INSTITUTO LATINO-AMERICANO DE ECONOMIA, SOCIEDADE E POLÍTICA (ILAESP)

PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM RELAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS

On the edge

or 'When sexualities and gender identities modernise: Paraguayans and Brazilians at the border between Foz do iguaçu and Ciudad del Este'

Nickolas Sá

Foz do Iguaçu
2022

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Dissertação apresentada ao Instituto Latino-Americano de Economia, Sociedade e Política da Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana, como requisito à obtenção do título de Mestre em Relações Internacionais.

Orientadora: Profa. Dra. Ana Carolina Teixeira Delgado

O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil (CAPES)

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Foz do Iguaçu, 11 de abril de 2022.

Catalogação elaborada pelo Setor de Tratamento da Informação
Catalogação de Publicação na Fonte. UNILA - BIBLIOTECA LATINO-AMERICANA - PTI

O48
Oliveira, Nickolas Gomes de Sá.
On the edge or? When sexualities and gender identities modernise: Paraguayans and Brazilians at the border between Foz do iguaçu and Ciudad del Este? / Nickolas Gomes de Sá Oliveira. - Foz do Iguaçu-PR, 2022.
138 f.: il.

Dissertação (Mestrado) - Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana. Instituto Latino-Americano de Economia, Sociedade e Política. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais. Foz do Iguaçu-PR, 2022.
Orientador: Ana Carolina Teixeira Delgado.

1. Mobility. 2. Modernity. 3. Border. 4. Sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. I. Delgado, Ana Carolina Teixeira. II. Título.

CDU 305(1-04)

Escrevemos o Anti-Édipo a dois. ***Como cada um de nós era vários, já era muita gente. Utilizamos tudo o que nos aproximava, o mais próximo e o mais distante.*** *Distribuímos hábeis pseudônimos para dissimular. Por que preservamos nossos nomes? Por hábito, exclusivamente por hábito. Para passarmos despercebidos. Para tornar imperceptível, não a nós mesmos, mas o que nos faz agir, experimentar ou pensar. E, finalmente, porque é agradável falar como todo mundo e dizer o sol nasce, quando todo mundo sabe que essa é apenas uma maneira de falar. Não chegar ao ponto em que não se diz mais EU, mas ao ponto em que já não tem qualquer importância dizer ou não dizer EU. Não somos mais nós mesmos. Cada um reconhecerá os seus. Fomos ajudados, aspirados, multiplicados.*

Deleuze & Guattari
(Mil Platôs, 1980)

EM BUSCA DE MULTIPLICIDADES REVOLUCIONÁRIAS

Ter atitudes revolucionárias, manter-se dentro de suas crenças e estar - ao invés de ser - se revolucionando, podem ser tarefas extremamente difíceis. É por isso que precisamos sempre nos manter em acoplamento com outras pessoas, coisas, deuses, energias etc. Precisamos ter alguém ou algo que nos dê suporte nos momentos em que não estamos mais conseguindo vencer todos aqueles desafios que aparecem como uma avalanche despencando sobre nós. Sempre que penso que o peso da existência pode me esmagar, olho ao redor e vejo que não estou sozinho e que posso continuar a cada dia que se passa aprendendo coisas diferentes, posso continuar me movimentando e trazendo intensidade à minha vida, mantendo o movimento como a constante que nos impulsiona e nos faz manter em mente qualquer tipo de sentido que se possa dar a ele.

Por muitos momentos nesses mais de 2 anos que passei estudando e pesquisando e conhecendo pessoas e assistindo aulas; muitas vezes me senti sozinho e à beira do colapso, especialmente a partir de segunda semana de março de 2020, quando a pandemia nos obrigou, em Foz do Iguaçu, a nos mantermos em casa. Eu estava morando sozinho e, assim como muitas pessoas, tive que aprender a lidar com a incerteza e a conviver com o medo, com a ansiedade para tentar me manter bem. 2020 foi um ano difícil e - sem querer romantizar mas falhando nessa intenção - muito transformador. Eu me mantive seguindo à risca todas as dicas de autocuidado que via pela frente, comecei a me aprofundar em mim mesmo, tentando me conhecer mais; também comecei a tentar me conectar mais com a natureza, com a comida que eu fazia. Contudo, ao final de 2020 tive um episódio brusco de solidão. Eu não aguentava mais estar comigo e apenas comigo. Eu precisava parar de estar sendo acompanhado sozinho de mim mesmo. Foi então quando decidi retornar pra Belém por um tempo.

Hoje, olhando pra trás, percebo o quanto diversas pessoas foram fundamentais pra grande parte dessa minha caminhada no mestrado. Com elas eu senti como se o movimento da minha vida pudesse ser retomado de uma forma ou de outra. A partir delas tive a possibilidade de estar em acoplamento com o mundo ao meu redor e pude ter a oportunidade de criar novas conexões intensas e revolucionárias. É a elas que eu dedico esse espaço importante da história aqui contada.

Carlos, Celine, Veronica, José, Tereza, Marina, Mario, Carmen, Sanchez, Hugo, Thomas, Alexandre, Rodrigo, Ali, Uriel e Pedro. A vocês eu devo agradecer a oportunidade que me deram de conhecer um pouco das suas vidas e me permitirem contar parte das suas histórias. Sem que vocês existissem e me dessem a honra de escrever sobre aquilo que me

relataram, eu jamais teria chegado até aqui. Obrigado por confiarem a uma pessoa que nunca tinham visto na vida intimidades tão profundas das suas subjetividades.

Mãe, Pai, Tia, Vivi. Muito obrigado pelo carinho incondicional. Obrigado pelas ligações, pelas palavras e pelo afeto. Vocês foram outro pilar que me sustentou durante essa caminhada tortuosa que eu estava fazendo a mais de 2.700km de distância ou de mais de 6 horas de avião de vocês. A vocês dedico meu amor incondicional.

Juddy, encontrei em ti uma pessoa e uma alma de um potencial revolucionário enorme. Teu acolhimento com as pessoas é algo surreal e a empatia que tu és capaz de demonstrar por quem está caminhando ao teu lado me faz, até hoje, sentir acolhido. Em várias oportunidades pude perceber como tu eras sensível a certas experiências minhas às quais eu não esperava as respostas e confidencialidade que encontrei. Obrigado. E também, obrigado pelas inúmeras vezes que revisaste meus manuscritos.

João, tu és uma pessoa rara. Em vários sentidos. O primeiro deles que mais me chamou atenção foi tua inteligência. Por isso, só tenho a agradecer pelas vezes que te disponibilizaste a ler algumas das páginas que constam aqui. O segundo, tua forma peculiar de criar vínculos com as pessoas que estão ao teu redor. Tu és uma pessoa incrível de se estar ao lado e eu fico muito feliz de ter tido a oportunidade de te conhecer nessa vida.

Brenda, muito obrigado por plantar em mim a semente do germe revolucionário. Cada conversa nossa me permite acessar multiplicidades que, hoje, percebo como sempre me influenciam a buscar pela diversidade dentro das novas possibilidades. Te agradeço por ter estado ao meu lado nessa caminhada da vida até hoje.

Ana, por muitas vezes achei que eu poderia estar sendo uma pedra no teu sapato por conta de como eu costumo funcionar. Mas, enfim, conseguimos. Muito obrigado pelas conversas, pelos ensinamentos, pelas dicas e, principalmente, por não ter desistido de mim nessa caminhada. Espero que eu tenha conseguido transparecer pra ti toda a minha vontade de continuar aprendendo que mora em mim.

Rudd (Samuel), Hory (Hugo), Xum (Tiago), Hayden (Leo), Core (Caio). Muito obrigado por terem me ajudado a tornar esses anos de pandemia e de muita tensão no processo de escrita da tese em algo mais leve. Todas as nossas jogatinas, conversas e risadas me transportavam pra perto de vocês em momentos que tudo que eu queria era apenas aproveitar outras companhias que não apenas a minha.

Também, agradeço ao PPGRI-UNILA por todas as assistências para lidar com as burocracias da vida acadêmica. Que esse programa perdure pela eternidade!

O uso do buraco do cu é a pedra de toque do conflito entre "pessoal" e "público" (político). A descoberta prática dos homossexuais revolucionários é que o "pessoal" não é outra coisa que não um fechamento e o "político" só é uma expressão possível da libido. Em outros termos, ***o buraco de nosso cu não é nem vergonhoso nem pessoal, é público e revolucionário.***

Guy Hocquenghem
(A Contestação Homossexual, 1970)

RESUMO

A história que procuro contar aqui diz respeito à minha experiência e às experiências de indivíduos sexualmente e de gêneros dissidentes que vivem na região de fronteira entre Foz do Iguaçu (Brasil) e Ciudad del Este (CDE, Paraguai). Por meio de relatos pessoais e informações coletadas de paraguaios e brasileiros por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas, procurei mostrar, em primeiro lugar, como seus discursos apresentavam tanto uma ideia de relações hierárquicas com relação a uma escala fictícia de modernidade vinculada ao desenvolvimento, que utilizava diversas sexualidades e identidades de gênero como medida de progresso. Em seguida, procurei também retratar como suas travessias evidenciaram uma compreensão de fronteiras ao mesmo tempo restritiva, mas que carregava em sua essência o potencial de desterritorializar as rígidas lógicas políticas modernas de separação, diferença e desenvolvimento nacional ligado à ideia de aceitação irrestrita à diversidade sexual e de gênero. Em geral, pude perceber que essas pessoas usavam a fronteira não apenas para atividades triviais, mas também como forma de expressar sua sexualidade e identidade de gênero, principalmente do lado brasileiro. O objetivo desta investigação foi questionar o que significa a mobilidade pendular de paraguaios e brasileiros inconformados sexuais e de gênero entre Foz do Iguaçu e CDE e o discurso moderno de desenvolvimento por meio da aceitação da diversidade, representada pela continuidade da lógica do e limites físicos. Argumentei que, enquanto a mobilidade pendular internacional de indivíduos paraguaios e brasileiros tem o potencial de desafiar e borrar os limites estabelecidos da lógica estatal das fronteiras, revelar um espaço imanente de possibilidades; tal mobilidade, porém, também traz consigo o reforço dessa mesma lógica, ao reproduzir um "discurso moderno sobre a diversidade".

Palavras-chave: Mobilidade. Modernidade. Fronteira. Sexualidades e identidades de gênero não-normativas.

ABSTRACT

The story I try to tell here concerns my experience and the experiences of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who live in the border region between Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil) and Ciudad del Este (CDE, Paraguay). Through personal reports and information collected from Paraguayans and Brazilians by semi-structured interviews, I sought to show, first, how their discourses displayed both an idea of hierarchical relationships regarding a fictive scale of modernity linked to development, which used diverse sexualities and gender identities as a measure of progress. Then, I also sought to portray how their crossings displayed an understanding of borders that was at the same time restrictive but carried in its essence the potential to deterritorialise the rigid modern political logics of separation, difference and national development based on the idea of an unrestrained acceptance towards sexual and gender diversities. In general, I could notice that these people used the border not only for trivial activities but also used it as a way to express their sexuality and gender identities, mainly on the Brazilian side. The goal of this research was to question what does the pendular mobility of sexual and gender non-conforming Paraguayans and Brazilians between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE and the modern discourse of development through the acceptance of diversity, represented for the continuity of the logic of subjective and physical boundaries. I argued that, while the international pendulum mobility of Paraguayan and Brazilian individuals has the potential to challenge and blur the established limits of the state logic of borders, to reveal an immanent space of possibilities; such mobility, however, also carries with it the reinforcement of that same logic, by reproducing a "modern discourse on diversity".

Keywords: Mobility. Modernity. Border. Sexual and gender non-conforming individuals.

SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1: THE ARRIVAL

-1.37366, -48.47570
-25.60259, -54.47870

This is a story about sexuality and gender diversities, national belongings, border crossings, discourses on modernity as development and world sexual politics. In this investigation, the reader will find a plethora of interplays between sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, their subjectivities and the international pendulum border crossings they enact between *Ciudad del Este* (CDE), in Paraguay, and *Foz do Iguaçu*, in Brazil. Ultimately, this is a story about the multiplicities we may find in so-called rigid and unitary structures such as territorial borders between national States and the subjectivities produced within its boundaries if we expand our attention to look at those individuals who do not mimic or try to escape normativities, that is, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. In other words, in this story I suggested looking at those who carry the chance to defy the norms and who dare to cross (social) borders, deemed to be unassailable, to live their lives as they exist. Nevertheless, this story progressively escalates to discuss many other markers that intersect the general backdrop such as the idea of borders, of (international) human mobility and, especially, the numerous effects in individuals' subjectivities the notion of political and developmental modernity provokes. Bearing this in mind, I shall begin by presenting my arrival to this story.

Living my whole childhood in northern Brazil I got used to thinking that Brazil's south and southeast regions were the closest anyone could get to Europe without actually leaving the country. Media outlets, Brazilian soap operas and relatives who used to visit these places would always describe those regions as economically prosperous, cosmopolitan and highly developed. The people would be well educated and, thus, different from those living in other parts of the country - after all, Germans and Italians directly influenced the development in those places. Even the weather would make it resemble Europe as it might snow in a few cities in the highlands.

For my family, though, European countries were the goal. Or any other developed country. Moving south or southeast Brazil was not optimal, but that would be better than the place I lived my whole life in the Brazilian northern region. I was raised thinking northern Brazil could not give me good opportunities to succeed (economically) in life. Hence, I was always encouraged to seek success and happiness abroad, in the international domain.

As I grew older, this discourse started losing its influence. I began realising its inconsistencies. Even though it was true that the south and southeast regions were statistically more developed (than the north, for instance), they would not be far from the problems Brazilians face daily around the country. At least, they would not be a kind of European replica. Of course, it varies in intensity depending on the city one lives in, but urban violence and other social or economic issues were also present in those places. Thus, for me, this discourse turned into nothing more than a wanna-be European fetish due to our colonial past. Southern and southeastern Brazil were not in the future whilst the other regions were lagging in the past. Ultimately, one cannot believe, after all, this "development discrepancy" and "superiority" when looking at Brazil's current (deteriorating) situation[1], knowing that both South and Southeast regions had a significant impact in the elections voting for Bolsonaro in 2018 (Rossi, 2018).

Even though I tried to deconstruct this discourse, I acknowledge this rhetoric left vestiges on how I think about my subjectivity. Moving to Foz do Iguaçu to attend my Master's programme proved it. The idea of moving to a city in southern Brazil located in a triple border region had me flooded with expectations. I felt like I could be closer to this important "entity" I heard about called "International". My excitement was not only an effect of getting to move somewhere new but rather an effect of moving to a city in the centre of an international phenomenon.

Foz do Iguaçu is separated by the Paraná river on its border with CDE in Paraguay and from Puerto Iguazú in Argentina by the Iguaçu river. It is structurally connected to Paraguay through the Itaipu Dam and shares the Iguaçu Falls - one of the world's natural wonders - with Argentina. Moreover, the Brazilian city is a hotspot for tourists coming from all over the world. Hence, these characteristics made me idealise the experience I would have living in the city - one I would be calling home for the next couple of years during my Master's studies.

Upon arriving in Foz do Iguaçu and experiencing living in this border city, I realised this countryside town was far from living up to the stereotype of precarious infrastructure we encounter in most Brazilian countryside cities - even though it is located in the southern region. On the contrary, for my living standards, Foz do Iguaçu had all the necessary assets such as an excellent public health system, exceptional public universities, a vibrant nightlife and was relatively less risky in matters of public security. However, it did not escape being behind the curve when it comes to homophobic harassment (with a particular Brazilian

[1] On the 30th July 2021, Brazil was the second country in the world with the most deaths (555.460) caused by COVID-19 according to the OurWorldInData dataset at https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus.

accent). Personally, in a two-year term living in the city homophobia stood out now and then, especially when walking in the streets showing “too much” skin.

But during my walks in Foz do Iguaçu - wearing tiny shorts -, something else also caught my attention. It was common to recognise vehicles’ number plates with Paraguayan tags going up and down the city. For instance, it was frequent to hear people chatting in Portuguese (and often in Spanish) with a very thick Spanish accent at doctor’s offices or beauty salons. Before starting living in Foz do Iguaçu, I did not know the integration level between the Brazilian and Paraguayan cities.

When visiting Foz do Iguaçu, one can feel that there is an almost symbiotic relationship with the Paraguayan city of CDE based on these characteristics. The International Friendship Bridge is an important gateway for both sides, making international border crossings easier. People and commodities cross it every day making its traffic more or less busy depending on time and weekday. At this border spot, the sense of the “International” seems to be present in a more subtle way.

Even though borders usually demarcate where one country ends and other starts when it comes to looking at this particular border zone one can feel there is an organic integration that seems to smoothen the statist logic. After passing through the Brazilian customs control, crossing the Bridge and walking through the Paraguayan customs, if you are not going by car, it is not necessary to establish interactions with Brazilians nor with Paraguayan state authorities. At least that was my experience.

Differently, this softness seems to vanish when one tries to cross through the Argentinian border. I got the chance to get to visit each border city as they are known as tourist attractions in the region. The security procedures I experienced crossing to Puerto Iguazú in Argentina demanded a full register of my entrance requiring my Brazilian identification and a thorough bag scan. And yet, after passing the border control, if one is not visiting the city by car, it is necessary to take a bus or a cab to reach the city centre a few kilometres from the border entrance.

At that first moment, in my perception, freely crossing through this border blurred the limits not only of the international but also blurred the borders themselves. The logic of a border needs the presence of statist institutions and structures to keep existing. In other words, the border needs proof of its existence showing signs that the Paraná river alone above the Bridge could not provide. Yet, the international realm craves other kinds of endorsement such as the difference in languages one hears and reads when crossing through the cities and reading its traffic signs or advertisements. It also needs to stabilise identities such as

"Paraguayan" and "Brazilian", "here" and "there". Otherwise, without its underpinnings, the nation-state would be lost in the mobile crowd crossing its "unsteady" borders.

I began looking attentively at this flow in the border between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu after I got startled by a conversation with a friend, David, whose long residency in the city made him aware of an allegedly odd occurrence taking place at this border.

David reported that in CDE, and more broadly in the Paraguayan region of *Alto Paraná*, the society located in this specific part of the country would follow more conservative stances when facing diverse sexual orientation and gender expressions others than heterosexual and cisgender standards. But what caught my attention was that this friend also reported that the border would play an essential role for Paraguayan gay, lesbian, bisexual and transexual (LGBT) people and for individuals who have sex with same-gender partners[2]. They would cross to Brazil to move away from gender diversity and sexual orientation-based discrimination in their hometowns and start living in Foz do Iguaçu or other cities in Brazil. At least, it was this friend's claim at the time.

At that moment the border crossings gained a refuge-like tone. I had anecdotal evidence based on the impressions from David. His statement made me imagine that LGBT individuals were trying to escape from a discriminatory Paraguayan society that was forcing gender and sexually non-conforming people to be away from their home country/hometowns so they could experience their sexuality in a more receptive country, such as Brazil.

In my imagination, the occurrences this friend narrated were quite convincing at that moment, considering a set of events that reinforced my perception of Paraguayans, LGBT-identified or not, coming to Foz do Iguaçu to live in a less conservative environment towards their sexual and gender nonconformity. The first incident was the violent reaction of self-claimed "pro-family" and "pro-life" groups that attacked and tried to cover and hide the attendees in big pieces of cloth at the first-ever LGBT March taking place on the 29th of September 2019, in the district of Hernandarias, Paraguay (ABC, 2019). On the occasion, participants of the March declared bombs and stones were thrown at them. In footage taken, explosions are heard and one member is seen nose bleeding[3] inside a building surrounded by

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[2] While conducting interviews to better understand this phenomenon, I faced a very specific behaviour from some of the interviewees who would not acknowledge the LGBT identity as their own, often due to a negative perception coming from third-party interlocutors (i.e., family, friends, other acquaintances). Therefore it is necessary to establish a difference between those who have sex with same-gender partners and identify with the LGBT movement and those who have sex with same-gender partners but reject to hold a membership to the LGBT cause as an organised social movement.

[3] For audio-visual and other material access the following link. In virtue of the content, viewer discretion is advised: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XmXBTslHZguDSP3yQO_WNfinap9JJ8-B?usp=sharing. Archives titles follow the events' order. Hernandarias' LGBT March related archives were tagged "EVENT 1";

police officers trying to escort the March participants from the "pro-family" and "pro-life" crowd.

A few weeks after the previous one, the second incident occurred when one representative of the City Council of CDE called Celso Miranda alias Kelembu tried to stop a protest-like festival named *Festival por la Igualdad y la Libertad* organised by SOMOSGAY, a Paraguayan pro-LGBT rights organisation. On this occasion, the footage shows Kelembu ripping apart scenery decorations on the top of a stage to cease the festival. More of the footage reveals aggressive confrontations by both festival attendants and Kelembu against each other. It is possible to watch police officials trying to ease the conflict in the same recording. Furthermore, it is possible to catch sight of another member of the regional government of *Alto Paraná*, the department councillor Sandra Miranda, who, alongside Kelembu, is accredited for summoning up anti-rights groups to protest against the festival realisation outside the *Parque Chino* on the 26th of October 2019.

A third and last incident came in the circumstance of the executive powers of Hernandarias and CDE proclaiming both cities "pro-life" and "pro-family", legitimising the anti-LGBT rights discourse from the groups mentioned above. In 2017 the executive governments of Hernandarias and CDE ruled different resolutions declaring each city as dedicated to protecting the family and life in the configurations those conservative and anti-LGBT rights "pro-family" and "pro-life" groups believe to be the righteous arrangement.

Concerning the three events above-mentioned, the stage was set for a very negative interpretation of the current situation of gender and sexual non-conforming individuals living in the *Alto Paraná* region in Paraguay, more specifically in the cities of CDE and Hernandarias. In the first moment, the refuge hypothesis was vital in my interpretation of the circumstances regarding the LGBT social group in this particular border zone. I was guided by the question of whether LGBT and other sexually and gender diverse individuals were crossing the border seeking freedom in a less judgemental (Brazilian) society creating a refugee flow that was not being taken seriously.

It surprised me when I started interviewing people and the information I had access to revealed a much more complex environment than expected. My limited experience and view only offered me access to very particular literature concerning International Relations (IR) queer theory scholarship in which the refuge of LGBT+[4] individuals is the main concern due

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Parque Chino's festival "EVENT 2"; and the pro-life and pro-family resolutions in Hernandarias and CDE were titled "EVENT 3".

[4] The use of the LGBT+ acronym in this particular case covers lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and other identities of the broader sexuality and gender spectrum such as queer, two-spirit, *travesti*, ally,

to institutional and structural persecutions, be it by sovereign-states or by social groups (fundamentalist religious groups, gangs, militias, paramilitary groups)[5]. This scholarship was the closest approach I had contact with for the phenomenon taking place between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE.

In the first place, I found myself looking for people to interview who could provide me with enough information about their "horrific" experience living in CDE and Hernandarias. I wanted people to tell me more about their need for leaving the country to safeguard their lives against that alleged perilous situation. However, since the beginning, there were signs warning things were not right with the refuge hypothesis. I took it for granted. Why would I not find among the interviewees a significant number of LGBT Paraguayans living in Foz do Iguaçu? Why was the first contact I managed to interview an LGBT activist who still lived in Paraguay? Would it be possible these LGBT people were still living there, enduring the dangers of homophobic and transphobic Paraguayan society?

All interviews conducted with Paraguayan gender and sexually non-conforming individuals revealed that all of them were still living in Paraguay. Furthermore, their experiences living as openly LGBT, or "closeted" ones, or as one who does not feel the need - or does not want - to identify oneself with any categories, would be as diverse as their accounts and perceptions about their situation in the Paraguayan cities of CDE and Hernandarias.

All accounts gathered showed a great range of perceptions about discrimination. Some interviewees would characterise the current situation as dangerous and would not prospect any improvement due to political, religious and social factors. Others would describe the situation as not an ideal environment for LGBT people but "liveable" if one does not draw attention to oneself - be it by openly showing their non-conforming sexual and gender expressions or be it by not being politically active. These differences in perspective induced me to raise awareness about my biassed hypothesis on this particular reality I was starting to investigate. It was even more eye-opening to find out that I did not interview Paraguayans living in Brazil since I could not locate them. Proving the initial anecdotal evidence my friend presented came to be an impossible task.

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questioning, etc. What is different from the previous use of LGBT in the beginning of this research is that the major queer theory scholarship available in IR and other social sciences focuses on forced mobility of LGBT+ people fleeing from persecution and life threats in their home countries and do not visualises only the LGBT spectrum which was the diversity I encountered during the interviews conducted.

[5] For examples on this scholarship see Patton; Sánchez-Eppler, 2000; Manalansan IV, 2006; Luibhéid, 2008; Cantú, 2009; Lewis, 2013; França, 2017; Winton, 2019.

Also, I must remark that my second move was looking for Brazilian individuals who could help me understand not only what was happening on the Paraguayan side of the border but also assist me to comprehend if Brazilian LGBT activists or other sexual and gender non-conforming Brazilian people were involved in this international border crossings. At first, I conducted interviews with Brazilians trying to locate Paraguayans who could be living in Brazil. As discussed above, of course, it yielded nothing. Furthermore, I could talk to Brazilians aiming to gather information on whether there was relevant behaviour other sexual and gender non-conforming individuals at the border crossings as well. For this second purpose, those interviews turned out much more valuable than expected. I was able to apprehend similarities and differences in the use of the border when comparing both national groups.

At this point, I still had to conduct more interviews, but some expectations for the future of this investigation started aligning. The primary premise of border crossings as a safe haven for gender and sexual non-conforming Paraguayan individuals was proven limited the way it was initially thought. Those individuals would surely move through the border, but they showed no interest in permanently moving from Paraguay to Brazil. The border crossings would occur mainly as *international pendulum border mobilities* in which people would come to Brazil for shopping and leisure. Likewise, other Paraguayans interviewees would cross the border for partying, dating and expressing their sexualities and gender identities during the night and returning to their hometowns in the morning. Differently, Brazilian gender and non-conforming individuals accounts revealed less frequent crossings through the border. They used to move across cities mostly for specific habits such as shopping and leisure (that will be thoroughly disclosed at the proper moment ahead).

A new path for this research started forming again. It was clear that there was systematic and institutional discrimination against LGBT organised groups at both CDE and Hernandarias boosted by their very local governments and society. The violence did not push these individuals out of the country. It fuelled their resistance. Additionally, a curious feature stood out from the content gathered in the interviews other than the pendulum mobility across the border. During conversations with Paraguayan individuals, I could detect significant discourses accompanying these individuals in their border crossings. I could identify in speeches comparisons between both counties in what concerns a perceived higher tolerance towards sexual and gender diversities in Brazilian society.

In those Paraguayans discourses, Brazil was seen as a more developed or advanced country compared to Paraguay concerning sexual and gender diversity. Brazil would be

placed at a higher ground because of the perceived acceptance and perceived "greater" diversity when the interviewees crossed the border. The main source for this perceived tolerance - that would strengthen the development argument - was not only based on their experiences at both cities but was especially connected to the fact that sexuality and gender diversities were noted as at the centre of Brazilian public debates. Thus, Paraguayan individuals highlighted juridical decisions[6] as examples for the alleged Brazilian superiority in terms of development.

Consecutively, Brazilian sexual and gender non-conforming interviewees stated a similar discourse pattern deeming Paraguay was *en retard*, whereas Brazil was ahead in a fictive-like run towards development. Furthermore, what caught my attention while interviewing Brazilian acquaintances was the fact that those who expressed the "development-by-sexual-overture discourse" also acknowledged that Brazilian LGBT and other non-conforming individuals were facing discrimination, violence and even death[7]. Yet, it seemed that in their perception this fact would still make the Brazilian situation better than in Paraguay since in Brazil there were ongoing debates about sexuality and gender diversity.

As a Brazilian gay cis man my perception of my own reality was pretty much different, especially at Foz do Iguaçu where I had already been harassed a few times in the streets because of the way express myself. Nevertheless, I could understand their claims. After all, even though the risk of suffering violence and discrimination existed at any time wandering around Foz do Iguaçu, this still did not make me feel deprived of the liberty to express my true essence. That led me to the interpretation that despite the hostility, it was still possible for me to express myself in public.

Now, turning to Paraguayans who stated the superiority discourse, if not carefully scrutinised, their accounts may leave the impression as though it was too difficult to broadly talk about sexuality and gender diversity in their social reality. Nevertheless, in my interpretation, things between Brazil and Paraguay were not so distant as it may appear. Indeed, Brazil already had laws indicating the criminal consequences for homophobia and

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[6] Interviewees did not mention specific laws - nor public discussions -, however, it is noteworthy that since 2002 Foz do Iguaçu sanctioned the anti-homophobia law that ruled for the preservation of homosexual, bisexual and transgender individuals against discrimination at the local level (Foz do Iguaçu, 2002). Of equal importance for this perceived Brazilian advancement comparing to Paraguay was the *Supremo Tribunal Federal* (the Brazilian supreme court of justice) 2019 decision that framed sexual and gender diversity discrimination into the racism law (STF, 2019). After this decision, the City Council of Foz do Iguaçu repealed the local anti-homophobia law since it was already codified at the federal level.

[7] Since 2008, the *Transgender Murder Monitoring* report is updated with informations about transgender people who are victimised by transphobia around the world. From 2008 to 2020 (for 12 consecutive years) Brazil leads the list composed of 75 countries (TGEU, 2021). All in all, Brazil is a leading country in terms of violence and death of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals (Bortoni, 2018).

transphobia, but that cannot be taken as a framework to evaluate qualitatively how LGBT and sexual and gender non-conforming individuals live in Brazil.

Therefore, I could not help but notice how this development discourse accompanying these individuals in their movements and activities at the border resembled the discourse I grew up listening to in my childhood in northern Brazil. I could observe both were related to a certain subjective degree that matched with a modernity rationale. While I envisioned Europe or southern Brazil as modern places where it would be possible for me to achieve (my own) development, sexual and gender non-conforming Paraguayan and Brazilian individuals advance that same imagery of the developed "Other" as superior and ahead in time.

This modern discourse linked to sexuality and gender diversity creates abounding fictions. For instance, it underpins hierarchies that establish power relations between two countries based on stereotypes of diversity acceptance that, put bluntly, may not correspond to reality. Ultimately, I argue that this modern discourse that accompanies these sexual and gender non-conforming individuals during their border crossings are precisely the pivotal supporter for the stabilisation of the statist logic that bolsters borders stability. In other words, the severing logic of borders that authorises the emergence of countries and their nationals must assemble discursive and material subsidiaries to become unassailable. Otherwise, human mobility would overshadow statist authority.

Thus, what to expect from now on is an investigation about the dynamics enacted by sexual and gender non-conforming individuals during their pendulum-like crossings through the border and the meanings that accompany them. In other words, the focus is to comprehend the interplays between the pendulum mobility and the discourses of modernity those sexual and gender non-conforming individuals from both sides of the border enact and how these particular meanings resonate and are reproduced at the Brazilian-Paraguayan border. In this regard, the debate I pursue embarks on discussions about the sense of superiority, higher development and modernity concerning the Brazilian influence towards Paraguay.

All information gathered with interviews led me to observe that this modernity discourse came side by side with the pendulum mobility performed by Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. Yet, I could notice that both the modernity discourse and the pendulum mobility were not necessarily caused one by another. But both coexisted and were present in most of the conversations with Paraguayans and Brazilians since both CDE and Foz do Iguaçu are integrated and depend more or less on each other especially to maintain the economic balance between both sides.

The path

As I mentioned above, it was David who first enticed me to look after how sexual and gender non-conforming individuals took advantage of the border and the possibility to cross from one country to another. It all started with this connection, that led me to reach out to non-governmental organisation (NGO) collaborators as my first move to grasp an overview of the local situation in Paraguay. In my initial exploration, I came to Gaston, who lived in *Asunción* and worked in a branch office of an NGO and indicated an acquaintance living in the city of Hernandarias, who was also working in another NGO but with the same purposes, towards the promotion of LGBT rights in the region of *Alto Paraná*. It was Carlos. Contacting him online was an easy task. He answered my preliminary questions and seemed interested and willing to collaborate.

We arranged our meeting in CDE so it would be fair for both of us in terms of distance from our houses. It was mid-September of 2019, it was a mild day and I can still feel my wet armpits caused by the anxiety of meeting a stranger in another country to interview him, something that I had never done until that moment. We met in the famous Shopping Paris in CDE near the border with Brazil and Carlos was just as warm as I thought. During more than one hour, Carlos told me about his personal life, about his experience living in a border region and answered many of my questions very openly. It was Carlos who planted in me a certain confusion when he told me he had "heard of" people who left Paraguay due to escalating discrimination. But things would not fit very well. If there was a refuge ongoing, why was I talking to him there, an activist gay man, at a shopping centre in the middle of the commercial area of CDE?

Little did I know at the time that out of the 16 individuals I talked to, only after the 12th I would get my things together and understand that Paraguayan individuals lived under very relative circumstances concerning their perceived safety against homophobic and transphobic violence. Surely, their very engagement with activist efforts to claim for sexual and gender diverse rights in Paraguay seemed to interfere in their perception. The following cases express the nuances I could grasp: Carlos and Veronica are directly involved in activism, differently from Ali.

> *[...] The entire region of Alto Paraná has already claimed to be pro-life and pro-family. So, all the fags will have to jump to Foz or, I don't know, outside Paraguay. Because the people are already starting to attack our population. I'm already experiencing it and I've never seen it happen before. I feel like we're living in the Stroessner dictatorship, you know?* (Carlos, Paraguayan cis gay man)

> *In fact, with the latest events that took place here, about the attacks on the LGBTI Parade, where people were stoned, where people were stepped on… Things go on as if nothing had happened. [...] We are in a vulnerable situation for the LGBTI population here in Hernandarias.* (Veronica, Paraguayan trans woman)

> *N: With the events at the 2019 Pride Parade in Hernandarias and the attack by religious groups on the festival of diversity in CDE, what is it like for you to live in CDE?*
> *A: Despite all that, discrimination is not, let's say, so drastic. It is not like: Oh, look! A faggot. Let's punch him... No. Thank God no. But it's still very conservative.* (Ali, Paraguayan cis gay man)

In addition to that, the very sense of the representations of the border would change depending on each one's experiences. To some Paraguayans, like Celine, a cis lesbian, would not demonstrate a more explicit interest in the border as an important asset for her. Others, like Ali, a cis gay man, would see in the border the opportunity to give expression to his sexuality attending gay nightclubs in Foz do Iguaçu. For him, the border meant the possibility to express more freely his true self without worrying about violence.

