-day management of social relations” (1999: 271). Though Lomnitz calls for a greater attention to the particular meanings with which the concept of citizenship is invested by different governments and at different times, he recognizes that common citizenship in Mexico, too, is one of lowest forms of social recognition, and least moving grounds for general solidarity (1999: 271). Lomnitz offers as an example the sharp contrast between the cordiality and disponibility in the treatment of friends and relatives in Mexican society and the indifference or hostility reserved for the anonymous fellow citizen (1999: 271-2). This resonates not only with DaMatta’s argument about Brazilian society at large, but is also observable in Guaribas in the contrast between the categorical obligations of solidarity and cooperation inherent in the relationship between family members, and the general attitudes of distrust and antagonism between members of unrelated families. Whilst some authors equate this absence of generalized morality with the lack of strong civic traditions, “wherein citizenship is the place in which the social pact is manifested” (Lomnitz 1999: 271), others consider it the result of the arbitrary “imposition” of the state and its institutions on cultures which have skipped, as it were, the historical development of liberal citizenship through the principles of government by consent and political representation (Migdal 1988; Alavi 1972; A. Smith 1983; C. Smith 1990).

Although the concept of citizenship in Brazil has been in constant change (M. Gomes 2003; F. Gomes 2003; Luca 2003; Canêdo 2003; Naves 2003; Holston 2009), especially between metropolitan and provincial areas, one may attribute the lack of consciousness of rights-based citizenship in a rural region such as Guaribas to all of the factors above, namely, the limited administrative presence of the state generating a local “culture of favours”, the “imposition” of state institutions, the lack of strong democratic civic traditions, and the notion of generalized morality premised on citizenship as a degraded baseline for social relations. These aspects come together to generate a challenging environment for the advance of the notion of rights-based citizenship in the village. In effect, Cornwall et al. assert that, in Brazil, the idea of the citizen as one who is able to know her rights and demand them from the state has been only partially internalized by the population: “that these expectations of the state exist at all”, they conclude, “is a relatively recent

phenomenon” (2009: 33). For this reason, Cornwall et al. maintain that “citizenship discourse in Brazil is a discourse of rights” (2009: 33).

This is certainly true of PFZ efforts in Guaribas, where government workers expressly and primarily equate citizenship with rights to infrastructural, welfare, and financial benefits. Yet, its counterpart, participation — the work a citizen must put in to oversee the proper functioning of democratic institutions, such as mobilizing to demand oversight, auditing municipal spending, or simply speaking up against what she perceives to be unfair in public administration — has not been assimilated to the same degree by villagers. The several Guaribanos I spoke to on the topic of political participation knew little about the functioning of legislative or executive municipal institutions. Nor did they seem interested in learning the details, for instance, of how the municipal council works, what statutory obligations the mayorality and the council must fulfil towards the municipality, how to officially define local infrastructural priorities and take them to the mayor’s office, or how to demand more visibility in municipal spending. All these concerns are apparently seen by Guaribanos as an additional encumbrance on their lives, and the activities related with political participation and supervision as extra work that departs from their familiar routine. This has also been detected by PFZ Sustainable Development Plans, which describe Guaribanos’ “lack of agency” and interest in political mobilization as one of the project’s main obstacles in the village.<sup>91</sup> For instance, though Guaribanos regularly expressed discontent with the mayor’s appropriation or mishandling of resources, never during the course of my fieldwork did Guaribanos mobilize, either informally or politically, against the alleged mismanagements. Even when resources that directly affected villagers were ostensibly misused, Guaribanos did not participate or get involved in any kind of collective manifestation of dissatisfaction. Thus when the only tractor in the village, a donation from an international development agency to the municipality, was only engaged in working the mayor’s lands almost for the whole duration of the 2007 rainy season, Guaribanos complained prolifically in private conversations and coffee groups, but refrained from taking any action or protesting against the mayorality. Similarly, when mayorality officials carrying the municipality’s funds (around £75,000) were robbed in the road from São Raimundo Nonato to Guaribas, and were subsequently widely

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<sup>91</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 32-3.

suspected of feigning the theft on the mayor's orders to embezzle the money, even the villagers who lost their salaries or had payments due to them delayed showed no intention of organizing to demand reimbursement or punishment for those involved.

Therefore, a folk model of citizenship seems to emerge in Guaribas, one that lays emphasis on individual rights and benefits, and underplays the citizen's obligations towards the state, such as paying taxes or taking on the charge of political supervision and participation. In fact, the low level of attendance and participation in PFZ assemblies to propose needs and define local priorities, and the lack of interest in the mayoralty's administrative activities suggest that Guaribanos concentrate on the state rhetoric of citizenship as rights to receive benefits, but are unwilling to participate in the regulation of government. This is in line with Cornwall et al.'s conclusions about recent developments in the concept of citizenship in Brazil, where the discourse of citizenship as rights is given priority over that of citizenship as a mode of participation (1999).

It is not surprising, then, that locals selectively incorporate PFZ's equation of citizenship with rights, material benefits, healthcare, financial resources, and free public education, that is, the advantages of state membership, whilst minimizing what they perceive to be its disadvantages, namely, the additional responsibilities of political participation. Yet, if this partial assimilation of the notion of citizenship is convenient to Guaribanos, it is also suitable to PFZ and the government's purposes in the region, which manage to effectively expand state capacity by introducing the benefits and positive aspects of citizenship and social inclusion first. In this manner, the familiarization of Guaribanos with government institutions, as well as their acquiescence to new instruments of state control — such as land and property records, censuses, and bureaucratic registration — is strategically facilitated.

Therefore, the endeavour to form citizens and governable subjects through public education, PFZ meetings and workshops, and so on, takes place within a discourse that is, primarily, one of empowerment and entitlement for them: the assurance of nationwide kinship and extended solidarity; the entitlement to one's share of the country's resources; the guarantee of practical advantages such as public health, safety, education, basic infrastructure, right to justice, protection of property, and welfare in general; the promise of categorical equality and social mobility in a

meritocratic professional system, and; last but not least, access to federal financial resources. In this mainly enabling version of the state, the presence of benefits and privileges surpasses the incidence of duties and obligations, some of which, like taxation of land, services, and income, are neither discussed, nor close to implementation yet in Guaribas. Thus “citizenship” and “development”, buzz words of the development enterprise, have become currency in the village, identified as they are with the improvements, benefits, and funds that have been recently injected into the community. The next section explores the extent to which local understandings of development have come to be mainly informed by material signs of improvements, and how “development” has acquired a predominantly positive value for Guaribanos.

## Development and the internalization of subaltern status

In a case similar to that of PFZ in Guaribas, Pigg describes the failure of a Nepalese development project to make locals view participation not as an additional, cumbersome responsibility, but as an opportunity to gain more control over policies and over their future (1992). She suggests instead that they tended to associate development simply with material signs of improvement and social ascension — the attainment of an affluent condition where, “like in America, ‘no-one has to work’” (1992: 508). This also obtains in Guaribas, where villagers primarily equate development with all kinds of material benefits, such as infrastructural improvements (running water, pavement, public squares, telecommunications), increased prosperity (money, motorcycles, cars), and welfare expansion (health, public education, federal financial assistance and credit lines).

For example, João Bertoldo, a villager in his seventies, described thus the course of development in Guaribas:

There were no cars here, now there are. We had no motorcycles here, now we do. Well, there were no [school] graduates here, now there are. Guaribas has grown by 100 per cent. Compared to other places out there, our village is poor, because people are better-off than us. But our land, in comparison with how I knew it, is 100 per cent better. Today you can talk to anyone in any country, because we have telephones, isn't it? We now have news on the fly.

Arnaldo, in his mid-sixties, also praises the changes brought about by development, stressing the greater affluence of Guaribanos due to PFZ cash-transfer programmes:

Everything we need is now inside Guaribas. There's education, health. There's thirst, which doesn't exist anymore. (...) If the person doesn't have a salary from the mayoralty, he has a government card. Everybody with a little money in the pocket. (...) Guaribas is bumming around [*vadiando*] with resources, thank God!

But beyond commending the advances in local living conditions, villagers typically *identified* the concept of development itself with its material effects. In order to elicit informants' notions of development, one of my standard questions during interviews was "what are the first things that come to your mind when you think about development?". Unsurprisingly, they usually began to enumerate the concrete signs of development in the village. Thus Valda cited, in answer to my question, and in this order, running water, electricity, schools, lines of credit, and the better physical appearance of Guaribanos. Likewise, Miramon Rocha stated: "There was no development here. And today we see the square, pavement, cars. Kids in school. Now we know the way to live". Similarly, Raul told me that "electricity is development. A school is development. All things good, I understand as development. The best development there is health."

Except for sporadic references to growing insecurity in the village and the indiscipline of the new generation of Guaribanos — caveats that were usually prompted by my own insistence on inquiring about the negative results of development for Guaribas — development is widely welcomed, and considered

“good” by locals. As a corollary to this positive evaluation of life in the village after the arrival of development programmes is the negative evaluation of life before them. Informants usually made reference to the previous lack of running water, health services, and public schools. João Caititu’s quote is representative of this outlook:

The suffering in Guaribas is over. You see, before, we had to get water three kilometres away from the village. We spent the whole night by the fire, waiting for that 20 litre bucket to fill up so that we could bring back water to cook beans. Not today: the faucet is already here. People used to be healed with wild herbs, and today this doesn’t exist anymore.

In addition, they often contrasted current living conditions in Guaribas to the isolation, poverty of means, lack of knowledge, and backward ways of villagers in the past. Accordingly, Geraldo, a villager in his early seventies, declared in an interview that

there was no study here, and today, thank God, there is. Here, nobody knew anybody from outside. And today, here you are, a person like you is here, with us, talking. Telling us what we don’t know. You, sir, are explaining to us the way things are, right? Life here, in old times, was rough. It was just us with us. Now those who come from outside give us the explanations. The schools are here.

Geraldo’s quote conveys how Guaribanos’ greater isolation and lack of formal education in the past translates, at least today, into an evaluation of deficiency in the balance of knowledge. It also reveals an admission of inferiority in relation to the (allegedly) better informed, educated, and more cosmopolitan residents of the rest of the country, who know and can explain to them “the way things are”. Narratives such as Geraldo’s were reiterated by other villagers who often described themselves as poor, uneducated, rustic tillers of the earth — or, as I was often told, as “primitive” as “Indians”. Cristóvão illustrated this tendency when, in my first

weeks in Guaribas, upon learning that I would stay there for over a year, he remarked: “You, sir, have come from Rio de Janeiro to stay in the midst of these Indians”.

The efforts of government and development workers in the village have much to do with the internalization of this idea of subaltern status by Guaribanos. As described in the next chapter, PFZ courses, workshops, and meetings, which seek to “sensitize” villagers to their own needs, consist largely of efforts to persuade them of their own deficiencies, from their “lack of education”, “laziness”, and failure to maximize income generation, through their inadequate hygiene habits and physical appearance, to their inability to act collectively and demand their civil rights. Though the raising of locals’ self-esteem figures as one of the main stated objectives of PFZ in Guaribas, development workers themselves perceived the contradiction of attempting to elevate self-esteem through PFZ, whose intervention is meant to remedy Guaribanos’ substandard living conditions and inadequate capacities. Rosa, hired by PFZ to teach alternative income generation courses, asserted during an interview that PFZ assistance reinforces beneficiaries’ self-image of poverty and backwardness. She noted that PFZ has come to signify “a label of low self-esteem”, and told me that some Guaribanos complained to her that they were stigmatized in local towns for receiving government benefits: “‘Here come the Zero-Hunger’, they hear as they go by”.

However partial or discursive, the internalization of subaltern status by populations “in development” such as Guaribanos lays the foundation for the endeavours of projects like PFZ to reform or reconstruct their capacities, aspirations, and self-images. As traditional ways of life and concepts of personhood are downgraded in relation to the perceived (personal and material) improvements brought about by the development encounter, the introjection of new and desirable competencies and lifestyles is facilitated. In the next chapter I investigate how PFZ capitalizes on this process for the production of urban and cosmopolitan subjectivities appropriate to “modern”, competent individuals.



## Chapter Six. PFZ and the production of cooperative citizens

This chapter addresses the social shaping of human subjects through pedagogies of personhood and images of deportment imparted by a variety of vehicles, from PFZ workshops in “beauty”, “hygiene”, and “self-esteem”, through public education, to mass media. Even if these vehicles are rarely formalized into a unified body of knowledge, and often contain elements from diverse discourses, they comprise a web of channels deploying values, ideals, patterned behaviours, and visual imageries, as well as common assumptions about selfhood and social life. As such, they suggest a family of ways of thinking about the self and acting upon the self, of desirable attitudes and lifestyles, standards of self-actualization and pathways to self-fulfilment which, together with PFZ’s calculated policies, contribute to “the coordination of human conduct and the utilization and reform of human capacities” (Rose 1999[1989]: viii). More specifically, I argue below how in PFZ workshops and meetings, classrooms and school environments, television programmes and advertisements, among others, the celebration of a certain type of economic prosperity, family orientation, career enhancement, and lifestyle maximization acts upon the aspirations and decisions of Guaribanos. PFZ directives are explicit in their intention to operate a transformation in its beneficiaries’ notions of “self-esteem”, “beauty”, and “hygiene”, and for that end a special branch of the project called TALHER was created. Therefore, the first section opens with a survey of TALHER’s objectives. The second section examines the relationship between the state and the production of cooperative subjects, and, in particular, the state’s remote regulation of human capacities for a national project of governance. The third section traces the impact of the expansion of public schooling and its related set of knowledges in Guaribas, and their emergence as fundamental forms of cultural capital. The fourth section examines TALHER’s attempts to reconfigure certain local psychological dispositions, especially villagers’ notions of self-worth and self-esteem. The fifth section explores the role of mass media in imparting representations and imageries of desirable lifestyles, standards of behaviour, models

of success and self-realization, as well as paradigms of family orientation, career enhancement, and economic prosperity to Guaribanos. It also addresses the calculated use of media objects by TALHER workshops to the same ends. The sixth section deals with changes in local aspiration models and ideal conceptions of life-careers as symptoms of transformations in Guaribanos' ideas of "the good life". The section also evaluates the consequences of the partial internalization of cosmopolitan ideals in local processes of identity formation. Finally, the seventh and eighth sections appraise, respectively, local patterns of consumerism and currencies of beauty, hygiene, and etiquette, as reifications of changes in locals' desires and models of personhood.

## TALHER

The TALHER branch of PFZ is responsible for coordinating and delivering social policies which aim to transfer "social technology" and "eradicate social exclusion".<sup>92</sup> In Portuguese, the word "*talher*" literally means "cutlery" or "table ware", suggesting the centrality of food security even in a project branch charged with social transformation. However, it is also an acronym that stands for "Team for the Capacitation of Citizenship Education" (Equipe de Capacitação para a Educação Cidadã). Among its stated goals at the official PFZ website are: the "universal access to the rights of citizenship", the socioeconomic emancipation of disadvantaged families, "the expansion of public schooling", and "the reduction of the social deficit".<sup>93</sup> Its mission statement in the Brazilian government's official PFZ website reads:

For the Zero-Hunger Programme, TALHER doesn't only concern physical, but also mental and spiritual nourishment. (...) The Zero-Hunger Programme does not only want to satiate the hunger for

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<sup>92</sup> Fome Zero: o que é" 2005.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

bread. It wants to satiate the hunger for beauty, promoting the citizenship education of its beneficiaries.<sup>94</sup>

Interestingly, the vagueness of this formulation, without any further definition of “citizenship education” and “beauty”, is repeated throughout official government websites.<sup>95</sup> In the Federal Public Ministry website there is an assertion about what it means to “satisfy the hunger for beauty”. Yet, it is unclear and only multiplies variables, introducing new notions such as “self-esteem” and “the perception of life as a biographical process” that remain just as indefinite as “beauty”:

To satisfy the hunger for beauty is to propitiate to the undernourished not only the satisfaction of his stomach, but also of his *conscience* and his *spirit*. To emerge from the perception of life as a biological phenomenon to the perception of life as a biographical process. To form citizens, men, and women with regained self-esteem, enjoying existence as people who feel, and know themselves to be *happy* (*italics mine*)” (Betto 2005: 1).

Similarly, in what concerns PFZ’s notion of “social technology”, the project’s Social Technology Network (RTS) official website provides an equally elusive definition: “Social technology comprises products, techniques, or methodologies, which are re-applicable, developed in interaction with the community, and which should represent effective solutions of social transformation”.<sup>96</sup> No example of a “social technology” is offered.

Though more remains to be explained than is understood in these enunciations, PFZ notions of “social technology”, “self-esteem”, and “beauty” are valuable to us because they involve the deployment of models for the construction of specific identities among local actors, potentially reproducing “hierarchies of

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<sup>94</sup> “Matar a fome de pão e saciar a sede de Beleza” 2005.

<sup>95</sup> “Matar a fome de pão e saciar a sede de Beleza” 2005; “Fome Zero: Programas” 2005; “Presidência da República” 2005. See also Betto 2004, and Betto 2005.

<sup>96</sup> “Rede de tecnologia social: princípios” 2005.

knowledge and society” (Mosse 2004:4) whilst simultaneously depoliticizing such an enterprise (Ferguson 1990). It is possible that the lack of specificity in the formulations of these key concepts involves a calculated vagueness in the programme’s discourse. Even though these essential concepts are not sufficiently defined in official PFZ policy descriptions, they are definitely at play in PFZ pedagogical discourses, in the social impact of the project’s policies, and in the everyday practices of programme managers, consultants, technicians, and villagers.

At the outset, one may already perceive a common denominator in the enunciations above. They describe PFZ beneficiaries as individuals who “hunger” for beauty, happiness, and self-esteem, which implies that they both lack and yearn for them. In simple terms, they imply that in their present condition these individuals are, to some extent, unattractive, unhappy, and suffering from low self-esteem. An analysis of PFZ’s Sustainable Development Plans for Guaribas shows that the assertion above does not push the project’s propositions too far. These plans cite as obstacles to development the prevailing local “feeling of negativity, fear, and low self-esteem”, the “dependency on government programmes”, and a common “fragmented outlook, that is, the population refer[ring] to the municipality not as a whole but as parts”.<sup>97</sup> According to these documents, local knowledge is marked by “the insufficiency of qualified human resources”, meaning that villagers “lack information”, “education”, “skills”, and “an adequate knowledge of technology”.<sup>98</sup> In effect, according to the PFZ workers who authored the diagnostics, it is the “lack of culture” and “leisure” that causes local families to be

unstructured, reinforced by the abuse of alcohol as the only option for the absence of work and leisure opportunities, where the victims are generally women and children. This unstructured family enters a vicious cycle that begins with encouraging male children to abuse alcohol and tobacco.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 18, 19, 38, 46.

<sup>99</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 33.

Assertions of this kind are of particular significance to us not only because they de-politicize and authorize intervention, but also because they enshrine stereotypes and make explicit what PFZ and development planners think is wrong with the village and its people. Thus PFZ proposes first to “sensitize” the population to its needs and inadequacies, and then to “capacitate” them by means of a comprehensive reform of their attitudes and competences.<sup>100</sup> Project activities seek to “rouse reflection, awakening in the community the need to leave the stance of RECEIVING to SEEKING [sic], introducing the notion of citizenship, and attempting to elevate self-esteem”.<sup>101</sup> PFZ programmes, courses, seminars, and workshops aim to “structure and strengthen civil society”, and to “capacitate” and “socialize” Guaribanos by imparting technical expertise and “social technology”.<sup>102</sup> They are to “inform the population”, “restructure family institutions”, “restructure community association”, familiarize villagers with national “political institutions”, impart “adequate economic technology”, and, ultimately, “articulate a new vision of the future”.<sup>103</sup>

Therefore, beyond the provision of infrastructure and financial aid to locals, PFZ aims to effect nothing short of a major reconfiguration of the person in Guaribas — her skills, capacities, attitudes, aspirations, and self-esteem — in the psychological, social, economic, and political realms. In this sense, following Gledhill, Hobart, Escobar, among others, it is plausible to characterize PFZ as the instrument of a bona fide “civilizing” programme (Escobar 2001; Ferguson 1990: xiii Gledhill 1996; Hobart 1993; Nash 1997; Pigg 1992; Woost 1993, 1997).

## The state and subjectivity

It is not surprising that a government development project chiefly concerned with food security, such as PFZ, should also attend to issues of beneficiaries’ beauty,

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<sup>100</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p.41-2; PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 1, p. 36.

<sup>103</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 40-43, 45-6, 48-51.

happiness, and self-esteem, and endeavour to “restore” or reform them. As Rose argues in “Governing the Soul”, the regulation of citizens’ subjective capacities has entered into

the calculations of political forces about the state of the nation, about the problems and possibilities facing the country, about priorities and policies. Governments and parties of all political complexions have formulated policies, set up machinery, established bureaucracies and promoted initiatives to regulate the conduct of citizens by acting upon their mental capacities and propensities (Rose 1999[1989]: 2).

Rose’s thesis is that as representations of citizenship in modern liberal democracies become organized around values and assertions of individuality and self-realization, the state governs by “acting on the choices, aspirations, and self-steering properties of individuals, families, communities, organizations” (1999[1989]: xxiii). In other words, in order to maximize human resources and minimize the cost of social maladjustment, the state governs “at a distance” by regulating subjective capacities, achieving “its effects not through the threat of violence or constraint, but by way of (...) the anxieties stimulated by its norms, and the attraction exercised by the images of life and self it offers us” (1999[1989]: 10). More specifically, Rose maintains that this remote regulation of subjectivity is achieved by the introduction of techniques and rationalities from “psy” disciplines into the domains of work, family, self-development, lifestyle, and child-rearing, which offer knowledge, expertise, and an array of normative representations (i.e., of the “contented worker”, of parenthood and family life, of citizens’ desirable actions, goals, and lifestyles). These are deployed, for instance, through means as diverse as government advertising, public schooling, welfare institutions, family guidance, child-rearing manuals, and the advice of social workers, experts on child development, professionals of mental health, etc. (1999[1989]: xi).

Still, government institutions and state rhetoric are but one element in a complex assembly of forces and authorities that include, among others, mass media and popular culture artefacts — multiple circuits of influence that throw grids of perception and judgement over personal conduct and competencies. Thus soap

operas, tele-journalism, daytime talk shows, pop music, magazines, and advertisements act as relays in the projection of aspirations and desirable lifestyles, presenting myriad normative models “no less powerful from being de-coupled from the authoritative prescriptions of the public powers” (Rose 1999[1989]: 229). In these and other vehicles of persuasion, signs and images of the good life are inscribed: template lifestyles imbued with the ideals of autonomy, self-assuredness, self-realization, freedom, material prosperity, and success.

