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RACE AND RACIALITY IN THE BRAZILIAN GEOGRAPHIC THOUGHT

RAÇA E RACIALIDADE NO PENSAMENTO GEOGRÁFICO BRASILEIRA

RAZA E RACIALIZACIÓN EN EL PENSAMIENTO GEOGRÁFICO BRASILEÑO

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// ABSTRACT

The article aim is to discuss the concepts and forms of operationalization of the race category in Brazilian Geography. We focus on the conceptual trajectory of race and how racial differences were interpreted and produced by the discipline during the 19th century to highlight the various perspectives in the field. Debates about race relations are not in Geography, this science has actively contributed to the development of differentiations and hierarchies based on race. In 20th century Brazil this process assumed a specific configuration influenced by "the problem of race" in national formation and the effects of racism on the reproduction of inequalities in space. Thus, there are production of conservative geographical discourses that sought to relate “environment-race” to institute processes of whitening the population or discourses to affirm the mestizaje as the ethos of the harmonic character of the Brazilian people. At the present time, race has been reclaimed by Brazilian geographers to question racist interpretations and to present more complex and critical readings about Brazilian race relations from geography viewpoint.

Keywords: race; racism; geographic thought; geography

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// RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é realizar uma leitura dos conceitos e das formas de operacionalização da categoria raça na Geografia brasileira. Focamos na trajetória conceitual da raça e em como as diferenças raciais foram interpretadas e produzidas pela disciplina durante o séc. XX para evidenciar as várias perspectivas no campo. Os debates sobre as relações raciais não são recentes na Geografia, essa ciência contribuiu ativamente para o desenvolvimento de diferenciações e hierarquizações baseadas na raça. No Brasil do século XX esse processo assumiu uma configuração específica marcada por discussões sobre o "problema da raça" na formação nacional e os efeitos do racismo na reprodução de desigualdades no espaço. Assim, há produção de discursos geográficos conservadores que buscaram relacionar "meio-raça" para instituir processos de branqueamento da população ou para afirmar a mestiçagem como ethos do caráter harmônico do povo brasileiro. Na contemporaneidade, a raça tem sido recuperada por geógrafos brasileiros para questionar as interpretações racistas e apresentar leituras mais complexas e críticas sobre as relações raciais brasileiras a partir da Geografia.

Palavras-chave: raça, racismo, pensamento geográfico, Geografia

// RESUMEN

El objetivo del artículo es discutir los conceptos y formas de operacionalización de la categoría carrera en la geografía brasileña. Nos centramos en la trayectoria conceptual de la raza y cómo las diferencias raciales fueron interpretadas y producidas por la disciplina durante el siglo 19. para resaltar las diversas perspectivas en el campo. Los debates sobre las relaciones raciales no son recientes en Geografía, esta ciencia ha contribuido activamente al desarrollo de diferenciaciones y jerarquías basadas en la raza. En el Brasil del siglo 20 este proceso asumió una configuración específica influenciada por "el problema de la raza" en la formación nacional y los efectos del racismo en la reproducción de las desigualdades en el espacio. Así, hay producciones de discursos geográficos conservadores que buscaban relacionar "ambiente-raza" para instituir procesos de blanqueamiento de la población o discursos para afirmar el mestizaje como el ethos del carácter armónico del pueblo brasileño. En la actualidad, la raza ha sido reclamada por geógrafos brasileños para cuestionar interpretaciones racistas y presentar lecturas más complejas y críticas sobre las relaciones raciales brasileñas desde el punto de vista geográfico.

Palabra Clave: raza; racismo; pensamiento geográfico; geografía

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INTRODUCTION [1]

The category of race, although devoid of any biological basis, remains a fundamental axis for understanding social and spatial dynamics in coloniality-modernity (Quijano, 2015). As a historical and political fact, its meaning has been contested across various fields of knowledge, including Geography. This text reflects on how Brazilian geographic thought has incorporated, reinterpreted, and applied this category – from its roots in the racialist debates of the late 19th century to its contemporary reinterpretations within the framework of ethnic-racial and Black geographies.

The idea of race is a social construct with no empirical basis in biology or the natural world (Malik, 2008). As a social production, it is marked by contradictory and polysemic attributes, often irrational (Hall, 2013). Beyond being a term with multiple meanings, it is used both in everyday discourse and in academic-scientific circles. Moreover, its concept has varied widely over historical time (Banton, 2019; Morrissey *et al*., 2014), and the way it has been mobilized and performed in social relations has been directly linked to the interpellations imposed by national, regional, and even local contexts. In this sense, to avoid excessive generalizations and abstractions, we will ground our discussions on race within its specific context. In this case, we will focus on Brazilian racial formation (cf. Omi & Winant, 2014), while acknowledging that Brazil's reality is itself vast and complex.

Throughout its history and national formation, Brazil has been deeply implicated in sharp debates about the "problem of race" (Seyferth, 2021; Schwarcz, 1993). On one hand, Brazilian social thought has grappled with "race" as one of its central concerns. Thinkers such as Silvio Romero, Oliveira Vianna, Gilberto Freyre, and Florestan Fernandes, among others, sought to explain and, in some cases, resolve the dilemmas of race in Brazilian society. Despite differences

[1] Some of the discussions presented here were previously addressed in the book Teorias da Geografia III: Mundos Possíveis (Claudino; Sposito, 2023).

in theoretical perspectives and historical-political contexts, all these thinkers understood race — to varying degrees — as a conditioning factor in our country's social relations. On the other hand, given that the "problem of race" in our nation has been tied to issues of the "torrid and degenerating tropical nature" and regional heterogeneity, since the post-abolition era and the early Republic, "geographers" debated race while seeking to understand the "men-environment" or "society-nature" relationship and the regional "ethno-cultural types". Thinkers from various fields produced a geographic discourse to accommodate visions of a multiracial people in a tropical environment. The European framework that defined a nation as the overlap between people, natural environment (territory), and culture (language) (cf. Anderson, 2008; Seyferth, 2021) compelled them to do so. Aspects of this debate on nationhood persisted throughout the 20th century in the social sciences and humanities, particularly in Geography.

Although the core of our debate is the national context, it is important to note that Brazilian thinkers, scientists, and geographers were avid readers of racialist theories from Europe and the United States. This leads us to examine how these thinkers translated and adapted such theories to Brazilian reality. Likewise, many foreign scientists living in Brazil engaged in this debate and expressed their views, further complicating perspectives on the category of race, as we shall see. This demonstrates the impossibility of interpreting Brazil in isolation from the international debate on race relations, even though uniquely Brazilian setbacks and dilemmas led thinkers to give the discussions a distinctly national tone. In short, the long-standing debate on race in Brazil has always been conducted in counterpoint and extended beyond the homeland; whether to ponder the failure of the "three sad races" to form a civilization; to showcase our moral example to the world through the "racial democracy" we supposedly achieved; or to forge a diasporic community that, based on shared experiences, seeks to develop anti-racist thought and action.