All in all, It was with my conversation with Carlos that I could trace a standard and compare similarities and differences on how Paraguayans would use the border, in what circumstances, with what intentions. In this sense, I would say the most important feature of my encounter with Carlos was the "snowball effect" generated. I was able to make contact with people more easily afterwards. Some of the succeeding individuals would be part of the same activist group; others would not. It turned out to be a very desired occurrence that new interviewees would not necessarily reproduce the same social status or other backgrounds as Carlos'. This is often the problem about snowball technique: get locked up into an "echo chamber" (Gusterson, 2008, p. 98) with similar discourses being reproduced over and over, not reaching a wider range of diverse social backgrounds.

In the subsequent interviews I continued following the same rationale: (1) try to perceive what kind of movement the person took part in through the border; (2) if so, what was the border's meaning and/or importance for this person, that is, I tried to understand whether there was any significance to live in a border region and be able to access another country such as Brazil; and (3) what activities would the person do when crossing the Bridge. In what concerns the questions, the format adopted was as follows:

1. Do you agree I record this conversation? Do you agree I use the information gathered in this interview for the sole scope of my research, knowing I will anonymise your identity?

2. Can you introduce yourself? Tell me where you live, what your age is, what you do for a living?

3. How is it for you to live in CDE/Hernandarias?

4. Do you usually come to Brazil? To Foz do Iguaçu or other cities? Do you cross the border?

5. How do you see the situation of LGBT individuals in the region? And what about the situation in the country as a whole?

6. Do you know LGBT people? If so, what impression do they make about living in CDE/Hernandarias?

7. Are there any NGO/support groups that act in defence of LGBT rights in the region?

8. In 2019, manifestations of individuals in the legislative power (CDE) and the executive power (Hernandarias) spurred violent incidents towards pro-LGBT rights activities. How do you feel about those incidents?

9. Why do you think these incidents occurred? Is it something that has always happened?

10. How is it for you to live in a border region? Is it influential to your daily life? Does it have any importance for you?

11. Do you know anyone who has left Paraguay because of discrimination? Do you have contacts with Paraguayans who live in Brazil?

12. Would you know other people I could talk to that you think would help me in my research?

13. Would you like to ask me anything? Do you have any questions about what I am doing with the information you are passing?

Except for the first-ever in-person interview in September 2019 recorded with a cellphone, all other interviews were conducted through video calls. As the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to adopt more flexible tools, it arrived at me that adopting the online format for interviews would be very much desirable considering I was willing to be talking to sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who could feel insecure about meeting me in person, someone who they did not know the intentions. That was the case of some individuals such as Pedro, a Brazilian cis gay man whose mother could not know about his sexuality and his Paraguayan boyfriend, and the cases of Ali and Uriel, bot Paraguayan cis gay men, who disclosed that had I not been indicated by one of their friends, our conversation would have never happened.

In general, for the research, I elected interviewees whose names were indicated by others, so I could make sure all the individuals I was going to talk with had had sexual and gender non-conforming experiences. Therefore, the snowball technique starting from a person who was part of an activist pro-LGBT rights group, such as Carlos, was necessary. He helped me to find other individuals with this specific profile. Also, I remark that it may be hard to find people to talk about such an intimate topic, which often mobilises and demands psychic and emotional energy that many may not want to spend.

Then, as shown above, I would request suggestions on who to talk to next at the end of the interviews. I always emphasised I looked for people that could assist me in the task to understand how sexual and gender non-conforming individuals had been living in the border region. And after the first 3 interviews with Paraguayan individuals, between activists and non-activists, I realised that it would be beneficial to gather accounts from Brazilian individuals as well in order to understand how the movement took place when departing from the Brazilian side. Thus, that made me look for personal acquaintances and LGBT organised groups in Foz do Iguaçu to gather information.

The first Brazilian I reached was José, an activist cis gay man with whom I had contact during an event in Foz do Iguaçu where he delivered a lecture about gender performances. In our conversation, José disclosed many pieces of information on his impression about the Paraguayan side of the border and whether he crossed it to visit CDE and/or Hernandarias. My interaction with him was responsible for making me realise a discursive structure of power relations existing between both sides. The following interviews with Mario, Carmen, Rodrigo and Alexandre endorsed this perception. They enabled me to notice the reproduction of a discourse that described Brazil as a safer place for sexual and non-conforming individuals when compared to a conservative and religious "underdeveloped" Paraguay.

Eventually, as I kept on arranging conversations with both Brazilians and Paraguayans, I reached a point where, after the 16th interview it seemed that their answers kept on repeating the same main content, except for their particular experiences. That was the moment when I realised I could stop looking for interviews and start to focus and work on those conversations I had already gathered. In more general terms, I arrived at two elements to work with: the pendulum-like mobility and the mobilisation of sexuality and gender diversity acceptance as development discourses that would hierarchise individuals based on their national belongings.

Within these features, I started to ponder about the way the elements such as the political meaning of a border, the possibility of crossing through a more or less porous border, the modern political thought based on development and the sexuality and gender diversity of individuals; I took all of these elements to think over their possible interweavings. It is pivotal for me to make explicit here the fact that the modern statist form is a fundamental component to comprehend how this story uncoils, taking special attention to captures the logic of the State executes against individuals in order to lock us inside spaces where not only our life should be surveilled but also the lives of others, the "Others" outside the State we are located in, they should be seen as the carriers of a menacing difference. The world divided in capitalistic and statist territorialisations is a place where crossings need always to signify invasions and negative transgressions towards someone's or something's integrity, sovereignty.

I, then, arrived at the point where I had to give shape to the compass that I would use to guide me through this storytelling. Hence, I started interrogating *how is this pendular mobility able to evince the contradictions of the modern logic of sexual and gender diversity acceptance through the discourses that represent both the stabilisation and/or the subversion of the very same nation-state border logic?* My effort was based on analysing if there were any interrelations between both elements that could help me understand how this specific border could be (or could not be) redrawn through the mobilisation of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals and its discourses. It is important to remark that by "border" I want also to extend this inquiry to the possibility of redrawing the logic of statecraft and the logic of the "International" as an entity.

It is in this sense, then, the main objective here was *to analyse what the pendulum mobility of gender and sexual non-conforming Paraguayan and Brazilian individuals between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE and the modern discourse of development through diversity acceptance represented to the continuity or dissipation of the logic of formal and subjective borders*. Furthermore, throughout this narrative, other three complementary objectives appear. For the first, *I tried to understand how subjectivities are produced in a place where integration seems to be taken for granted but that, in fact, what sprouts from the encounters of different national subjectivities is, majorly, territories of difference.* For the second, *I elaborated on the historical events that could bring forth pieces of evidence to understand the formation of sexual and gender non-conforming subjectivities in the region and in Paraguay, namely, the Guasú War and the Caso 108***,** which helped me interpret the reality I accessed. Thirdly and finally, *I intended to comprehend the elements capable of "disorganising" the*

whole logic of violence against sexual and gender non-conforming individuals present in the border between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu.

My general argument in this investigation is that, whereas the pendulum mobility of sexual and gender non-conforming Paraguayans and, less frequently Brazilians, through the border has the potential to challenge and blur the established limits of the statist and capitalistic logic of borders, such mobility also works to reinforce this very logic through the reproduction of a "modern discourse of diversity". On the one hand, their constant flow through the border could work as a subversion of the statist and capitalistic logic of countries' limits. On the other hand, these same individuals propel a discourse of modernity based on development through the idea of sexual and gender diversity that places Brazil in a superior position compared to Paraguay in a fictive hierarchy that advances conflicting imageries between the reality and the idealisation that sexual and gender non-conforming individuals live in both countries. Ultimately, the stabilisation of the borders and of the statist logic is one of the foremost assets that this development discourse of diversity acceptance enacts when it travels with these individuals.

In other words, whereas Brazil is seen as superior because it is a place where diversities are accepted - thus representing a modern country -, Paraguay is placed on the opposite side of the hierarchy as "lagging" and "primitive" since it does not follow the same "progressive" patterns of development. It is part of my argument that this modern discourse not only strengthens the formal political border that divides both countries but also creates subjective borders that segregate and categorise individuals. The modern discourse of "development", when reproduced in the daily practices of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu, produces and naturalises these subjective borders.

Drawing heavily on Deleuze and Guattari's (1983; 1987) works and Thomas Nail's (2016) theory of borders, I contend such reiterative effects of borders as spaces of negative differences are the byproduct of tight circularities our current social formation builds to prevent a general leak of deterritorialising desires. Said differently, since the social machine we subscribe to in the form of the capitalistic nation-state is generated by a constant effort to maintain all flows of desire under control, any other new idea of social organisation, economic structure, political assumptions, way of living, way of dressing or having sex with others, that menace the territorialisation of the capitalistic and statist codings, is crushed through the general surveillance executed by the State and the subjectivity production inserted in others and in ourselves.

The underlying assumption to these arguments is that the broader understanding on how sexual and gender diversity can be useful to analyse the way the modern nation-state, seen as a powerful entity that binds individuals to a territory or national belonging identity, works as a foundational ground that allows other identities to flourish above its "foundations". Supported by the experiences I went through during the time of this research, I contend the nation-state, as a pivotal structuring artifice, guarantees its physical and immaterial borders instilling different subjectivities on individuals, who are able to stem other identities from this prior ground, but that, in a final sense, always reproduce their belonging to a certain nationality.

Nonetheless, it is at this point where (post-colonially informed) international queer theory makes its entrance in this investigation to critique how modern discourses over sexuality and gender diversity intersect with the subjectivity production of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals located in the Global South. I relied heavily on authors such as Cynthia Weber (2016), Momin Rahman (2014) and Ilan Kapoor (2015) to understand such embedding feature enacted by the modern nation-state that informs the desire for modernity and development taking so-called developed nations as the apex of a fictive evolution towards a (sexual) progress. Such assertion comes from the tendency identified in the discourses of Paraguayans who would adopt an interpretation looking, for instance, at the United States as the ultimate destination of their crossings, one that would even surpass the Brazilian importance in the sense of development and security for sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. As part of the ideas I gave shape during this investigation, the concept of *nexus of progression* was elaborated to explain that modernisation discourses intersect with markers such as nationality and sexual and gender diversity intimately to disrupt the subjectivity production enacted, in this case, by the Paraguayan nation-state.

Finally, apart from this first chapter where I arrange the overall scenario for continuing the story I wish to present, the rest of this writing is structured as follows. In chapter two I focused on detailing each of the most important concepts that supported me on the way to elaborate this investigation, namely, the subjectivity production inside the statist machine, the concept of borders, the way international human mobility affects borders, the rationale of modernity as development in sexual and gender diversity and the way sexuality and gender diversity are intertwined in this complex relations. In this sense, I reached for the experiences presented by those Brazilians and Paraguayans I interviewed to assemble an argument stating how subjectivities, the border crossings and the underlying understanding of the border itself

represent tight territorialities of a negative difference, which work to sever individuals to the point where no other possibilities of shared communion can be envisaged.

For chapter three, I decided to look at two crucial historical moments that took place in Paraguay brought to me through interviews with Carlos and Rodrigo. I analysed how the bellicose conflict between Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, the Guasú War (1864-1870), and the *Caso 108*, in Asunción, contributed to the current subjectivity individuals compose. The main rationale presented in this chapter contends how those two historical events channelled the underlying cis-heteropatriarchal grounds present in the Paraguayan social machine to the point where women and, in particular, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals became direct targets of the structural discrimination. Whereas women had a pivotal place to, literally, rebuild the Paraguayan State only to, then, assume again a subservient place in society; sexual and gender non-conforming individuals became the victims of Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship in Paraguay (1954-1989). In this sense, I drew on Rocco Carbone's (2015a) writings in order to analyse how subjectivity regimes of oppression towards those two minority groups impacted the current Paraguayan history.

For the fourth chapter, I aimed at tackling directly the issues faced by sexual and gender non-conforming Paraguayans and Brazilians concerning the border between both twin cities. In this chapter, I deployed my main argument of borders as an ambiguous space (of negativity and of possibility), complemented with the description of those similarities and differences grasped in the interviews. Moreover, I articulated the main theoretical underpinnings to demonstrate how border crossings are an essential movement to the continuity or rupture of existing circularities. I tried to find support on the examples gathered in the interviews to also argue how individuals and social movements could work in order to provoke a general deterritorialisation on the tight circularities arresting individuals' desires, expressions, actions from flowing.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, I resume the general content explored throughout this writing in an effort to show how our revolutionary actions are the key to returning the intensity our actions have so long lost.

Figure 1: The Friendship Bridge above the Paraná River

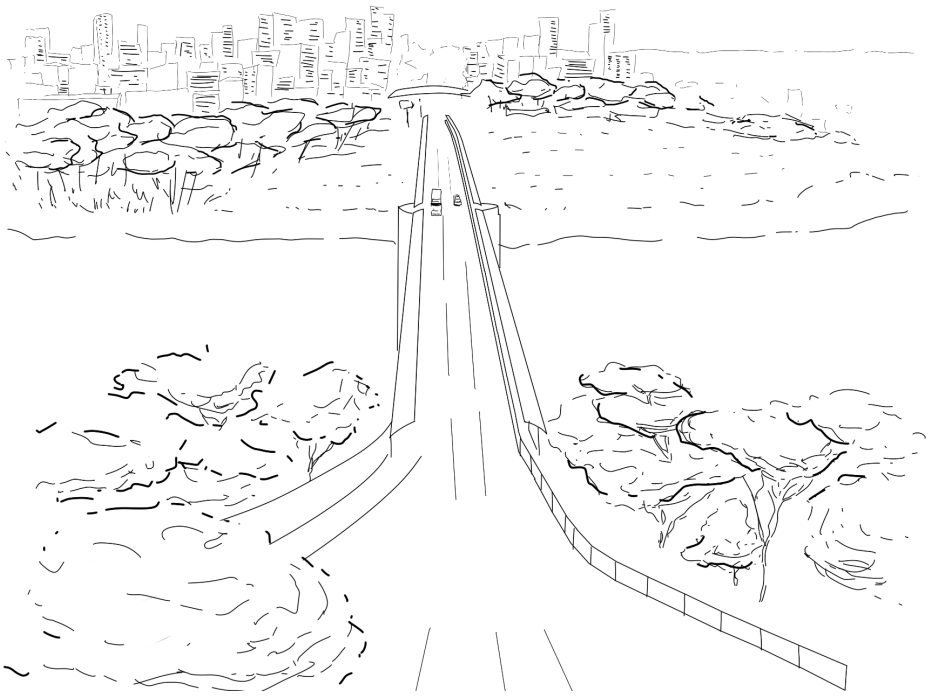

Photo: Artwork done by fferreira (ff.artsy) upon request.

CHAPTER 2: THE UNRAVELLING

-25.50949, -54.59665
-25.50935, -54.60515

Sides

I still remember the first time I set foot in Ciudad del Este (CDE), Paraguay. I was accompanying friends who were willing to spend money buying all sorts of merchandise they found much cheaper there than in Brazilian shopping centres. In reality, I do not think I can say I visited the city, I would rather say I went to see its commercial hub. After all, we did not spend too much time there. We walked through the part closest to the border with Brazil. It was an agonisingly hot spring day and the central commercial area looked excessively crowded with people and vehicles moving and bumping up and down against each other (and I do not resort here to a narrative strategy, although it may sound an exaggeration to say that cars and motorcycles bumped into people, but it was what almost happened to me several times trying to cross the city streets).

Putting the weather and the uncontrollable amount of people aside, another feature caught my attention. While writing this passage today, almost two years after my first ever walk through CDE, I acknowledge I had way too many expectations about the international border crossing I enacted at that moment. Arriving at the Brazilian side of the International Friendship Bridge made me feel excited in the sense that I was about to visit a country I had never been to before. Undoubtedly, crossing the Bridge delivered this sense to me. The Brazilian customs and borders post, people walking fast with a hurried looking in their faces, the wind strongly blowing in that metal structure and the height that separated the flow of people from the *Paraná* river right underneath our feet; all of this, left me the impression I was unequivocally crossing through an international limit.

After a five-minute walk through the Bridge, I encountered the Paraguayan customs and border post and, right behind it, CDE's commercial area surged. That part of the city was drowning in advertisements, department stores and other businesses. One could easily distinguish several individuals speaking different Portuguese, Spanish and "Spaniguese" accents, interspersed with honking horns coming from the chaotic traffic. All of that considerably resembled the Brazilian side of the border. In my perspective, I felt as though that place was not exactly another country, but rather the continuity of Foz do Iguaçu. It left

me the impression that both sides of the border displayed similar essences concerning visual and sonorous aspects.

Of course, at that opportunity, I did not think of any considerations about that impression of mine. It was only an ephemeral thought. However, looking at it more carefully, I believe it was an important experience that is worth commenting on. At that first visit to CDE, it was almost as the border materialised itself through the presence of the nation-state representatives there, that is, the Bridge itself and both national customs and borders posts. It was just as the international realm existed for that brief moment while crossing above the river. I also remember the tension I felt when I walked through and noticed there were officers at both customs and border posts vigilantly wandering around the countries' entries/exits. That negative feeling arrived from "nowhere". At least, it was not as though I misbehaved, transgressed or broke any law at that moment. However, the presence of federal armed forces there seemed - and oftentimes seems - oppressive, which leads me now to claim that statist institutions can convincingly reassure the potency and authority of nation-states surveillance over individuals.

Nevertheless, these impressions changed as soon as I finished my way through that international dimension the Bridge represented. All of that sense of "travelling abroad" and crossing an international limit stayed behind giving space to an awkward feeling of continuity as if both cities complemented themselves. Surely, beyond the sense of my subjective perception, that is a common trait considering that those are twin cities (Kearney; Knopp, 1995) - also known as cross-border cities (Martínez, 2004) -, which developed a complex and thorough relationship in cultural, social, political and economic strands through time. This is especially true in the case of CDE and the *Alto Paraná* region more largely, that suffered political and social interference of Brazilian individuals stimulated by governmental plans to acquire lands in the Paraguayan side of the border (Souchaud, 2011).

From evoking those memories, I can trace parallels with current understandings that concern discussions on the concept of borders. Of course, here, I address two different dimensions: the subjective and the physical reality of borders. In the first moment, my experience made me focus on the human and architectural aspects (material aspects) that looked the same for me comparing both sides of the border. One may argue that, had statist institutions not been there to reassure the division between countries, one could certainly claim both cities were, actually, one single place. Nevertheless, the reality is much more complicated than this. Border politics are not only about the physical restraining of a specific

space, it also depends on the production of subjectivities to reiterate its existence. And it is precisely what I want to dwell on now.

This memory is of great importance to illustrate the meanders involved at this border. Especially concerning the reasons for each interviewee to cross (or do not cross) from one side to the other. My description of the first day I crossed from Foz do Iguaçu to CDE leaves subjectivity issues apparent. While I walked my path through the border I was unable to verbalise what else - other than the state presence - made me willing to reinstate the existence of that border as a division. I now realise that every single material and ideational element compounded a complex chain of meanings I carried along with me in my displacement. That is to say, the same components I saw that day which could indicate similarities (the sounds, the buildings, the traffic signs, the accents), also meant strong differences based on my previous experience as a Brazilian citizen, a subject from another nation-state. In the back of my head, those elements were there reminding me of the separations between different subjectivities, of different nation-states.

In this first chapter, in this first moment of the narrative, the attention revolves around the interplays of subjectivities at this border region. Departing from the anecdote of mine, I tend to construe the chain of shared meanings in this border context as a compelling subjectivity regime of difference that overlaps any sort of possible shared sameness. Despite the possibility of conceiving a unified space between both sides of the border, a "border identity", a kind of common bond shared by Paraguayans and Brazilians does not seem as real as the subjectivity based on differences built in this region. Differences stand out and seem to be deemed intrinsic at both sides despite border permeability and flows of human mobility across its boundaries. Despite close and continuous interactions.

My aim here is to disclose the theoretical and conceptual pathways through which I strolled, to present what I came to observe behind the border crossings of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals on both sides. It was through discourses from the individuals I interviewed and from informal conversations with other residents in the city during the more than two years living in Foz do Iguaçu that I perceived identities are informed by strong subjectivities of separation, even though it looks like a symbiotic place. Thus, while I understand differences to undertake prevalence at this border, I proceed to take a step back and look at the nation-state's influence over individual subjectivities. Then, I proceed to explore specific traits present in this space, such as the relation between how sexual and gender non-conforming individuals conceive their subjectivities living in an international

border region, how they perform international cross-border mobility and the effects of current understandings circulating in this cross-border scenarios.

Belongings

First, some examples. During interviews either with Brazilians or Paraguayans, there were always present hermetic representations of national belonging, a division between peoples and identitarian definitions (especially related to sexual and gender diversity, that is, the LGBT or other distinctive form of a self-defining characteristic of singularity). But only those representations bound to border politics matter at this moment to make sense of this production of subjectivities. Thus, as expected, the people I interviewed (and I) presented well-tight interpretations about where each of them (us) belonged at the divisions the Triple Border defined. Obviously, concerning Paraguayan interviewees, each of the conversations I had made clear we did not share common experiences, not at the level of local or national events. At least, not that I could relate to as a Brazilian citizen.

I became self-conscious of that since the first interview, when Carlos, a Paraguayan gay cis man, brought to our conversation the story of the "*Caso 108*". The case happened during Alfredo Stroessner's hardship in Paraguay (1954-1989), in 1959. As Carlos told me, it refers to when the Paraguayan society pressured Stroessner's government to intervene in the death investigations of a famous radio announcer and ballet dancer, Bernando Aranda, who died under suspicious circumstances in that same year. Stroessner's government response was rough. As local news outlets reported at the time, 108 homosexual men were arrested and tortured to confess who was guilty for Aranda's death. However, until today that is an unfinished affair for the Paraguayan memory, especially for LGBT individuals. No one was convicted of Aranda's death and, as a result, the number 108 became a demeaning representation to refer to homosexuals in Paraguayan society, especially bolstered by media outlets at the time. It is a similar trait when it comes to the number 24 on the Brazilian side of the border which is taken as a derogatory term to refer to homosexuals as well[8].

Until the moment of our conversation I had no idea about who Aranda was, nor had I felt the impact of being called "a 108", as Carlos reported to me. Surely, at that moment I became aware of the aggressive and negative burden of that number, but it was not as though

[8] For the sake of comprehension, one can observe the subjective magnitude of the number 24 in the Brazilian society looking at the National Congress, where the room number 24 vanished from 2014 to 2018 without further clarifications. Only in 2019 the numerical order came back properly to the corridors at the Federal Senate (Bragon; Mattoso, 2019).

that word could hurt me. As a Brazilian, it had no other semantic or subjective sense, nor did it impact my subjectivity. Consequently, that moment made me realise the separations between our belongings. It is this common "national memory" with strong subjective and semiotic reverberations throughout the whole Paraguayan society that I refer here as the main feature that separated me from the subjectivity Carlos and other Paraguayan interviewees were surrounded by. That one produced subjectivity composed by a collective assemblage (or *agencement*), which Paraguayans themselves gave (and still give) real form up to the present.

My understanding of subjectivity production is *not* informed by the idea of a bunch of unique individualities that give form to a greater mass of different subjectivities. As Guattari (1992) puts it, it is pretty much the opposite. Individual subjectivities are informed by the way one's assemblages are conditioned through the social, economic and political realities and the whole cosmos surrounding individuals. Thus, it does not proceed inside out but from the outside inwards. That is to say, the subjectivity I assemble is defined by the way I come to relate to, for example, the clothes I wear, to the pouring rain, to the lawn I step on, to the geography of the Triple Border region, to the national belief of a Brazilian or Paraguayan belonging, to the social interactions with Paraguayan individuals and so on.

Nonetheless, subjectivity regimes and the current subjectivity of individuals at the border between Brazil and Paraguay experience are imbued with very well-tailored contours oriented by patterns of capture. In other words, the nation-state, as the capture machine it was created to be, organises the repression of all singularities to give way to pre-moulded subjectification it fixes as the dominant standard, based on assemblages towards a forcefully unified subjectivity. By singularity, it should be understood as the modes of existence experienced by individuals that escape the serialisation imposed by previously created identities (Guattari; Rolnik, 1996). In statist subjectivity production processes singularities are overwhelmed through well-honed tools such as institutions, the family, educational and legal systems, social media etc. That is the case of unifying a nation whereby these social mechanisms will become responsible for repressing singularities and enclosing each person in ways of existence that correspond to the territorialisation most suitable for the statist social machine's survival and interests.

It happens that repression imposed through socialisation, under the modern nation-state apparatus, is constantly built on infantilised subjectivities. For Guattari, to infantilise individuals means to disable one's self-sufficiency to the degree the statist social machine take integral control of social, political and economic productions wherein no person can act without direct mediation coming from bureaucratic institutions (Guattari; Rolnik,

1996, p. 42). That is to say, the state guarantees its unassailability by creating a subjectivity regime always dependent on its instruments to make existence legit, or rather, *rightful*.

What is more, such infantilised enclosure finds resonance in another sphere that has been remarkably appointed by Walker (2006) as part of what he named the "double outside of modernity". He argues it is through the nation-state's endorsement that individuals become part of contemporary forms of political assemblages; only after becoming distinguished from other subjectivities can human existence reach objectivity. And, once this first outside separation occurs inside territorial boundaries, the second one advances the separation in the international outside. The "international" becomes the ultimate sphere to be reached on a global scale. What else is there beyond the international? Apparently, according to modern thought, nothing is. Here lies the utmost statist interference in our lives. It is only inside nation-states that subjectivities must exist. Only when citizenship is acquired can our humanity be recognised. Especially in the sense of crossing borders to the international realm where humanity remains as the last resource that indicates bonds (of friendship or rivalry) between many different citizen subjects (Walker, 2006, p. 60).

The fact that Paraguayan and Brazilian interviewees acknowledged their national belongings showed me that the resulting division from this process of subjectivity production - undertaken by the relation between the individual, the social reality, the nation-state and other surrounding elements - of different subjectivities, also meant an impossibility of imagining another semiotic arrangement (for instance, about both sides of the border) and territorial organisation. That is a powerful process, indeed. After all, when individuals are repressed and have their singularities crushed, it becomes hard to imagine different ways of experiencing life. "In short, the nation is the very operation of a collective subjectification, to which the modern State corresponds as a process of subjection" (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 456).

This severance between two different national belongings is notably true when one's singularity interferes in the safe territorialisation of cisgender subjectivities and intersects with other regimes of existence separated by the expelling force of national borders. The repression, the crushing enacted by the belief of national belonging prevents the creative formation of new existences. Carmen, a transgender Brazilian woman, in a single statement, showed me this force when she reported she was afraid of Paraguayan society based on her perception as a trans woman and border dweller:

> *No, no. I'm not in the habit of going to Paraguay. Not even for shopping at CDE. I don't… I'm not in the habit of going there. In fact, I'm very afraid ìn*

> *this aspect of the Paraguayan people because I see that they are very intolerant. If we Brazilians are lagging behind, I see that they are lagging even more behind there concerning the respect for the differences, so I'm a little afraid to go there.*

Surely, her subjectivity as a citizen of a nation-state such as Brazil influences her perceptions about what surrounds her outside the national territory. That will be better covered ahead as the relation of modernity and development between countries. But, for now, let us consider that her perception of Paraguayans as an underdeveloped society is not only a reflection on the territorial belonging but also a response from her lived experience as transgender which composes her subjectivity. During our conversation, she revealed she never suffered explicit discrimination based on her gender identity when crossing the border to Paraguay, even though that was a rare occasion for her. Conversely, as a Brazilian citizen living in Foz do Iguaçu she disclosed it to be unusual for her to face transphobia during her everyday life. She has never felt excluded by neighbours, nor faced intolerance when walking in the city streets, but has passed through several discrimination episodes when dealing with governmental institutions trying to redress her name in official documents. Furthermore, she acknowledged her reality was one of considerable privilege when compared to her trans women acquaintances. Carmen showed she was aware of the violence and discrimination against gender diverse individuals at both the Brazilian and Paraguayan sides of the border as she gets to know what her friends pass through in the cities as sex workers.

The sense of separation, of opposing subjectivities, becomes evident in Carmen's words as she showed to become distressed with the idea of crossing to Paraguay. Even though she never really suffered transphobia going to CDE, her conception of self-preservation seemed to be attached to the notion of a Paraguayan "other" less civilised than the Brazilian "us", where the alien society was seen as potentially more violent and could not possibly act with respect towards gender diversity considering Brazil also presents high cases of transphobic violence. In other words, how would it be possible for those who Carmen sees as less progressive towards respect to be more accepting than the society she lives together in Foz do Iguaçu having in mind that Brazil is ahead of Paraguay in such an agenda?

A few months earlier, I had reached Veronica, a transgender Paraguayan woman, who curiously stated a contrasting feeling when referring to her contact with the Brazilian side of the border. When asked whether she used to cross the border to visit Foz do Iguaçu her response came decisively: "*[...] [I am] more afraid of Brazil than Paraguay. Brazil is the country that kills the most transsexuals in the world. The idea of a transsexual being able to*

live freely in Brazil cannot be conceived, she will live in fear. It's impossible... The statistics speak for themselves."

Veronica was only the third person I talked with while looking for more interviews at the beginning of my investigation. At the time of our virtual encounter, I was incipiently entering the research's universe and, in a single blow, she made me realise how reality was not as straightforward as I had thought. She could not imagine how she would relate to a place where her existence was rejected by the means of annihilation[9]. Veronica was the example of someone who did not perceive the border as an escape to give way to her singularity. Thus, at first, I became afraid my contact with her would not be of many gains, but then she assisted me to acquire a wider comprehension about what was at stake for someone living as she lived in a border region.

There was an obvious opposition between both Veronica and Carmen statements indicating intersectionalities piercing transgender women subjectivities in the region and the fact that living their lives on the other side of the border, respectively, would not be possible. Crossing the border between Brazil and Paraguay, in either direction, meant a whole different arrangement of subjectivities, different from those of gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals. Along with the physical crossing through the Friendship Bridge, their gender diversity also crossed with them in the social plane. Taking aside matters of "passing" - that is, how transgenders are seen as "faking" or "being part" of a certain gender, as if they *look* like cis women or men -, since I believe it to be much more difficult to discuss in here the experience of those who "do not pass as cisgender" individuals; their fear, Veronica and Carmen's fear, seemed, first and foremost, deep-rooted in their perceptions about how each society at each side of the border could treat their bodily reality. For Veronica, data coming from Brazil reinforced this fear of violence. Yet, for Carmen, even though being aware of such information, her local experiences were much more valued to support her perception of fear against the Paraguayan side of the border.

All in all, what is clear here is how collective assemblages - under the constant surveillance of wider subjectivity regimes - can break apart living experiences and assist in the production of subjectivities that take away other possibilities of social organisation on behalf of homogenising heterogeneous individuals under the same cultural signs. That is when the territorialisation of a nation forms: virtual or real representations charged with

[9] According to the Trans Murder Monitoring map, Brazil is the country with the most deaths of transgender individuals in absolute numbers since the beginning of the counting in 2008, totalising 1520 trans people murdered until 2020 (TGEU, 2021).

meanings capable of attaching individuals to belongings and subjections in space and time. Leading to different perceptions about subjectivities and their multiple instantiations. Such territorialisation is, thus, formed stemming from a cartography drawn with the use of three different lines: molar, molecular and line of flight.

To make sense of it let us exercise our imagination by borrowing the three lines of segmentarities Deleuze and Guattari (1987) thought of. Imagine our lives, our deeds, our friends and families as segments in a flowing line on a surface. Each of these segments follows binary logics and may intersect with one another at any time to compose multiple dots, that is territorialisations of stable subjectivities. These lines are, thus, the *supple or molecular lines*. Alongside molecular aggregates, let us imagine another group of segments: the *rigid or molar lines*. The latter follows the same binary logic as before and forms agglomerations towards a common centre, where molecular lines tend to converge. Their rigidity presupposes control, organisation and hierarchy, as a totalising aggregate that assume forms of great social formations such as the modern nation-state, religious doctrines, racial relations, hetero and cisnormative sexual and gender orders, labour relations, family relations etc. Each molecular and molar line depend on each other to exist and, consequently, each of them exerts a direct effect on one another.

The third and last flow goes with the *line of flight* (or *ligne de fuite*). This line represents the vacillation, the escapades, the slippages capable of disturbing the segmentary flow on molar and molecular aggregates. In other words, the line of flight is responsible for igniting instability so processes of deterritorialisation can occur and modify existing molar regimes towards different poles. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 227), the poles to which the flight heads towards are not necessarily positive. There are always revolutionary and reactionary poles. One must be careful to resist the spillage of reactionary molar line's affections on molecular elements that are always embedded in social machines. As the desire for revolution is present, so is the reactionary desire for maintaining the current regimes of repression and conservatism. Therefore, each of the three lines has its dangers.

One can explain the line of flight by looking at groups of people or individuals as examples. Let us take the day the activist group *Diversxs* organised the 2019 Pride Parade in Hernandarias, in which a group of people opposing their demands enclosed, stoned and tried to "cover" the LGBT activists marching in the streets with blankets - so others could not watch them parading. But even before the Parade could come out to the streets the local executive representative, Ruben Rojas, issued a determination to block the realisation of the event arguing in favour of a former decision declaring Hernandarias pro-life and pro-family

municipality at the Paraguayan Alto Paraná region. In the official release, Rojas' government denied police escort to the group at the event and contended he meant no discrimination against "people of any sexual character, race or different gender", but the decision should be seen as "a measure to protect the rights of the most of the citizens in the municipality be it in cultural, religious or social aspects"[10]. Even so, LGBT activists defied the resolution and took the streets.

