
Neither Natives nor Nationals in Brazil: The ‘Indianisation’ of Bolivian Migrants in the City of São Paulo

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Bolivian migrants in Brazil are commonly categorised as ‘indians’ who are ‘enslaved’ in São Paulo’s garment industry. Simultaneously, self-identified indigenous peoples in Brazilian urban centres are constantly challenged as to the authenticity of their claims to indigeneity. This article explores the racialisation of migrants based on an ethnography of two Bolivian street markets in São Paulo, as social and spatial mobilities articulate race and class hierarchies. It proposes that such racialisation is entrenched in colonial socio-spatial hierarchies that continue to represent indigenous peoples as excluded from humanity, modernity and the city, reinforcing their subaltern insertion in the labour market.

Keywords: Bolivian migration, Brazil, garment manufacturing, intersectionality, racialisation, Urban indigeneity.

On a grey Sunday morning, I arrived at a quiet cul-de-sac in the eastern fringes of São Paulo’s city centre, where stands were being assembled for one of the weekly markets at the heart of the Bolivian migrant community in South America’s biggest metropole. As Doña Luciana carefully arranged her products for sale, we chatted about her jobs beyond the market stand. With a proud smile on her face, she said: ‘I am no longer a slave’, before adding that she had *carteira assinada* (a formal contract), working as a seamstress for a popular retailer on weekdays.

In speaking with me, Doña Luciana elaborated on a narrative that continually makes headlines in Brazil: Bolivians’ precarious insertion in São Paulo’s labour market – specifically, in garment manufacturing – is a form of slavery (e.g. Exame, 2013; Machado, 2018; Lazzeri, 2020). Despite the substantial presence of Bolivians in this city, it is largely through the lens of ‘slave labour’ that their everyday lives become known to most Brazilians. My initial comment made no explicit references to slave work, but sensing that her Brazilian interlocutor meant precisely *that*, when talking about work, Doña Luciana acknowledged the issue and made clear it was not *her* case.

Mediatic representations of the Bolivian migrant community in São Paulo, however, often reinforce another distinctive aspect of the group: their supposed indigeneity. A decade ago, a piece in the newspaper *O Globo* encapsulated the stereotype clearly: ‘Behind locked doors, thousands of Bolivian migrants live and work in ... [conditions]

analogous to slavery. [...] The indigenous features, the language barrier and cultural retraction [*retração*], contribute to propagate discrimination' (Suwwan, 2011). Closely associated with its representation of Bolivians as *indians* – whose phenotypical features and 'traditional' celebrations communicate a homogenous 'indigenous culture' to Brazilian eyes (Silva, 2005; Vidal, 2012; Simai and Baeninger, 2015) – the piece further implied that the migrants' supposed indigeneity was to blame for the prejudice and exploitation they endured.

In this article, I explore the 'indianisation' of Bolivian migrants in São Paulo to address the apparently contradictory effects of mobility and urbanity over indigeneity. I argue that this categorisation relies on a process of racialisation, through which Bolivians' supposed indigeneity is intertwined with their subaltern insertion in the urban labour market, considered a form of 'modern slavery'. Mobilities articulate class and racial hierarchies through which spaces and practices become racialised. As such, they provide the basis to contest, but also to effect, social inequalities with colonial roots which continue to be reproduced, even if transformed today. Throughout this analysis, social and spatial mobilities thus provide the basis from which class- and race-based forms of exclusion become articulated and contested.

I furthermore argue that the racialisation of Bolivians in Brazil is ingrained in a series of discourses – mobilised by the media, politicians and advocates for migrants' rights – that present their contemporary exploitation in garment manufacturing as fundamentally anachronistic in Brazil's most economically developed metropole. Such discourses often reinforce stereotypes of indians as 'ignorant', 'anti-modern' and infantilised, which are essential components of the representation of Bolivians as 'slaves' and victims of circumstances. Racialisation thus makes indians – a term used to emphasise its underlying coloniality – out of indigenous peoples – a term used in reference to those self-identified as such. Racialisation, furthermore, makes indians out of Bolivian migrants, alienating both indigenous peoples and Bolivian migrants from their agency over processes of mobility, with dehumanising effects. As shown below, the Bolivian participants in this research were aware of these associations and keen to distance themselves from them.

Addressing the racialisation of Bolivian migrants as 'indian slaves', moreover, provides a different perspective from which to analyse indigeneity in contexts of mobility, particularly towards urban settings. Whereas urban indigenous peoples constantly struggle to reinstate their authenticity, Bolivian migrants in São Paulo – by definition urban as well as spatially, and often socially, mobile – were homogeneously racialised as indians. By highlighting how Bolivians' South–South migration makes them 'more indian', this article furthermore contributes to the debate around how indigeneity is also racialised and indigenous peoples are subjected to racism, both intimately and structurally (see also Warren, 2001; Milanês et al., 2019), as it highlights the coloniality that underlies the representation of an 'urban indian' as an oxymoron.

