Inequalities and Resistances in The Organization of Marginalized Festive Practices

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Abstract

This article is based on the understanding of festivals as organizations and events that are multiform and establish mediations with society (Amaral, 1998a; Davel, 2016). Based on a multi-political perspective, our objective was to reflect on the social production of inequalities and forms of resistance in the organization of the *congo capixaba* festival, in the state of Espírito Santo. Our theoretical reflections were grounded in Certeau's (Certeau, 1985, 2008, 2012; Certeau, Giard, & Mayol, 2003), Hall's (2003, 2011) and Sansone's (2004) discussions and reflections regarding contemporary black culture. Our empirical field of investigation was the *Carnaval de Congo de Máscaras* [Congo Masquerade Carnival], in Roda D'água, where we employed the ethnographic method as a data production and interpretation strategy. Our findings indicate the existence of "non-places" as products of historically produced conditions of social marginality, as well as an ethnic-racial invisibility reinforced in the festival's organizational context. These non-places operate in the religious, touristic, and cultural macropolitical fields. On the other hand, we highlight how the subjects of such conditions deal with them by employing certain micropolitical tactics, which figure prominently in their everyday lives, and articulate themselves around a sense of tradition and belonging.

Keywords: congo capixaba, non-places; Afro-Brazilian festivals; micropolitics; inequality.

Introduction

The Congo festivals, also known as *Congadas, Congados, Cacumbis, Ticumbis, Bailes de Congo*, among other nomenclatures, are festivities regarded as typically representative of Afro-Brazilian culture. They celebrate and reinterpret, in Brazil, the coronation of black kings from ancient West African kingdoms (Barros, 1983; Santos, 2013). Within the context of the *capixaba* state (the nickname for the state of Espírito Santo), *congadas* appear in different festivals, including the one described in this article – known as the *Carnaval de Congo de Máscaras* [Congo-Drum Masquerade Carnival] of Roda D'água. It takes place annually in the rural area of the municipality of Cariacica (ES), on the periphery of the metropolitan region of Vitória (the state's capital).

The festival, which is of a sacred and profane nature (Amaral, 2008), pays homage to *Nossa Senhora da Penha* (Our Lady of Penha[1]), the state's patron saint, and integrates the Catholic calendar, occurring in the local context for more than a century, according to the region's residents. The Congo-Drum Masquerade Carnival is also part of a series of *collective* cultural manifestations – as understood from the perspective of Afro-Brazilian cultural production, given the ethnic origins claimed by the festival's actors. Thus, operating in the spheres of both material and immaterial production, the Carnival can be seen as a current manifestation of the politics and economics of Afro-Brazilian culture.

The establishment of the *congo* festivity in this political, economic, cultural, and identity context, however, does not occur in a monolithic or homogenous way. On the contrary: the festivities set the stage for various tensions and conflicts. Historically meant for marginalized spaces, they are expressions, for example, of the complex configurations assumed by racial relations in Brazil, permeated by a concealed and obfuscated form of racism that is inseparable from social classes. They also reveal tensions stemming from the convergence of African religious practices and cultural expressions with religiosities of Christian origin; tensions between tradition and modernity; between the public space and the private space; between forces of resistance and movements of assimilation. To understand the ethnic, religious, social, and political elements that are interwoven in this complex web of produced and reproduced meanings, it is useful to highlight Certeau's (2008, 2012) formulation of culture as an articulation of conflicts that bear essential differences in respect to each other. The author thus proposes the adoption of a polemological analysis, that is, an analysis that sheds light on the politicization of everyday practices by observing ordinary actions in the field of forces upon which society is built. Thus, considering that a festival necessarily reflects the social, economic, and political realities of the context in which it is organized (Marques & Brandão, 2015), the Congo-Drum Masquerade Carnival is presented as a field for unveiling and debating the production and reproduction of economic, social, and ethnic-racial inequalities.

This article lies within the field of Practice-Based Research in Administration, interacting with Practice Theory in the context of Organizational Studies, a theoretical framework based on everyday life, i.e., on what people *actually do* in an organization (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Considering the significant heterogeneity of perspectives within Practice Theory, we adopt Michel de Certeau as our main theorist. This implies understanding organization from a procedural and spatial perspective, taking as a reference the concept of everyday life and space as products of people's doings, and these "doings" as fissures in the spaces established by the dominant order – fissures that engender new possibilities (Certeau, 2008). The festival, in this context, is understood as both organization and organizer, a multiform event that establishes a mediation with society at large

(Amaral, 1998a; Davel, 2016), justifying our choice of the Congo-Drum Masquerade Carnival of Roda D'água, in Espírito Santo, as the locus of our research.

Considering what has been presented so far, we highlight that the objective of this article is to reflect on the social production of inequalities and resistances in the organization of the *congo capixaba*, based on a micropolitical perspective permeated by everyday practices. We thus highlight the non-places of the *congo* as products of marginality and ethnic-racial invisibility, conditions that are reinforced in the festival's organizational context.

As a theoretical contribution, we point out how the festival's organizational process is able to mobilize tactics that are produced on an everyday basis, rooted in ancestry, and engrained in fissures that subsist in places of power, leading to negotiations with other spaces in the cultural, religious, and institutional setting. In a similar sense, we attempt to unveil the forms of protest employed by people subjected to such conditions of invisibility, practices that are micropolitically operated throughout everyday life. Thus, we are interested in exposing mechanisms for oppressing and silencing black people that remain in effect to this day, affecting, above all, the inhabitants of geographically and politically peripheral territories, while emphasizing that Afro-Brazilian cultural production is neither passive nor apolitical.