The recent penetration of mass media and formal schooling in Guaribas, which will be treated in more detail below, intersect with PFZ’s direct intervention through policies and initiatives that intend to transform the personal competencies, conducts, and social lives of villagers. The main instruments employed by PFZ in its campaign to reform local human capacities take the form of courses and meetings, assemblies with government workers, and TALHER workshops. These ostensibly seek to discourage certain habits, predispositions, and morals, and to inculcate others. As mentioned in Chapter Five, PFZ workshops and meetings consist to a large extent in attempts to persuade villagers’ of their own inadequacies. In seminars about the “World Scenario”, for instance, Guaribanos are confronted with their own insularity regarding knowledge of other countries’ peoples, cultures, and histories, reinforcing their sense of possessing very limited “knowledge of the world”. In alternative income generation courses, development workers make constant reference to the local underexploitation of available man-power and resources, often criticizing villagers for their lack of initiative, energy, and ambition to “prosper”. From their experience in “Potentiality Fairs”, where Guaribanos are encouraged to suggest local aptitudes and propose ways whereby to increase their income and wealth, development workers conclude: “people are indolent [*acomodado*], misinformed, and do not know how to act”.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, in TALHER Citizenship Education meetings to boost mobilization and participation, government workers censure the villagers’ “lack of agency” to demand benefits and improve the local “unsavoury living conditions”.<sup>105</sup> Beauty and hygiene workshops single out numerous local habits as unclean and unhealthy, and attempt to transform the physical appearance of Guaribanos by introducing “new” and “cosmopolitan”

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<sup>104</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 38.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 32-3.

techniques of beauty, from trendy haircuts and fashionable clothing to the regular use of cosmetics and perfumes, as described momentarily. Across these initiatives which seek to “release potential” and improve the local quality of life, the enduring effect is Guaribanos’ own pervasive impression of insufficient knowledge, lack of familiarity with technology and formal education, and poverty and insularity in relation to other communities. In a word, villagers experience a deep sense of how distant they are to the prevalent image of a modern competent individual.

Several authors have attempted to stabilize a general typology of assumptions about the self within Western liberal democracies, to trace the history of “Western individualism”, and account for the emergence of the conception of the person as an autonomous, rational, and self-actualizing being (Coleman 1990; Dumont [1982]1987; Jopling 1997; La Fontaine 1987; MacFarlane 1978; Mauss 1987 [1938]; Markus et al. 1997; Morris 1994; Neisser 1997; Taylor 2006 [1989]). It is not necessary for my purpose here to attempt the same, for my claim is more modest and does not hang on heuristic typologies: merely that a folk-model of desirable individual qualities is at work in the conceptions of PFZ development planners and workers, and that it has come to celebrate certain ideals, attitudes, and personal competencies. These can be directly inferred from the claims above in PFZ sustainable development plans, official mission statements, and preliminary diagnostic studies. They advocate and endeavour to impart the ideals of agency, self-assertion, diligence and work maximization, economic ambition and affluence (as “prosperity”), the acquisition of formal and technological knowledge, and a subscription to contemporary hygienic, aesthetic, and etiquette standards. In order to investigate the impact of TALHER’s values on the construction of local identities, I will examine each domain of intervention separately in the next sections: self-esteem and agency; affluence and consumerism; beauty, hygiene, and etiquette; and the expansion of public schooling, to which I now turn.



## TALHER's expansion of formal education: new cultural capital and intergenerational conflict

Lieber (1981), Inkeles (1983), and James (2000) have focused on how public education inculcates “modern” values and promotes “modern” attitudes not only through its specific forms of knowledge, but also through “common principles of organization, procedures for assigning power and prestige, and modes for allocating rewards and punishment” (Inkeles 1983: 20). Lieber, in particular, has studied how, in Trinidad,

Euro-American ideas and ideals enter the society most pervasively and influentially through the educational system. Here they are instilled, often obliquely, as the standards of right and wrong. It is here that youthful hopes and ambitions are engendered and directed — but are too often left unfulfilled (Lieber 1981: 231)

Similarly, the expansion of public schooling in Guaribas becomes a major platform for the transfer of “social technology”, and is one of TALHER's main stated objectives. As a vital moralizing instrument for shaping and regulating the subjective capacities of future citizens, public education is to impart necessary values and skills, and equip the individual with specific forms of knowledge, among which: literacy; technological and scientific information (natural sciences, mathematics, history, geography, elementary computer skills, etc.); acquaintance with civil rights and duties; a basic understanding of bureaucratic, legal, and political processes; and a familiarization with current affairs (environmental issues, information technology, world events, etc.), all considered essential for an active participation in national life.

Whilst the value of educational qualifications and accreditations is made obvious by their consequences for economic life in the metropolises to which villagers regularly migrate for temporary work — eligibility to more jobs, better paid occupations, and an increased prospect of prosperity in general — in the village,

too, literacy, basic information technology skills, and secondary school diplomas are necessary requirements for the much coveted municipal office jobs made available since 1997. Because these salaried desk jobs are better remunerated, lighter than manual work, and can only be taken by the more qualified local labour force — those who are better educated and somewhat computer savvy — they easily convert into social prestige and cultural capital, conferring a higher status on those who hold them. This can be demonstrated by the increasing desire of the younger generations of Guaribanos' for these municipal jobs and their concomitant lack of interest in farming, as well as by the increasing stigmatization of agricultural labour as the only option for “backward” (*carrancista*), “rustic” “peasants” without education. Also, young men who have salaried desk jobs at either the mayoralty or the SESC centre are also considered to be highly eligible bachelors, and emerge locally as more desirable or attractive individuals due to their competencies and prospects. For example, shortly after my first 12 months of fieldwork, 21 year-old Anderson returned to Guaribas after an extended stay in São Paulo, and was almost immediately able to secure a position in the mayor's office thanks to the better quality education and computer skills he acquired in the metropolis. At the time of his arrival, he also stood out from other Guaribanos by his more cosmopolitan style: he wore trendy and expensive *Cavalera* brand T-shirts, heavy metal necklaces and wrist bands resembling those of Hip Hop artists in music videos, sunglasses, braces (expensive orthodontic correction is a local sign of affluence and cosmopolitan beauty standards), had streaks of blonde highlights applied to hair locks, and a flawless emulation of the São Paulo accent and parlance. In less than four months he was able to court and marry Sorâmis, an 18 year-old Guaribana who was born in São Paulo during her family's work migration, and who was widely considered at the time to be the unattainable “dream girl” of the village due to her beauty and the wealth of her parents. Before Anderson's arrival, Sorâmis had obstinately decided to remain single past the village's typical marrying age by regularly rebuking the advances of local young men.

The forms of knowledge related to public education have come to be perceived as fundamental in Guaribas, as cultural capital and as a path to status enhancement, as suggested in Chapter Five. (See Picture 26.) Guaribanos of all generations already associate formal education, scientific knowledge, and

technological proficiency with the formation of a capable, knowledgeable, modern individual, and contrast the latter to typical villagers in the past, who, as “uneducated” farmers, were mostly illiterate, comparatively untrained in scientific knowledge and formal schooling, unversed in new technologies, insular regarding contact with mass media artefacts, and poor in relation to other communities concerning access to services, public infrastructure, purchasing power, and consumer goods. Adão Rocha, a villager in his late fifties, conveyed in an interview how the lack of formal studies is associated with an inferior position in the balance of knowledge:

Guaribanos are a type of humble people, hard-working farmers who don’t have education. (...) I’m a man of my own effort, and this same profession I taught my children. Because there was no study here. We didn’t know outsiders, no. (...) How can a place not have studies and know anything at all? We don’t know because there’s no-one to teach us, isn’t it? Now any kid anywhere already gives us a lesson. Because they have schooling and we didn’t have it.<sup>106</sup>

Likewise, João Bertoldo, a farmer in his early seventies, equates not having public schooling with both poverty of knowledge and poverty of means:

The people today are in better conditions, they have better knowledge, teachers, and before, none of this existed here. (...) People just knew the letter “A”. We asked for a teacher here, but they said that no teacher wanted to live here, because it was too rough. So we conformed ourselves to our poverty.

The local value of formal education and its related set of knowledges and capacities, then, is widespread and considerable in Guaribas. A further instance that illustrates the centrality of these new forms of knowledge is the malaise which the

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<sup>106</sup> Sometimes, during interviews and conversations, when I insisted that I was not in the village to teach, but to learn from the people, older Guaribanos became confused, and even disappointed, accustomed as they are to regarding foreigners as the loci of knowledge.

majority of Guaribanos reveal when asked about items of traditional knowledge and local folklore, associated as they now are with a past of ignorance, backwardness, and poverty. One of my greatest shortcomings during fieldwork was the failure to collect enough accounts of indigenous knowledge from informants in the way of local legends, proverbs, songs, old customs, and so on. In semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, Guaribanos of all ages, but especially adults, showed a noticeable amount of hesitation and discomfort as I insisted on eliciting details about objects of local folklore, like the *Caboclo do Mato* (the “Indian of the Forest”, a mythical deity of the wilderness taking the shape of an Indian), the *Mãe d’Água* (the “Water Mother”, a deity who protects water sources and sings by the rock pools in the mountains), as well as children stories, lullabies, and old popular sayings. All of these were, more often than not, dismissed by adults with a smile and some nonchalant remark about the credulity of people in the past. The same obtained with older customs such as arranged marriages, marrying very young (from 11 years of age), and bride-abductions, which were rebuffed by most villagers with the same suspicion of being “utter foolishness”. The best material on local folklore I was able to collect came from a conversation with five villagers in their late teens, who were old enough to have heard these typical stories and sayings more regularly, but also young enough to regard them with a certain scepticism. During our exchange, they seemed genuinely amused by my interest in these “old-fashioned” articles of local tradition, and I could detect more than a touch of playfulness and derision in their tone. It is reasonable to speculate that a sense of embarrassment or shame underlies this reluctance to treat these articles of traditional wisdom and indigenous knowledge as significant, or even worthy of discussion.

Likewise, traditional healing knowledges and practices in Guaribas have been devalued and all but fallen into disuse. For instance, fat from giant anteaters (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), jaguars, and castrated black lambs without spots, formerly employed in massaging fractures, are now extremely rare in the village. Though many locals have iterated to me their effectiveness as anaesthetic and curative pomades, only one Guaribano I knew declared having some of those ingredients at home. A similar end befell the *camaçari* tree bark, used in the treatment of indigestion and stomach aches, the rattle of the rattlesnake, and local chili pepper ground in cachaça, both used for myriad purposes and therapies. Yet, it

is not simply a question of efficacy that causes Guaribanos to increasingly entrust their health to modern medicine and gradually disregard their traditional healing practices. For one, these cures have not almost fallen into disuse because villagers have suddenly “realized” their inefficiency, since most Guaribanos I spoke to still believed in the potency of these traditional remedies. For another, pharmacological drugs and products, from sun-screen to cough medicine, are not always locally made use of according to their actual properties and functions, which does not help their efficacy. Thus adults and children who had burned themselves or who were suffering from mild sunburn regularly borrowed my sun-screen lotion for it to, as I was told, “suck the fire out”. My cough medicine was also popular for several unorthodox applications, such as leg bruises and the *potó* insect (*Paederus Irritans*) skin burns. Whatever the results of these alternative applications of pharmacological products, one is led to suspect that the issue of efficacy is not, at least, the main driving reason for this assimilation of modern medical products to the detriment of traditional treatments. It merely provides us with another instance of valorisation of an external, modern body of knowledge to the detriment of an “outdated” indigenous one. To be sure, the creativity of Guaribanos in the unconventional use of these products by itself suggests a notable level of syncretism rather than the straightforward superimposition of modern medical knowledge over former healing practices. The latter, however, would be the stated object of TALHER’s health and hygiene workshops, where traditional healing knowledges are both discouraged and dismissed as mere superstition.

Therefore, the penetration of extraneous knowledges in general, and of formal education and its related set of capacities in particular, is consequential in Guaribas. For parents and grandparents are proud of their children’s novel knowledge, and much interested in their scientific explanations of climate changes and natural phenomena, such as the formation of clouds, rain, wind, and so forth. Because children and teenagers, in general, read better than their parents, they aid them in understanding the ever increasing number of documents, paperwork, and correspondences that arrive at the household. Parents often defer mathematical calculations to their children in the course of colloquial conversations or when undertaking basic accounting in their commercial establishments. Teenagers and children also instruct their parents on the operation of new and already popular

electronic equipment, such as DVD's, TV's, and stereo systems, showing them how to set them up and make them work. When watching together their favourite soap operas and TV shows, they familiarize their parents with slangs, linguistic expressions, the connotation of fashion articles, dress codes, and "body art" (such as the tattoos and piercings of actors and TV presenters), as well as with the more elaborate rules of game shows. They also begin to correct their parents' sociolect, teaching them the proper pronunciation of words, plural forms, and verb concordance. Thus, in a reversal of the traditional flow of information from parents to their children, the latter now instruct adults on all kinds of relevant areas, from formal knowledge acquired in public schooling, through fluency in media cultural artefacts and current events, to the interface of electronic products and electrical appliances.

This epistemological inversion of tradition, however, is not without its pathos. Though Guaribanos of all ages recognize the value and wide ranging applicability of formal education, adults openly associate the undermining of parental knowledge and authority with the expansion of public schooling. For instance, João Caititu, a villager in his late fifties, believes that

the best thing about development is education. A great beauty, the son graduating. (...) But here, when it wasn't a city [municipality], children were obedient. You'd send them somewhere and they'd go. Today, they say that they won't. They go by the studies, by what's in the books.

Valdecir, in his early sixties, iterates that children have become more "independent and loose" as they are "educated nowadays without the recommendations of old customs", and adds that "education is good, studies are improving everything (...) but leading to 'ignorance' [disregard, disrespect] towards relatives". Arnaldo's view complements Valdecir's:

My father always told me that the best education is paternal education. The father has by obligation to say: “Son, ‘walk right’, he who ‘walks right’ has no fear in life”. I say to my children: “You don’t raise your children like I raised you, because there they are, the things, the school” (...) So the thing I thought didn’t bring good development, as I’m telling you, is because of education, because it’s bringing much vanity to Earth. The children, who didn’t know, are now knowing what I didn’t know in the days of my youth. Disrespect. The son doesn’t respect his father properly, the daughter doesn’t respect the father, a brother doesn’t respect the other, the child doesn’t respect the adult.

Later on in the interview, Arnaldo ascribed this “vanity”, or what he perceives to be the excessive pride or egotism behind children’s disobedience, to a loss of innocence in the acquisition of new knowledge in school, and contrasts it to the traditional value of obedience:

The son that obeys his father, it’s beautiful even to God! (...) But because teachers give classes, there are no more innocent children. Today, with children, you are seeing everything. Through television, which didn’t exist here before. There was no electricity here. Now they take in the “experience” from there [the outside world]. (...) We are in the new world.

Yet, even if adult Guaribanos object to what they perceive as the increasing obstreperousness of undisciplined children and the demise of parental authority — their most common complaints being that their offspring sleep in, dodge agricultural labour, answer back, and refuse to obey orders — they seem to adjust to it with a certain conformity. The disobedience and greater autonomy of children and teenagers is described by several villagers as a *fait accompli*, and its acceptance as a resignation to the inevitable: “They [the younger generations] are following what happens in other places. Everything’s changed. The way they see [things] is the way they’re using [them]. There’s nothing to be done. It’s useless.” says Valdecir. If adults resign to the view that this is simply how “the new world” is, the younger

generations of Guaribanos seem to regard their greater autonomy with the same matter-of-factness. Miramon Rocha, a villager in his late sixties, believes that

education, on the part of disobedience, is bad. Nowadays, you send a boy to do something and he answers 'I won't'. (...) The father always told the son what to do, otherwise he would be punished, but today, if a father hits his son he denounces him [to the Secretary of Social Assistance]. They just say: "You, from old times, are over and done with!"

Therefore, the significance of formal education in the village is such that Guaribanos themselves not only assert that, as a set of novel and essential kinds of knowledge, it is at the root of their offspring's increasing independence, but that it also underlies new issues of intergenerational conflict. Another example of the expanding local import of "education" can be gleaned from the way it has become a key criterion for inhabitants of both sides of the village to criticize each other. As conveyed in Chapter One, villagers regularly characterized residents of the other side as less solidary, clean, temperate, "open", hospitable, well-informed, and reasonable on the basis of "lack of education". Similarly, Guaribanos also employed "lack of education" and "ignorance" as the main reasons for the higher incidence of violence in the settlements and the "strong blood" (short temper) of its inhabitants.

Hence, the younger generations of Guaribanos have been invested, through public schooling, with sponsored and privileged forms of knowledge that grant economic advantages, social prestige, and cultural capital on those who possess them. In the same manner, those unskilled in formal studies and new technologies are imparted with a sense of shame, which the humbling, apologetic tone with which older Guaribanos convey their "lack of knowledge" suggests. As in similar cases of the development encounter, the introduction of mass education in Guaribas has contributed to "the greater autonomy [of teenagers and children], the attenuation of their connection to their parents' household (...) and a concomitant shift in their 'desires and activities'" Rappaport [1999](2006): 91). The next section analyses how the influence of new career ideals and aspirations, as well as of paradigms of self-esteem, self-assertion, agency, and self-presentation by younger Guaribanos concurs



to aggravate intergenerational conflict, a symptom of social change. At its crux is a desire for self-realization that involves prescribed forms affluence, consumption, and the acquisition of new social and cultural capital as a pathway to self-esteem.

## Self-esteem in Guaribas

Self-esteem is commonly defined as “a person’s overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth”.<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, it is analogous or closely related to other constructs essentially psychological in form and structure, such as self-regard, self-respect, self-love, and self-integrity.<sup>108</sup> It is notably difficult to establish a cross-cultural definition of self-esteem, let alone to assess the collective self-esteem of a population and stipulate ways to manage or reform it (Brown 2002; Houston & Andreopoulou 2003). I would not attempt here to make generalizations and diagnose, as PFZ does, the overall level of self-esteem of Guaribanos, but I can at least note that nothing I have observed in the course of fieldwork authorizes me to assert that locals have an intrinsic sense of low self-worth, or suffer from a pathological insufficiency of self-regard. In effect, throughout my 17 months of residence in the village, I never learned of a case of depression solely or mainly caused by “low self-esteem”, and the three cases of suicide attempt informants were able to recall in the village’s history were all triggered by instances of unrequited love.<sup>109</sup>

Yet, PFZ explicitly states its intention to elevate the self-esteem of Guaribanos. Possibly, PFZ policy designers and development workers labour under a specific and culturally particular conception of self-esteem which, in the historical

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<sup>107</sup> The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition, 2000.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Tellingly, of the three suicide attempts in the village, two failed because the men shot at their hearts and missed, and in the remaining instance the man drank a non-lethal dose of caustic soda. Some villagers implied that these men, tormented by unsuccessful love affairs, did not actually want to die, but to put on a last, desperate attempt to rekindle the sympathy of their lovers, not unlike a tragic performance. Note, too, the symbolic implication of the methods chosen for suicide: drinking caustic soda, an excruciating way to die which lays emphasis on the pain felt by the rejected lover, and shooting at the *heart*.

construction and transformation of personhood within contemporary Western forms of life, has come to accentuate ideals and expressions of self-assertion and self-enhancement which are not typical in Guaribas. As Hogg and Williams argue, this folk understanding of self-esteem holds important presumptions about the nature of the self, in that it contains an inherent need for self-enhancement and positive distinctiveness (2000). These and other authors distinguish patterned psychological registers and attitudes — such as expressions of self-love, self-assuredness, self-importance, and the projection of an image of personal success — as inbuilt self-enhancement motives in the service of self-esteem. However, Markus et al. question the cross-cultural validity of this “self-assertive bias” of the self in contemporary Western societies by showing how self-representation and conceptions of self-worth vary widely between cultures, and how its general overtones of self-promotion are significantly subdued in different cultural narratives of the self (1997).

In Guaribas, for instance, it is impossible to miss the numerous customs that have the values of humility at their centre. It is not only that humility is perhaps the moral quality most explicitly praised in the village, Guaribanos actually have an intense dislike for expressive demonstrations of self-promotion, self-assertion, and pride, and for people who attempt to show themselves above others. This consideration always seemed to me to underlie the way Guaribanos typically respond to a casual “how are you?” salutation. The answer is, typically, “more or less” (“*mais ou menos*”). Initially, I interpreted this reply as a clue that things were perhaps not going so well with the person, that some aspect of her life troubled her and kept her from simply affirming that everything was well. Because in Brazil, in general, the usual way to respond to such a salutation would be, predictably, “fine (*bem*), “everything’s well” (*tudo bem*), “very well” (*muito bem*), “all is beautiful” (*beleza*), and so on, I always proceeded to ask my interlocutors what was the matter with them. Yet, invariably, there was nothing wrong with neither their health nor their lives, and they seemed more surprised by my further inquiry than me by their answer. In time, I realized that “more or less” actually means that everything is well, neither extremely good nor extraordinarily bad, but simply normal, usual, satisfactory. What I expected as answers to my salutations were the usual self-assertive replies which reflect what Markus and al. call the “self-enhancing biases” of many contemporary Western societies, centred around “practices of distinguishing

oneself and standing out from the rest through affirmations of personal success, strength, and uniqueness” (1997: 34). To be sure, nothing could be farther away from the role humility plays in shaping the local ideals of desirable moral character, as the prevalent custom of describing one’s condition or life as “more-or-less” avers. To be sure, this is also coupled with Guaribanos’ concern with unthinkingly volunteering personal information, as alluded to in Chapter Two, for the remarkable welfare that self-assertive declarations suggest may not only draw attention to one’s life and business, but invite the potentially dangerous sentiments of envy and resentment of other villagers. A much more prudent stance is to not stand out and arouse covetousness with deliberate declarations of extraordinary prosperity, health, or good-luck, which is what in fact obtains in Guaribas.

By the same token, ritual complaining is another feature of routine conversations and exchanges between Guaribanos. It amounts to the deliberate abasement of one’s state in relation to her interlocutor, be it concerning her economic situation (such as misfortunes with the last harvest, for example), her health condition, or her family’s general hardships. Typically, women from unrelated families, but often relatives from different household groups, will already engage their interlocutor at a distance, upon first setting eyes on her during the day, and begin such an exchange, for instance, with a characteristically loud, high-pitched “Oh! My sister! I’ve been dying! I haven’t raised [from the bed] for fifteen days!”; or “God value me, my sister! Our beans have all soaked in the Mané Félix fields!”; or “Oh, my sister! You have no idea! Have pity on me!”. This exchange will sometimes last for more than half an hour, with both women taking turns at complaining about their lot in life. I have witnessed women engaging in such conversations as they enter each others’ houses, as they chance upon each other in the streets, or as they patiently wait to return to Guaribas in the inn in São Raimundo Nonato, from which all pick-ups depart to the village. This rite whereby a Guaribano seeks to ascertain her inferiority in relation to another has always seemed to me to be less a contest to appear more misfortunate in life and in poorer overall circumstances than the other, than a paradoxical competition for equality, which in the end establishes a balance between both women’s conditions, with the local basic value of humility and self-humbling at its crux. Also, because such ritual complaining has a customary, formulaic character, it consists, to a large extent, in a routine

performance, and understood as such by the social actors who partake in it, it ultimately does not jeopardize the formal equality of conditions between them. In other words, in this rite, what is said is no longer the stake, only the pretext, and none of the actors are in danger of actually producing a disequilibrium in their general status by establishing their *de facto* inferiority in relation to the other. Even so, though men also engage in such discourse, they do so with less frequency than women, perhaps because it harnesses, however superficially, an entitlement to inferiority and weakness which men, according to the gendered role of local virility, are less at liberty to claim. In this sense, the rite of complaining is a cultural practice in Guaribas that hints at the locals' intention to not stand out, not show a pretension to superiority of conditions, or of greater well-being and advantage over another.