Following this introduction, I present the notion of racialisation to highlight how the notion of the indian is created in and through the intersections among different forms of exclusion. The following section contextualises the racialisation of Bolivian migrants as indians in Brazil's racial relations. Focusing on indigenous peoples in Brazil who migrated to cities, it discusses how indigeneity is framed as a place-based and place-bound identity, if continually challenged by urban ethnogenesis. The next section introduces my fieldwork, which took place between 2015 and 2016, along with general aspects of Bolivian migration to Brazil and the role of *feiras* (street markets)

in São Paulo. The last main section discusses the narratives of Bolivian women who worked in the weekly street markets of Kantuta and Coimbra. In particular, it addresses how the indianisation of Bolivian migrants in Brazil, along with their representation as slaves, is incompatible with these women's narratives of social and spatial mobility. These narratives reinforce an anachronistic, and ultimately colonial, process of racialisation.

Racialisation as an Intersectional Process

Racialisation is understood here as a process whereby colonial forms of Othering are reinstated, reproduced and re-signified as the basis for the inclusion and/or exclusion of social collectives defined via supposedly innate features of the group. These 'inherent' characteristics are most commonly defined through phenotypical features – although they might also include non-visible biological characteristics, both real and imagined – deemed 'objectively' distinct (Miles and Brown, 2003:101). Different racial categories are imbued with different evaluative connotations which, in turn, create hierarchies among these groups.

Processes of racialisation are furthermore intersectional (see Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). This means that racialisation creates hierarchies that come 'into existence *in and through* a relation' to other forms of exclusion, such as gender and class, 'even if in contradictory and conflictual ways' (McClintock, 1995: 5, emphasis in the original). Here, the focus is on how race and class are articulated through processes of spatial and social mobility, through which indigeneity becomes reified, but also contested, within specific racial regimes. The hierarchies created in these processes are thus expressed not only in terms of embodied differences: indeed, spaces and practices, too, are racialised and racialising.

Uneven forms of development and recent economic restructurings have affected racialised groups disproportionately. Yet, despite the greater flexibility demanded from labour, people do not cross (real and imagined) boundaries as freely. The exclusion of indigenous peoples on the basis of racialised constructs – or racism – is sustained on personal and structural levels, and enmeshed in their migration and labour insertion in urban contexts (see also Miles and Brown, 2003; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 2005: 54). Focusing on racialisation allows us to explore how these mobilities are understood and translated into different positions within this very unequal society in the context of contemporary global capitalism.

While ethnicity and race overlap both in theory and in practice, I use 'race' and 'racism' to highlight the coloniality embedded in the shifting processes of hetero-categorisation and discrimination (Miles, 1982; Wade, 2010). Indigenous peoples are categorised not only in terms of cultural difference, but also according to phenotype, the spaces they occupy and the practices they perform, based on reified constructions that are, ultimately, colonial (Warren, 2001). Indigeneity, in its multiple meanings, must also be understood as a product of the enduring duality between the colonisers and the colonised Other (Quijano, 2008). It is precisely in this sense that I use 'indian' – a term that has been reclaimed by indigenous peoples in Brazil – in this article: to emphasise the sustained coloniality of the power relations embedded in it.

Indigeneity in Brazil: Between the Place-Based and the Mobile

Contextualising the indianisation of Bolivian migrants within a discussion about race and racism in Brazil requires acknowledging that this debate has largely focused on issues surrounding slavery and blackness (Arruti, 1997; Telles, 2004; Hooker, 2005). Historical slavery has been racialised as black, and comprised African men, women and children – brought in their millions over centuries of Atlantic traffic – and their Brazilian-born descendants (Miki, 2018). It was, however, in the context of the abolition of slavery (legally concluded in 1888, but on the agenda since at least the end of international slave traffic in 1850) that blackness emerged as an issue for nation-building (Wolfe, 2016). As scientific racism peaked in popularity, European (and, later, Middle Eastern and Japanese) migration was incentivised by the state with the goal of transforming the Brazilian economy and society, spurring the ‘progress’ stamped in the country’s national flag (Lesser, 2013). The expectation was that, first, migrants would substitute the archaism of slavery with ‘modern’, waged (albeit exploited) labour. Second, they would contribute to future generations by ‘enhancing’ – i.e. whitening – the population (Telles, 2004). The end of slavery did not provide former slaves with any form of compensation, thus sustaining the reproduction of a highly stratified society in which race and class remain intimately tied (Silva and Paixão, 2014).