Focusing only on that precise moment, the LGBT activists in the streets made a line of flight leak from the hardened molecular aggregate the society in Hernandarias had been living in. That was an attempt to break the binary difference of good and evil, where heterosexuality and cisgenderism supposedly represented good and homosexuality and transgenderism supposedly represented evil. Thus, as no revolution finds paths free of resistance inside tightly reactionary assemblages, Ruben Rojas' executive government, intimately immersed in conservative molar formations, tried to restrain the leakage from happening. His attempts to legally obstruct the Parade's realisation found resonance and support in the violent attack against the activists at the march. This incident, though, is very symbolic to understand the movements of revolution and repression inside a social machine such as the nation-state, where molecular evasions through lines of flight must find much strength to pass through rigid molar aggregates.

Now, following the same logic of regimes of subjectivity production as the effect of external assemblages and the existence of resistance and reactionary flows, I, therefore, wish to expand it to the international space. Let us start by acknowledging that these regimes are not restricted to a single space. They deflect into the international realm as individuals cross national borders disseminating their beliefs and ways of experiencing life. Put bluntly, I understand that along with the appearance of (modern Western[-ised]) nation-states and the consequent relations between them different regimes of subjectification came together to form, collectively, new manners of interpretation towards reality.

These new cross-border conjunctions take place mainly through flows of human mobility which, at a border such as that between Brazil and Paraguay, people from both sides come into contact and exchange not only commodities but also build jointly their subjectivities upon contact with foreigners. This process is decisive for the main argument in this investigation: despite sexual and gender non-conforming individual's bordercrossings through Paraguay and Brazil may potentially represent the reshaping of current regimes of

[10] To retrieve the full text in Spanish, please access the following link and read the file named "Event 3": https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XmXBTslHZguDSP3yQO_WNfinap9JJ8-B.

subjectivity production at this border, their ways of experiencing this reality is tightly repressed to the point which there is no other choice than to restate the border logic through a discourse that appeals to the "Brazilian modernity" of sexual and gender acceptance cherished by LGBT Brazilian group's juridical gains.

In my perspective, this phenomenon is essentially subordinated to the same Western rationale operated over capitalistic relations, in the context of twin cities where movements of human mobility tend to foster intense interactions. As I will better explain further ahead, because virtually all countries - and other social formations subjected to the modern nation-state - live under the same world market, human affections and desires become shaped by a *capitalistic subjectivity* (Guattari; Rolnik, 1996) which dictates particular ways of being, eating, talking, feeling, behaving etc. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 457), regimes of subjectivity production under capitalistic order profoundly define us:

> Capitalism arises as a worldwide enterprise of subjectification by constituting an axiomatic of decoded flows. Social subjection, as the correlate of subjectification, appears much more in the axiomatic's models of realization than in the axiomatic itself. It is within the framework of the nation-state, or of national subjectivities, that processes of subjectification and the corresponding subjections are manifested.

For now, it suffices to comprehend that because Paraguayans and Brazilians live under the same capitalistic subjectivity (a Western one), their experiences are also shaped through interplays between their interactions with individuals from other nationalities along this international border. This comprehension opens up the way to argue for a "border identity" attached to those who live at the margins of national territories - though as stated above, this one identity is still subordinated to a wider regime of national belonging.

Yet it is of utmost importance not to allow ourselves to be deceived by shallow perceptions in terms of subjectivity production and interactions with external assemblages. Socially speaking, the capitalist order virtually represents the current form of all nation-states and its social machines; or rather, the modern nation-state is capitalism's model of realisation, the structure through which capitalism assures its end will indefinitely be postponed, distancing its "tendency of the rate of profit to fall" (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 463). Every single desire for another mode of production, social ordering, or political community is promptly repressed.

In Deleuze and Guattari's (1983, p. 223) words, in any social formation, there are always decoded flows escaping, escaping desires for a new way of experiencing life, a different political thinking, a different way of dressing, of being sexual, of performing a

gender etc. It is against and to control these decoded flows that capitalism preserves the statist apparatus, to create a "*general axiomatic*" (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 453) capable of appeasing disruptive changes. There is no capitalism without the statist repression machine. In this sense, the creation of an axiomatic corresponds to juridical and political codifications and regulations that reorganise any menace against capitalist production. For instance, when workers go on strike, or when individuals cross international borders, the nation-state acts quickly to axiomatise these escaping decoded flows to recover stability and capitalism's security. In other words, such axiomatic represents the desire to maintain territorialisation immutable, to keep national belongings separated from a unified understanding, to reify that Paraguayans are not at the same level intellectually and materially as Brazilians, to preserve human societies sedentary and trapped in confined spaces.

Here lies the importance of human mobility as a concept to understand how borders reiterate processes of subjectification, as the extension of nation-states. When individuals move across international borders they are not just bodies on the move. These travels represent a whole territory - in the sense of stable collective assemblages - in dislocation: Paraguayans crossing to Brazil or Brazilians crossing to Paraguay carry markers with them that work as signs of "invasion" to each territory, giving way to new territorialisations at the level of identities - and not necessarily at the infrastructural degree of national belonging. In other words deterritorialisations and reterritorializations occur (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 315).

Commonly, other than in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation have been taken to signify the effects of globalisation as the interplays between the local, the national and the global in different spheres, such as economics, culture and politics (Hernàndez, 2006). But most importantly for what I am arguing and telling here is to understand that the national factor seems to attract deterritorialisations driven by local or global decoded flows to reteritorrialise them on behalf of nationalist homogenising tendencies. What does not necessarily mean, as Appadurai (1996) notes, that globalisation engender a general homogenisation of all cultures into a single world culture led by Western imperialist countries, but rather it spreads cultural traces "that are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, and fundamentalism" (*ibid.*, p. 42).

It means, even if deterritorialisation as globalisation's utmost feature is deemed to transform and reterritorialise different cultures into something new when encounters happen, the essential trait of national belonging resists this movement. It does not mean that because

Paraguayans and Brazilians come to attend “each other's” national space an identity capable of demeaning the compelling force of national subjectivities will arise. At least, not in the space, I focus on here. Surely, national languages can absorb foreign words or accents at the local scale, foods and seasonings can be shared as part of local menus, or even a certain dynamic such as shopping in Brazilian or Paraguayan supermarkets, visiting Brazilian or Paraguayan night clubs and bars, or benefiting from the HIV combating programme in the Brazilian public health system (Zaslavsky; Goulart; Ziegelmann, 2019) can happen, but those traits do not inevitably indicate the emergence of shared subjectivities. At least not at the most basic support of them: the national belonging. And it is important for me here to emphasise this national characteristic since it is through this arrangement of subjectivity that I come to perceive social complications occurring at this border through border crossings.

As presented before, statist pervasiveness is strong enough to make us believe in an imagined and socially constructed bounded and stable community, which not only dehumanises us to control our belongings through citizenship but also instils taken-for-granted and naturalised subjectivities as modes of existence. Hence, I advance that what deterritorialisation performs in globalising processes is the reterritorialisation, the integration of different flows to confined and settled territorialisations that do not represent substantial changes in the infrastructure of national belongings. As Boli and Lechner (2015) note, the nation-state is an integral part of our (capitalistic) contemporary world culture. The capitalistic subjectivity we subscribe to as Western and non-Western capitalist societies is one result of the capitalistic building block of such regimes. So when globalisation hits the global realm with deterritorialising processes what becomes apparent are the manifold ways cultural diversity reterritorialises and settles the difference arriving from the exterior.

But it is also important to remark on one more comprehension of mine about this globalisation phenomenon at this border. Deterritorialisations that give way to reterritorialisations in the Westernised world work in favour of modernity. So to explain this, I briefly bring up the case of “*brasiguayos*” - which will be better described in chapter 3. Put shortly, they refer to and identify as the descendants of Brazilian immigrants (originating from Brazilian southern states, thus descending from Italians, germans, mestizo etc.) who crossed the borders towards Paraguayan eastern portion during Alfredo Stroessner’s plan to demographically expand this part of the country during the 1960s. Furthermore, *Brasiguayos* are taken to be the most numerous Brazilian immigrant group to live abroad in another country. In Paraguayan inner towns of Alto Paraná department, these descendants are part of

different economic classes but are especially large landowners and part of local political groups (Albuquerque, 2015).

In identitarian terms, *brasiguayos* are mostly seen as invaders and part of local social justice problems concerning land distribution and have disputed complex and diffuse belongings, bringing Brazilian features (language, music, television broadcasts) to the parts where they lived and fusing with local Paraguayan culture. For example, Ali and Sanchez, two Paraguayan gay cis men, showed this aspect of interaction Brasiguayos took to Paraguay during our conversations. On both occasions, they revealed this contact right after I commented on how light their Portuguese accents felt to my ears. Except for a few moments, I could not tell they were actually not native speakers.

The first to whom I talked was Sanchez. As a kid living in CDE, he would stay in contact with Brazil in different aspects:

> *I lived next to a neighbour who was Brazilian.[...] She would always speak in Spanish with me… [My mother would leave me] once a week with our neighbour, when I was younger [...]. And there were times when she would drop a word in Portuguese. Then, I already had this first contact with Portuguese. Here in Paraguay, in CDE, we didn't have cable TV, we only had the antenna that caught the local channels. Then, the antenna caught Argentinian and Brazilian channels [...] [So] when we were younger we didn't have any kind of channel that would broadcast children's content, like cartoons. [...] So I grew up watching cartoons in Portuguese and I learnt to understand what they were talking about in the cartoon and for me, it was much easier because I was a kid, right, learning this kind of thing when you're younger is much easier, so that's how I learned to understand Portuguese but not to speak it.*

The same seemed to have happened to Ali concerning television programmes, who claimed to watch Brazilian broadcasts while growing up in CDE.

Yet today, drawing on Albuquerque's (2010) ethnographic efforts, it is blatant how identitarian contentions are formed, where the most *brasiguayos* rebound connections with national Paraguayan belongings affirming a Brazilian descent when it comes to benefit from Brazilian public services such as education, voting, health etc.; or affirming a cultural and civilisational superiority of Brazilian costumes of Paraguayan's, such as the language considering one of the official languages in Paraguay is a traditional indigenous one. Thus, it seems deterritorialisation manages to reterritorialise its cultural bonds towards the most modern part of one's descent.

Now, returning to the deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations carried out through mobility at the border encounters between Brazil and Paraguay, I advance to indicate three distinct tendencies of such a pair I came to identify: *repelling*, *absorption* and *incorporation*

of strange flows. I describe it here to indicate a few examples of practices of de- and re-territorialisation. I noticed it as important to separate here the instances where these phenomenons can affect, which can be divided into two social realms: micro and macro environments, that is, at molar and molecular dimensions respectively.

Let us take first, for example, the macro environment of a national economy where flows of illegal commodities or drug smuggling demand rearrangement of assemblages. The deterritorialising flows (illegal commodities and/or smuggling) menace already existing territorialisations (national economy) which will need to reterritoliase itself with the changes provoked during the meeting with these different deterritorialising flows. The outcomes may be interpreted as interception and destruction of illegal loads (repelling), reception of illegal flows (absorption) or creation of legal landmarks (incorporation of strange flows).

Now, let us consider a microenvironment, for example, when gays or lesbians cross from Brazil to Paraguay (and vice versa) and show affection in public, or when organised LGBT social movements go out in the streets of Paraguay to protest. Certain reactions may surge from this meeting of different territorialisations: physical violence, as at the 2019 parade in Hernandarias (repelling); non-physical violence, as when asking two men or two women to stop kissing or holding hands (absorption); and symbolic violence, as to when gender and sexual non-conforming individuals become impelled to behave according to heteronormative patterns (incorporation of strange flows).

During interviews, I encountered individuals who endured each of these “disruptions" on settled territorialisations - especially in Paraguay -, which in my perception are direct results of this movement across social borders or, in other words, the result of movements of deterritorialisation that become reterritorialised for the sake of fictive collective stability in a specific social milieu. Concerning the repelling of territorialisations “on-the-move” at a microenvironment, I bring Uriel’s account, a gay Paraguayan man. Uriel allowed me to get to know him, disclosing private memories of moments he underwent. One specific moment in our contact struck me personally as a gay man. Both of us had passed through moments we had to endure very repelling pressures when crossing sexual social borders:

> *[...] I had an experience on Valentine's Day. I went out here in Paraguay and [this restaurant] had a promotional offer, like, today the couple... It costs that much. Then, I went with my boyfriend at the time and we sat down and they asked what we were going to eat. We talked about the offer and they said that this was only for men and women and then we got up and left.*

Furthermore, Celine, a lesbian Paraguayan woman, represents here the case of incorporation. Actually, her “strange” movement crossing sexual territories as a lesbian in a

heteronormative regime is much more than a simple crossing over social borders. In the micro reality in the social machine she lived in, she reached a deep level of entrenchment with her surroundings which not only incorporated her presence but also was reproduced in her speech while we talked.

> *[...] Everyone knew we were lesbians and dated. At work, our family, everyone. But we never showed affection in the streets, that we are lesbians, we are girlfriends. We seemed like two friends, but everyone knew we were girlfriends and so I think that was the difference with the others who are gay too… The others are very scandalous… [...] So, here [in Hernandarias], people don't like it, not even me, an LGBT myself. I don't like these things, like these scandals in the street, screaming, wanting to show off, you know?*

Even though it was not asked this way, nor was probably the sense of her comment, I acknowledge Celine's response to be circumscribed within the limits of what Jota Mombaça (2016) evokes as a self-defence effort before violent scenarios in which it may be a useful weapon to recognise our fragility. In Mombaças's perspective, confrontation is not always a good tactic to strike back structural violence. Self-defence is also part of "strategies, techniques and tools that only one's corporeality and subjectivity inhabiting fragility are capable of developing". In this sense, it may be essential to "develop escape routes, for when escaping is necessary" (*ibid.*, p. 14). Anyhow, Celine's vision arrives at me caught in a double bind: on the one hand, she appears to avoid violence as the consequence of crossing social borders marginally incorporating the current heteronormative subjectivity regime; on the other hand, she seems captured to reinforce the same abuses when stating her disagreement with local pro-LGBT rights groups' claims.

> *Here in Hernandarias, I'm very recognised for my work. So, almost everyone knows me here, so people respect me, everyone… elders, children... parents tell their 4, 5-year-old children: "Darling, she likes girls…" I cried when I saw these things because they happened to me. So that's the difference I make with others [LGBT]. People alone, each one of them, started to respect me, I didn't ask, I didn't say, I didn't beg, I didn't cry, you know? If they ask: "Celine, are you a lesbian…?" "I am…" Then, I get embarrassed: "Wow, but you're not like the others!". [...] I think they [LGBT] want things too fast, you know? [...] That's why it's very difficult here and because of these people who drag all of us, those of us who are respectful LGBT, to do things right. [...] Here, these groups of people are not well seen and so that's why I don't share with them a lot, I don't share with LGBT people, or I don't have friends like that either. Because they do things wrong. Going out in the street dancing, like you were crazy, drinking in the street… I think… Why don't you put yourself indoors, between four walls?* (Celine, interview in March 2020).

The excerpts from Uriel and Celine's interviews help me set the pace to comprehend the dimensions of human mobility addressed here. A comprehension beyond physical reality. In sum, talking about borders invariably leads us to enter the domain of movement, of

mobility. This is why I came to view borders as territorialisations raised to mark off different regimes of subjectification, where deterritorialising flows are constantly moving and bumping against settled territorialisations when individuals move. In the case of the border between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE, where there are more or less free international movements across its limits, it seems to me this space, as a social aggregate, is continuously reterritorialising flows of information, people, commodities, capital etc., towards a Brazilian or a Paraguayan national belonging in the sense of making stable any movement that may appear too dangerously deterritorialising for current living conditions.

Movement

In the end, mobility is what "gives meaning to the establishment of borders; it is the crossing or the hypothesis of crossing, the mobility through the limit, the entry/exit to/from the territory to the extent that it (truly or potentially) threatens the interests of who controls them" (Kralich; Benedetti; Salizzi, 2012, p. 115). Or, to put it in Thomas Nails' (2016, p. 21) terms, what matters for understanding borders is its *kinopower* and their derivative *kinopolitics*, that is, the circulations of social movements that give form to motion as the coproduction of modern history. Such political effects of movement in contemporary social history tend to be enclosed into molar borders where flows are always redirected to avoid abrupt deterritorialisations.

Making sense of that, it is curious how scholarship on borders in International Relations (IR) has overlooked the international mobility of individuals when it comes to cross-border regions such as twin cities, where individuals pass more or less freely through international limits. Arguably, though, other social sciences disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and geography incorporated a far broader agenda of international human mobility[11]. When it comes to IR, it is noticeable the dominance of migration studies taken as canon to approach the international phenomenon of mobility. It is, nevertheless, interesting how this subject arrived and acquired importance in the field considering that this topic had reduced relevance until the turn of the 21st century. As Paasi (2019) points out, in the 1990s border studies saw an increase of discussions suggesting a "world without borders" anchored on events such as the end of the Cold War and the enlargement of processes related to

[11] For pieces of literature about twin cities and cross-border regions outside South America see Herzog (1990); Kearney and Knopp (1995); Alfonso (2008); and Sohn (2018). For the same subject now taking South America as the departing point see Alfonso (2015); Silva (2016); Moura and Cardoso (2016); Espírito Santo, Costa and Benedetti (2017); and Guizardi, Torralbo and Contreras (2020).

globalisation. However, critics decried the thesis as world politics encountered nationalist movements and increasing migrant flows boiling around the globe.

Adamson (2006, p. 166) calls attention to a comprehensive body of literature that looked for connections between security, refugee crises and diasporas, taking place, especially in Europe. Nevertheless, the author notices that the 11 September attacks were taken as the triggering point that raised the alarm for security scholars to look at borders and mobility more attentively and not only as a "matter of domestic politics and policy" (p. 167). As a result of the sudden increase to the approach of mobility through a security lens, migration became synonymous with the international movement of refugees, asylum-seekers and other long-standing forms of mobility - that could represent any degree of danger to the nation-state (Mittchel, 2012).

Despite the attention that has been given to such concerning types of international mobility, my aim here is to look at what can be referred to as different names, but that I shall call: *international pendulum border mobility*[12]. I understand this feature as the free international human movement between Brazil and Paraguay border at the contact point amidst Foz do Iguaçu and CDE, characterised by its remarkable permeability allowing, on average, more than 113.000 individuals (Quadra, 2017) to cross daily - and easily - its international limits for working, shopping and for leisure activities.

Considering all that, it should be clear now that I subscribe to the potential power of human mobility as a distorting agent of stable borders, stable territorialisations. Human mobility "[migration] is a bordering and rebordering force that affects identities and, not infrequently, creates new ones" (Heisler, 2001, p. 226). However, this process does not affect all borders the same way, especially those that attach individuals to an idea of national belonging. It is dormant, buried deep down inside, underpinning the production of capitalistic subjectivities for the construction of other identities and belongings. In other words, our stable territorialisation serves us as a prerequisite to building defined particularities up afterwards.

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[12] Geography and demography scholarships have long been concerned with what can be referred as "daily displacements" or "pendulum migrations" (Moura; Castello Branco; Firkowski, 2005), defined by individuals who cross inter-municipal limits to work and/or study and then return for their cities after a few hours away. The same way, when it comes to observing this same movement pattern in international border regions, authors have been assigning similar rationals with minor modifications. Commonly, studies focusing on twin cities between international borders refer to daily international movements as also pendulum migration (Simões; Veras, 2014), transnational circulations (Montenegro; Béliveau, 2006) or temporary migrations (Birol, 2016). However, one can notice all previous definitions may imply general understandings since circularity or pendular mobilities do not only define an international movement, but also internal displacements. The same way, words like transnational or migration are all too broad and only make sense if applied in contexts with enough explanations about their use. This is the reason why I chose to further adapt the concept I use here to the particular movements that happen at the border location I analyse in this research.

In more general readings that look at how human mobility affects assemblages, most common claims advance assumptions of cultural inclusion and exclusion of immigrants - or, depending on how the "host society" reads these individuals, of "outsiders". These arguments reflect the more immediate byproducts of the contact between different national peoples, which can generate different outcomes: ranging from segregation of ethnic groups to the assimilation of specific individuals who carry with them not only stigmas but also advantageous assets that can serve economically the host country (Castles; Hass; Miller 2014).

On the other hand, there are remarkable pieces of literature regarding international pendulum border mobility discussions on the Triple Border region between Foz do Iguaçu, CDE and Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) explaining the phenomenon's resonation in the social, political and economic realms in such a place where border crossings are more or less free to occur. In general, it is a common understanding, as indicated earlier, that human mobility in border regions, just as in refuge or labour migrations, are portrayed through encounters between different social realities capable of erecting or defying political and cultural territorialisations. Baeninger and Mesquita (2016, p. 50) affirm the border region between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE provides enough basis for the construction of subjectivities connected to international border areas defined by the circulation of individuals through both sides of the border, which the authors characterised as a "borderous" or, in Portuguese, "*fronteiriço*" identity.

Similarly, Moura and Cardoso (2016, p. 208) bring Hiernaux-Nicolas and Tito Alegria to argue that border regions are composed of "moving identities" capable of shapeshifting themselves considering the border realities where they flow. Alegria is mentioned based on the assumption that each side of international cross-border cities looks the same as a result of intense exchanges. From Hiernaux-Nicolas (2005), both authors draw on the claim that identities do not disappear upon facing different ones, they are transformed into something else considering that mobile individuals still preserve previous ties formed with the territory left behind.

I must say, therefore, I am not convinced any specific identity emerging at this border twin cities is of great relevance in the general context. As discussed above, what deterritorialising flows change are not the most essential foundation of contemporary capitalist subjectivities, that is, the nation-state's naturalised citizenship and group association, but more immediate investments that do not affect profound layers of subjectivity. I oppose Saquet and Souza's (2009) argument that peoples living where

international borders intersect build a space that does not obey national limits since national cultural and identitarian backgrounds form a whole new subjectivity capable of awakening new dynamics. Following my argument, it is through such national belonging that borders become real not only as administrative divisions but as social markers of *otherness*. To the extent of which I could observe, I have been in contact with people who believed that living in a borderland enabled and facilitated their economic exchanges and provided them with the experience of visiting another country with a whole different cultural set, but it did not spark in them profound subjectivity changes of citizenship/belonging. Taking this dynamic as an example demonstrates how the nation-state displays semiotic tools to rely less on physical features to preserve its territory.

The fact that the milieu and the semiotic regimes do, definitely, impact individuals' subjectivity made me realise the way interviewees related to the Friendship Bridge and the natural Paraná river flow - as though they meant an immanent division between countries - was of great symbolic importance. Hence, the idea of a border identity does not necessarily mean social integration capable of leaving behind - or of deterritorialising - what is the most important difference marker here: a subjectivity of national belonging. But as a consequence of such close distance and economic entanglement, Paraguayans and Brazilians can share material similarities that become reterritorialised and, then, benefit. A trivial example of this are the currencies accepted at CDE for shopping. The American dollar, the Brazilian *real* and the Paraguayan *guarani* are used in trades, which indicates foreign exchange policies had to be reterritorialised to become accepted.

Anyhow, I find it a conflicting theoretical formulation especially considering the information I accessed during the interviews with Brazilians and Paraguayans which follows my main train of thought here. I agree with Hiernaux-Nicolas when he posits mobile individuals perpetuate former ties with the territory they leave behind. Their territorialisations may not bend to certain encounters with new deterritorialising flows. Being close and economically integrated does not mean respect for differences. I thus argue that micro-superficial identities which create separations between individuals, such as professional bondings (being part of the same expert group); being born in a specific city, town or locality in the countryside; or the feeling of connection to a distinct characteristic inside gender divisions (women who become mothers); all these micro-identities that create divisions are overlapped by a more structuring one, directly linked to the production of subjectivities enabled by the nation-state.

Following my account at the beginning of this chapter, I understand the nation-state does not need to strongly invest its resources to materially ensure its political borders and guarantee its territorial spaces - except in the case of formal invasions by other states. For instance, I go partially against Cardoso and Moura's (2017) assertion that porous borders renew statist preoccupations to preserve national integrity. I view statist social forces involved in the creation of national identity as powerful embedding processes. Its molar structure locks individuals inside the logic of being part of a cohesive (national and) "natural" community that can always be recalled to assert the clear cultural separation between individuals of different nationalities.

In my first visit to CDE, even though I did not feel much difference between both sides of the border based on a few physical signs, there was also this intractable and conflicting understanding that those same signs were embedded in ambiguous relationships not only of sameness but also of difference. Let me explain. I mean that the accents I heard, the individuals I saw walking, the buildings I stared at that reminded me of those at the Brazilian side of the border, among other aspects, despite their similarities at both sides, these same characteristics were there reminding me of the subjective differences they also represented. I had brought along with me a very firm territorialised subjectivity. As an individual of another nationality, I also carried along with my belief of belonging to another place. My border crossings were completely embedded in another regime of difference.

Whereas my initial experience touched on physical aspects of the border, it also revealed that this politically rigid molar space is, to some degree, potentially vulnerable to social forces that are constantly on the verge of shaping it. Social forces are, namely, the individuals who cross, build and decorate their buildings, talk and walk through this border region; live and express their subjectivities. Their interactions in between these twin cities show the potential mobile individuals possess to endanger molar territorialisations both national states - Brazil and Paraguay - convey as their own, but that are appeased through the process of subjectivity production based on differences and enhanced by the segregationist logic of borders. It is here that deterritorialisations are reterritorialised to secure nothing changes.

As I have been arguing over the pages, the distortion of borders is a potential. It means it can turn into deterritorialising flows and become a line of flight capable of breaking dominant regimes once it escapes the molar aggregates. That is, however, hard to achieve since the nation-state and its molecular segments are constantly repressing inner desire - either for revolution and change or for reactionary stability. The very discourses delivered during

interviews whether with Paraguayans or Brazilians reproduced this rigid and divisive arrangement. Borders separated the developed nation from the underdeveloped (or undevelopable) nation. Two peoples, one over the other when it comes to acceptance towards sexual and gender diversity.

Even when sexual and gender non-conforming Paraguayans cross to Brazil or vice versa, showing the potential to deterritorialise the stable cartography of that space, there is always present the unconscious mark of difference engraved in their subjectivities depicting modernity to the Brazilian territory and inducing it is ahead in time - which in literal terms is not false considering both countries are in different time zones. However, at last, what is in jeopardy at that moment is connected to the dangers Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 227) point out underlying each of the three lines of social cartography: the danger of fear.

> We are always afraid of losing. Our security, the great molar organization that sustains us, the arborescences we cling to, the binary machines that give us a well-defined status, the resonances we enter into, the system of overcoding that dominates us—we desire all that. [...] We flee from flight, rigidify our segments, give ourselves over to binary logic; the harder they have been to us on one segment, the harder we will be on another; we reterritorialise on anything available; the only segmentarity we know is molar, at the level of the large-scale aggregates we belong to, as well as at the level of the little groups we get into, as well as at the level of what goes on in our most intimate and private recesses. Everything is involved: modes of perception, kinds of actions, ways of moving, lifestyles, semiotic regimes.

To some extent, our bodies, our desires, our subjectivities are so well tied to statist national territories it is not possible to imagine possibilities of living beyond where we are enclosed and where our subjectivities have been produced. And that same logic is reproduced in every corner of every nation-state from where categories of difference establish the refugee, the asylum seeker, the stateless person. Then, when LGBT activists in Paraguay go to the streets and find resistance against their demands in their own country when they are violently attacked by reactionary desires connected to the molar order to avoid new territorialisations from becoming real, one can expect these same individuals to be willing to distort territorial borders and gain allies in Brazil where it is deemed every sexual and gender non-conforming person has their existence respected, right? Well, this is a possibility. However, the fear of losing their only firm ground composing the base of their subjectivity, their national belonging, even if they suffer discrimination from the local community, they retreat. After all, fear is the alert sign to go back to “safety”. “The more rigid the segmentarity, the more reassuring it is for us. That is what fear is, and how it makes us retreat into the first line [the molar line]” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 227).

Veronica and Carmen's experiences as transgender individuals resonate in this danger of fear lines represent. Their bodily reality creates a line of flight that does not find an extent beyond national territory. Their flight is restricted to a local deterritorialising experience of gender norms at the towns where they live. When it comes to facing the possibility of crossing the international border between Brazil and Paraguay both of them retreat in fear, sealing off the leakage their line of flight caused, coming back to the molar line restricted to the "safety" of national belonging. Their subjectivities differ from the escape the border indicated for gay and lesbian interviewees in their accounts. Hence, the danger of fear appears here in a double bind: for transgender women, the danger in the line of flights represented by fear takes form under their refusal to cross the international border since it has no difference crossing or staying where they are. On the other hand, for gay and lesbian Paraguayan's subjectivities, the crossing to Brazil truly represents escaping from violence but that keep returning to the general molar line as well when that international mobility ends. Here lie the examples for what I mean when I say the nation-state does not need to expend all its material resources to secure its borders: the subjection through the production of subjectivities takes over control to suppress unrulinesses.

To keep track of this rationale, firstly, it is important to shed light on the manifold perspectives one can grasp from the meanings of borders. And following what Chris Rumford (2011, p. 68) once said it is necessary we start to "see like a border", for it is enmeshed in society as "questions of identity, belonging, political conflict and societal transformation". Because without thorough scrutiny, borders may look like inanimate lines crossing and dividing territories in maps. However, borders can become pretty much alive depending on how "intentionality enforces its potentialities" (Soguk, 2007, p. 284). Borders' potential means they can divide, capture and slip away when individuals challenge or affirm the separation in space - or conscience - they are capable of creating. That is to say, physical borders, namely walls, fences or geological characteristics taken to represent "natural(ised)" divisions between territories, also erect segregations in social and political dimensions.

In this process of erecting borders, Balibar (2002) raises attention to the subjectivities that also emerge. Through the separation the nation-state logic garners in its constitution, national identities appear as the "supplement of simplicity" (*ibid.,* 76) which is necessary to create internal cohesion and a sense of community. As a result, borders are internalised and become "invisible borders, situated everywhere and nowhere" (*ibid.*, 78). What, in Popescu's (2012, p. 8) words, he contends, cultivates the "territorialisation of difference".

Differences are given life under numerous markers such as nationality, class, gender diversity, sexuality, race etc. Put in other words, territorial borders introduce with them the logic of separation, the logic of the "Self" and the "Other", that I advance here as the transmutation of the physical border logic in space to the social, political and cultural realms. This phenomenon, for Balibar (2002), is seen as a byproduct of what he terms as *overdetermination*, that is, the intrinsic power political borders show to promote different configurations, capable of structuring derivative borders that support the utmost division represented by the nation-state.

Searching for support in these theoretical formulations, I tend to visualise that the feeling of separation and difference advanced by nation-states subjectivity productions serve us as the foundation to the construction of other severing relations, which are constructed departing from the steady structure the statist logic offers. The complexity rises when this relationship between the "Self/I/We/Us" and the "Other/He/She/They" becomes the result of hierarchical divisions, where the superiority of some represents the inferiority of others.

Borrowing Edward Said's (2007) elaborations, the hierarchy that appears as a legitimate power relation based on differences should be comprehended as it is: the investment in assumptions that create power relations, in which an alleged superior instance is possible to exist only if the inferior subject is given meaning. Hence, one cannot prevail without the other. What represents the problem of this hierarchical set is precisely the power relations that grow from it and that generate deleterious consequences to the dominated part. Therefore, such *logic of difference* does not escape the *logic of equivalence* (Doty, 1996) responsible for revealing the contradictions behind naturalised hierarchies of difference given meaning through relational linkages, which I make use here to raise awareness of the hierarchies.

In my experience, since I arrived in Foz do Iguaçu, I came to perceive that the Brazilian city had countless borders added to those physical borders with Argentina and Paraguay. This border region was, definitely, the place of countless territories of differences, of countless territorialisations. I had the opportunity to understand what local people thought about the separations and the subjective borders of everyday life on formal (the interviews I conducted) and informal situations, such as in quick chats with application drivers, eavesdropping on conversations in public transport and other public places, and talking to friends who lived in the city longer than I did. And what I found was a constant repetition that the Brazilian society at Foz do Iguaçu was known for a xenophobic discourse towards, especially, Paraguayan individuals.

The first Brazilian person to whom I talked to in April 2020, José, who identified as a non-binary gay person, emphasised the same matter. When asked about how they perceived the general social scenario concerning Brazilians' views towards Paraguayans they vented that

> *[...] It's an illusion to believe that there is a good relationship between Brazil and Paraguay, you know because there isn't. There is a lot of prejudice, a lot of fear, and there are few people that... Some documentaries have been produced at UNILA, on the issue of domestic labour of Paraguayan women who work here in Brazil and who work as caregivers, work as maintainers and receive very little [salaries]. It also makes a very good view of this issue on how Brazilians from Foz do Iguaçu see Paraguay, like... and there are many people here in the city who have never walked more than two blocks at CDE, who have never seen the lake... some people are very disgusted to eat there, you know?*

Furthermore, in March 2021, talking to Marco, a Brazilian cis gay man who was born in Foz do Iguaçu and had been living in the city since then; he presented me his critical perception about the Brazilian society that lived at Foz do Iguaçu and, at a certain point of our conversation he said:

> *[...] [The] society in this border is a difficult society to live with. It's a xenophobic society. It's a racist society. It's a homophobic society. It's a society full of prejudice. It's a society extremely full of religious intolerances and racial intolerances, intolerance in many possible ways, you know? So, these are unreasonable things that fit into a plural place in a way that, unfortunately, it shouldn't. It is so incredible how Foz do Iguaçu is a plural city that even in prejudices, this plurality comes to manifest itself.*

Marco left me ruminating for a long time about this apparent paradox. He tried to show me how the Brazilian society in Foz do Iguaçu was marked by a perception of prejudice against foreigners (or, in other words, "non-Brazilians"), even though it is a touristic city where 81 different ethnicities live in its territory (Lichacovski, 2014) and even it being part of a Triple Border region.

My conversation with another gay Brazilian man, Alexander, also got marked with such a perception of him. Living and being part of the Brazilian society at Foz do Iguaçu, he could remember - with a heavy heart and a confessional tone - growing up hearing negative comments about Paraguayans and their Indigenous background as a negative aspect from the other side of the border.