This dislike for claims of self-assertion and superiority in relation to others is also at the root of another custom in the village. Remarkably, mentally handicapped individuals, and people locally considered to be of low morality due to their reprehensible behaviour, gain the titles of Doctor or Baron, in a suggestive reversal of hierarchical denomination. The case of Tandula's son and Iranildo (who are so widely called Doctor in Guaribas, even by their families, that it took months until I learned their given names), illustrates this local practice. Both are in their early twenties, have never been enrolled in school, and exhibit several aspects of mental disability — speech impairment, deficiency in self-help and interpersonal skills, and difficulty to understand what is said and to formulate relevant answers — which make conversation difficult. They both have no steady jobs and are given all but minor tasks by their families, so that they can be seen casually wandering the streets throughout the day, and, in the case of Iranildo, recurrently asking people to buy him snacks and occasionally stealing small objects from people's houses. (See Picture 27.) In the same vein, Cristóvão Correia da Silva, a man in his early seventies, became increasingly more senile during the course of my fieldwork, and I witnessed the transition whereby he gradually became widely referred to as "Doctor". Cristóvão is the closest one gets to being a living legend in Guaribas. As a child, he was wild and rebellious, and is said to have suckled milk from the udders of seven different animals, thus having their bloods running in his veins; as a young man, he was reportedly endowed with unnatural strength, and capable of breaking vicious bulls and taming wild animals; and as an adult, he was at the centre of rumours about

a man who was transformed by the full moon into a beast. The fact is that because of his tumultuous past and his many famous misadventures, villagers are not surprised that Cristóvão has finally become unsound, sometimes tearing his clothes off in public or urinating in the middle of the street in broad daylight. It is ironic that these mentally handicapped or acutely senile individuals receive the eminent title of Doctor, which substitutes for their names altogether, and by which they become unanimously known in the village. However, I argue below, it is not so much the individuals who are ridiculed by this practice, but the superior title of Doctor itself, which is sardonically belittled in a symbolic attack on self-importance and social distinction.

Likewise, there is a couple in the village known as the Baron and Baroness, who stand out for their unkempt physical appearance, their shabby clothes, and the fact that both are regularly drunk in public, live in a precarious thatched mud shelter, and have no means of survival apart from donations of food and money or sporadic rough jobs, such as cleaning cesspools for R\$50 (£13). It is also said that the Baroness is sexually promiscuous, and sometimes has sex for petty amounts of money, usually with the consent of her husband. For all these reasons, they are looked down upon in the village, comprising, with the Doctors, perhaps the only individuals considered to truly possess low status and be seen, to some extent, as outcasts in the community. Again, tellingly, the Baron and Baroness are invested with imposing aristocratic epithets, the titles of nobility through which they are locally notorious. To be sure, this practice could be construed as simple irony directed at these individuals, but they do not appear to be the main targets of such witticisms. On the one hand, they are treated lovingly and patiently by the other villagers, who buy them snacks, seldom fail to strike up spirited exchanges with them, and rarely complain about the minor thefts attributed to them (i.e., stealing fruit from backyards). On the other hand, this bestowing of titles of eminence and superiority to “outcasts” is not dependent on their personal character, nor on the personal relationship of a villager with them, thus consisting in a custom that supersedes both the individual who is called, and she who calls another “Doctor” or “Baron”. Therefore, the custom is rather a caustic attack on titles of social distinction, which are locally relegated and attached to the defective, the unsound, and the flawed.

The examples cited above are not isolated instances. In the same manner, during a local ritual of inversion called *Careta* that takes place on Good Friday, one of the most popular characters is a burlesque parody of a lawyer who cites preposterous laws during mock arrests. Through his comic, caricatural performance, the legal system he represents is satirized. Importantly, the victims of the mock arrests mentioned above are politicians, prosperous businessmen, and other influential villagers who are accosted and insulted in the streets, soiled with oil, paint, or lipstick, tied to a rope that binds them to other prisoners in the manner of slave chaining, and forced to ride in back of trucks for the duration of the day, being teased and humiliated at each new site the group visits. In this ritual, Guaribanos locally considered to be rich or influential are chased, ridiculed, and humiliated, illustrating once again this local antipathy for archetypes of the powerful — doctors, aristocrats, lawyers, politicians, the rich, and the excluding legal system.

Patent one-upmanship, therefore, the practice of demonstrating or assuming superiority in relation to another individual, is not taken lightly in Guaribas. It is not only that when entertaining guests for dinner or coffee, for instance, hosts are always careful to show modesty by deliberately complaining about the quality of their own viands, but that every act of offering that crosses the line from genuine generosity to upmanship is met with unease and sometimes dissension. Such was the case in a bar brawl where two friends, Dudu and Miudinho, were merrily drinking together after a local football match. When Dudu decided to buy Miudinho a whole litre of *Paratudo* (a local medicinal brandy), the latter reacted violently to what he perceived as a deliberate attempt at public one-upmanship, and grabbed Dudu by the collar. A few pushes ensued, but relatives standing by were able to prevent the scuffle from escalating to blows, and Miudinho left, leaving a drunken Dudu to his yet worse antics at the bar. Dudu started insisting that he wanted to buy rounds for everybody, saying the names of people to whom he would give R\$50 (£13), even R\$100 (£25) to drink as much as they wanted. Then Dudu began to tear R\$10 (£2.5) bills to the dismay of his relatives at the bar, who by that time had had enough of his behaviour and manhandled him home. Afterwards, Dioripe, Dudu's uncle, started picking-up the torn bills on the floor; I put my hand on his shoulder and said "It's no good, Dioripe, they've been torn three, four times over, there's no taping them now", to which he replied, looking up at me with a saddened countenance, "No, these I'll

show Dudu tomorrow, when he's sober, to remind him of what he's done". The fact is that Miudinho was right in assuming that Dudu was driving earlier at one-upmanship, and this caused an embarrassment to Dudu's family such as I have not seen even in the occasions in which a Guaribano admitted to a disreputable incident with a relative, such as his killing someone, or being betrayed by his wife. Over the following days, I was approached by Filogônio, Dudu's father, and some of his other relatives, who attempted to excuse Dudu's behaviour in the most apologetic of terms. Because families usually refrain from criticizing its members before non-relatives, or because, as the local saying goes, "To the family, none [of its members] are bad, all are good", this public acknowledgment of Dudu's faults was a revealing instance. It became clear to me how much Dudu's attempt to appear superior and affluent at the bar by buying everybody drinks and capriciously destroying money had shamed his whole family, and the extent to which this blatant demonstration of one-upmanship is locally considered to be disgraceful. To conclude, self-assertive aspects of deportment that Markus et al. define as characteristic of "Western" selfways are seen as a sort of hubris in Guaribas.

Whilst it is possible that these cultural practices based on the ideal of humility have been mistakenly interpreted by PFZ policy designers and development workers as symptoms of generalized low self-esteem, it is certainly not the only factor informing their assessment. As mentioned in Chapters One and Four, Guaribanos were all too easily identified by PFZ, the Brazilian government, and the national media with the incompetent and the impoverished within Brazilian society. By conveying Guaribanos as a deprived, isolated, and uneducated people "who can't help themselves", PFZ justified intervention and helped reproduce the relationships through which these people were seen as disadvantaged and inferior. From the perspective of development workers, imbued with the progressive cosmopolitanism by which mainstream Brazilian society judges the "rural provincialism" of a community such as Guaribas, Guaribanos are indeed "at the margins of society", and are often treated by them with contempt. Both in workshops and in private conversations, I have witnessed development workers, PFZ officials, and course instructors making fun of what they perceived to be the backward ways and customs of villagers. A preferred topic of ridicule, for example, was the local dialect, which contrary to correct Portuguese usage, adds an "e" to all words ended with "l". Thus

PFZ employees and teachers from São Raimundo Nonato who work in Guaribas composed an almost nonsensical sentence with several words ending in “l” to accentuate how Guaribanos would pronounce it incorrectly, which would frequently provoke laughter and amuse them. PFZ’s coordinator Rosângela Silva, however, in an interview granted at the project’s headquarters in Teresina, transferred this debasing attitude to Guaribanos themselves, and concluded that it is “the people of Guaribas [who] have no pride. They can’t manage to respect themselves, and thus to love themselves”.

Therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, there are at least some signs of low self-esteem in the village today that are not entirely related to differential access to knowledge and resources. Whether Guaribanos were actually “deficient” in self-esteem before the arrival of PFZ, or interference from external knowledges and aesthetic paradigms that set their culture as poor, ignorant, and inferior have caused it, the fact is that a significant number of adult Guaribanos seem to have internalized subaltern status in several domains, portraying themselves, as indicated above and in Chapter Five, as uneducated, destitute, and backwards in relation to other communities. Adão Rocha, a villager in his late sixties, provided a definitive illustration of this in an interview. When I asked him about Guaribas in the past, he spontaneously embarked on a comparison between Guaribanos and “people like me”, that is, outsiders from larger cities, emphasizing how it would be very difficult for me to imagine how life in the village was in former times:

You were born in the light, we in the dark. Donkeys were our cars, hammocks, our beds (...) Before, people rose in life by wealth, but not today. The fellow today... it’s by knowledge, by intelligence, by letters. In those times we could read letters [of the alphabet], write some, but it’s not like today, when things are accepted, are changed, by proof of this and that. These are your things, since you have other, better knowledges, [that are] more refined, do you understand? And ours isn’t like that: we read, write, tell [stories?]. You take in fast, grasp quickly... You have that “follow through”, other studies, another civilization [sic]. Not us, we are weaker.



In another demonstration of this perception of subalternity, the team to win the 2007 local football championship was named “Haiti”, probably in reference to the Caribbean country which experienced sociopolitical problems and underwent a food crisis in the same year. This was widely covered by the national media at the time since the bulk and command of UN peacekeeping forces there were comprised of Brazilian military personnel. By naming their football team after the country, Guaribanos drew a spirited comparison between the poorest community in Piauí (according to official IBGE statistics) and one of the poorest countries in the world.

PFZ’s proposed countermeasures for treating low self-esteem include TALHER workshops in “beauty” and “citizenship education”, but this might be the instantiation of a case where the “solution” aggravates the “problem”, as it were. For as mentioned above, in order to persuade villagers of the desirability of contemporary values, aspirations, and attitudes they must first convince them of the inadequacy of their former capacities. Accordingly, symptoms of poor self-image in the village may be the result of these accumulated criticisms, of being recurrently humbled in the estimation of visiting government representatives, development workers from Brasília, teachers from São Raimundo Nonato, and course instructors from Teresina. To these one must also add the negative evaluations of Guaribas and its inhabitants in the national press, and in official PFZ and state discourses. The contempt and scornful jocularity with which they are treated outside the village, being singled out as “the Zero-Hunger people” as they pass, and by authority figures in the village who frequently mock local ways in their presence, yields embarrassment and shame. To be sure, shame is one of the most powerful and subtle agents of social control, activated in this case by scorn and, often, open laughter. It generates in locals the painful consciousness of acting improperly and being worthy of ridicule whilst not being among those “in the know”.

Hence, in these workshops, Guaribanos are lectured on the kinds of selves they should seek to be, and on what they must do to themselves — the practices and standards by which they should act upon themselves to reform or improve themselves — in order to become prosperous, free, and fulfilled. Typically, Guaribanos are encouraged to maximize work and production, reinvest profit, and accrue wealth; to acquire formal education and technical knowledge; to assimilate as much as possible cosmopolitan aesthetic, hygiene, and etiquette paradigms; to be

ambitious in the sense of seeking new personal goals and career ideals; and to be more self-assertive, at least, in the interest of agency and political participation. Above all, in these workshops, strong messages are sent associating diligence and entrepreneurship with wealth and worth. Underlying this discourse is the principle of meritocracy whereby opportunities for social mobility, career enhancement, prestige, and affluence may be seized by those who are proficient in the required moral and technical competencies. On the other hand, poverty, ignorance, and lack of success are connected to a chain of other negative signifiers, such as the apparent “laziness” or “sloppiness” of locals, which several development workers characterize as one of their most detrimental moral weaknesses. The means through which these directives are posited range from instructors’ explicit recommendations, cautioning tales, and derision, to the substantialization of these propositions in illustrated course packages and the calculated use of media artefacts, such as *Tecendo o Saber*, a government sponsored pedagogical soap opera which will be considered below.

Importantly, Guaribanos should be, in more than an allegorical sense, avid entrepreneurs of themselves — diligently improving their skills, knowledge, and economic condition, as well as setting ever higher goals and aspirations for themselves — according to a model of teleological evolution and development which is applied equally to societies and to the individual. According to neoclassical social and economic theory, “nonsatiety” is regarded as a positive driving force for societies and peoples, as in, for example, Thorstein Veblen’s hypothesis (2007 [1899]). Veblen’s main argument relates to what he termed “leisure class”, and explicates the mechanism between taste, acquisition, and consumption. Taking his thesis of taste as an economical determinant, Veblen merged it with the neoclassical assumption of nonsatiety, which states that no man can ever be satisfied with his fortune (2007 [1899]: 17). The by-product of this outlook, however, may be anxiety, and particularly identity anxiety, for through “a constant and intense self-scrutiny, a continual evaluation of our personal experiences, emotions, and feelings in relation to images of satisfaction (...) the self is obliged to live its life tied to the project of its own identity” (Rose 1999[1989]: 258). Hence, whatever the truth of the positions above, it remains to be demonstrated that the proposed “substitution” of low self-esteem (allegedly) deriving from a model of conformity for anxiety deriving from a model of nonsatiety is psychologically advantageous, or conducive to a state of

increased happiness. To be sure, the question is set up in a way it cannot be answered, and in the absence of absolute parameters such a trade-off does not appear to be above questions of partiality in cultural aesthetics.

## The partnership between PFZ and the media

It has been widely observed that interactions between development and the media are mutually reinforcing, and that social development can be accelerated by the acquisition of information from the media (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2008: 8-9; Deane 2005: 177; Francis 2009: 62-4; Nassanga 2009: 57; Schramm 1964: 115; Sparks 2007: 3; Tufte 2005: 160; Wainsbord 2005: 77; Zeleza 2009: 21). As a vehicle for the transmission of ideas, images, normative behaviours, and information, the media can contribute to the development of beneficiaries' "social capital", so that mass education and behaviour change via the media grew as a concern and ambition since 1930's, but accelerated in the 1970's. (Tufte 2005: 162-3). This has led to the emergence of "development media" and "entertainment education", and their employment as a communication strategy in development projects has grown significantly over the past decade (Bauman 1999; Sabido et al 2003; Singal and Rogers 2004; Tufte 2001, 2005).

Authors who advocate the use of the media in the service of development usually stress the positive effects of the sector in improving good governance, transparency, and accountability by building public awareness and exposing issues of public concern to open discussion. They see the media as a component of genuine democratic debate, insofar as it informs the public, operates as a watchdog, and fosters dynamic communication between policymakers, politicians, and their constituent populations (Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2008: 8-9, 45; Deane 2005: 178). Furthermore, they emphasize that the media can expand educational opportunities and enhance the quality of basic education in development contexts where the education system faces considerable difficulties (Ngome 2009). Therefore, in this view, mass communication, mass transmission techniques, and educational radio and

television primarily reinforce democratic institutions, ensure good governance, and empower citizens, becoming important tools for the development of beneficiaries and their sociopolitical contexts (Deane 2005; Ramirez 2005; Schramm 1964; Tufte 2005; Wainsbord 2005).

Other authors, however, emphasize the concentration of media ownership by communication conglomerates, and take issue with how media outlets are “often presumed to be acting in the ‘public interest’ when in fact they are commercially motivated self-interested organizations” (Da Costa in Beckett and Kyrke-Smith 2008: 30; see also Nassanga 2009: 58). Deane notes that, under pressure from corporate interests, and following an advertising driven social agenda, there is decreasing inclination within media networks to focus on sensitive development issues (2005: 184). He argues that while the proliferation of media in many developing countries was initially marked by an upsurge of public debate, “evidence is growing that, as competition intensifies, content is increasingly being shaped by the demands of advertisers and sponsors who pay for the newly liberalized media”, and that “the result is more urban biased, consumer oriented media” (2005: 184). Nassanga reinforces this point by providing examples of how the media in Tanzania, Zambia, Nigeria, and Francophone West Africa target a middle-class audience with disposable income, and gives more attention to urban affairs, urban problems, and urban culture, thus greatly “alienating some African populations from their cultural norms, values, and customs (2009, 55). In similar vein, Francis claims that

culturally, the media are subject to an imposed hierarchy of national and world cultures, and also of the cultural industries that have opted for routinization, standardization and homogenization of content. This has occasioned the marginalization or the exclusion of entire world views and cultures that do not guarantee profitability (2009: 63).

Since after the Second World War and experiences with entertainment propaganda, “the dominant paradigm”, as it is now termed by theorists of media studies, advanced that the mass media had a crucial role to play in fostering modern attitudes and beliefs, considered to be the primary conditions for any significant

social changes (Sparks 2007: 3). This model of social transformation was premised on the assumption that “continuing contact with another culture leads to the borrowing of customs and beliefs”, and thus based on “the dissemination through the mass media of the psychic attributes of the modern personality as defined in the developed Western countries, and particularly in the USA” (Schramm 1964: 114; Sparks 2007: 47). Even though development media has come a long way since, most of its initiatives “continue to believe in the superiority of modern over traditional ideas in a top-down approach”: a belief that “the experts know what is best for everyone else, and design communication to transmit the fruits of that expertise to the people who [are] to ‘be developed’” (Sparks 2007: 3; Wainsbord 2005: 77). Aseka takes the thrust of this trend to be toward “a hegemonic (...) and incorporative dynamic that encourages local communities to absorb and internalize the inherent values of contemporary globalization” (2009: 85; Slater 1997).

Beyond development media, however, “entertainment and advertising, along with educational and public informational programming, play a critical role in changing or generating individual and collective perceptions and behaviour”, defining “new forms of etiquette and social dispositions” (Aseka 2009: 87; James 2000: 36). Through its focus on wealthy urban elite interests and the promotion of the ideas of more powerful social classes, the media produce new worlds of experience and imagination for poor rural populations as they “represent ways of living and provide models of how one might appropriately relate to others, as well as how recognition, status, honour, and prestige are given or withheld” (Kimani and Middleton 2009, xi-xii). Within these core-periphery relations in the flow of media content, less affluent rural populations are often “pressured to shape social institutions to correspond to the values and structures of the dominant representations”, and “collectively strive to acquire the media-produced images of ‘the good life’ [such as portrayed] in movies and soap-operas” (Aseka 2009: 90; Schiller 1976).

In effect, drama has been, and continues to be, an important means of communicating messages and marketing social behaviours because

the genre connects so well – in dramaturgical rhythm and in content – with the everyday lives of many people (...) It is a genre which has a documented ability to articulate debate. People engage, identify and involve themselves strongly with the stories told in radio and TV drama (...) The field of tension created in the quotidian mixtures of dramatic love stories and subtle class conflicts is the main recipe stimulating what I have called socio-emotional reactions of the viewers, and in multiple ways articulating the social and cultural practices of everyday life among the audience. On one hand, the love drama, being central in all telenovelas, enables the identification and engagement. For example, the concern with and responsibility for the family is central. It is present in the audience's identification with often conflict-oriented relations between parents and children, men and women, brothers and sisters. Values such as unity, love, and mutual understanding are emphasized (...) to highlight positive elements. Negative elements present in their discourses include issues of disrespect, betrayal, and personal ruptures of various sorts, reflecting – as with positive elements – dimensions of their own social reality and personal experience (Tufte 2005: 168-9; see also Ahade 1999; Nassanga 2009: 51)

Tufte has studied entertainment-genres used for the promotion of individual behavioural change, particularly serialized TV narratives such as telenovelas and soap operas in Brazil. He believes that these can serve the agendas of social movements by making core problems (such health issues and social inequality) visible, “putting pressure on politicians, and empowering audiences comprised of marginalized groups to collective action” (2005: 160). In addition, he argues, TV fiction and its potential to convey built-in social messages can “challenge normative, moral, and social borderlines, and articulate a critical dialogue on pertinent issues as a pathway towards social change” (2005: 167). Nevertheless, Tufte acknowledges that telenovelas also maintain “the hope and aspiration of the audience – some would say delusion of the audience – for social change and ascent” by inserting in the melodramatic narratives stories of social mobility and personal success that would seldom be realized by marginalized and low income social actors in real life (2005: 170). Thus, through a particular aesthetic that “avoids the ostensible exposure of social inequality”, telenovelas can contribute to an internalized acceptance of the status quo (2005: 168):

the physical portraits of the lower classes in telenovelas tend not to be as physically explicit as in real life. Slums are seldom seen, and worker's boroughs are always built almost beyond recognition, being cleaner, more beautiful, and always more bountiful and richer than in real life (2005: 169).

In the same vein, I argue below that the penetration of mass media in Guaribas not only acts as a relay in the transmission of certain values and attitudes advanced by PFZ, but also contributes to normalize the vision of a docile lower-class workforce through what Souza has called "the myth of meritocracy" (2003: 169). This will be exemplified momentarily through a detailed analysis of *Tecendo o Saber*, a pedagogical soap opera employed by PFZ in almost all Citizenship Education workshops I attended at the SESC centre.

In the first place, the recent penetration of mass media in the village is complicit in the process of Guaribanos' increasing "awareness" of subaltern status vis a vis other national and international communities. For its introduction in the village gave Guaribanos a new dimension of the disparity between village life and metropolitan social standards. Since 1998, when a few households were first connected to the electrical power system, the village experienced a gradual though steady expansion of access to mass media as more villagers bought appliances such as TV's, radios, and satellite dishes. This expansion culminated in the construction of an 120-metre telecommunications antenna thrust in the middle of Guaribas Two, an initiative articulated by PFZ in 2004 which made satellite dishes in the village unnecessary for TV reception. Thenceforth, the diffusion of mass media inaugurated a traffic in significant symbols — representations and imageries of desirable (urban) lifestyles, standards of behaviour, models of success and self-realization, as well as paradigms of family orientation, career enhancement, and economic prosperity — imparted by the ethical scenarios of soap operas, daytime talk shows, radio chat programmes, advertisements, cinema, sport, fashion, tele-journalism, tabloids and show-biz magazines, pop music and artefacts of popular culture, and so forth. Their impact on the social lives and psychological dispositions of Guaribanos should not be underestimated. For as Rose and authors from various disciplines point out, these

“cultural forms may stabilize in a more profound manner than specific norms”, thus playing a vital role in remodelling behaviour and reshaping aspirations and capacities:

Life is to imitate the images of life, the simulacra of joy, warmth, and achievement presented in advertisements, television chat shows, soap operas and other public imaginings of personality, conviviality, and winning ways. These images provide the template against which the mundane dissatisfactions of our lives (...) are to be judged and found wanting. According to this meta-world of images and values, more luminous and real than any other world we know, the self is to be remodelled so that it can succeed in emitting the signs of a skilled performance (1999[1989]: 242).