Denying neither the antagonism nor the conviviality among blacks, whites and the spectre between these poles, the centrality of this debate also marginalised indigenous peoples throughout Brazil’s racial history (Warren, 2001; Miki, 2018). Yet, indigenous peoples’ relation to broader society is structured around more than the establishment of ethnic frontiers. If indigenous peoples’ Otherness provided a rationale for colonisation under the guise of civilisation and Christianisation, their labour was also crucial for the consolidation of the colonial project (Perrone-Moisés, 1992; Oliveira, 2016). Indigenous peoples’ subaltern labour insertion, coerced to different extents, made them ‘more human’ inasmuch as it made them more ‘domesticated’ and less ‘indian’. But it was also profoundly dehumanising, in that assimilation presupposed a lack of ability (agency) to make choices and to save themselves from such a ‘wild’ state.

Scientific racism, racial democracy and multiculturalism have oriented successive attempts to address the country’s ‘indian question’ (Guzmán, 2013). Contrasting with previous policies – which presupposed the inferiority of Other races and their progressive elimination by the forces of progress, and the assimilation of difference within the barrel of convivial *mestiçagem* (miscegenation) (Wade, 2010) – the multicultural orientation behind Brazil’s 1988 Federal Constitution ‘paved the way for indigenous peoples to exercise civil and political rights’ without compromising their claim to indigeneity (Arruti, 2019: 141). It celebrated indigenous rights to territory, cultural distinctiveness and self-determination, aligned with Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), ratified in Brazil in 2004 (Oliveira, 2016). Yet, atavistic representations of what indigeneity should entail lingered in mainstream media and politics. As recently as 2020, president Jair Bolsonaro praised indigenous peoples of Brazil for becoming ‘more human, more like us’ (Ker, 2020). As polemic and oppressive as he might be, Bolsonaro is not alone in uttering discourses that deprive indigeneity of its contemporaneity and cultural dynamicity, reinforcing the idea that, to remain indigenous, one has to be socially and spatially immobile.

Representations of indigeneity as a place-based and place-bound identity can be partly attributed to the emphasis on collective ancestral ties to territories, espoused in indigenous movements for which, in Brazil, reclaiming the term ‘*índio*’ is crucial

for unifying a diverse struggle (McSweeney and Jokisch, 2007; Guzmán, 2013; Oliveira, 2016). These efforts, however, have not completely effaced the deep-seated coloniality which determines indigenous peoples' material and symbolic exclusion from the spaces of cities. However, land encroachments and violence in the agricultural frontier push indigenous peoples out of their communities, while the search for better education and the need for cash might serve as pull-factors towards urban areas (McSweeney and Jokisch, 2007; Milanês et al., 2019). Indigenous peoples have in fact always been mobile, but now they are also increasingly urban.

Throughout Latin America, indigenous peoples' presence in urban spaces is often accompanied by a subaltern insertion into the labour market, in roles such as domestic and construction workers, as well as in petty commerce (Langfur, 2014). Being indigenous and urban thus often means to occupy a precarious working-class position. Contrastingly, urban indigenous peoples are often challenged in their authenticity, being constantly required to perform their indigeneity to claim it (Nakashima and Albuquerque, 2011). In and against these twin processes, urban indigenous ethnogenesis constantly reinvents, reiterates and reinforces indigeneity by disputing reifications of who counts as indigenous, what they can do and where they should be (Poets, 2017; see also Hale, 2004).

This is clearly exemplified by the Pankararu, who began their migration from the Northeast to São Paulo in the 1940s. As described by Arruti (2019), the Pankararu settled in what is now the Real Parque favela, having arrived with others coming from the same region. They were thus part of a wave of brown-skinned impoverished migrants fleeing the droughts and seeking work, which, combined with their non-'distinctively indigenous' phenotype, rendered indigeneity invisible (see also Warren, 2001). Performing their indigeneity in São Paulo through very visual rituals, including the Toré dance, was crucial for establishing ethnic boundaries and for legitimising their struggle for recognition. As such, indigenous presence in cities like São Paulo is as much a product of deep-set inequalities, which brought migrants from the country's poorest regions to the poorest areas in these cities, as it is a result of ethnogenesis in this hitherto 'disenchanted' context (Arruti, 2019).