As recent historiography reveals, modern scientific Geography, born in Europe in the late 19th century, has an epistemology and modus operandi marked by colonialism and imperialism (Morrissey *et al.*, 2014; Nayak; Jeffrey, 2015). While this Geography sought to develop theoretical tools to analyze and explain natural and human diversity across the globe, the European nations' drive to dominate resources, peoples, and territories led the discipline to

qualify and hierarchize this very socio-natural diversity. For example, regionalization methodologies, which group spatial phenomena by similarity and separate them by distinction, were powerful mechanisms for qualifying and producing difference through physical and, especially, human aspects. In this sense, based on a "climatic moral" (Livingstone, 1991) and geographic determinism—which used race as a theoretical device—geographers did not insert a generic, universal "human" into "nature" (as in Enlightenment thought) but rather a fractured and racially hierarchized "men" (Livingstone, 1993; Morrissey et al., 2014; Cirqueira, 2015).

In recent years, as several surveys demonstrate (Cirqueira & Corrêa, 2014; Oliveira, 2020; Ratts, 2020; Santos, 2020), numerous studies have sought to recover these approaches and present critical reinterpretations of space using race as a key category. Mostly produced by Black researchers, these works also expand the scope of geographic interpretation by incorporating methodologies that highlight the racial dimension in space production. Some authors have termed these approaches "geography of race relations" (Santos, 2011, 2012; Oliveira, 2011), readings of the "spatiality of ethnic-racial relations" (Ratts, 2010), interpretations of the "racial dimension of space" (Guimarães, 2015), and, more recently, "Black Geographies" (Cirqueira *et al.*, 2020). Throughout this article, we will discuss methodological and interpretive proposals from these perspectives.

The article is structured as follows: first, we will outline the general perspectives on race and race relations in Brazilian social sciences; then, we will debate the presence of race in Brazilian geographic thought, focusing on key texts and turning points in 20th-century interpretations; next, we will explore how the category of race has been applied in geographic analyses after the "critical turn" of the 1980s; and finally, we will present some insights on where these discussions are heading within the discipline.

RACE AND RACIAL RELATIONS IN BRAZILIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT

In the literature that seeks to synthesize the debate on race and racial relations in Brazil (Guimarães, 1996; Munanga, 2019; Schwarcz, 1999), we find four key moments and perspectives that laid the foundation for the main interpretations of race and racial relations in the country: the first refers to studies rooted in racialist sciences based on 19th and early 20th-century biology; the second concerns "culturalist" interpretations of race, developed from the 1930s onward; the third, emerging in the 1950s, emphasizes the residual nature of "racial prejudice" and inequality in Brazil, critiquing ideas of racial harmony; the fourth perspective, which arose in the 1970s-80s, identifies racial discrimination as a structural feature of Brazilian society, generating inequalities between whites and non-whites in income, education, and other social indicators. We will explore these perspectives in detail below.

Although questions surrounding "human differences" have been present throughout Brazil's social formation, theorizations about race as a scientific category gained prominence after the abolition of slavery (1888) and the establishment of the First Republic (1889) (Schwarcz, 1993). Two pressing concerns troubled the political elites at the time: how to build a developed and civilized nation modeled after European countries, and what to do with the large Indigenous, black, and mixed-race populations who, in the eyes of European and Brazilian racialist theorists, were racially inferior and an obstacle to progress.

Canonical authors of this period — such as Sílvio Romero, Alberto Torres, Oliveira Vianna, and Nina Rodrigues — sought to resolve these supposed dilemmas of Brazilian society by employing the concept of race. Influenced by racialist sciences from Europe and the United States, they treated race as a natural/biological reality. There was a reduction of the social world to racial determinisms, with race understood as an ontological notion, an organizing mechanism of society. Thus, each "racial type" (white, black, Indigenous, and mixed-race) was assigned a distinct character, archetype, and subjective and moral essence. These differences were translated into natural hierarchies and inequalities, with whites ("Aryan," "Caucasian," "Germanic," etc.) at the top and, depending on the author and theoretical references, took turns

at the bottom all the "inferior races" (blacks, indigenous, asians, and mixed-race people) (Cirqueira, 2015). It is important to note that while Indigenous peoples, distant from urban areas, became a focus of Anthropology through ethnic studies, Black people became the "object" of historical and sociological investigations through racialist studies, seen as "problematic" members of a capitalist society undergoing modernization.

The effects of this racial interpretation on social reality included justifying, explaining, and naturalizing structures of inequality and labor control in the post-abolition period, where the institutional framework of slavery was replaced by the fixity of biological racial determinisms (Schwarcz, 1993; Seyferth, 2021). Politically, this interpretation supported policies encouraging European immigration to Brazil to "whiten" the population and territory (Corrêa, 2013), aiming to "develop" the nation.

In the 1930s, a surprising shift occurred in interpretations of race in Brazil. A key milestone was the publication of "Casa Grande & Senzala" (1933) by Gilberto Freyre, which, aligned with the national-populist initiatives of the Vargas government, introduced new and complex theories with a distinctly popular appeal to explain Brazil. At the core of Freyre's interpretation was the replacement of biological race with the concept of culture, influenced by the Cultural Anthropology of German anthropologist Franz Boas (1852-1942). Freyre did not entirely abandon race but presented a more flexible interpretation through the idea of miscegenation. In his view, what characterized and gave uniqueness to Brazilian society was its propensity for and tolerance of racial mixing, leading to a "social democracy" (later termed "racial democracy") despite the absence of "political democracy," due to the supposed lack of racial prejudice in the country.

By culturalizing what had previously been understood in biological terms, Freyre relativized racial determinisms. Moving ambiguously between biology and culture, race became a "plastic" element in his thought. Though he retained terms from earlier racialist science (such as "black," "white," "Indigenous," and "mixed-race"), this approach highlighted the central role of Africans in Brazil's "civilizing process" and "social and cultural formation" (Freyre, 2006) precisely because of its adaptability to a world in the tropics (Cirqueira, 2023). However, it also obscured

the power relations forged through race, which produced inequalities and hierarchies in Brazilian society.

In the 1950s, after World War II and under the auspices of the UNESCO project to study racial relations in Brazil, new perspectives on race emerged. Among the key studies was the "Programa de Pesquisas sobre Relações Raciais no Brasil" (Research Program on Racial Relations in Brazil) (Maio, 1999), particularly those developed by the "São Paulo School of Sociology," funded by UNESCO. Led by Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes (1955), this group treated "race" (as well as "color") as a sociological category, explicitly distancing it from biological or natural qualifications.

Fernandes (2013) sought to understand "color prejudice" in Brazil's racial relations (specifically in São Paulo). Beyond denouncing racial democracy as a "myth" — an ideological distortion of reality — he emphasized the persistence of "slave-order values" in the emerging "competitive order." Fernandes argued that concepts like "black," "white," and "mulatto" were remnants of the slave past in a newly forming class society, destined to disappear with modernization. Implicit in his theorizations was the idea that race (or color differences) would lose meaning in a capitalist Brazil, where class antagonisms would dominate.

Also significant were the critiques by Guerreiro Ramos (1995, pp. 163-164), a sociologist and black movement activist in the 1950s. He criticized scholars who applied "categories and values predominantly derived from European and North American realities," arguing that race had been adopted as an "ideological" construct in Brazil. He was among the first to highlight that the "Negro problem" was not strictly tied to social reality but was a creation of the very science that examined it. Ramos proposed studying race as a "sociological category" within a "national science," grounded in Brazil's concrete reality.

