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We quilombola women: a documentary about COVID-19 vaccination among *quilombolas* as an anti-racist device

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Abstract *We quilombola women, a documentary that considers the quilombola identity and the right to COVID-19 vaccination, evokes notions of priority, rights, privileges and identity during the process of matching the number of vaccine doses available to citizens' arms. Omission by a Brazilian federal government grounded in necro-politics and denial, plus a lack of information, led quilombo communities to take it on themselves to draw up lists of those eligible for vaccination. The production team's aim was to use images as political language in the health field, so as to document and give visibility to these issues as one illustration of combating social and health inequalities and inequities rooted in structural racism. By combining science and art and interlacing references from the sociology of images, visual anthropology, plus the work and aesthetic devices of Eduardo Coutinho, the audiovisual production method brought out three key categories: I, We, and They, quilombola women. This article explores these categories underpinning construction of the documentary narrative, which drew on the potential of images, which in turn served as anti-racist, political and educational devices, both in the course of the production process and during the public screenings.*

Key words *COVID-19, Quilombola, Vaccination, Documentaries and factual films, Racism*

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic posed enormous challenges for countries with extreme social inequalities and inequities. In Brazil, it laid bare colour, income and gender, because the people worst affected included blacks, people living on the street and residents of *favela*, peripheral, *quilombola* and indigenous communities[1] (p. 221). It worsened the situation of these populations, which have historically been left vulnerable and suffered injustices framed by structural racism[2], which *is a social determinant of health which affects population health adversely and constitutes one fundamental cause of inequities in access to goods, resources and opportunities in a globalised world*[3] (p. 192) and particularly for lack of access to health services, suitable housing and stable work, resulting in higher COVID-19 infection and mortality rates in black men and women[2,4]. The risk of death from COVID-19 was significantly greater for black women, especially those at the base of the social pyramid. For women working in domestic service, the odds were 112% higher than for white men[1] (p. 224). The intersections among gender, race and social class involved underline the extent to which various identities and systems of oppression interweave and interact in people's lives. An intersectional perspective[5] shows that experiences of racial discrimination cannot be understood in isolation, because multiple identities are overlaid and influence lives in complex manners, highlighting how different black women are and how much they have to struggle against and resist the oppression by our white cis-hetero-patriarchal society experienced by their racialised female bodies[5,6].

The ABRASCO dossier on the COVID-19 pandemic[1], comprising a searching technical and political analysis of the emergence of COVID-19 in Brazil and the failure to manage it in all its complexity, revealed the seriousness of the lack of appropriate responses to the pandemic and the extent to which the correlation between science denial[7] and necro-politics[8] devastated these populations. As one way of resisting and fighting against this situation, the national body coordinating *quilombola* relations (*Coordenação Nacional de Articulação de Quilombos*, CONAQ) filed a claim of non-compliance with a fundamental precept (*Arguição de Descumprimento de Preceito Fundamental*, ADPF)[1] (p. 311) with the Federal Supreme Court, which led to the formation of an interdisciplinary working group to debate, approve and monitor execution of a national plan to address COVID-19 (*Plano Nacional de Enfrentamento da Pandemia de COVID-19*) directed to the *quilombola* population.

Despite that progress, the lack of data led *quilombola* communities to take it on themselves to map confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19 in their territories[9] and to mobilise, for example, to set up an Observatory of COVID-19 in *quilombos* so as to be able to monitor COVID-19 cases autonomously[10]. That realisation of the lack of data and government omission adds weight to the arguments of Silvio Almeida[11], who sees racism in Brazil as a constitutive component of politics and economics, which structures society perversely to become an obstacle to any guarantee of the right to health and to life for the *quilombola* population. In *quilombos* as yet without land title, issues such as these are still more intense and tense, given the need to prove *quilombola* identity. In general terms, *quilombos* and *quilombolas* refer to an ethnic grouping in rural and urban black communities that grew out of resistance to the historical oppression they suffered. That resistance has been constructed on the strength of a significant network of sociocultural, economic and political relations, a collective memory anchored in black Afrodiasporic ancestry in body-territories. The conception of being quilombo applied in this article emerged from the voices of the body-territories of *quilombola* women and constituted the narrative storyline of the documentary.

Accordingly, the aim of the audiovisual product presented here was to build up these groups' social presence in political decision-making environments using the language of documentary, to give visibility to the protagonism of *quilombola* women in proving that identity and drawing up lists of those eligible for COVID-19 vaccination – to record so as never to forget[12], never to disappear, but to make the silence speak out[13] and to explore its aesthetic, political and narrative potency to reveal what the State intends should be invisible[14]. Those are the elements of what is presented in this article reporting on the construction of a documentary through its various production stages, examining the potentialities of images which, over and beyond language, constitute an anti-racist political and educational device that has been able to produce other ways of seeing these populations, both during the production process and over the course of public showings.