> *[...] people comment in negative ways: "It could only be Paraguayans...". Or I see people being a little racist, you know. I've heard people say: in Paraguay, there are only Indigenous people. They go there and break everything, like when there's a riot, you know. I've already heard people saying things like that.*

Besides those comments in interviews, Guizardi and Mardones (2020) carefully explored this dynamic pointing to an augmentation of xenophobic discourses after the Brazilian 2018 presidential elections, when Bolsonaro came to power. Both report how foreign students at the Federal University of Latin-American Integration (UNILA), in Foz do Iguaçu, coming from many parts of Latin America, deal with xenophobic violence and what are their perceptions about the city. In sum, the authors contend that Brazilian society lives in fear of the unknown, of immigrants, since they are deemed to represent the outsiders who contribute to the violent crimes carried out at the Brazilian-Paraguayan border (such as, illegal trafficking).

But even so, what might be interpreted at first as a contradictory movement, turns out to be reframed to a certain extent by Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who cross the border. The questions raised are: if the Brazilian side seems unreceptive towards Paraguayan nationals, what makes sexual and gender non-conforming individuals across the international border between both countries to give way to their desires at nightclubs and other leisure areas? What for is Brazil represented as a modern country for *LGB* individuals if it is where not only xenophobia is a reality but crimes against transgender people are rampant?

In sum, all the problems converge to a common rationale: even knowing violence against sexual and gender non-conforming minorities exists at both sides of the border, it is better to be closer to the more developed (or modern) side than to the one "lagging behind". At least, for Carlos, the first gay Paraguayan to whom I talked at the beginning of my investigation when asked about that exact tenuous line showing the violence at both countries, his answer confirmed the tendency of leaving Paraguay and heading towards Brazil.

> *It is… because there are more possibilities to be happy there [in Brazil] and there are more places for you to… Life is not limited to work or studies. So, you have to work to live and not live to work and when you are living here, in Paraguay, there are no specific public places for LGBT. There are friendly ones. But the friendly ones for you to get there [you face] social problems. There is verbal and physical violence. So it's not safe. And in Brazil you have specific LGBT places, there are even LGBT neighbourhoods, there are LGBT beaches, so it's a safer place. It won't be 100%, like, oh man, the United States, we have laws, we have Pride Parades, we have rights there, but it's not a safe place for a gay person. Like if you live in New Jersey and works in New York you need to take a 1-hour long train ride and, on the train, you will find homophobic people too. You get there in New York, you go to a bakery and you want to buy a cake and the owner is very homophobic, very religious, he won't sell it to you. Only he won't say he won't sell it because you're gay.*

Starting from Carlos' statement, the idea of modernity and development kept coming back one interview after the other more or less straightforwardly. Whereas Paraguayans assumed their country was behind in the global development scale; or they declared their will to leave Paraguayan lands to seek more *liberal* - as the opposite of moral conservatism - and developed countries concerning their safety; Brazilians to whom I spoke, in their turn, admitted Brazil was not the best place for sexual and gender non-conforming people to live, but Paraguay was definitely not a better option.

Much of this impression was translated in the fact that Brazil had the necessary law enforcement sexual and gender non-conforming individuals needed to live well, even if it is a society where these same individuals still need to deal with outrageously high rates of murder and violence. The approach to such a mindset that brings together sexual and gender diversity as modernity markers have long been under global queer theory's scrutiny, especially when looking at international development discourses and theory where this logic gained broader projection.

Worldly

It is common sense on Western and liberal-progressive political thought that the demand to liberate social minorities from deep-seated discrimination and structural exclusion is a goal peoples all over the globe must wish for to claim a place among the most developed nation-states. That line of thought stems heavily from the modernisation promised by the European Enlightenment when the way of thinking about social reality suffered a great ontological and epistemological shift, placing human progress as a reference and a goal.

As Rahman (2014, p. 34) points out, the emergence of modernity gave way to the European imperial expansions in the XVI century, when commissioning natural superiority or inferiority to non-European societies and their political formations started. Therefore, that is the point in the formation of what is known today as global politics when modernity and colonisation merged to underpin a lasting racial divide between the so-called advanced white European/white western man and the so-called belated non-white/non-western/non-European other, thus contributing to the formation of what Frantz Fanon (1967) once called "inferiority complex", that is, the direct effect of subjugation on colonial and postcolonial subjectivities through an "internalization or rather epidermalization of this inferiority" (*ibid.,* p. 13).

That is the operating logic behind the "evolutionary" idea of international developmentalism right after the end of World War II, when, according to Cynthia Weber

(2016, p. 49), Western colonial countries harnessed the *underdeveloped* category to withstand the emerging and opposing global communist forces. It was more than a timely strategy. Underlying that attempt to produce subjectivities based on hierarchisation, the molar aggregates in global politics pulled together long-standing desiring forces of oppression to underpin patronising forms of saying the "primitive" societies needed a western/white/European saviour to guide them out of ignorance.

> This guidance invariably recommended implanting the 'underdeveloped' with a desire for the right kind of development and then placing him on a civilizing course from decadence to decency that mapped exactly to a political and economic progression from irrational, local tribalism toward modern Western capitalism and (usually) political liberalism (Weber, 2016, p. 50).

And not only the "underdeveloped primitive" is now part of a regime of subjectivity production but also the "undevelopable" being also appears to represent those deemed incapable of ever reaching any instantiation of civilisational development. The "undevelopable" is the ultimate opposite to Western standards of subjectivity for they are the personification of "decadence", "degeneracy" and "perversion" (*ibid.*, p. 53).

Cynthia Weber (2016) offers us an interesting point of departure to understand the connections between Western modern developmentalism and sexual and gender diversity acceptance as markers of progressive liberal politics as the author draws heavily on Donna Haraway's concept of figuration. Following Weber's theoretical elaborations, reality and its assemblages become discernible under the deployment of figurations, that is, the semiotic regimes that rely on images and language/discourse to "bring specific worlds into being" (*ibid.*, p. 28). Through this comprehension and the notion of the "underdeveloped" and the "undevelopable" as temporally behind in modernity, Weber, in the first moment, argues for an equivalence between these figurations of development and the general figuration of homosexuality within Western subjectivity.

Before sexual and gender diversity became markers for Western liberal modernity, homosexuality was treated through the same figurations of moral and civilisational decadence as non-Western nations in the fictive scale of development, thus equating one characteristic to the other. That is to say, the racist division also means, for Weber (2016, p. 55), the sexualisation of international order. After all, European colonisation dismantled not only political organisations during colonial invasions, it violently deterritorialised and reterritorialised existing Indigenous gender and sexual subjectivities (Lugones, 2007;

Fernandes, 2015) imposing Christian moral beliefs that privileged heteronormative behaviour towards gender identity and sexuality.

Over the XIX and XX centuries Western psychiatry, biology and psychology sciences operated under the logic of evolutionary behaviour placing homosexual sex under the labels of degeneracy and savagery, which gave sufficient championing for imperial Western nations to juridically sanction homosexuality as an obscene crime against "natural order" and to place the heterosexual couple in binary opposition to homosexuality. At the first moment, following Weber's (2016) reasoning, the figuration of the degenerate and savage homosexual became synonymous with the figuration of the underdeveloped because neither of them could reach the allegedly "natural" function of (social and) sexual intercourse of social and biological reproduction, which does not mean this one homosexual figuration cannot be "saved" and put on the trails towards temporal development marked by the transition from the belated homosexuality to the modern and productive heterosexuality. On the other hand, the "decadent homosexual" as the "undevelopable" became synonymous with each other as both were "aberrations" that could endanger the temporal course of development taking into consideration their alleged immutability to serve development well. Hence, Weber (2016, p. 67) highlights three different "functions" to the decant homosexual figuration that, in sum, is transformed into a living and disposable example to others on how not to portrayal modern development.

> First, the 'decadent homosexual' reasserts the centrality of the 'reproductive cis-gendered heterosexual couple' and its supporting structures of heteronormativity in achieving modernization and development. Second, as the minority figure beyond development, he implants in the majority 'developing' the knowledge that he, the 'decadent homosexual', marks the limits of the development process itself. As a result, his third function is to serve as the scapegoat whose existence in traditional societies explains why social and political development has failed to take place.

In a second moment, Western progressiveness started to adopt a different paradigm towards sexual and gender diversity. One that subsumes social minority groups to human rights discourses, redirecting not only sexuality demands into liberal modernity but also feminist and racial disputes against structural discrimination. Focusing on sexual and gender diversity rights claims, Weber (2016, p. 107) looks at international LGBT activism spawning from the U.S.-Europe axis, such as the campaigns for HIV/AIDS and political action from Human Rights Watch, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, among other regional and local LGBT non-governmental organisations; as the departure point for a concrete emergence of

so-called “gay rights holder” figuration as no longer a menace for Western modernity and development, but now as the “normal homosexual” in international politics.

Nevertheless, no one should assume international activism reached high achievements concerning practical gains homogeneously all over the world. As Rahman (2014, p. 44) rightly points out homosexual subjectivity has not been unequivocally accepted even among Western nations; in the West LGBT rights are still a contentious and controversial debate. Conversely, I see international LGBT activism helped spread Western understandings about sexuality and gender diversity. In the wake of globalisation, Western modernised sexual and gender diversity found reverberation in local Third World contexts, where the Western LGBT acronym became more or less adapted to postcolonial scenarios (Binnie, 2004) and generated, most of all, what I have been dwelling on: the fictive modern discourse of development based on sexual and gender diversity acceptance - as I happened to encounter in the Paraguayan and Brazilian cross-border context.

The “normal homosexual” depicted in Weber’s theorisation finds representativeness in specific embodiments defined by particular social markers deemed not to disturb the (neo)liberal economic regime. “This new normal subject is the multiculturalized white(ned), ableized, domesticated, entrepreneurial subject who is (re)productive in/for capitalism, regardless of whether he is heterosexual or homosexual” (Weber, 2016, p. 110). In this sense, what once was the savage and troublesome homosexual now passes through discoursive transformations to become the “gay rights holder” with new sanitised subjectivity where individuals come to desire their own repression subscribing to the constant reproduction of (neo)liberal values. Put differently, this is the naked truth of what queer theory scholars know for *homonormativity* as elaborated by Lisa Duggan (2003): a demobilised and depoliticised sexually and the gendered dissident individual who does not contest prevailing heteronormative regimes, but that, instead, supports its continuity through consumerism and the reproduction of heterosexist institutional customs indispensable for the continuity of neoliberal politics.

Informed by Duggan’s concept, Weber (2016, p. 109) argues the figuration of the perverse homosexual mutates under special conditions to the normal homosexual figuration, where, in practice, this new domesticated, sanitised, complicit sexually dissident individual seeks to reproduce the basic molar aggregate of most Western social machines: the reproductive family. The new “normalised homosexual” was made to fit in familial relations composed of two same-sex monogamous parents, whose subjectivity desires to re-enact the same repressive heteronormative pattern based on children rearing that will be ever-destined

to recreate territorialisations drowned in molar logics of the nation and civilisational reproduction attached to neoliberal ways of consumption.

> [Homonormativity] is about engaging uncritically in the market as a private consumer, usually as part of or on behalf of the private family unit. This proper attachment means that any challenge to 'neoliberal policies of fiscal austerity, privatization, market liberalization, and government stabilization [that] are [the] pro-corporate capitalist guarantors of private property relations' locally, nationally and internationally are forfeited by same-sex individuals in the name of being (in) just another 'normal family' (*ibid.*, p. 109).

From this moment onwards, modern progressive Western discourse does not perceive homosexuality as a sexual perversity that interrupts biological reproduction but rather condemns those sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who desire different forms of political, economic and social organisations incompatible with neoliberal standards.

As Kapoor (2015, p. 1613) puts it, homosexuality is treated merely as a "sexual expression, lifestyle and identity" that bolsters LGBT identity internationally reaching mass-media and marketing plans, without ever clearly situating this subjectivity inside capitalism and its patriarchal foundations. At last, in late modernity, the homonormative "normal" homosexual becomes the modern Western exemplary model for Third World sexual and gender non-conforming individuals to follow. Underdeveloped-almost-modern sexual and gender individuals located in the global South now have the proper "guideline" to be considered worthy of human rights.

It is the modulation of this new modern Western homosexual subjectivity, worthy of rights, no longer perverse and developed, that invades international politics to be used by Western powers as the measuring scale capable of separating *traditional* (pathological) societies from *modern* (developed) ones. In today's sexualised international politics, so-called modern Western states use the LGBT rights agenda as a form of judging whether another country is worthy of economic help based on how governments deal with sexual and gender diversity.

In a single passage Weber (2016, p. 81) clears our doubts on the effects of such discursive arrangement to any susceptible individual's subjectivity taken by pervasive subjections:

> Civilizing development is not just understood as a process that transforms the 'underdeveloped' into the 'developed'. It is also understood as a process that implants a desire for civilization as a desire for Western-style development in (post)colonial populations. If the 'developed' succeed in implanting a desire for civilization as Western-style development in (post) colonial populations, these populations are refigured as the

> ‘underdeveloped’. If this process fails, these populations are refigured as ‘undevelopable’.

As Rahman (2014, p. 121) poignantly stresses, the Western discourse on modernity that brings together sexuality as a development marker serves as a *homocolonialist* attempt to exert control over non-Western subjectivities and, thus, put into practice the internalisation of an inferiority complex (Fanon, 1967). This massive assemblage of subjectivities aligned to capitalist molar flows affects directly our libido and, consequently, our desire. Since our subjectivities are the result of collective assemblages, the desire for our own repression stands dormant in the realm of the unconscious desire, waiting for the right moment to appear.

To better understand this relation, it is necessary to take a step back: what is desire? First, let us conceive *desire* not as a lack, as the absence of an object, but as production. A collective production. As such, *desire* evokes the will to produce, to move, to change, to create. The energy contained in desire, Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p. 291) called *libido*. Not as sexual libido, for when individuals intend to engage in sexual intercourse, but as the vital energy of production, as though getting “sexually aroused” by the potency of creation. However, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983) indicate, social formations always operate repressions in the desire to avoid the social machine’s downfall through uncontrolled decodifications and deterritorialisations. Today’s lasting capitalist formation has been built on this same repression regime and established different libido flows under its social machine, where the very desire for one’s repression resides.

Through collective assemblages, flows of desire appear in both molar and molecular aggregates generating continuous unconscious desires. That is to say that, as individuals, our libidinal investments may resonate with *group fantasies*, the collective desires lying underneath the social field. If not apprehended and resisted, these unconscious desires can reveal themselves to be reactionary, counterrevolutionary. It is what explains why sometimes our interests and needs do not correspond to the desiring investments. As part of an aggregate, collective desires permeate our subjectivity, and thus our libido tends to direct itself towards that group investment. Deleuze and Guattari (1983, *passim*) explain this relation:

> The truth is that sexuality is everywhere: the way a bureaucrat fondles his records, a judge administers justice, a businessman causes money to circulate; the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat; and so on. [...] Hitler got the fascists sexually aroused. Flags, nations, armies, banks get a lot of people aroused. [...] No, the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that need to be accounted for.

The yearn for power, the craving for better statuses, is what composes much of our libido investments, which is closely related to the modern capitalistic subjectivity hovering in most postcolonial societies. As Michel Foucault stated in the preface for the Anti-Oedipus (*ibid.*, p. XIII), referring to the major contributions of this work, the book is meant to build strategies to fight "the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us".

Is it not interesting to think of the unconscious way each one of us come to desire reality as the result of collective investments? Because we are so intimately intertwined in dominating capitalistic subjectivity regimes, defiled with colonial pasts in Third World societies, that even the most revolutionary sexual and gender non-conforming persons and LGBT activist groups fighting for recognition in the Paraguayan political macro environment have their members molecularly attached to reactionary tendencies such as that of leaving the country towards an allegedly better place to live - but that represents a whole new set of repressions. The desire for one's own repression. This process appears clearly in the discourses stated by Paraguayans and Brazilians during the interviews I conducted, even if in specific ways. One very representative example was Uriel's statement on the usefulness of Paraguay for his progression towards self-development. In his words:

> *I've already got where I wanted to go in Paraguay, in terms of my work. And I see the roof too shallow here and I want a little more, I want more. So my goal was either Brazil or the United States. I was even going to start... my postgraduate course was going to be in Curitiba, precisely when the pandemic came [...] After all that with the pandemic, I kept thinking more, and more. I saw the situation in Brazil too and then I decided I'd go there directly because I always had in mind what I would do if it wasn't for the postgraduate course, another specialisation there in the United States, but I just went ahead, I said: I'm not going to spend my money, my time doing it in Curitiba, or São Paulo... I'll go straight there and then stay there for work or studying if I can, and stay there a little longer. It's more about the opportunities it offers me and the rights that I'll also have there [in the U.S.].*

The specificity mentioned above, concerning Paraguayan and Brazilian utterances, arrived at me as the idea of a "*nexus of progression*" mostly driven by a possible colonial hierarchy heritage. It obeys progressiveness in the way of an imaginary scale, where Paraguay and Brazil - though the latter being above the former - were seen as means for reaching the ultimate end: the developed West. What is remarkable in this nexus is the apparent progression between three different locations, three different territorialisations of sexual freedom. At the lowest plateau, there is the stagnated (and undevelopable) Paraguayan nation-state with its "unruliness" to protect sexual minorities. Then, at an intermediate plateau, we find the Brazilian nation-state, where sexual and gender diverse minorities

allegedly have more legal grants to survive discrimination, yet social data still informs Brazil to be a dangerous place in the long-term development (thus, a not stubborn underdeveloped country for neoliberal sexual politics), but that attracts Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. And, finally, at the end and most high plateau, there are Western countries, where sexual minorities are safeguarded from violence and can marry, adopt and constitute family thanks to the moral superiority of Western societies.

It appears that the main feature of this logic is its ability to break one's national belonging at the expense of a "less modern" country, attracting individuals to always try to pursue the "higher" ground of modernity: be a member of a (more) modern (colonising) nation. That feature becomes blatantly apparent in the following passage from my conversation with Ali, a Paraguayan gay man who openly stated his kind of passionate feelings about Brazil whereas he, perhaps unwittingly, restated what has been argued concerning the force of nation-state's strategies of subjectivity production over individual's singularities as well as the force displayed by the current (neo)colonial capitalistic subjectivity capable of enclosing and suppressing desire in order to maintain a single understanding, a single meaning of a life as the only way live, through reaching stability in a sedentary life:

> *I've been to Rio, I've been to São Paulo, to São José dos Campos too, so as I told you: if today, right now, you would say to me: "Look, Ali, Paraguay will become extinct and you have to choose a nationality: Brazilian, Peruvian, Chilean, Chinese... whatever…", I would choose Brazilian, for sure. Then you'll say: but how, here we have Bolsonaro…? Man, his term is coming to an end. When it's over you're going to put someone else in, Brazil is going up, so everyone will be happy again. But I don't know, I think that I've always been like this. I have pictures [in Brazil]. Since I was little we used to go there to have dinner with my mother at Rafain*[13]*... we went to the Falls. [They would say] "Ah, let's go to Foz". Then I would go there.* (Ali, Paraguayan cis gay man, interview in March 2021).

Ali had given me that answer after I asked whether he had visited other cities in Brazil other than Foz do Iguaçu. He reacted instantly to show his excitement with my question. And showed exactly the extent to which we can become seduced to certain subjectivities. Our libido manifested.

But it is important to leave it well explained here that one's desire for more "modernity" abroad does not necessarily result in an actual displacement to fulfill such yearning. I find this desire to stay mostly as a rendition in the ideational realm, as though an ideal situation to be reached - if possible - that contributes to lowering one's subjectivity to a subordinated identity - to be feeling less important than those abroad. While there will be

[13] Rafain is a famous restaurant in Foz do Iguaçu, in operation since the late 1950s, where traditional shows covering latin-american cultures are held for customers.

people who will surely manage to immigrate elsewhere, others will remain alongside their original community taken by the fear of potential dangers and the uncertainties of moving abroad. That is to say, it will depend on which factors are affecting one's life to decide to go away or to stay surrounded by familiar structures which, to a certain extent, may represent security from the unknown, from the others whose differences may be frightening, from language differences, from cultural differences, from the citizenship and nationality differences. As I have already shown, the production of desire and, consequently, of subjectivity, make individuals sedentary and attached to certain locations. Lands, people, family, all that composes our daily life in assemblages leave in us feelings of attachment hard to let go of. Trying to ignore and leave emotions behind may be too harsh and/or impossible to some of us.

In the end, what counts is that the logic of modernity echoes the will to have power, as the capitalistic subjectivity demands. Yet, I am not certain that sexual and gender non-conforming individuals born in postcolonial Third World nations have ever firmly belonged to its "natal" territory. I question if the Paraguayan and Brazilian nation-states have what is necessary to produce strong subjectivities that do not bend to Western neoliberal political and economic forces? Now I argue it is a direct heritage of the colonisation of the desire whereby national subjectivities are subjected to wider globalising capitalistic subjectivities spawning from Western (neo)colonial politics. Fanon's notion of inferiority internalisation remarkably explains this phenomenon, awakened through the global assemblages of progressiveness.

This, of course, leaves racialised others (i.e. Latin Americans) out of the process of progression. Borrowing Puar's (2007) *homonationalism* - defined by the junction between homonormativity and nationalism -, the scale of hierarchisation is extended to separate the "developed homosexual" from the "underdeveloped/undevelopable homosexual" in which "some queers are better than others" (*ibid.*, p. 48). That is to say the modernity discourse, as homocolonial and homonational projects, not only creates a fictive image of Third World sexual and gender diverse minorities as dangers but also propels their desire to seek ways of reaching the "opposite" pole in the scale of modernity and development to finally become "part of modernity", the inferiority complex might affirm.

However, it is not achievable and will never be, because the "underdeveloped" homosexual must meet requirements of racial, national, political and social belongings. Even if the "underdeveloped" sexual and gender non-conforming individual succeeds to accomplish his or her desire to live in "developed" lands, there will always be present intersecting social

markers undermining their lived experience to become a “true developed being”. They will not be able to live up to the expectations. It is an endless run towards “development”, such as capitalism's endless task to survive its own self-fulfilling prophecy of demise.

Inayatullah and Blaney (2004, p. 6) have formulated a similar thought, namely, the “difference within”, for when the “Other” deterritorialises local and international instances by the means of mobility hoping to achieve a better life but faces a fictive “sameness”. Such imaginative equality happens because the “[...] other within the boundaries of the political community is ‘managed’ by some combination of hierarchy, eradication, assimilation or expulsion, and tolerance”.

This is not to say, nonetheless, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals from Paraguay or Brazil should put away their aspirations of better living conditions, or as Agnew (2008) calls it “the right to a decent life” for those who are structurally limited by borders in our minds. When disclosing all the theoretical and empirical data in this research, I mean not to say individuals in these countries should stay under conditions that menace their integrity and resist or fight them. Not at all. In the same way, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals may resort to leaving their countries and subscribing to neoliberal politics, others may resort to leaving their countries to grow stronger and act from afar. “I may be running, but I look for a gun as I go” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 204).

In this sense, to run away should never be rationalised as the same as giving up or acting cowardly. After all, what is resistance without life if not nothingness? It is our libidinal investments that must be ready and charged with the desire to change. And if social machines threaten our existence, our priority must turn to ourselves. Somewhat, my intent here is to advance a broader understanding of what may lie underneath sexualised international politics, disclosing the most apparent oppressions against sexual and gender diverse minorities. Therefore, it would be irresponsible to discourage or condemn (if I would ever come to bear such power over someone) one’s interests to look for what one finds most suitable for him/her/they, especially in grim realities of risk of death or suffering. Besides that, even though I believe one singularity alone cannot sustain the pressures of entire molar lines’ centripetal force against the lines of flight, somehow and someone must escape from enclosed territorialisations to trigger the disruptions that give form and sprout molecular revolutions.

Incipiency

Subjectivities travel. They can change, they can be much more than just one thing as they carry the power to deterritorialise and reterritorialise. And even if I say "they", what I really mean is the assemblage of the "us". We must bring responsibility to our deeds. It is we. We are multiple. We travel and we change and we are capable of altering reality despite it may seem we are just too small to fight back against the forced docility to our desire, to our will to produce. Our subjectivities, our bodies, as I have been discussing, are tamed to fit into certain limits with which we must comply and never cross beyond what is already secure, or rather, familiar. Because once trespassed, the only thing that clings us to humanity may be dispossessed from us: our citizenship. That is, the ultimate bond between our possibility to claim existence and the social machine we are inserted into.

The multiple potentialities our subjectivities assemble make our movements and crossings complex. In what concerns sexual and gender diversity, some may find relief in travelling and crossing borders (such as Uriel, Ali or Carlos). Others, just like Veronica, are compelled not to do so based on the life-threatening conditions Brazil represents for trans women. Hence, the border between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE becomes the place of numerous possibilities of existence that finds its limits on the very borders society builds up. The problem is when such limitations represent danger and violence towards someone. When I look beyond Veronica's problem, I can see violence reaches other individuals who claim more rights and respect and are violently attacked as in the case of Hernandarias' first Pride Parade. Surely, affirming that is the same as looking only at the crude problem's side, when there are others, such as Ali, who can create bearable living conditions using the border as a safe escape route. But who knows how will violence and discrimination escalate from now on?

Even though social reality seems to flourish from a plethora of movements, different displacements; it is evident, now, that this flow of life is caged and clearly doomed to fail in its self-fulfilment. That is to say, the intensity in movements composing our social reality is always circulating round and round, as in a never-ending spin towards a very well-known and stable centre. This is precisely the very functionality of subjectivation processes encountered in our capitalistic and colonial reality. International politics, nation-states, institutions, social orders, the school, the family… All of them are the receptacles of the enclosure that trap and attach our desires - and, consequently, our lives - to modes of existence in circularities.

For example. The international pendulum border mobility of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE represents exactly what I mean when I say our social flows are caged. Even the image of a pendulum is self-explanatory in this case. A *pendulum* is any mass connected to one end of a thread that, when suspended,

holding the other end of the thread and being under the effect of a force, tends to swing from one side to the other until resistance nullifies the moving force. In the end, the movement stops and the mass in the one end of the thread keep holding there until another moving force applies a displacement. Sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who cross the border to live their experiences going from Paraguay to Brazil in the evening to visit bars and night clubs and, then, going back home in Paraguay; or when these same individuals reproduce hierarchising logics of modernity, these movements, are the same of a wobbling pendulum.

Virtually, all of our movements (social, psychological, political, economic) are restrained to circulate within a certain limit that must never be trespassed otherwise individuals, instead of putting borders at risk, are threatened with punishments. So, being very Deleuzian, if social life is created with movement, then, apparently, we might not be living all that we could. Rather, we are locked in limited social, physical, mental, psychological and emotional spaces where one is allowed to approach the border of that space but never cross it making always the same pendulum movement, always moving back and forth.

But, to some extent, living under certain limitations may become something desirable. It may become - as it already is - part of our group fantasy over desire. Concerning this point, there is a very emblematic passage from my conversation with Ali, that one Paraguayan man who said he would choose the Brazilian citizenship in case Paraguay became extinct when I asked him whether he had plans to leave Paraguay:

> *It's something I was talking about yesterday with a friend of mine. [...] I went to his house and his mother said: "Go to the United States, sweep away snow or do any other thing. Get out of here and go make some money". And then I said to him like this: "Do you believe I was thinking about this possibility these days?" [...] And who knows… I don't know if I would go now if I had an opportunity to go to Brazil. However, I don't know... It's just that I'm a little afraid too, you know, so... It's very easy for you to stay in your country, in your community and I still live with my parents. So I live here with my family, sometimes I have money, sometimes they have money, my mother has money, so she lends me some. Nothing is missing.*

Despite the fact Ali valued leaving Paraguay based on expectations of acquiring better life conditions whether moving to Brazil or to the United States, it is also clear that the desire for modernity/development collides with the security statist sedentariness provides us. Said differently, even though Ali seemed enticed to follow the modern liberal thought of sexual freedom as development, his personal experience while raising in CDE all his life creates an expected feeling of insecurity for the losses he would be generating in the case of definitely leaving his family, his community and his country.

Like it or not, individuals tend to become intimately attached to sentiments of what has been left behind. Not only in terms of the security provided by hearing a familiar language or seeing familiar faces but also of the landscape, the climate, the flora and the fauna common to, in this case, the Alto Paraná region in Paraguay. As Huang (2009) states commenting on the logics of "translocalities", people tend to carry with them territorially bounded social spheres across national spaces when trying to adjust to a new locality. Our feelings attached to a specific spatiality travels with us and

> [...] the everyday activities and geographies of transnational communities occur and accumulate to enable transmigrants who share some form of identity to find and develop dense networks and social relations with one another in host societies, as well as to create and maintain links with home and other translocal spaces in other parts of the world in a multidirectional manner.

And even though acknowledging this conflicting relation, I come to argue, based on my conversations with Carlos, Ali and Uriel, all Paraguayans, that, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, whose subjectivity is strongly informed by this vital characteristic, living in the Global South, seem to overvalue their sexual and gender diversity acceptability over their national belonging, as though the promise of living without fear of discrimination would compensate any other difficulties of moving abroad. What leads me to think the process of subjectivity production in peripheral postcolonial states, to some extent, reproduces the very modern logic of superiority through development.

Even though the modern State form is built on the grounds of modernity, which encloses individuals to confined spaces and semiotically operate over our desire in order to make us believe in a natural order of menace based on differences as a negative trait, it is clear for me that this crushing statist force - also backed by capitalistic subjectivities -, at least in nation-states located in the global periphery, is affected by the semiotic effects of developed States. Said differently, I contend the subjectivity production carried out in Paraguay or Brazil, for instance, carries, in its essence, a trace of disloyalty to itself due to its past as colonised nations. The words coming from Ali call my attention to think of how the current capitalistic subjectivity is directly influenced by the so-called developed nations from the Global North, which through this modernity rationale can operate fissions on the idea of national belonging.

In the case of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals from peripheral States, their sexual and gender diversity adds on as another subjective element to be operated by this logic of belonging, the same logic of what Jon Binnie (2004, p. 122) discusses in terms of

sexual citizenship. For the author, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals tend to operate movements of migration to cities where the global modernity rationale guides the likelihood of these dissident individuals to better live their sexualities and gender identities. As seen before, the homocolonial and homonationalist operations translate the neoliberal rationale in this area of our subjectivities on a world politics scale. Hence, I come to think of the way this logic coopt sexual and gender non-conforming individuals located in the Global South to see in "developed countries" or, at least, countries in ascension towards development, as in the case of Brazil. Over and above breaking national "loyalties", the capitalistic subjectivity produces in us the desire from the inside.

Figure 2: A *petit* piece of modernity in CDE

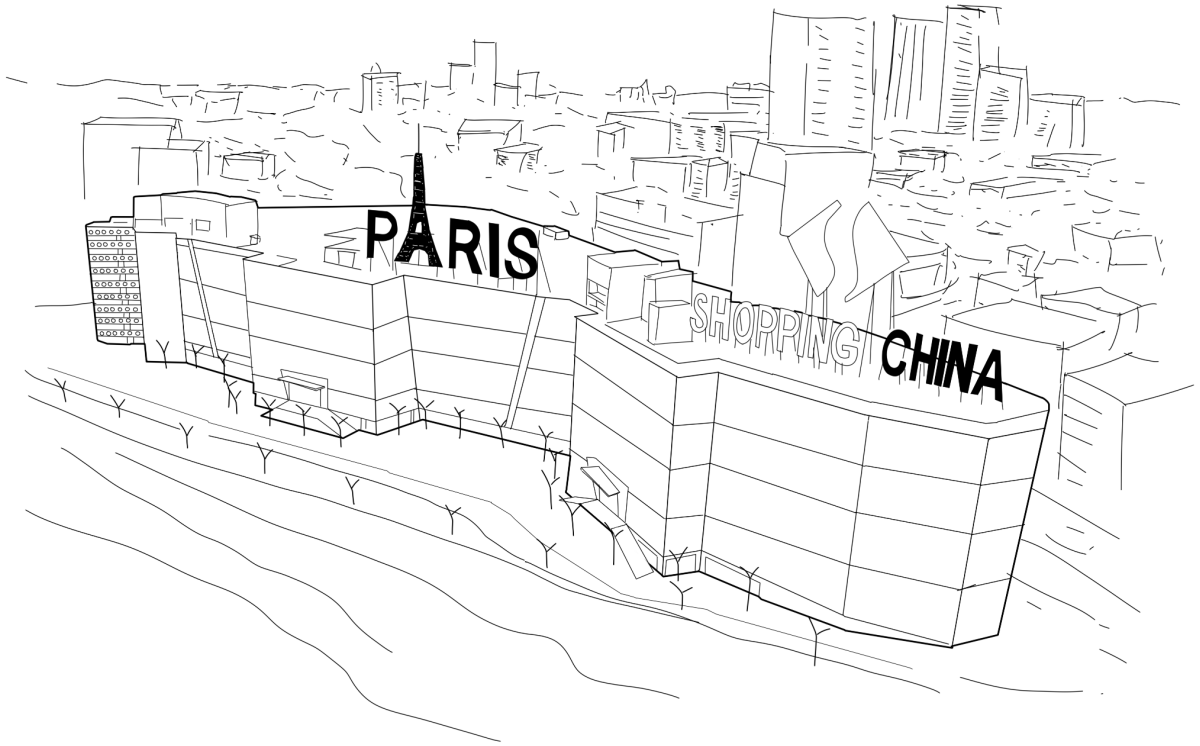


Photo: Artwork done by fferreira (ff.artsy) upon request.

CHAPTER 3: GOING BACK AND FORTH

-25.274143, -57.541291
-25.30140, -57.63590

I kick off following one of Thomas Nail's (2016) consequences of border theorisation: the border as a process of circulation. This is a useful concept to explain how borders serve as markers of limit points wherein social reality circulates and recirculates over and over again until a discontinuity happens to rearrange new territorialities. In sum, circulation divides, preserves, defends and expands what is divided. This very logic can be applied when looking at various borders and, especially, those which persist through time and last until the present days in a never-ending circularity impregnated on our minds and our subjectivities. In this part of the story I wish, thereby, to unpack the historicity belonging to the borders composing (not only but notably) sexual and gender non-conforming individual's subjectivities in Paraguay.