A final shift in interpretations of race emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The military regime, since the 1964 coup, had reinforced the myth of racial democracy as part of Brazilian national identity while silencing activists and researchers who sought to expose racial problems. However, with political reopening and the resurgence of the black movement, new interpretations using race as an analytical category came to the fore. One key development was

the sociology of racial relations, influenced by U.S. debates, which used race to analyze systematic discrimination and its role in generating inequalities in opportunity, treatment, and socioeconomic status between racial and color groups (Guimarães, 2003).

Among the leading researchers of this period, Hasenbalg and Valle (1988) exemplified this approach. By disaggregating official Brazilian statistics by race, they demonstrated that disparities in Brazil had a strong racial/color component, irreducible to socioeconomic factors alone. Their analyses showed that: 1) Statistical groups could be aggregated into "whites" and "non-whites," as there were no substantial differences between Blacks ("pretos") and mixed-race individuals ("pardos") in variables like income, education, and housing etc. ; 2) inequality and disparities in status and class position remained unexplained in interpretations focused on socioeconomic conditions (measured by income, housing, etc.), something that could only be attributed to individuals' race/skin color. Debunking the idea that mixed-race individuals serve as the balancing point in racial relations, the authors demonstrated that position in the "color gradient" (between whites, browns (pardos), and blacks (pretos) does not function as a hierarchical determinant in individuals' structural upward mobility, as the system of inequalities appears more racially polarized in statistics than in social imagination (cf. Guimarães, 2009). In other words, in statistical terms, "non-whites," whether black or brown, not only cluster closely together but also appear equally and more frequently at a disadvantage. This is something that the choice to self-identify as brown rather than black, for example, cannot structurally mitigate, according to the authors (Hasenbalg, 2005; Hasenbalg; Silva, 1988).

Unlike Florestan Fernandes, who viewed racial prejudice and race/color relations as an archaic anomaly in the new competitive order, Hasenbalg and Silva – using race as an analytical category – demonstrated that not only were "racial prejudice" and race functional for the development of Brazilian capitalism, but the reproduction of the racial and "color-based" inequality system required these elements to regulate labor relations. Thus, by seeking to establish points of convergence and differentiation between "color groups" and "social classes" to analyze "social position," they revealed how race, as a "classificatory principle," is structural in Brazilian society, particularly in the production of inequalities and hierarchies.

On the other hand, during this same period of redemocratization, the Black Movement - especially the Unified Black Movement (MNU, 1988) - emphasized the structural and institutional dimension of racism in Brazil. Black intellectuals began targeting the epistemological foundations of theories produced to interpret Brazilian race relations. In the view of thinkers like Lélia Gonzalez (2020), one of the obstacles to interpreting race relations is racism itself, since it results in theoretical perspectives shaped solely by white experiences, viewpoints (and fantasies). Scholars such as Eduardo de Oliveira Oliveira and Beatriz Nascimento (Nascimento, 2021) advocated for a "Black sociology" and "a history made by Black hands," precisely to produce alternative perspectives on race relations and how race is experienced in Brazilian society.

These different perspectives helped shape the understanding of race relations in Brazil, influencing not just the social sciences but also Geography. Next, we will conduct a contrastive reflection on how these different approaches to race were expressed or not in geographic science.

RACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND NATION IN GEOGRAPHIC THOUGHT AT THE DAWN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In this section, we present a panoramic view of the trajectory of the race category in geographic thought produced in Brazil. First, it is important to emphasize that, although many social scientists have not given it due attention, discussions on racial difference had a pronounced geographic (or spatial) foundation. Two examples, among many, illustrate this. The first refers to one of the earliest known uses of the word "race" to designate differences between human beings. François Bernier, in a 1684 article in the *Journal de Sçavants*, presents racial difference as an effect of the natural environment, allowing him to propose a "new" regionalization of the world based on this criterion:

> Geographers have so far divided the Earth into countries or regions. What I have observed in man during my travels leads me to think of dividing it differently. For although in the external form of the body, and especially the face, man are almost all different from one another, according to the different corners of the Earth they inhabit—so much so that those who have traveled widely can often distinguish each particular nation by the face without error—I have further observed that there are, above all, four or five species or races of man whose difference can serve as the basis for a new division of the Earth. (apud Guimarães, 2008, p. 17)

The second example is the use of the race category by Frederich Ratzel and Vidal La Blache. While there is no space in this article to delve deeply into this discussion, both authors operationalized race to qualify human difference in their major works: Anthropogeographie (1882-1891) and Principles of Human Geography (1922). Their work suggests that the "human" expressed in these titles is not a generic and universal human but a fractured, differentiated, and often hierarchized one[2].

In the Brazilian context, geographic theories were central during the formation of the First Republic at the end of the 19th century, where "geographic space was both a reality and a metaphor" (Machado, 1995, p. 310) in debates about national formation and the pursuit of "progress." According to Machado, three key concerns preoccupied thinkers who sought to lead the country toward development: the physical-climatic nature of the territory; the adaptation of individuals to the environment; and the racial characteristics of the inhabitants.

This reality led many thinkers of the nation to produce geographic theorizations, directly or indirectly, even if they did not identify with the discipline. Consequently, given the abolition of slavery (1888) and the large presence of so-called "inferior races" in Brazil, they incorporated assumptions from European racialist sciences into their theories. Sílvio Romero, one of the leading thinkers of the late 19th century, sought to formulate a "theory of Brazil's historical evolution," aiming to "find the laws that governed and continue to determine the formation of

[2] For further exploration of this topic, we recommend consulting Stogiannos (2019), which examines the treatment and presence of race in Ratzel's works, as well as the section titled "Formation of Races" in the Fragments chapter of *Principes de Géographie Humaine* (Vidal de la Blache, 1922)

the genius, spirit, and character of the Brazilian people." He emphasized that among the key factors in understanding the Brazilian nation were the "action of the physical environment" and the "ethnological qualities of the constituent races" (Romero, 1902, pp. 6, 21).

Guided by evolutionary biology, Romero argued that the "origins of Brazil's backwardness" lay primarily in the climate — marked by "excessive heat, torrential rains, and droughts" — and in the "relative incapacity of the three races that constituted the country's population" (*ibid.*, p. 41). His proposed solution was to encourage European immigration and promote miscegenation between the "superior white race" and "inferior races." In his view, miscegenation would solve both problems: it would whiten the population by injecting "superior white blood" and provide the whitened descendants with the biological "tools" to adapt to the tropics. He concluded: "The mestizo is the condition for this victory of the white race, fortifying their blood to enable them to withstand the rigors of our [tropical] climate." (*ibid.*, p. 91)

Oliveira Vianna reproduced this interpretation with greater complexity. He advocated for controlled "Aryan" immigration, distributed regionally across Brazil to avoid concentrations, as had occurred in the Brazilian south. He believed that distinctions existed even among European whites due to different natural environments in Europe, leading to racial differentiations such as "Celts," "Mediterraneans," "Nordics," "Iberians," and "Dinarics." Since each of these "racial types" had a distinct "adaptive response" to tropical climates, he proposed a "rational distribution of Aryan ethnicities according to their greater or lesser adaptability to Brazil's diverse climatic zones" (Vianna, 1959 [1932], pp. 49, 69).