The process of constructing the documentary

Interweaving science and art

Inspired and challenged by the uses of images in scientific research and by the role of documentary associating science and art[15] (p. 419) as a language for social intervention[14], we used an audiovisual production method that took some of Eduardo Coutinho's approaches to image capture[12] as its aesthetic yardstick, interweaving these with frames of reference given by the sociology of images[16] and visual anthropology[17,18].

The documentary was conceived to be a product of inter-epistemic and intercultural encounters among bodies of knowledge, as inspired by Silvia Cusicanqui[19], drawing on a geopolitical and anticolonial epistemic South, which "*connects us with visual cultures as forces for interpreting, demystifying and counterpointing against lettered cultures*" (p. 6), and by the thinking of Mariano Landa[17]:

Scientific, academic and artistic work does not escape the influences of the theory, ideology, political position, interests and values of the scientific and artistic subject. That is why methodologies must be tried by which to produce inter-knowledge, that is, achieve collaborative disciplinary experiments and social practices that can map bodies of intercultural and inter-epistemic knowledge [...][17] (p. 104).

The team of technically and culturally different filmmakers, from their own epistemic fields, endowed the film with a democratic, liberating character that sought to foster autonomous spaces and experiences and nurture *processes of symmetrical reciprocity among investigators and investigated to overcome academic arrogance and forge commitments to solidarity, social change and the production of bodies of inter-knowledge expressed through new and/or different narratives of an intercultural nature*[17] (p. 105). Just as

SOUTHing is not mediating and/or translating relations between different cultural and mental contexts. It is setting up open, frank, transparent and friendly communication processes that guarantee coexistence based on respect for human diversity[17] (p. 104).

When considering a documentary produced with others and not about others, we also drew inspiration from the film devices of Eduardo Coutinho[12] (p. 11 and 12), that is,

Making the interviewee not an "object" of a documentary, but rather the subject of a film, dialoguing with him, having him express himself, with ethical and aesthetic solutions for that purpose. Not "giving a voce" or being a "spokesperson", because that idea, among other things, assumes a truth about the other that is to be revealed in the film, ready to be extracted by the documentary film crew. There is no way to "give a voice to the other", because the word is not essentially the other's. The documentary is at least a bilateral act in which the word is determined by whoever speaks it, but also by whomever it is destined for, that is, the filmmaker, the crew and whoever else is on the set[12] (p. 108).

Constructing spaces for intercultural encounters by way of images

With these theoretical and methodological references as a starting point, the stages of production were constructed by a diversity of hands and minds and ways of seeing, in a process that began in August 2021 and ended in November 2022, as systematised in Figure 1.

In **pre-production**, we conducted a narrative review, a survey of the state of the art of the central themes of the project, monitored COVID-19 cases in rural *quilombo* areas of Rio Grande do Sul and formed the production team. Forming the team was a crucial point at this stage, because it offered the concrete possibility of producing an audiovisual while experimenting with intercultural encounters starting with the team itself. On a parity basis in gender and race/colour/ethnicity, the team comprised six women researchers (three black, one of whom was a *quilombola*, and three white), with different levels of academic qualification (undergraduate, masters and doctoral students), from different fields of knowledge (anthropology, collective health, rural development), all working with the subject of *quilombola* and indigenous women, a technical staff of four men (two black and two white) and one woman (film distributor and curator), plus audiovisual producers, photographer, graphic designer, sound editor and illustrators.

The Morro Alto community in the municipalities of Maquiné-Osório was chosen for being one of the largest *quilombos* in Rio Grande do Sul, as yet without legal title and illustrative of the situations involving the difficulties in having the *quilombola* identity recognised for purposes of vaccination. The documentary proposal was presented to the *quilombo* leaders and local health managers and practitioners, who – after stating their consent, interest and willingness to par-

ticipate – chose the voices that would represent each of these three categories of social actors. It should be stressed that women, who are historically caregivers[20], were the leading actors in the whole process. The political choice to give pride of place to the role of black *quilombola* women was warranted by the role they play in society, because, just as they are caregivers, so it is also they who suffer from racism in all variety of social settings. The gender approach was intended to give visibility to *quilombola* women ELAS, on whom a colonial and normatively cis-hetero-patriarchal social and power matrix still imposes coloniality of being, knowing and seeing[21,22].