Theoretical reflections

The concept of practice adopted in this study lies within the field of Practice-Based Research, which in turn emerged from Cultural Theory. Practices, in this context, are not mere routine actions or reproductions of a given action (Reckwitz, 2002). The field of Practice-Based Research is diverse and heterogeneous, but Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) defined it in regards to three analytical possibilities: the empirical, the theoretical, and the philosophical. According to these authors, the empirical approach sheds light on the everyday actions of people in the organizational context; the theoretical discusses the operationalization and production of practices as situated in time and space; the philosophical is based on the understanding of practice as a producer of social reality (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

By employing the philosophical approach to our investigated practices, we elaborate our theoretical framework based on the propositions of the historian, philosopher and anthropologist Michel de Certeau (2008, 2012), an author whose discussions have been mobilized by Organizational Studies both in Brazil and abroad (Faria & Leite-da-Silva, 2017; Machado, Fernandes, & Silva, 2018). According to this perspective, practices correspond to ways of doing that use creativity and know-how to penetrate and establish themselves in fields permeated by unequal forces. In other words, for the author, these practices are developed throughout common subjects' everyday life as operatory ways to implicitly (but not explicitly) circumvent the adversities imposed by dominant systems. Moreover, in the face of dominant strategies, subjects always employ circumventing tactics (Certeau, 2008).

What Certeau (2008) means by "strategies" are calculations associated with maintaining the balance of power, carried out when subjects of will and power become isolated from their respective environments. Put into practice by a subject who sees from above, strategies are also defined by their tendency to comprehensively measure and control everything, letting nothing escape from view. They are conceived in the seat of power and used by to establish directives that

maintain one's status (Certeau, 2012). Strategy dominates time and capitalizes on the advantages obtained from these calculations, becoming independent from circumstantial, time-related variations (Certeau, 2008).

Tactics, on the other hand, are time-dependent. They occur outside the position of power, in the absence of a self (Certeau, 2008). For the author, they are the art of the weak: calculated in a place that belongs to another, blow by blow they take advantage of the exterior forces that affect them. Based on the premise that tactics are everyday practices – since everyday life pressures us and oppresses us (Certeau et al., 2003) – subjects operate within that manipulative game, prompting the transformation of their places into spaces of practice. Thus, strategies determine places and tactics, in turn, establish spaces; furthermore, in their nature of daily confrontation, these spaces constitute places of creation (Neubauer, 1999).

It is necessary to point out, however, that in the dynamics of everyday life, subjects are embroiled in various relationship networks and, within this social game, they alternately devise strategies and tactics; in the same sense, sometimes they produce spatial determinations, sometimes they subvert them. Thus, for authors such as Roberts (2006), in the search for the philosophical and political meaning of daily practices, the view defended by Certeau would be devoid of an ideological and revolutionary character, since it refers to actions that do not necessarily cause a rupture in the *status quo*.

Faria and Leite-da-Silva (2017), however, argue that one of the advantages of Certeau's approach to research would reside precisely in this supposed inclination for submission to the status quo. This criticism, according to the authors, would have exerted great influence over studies with similar approaches, expanding the possibilities in the field of Organizational Studies (Faria & Leite-da-Silva, 2017). It is perhaps for that reason that a significant part of the theoretical-empirical research developed through such an approach has been conducted in organizations outside the format considered traditional by the so-called mainstream, that is, medium- and large-sized companies (Machado et al., 2018).

On the other hand, elaborating on Certeau's perspective, authors such as Oliveira and Cavedon (2013), when analyzing management practices in a circus organization, highlight the refutation of the dominant order through micropractices: everyday political gestures that ascribe resistance to the normalizing procedures faced by subjects in their daily practices.

By analyzing the day-to-day experience of cooperatives, Quaresma Junior, Peixoto, and Carrieri (2013), on the other hand, argue that the tactics employed inside these collective enterprises were responsible for seizing power from the company's former management, even though they implied no such intention. On the basis of that analysis, the authors perceive a shift of power in the organizational context, resulting from the employees' tactical actions. In other words, microactions established within the social sphere led to anonymous practices that confronted everyday oppression and destabilized a place of power Certeau (2008).

By situating practices as manifestations of strength and power, Certeau (2008) also confers centrality to the spatial dimension. The author establishes a distinction between place and space that is marked by certain modi operandi. For example, when considering the spaces of a city, the place would correspond to the boundaries of a city's urban plans and architectural projects, as well as to strategic boundaries that in and of themselves hardly express the multiple ways people

practice and constitute their ways of using and signifying the place that was imposed on them. Spaces, in this sense, correspond to a place's network of practices.

The idea of a "non-place" is not meant to signify merely the opposite of a place. Based on the view of popular productivity defended by Certeau (2008, 2012), the notion of a non-place could be interpreted as simply the lack of a place, since such a territory would not produce spaces. In the author's view, however, a non-place would be configured by the absence of the self, which acts as a trigger for the disorder that creates space per se. For a more robust reflection on the difference between places and non-places, Augé's (2012) propositions are worthwhile. For the author, non-places stand at the opposite pole from personalized space, from space where investment is present; they are spaces accentuated by the space-time conditions of super-modernity.

As opposed to places defined by their anthropological character, which are "identity-based, relational, and historical" (Augé, 2012, p. 73), non-places are defined by their ephemeral existence, by their mobility and non-fixed character. They are airports, train stations and subway stations in big cities – transitory and provisional occupations. Thus, considering the asymmetrical strength and power relations that build places, non-places are delineated by mechanisms for suppressing the "weak," ascribing them isolating experiences by virtue of the dynamics of social places and spaces. In that regard, that they can be understood as having a triple nature: physical, symbolic, and political.