A measure of the appeal and magnetism they exert over Guaribanos can be gleaned from the extent to which villagers, especially the younger generation, have come to copy cosmopolitan dress codes, hair styles, dialect and slangs, gestural registers and body language, body art (tattoos and piercing), and standards of beauty in general, as well as conspicuous consumption patterns and career and lifestyle aspirations, all of which will be analysed in detail in the next sections (See Picture 28.) In the interim, a peculiar incident that took place during my fieldwork can illustrate the influence mass media objects may have on the behaviour of locals. There was a very popular TV show in Guaribas throughout 2007, a teenage soap opera from Mexico called *Rebelde* (Rebel), whose plot revolved around students from an elite boarding school regularly challenging the authority of teachers and the conservative norms of the institution. In a live re-enactment of the soap opera, a girl in a class of 12 year-olds in the village led a rebellion of students who stayed in the classroom but refused to do any work. The students repeatedly chanted the chorus of the show’s theme song, “We are Rebels”, until the teacher finally left the classroom crying.

Another suggestive instance was an exchange that ensued between Dirno and Cleudo, both villagers in their early forties, as the three of us watched the Brazilian version of the Big Brother reality show. Referring to the prize of one million reais



(£250.000), Dirno remarked that “one has to dream with what is truly good”, and added about one of the participants — Alemão, a rather conceited young businessman from São Paulo who was well rated then to win the show, which he eventually did — “Nowadays, the fellow needs attitude, like that, to get ahead. Money and attitude”. Then Dirno proceeded to exemplify what he meant with an incident he had just heard about in one of the settlements nearby: a local farmer went, modestly dressed and with a humble attitude, to ask a man for his daughter’s hand. Dirno related that the farmer was nearly manhandled out of the property, with the girl’s father chasing after him and shouting “Fly! Fly!”. Dirno concluded that nowadays one has to immediately show what one has, what one can offer, and to at least appear to be proud and well-off. Hence, taking cue from the TV show we watched, Dirno advanced a model of identity and self-presentation much closer to the kind Markus et al. and others describe as typical of contemporary Western societies (which puts a premium on self-assertion, self-importance, and self-promotion) than the traditional local stance that favours the ideals of humility and modesty (1997).

The assimilation of these new cultural forms and values generates the accumulation of cultural capital, and is locally seen as key in the internalization of a modern, cosmopolitan identity (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]).<sup>110</sup> By the same token, the unequal competence at, and familiarity with these cultural forms also leads to new modes of social exclusion or demotion. The mastering of this novel cultural capital is so critical that an example of its sensitivity can be grasped from the internal downclassing and upclassing in teenage girls’ groups, which may occur on grounds as subtle as a girl failing to understand or employ correctly a new slang introduced by the female protagonist of *Malhação*, an afternoon soap opera aired by Globo (Brazil’s dominant TV channel) where famous young actors portray teenagers in an upper-middle class school in Rio de Janeiro. Girls will assemble in the square at night exchanging views on the last show, pioneering, working out, and trading the cultural concepts gathered from that afternoon, from sociolect and fashion articles to their favourite characters’ “stylish” attitudes and ideals. In these groups, such concepts become a sort of currency for “cultural jockeying”, that is, for an internal

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<sup>110</sup> Coleman uses the term “human capital” to describe the same set of personal resources: “human capital is created by changing persons so as to give them skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways” (1990: 304).

competition for popularity and prestige based on cultural capital transmitted by mass media objects.

The case of soap operas in Brazil is equally illuminating. The influence of Brazilian telenovelas on national society has been widely established by research conducted in almost all areas of the social sciences, as well as in media and reception studies (Hamburger 2005; Curran 2006; Leal 1986; Kottak 1990; Vink 1990; Ronsini 1995; Martín-Barbero & Muñoz 1992; Tufte 1995; Jacks 1999; Lopes et al. 2002). In particular, the broadcast situation in the country is such that viewing prime time telenovelas produced by Globo, the largest Brazilian TV network and the primary telenovela producer for national audiences, is nothing short of “a national ritual” (Hamburger 2005, 73). In general, these telenovelas invite viewers to reflect on behaviours and values, but rarely make weighty social critiques based on the systemic structure of social inequality. Rather, as Souza and other authors maintain, they justify social class and “the permanent differential access to chances in life and the appropriation of commodities” in terms of individual merit, legitimating the “inequalities in [viewers’] daily lives using the myth of meritocracy” (Souza 2003, 169; c.f. Vink 1990; Ronsini 1995; Martín-Barbero & Muñoz 1992; Jacks 1999). Thus, in line with the messages of TALHER Citizenship Education workshops, telenovelas correlate cosmopolitan forms of individual qualification and personal competence with the prospect of affluence, material comfort, social prestige, success in love and sexual exploits, and winning ways in general (Souza 2003, 169). In the same manner, characters representative of those who are on the other side of this spectrum are relegated to various degrees of marginality, irrelevancy, and social prejudice, just like Guaribanos in real life.

Most likely, it was a strategic decision by PFZ designers to integrate the expansion of mass media and telecommunications to other development initiatives, since “stylizations of existence represented in the mass media have come to play an increasing role in the shaping and regulation of selfhood and identity” (Rose 1999[1989]: 265). In fact, as Rose argues, these vehicles often act as relays in the promotion of certain types of career enhancement, lifestyle maximization, maxims of comportment, identity construction through consumption patterns, and desirable “ways of thinking, feeling, wanting, and doing” (Markus et al. 1997: 16). PFZ in Guaribas provides us with an example of this partnership between the mass media

and the development enterprise. Almost every TALHER Citizenship Education workshop I attended was conducted at the SESC AV room, and consisted in the showing of an episode of *Tecendo o Saber* (“Weaving Knowledge”), followed by a group discussion. *Tecendo o Saber* is a pedagogical soap opera created by the Brazilian Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Roberto Marinho Foundation (the non-profit branch of the Globo network) and the Vale do Rio Doce Foundation (the non-profit branch of the Brazilian multinational, the second largest mining conglomerate in the world). The soap opera comprises 65 episodes, divided into four modules, which were, and continue to be aired by four TV channels, Rede Globo, TV Cultura, TV Escola, and Canal Futura. In *Tecendo o Saber* figure famous actors of Globo soap operas, household names like Camila Pitanga, Bruno Garcia, Alexandre Borges, Giulia Gam, Letícia Sabatella, Marília Gabriela, Benvindo Siqueira, among others, who are well known to the Brazilian public. Besides the presence of Globo telenovela stars, episodes are split into three eight minute blocks with two intervals, which makes for an easy viewing experience for audiences.

The plot orbits around the lives and struggles of six main characters who represent stereotypical individuals from lower-class backgrounds, most of whom were born in the Northeast of Brazil and moved to a public housing project in the periphery of a large, unspecified South-eastern metropolis where the action takes place.<sup>111</sup> The main protagonist is Francisco, a middle-aged Northeastern migrant who decides to try his luck in the metropolis, and faces unemployment and hard living conditions as a result of his own underqualification in the city’s competitive labour market. Besides lacking formal education, Francisco is illiterate, but chiefly thanks to his gradual acquisition of formal education and an entrepreneurial attitude, he is finally able to find stable work and adequate housing. Valdete is a black middle-aged street sweeper who dreams of being a famous singer, and recurrently tries (in vain) to help her husband, the “eternally unemployed” Januário, to stop moving between temporary jobs and find a permanent occupation. In effect, Januário, a white middle-aged man from Rio de Janeiro, often provides the storyline with comic relief: he is a passive, indolent character who has nearly conformed to his regular unemployment, and usually advances unfashionable conservative ideas that are always proved wrong

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<sup>111</sup> The soap opera was filmed at Conjunto Habitacional Bandeirantes, a housing project in suburban Rio de Janeiro.

at the end of episodes. For this reason, Januário is the only character to have his own “music theme” in the soap opera, a humorous tune of trumpets and trombones reminiscent of burlesque comedy. Celestino is a Northeastern migrant in his early sixties who arrived at the metropolis many years before the time of the action, and who was able to establish himself as a bar and bazaar owner in the community through a mixture of diligence, money saving, and honesty. His love interest in the plot is Socorro, also a migrant from the North of Brazil, and a middle-aged single mother who regularly sells baked goods and cleans middle-class households to generate income. Bruna, her daughter, is a black teenager who represents the first generation born of migrant workers in the metropolis. She is a dedicated student at the local public school, speaks in “correct” Portuguese with a Rio de Janeiro accent, and is knowledgeable in contemporary matters, such as environmental issues, energy conservation, sex education and contraceptives, and world events, so that she frequently instructs grown-ups on the importance of being attuned to, and pro-active in these topics. She is also actively engaged in community problems, often encouraging other residents to mobilize against unfavourable aspects of living conditions in the neighbourhood (the institution of a polluting factory nearby, the creation of a landfill in the district, the lack of a local sewage system) and to demand their rights through official means (petitions to the mayoralty, open letters to the press, community radio announcements, etc.).<sup>112</sup>

Hence, the cast of characters of *Tecendo o Saber* captures precisely the constituency at whom its stories are directed: lower-class Brazilians with little or no formal education, of Northeastern *sertanejo* or black racial background, speaking with their dialectal accents and expressions, and facing the common problems of migrating from a rural setting to a large city in the country’s more metropolitan Southeastern region. In effect, the very aperture of the soap opera suggests this transition: a Northeastern *forró* theme song plays as we see the images of *jangadas* (fishing boats with triangular sails typical of Northeast Brazil), a panorama of semi-arid vegetation also emblematic of the Northeast region, a scene from the *Bumba-meu-boi* Northeastern traditional feast, followed by large city scapes, such as a wide downtown avenue busy with the traffic of people and cars. In fact, the very first episode opens with Francisco

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<sup>112</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 2, DVD 2, Episode 12; Module 1, DVD 1, Episode 6.

leaving his small village in the Northeastern state of Maranhão for a large city in the Southeast, and as he watches through the bus window the images of his native land go by, we hear in-off:

Since always people have left their places of birth in search of a better future. Those who have moved from their native land know how difficult it is to miss family and friends left behind. And, at the same time, to adapt to completely different places, peoples, and ways of life. To face these changes means learning, discovering, winning challenges, and growing. (...) Most names have a meaning; our friend who now travels by bus, for example, is called Francisco, which in Latin means “free man”.<sup>113</sup>

It is hard to miss the laudatory notes with which this transition from the rural to the metropolitan is depicted. As Francisco’s story unfolds, he works hard at a construction site and in a string of badly paid temporary jobs from which he is regularly laid-off, until he is taken to an employment agency by Socorro. There, Francisco finds out that the clerk is the long lost love of his life, a young woman who had left his hometown some time before him, and with whom he had corresponded until she finally broke up their engagement in a letter. Francisco, ashamed of having to admit being illiterate, cannot work up the courage to address her, and runs away from the agency at the first opportunity. But illiteracy does not only harm Francisco in hindering his chances at finding a job. Later in the episode we learn that his ex-girlfriend never ended their relationship: being illiterate, Francisco delegated the reading of his letters to a girl in his village who was in love with him, and who wilfully deceived him into thinking that the relationship was over. Consequently, in this little scenario, shame, thwarted prosperity, and the irreparable loss of love are equated with illiteracy and the lack of formal studies.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Tecendo o Saber, Module 1, DVD 1, Episode 1.*

<sup>114</sup> Likewise, in an episode which emphasizes the importance of educational qualifications, a documentary piece is shown where a middle-aged migrant worker is interviewed in a street in Rio de Janeiro. His experience echoes Francisco’s: “I embarrassed myself several times in Rio. Without studies, you don’t find a job, you don’t get anywhere. Now I arrive at a bank and talk to the manager without lowering my head. It’s never too late to learn.” Another interviewee is a 19 year-old crab gatherer in the mangroves of the Northeastern state of Pernambuco. The black young man is shirtless, barefooted, his face and body are soiled with mud, and as he tells his story, his Portuguese is riddled

Similar stories and ethical narratives are deployed in the course of the soap opera, associating the acquisition of formal education, the development of pro-active and “go-getter” attitudes, as well as diligent work and career-enhancement with happiness, success, and prosperity. Importantly, economic viability and distance from want are not the main or sole recompenses for these kinds of entrepreneurship. The scenes and the plot are familiar from soap operas, as are the repertoire of moral lessons and rewards driven by simple, universal, wholesome needs: love, affection, attention, dependency, reassurance, intimacy, and social recognition. In this fashion, throughout *Tecendo o Saber* we follow Francisco working and studying hard to obtain a high-school diploma and qualify to ever better occupations, being finally able to rise from the position of builder to mason to electrician. Yet, apart from achieving economic stability, Francisco’s career enhancement is also rewarded by the increased attentions of local young women, as well as by winning his mother’s admiration.<sup>115</sup> We also watch Socorro, Bruna, and Valdete creatively envisaging and succeeding in alternative income generation enterprises, such as buying a stand at the local fair and wholesaling baked goods, selling an aunt’s lacework production to a salesman for considerable profit, establishing a local baked goods cooperative, and helping a family in the community to overcome their economic difficulties by retailing recycled artefacts such as ashtrays, purses, and toys made from refuse. However, economic viability is not the sole end-result of entrepreneurship. As Bruna and Socorro make the baked goods to be sold at the fair, they are looking at each other and smiling cheerfully, thus strengthening the bonds of love and solidarity between mother and daughter.<sup>116</sup> As Bruna’s aunt embroiders the lacework to be commercialized, we are shown a convivial and optimistic work environment in the family living-room, where all admire with great satisfaction the beauty and quality of

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with grammatical mistakes and laced with such a strong local accent that some sentences are hard to understand:

I’m 19, I started to gather [crabs] when I was nine. If it wasn’t for that, we’d go hungry, ain’t it, my man? My mother told me to study, I had a good job lined up (...) but I couldn’t get it because of [my lack of formal] studies: I don’t know how to read or write. So I only didn’t get the job for this reason. Very sad.

This is a forceful, exploitative even, cautionary tale of what might happen to those who lack formal education. *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 3, DVD 2, Episode 13.

<sup>115</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 3, DVD 1, Episode 8.

<sup>116</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 3, DVD 1, Episode 5.

the products.<sup>117</sup> As Bruna and Socorro labour at the local baked goods cooperative, we are presented with images of happiness at work, people joking with each other, merrily covering cakes with sugar and candy, smelling the bread with closed eyes and a contented smile, and so on.<sup>118</sup> And finally, as Bruna and Socorro join forces with their neighbours in the recycled artefacts enterprise, they are able to prevent Bruna's boyfriend's family from having to move away from the community due to its financial difficulties.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, the pursuit of love, friendship, familial tenderness, and even a satisfying sex life, as described momentarily, accompany increased prosperity as persuasive reasons for changes in behaviour, values, and ideals.

In one of the most compelling illustrations of the rewards of energetic entrepreneurship, gratifying in social and psychological ways far beyond the enhancement of income, Valdete urges Januário, her unemployed husband, to be innovative and resourceful in order to find a way to complement her street sweeper earnings. As she gets ready to leave for her job in the morning, Januário lazily watches TV; she turns to him, rather aggressively, and says:

Ideas [for making money] don't fall from the sky, Januário. You have to dig deep, to go after it! You won't achieve anything by remaining "planted" in this sofa. (...) I need to go because I'm the one who "makes it rain on my garden". And turn off that TV, it won't help you at all!<sup>120</sup>

As a result of their conversation, Januário has the insight to start an organic vegetable garden in his backyard, an initiative that meets with instant success as he is able to place his produce at Celestino's bazaar, so that both men profit. Significantly, the episode closes with Valdete putting an end to the "sex strike" through which she had decided to punish Januário for his idleness, and in the last scene we see husband and wife embracing in bed as the light fades out.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Tecendo o Saber, Module 2, DVD 2, Episode 16.*

<sup>118</sup> *Tecendo o Saber, Module 3, DVD 1, Episode 7.*

<sup>119</sup> *Tecendo o Saber, Module 1, DVD 2, Episode 9.*

<sup>120</sup> *Tecendo o Saber, Module 1, DVD 2, Episode 10.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

Apart from the eulogy of entrepreneurship and the acquisition of formal education, *Tecendo o Saber* is replete with imageries of ideal registers of sociality, family and neighbour solidarity, and widespread community cooperation. Characters help each other find jobs and cope with financial difficulties, they collaborate in economic enterprises, lend and borrow from each other, exchange relevant information and knowledge, give and take advice, share food and resources, visit each other frequently and are received with great hospitality, in sum, they make up an active, solidary, economically progressive lower-class community. Yet, these images convey more than a contented underprivileged neighbourhood: they normalize the vision of a docile lower-class workforce which, no matter how low in the scale of occupational hierarchy, is optimistic, proud, and ultimately happy.<sup>122</sup> For example, as Francisco mixes cement and sand at a construction site, sweating profusely under the sun, he remarks to a fellow builder, “Damn hard work, isn’t it, Rivaldo?”, to which the latter replies, “Yeah, but don’t you complain. I was unemployed for two months. This city swallows us!”.<sup>123</sup> In a similar scenario later in the soap opera, a panting, tearful man thanks Francisco for having recommended him for construction work at his site: “I’m sorry, but I needed to thank you. They hired me, I start tomorrow. I’ll have a salary again! Now I can find a place to live!”.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, upon being asked by a local newspaper reporter about living at the housing project, Celestino declares: “It’s very good indeed, because we get to know our neighbours, we help one another. Look, I’ll tell you something: I wouldn’t trade my little place here for none of these fancy condos for rich people!”.<sup>125</sup>

Yet, the most forceful examples of contented conformity with low-grade jobs and modest living conditions come in the form of short documentaries inserted in every episode where real people are interviewed and tell their life stories. For instance, a black street sweeper in his forties offers an account of his job in Rio de

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<sup>122</sup> This idealized image of a fraternal, socially mobile, heterogeneous yet harmonious community resonates with Freyre’s idea of racial democracy in Brazil, whereby Brazilian society is portrayed as a congenial hybrid of different races and classes since colonial times (Freyre 1986 [1933]). For a discussion of how racial democracy, first advanced in Freyre’s classic *The Masters and the Slaves*, has become a pervasive “master narrative” for the construction of national identity, see Sheriff (2001: 4). For critiques of the “myth” of racial democracy — i.e., how it effectively camouflages and underplays racial inequalities and class divisions, perpetuating passivity and neutralizing political struggle in Brazil — see Silva (1995: 54).

<sup>123</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 2, DVD 2, Episode 14.

<sup>124</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 3, DVD 1, Episode 6.

<sup>125</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 4, DVD 1, Episode 5.



Janeiro. (It is worthwhile to note that street sweepers in Rio are sometimes scornfully called “little oranges”, *laranjinhas*, in reference to their bright orange uniforms, hinting at the stigmatization of their low-grade profession.) He declares:

I believe that one cannot be picky about jobs nowadays, right? When a job comes up, one has to grab it with “teeth and nails”, and value what one does. I value what I do and I’m valued for what I do. And I like what I do. My job is important because I keep the city clean for its residents. Here, I make the difference. Here I beat racism, I beat prejudice.<sup>126</sup>

Although the street sweeper seems conscious of the low position his job takes in the local occupational hierarchy, he gives us such a dignified, idealized version of his work’s worth as to border on overcompensation. This trend is picked up by the soap opera’s narrative, which proceeds to show the street sweeper smiling, samba-ing around his broom, sending kisses in an emulation of carnival male dancers (*passistas*), as he is applauded by three smiling elderly ladies sat in a park bench behind him. Likewise, in the very first episode of *Tecendo o Saber*, which focuses on the experiences of work migrants, the interviewee is a skinny, wrinkled woman of mixed descent in her sixties, dressed in a French maid uniform, and sat on a plastic stool in the pantry of a middle-class household. Behind her, crammed in the pantry’s small space, we notice a gas boiler above her, baskets of dirty clothes at her feet, and a noisy washing machine at work, so that she must talk loudly to be heard. This is what she has to say about migrating to Rio de Janeiro to work when she was only 15: “I’ve always had a strong will to learn, to win. I consider myself a winner. I adapted, learned. It was a new experience for me. I never let my head down, I always kept my head up, and won.”<sup>127</sup>

Though the deep irony of these portraits render them almost bizarre, the message is clear: at the same time that one must desire and strive for career and status enhancement, material comfort, and increased prosperity in general, one should be happy and proud with what one can have should her dreams not come true.

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<sup>126</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 1, DVD 1, Episode 5.

<sup>127</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 1, DVD 1, Episode 1.

The appeal of this proposition lies in that it appears to be a contradiction in terms, but it is not. It evokes instead a “win-win” narrative which caters for both success and failure in fulfilling aspirations, whilst advancing an entrepreneuristic attitude and an agentic stance that are crucial to the neoclassical ideal of social and individual evolution, whereby the continual desire to develop sanctioned competencies is stoked and maintained. This discourse, which several authors have associated with the “myth of meritocracy”, is crucial to the shaping of governable subjects and the management of a docile workforce in contexts of marked social inequality, such as in Brazilian society (Sheriff 2001; Souza 2003). For, in practice, the gap between what citizens with lower-class and minority racial backgrounds, inferior educational capital, and low-grade occupations are encouraged to achieve and can pragmatically achieve would present, in the absence of the “myth of meritocracy”, a potential source of widespread frustration and social unrest (Fontaine 1995: 2; Guimarães 2002; Hasenbalg 1995: 25; Mitchell-Kernan 1995: ix-x; Tôrres [1965]1989).

Therefore, the intersections between the production of cooperative subjects in a national project of governance and mass media objects, such as telenovelas and *Tecendo o Saber*, are not insignificant. Whilst the calculated use of *Tecendo o Saber* by PFZ initiatives demonstrates by itself the extent of this relationship, the political vein of the pedagogic soap opera becomes evident as some episodes end with a favourable biography of PT government figures, such as Marina Silva (the then Minister of the Environment)<sup>128</sup> and President Lula himself<sup>129</sup>. *Tecendo o Saber* also reinforces, as shown above, the importance of formal education, energetic entrepreneurship, and ambitions of career enhancement which inhabit both official state rhetoric and PFZ programmes. The pedagogic soap opera is also tied to the expansion of state capacity in that it stresses the significance of bureaucratic registration, personal documents, and participation in national censuses.<sup>130</sup> Finally, in line with PFZ directives to “modernize” the competencies and skills of beneficiaries, a whole episode of *Tecendo o Saber* is devoted to familiarizing viewers with

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<sup>128</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 1, DVD 2, Episode 15.