The production team and interlocutors constructed an inter-epistemic space for virtual intercultural encounters, in which we were brought closer and forged bonds of trust and respect, as we discussed issues raised by the vaccination process. Virtual meetings/workshops also served for the team to problematise collectively and construct a storyline, preliminary script and aesthetic

Preproduction
- **Choice of theoretical and methodological frameworks**
  - Link between references from the Sociology of Images, Visual Anthropology and the production and aesthetic devices
- **State of the art of the central themes of the project, contextualised in the Covid-19 pandemic**
  - Articles, theses, dissertations, book chapters, press reports
  - Descriptors "Quilombolas COVID-19", "Quilombolas pandemia" and "Quilombolas vacinação"
  - Twenty-three texts classified into three categories: impact, strategy and measurements
- **Monitoring of Covid-19 cases in rural quilombo areas of Rio Grande do Sul**
  - Epidemiology bulletins and Rio Grande do Sul Coronavirus Panel
- **Forming the team**
  - 14 people
  - Researchers and audiovisual producers (distributor and film curator audiovisual producer, photographer, graphic designer, sound editor, illustrators)
  - Ally technique and sensitivity
- **Choosing the Quilombo and interlocutors for interviews (quilombolas, heath managers and practitioners)**
  - Morro Alto quilombola community
    - One of the largest quilombos in Rio Grande do Sul
    - Illustrative of situações involving difficulties in gaining recognition for a quilombola identity
- **Authorisation for use of image and testimonial**
- **Shared construction of preliminary script**
  - Image-mediated inter-epistemic and intercultural encounters

Production
- **Photographic and audiovisual image capture**
  - Recording of interviews, filming the territory, aerial images and photographs of accounts of drawing up lists of quilombolas to be vaccinated
- **Recording a film diary**
- **Preconstructed script**
  - In the interaction between camera and interlocutors, the script was adjusted and even constructed by the expressions of body-territory
  - Engagement and involvement of the team in offering a new narrative from the perspective of those who have always been rendered invisible and silenced

Post-Production
- **Being quilombola**
  - Construction of a chart with the summaries of the singular life histories and community transversalities, transiting between individual and collective dimensions
  - Three core categories emerged from the voices of the quilombola women's body-territories: I, We and They quilombola women
- **Illutrations and animations**
  - Products of the systematisation of the body-territories
  - Pauses and summary narrative on the narrative line of the film
- **Advance showing of the documentary to the quilombola community**
  - Feedback and validation of the narrative
  - Public release and showing at various venues

Figure 1. Process of constructing the documentary.

Source: Authors.

choices. The preliminary script comprised three major themes: 1) the pandemic, public health, social, economic, political and environmental scenario and impacts on the families' daily lives; 2) *quilombola* identity – who and where they are, recognition of that identity, body-territory versus lack of data; lists of those so self-declared; and 3) vaccination: organisation, logistics, scarcity and access.

In the **production stage**, image capture involved recording videos and taking aerial photographs and photographing the stories behind the formation of the lists of *quilombolas* to be vaccinated contra a COVID-19. Film framings and shots recorded almost indescribable images and moments (looks, gestures, silences, objects and people extraneous to the main scene), evidencing a series of unsaid, invisible aspects of an identity unacknowledged by the State.

The preliminary script was further shaped by interactions between the camera and the female interlocutors. Building on the initial thinking about how the vaccine reaches the territory as a function of the number of doses, the count of doses available and the "number of arms" required by the public authorities (how many people belong to or form the *quilombola* community as a collective), our interaction with people in their territory steadily revealed complex realities. The territorial approach taught the team to see diverse, non-homogeneous, "different arms", with ties of ancestry sustained by affect and solidarity, reflecting feelings of belonging and identity. Individual stories had to be drawn out in order to understand the universe of symbolic practices that had the power to guarantee the feeling of belonging, the resistance and persistence of these social groups on their territory. In that context, the team took up the notion of body-territory and its invitation to *regard bodies as living, historical territories that allude to a cosmogonic and political interpretation inhabited by our wounds, memories, knowledge, desires, individual and common dreams and, in turn, to look at territories as social bodies that are integrated into the web of life and, as such, our relation with them should be conceived as an "ethical event", understood as an bursting in on the "other"*[21] (p. 43).

The *quilombola* identity revealed in the interlocutors' words expressed ancestral practices in using the wilds since slavery days (freedom, flight, meetings), mobilised relations established in the *senzala* slaves quarters (kinship, memory, ancestry) and in the fields (family relationships, a legacy of land, work and survival), which constitute *quilombola* territoriality and *being*. From these ties and relationships, descendants' family names and branches can be identified in dispersed territories (kinship constitutes one of the systems unifying the community and operating connections between the "land" and the "people"); while the colour and shared value of their existence and resistance foster recognitions in solidarity. While remnants of *quilombola* communities claim a right to the territory, their identity holds memory as the living history of a people oppressed, silenced and rendered invisible for centuries by dehumanisation and racism.

Eduardo Coutinho's device of filming in close-up on one camera (faces), medium shot on another and wide shot on a third (to include the production team) revealed potent interactions through which to express the *quilombola* woman's body-territory and other territorialities, while preserving the expressive force of the images[12] (p. 13). The interactions with and through the camera afforded the *quilombola* women re-encounters with their history and ancestry; confronted the health practitioners and managers with moments of discomfort and upheaval, challenging questions about the condition of coloniser and reproduction of a social matrix of racialised and patriarchal power; posed probing questions to the production team about Otherness, the coloniality of being, seeing and knowing; and all concerned had moments of knowing they were making a difference and sharing in processes of exchange and learning. We (the team, health practitioners and managers) were there to talk about the vaccination process; they (the *quilombola* women) had come to talk about who they were, about their body-territories.