To analyze Brazil's physical environment and the "acclimatization" of "Aryan types," Vianna drew on contemporary geographic debates (Cirqueira, 2018). The author demonstrated familiarity with the theoretical trends in Geography of that period, such as "the 'anthropogeography' of the Germans, the 'social geography' of the French, the 'human geography' of the English (sic), or what the Americans more aptly call 'human ecology'" (Vianna, 1959[1932], p. 163). However, the main references for his arguments were Ratzel and La Blache, interpreted through Lucien Febvre's work *La Terre et l'évolution humaine* (1922). Through this approach, the author favored La Blache's "possibilism" over Ratzel's "determinism,"

as strategically, "possibilism" freed him from viewing the tropical environment as an insuperable, degenerative prison and allowed him to project Brazil's "social evolution" problem onto "men" - and consequently, onto "racial or ethnic types." Ultimately, rejecting Ratzel's "geographic fatalism" in favor of La Blache's "possibilism" enabled understanding Brazil's intrinsic "tropical environment" not as a problem, but as an open horizon of possibilities for the "various types of the Aryan race" (*ibid.*, p. 138, 163).

Regarding geographers contemporary to Romero and Vianna who incorporated the race category into their theoretical frameworks, we can highlight Delgado de Carvalho and Everardo Backheuser. Both geographers devoted efforts since the 1920s to introduce "Modern Geography" into the Brazilian context – which in their interpretation represented a more "scientific" and less "memorization-based" and "descriptive" perspective. They also engaged in debates about development, progress and nation-building during the final years of the First Republic, offering geographic interpretations of this context. Since race was one of the central themes in national debates, both incorporated this concept into their theoretical systems.

Carvalho, heavily influenced by the French geographic perspective, sought to establish "Modern Geography" by positioning the discipline within the natural sciences. The "natural region," presented as a fundamental concept of the field, was understood as a product of the physical-natural environment that, while incorporating elements like topography, climate and vegetation, treated the human component as a "factor" that played a fundamental role in processes - yet remained subordinate to natural forces like any other environmental element. Thus, the "natural region" expressed the relationship and synthesis between human groups and their specific physical-natural environment.

Carvalho's approach to the "natural region" offered a solution to issues concerning Brazilian national unity in the early 20th century. He presented the diversity of Brazil's natural regions as an interconnected whole, reinforcing an ideal of "unity in diversity" that transcended the nation's internal heterogeneity. In his words:

> By moving away from the notion of theoretically equal and equivalent States as established in the Constitution, we shall emphasize the differentiating, diversifying factors that make national zones complement each other. More eloquently and urgently will emerge the sacrosanct idea of union that has brought honor to our history and constitutes our prestige and strength (Carvalho, 1925, p. 88)

Beyond addressing national unity through geographic discourse, another issue emerging from Carvalho's work concerns human diversity within Brazilian territory, which he sought to interpret through race, conceptualized as "human social types." He understood the physical-natural environment as the determining condition in the formation and differentiation of human "types." Thus, he aligned with perspectives affirming the existence of "human social types" particularly suited to each specific environment or "natural requirement." In his own terms: "each [natural] region forms a human social type, molded to its natural requirements" (Carvalho, 1930, p. 242).

One problem central to his discussions about the formation of human "types" in Brazil was the miscegenation. Carvalho's propositions were essentially shaped by ongoing debates on this topic in Brazil. Amid discussions oscillating between optimistic and pessimistic positions on miscegenation, he sided with the former. Carvalho agreed with authors like Sílvio Romero and Oliveira Vianna who believed miscegenation was not a degenerative process (as claimed by European theorists) but a necessary and transitional stage that would culminate in prosperity by producing a whiter and supposedly more civilized society. A novel aspect of his approach was linking regional dimensions with racial mixing.

Since Carvalho conceived "human social types" as shaped by environmental "requirements," he connected his notion of Brazil's interconnected natural regions with the formation of regional "types." In essence, the natural environment conditioned the formation of various Brazilian mestizo types and the most common and characteristic were: the "mameluco" of the central plateaus; the southern "gaúcho"; the "jagunço" of the northeastern semi-arid region; and the Amazonian "caboclo" (*ibid.*).

However, when addressing miscegenation, Carvalho advocated for the superiority and predominance of the "white type" in the mixing process. In this context, he not only supported policies encouraging white European immigration but also produced geographic discourse predicting and aiming for national whitening. He stated:

> The pure white elements annually brought to Brazil through immigration, sexual selection, and the absence here of the racial prejudice so entrenched among Anglo-Saxon peoples, are factors leading to the extinction of mestizos. Within a century, it is likely that Brazil's population will be predominantly white, with the African and Amerindian races extinct (Carvalho, 1923, p. 128) [3].

Alongside Carvalho, Everardo Backheuser is also considered one of the introducers of "Modern Geography" in Brazil. Like many authors of his time, he focused on issues he deemed pressing for Brazilian national and territorial unity, addressing the problem of race concerning the population. Although in dialogue with Carvalho, he presented a relatively different interpretation by employing the notion of "anthropogeography" based on Ratzel.

In his conception, "man is a geographic agent," and geographic interpretation must express the "close connection between man and his environment of activity." Here, he uses ratzelian theories to argue that the more developed and civilized "man" becomes, the more tied he is to the environment—from which them draws resources—and the greater his propensity for migration (or expansion). It is in these terms that "the study of the human component translates (...) into the examination of the various stages of human culture. This assessment of the degree of culture seems to us an element of enormous geographic value. It is through it that we see the action of the human factor" (Backheuser, 1926–27, pp. 81–82).

On the other hand, Backheuser sees "man" as essentially nomadic. In his reading, migrations "have typically geographic causes. Geographic, too, are the adaptations undergone by animals and peoples when they ultimately bear the decisive weight of the physical

[3] It is important to note that Carvalho bases his arguments on João Batista de Lacerda, specifically drawing from the claims made in his text "On the Brazilian Mestizo" presented at the Universal Races Congress (1911), which emphasized the disappearance of Black, Indigenous, and mixed-race populations, and the whitening of the Brazilian population within four generations.

environment, which leaves indelible marks on individuals and communities" (ibid., p. 79). Based on Ratzel's theories of human migration, Backheuser concludes that human displacements are related to a process of adaptation, overcoming, and environmental exhaustion (land and climate).

Following this reasoning, the author emphasizes that humanity emerged in the tropics and, through processes of adjustment and overcoming, moved to temperate and cold climate areas, where "advanced civilizations" now reside. It is precisely at this point that Backheuser links the idea of "degree of culture" with Ratzel's theory of "geographic position," sustaining the understanding that, in the near future, a civilization will emerge in the tropics.

To create an optimistic projection for Brazil, Backheuser first accepts the premise that developed peoples are in the temperate zones of the globe—implicitly referring to Europe. However, by considering the use of resources provided by the land, he relativizes the development process of human groups, as a people's "degree of culture" determines the possibilities for resource utilization. Consequently, since all lands provide resources that can, in theory, be exploited, the development process remains open, awaiting the historical moment when a people reach the necessary "cultural stage" to properly exploit their land[4].

