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Intersectional Convivialities

Brazilian Black and Popular Feminists Debating the
Justiça Reprodutiva Agenda and Allyship Framework

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Intersectional Convivialities: Brazilian Black and Popular Feminists Debating the *Justiça Reprodutiva* Agenda and Allyship Framework

Susanne Schultz

Abstract

The concept of reproductive justice is currently receiving a lot of attention in transnational counter-hegemonic feminisms. The text explores how Black and popular feminism are adopting the concept currently in Brazil. In the first section, the text deals with implications for agenda setting and reflects the movements' strong reference to necropolitical dimensions of reproductive relations. Three elements of agenda setting are explored: addressing structural inequality within "classical" reproductive health issues; the attention to anti-natalist strategies, such as a continuous policy of sterilisation; and experiences of motherhood/parenthood being stigmatised or attacked. In the second section, the text explores another level of meaning of reproductive justice, namely that of being a framework for intersectional feminist alliances. Therefore, it deals with how the movements negotiate different positionalities and the question of allyship within their everyday convivialities. The movements negotiate these organisational challenges by reflecting processes of collective repositioning in a complex way and referring to important concepts of contemporary anti-racist and social movements in Brazil, such as *não lugar*, *aquilombamento*, and *bem-viver*.

Keywords: reproductive justice | counterhegemonic feminisms | Brazil

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Ways of Approximation: Exchanges with Black and Popular Feminist Organic Intellectuals	4
3. Repositioning Agendas against Reproductive Injustices and Oppressions	6
3.1 Social Inequality, Obstetric Violence and Mortality: Beyond “Hovering” Factors of Difference	8
3.2 A Revived Attention to Antinatalist Agendas: The Denial of Reproduction for People Who “Don’t Fit into Their Social Norms”	11
3.3 Against the Stigmatization and the Attack on Mothering/Parenting: “The Right to be a Mother to the Children We Already Have”	14
4. Inequalities that “Actually Pass through the Lives of Us All”: Reflecting Intersectionality and Allyship Collectively	17
4.1 Intersectionality within a Counterhegemonic Feminist Conjuncture: Learning from Black and Trans Feminisms	18
4.2 Politics of Intersectionality: Between Stable Positionalities, Collective Self-Repositioning, and <i>Não Lugar</i>	20
4.3 Analysing Entangled Relations of Oppression: Racial Capitalism, <i>Cis-Heteronormatividade</i> and Radically Rethinking Motherhood	23
4.4 Bringing Transformative Communitarian Visions and Survival Politics Together	25
5. Conclusion: Potential Agendas and Allyships, or Lessons for Transnational Counterhegemonic Feminist Reflections	28
6. Bibliography	33

1. Introduction

Reproductive justice, or in Brazilian Portuguese *justiça reprodutiva*,¹ is a travelling concept that has recently attracted strong attention within those transnational feminist movements currently on an upswing that are engaging in counterhegemonic feminisms:²

With the concept of *justiça reprodutiva*, we are entering a very new field, under construction, a field of dispute, and a very fertile field. [...] It is a potential concept, an intersectional and decolonial strategy, a discursive practice, but above all, a call for systemic change in search of social justice and equity for all people (Lopes 2021).

The broad framework for politics around abortion, contraception, pregnancy, birth and childraising aims to analyse and oppose complex and structurally embedded reproductive inequalities and oppressions. It is also conceptualised as an intersectional framework for multivocal alliances.³ In this working paper, I want to follow this travelling framework by listening to Black and popular feminist movements within Brazil and asking how they are appropriating the concept recently in both its agenda-setting and allyship dimensions. I want to contribute conceptually to the double question: how social inequality concerning reproductive relations is negotiated within feminist movements' agenda-setting processes and how the intersectional conviviality of movements contributes to how allyship is elaborated and addressed in the fight against reproductive oppressions. The concept of conviviality-inequality, central in Mecila's research programme, serves as an analytical approach for these double but entangled dimensions of *justiça reprodutiva* because it provides an adequate process-oriented, micropolitical and relational research horizon (Costa 2019). The fact that movements reflect currently within the heterogeneous intersectional positionalities within their groups and their politics of alliance can be taken into account by this process-oriented approach because it allows us to reflect that individual and collective political speaking positions are themselves not simply a pre-given but produced, reified and transformed within the political processes of organisation (Gilroy 2004; Thompson 2020). Moreover, a process-oriented conviviality-inequality perspective helps to pay attention to how, on the one side, transformations towards more horizontal, solidary principles might develop

1 The term *justiça reprodutiva* refers to the adoption of the term reproductive justice within Brazilian contexts. All translations from Brazilian Portuguese to English are by the author. I maintain the original terms when they are easy to understand or are very specific terms of the debate.

2 I refer to the term "counterhegemonic" as a quite common self-description for those current feminist movements within Latin America who understand themselves as anticolonial, antiracist, intersectional and anti-capitalist and thereby distance themselves from a liberal, individualistic, universalising gender-only, state-centred, white "hegemonic" feminist project (cf. Espinosa Miñoso et al. 2014; Schild 2015; Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras 2008; Criola 2020a).

3 See also SisterSong (n. d.).

and on the other, which (invisible or visible) hierarchies and inequalities might also be (re)produced within the movements' daily activities.

The concept of reproductive justice has been introduced and propagated by U.S. Black feminists since the 1990s (Roberts 2015; Ross 2017b, 2017a, 2021). It was developed as a reaction to an individualistic, decontextualising feminist pro-choice agenda that had been focusing above all on individual abortion rights within a privacy-centred legal approach. Combining social justice with reproductive rights, the neologism puts structurally unequal conditions of reproduction along racism, class relations, incarceration, ableism and heteronormativity in the centre of reproductive politics. Reproductive justice integrates three demands: first, the right to decide against having children; second, the right to decide to have children; and third, the right to raise children in good social and ecological conditions and free from institutional and personal violence.⁴ By including the second and third sets of rights, the proponents extended the feminist attention not only towards anti-natalist, Malthusian, social-Darwinist and eugenic programmes but moreover towards those policies which delegitimise and stigmatise the mother/parenthoods of oppressed social groups.⁵ Or, as Loretta Ross, one of the most widely received proponents of the concept, expressed: The concept draws attention to the “endless recyclable myths of the undeserving mother” (Ross 2017a: 172). By integrating all these claims, the U.S. Black feminists did not only interpret reproductive justice as a counterhegemonic feminist programme. Beyond this agenda-setting function, they presented the concept also as an “anti-essentialist” framework for multivocal alliance building (Ross 2017b, 2021). The conditions for universalising the concept in this way were explained as complying with the core agenda, maintaining the visibility of the Black feminist genealogy of the concept, and providing the possibility for giving voice to multiple lenses and experiences of reproductive oppression, with a special emphasis on methodologies of storytelling (Ross 2017b, 2021). The framework thus also invites us to reflect on dimensions and challenges for feminist intersectional allyship more in general. After all, the concept focuses on interlocking and complex forms of oppression and marginalisation and also implies the challenge of how to formulate common feminist demands without bleeding out structural inequalities and differences in daily reproductive experiences.

Recently in Brazil, the concept has been actively adopted, interpreted and disseminated as *conceito-potência* (“powerful concept”) above all by Black feminist organisations; meanwhile, broader feminist alliances and organisations also refer to it (Lopes

4 Meanwhile, the right to sexual autonomy has been added in some contexts as a fourth set of rights.

5 In the following, I will always refer to the double term motherhood/parenthood (or mothering/parenting etc.) in order to take into account, on the one side, the critical feminist focus on the gendered role of mothering and on the other hand, the strong reference of *justiça reprodutiva* to anti-heteronormative demands, as well as to broader networks of families and communities.

2021; SOS Corpo 2022; Criola 2020a; Schultz 2021e).⁶ These approximations to *justiça reprodutiva* are also linked to a counterhegemonic critique of those feminist organisations in Brazil that have dominated the reproductive rights agendas in the last decades and have often tended to concentrate on unmarked and universal gender concepts. The reference to *justiça reprodutiva* thereby also calls for paying attention to the construction of hierarchically organised and always historically specific and particular femininities, as decolonial feminists have claimed for a long time (Lugones 2007; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010). Important issues addressed within this process of appropriation are, for example: analysing institutional racism and structural social inequalities within reproductive health policies; exploring LGBTQI* perspectives and demands concerning reproduction; rediscovering the history and (dis-)continuities of anti-natalist population policies within Brazil; and integrating debates on how motherhood/parenthood is stigmatised or even attacked involving thereby also issues such as child abduction and police violence. The debate thus integrates also those dimensions of disreproductive and necropolitical policies that are targeting specific social groups or “populations” whose reproduction is socially not valued, stigmatised or even presented as dangerous

In the following, I will first present in section 2 the research process conducted in 2021 in exchange with activists of Black and popular feminist groups, explaining my situated perspective and introducing the individuals and groups to whom I talked. The following two main parts of the paper are structured along the two dimensions of *justiça reprodutiva* already mentioned: In section 3, I will analyse how current Black and popular feminist groups and activists are working on the process of agenda-setting. I will start by showing how they contextualise the recent emergence of the *justiça reprodutiva* agenda and then introduce how they refer to and reframe three core dimensions: the politics of unequal access to reproductive health services; the anti-natalist and eugenic dimensions of these politics; and the right to mothering/parenting. In every one of these three parts, I will address both concrete current issues debated and then emphasise core analytical frames the activists are suggesting, emphasising in all three parts different ways of thinking about necropolitics. In section 4, I will show how the movements address questions of intersectional convivialities and thereby the implications of the *justiça reprodutiva* framework for allyship under conditions of multivocal positionalities. First, I follow the movements’ organic intellectuals’ reflections on the current conjuncture of debating intersectionality; then, I address their complex ways of collectively reflecting heterogeneous political speaking positions – with both more stable or more procedural approaches, involving concepts such as “passing”

6 For example, “classical” feminist reproductive rights NGOs such as the Católicas pelo Direito a Decidir, SOS Corpo, Cfemea, or Rede Feminista de Saude refer now to the concept (Lopes 2021; SOS Corpo 2022).

oppressions and the experience of *não lugar*.⁷ In the fourth part, I will show how they combine visionary communitarian concepts with politics of survival in their political narratives, referring to a specific temporality that the reference to *aquilombamento* implies.