With regards to spaces produced by particular social groups, Hall's (2003, 2011) contributions are important to bring Certeau's (2008, 2012; Certeau et al., 2003) theorizations to the ethnic and social context of this study. Hall discusses the productions of black popular culture within the spheres of mass culture and cultural industries, where mass (popular) culture converses with mainstream (dominant culture) not on the basis of opposing, irreducible positions, but rather through approximations and dialectical ruptures. This offers a glimpse on the political uses of black cultural configurations, as well as on the pressures and displacements that take place within hegemonic power configurations.

Another important contribution lies in the notion of identity not as an essence, but rather as a place that is assumed by others in a sewing of position and context (Hall, 2003), and also as a situational production (Hall, 2003). These notions add to the field of changing constructions that are built in our everyday lives, installing "ways of being," of identifying, based on sensibility structures and relational practices.

Within the field of reflections on ethnic and racial dimensions, Sansone (2004) provides important supports for a non-homogenous understanding of the relationship between these concepts, weighing up their dimensions and implications in local and global terms. In his production, the author highlights the complexity of the themes of ethnicity and race, stressing the need to carefully evaluate the contexts in which they are expressed, so as to grasp the intercrossing of these relative constructions with other dimensions and conditions of social experience.

Therefore, in order to discuss the dynamics of the relationship between strategies and tactics (Certeau, 2008) within the context of contemporary black popular culture, we start from the understanding that spaces of production are contradictory and complex. In this sense, the fight for cultural hegemony and the construction of places does not occur on the basis of positions of victory or domination, but rather on the basis of articulations that destabilize power configurations,

without necessarily removing them (Hall, 2003). In this sense, cultural practices are also spatial practices.

Methodology

This article is part of a dissertation that adopted a qualitative methodological approach involving the interpretation of social realities (Bauer & Gaskell, 2002). Consistent with this understanding, we chose an ethnographic methodological design, which, according to Cavedon (2014, p. 65, our translation), means "subjecting to a day-to-day experience of the culture one aims to study." This corroborates Certeau's (2008) critical positioning in relation to the panoptic view.

Ethnography was thus adopted to provide a necessary displacement from the axis of microanalyses to the complex networks of everyday relationships. It was also an important ally when reflecting on the subjects' everyday practices, based on our interactions with them, while avoiding any attempted suppression of the emotions and subjectivities experienced by the field researcher – thus contributing to an interstitial construction of the study. In any case, we consider that ethnography was crucial for apprehending these relationships in their belonging to the social structures involved in the organization of the festivity, allowing us to concentrate on their micro-dynamics and, above all, on the actors' views and perceptions regarding their own practices.

Therefore, in the attempt to subject our analyses to these everyday dynamics, we adopted the participant observation technique as the main form of data collection. One of the authors of this article remained in the field from January to September, 2017. Her insertion was made possible by a friend and fellow congo researcher who introduced the lead field researcher to the then president of the Association of Cariacica Congo Bands (ABCC), a *congueiro* master of the region as well as the son of another master. Contacts were also established with members of the Municipal Culture Department (SEMCULT), identified during the research as the main unifying entity of the pre-Carnival actions and as a mediator between *congueiros*, other players and organizations.

Over the course of the study, the researcher initially accompanied meetings regarding the organization of the festival, both among the *congueiros* themselves and between the *congueiros* and SEMCULT. However, with few meetings occurring and a halt in activities as well as the disarticulation of the involved parties, we chose to extend our observations beyond the explicit organization of the Carnival, also encompassing its surrounding congo dynamics. Thus, besides the Carnival, another two festive moments entered the scope of our study, and our proximity with one of the bands favored access to rehearsals as well as other formal and informal meetings.

This participatory perspective was primarily developed through the author's contribution in the field together with the band, upon her request, carrying out the recording and monitoring of different projects. It should be highlighted that the participation of congo bands in the municipal and state cultural public notices has been a practice for several years, and the author even received details on previously elaborated projects. Thus, far from representing the introduction of a new practice, her permanence in the field was combined with her inclusion in the band's relationship networks, leading to a tightening of affective ties and to the establishment of reciprocity relationships between researcher and subjects.

As data gathering instruments, besides participant observation – which resulted in 23 field diaries – we employed audiovisual and photographic recordings. The data produced during the period of immersion in the field were combined and then interpreted by both authors in light of the study's theoretical framework of reference, so as to identify regularities and themes. In the interpretation process we sought to build an emic overview, which corresponds to a way of understanding the studied groups with a focus on how people signify their actions (Angrosino, 2009), i.e., placing emphasis on the perceptive aspects of the subjects' manifestations; this choice was, in a way, connected with the theoretical views we adopted.

Presentation of the field: the Congo Masquerade Carnival of Roda D'água

As already presented in this article, the Congo Masquerade Carnival is regarded as the most traditional festival of the municipality of Cariacica, representing a tribute to *Nossa Senhora da Penha* (Our Lady of Penha), the patron saint of Espírito Santo. The festival is an expression of the *congadas capixabas* [Congo festivities held by the native and indigenous people of Espírito Santo], a characteristic of which is the centrality of the so-called "congo bands." Varying in number of participants and types of instruments depending on the locality, these bands are generally composed of men, with the presence of a master and, in some cases, a queen. The queen carries a banner referring to the saint the band is commemorating at that specific moment (Barros, 1983).

It starts with a procession, followed by an outdoor mass to the sound of drums and *casacas*[2] both. Subsequently, at another location, the festivities' whimsical and profane dimension is accentuated when the congo bands intermingle randomly with the other participants, creating congo circles where musicality, dance, and spontaneity reign, along with the consumption of alcoholic drinks.