Reclaiming indigeneity in urban spaces remains contentious, particularly as some non-indigenous Brazilians still perceive 'Indianness and Brazilianness [as] mutually exclusive categories' (Warren, 2001: 178). In 2019, the most-voted state representative for Rio de Janeiro, Rodrigo Amorim, described an urban indigenous community, Aldeia Maracanã, in the eponymous state capital as 'urban trash [...]. If you like indians, then go to Bolivia!' (Revista Fórum, 2019). His suggestion that the Aldeia could be used, among other things, to build a parking lot, reflects how indigeneity is seen as antithetical, and a hindrance, to 'development'. When telling those who like indians – presumably indigenous people living in Aldeia Maracanã included – to go to Bolivia, he presented indigeneity as a literally foreign presence in this Brazilian city. But another question remains: what does it make of Bolivians who come to Brazil?

The *Feiras* in Perspective: Methodological Considerations and Bolivian Migration to Brazil

Esther Condori, who was in her mid-twenties, arrived in Brazil ten years before I met her in 2015. Bright and outspoken, Esther was one of my main interlocutors at one of the *feiras*, where she traded herbs and spices. Esther was particularly aware of my role as a

researcher and keen to tell me about life back in the Bolivian *provincia* (rural area). Yet, she had barely lived there. Most of her childhood was spent in El Alto, where she was raised by her godmother, estranged from the rest of her family. Esther's migration to São Paulo was enabled by the relatively secure position of her older brothers after a decade of hard work in *oficinas* – as garment workshops are known – itself preceded by internal migration in Bolivia. From the fictive kinship ties of godparenting, or *compadrazgo* (see also Rockefeller, 2010: 171), to the current multi-scalar and transnational relations that still connect Esther to the community where she was born, the Condoris employed different strategies for social and spatial mobility. They eventually led the entire family from the rural hinterlands of the department of La Paz to El Alto and, finally, São Paulo, where they owned a small family *oficina*.

The trajectory of the Condoris illustrates that of many other Bolivians who came to São Paulo from the mid-1980s to work in garment manufacturing. The number of arrivals picked up substantially in the mid-1990s (Freitas, 2014). There is little consensus about the size of the Bolivian community in São Paulo. Official data place the total at around 80,000 (Observatório das Migrações em São Paulo, 2018), but the figure most likely fluctuates around 250,000. The rise in international migration followed Bolivia's urbanization, which was later and speedier than the Latin American average (Baldivia, 2002). Starting in the early 1980s, the combined effects of climate change, debt crisis and swiping neoliberal reforms promoted a strong movement from rural areas and mining centres to the country's cities. There, rampant unemployment, informality and extreme poverty (Kohl and Farthing, 2007) contributed to the increase in South–South migratory flows, chiefly towards Argentina, Chile and Brazil (Gago, 2017).

My main interlocutors for this study were first-generation migrants: twelve women and six men who arrived in Brazil between the early 1990s and 2005. Like most Bolivians coming to São Paulo, the majority of my interlocutors were born in the rural highlands, primarily in the department of La Paz. Their ages varied from the mid-20s to the 70s. Apart from the two youngest women, all others were married and had children. In general, they first migrated to a city in Bolivia before heading to Brazil. Some had previous experiences abroad, most notably in Buenos Aires, where many Bolivians also work in garment manufacturing (see also Freitas, 2014; Gago, 2017). Unlike Argentina, where Bolivian insertion into the labour market is more diverse and characteristically gendered beyond the workshops (Bastia, 2019), the garment manufacturing industry in São Paulo is the main employer of Bolivian men and women (Buechler, 2014). This was also reflected by my interlocutors, whose migratory narratives, despite personal differences, were all connected to the garment industry.

In São Paulo, garment manufacturing has been linked to international migrant communities, and historically employed Jewish, Syrians and Lebanese, before Koreans and, finally, Bolivians (Lesser, 2013). For Bolivians, garment production usually takes place in the *oficinas*, which tend to double as living quarters. Nowadays, many, if not most, of the garment workshops employing Bolivians are owned by co-nationals who often started their lives as *oficina* workers (Buechler, 2014).

I was only once invited to a small family-run *oficina* and thus had little contact with these spaces, where the work and the domestic, intimate spheres of my interlocutors' lives unfolded. Rather, my research was conducted in the very public spaces where the Bolivian community meets at the weekends: the street markets of Kantuta and Coimbra. When I first arrived at Kantuta, in October 2015, my notes highlighted that the smells, music and voices brought me straight back to the markets I had visited in the Andes. The vivid green of the trees and the lack of altitude sickness gave away that I was much closer

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to sea-level, in my native Brazil. Located within the expanded city centre of São Paulo, these weekly *feiras* were built for and by Bolivians and constitute pivotal spaces for the community. Spanish is the most prevalent language, although Quechua and Aymara, as well as Portuguese, can often be heard. Here, religious and civic celebrations keep the Bolivian calendar; telephone, travel and money transfer services connect migrants to friends and family; and food and accessories, from dried potatoes to tire-rubber sandals, bring a taste of Bolivia to their homes in São Paulo.