The paper thus is not structured in a classical academic way by starting with a given theoretical framework but starts from the conversations, podcasts, declarations, and other public materials I found and from the conceptual and theoretical perspectives the movement activists offered. Only in the concluding part, when I summarise the main insights from this research and listening process, I will bring these insights in touch with some transnational counterhegemonic debates on reproductive oppressions and intersectional allyship in order to show to which specific debates Brazilian activists refer and contribute to. Without reconstructing the “classical” literature widely, this collection and reflection on the movements’ knowledge production might hopefully contribute to further reflecting how (reproductive) inequalities are processed within the feminist convivialities.

2. Ways of Approximation: Exchanges with Black and Popular Feminist Organic Intellectuals

In 2021, the Mecila offered me the great opportunity to learn from the Brazilian movements’ debates on *justiça reprodutiva*. As a Germany-based sociologist and activist, my interest in approaching both the interpretative and organisational implications of the concept within Brazilian feminisms has arisen from various backgrounds: the academic research and activism toward global anti-natalist population policies (Schultz 2011, 2021a); the collective movements’ reflection around the question how to adopt the travelling reproductive justice framework within specific German movement contexts, and last but not least a long story of exchange with Brazilian feminists since the 1980s.⁸ However, this research impulse is not only personal but embedded in a noticeable shift of attention and even reversal of learning directions within current transnational feminist movements, affecting feminist debates in Germany too. This shift was also inspired by diasporic networks of migrant activists, highlighting the Latin American or Abya Yala feminist theory production about decoloniality, antiracism, patriarchal violence and

7 Djamila Ribeiro explains the concept of *não lugar* (non-place) by referring to the work of Patricia Hill Collins, who analyzed the position of Black women as “outsiders within”, thereby describing for example the experiences of Black women within white feminist movements. Djamila Ribeiro explains the experience of *não lugar* both as that of marginalization and also as a position from which it is possible to “observe the society from a broader spectrum”, and so to analyze interdependent relations of oppression (Ribeiro 2017, 26f; cf. Collins 1990).

8 Eg. Kitchen Politics (2021); see also Netzwerk für reproduktive Gerechtigkeit Berlin (n. d.).

Black, indigenous and communitarian feminisms.⁹ These developments are irritating at least the old (post-)colonial Western or Eurocentric feminist project, which has and in a lot of spaces and circumstances are still continuing to claim the hegemonic position of teaching emancipation “to the rest” (Espinosa Miñoso 2014; Schild 2015).

When I applied to the Mecila fellowship, I was hoping to participate for some months in daily meetings, networking practices, political events etc. However, due to pandemic travel restrictions, the opportunity to get insight into the movement’s convivial daily practices and processes around reproduction issues became an impossible project and was reduced to an online exchange. Therefore, I decided to shift the approach by asking my online interview partners themselves about how they work with the *justiça reprodutiva* framework, how they reflect their daily convivial movement practices, and how they interpret this intersectional allyship.

For this purpose, I recurred to online individual and group interviews and to analysing the public communication of NGOs and individually engaged experts who are vanguard proponents of *justiça reprodutiva* within the feminist publics in (above all Southeastern) Brazil.¹⁰ To understand better the adoption of the framework by Black feminist NGOs, I decided to focus on the engagement of the Rio de Janeiro-based Black feminist NGO Criola by online-exchanging with one member (Schultz 2021e) and closely parsing their materials and podcasts (Criola 2020a, 2019, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2022), as Criola has been especially active in promoting the *justiça reprodutiva* concept within Brazilian movements.¹¹ Another important part of the research was the exchange with two grassroots popular feminist networking organisations I have been in close contact with for some decades: the União de Mulheres de São Paulo and the Casa Mulher Trabalhadora in Rio de Janeiro. Both were founded by leftist feminist activists and are looking back to a long trajectory of activism and popular educational work mediated by the work of *multiplicadoras* or *promotoras*, especially in peripheral neighbourhoods of the two cities. In June and July 2021, I talked via videoconference with two founders of the organisations (Schultz 2021b, 2021c). Then we organised two online group discussions with (mostly) younger *promotoras* or *multiplicadoras* who engage in these organisations and do network and political educational work within their respective neighbourhoods or communities (Schultz 2021d). These activists’ group reflections were especially interesting in their roles as *interlocutoras* and bridge builders of the

9 *Abya Yala* is the term by which native peoples and anticolonial movements refer to the Americas, thus questioning the colonial term “Latin America”. The term is used by the Kuna, meaning living or blooming land.

10 This involved websites, online talks, podcasts, brochures and documents. Among them are the Black feminist NGOs Criola (Rio de Janeiro); Geledés (São Paulo), the anti-extractivist NGO Coletivo Margarida Alves (Belo Horizonte); the public health expert Fernanda Lopes and several others.

11 See also Siqueira et al. 2021); for this purpose, I worked also with transcribed podcasts of the series *Vozes de Criola* about the topic (Criola 2019, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2022).

movements, because they are negotiating a lot of heterogeneous positionalities at a personal and collective level and engaging intensively in interpreting, translating, networking and creating connections between very different social and political groups within Brazilian social movements.¹² The conversations revolved around movement practices during the pandemic, reflections on intersectional feminism and touched on several aspects of *justiça reprodutiva*; these conversations are the main reference for the broader question on intersectional allyship for the second main section of this text.

As impressions from an outsider and an online distance, the results of this research are certainly very partial. They have many blind spots, starting with the intense focus on one NGO and two popular feminist networks based in urban Southeastern Brazil. In addition, the reflections on the travelling concept of *justiça reprodutiva* are themselves very incipient, not only in Brazil. All these conditions make this paper just an open process of (re)search and reflection. Nevertheless, the complexity, reflexivity and radicality of these very recent discussions, especially those inspired by Black and LGBTQI* feminisms, have strongly impressed me. This limited research scope might offer many insights into current counterhegemonic feminist repositionings.

3. Repositioning Agendas against Reproductive Injustices and Oppressions

The stories of how movements' concepts are emerging and travelling are never complete and depend on the perspectives of those engaging with them and telling the story. As one activist says: "*Justiça reprodutiva* does not have only one birthplace" (Schultz 2021e). However, what became obvious in all conversations and sources was that Black feminism's enormous increase in strength and visibility since 2015 (several mentioned the March of Black Feminists in Brazil in 2015 as an important moment, cf. (Schultz 2021d; Criola 2020b) was decisive for the intense appropriation of the concept within Brazilian feminisms (Schultz 2021c; Criola 2020c, 2020d; Lopes 2021):

Justiça reprodutiva, it affects several spheres [...]. Those who don't possess anything are treated with violence [...]. In various ways, starting with pregnancy, the decision about whether or not to have a child [...]. And then, when you decide to have a child, how will this child be treated? How will this child be born? Where will this child stay? This is not thought through. None of these stages (Schultz 2021d).

¹² From the União, six *promotoras legais populares*, who are engaging in feminist educational work above all on the topic of violence in their respective neighborhoods or communities, participated in the group discussion. At CAMTRA, in addition to the initiator, two multiplicadoras from peripheral neighborhoods participated in the conversation. They joined CAMTRA many years ago in the Núcleo de Mulheres Jovens and are currently contributing in various ways in the office and in social media.

The Criola interview partner explains that Brazilian Black feminists have been aware of the U.S. reproductive justice concept since the 1990s.¹³ However, according to her, the concept's active appropriation started only in 2017/2018.

Indeed, the narratives about the concept's adoption generally emphasise that similar approaches to reproductive relations had already been elaborated within Black and popular feminist movements, highlighting, for example, the movements' declarations against mass sterilisation in the early 1990s (Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra 1993; Lopes 2021) and the struggle in the late 1980s and early 1990s for the introduction of the integrated universal public health system (Sistema Único de Saude - SUS, cf. (Coletivo Margarida Alves 2021). In both contexts, a lot of debates about structural conditions and social inequality with respect to basic and reproductive health care had already come up. However, according to the Criola interview partner, in the course of the 1990s, Black feminist movements had been increasingly retreating from those spaces in which the framework of sexual and reproductive health and rights had been established by specialised feminist health NGOs. She explains:

Historically we [Black feminist movements, S.S.] have always been having debates about sexual and reproductive rights, only often not employing this insignia. Because we understood that within this articulation of feminists here, we were spending a lot of energy making them aware that racism is structuring these deaths [referring to maternal mortality, S.S.], and who lives and who dies. So, we were in other fields: the fights around public security, abolition of imprisonment, access to job possibilities, defending education and public health; we were doing the debate in these contexts. But then, from 2018 onwards, we started to say: "No, wait a minute, let's reposition, let's turn this around" (Schultz 2021e).

Although the current appropriation of the *justiça reprodutiva* agenda is still described as incipient and open-ended, some general directions are already be identified: the Brazilian debate refers, in principle, to all core dimensions of the U.S. Black feminist concept.