One way or another, the international pendulum border mobility between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu is not restricted to physical crossings. It transcends space and time and can be grasped in past times. As it has been argued already, the way individuals come to conceive their subjectivities is directly connected to common understandings of national belonging and other social markers responsible for highlighting differences, which become more or less apparent depending on the distances individuals travel and the boundaries they cross. By and large, human crossings also occur in the unconscious, in the ways we come to free our desire from repression and ask for change, or when one comes to wish to overcome limitations. This is the reason why I state here that our crossings are the tools to form revolutionary lines of flight and deterritorialisations if well-honed against reactionary practises. However, to achieve such autonomous status capable of overcoming segregational barriers of the difference caused by the logic of borders, one needs to comprehend how borders are contingent and carry historicity. Investigating the past might be useful to explain how borders circulate and why certain individuals need to obey limits whereas others benefit from more expanded limits.

In different moments during conversations with interviewees, two historical events were brought about which drew my attention and made me notice certain stable circularities whilst visiting Paraguay's recent past. The first event has come to my attention in my contact with Carlos - the first person to talk to me. He informed me about what is known yet today as *Caso 108*, which occurred in 1959 when the investigations on the mysterious death of

Bernardo Aranda, a famous radio announcer, triggered systematic persecution against sexual and gender non-conforming individuals and especially against homosexual men in the capital *Asunción*, during Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship in Paraguay. Local press at the time was responsible for spreading the formalisation of such investigations as well as triggering the reinforcement of stereotypes of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals as "*amorales*" (immorals), in what seemed to mark more crudely the explicit structural discrimination against those individuals. Such affair is deemed to still unconsciously figure in Paraguayan society causing negative reverberations to sexual and gender non-conforming individuals' subjectivities.

The second event brought up was not so easily perceived as a relevant case to feature in here. However, after pondering over it with the help of Rocco Carbone's (2015a; 2015b) writings on the role of women and gender discrimination - even after the combats -, the linkage between the *Guasú*[14] War (1864-1870), or the War of the Triple Alliance (or, even, for Brazilians, the War of Paraguay) and the current circularities forming borders that push away sexual and gender non-conforming individuals inside Paraguayan society started to make sense. Besides that, I could not ignore the fact this topic surged as a temporal reference to indicate how Paraguayan "Others" ought to be seen as a talked to Rodrigo, a Brazilian gay man. In his perspective - and a very cautious one since he carefully remarked it was only a hypothesis he came up with -, contemporary social behaviour has suffered from the humongous amount of men who died at the war. Rodrigo would comment: "I always bring myself to think that because so many men have died, people want those manly men again… Those manly men out there in the country again".

As I heard Rodrigo's thoughts on this subject a few questions popped up. The first one was: why did no other Paraguayan individual I interviewed bring such a historical event to our conversations? Would it be possible I did not ask the proper questions or did this subject really not come up importantly enough to those whom I talked with? The second one: why did a Brazilian man find it relevant to recover the effects from the War on contemporary society in Paraguay? Could it be anything else hidden behind Rodrigo's statement? And for the last question: what for did these two historical events have been brought up during conversations with interviewees? Well, at least for the last question raised, I come to believe they still resonate on present circularities indeed. Considering the first and the second questions I am afraid I will have to disappoint the reader to some extent here since I feel this is not the proper

[14] In *Guarani*, *guasú* translates as "great", "big".

space - nor I feel I am competent enough - to answer them properly when taking into account the scope of this investigation.

In any case, when it comes to unravelling the way Paraguay is seen through Brazilian eyes, Sylvain Souchaud (2011) has given us an overview so we can grasp glimpses of Rodrigo's motifs to look at the Guasú War as a reference for Paraguay's contemporary social reality. Souchaud argues the current view of Paraguay in Brazil has shifted largely from the post-Grasú War imaginary to the integration at the border between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE which flourished as of the 1960s with Brazilian and Paraguayan governmental plans to build the Itaipu Hydroelectric Plant, to populate the Alto Paraná region and to augment the agricultural frontier at the Paraguayan side (or the Brazilian colonisation in eastern Paraguay lands as it is known lately). All of these occurrences contribute, yet today, to feed a negative image to the whole assemblage of Paraguayans. First, as deceivers due to illicit and fake merchandise negotiations at the border between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE. Second, the conflicts in rural areas between Braziguayans and Paraguayans resulted in old resentments because of lands controlled by big landowners descending from Brazilian colonisers. And lastly, for the traumas of the Guasú War which, even though mostly forgotten in the Brazilian imagination, still resists today as a figuration to refer to the defeated party.

In sum, Souchaud (2011) demonstrates the Brazilian imagination to be selective, in the sense of recovering historical events to define a whole people; and fragmented, in the sense of restraining the whole identity of Paraguayans to what occurs in a single point at the border between both countries. Thus, in his speech, Rodrigo replicates, even though accurate without knowing, the same tendency to look at the past to explain the present recovering traumas of the Guasú War as a generalising determiner for contemporary behaviours, which, in this case, as I will present ahead, does surely find reminiscences. I suggest, therefore, Rodrigo's theorisation to take into account the effects of the war based on the circularities that go round and round in the Brazilian imaginary about Paraguayans as Souchaud argues, but that finds substantiation despite Rodrigo never having had contact with investigations pointing out this relation.

Bearing in mind both historical moments, in this part of the story, I intend to go back and forth in time to investigate the relevance of the Guasú War and the "Caso 108" to current understandings of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals' subjectivities. Hence, I first present both Rodrigo's and Carlo's statements referring to historical events before jumping into the topics, respectively, the Guasú War and the Caso 108. Following the exposition, I sustain, though, that the War's aftermath is qualitatively different from the echoes of the

"Caso 108". The conflict was part of a larger international political entanglement and brought broader consequences to the comprehension of a Paraguayan subjectivity beyond its territory. In other words, Paraguay's loss resulted in internal political and social instability especially as a great part of its male adult inhabitants died in the war, which contributed to labelling the country as "a country of women" (Potthast, 2006) at the time. Such trauma derived from War was addressed in a way to reverse the gender imbalance by restructuring patriarchal hierarchies to their former status at the expense and erasure of women's efforts during the conflict. And, of course, drawing on Carbone's (2015a) "gendered law" (or *ley genérica*)[15] notion, the reconstruction of sexist structures also affected gender and sexually nonconforming individuals as a "side effect" of cis-heteronormativities as part of generic measures to rebuild male dominance.

On the other hand, the imprisonment of 108 homosexuals in 1959, during the Paraguayan hardship period, is an integral part of internal politics which makes it easier to grasp its impacts in today's Paraguayan social reality. It is a symbol for LGBT activist groups who try to reframe the social meaning of the number that is less a vestige inherited from Stroessner's government than a perpetual circularity representing the strength of reactionary molar aggregates within Paraguay's society. In fact, as part of my argument, both events contribute in singular ways to perpetuate borders' circularities. Finally, after pointing out the primary assumption, I follow for the second, where I sustain looking at both historical events as an integral part of the subjectivity production process, as I came to understand, which circulates internally - in the cis-heteronormative patterns expected for individuals - and internationally - in the way the fictive image of a Paraguayan subjectivity is apprehended in Brazil.

MMXXI

Going forth. Rodrigo was the second to last Brazilian I talked with and, of utmost curiosity for me, he was the only person to mention the Guasú War. At first, even though I knew I would have to learn more about that historical event, nothing else made me alert of the reference he had cited at the time. Our conversation went smoothly for over 38 minutes as I listened to Rodrigo's memories, experiences and thoughts on his life in the border region.

[15] I chose to translate the Spanish word "*genérica*" as "gendered" in English, since the word Carbone employs may be understood in the context as both "generic" and "gendered" to explain the effects of the sexist structure in Paraguay before and after the Guasú War. Thus, it can be used interchangeably in the text as well.

At a certain point during our talk I drew on one of Rodrigo's first statements in our conversation; about his perception of sexism at both Foz do Iguaçu and Paraguay - following a preceding question I had made. He claimed to subscribe to an understanding in which cis-heteropatriarchal discrimination against women and gender and sexual non-conforming individuals was part of the cultural asset at both sides of the border. In sequence, I asked him what made him think of that. He stopped talking for a bit and answered me listing a few hypotheses he had come up with for each border's sides.

> *So, I have a hypothesis that I raise. Paraguay... And that is completely my perception, ok? When Paraguay lost the war, the war between Brazil and Paraguay, a long time ago, many Paraguayan men died… Historically speaking, many men died. So, the country was very... Many women remained in the country because many men died. Then, I always had the impression and, as I told you, it's pure guesswork, okay? Like raising a hypothesis, ok? I always bring myself to think that, because so many men have died, people [started to] want those manly men again… Those manly men, back in the country again. [...] "We need to rebuild these men that we lost in war". For me, that is one point.*

At first, this passage did not draw my attention. It was not until I questioned Paraguay's history that I began mulling over the importance of past events for contemporary political and social behaviours of and towards sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. I, then, invested efforts in asking what circularities have been around in time and space involving that border region. My initial reaction was chasing the past, departing from what people I had been in contact with told me about the historicity that could concern that border region.

After ruminating on Rodrigo's comment about the Guasú War, a couple of months after our meeting, I went in a search for more data to help me understand why he had brought me that information - with certain conviction - as though it was important to comprehend local interplays. Truth is, the investigation I decided to pursue is surrounded by all sorts of complex dynamics requiring attention to many different details, such as historical pasts, borders circularities, contemporary local, national and international politics; the international border mobility of individuals; the discourses that accompany people in their displacements; as well as how sexual and gender politics are managed etc. Hence, bringing forward historicity unveils both the complexity and the continuous repetition of old circularities that may explain why Rodrigo made the point of unravelling his perception.

All in all, following the rationale of the Guasú War aftermath, to take it as a driver which still impresses impacts in the present is to admit circularities are still functioning as efficiently as more than 150 years ago. Following Souchaud's interpretation of how Paraguay

is perceived in Brazil, as just stated above, it becomes evident once again the temporal "cherry-picking" displayed in Brazil's imagination on Paraguay. This selective reaction, I argue, may become accompanied by a modernising hierarchy between peoples causing, for example, Rodrigo to deem the Paraguayan society to be late in the development scale. Now, whether in the one hand I encountered Paraguayan individuals claiming Paraguay to be less modern than Brazil because their country did not have the laws and discussions to protect their gender and sexual diversity; on the other hand, I encountered Brazilians generalising the alleged Paraguayan "lack of modernity" based not only on how gender diversity and sexuality are seen to be treated inside their social reality but also based on a broader idea of a country lagging in all nuances compared to Brazil - infrastructure, economically, socially, politically etc. That becomes clear when Rodrigo goes for the second consideration about what was his interpretation of the causes of sexism coming from Paraguay. Following the Guasú War argument, he stated:

> *Another point is that if we look at Paraguay in the development of education, even technological, it is still behind Brazil in several ways and, educationally speaking, I mean, what the schools are teaching… Back in Encarnacion, I was super shocked last year... that a school did a campaign, within the school, that: Yes! Boys wear blue and girls wear pink… Like, the school's campaign was this: boys wear blue, girls wear pink. [...] That scared me, so I said: But a school doing a campaign at this level like that? I say that, somehow, there is a delay. While in Brazil we have been talking about the inclusion of children who are already starting to identify as trans, right… In Brazil, for example, there is already the issue of the legal name change. In Paraguay, I have never seen this. I have never seen anyone talk about it... And that's it. It's like I said, why do I think that happens? I think because it's a historical issue in Paraguay.*

It seems to me, the echoes of the Guasú War only add up to the modernising stereotypes aimed at Paraguay. In Rodrigo's words, it may be seen how the "*legit trauma*" of the War still lives in society - allegedly - deprived of proper education and development, which, consequently, results in a lack of modernity, therefore, since the 19th century. At least in Rodrigo's words, he seems to maintain historicity alive.

In the sequence, an even more curious fact - but not new - came out from Rodrigo. In my question that followed his answer describing the Guasú War effects, I asked him not only about Paraguay but also about Brazil. I wanted to know what made him believe Brazilian society was sexist as well.

> *Now, in Brazil... I think it's not just in Brazil but in the entire world… This culture of machismo, of the patriarchy, where the man is a dominant figure at home… And it's very interesting because effeminate gay people suffer much more prejudice... And I'm always wondering: why effeminate gays? Is it because they resemble women and women are undervalued? And how do*

> *these exclusions all connect, because it's not just for being gay, but for being gay and for having a female position. Even in homo-affective relationships, gay bottoms are less valued than gay tops, why? Is it because gay tops are the figure of the man… Is he God? [...] I think it has all this construction. But this I think is not just in Brazil, I think this is globally speaking.*

Recovering this excerpt I come to raise a few considerations. Starting on the - apparently - patronising way Paraguay becomes perceived in Rodrigo's answer when he states different causes to explain cis-heteronormative sexism at both sides of the border. Whereas Paraguay would be suffering from the Guasú War traumas that would still trap Paraguayan society in underdevelopment and lack of education; conversely, in Brazil, the cause for such an attachment to sexist molar circularities would be a matter of a global totalising phenomenon, where all other societies suffer from the same structural discriminatory system. So, would the fact of Paraguay losing the Guasú War be really something relevant or would it just be the selectiveness Souchaud has informed? I do not suspect the War has generated long-standing reminiscences to contemporary Paraguayan society; it is, however, at least curious, for me, to comprehend the way it has become part of a general understanding of Paraguay. It left in me the impression Rodrigo knew how to respond to that question of mine presenting a justification for Paraguay's underdevelopment/lack of modernity regarding this subject while, virtually, in the rest of the world, that would be just taken for granted.

What is more, the decision to disclose this brief piece of conversation between me and Rodrigo is meant to make things clearer about how the temporal matter of the Guasú War arrived in the trajectory I ran across for this investigation. More importantly, even though the statements referring to the Guasú War have not made it to the point I wish to cover here concerning the historical events taken to compose contemporary Paraguayan subjectivities; I wanted, nonetheless, to present the other way around as well. That is to say, I found it instructive for the broader comprehension about the modern logic surrounding this border region to present a Brazilian perspective, although it does not tell us much about the internal effects towards Paraguayan subjectivities.

MDCCCLXX

Going back. The international conflict, namely, the Guasú War, refers to the period between 1864 and 1870 when contentions and battles were fought by the armies of the alliance between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay against Paraguay's army. A plethora of reasons may be raised to explain the bellicose motivations and the will to gain control over

territories belonging to the three allied countries as part of them. Spatially, it took place mostly where the borders touched between Paraguay and Argentina, and Paraguay and Brazil. Yet today, the names of battles from this event mark street names and city names in Brazil - although some individuals may not know about that - such as *Lomas Valentinas*, *Humaitá*, *Tuyutí*, *Riachuelo* and, the one responsible for definitely ending the conflict, *Cerro Corá*. That was the last battle in the Guasú War, when the former president of Paraguay, Solano López, died putting an end to military confrontations.

Putting aside technical matters concerning the War, what is most remarkable and important to be visited here is related to the outcomes for Paraguay. To be more precise, I have had my attention tied to those moments after the conflict, when measures were adopted to symbolically rebuild the nation. The main anxiety, thus, revolved around a Paraguayan national identity which, after the warfare period, had come out shattered with narratives dominated by the victorious international triple alliance. The Paraguayan nation-state saw the need to impose proper revisionism to recover the national self-esteem sentiment back into its people. Additionally, the national memory as the aggregate of events concerning a country's history also had to manage a gendered facet, that is, the situation of women after the war.

Quinteros (2020) sums up the post-Guasú War endeavour for reclaiming the sense of pride looking at the attempts from intellectual leaders to resignify the Paraguayan losses during the conflict. The national memory started to be redrawn from its essence, pointing to a so-called "Paraguayan race" which would have inherited the qualities from the Guarani and the Spanish peoples and granted Paraguayans the determination and strength to fight in war no matter what could happen. In this sense, Solano López became the main example of such Paraguayan determination. He was made into the leader who had brought prosperity to Paraguay during his government and fought the war until losing his life to protect the people against foreign imperialism. At least, this was the memory Paraguayan intellectuals planned to build concerning the past conflict, which also resulted in the construction of the *Panteón Nacional de Los Héroes*, a place to immortalise Solano López and other heroes.

Now, the same elite responsible for mending the national Paraguayan self-esteem addressed the problem of human losses as well. This was a sensitive point for Paraguay since the majority of the male population perished in war causing the country to face a serious demographic imbalance and disorganisation on population distribution across regions. The same logic applied to Solano López's death defined the explanation for all other military and civilian casualties, as though the population, including women and children, chose to fight as

a demonstration of their “Paraguayaness” and goodwill to lose their lives to protect their homeland.

As a result, Paraguayans were decimated. On average, 60% of the total population died. More or less than 200 thousand people remained alive after the direct conflict ceased, but many more died due to famine and poor living conditions left as the consequences of war effects. A great factor to contribute to this was the indiscriminate recruitment of people. At a certain point, when the number of active adult men in the army decreased vertiginously, the López government called for elders, women and children to serve as soldiers and fight in battles. Consequently, the demographic presence in the country was torn apart (Potthast, 2001; 2006). But what I really want to focus on - and bring to our understanding - from this piece of information is the social impact for the heteropatriarchal circularities in the, then, post-war Paraguay.

Rocco Carbone’s (2015a; 2015b) analysis called my attention for proposing to look at the past, as far as 151 years ago, in order to find the fragments remaining yet nowadays concerning the way sexual and gender diversity are addressed in Paraguay. Carbone contends the Guasú War caused the “gendered law”, or the general heteropatriarchal social control over genders, to gain much more force. Or, as I would say, it overflowed the unconscious. Paraguayan women lost their lives fighting in battles and stood firm to reconstruct the nation out of the wreckage left. By 1870 it is estimated the demographic disparity reached four times more women than men in any age, which made Paraguay known as a “women’s country” (Potthast, 2001). Still, it was not a “country *for* women” (Potthast, 2016, p. 99). Paraguayan men took place, once more, in the political scenario founded in sexist authority.

It is definitely intriguing the way circularities resist inflexions in time and space to ensure molar aggregates go on untouched - at its hardest core - in perpetuity. Paraguayan women were responsible for maintaining the country’s food provision through subsistence agriculture in the initial years in conflict. As Potthast (2006) states, since warfare demanded men to fight in front lines, the feminine workforce in agriculture took a great deal of importance. Almost half of the internal supplies came from productive lands in the countryside headed by women, who sold fruits, corn, manioc and other products to the López government. However, as time passed by and the allied forces advanced over Paraguay, women were forced to fall back from invaded lands, whilst joining in hard labour activities such as salt extraction to keep internal reserves from depletion.

Moreover, with every new battle loss, lower and middle-class women were gradually more present in military camps to assist their male family members. They became known as

"*residentas*" and played the role of assistance as cooks, nurses, seamstresses, doctors and combatants as a self-defensive tactic in cases of allied invasions. Potthast (2001) stresses, though, besides their desire to stay closer to family members, most women who stayed with battalions did so both because there was no other option than retreating away with the Paraguayan army as the allied forces entered the territory. And because most of them resided in Paraguay's border regions and, thus, were educated to resist foreign attacks in a period of constant conflict and surveillance against non-settled Indigenous peoples and surrounding countries. Their reasons for being present reached well beyond nationalist desires, taking into account their sentimental and family motifs.

Propaganda was also influential for the support Solano López required to advance with the investments to wage war against the allied forces. For instance, the main tactic to garner the public opinion was to spread compelling discourses deeming the war was necessary to guard Paraguay's sovereignty from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay which were, allegedly, willing to invade the Paraguayan territory to claim ownership of new lands and (I emphasise) violate women's bodies. The latter reason had accentuated impact bolstered especially through assembly sessions that politicians and part of the Paraguayan elite hosted in Asunción to raise funds with donations, which would often be followed by festivities such as balls.

During the gatherings, though, women - or the representatives of the "beautiful national sex" as some periodic news outlets referred to them - had opportunities to deliver speeches to declare support to López's endeavours in war. This, consequently, caused official propaganda and other newspapers to support a qualitative change in their approach towards female roles in Paraguayan society (Potthast, 2001). As the years in war passed by, women taking care of crops in the countryside had their work recognised and those who were part of the elite had a broader insertion in the country's public life. Differently from the traditional role of women in patriarchal societies at the time, the strategy to gather support from the Paraguayan female portion worked as the perfect example to glorify the country against enemies, to distinguish the "Paraguayan race" from the rest of South America departing from the discourse of progress by including women in political life, differently from other countries.

It is at this point where things become interestingly complicated. Whereas my insertion into this topic started with a comment from Rodrigo, academic discussions already had long advanced to the point I found Carbone's piece discussing the problems of the "gendered law" derived from the post-Guasú War conflict. The author addresses precisely the problem women faced to recover Paraguay: a wrecked country, then; lacking proper living

conditions and with its population reduced by half, with few adult men left to assist in reconstruction. And even with all these conditions, even if women started to assume a leading role in the political scene a few years before the conflict ceased, in the end, the real power ownership was not at the female side. Even after a war that changed Paraguay territorially, economically and socially, circularities resisted. The molar aggregate of gender resisted in the molecular lines in a society where women were the majority in number but minimised subjectively.

> From this, it follows that with the Guasú War, Paraguay suffered a restructuring of national borders: in demographic and territorial terms, but not in generic terms. In the generic falls by land, the axiom that maintains war displaces things. In generic terms, the war does not change anything in Paraguay (Carbone, 2015b, p. 161, my translation).

How strong must deterritorialisation be so old oppressive structures do not reterritorialise into the same essence as before? Not even the terrors of war were enough to cut the deep sexist roots that have been marking off boundaries between women and men. As Carbone argues, before and after the conflict Paraguayan women did not enjoy any other status but the social submission before men. They kept the foreigner image in the land deemed as their own, albeit not quite theirs when compared to the period of propaganda during the years in battle - and, to a certain point, of reconstruction. The feminine being who had crossed the gender borders with the endorsement coming from the masculine elite authority had to return to their "rightful" place of non-existence, of non-citizens. And this lack of citizenship was even deeper as the state of war dismantled the civil structure and demanded from Paraguayans to rebuild not only the material structures but also their national subjectivities.

Feminist critic Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) addresses the female ambiguity inside the nation-state looking at the way women are looked differently inside the a nation's citizenship. For them, there will always be specific rules and policies applicable only to their bodies. After all, the cis women bodies are instrumentalised to prevent the nation from dying symbolically and materially. Biological reproduction is an essential trait that will bind women to the territorialisation where they belong which, in the case of Paraguay, their deeds are historically remarked as the bravery of the female side of the Paraguayan race. Those women loved not only their children, their husbands, their brothers and fathers but felt unconditional love towards the Paraguayan "fatherland".

The female image came once again to represent the role of social and biological reproducers and an integral part of the male social body. There were no more female soldiers

and no more female interventions in politics once the demand for support ceased. Even being larger in number, the first move towards the reconstruction of the country was to diminish what could represent a direct interference to straighten the main statist social organisational pillar. And that did not start from an outside agent, not as though the fewer left men in the country organised themselves to overthrow women commanding agriculture, for instance. No. The heteropatriarchy *was* and *is* a compelling force. Or rather, a *group fantasy*. It is part of what we desire, of what those Paraguayan women desire. Not all of them surely, but as a social body, it is what prevailed. As Carbone (2015b, p. 160) states, the surviving women worked hard to accomplish the "masculine necessity and desire: the struggle to recover men (to recover: to have men back and emphatically)".

Whereas men took over control of important sectors such as exportation trade and politics, women dominated subsistence agriculture and small businesses. Hence, the outcome, as Potthast (2006, p. 99) highlights, was the exclusion of political rights for women. The new 1870 Paraguayan constitution, based on liberal political thought, did not secure civil and political rights, such as universal suffrage, neither for women nor for Indigenous individuals. The new political framework even looked at Solano López's move to give women more participation in war as an abusive whim, which was then interpreted as a means to distrust the former government's actions towards war and the (limited) inclusion of women.

What is more, women did protest against certain political measures adopted after 1870, however, no group reached significant changes as conditions deteriorated. Bearing this in mind, we arrived, thus, at one of Carbone's (2015a) main questions: why what once was a *fatherland* did not turn into a *motherland* when the opportunity appeared? If women had surpassed men quantitatively, what refrained them from claiming more space? Questioning this, I am willing to make an effort of pure theoretical argumentation. Carbone focuses on the collective commitment to the sexist gendered law that was not only subjective but subjecting, which brought me to recover Raewyn Connell's (1987, *passim*) concept of *emphasised femininity*. In short, when diving into gender studies on masculinity, this concept refers to the category of femininity that complies with "subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men. [...] What it does imply is the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women".

> [...] such as the display of sociability rather than technical competence, fragility in mating scenes, compliance with men's desire for titillation and ego-stroking in office relationships, acceptance of marriage and childcare as a response to labour-market discrimination against women. At the mass level, these are organized around themes of sexual receptivity in relation to

> younger women and motherhood in relation to older women (Connell, 1987, p. 187).

Furthermore, as the name tells, it emphasises the *hegemonic masculinity* lying at the top of the hierarchy preventing "other models of femininity [from] gaining cultural articulation" (Connell, 1987, p. 188).

Both Carbone and Connell's thoughts are similar in essence. Nevertheless, when reading about the "gendered law" I felt as if it needed a few additions. Time and again Carbone (2015b) argues women could have overcome the heteropatriarchal structure after the Guasú War had they assumed more participation. But I question the possibility of that occurrence in two different manners. First, we should pay thorough attention to the way desire is produced in capitalistic-informed societies, where women's subjectivities are deemed to reproduce an emphasised femininity intimately integrated into reactionary intentions. Did Paraguay women really worry about gaining civil and political rights? Did it matter for them? Or to run back to the comfort of repression represented a much more valued desire? Did they, at the very least, become conscious of their subservient status and the changes they could have waged? Then, secondly, who would have guaranteed the oppressive heteropatriarchal structure would be dismantled and not transformed into a "heteromatriarchy". As Carbone himself alerts, it is no use to swap one symbol for the other. Surely, I must acknowledge the author indicates his piece is part of an imaginative effort, whose purpose is also to learn from past situations. And I profoundly agree we should learn from this as one missed opportunity, but that conditions did not allow further revolutionary inflexions.

Reverberations today indicate the residual heritage left from the Guasú War composed what has been told as the national memory in Paraguay. Concerning the gendered aspect, the new nationalist sentiment arising reserved women's participation in war a strictly romanticised place. Those who formulated the new narrative depicted the *residentas* as women, mothers, daughters, sisters willing to protect Paraguayan men, their sons, husbands, fathers, brothers whatever the cost. In the new image, women were willing to protect the same men who, after the warfare, placed the female subjectivities under servitude. But for the nationalist craving, it was necessary to build up and strengthen the emphasised femininity useful for gender roles' separation. And the way to glorify women's participation in the war was transformed into passionate narratives of heroism towards both genders, where men found the incentive to fight and die (to protect women).

Nonetheless, of course, the fact that children and elderly people got recruited to serve as decoys for slaughter could never appear in the nationalist stories. Not even those women

who tried to resist the reasons to wage, who opposed the government. These were commissioned to oblivion as well. The so-called "*destinadas*" (Potthast, 2006). Women who directly opposed or were related to other family members who opposed López's government were persecuted in Paraguay and sentenced to stay exiled in Paraguay's most harsh lands in the north of the country, where there were no proper living conditions.

Returning to Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) theory of desire, it is possible for us to link the general oppression of desire to the example here of societies where sexism circulates round and round. Individuals are socially taught to desire and passionately invest in their self-repression and the repression of others once the nation-state form crushes the intensities of desire, impeding people from deterritorialising away from the boundaries of the state. In this sense, I came to perceive that our singularities and subjectivities as individuals or aggregates tend to reproduce these oppressive structures that resist even death and suffering carried by war. Hence, we must keep in mind these characteristics of circularities to fully comprehend how, in Paraguay, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, yet today, feel the effects from the "gendered law's" legitimation brought along with the Guasú War. As part of my argument here, I will proceed to connect both the Guasú War and the Caso 108 as events that reflect the same sexist cis-heteronormativities not only to women but also to sexual and gender non-conforming subjectivities.

MMXIX

Going forth. Until the day I met Carlos, I had never heard about the "Caso 108". He tried to explain what happened in 1959, in Asunción; but things were not very clear to me at the time. Just hearing Carlos was not enough for me. Then, a few months after our conversation, when I started to transcribe and study our interview and noticed there was this other temporal digression besides the Guasú War, I sought to know more about it. In the beginning, differently from what I came to elaborate about the Guasú War, the Caso 108 struck me as much more relevant. After all, this was a more recent event to the Paraguayan story I was interested in. I mean, I could perceive the interplays with current subjectivity regimes more clearly concerning Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. Thus, I resume finishing Carbone's (2015a) elaborations on the gendered law circularities which became blatantly present in the cis-heteropatriarchal Paraguayan social machine.

But, before moving on, a little bit of contextualisation is necessary. In my conversation with Carlos, the Caso 108 came about while he explained to me that the Pride Parade has been

held every 29th September to mark the day Bernardo Aranda died under indeterminate conditions and when Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship systematically started to persecute sexual and gender non-conforming individuals in Paraguay's capital. As in other moments in our conversation emotions emerged once again. I could perceive Carlos related passionately to the subject. The way he presented the story to me was also engaging, which made me feel anguish and affliction just by imagining myself, a gay man, the same age when Aranda died, living under such a morbid regime. Carlos' answer during our conversation follows:

> *[...] on the 29th of September, during the hardship, Stroessner ordered the death of the radio announcer who was homosexual, Bernardo Aranda, and started to persecute the gays. [...] 108 people got arrested and they were not all men, there were 36 women too and no one was guilty of having killed him, because it was the dictator who ordered this to be done... There was a van that we call "caperucita roja" because Stroessner used to say: Let's go get it, let's go get the van, let's go grab the fags! They would go out in the streets looking and would say: Oh, this one looks like he is gay... Oh God, if I was born at the time and I was 20-years-old, I'd be dead... And they would take them to the police station to torture. Do you get it?*
>
> *[...] in Asuncion there is a specific avenue that always holds demonstrations, any kind of demonstration… So, on these avenues, Stroessner ordered them [the 108] to walk in daylight. Some people would die, it was dreadful… From being beaten at the police station and [from] being electrocuted… I [could] claim: Oh! It was Nickolas who killed Aranda! So they would go after you and you would also suffer like this and you would say: Oh, [it was not me] it was... And so they reached 108 people and they made them walk on these streets, on these avenues, for them to represent shame for no one else to do the same thing as they did. So this avenue has remained until today for demonstrations.*

While Carlos told me the version of the story he knew, he pulled out his mobile phone to search for the precise dates of Bernardo Aranda's death and the "108" imprisonments. Despite his efforts, though, a few details of what Carlos had informed me did not quite match what I was able to pick up reading in the literature about the Caso 108. For instance, it was not exactly a mismatch, however, it is worth clarifying the police forces arrested more than 108 individuals. This number made an appearance on an *El País* issue, one of the news outlets monitoring the case at the time, which claimed to have prospected this exact number of individuals arrested in the investigative process. Furthermore, another conflicting point concerns what Carlos told me about the day when individuals under legal custody were forced to march on the streets of Asunción in order to serve as an example to the population not only of who were the "immorals" but also to instil fear in others. As I will present in the sequence, it is unlikely to have happened.

MCMLIX

Going back. On the 1st of September 1959, Bernardo Aranda lost his life when his house burst into flames. His death marked the beginning of systematic persecution against sexual and gender non-conforming individuals in Paraguay, especially in the capital Asunción, under Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorial government. Aranda was 25-years-old and worked as an announcer at a local radio station, namely, *Radio Comuneros*, where he became well-known for his participation in emissions. His reputation, thus, contributed to triggering profound scrutiny over his death and, consequently, over his "suspicious" personal life as both police investigations and news outlets invested into the investigative hypothesis of a crime of passion - also bolstered by public contributions from the newspapers readers who took part in discussions through letters sent to journalistic editorials.

Let us not forget, of course, about the political moment the country passed through during that decade. Paraguay entered in a long (35-years) dictatorial regime commanded by Alfredo Stroessner, from 1954 to 1989, a period known as "*El Stronato*". The country and its institutions became part of a centripetal machine where all public and private aspects were surveilled and controlled inside a state terrorism rationale towards centralisation. Moreover, as the Paraguayan *Comisión de Verdad y Justicia* (CVJ, 2008a) could assess in its final report, the repressive apparatus was under the direct command of Alfredo Stroessner. All of the regime stemmed from his figure to other institutions in order to concentrate the power he held. Hence, the judicial instance, as well as the legislative power were hostages to the executive whims in exchange for keeping cohesion. This is one reason why Marcial Riquelme (1992) has called attention to the personalist trait intrinsic to the *Stronato*. In other words, the Paraguayan nation-state passed from *res publicæ* to *res privatæ*. One important feature of this was the bureaucratic machine, which served as the main repository of favours to achieve the government's goals when in need of support. In addition, it is well-documented that Stroessner's administration had control over the main repressive mechanisms activities focused on persecuting opposition opponents and restating the underlying cis-heteropatriarchal regime. Which, here, is what matters for the discussion.

The global control aimed at the social aggregate reached the Bernardo Aranda affair. As briefly described above, after his death, news outlets commenced to accompany the legal investigations on the cause of the death delivering an immense impact on public opinion, particularly by implying Aranda's death was caused due to his engagement in homosexual relationships. According to the research conducted by Pozzo, Falabella and Fogel (2016),

whereby the authors analyse the main printed medias' issues that had closely monitored the Aranda case, both *El País* and *El Independiente* were responsible for disseminating the connection of the murder to groups of "immoral" males backed by the police forces. Such "crime of passion" hypothesis made its first appearance on the 7th September 1959 in an *El País* issue following an uninformed number of detentions by the police forces but without any trait of discussing sexual conducts.

Conversely, in an *El Independiente* issue released on the same day, the editorial team made an open call to the whole Paraguayan society, a real invitation, to fight the "social scourge" by the means of persecution and denouncing of those "sodomites that subvert the morals and the good customs" (Pozzo; Falabella; Fogel, 2016, pp. 121-122). The piece pointed out Aranda had involvement with individuals of "existentialist" conduct, or the "third sex", who were, allegedly, responsible for "perverting" youngsters and used to be involved in criminal activities such as homicides. Subsequently, on the 11th of September, *El Independiente* informed about a "successful" apprehension the police had undertaken against individuals who were *perceived to be* homosexuals. In this issue, the newspaper team pointed out the same systematic strategy Carlos had told me in our conversation: the individuals arrested would give more names during their hearings so the persecution could resume. Hence, in that same day, the newspaper article on Aranda's case explicitly declared to be working to acquire the list of names of those under arrest in order to reveal their identities to the general public so they could receive the worst punishment possible: "the public opinion's vengeance" (Pozzo; Falabella; Fogel, 2016, pp. 123).