The importance of garment manufacturing for Bolivian migration is also expressed at Kantuta and Coimbra, which serve as trading floors for outsourcing and subcontracting negotiations. Yet, the dynamics of the *feiras* are not reducible to those of the *oficinas*. For migrants, street markets reflect the opportunities and challenges of adapting to a new social and economic position in a context of mobility (Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller, 2002; Hiebert, Rath, and Vertovec, 2015). As they sustain crucial connections to Bolivian social, cultural and economic landscapes, the *feiras* also advance the community's claim to São Paulo.

Multi-scalar connections are not exclusive to Bolivian markets abroad. Andean street markets have long been the focus of academic interest, described as intermediating between indigenous and non-indigenous, rural and urban, traditional and modern socio-spatial practices (Seligmann, 1989; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1996; Peredo, 2001; Weismantel, 2001). As the market vendors are the main agents of these practices, their identities have been characterised as similarly marked by in-betweenness, stereotypically associated with the *chola* identity (Seligmann, 1989). While not all traders are *cholitas*, these distinctively dressed, business-savvy and often bilingual traders have come to embody and challenge the validity of the duality that opposes the indigenous, rural and traditional, on the one hand, and the non-indigenous, urban and modern, on the other. This has resulted in an inherently ambiguous identity, simultaneously described as urban, indigenous and mestiza (Ikemura Amaral, 2019). Historically one of the few employment alternatives available for indigenous women in Andean cities (Barragán, 1990), the continued association between the *chola* and market vending (as well as domestic work) highlights how gendered and racialised hierarchies frame the opportunities available within the urban economy, even today.

Women were the majority of traders in Kantuta and Coimbra, as in the markets in Bolivia, and they are the focus of my research. The *feiras* are easily identifiable, so I use pseudonyms for my interlocutors and their work locations are omitted. None of these women had worked as vendors before coming to São Paulo, but the *feiras* appeared as a much-welcomed source of extra income amidst constrained labour opportunities. These women also did not present themselves as *cholitas*. In fact, attempts at approaching how they categorised themselves or were perceived to be categorised in Brazil were often met with a frown. As discussed in the next section, reflections about racialisation emerged much more indirectly in our conversations.

My positionality certainly influenced what, and how, any information was disclosed to me, as illustrated in this article's opening anecdote. For the research that underpins this article, I completed a nine-month ethnography between 2015 and 2016, mostly at Bolivian street markets in El Alto and São Paulo. Being a middle-class, childless, unaccompanied, mobile woman communicated privileges that made me white(er). Importantly, it also made me a member of the elite of their host society in Brazil. Indeed, our experiences of migration, work, racialisation and womanhood were different in many ways. My personal and academic familiarity with their country of origin – its smells, tastes, landscapes and socialities – helped break the ice, and I was able to foster more

horizontal relations with these women and develop long-lasting connections with some of them through listening to their stories, sharing about myself and constantly returning. It is from this position that my fieldnotes and observations were recorded and used as the basis for this article. Narratives have been built from our interactions and from hearing how the silences in our conversations were also revealing of how Bolivians engage with being racialised in Brazil.

Slaves and Indians No Longer: Narratives of Bolivian Market Vendors against Racialisation

Doña Barbara came to Brazil in the early 1990s, with the promise of work and boarding at her older sister's *oficina*. With a baby in her arms, Doña Barbara arrived hoping to make a new life for herself and her children – including the other two who remained in Bolivia. She eventually succeeded, but her early years in São Paulo were harsh. Although she worked long hours every day of the week, it was months before she saw the first bills of Brazilian currency. Her sister refused to pay for her baby's formula, arguing that only those able to work should be allowed to eat. 'It is bad enough to be enslaved by your fellow nationals ... But by your own sister, it is beyond words!', she once told me with tear-filled eyes.

Doña Barbara described her early experiences as an *oficina* worker using the same lexicon as Doña Luciana, advocates and the media: 'slave work'. Officially, the legal expression in Brazil is 'labour conditions analogous to slavery', which incorporates the notion of 'degrading work conditions' into the ILO's emphasis on coercion in its definition of 'forced labour' (Costa, 2009: 16). 'Unfree labour' is often related to high levels of labour informality and mobility, outsourcing and subcontracting, as well as piece-rate payments (McGrath, 2012; Phillips, 2013) – all widely present in *oficinas*. From the women I met at Kantuta and Coimbra, I heard countless stories of insalubrious accommodations, twenty-hour shifts, payment withheld due to debt contracted to the employer, and of workshop owners who prevented workers' movement by confiscating documents until orders were complete. These practices were widespread in the *oficinas*, regardless of the owners' nationality and personal ties, as shown by Doña Barbara's story.