<sup>129</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 1, DVD 1, Episode 5.

<sup>130</sup> *Tecendo o Saber*, Module 3, DVD 2, Episode 9.

information technology, showing them how to access internet websites, write e-mails, shop online, and consult bank statements via the internet.<sup>131</sup>

In the next section I continue to investigate the social impact of TALHER's policies to transform the capacities and aspirations of locals in order to "articulate a new vision of the future" for Guaribas.<sup>132</sup> The premise is that these shifts in ambitions and desires can be traced through their reifications in new career and lifestyle aspirations, as well as in new consumption tendencies linked to strategies of identity construction. The section's second premise is that intergenerational conflict caused by the increasing variance between the aspirations of the older and new generations of Guaribanos is indicative of the measure to which these shifts have occurred.<sup>133</sup>

## Local changes in career aspirations and intergenerational conflict

Compared to other communities in the country, Guaribas exhibits a rather egalitarian, classless social structure, though this has been changing fast. Because the great majority of Guaribanos are small independent farmers who own and cultivate their lands, there is little if any insinuation of the hierarchy predicated on unequal access to land and the means of production. Also, even though desk jobs at the mayoralty are rated high in the local occupational hierarchy, there is only a minor diversity of work and employment available in the village, so that status differentiation based on the distinct values conferred by a society to distinct occupations is still relatively nascent. Moreover, older Guaribanos often emphasize that until not long ago very little money circulated in the village, and that the main way to exchange goods and services was either direct or diachronic reciprocity. As older informants reiterated, even the people known as "rich" in Guaribas two

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 45.

<sup>133</sup> As Redfield argues, significant social changes may appear most plainly in the changing states of mind of people, or in the "differences between what older people think and feel and what younger people think and feel" (Redfield 1960: 60). See also Yunxiang 2003

generations ago had merely “half a dozen cows” more than other villagers. Thus, the accumulation of capital and private property had never been so marked as to delineate different socioeconomic classes, nor to be a principal criterion in the calculus of social status. Furthermore, as Tandula asserts, even those more affluent villagers were “rustic”, “coarse” people [*caponeiros*] “just like all other Guaribanos, dressing, eating, working, and knowing the same as everybody else”, in what he deemed “a sort of Indian culture”. In short, affluence did not distinguish Guaribanos, neither in appearance, occupation, nor lifestyle.

However, as mentioned above, this is changing, and fast. To begin with, an incipient, though greater diversity of jobs (such as working as a teacher in the new municipal schools, as a clerk in the mayoralty, or as a hired housekeeper, for instance) is rapidly establishing occupational hierarchy, and becoming a *bona fide* standard for status differentiation. Secondly, the increased circulation of money chiefly due to Bolsa Família’s financial aid enables the accumulation of capital which, mainly through consumerism, translates into public displays of wealth, success, personal competence, social prestige, cultural capital, and the internalization of cosmopolitan aesthetics, ranging from fashionable clothes to house remodelling. Thirdly, there is the increasing local significance of formal education, which leads to new forms of social exclusion and demotion for those who are unskilled in it, that is, to downgrading through the lack of educational capital. And finally, largely through work migration and mass media, there is the diffusion of new cultural values and desirable competencies — from sociolect and career-ideals to standards of comportment and body language — the internalization of which generates the accumulation of cultural capital, providing new instances for status differentiation and social distinction (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]). Therefore, be it through high income, occupational hierarchy, competence in formal education, or the mastering of a complex web of new fashionable behaviours, attitudes, and desires, social inequality in the village is on the rise.

These considerations are significant as a backdrop against which to offset recent developments in the village. The more I inquired Guaribanos about their “aspiration models” and “life-careers”, their paradigms of “the good life”, the more I began to notice a significant discrepancy between the ideals of teenagers and those

of adult and elderly villagers.<sup>134</sup> Take, for instance, a few typical answers from middle-aged or senior Guaribanos to my standard question “what are/were your dreams in life?”. João Caititu, a villager in his forties, replied as follows:

My dream was to be a well-liked person, a popular person. A person who didn't go about idly. My dream was to be peaceful, and not harm anybody else. (...) I never had difficult dreams, no. My dream, really, was just to work. And maybe be a motor biker too...

Likewise, João Bertoldo, a farmer in his early seventies, asserted that he “only thought of the fields for a career, and to buy, perhaps, a few head of cattle”. Miramon Rocha, also in his seventies, told me in an interview that he didn't “even remember what [he] wanted to be, what [he] wanted in life”. Then, after a pause, he resumed: “Well, from the time I was old enough to remember, my dream was to make bird traps (*arapucas*), catch *juritis* (blue ground doves), and ‘gain’ a day's labour in the fields”.

Now compare these modest aspirations in the context of the village (to be a farmer, to be well-liked and popular, to hunt birds — rural, sociocentric, and even bucolic in nature — with answers to the same question by teenagers and children. Iracélia, who was 17 at the time, replied that she wanted to be a veterinarian, and suggestively added that this was *her* dream, not her parents'. Neguinho, then 18 years-old, straightforwardly stated that his dreams were “to have a car, a big house, and a lot of ‘dough’”. Tiago, 19, wanted to be a lawyer at first, but would settle, as he told me at the time, for being a judge or a doctor: “I'm more pen than earth, anyway”, he concluded, alluding to his disinclination to be a farmer like his father.

These are but a few of the several accounts I collected in the course of fieldwork indicating that a gap has opened (or widened) between the dreams and career aspirations of the different generations of Guaribanos. This discrepancy in values and ideals leads to new issues of intergenerational conflict in the village. Parents complain that their children dodge agricultural work, sleep in, and refuse to

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<sup>134</sup> These are Redfield's formulations (1960: 62).

submit to the temporal framework required for farming activities. Teenagers, on the other hand, complain that parents “live off the past and not the present, and don’t make use of the knowledge they already have”. Accordingly, Tiago affirms that teenage Guaribanos nowadays “learn more from their friends (...) technology, and television, than from their parents at home. (...) They see things on TV and think: ‘if it’s like that there, why can’t it be [like that] here?’”. As mentioned in Chapter Five, a significant test of the balance of power between parents and their offspring is the latter’s refusal to obey orders, fetch things for senior relatives, and ask for permission before leaving the house. “Not today”, Tiago maintains, “the son only lets the parents know where he’s going and when he’s coming back. If they say ‘no’, well, it’s the same, he goes anyway”. As Tiago suggests, at the bottom of these new instances of intergenerational conflict is the dissemination of new attitudes and aspirations through mass media and modern “technology”.

The preference of the younger generations of Guaribanos for well remunerated professions indicative of higher social, educational, economic, and cultural capital, and which demand in turn competence at a set of “modern” technical knowledges and capacities, can be grasped not only through the replies above, but also through the rising interest of locals in desk jobs at the mayoralty, and the increasing stigmatization of agricultural activity, as discussed in Chapter Two. Perceived as career enhancements conducive to affluence, lifestyle maximization, and several forms of social prestige, these occupations have come to inhabit the aspirations of young Guaribanos, kindled by public schooling, TALHER workshops, and mass media objects. For instance, in a joint initiative between TALHER development workers and public school teachers, an activity to familiarize lower-school children with modern professions was conceived. It was called “Profession Day”, though it actually took place on Mother’s Day, and consisted of teachers allocating different professions to each student in their classrooms and dressing them up accordingly. I attended the event, and as mothers and teachers carefully clothed and groomed the children, I noticed that girls warmed up to the activity much more than boys, though a few of them also participated. The allocation of professions was decided by the teacher on the fly, which generated a minor commotion since the girls had their own ideas about what occupation they wanted to embody. “Schoolteacher” was by far the most popular with the girls, several of whom surrounded their teacher

screaming “Me! Me!”, as she announced that she would now pick a student to represent the profession. Next in demand came “singer”, “secretary” and “doctor”. There was still keen competition for the professions of “lawyer” and “hairstylist”, but when it came to assigning the occupations of “farmer” and “housewife” — the most traditional in the village — I could sense a measure of disappointment in the girls’ faces, which was fortuitously captured by the pictures I took of them. (See Pictures 29 through 34.)

Though it was the students who directly assigned value to the different professions through the open display of their predilections, teachers and mothers did as much, only implicitly. It was through the composition of an imagery distinctive of each profession, an iconography manufactured with particular clothes, props, accessories, hairstyles, grooming, make-up, etc., that the organizers of the activity imparted to them different levels of value and worth. As the pictures show, more fashionable clothing (shorter skirts, colourful jackets, and T-shirts adorned with glitter), accessories (purses, earrings, necklaces, rings, and bijoux in general), shoe wear (clogs and colourful, decorated sandals), and make-up were employed in the symbolic representation of, for instance, “teacher”, “doctor”, and “lawyer”, than in that of “farmer” and “housewife”. In fact, none of the features above were present in the latter’s portrayals: whilst the girl standing for “farmer” has no props or accessories of any kind, no make-up, and wears a monochromatic old-fashioned long dress to her ankles and a handkerchief around her head (reminiscent of the clothing worn by older local women at agricultural labour), the girl representing “housewife” equally lacks accessories and make-up, sporting cheap rubber flip-flops, and holding a single prop, a worn out feather duster. Finally, when the time came for the presentation, each child was called by her profession, and marched very much like a model at a fashion show. The audience was comprised of teachers and parents (mostly mothers) who cheered and applauded the children. As I recorded in my notes at the occasion, the most applauded child/profession was “lawyer”. It is significant that a profession denoting high status such as “lawyer” is mocked and belittled in the traditional Careta ritual, and so popular among mothers and children in the village.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Not to multiply instances, I add a final example due to its ubiquity during my life in the village: the youngest son of my host family was called “Advogado” (literally, “Lawyer”) by all villagers, including his parents, a nickname he chose for himself owing to his early desire to eventually become one.

Therefore, couched in playful performance, the activity indirectly assigned value through imagery, through an iconography of professions manufactured with dress codes, ornaments, accessories, and facial cosmetics. Again, it suggests a gap in the career and lifestyle aspirations of different generations of Guaribanos.

### Léo's "love machine": self, consumerism, and the state

It has become a truism that, at least in Western forms of life, to choose, to consume, and to possess, is to signify. That consumption has become "a privileged site for the fabrication of self and society, of culture and identity" has been established by such a prolificacy of works as to render unnecessary any extensive rehearsal of the argument (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001 [2000]: 9; c.f. Bourdieu 1984 [1979]; Slater 1997; Weber 1978 [1922]: 937; Veblen 2007 [1899]). Clarke et al. observe that alongside consumption patterns, "the notion of 'lifestyle' captures the sense in which one can increasingly 'buy into' a particular identity" (2003: 15). This because the symbolic reification of social, economic, and cultural capital is expressed not only through life-career choices in an occupational hierarchy, but also through consumption patterns. The opportunity for "gaining distinction by means of the direct manifestation of property" has emerged as one of the most easily recognizable evidences of a reputable degree of status and success (Veblen 2007 [1899]: 16). In effect, under the regime of individual ownership, the "most available means of visibly achieving a purpose is that afforded by the acquisition and accumulation of goods" (Veblen 2007 [1899]: 18). The idea, Veblen maintains, becomes particularly appealing to those who possess little and ordinarily accumulate little, for through mimicking or emulating the consumption habits of their "social superiors" — that is, through the possession and consumption of status-intensive goods — it becomes possible to demonstrate conspicuously the achievement of prestige (Mitchell and Epstein 1959: 32).

According to Maslow's concept of hierarchy of needs, the striving for status through acquisition becomes a predominant motivation only after other, more basic



needs (for hunger, thirst, safety) are satisfied (1954). Nevertheless, James argues that it is precisely this high-income taste that is transferred by the demonstration effect to the poor populations of the poor countries of the Third World (2000: 40). Nurkse coined the term “demonstration effect” to formulate how, in consumption theory, exposure through demonstration leads to imitation:

When people come into contact with superior goods or superior patterns of consumption, with new articles or new ways of meeting old wants, they are apt to feel after a while a certain restlessness and dissatisfaction. Their knowledge is extended, their imagination stimulated; new desires are aroused (1957: 59)

In fact, students of consumption behaviour among the poorest populations in developing countries are prone to comment on how members of such groups often reduce their spending on food and others essentials in order to purchase modern, status-intensive goods (Wells 1977; Ger and Belk 1996). James notes that “education and exposure to mass media are the most important variables for change in consumer values and attitudes, and the acquisition of new tastes”, but knowledge that is transmitted via advertising, for example, also contributes to alter the tastes of the consumer in favour of “modern” characteristics (2000: 36). In particular, advertising enhances the preference for the positional component of demand through linking consumption of the advertised product to “getting ahead” of the rest of society (James 2000: 42).

Expanding on the last section, the rise in status differentiation in Guaribas becomes a public and social matter through the assumption of a lifestyle marked in part by the acquisition, use, and display of goods (Wilson 1974: 94). Success in achieving a “developed” way of life is demonstrated conspicuously by the physical appurtenances of living, where consumption patterns emerge as a high-status symbol of modernity and Western consumer culture — as images and icons of particular aspirations and ways of life promoted, also directly, by government and PFZ initiatives.

From the perspective of national states, according to mainstream macroeconomic theory, increasing the consumption of goods is economically desirable for the internal growth of production, gross investments, industrial capacity, employment-to-population ratio, and so forth. Hence, the integration of marginal, “underproductive” sections of the population into a market economy is essential to national economic growth. This is, in fact, one of the main objectives of government sponsored development projects, such as PFZ in Brazil, which seek to carry out this productive process pushed by the state, whereby villagers are encouraged to participate in a market economy, and “perhaps eventually become nascent village capitalists and entrepreneurs” (Woost 1997: 238-43).

Yet, as Rose points out, the state and consumption patterns are also linked in a more subtle, though no less effective way. As representations of citizenship become organized around ideals of self-development and personal autonomy, the state governs at a distance by encouraging and remotely regulating private choice in the spheres of market, civil society, and private life. The modern liberal state vouches to create an enabling environment where citizens may fulfil their personal projects “to live a good life, to infuse their actions with meaning, and realize their wishes, hopes, and ambitions” by exercising consumer-like choice within a repertoire of alternatives in the social, economic, and political domains — private preferences in career, family, lifestyle, political views, and so forth:

Citizenship is primarily realized through acts of free but responsibilized choice in a variety of private, corporate, and quasi-public practices from working to shopping. The citizen as consumer is to become an active agent in the regulation of professional expertise. The citizen as prudent is to become an active agent in the provision of security. The citizen as employee is to become an active agent in the regeneration of industry and as consumer is to be an agent for innovation, quality and competitiveness. The citizen is to enact his or her democratic obligations as a form of consumption through new techniques. This kind of “government through freedom” multiplies the points at which the citizen has to play his or her part in the games that govern him (Rose 1999[1989]: xxiii).

Accordingly, PFZ is committed not only to maximizing local work output and production, but also to boosting consumption in Guaribas. As described in Chapter Two, numerous loan schemes and instruments of credit have been made available in the village, both directly through government institutions such as PRONAF and EMATER, and indirectly through government owned banks such as Banco do Brasil, Caixa Econômica Federal, and Banco do Nordeste. As mentioned in Chapter Five, stands with representatives of these banks are regularly found even in TALHER self-esteem and beauty workshops, and PFZ events like Cidadania Ativa. These bank representatives distribute flyers, talk to locals, and invite them to open cashing accounts and consider micro-credit options at their financial institutions.

Though a small community of subsistence farmers, and the final link in an economic hierarchy of regional markets, Guaribas is significant to the Brazilian government as part (and showcase) of a continued policy to increase internal production and consumption through a substantial injection of capital nationally. Yet, communities like Guaribas are also prime target markets for a whole segment of low-cost, low-quality products which have become technologically or aesthetically uncompetitive in more metropolitan areas, as discussed in Chapter Two. Recent economic research in Brazil shows that consumption among the lower classes (D and E) has increased by 420 per cent in the last eight years, substantially contributing to national growth indexes.<sup>136</sup> In this sense, the government's distribution of federal funds to these communities is tantamount to strategic reinvestment in its own "income", as it were, through GDP indicators. Also, by reaching the low-quality production segments that cater for the lower classes, government funds are partially regenerated as indirect taxes over the circulation of products. Moreover, villages like Guaribas are fundamental to a more overlooked, but rapidly growing sector in the national economy: the informal underground market. As conveyed in Chapter Two, not only outdated commodities, but pirate products of all kinds flourish in the local economic environment. The most profitable business in the village's Sunday market was, for the whole duration of my fieldwork, a pirate CD and DVD stand. Though unofficial, and thus impossible to estimate with any accuracy, the circulation of money in this underground market trickles down to numerous economic actors

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<sup>136</sup> "Consumo da classe C cresce sete vezes desde 2002, diz estudo" 2011.

involved in their production and commercialization: the trader who sells the pirate commodities, the technician who copies, the shop that sells virgin CDs and DVDs, their manufacturers, agents and firms engaged in transportation, the companies which supply them with fuel, tires, mechanical parts, and so on. Even the original artists who own the copyright royalties of the pirated commodities are benefited, since the diffusion of their products multiplies their fan base and enhances earnings from local live performances. Consequently, in one way or another, a literally infinite series of lucrative exchange relations in the internal market can be traced back to pirated goods and their correlated services.

Formal or informal, official or underground, consumption and consumerism have been on the rise in Guaribas. Whilst this can be gleaned from the micro recession that struck the village in 2008 as a result of Guaribanos overextending their new purchasing power and financial capacities — buying too much and making improvident use of loans and credit alternatives in other regional markets such as Caracol and São Raimundo Nonato — daily life in the village presents numerous displays of conspicuous consumption. For instance, teenage students who have their classes at night wear daily their most fashionable clothes to school, so much so that the first time I attended their night lessons, I was impressed by how much recess in the patio resembled a sort of open air nightclub: young women wear high-heels or clogs, sheath dresses, tight tank-tops, low-cut neckline blouses, heavy make-up, and a variety of fashionable ornaments and accessories, whilst young men capitalize on clean and well pressed T-shirts with slogans in English, decorated jeans, colourful tennis shoes, as well as single earrings and gelled hair styles. The smell of warring perfumes in the patio is omnipresent, as it is in the Guaribas Two village square at night, where some of the students congregate after classes. (Suggestively, apart from the isolated football field at the limits of Guaribas' urban area, these are privileged spots in the village for flirting and “hooking up”, and thus for testing the “efficacy” and allure of these fashionable articles.) As described in the last and final section of this chapter, besides items of fashion, villagers consume fairly expensive products (even to metropolitan standards) associated with beauty and hygiene, such as perfumes and cosmetics of all sorts.

However, these comprise but a few of the commodities that have come to comprise the material aspirations of Guaribanos. The latter range from household

appliances, DVD players, stereo systems, television sets, and satellite antennas, to motorcycles, interior decoration artefacts (pre-fabricated furniture, plastic vases and ornaments, broken electronic products that are nevertheless left over racks and surfaces), and new material aspects of house remodelling (ceramic floors, modern bricks, internal bathrooms, surrounding walls, modern plan designs, etc.). This to the extent that, as I took a break from fieldwork in São Raimundo Nonato on a weekend in February of 2007, a daytime party was taking place at the local Honda motorcycle dealership. The reason for the celebration, I was told by an employee, was the unexpected rise of their sales rank to top ten in Brazil; when I inquired about sales to Guaribanos, he mentioned that Guaribas bought more motorcycles from the São Raimundo Nonato Honda dealership than any other municipality in Southern Piauí. Still, Guaribanos' consumption patterns exhibit a noticeable predilection for entertainment related electronic products. I once asked Tiago and his friends to list, in hierarchical order, the consumer goods that a Guaribano family coming into some money would buy. The result was: 1) television; 2) motorcycle; 3) satellite dish (for better reception and more channels); 4) DVD player; 5) stereo system. Pictures 35 and 36 in Appendix B provide some illustrations of the ubiquity of these entertainment electronic products in Guaribano households, where their designs contrast with the austerity and "rusticity" of traditional adobe house interiors and exteriors.

Displays of conspicuous consumption in the village sometimes border on what could be construed as "ritual excess". For instance, take the very recent arrival of a few budget, used cars in the village — or "promenade cars", as they are locally called, in contrast to pick-up trucks which are employed in work and transportation to and from Guaribas. Most of these vehicles, lacking four-by-four wheel traction, cannot leave Guaribas due to poor road conditions, and are confined to drive around the same few streets in the village. These are vehicles for show, not for work, and are certainly not practical in the local context. One of the first, select few Guaribanos to buy a "promenade car" was Léo, Ceixa's son, because it was remarkably cheap and thus an unmissable opportunity (according to his mother), and because Léo needed a resource to attract, as well as a private place to court local girls (as he told me). At night, "Léo's Love Machine", as it came to be known, could be seen slowly moving

through the streets, and sometimes disappearing in the darkness towards the football field in the outskirts of the village, its intended destination.

To be sure, consumerism was limited in the past by several factors: difficulties in transportation, the lack of hard currency in the village, the scarcity of credit opportunities and the personal documents required for them, the drastically lower purchasing power of villagers before PFZ, as well as the relative uniformity in the lifestyles and aspiration models of Guaribanos to which Tandula alluded above. However, apart from these circumstances, there are various indications that locals had, in former times, more reservations and scruples about consumption in general, and that they often equated its manifestations with acquisitiveness. For instance, despite my difficulty in eliciting local proverbs, I learned of two that are directly related to consumerism and lifestyle enhancement, and that appear to confirm this hypothesis. Even though the first of them, “The more you have, the more you want”, is certainly not particular to Guaribas, it was reported to me as though it were, with informants reinforcing its currency in the village since very old times. It conveys acquisitiveness as a cycle of dissatisfaction, and thus as a senseless inclination. The second is probably indigenous to the region, and goes: “Death to luxury, and long live the stomach!” (“*Morra o luxo e viva o bucho*”). It seemingly celebrates the rather radical notion that besides satisfying very basic needs (like eating), acquisition *is* a superfluous form of self-indulgence. It is a traditional artefact that provides us with a critique of consumerism by demanding the demise of “luxury”. In addition, in conversations, older Guaribanos often recalled with some nostalgia the frugality and lack of greed of villagers in the past. Accordingly, Rei, a farmer in his sixties who moved to Guaribas in his youth, told me in an interview that what first appealed to him in the village was that “people were without greed, without the mad desire to get things”.<sup>137</sup>

This is not to say, however, that Guaribanos were mainly frugal and critical of consumerism in the past, and have become overenthusiastic about it recently. Conflicting attitudes towards consumerism coexist in the village. For one, the local regime of work alone furnishes us with the illustration of a widespread and fundamental non-consumerist stance which contrasts with the cases of conspicuous

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<sup>137</sup> Rei used the verb “*conseguir*”, which can equally mean “to get” or “to achieve” things.

consumption cited above. As observed in Chapter Two, the local regime of work and production operates well under its highest capacity, and resists PFZ attempts to maximize it, suggesting that Guaribanos are not easily driven to sacrifice their lifestyle preferences — as expressed in the local comfortable balance of labour and leisure — in favour of greater purchasing power for the accrual of goods. For another, not all Guaribanos are so readily disposed to forego their familiarity with the traditional ways and appearances of local products, devices, and environments. Thus some villagers would rather preserve wood-fired external ovens, external bathrooms, beaten-earth floors, adobe walls, and customary roofing techniques, for instance, instead of switching, like the majority of Guaribanos, to gas ovens, internal bathrooms, ceramic floors, modern brick walls, and pre-fabricated fibre cement roofs. (See picture 37.) The marked discrepancy in fashion for the different generations of local women, as mentioned in the Introduction, also instantiates the customary adherence of some villagers to traditional articles and goods.