It is, then, on the following day, on the 12th September 1959, that the daily *El País* issue printed the phrase: "*108 personas de dudosa conducta moral están siendo interrogadas*". In the beginning of the article, the writer makes it clear the person in charge for accompanying the progress of the investigation entered the police station early in the morning once they noted an intense movement of people commenced (Szokol, 2013). It was at this moment when, unwittingly and by chance, the reporter erratically counted how many suspects the police officers seized among those present and contributed to assigning a long-standing stigma to the number "108"[16]. Nevertheless, as the subsequent journalistic pieces point out, there were no official records on the exact number of individuals arrested under the suspicion of being involved with the death of Bernardo Aranda. In addition to the

[16] I strongly recommend the reader, who is interested about the stigma around the number 108 in Paraguay, to watch the short documentary about Case 108, namely, "CASO 108" in which ordinary people are interviewed in the streets of Asunción and Erwing Szokol presents the general story. Nonetheless, the video does not offer translated captions. The link to access: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTpUhPUN7ww.

lack of proper documentation from governmental sources, the temporal distance between the day of the case and the investigations, especially the one headed in the Paraguayan CVJ (2008b), made it impossible to gather testimonies from individuals who might have had information about the arrests.

What is more, the publications in both newspapers concerning the case of Bernardo Aranda kept being released by mid-October, when the police investigations met their closure, passing from the investigative phase to the judicial proceedings (Pozzo; Falabella; Fogel, 2016). From then on, at least in the current academe and the CVJ works, it is where the information gathered through the printed media from that time meets its limits. In general, after the period between the 1st September to the 7th September, when the case got connected to the crime of passion related to alleged homosexual involviments, to the last publications in both *El País* and *El Independiente*, the journalistic coverage insisted on campaigning for the persecution and condemnation of homosexuality. By and large, the journalistic insistence in the subject of (hunting) "immorals" found its support not only in the police apparatus but also in the very rationale of Stroessner's hardship and the social aggregate, the public opinion.

By way of example, in Pozzo, Falabella and Fogel's (2016, p. 105-106) piece, two texts reproduced in the newspapers have called my attention the most. The first, published on *El Independiente*, was an anonymous letter wherein the writer "declare[s] war against immorals" showing their concern with what they claim was happening, especially, in Asunción: homosexuals would be *seizing* the main spheres of public life. In other words, taking control of civil, military, political and religious high-ranking posts to *subvert* the deeds of the "heroes which have done much for the world to recognise the Paraguayan manhood". Curiously, the "anonymous writer" presents in their letter the reproduction of a moral panic recovering the idea of a "Paraguayan race" imbued with transcendental masculinity the Paraguayan (male) citizen would bring along with (him) them, as though part of natural heritage. We will return to this idea shortly ahead. Let us keep this in mind for now.

Continuing with the texts on the publications, the second one that called my attention refers to another anonymous letter but this time from a group of "immorals", who decided to react to the enormous political and institutional wave of discrimination and persecution against sexual non-conforming individuals. The message from the group got reproduced on the *El País* pages integrally one week after it was received. The 30th September 1959 was the date it first came upon publication under an extensive reply to it. On the 7th October it was fully released and in its content the authors, writing in the plural form, questioned the negative form the editorial team of *El País* referred to and treated homosexuals, sustaining

that homosexuality as a "vocation as old as humankind" (Szokol, 2013, pp. 37-38) should be treated as just another trait reserved to people's intimate lives where each person was free to choose what to do to their bodies.

In addition, the text closes the discussion by saying: "The moralists from *El País* are wrong because in this matter there is no collective moral but individual moral and we are individualists by philosophical principles. If you insist on standing in error you will waste your time and we will lose nothing" (Szokol, 2013, pp. 37-38). The content in the letter, serving as an open defence written by an organised group of homosexuals, shows how, even in the aridest conditions, revolutionary lines of flight can surge. Furthermore, this event demonstrates that individuals not only existed but also resisted oppression and persecution during the period of *Stronato*, each individual in their way. As a consequence, in the present, advocacy groups for the rights of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals have chosen the 30th September as the official date for Pride festivities in Paraguay, as the first day the letter was mentioned in an *El País* issue is deemed to represent the first rights-claiming manifestation ever recorded in the country.

Now, coming back to basics. In sum, the *Stronato* imposed institutional shapes to conservative and reactionary molar structures underlying the Paraguayan social machine. Taking into account the same rationale applied to the sexist generic law, which also became manifested and more visible during the Guasú War period, it would be a mistake to believe discrimination against sexual and gender non-conforming individuals did not exist before Stroessner's hardship or before the effects brought by the Guasú War to women in the case of the "generic law". Nor does it seem honest to claim these structural oppressions were lying dormant. Not at all. They were always there circulating in collective desire but without a milieu to give shape to them. Once the right conditions were assembled, individuals started to see it acting more clearly and under an artificial "legality". Concerning this idea of a generalised desire for oppression, I bring the text "Everybody Wants to be a Fascist" in which Félix Guattari (2009, p. 164) disposes of the following passage that summarises such totalitarian matter:

> A man does not communicate with his fellow men: a transhuman chain of organs is formed and enters into conjunction with semiotic links and an intersection of material flows. It is because the productive forces of today cause the explosion of traditional human territorialities, that they are capable of liberating the atomic energy of desire. Because this phenomenon is irreversible, and because its revolutionary scope cannot be calculated, the totalitarian-bureaucratic capitalist and socialist systems are forced to constantly perfect and miniaturize their repressive machines. Therefore, it seems to me that the constant search for this machinic composition of

> totalitarian powers is the indispensable corollary of a micro-political struggle for the liberation of desire. The minute you stop facing it head-on, you can abruptly oscillate from a position of revolutionary openness to a position of totalitarian foreclosure: then you find yourself a prisoner of generalities and totalizing programs, and representative instances regain their power

Now, let us quickly return to the text published in *El Independiente* in which the writer neurotically denounces "homosexuals were hijacking" the Paraguayan state from its inside. What caught my attention was the argumentation conceived in the idea that homosexuality represented a direct conflict with a so-called "Paraguayan race" the people inherited from the great heroes of the nation who fought in the Guasú War to prove to the entire world the Paraguayan people would never let their homeland/fatherland/motherland lose its territory, nor give up on their masculinity, nor let foreign armies violate Paraguayan women. And, here, we reach back to the point where Rocco Carbone (2015a, p. 366) elaborated remarkably about the exact relation between the Guasú War's gendered law and the "sex-political mechanism" of disciplinarity activated so mercilessly against sexual and gender non-conforming individuals between 1954 and 1989, during the *Stronato*.

The number 108, in reality, became just another mark of the testimony of the cowardly and neurotic fascist desire for authoritarian power liberated over individuals who had little to fight against the huge statist social machine. The number 108, as Carbone (2015a, pp. 367-368) puts it, represents the addition, an appendix to the misogyny rising observed during the Guasú War, a kind of continuity, or overflow, of the circularity initiated between 1864 and 1870. "The overflow on homophobia that, after all, what is it but a widespread misogyny?" (p. 367). Carbone was able to observe the realisation of the gendered law into misogyny and the new reactionary political order designed in Stroessner's government.

> Homophobia is – in the sense that it can be understood as – widespread misogyny. Or, put another way, broadening the margins of this interrogation about the history and construction of gender in Paraguay, the persecution of the body of homosexuality could be activated because the Paraguayan political order between 1954 and 1989 had a generic law in the state of availability, whose framework could be, as it actually was, expanded. A generic law that in 1959 was almost a century old. A law that at least had been circulating vertiginously in Paraguay since the first years of the post-Guasú War (Carbone, 2015a, pp. 367-368).

Both the Guasú War aftermath and the Caso 108 symbolised the epitome of the generic/gendered law underlying the cis-heteropatriarchal underpinnings of Paraguay. What was less apparent before, even though always present in the collective unconscious, emerged on the surface. In the case of the Guasú War aftermath, it appeared in the form of controlling women's bodies to rebuild the wrecked social machine in order to reestablish the male

command that, virtually, never escaped from their control; whereas, in the Caso 108, what emerged on the surface was the cowardice of fascism under the form of Stroessner's dictatorship paranoia to purge those deemed "immorals", those who could not serve well their so-called Paraguayan nation, those who blemished the image so meticulously thought to ennoble a tragic past of war at the expense of women and sexual and gender non-conforming individuals.

MMXXII

Going forth. Contemporarily, we can still perceive the strong presence of repressive circularities moving back and forth, deterritorialising and reterritorialising the flow of desire into the same essence of structural discrimination. The examples from the Guasú War and Case 108 only demonstrate the main vector through which the "gendered/generic law" found its realisation. And, when looking at its effects in the micropolitical and molecular ground, it is better revealed how, even though women or organised sexual and gender non-conforming groups resist, these hard lines remain resistant. We can see, especially through the individuals who contended in the newspapers during Stroessner's hardship that homosexuals should have been chased down and eliminated, that the micropolitical sphere found support on the molar level represented by the state's apparatus of repression.

However, desire is continuously seeking to escape all manners of limiting boundaries through lines of flight. Molar structures are resistant. Not invincible, or indestructible. They may bend towards revolutionary or reactionary changes depending on the intensity desire is liberated from oppressive capitalistic subjectivity and the investments from our libido, of what we come to desire so passionately. In this sense, it is useful to look at the conjunction or, rather, the resonance of desiring forces aiming for the same end, that is, escaping from an ever-oppressing system, to understand the way social reality finally starts to find its inflexion points. When referring to the events that led to the strikes of May 1968 in France that saw many other social minorities joining the students' cause, here follow Guattari's (1984, p. 220) words:

> [...] The local and specific demonstration of the desire of small groups found its echo in a multiplicity of desires that had been repressed, isolated from one another, and crushed by the then dominant modes of expression and representation. The situation was not one in which an ideal unity represented and interpreted multiple interests, but one in which the development of a many-voiced multiplicity of desires produced its own guidelines and organization. [...] Its different strata consist of different social groups as

> demarcated by class, age, sex, place of birth, type of job, sexual orientation, etc. It never achieves a monolithic unity. It is the unequivocal quality of the people's desire that is the basis for the unity of their struggle, not the channelling of that desire towards standardized objectives.

If during Stroessner's dictatorship social movements faced a totalitarian regime investing its mechanisms to shrink every force that tried to confront its influence, we also might perceive timorous acts of resistance as in the case of the manifestation of homosexuals in the letter sent to *El País* in 1959 or the case of the exiled women, or the *destinadas*, who went against Solano Lopéz conduct during the Guasú War. Those were clear examples of incipient "molecular revolutions" (Guattari, 1984), or rather, revolutionary-tending molecular movements. And, in general lines, all of the present and past situations contribute to grasping the way sexual and gender non-conforming individuals have been reproducing their subjectivities. Hence, transporting the logic of resonating desires to the contemporary sexual and gender diverse social movement in Paraguay, it is noticeable conditions have improved.

The organised LGBT movement in Paraguay holds a relatively recent story. Fallabela (2012) contends that with the end of the Paraguayan hardship in 1989, it took a few more years for the first organised group to appear in Asunción, in 1996, namely, *Comunidad Homosexual del Paraguay* (CHOPA), which did not have much political action in the sense of a direct militancy, but dedicated efforts to assist individuals in HIV/AIDS' terminal stages. On the other hand, in 1999, the *Grupo de Acción Gay* (then known as GAGL) makes its appearance in the wake of the "Paraguayan March" riots, when the democratic institutions faced once again the dangers of authoritarianism after the murder of vice-president Luis Argaña, one of the few politicians who represented a strong opposition against the threats to the Paraguayan democracy. In that year, *campesinos* joined forces with other groups, which contributed to strengthening the masses fighting against democratic deterioration in Paraguay going on strike to protest against and demanding president Raúl Cubas' impeachment (Bareiro *et al*., 1999).

Under the political turmoil, GAGL worked as the first organised group to politically demand changes and respect against acts of violence sexual minorities endured from society and statist institutions. In this sense, it was during this scenario that, in 1999, GAGL published the first human rights report over the situation of LGBT individuals in Paraguay and, a few years later, in 2003, organised the first Pride Parade in Asunción in association with *Aireana*, another activist group derived from GAGL that focused on the lesbian cause. It was also in 2003 that discussions appeared about the creation of the "Law Against All Forms of Discrimination" which persisted until 2005 when fundamentalist religious groups

advocated against its approval at both houses of representatives winning the majority of votes in order to close the case. As Falabella (2012) exposes, despite other groups surging in the following years such as *Somosgay*, *Panambi* and *Paragay*, the political changes in the country are still scarce. Civil society has been facing difficulties in dialogue with statist institutions since Fernando Lugo's impeachment from the presidency, which has been even more precarious in the present with Mario Abdo Benítez in charge.

This situation reminded me of my conversation with Carlos. At a certain point, he disclosed that, in 15 years, pro-LGBT organisations had tried to reach Congress more than 48 times to demand the execution of the 45th article present in the Paraguayan Constitution which mentions equality among individuals. Furthermore, we came to a point where I asked him about what he had to tell me concerning the presidency of Mario Abdo Benítez. Our talk was as follows:

> *C: He's Stroessner's nephew practically. [...] His father was the right-hand secretary of Stroessner's office... So that's why we're experiencing this downturn here and it's very fast, he hasn't even been here for 2 years in the government and look what's going on [...] People are starving and you don't have the right to express yourself, you don't have the right to be who you want to be and we're going back to the dictatorship. Last time the president was there at Hernandarias and a guy shouted at him… He shouted to the president like this: "Marito sells the homeland!" Because he wanted to sell Itaipú to Brazil… [...] And the guy got arrested… You can't protest, you can't manifest now in Paraguay.*
>
> *N: Has Mario Abdo Benitez ever made a homophobic or transphobic speech…?*
> *C: Oh no... not that I know of... But the previous one, Cartes, he said that... [...] If his son told him that he is gay he would shoot his own balls [...]*

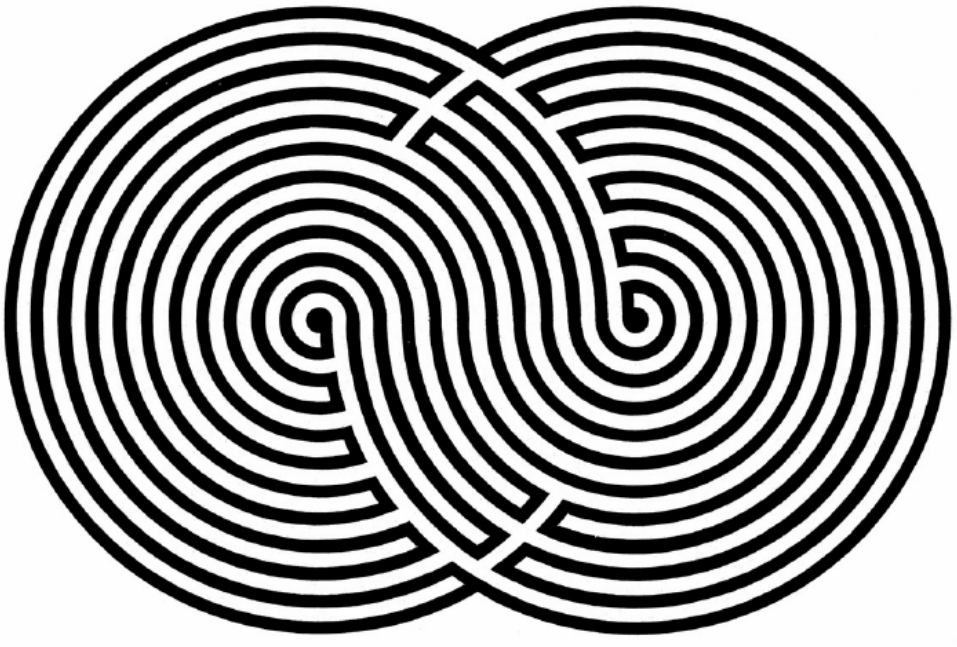
Sexual and gender non-conforming individuals in Paraguay endure a long-standing resistant circularity of repression against their existence. As I argued before, the fact that pro-LGBT rights organisations could emerge after the formal 35 years of dictatorship is, by itself, a demonstration that revolutionary forces are working and resonating in the most micro-level of the molecular structure. All in all, such changes help us understand the way sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, whether involved with activism or not, come to realise their subjectivities inside a structure functioning as a blender, that is, pulling the margins to a concentric force of molar reactionary aggregates. But, let us not forget that

> Over the last few years, the position of homosexuals in society has changed a lot. [...] Homosexuality is less and less felt as a shameful disease, a monstrous deviation, an offence. This evolution was even more accentuated in recent years, when social struggles took into account problems that they had previously put aside, such as life in prisons, in asylums, the condition of

> women, the issue of abortion, quality of life, etc. That is how homosexual political movements arise, considering themselves as marginal minorities, defending their human dignity and claiming their right of citizenship. Some of these movements, for example in the United States, even joined their actions with movements to fight against the Vietnam War, the movements of emancipation of blacks, Puerto Ricans, feminist movements, etc (Guattari, 1985, p. 40).

We can see in Guattari's words that as time goes by changes can appear. And very important ones. The revolutionary tendency carried out in 1999 in Asunción over the death of vice-president Argaña in the massive mobilisation to riot against authoritarianism make things clearer as to reveal the power of social aggregates to modify rigidities, structural discriminations and violences inside the Paraguayan society. Today, even though homophobia and transphobia in Western(ised) societies are still blatant, when it comes to addressing resistance against those violences the stage is full of individuals and organisations. In this sense, I follow for the next chapter to put it bluntly how sexual and gender non-conforming individuals between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE are resisting and living their diversities in the border.

Figure 3: Circularities locked in the labyrinth based on Jorge Luis Borges works



Source: Replicated from the website *Casa das Rosas*[17].

[17] This image can be found on the following link: http://www.casadasrosas.org.br/nucleo-educativo. The context of the labyrinth image does not necessarily have to do with the concept of circularities as I explore here in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: CROSSINGS

-25.509491, -54.600110

Returning to one of the ideas displayed at the end of Chapter 2 (see page 64), if the story of societies, of life itself, is a constant flow of motions, then, when we look to the way individuals cross physical and immaterial borders, or when we look to the way our subjectivities are *organised* around repressive statist and capitalistic structures, one could argue we are not living life at its full potential. This is not the same as to say, of course, that individuals cannot live in the current circularities we are inserted into. Because even when we find ourselves locked inside previously determined spaces, the course of life keeps its movement. Individuals may be born, live and die following the same constrictions in space and subjectivity. The problem appears, though, when individuals start to divert from the so-called "right" course. Or rather, when individuals understand they cannot be contained inside limited and tight circularities. That is when intensities start to overflow, to escape, to create lines of flight. For instance, the very displacement of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals from Paraguay to Brazil or vice-versa can represent such overflow. And it is what I wish to dwell on in this chapter. If the stream of desire is being hindered, blocked by repressions, then, I advance it should be restored in order for us to change the current reality which presents itself bursting with violence towards sexual dissenting and gender diverse bodies.

In this sense, returning to the main argument that gave a more solid direction to this investigation, I come again to contend the mobility of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals across CDE and Foz do Iguaçu should represent a form of contestation to the repressive logic of national belonging that arrests other possibilities of living from becoming real, which is currently very much suppressed from happening through processes of subjectivity production, based, especially, in a common understanding of "development as modernity" garnered by the capitalistic and modern statist logic. While individuals carry with them the potency to implode boundaries through their international mobility across the border, their very mentality, thus, subjectivity, seems to be arrested in their passionate belief towards a discourse of development-as-modernity.

Moreover, it is important to remark that escaping circularities, breaking out from molar lines of repressive power relations is far from being an easy task. It is not simple to decide to let go and abdicate from the secure and certain structures of sedentarism provided

by the modern nation-state logic in favour of adopting more revolutionary *nomadic* assemblages. And this difficulty, I say, is not only the result of a habit of an entire life living under a "stable" regime, but it is also difficult to let go of what we invest so passionately our libidinal forces to the point of believing there would be no other options other than desiring one's own repression by the mean of investing in capitalistic mystifications.

All in all, how do I intend to proceed to display this argument? I follow to directly present the way sexual and gender non-conforming individuals I encountered during this investigation enacted their international pendulum border crossings between CDE and/or Hernandarias and Foz do Iguaçu pointing out their particular motions in what concerns the possibilities and obstacles placed in their ways that could represent a broader way of experiencing a certain transgression against the tight logics of national belongings. I intend to present the experiences of those who exposed their movements through the territorial border and the subjective borders in order to leave explicit the reasons, the situations and the openings fostered in this movement.

For the sake of comprehension, the story in this part follows what I came to notice as the main features displayed in the content gathered in interviews. My intention is not to describe the whole dialogues, but only the parts I managed to group based on similarities between statements in two general strands. The first strand concerns the understandings between Brazilians and Paraguayans about what I came to describe as the "development-as-modernity" discourse, which remarkably posited Paraguay(ans) below Brazil(ians) in a fictive scale of "superiority" based on the number of legal safeguards (i.e., anti-homophobia legislation, egalitarian marriage, children adoption, gender recognition law etc.) and perceived qualitative differences of habits towards "differences" carried by sexual and gender diversity. In this strand I bring forward how religion and conservative political forces were importantly present in the discourses to point out the assumed differences in "modernity" between both sides.

Then, the second strand refers to the actual crossings both Paraguayans and Brazilians to whom I talked to enacted at the border between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu. In this strand, I shall focus on the displacements narrated as well as in the plans and projections of future displacements, specifically, outside Paraguay manifested inside the rationale I understand as being part of a *nexus of progression* - to see Paraguay and/or Brazil not as possibilities for personal completeness but only as steps to reach higher grounds.

To make sense of the signs presented in Brazilians and Paraguayans' discourses framed in my understanding as "development-as-modernity" and advance my main argument,

I rely heavily in Jon Binnie's (2004) discussions on queer globalisation and sexual citizenship as well as drawing heavily on the understandings of Nail (2016) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) on circularities and territorialisations. My main argument here revolves around the insights about the meaning of borders grasped until here. I came to formulate that when one proposes to look outside the "normal", the normative, that is, in this case, looking at sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, it is possible, through diversity, to acknowledge how borders are, actually, not the places of differences but the places of *possibilities*. Borders are, actually, the places of diversity in the sense that it is not a transcendental structure but the result of social motion as coproduction. The border, if seen from a different angle, may become the site of multiple possibilities in the sense of a deterritorialising agent. When freed from the modern statist logic, borders are no longer a Paraguayan side and a Brazilian side, it resumes the characteristic of "in-betweenness", it belongs to no one, it becomes an intensity.

Also, I will bring more potential to the description adding the theoretical discussion on the possibilities of resistance by the means of border transgressions, especially, looking at the *war machine* as a tactical instrument to liberate singularities, possibilities and draw creative lines of flight. But before anything else, to a certain extent, the transgression I indicate here can be conceived through an awareness of the social and political conditions that work as a limit to where individuals' actions may reach. In other words, if the State presence and the national belongings intrinsic to our subjectivities mark off the threshold for a severing rationale, to restore a never-ending deterritorialisation - immanent to the continuity earth itself/themself presupposes - is essential. It would be necessary to put forth the possibility of *disorganising* all of the codings created to represent a fictive separation to the Paraná River, or the Friendship Bridge, for instance. Because underneath the water that flows below the bridge connecting Foz do Iguaçu and CDE, there is continuous land connecting both sides. There is no void. No actual separation than that produced. Hence, the movement of deterritorialisations and decodifications would function just as one way to give different meanings to the so-called "stability" the modern statist borders represent.

Another feature to be addressed concerns the magnetising idea of developed countries as modern safe spaces for sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. Above all, I wonder: is there anything such as "safety" for someone whose own existence pierces the "steadily fragile" structure that (so precariously) underpin the sexual and gender norms in our capitalistic times? Surely, to escape hostile environments is something to think of in order to preserve one's life. However, we cannot afford to miss the point after the displacement. To run away should never fall prey to the repression of desire, that is, consciously being seduced

to abandon deterritorialising resistances. It would be a mandatory asset to pursue deterritorialisations wherever we may arrive. After all, there is no point in guaranteeing that the social machine's crushing force will still make us hostages of fictional imaginations of "development as modernity".

In a certain way, as a revolutionary social aggregate, minority groups in general and, in this case, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, are constantly approaching - despite never reaching yet - to reclaim the *war machine* as a resistance strategy. The war machine, as a concept Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have developed, is better understood as the site of *nomadic* possibilities that constantly try to resist the interruptions spread by the tyrannical territorialisation the nation-state entails. In a certain sense, the war machine has always been present as the mechanism to avoid enclosures and to prevent the earth from becoming striated. That is, to prevent the limitations imposed to the intensities present in desire. And, even though the war machine instantiates the opposite of what the State preaches, it is inside and among States where we find, contemporarily, the war machine being deviated from its essence. Both Deleuze and Guattari propose the war machine is exterior to the State but is necessary to be held within it if the modern capitalistic social machine intends to keep its boundaries and all of its codifications under control.

> *The State has no war machine of its own*; it can only appropriate one in the form of a military institution, one that will continually cause it problems. This explains the mistrust States have toward their military institutions, in that the military institution inherits an extrinsic war machine. Karl von Clausewitz has a general sense of this situation when he treats the flow of absolute war as an Idea that States partially appropriate according to their political needs, and in relation to which they are more or less good "conductors" (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 355, emphasis in the original).

Bearing this in mind, before finally advancing, I must advert the reader that this part of the story is less about practical solutions full of certainties than the imaginative exercise to collaborate in creative ways to address real problems of everyday life for those sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who endure discrimination and violence. For almost two whole years I have been diving deeply to think about the situations I am too involved in that relate more or less to the prejudices, fears, hidings those I interviewed in Foz do Iguaçu, CDE and Hernandarias pass through. And if we are to aim to make the slightest change, without each other, we definitely cannot reach far from where we are now. That is why we would need to cross borders and deterritorialise them.

Strand One: And modernity arrives

By far, what intrigued me the most of all the information I could gather during the investigation course was the way it seemed to exist a certain generalisation of the discourse equating development to superiority in terms of modernity scale. And it would not come strictly from those sexual and gender non-conforming individuals I talked with. The general aspect I refer to is that it seemed to pour out to the general public, at least on the Brazilian side, an almost taken-for-granted belief that Paraguayans were, essentially, less developed than Brazilians. The investigation conducted by Guizardi and Mardones (2020) is very illustrative of such dynamic of real antipathy towards national differences at Foz do Iguaçu. Besides that, other informal interactions with individuals, for example, when I could eavesdrop on conversations whilst using public transport services or chatting with application drivers, revealed to me individuals would let out comments assigning a lack of education to Paraguayans who would cross from CDE to Foz do Iguaçu.

However, let us come back to focus on the discourse dissemination among those Brazilian and Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals I could talk with. That was quite curious to find out that most of those people I scheduled interviews presented more or less similar interpretations of what it meant to be sexually and/or gender diverse Paraguayan or Brazilian. On the Paraguayan side, the rationale followed an ideal portrait of Brazil as a safe space, as a better place to express one's sexuality and gender diversity in comparison to Paraguay. Some would focus on the availability of legal measures to support the minority's rights, as follows:

> *N: I wanted to ask you how you see the situation of LGBT people there in the region? What do you think of it between Foz do Iguaçu, Hernandarias and CDE?*
> *C: I think that because there [in Brazil] it is already legalised… I think that's why it's easier to go out on the street… I think there are more beautiful things to see as well…* (Celine, Paraguayan cis lesbian)

> *Even though I know and follow that Brazil is a South American country that kills LGBTs the most; but the difference with Paraguay is immense. Let's start with the legal, the laws. There is no law to protect us here. [Besides that], here is a very conservative country in terms of customs, the family is only father, mother, man, woman, children. So, there are a set of things that go together… Which, over time, I think, are getting better a little more, but there is still a lot to be done. Very much.* (Ali, Paraguayan cis gay man)

> *N: How do you see this tolerance issue here in Brazil towards diversity? Do you think there is any difference in relation to Paraguay?*
> *U: I think that, at least in the last few years, yes, a very noticeable difference compared to Paraguay. In fact, here in Paraguay, we didn't have this opening. [...] Because I think that in Brazil there is a law, you know, that you*

> *can sue or send someone to jail, things like that, the person who discriminates against you. That doesn't exist here in Paraguay. I think that's why there is this "security", in quotes, of Brazilians, of people who live in Brazil in terms of showing themselves more open in the community itself, being LGBT and, just as I said, there are places in Foz that are super friendly for you to go with your boyfriend or girlfriend, hold hands or hug, than here in Paraguay.* (Uriel, Paraguayan cis gay man)

Three out of seven Paraguayans, namely, Uriel, Ali and Celine mentioned the Brazilian anti-homophobia law as an important factor for a certain sense of security granted to sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. Ali made it explicit in his statement when he declared to observe an "immense" difference between both countries departing from the availability of legal instruments meant to preserve sexual and gender diversities. Furthermore, it was also intriguing how in all of their discourses, the idea of a Brazilian "safe space" would be accompanied by an imagined grandiosity of a place full of beauty and diversity. This aspect led me to perceive that other Paraguayans' statements focused on a more cultural aspect of an "intrinsic" modernity assigned to Brazilians. For instance:

> *C: I'm afraid. I don't want to stay here anymore, it's just that I can't leave the country until now.*
> *N: And where would you go?*
> *C: Oh, I would go back to Rio. To Rio… I feel safe there. [...] I went to Vidigal… Do you know Vidigal? I went there alone… And no one looked at me, I used to walk around naked on the streets. Not literally naked, but in swimming trunks, almost naked. And nobody would look at me. There I'm free, you know? And here in Paraguay if you're dressed like this everyone will look at you [judgmentally]. [...] Brazil is very beautiful. Of course, there are also very ugly parts. There are bad people too, but it's a matter of knowing how to live, that's what I always say. You have to know how to live, you see that there are people who don't like it, they don't like what you're doing, then go elsewhere*. (Carlos, Paraguayan cis gay man)

> *The difference between Brazil and Paraguay is that in Brazil you can live freely, there you can go out, you go for a walk without anyone saying anything to you, without anyone shouting at you... [That is not the case] in Paraguay. Here in Paraguay, you live in fear of someone throwing a stone at you... Thus, I love Brazil. I'm very Brazilian.* (Marina, Paraguayan trans woman)

> *[...] The experience in Foz is very different from that of this region in Paraguay. In fact, at the first Pride Parade in Foz, I saw a diversity that left me speechless. I felt much more freedom and I felt... It was an experience I can tell you that we never had here in Paraguay. [...] It made me feel safer to participate when I saw the number of people there. [...] I saw a very important number of people compared to what we had in CDE, for example, we were about thirty people. In Foz, there were many people and it was much more diverse.* (Mario, Paraguayan cis gay man)

> *N: In your opinion, do you believe that the border, the Friendship Bridge, has any influence on the lives of those people who have same-sex relationships and who identify as other gender identities?*
> *S: I think so… For reasons that, as I have already told you, Paraguay is a very Catholic, very religious country. And Brazil is already a more developed country. Let's say, in relation to Paraguay, it is much more developed, that's what I mean. So Brazil already has, in most cases, I won't say it's 100% either, but Brazil has a much higher acceptance rate than Paraguay.* (Sanchez, Paraguayan cis gay man)

The discourses from Carlos, Marina, Mario and Sanchez revealed a rather intriguing belief of difference between Brazilians and Paraguayans concerning the acceptance towards sexual and gender diversities. Their comments referred mostly to an alleged behaviour as though Brazilians showed to be more accustomed, open-minded and accepting than Paraguayans - these qualities, of course, linked to the belief of a more developed and thus modern Brazil. Most impactful for me was noticing that their statements were underpinned by a feeling of safety, which I tended to read as something mostly formed of a fictive image built on the logic of "development-as-modernity" since this does not correspond to the general scenario sexual and gender non-conforming individuals face in Brazil.

Following this, I looked carefully at Ali and Carlos' comments - who had been to other Brazilian cities as tourists beyond Foz do Iguaçu - acknowledged Brazil would suffer from diversity discriminations as well. Ali even cited the well-known data from the *Transgender Europe* report showing Brazil as the number one country with the most deaths in absolute numbers of transgender individuals. Even so, their statements seemed to dismiss this fact as not so compelling to the point of changing their idea about Brazil. The whole situation involving everyday life, such as more places to feel secure than in Paraguay, better job opportunities, currency value and living conditions formed a considerably idealised scenario for them about living in Brazil.

This idealisation is very comprehensible and expected if we look at how there is a mainstream political discourse over sexual and gender diversity inserted into ideas of modernity. Discussing on the intertwinning between globalisation and sexual politics, Jon Binnie (2004) points out how the advancement of a "global gay" spawning from North America and Europe travels around countries inciting homogenous discourses of modernity but that are more or less appropriated and mutated by localised sexual and gender non-conforming communities to their realities. As for Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, this discourse connecting development/modernity to progressive attitudes towards sexual and gender diversity was almost a naturalised point, especially if one

considers the border scenario where comparisons with Brazil are almost immediate, as though eople can witness another "reality" at their doorstep, on the other side of the border. Such dynamic brings me to think of Binnie's (2004, p. 92) elaborations on a qualitative distinction between the metropolitan and the provincial intrinsic to modernity, whereby, applied to the case at this border, the Brazilian side is represented as an urban or metropolitan centre where sexuality and gender diversity face all the "ease" of development and the Paraguayan side represented the rural or provincial where backwardness and lack of freedom prevailed.