This is not exclusive to Bolivians in Brazil. Global textile and garment production chains are infamous for precarious living and working conditions, as epitomised by the sweatshop, which continues to exploit the labour of women, migrants, and racialised groups throughout the world (Mezzadri, 2017). The emphasis on 'slavery', however, has its problems. On the one hand, it fuses contemporary forms of labour exploitation with the archaism of slavery. On the other hand, it can undermine workers' agency, presenting them as 'victims' or 'normalising "lesser" exploitation and abuse' (McGrath, 2012: 1009).

My interlocutors told similar stories, described as widespread practices in *oficinas*; though crucial to their own narratives, it was part of their past. For many, being 'no longer a slave' did not necessarily mean that their working routines were not harsh or demanding, as many continued to work around the clock. However, in framing their narratives as progressing away from 'slave work', these women underscored their own agency in their spatial, as well as social, mobility – for which enduring such conditions played a role. Market women's reflections on the situation in the garment workshops were always accompanied by stories of what they had achieved – a stand at the *feiras*,

education for their children, and even their own *oficinas* – where resilience and hard work took centre-stage and allowed them to leave slavery behind.

'Slave work' was not the only aspect relegated to the past. As already noted, the mediatic emphasis on 'slavery' is also deeply connected to the representations of Bolivian migrants in São Paulo as 'indians'. Data from the 2010 Census corroborated that, among many immigrants, Bolivians are the most discriminated against in the labour market, receiving the lowest returns for their education, experience and occupation (Vilela, Colares, and Noronha, 2015). Yet Census-based research on Bolivian migration has severe limitations, given this community's under-representation in the Census's design. Consequently, qualitative research further illuminates the Othering of Bolivian migrants in São Paulo. According to Vidal (2012), 'slave work' in *oficinas* operates along ascriptive signs that reinforce Bolivians' supposed indigeneity, as embodied (phenotype, behaviour, clothing) and cultural distinctiveness are used to present Bolivians as essentially distinct from Brazilians in the city.

The women I met at the markets were aware of these associations and were very keen to distance their current selves from the labels of slavery and indigeneity. In fact, during my time at the markets, only once did someone use the term 'indigenous' for themselves. When Esther travelled to Bolivia, her father, Don Luis, took on the role of the official family storyteller. Recovering events that expanded way beyond his 70 years of life, his narrative of migration began with the Spanish colonisation and what he presented as the 'enslavement of the native population'. Bringing together events like the Pacific War of the late nineteenth century and the Chaco War of the 1930s, Don Luis weaved seamlessly through history to arrive at a defining moment: the 'death of the sun'. He told me that in the early 1980s, 'cuando se murió el sol' (when the sun died), extended frosts and droughts laid his land barren. In his narrative, the impact of this cataclysmic event, which coincides with the El Niño of 1982/83, lasted until the year 2000. Impoverished by climate change and the effects of the subsequent neoliberal reforms, the family left the countryside one by one, reuniting in Brazil in the early 2000s. When I asked him about the Condoris' life during the almost twenty years that the sun was dead, he added: 'for those of us who come from the *provincia*, *para nosotros de raza indígena* (for those of us of indigenous race)', poverty and exploitation continued long after the Spanish were gone.

Don Luis's narrative raises more elements than I can possibly address here, but before exploring some of them further Esther's reaction to it is noteworthy. Upon her return, we discussed this conversation and I asked if she, too, considered herself to be 'of indigenous race'. Her shocked expression was followed by a reflection and then an answer: 'Then I must be, for it runs in the blood'. Esther's initial bafflement was something I also noticed when the term emerged in other conversations: the terms *race* or *indigenous* were never used for oneself. In fact, Don Luis's presentation of indigenous as enslaved could be seen, in the words of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, as a mistaken term or 'a cultural heteronomy', framing contemporary experiences in terms of the 'knowledge acquired in colonial exploitation' (quoted in Gago, 2017: 136). Crucially, these interactions highlighted that indigeneity, defined via colonial difference, was continuously materialised both in labour exploitation and in blood. Importantly, it was also intimately tied to the rural environment.