Moreover, even Guaribanos who regularly embark on displays of conspicuous consumption occasionally reveal ambiguity, and even malaise about their consumerist tendencies. For example, Léo, the proud owner of the “Love Machine” himself, upon buying a 33-inch widescreen flat TV, asked me not to spread the word around about his new acquisition. When I remarked that since he intended to invite friends over for TV and movie sessions, people would eventually know, he simply reiterated his request, with a comment about how people didn’t need to know at once. Whilst I would not presume to know why each particular commodity was subsumed according to a different outlook in consumption and morality, Léo’s concern with concealing rather than displaying the acquisition of the TV seems to echo Guaribanos’ typical use of discretion in disclosing information about their families’ economic state of affairs. As mentioned in Chapter One, a Guaribano usually avoids giving indications of financial success to a non-kin for a number of reasons: because it consists in strategic knowledge that bears on competition and profit in the local market; because it invites the “evil eye” of other Guaribanos; and because it departs from the values of modesty that inform various local behaviour patterns. Therefore, even though a discrimination in favour of visible consumption as the projection of higher wants — spiritual, aesthetic, intellectual,

and so on — is on the rise in the village, Guaribanos are between diverging evaluations of consumerist practices (Veblen 2007 [1899]: 14).

In view of Guaribas' micro-recession, the high level of incentive to local consumption by government institutions and PFZ initiatives is problematic.<sup>138</sup> But why are Guaribanos consuming so much? One possible explanation is the increasing contact with PFZ initiatives and mass media objects such as soap operas and advertisements, which suggest that through consumption one is able to invert socially marginal positions and claim personal autonomy. Though it would be too far-fetched to assume that Guaribanos are being gradually equipped with bourgeois impulses to acquisitiveness, a certain material sensibility begins to be cultivated in the village whereby styles of existence are represented by their associated artefacts, thus equating commodities with empowerment and autonomous choice. Which suggests a second explanation to the phenomenon of Guaribanos' burgeoning consumerism: new consumer habits follow and express the local changes in aspirations and desirable lifestyles alluded to above. Moreover, taking cue from Rappaport's concept of ritual indexicality, yet a third explanation may be conceived from its application to the context of consumerism in the village (Rappaport 2006 [1999]). He argues that whatever is done, meant, transmitted, or symbolized by the words, songs, actions, or apparel of ritual performers, to both themselves and to others, participation in a ritual is an indexical message of acceptance which takes precedence over the ascription of any semantic content to signifiers or "canonical" messages. In his words, "indexical information inverts the familiar qualities of sign and signified", for "usually, a sign is as insubstantial as the word 'stone', and the signified is as substantial as the 'stone' itself. But an indexical sign is substantial and the signified is insubstantial" (2006 [1999]: 181). In this manner, in the context of village consumerism, whatever self-referential qualities are represented in the product as conceived by the consumer-sender and the public-receiver, the mere participation of Guaribanos in this semantic system already conveys the crucial message that, through participation, they can be counted among the socially, economically, and culturally influential classes whose flow of information, styles, and currencies increasingly reach them.

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<sup>138</sup> During the past year, I've learned through telephone contact with Guaribanos that the village has progressively been "emptied" of people, and that most of the young men who became my closest friends are now in São Paulo.



Though none of the hypotheses offered above are mutually exclusive, and probably contribute jointly at different levels to the phenomenon of Guaribanos' expanding consumerism, the third hypothesis is particularly significant to the next section, which analyses the social impact of TALHER's initiatives in the domain of beauty and hygiene.

## Local currencies of beauty and hygiene

TALHER is given the unique task within PFZ of satiating "its beneficiaries hunger for beauty".<sup>139</sup> However, as alluded to above, the organization within TALHER in charge of devising its social agenda — Network for Social Technology (RTS) — offers no definitions as to what its concepts of "citizenship education" or "beauty" may mean. Instead, it proposes the rather vague objectives of encouraging "the practice of democracy, dialogue, solidarity, decentralization without subordination, plural access, and social empowerment".<sup>140</sup> Beauty, then, is explicitly correlated in PFZ discourse with citizenship (status enhancement) and social empowerment. In fact, from what I gathered on the ground by attending TALHER beauty workshops and activities, and by interviewing villagers and development workers, local currencies of the concept of beauty have more to do with politics, and especially identity politics, than with aesthetics, *stricto sensu*. My attempt to understand local conceptions of beauty by employing an academic theoretical framework which distinguishes between the aesthetic, the political, and the economic domains only further obscured the question.

For instance, a TALHER beauty workshop called *Cidadania Ativa* (Active Citizenship) took place in a municipal public school on the Fazenda side of the village during a weekend in June, 2006. The classrooms had been prepared for TALHER contracted aestheticians, hairdressers, and manicurists to work on the appearance of Guaribanos. There, villagers went from sector to sector, having their

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<sup>139</sup> "Rede de tecnologia social: princípios, 2005"; "Matar a fome de pão", 2005.

<sup>140</sup> "Rede de tecnologia social: conceitos, 2005"; "Rede de tecnologia social: home", 2005.

hair cut and styled in one room, their nails done in another, and make-up and cosmetics (in the case of women) applied in yet another.<sup>141</sup> (See pictures 38 and 39.) Guaribanos were manifestly amused by the experience: they smiled as they sat down to be groomed, and teased and complimented each other as they met in the corridors between sectors. All these services were offered gratuitously by TALHER, but alongside beauticians and hairdressers worked, in just as many classrooms, officials from the state's Judicial Tribunal who endeavoured to issue Guaribanos' personal documents — Identification Cards (RG), Financial Record Cards (CPF), Work Cards (Carteira de Trabalho), and Birth Certificates. I could not discern which kind of service was more in demand, since Guaribanos seemed to attend the event as much for the grooming as for the issue of official documents. This peculiar combination of aesthetics and politics in the activity is already explicitly advertised in the TALHER mission statements considered above. Throughout my fieldwork, bureaucratic registration accompanied various TALHER activities, such as health and hygiene events (whose subjects involved brushing teeth, flossing, health education, and food conservation), professionalizing courses in manicure and cosmetology, as well as the beauty workshops already described. It is worthy noting that Banco do Nordeste stands were often strategically located at the entrance of these events, tying together the themes of beauty, citizenship, and consumption in PFZ initiatives to reform the appearance, desires, and capacities of Guaribanos.

Like these TALHER sponsored functions, development workers in the village usually collapsed in their statements, during interviews, political and aesthetic aspects when talking about beauty. In a typical example, when I asked Jucileide, PFZ's representative to Guaribas, to define what specific kind of beauty the project intended to impart locally, she offered the following definition: "Beauty is self-esteem, life improvement, and income generation". Similarly, Rosa, a PFZ course instructor, alleged that she could already observe changes in the "education" of locals, who gradually learned to not show themselves in public with "strong body odour, dishevelled hair, and dirty clothes". She got particularly emotional during the interview when she recalled the story of a local young boy whom she had scolded for his physical appearance when he first showed up with his mother in her course. A

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<sup>141</sup> It is worthy of note that the hairstyles suggested to, and accepted by most Guaribanos were generally much shorter than the lengths typically worn by men, women, and children in Guaribas. Hairdressers conveyed these as having a "cleaner", more modern look.

tearful Rosa remarked that the next day the boy came after having taken a thorough bath, with clean clothes and his hair combed. In this sense, Rosa seemed to interpret external markers of beauty in self-presentation as the definitive indication of the assimilation of “education” and “development” by locals.

When I attempted to elicit specific definitions of beauty from Guaribanos, I perceived that they too conflated the notion of beauty with, among other things, economic prosperity, urban infrastructural improvements, the expansion of public education, and development writ large. For instance, Miramon Rocha, a villager in his sixties, described thus the course of development in the village: “There was no development here. And today we are seeing beauty. The square, pavement, cars. These things help us. Kids in the school. Now we know the way to live”. Like Miramon, who merged such apparently diverse images as “pavement” and “kids in school” with beauty, Valdecir associated urban infrastructural betterments and prosperity in general with beauty. When I asked him what were the first things that came to his mind when he thought about beauty, he cited, in this order, health, running water, electricity, schools, lines of credit, and the better appearance of Guaribanos, to which he also referred later as beauty. João Caititu replied thus to my standard question “What is beauty according to you?”:

Beauty is to be with the family at home, and enjoy tranquillity. Beauty is the person only going around well dressed, with money in his pocket. Before, people walked around in all sorts of unkempt ways: torn [clothes], dirty, for there was no water to bathe [regularly].

A discourse analysis of the statements above shows the incidence of circular referencing between all kinds of infrastructural improvements (running water, pavement, the square), prosperity (money, cars, fashionable clothes), welfare (health, public schooling, tranquillity), aesthetics (hygiene, personal appearance), and knowledge in general (“knowing the way to live”), as if these were somehow identical, equivalent, or interchangeable in local understandings of beauty. Whilst it is difficult to infer the causes that have led to the conflation of all these ideas and representations with beauty in the imaginary of Guaribanos, its effect is easier to

discern. “Beauty” has come to encompass to all actors involved in the development of Guaribas — locals, development workers, and PFZ policy designers — a conglomerate of desirable transformations, capacities, and aspirations, and to signify their internalization: citizenship, education, development, self-esteem, affluence, and lifestyle enhancement. Suggestively, like individual and society, local surroundings are also described as “beautified” and “developed” as they approach modern, urban, and cosmopolitan built environments.

But why is it that beauty in this context has relatively little to do with appearance, and traverses the borders of the aesthetic to emerge as a privileged, comprehensive domain for the reification of economic and political capabilities, psychological dispositions, and worthy desires, knowledges, and skills in the formation of identity and selfhood? In an analogous way, Eagleton has asked the same question of “the aesthetic”, namely, why, as a category, “it denotes instead a whole programme of social, psychical, and political reconstruction on the part of early European bourgeoisie” (Eagleton 1992: 21). Because the aesthetic concerns judgments of sentiment and taste, he argues in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, it is a notably versatile field which enjoys great latitude in the ascription of theoretical and practical value to its objects: it allows for subjectivity, semantic flexibility, and polysemy, so that signifier and signified can be legitimately manipulated by both sender and receiver (1992). In short, the domains of beauty and aesthetics have a particular susceptibility to convey and deploy ideological meaning. In the case of Guaribas, the local importance of beauty lies not only in that it has effectively come to comprise myriad sanctioned (ideological) stances, but that it renders the individual who assumes them visible and legible to the trained eye.

In addition to fashion and physical appearance, demure and comportment also substantialize cultural valuation, and indicate aesthetic (and ideological) subscription. Hence, besides being coached in styles of dress, accessories, and grooming in beauty workshops, Guaribanos are also encouraged to assimilate etiquette and manners which reflect prevailing cosmopolitan standards of grace, *bon ton*, and propriety. For instance, villagers, and especially local girls, are constantly reminded not to spit in the streets, blow their noses directly onto the ground, sneeze and cough without covering their noses and mouths, sit with their legs uncrossed, walk barefooted, and look for lice in each other’s hair in public. They are also urged

to sport clean and untorn clothes, tend to wounds and scars in their legs, avoid skin aging due to exposure to the sun, and remove traces of dirt from their bodies, all of which are very common in rural contexts. These workshops, then, seek to clean up, as it were, the signs of rural life from Guaribanos, many of whom have come to invest heavily in beauty products following the advice of TALHER instructors.

For instance, local teenage girls sometimes save up for months before a trip to São Raimundo Nonato in order to buy several expensive perfumes and cosmetics, such as make-up, facial creams, moisturizers, acne treatments, and so on. In one such spending spree that became both famous and infamous in the village during my fieldwork, Clisandra, 16, bought so many cosmetic products from O Boticário, the second largest Brazilian cosmetic franchise, that it arose rumours that she might be amassing money by selling sexual favours whilst in the town. The fact that these consumer products which embody cultural capital are costly brings to the fore not only the fundamental factor of exclusivity and distinction in ownership — positive distinction and uniqueness being constitutive, as referred to above, to Western conceptions of self-esteem — but also the issue of economic sacrifice. Vanity, and the desire to acquire beauty are explicitly encouraged by development workers as a way to increase self-esteem, whilst the apparent absence of vanity is seen as a marker of lack of self-love or shame in one's physical appearance. Accordingly, in an interview, Rosa characterized what she perceived as the low self-esteem of Guaribanos by simply referring to them as “a people without vanity”.

If elements of fashion and grooming are associated with authority figures (media personalities and stereotypes of the rich, successful, attractive, etc.), suggesting identification and the possession of an analogous self by its owners, comportment and demure are also interpreted in terms of the inner personality they manifest. The controlled use of bodily presentation and deportment in the non-verbal grammar of body language is interpreted as “visible statements about the hierarchy of values to which their chooser subscribes”, and “read by those who know the code and scan it for information” (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 5). Appearance, demeanour, and bodily presentation become taken as expressions of the self (Featherstone 2003: 164; c.f. Sennet 1976). Hence, these new techniques of etiquette reflect membership to the world of urbane, sophisticated modern individuals and their values. In this sense, the body and its gestural language become locally

unambiguous signs of adherence to cosmopolitan aesthetics, and of participation in local “development” and modernization at large. (See Picture 40.) In Guaribas, whatever *specific* meanings are subjectively understood and learnt through the body, the experience of “development” is embedded in the socially informed body.

The partial, piecemeal assimilation of hygiene habits and knowledges by Guaribanos provides us with another instantiation of Rappaport’s concept of indexicality, where the indexical sign is more substantial than the signified. TALHER health and hygiene workshops in the village have concentrated on food conservation, refuse disposal, the importance of not defecating outdoors and having internal bathrooms, and especially, dental hygiene. Probably because most professionals available for hire by TALHER at the inception of PFZ were dentists, Guaribanos reported to me that most hygiene workshops were concerned with brushing teeth, flossing, gum care, tongue cleaning, and halitosis. As a result, a great many Guaribanos, of all ages and both sexes, take dental hygiene remarkably seriously, sometimes prioritizing it over health habits whose neglect may cause more dangerous illness. For example, my neighbours, who like me had their only source of running water in the backyard, a pipe emerging from the earth with a faucet at its end, could be regularly seen brushing their teeth together. They usually took a long time crouching by the faucet, with the older children slowly and carefully repeating the instructions received in the workshops: “First the top, then the bottom, then the tongue, you can’t have bad breath”, nine year-old girl Tiarrôla taught her juniors. My neighbours’ faucet, however, was immediately above the path their open sewage ran through, so that adults and children brushed their teeth, barefoot or in flip-flops, with their feet sometimes splashing the puddles formed by the wastewater flow (particularly at night, when it is harder to see it). Potential contamination from the contact with faeces, urine, and other sediments was apparently less of a concern to my neighbours than bad breath. This curious inversion of the usual hierarchy of contemporary hygiene habits, which prioritizes the prevention of more serious diseases over less serious ones, shows that some villagers have not acquired (or not been adequately imparted with) the principles and rationale which inform it. For if fully aware of the pathological discrepancy between the health hazards from brushing their teeth by the sewage and not brushing their teeth, they would probably choose the less hazardous latter option. This suggests a piecemeal assimilation of

hygiene practices by Guaribanos where it is not the intrinsic medical value of the habit that motivates its assimilation, i.e., the reasons and rationale for taking on the habit, but the level of emphasis of TALHER initiatives on the one hand, and the sense of symbolically appropriating the urbane habits of more metropolitan communities than Guaribas on the other.

It seems that much is inferred from a single anecdote, but similar examples of inversion of conventional hygiene priorities, as advocated by contemporary medical standards, could be cited to include Guaribano's littering their own backyards and planting by the constant sewage flow whilst devoting a remarkable amount of time and attention to skin care — which, in fact, was the case in my host family. It was always my impression that, with respect to hygiene habits in Guaribas, practices have more to do with the consumption of positional goods and status emulation — the partaking in the metropolitan standards and customs received from contact with mass media and TALHER initiatives, as well as from travel and work migration — than with the issue of disease prevention which underpins the principles of public health. Like in the creative and unconventional use some Guaribanos make of pharmacological remedies described earlier in this chapter, the significance of use supersedes the question of efficacy: copying a habit or practice becomes more important than its conventional function as a reason for copying.

## The social marketing of desire

Conceived more than thirty years ago, social marketing “consists in essence of the application of commercial marketing principles to the promotion of social causes (where these may have to do with products, ideas, or forms of behaviour)” (Kotler and Roberto 1989: 62). It is so named because it draws heavily on commercial marketing principles employed by marketing theorists and advertising psychologists for social interventions (James 2000: 131). Its objective is to influence changes in social ideas and practices, including the specific needs, desires, beliefs, and attitudes of target adopters in order to successfully implement social change campaigns (Kotler and Roberto 1989). Just as in advertising, where objects become

representatives of “whatever is said to be necessary, desirable, and missing from one’s life, the target adopter is *made* to have needs, and new values, ideals, behaviours are presented as things that can satisfy those needs” (Falk 2003: 181). A comparison between the techniques of social marketing and advertising and the *modus operandi* of PFZ initiatives in Guaribas is illuminating in this respect.

In “The Genealogy of Advertising”, Falk describes how advertising makes use of two techniques to promote a positive expression of want through the creation of needs and desires underpinned by a theorising of the consumer’s “aspirations” and “preferences”. On the one hand, it suggests “the comfort or profit which results from the use of the product”, which is called the positive register (2003: 186). At the other end of the spectrum is the equally effective negative register, or the emphasis on “the dissatisfaction, embarrassment, or loss which follows from its absence” (2003: 186). The negative register, used for depicting the state of deficiency that follows from the absence of the product,

has a socially stigmatizing, anxiety format classic of the 1920’s and 1930’s which appealed to the glances of reproof from neighbours and significant others, and in general depicted the deficit that the absence and non-use of the product would cause to social relations, career prospects, and so on (Falk 2003: 186-7).

The use of positive and negative registers, either in terms of offering surplus good or eliminating deficit, mirrors PFZ’s “sensitization” and “capacitation” approach. PFZ mission statements, sustainable development plans, and workshops and activities in the village propose first to “sensitize” the population to its needs and inadequacies, and then to “capacitate” them by means of promoting the desirability of certain attitudes and competences.<sup>142</sup> Typical of these advertising strategies, the “classical ‘before-after’ persuasion scheme” is also made use of by PFZ not only in its activities in Guaribas, but also in project advertisement material, as shown in Pictures 21 through 23 in Appendix B (Falk 2003: 186).

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<sup>142</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 7.



It is interesting to note that where these strategies have been employed to target the economic infrastructure of Guaribas — to increase productivity, transfer new technology, establish cooperatives, impart an entrepreneurial attitude, and maximize work — they have met with very limited success, convinced as Guaribanos are of the logic of their own work practices. However, where these strategies have targeted the local sociocultural superstructure, as it were, to advance so-called higher aspiration models and desires — economic, aesthetic, psychological, intellectual, and so forth — through Citizenship Education, Self-Esteem, and Beauty and Hygiene workshops, they seem to have been more effective. The provocation to this Weberian inversion of the Marxist primacy of the economic infrastructure for social change comes from a comparison of the evidence presented in Chapters Two and Six. For as this chapter has shown, villagers' relationships with at least some ideals and practices associated with beauty and hygiene, lifestyle and consumption, and formal education and its related set of knowledges have been adopted as worthy and positive in their own right. In the context of Guaribanos' relatively late integration into mainstream Brazilian society, the examples considered in this chapter show that instead of assuming an attitude of reverse contempt for novel and extraneous knowledges, objects, and customs, Guaribanos wish, in many ways, to "fit in". This can be gathered from changes in Guaribanos' aspiration models, their increasing consumerism, and their developing competence in new techniques of beauty, deportment, and hygiene. Another important symptom of these changes is the rising incidence of intergenerational conflict. The main agents of these transformations, I have argued, are the expansion of public education, the increased contact with mass media objects, and PFZ's own direct interventions through various workshops, functions, and courses.

## Conclusions and policy recommendations

*“They try to solve the problem of poverty by keeping the poor alive. Or, according to a more advanced theory, by amusing the poor.”*

*Oscar Wilde in The Soul of Man under Socialism*

It is difficult to describe a society undergoing a process of social change. I have attempted, as much as possible, not to dichotomize the impact of PFZ in Guaribas by hypostasizing an extraneous system of knowledge and its “penetration” into an indigenous, traditional one. To that end, I have foregone the use of “systems of knowledge” altogether and gone straight to the description of the specific ideals, values, practices, customs, attitudes, and institutions that, in being (however partially) discrepant, underlie the failure of project policies. I have also tried to avoid victimizing Guaribanos. As described in Chapter Two, villagers are pragmatic and cynical in their relationship with several development initiatives in the village, and ready to take advantage of loopholes in badly conceived PFZ schemes. By the same token, I have equally not set out to vilify the development process and its agents. Development workers are committed to what they perceive as the improvement of Guaribas, and whether they live in São Raimundo Nonato or Teresina, in the village they are away from their families, subjected weekly to long and uncomfortable trips, and faced with what they consider poor living conditions and few opportunities for entertainment.

Even so, a suspicion of the development enterprise certainly colours my analysis. For PFZ initiatives in Guaribas have fallen remarkably short of their official objectives. To begin with, the influx of financial resources has decreased Guaribanos’ dependence on surplus extraction, so that villagers have fallen back to integral subsistence agriculture, in a kind of economic involution. With the sudden increase in their purchasing power, locals have bought commodities in regional metropolises and become entangled in long payment plans to the extent that the village began to experience a micro-recession in early 2007 (Chapter Two).

Consequently, Guaribas' structural dependency on outside markets has also risen (Chapter Four). PFZ policies in the village have similarly failed in modernizing agricultural technology, establishing operational cooperatives, stimulating alternative income generation activities, and motivating locals to participate in the planning of programmes (Chapters Two and Four). Workshops, assemblies, and meetings have also failed in increasing political mobilization and citizenship participation, and in reinforcing locally the praxes of representative democracy (Chapters Three and Five).