As pointed out by Débora Diniz, *unlike other visual narratives where the script dictates the shooting, in ethnographic film, the participants continually reconstruct any proposed preliminary script. That, in fact, is also why the ethnographic method is so richly rewarding*[15] (p. 419). Taking that perspective meant the team was engaged and implicated in offering a narrative from the standpoint of those who have always been silenced and rendered invisible: *taking it for granted that there is no neutrality when constructing a narrative is to assert that all narrative represents a point of view on social phenomena and is thus an ethical and aesthetic narrative of what is filmed*[15] (p. 419).

The guiding thread of the film narrative: *I, We … They,* quilombola *women*

In post-production, the understanding of reality that we challenged ourselves to reveal called for a way of seeing that peruses singularities and transversalities and transits between the individual and collective dimensions. That route highlights Afro-Brazilian social dynamics in which the community is the individual's central concern[23]. Here, we present the three core categories – *I*, *We* and *THEY* – that emerged from the voices of the *quilombola* women's body-territories. These do not give a linear sequence of the documentary narrative, but rather permeate the whole storyline of the film.

The production crew began by watching the individual recordings, so as to produce a synthesis of the most telling moments in each interview and what could/should be detailed in each life history. Having built up a summary picture of singularities, we then identified what social identity they shared in common[21]; that is, beyond gender, race/ethnicity or social class, how strength, courage, determination, ancestry, resistance, welcome, pain/suffering/racism, leaving the *quilombo*, violence, perversity of racism and necropolitics intersecting with patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism ran transversally through construction of the narrative about COVID-19 vaccination: "We would not be vaccinated or we would be the last if not for the role of the quilombola people" (Catiani). From there the team constructed the plot and the connections between the *quilombola* identity/being a *quilombola* and the role of the *quilombola* women in addressing racism as a social determinant of health in construction of the lists of those eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Prompted by the *quilombola* women's narratives and with the help of illustrations, we experimented with systematising these body-territories in such a way as to foster a confluence among these multiple ways of seeing. Blending languages[4] (p. 284), their thoughts and inspirations were then translated into illustrations, which ultimately brought a horizontality to dialogues between the technical team and the *quilombola* community. The illustrations portray the transversality running through life histories rooted in the *quilombola* women's identity and memory, as well as fostering a polyssemous way of seeing and an inter-epistemic dialogue. The illustrations developed by the artist, Natália Gregorini mediated the dialogue among academics, technicians, community and feeler-thinkers who associate science and art.

The sketches were done in charcoal – a choice reflecting the manual activities present in the histories of the eleven women who are the leading characters in the documentary and of the body-territory that produces the community's resilience – and were later digitised. That choice also reveres the land, a factor that influenced the choice of the colour palette for the illustrations, which is full of earthy tones. The subtleties include non-human figures, including the fig tree and the wind, whose presence contributed to characterising the body-territory, awakening memory, ties of affect, the land that nurtures, sustains and permeates time. That conception, which contemplates human and non-human individuals and collectivity, territory and time, provided the basis for developing animations that synthesise complex concepts and moments (*what it is to be a quilombola*), as well as inspiring the title and poster for the plot. Just as life in the *quilombo* is nurtured by the women's day-to-day actions, so the choices as to how to approach the narrative between the technical team and the *quilombola* women were nurtured by the dialogues mediated by the illustrations – a poetics going out in search of memories and a scientific pictorial record.

What it is to be a quilombola was thus the guiding thread to the narrative, while the images generated informed the collectively constructed interpretative analysis of the script when assembling and editing the images (audiovisual, photographic, illustrations). *I, We... THEY* all feature as central components of that identity and permeated the whole vaccination process, interweaving throughout the whole storyline of the audiovisual narrative being presented here. The *I* reflects the opening words – "*I,* quilombola*, me being vaccinated for being a* quilombola*, that makes a great difference*" (Catiani) – and bears the imprint of identity from the outset. The *I* thus contemplates the singularities or each life story, which are presented here descriptively, at the same time as it expresses the connection with the collective dimension produced by the *We*. In this dimension, the reader is invited to contemplate the depth of the context where the common values are expressed, producing recognition and belonging, that is, social identity. When referring to *THEY*, the analyses conducted highlighted the women protagonists of the process rooted in ancestry and related to *making the silence speak out*[13] (p. 24), in resisting domination of bodies

and territories by colonisation and whiteness and thus guaranteeing the right to vaccination. Also, approaching these issues from the standpoint of intersectionality underlined the extent to which the black women needed to struggle against and resist social oppressions[5].