The author uses this logic to argue that if "man," in "civilizational" terms, could expand and develop in temperate and cold zones by properly exploiting land resources, this process could also occur in the tropics—specifically in Brazil, a "space" abundant and rich in natural resources. Thus, he predicts the displacement of civilization from temperate zones to the tropical region.

Despite this optimistic perspective on Brazil, race appears as a stumbling block in Backheuser's interpretation. It is important to emphasize that the author denies race as an explanatory factor in geographic processes involving "man's action" in "space." Nevertheless, even as he replaces the word "race" with "culture," the same differentiating and hierarchical conceptual principle persists. By retaining evolutionist logic, hierarchies are projected onto culture, and since culture is linked to human groups—still recognized by their diacritical traits—

[4] The example used to substantiate this claim is the case of England, which - despite having mineral coal deposits within its territory for thousands of years - only developed techniques for exploiting this available natural resource in the 19th century.

a culturally based hierarchy remains racialized. European and white peoples, "culturally advanced," remain superior, while the rest of "humanity," non-white and backward, remains inferior.

This position is expressed in Backheuser's propositions about Brazil's political structure. According to him, territorial unity and national identity are inseparable parts of a modern nation-state, and the people (and their "degree of culture") emerge as the elements that give unity, meaning, and totality to these factors. Given the inferior nature of Brazilian population's "culture," the author concluded that this aspect needed to be altered for the country to achieve an advanced degree of civilization.

In Backheuser's proposed solution to this problem, two factors stood out: education and whitening. As part of the *escolanovista* (New School) movement, he emphasizes that the popularization of education is essential—a guide for "civilizational progress." As for the second aspect—which seems to directly clash with the first—Backheuser saw the immigration of white Europeans to Brazilian territory as a path to national development. For him, this would involve both a cultural "contribution" and a genetic input through the introduction of "pure European blood."

In this sense, even considering the supposedly debilitating effects of the tropical environment, Backheuser still believed that white European migration was crucial to "invigorate" and "compensate" for the harmful effects of the tropics on the already weakened Euro-Brazilian population in our land.

> The more we reflect on fundamental problems, the more convinced we become of the necessity and urgency of rigorously increasing European immigration. It is perhaps less necessary in its material function—the call for agricultural labor (though even here it is, strictly speaking, indispensable for the country's progress)—**than as new and pure blood to correct, through salutary miscegenation, the damages left by the tropical climate on the third or fourth generation of originally European stock** (ibid., p. 107, emphasis added).

THE FOUNDING OF GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENTS AND THE QUESTION OF THE WHITE COLONIZER IN THE TROPICS

The 1930s brought a new reality to debates about race relations and racial difference in Brazil. The populist and nationalist policies of the Getúlio Vargas government—particularly the publication of *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933)—moved away from pessimistic views of the Brazilian population (and consequently, its culture) and established a "positive" vision of the country as a place of harmonious encounter among the three races: white Europeans, Indigenous peoples, and black Africans. Amid the institutional modernization driven by the Estado Novo, several institutions were created or restructured at various levels of the state. As part of this process, Geography programs were established at the University of São Paulo (1934) and the University of Brazil (1935). A "French mission" of geographers was assigned to structure these programs. The development of university-level Geography in Brazil defined a new regime of debates within and about the discipline, shifting the center of geographic knowledge production and dissemination away from institutions like the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute), the Sociedade Brasileira de Geografia (Brazilian Society of Geography), and the Colégio Pedro II (Pedro II College). Consequently, French geographers assumed key positions of influence and representation in the field of Geography in the country.

This had a strong impact on racial debates within the discipline. Discussions that had been ongoing since the early 20th century became confined to school Geography, particularly at Colégio Pedro II, where some of the pre-1934 geographers remained. It is worth noting that the geographers at Colégio Pedro II were responsible for designing programs and Geography textbooks distributed nationwide, meaning their interpretations of racial difference were also disseminated through these materials. Recent research on the history of school Geography, though still lacking qualitative analysis, has shown that racial content was consistently present in Geography textbooks from the 1920s to the 1970s (Barros, 2022).

The nature of debates on race relations, now led by French geographers, also changed. Unlike the previous generation of geographers—who sought to produce or justify a notion of

national unity through geographic interpretations, forcing them to address the problem of race in the population—the French geographers, fascinated yet confused by Brazil's racial relations, focused their discussions on white European migration and its adaptation and assimilation in a tropical society and environment. Would white migrants thrive in the tropics? Would they fade away through racial mixing? Geographers like Pierre Monbeig and Pierre Deffontaines, among others, used these questions to analyze the Euro-white population in Brazil.

In the "Commentary" section of the Boletim Geográfico (1947), Monbeig sought to understand the relationship between the "white man and the tropical climate." Drawing from Max Sorre's *Les fondements biologiques de la géographie humaine* (1943), he presented the state of the debate, avoiding "simplistic affirmations" and "a priori conclusions," and related it to the Brazilian context.

Regarding the "action of different climatic elements on the [human] organism," Monbeig (1947, p. 124) raised several questions: "Physiological behavior at altitude"; The effects of "luminosity" and "atmospheric electricity"; The influence of "winds," etc. Do these phenomena cause "physiological anomalies with repercussions on activity and the mind?" In his view, "patient studies (...) have established optimal conditions and revealed how even minor imbalances in normal climatic situations can produce biological disturbances." Thus, linking this premise to Geography, he emphasized that, in many cases, "the formation of the ecumene may reflect the influence of climatic elements on the organism."

At this point in his argument, Monbeig connects the ecumene to the discontinuities generated by climate effects, "racial differences," and their "contrasts in qualities." He centers his analysis on the "famous problem of tropical settlement—the question of white acclimatization to hot climates" (p. 124). To illustrate the complexity of this debate, he contrasts opposing theses:

> Tends to consider the problem, ultimately, as nonexistent, with acclimatization perfectly possible without special measures; [and] denies any alteration in the functional activities of whites in truly tropical climates. The success of Dutch colonization in the East Indies fully justifies their optimism. (*ibid*., p. 124)

He also presents the "pessimistic position" of the British, Australians, and Americans. For this, he draws on the works of geographers Grenfell Price and Herber J. Fleure. The former, in his book *White Settlers in the Tropics* (1939), states that "even the most ardent optimist has doubts about the extent of the conquest [colonization] when hearing about nervous disorders and learning that European children must often be sent back to Europe for medical treatment" (apud MONBEIG, 1947, p. 124).

Remarkably, while Monbeig highlights an "annual average of 16°C to 23°C" as the ideal temperature for human physiology (notably, Europe's average temperature at the time), he critiques both theses, arguing that regional differences in tropical effects on physiology—and thus on the ecumene—must be considered:

> The tropics are not strictly identical (...) nor are all colonizers the same everywhere. One cannot derive a universally applicable principle from Dutch colonies in the East Indies, British settlers in the Antilles, German groups in barely tropical parts of South Africa, or Luso-Hispanic settlements in the New World.(*ibid*., pp. 124–25).