One central dimension is to rethink reproductive relations as an integral aspect of complex structural social inequalities. For example, the public health expert Fernanda Lopes explains *justiça reprodutiva* in the following way within an introductory podcast: "*Justiça reprodutiva* is at the heart of the social justice discussion, and it is not restricted to a singular aspect of reproductive life" (Criola 2019). According to the proponents, this claim of embeddedness goes hand in hand with emphasising the openness of

13 She explains that Black feminists had become aware of the concept in the 1990s by studying Black U.S. feminist proposals, especially Loretta Ross' and the NGO SisterSong's engagement.

the *justiça reprodutiva* concept for the analysis of multiple and interlocking forms of discrimination. At the centre of this current debate, there are two main focuses: on the one hand, on racism and coloniality as structuring reproductive relations and health care access within Brazil and, on the other hand a strong focus on opposing heteronormativity and transphobia (Criola 2020d). Another general dimension is a strong claim to rethink questions of knowledge production and analysis itself, in the sense of epistemic policies of the movements.¹⁴ This means there is a strong theoretical claim to do systemic and genealogical analyses of structures, institutions and social relations. Also, this epistemic claim is closely linked to approaching reproductive inequalities from the voices of those affected by them, highlighting practices of storytelling and examples which show the complex lived daily experiences of reproductive oppressions (Schultz 2021d).

Other ways to embed the *justiça reprodutiva* concept are various linkages with transformative concepts emphasising collectivity, such as *aquilombamento* and *bem-viver*, as I will address later (Schultz 2021e).¹⁵ All these references flow together in the claim to go beyond decontextualising individual concepts of reproductive rights by reflecting the social conditions of individual self-determination. Within the popular feminist group talks, one activist found an adequate way to express this concern. She suggested two different terms, that of formal “*escolha*” (choice) and that of real “*caminhos abertos*” (open paths), to rethink this claim (Schultz 2021d). This also means that the activists link the *justiça reprodutiva* framework not only to explicit forms of exclusion, violence and coercion within reproductive relations but also to those precarious social living conditions that might allow formal freedom of choice, but not to make decisions beyond immediate necessities.

3.1 Social Inequality, Obstetric Violence and Mortality: Beyond “Hovering” Factors of Difference

One big challenge for the *justiça reprodutiva* agenda is to rethink demands which have always been in the focus of the feminist reproductive health agendas and to do so by focussing on social inequality, on limitations of access for specific populations and thereby by analysing the structural power relations and dimensions of institutional racism and violence:

¹⁴ For example, as in a lot of current Black feminist debates, also public health expert Fernanda Lopes refers especially to the work of Sueli Carneiro and her way of approaching the concept of *epistemicídio* (Lopes 2021; Carneiro 2005).

¹⁵ *Quilombos* are communities built up by fugitive enslaved people in Brazil. *Aquilombamento* refers to the verb *aquilombar* and is used in this sense for current processes and activities building up resisting communities and collectives (see Nascimento 2018; Streva 2021; Tosold 2021).

We had a recent case that was very emblematic of a woman [...] who was pregnant, riding public transportation [...]. A bus with terrible suspension, a poorly paid, irritated driver, driving on potholed streets. The place she had to sit on was in the back of the bus. At a certain moment, the driver over-accelerated and went through a pothole. She was thrown almost to the roof of the bus, hit her back down to the seat, and lost her child. She went to the healthcare centre, and people there left her sitting at the reception desk, waiting for 24 hours, always pushing and asking her, doing almost an inquisition, saying that she had caused the abortion. So that's what obstetric violence is about, too (Schultz 2021e).

For the current debate, access to abortion continues to be a very important issue, even though the Brazilian activists, too, emphasise that *justiça reprodutiva* goes beyond a limited focus on abortion rights (Goes 2019; Criola 2020c, 2020d; Schultz 2021e). The focus on abortion is especially relevant in times of anti-gender political attacks and concrete initiatives by the former Bolsonaro's government to restrict even the very limited legal abortion options. One important event for the recent protests was a regulatory ordinance of the Ministry of Health in 2020, which revoked a former de-bureaucratisation of abortion protocols in cases of rape, reintroducing the need to present a police report to access this legal option of abortion.¹⁶ A national working group of established reproductive health NGOs working in favour of abortion rights was an important space where Criola engaged in using *justiça reprodutiva* as a broad frame (Schultz 2021e; SOS Corpo 2022). The concept was disseminated at a national level when they presented their Amicus Curiae in 2018 in a public hearing at the Federal Supreme Court (STF), supporting a petition to decriminalise abortion (Schultz 2021e; Criola 2018).

What was the impact of embedding abortion rights and other reproductive health demands within the *justiça reprodutiva* framework? One aspect is that the activists refer strongly to integrated public policies and not just to formalised individual rights (Criola 2020b, 2020c). The Criola activist explains this as a specific reference to the Brazilian movements: "I think we do have many differences in the way the concept of reproductive justice is articulated here in Brazil" (Schultz 2021e). One aspect she highlights is "the scenario of promoting the SUS in Brazil is a construction of much power and effort since the 1980s by Black women in health conferences, just before the 1988 Constitution and soon after" (Schultz 2021e). The strong attention to the SUS enables, first of all, to make social inequality visible by focusing on those social groups

¹⁶ Rape is one of three cases in Brazil when abortion is legal and has to be provided within the SUS, the others being a risk to the woman's life and an anencephalic fetus. Ordinance 2282/2020 also made it mandatory for health professionals to offer information about the possibility of visualising the embryo or fetus via ultrasound, even if not requested.

that depend on this increasingly underfinanced and weakened public health system (Criola 2020c, 2020d). On the other hand, the activists can pick up the structure of the SUS programs that have been institutionalised for specific social groups (for example women, LGBT, in the prison system, the Black population etc.) and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. By referring to public policies and not just individual rights, the *justiça reprodutiva* frame also makes it possible, according to Brazilian feminist law experts, to take into account social crises such as the pandemic to contextualise abortion access and link it to the aggravation of social inequalities within this crisis (Machado and Penteado 2021).

With respect to abortion, the popular feminist discussions mentioned a wide range of difficulties for women in precarious situations, from the lack of information about reversible and non-harmful contraception to the higher risks when contesting patriarchal rules and social taboos (Schultz 2021d). Moreover, the *justiça reprodutiva* debate on abortion rights emphasises the health risks because of the lack of access to legal and illegalised (privately provided) abortion options. One podcast discussant explains that, “Black and indigenous women are discriminated against during daily obstetric care, and in the case of abortion”, and this “regardless of whether the abortion was natural or provoked”, and “even under conditions allowed by law [...]. Black women encounter many barriers to having a safe abortion, which puts their lives at risk” (Criola 2020b, 2020d).

As the last quote makes already obvious, one of the main frames of the *justiça reprodutiva* debate in Brazil used to address social inequality is the unequal exposure to reproductive mortalities. The reference to differential mortality becomes a very general foundation for analysing comprehensively structural violence and institutional racism connected to reproductive health (Criola 2020b, 2020d). Another important frame, which emphasises the reproductive injustices and oppressions specifically regarding institutionalised dimensions, is the concept of obstetric violence, which is being increasingly discussed transnationally. The activists highlight dimensions of institutional neglect, stigmatisation, responsabilisation and humiliation within reproductive health care (Coletivo Margarida Alves 2020: 9).

There is also a strongly upcoming debate about obstetric violence during birth and the lack of access to a respectful delivery within the public health system, involving classist and racist dimensions. My interview partners addressed the lack of access to alternative birth cultures and modern biomedical interventions. In the popular feminist groups, one discussant reflects: “*Justiça reprodutiva* is there in several places. When we talk about access to a dignified, respectful, humanised birth, those who have money can decide to have one” (Schultz 2021d). On the other side, the Criola interview partner alerted that obstetric violence with respect to delivery also includes giving Black women

less access to C-sections because of racist projections onto Black women, “leaving them at the mercy of a racist discourse, with pseudo justifications that Black women endure more pain, endure more humiliation and all that” (Schultz 2021e). One podcast discussant referred to various studies by Black feminist scholars and activists affirming that Black women are touched less in consultations, are not heard in a qualitative manner” or that “Black adolescents are questioned about the responsibility of having become pregnant, and judged as to whether they will be able to raise their children” (Criola 2020b, 2020d).

Moreover, the epistemic policies to approach these dimensions of institutional racism are themselves a central point within the current *justiça reprodutiva* agenda in Brazil. The ways to approach these issues – from two sides: situated storytelling and the studying of more profound and complex structural and institutional power relations – go far beyond a purely statistical approach to identify quantitative differences in reproductive health access. The Criola interview partner, therefore, calls for countering the analytical void she identifies within hegemonic feminisms’ approaches to reproductive inequalities, referring to somehow “hovering” factors without studying institutional and structural causes:

It is very much the idea: “Ah, obstetric violence is hovering here, and it falls on our heads”. Suddenly, it takes a jump, and Black women die from maternal mortality. There is this disconnection. We have a long way to go to establish the connection by saying: “Look, it makes no sense just to say that Black women are the ones who die the most, but we have to say: “They are the target of the maternal mortality policy!” (Schultz 2021e).