Focusing on the congo in Roda D'água, a rural region of Cariacica (ES), the masks, which lend the carnival its name, relate to João Bananeira, a folkloric figure from the municipality (Figure 1). The folklore of João Bananeira emerges from the relationship between popular culture and the rural context during the slavery regime that still endured in Brazil when João was alive. The figure's body is covered in banana leaves and its face is hidden by a colorful paper mask shaped from clay. According to reports captured during fieldwork, the origin of João Bananeira traces back to the time of slavery. Per one of the studied subjects, black slaves, many of whom were runaways, dressed up in masked costumes to enjoy the celebration without being recognized (field diaries, June 17th of 2017). There are also versions that say that the landowners themselves were the ones in disguise, as they wanted to participate in the Congo Carnival together with their subjects, but feared being recognized (Santos, 2013).

Figure 1. João Bananeira

Source: photographed by the authors.

The Congo Masquerade Carnival was thus established in the so-called "times of the ancestors," within the context of slavery, its prohibitions and negotiations in regards to worship, and the celebration of the so-called "black saints," mediated by Brotherhoods. Over the years, institutionalization processes have affected congo practices, particularly with the creation of the Council of Bands in the 1990s and, subsequently, the ABCC in in 2003. Both redefined the relationships of the bands with each other and with public authorities, primarily represented by the SEMCULT. For the involved actors, these new arrangements, which enabled the implementation of agreements with the municipality and, consequently, the allocation of resources for the Carnival's organization, gave new dimensions, configurations, and meanings to the festival and to congo itself. Over time, this serves to both preserve and transform current configurations, especially in respect to social negotiations.

The non-places of the congo and everyday micropolitics

The observation of the organizational processes related of the Congo Masquerade Carnival unveiled a scenario marked by intense instability in management and organization practices, leading to transformations primarily in the level of participation of the *congueiros* in decision-making processes. This was first and foremost due to the fact that, in 2015, the ABCC became immersed in debt, with irregularities in their accounting ledger concerning the previous year's Carnival. This resulted in the ABCC's role in the organizational process of the Carnival being decreased considerably: after being registered as insolvent by the municipal tax authority, it became unable to sign agreements with the municipal government and other organizations, and other individuals stepped in to mediate and intervene in the interactions between the bands and the municipal bodies, widening and complexifying the Carnival's organizational network. Despite the relationships

embedded within the institutional spheres, our observations also led to the perception of the congo as an everyday experience, encompassing staying at home, working, believing and enjoying, among other dimensions, through the manifestation of practices that make our subjects genuine inhabitants of their landscape.

A non-place in the field of religions

The Congo Carnival adheres to the Catholic calendar and celebrates a Catholic saint to the sound of percussion instruments and *toadas* pushed through vocally by men and women. When reflecting on the history of religious practices in the context of the Brazilian colonial slavery system, Santos (2013) draws attention to the role of the Brotherhoods, which on one hand can be interpreted as a means of reinforcing the colonial system but, on the other, as a means for constituting a distinct Catholic practice built upon the association between blacks and upon the reinforcement of common-origin elements, potentially questioning the slavery regime's oppression. In this sense, the author corroborates the idea that the absorption of Catholic teachings and the worshipping of saints took place through reinterpretations, intermingling with Afro-Brazilian values and, primarily, with religious elements and practices of African origin. Black people thus gave rise to "black popular Catholicism" (Santos, 2013, p. 44), an expression we will adopt in our reflection to define the *congueiros*' belief system.

According to IBGE data (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010) on Cariacica, the main self-identified religious practices are Roman Catholic Apostolic and Evangelical, each corresponding to approximately 41% of the population. As the data indicate, in the religious practices of Cariacica, Roman Catholic apostolicism -- the majority religion in Brazil since colonial times -- has gradually lost ground to evangelical religions. However, it is important to highlight that black popular Catholicism, a patchwork joining together the official Catholicism imposed by colonists and elements and practices inherited from ancestors of African origin, never enjoyed a dominant place in the religious scenario.

With Catholicism and Evangelicalism side by side in terms of their numerical proportion of followers, the Roda D'agua *congueiros* with whom the field researcher interacted identified as practitioners of Catholicism. However, this identification is quite unilateral: for many traditional Catholics, the association of congo and *casacas* during mass causes discomfort. On the other hand, associations between Catholicism and religions of African origin are repelled by the *congueiros* themselves, who even state that they "do not appreciate" such a combination.

For the family of the master of the band we accompanied, reality was not much different: among his six children, two had converted to evangelicalism and did not take part in congo-related activities. Despite the parents' withdrawal, their daughters, grandchildren of the master, were still present in both universes. We were able to witness the master singing evangelic praises with his granddaughter, without showing any discomfort, while accompanied by congo drumbeats. We also had the opportunity to hear him play the guitar with a brother-in-law, another evangelical, in a repertoire that included his own compositions in the gospel viola style.

Thus, the aesthetic character (Certeau, 1985) of congo-related religious practices in the family domain seems to be defined by a "style" of doing that derives from the convenience of avoiding confrontation with evangelicals. Yet, when the *congueira* religiosity (black popular

Catholicism) steps outside the family environment, its most important articulations – and clashes – do not occur in regards to evangelicals, with whom it does not share a common space, but with Roman Catholic apostolicism. The latter maintains an official "way of thinking" and relegates black people's belief systems to a non-place. It is thus within this field that the ethical and controversial character of these religious practices (Certeau, 2008) stands out most prominently.

This absence of place can be exemplified in the desire of the aforementioned subject to participate in the Penha Festival – the "official" one – and in the fact that he saw himself as far-removed from that possibility, as he did not even know how to proceed in order to be granted permission to play there. According to him, the Penha Festival is very "closed-off," and not by chance or coincidence, but because his practices are regarded as marginal. For many Catholics, the "entrance of the congo in the church" would be inconsistent with official religious practice.