Monbeig (*idem*, p. 125) also notes a gap in Sorre's work, believing that "the concern with only considering geographically perfect cases likely excluded Brazilian examples." Thus, commenting on Brazil's multiracial reality—perhaps as a call for scientific research, given the "extremely limited documentation"—he observes that while immigration initially concentrated in the "great São Paulo plantations" (with a temperate climate), newer "pioneer zones" with "typically tropical climates" received "the most heterogeneous elements: native Brazilians, descendants of Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Germans, recent arrivals, Hungarians, Latvians, Japanese, not to mention English estate administrators." Geography, therefore, should examine this "racial laboratory" to understand the tropics' effects on this diverse white population in Brazil.

While Monbeig emphasized the need for scientific investigation, Pierre Deffontaines focused on the processes, consequences, and results of white colonization in Brazil. Deffontaines

follows a late-1920s debate trend led by anthropologist João Batista de Lacerda, who argued for the progressive whitening of Brazil's population. For Deffontaines, Brazil—unlike other tropical regions—was the "most typical example of white settlement conquering a vast tropical and equatorial zone." Thus, "here, it is no longer a question of the white race's possibilities in the tropics, but of results" (DEFFONTAINES, 1945 [1938], p. 1071).

A key assumption in Deffontaines' interpretation was that racial "types" in Brazil resulted from both miscegenation and specific natural environments. He describes human "types" as regional products: "the Cearenses, an astonishingly robust race living in Northeast Brazil"; "in the south, the São Paulo plateau fostered the emergence of particularly prolific, robust, and adventurous men"; "in the heart of Brazil, the highlands gave rise to another type—the Mineiros, a kind of mountaineer." Despite differences, these "types" shared a prevailing "European appearance" and "white composition." Thus, "new varieties of human types emerged, almost white in somatic aspect or increasingly approximating it" (p. 1070–71).

A question Deffontaines raises (*idem*, p. 1071) is: "Does this general whitening of Brazil correspond to a change in ways of life?" In his view, while somatic transformation was rapid, changes in "genres de vie" (ways of life) were slower. Many white migrants and settlers adopted "habits and lifestyles akin to those of primitive colored populations." In some cases, he points to the "caboclização" (caboclization) of white Europeans, such as Germans in Espírito Santo and São Paulo who "regressed to a near-savage state within decades." Nevertheless, he concludes: "despite this, Brazil as a whole represents a singular case of a tropical zone in the process of whitening."

A GEOGRAPHY FOR RACIAL DEMOCRACY... STILL RACIST

Despite Geography having carried racial discourses from the late 19th and early 20th centuries at its core, the process of the discipline's institutionalization in universities did not question or theoretically revise these themes afterward—unlike other disciplines, particularly Sociology in the 1950s (cf. Bastide; Fernandes, 1955). The consequence was that geographers

continued to reproduce, implicitly and explicitly, stereotypes and prejudiced views for decades. The Military Coup exacerbated this scenario, as the state adopted the ideology of "racial democracy" as a founding myth of the nation and suppressed any debate on race relations or the existence of racism in Brazilian society.

This context produced something unusual in Brazilian geographers' discourse on race relations: while the idea of "racial democracy" was being absorbed, the entire framework of categories and theories from 19th and early 20th-century racialist sciences was used to interpret this "mixed-race society." For example, authors who despised miscegenation—seeing it as degeneration or a temporary stage toward whitening—were referenced. Oliveira Vianna and Sílvio Romero, already mentioned, were constant references in geographic texts or works by geographers on "ethnicity" or "race" in the Brazilian population, alongside Gilberto Freyre, Roquette Pinto, and Afrânio Peixoto, as well as Europeans like Julian Huxley, Camille Desmoulins, and Blumenbach de Tourville. Geographers of the 1950s and 1960s continued to reproduce racist stereotypes, albeit enveloped it in the language of racial democracy.

As an example, consider the school textbook *Geografia Humana* by Delgado de Carvalho and Terezinha de Castro (1963), which, in a pseudo-scientific manner, presented "classification criteria" and expressions coined by racialist scientists who relied on anthropometry and craniometry. Anachronistically, they spoke of a "degree of civilization" and classified human groups based on "skin color," "hair," "stature," "head shape," "cephalic index," "facial angle," "nasal index," "cranial capacity," etc.—terminology that was already outdated and deemed inappropriate for analyzing human difference.

The same logic can be seen in Aroldo de Azevedo. The geographer mixes statistics and anthropological readings about the "ethnicities" and "races" present in the Brazilian population. For instance, he uncritically employs theories by Sílvio Romero, Oliveira Vianna, and Gilberto Freyre at a time when the outdated, fallacious, and distorted nature of many of their interpretations was pointed out. Contradictorily, Azevedo (1975 [1969], pp. 120, 122–123) reproduces Vianna's racist typologies—such as the claim that "[the mulatto] lacks great disposition for heavy labor, nor much inclination for commerce or industry," or that "[the

caboclos] can become treacherous and vengeful, sometimes fanatical in religious matters"—while simultaneously praising the "mixed-race character" of Brazilian society, which he calls the "main aspect of the Brazilian population."

A landmark of this phase of geographic interpretations on racial difference in the 1970s is the article *As etnias brasileiras (RODRIGUES, 1970)*, published in the collection *Brasil: a terra e o homem*, edited by Aroldo de Azevedo. This text combines old-fashioned perspectives with contemporary debates on "ethnic" and "racial" aspects of the Brazilian population. Although the author provides a sharp statistical and demographic analysis of Brazil's ethnic and racial composition, he still invokes 19th-century racialist stereotypes without critical reflection on their meanings.

In the late 1970s, Brazilian geographers turned their attention to geographic science itself, reevaluating the discipline's trajectory up to that point. The so-called "critical turn" occurred when Brazilian Geography gained some freedom from the authoritarian state and began asserting more autonomy in defining its research interests. The moment seemed fertile for developing a Brazilian geographic approach to the racial question. However, according to Ratts (2010), what happened was a "near disappearance" of race in favor of social class as the central analytical element. The critical turn did not reckon with the "conservative" racialist readings produced throughout the 20th century, nor did it reevaluate these approaches—in effect, race was buried alive in the field of Geography. Perhaps for this reason, a strong critique emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, led primarily by Black geographers interested in analyzing race relations through a geographic lens.

NEW ACTORS ENTER THE SCENE: CRITICAL READINGS OF RACE IN GEOGRAPHY

Since the 1990s, Black geographers in Brazil have sought to interpret race relations through geographic frameworks. These approaches are influenced on one hand, by debates on the effects of racism in Brazil—as, since the political reopening after the civil-military dictatorship, the Black Movement had been highlighting racial inequalities and denouncing the

myth of "racial democracy." Black geographers, some of whom were organic activists, took up the demands and themes of the Black Movement in their research. On the other hand, they engaged in a productive—though tense—dialogue with "Critical Geography." While incorporating this theoretical current's aspirations for social justice and political critiques of inequality, they also critiqued its class-reductionist tendencies and sought to address gaps in understanding capitalism's racialized hierarchies.

Below, we present five geographic interpretive frameworks that center race or racial difference as analytical categories. It is important to note that research on this theme has grown significantly since the early 2000s, as shown by Cirqueira and Corrêa (2014) and Santos (2020). While this growth is positive for advancing geographic approaches to race, the extensive material requires us to focus on a selection that represents the diversity of emerging trends.