In fact, indigeneity often emerged in market women's narratives through categories denoting some form of rurality, in particular *campesina* or peasant, a class term also favoured by some Bolivian indigenous organisations (see also Rockefeller, 2010; Canessa, 2012) – or the straightforward 'from the *provincia*'. Indigeneity and rurality

appeared intertwined with stories of colonisation, as outlined above, in references to the use of indigenous languages, and in retellings of rituals and practices that took place in the countryside, such as traditional medicine. While similar practices continue in urban settings, their rural location within market women's narratives reflects how, throughout Latin America, the indian has historically been associated with "traditional" and rural, and [...] rural lifestyles [...] as folkloric or miserably backward' (Canessa, 2012: 214). This superposition between indigeneity and rurality builds on colonial socio-spatial divides that segregated the cities of the Spaniards from the rural areas, where the indians were allowed to dwell and required to produce the surpluses that advanced the colonial enterprise (Harris, 1995). Such dualities have been reiterated by different elite and state projects in Bolivia, and continue to resonate today regardless of the changes enacted under Evo Morales' presidencies (2005–2019) and the rise of an urban Aymara bourgeoisie (see Maclean, 2018, McNelly, Forthcoming, in this volume).

For the market women I met, coming from the *provincia* was the most likely factor leading to Bolivians' exploitation in garment manufacturing. The absolute majority of my interlocutors were born in the countryside. Still, it took them months to disclose that information. Most initially told me they were born and raised in cities before casually stating, months later, 'you know, I actually grew up in *provincia* X'. This was the case of Doña Luciana, who only disclosed that she was born in the countryside during my second round of fieldwork. When I asked her if she knew how to speak an indigenous language, she said she used to speak Aymara but had 'forgotten it all', dismissing my question with a wave of her hand.

Esther also told me she had lost her Aymara when living in El Alto. Since moving to São Paulo, she was working on it to communicate with her mother. Doña María, Esther highlighted, was still very attached to the ways of the *provincia* and had never really mastered Spanish. Rather problematically for Esther, Doña María still used the herbs – and other items hidden away from most customers including, initially, myself – for traditional medicine. This was at odds with the daughter's Protestant faith and technical skills, as she was training as a nurse. In highlighting the differences between herself and her mother, Esther constantly distanced herself from 'the way things were done in the *provincia*', dismissing her mother, Doña María, equally as endearing and as a hindrance for 'not knowing better'.

Esther's personal narrative of mobility, which included some time in higher education, was guided by a clear notion of progression, underlined by an ambiguous relation to the family's narrative. Whereas her migratory trajectory had been decided by others, she presented herself with a tight control over the woman she was becoming, who was indeed very different from the previous generation. By omitting aspects of their background and highlighting how their narratives of mobility distinguished them from others, Esther and other market vendors actively distanced themselves from what made them indians in their own eyes. Acknowledging that rurality racialises, my interlocutors left it somewhere in their past, much like their own experiences of 'enslavement' in garment manufacturing.

Recognising racialisation does not mean recognising racism. In fact, many of the market vendors I met in Kantuta and Coimbra found Brazilians not to be racist at all – a point reiterated by other scholars (see Vidal, 2012; Freitas, 2015; Simai and Baeninger, 2015). Doña Julia, for instance, who first migrated from rural areas in the department of Cochabamba to Buenos Aires, compared her experience in São Paulo to her time in Argentina very positively. In Buenos Aires, where *boliviano* is a disparaging

term to refer to 'black' or 'poor' (Grimson, 2005: 27), Doña Julia said Bolivians were constantly mocked for their speech and had no option but to live 'in favelas'. In Brazil, she felt more dignified. Other market vendors were less sure about Brazilians' inclusivity, and demonstrated concern regarding Brazilians' attitudes towards themselves and their families. One of them said she had sent her children back to Bolivia because Brazilian kids would bully them at school – although, she reckoned, it probably had something to do with her son's explosive temperament. Finally, another market woman relativised Bolivians' experiences of racism. While the migrants did endure racism and exploitation in Brazil, it was nothing compared to what those 'pobres negritos' (poor little black fellows) faced.

At first glance, when denying being subject to racism, market vendors partially bought into the racial democracy paradigm. The latter mainly refers to the discourses of Brazil as a racially tolerant and mixed society, most commonly associated with the work of Gilberto Freyre (1975 [1933]), and also expressed in the notion of 'veiled racism' encapsulated in seemingly 'cordial', yet violent, racial relations (Wade, 2010; da Costa, 2014). However, the comment regarding the exploitation of blacks also demonstrates that market vendors were very aware of racial hierarchies in Brazil. The market women I met were no strangers to the limitations in the dominant discourses around peaceful conviviality and equality among different 'races'. In short, they were cognisant of how racialisation and racism played a structuring role in Brazil's social inequalities, which informed their rejection of labels that could place them in the bottom.