Such distinction between metropolis and province emerges from the very essence of modern fictions. Jon Binnie (2004) discusses this subject calling attention to the creation of a "cosmopolitan" belief residing in specific locations where sexual and gender diversity are deemed to not suffer discrimination in opposition to less developed places where discrimination would show up more blatant. This idea creates an imagery of "global cities", of metropoli where diversity would be usually taken for granted considering their size and structure, thus, deemed as places full of respect and free from sexual and gender diversity discriminations. On the other side, there would be the provincial locations, that is, the countryside, smaller towns or villages in the country's interior, or, even, whole countries in comparison to other specific cities. For example, the opposition between Hernandarias/CDE to Foz do Iguaçu, or even Hernandarias or CDE to New York in the United States, where sexual and gender non-conforming individuals would enjoy less life-threatening circumstances.

Applying this binary opposition to the current situation discussed, for Brazilians, the rationale of modernity seemed to follow the same differenciation of rural/provincial agaisnt urban/metropolitan, especially on affirmations such as that of looking at the Paraguayan lack of acceptance and lack of respect towards sexual and gender diversities connected to the same idea of poor development. Also, as in the case of Sanchez above, more interviewees perceived the Paraguayan society to be very connected to fundamentalist religious moralities opposed to sexualities and gender identities, not in agreement with the cis-heteronormative one, present in claims of an apparent lack of discussions involving subjects such as sexuality and gender diversity in the political and social milieus.

> *I'm not in the habit of going to Paraguay. Not even to shop at CDE. I'm not used to going there. In fact, I'm very apprehensive about the Paraguayan people in this aspect because I see them as very intolerant, right? If we Brazilians are backwards, there I see that they are even more backwards in terms of respect for differences, right, so I'm a little afraid to go there.* (Carmen, Brazilian trans woman)

> *I think there's a lot of difference. Here in Brazil, it's much easier for you to say that you're gay. It's easier than in Paraguay. There they take it more seriously, they're very religious. [...] And it depends on people, as I said, like, there the teachers lived a lot with LBGT people, so for them, it was nothing very abnormal, but if I were to talk, for example, to a woman who worked in the photocopy in front of the college, then it was something else, then she wouldn't like it so much. So in that sense, the acceptance is very different. In Brazil, we certainly have something much better than there, because it's a very difficult country to live in. [...] [It is difficult] for an LGBT person because of that, because of the lack of acceptance, in addition to the fact the country being, you know, less developed, there it is very difficult to live, so, for what I, when I was there, it was really hard, like, really, really hard to live like that.* (Hugo, Brazilian cis gay man)

> *[...] For me Paraguay, continues to be an even more sexist country, you know? Homosexual people in Paraguay, I see that they have less acceptance than in Brazil... They have less freedom to be homosexual in Paraguay than we here in Brazil. I think Paraguay is a little late in that sense yet. [...] So I think that Paraguay doesn't... It accepts less, but in Brazil, it kills more... That's crazy, that's really a paradox. But I think acceptance in Paraguay is more difficult.* (Rodrigo, Brazilian cis gay man)

> *N: Making a more comparative effort in relation to Brazil and Paraguay, having been there, have you ever endured any explicit discriminatory situation?*
> *P: Yes, once we went to a nightclub, we were like this outside and we hugged my boyfriend and me. We just hugged each other then the club security came to say: You can't do that! He told us to set apart… That was the only time I suffered something. It affected me a lot. But other than that, I haven't suffered because it was precisely the only time I showed any affection like this in public and then the security guard came… So, after that, I have never even thought of demonstrating something again. Maybe that's why I didn't go through this anymore. There [in Paraguay] this issue is very explicit that it is forbidden. Security guards appear others come from wherever to tell you to separate and if you refuse they kick you out of the place.* (Pedro, Brazilian cis gay man)

A few specificities call attention here. For example, Hugo's statement. He is someone who was born in Foz do Iguaçu and has been living in the city since then. His experience with the Paraguayan side of the border exceeds that of others in the sense that he had thorough interactions when he started his undergraduate studies in a private institution for a few terms. Even though he did not complete all the years necessary to graduate, the time he passed crossing from Brazil to Paraguay on a daily basis contributed to his current negative vision about the subject of acceptance towards sexual and gender non-conforming individuals.

Hugo even showed to reproduce the same logic of development and modernity on a micro level when he pointed out which individuals would more probably be accepting of sexual and gender diversity. In a clear class intersection based on his experiences, he mentioned as an example a hypothetical college professor who would be more open-minded

than a hypothetical "photocopy lady" who would allegedly be less receptive to such diversities. In Hugo's anecdote it is possible to understand the pervasiveness of the modern logic capable of penetrating in the most trivial human interactions but that, actually, do not necessarily do justice to reality.

Furthermore, let us not forget the way religiosity is also present in discourses. In general, this is pointed to as a factor for the overall impression of intolerance. Visualising Sanchez's and Hugo's statements, in Paraguay, the responsibility would mostly rely on the intensity religious faiths are present in social life. Other examples are:

> *[...] It's very difficult here in Paraguay. It's very difficult because people are very Catholic, Protestants, you know... And it's very much about God. You are not going to change the mentality of an 80-year-old person overnight, even the way we eat is very difficult [to change] if we are too used to it.* (Celine, Paraguayan cis lesbian woman)

> *N: Taking into account all these events, not only in Hernandarias, how do you see this whole situation, what is your opinion about it?*
> *V: Well, it was a situation, first, fueled by political interests, which I told you, that's one of the factors. Obviously, it was carried out by people who can be manipulated, the Catholic Church manipulated many people and continues to manipulate. And as I told you, it has a lot to do with it, because the Catholic Church continues to intervene in State issues. They keep getting into things that belong to the State. Things they shouldn't get into, you know? And unfortunately for the LGBTI cause, the Catholic Church continues to be a great predator here in Paraguay, because Paraguay is a very Catholic country, it is a very conservative country and it will continue to be a rock for us for a long time, but at some point, it will fall.* (Veronica, Paraguayan trans woman)

> *I think... Ok, I don't know if it's really religion, but I think it's more about hate. People keep saying that it's religion to disguise their hate with us, with the gays, with the LGBT population. So, I think religion is not that much, but it also has a lot of religious influence here… Just as in Brazil it is one of the most Catholic countries in the world and it has a little influence too.* (Marina, Paraguayan trans woman)

What is most striking of the three excerpts above is how Marina focused on demonstrating that, whereas religiosity should be acknowledged in its influence to spread reactionary discourses against sexual and gender diversities, Marina highlights how intolerance is advanced far beyond the scope of religious doctrines in a collective social fantasy of intollerance against differences. In other words, religions serve as the perfect disguise to mask people's hate towards sexual and gender non-conforming individuals.

This same scenario also finds resonance in the other conservative initiatives narrated before, as in the case when "pro-family" and "pro-life" groups attacked the first Pride Parade in Hernandarias in 2019; the protests against the *Festival por la Igualdad y la Libertad* in

CDE organised by the city representatives Sandra Miranda and Kelembu Miranda[18] (both from right-wing parties: the Christian party *Patria Querida* and the nationalist and conservative party *Partido Colorado* respectively); the two resolutions declaring CDE and Hernandarias pro-life and pro-family based on "spiritual" creeds. All of these followed in the same trail of a more general political agenda in an endeavour-like tactic throughout the country. On the national level, there has been the 2017 decision from the Ministry of Education in Paraguay - during Horacio Cartes' government from 2013 to 2018 - to ban any educational material advocating "gender ideology" contents (Carneri, 2017); in 2019, the national Senate approved a project to declare the house pro-family and pro-life based in religious morals (UltimaHora, 2019) and, as for the presidency, Mario Abdo Benítez's government got elected declaring clear oppositions towards sexual and gender non-conforming individuals' claims (Zerbato, 2018).

Despite all evidence listed above, I bring here an excerpt from my conversation with Carlos since his impression concerning the religiosity subject represented a kind of counterweight to the argument I am assembling here. He says:

> *So that's why I say it like this: it's not that the people are feeling more religious, it's the rulers who are doing all the shit, you know? [...] It is because the population does what the ruler says. If they say something is wrong, it is wrong. So people already get this recorded in their heads and then when they see it, they say: Oh no, this is wrong! Get out! Get out! Do it right! And now, if the government isn't promoting it, it's not saying it's wrong, it's okay, it's right, then people won't say anything. What he promotes generates opinions, he generates actions. Because he is precisely an influential kind of person: Ah! He is the mayor. The mayor said it's bad, [so] it's bad! And so on…*

Carlo's statement went against what most other Paraguayan interviewees argued concerning religion in the country. However, I do find sense in his discourse when we set eyes on the way the "rulers" he mentioned influence others. Nevertheless, my line of argumentation goes back to the religious base underpinning the ruler's influence over others. Hence, it is of utmost importance to look at the current structural and material circumstances in Paraguay from a perspective that goes beyond the apparently "merely cultural" (Butler, 1998) aspect of actual violence and intentional dereliction of minorities. Here, I turn to Rahul Rao's (2015) *homocapitalism* elaborations to understand how religion and material conditions

[18] In October 2019 Sandra Miranda participated on a radio broadcast discussing about her positioning to forbid the festival from happening, arguing with the radio announcer the sexual and gender non-conforming groups claiming for rights advocated against religious doctrines such as prescribed in the Holy Bible. It is possible to accompany the quarrel on the following link: https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2019/10/08/me-parece-perfecto-que-sea-prohibida-afirma-concejal-con-respecto-a-nueva-marcha-lgbti-en-cde/.

are tightly imbricated. In his piece, Rao looks at Uganda's case of "neoliberalisation" and subsequent implementation of homophobic laws to argue how discourses over sexual modernity travel along with neoliberal policies via international financial institutions. In the first moment, the author observed how neoliberal politics from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund construed material conditions for pentecostal religions to take control over education and the healthcare system in the country contributing to spreading moral panics against homosexuality for a long period in Uganda. Rao argues how the State presence shrank to cope with external financial exigencies causing public services to be vacant to other private institutions.

I follow the essence of Rao's analyses to indicate that discrimination in Paraguay has direct material causes for the persecution against sexual and gender diverse minorities. The decreased secularity in government spheres may be indicative of the reactionary appeal for moral panics based on discourses of "saving life and family", which seem very much convincing considering the current situation. However, to continue this discussion would demand some expertise I cannot commit myself to exploring here, as it is not the point. Nonetheless, bringing together González and García's (2019) analyses on the discussions around gender discourses inside a particular "pro-family" and "pro-life" group on Facebook, I come to understand, at least, that the religious discourse involved with politics lures and seduces individuals to support conservative candidates. Their conclusion revealed the group's major goal to function as the means whereby the Paraguayan elections could be affected to secure seats for conservative politicians in the legislative and executive powers.

Added to this, as we have noticed in the previous chapter, sexual and gender non-conforming organised groups have only appeared in Paraguay during the early 1990s and concentrated efforts mainly in the capital Asunción. Now that years have passed and the organised social movement has spread its demands over other parts of Paraguay, it is pretty evident that conservative forces, which never saw signs of disturbance in other parts of the country, would react against these individuals. Veronica expresses much better this idea when she says to me that, now, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals are out there, being noticed in public.

> *[...] Today we are visible, today we appear. Before it did not happen, today we are making ourselves visible, today we are showing ourselves, we are acting with more freedom, we are acting with more power, with more empowerment. We know our rights. Previously, the LGBTI population hid a lot, they hid a lot, they didn't want to appear. But today they are showing up and that's what bothers, that's what starts to generate hate in other people, in the heteronormative population. And obviously, it's a... How can I put it...*

> *It's an unavoidable social event. Inevitable because the world is open to the LGBTI population, the world is opening up. Paraguay cannot be left behind. Of course, you're going to have to go that route too… Sooner or later.*

Today, sexuality and gender diversity are increasingly present out there because it has always been within us. And that is very relevant for me to notice that, in Veronica's thought, the way ahead passes through an ever-widening acceptance towards diversities - what is not wrong, but we must take care with the way we conceive this idea as I will soon argue.

Now, continuing to focus on the discourses from the interviews, in the case of Rodrigo's statement, it was, at the very least, interesting to hear him reaching by himself the apparent paradox found in his discourse. On the one hand, his experiences in Paraguay had revealed clues not only towards negative aspects but also positive ones. In other moments during our conversation, Rodrigo revealed he had faced contradictions between his speech and personal perceptions which could have told him, as well as for us, that, perhaps, we do not live light-years away from the situations found in Paraguay. Perhaps, we are not so different from each other but it seems we tend to ignore the similarities and focus on the differences for confirming the different stages each side is in. Thus, approaching the end of our meeting our conversation reached the point that follows:

> *N: Is there anything else you thought of telling me that you didn't get the chance to?*
> *R: I'm thinking here. I think there's an interesting point. So, as much as I see Paraguay lagging behind in some works I did there, I had a few moments when I had the opportunity to openly tell people that I'm homosexual and I received acceptance, kindness from people I didn't even imagine I would have. I don't mean to generalise, I see that nothing is generalisable, in fact. But at the same time that I perceive Paraguay in delay, some people surprised me very positively in this acceptance, you know, very positive. I have friends who are from Paraguay, who are straight, married to women and who treat me with immense kindness. One of them, from Encarnación, married and all, in his 40s, married to a woman… He invited me a few days ago to an event he was going to hold: "You and your boyfriend are welcome". And that was very surprising when he said: "you and your boyfriend" naturally, like, you know... Such an open-minded guy and he lives there in Encarnación, which is a super small and super conservative town.*

Definitely, not only Rodrigo's but all others' assumptions reveal so much about our beliefs and the way we build our contemporary "modern" reality based on the territorialisation of differences as the main pillar to address "Others". Still, it is not possible to ignore how the overall impression revolves around an intolerant Paraguay as a whole and an exotically safe Brazil as a whole - despite not entirely true.

In the end, it is possible to see that the reality at this border region is crowded with a plethora of chains of signification passing through religiosity, politics and logics of modernity

that work to foster the establishment of hierarchical differences between individual's identities and national belongings above all. Hence, the central point about this strand revolves around the fictive images created through a movement of development-as-modernity in sexual and gender diversity rights representing other places, other countries ideally, without questioning the depoliticising potential of such beliefs. And I do not mean to use the word "depoliticising" loosely here. It is in the sense that individuals tend not only to overlook the problems of other countries but also tend to ignore those difficulties around them. It may be very common for hopelessness and despair to invade individuals and settle negative emotions as though nothing could be done to change reality. I do not doubt that *alone* it is pretty much difficult - if not impossible - to change reactionary molar scenarios, but the micropolitical sphere must be added to this equation. It is in this realm that desires for revolutions surpass those desires for staying and preserving reactionary discourses. After all, there is no use in advocating for respect towards minorities, in the ideological domain of interest, and, in the micropolitical investments of desire, keep on reproducing detrimental power relations as, for example, believing that national belongings define one's worthiness of respect. The "Other", seen in their difference must never become devoid of life.

Ultimately, we must pay attention to the international rights-claiming discourse equating modernity and sexuality and gender diversity acceptance to development, transmitted through international networks. Particularly in the case of political LGBT activism, discourses must be carefully analysed if we wish to keep away homonormative and homocolonial demands, that is, the urge to claim for rights inattentively and indiscriminately reproducing the neoliberal domestication of individuals.

I do not mean that demanding marriage equality or children adoption by homosexual couples is something shallow. Definitely not. I believe these are legitimate requests considering our reality in order to bring forth representativeness and opportunities for those sexual and gender non-conforming individuals most vulnerable. These changes may work fundamentally to overall changes, provided that our intentions for change must not cease at the moment those rights become just new axioms for the modern capitalistic state to shut down revolutionary flows. Individuals need to seek more than that. Because while a trans man, woman or non-binary person, disabled persons, homeless people or who else other that can be included here as part of the "waste" produced in this deleterious capitalistic structure, while these individuals are not able to keep living with dignity and respect, then we all shall never find tranquillity.

At this point I go back to one of Jon Binnie's (2004, p. 39) discussions on the globalisation of mainstream discourses on sexualities to indicate a counterpoint to his argument that local sexual and gender non-conforming communities hybridise an allegedly "global gay identity" spawning from the global North in order to make it serve their local needs. I would argue this may not be generalised as it is evident this is not the case in the lives of those located at CDE/Hernandarias and Foz do Iguaçu. Most part of these individuals seemed to be seduced by sexual discourses on modernity by indicating their beliefs in the hierarchisation between both sides. Their use of the border reflected what I wish to indicate here as the site of difference between a "rural and a metropolitan" binary opposition.

Strand Two: A site of possibilities

Let us start by looking at the integration between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu. As twin cities, it becomes clear the following relation. As already seen, both the Paraguayan and Brazilian States, during the 20th century, supported the initiative to augment population presence in the Alto Paraná region by creating incentives for expanding agricultural holdings. This move contributed largely to the integration and consequent deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of borders. If the limits between both countries at the intersecting point separating/uniting CDE and Foz do Iguaçu has ever been a loose knot at the border, the proper subjectivation of individuals living at this zone - what leads to collective surveillance - and the State apparatus presence have minimally settled any doubt of who or what belongs to each of the sides. In other words, circularities were set and not only the land became striated but also human relations, the river water, the vegetation etc. Said differently, all became more or less coded in a territorialisation that depended also on social relations established in this zone between Paraguayans and Brazilians and their subjectivities.

It turns out that the government incentives for advancing towards both countries' edges facilitated the process of integration between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu. It became intense to the point both sides rely on each other, on different levels, to avoid economic losses. Nevertheless, this economic integration did not come without highlighting the problems that accompany the modern statist rationale of well-divided borders in a land as well as in one's mind. In other words, the taken-for-granted division between the fictional We/I and the They/Other.

The integration between both sides started as early as the 1950s when Brazilians acquired big portions of fertile land in the Paraguayan side encouraged by Stroessner's

political moves to increase demographic presence in the area. This move lured Brazilian landowners from the southern portion of the country to move to the Paraguayan Alto Paraná region, who took advantage of lower prices than in Brazilian territory, the possibility to buy bigger portions of land and the reduced taxations in the neighbouring country (Albuquerque, 2019). As already discussed before, the flow of Brazilians towards Paraguay generated a very complicated relation of actual colonisation in the Paraguayan countryside, which, today, current generations of Braziguayans and rural workers deal with struggles over unequal distributions of land.

Now, effectively, the conurbation between CDE - named, until 1989, as *Ciudad Presidente Stroessner* - and Foz do Iguaçu started to bloom only with the enterprises planned for the region. The construction of the Friendship Bridge (concluded in 1965) and the enormous construction of the Itaipu Hydroelectric Plant (initiated in 1975 and only concluded in 1982), demanded a large contingent of the labour force to stay in both cities for long periods, which caused many to set up residence in the region. All in all, the gradual population increase and the investments of capital to assemble the minimum structure to accommodate individuals, consequently, culminated in the formation of stronger interactions between both sides of the border (Jaquet, 2008). It was during the 1980s when CDE finally saw its commercial hub boil with the practice of a "shopping tourism" bolstered by the increasing presence of Taiwanese, Chinese and Arab immigrants, who funded the main speciality of CDE's commerce: the direct import of electronic products (Pinheiro-Machado, 2010).

As of today, the border and the crossings between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu foster not only intense flows of trade but also represent a fundamental aspect for that border zone loaded with fixed territoralising differences and deterritorialising multiplicities, possibilities. During the course of this investigation, I came to see that the division, the limit between both countries could receive an infinite amount of meanings and, when I arrived in the specific group of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals, the possibilities of meanings multiplied. Each individual in their subjectivity regarded the border in a different manner considering their needs and idiosyncrasies, which could range from understanding the border as a refuge, protection, a menace or just something that stood there, by their side, meaninglessly.

What is so essential to take into account here is the fact that borders, whether ontologically thought to represent a barrier, also carry along with the essence of movement, of multiplicity. Thomas Nail (2016, p. 21) so accurately states that the history of borders "is not

merely a derivative product [of society] but a primarily productive process", which makes me think of the neurotic obsession for controlling our current capitalistic and statist rationale so carefully carries along but that, in real terms, does not exist. Even if the production of subjectivities wishes us to avoid all of that is uncertain, deterritorialised, decoded, it seems to me our essence lies in the very multiplicity the social motion enables. And the border represents exactly that transgressive possibility that is so strongly repressed in and by us.

Of course that our current vision invests at borders mainly as territories of insecure differences, however, considering the possibilities of multiple meanings when looking more closely at the movements sexual and gender non-conforming people have been taking in it, I arrive at the point where I come to understand that to stare at sexual and gender diverse people was pivotal to apprehend the deterritorialising potential a border carries, but that has been hindered and limited to a certain circularity. As I will elaborate more ahead, borders can be the *war machines*, the smooth spaces between striae and hard codings. Surely, this is not something generalisable since I am looking at a border that carries the precise characteristic of more or less free passage. Thus, wherever intensity is prevented from fulfilling its movement, the energy rebounds and rebounds and rebounds until it finds another way or a breach, a gap in the way it is moving.

Even if it seems every single person around us is doomed to live their entire life *being* one thing, following a single path, a normative one; even if we constantly receive semiotic reminders of normativity, of modernity, of capitalistic subjectivities that defiles our desire and invades our most intimate emotions to the point of fearing multiplicities and differences, it is very much clear to me that, above all, we may *be* more than one thing. Anyhow, despite this almost-idealist argument of mine, to some individuals, the specific existence of others may awaken the most dangerous of fascist desires, which is the case of two trans women I had the opportunity to meet in this investigation: Veronica and Carmen. Their crossings do not represent an ordinary movement in our current society as I have demonstrated before. Their experiences and the reminders they constantly receive about their embodiments make them even more distant and fearful of trying to move inside multiplicities.

Let us start by pointing out the way their crossings are obstructed both inside Paraguay and Brazil, and when thinking of crossing the international border. According to Veronica, a Paraguayan trans woman, in her own words during our conversation:

> *N: In your daily life, have you ever witnessed homophobic, transphobic, lesbophobic discrimination on the streets?*
> *V: Of course, of course. Always. It happens to me, it happens to my companions… Because in addition to transphobia, we also have to face the*

> *problems of machismo, that is, what we face is double discrimination, sometimes triple discrimination, you know? We endure the issue of being transsexuals on our shoulders and because we are transsexual women, we suffer machismo, you know? It's a total loss of privileges. It's a loss that goes up a ladder. Discrimination escalates.*
>
> *N: Do you usually cross the border to Brazil, to come to Foz?*
> *V: Yes, to Foz I can go.*
> *N: Right. How often?*
> *V: Before I used to go a lot. Now, I don't go anymore [because of Coronavirus], but I used to go on weekends.*
> *N: To do some specific activity or just go for a walk?*
> *V: Just walk around.*
>
> *N: As LGBT people from Paraguay live on the border, they end up coming here to Brazil to distance themselves from the eyes of people who know them, who don't know that they are LGBTs. Do you think this really happens?*
> *V: No. Brazil for nothing... I'm more afraid of Brazil than Paraguay. Brazil is the country that kills transsexuals the most in the world. The idea of a transsexual being able to live freely in Brazil cannot be conceived, she will live in fear. It's impossible... The statistics speak for themselves.*

Once again I decided to bring the passage when Veronica showed me how her gender identity cannot be overlooked when talking about her crossings. After all, her life and existence revolve around her subjectivity. The way it relates to the exterior is on a whole other stance, that of fear of death by murder. She made it explicit for me in our talk that she used to cross from CDE to Foz do Iguaçu to enjoy the city's hotspots. However, when the theme goes to the sense of freedom and sexual and gender liberty in the Brazilian city, her answer changes. It is not a possibility anymore bearing in mind how highly transphobic Brazil demonstrates in its statistics. In this sense, her experience would diverge from that of other sexually diverse individuals. And it is such a sensible awareness between lived experiences, because why would she submit herself to cross to a country that may indicate her death sentence? Thus, the sense of modernity others may find in Brazil would not adhere to her desire.

In sequence, the case of Carmen is very similar to Veronica's but the other way around. Just a quick remembrance, Carmen is a Brazilian trans woman who has been cited in previous parts in this investigation and who also made me perceive the then not so apparent reality trans individuals, in her case trans women, have to live when they are surrounded by a social aggregate that pursues their bodies for both death and pleasure. What concerns Carmen's experience living as a trans woman in Foz do Iguaçu, she pointed out the following:

> *When I used to work in local business, I didn't feel I suffered from transphobia, you know, because as I don't practice, I have never practised here... Prostitution, so I had a normal life. My family worked with me and I*

> *used to employ a large team who worked with me, so people were used to seeing me on the streets every day during daylight. So I was always very well respected by the surrounding community, by the local businesses in Foz do Iguaçu. So, the only problem I had, that transphobia was very visible, was the issue of using the social name, which at the time I didn't have the name corrected when I needed to use public agencies, health centres, or even when I went to the City Hall to deal with any bureaucracy. But within the community, I never had a problem. Now, when I used to need to access governmental institutions, all my rights as a transsexual woman were violated. They would not respect the use of the social name. When I used to participate in courses at the City Hall they forced me to wear badges with a male name on them.*

Carmen's motions through Foz do Iguaçu revealed another perspective about the possibilities to live in a city marked by negative reactions towards differences, especially knowing how transgender individuals struggle for their lives in Brazil. Despite the insistence of bureaucratic apparatuses in violating her and invalidating her existence, Carmen presented another side of possible daily reality in the existence of a trans woman - that could be worse -, without being omissive to address how she has been the exception and not the norm. In another moment in our talk, she demonstrated the difference between her experience and other trans acquaintances of her that still work in the sex market in the border region:

> *[...] Of all the letters of our community, we are the ones who live on the margins of society. We can't get a job, there is the issue of access to education... We end up living on the margins and we often engage in prostitution so that we can survive in our society. [...] So, I live a lot in contact with transsexual girls here in Foz do Iguaçu. [...] The girls, getting into this aspect of prejudice, I noticed that they complained a lot, but there's that thing, the girls weren't in the habit, like me, of being circulating around the city during the day, most of them engaged in prostitution so they would go out at night. Then, during the day, when they go out on the street to resolve something, of course, it ends up drawing more attention because it was not part of people's daily lives and I always had a lot of customers. So it was easier for people to know me because of my business than they did in the case of prostitution. So they would face problems in commerce, when they entered the stores, people treated them harshly.*

Carmen’s comment and activist actions on the situation of trans women who do not receive the bare minimum support to get to deliberate sex work as a possibility and not an obligation for their survival, her description adhered to mind as though Carmen acknowledged the difficulties she could have passed through her life but that, fortunately, she got to choose the path she wanted for her. And even though her experience was essentially different from those of her friends or Veronica’s, at a certain point during our talk, we arrived at the topic about her crossings at the border when she had the chance to tell me that she feared the Paraguayan side.

> *N: Do you usually cross the Friendship Bridge? Do you usually go to Paraguay?*
> *C: No. I'm not used to visiting Paraguay. Not even to shop at CDE. I'm not used to going there. In fact, I am very apprehensive in this aspect with Paraguayans because I see that they are quite intolerant, you know. If we Brazilians lag behind, I see that they are even more behind in terms of respect for differences. So, I am a little afraid to go there [...]When I go, I try to go with other people. I don't usually go alone.*

Whereas Veronica had used the data for transgender homicides in Brazil to argue for her feeling unease about the idea of seeing Brazil as a safe space, Carmen did not cite it directly. Unfortunately, the idea of questioning Carmen's fear of the Paraguayan people did not come about, however, now, ruminating on her reasons, my impressions for this response of her travel to different explanations. Definitely, in her discourse, it is very clear the influence of a general idea of superiority brought by a modern rationale, but, at the same time, my thoughts travel to the place of a trans woman named Carmen who has lived her entire life hearing about violence, murders and vilifying insults. Despite the idea that modernity exerts tremendous force over individuals to fabricate the naturalisation of differences, it is not possible to ignore the more immediate evidence.

Going back to the crossings of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu, Carmen also revealed another important piece of information concerning the movements across the border related to trans women working as prostitutes who would come from Paraguay to Brazil and take advantage of the connection to augment their income. Similarly, Marina, another Paraguayan transgender woman who has been in contact with other transgender girls at the Paraguayan side, reaffirmed the importance of the border for them marking explicitly the difficulties they faced during the time the states shut down their borders due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

> *What I hear from transsexual girls here in Foz do Iguaçu, they come, stay here for some time and return to Paraguay. There are others who would pass by the border every day, crossing the bridge, practising prostitution here and, at the end of the night, during the day, they return to their homes in Paraguay. Just like a professional matter. They come, do their work and return to their homes.* (Carmen, Brazilian trans woman)

> *I know people who depend a lot on being able to move to Brazil so they can work. I work more with transsexuals who work on the street, who work at night with their bodies. They were very affected by the closing of the border because there were many of my friends who would go work and, then, it closed. My God, it was very difficult but now it's getting better.* (Marina, Paraguayan trans woman)

With no intention to romanticise their situation, it is central to think of their behaviour using the border as this space of survivability against all risks it may represent, in a reality

that means an enhancement of the dangers and the potential of acts of violence towards their bodies. At this point, I turn to myself and ask: is there something broader than a border indeed? Those women prove with their own lives that social or physical limits/borders are just fiction, a way to try to tame our flows of desire from flying to different spaces.

Now that it has been laid down that Veronica and Carmen's cases are very much peculiar when compared to those experiences from others, I now turn to the similarities and singularities disclosed by the Brazilian sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. Firstly, I will present those excerpts from José, Hugo, Rodrigo and Alexandre where they described to me their movements across the border which I find particularly similar in essence.

> *I end up being very unmotivated to live certain dynamics of the border due to mobility issues. It's difficult, ok, I can go there during the day, but to live the nightlife, I need to either know someone there, who lives there to spend the night or come back early the next day. [And] it's another country, the buses, transport work differently, taxi, money, the issue of people thinking you're a tourist and you get scared, like I'm going to be there at night, and I don't know what's going to happen to me. I had another experience when I was married. We went there to spend the day, eat, and stay by the lake, which is the closest thing you can do on foot to know an area that is not the commercial hub of CDE. At the time we had bleached hair and we felt a lot of repressions. It was something like the effeminate figure ends up suffering a lot of reprisals in CDE. People shout at you, tease you in the street. You get very scared.* (José, Brazilian gay man)

> *N: Do you often go to Paraguay?*
> *H: No, I don't go there anymore... I used to go there a lot when I studied in Paraguay. Today I go only when I need to shop. I go there to buy something, but, no, I don't cross that much every day. [But] I like Paraguay, I think because it's a lawless place, so people don't care about anything. It's very absurd, like, there's no traffic signs, some very crazy things, we just go, like, whoever goes, goes first [in traffic]. It's really cool. I had a lot of fun.* (Hugo, Brazilian gay man)

> *To be very honest with you, my relationship with Paraguay, with CDE, consists of when I receive relatives at home, who come to visit me, who live in other cities. Then, we would end up going to Paraguay if they want to buy anything. Now, how can I tell you this... I know that there is this situation of hatred against LGBT people there in Paraguay, but the contact I have with it is just that, I know that but it's never had such an impact on my life. [Furthermore], when I go there, I always try not to show in any way that I'm gay. I dress more... In a very heteronormative way, to really disguise it, to avoid some kind of harassment, you know. Because it certainly might be a very uncomfortable situation, I would be very uncomfortable in front of my family if that happened. I would be very upset.* (Alexandre, Brazilian cis gay man)

> *I always have this feeling in Paraguay. Even while I was working there I heard discriminatory comments. But I also had super good experiences, but my feeling, my perception. It is purely the perception of friends I know from Paraguay who has a difficult moment coming out as both lesbian or gay.*

> *[...] For example, my boyfriend and I live together in Foz, but when we met he lived in Paraguay, he lived in CDE, where he studied. Living in CDE he felt afraid of kissing me inside the car on the street, afraid if someone was going to see us. Here in Brazil, we didn't have that fear. But I don't know if it's because there was something about being in another country, but it was the fear that lived in us. It was more present than here in Foz.*
> *[...] Ah, there were times when I would even go to the lake, like, to do physical activity, you know, run in the lake, I loved to do that... but I think work was the biggest reason I crossed the border, well, work ... to really work.* (Rodrigo, Brazilian gay cis man)

Except for Rodrigo, whose work demanded him to cross the bridge to Paraguay and Hugo who used to study in a university in CDE, the others, José and Alexandre showed, in their statements, that their crossings to CDE would come down to sporadic visits to the Paraguayan side in order to have a time for leisure or to take the opportunity to buy products in CDE's commercial hub. Through their experiences, one may apprehend that the relationship of integration between both cities does not necessarily correspond to a situation of equivalence and some of the words used during their interventions also reveal a certain disdain towards the Paraguayan side. However, it is curious to also understand that, even though CDE is portrayed as a decadent and discriminatory place, in the cases of José and Rodrigo, for instance, they would still visit the city during their spare time accompanied with their partners. Hence, I keep the following question to myself: to what extent do they believe in their own discourse taking into account their will to make activities at the Paraguayan side of the border? Is the other side really that dangerous? It seems to be just one more fiction.

Apart from the Brazilian experiences described above, in which the border acquired completely different meanings, the case of Pedro's crossings is of a remarkable particularity. Pedro is a Brazilian cis gay man whose only his father knows about his sexuality and supports him. Conversely, his mother, as Pedro told me, cannot even know about her son's sexual orientation. When we both met online, what first struck me was that Pedro's story demanded him to build a different relationship over the border separating CDE from Foz do Iguaçu in order for him to live his sexuality more freely. His experience differs largely from those of other interviewees, Brazilians or Paraguayans. Whereas the narrative until this point has depicted Paraguay as a dangerous place for sexual and gender non-conforming persons, Pedro's subjectivity demanded the border to provide him protection from the eyes of his mother and other family members who could not know about his relationship with his boyfriend, who is a Paraguayan living in CDE. Our conversation follows:

> *N: The first question I wanted to ask you is about how do you see the issue of discrimination against sexual and gender non-conforming individuals in the region?*

> *P: So, in public places, I have never witnessed an act of discrimination, here in Foz. But it's because I also tend to be very reserved due to my mother. I'm too afraid to go out to a restaurant or something like that. That is why I prefer to go to the other side of the border, to Paraguay, because I don't feel comfortable here. But, here in Foz, the times I went out, I never suffered [discrimination], only on the other side, in Paraguay, where a situation happened.*
> *N: Does the bridge have any importance for you? The access to Paraguay, does it mean something?*
> *P: Yes, there is. My boyfriend is from Paraguay, we met thanks to the bridge and we can see each other every day also thanks to the bridge. [...] I feel safer there.*
> *N: Apart from your relationship, were you used to visiting Paraguay to do any activity?*
> *P: I rarely went shopping. That was once every three months. But today I go there three times, four times a week.*

The diversity in the possibilities of interpreting the border between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu is pivotal here. Multiplicity seems to be an essential trait intrinsic to this structure that mostly relies on our subjectivities and the investments we make to keep it raised high. Pedro's comments left me so inquisitive about the potential of protection the border could offer to someone in his position. There is no doubt that this border also offers the same refuge-like and protection characteristic for some of the Paraguayans I could talk to as well, but when we turn to Pedro's story and realise through his words that the so-called "dangerous side" offered him a possibility to live his sexuality more freely, I am left pondering the way discourses on development-as-modernity exclude the multiplicities one can grasp while experiencing life.