In the 1980s–90s, amid debates around Brazil's constitutional reform, Milton Santos developed a geographic perspective on citizenship, culminating in his book *Espaço do Cidadão* (1987). Influenced by dialogue with the Black Movement and his personal experiences, Santos proposed an analysis of how racial prejudice distorts citizenship in Brazilian society. His framework examines the "black question" through three dimensions: "Individuality," "corporeality," and "citizenship." Individuality involves subjective data and the individual's perception of the world and the society in which they are inserted; corporeality implies objective data that mediate individuality and the world (or society); and citizenship is defined as the political "franchises" instituted in and by the State, something that is "above and beyond corporeality and individuality" (SANTOS, 1996\1997, 2000, 2002[2000]).

> In the Brazilian case, a person's body imposes itself as a visible mark, and it is common to privilege appearance as the primary condition for objectification and judgment, creating a demarcation line that identifies and separates, despite the other's claims to individuality and citizenship. Thus, subjectivity itself (...) runs up against the ostensible fact of corporeality, whose evaluation, however, is prejudiced (SANTOS, 2002[2000], p. 159–160).

Therefore, due to the effects of the slaveholding past and the proliferation of racism in the civil sphere, the corporeality of a Black person has more resonance in society than their individuality. This relegates Black people to a "mutilated citizenship" or "incomplete citizenship," since the body, signified in a prejudiced manner, overrides and overshadows individuality. There is no well-structured elaboration around this, but for Milton Santos, to address this situation, the State should establish political actions to truly incorporate the Black population into the nation.

In studies on urban space, we have two examples of research that seek to cast a gaze upon problems of the city of Rio de Janeiro from an understanding of race as a structural element in the configuration of socio-spatial inequalities, yet which draw on distinct theoretical and methodological currents. Andrelino Campos and Geny Guimarães are two Black geographers and activists, and their work is, without a doubt, marked by this dual positioning.

Campos's studies are directed toward the construction of urban studies from the analysis of the racial question. Oliveira (2016, p. 11) states that the geographer "persistently sought to construct a theory about the urban that could account for the spatiality of the violent Brazilian racism" in the book *Do quilombo à favela*, a landmark in studies on favelas and criminalized territories. Campos (2010) develops his argument based on a historical investigation of the formation of quilombos in Rio de Janeiro, traversing the process of marginalization of the Black population in the post-abolition period. His critical perspective reveals the connections between the nineteenth-century nation-building project and the systematic exclusion of those emerging from the slave system from the nascent labor market—a process that, in the author's words, "was a political-cultural decision with a logic guided by the effort toward the white appearance of the urban population" (*ibid.*, p. 48).

Campos builds his argument from elements that indicate the systematic exclusion of the Black population from decision-making bodies, particularly in the political field, and the effects of this on the spatialization of Black groups in the city. Drawing on Otávio Ianni, Campos presents a definition of "discrimination" that approximates what is referred to as structural racism (Almeida, 2018), understanding that the notion of races among human beings was socially constructed and constitutes a mechanism that maintains social distances. "The construction of

the nation was not homogeneous; yet the 'Other,' not in a clear way, remained very different, not only in color but in all activities, considered almost always as inferior" (Campos, 2010, p. 50).

In his analysis of "racial prejudice" as a constitutive element of the Brazilian national project, Campos (2006) develops a theoretical foundation that fills the gaps left by geographical approaches that adhered to the myth of racial democracy. His work deconstructs the racism implicit in this hegemonic discourse and proposes new analytical paradigms for a Geography committed to understanding the country's socio-spatial formation. In his later work — *O planejamento urbano e a 'invisibilidade' dos afrodescendentes: discriminação étnico-racial, intervenção estatal e segregação sócio-espacial na cidade do Rio de Janeiro* — Campos (2006) reaffirms the historical and constructed character of the category of race, a product of the colonial context that persists into the present. Thus, his analysis centers on racism as an imaginary construct materialized in spatial dynamics, developing a geographical reading of the processes of invisibilization of the Black population in the urban context of Rio de Janeiro. This approach reveals how racialized power structures are inscribed into urban space through mechanisms of urban planning and regulation.

Guimarães (2015), in her work *Rio Negro de Janeiro: olhares geográficos de heranças negras e o racismo no processo-projeto patrimonial*, undertakes a critical analysis of the criteria for selecting and constituting heritage assets, investigating the underlying reasons for what the author calls the process of erasure, silencing, and cultural appropriation of Afro-Brazilian heritage in the formation of the national heritage and Brazilian identity. The researcher thus revives the discussion on racism as a structuring element of the national project, establishing a theoretical dialogue with Campos's propositions. Although both studies share the spatial focus on the city of Rio de Janeiro and analyze the role of the State in producing socio-spatial segregation, they differ in theoretical and methodological references. Guimarães (2015) adopts a perspective more aligned with Cultural Geography, while Campos (2006) grounds his analysis in the assumptions of traditional Urban Geography. The former develops a methodology centered on the perspective of the Black subject, "from the Black themselves" (Guimarães, 2015, p. 34), anchored in ethnomethodological and Afro-epistemological approaches, explicitly

embracing interdisciplinarity as a structuring axis of her investigation. The author further makes explicit her theoretical-political positioning through the strategic use of the first person in her writing, in dialogue with the notion of "escrevivência" from the writer Conceição Evaristo.

Regarding theoretical contributions, both authors converge in analyzing racism as a determining factor in Brazilian urban dynamics, particularly in processes of socio-spatial segregation—an aspect that constitutes the main vector for inserting the racial theme into the field of contemporary Urban Geography. As for the categories of analysis, both Guimarães (2015) and Campos (2006) mobilize the concept of territory, albeit with distinct emphases. Guimarães works with the notion of diasporic territorialities, conceiving them as "processes of territorialization that may take on 'closed,' 'traditional,' 'flexible,' and 'multiple' configurations" (Guimarães, 2015, p. 239), understanding the diaspora as "a catalyzing element of processes of deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and multiterritoriality" (Guimarães, 2015, p. 239). Campos, in turn, articulates the concept of territoriality to community identities and social movements, privileging an analysis of struggles for recognition and the right to the city.