On the other hand, as it does not operate in a zone of ambiguity, the *congueiros*' relationship with evangelical religions, in the analyzed micro-context, did not manifest itself as a direct clash. Thus, we were able to observe no actual spatial disputes. During the Carnival, for example, the evangelical part of the family stayed at home (with the exception of the children). On the other hand, many representations of the Catholic Church were present, as exemplified by the mass itself, by the image of the saint found on many t-shirts, and by the crucifixes found on many necks, all fighting for physical, symbolical, and political space in the realm of beliefs.

Even though refusing associations with African religiosity, the adoption of the term "*terreiro*," or "ground," is common among *congueiros* to designate the spaces in which they play spontaneously, outside moments of public presentation, such as in schools, which are also distinct from their everyday use of house/yard. This takes place through the celebratory manipulation discussed by Certeau (2008, p. 190), which enables being there without the other, but in a necessary relationship with the disappeared object [the place], in an original spatial structure.

On marginalized spaces, there are reinventions of the ways of believing in and practicing a faith, joining what has been imposed with one's own creations. Without a proper place to reproduce itself, the religiosity of the *congueiros* maintains a diffuse and fluid character. Hence, in this palimpsest, subjectivity is articulated upon an absence that structures it as an existing entity and allows it to 'be there' (Certeau, 2008, p. 190). Self-proclaimed Catholics, *congueiros* build *terreiros* on festival days, alongside the Evangelical Assembly of God.

At the time of the festival mass (Figure 2), for example, the band's base[3] is transformed into a parish. Yet this transformation involves the everyday building of the base as a place of work, an institutional environment, a space of negotiation, meetings, recording, council. If the base openly recognized itself as a *terreiro*, would priests accept praying there? Thus, this terminology is tactical insofar as it obfuscates the marginality and the historical weight of a religion built upon popular culture. Stitching together beliefs and languages, the "base" becomes a particular type of parish: the mass is led by a black priest, and the usual contemplative silence is interrupted by drums and *casacas*. Some stand up, others sit; some dance, others sing, pray, or talk. All build a liberated micro-space to celebrate in their own ways.

Figure 2. Beginning of the outdoor mass
Source: Photographed by the authors.

An additional perception regarding the investigated context came about from a discussion at the time of the meeting between the *congueiros* and SEMCULT. It involved the attributions of the Catholic Church, represented by the local parish, regarding the festival's sacred aspect per se. This corresponds to its first acts, when a procession takes the celebrated patron saint from an improvised chapel to the place where the mass is held.

In an outrage, one lady, a member of the Santa Izabel band and devoted believer of *Nossa Senhora da Penha*, described how the saint had been carried in recent years. According to her, the traditional practice, in which the women of the Santa Izabel band held the saint (Figure 3), was being denied – with the women being replaced by regular members of the parish. In her words: "Our *tradition is for the women* [to take the saint], *not the men*" (field diaries, March 4th of 2017).

Figure 3. Beginning of the procession with the carrying of the saint to the place of the mass. In the photo, members of the Santa Izabel band

Source: Photographed by the authors.

When questioning this break from tradition, she pointed to an actor – the "other" in this instance – who is simultaneously the proprietor of hegemonic discourse regarding her own beliefs. This actor, for the congo, already has its own, proper place in the religious sphere, and by "carrying the saint," it becomes a representative of that place's order. Thus, while making tactical calculations in a place that does not belong to the subject, this narrative on the issue of tradition displaces the "other." Such a tactic confers the subject with space, in an action of an accentuated political character (Certeau, 1985, 2008).

While they self-identify as Catholics, congo practitioners know they are not recognized by the latter as followers of legitimate Catholicism. In this sense, considering the determinant strategies of places of religious invisibility (Certeau, 2008), identifying Catholicism in the context of the festival as an "other" is a play that momentarily destabilizes the everyday balance of power, opening up a space for religious freedom – even though the existence of such a space is circumscribed to the festival itself.

Thus, as indicated by Certeau (2008) and Lyra (1981) in their approach to the people's belief forms – upsetting as they are to the hierarchies of the Catholic clergy when they evoke saints through their appropriations and approximations -- the accentuation of Catholicism as the "other" establishes a micro-resistance founded on everyday practices. And, in the described situation, a zone of ambiguity (Amaral, 1998a) emerging from religious ceremonies, the "carrying of the saint" assumes a manifest political character, destabilizing the places of power that exist between *congueiras* and the parish by tactically making use of the notion of tradition, supported by an argument of authenticity.

A non-place in the tourist landscape

The history of the congo band which we followed closer during the research merges with the history of the master's family and of Roda D'água congo itself. Having participated in the region's bands ever since he was a child in order to fulfill a long-standing wish also to honor his father's memory – a well-known figure in the region who died young, when he was around 25 years old – in 2007 the congo master created a band bearing his own name, distinguishing it from the other bands, which generally adopt names in homage to patron saints and/or their neighborhoods of origin.

Relatively new, having completed ten years in 2017, as opposed to the more than fifty years of existence claimed by other bands in the region, the band has consistently represented itself through a reaffirmation of its historical place, a discourse anchored in narratives that -- its young age notwithstanding -- accentuate its belonging to the *congueiros*' social group, insisting on the ties established by the master's ancestors.

As the master's son reported, the band was initially composed of only the closest members of the family: brothers and sisters, children and daughters-in-law. To validate this information, he referred to old photographs, where, based on an interpretation of his gestures, the observer was able to ascertain the period in which the whole family indeed participated in the band. Continuing by talking about their current composition, he revealed that nowadays the band "*is a bit more mixed*" (field diary, April 4th of 2017). This was because two of his brothers and sisters were no longer participating, as they had converted to the Evangelical Church. Without dwelling on the question, he commented that his father "did not question that" and, also in his own words, that "*everyone choses their own path*." Next, he indicated that there was another brother who did not live with them but participated sporadically: "*he comes when he wants*" (field diary, April 4th of 2017). This left him and two other brothers as active family participants, the ones who held stronger ties with the master.