What is more, another intriguing part of my conversation with Pedro concerned to the point when he stated the following comment:

> *N: Have you ever been through any explicit situation of discrimination in Paraguay?*
> *P: Yes, once we went to a nightclub and we were outside the club, in the smoking area, and we hugged, my boyfriend and I, we just hugged each other. Out of the blue, the security guard appeared to tell us we could not do that. He told us to set apart. That was the only time I suffered something and it affected me a lot, but no other moment than that. It was precisely the only time I showed any affection in public and after that, I never even thought of demonstrating something again. This issue is very explicit, that it is forbidden [LGBTs].*

At first, his words contrasted with the previous thoughts presented in a very ambiguous way. I wondered: was it "safer" for him to go to Paraguay, a place where he would allegedly face more chances to suffer from homophobic discrimination than to stay at Foz do Iguaçu where he would, in theory, be more at ease? In my mind, either his fear from his mother might have been something really profound, or he did actually not care that much about potential discrimination on the Paraguayan side. Why are not both possibilities possible? Truth is, just

as he told me, whereas the only discriminatory situation he lived in his life happened in a nightclub while in Paraguay, when it comes to making his sexuality flow freely, Pedro started taking much more care to not let hints "escape" from his body.

In sequence, I, then, turn to the similarities and singularities found in the discourses from the other Paraguayans I talked with concerning their crosses through the border, which also demonstrated a myriad way to look at that space not only as a division between nationalities but as the site of many possibilities. Possibilities moreover not only restricted to issues of sexual and gender diversity. Concerning the movement of crossing, in most cases, the opportunities for work and study in Brazil stood out, as well as the relationship of complement regarding grocery prices which individuals could choose to buy either in Paraguay or Brazil depending on general prices; and the importance of being able to attend more friendly spaces towards sexual and gender diversities.

> *N: Do you usually come to Brazil, cross the border?*
> *C: Always, always.*
> *N: What for? Do you do anything here in Brazil? Work?*
> *C: Shopping. [...] I would also go for a walk once a year.* (Celine, Paraguayan cis lesbian)

> *I lived there [in Foz] for 1 year and 6 months and I would always go there to work. I used to go a lot. I was practically dependent on the people who lived there in Foz. I love Foz, I love Brazil. In fact, I worked, like, taking clothes, bringing clothes [from side to side], and other things.* (Marina, Paraguayan trans woman)

> *N: What is the importance of this border for you?*
> *S: So, the first thing is that I managed to get into the course I wanted in Brazil, in the University. Here we also have the National University, but it is not 100% free, even though it is from the State, and it didn't offer the course I wanted to do here at CDE. So, if I couldn't get into the University in Foz, I would need to go somewhere else. [...] [Also], I grew up with my mother shopping in Brazil and bringing home rice, beans, sugar, these things, because in Brazil it was cheaper than here. So, we used to buy things monthly and we spent 50% of what we would spend buying.* (Sanchez, Paraguayan cis gay man)

> *So, to begin with, many of my friends would agree with me that the bridge for us is not just commercial. [It is important] in all senses. The bridge for us is an opportunity. During this pandemic, it was something that moved us a lot. Because we were used to going to gay clubs and other bars. Even the first gay club I have been to was there [in Foz] because there are none here [in Paraguay]. So it's one thing you feel the difference. Thus, it's very important. As I told you, you can feel the difference when it's open when it's closed, you can go, come back when you need to. In all senses. [It's important] for you to be who you really are, for dating… Well, 90% of my boyfriends are Brazilians. Even for that. Because the mind is different, the way of thinking is different. [...] Weekends were sacred for us. We had to go there [to Foz] for dancing, for dating.* (Ali, Paraguayan cis gay man)

> *U: I finished my graduation in Brazil. I went to college in Brazil and before that, I studied other things in Foz as well. For me, Foz do Iguaçu is like a big neighbourhood, like, we're a big city but this is just one neighbourhood, it's not another city, for example. Like, I go to the market, things like that in Foz too. So, I've always been very attached to Foz and I usually go a lot. Before, I used to go less because most of my friends were Paraguayans. When I started studying in Brazil, I started going to Foz do Iguaçu more. [...] [And] I used to go to gay clubs a lot and the parties that were also aimed at the public, I would attend.*
> *N: But did you live here [in Foz] or were you still living in CDE, just crossing the bridge?*
> *U: I have continued to live here in Paraguay. I would always cross to Foz every day for college and come back again.* (Uriel, Paraguayan cis gay man)

It is interesting to think more carefully about a few situations in their discourses. For instance, I come to think Celine's answer is of tremendous significance here since she was the Paraguayan woman who first presented her thoughts to be contrary to the realisation of LGBT activism in the region as she deemed it would draw too much attention to others in the community and, consequently, all others would suffer more. In her perspective, individuals should be more contained and reserved concerning their sexualities, which made me think of the way her response to me was very short and straightforward. My mind elaborated on the fact she did not mention exactly what kind of "walks" she would do in Foz, nor has she cited more personal information like whether she enjoyed partying or how she met women to date. Perhaps, Celine did not like to go to nightclubs or she just did not feel at ease to talk about that, but her general position concerning the image of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals made me think of the way other possibilities the border could offer her just did not take into account because it meant nothing more than that.

Furthermore, in Marina's statement, it is clear how to stay in such close contact with the Brazilian side of the border represents the aspect of a space of possibilities, especially relating to what has been said before about the situation for trans women in the region, in particular to the Brazilian side. In our conversation, Marina told me her family does not accept her diverse gender identity, however, they have never reached the point to think of expelling her from home, even though they do not nourish a close relationship. When she told me that, I started to realise how this opportunity to work may be essential for her to acquire some sort of financial independence so she could keep living. The same sort of circumstances extends to Sanchez's conditions, who had been raised knowing about the proximity between Brazil and Paraguay and the porosity of the border that created the sphere of complement

between both sides, which is of such good use for him in order to accomplish his goals in college.

Besides that, it is possible to notice, when it comes to the experiences of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals from Paraguay, that the Brazilian side seems to act as a magnetic field of attraction, which goes well beyond the fact that infrastructure is near to these individuals and, thus, there would be no need to move beyond, especially taking into account what Uriel and Ali have stated. There is often this underpinning logic of Brazilian modernity which appears here as a kind of solution, for example, to the fact that in Paraguay there are no clubs or bars so sexual and gender non-conforming individuals can enjoy without the fear of being expelled or attacked. The fact that the border enables this behaviour is, undoubtedly, fundamental for those whose subjectivity subscribed to the need to see themselves represented in spaces. But, at the same time, in my mind echoed the image of people who have lost faith in change caused by all those structuring discriminations in politics and inside society. It is, then, here that my thought brings me to the realm of deterritorialising activism across both twin cities' borders seeing them as spaces of possibilities other than divisions and separations.

The eternal recurrence of nothingness

When a deterritorialised flow, a strange intensity appears inside a circularity, the structuring forces tend to reorganise it, to reterritorialise it in order to avoid other flows from breaking through its boundaries. In other words, the lines of flight, or the sexual and gender non-conforming individuals who defy the limits of social and physical borders, tend to be suppressed and reterritorialised to the former state of order. However, as we already know, the motion in desire cannot be forever locked inside a restricting area without breaking and creating breaches on walls. In fact, what circularities do is slow down the speed of strange flows and make them return to the point where they can be controlled. Thus, international pendulum border crossings of sexual and gender non-conforming individuals walking up and down between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE represent exactly this motion of a strange flow but that - and it is very important to understand - were already reterritorialised and axiomatised so the statist and capitalistic organisation take advantage on this movement and dampen any eventual disorganising tendency.

As already argued, it is precisely in this movement of going back and forth provided by this border where I see the potential for multiplicities to proliferate and break free from

repression. It is the place where the *war machine* can become a *war machine of dissidence*. All of the experiences visited during the gathering I undertook with the interviews made me reach the understanding of the border as this liminal space that does not belong to anyone, which is precisely the very essence of a war machine as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987)[19]. This follows the interpretation of mine, of borders as locations of multiplicities, drawn heavily on Thomas Nail's (2016, p. 3) theorisation over the positive nature of borders in its intensive quality of division. The author sees the intensive separation caused by borders as bifurcations, that is, the division that does not separate but that, instead, bifurcates the paths whilst maintaining them the same.

Borders can be - and usually are - signified as territories of differences in a negative relation to the space they cut. In our current times, this negative use of the border is arranged through the modern statist and capitalistic thought to elaborate a fictional superiority/inferiority relation between spaces, individuals, subjectivities and all other material and immaterial resources that can be coded by the State. However, at least in theory, things do not need to follow this way, because, as Nail (2016, p. 3) puts it

> [...] The border is not only its sides that touch the two states; it is also a third thing: the thing in between the two sides that touch the states. This is the fuzzy zone-like phenomenon of inclusive disjunction that many theorists have identified as neither/nor, or both/and. If the border were entirely reducible to the two states, nothing would divide them— which can't be true.

We, as social aggregates, invest in beliefs of borders that read our crossings through them as access to strange spaces, the unknown; all of this in order to prevent us from seeing the potentialities that a border carries in its essence. It carries multiple tools to show us how deterritorialising it really is. Hence, I contend that the exercise to look at non-cis-heteronormative individuals helped me to make it, even more, clearer to perceive what is hidden underneath normativities. Their non-conformity evokes the diversity in possibilities and the very chance to reclaim the war machine as the mechanism to *disorganise*

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[19] The concept of the "war machine" in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987) has an intimate connection with Pierre Clastres' thesis presented on *Society Against the State* wherein he discusses how the State form as a political organisation has become virtually homogenous in the current world politics considering there have been other less coercive forms of political organisation in societies around the world that even averted the State from centralising their lives. That is precisely the war machine in Deleuze and Guattari's work. This machine is, in real terms, each individual, it is us as nomads, as beings free from territorialised identities and stability found in the political State form. It represents the very opposition to the current State form, where multiplicities are hindered to become an unified part of the aggregate embracing oppressive forms of existence in society. It is where the border is built to separate and indicate who belongs to what side or identity, it is where the heterosexist patriarchal structure violently abuse sexual and gender non-conforming individuals. The very concept of war machine, then, makes sense with the interpretation Thomas Nail (2016) provides, seeing the border as a liminal space where no one can interfere to claim possession over it. My intention was to get both concepts together to demonstrate how a border seen as a site of difference may transform itself in a site of possibility as multiplicity.

the fixity in territories of difference that emanate violence towards all that is decoded, strange, deterritorialised.

As we could see, the discourse of development-as-modernity among sexual and gender non-conforming individuals was well widespread in the case of both Brazilians and Paraguayans interviewed by me. This rationale, nevertheless, I contend, may be responsible for the creation of a depoliticising sphere where the problems surrounding individuals and those problems of others are overlooked once people start to look at modern spaces as the ultimate refuge, as the problem-solving solution. All this is deepened even more when we conceive the compelling subjectivities separating "us" from "them" in national belongings. This is a pivotal logic to keep in mind since it casts away deterritorialising desires that menace the nation-state. Thus, accompanying the cases, especially of Brazilians, except for Pedro's and Rodrigo's cases, who needed to use the border either as protection or the chance to work, the physical crossings over the border did not acquire the same sense felt in the discourses from Paraguayans describing the importance of that space for them. In particular, for the transgender girls who work as prostitutes crossing the border, as disclosed by Marina and Veronica, the border received a different significance.

Bearing this in mind, I wish to focus now on what called my attention the most. Among those individuals interviewed, except for those who stated to actively support sexual and gender non-conforming individuals in an activist-like effort, such as Marina; I could not witness a more thorough commitment to thoughts of political activism to claim respect for sexual and gender non-conforming minority groups, nor did I witness a sort of effort, from Brazilians, to support, in any way possible, the activist groups from CDE and Hernandarias, especially those who were harmed both at Hernandarias' Pride and the festival in CDE. It was like each side only took into account their own problems to deal with, without deeper involvement in each others' businesses. This separation, although expected, looms large for me. From the questions directed specifically to this subject of the degree of participation in activist-like activities, I was able to gather only a few hints concerning attempts of Brazilians supporting Paraguayan LGBT groups, but without a more articulated engagement. In general, the experiences of Brazilians came down to their participation in the Brazilian Pride Parades held at Foz do Iguaçu:

> *N: [...] Do you think there is an interaction, not necessarily only yours, but from the movement... The community here in Foz with the community in Paraguay?*
> *C: [...] Unfortunately, I can't tell you concretely if there is so much interaction between the Paraguayan and Brazilian communities. As I told you, I have some friends of mine who live there in Paraguay, who are trans,*

but we know each other through other means. (Carmem, Brazilian trans woman)

N: Do you have any experience with groups defending LGBT rights? Do you have any involvement with activism?
A: So, I'm very involved in these... [...] I always follow a lot of news, I follow people who are very militant [on social networks]. I always follow social media, I always share. I don't know if this would be considered activism, but I follow these people, I really like to read about, I really like to be informed about. (Alexandre, Brazilian cis gay man)

N: Do you have any kind of involvement with activism, were you already involved?
R: No. [...] I didn't. I had none of that.
N: And did you take part in any edition of the parade here in Foz?
R: Yes, twice. The second was last year [2019], I think, before the pandemic. (Rodrigo, Brazilian cis gay man)

Now, turning to Paraguayans:

N: Last year in Hernandarias the mayor prohibited the Pride parade from taking the streets in September, have you heard about that?
C: It's true...
N: I also saw news saying that this parade, despite the ban, went out on the streets and had some protesters who attacked them.
C: Yeah… Those were Catholic protesters, they threw stones. There are recordings, there's everything… Yes it's true
N: What is your opinion? What do you think about these bans and violence?
C: For me, it's wrong to do what they do, the LGBT activist group. They are very scandalous, they scream... They show themselves a lot on the street when they have a boyfriend when they are with someone. So people don't like them… Now, if you are like me, if you don't show it to everyone, don't go around telling everyone that you are [homosexual]... I'm a lesbian, since I was 13 years old, I've always respected people. I think it has to be done little by little. With your behaviour, people will like you and accept you for who you are. Here in Hernandarias, everyone respects me. So that's the difference I make with others. People alone, each one, started to respect me, I didn't ask, I didn't beg, I didn't cry. If anyone asks: Celine, are you a lesbian…? I say: Yes, I'm… Then, I feel ashamed: Wow, but you're not like the others! If all people were each one in their own world, in their own corner… I think they want things very fast. (Celine, Paraguayan cis lesbian)

[...] The first march in CDE, the first in Alto Paraná… Before that, we held a celebration for diversity. It was a space we made in a public square, we set up a stage, we decorated everything with the LGBT colours, the rainbow. And that time had the presence of Brazilian activists, there were some whose names I don't remember very well now, because... Well, it was in 2018 and in my memory I don't remember anymore, but other very important trans activists from the Foz region were there. In the march, I think there was not much presence but I think that it is not due to a lack of support, in general, instead I think that we did not send the corresponding invitation on time. I think that is why there was not much support. However, in Foz Parades we are always invited, when we find out that it is going to happen the march we

> *publicise in our social networks and, then, we also attend.* (Mario, Paraguayan cis gay man)
>
> *N: Do you know anyone who is involved with activism, or are you involved with LGBT activism, do you know any organisation that works with this at CDE?*
> *U: I am not involved, but I do know people who are dedicated, for example, I know who was leading the first LGBT parade here [in CDE] a few years ago.*
> *N: But have you, personally, ever been involved in any of these activism activities?*
> *U: I don't, I don't particularly.* (Uriel, Paraguayan cis gay man)

Whereas for the Brazilians' statements I could not grasp diverging views in what concerns the importance of or the way a Pride Parade should be held; for Paraguayans, instead, as laid down by Celine, in her perspective to call attention would not be the best of the strategies to fight discrimination and violence. Celine presented a more conservative stance as she herself described how she would act in her personal life when her sexuality is a relevant subject; Celine would feel shame when disclosing she is lesbian, which makes me think of how suffocating and crushing to one's subjectivity the general repression of desire might be. I am not trying to argue that her strategy of resistance and of responding to her fear is something to be condemned, it only makes clear to me that the political, social and economic work to change the actual scenario in Paraguay should be taken from a more micropolitical, from a more microstructure point. Nonetheless, in what concerns the participation in political activism, Uriel's comments also reveal this trace of need to change the more micropolitical approach towards the acceptance of sexual and gender diversity.

But why do I bring up this topic here? Even though it looks like I am trying to lecture or to deliver a sermon on how to properly be an activist or an LGBT individual, all I am trying here is to point out what Mario and Carmen remarkably demonstrate in their interventions to me. While he said Paraguayans and Brazilians participated in each others' events for the Pride Parade and Carmen denotes there is a little movement of interaction between both sides' activist groups, I, then, look at these interactions as precisely the opportunities to blast off positive changes. I shall explain. Whilst in Foz do Iguaçu's Pride Parades the environment seems more receptive and secure for their realisation, differently from the atmosphere in the Paraguayan side, especially in Hernandarias, I come to imagine how the integration between both sides' activism could potentialise their political actions. While the Brazilian presence in Paraguay could give more strength and mass for them to confront adversities; for the Brazilian side, the Paraguayan presence could result in the same

positive contribution, that is, to support Brazilian activist groups to gain even more pressure inside the Brazilian scenario.

I envisage this area of possibilities departing from the understanding that this zone involving CDE, Hernandarias and Foz do Iguaçu are part of a border region where the integration is more or less organic, mainly due to economic bonds. And, despite all the compelling construction of subjectivities backed in the modern rationale of national differences, I see the war machine - which can be turned into a war machine of dissidence - as an important tool to overcome the limitations of desire and free our libidinal passions from our self-exploitations.

But what is this war machine after all? According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), it is an important concept capable of disclosing the possibilities of living and desiring life with real intensity, without subscribing to the statist and capitalistic repressions, where life is constantly reduced to serve the main goal of capital, that is, to reproduce itself at all costs. The war machine, then, would be the mechanism to be retaken that would execute the cut between our libidinal tendency to feel aroused by power, by enclosing normativities, by repressing individuals and, finally, by capital. As this apparatus of possibilities, the war machine tends always towards what is not striated and what is not firmly coded. In other words, it goes against all that maintains the nation-state safe from uncertainties. Moreover, it means to say the war machine resides on the deterritorialising potential of each and everyone who moves through borders without the intention to be reterritorialised by the State.

The nomadic feeling, though, is intrinsic to the war machine in the sense that it was in the nomadic life where Deleuze and Guattari found the concrete example of individuals who make flows of desire escape from restraining boundaries. The nomads do not get stuck to confinements as in the case of sedentary peoples. They live in smooth spaces, that is, spaces where no State, no coding, no walls or borders exist because those things are precisely what striate the land turning it into territories (of difference) and the nomad is responsible for always deterritorialising spaces. “It is the earth that deterritorializes itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory. The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground (sol) or support” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 381). Therefore, overcoming the restrains means overcoming national separations, which means that the border should not be seen as negative separation but as positive bifurcation; sexual and gendered dissidence is not a menace to social bodies anymore and so on.

We should not understand the war machine in the sense of a mechanism to wage war. This belongs to the distortion caused by the State when it captures the war machine and uses

it as a weapon. It is the opposite “pole” that interests us, one that refers to the essence of the war machine

> [...] It is when the war machine, with infinitely lower "quantities," has as its object, not war but the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of smooth space and of the movement of people in that space. At this other pole, the machine does indeed encounter war, but as its supplementary or synthetic object, now directed against the State and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States (Deleuze; Guattari, 1987, p. 422).

In this sense, social movements are pivotal for raising awareness about the possibilities of desire under oppression by totalitarian macro and micropolitical outbreaks of violence. Those who escape the strict norms and codes, that is, those belonging to a minority are the ones to be the most menacing to the modern State form.

Nevertheless, I must be careful here to suggest such an effort of detachment since our subjectivities are completely tied to beliefs that connect us to a State formation that gives us the legitimacy to exist in a world of citizenships. When we try to resign the captures and territorialities we were used to, our own subjectivity, drenched in sedentarity, executes an auto-censorship alongside other individuals in the social aggregate we inhabit. Put bluntly, there is no need for the State to worry about the possibility of our deeds turning into decoded flows, turn into a strange movement, because even if the capitalistic order fails to axiomatise this new deterritorialising desire, that is, fails to give a meaning that favours the reproduction of the capital, our subjectivities are probably never letting us act loosely and it will restrain our acts. Here is the reason to resort to coupling with others in order to resist reactionary forces.

We also need to stay true to the ends of our revolutionary desires and resist the forces that try to stop it from accomplishing its intensive move. For instance, I turn to those comments from Ali and Uriel as examples to explain this dynamic. Both had the intention to move away from Paraguay either to Brazil or the United States in order to live a better life not only in terms of material gains but also in terms of subjective gains, such as enjoying the achievements of LGBT rights. However, even though their intentions are less moved by a desire of revolution than the tendency of a nexus of progression, that is, to overlook more general problems either in Paraguay or in Brazil/United Stated; but let us exercise our imagination and think that both intended to follow a more activist stance, it is very important that the use of such strategy to move away from one’s country find in its end the creative line of flight opened through the war machine of dissidence. The desire for change must never lose its intensity, otherwise, it will again fall prey to the reterritorialising forces of the new

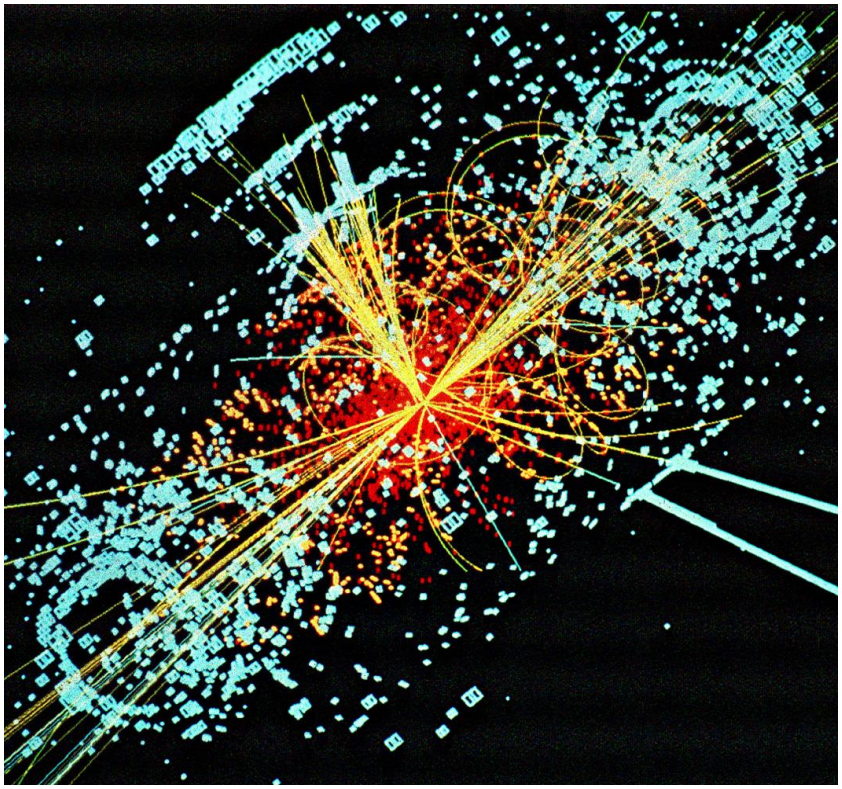
State one is moving to. As though it is recaptured in its deterritorialization by other states through the logic of modernisation. Even if the discourse of development-as-modernity aimed at sexual and gender diversity acceptance provokes the disidentification (Binnie, 2004) on sexual and gender non-conforming individuals in order to redirect their desires to pertain to a different sexual citizenship, individuals who tend to move across international boundaries must stay alert to the pitfalls hidden in the calmness allegedly offered elsewhere.

This rationale is also valid to the recapture that can occur in sexual and gender non-conforming social movements, especially considering the attractive force of modernising discourses running free in world politics. Despite all that I have been saying until here concerning the junction between both sides' activist movements, I could not make the mistake of not elaborating on the very intrusive and potentially colonial capacity that the Brazilian movement could exert over the Paraguayan side. In a very revolutionary piece from R. B. J Walker (1994) the author discusses the interplays between social movements and world politics. For the central argument, Walker elaborates on the risks of believing that global civil societies may serve us as the ultimate form for social movements. In reality, as the author argues, much had been ignored that such social movement formation could not escape the limits imposed by the State form, therefore restraining the real potential for demanding for changes. Besides that and focusing on the capture of social movements in world politics, Walker tells us about the tendency social movements in a global scale entail to reproduce statist logics unwittingly, a sort of "discursive economies of scale" where structures deemed to represent the outer realm of the international must assume State forms in order to symbolise power and authority. To counter this logic, Walker deems it necessary to keep in mind that

> A politics of connection is, I believe, absolutely crucial. Movements do connect, converse, learn from each other, and sometimes develop partial solidarities. But a politics of connection is not necessarily a politics of a united front or a counterhegemonic strategy. Exactly what a politics of connection would look like is not clear. [...] A politics of movement is crucial also. For the great strength of social movements is that they are capable of expressing a politics of temporality, a politics that always looks like weakness to those who believe that states, for example, are really unchanging structures, to those whose views of politics affirms the truthfulness of space against the apparent illusions of time (Walker, 1994, p. 699).

As a resignified space, the border seems to me to serve as the war machine, the mechanism to bear the politics of connection and movement that, I contend, germinate from the diversity found in sexual and gender non-conforming individuals.

Figure 4: The simulation of a Higgs Boson creation and its deposits of energy (in blue) after two protons collide



Source: Image created by Lucas Taylor in 1997.[20]

[20] Available in: http://cds.cern.ch/record/628469/?ln=pt.

CHAPTER 5: WE OPEN AT THE CLOSE

-20.085384, -51.000613

Throughout this entire story, I have been trying to point out the complex interplays between the effects and encounters of individuals and the(ir) borders between Brazil and Paraguay, their crossings, their subjectivities, the national and capitalistic desires; and the sexual and gender diversities that traverse each of them over and over again. My main storytelling goal here was to describe what arrived at me at first as an allegedly dangerous situation to sexual and gender non-conforming individuals crossing the border between CDE in Paraguay and Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil. I was struck by the fictions from places that hid profound plots underneath the sign of twin cities, underneath an atmosphere of an alleged integration subsumed by the image of a "Triple Border" region, where the fact that both sides would depend more or less on each other and share a "porous" border would represent no big challenges. On the other hand, my main academic preoccupation here was to dive deeply into how sexual and gender non-conforming individuals lived in that area, where on the Paraguayan side this group faced harsh circumstances when claiming their rights, whereas in the Brazilian side it seemed that, in the first moment, it served Paraguayans as a safe space.

It turned out that in the course of this investigation I found out things were not as straightforward as they seemed to me. I arrived at a place full of diversities, as expected, but that taught me to look at the most subtle forms of resistance that I did not perceive in my arrival and only time could have granted me such kindness. When talking to those who I chose and that chose me to share their lives, I first tried so hard to confirm Paraguayan sexual and gender non-conforming individuals were under the most hideous of persecutions, one which would make them run away from their country. Instead, I found very brave and resistant individuals, struggling against local governmental representatives with the statist repressive apparatus in their hands. Whereas in the Brazilian side, I found an equally dangerous space for sexual and gender non-conforming individuals but that, conversely, concealed its acts of violence under the same signs of the famous story of the "racial democracy myth".

Nonetheless, apart from differences, I also found a region taken by political tendencies that reflected the general structuring logics of not only cis-heteropatriarchal normativities but also those of the modern political thought based on the infrastructure of the statist apparatus

of capture inside capitalism, responsible for repressing our desire's intensities in order to maintain the rigidities it entails. I found out most Brazilians and Paraguayans stated the same root in their discourses reifying so-called "natural" separations between national peoples and their development on a scale of superiority and inferiority. Added to this, the homonormative international discourse also presented itself widespread in the minds of those to whom I could talk. The superiority and inferiority rationale was not restricted to material structures only - for example, the presence of services and infrastructures -, it was intimately enmeshed in the subjectivities of those individuals, who believed in a logic that equated modernity/development/superiority to the quantitative gains of LGBT rights and acceptance, without looking at other material situations inside their immediate surroundings and the surroundings of others beyond the national borders located closer to them.

Through the analyses carried out intersecting each of the "markers" (e.g.: modernity, development, sexuality, gender diversity, border crossings, subjectivity production etc.), I was able to observe the perspective of individuals living in a place plain of territorialities of differences and plain of circularities that would function as enclosed spaces where each person could only walk inside its boundaries. However, at the same time, I perceived individuals would also spend their energy managing to afford the risks of escaping the control exerted not only by the statist apparatuses but also by the capitalistic and statist logic of social behaviour, that is, the way we should engage in sexual intercourse with others, the way we should perform our gender, the way we should dress, the way we should work and so on. As I came to understand that this movement was present in the circumstances narrated to me in the interviewees, I arrived at a point where I started to see that the same individuals locked in normativities could represent the agents of generalised disorganisation of these restraining statist logics of circularity, despite their investments in these same restrictions. After all, once our desire is repressed and we are taught through life to behave in certain ways, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) have already told us that it is hard to let us loose from the chains of self-repression, or the desire for repressing ourselves and the others surrounding us.

But, as the main argument in this investigation, I chose to look at the realm of diverse possibilities each and every one of us inhabit. I contended the crossings sexual and gender non-conforming individuals realised between CDE and Foz do Iguaçu, at the same time they reiterated the circularities of repression, they also represented the potential to breakthrough the normativities intrinsic to the logic of capitalism and the nation-state form. To walk the path of this investigation based on this assumption, I decided to tell the story looking at not only the actual information gathered, but I also drew on historical events to grasp the most

subtle of the findings I could have encountered. I resorted to looking at how the subjectivity of sexual and gender non-conforming Paraguayan individuals was, historically, persecuted and trimmed to fit in the tight cells of fascist regimes that took control of the country's government, such as in Alfredo Stroessner's hardship, when, mostly homosexual men, were persecuted and tortured based on their sexuality. In addition, I also resorted to looking at the Alto Paraná region integration, started during the 1960s, to comprehend how Brazilian subjectivities were intertwined in this social reality in a sense of superiority and development.

All in all, besides recurring to historical events, I was able to recur to the experiences narrated by those to whom I talked to perceive in their very crossings the potential to deterritorialise and open up the war machine to implode the very statist logic from its inside into creative lines of flight. In other words, through individuals' motions, I was able to conceive the border itself outside the negative logic the modern Statist form imposes us to obey and believe with all our passion. I started to see the border with the same potential of deterritorialisation - although it is currently used to reterritorialise any strange flows - as individuals have. I needed to comprehend the border was not condensed to its outer spaces that, allegedly, belong to the territories that use it as a division. The border is, essentially, an "in-between" space, which does not belong to any striated, coded and territorialised land but to the earth itself. It is in this characteristic that lies, in my perspective, the potential of disorganisation and deterritorialisation of a border, which can be used to recover the smooth space striated by the State so intensities run free again.

Bearing this in mind, I started to tend to the schizophrenic pole Deleuze and Guattari (1983) describe as the pole of possibilities and intensification of the desire, that of revolutionary tendencies. Thinking about the situation I encountered in the border between Foz do Iguaçu and CDE/Hernandarias, I have set sail to imagine how sexual and gender non-conforming individuals (could) ontologically carry with them the potency to transgress. In fact, sexual and gender non-conforming individuals' existence presuppose a menace to the cis-heterosexual order. In this sense, I see this potency to transgress, alongside the understanding of borders as sites of possibilities, could open the opportunity to imagine and construe a different way to make revolutionary changes in social reality. That would require uniting not only LGBT social movements from both the Brazilian and Paraguayan sides, but engaging a more global public. That would require bringing together other socially and politically engaged social movements from both sides. Thus, I arrived to the - maybe delusional - idea of looking at the border's "in-betweennes" as the war machine necessary to

transgress the negative notions of national differences towards a more activist change to the perception of sexual and gender diversity at both sides of the border.

As I approached the end of the hard task of writing this investigation, I found myself feeling hypocritical many times. I started to revise my own subjectivity, my own deeds and I perceived that I am the first person that should look at what I have been so suggestive of in this investigation. After all, it tells much about the assumptions I subscribe to when it comes to the revolutionary and creative line of flights I so passionately talk about and propagate. However, I do think it is a necessary effort. The exercise of self-critique has been very useful to the point of recognising that this is an "ant's job". Since desire is something that stirs people's affections, it can be hard to believe that anything can change when we see people like us suffering and needing to fight to survive to feed themselves without enough support or material conditions to do so. The truth is each one of us struggles too many personal fights every single day. As much as it may sound like an empty speech, I do believe that if we cling to a nihilistic thought that nothing can be done, how are we going to live? Without hope? People need to continue exercising this kind of discussion so that the black holes of our era do not intercept us to resound even more acts of violence.

As it has been repeatedly said here: if social life is created through motion, nothing in our world can rest unchanged during its entire existence. Hence, here is not the end, but the cut that passes through one intensity to give form to another intensity that will be passed through another and other, and other, and other…

> *And if you ask me: Do you think this could change across generations? I think so. I think that in 10 or 20 more years this will change. Paraguay will make a very significant turn in terms of rights. Each generation is a different one. I can tell you for the generation of my little niece, I remember that in high school nobody came out as gay. Now, you go to their school and it's something else, another mentality... These are things that I would have liked to have lived in my high school days. So, this is going to change, I believe so, I believe that in 20 more years, I think it will take a significant turn.* (Ali, Paraguayan cis gay man)

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