Alex Ratts (2003) is one of the first Brazilian authors who, from a geographical perspective, seeks to articulate the concepts of gender, race, and space. Recognizing that these categories have historically diverse meanings and derivations in scientific thought, the author proposes the "controlled intersection" of these three variables in geographical interpretation. One of the assumptions guiding his readings is that "[t]he subalternization of gender, according to race, presents a spatial dimension." In justifying this statement, the author emphasizes that

> racial relations have a clear spatial dimension, just as gender relations are constructed in highly defined spatial realms. Put differently, private and public spaces are experienced differently and unequally by men and women, with some being qualified as masculine and others as feminine, and by Blacks and whites. In Brazilian society, some of these distinctions are not exclusive, which does not mean that they do not exist. (ibid., p. 1)

The author's focus for understanding the intersection between gender, race, and space falls on the "trajectory of Black women," whose "displacements" involve "routes, not only geometric,

between rural and urban Black groupings and between public and private spaces, corresponding to a transit through differentiated socio-racial realms" (*ibid.*, p. 1). Thus, by "spatializing" the readings of Lélia Gonzalez, the results of his analyses indicate that Black women, moving between private and public spaces, undergo identification processes that, marked by combined racism and sexism, constitute in the present "differentiated recreations of enslaved women" (today: mulatta, domestic worker, and nanny; in the recent past: maidservants, maids, wet nurses, or "mães pretas" (black mothers). The spatial contexts of interpellation of each of these "icons" or stereotypes represent mobile and shifting limits and barriers in the lives of Black women. This contributes to the understanding that the experiences and representations of Black women, from the position of inequality, are apprehended as a "changing same" in Brazilian society, for, even though their identification varies in time-space and there is a "mythification" in the social imaginary about their figure, it is fixed in the lowest strata of society.

From a different perspective, but also seeking to highlight the complexity and multidimensionality that traverse processes of racialization within power structures, Renato Emerson dos Santos (2012) endeavors to interpret "the spatial dimension of racial relations" and "to discuss racial relations based on reasoning centered on space." Since race, a social construct, is a "principle of classification that orders and regulates behaviors and social relations," it has a direct link to Geography, for "racial relations inscribe space, are constituted in space, and with space. Revealing these spatialities is the task of geography" (*ibid.*, p. 38).

Drawing from a reading of coloniality (of power, of knowledge, and of being) and the idea of "social classification" (rather than "social class"), the author emphasizes that "coloniality is a pattern of power that articulates diverse dimensions of social existence" and, consequently, interweaves multiple determinants of hierarchization and domination (in addition to race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, origin, etc.), something that operates at various scales, from the global to interpersonal relations. In the author's view, interpretative efforts should be oriented toward understanding the combinations and overlaps of hierarchies, which express "multiple axes of subalternization and discrimination of individuals and groups." Racism, from this perspective, appears as a "multidimensional system of social classification" that, in the Brazilian

case, has corporeal traits as its main classificatory reference—though these may be associated with other factors. What Santos seeks to emphasize here is that race "may or may not be an independent variable"; "it may, in a given context, be tied to another variable (...) or it may be mobilized independently"; it may "emphasize a subalternized or a valued position, may annul or relativize another, or may even 'discursively substitute' another" (*ibid.*, p. 48). All this is conditioned and dictated by "context," which is characterized by a process of "racialized social ordering" or "spatio-temporal ordering of categories and systems of social classification."

In transposing these readings to an interpretation of the spatiality of racial relations, Santos emphasizes that: the valorization/mobilization of axes of belonging in social interactions varies, with moments in which they regulate social relations and moments in which they do not; and the complexity of the classificatory systems themselves and of the structures of "belonging" changes from context to context (*ibid.*, p. 42). Drawing on the works of Sansone, Santos emphasizes that racial relations produce "hard areas" and "soft areas," that is, "areas where the racial dimension matters, where normally this weighs negatively for Blacks," and "soft areas," in which "being Black does not hinder (...) and may, at times, even bring prestige" (*ibid.*, p. 42–44). These "areas," associated with "contexts of interaction," generate

> a complex pattern of racial relations that mixes, in the daily life of social relations, moments where there are interactions marked by horizontality, integration, and equality between whites and Blacks and, at the same time, other moments where there are verticalities, hierarchies, and differences that are transformed into disadvantages, or unequal advantages, between these groups. (*ibid.*, p. 44)

The multiple and complex classificatory systems produce equally multiple forms of "spatialization." The organization of Brazilian racial relations, guided by a "classification of social contexts," produces "black spaces" and "white spaces." Although this production is marked by processes of hierarchization and segregation, it does not occur in an absolute way. Black Movements, through anti-racist actions, dispute the meaning and production of these spatialities and affirm Blackness positively. In this sense, even though race is constituted as an instrument of domination and social control, the black population establishes processes of reversibility by

imprinting “spatial scripts and inscriptions” through “toponyms of resistance” and creating “spaces for the valorization of Blackness” and “political spatializations” (*ibid.*, p. 64) that seek to produce spaces, perhaps even a world, without racism.

CONCLUSION: WHERE IS RACE GOING IN GEOGRAPHY?

Throughout this article, we have sought to demonstrate that race is not a recent theme in Geography. On the contrary, geographic science has actively contributed to the development of racial differentiations and hierarchies among human beings. In 20th-century Brazil, this process took on a specific configuration, shaped by debates on the "problem of race" in the country. Over the history of geographic thought, racial debates have taken different paths, and in the current period, race has once again gained attention among Brazilian geographers.

Beyond the studies we have cited, the methodological operationalization of the race category in Geography has been a focus of the Rede de Geógrafes Negres (Black Geographers Network). This national collective emerged in the context of transformations in Brazilian race relations, reflecting the increased enrollment of Black students in higher education—a direct result of affirmative action policies since the 2000s. Black geographers, in contrast to past scholarship, are proposing new perspectives for a geographic approach to the racial question, perspectives that are deeply tied to their own experiences in Brazilian academia, which for a long time treated the "Black" as an object of study rather than a subject of knowledge production.

Research on race in Geography has grown significantly, displaying great theoretical and methodological diversity. The most evident sign of this is the increase in theses and dissertations on the subject in Geography graduate programs. In a survey, Santos (2020) identified 126 theses and dissertations addressing "ethnic-racial" relations in Brazil, produced between 1987 and 2018. While most of this research comes from programs in the Southeast Brazil, it spans institutions across all Brazilian regions, reflecting a diversity of themes, empirical approaches, and methodologies in how race is conceptualized in Geography. It is also important to highlight several edited volumes that explore the complex field of ethnic and racial relations through

Geography, including: *Diversidade, espaço e relações étnico-raciais* (Santos, 2007), *Espaço e diferença: abordagens geográficas da diferenciação étnica, racial e de gênero* (Costa; Ratts, 2018), *Caderno Temático: Geografias Negras* (Cirqueira *et al*., 2020), *Pensamentos Geográficos Africanos e Indígenas* (Lima-Papayá *et al*., 2021). Additionally, there is a growing effort to understand the "Indigenous question" through the lens of race relations (moving beyond ethnic and culturalist studies) in Geography. In short, the various labels applied to theoretical work on race in Geography reveal both convergences and divergences, indicating that this field of study—still in formation—is highly fertile and open to diverse approaches.

Finally, it is crucial to note that a movement is underway within Brazilian Geography that questions and challenges the discipline's limits in addressing race and racism. While it is too early to say whether this movement will lead to a definitive "turn" among geographers, one key development is that—alongside the growing volume of research—institutional actions are being taken, particularly by black geographers, to bring these issues into debate. Among these efforts, we highlight the "Por uma Geo-grafia Negra" (For a Black Geography) Manifesto (2019), presented by a group of Black geographers representing 20 research centers, laboratories, and academic institutions from all five Brazilian regions at the XIII National Meeting of Graduate Studies and Research in Geography (ENANPEGE), held in September 2019 in São Paulo. As this movement continues trying to affect the geographic institutions, we will see where the debates on ethnic and racial relations in Geography are headed.

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