Despite these shortcomings, PFZ intervention has produced instrumental "side-effects" for the Brazilian government. It has enhanced state capacity through the registration of land and people into the national bureaucracy, since personal documents and deeds of property are requirements for cash transfer programmes and micro-credit schemes (Chapter Five). Together with the extension of public schooling and the expansion of local access to mass media, the project has also culturally drawn a remote and marginal area into the national polity (Chapter Five). Moreover, PFZ's specific implementation in Guaribas, its pilot community, has been highly politicized by the Brazilian government. PFZ's intervention in the village was widely publicized through government releases and the national media as a sort of humanitarian campaign to rescue poor peasants from their destitution, so that the Worker's Party government converted public policy into propaganda, reaping significant political dividends in the process (Chapter Four).

This is in line with a now extensive literature on development which suggests that the repeated 'failure' of development projects in relation to their stated goals does in fact systematically produce results: the "unintended" "side-effects" in which the real importance of projects lies. Among these characteristic "side-effects" are the expansion of state capacity and bureaucratic power, and the attempt to incorporate marginal areas and non-state fringes through nationalizing narratives (c.f. Pottier 1997, Woost 1993, Pigg 1992, Ferguson 1990). The regular "side effects" of development projects explain why though failing to realize the stated intentions of policy design, these projects are nevertheless continuously replicated (Ferguson 1990). I argue that PFZ's intervention in Guaribas not only instantiates this theory,

but uses novel strategies in its endeavour to increase state control and achieve social regulation.

These strategies fall under the responsibility of TALHER, whose task is to “transfer social technology”. TALHER’s function in Guaribas is organizing courses and workshops in “citizenship education”, “self-esteem”, “beauty”, and “hygiene”. Beyond familiarizing villagers with democratic institutions, modern technologies, and world-events, these workshops aim to impart contemporary “cosmopolitan” values, competencies, aspirations, psychological dispositions, and pedagogies of personhood to locals (Chapter Six). They seek to correct “the local insufficiency of qualified human resources” by first “sensitizing” Guaribanos to their needs and inadequacies, and then “capacitating” them by means of a comprehensive reform of their attitudes and competences.<sup>143</sup> It is through them that PFZ intends to “inform and socialize the population”, “restructure family institutions”, “restructure community association”, familiarize villagers with national “political institutions”, “elevate self-esteem”, and “articulate a new vision of the future”.<sup>144</sup> In this way, TALHER works in tandem with PFZ’s calculated expansion of public education and mass media infrastructure for shaping and regulating the subjective capacities of its beneficiaries (Chapter Six). It is not far-fetched to conclude, then, that PFZ goes far beyond the provision of financial aid and basic infrastructure to beneficiaries, and can be characterized as a civilizing enterprise tied to a national project of governance.

Whilst some authors tend to regard development as a hegemonic framework that constructs social order and imposes appropriate ways of thinking and acting (Woost 1993; Hobart 1993; Escobar 2001; Mosse 2004), others emphasize the agency and decision-making strategies of social actors (Pigg 1992, Rossi 2004, Nash 1997; Grillo 1997). The fundamental problem, in my view, is not to decide which position is correct, but to account for the fact that both are. In Guaribas, in spite of the comprehensive reforms envisioned by PFZ, the limited success of project policies owes much to the reluctance of locals to assimilate the different values, ideals, and techniques that inform them. For instance, Guaribanos are disinclined to maximize work output and production for profit reinvestment and the accrualment of

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<sup>143</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 7, 19.

<sup>144</sup> PFZ Sustainable Development Plan Version 2, p. 40-43, 45-6, 48-51.

wealth. Instead, despite PFZ orientations, they maintain the easy balance between labour and leisure that obtains in the village, and that provides sufficiently for their needs (Chapter Two). Likewise, local conceptions of kinship endure as the main criterion for economic collaboration and political association in the village, which constrains the success of PFZ initiatives predicated on perspectives of collective cooperation and mobilization (Chapters Two and Three). Thus, the unwillingness of villagers to associate economically or politically beyond family level restrains PFZ's objectives to promote locally a transactional entrepreneurial attitude, and the ideology and practices of democracy based on "the common good". Guaribanos also imaginatively exploit the many flaws in project design, especially in cash transfer and micro-credit schemes, complying perfunctorily with project procedures in order to secure the most resources for their families (Chapter Four). As Thompson proposes, compliance is acceptable to clients if it achieves the desired results, and in strategically acquiescing to norms and procedures, clients demonstrate their agency (2005: 191). Guaribanos, therefore, are not simply passive subjects in the development encounter, but social actors actively crafting and making use of new opportunities.

On the other hand, there are indications that Guaribanos have at least partially internalized some of the "modern" ideals and attitudes that reach them through project workshops, mass media objects, and public schooling (Chapter Six). Even if these vehicles are rarely formalized into a unified body of knowledge, and often contain elements from diverse discourses, they comprise a web of channels deploying values, aspirations, patterned behaviours, and visual imageries, as well as common assumptions about selfhood and social life. They generally advance the ideals of agency and self-assertion; diligence and work maximization; economic ambition, career enhancement, and lifestyle maximization; the acquisition of formal education, scientific knowledge, and technological capacities; and a subscription to contemporary hygienic, aesthetic, and etiquette standards. I have traced their penetration in Guaribas by investigating the rise of new aspiration models, career ideals, and ideas of lifestyle enhancement, particularly among teenage Guaribanos (Chapter Six). I have also examined the increasing importance for villagers of formal education and familiarity with mass media artefacts as cultural capital inherent in the formation of a "competent", "modern" individual. In addition, I have analysed the

rise of practices related to the ideals cited above, such as consumerism and conspicuous consumption, status emulation, and the assimilation of “urbane” etiquette models, hygiene habits, and fashion. As symptoms or reifications of these shifts in values, aspirations, and attitudes, I have described several instances of new intergenerational conflict in the village (Chapter Six).

There are, of course, significant exceptions to the internalization of PFZ directives by locals, the most important among them being, perhaps, Guaribanos’ disinclination to maximize work and production for the greater accrual of wealth, and to the detriment of the easy local balance between labour and leisure, as described in Chapter Two. However, if this balance is maintained, following Sahlins’ formulation, by villagers producing little and desiring little, that is, by their modest ideas of satisfaction, one is tempted to imagine what happens when local aspiration models are altered (1972: 2). The increasing desire for lifestyle and career enhancement, and the developing taste for consumer products, especially for electronic equipment for home entertainment, may generate a disequilibrium between what one wants to achieve and what one can realistically achieve. As suggested above, in the domain of consumption, this is already the case, as the village’s micro-recession conveys the extent to which the will to consume increasingly outstrips the opportunity to earn. Yet, the problem may be aggravated if, or when, PFZ’s massive injection of financial aid through conditional cash transfer programmes is reduced or cancelled. Guaribanos can potentially respond in three ways: by resisting aspirations and desires that put pressure on their productive capacities, by increasing the latter, or by synthesizing both approaches in varying degrees. These important conjectures, however, do not seem to enter the calculations of PFZ policy designers. The direction of project initiatives is clear from its intention to boost local consumption and encourage Guaribanos to aim ever higher in the pursuit of affluence, career and lifestyle improvement, and self-development through the acquisition of new and “more advanced” knowledges, attitudes, and desires. The outcome may be a short circuit, as it were, between imparted desires and the means to achieve them, generating a considerable level of frustration and anxiety whose political articulation is kept at bay by the myth of meritocracy, as Souza and several authors concerned with Brazilian society aver (Souza 2003, 169; Vink 1990; Ronsini 1995; Martín-Barbero & Muñoz 1992; Tufte 1995; Jacks 1999).

As described in Chapter Two, the effort to conjure up wealth by itself does not lead Guaribanos to change their work regime by employing the maximum amount of time and effort in order to boost production. Taking cue from Sahlins once again, the traditional Guaribano model of economic underproduction and modest ideas of satisfaction is a lifestyle in its own right, whose endurance in the village can be attested by the failures, so far, of PFZ and EMATER initiatives to reform it. Yet, if workshops, income generating courses, opportunities for micro credit, and direct cash transfers are not successful in persuading Guaribanos to continually reinvest profit in production, PFZ might very well accomplish some of its goals in an unintended, unanticipated way, namely, by reconfiguring locals' desires and aspiration models. Compelled to maintain or enhance purchasing power in order to satisfy newly acquired tastes — and especially to continue enjoying highly appreciated forms of entertainment derived from electronic products such as TV's, DVD's, and stereo systems, whose presence in local households cannot be exaggerated — Guaribanos might finally be driven to alter their traditional regime of work and lifestyle by sacrificing a degree of leisure in favour of increased surplus extraction. In this sense, borrowing from Ferguson's argument that social transformations are brought about by development projects' recurrent generation of unintended, adverse effects, one may speculate that a project such as PFZ may achieve its intended effects through an "adverse cause" — the reformation of taste and aspirations in the construction of a desiring subject. The pressures of acquisition, especially the economic sacrifice involved in consumerism, are in Guaribas subdued by the very nature of the commodities that have most come to inhabit their desires: entertainment products. In other words, couched in the apparently innocuous domain of entertainment and amusement, new habits and desires infixed into the everyday of Guaribanos may smoothly succeed where PFZ policies have failed, namely, in transforming the economic infrastructure and work regime of Guaribanos. Hence, notwithstanding PFZ's shortcomings in boosting local work and production output, and instilling a capitalist cash-cropping attitude in the village in the short-term, these objectives might yet be obliquely realized in the long-term. The gradual and piecemeal internalization of ideals such as career and lifestyle maximization, and the acquisition of new habits in consumption and entertainment, might indirectly transform local production by driving Guaribanos to increase their purchasing power. In this sense, I suggest that development projects may not only produce

“unintended” outcomes such as state enhancing “adverse effects”, but also achieve intended outcomes through “adverse causes” — through the unanticipated operation of initiatives that effect intended social transformations in areas for which they were not originally conceived.

I also view with a certain scepticism how, beyond the integration of the dispossessed and powerless into society, PFZ endeavours to expand state capacity and invites Guaribanos to participate in a system of investment capitalism over which they have ultimately no control. The state in Brazil is hardly a guarantor of equity, and it will be instructive to follow how it seeks to make good on the promises of citizenship welfare and the free market in Guaribas. In addition, PFZ proposes in Guaribas nothing short of a “reform” of personhood and social life under particular apparatuses of truth, power, and subjectification. Under PFZ, Guaribanos are primarily a target for economic and “social” technology, but hardly a population with the means for capitalizing on their use. Having acquired certain values and aspirations, and hence a demand for “developed” lifestyles which at least bear the outward semblance of modernity, it is questionable whether Guaribanos will come to possess the capacities to fulfil those aspirations. I particularly recall Fidélío, a villager in his late teens who had just graduated from secondary education, but who could read and write only to a very basic level, hopefully asking me if he would now “make it in São Paulo”. Neither his ambitions nor his limited qualifications to achieve them is surprising since in many fourth grade classes I attended in the village the teachers were still calling students to the blackboard to write their full names. This generation of Guaribanos will probably experience more directly the gap between imparted desires and the given means to achieve them. The probable outcome of this contradiction is that Guaribanos’ inability to indulge their preferences will tend to leave them with a sense of frustration and disappointment.

In order for PFZ to maximize the improvement of living conditions of local communities without ostensibly interfering with their social structures and lifeways, a fine-tuning of its future development initiatives needs to take place. Primarily, PFZ policy designers must be acquainted with the inherent difficulties in implementing the participatory approach. In the institutional development world, the participatory approach has “gained currency and trade value in the competitive market struggle for development project contracts”, where it has emerged as “an indispensable



ingredient” (Leal 2007: 539). Yet, several authors have questioned the empirical application of participatory development, challenging the idea that it can radically transform top-down bureaucratic planning systems (c.f. Grillo 1997; Leal 2007; Mosse 2000, 2004; Pigg 1992; Pottier 1997; Sillitoe 1998; Woost 1993, 1997).<sup>145</sup>

Craig and Porter, for instance, focus on the basic contradiction in the participatory approach between fostering local initiative and control and having to meet objectives established before the implementation of the project, since the latter “intends to reconstruct the local community in the image of the overall goal”, and thus works within a “framework which rigidly shapes and bounds the kind of participation that is possible” (1997: 230-31). In response to the critique that development projects are designed according to pre-selected ideals and goals, and are thus generally more managed than participatory, Craig and Porter suggest that their initial planning allow for “space-creating practices” in project design, that is, that they allow for a fair amount of adaptation, improvisation, and flexibility during implementation (1997: 236). This point has been championed by Gow and Vansant, who stress the need to move from a “blueprint style” of programme planning to a “process approach” (1983: 431). Such a shift involves trying various alternatives, discarding them when they prove unworkable, and trying others:

the process approach (...) assumes considerable uncertainty and is characterized by continual openness to redesign and adaptation to changing circumstances. On-the-spot study and an interactive style of problem solving are relied on rather than remote expertise (Gow and Vansant 1983: 432).

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<sup>145</sup> Mosse raises four main objections to participatory methodology. Firstly, he suggests, what comes to represent local knowledge is shaped by local relations of power, whereby heterogeneity and diverging interests are suppressed in favour of the perspectives of locally dominant groups, which define the legitimate version of “indigenous knowledge” in order to strategically manipulate the allocation of resources (2000: 5). Secondly, local knowledge may reflect the expression of outsider agendas, since the local idea of what benefits the development project can deliver influences the way people construct their needs, so that their participation adapts to programme planning, rather than planning being shaped by people’s participation (2000: 5-6). Thirdly, programme decisions are heavily determined by organizational pressures — such as the agencies’ institutional accountability to donors, targets of quantitative achievement, budgeting time-frames, procedures for approval, fund disbursement, and so on — which radically limit the potential creativity of the participatory approach (2000: 6-9). And fourthly, the manipulation of people’s planning by project agents who have organizational interests in mind, such as the achievement of established criteria for project goals and the maintenance of professional positions and relationships within the development network (Mosse 2004: 16).

Taking cue from these authors, who call for a redesign orientation in development projects, that is, periodic revisions of objectives and strategies in order for them to adapt to local realities, I suggest below a number of adjustments in PFZ's structure and initiatives based on my own observations of its operation in Guaribas.

#### 1) THE NEED FOR A PROCESS APPROACH IN PFZ STRUCTURE:

The fact that only two field visits to its pilot-community were undertaken by the staff of the PFZ headquarters in Teresina throughout my fieldwork, from January 2006 to April of 2008, already signals the need for better monitoring of the project's implementation. An yearly assessment of results, with the intent to adjust objectives and initiatives to the local context, would prove particularly productive if made by either a programme branch independent of the planning division, or an autonomous agency whose evaluation would not suffer pressure to confirm the success of initial strategies. Ideally, though separate from PFZ's planning division, this yearly monitoring should be performed by staff that is not detached from the achievement of project goals. A mentality of constant supervision and redesign based on on-the-ground observation would greatly contribute to the correction of unproductive initiatives in the village — such as the construction of COHAB houses that are “ecologically incorrect” and too small for the local average family, being rented instead by Guaribanos to outsiders, or of trying to raise villagers' self-esteem and pride for their origins by delivering the statue of a Fazenda patriarch in Guaribas Two, a *faux-pas* made worse by the fact that the Félix Guaribas depiction mistakes his Black descent for Indian ethnicity. The institution of working cooperatives and the transfer of agricultural technology, I argue below, would also greatly benefit from readjustments based on continued supervision geared towards redesign. For readjustment to be effective, however, a two-way flow of information at every level needs to leave the pages of PFZ mission statements and be established in practice. Basic knowledge of the community's history and fragmentary structure on the one hand, and of local housing conditions on the other could have avoided, for instance, the construction of dwellings that Guaribanos decline to live in, and the inauguration of a “monument” that aggravated the resentment between Fazendeiros and Guaribas Two residents. Yearly evaluation grounded on local reception of PFZ

activities would also ensure villagers' greater participation in project decisions, the format for which I outline in more detail below.

## 2) COLLECTION OF DATA ABOUT SPECIFIC LOCALITIES OR MICRO-REGIONS FOR TAILORED PLANNING

Collecting specific data about beneficiaries' communities instead of applying central initiatives across the board could have prevented wasteful investment on activities whose success in Guaribas were, and still are unrealistic. For instance, the failure of alternative income generating courses that are economically unviable because their basic ingredients are costly in the village, or that focus on "traditional crafts" such as pottery and bijouterie-making — which, however, have never been indigenous to the region — could have been either avoided or substituted by advanced training in activities that are already familiar to villagers, such as apiculture and manioc-flower production. By way of example, villagers could be taught to work with indigenous bees (non-European or African bees, of the *Melipona* and *Trigona* species), like the Mandaçaia (*Melipona quadrifasciata*), Cupira (*Trigona cupira*), or Munduri (*Melipona marginata*) bees, which make exquisite varieties of honey, but produce less than common bees and demand different keeping techniques. The honey from these wild, indigenous bees is largely unknown to the rest of the country, and could become a distinctive merchandise of the village, a unique product which could partially liberate Guaribanos from having to compete with its neighbouring communities with the same products (beans and corn) in an already saturated regional market.

Therefore, the inclusion of anthropologists or sociologists in the task forces that delivered the first preliminary studies about the region, and as permanent members of staff in PFZ headquarters could have contributed to a fine-tuning of alternative income generating courses to local potentialities. A more detailed anthropological study of Guaribas' social structure, and especially of the local role of kinship in economic collaboration, could also have improved the chances of establishing functional cooperatives in the village. As suggested in Chapters One and Two — and advanced by Eduardo and Edna of Programa Produzir, and by Alfredo, EMATER's official in the village — had PFZ worked with *family cooperatives*,

formed through the voluntary association of its related members, instead of arbitrarily imposing that an equal amount of members be selected from the different sides of the village, the effort to institute cooperatives in Guaribas would have been more successful. For cooperatives to operate, in the short to medium-term, it is imperative that PFZ initiatives work with local patterns of association and economic collaboration, instead of attempting to impose an extraneous rationale for economic cooperation *through* productive activities.

On the other hand, the significance of kinship for economic cooperation in the village might not apply to other rural communities, just as centralized PFZ assumptions about beneficiaries' social contexts are not fruitfully extended to Guaribas. Therefore, preliminary consideration of diverse project environments is essential: "any intervention must be tailored to the specific environment in which it is to be implemented" (Gow and Vansant 1983: 432).

### 3) FORMAT FOR LOCAL PARTICIPATION

In practice, PFZ's version of the participatory approach consists in "occasional meetings in which project staff discuss their plans with local farmers in the usual benefactor-to-beneficiary manner" (Gow and Vansant 1983: 427). As described in Chapters Two and Four, the manner in which these services are administered reflects programme expectations that locals "respond in sheeplike way to staff overtures, advice, or commands" (Gow and Vansant 1983: 430). PFZ staff usually behave as technical superiors, and assume patronizing, bureaucratic tones that are not particularly inviting for the participation of locals. Some authors propose that beside these usual encounters between development workers and locals to define priorities collectively, "gripe sessions" be instituted, in which locals "have the opportunity to express their opinions and criticisms on the project and its staff" (Gow and Vansant 1983: 436). This format, however, would not work in Guaribas. As alluded to in Chapter One, most Guaribanos are not comfortable to express their needs, interests, and goals in front of members of unrelated families, and when they are demanded to do so in PFZ sponsored gatherings, they usually refrain from articulating their concerns and intentions, and normally remain silent. The level of general antagonism and competition that obtains between unrelated families in the village calls for

another approach if locals are to be heard. This is the consultation of a domestic group by project staff through private house visits. Surrounded by members of one's elementary family, in one's own house, a Guaribano feels more comfortable and confident, so that interviewing or listening to locals in such an environment is the only realistic way to obtain more frank and open opinions. Though this format can hardly be seen as encouraging a democratic forum for collective decisions, my experience in Guaribas recommends that, at least in the short-term, these consultations are the only realistic way to elicit families' views of their own priorities, as well as their evaluations of project initiatives. Importantly, these are not to substitute collective meetings, but to be held in parallel with them.

#### 4) RESOURCE COMMITMENT FROM GUARIBANOS

A resource commitment from Guaribanos for certain project activities, such as alternative income generation courses, and as counterpart of federal investments in materials for the establishment of local cooperatives would be productive in two ways. Firstly, it would help to measure the level of interest locals have for the activity being implemented, or to assess how important its objectives are for the community. The reluctance to contribute financially or with labour force to a specific endeavour would already indicate that the project activity in question is not particularly attractive or relevant for beneficiaries. Secondly, resource commitment from locals would depart from the "giveaway" mentality of most federal disbursements that comprise PFZ, making beneficiaries more concerned for the outcome of the development initiative in which they have invested money, time, or effort.

#### 5) PROVIDE BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE, AND NOT OSTENSIBLY SEEK TO INTERFERE WITH THE TRADITIONAL VALUES OF BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES

Throughout this thesis, objections were made to PFZ's attempts to impart certain economic, moral, and aesthetic ideals to Guaribanos that impact directly on their ways of life — from traditional notions of sociality and personhood to career aspirations and ideas about "a good a life". At the same time, PFZ has failed to

radically improve the village's infrastructure, as it vouched to do as early as 2002. As mentioned in Chapter Four, to this day, Guaribas still counts on the precarious health outpost as its only medical installation, there have been no investments towards a sewage system, and the main road that connects the municipality to São Raimundo Nonato has not been paved, thus precluding public transportation, and making private transportation difficult, irregular, and costly. I suggest that the project's focus should be shifted from providing "beauty" and "self-esteem" workshops to villagers, and from building a 1.5 kilometre airfield and a museum to PFZ's intervention in Guaribas, to providing basic sanitation, health, and transportation improvements. By placing emphasis on the delivery of these material betterments, PFZ would immediately and radically transform the quality of life of Guaribanos. Though not culturally neutral, in the sense that each of these improvements would, in their own manner, influence local conceptions of healing and hygiene, for instance, and enhance mobility and contact with outside communities, these interventions are less culturally invasive than TALHER workshops, and address pressing concerns in the material living conditions of Guaribanos.