3.2 A Revived Attention to Antinatalist Agendas: The Denial of Reproduction for People Who “Don’t Fit into Their Social Norms”

Another issue that the *justiça reprodutiva* alliances in Brazil are currently addressing with increased attention and sensitivity is the more or less explicit policies that are aiming at preventing certain groups of people in particular from having children – and from interpreting these policies as dimensions of population control and anti-natalist or eugenic strategies:

I even remember an article in *The Intercept* about the forced sterilisation of Janaína Aparecida Quirino, a Black woman living on the streets. After the request of the prosecutor, Janaína underwent a sterilisation procedure [...]. Afterwards, the São Paulo Court annulled the decision, but it was already too late. She had already had the procedure three months before. We need to rescue that, in fact,

the processes of compulsory sterilisation are an old debate and still a serious issue (Criola 2020a; Alves Cruz 2018).

In this context, there is also a revitalised memory concerning past struggles, especially by Black feminist activists, who had engaged against the mass sterilisation campaigns of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s when they succeeded in establishing a Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPMI).

Several *justiça reprodutiva* activists emphasise that these struggles led to the success of improved legislation established in 1996 to guarantee the voluntariness of sterilisation, imposing rules, procedures and restrictions under what conditions sterilisations can take place (Criola 2020b).¹⁷ However, the current discussions emphasise the continuities of anti-natalist practices and agendas despite this legal progress. There are openly coercive practices, as one group discussant referred to with respect to a hospital, within which various women of her peripheral neighbourhood had been sterilised without consent: “There [in the hospital, S. S.] they sterilised these women, women that had seven or eight children, many of them I assisted with these stories. And they reported that they were not asked” (Schultz 2021d). Also, the Criola activist confirms that sterilisation during birth is practised routinely despite being banned by the law, referring to a study of her organisation in three peripheral neighbourhoods (Siqueira et al. 2021: 88): “In all these places, the report was: ‘I had a child, I was in bed still, waking up from anaesthesia, the doctor offered: ‘Let’s do this’. And it was done” (Schultz 2021e).

However, the continuity of sterilisation practices within Brazil involves not only coercion but is a complex result of many factors, leading to a technological fix, with female sterilisation presented as the only apparent solution for “solving” complex, challenging living conditions. Several factors for the continuing focus on sterilisation as the only contraceptive solution are discussed within the *justiça reprodutiva* fora. First, there is a continuous lack of information and access to non-harmful and reversible contraception (Criola 2020b). Moreover, the Criola interview partner also points to an ongoing propagandistic political support for the hegemonic sterilisation practice, which

17 Law 9.263, known as the Family Planning Law, established in 1996 the rules and procedures for this irreversible surgical intervention (Menandro and Barrett 2022). It prohibits sterilisation during childbirth or abortion (except for strictly medical reasons) and provides penalties for agencies and professionals who breach the law. It allows voluntary sterilisation only when a person has full civil capacity, is aged 25 or older or is younger than 25 but has two or more children. The woman or man must undergo counselling with a multidisciplinary team and wait at least 60 days before the operation can be performed. While these rules are interpreted as a positive result of these struggles, there is a critique that the law did not consider the practice of coercive sterilisation toward trans people who want to change their registered gender, which was only reformed in 2018 (Schultz 2021e; Criola 2020b).

she explains as the “*roupa sedutora*” (seductive clothes) of tubal ligation, for example when a councilman in a low-income Black neighbourhood offers tubal ligations for propagandistic purposes (Schultz 2021e).

One participant of the popular feminist discussion group also mentions a collective process of self-reflection, referring to their support for an unhoused woman with a baby in their neighbourhood who explained that this was her sixth child. Although she first suggested to this woman to get sterilised, after the collective discussion process, she changed her opinion: “Why do we always look at women and say, ‘we are going to castrate you’? [...]. Because many times it is very common-sense [...]: ‘let’s propose sterilisation for this woman because she can’t afford to have children’” (Schultz 2021d).

In 2021, another important occasion to look at the continuities of population control was the feminist opposition to the Ministry of Health’s administrative ordinance for long-acting hormonal implants. In this Portaria 13/2021 the Ministry defined certain groups as target groups for this treatment within the public health system. The long-term effective (between 3 and 5 years) hormone implants should be used within a specific program for drug users and “women living in the streets, with HIV/AIDS, deprived of freedom; sex workers; and in treatment for tuberculosis” (Ministério da Saúde 2021). A network of feminist groups protested and analysed this ordinance as “the promotion of eugenic, racist and colonial practices that persist today mainly through the actions of the Brazilian state and international pharmaceutical companies” (Coletivo Margarida Alves 2021).

The movements’ references to anti-natalist politics thus go beyond an individualising perspective but strongly address the dimension of population policies, asking which social groups are addressed to hinder their reproduction. Recalling the debates within the Black community in the 1990s, the Criola interview partner explains that there was the “argument within the Black movement, that the sterilisation of Black women was not a problem isolated to Black women [...]. It was an issue posed to the community because it concerned weakening our existence as a community” (Schultz 2021e).

From a *justiça reprodutiva* perspective, this reference to community does not mean a call for reacting with pro-natalist counter-policies but for paying attention to the specific necropolitical dimensions of population policies that go beyond the focus on individual bodies and behaviours. Because addressing the (future) children of certain population groups as not valuable or even dangerous means not only to devalue these possible future children but also to stigmatise and devalue the addressed community itself. Or, as one of the popular feminist intellectuals explains: “Being in the womb or being born, you don’t have value yet” (Schultz 2021d). And similarly, in one podcast contribution: “Thousands of women are involuntarily sterilised. So, when this old practice happens,

the state is saying that people who don't fit into its social norms cannot reproduce, cannot have the right to life" (Criola 2020a). The Criola activist therefore refers also to the concepts of "reproductive hierarchies" or "hierarchies of life", "admitting what is the prevailing national project, which has always been in force in Brazil and which is no less different today, that of population control through eugenics, the racism of the production of death and not of the production of life" (Schultz 2021e).

The special attention to anti-natalist politics within the framework of *justiça reprodutiva* thus involves an analytical shift of feminist politics toward an understanding of reproductive relations as shaped by different valuations of (future) lives and the articulation of body and population policies. The *justiça reprodutiva* debate suggests there are various historical connections and genealogical frames: On the one hand, there are references to the transnational history of anti-Malthusian feminist mobilisation against anti-natalist programs that aim to reduce "population growth" within the Global South, especially in the context of the Cairo conference in 1994 (Schultz 2021e; Lopes 2021). And there is a strong reference to the Brazilian history of *embranquecimento*, connecting the current practices to postcolonial continuities within Brazil when the pro-natalist policies with the aim of "breeding slaves" switched towards anti-natalist agendas (Coletivo Margarida Alves 2020: 8).¹⁸

3.3 Against the Stigmatization and the Attack on Mothering/Parenting: "The Right to be a Mother to the Children we Already Have"

As a third dimension, the *justiça reprodutiva* proponents also integrate the attention towards mothering/parenting being stigmatised, discriminated or even attacked into their political framework:

Or [consider] the case of five-year-old Miguel Otávio, who fell from the ninth floor of a luxury building in Recife, because of the carelessness of his mother's employer; the mother was a domestic worker [...]. She had to work in the middle of the pandemic, and she had the right to have a child, but society denied her right to take care of this child in a suitable manner, to stay at home and take care of him at the time of the pandemic. And it was also denied by her employer. So, thinking about *justiça reprodutiva* is thinking in a broader way of access to these rights. It is not an individual issue (Criola 2020a).¹⁹

18 *Embranquecimento* ("whitening") refers to the racist ideology and connected policies of postcolonial Brazil. *Embranquecimento* aims at making Black people disappear by promoting "racial mixing" and by linking social ascent with having children with a lighter skin color.

19 The death of this child was referred to several times in our talks. The employer had not taken care of the child while sending his mother to walk the dogs (Lacerda 2021).

In an introductory podcast, Fernanda Lopes summarises this *justiça reprodutiva* dimension as the “right to be a mother to the children we already have” (Criola 2019). The *justiça reprodutiva* proponents thus address precarious living and care conditions for mothers/parents and the dimensions of mothering/parenting being delegitimised, devalued or even violently attacked. They also refer to the most extreme violence, the murder of children and adolescents by the police, and police brutality, which has been at the centre of new Black movement policies in recent years. In the podcast series, one discussant explains: “The discussion on the deaths of Black children, at first sight, seems not to have much connection [...] but it has everything to do with it. Since these women do not have the guaranteed rights to exercise maternity, we are talking about *justiça reprodutiva*” (Criola 2020a).

Within the group discussions, the popular feminist activists did not doubt how to link the concept of *justiça reprodutiva* to these dimensions of reproductive oppression. They mentioned several exemplary cases of vulnerable and delegitimised mothering/parenting important for their local politics and referred to resistance campaigns of mothers against police violence:

Here in Brazil, we have a lot of mothers’ movements. For example, the Mothers of Acari have long participated in our organisation. Their children were murdered in a massacre. They were in the street playing in the *favela* and were murdered [...]. To this day, those responsible for the murders have not been held accountable (Schultz 2021d).

The Criola activist explains that from the side of the mothers’ movements, there is also an incipient evaluation of whether to actively appropriate the *justiça reprodutiva* agenda (Schultz 2021e). Moreover, the popular feminist groups addressed the neglect of police investigations in the case of disappeared children as cases of reproductive injustice:

Three boys disappeared in December, and to this day, the police have not been able to find them [...]. The way it is handled, you can already see the difference in the degree of racism: they will blame the woman [...]. Because they are Black and from the periphery, they are already considered irresponsible: “they were wandering around, they don’t know how to take care of their children”. While the state doesn’t even guarantee basic conditions of education and daycare where they can leave their children (Schultz 2021d).