I: singularities in the process of understanding the *quilombola* identity

At the heart of the community, the Rosa Osório Marques Community Association pulsated with the words, thoughts and emotions of the protagonists of the vaccination process in the Morro Alto *quilombola* community. Eleven women, driven by the challenge of the moment, revisited memories, faced up to fears and reformulated plans. Chart 1 systematises some components of their lives and some of the things they said in the documentary that underpinned construction of the categories *I, We… THEY,* which were key to the guiding thread of the documentary narrative.

It was through the singular histories of each of these interlocutors responsible for identifying the arms that they told the production team of

Chart 1. *Quilombola* women protagonists of the documentary and some of the remarks that underpinned construction of the categories *I, We, THEY* that were key to the guiding thread of the documentary narrative.

***Quilombola* women of Morro Alto-Maquiné and Osório, Rio Grande do Sul**		**Some remarks from the documentary**
Elizabete, President of the Morro Alto-Maquiné Quilombo Community Association	Elizabete is 64 years old, lost her father when she was five and was encouraged by her illiterate, widowed mother of six children to get an education. She and her brothers worked in the fields and as cleaners of beach houses for a livelihood. Now retired, she remembers fondly her profession as a teacher, which gained her recognition beyond the community, making her a person of reference in the municipality as to *what it is to be a quilombola*. Transiting between memories of scenes of police violence in the yard of her home, offers of work which disregarded her qualifications, but not her colour, lack of official data about her community, and the desires and actions for social justice in the community's future. Her children do not live exclusively in the *quilombo*. Like other young people, they have left in search of employment.	*The great majority are outside... they leave looking for work. Because the municipality doesn't have work for everyone. So our own children go to other municipalities or other states looking for work. But they never lose our* quilombola *bond, because it is our customs, our values, our identity. And there's one thing that I call very important, which is our blood ties… So, that's because those ties are scattered. It's not just within the community, not just the coexisting inside that piece of territory we find ourselves on. It goes beyond that. The feeling identifies us a lot. And we are survivors of a struggle, because to me, being a* quilombola *is being able to identify with a certain community. And to this day we are after our identity, we are after our light, looking for better days, because – as incredible as it may seem – we are invisible.*
Francisca, *quilombola* leader, Osório	Also in a leadership role is Francisca, *Preta do Maçambique*, ceremonial Queen Ginga, a leading character in the Maçambique celebrations. She lives in Osório, where the *quilombola* territory is not recognised. Born at Morro Alto in the 1960s, she tells us how she left the territory, not from choice. Her history crosses issues of gender and violence, combines the importance of female ancestry, orality and religiosity in the transmission of values of what it is to be a *quilombola*. During the COVID-19 vaccination process, she experienced the community that goes beyond celebration and stressed that the vaccine process brought out other issues experienced by her community.	*People had to leave this community. Not because it was their choice, but necessary to survive. We lived on top of the hill and with the quarrying, because of the dynamite, our lives were at risk, there was no way we could stay on the hill top.* *I spent a long time leaving, leaving the community, before I recognised myself again* [as a *quilombola*]

it continues

Chart 1. *Quilombola* women protagonists of the documentary and some of the remarks that underpinned construction of the categories *I, We, THEY* that were key to the guiding thread of the documentary narrative.