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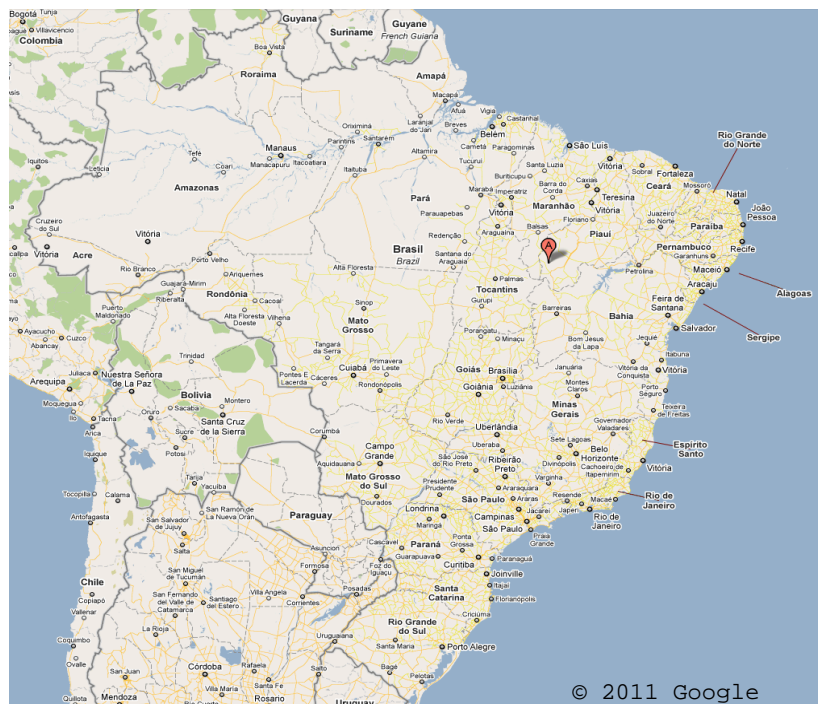
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## Appendix A: Maps

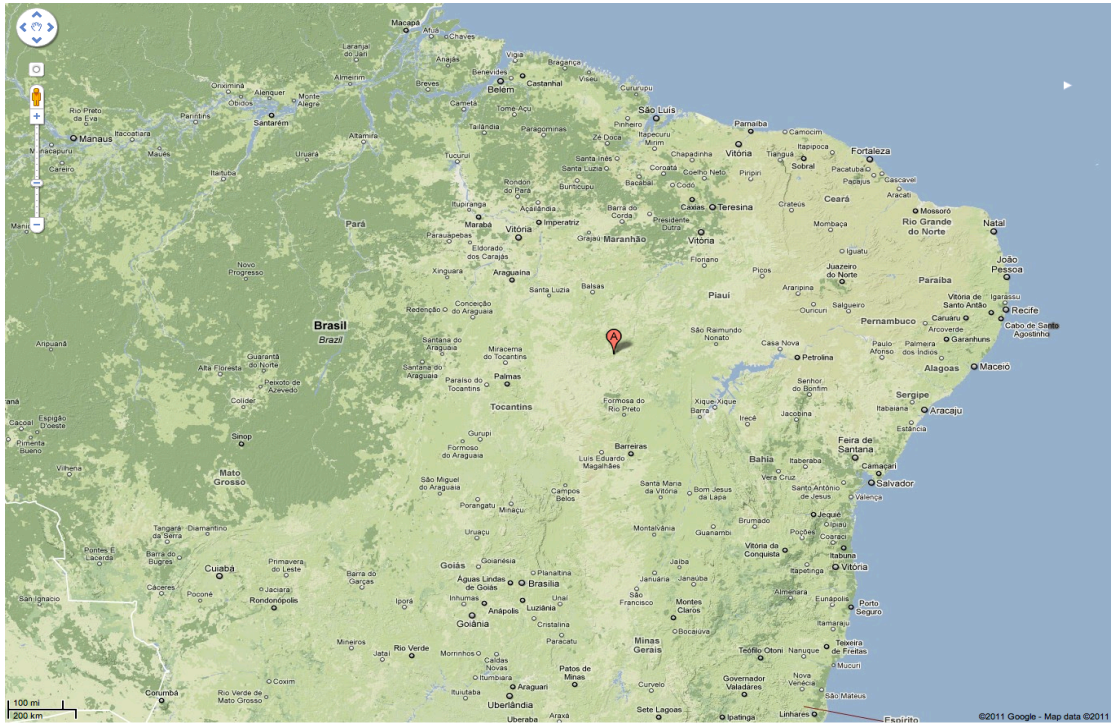


Terrain map of Brazil. Guaribas indicated by red mark “A”

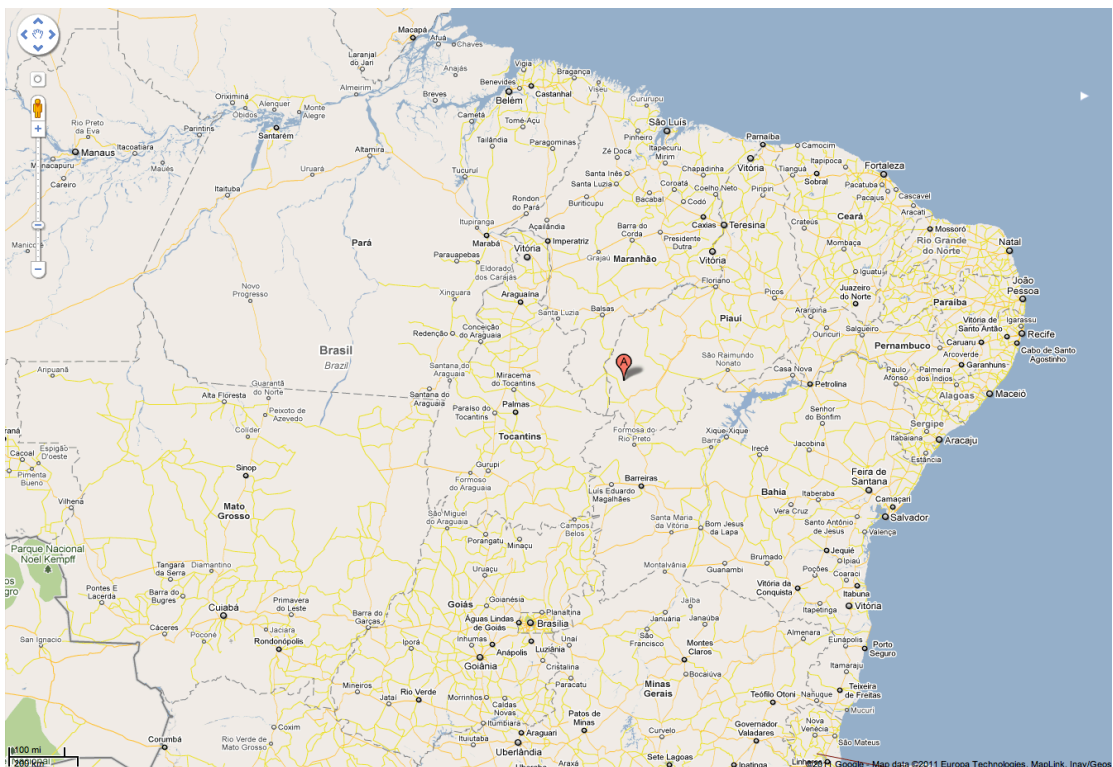


Road map of Brazil



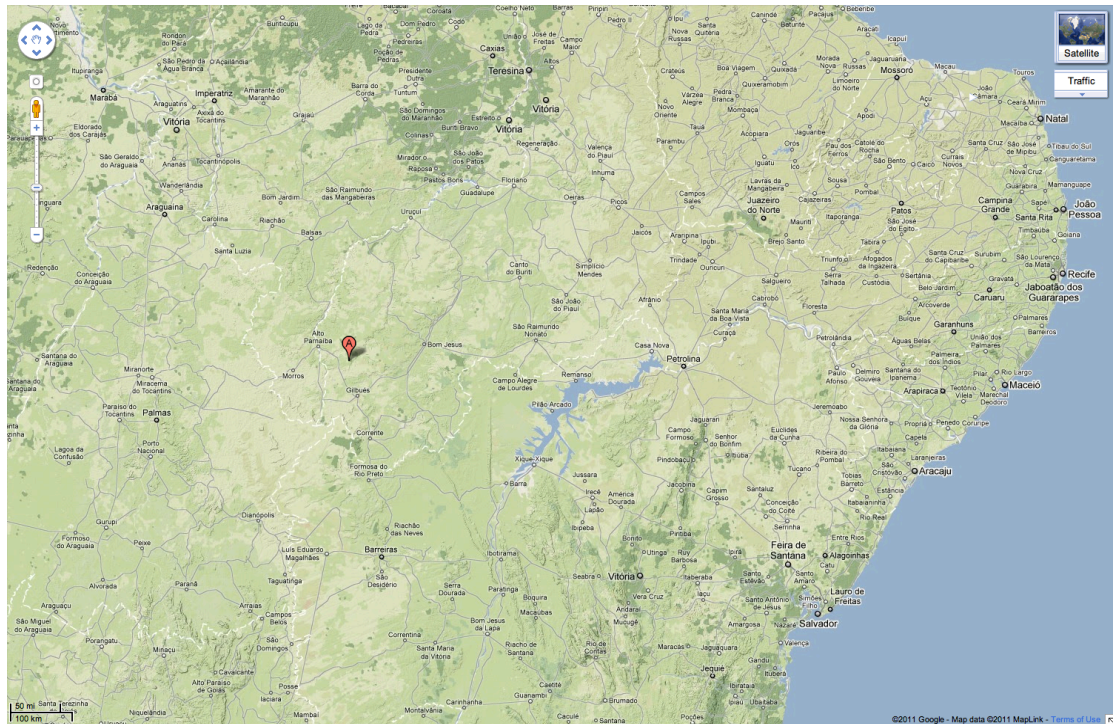


Terrain map at 100 mile scale

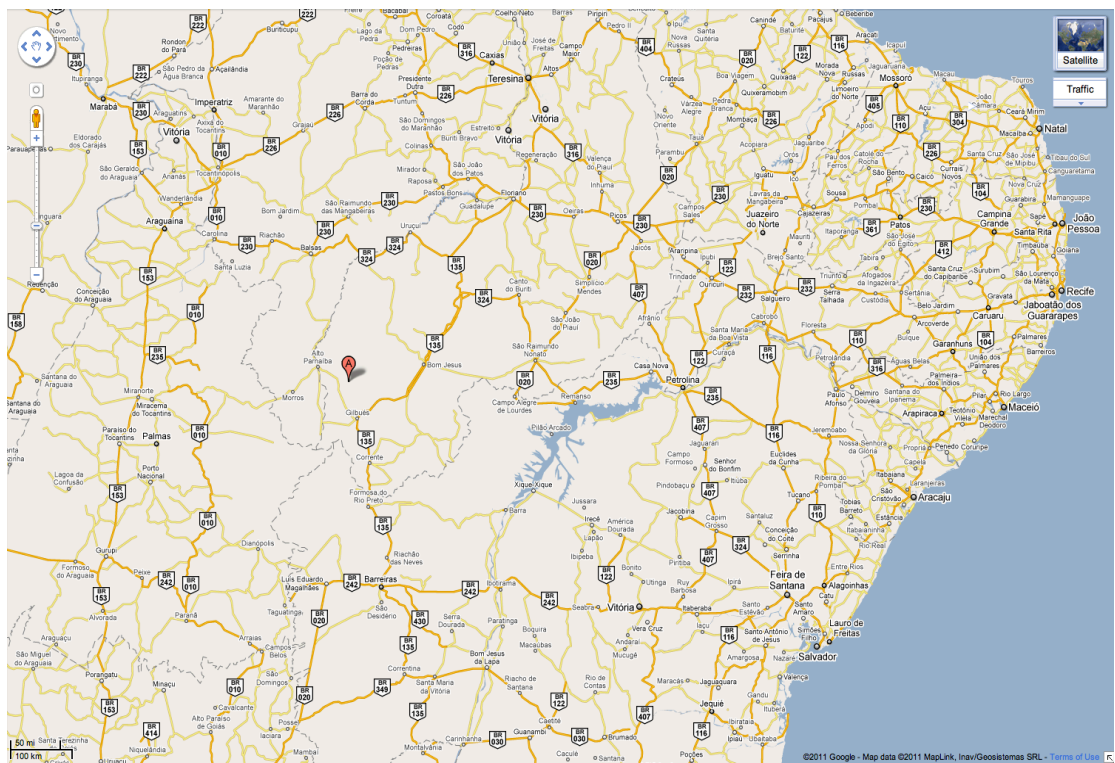


Road map at 100 mile scale

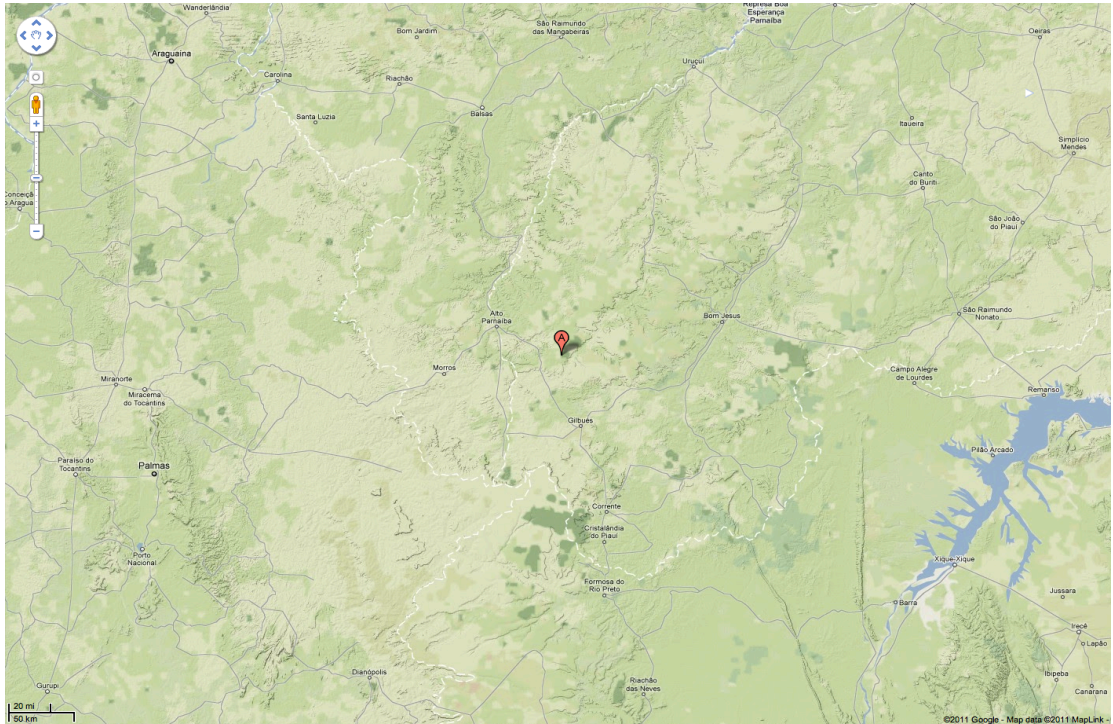




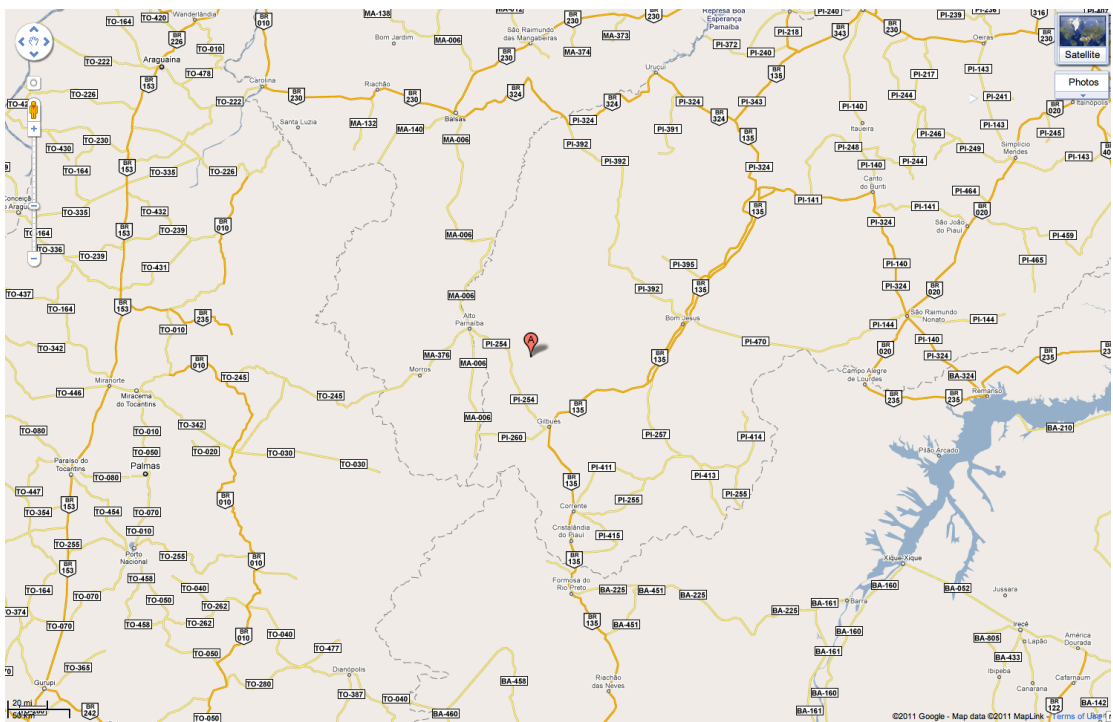
Terrain map at 50 mile scale



Road map at 50 mile scale

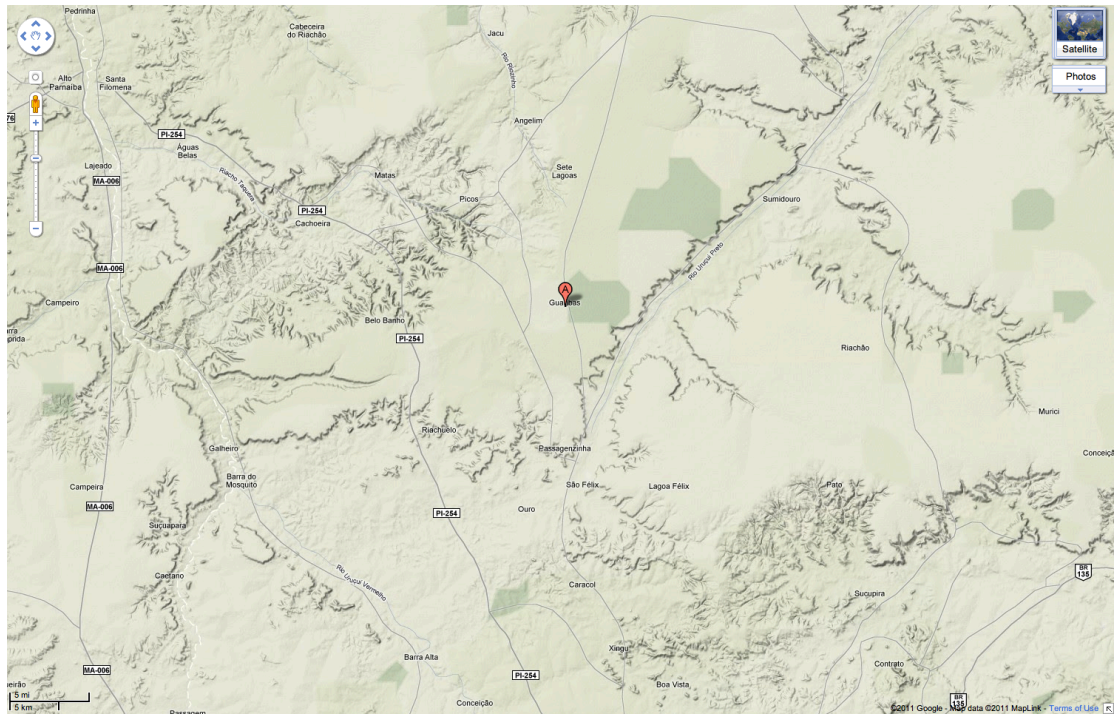


Terrain map at 20 mile scale



Road Map at 20 mile scale





Terrain map at 5 mile scale

## Appendix B: Pictures



Picture 1: The village of Guaribas in the distance, surrounded by the Mountains of Confusion



Picture 2: Guaribas in the summer



Picture 3: Guaribas in the winter



Picture 4 : The Mountains of Confusion





Picture 5: Truck on the way to Guaribas



Picture 6: The SESC complex under construction



Picture 7: The two sides of the village. Taken from Guaribas Two, with the Fazenda side in the distance



Picture 8: Traditional adobe house





Picture 9: Teenagers by a rockpool



Picture 10: Nílío going to the fields in *sertão* garb



Picture 11: Local fashion for older Guaribanas



Picture 12: Fashion for teenage Guaribana



Picture 13: Fazenda's urban layout





Picture 14: The Guaribas Two square during the Sunday fair



Picture 15: PFZ's statue of Félix Guaribas at the SESC complex. Félix is here depicted as an Indian in spite of the fact that he descends from freed Black slaves



Picture 16: Distribution of refreshments during a PFZ sponsored activity



Picture 17: Stick-ons of bullet holes in motorcycles, very popular among male teenage Guaribanos



Picture 18: One of the three stands in the Sunday market

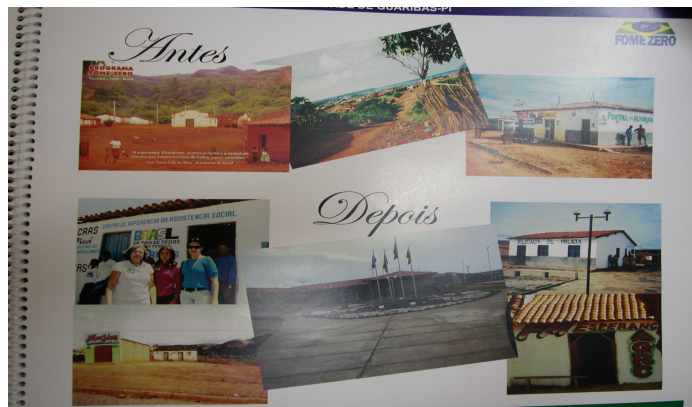


Picture 19: Workers hoeing in line





Picture 20: A Guaribano backyard



Picture 21: A “before/after” montage in PFZ’s official advertisement material. All pictures are from Guaribas except for the square in the centre



Picture 22: PFZ delivers cisterns. All pictures in PFZ release are from Guaribas except for bottom-right



Picture 23: Another “before/ after” montage, but only the top-left picture is from Guaribas



Picture 24: A PFZ assembly with an audience comprised mainly of local development workers and mayoralty employees



Picture 25: Citizenship Education Workshop at the SESC centre. Guaribanos regularly send their children to attend courses and workshops in their place





Picture 26: Chefinho (“Old Chief”) and I in his house at Lagoinha. Suggestively, whenever I took a picture of us at work, he would pick up my pen and notebook, symbols of formal study, to pose for the picture



Picture 27: “Doctor” Iranildo



Picture 28: Young teenagers going to school



Pictures 29 – 34: Children/ professions



Doctor



Teacher



Singer



Hairdresser



Farmer



Housewife



Picture 35: Satellite antenna in a Guaribano backyard



Picture 36: TV and electrical installations in a Guaribano household



Picture 37: External oven in Dioripe's backyard



Picture 38: PFZ hairdresser restyles the typically long hairs of Guaribano women





Picture 39: Another Active Citizenship improvised beauty saloon



Picture 39: From PFZ's official advertisement material. PFZ sponsors a beauty contest in Guaribas where teenagers model on an improvised catwalk.