In addition, the *justiça reprodutiva* discussions also refer to state custody and to whose children are especially taken away from their mothers/parents, as in the case of imprisoned mothers: “One profound issue that needs to be discussed is imprisoned mothers. They want to take the children from these incarcerated women, and there are

women who cannot organize the care themselves when they don't have a family to care for the children. And often they don't even know where these children are going" (Schultz 2021d). They also mentioned that in poor neighbourhoods, the Youth Office (Conselho Tutelar) is very fast in taking children away, and the movements often have to avoid contacting them (Schultz 2021d).

Various conceptual dimensions from these ways of framing *justiça reprodutiva* as an issue of delegitimised mothering/parenting in the Brazilian discussions should be highlighted, which have far-reaching implications for counterhegemonic feminist politics concerning reproductive relations: one dimension is that the reference to mothering/parenting under attack once again introduces, but in a third way, the question of necropolitics in the context of the *justiça reprodutiva* framework. The main argument here is that police violence against children and young people is not only indirectly and arbitrarily affecting their communities, families or mothers/parents, but that this violence is a form of strategical or institutional violence against those who are taking care and have the strongest emotional ties to the murdered family or community members. The Criola interview partner explains this as institutional violence and that "this is not only indirect but direct violence on these women's lives; they are also targets" (Schultz 2021e).

Another dimension of the integration of mothering/parenting in the *justiça reprodutiva* framework is a very clear and radical stance the activists take within highly polarised gender politics in the era of the Bolsonaro government. The *justiça reprodutiva* discussions are integrated into strong opposition to those anti-gender campaigns that have been institutionalised within the right-wing family policy and are supported by networks of familialist, conservative, and religious forces. And they are clearly opposing also those right-wing strategies which intend to hijack feminism by reinterpreting it in the sense of their agendas (Schultz 2021b, 2021d).²⁰

The discussants also transmitted a very clear commitment against heteronormativity and transphobia:

Some *bolsonaristas* tell me: you feminists want women to become men and men to become women. But then I say: What's the problem? Do you think that this is the problem in Brazil? How insane [...]. I follow a brand of feminism that is anti-capitalist and wants social justice and wants to see everyone having rights – no matter if they are a man or a woman (Schultz 2021c).

All these perspectives contribute to a way of connecting the politics of mothering/parenting with a radical political project. By focussing on stigmatised and marginalised

²⁰ See forthcoming Mecila Working Papers by Marília Moschkovich and Jaqueline Moraes Teixeira.

forms of mothering/parenting, the *justiça reprodutiva* debates explicitly support forms of (familiar) conviviality beyond the conservative hetero-nuclear family. The strength of this perspective becomes already obvious in the way how Marielle Franco, as a symbolic figure of Black feminism, is being addressed regularly not only as an anti-racist Black feminist activist but also as a *favelada* lesbian single mother.²¹ The *justiça reprodutiva* agenda is thereby also contributing to the questioning of those hegemonic feminist narratives which have put the emergence of the privatised housewife as universal history when reconstructing the roots of today's gender relations. In contrast, they start telling the history of mothering/parenting from those heterogeneous positionalities excluded from the beginning from this norm – as enslaved people, wet nurses, servants, domestic workers, etc. (Schultz 2021d).

All these radical and transformative dimensions of the intersectional knowledge production involved in agenda-setting make clear that they are not separable from the challenge of developing forms of allyship and shared political projects without negating the heterogeneity of these marginalised positionalities.

4. Inequalities that “Actually Pass through the Lives of Us All”: Reflecting Intersectionality and Allyship Collectively

The debates about the agenda-setting dimensions of the *justiça reprodutiva* framework make it obvious that the framework is embedded in strong movements within which counterhegemonic feminisms are rethinking and contesting the political subject woman and reflect hierarchical positionalities within feminisms:

We understand *justiça reprodutiva* as a *conceito-potência* because it is one of those concepts, as well as other concepts such as intersectionality, as integral health, or as *bem-viver*, that enable us to frame the factors of the *fait social* to understand how we organise ourselves either in responding to or in proposing something diverse (Schultz 2021e).²²

However, they do this under the banner of a common struggle for radical social transformation. Therefore, the *justiça reprodutiva* framework is entangled with broader debates on allyships within and between organisations – and on *interseccionalidade* as a concept which is recently very prominently debated within the movements. The debates around *justiça reprodutiva* are thus articulated with the general challenge

21 The city counsellor had engaged in investigating military police violence and was murdered in 2019 in Rio de Janeiro. Her death is remembered continuously by counterhegemonic feminist (and many other) movements.

22 *Fait social* is a term introduced by the sociologist Emile Durkheim, who used it to address social facts that have their own dynamics beyond individual action and control.

of counterhegemonic feminisms: calling on the one side for a comprehensive social transformation that aims at the “whole” of interlocking relations of oppression, and doing so, on the other hand, from the perspective of multiple and diverse experiences of oppression and marginalisation.

4.1 Intersectionality within a Counterhegemonic Feminist Conjuncture: Learning from Black and Trans Feminisms

The current strong reference of feminist movements to the concept of intersectionality and questions of allyship is the effect of all those flourishing feminisms, especially Black, trans, and indigenous feminisms, which are taking distance from a universal or monolithic project of gender politics. This activist makes it clear:

We from popular feminist movements have been working in a similar way for a long time, without using the term intersectionality [...]. What is new is that young women, trans women, Black women, lesbian women and indigenous women are much more mobilised and aware. Black women have always been part of our organisation. But now they are calling for anti-racist feminism; they have a much more sophisticated, elaborate discourse, and I like that a lot. These are young women who bring tremendous power, and this power will stay and bring many changes (Schultz 2021c).

For the urban popular feminist movement, this distance, in general, is not new, as they are looking back to a continuous long-term agenda of struggling against the exclusion and exploitation of peripheral or women from the *favelas*. Since their foundation, they have been highlighting differences which, however, have been framed primarily as social inequality and as class relations. And since then, they have been protesting against those dimensions of hegemonic feminism which also led to hierarchies of access to the feminist movements' infrastructures and public spaces. Intersectionality thus is interpreted by one activist as a “permanent practice of confrontation, [...] of all the inequalities and evils that some women are experiencing in their own spaces” (Schultz 2021d).

The experience of exclusion also makes the activists very attentive to the possibility that established feminist organisations could water down new radical counterhegemonic concepts such as *justiça reprodutiva*. Moreover, there is also a critique of using Black or peripheral women in this current conjuncture as tokens (*fantoches*) of established movements. Moreover, as already introduced, the current confrontation within which the debates on intersectionality are flourishing is not only with hegemonic feminism or some established feminist spaces but also with right-wing familist, heteronormative,

bolsonarista politics, which nevertheless present themselves sometimes as “feminist” (Schultz 2021c).

However, beyond this clear opposition to hegemonic and right-wing feminisms, the question remains how the movements treat hierarchical heterogeneities within the broad range of counterhegemonic feminist convivialities. Possible internal tensions and conflicts identified within the group’s conversations might be a first indicator for understanding the challenges of conflict and the opportunities for allyship. Interestingly, the problematic issues addressed more or less subtly within the self-reflective discussions of popular feminists circled dimensions of assistentialism,²³ internal trends of academisation and also touched on different evaluations of social media and digitisation of movements articulations.²⁴ In contrast, there was no questioning or debate but a very strongly expressed commitment in favour of rethinking their own political agendas and practices, especially in support of Black, indigenous and LGBTQI* feminisms. Thus, there was no reference or debate on possibly problematic “identity politics”, “cancel culture”, or similar vocabularies. In contrast, the accentuated reference to Black and trans feminism was presented as a central issue for the debates on allyship and intersectionality and as a strength of the current conjuncture of collective learning processes within the movements. The support for Black feminism goes hand in hand with a very strong references to Brazilian Black feminist authors, which the movements are currently studying:

When we talk about the issue of intersectionality, what I also observe, [...] is that the issue of Black feminism is also becoming more present, There were already very important Black feminists here, like Sueli Carneiro, Lélia González, Maria Beatriz Nascimento, but access to their literature was not so easy. But today, we manage to have more access (Schultz 2021d).

Moreover, the discussions also often highlighted the current strong learning processes being pushed by LGBTQI* and especially trans feminist activists, contributing to a radicalisation in the movements’ analyses of heteronormative power relations. There is a lot of attention and support to trans Black feminist activists and politicians, and more

23 Assistentialism is a critical term used by social movements for those relations of social aid or charity that do not empower those who are supported but establish specific relations of dependency and disempowerment.

24 Another rather subtly addressed point of friction seems to be a different emphasis on class politics between generations. The older group members emphasised anticapitalist and leftist politics as a core issue for their movements. They criticised a certain neglect of addressing class relations in some younger movements’ contexts (Schultz 2021b, 2021c).

attention to popular peripheral trans people and groups that are also forming part of their networks and organisations.²⁵

4.2 Politics of Intersectionality: Between Stable Positionalities, Collective Self-Relocation, and *Não Lugar*

Within these strong reflections about intersectional politics, the group discussions referred generally to two dimensions of interpreting heterogeneous speaking positions without putting them into opposition. In some moments, they addressed a rather “classical” way of thinking about intersectional politics, that is, in the sense of allyship between rather fixed, stable, or “thick” positionalities (Thompson 2020). This also involves the acknowledgement of hierarchical differences or differences of “privilege” within the groups and networks. And it involves the call for recognition and solidarity with Black, indigenous, lesbian or trans feminist groups and the support of their own forms of organising. For example, in one group discussion, one activist explained:

In our organisation, we all work together. But there are Black women in our organisation who also participate in Black women’s groups or lesbian women who participate in another group. They are not satisfied with our mixed group and need groups where they organise themselves as women with the same experiences of racism or homophobia (Schultz 2021c).