***Quilombola* women of Morro Alto-Maquiné and Osório, Rio Grande do Sul**		**Some remarks from the documentary**
Lélia, *quilombola* leader, Morro Alto, Maquiné	Lélia, in addition to leading the process of preparing meals during the filming, told us of the hunger that marked her childhood. At 59, her words depict the pains in her body today from the kind of work she has done in the fields since childhood. Although trained as a nursing technician, she opted to work in the school canteen. Lélia is also the daughter of the community's oldest resident. Her father, marked by the struggle for the territory and arrested during the dictatorship, was also the main reason for her hospital discharge when she fell ill with COVID-19.	We were very poor and had a neighbour where we used to go to get pigswill. And the situation was so difficult that there was no meat and we had no meat, so sometimes they threw it away and we went and washed it and ate it. My sister said: Why tell other people about something like that? But it's our life, it was our life. *It's a root that comes in your blood, because to this day, like, when you try to think that it's something that has passed , but to this day, when I remember the people who had it rough, look, it seems to me like I'm still taking a beating today.*
Edite, *quilombola* leader, Ribeirão, Maquiné	Edite was the first to have tears recorded by the cameras. Emotions overflowed even during camera focus setting. At 78 years old, this retired teacher talked to us about the importance of her aunt Aurora in keeping history alive and showed concern when she told us that today many people doubt what is said about the past. She also said memorable things about the importance of community meetings and her pride in being recognised today as a *quilombola*.	*I fight, I participate... in the* quilombola *meetings and I was one of the first to form the group, get people together, make coffee, make cake and bring people together in my house or often in my family, at the club, at Ribeirão Soccer Club. Even when there was no meeting room, we got together under the fig tree... and not just half a dozen people, it was a hundred and something people. So, that was gratifying to me. It was a struggle that we were fighting and thank God we are getting something back for what we did. I beat my chest and say: I am a* quilombola *and proud of it.*
Catiani, *quilombola* leader, Faxinal, Maquiné	Catiani, a young leader from the area known as Faxinal or Quilombinho, the place where the first dose of vaccine was applied in the community. In addition to giving birth to her second child during the pandemic, she suffered the loss of her partner and the challenge of sanitising the vaccination room at the health post. Her daughter's father left, revealing their vulnerability to precarious work. She drew attention to the difficulty of isolation, cutbacks in public transport, the difficulty of reconciling employment with caring for the children during the pandemic. She talked about the course in pedagogy interrupted by pregnancy, but envisaging in education the possibility of other futures for her community. She feels safe with her great family, in the *quilombo*.	*I,* quilombola*, me being vaccinated for being a* quilombola*, that makes a great difference. We would not be vaccinated or we would be the last if not for the role of the people of the* quilombo. *What is it to be a* quilombola *to me? I think it is resistance, I think it is the strength that comes from right back, from my grandmother, going through a lot of things like that, I mean, like racism, inequality, that is our strength in being* quilombola *to me.*
Solange, quilombola leader, Aguapés, Osório	Solange, mother to young Isadora and Vitória, was born in the community de Morro Alto, but lived in Terra de Areia, a nearby municipality. She went back to live in the Aguapés community – which is within the territory of the Morro Alto *quilombo*, but belongs to the municipality of Osório – when she married a resident born and raised in Aguapés. She is a teacher in the neighbouring municipalities of Capão da Canoa and Xangrilá.	*It wasn't just the vaccine. The vaccine came to show me the other side. We came over here to be slaves, but today we are no longer slaves. We have to know the history of us blacks to know that it was us who helped build this country. If we hadn't taken the lead on the issues of the vaccines and all the rights that we come to know about when you take part in a* quilombola *community, people, the majority, wouldn't have access to the vaccines, because they don't have the knowledge, because they aren't informed.*

Source: Authors.

the bonds, of what united them, the *We*. They also revealed the intersections among gender, race and social class[5] of these body-territories grounded in patriarchal, capitalist and colonialist models, in systems that interweave and produce structural consequences through the interaction of these dimensions of subordination[20,25].

WE: body-territories strengthening identity and the anti-racist struggle

From what the protagonists said about the relationship between memory and group unity, the production team arrived at the fig tree, the site of the first meetings in the community. Under the shelter of the canopy festooned with grey-green beards that sway to the touch of the breeze, meetings anchored in the roots of the tree and the community watched over processes of change.

The fig tree came to be, at the same time, setting, character and inspiration. Knowing also that, to the *quilombolas*, trees planted by an individual signify the continued presence of the forebears in the collectivity[26], the production team perceived in this element an approximation to the *quilombola* epistemology, by way of the relations among body, territory and land, among roots, ancestry, resistance and future (Figure 2). Accordingly, adding in the fig tree to the narrative, as part of another language, made it possible to illustrate the connection with the values that construct the social identity produced by the ancestral *quilombola* roots and to show the struggles, pain and disquiet resulting from Brazil's racist, colonial structures, but also the timeless resistance, the challenges of the present and hopes for the future, values that, as expressed by Roberto Lacerda *et al.*[23], are essential to group survival.

Running through the narratives is the relationship with the territory (Figure 3), which contemplates the feeling of being a *quilombola*, among both the women who were born in the community and never left it and those people who were forced to migrate to other regions in order to survive the use of dynamite for quarrying and to find work elsewhere. There were also young people who lived in larger towns looking for training and who returned to the *quilombo* every weekend; and there were also marriage ties. In that connection, note that being a *quilombola* is not restricted to territory. The collective dimension of belonging and acknowledgement of a social identity does not disappear on leaving the *quilombo*.

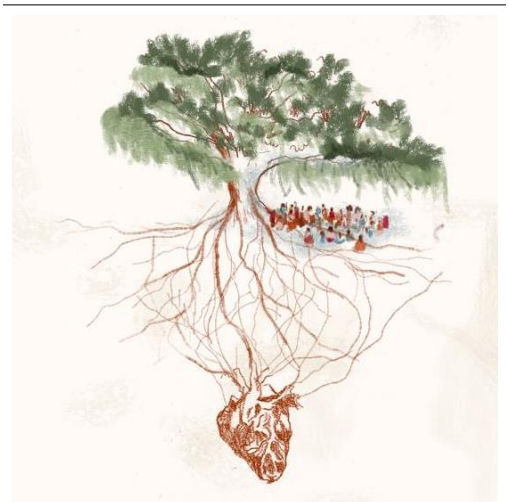

Figure 2. Illustration of the sociocultural synthesis of quilombola ancestry that became the driver and guiding thread of the audiovisual narrative.

Illustration: Natália Gregorini, 2022.

Figure 3. Illustration of the sociocultural synthesis of quilombola ancestry.