While describing the other members of the current band formation, he attempted to conceal this change through carefully chosen words and the use of lax terminology -- sometimes "family" and sometimes "relative" – using the latter term to blur the significant alterations the band's formation had gone through. While referring to each member individually, he did not dwell on their respective roles, rather emphasizing their degree of family relationship. At the end, he cited two current members who lived in the region and who, based on our interpretation of a slip of the tongue, were not actually from the family. But, bringing them into the family nucleus, he gave them the title of "relatives": "*. . . but we consider him a relative . . . because he's . . . has some degree of relationship… in the end*" (field diary, April 4th). As Certeau (2008, p. 103) notes, no none should be surprised by these homologies between practical astuteness and rhetorical movements. In regards to syntactical formalities versus one's "own" meanings, that is, in regards to the general definition of something that is our "own", distinct from what is not, there are occasional manipulations of language that are meant to seduce, capture, or invert the linguistic position of the receiver.

As such, the subject's "act of speaking," while meant to convince, was based on a process involving the interplay between the power relationships of a particular social space (Certeau, 1985, 2008). Thus, we ask, what does this defense of family ties lead to, what is gained or lost by it? As part of the operation of the credible (Certeau, 2008) in the building of a truths regarding both congo tradition and the band's relationship with it, it is central for one to belong to the family. At the same time, this opens up possibilities and creates limitations, and so these significant practices (the

recounting of family legends, in this case) can be regarded as inventive spatial practices (Certeau, 2008, p. 188).

Therefore, the fact that these bands were created in different contexts enables interpretations that the aforementioned one might be "*very commercial*" (field diary, March 4th of 2017), as the field researcher heard from a public authority, including a warning that it would probably not represent "*the best place to research the congo* [here in Cariacica]" (field diary, March 4th of 2017). The comment indicated, at the very least, that the ways of doing of the subjects of the band have caused some degree of discomfort. Thus, we ascertained that these narratives do not occur as individual expressions or aim to sustain an individuality; above all, they arise collectively, through representations of the band as part of a whole.

These judgments also drifted, in another public body, into a questioning of the choice of the Congo Masquerade Carnival itself as a specific object for studying the congo of Espírito Santo, as there would be other manifestations less affected by – in the public representative's opinion – explicit political and financial interests. Based on these determinations, we found these were attempts to weigh up the authenticity of each manifestation, in a manner that did not consider the idea that precisely because it is alive, the *congo* culture is not crystalized and has reproduced itself according to new arrangements, reinvented under new conditions of living resulting from the new economic and social contexts of its actors (Amaral, 1998b; Certeau, 2012). Certainly, it is precisely by looking at new cultural threads that we can find support for discussing and understanding the apparent "horse-trading" tendency underlying these manifestations.

In this sense, this question posed by Hall (2011, p. 247) would be relevant: do changes and great ruptures generally emerge from within popular culture itself or from external factors that invade it? The author himself indicates that popular culture is not a form of consolidated, crystalized resistance; rather, it is the very ground over which these transformations are operated (Hall, 2011, p. 249).

Moreover, the absence of this type of question (both regarding the festivities' commercial and financial character and regarding their supposed loss of tradition) when it comes to the Festival of Penha is puzzling. It is a fertile ground for the selling of religious articles and technological absorptions, such as the provision of Wi-Fi networks for the followers and live transmissions of the program on social media. None of that leads to questions regarding its authenticity, and the same is true of the Polenta Festival, another grand event in the state held in the municipality of Venda Nova do Imigrante, which combines elements of Italian traditions with a wide array of musical shows, ranging from the pop and *sertanejo universitário* music universes to other current consumer trends and interests.

In that sense, there is an opportunity for debate on the tendency to crystalize the products of subaltern practices, Afro-Brazilian culture in this case, in contrast with the absence of these same discourses concerning manifestations of European origin. Moreover, it is important to highlight, in the context of Espírito Santo, the different places that these manifestations occupy in the state's tourism strategies. In the case of the two major festivals we have discussed, there is a public interest that believes the first to be attractive to religious tourism in Espírito Santo, and the second to be representative of the state's cultural diversity.

The articulation with state authorities in this process -- as well as with the bodies belonging to the tourism sector in any sphere -- is also worth emphasizing, leading to the hypothesis that the Cariacica congo might be a non-place in regards to local tourism strategies. Thus, it seems that the Congo Masquerade Carnival of Roda D'água is not the object of any significant investment in any of the two aforementioned public-interest perspectives, even if there is well-demonstrated potential – one would just have to participate in the festival – for it to occupy both places.

Thus, this discussion is indicative of the non-place occupied by congo festivals in the current tourism policies of Espírito Santo. We understand that their incorporation into these policies would amplify the Afro-Brazilian cultural landscape in the state (Figure 4), counterposing alternative interpretations to the tendency of preserving the city's white 'romance' (Certeau et al., 2003, p. 192) as its selling point. Only slightly penetrated by the poetry of a multi-ethnic people, we understand that this narrative contributes even more to the maintenance of the invisibility of the black culture in the state.

Figure 4. Observation of the public at the festival

Source: Photographed by the authors.

By a place in the institutionalized field of culture

Even though they are nowhere to be seen in the municipal and/or state tourism agendas, it is important for us to also consider what type of public is interested in the *congadas*. Based on this discussion, we highlight that it was through the field of cultural public policies that the congo was able to invest in a relational network.