The activists also referred to classic concepts of alliance politics when they presented their practices of solidarity, such as celebrating specific dates as the Dia do Orgulho Trans (Trans Pride Day) or the month of Black feminism as a way of supporting the corresponding collectives. And out of solidarity they also stepped back and accepted these movements as the leading actors: “We would not do a live event on 25 July so as not to have a competing schedule there, out of respect for the Black women’s organisations that would do it” (Schultz 2021d).²⁶ Connected to this respect for the voices of those experiencing various and other forms of oppression, there is a strong reference to politics in the first person (Schultz 2021d). The collectives mentioned several times the importance of doing politics from the embodied experiences, knowledge and voices of people affected by oppressions: “There is no general rule, no, there isn’t. We learn from the coexistence of bodies, what it means to be trans, to be Black – and we, as cis women, have a lot to learn. Also, we are not academics. We don’t want to research women, we want to learn from them and write and speak from their perspective” (Schultz 2021b).

²⁵ The activists for example, talked about the exchange with the Black trans activist and political advisor to the Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL) Lana de Holanda in Rio de Janeiro or the trans Black councillor Erika Hilton in São Paulo.

²⁶ 25 July is the International Day of the Black Latin American and Caribbean Woman.

Already this way of talking about the learning perspective “in coexistence”, however, shows that there is a strong focus in the debates on intersectionality that goes beyond a very segregated way to address different positionalities and speaking positions. Instead, there is a prevailing, very reflective way of understanding intersectional policies as a more collective, procedural and less fixed way to address different speaking positions. For example, one *interlocutora* expressed a strong awareness against the politics of “fixed boxes”:

Our class [in a feminist training course of the organisation, S.S.] also had many lesbian women, who also said: Look, how can we provide input? How do we put this in the discussions without being put into a box? Without having a day that we will talk about lesbian women, and a day that we will talk about trans women? How can we discuss the issues that are passing through our lives without being closed in this place, right (Schultz 2021d)?

Both group discussions elaborated much more intensively on intersectional politics in this second sense, that of a critique of reifying forms of categorisation (within a “box”) and that of rethinking of entangled and “passing” forms of oppression as collective experience (Schultz 2021d).

The challenge to avoid fixed categorisations was responded to in various ways: One way is the transparency of addressing collective learning processes. There is a strong emphasis on the visibility of how individual and collective self-locations are not a stable issue but an effect of common discussions. Concerning individual repositionings, some made it clear that the debates on Black feminism and intersectionality changed their reflections of what it means to be addressed as *nordestina*²⁷ or as a Black woman (Schultz 2021d). Moreover, the discussants explained these processes as important not only for rethinking their individual but also their collectives’ self-relocation, or how they interpret the positionality of their groups: one discussant emphasised that in recent times they realised more than before the fact that “the number of lesbian women who have been working in [name of her organisation, S.S.] is immense” (Schultz 2021d), thereby reflecting the assumed heteronormalization of the category woman when being addressed or self-positioning as a women’s organisation. Similarly, one activist described that they had previously understood themselves above all from a gender and class perspective as women’s workers’ organisations, but now are reflecting more and more that the workers as their organisational basis are overwhelmingly Black women:

[Name of the organisation] is not a Black women’s institution [...]. But if we are an organisation that works with female workers, and the female workers are mostly Black, how can we not be a Black women’s organisation? I think this

27 People who have their migration background in northeastern Brazil.

means becoming mature, and we have been focusing more on it over the years (Schultz 2021d).

Another example was that one *interlocutora* who engaged for several decades as a domestic workers' activist referred to a rethinking of domestic work as a formerly invisible continuity of racist relations (Schultz 2021d). Another group member confirmed: "For years, we worked very directly with two domestic worker unions: racism was so pervasive in ourselves that we didn't notice it [...]. Then we gradually realised: 'But this is a category of almost all Black women, right? So [name of her organisation, S.S.] is part of this increased attention" (Schultz 2021d).

Thus, the convivial studying processes are changing how the collectives interpret their individual and collective positionalities not as fixed and stable but as a result of theoretical and political reflection. However, what the groups' discussants address as entangled and "passing" oppressions is even going beyond these ways of making contingent processes of self-relocation visible. This becomes clear also by another important concept currently brought into the debate by Black feminist theory-building: the concept of *não lugar* (non-place), as one group discussant also addressed explicitly:

When I read the texts of Black feminists, for me, it is incredible. I am homeless. It was very difficult for me to be at the university being poor, homeless, a woman and a mother [...]. I went through university, but that doesn't mean I have the privileges of a typical university student, because I am also a poor, peripheral woman. So, when I try to bring up some narratives, I am always unable to [...]. My place is always a *não lugar* [...]. The university looks at me and thinks I'm too much of an activist; activism looks at me and thinks I'm too much of an academic. When I read Lélia González I said: "People, It makes perfect sense! I am always at this *não lugar*" (Schultz 2021d).

Thus, this *interlocutora* extends the meaning of *não lugar* beyond the more common reference to the Black women's experience of being situated as non-visible between Blackness constructed as masculine, and femininity constructed as White. The term is broadly defined as expressing the experience of silenced non-positionalities or of being caught between the stools. The concept of *não lugar*, thus, is a way to question more generally the possibility of fighting not only from one, but from several of various fixed individual positionalities. However, the concept nevertheless presents this paradox situated positionality of *não lugar* as an important way of approaching the analysis of entangled power relations. The experience of *não lugar* thus does not appear in the group discussions as the opposite of claiming politics from a situated perspectives of a *lugar de fala* but as emphasising the situated experience of being silenced in

complex ways.²⁸ And it highlights the possibility that the movements' convivialities to learn together about entangled forms of oppression and rethink their collective political positionality as procedural has never closed the way for the theoretical reflection on systemic power relations.

4.3 Analysing Entangled Relations of Oppression: Racial Capitalism, Cis-Heteronormatividade and Radically Rethinking Motherhood

Various theoretical reflections connected to these experiences of *não lugar* were especially addressed within the group discussions – once again focusing on Black and trans feminist contributions – and interpreted as important for the theoretical rethinking of the entangled forms of oppression. One refers to the previously mentioned rethinking of class relations as always already racialised, thereby studying – under the strong impression of current Black and decolonial studies – the genealogies of racial capitalism, coloniality and the specific Brazilian history of enslavement and *embranquecimento*. Thus, in both conversations, the collectives spoke about the challenge to collectively “decolonise” one’s analysis:

Racism is so pervasive in each of us. In Brazil, it happens by the colour of the skin. The blacker you are, the greater the racism you will suffer [...]. So, I think it is necessary, as Lélia Gonzalez says, to decolonise ourselves [...]. I believe Black feminism has a fundamental role in this. We are so colonised that we fight a lot among ourselves, but I think this is changing because the pain is enormous. There is a lot of death (Schultz 2021d).

Similarly, the collective learning process also comprehends the rethinking of cis-heteronormativity as entangled with social inequality and racism. This contributes solidly to radicalising the movements’ way of interpreting gender relations in general, thereby confronting anti-gender forces. The strong impact of transfeminist struggles thus has led to strong solidarity for the rights of trans people and the visibility of violence and stigmatisation against them and has contributed to the movements’ rethinking or heteronormative familiar violence, power relations and cis-heteronormativity. For example, one activist explained her exchange with trans women in a peripheral neighbourhood:

These trans, Black women suffer great violence inside their homes [...]. [T]here are a lot of family issues, which are very toxic and complicated [...]. And this is

28 The Black feminist concept of *lugar de fala* was introduced by Lélia Gonzales, and Djamila Ribeiro has further elaborated it (Gonzalez 1984, 224; cf. Ribeiro 2017). It refers, on the one hand, to the situated experience of being silenced in complex ways and, on the other hand, to the resistance of claiming to speak from this position.

what [name of her organisation, S.S.] also provides, right, for us to see other ways of thinking about feminism, not only about cis women (Schultz 2021d).

Another activist explains the influence and “push” of transfeminist movements in the following way: “We get out of this idea that the human being is divided between men and women, who have different roles [...]. So there is a deeper discussion, and we have, as feminists, to go deeper into this totality” (Schultz 2021d). The learning processes induced by debating trans feminists interventions thus contributes not only to a deconstructivist perspective on gender relations but always happen in a situated way by addressing entangled relations of oppression. Nevertheless, as one discussant also points out, these reactions to LGBTQI* theoretical interventions are very recent, contingent and open in terms of their effects: “It is still not clear how this changes a brand of feminism that is dominated by cis-women, and to what extent LGBT movements will contribute to more radical feminist analyses for changing social macro-structures. In any case, there is a world different from mine, and I need to learn about it!” (Schultz 2021b).

All these ways to rethink entangled forms of oppression within convivial learning processes are also very relevant to the *justiça reprodutiva* framework. As demonstrated in the first section of this paper: the reference to heterogeneous experiences of mother/parenthood being stigmatised and attacked has also flown together into a radical theoretical rethinking of motherhood from the margins. The way how a lot of social groups have been excluded from the norm of the privatised “good housewife and mother” is currently studied in the Brazilian movements extensively also by referring to the rediscovered Brazilian Black feminist scholars, who have been reconstructing the genealogy of Black motherhood from the history of colonisation and enslavement. Once again, Lélia Gonzalez’s reference to the “Black mother” (addressing enslaved care work) as both stigmatised, exploited and oppressed, but also as powerful and influential on Brazilian culture (Gonzalez 1984) is notable here. All this contributes to interpreting the dis/continuities of motherhood/parenthood differently, insisting on the genealogies of exclusion and violence. One *justiça reprodutiva* podcast discussant summarises this genealogy in this way:

The reproductive life of Black women has always been targeted for control. Since our kidnapping in Africa, our bodies have been targets for rape [...], through the imposition of the reproduction of new enslaved men and women, to control via sterilisation, criminalisation of pregnancies of Black women in all senses, through considering the mothers to be the mothers of bandits, responsible for germinating seeds of evil, an extreme racial control that is reflected in daily life in expressions such as “they get pregnant to receive the Bolsa Familia social benefits”. This entire process must be considered (Criola 2020b).