The racialisation of labour and of flows of people to and within Brazil is not a contemporary novelty, but Bolivian migrants do not fit the clichés that propelled state-sponsored historical mass immigration. This becomes particularly salient in São Paulo, Brazil's 'locomotive of progress', where economic success grew alongside the number of arriving international migrants (Lesser, 2013). That said, Bolivians fit the description neither of black slavery nor of domestic migrants from the poorer North and Northeast regions of Brazil, many of whom descend from indigenous peoples and former slaves – upon whom São Paulo's prosperity also depends. Up close, the stereotypes thrown at Bolivian migrants and their working conditions are associated with those of indians: cultural retraction, anti-modern practices, victimisation, and, even, dehumanisation. These stereotypes, importantly, are imposed on the basis of the purportedly innate features of Bolivian migrants, even if such features are proxied by those attributed to indigenous groups in Brazil. Imposing these stereotypes is, thus, a process of racialisation.

Even so, Bolivian migrants are positioned very differently in relation to indigenous groups living in São Paulo, like the Pankararu. While sharing a migratory background and a working-class position with them, my Bolivian interlocutors expressed their agency by emphasising how spatial mobility distanced them from indigeneity as they moved away from the practices and socialities of the *provincia*. Moreover, the social mobility enabled by migration has contributed to cement this trajectory, placing both the 'indian' and the 'slave' behind in the times and spaces of their own life trajectories – while still remaining, for these participants, implicitly or explicitly valid terms to describe the present time and place of others. These reified representations, fundamentally built on colonial forms of exploitation and domination, contribute to presenting both categories as anachronistic in these women's present lives, even if that coloniality continues to be reproduced in their insertion as migrant workers in São Paulo.

Conclusions

The indianisation of Bolivian migrants in Brazil can be seen both as a mirror and as a mirage of how urban indigenous peoples are addressed there. It reproduces the general stereotypes around indigeneity, while also highlighting the paradox surrounding its urban forms. Mobility makes Bolivians indians in the eyes of Brazilians, but raises questions over the authenticity of urban indigenous peoples from Brazil. Processes of racialisation and, associated with that, racism, are doubly alienating: those who are racialised are often denied agency over their mobility, whereas mobile indigenous peoples continue to be culturally and materially excluded from dominant spaces in society. Understanding how these apparently contradictory processes reproduce and re-signify colonial hierarchies and forms of exclusion has been the focus of this article. Mobility – of indigenous peoples and of Bolivian migrants, indigenous or not – both articulates and is articulated by forms of exclusion, at times contesting, at times reinforcing the same hierarchies. Regardless of their success (or lack thereof), the struggles of Bolivian migrants against the stereotypes thrown at them operate within a colonial register, according to which indians are antithetical to modernity. This is also distinctively marked in the depiction of Bolivians as slaves in garment manufacturing. In fact, both categorisations mutually enable the exploitation of Bolivian workers' labour in this industry by presenting this form of labour exploitation as fundamentally anachronistic.

The narratives of those who are seen as indians, but who do not see themselves as indigenous, point to the challenges of fighting forms of racialisation that are inherently intersectional and transnational. The current definition of indigeneity, based largely on connections to particular land and territory, is also dependent on recognition by the state. This poses a problem to both Bolivians and urban indigenous peoples in Brazil who do not fit the state-sponsored notion of the *indio permitido* (permitted indian). While threading different narratives and reclaiming different identities, spatial mobility and (in)visibility are constitutive of, and constituted by, processes of dispossession and precarious insertion in stratified labour markets that contribute to reinforce their exclusion as urban *indians*.

The representation of Bolivians – who are neither natives nor nationals – in Brazil as indians also reproduces the sense of indigeneity as alien to, and alienated from, the nation and its urban spaces. This rationale furthermore serves as a means to conceal the exploitation that characterises contemporary capitalism, which shapes present spatial mobilities and the often-precarious insertion of racialised migrants in the labour market. As such, the indianisation of Bolivian migrants also alienates their own agency over processes of mobility. Market women took a clear stance against these connotations by emphasising how their agency over, and the outcomes of, their work distances them from both 'slavery' and 'indigeneity'. Emphasising the processual change involved in their personal trajectories of social mobility, they have thus actively distanced *themselves* from these forms of exclusion, but not really denied their applicability to *others*. They insinuated and, at times, directly said that people from the *provincia* were more ignorant and, hence, prone to exploitation. Thus, they have actually reinforced the same stereotypes that were driven at them. In fact, by removing themselves further from what would make them indian in their own eyes, they reproduced the same tropes at the heart of the processes of racialisation of Bolivians in Brazil. This underscores both the real processes of social mobility many of these women experienced, overcoming racialisation and multiple of forms of exclusion, as well as the broad, interlocking challenges that exist to

expand such mobility in ways that eliminate the conjoint root-causes of intersectional inequalities.

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