According to the master we interviewed, nowadays "the congo is much more deserving of consideration" than in the times of his ancestors or even the times of his father: "of course there are still people who don't like it, but now it's seen as much more than merely the congo, these days it's another story" (field diary, March 25th of 2017). This other story involves several

transformations, primarily in the last 35 years, including the local milestone represented by the creation of the ABCC, which, as we have discussed, redefined the relationships of the bands with each other and with the public authority, primarily represented by the SEMCULT. These new arrangements, which enabled agreements to be implemented alongside the municipality and, as a result, the allocation of resources to organize the Carnival, conferred new dimensions, configurations, and meanings to the festival and to *congo* itself for the players involved.

Yet, in the current ambiguity of perspectives regarding the congo, despite indicating improvements, the master also points to a devaluation. This is apparent, for example, in his criticism of the low fees received by the *congueiros* in the Carnival (field diary, January 20th of 2017; field diary, March 4th of 2017). Moreover, he had evident dissatisfactions with the event's management, leading to his boycott as a sign of protest in the festival of the year the study took place (field diary, January 20th of 2017). These grievances led him to questioning what degree of consideration the congo was supposedly receiving.

This poses a question on the relationship of this specific cultural context with the immediate social environment, in which the scenario, which appears as favorable, contrasts with a daily-life experience that continues to be permeated by inequalities and privations. In this sense, we ask: do more resources necessarily imply more visibility? Or, still, as Certeau (2008) puts it, do more resources imply the production of a place of belonging by the subjects? Clearly not.

In this regard, the current situation the ABCC finds itself in is exemplary: blacklisted by the municipal tax authority and unable to sign agreements and take charge of the management of the festival, due to problems with one of its accounting reports, it has left this space open to other organizations.

Furthermore, other problems related to the inflow of resources compound this crisis, such as the receipt of fees – linked to the number of participants in the bands, as well as to the payment of other necessities such as the production of masks – a privilege of only a few *congueiros*. This has intensified pre-existing tensions between the groups, associated, according to reports, with the bands' past origins in trauma and dissidence (Santos, 2013), contributing to disarticulation between them.

Yet, in the field of state politics, we should also mention the growing visibility and recognition of the *congo* as part of the local identity, a process that has been occurring since the 1980s (Macedo, 2013). Regarding the national scenario, one should also take note of the trajectory of Brazilian public policies directed at so-called popular or traditional cultures in Brazil. These have been defined by a movement from absence, to authoritarianism, to instability (Rubim, 2007). More recently, they have been marked by Gilberto Gil's management as the Minister of Culture, by the understanding of diversity and the concept of culture as factors in social transformation, and by new guidelines for the building of practices and programs that culminate in the appreciation, production, diffusion, and democratization of cultural access. Despite the fact that the country's current political crises have again accentuated the dimension of instability, generally speaking cultural policies have not reversed their course.

In this scenario, in 2016, the congo master we studied was publicly recognized as a master of popular culture and awarded the title of "Master Amorjo of the Capixaba Folklore – 2016 edition"

by a Cultural Public Notice. In the following year, his son also ran for the title – with the field researcher even taking responsibility for his application – but was made a substitute.

However, it is important to perceive this series of political actions – not only cultural, but social and economic as well – not only from the perspective of the emergence of new programs, but also from the standpoint of how the subjects of said policies reorganize their practices – among them, their narratives – leading to variations in their own self-representations (Bezerra &, Barbalho, 2014). This perception leads to the observation of another side of politics: politics as a function of everyday life, where the popular is reinvented in innumerable negotiations with elements of the dominant sphere (Certeau, 2008), sometimes operating within it.

In this sense, if on the one hand one of the roles assumed by the researcher during her field research -- helping the band to enroll in state-sponsored projects -- tactically enabled her inclusion in the bands' inner domains, on the other hand it was also a way of obtaining knowledge in respect to aspects such as the strategic demands of congo practices in the current context. In this scenario, there were narratives that supported belonging to the family as a "style of use" of popular discourse on popular culture.

Thus, with the understanding that these practices are also based on meanings and discourses as products originating from the interactions of the subjects with the world around them and with the order that regulates it, the rhetoric of belonging to the family revealed a way of incorporating a logic that operates in the broad field of popular culture.

In the narratives below, extracted from an audiovisual recording that we made upon their request to tell the band's story as part of the material to be sent alongside an application to a popular-culture public notice of the Culture Department of the State of Espírito Santo, it is clear how the band members' speech acts are invested in the reiteration of an ancestral family history: "*We accompany the congo circle, right? The congo circle is the Ferreira Family . . . we created the band as a version of the family . . .*" (report recorded by audiovisual means on September 9th of 2017); "[We have been a band for] *a short time… look, no . . . really . . . a short time, but then we also go way back, **because back then we were already part of that culture**" (report recorded by audiovisual means on September 9th of 2017). And, also:

> It was **our grandfather's** [dream], before he died, it was not to let… [the dream of] a family band die; his dream was to have a band of **family-members** only. Because the family is big, this band is big, it has various **antecedents**. (report recorded by audiovisual means on September 9th of 2017)

Given the Afro-Brazilian invisibility in Cariacica and in Espírito Santo in general, contrasting with the myth of racial democracy, the congo enables the emergence of a strategic place. The memory of the ancestors and parents constitutes an originary movement in the logic of congo practices. Emphasizing solidarities, current congo practitioners trace their individual memories by means of orality, telling their stories by drawing bridges between the past, present, and future, insofar as the "from father to son" perspective is indicated as central in the process of cultural transmission of the congo and in the affirmation of a shared place, structuring certain reciprocal identifications.

Thus, the participation in public notices, integrating new practices into the congo's overall dynamic, is established through the 'sewing' of different processes (Certeau, 2008), with the production of a new (spaces, statuses, arrangements) based on the prevalent cultural economics. Congo participants thus operate in a tactical way, somewhat divided between the need to have a space of belonging and the need to participate in the congo as part of a broader cultural system – and viewing their reciprocity with the researcher as a momentary opportunity to strike the system while following its own logic.