The construction – although still relatively recent and incipient – of a way of radically readdressing motherhood in counterhegemonic feminist debates by combining insights from the margins might thus be interpreted as an exemplary way of how a framework that combines intersectional agenda-setting and the promotion of convivial allyship processes contributes to transformative and radical political perspectives. This intersectional analysis leads to a broader, more integrated systemic analysis of reproductive relations. These more universal analyses of entangled relations of oppression, nevertheless, are not developed by negating the *lugar de fala* but by interpreting and making it visible in a specific way: as embedded in processes of collective learning and repositioning, by addressing relations of oppressions as “passing” us all, and by learning from experiences of *não lugar*, bringing situated perspectives and collective analysis together.

4.4 Bringing Transformative Communitarian Visions and Survival Politics Together

The movements’ interpretation of intersectional allyship also strongly involves specific ways of reflecting community and conviviality. One discussant reflects on their organisational process by saying: “We ended up seeing clearly that the bigger thing was that it was a collective process” (GDM.I). One important observation is that the Black and popular feminist discussions integrate both transformative collective or communitarian visions and daily politics of survival in a not separate way. There is, at the same time, a strong reference to concepts such as *bem-viver* that strongly connects current agendas to a community-based post-extractivist, post-capitalist civilisatory future that is inspired by indigenous and communitarian feminisms. And there is, on the other hand, as already shown in section 3, a pervasive reference to necropolitics and survival strategies. However, both perspectives are not interpreted as contrary but brought into communication.

With respect to transformative perspectives, for example, the Criola discussant explains the reference to *bem-viver* as an important specificity of the Brazilian debates on *justiça reprodutiva*: “The first difference is the way the concept of *justiça reprodutiva* is articulated here in Brazil, which is strongly articulated with the concept of *bem-viver* [...]. In itself, it is a proposal for a new civilising framework. It is global; it is our agenda. It is the agenda through which our struggles continue. So here comes *justiça reprodutiva* as a strategic concept to promote this framework, and we think it fits very well” (Schultz 2021e). One podcast discussant further explains referring to *bem-viver* and collective health: “This concept moves away from these Western and conventional ideas of what a good life would be, what well-being would be, or what progress would be. These are concepts that are born from the social movement practices” (Criola 2020a). This

discussant also brings *justiça reprodutiva* in a strong connection to the concept of territoriality as another pervasive concept for debating transformative politics currently in Brazil:

This concept [*bem-viver*, S.S.] is an opportunity to think about different ways of living, of dealing with land and territory [...]. Opening this space for a debate is extremely important for us to create alternatives for the right to life and claim an egalitarian society. It is extremely important for us to guarantee a better life for Black women. This is why *bem-viver* is essential when we talk about reproductive justice, which is centred on a perspective of autonomy, linked to collectivity and the subjectivities present in the lives of the diversity of existing women (Criola 2020a).

The concept of territoriality, as also strongly referred to by current counterhegemonic Latin American feminisms, was repeatedly referred to in the individual and group discussions. As an iridescent concept, it is, on the one hand, an analytical tool addressing the situatedness of heterogeneous social realities within the continent of Brazil and the connectedness to social and natural environments. On the other, it is also, similarly as *bem-viver*, connected to visions of transformation and social change based on an anti-extractivist agenda, thereby questioning capitalist or civilisatory systemic power relations and thinking change departing from local and communal society/nature relations (Sempértegui 2021).

Nevertheless, these strong transformative visions are not distanced from the equally strong references to daily struggles of survival. One concept that came up within the popular feminist groups that might explain this connection is another concept strongly promoted recently within Brazilian Black feminism: the concept of *aquilombamento* (Tosold 2021; Streva 2021). This concept irritates teleological temporalities of progress and refers to absent/present ways of doing politics in a communal or collective way. One activist in the group discussions explained: “For me, intersectionality is what crosses me. I am part of an urban *aquilombamento*, I am from a *terreiro*²⁹ community and this is very close to this whole aspect of what were the *quilombos*, to everything that was destroyed in our society culturally and socially” (Schultz 2021d). Thus, she uses the term *aquilombamento* at the same time for describing her situated engagement within her community but also for referring to the *quilombo* as something destructed in the past which nevertheless is guiding the communal activities. Historically the term refers to the Brazilian history of fugitive former enslaved peoples’ ways of community building in *quilombos*. However, the movements refer to the *quilombo* also as a communal practice which has still to be built and for which the *quilombos* are not just a reference to a historic past but also – beyond the idea of historic linearity – something

29 A *terreiro* is where the Afro-Brazilian religious camdomblé communities meet and practice their cults.

that nevertheless has always shown some presence within Afro-Brazilian practices of resistance.³⁰

This way of referring to the destroyed but nevertheless absent/present collectivity echoes the insistence of the movements to reinterpret the politics of daily survival as a radical force of social transformation. These activists point to the power of collective survival strategies, thus not only as a last resort of defence but also as a political horizon of transformation. The strong reference to survival practices as a radical political force thus has various dimensions. Certainly, it refers to the extremely hard living situations and violence that cynically make sheer survival a success of resistance. Moreover, it is connected to the complex and multilevel analytical frames referring to necropolitics, as shown in the first section on agenda-setting. However, the movements also refer to the politics of survival as a more far-reaching practice of intersectional and anti-capitalist resistance. They thereby reinterpret, for example, emergency support during the pandemic not just as falling back to charity or assistentialism, or as only being reduced to immediatist needs. Daily practical struggles for survival are, by contrast, connected to the pride of being at the forefront of intersectional policies, highlighting the knowledge and wisdom which they are accumulating within these practices of survival. How processes of collective organising within marginalised social groups become visible now and are encountering ways of rethinking the temporality of resistance might be another contribution to the current strength of the counterhegemonic feminist conjuncture.

Two quotes from the group's discussions might highlight this approach to intersectional allyship as an issue of daily survival strategies. One activist explains her group's reactions to the pandemic emergency situation:

We managed to re-signify ourselves working for these women's lives, by guaranteeing their bread and the security of their lives [...]. I think that when we talk about the anti-racist, anti-capitalist struggle, one thing is to talk. You go and talk to a worker [...]. She won't know what it is to be anti-capitalist, but in her day-to-day life, every day she is being anti-capitalist, because she is fighting to survive (Schultz 2021d).

Another activist explains her reference to intersectionality:

I'm not from academia. But I wanted to talk about experience, about how I see it [intersectionality, S.S.]. We are living in difficult moments in the pandemic. And the skin that feels this is the skin of mostly peripheral Black women. Many people are going hungry in Brazil, and it is no different in my city. And then

³⁰ This interpretation is also reinforced by the broad reception of the work of Beatriz Nascimento (Nascimento 2018; see Tosold 2021).

we began to organise ourselves into a movement of solidarity kitchens [...]. We don't give many names to our actions, but things are happening. We have indigenous women, Black women and non-Black women there being part of the same movement. So, I think that we find ourselves in this chain of movements (Schultz 2021d).

5. Conclusion: Potential Agendas and Allyships, or Lessons for Transnational Counterhegemonic Feminist Reflections

How the Black and popular counterhegemonic feminist movements in Brazil are currently starting to adopt the framework of *justiça reprodutiva* as intersectional *conceito-potência* shows a very complex way of reflection:

Justiça reprodutiva has its epistemological character based on Black feminism, which is powerful because it makes those who rely on it move in an intersectional way. Above all, it is worth saying that intersectionality is a methodology for analysing reality and also a methodology that produces action (Criola 2020a).

Their debates touch on the core conceptional dimensions of the framework as it has been suggested first within the Black feminist U.S. context, in opposition to a decontextualising, individualising and gender-universalising pro-choice agenda. Taking into account and integrating the double orientation of the *justiça reprodutiva* concept as agenda-setting and allyship framework, their reflections are embedded into an intense moment of counterhegemonic feminism (not only) in Brazil, with all those anticolonial, anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-heteronormative claims which especially Black, popular, LGBTQI* and indigenous feminists are pressing.

In this conclusion I will summarise the insights of this process of listening to the Black and popular feminist organic intellectuals and connect these insights to general transnational debates on reproductive relations, intersectionality and allyship to which they contribute and towards which they also position themselves. The objective is also to contribute in a specific double way to the conviviality-inequality approach, taking into account how social movements collectively work with, adopt and reinterpret travelling theoretical concepts within their daily convivial learning and organising processes – and on the other hand, how the movements themselves reflect their convivialities as shaped by intersectional conditions of entangled inequalities, and how they develop forms of allyship under these conditions.