Illustration: Natália Gregorini, 2022.

The process triggered by COVID-19 vaccination in the Morro Alto community showed that being a *quilombola* transcends the individual, present, material and biological dimension of the health phenomenon. That fact reinforces the idea that identity, strengthened by a healthy, cohesive collective body, helps in withstanding life's adversities[23]. The very term "*quilombo*" once meant a criminal organisation to be persecuted and shunned; today, the same expression stands for an achievement, a rightful organisation and an identity that is demanded by *quilombolas*[23,27].

In this context, one of the women, attentive to the challenges they face and the place they occupy in the structure of Brazilian society, summarised the importance of the *we* in guaranteeing the right to vaccination: *We would not be vaccinated or we would be the last, if not for the role of the people of the* quilombo (Catiani).

THEY, quilombola women: the protagonism of *quilombola* women in the COVID-19 vaccination process and in addressing structural racism

The decisions made and actions taken in the *quilombola* community in drawing up the lists that would guarantee the right to vaccination, to life, to the *quilombola* way of being in the world were grounded in an identity anchored in memory. Through the narratives of the *quilombola* women's life experiences, the storyline evidences the (mis)encounters between planning and action at the federal, state and municipal levels of government, as well as local strategies for coping with the scarcity of vaccines, demands from priority groups and public transparency in the process: *It wasn't just the vaccine. The vaccine came to show me the other side.* (Francisca).

Ever since slavery times, black women have been fundamental historical and political subjects in resistance efforts. These women, who have always been silenced by the dominant narrative, took on responsibility for the vaccination of *quilombolas*, in response to a State that has failed to fulfil its role effectively as the entity responsible for this population's health.

Confronted by the pandemic scenario, living with social distancing, quarantine, diseases, deaths and uncertainties; stressed, confused, worried, anguished and frightened, they realised how important it was to take the lead in this process that would guarantee the life of the collective, even if that meant placing their own lives in danger. The *quilombola* women's words and actions lead one to reflect on the antiracist construction of a care practice that has to surmount the lack of data that is reproducing the social invisibility of these groups, which are regarded as invisible or whose very existence is a source of discomfort[25]. This entails a way of seeing that does not reduce *quilombola* communities to arid, ailing territories forgotten by the public authorities and earmarked to disappear[23,28].

The **post-production stage** also included advance screening of the documentary in the community for feedback and validation, with the team willing to make any necessary adjustments and committed, to the end, to shared construction of the whole process of producing an ethical, political and engaged narrative. That was also the time to return the illustrations to the *quilombo*, not just to be seen in the film, but also for print copies to be delivered so that, beyond reason, emotions could be shared. These meetings culminated in a go-ahead for the proposed narrative, with its strong roots, to gain wings and blaze new paths under other eyes. In that regard, it should

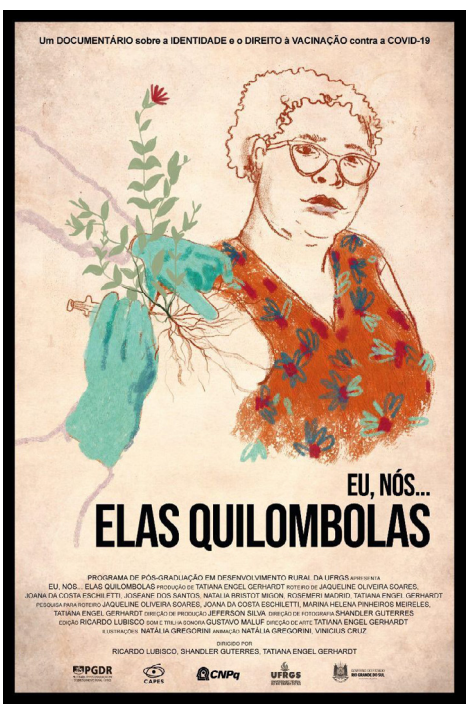

Figure 4. Poster of the documentary.

Illustration: Natália Gregorini, Ricardo Lubisco e Gustavo Maluf, 2022.

be noted that, guided by the protagonists' consent to use their names and images, we assume responsibility for presenting them under their real names.

The complexity of the narrative resulted in a feature length film (Figure 4), which goes beyond vaccination to portray the reality of *quilombola* populations, with a storyline that, despite the efforts at description and reflection set out in this text, we believe derives its potency from being seen, from images' saying what the written text cannot. That being the case, the reader is invited to cast an eye on these issues through the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJdzxOi-0RAE. The written word may speak of invisibility, but to hear the *quilombola* women talk about their invisibility gives it another meaning.