This is the dual character of popular culture: defined by a movement towards both incorporation and resistance (Hall, 2003), also characterized by the author as the genuine dialectic of the cultural struggle. Nowadays, this struggle takes place along the complex lines of resistance and acceptance, rebuttal and capitulation (Hall, 2003, p. 255) that define the field of culture as a field of permanent battle, where definitive victories are not obtained, but where there are always strategical positions to be won or lost (Hall, 2003, p. 255).

This may be related to the congo's capacity for mediation (Amaral, 1998a) and for establishing relative articulations between congo practitioners and the "other," based on the gains and positions that can be obtained from such tactics. Per Amaral (1998a), for instance, we could argue that festivals and other cultural manifestations transform these dichotomies into bridges, operating between the belonging that drives away the other (strategy) and the reciprocity that reclaims the other (tactic), leading to a re(organization) of cultural spaces.

Concluding remarks

The Congo Masquerade Carnival of Roda D'água has been organized without occupying centrality in the planning, management, and execution of the overall festival. It was also permeated by strategic invisibilities, produced by discourses which, on the one hand, conceal the presence of Afro-Brazilian manifestations in comparison to European ones in the eyes of the state, and, on the other, raise questions about the authenticity of the festival given its underlying power structure. This produces the day-to-day experiences of its protagonists: they are situated between marginalities structured by totalizing narratives, which determine and stabilize places of power, and an astuteness that engenders creative ways of moving through these dominating orders, producing spaces of belonging.

We have discussed the social production of inequalities and resistances in the organization of the *congo capixaba* by highlighting the places and non-places of the state's congo festivals, understanding the production and reproduction of these non-places as a result of strategies that seek, if not to erase, at least to make their actors invisible. Based on a micropolitical perspective, we presented a non-place in the religious field, expressed in a form of Catholicism that sees itself as official while delegitimatizing Afro-Brazilian religious practices. Another non-place discussed here was the one promoted by tourism policies – or by their absence, given the promotion of other manifestations structured upon the prevalence of Eurocentric manifestations of faith and Eurocentric cultural practices in the state of Espírito Santo. Finally, another non-place lies in cultural micropolitics: by distancing themselves from centrality in the organization of the Carnival, the band members were able to find, in the state's cultural policies, possibilities to "strike" the system on the basis of its own mechanisms. Moreover, attention is drawn to the micropolitics present in the

everyday life of the *congueiro*, who stands in conflict with these constructions and, also, to the perception of the festival as an organizational form that aggregates various organization processes.

In light of the new logic established by the institutionalized field of culture, we unveiled the inclusion of the congo in working-practice spheres, also establishing new spaces and possibilities of articulation. Concerning religious practices, these were shown to be diffused in everyday life and tactically anchored in discourses that verse upon the subject of tradition. Thus, these practices act to interrupt the unicity of these places, pluralizing their spatial occupation. This perspective highlights the investment in narratives elaborated upon meanings centered on the idea of belonging, understood here as the construction of an ethnic identity based around the *congueira* activity as a way of building one's own place in a space that belongs to the other. Thus, congueiros employ a strategy that, by elaborating a specific discourse regarding the congo, operates with the aim of managing its relationships with a distant exterior entity (Certeau, 2008, p. 46).

Interweaving tactical and strategic actions (Certeau, 2008) constituted around senses of belonging, the subjects of the congo operate in space by alternating between absence and the possibility of a place they have envisioned. Negotiating the occupation of spaces (Certeau, 2008; Hall, 2003), these practices create possibilities of resistance amid the preexisting conditions of the places they have been allocated. Thus, in the search for a place of practice – by forming a relationship with the place of speech as discussed by Ribeiro (2017) – the *congueiros* narrate boundaries that identify and bring them together as a collective, legitimizing their practices amidst an unstable context marked by the fluidity of its players and by their asymmetric relationships. In this environment, in the fight for a place of speech, for a place of practice, they invest in attempting to exchange positions with the Other (Ribeiro, 2017).

Through interwoven reflections, we present as the main theoretical contribution of this research a discussion of the festival's organizational process as being capable of mobilizing tactics in the everyday production of spaces, based on Certeau's approach. Celebrating, in this context, means establishing oneself in the cracks within places of power, subverting the stabilities produced by the dominant strategies subjects encounter in their everyday lives. Moreover, we equally understand as a contribution of this article the exposure of problems faced by an Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestation, problems which reinforce the underlying tensions that take hold when the ethnic-racial dimension assumes centrality -- even though these tensions are permeated by other aspects, such as precarious material conditions -- in the production of these organizations, and, consequently, in the ensuing spatial disputes. We therefore point to these cases as demonstrative of our failure to overcome our ethnic and racial hierarchies, upon which Brazilian society has been structured, further highlighting the need to promote this discussion based on decentralized perspectives. We also indicate the productions in the political field enabled by popular cultural practices, highlighting, from a theoretical viewpoint, how the strategies and tactics employed in everyday life have explicitly political uses.

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Notes

1. Our Lady of Penha is the patron saint of Espírito Santo, and the biggest and most important religious festival in the state is held in homage to her: the Festival of Penha. The Festival of Penha has taken place in Vila Velha for more than 445 years and is the third biggest religious event in the country in number of worshippers. It lasts approximately nine days, involving masses and pilgrimages.

2. The *casaca* is a percussion instrument, similar to the reco-reco, considered to be a typically *capixaba* instrument.

3. Among the changes produced by the process of institutionalizing *congo* practices, there was the creation of self-managed bases for most of the bands.

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