Starting with the dimension of agenda-setting, the Brazilian Black and popular feminist ways of adopting the *justiça reprodutiva* agenda offer various important conceptual suggestions to transnational counterhegemonic debates, within three dimensions. First,

they “reposition” the feminist agenda of access to reproductive health by emphasising structural dimensions of exclusion, stigmatisation and violence. Therefore, they call for epistemic policies to change knowledge production about reproductive health based on theoretical approaches to structural power relations and lived, embedded experiences and storytelling – with a focus on marginalised, stigmatised, precariously living and oppressed social groups. Moreover, they suggest as frames of reference: an integrated demand for public health policies; a strong attention to institutional conditions of obstetric violence; and the awareness of systemic causes of reproductive mortality as the first way to approach reproductive necropolitics. Second, their *justiça reprodutiva* agenda-setting has retaken a stronger attention towards disreproductive policies. They are also contributing to reflections on more subtle coercive dimensions of population policies around irreversible or (currently at the forefront) long-acting contraceptive technologies (Bendix and Schultz 2018; Senderowicz 2019). In their analyses of anti-natalist programmes, they go beyond gendered body politics and draw attention to hegemonic concepts of population(s). This means that they strongly criticize that anti-natalist policies do not primarily target individual bodies but aim at averting the reproduction of certain communities or social groups, thereby contributing to an analysis of what Loretta Ross has conceptualised as “reproicide” (Ross 2017b, 2021). By referring to this second necropolitical dimension, they show that these policies are designed to avert not only future births but also to question the very existence of certain social groups. With their strong focus on coloniality and racism as central to the genealogy of population control, they also support studies on the intrinsic racist dimension of “population” itself (Murphy 2017; Wilson 2017). Third, the *justiça reprodutiva* agenda setting in Brazil introduces new ways of connecting the right to decide for or against children with the politics of motherhood/parenthood. The integration to the agenda of the right “to be a mother/parent to the children already born” and the focus on those, whose motherhood/parenthoods are stigmatised or even violently attacked, challenges and decentres universalist feminist narratives on motherhood and the family. Moreover, it introduces a radical way of referring to mothering/parenting that takes a very clear (anti-heteronormative and anti-racist) stand within the polarised gender politics in Brazil. The agenda-setting process is articulated with a broad range of decolonial, anti-racist and anti-capitalist feminist research on the complex history of gendered racial capitalism and how a broad range of social groups have never been included and addressed by the project of the good housewife and mother. It is thereby also strongly articulated with the current transnational attention towards those Black feminist authors who have put at the table the genealogy of reproductive oppressions rooted in colonialism and enslavement (Gonzalez 1984; Spillers 1987; Hartmann 2016). All these three dimensions of the presented *justiça reprodutiva* agenda-setting in Brazil are contributing at the same time to radical and

broad visions of social transformation as they are framing the agenda referring to three dimensions of necropolitics and elementary politics of survival: first, with respect to reproductive mortality; second, to anti-natalist “reprocide” agendas; and third to police violence and mothering/parenting being attacked as affecting caring family members and communities (Smith 2016).

These *justiça reprodutiva* agenda debates within Brazilian feminist collectives are also linked to equally complex reflections on how to conceptualise intersectional feminist allyship. The movements also contribute to how *justiça reprodutiva*, in its second sense, as an anti-essentialist and plurivocal allyship framework, might develop further. The ways how the movements’ organic intellectuals are reflecting intersectionality are not watering down anti-racist protest, nor do they result in reifying social categories, as some critiques of the concepts’ success story have rightfully pointed out (Erel et al. 2011). On the contrary, the movements’ conceptual reflections are embedded in the search for comprehensive ways of systemic opposition and as a way for rethinking convivialities and allyships necessary for an integrated transformative project of action.

These reflections reverberate strongly those more activist and collective tradition lines within Black U.S. feminism, which have always been insisting on the necessity to analyse interlocking systems of oppression as a foundation for transformative struggles (Combahee River Collective 1997 [1977]; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Taylor 2018). Nevertheless, there are also a lot of specificities of the Brazilian discussion, for example, when recurring to Abya Yala and Brazilian Black feminist concepts such as *bem-viver*, territoriality and *aquilombamento*, to the struggles and concepts of integral public health policies, and specific positionalities and speaking positions, ranging from the urban self-positioning as *faveladas* or peripheral women to the specificities of Brazilian Black trans activism. Some spotlights of these reflections are that first, the movements refer to political speaking positions by integrating both more stable and more fluid positionalities without talking about them as opposites. They refer to stable speaking positions in order to make visible and reflect hierarchies also within the movements, to protect self-organised spaces and provide respectful solidarity.

However, the organic intellectuals are more strongly accentuating the procedural and open collective processes of learning and self-repositioning –individually and as collectives. In this way, they strongly support the insights by Paul Gilroy, who has emphasised the “radical openness” of conviviality, the “nonsense of closed, fixed and reified identity”, and the attention towards “unpredictable mechanisms of identification” (Gilroy 2004: 15). Moreover, these movements’ narratives on self-repositioning echo what Vanessa Thompson has explored in her research about activist groups’ convivialities within the *banlieues* of Paris. She showed that neither a pre-given “thick identity” nor simply common experiences of oppression, but collective activist practices

themselves have contributed in this case to constitute a Black collective identity (Thompson 2020).

Moreover, the movements strongly connect the reference to a *lugar de fala* with the experience of *não lugar*, beyond an either-or. On the one hand, there is a strong insistence on understanding power relations from the perspective of those affected by experiences of oppression to give visibility to former silenced voices. However, this *lugar de fala* is always connected to collectivity by formulations such as power relations “passing through the life of all of us”. These expressions reverberate strongly with the idea of the Chicana feminist’s “bridge” concept as a “figure of multiplicity, representing consciousness as a ‘site of multiple voicings’ seen ‘not as necessarily originating with the subject but as discourses that traverse consciousness and which the subject must struggle with constantly” (Brah and Phoenix 2004). Similarly, Juliana Streva has shown this way to understand positionalities within Brazilian activism (referring to Beatriz Nascimento’s research on *quilombos*), by reflecting “not only the personal experience of an individual body” but also “the public aspects of experiencing the world from one locus” (Streva 2021: 13). This procedural way of referring to collective speaking (and analysing) positions is accentuated by insisting in the experience of *não lugar*, remembering that marginalised identities are a product of experiences of being silenced which are converted into struggles. These reflections correspond strongly to Patricia Hill Collins work emphasising the analytical efforts done from the position of outsiders (Collins 1990), as Brazilian Black feminist theorist Djamila Ribeiro has reinforced: “It would be like saying that the Black woman is in a *não lugar*, but beyond that: she is able to observe how painful that *não lugar* can be and equally attentive also in what can be a place of power” (Ribeiro 2017: 27). All these reflections are thereby contributing to think intersectional counterhegemonic allyships also with respect to *justiça reprodutiva* as anti-essentialist and multivocal policies (echoing this continuous emphasis by Loretta Ross; see (Ross 2017b, 2021). They might also support the observation of other scholars that current intersectional counterhegemonic Brazilian movements refer to intersectionality in general as a strong concept for alliance building “against all oppressions” (see (Correia Zanoli 2021) with respect to Brazilian Afro-LGBT communities). Similarly, Julia de Souza Abdala has resumed in her research about Black feminist movements in the city of Campinas that these movements, while being aware that alliances are always fragile or, in her words, “despite (or even because of) conflictive negotiations”, maintain a strong spirit of allyship, to create a “space in which different marginalities converge and from which their various differences and similarities are elaborated in view of political alliances” (Souza Abdalla 2020: 349; Taylor 2018).

Both the agenda-setting and the allyship dimension of the *justiça reprodutiva* debates I listened to are strongly interconnected. This connection starts with the observation

that the simultaneously multivocal and universal allyship concept corresponds with the agenda-setting strategy, which consists in intertwining and not contrasting epistemic strategies of storytelling and of integrated structural social analyses, irritating thereby classical social theory conceptualisations. Another aspect that brings both dimensions of the framework together is the way how the Brazilian activists analytically combine in their agenda-setting the analysis of necropolitics and the analysis of systemic power relations or, when it comes to the organising perspective, how they do not contrast but strongly connect their reflections about daily struggles for survival with struggles for radical transformation.

Maybe the current movements' slogan of combining "resistance" with "re-existence" points in the same direction. The fact of being still alive as a result of a collective history of past and present resistances is thereby connected to a specific temporality "that displaces underlying analytical assumptions of a linear, progressive and sequential time", as Lea Tosold has been highlighting with reference to Beatriz Nascimento's work about the quilombo (Tosold 2021: 3). The strong link between struggling for survival and seeing this struggle already as an expression of radical transformation might appear as either cynical or romanticising interpretation. However, it can also be interpreted as a way of irritating linear teleological revolutionary programmes by referring to an absent-presence of those communitarian strategies of *aquilombamento* and *bem-viver* referring neither to a historic continuity to be saved nor to an absent long-term future project, but as partially traceable and tangible in the daily convivial practices of the movements.

One podcast discussant's words about the Black feminist struggles for *justiça reprodutiva* might make this clear:

I even stress the word attempt, underlining and highlighting it [...]. Attempt, because as Conceição Evaristo wisely states, they agreed to kill us, and we agreed not to die [...].³¹ They find us so impossible and always want to reinforce the place of subalternity of Black women [...]. Our collective values, *quilombamento* values, make us stand, and Black women are central in this process [...]. We support ourselves; we reproduce ourselves; we work, we are the basis of the work of this country, and we are here [...]. At the same time that obstetric violence, as linked to the genocide of Black youth and based on structural racism, is a perverse reality: the confrontation of this problem counts on the insurgence of Black women in a movement that seeks social justice in all senses (Criola 2020b).

31 Conceição Evaristo is a Brazilian Black feminist author whose novels are currently being rediscovered within Black feminist movements.

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