Final thoughts: the audiovisual production as an anti-racist device

Vaccination of the *quilombola* population against COVID-19 was an important step towards recognition for this population's identity and rights although, throughout the operationalisation process, structural issues emerged whenever numbers of doses were to be connected with citizens' arms. Immersed in what was one of the most important public health, social, economic and political crises ever and attentive to the set of problems where invisibility mars decision-making processes, the audiovisual production is not only a record, but possibly also a political and pedagogical device for addressing the State's absence, its necropolitics and the structural and institutional racism, privilege and entitlement that jeopardise *quilombola* populations and all other populations rendered invisible and vulnerable. In the endeavour reported here to produce science mediated by images, we agree with Ana Lúcia Ferraz[29] that:

audiovisual production, by expanding the possibilities for dialogue between academic knowledge and social subjects, contributes to the process of democratising the knowledge produced in the social sciences. This image-mediated dialogue and those images' restitution, in the process of research, to the groups studied expand understanding and root more deeply the bonds shared in the field (p. 113).

Giving visual expression to *everyday life in* quilombola *communities, as a scientific exercise to investigate and understand the potencies of care in contexts and scenarios of neglect and induced vulnerability*[23], enables the Collective Health field to consider and incorporate a multiplicity of discursive genres – such as images – into its research practices. It also enables the products of science to be returned to the community and, in the scientific field, leverages interaction with the health-related experiences of individuals historically rendered invisible by an epistemic racism that universalises and legitimises Eurocentric conceptions of how to study traditional communities' ways of life[30].

The proposal for a public science must gain material form in actions and develop methodologies to expand understanding in dialogues to produce knowledge. Ethnographic film acts on social processes by highlighting points of view, loci of experience and ways of life and bringing into the discussion the issues raised by moments experienced in processes of knowledge production. Ethnographic film expands the possibilities of dialogue with the public outside the walls of academia, amplifying subjects' voices, disputing hegemonic ways of seeing with images of subjects filmed in terms of their territories, their ways of life and their own logics[29] (p. 113-114).

Although the magnitude of the impacts of image-based productions are known, in the academic sphere, both the preparation and the reception of these materials poses epistemological, methodological and funding challenges and difficulties in forming a multidisciplinary team willing to weave an authorial narrative from a collective subject that tells a story.

Joaquín Barriendos[22] addresses the colonial way of seeing as constitutive of modernity and thus as acting as a heterarchical pattern of domination that is decisive in all settings of contemporary life and he problematises the relationship between the visual production of otherness and epistemological racism. Images can be used by colonisers as a form of power, to be ignored, forgotten or feed the imaginary with prejudices to be interiorised; on the other hand, however, the power of images can be used to contest, to reactivate, for recall and rethinking from another place of enunciation which makes it possible to resignify and utilise images as a source of knowledge of the Other, where new demands and identities modify their original meaning and fit into a new framework of meanings[31].

The central categories in the process of drawing up the vaccination lists – *I, We, These* quilombola *women* – make it possible to explore the nature of the social bond in greater depth and to understand the conditions and possibilities for certain groups to materialise their grievances in

the arena of political dispute over the meaning and visibility of marginalised social demands, because the images help build social imagery out of a history told by these *quilombola* women. Here lies the core of *making the silence speak out*[13] (p. 24) against the oppressions as regards the diversity of bodies of knowledges and expressions of living and caring, of resistance against the epistemic privilege of the biomedical model and forms of domination, particularly through the synergy resulting from colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. Cida Bento[13] (p. 24) tells of the heritage that is written into the collective subjectivity, but is not publicly recognised:

Therefore, talking about the slavery-based heritage that has been handed down over time, but silenced, can help new generations recognise what they have inherited in what they experience in their lives today, to debate and resolve what remained in the past, so as then to construct another history[13] (p. 25).

Silvia Cusicanqui[16] argues that images have the strength to construct a critical narrative that can unmask different forms of colonialism and that images, more than words, make it possible to grasp and deconstruct meanings blocked by official language. It is not the intention to idealise images as things not colonised, but to think of them as a creative challenge that goes beyond writing, given that words take pride of place in western knowledge and that part of the rural world has no access to the written word. When accompanied by an caring ethic[32] in which respect is the basic and necessary premise for dialoguing with and listening to their forms of expression, images, by their polysemy, permit multiple encounters with other ways of existing.

Working visually also contributes to memory, because it recalls to mind what had been forgotten and *evokes deep-seated elements of human awareness*[33] (p. 9). Images form part of a kind of knowledge that offers the possibility of escape within colonial domains, of another ontology in which a relational political ontology reallocates the modern world in a world within other worlds, which is a fundamental task for academics and some social movements[34]. Lastly, images make it possible to understand and learn about different epistemologies, conceptions and practices in health and, by way of this exercise in images, these become powerful allies in the construction of spaces for inter-epistemic and intercultural dialogues in Brazil's Unified Health System (*Sistema* Único *de Saúde*, SUS).

Collaborations

TE Gerhardt worked in the conception, research, analysis, final drafting and approval. JO Soares and NB Migon worked in the conception, research, analysis and final drafting. JC Eschiletti and RP Lubisco worked in the research and methodology. J Santos and RS Madrid worked in the research and final revision.

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