

# KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, HISTORICAL REPARATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE FUTURES. INTERVIEW WITH MIGUEL DE BARROS

## PRODUÇÃO DE CONHECIMENTO, REPARAÇÃO HISTÓRICA E CONSTRUÇÃO DE FUTUROS ALTERNATIVOS. ENTREVISTA COM MIGUEL DE BARROS

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The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically exacerbated pre-existing social inequalities and added urgency to the awareness of the need for social transformation. Social movements for the decolonisation of knowledge and governance systems have gained new momentum and the demands for historical reparation and climate, health and food justice. Historical reparation has sometimes been equated only to restitution of material goods or financial compensation. Still, it is a much more complex endeavour that necessarily involves making knowledge production a more engaging and participatory process, inside and outside the academy, linking different knowledge to build fairer and more inclusive futures.

This text stems from an interview with Miguel de Barros, Guinean sociologist and activist, recently awarded the Pan-African humanitarian award “Leadership in Research & Social Impact”. Miguel de Barros is co-founder of the Centre for Social Studies Amílcar Cabral (CESAC), a member of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa and executive director of the Guinean environmental non-governmental organisation Tiniguena. The interview unfolded on two different occasions. The first part was in October 2019, before the pandemic outbreak, and the second part 2 years later, in November 2021, where we address the challenges in knowledge production, historical reparation and social justice in the current planetary context.

### 1. KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

In October 2019, a Permanent Seminar on Communication and Diversity session held at the University of Minho was dedicated to cultural diversity, sustainability, and social inclusion. We debated the existing challenges in public participation in governance and knowledge production processes, the conservation practices of natural spaces and resources, and the dialogue among knowledge systems. The seminar was hosted by Miguel

de Barros, CESAC researcher and executive director of Tiniguena - “This is our Land!”, one of the oldest non-governmental organisations in Guinea-Bissau. Tiniguena’s activities led to the creation, in that country, of the first community-managed protected area, enhancing different forms of public participation, which also involves the acknowledgement of traditional structures in the governance of their own spaces and resources. In this interview<sup>1</sup> with Miguel Barros, we addressed not only Tiniguena and CESAC’s activities but also cultural movements in Guinea-Bissau, namely youth movements through music, theatre and other arts, and also the way art dialogues with urban and rural spaces, cultural memory, social awareness, public intervention and knowledge production.

**Rosa Cabecinhas (RC):** How would you answer the question “who am I”?

**Miguel Barros (MB):** I am Miguel de Barros, I come from Guinea Bissau and I am a sociologist. I work in various areas such as scientific research through the Centre for Social Studies Amilcar Cabral. I also collaborate with international research networks, for example, the International Network of the Peripheries. This network brings together activists, researchers, creators around an alter-globalist thought. It fosters dialogue between territories, setting the periphery as a centre of power and generating possibilities for the emancipation of peoples, such as Black people and Quilombolas, by articulating the main current agendas, such as the women’s condition, income generation and sexual and reproductive rights. These elements allow us to dream, to build bridges, but my activity is not limited to this. I lead one of the oldest non-governmental organisations in Guinea-Bissau, which, thanks to the conservation of natural spaces and resources, created the country’s first community-managed protected area. It has enabled to promote forms of public participation recognising traditional structures in the governance of their own spaces and resources. And along with that, the development of cultural movements, whether through urban youth protest songs or rap music and cultural movements around art, especially in how art dialogues with urban space at the same time the issue of memory, social awareness and public intervention.

**RC:** It is undoubtedly a diverse and interdisciplinary activity, combining knowledge from various fields, but we can start with your concept of governance.

**MB:** When it comes to governance, first of all, we reject the idea of democratic minimalism, that democracy works only with electoral democracy and also with representativeness through sovereign bodies. We assume that democracy must be seen in its much broader dimension, which is the effective participation of communities in managing their livelihoods, but at the same time, the ability to represent and legitimise these people through traditional local structures. From this standpoint, the concept of governance breaks away from that institutionalised and formalised dimension. It gains a much more endogenous perspective because it allows for a certain ability to transform the concept

<sup>1</sup> The think tank *Communitas* (2020) features a short excerpt of this interview, with sound and image and editing by Vanessa Cortez.

vis a vis local needs and the people's aspirations towards the level of involvement and representativeness within these structures. In this sense, we believe that the representative democratic system is not the most important element. For us, the priority element is, above all, how to build spaces, mechanisms and instruments allowing collegiality to intervene in the public space while bringing in all the other dimensions that make up the capacity of a certain people and a certain locality to maintain their ties. Moreover, ensure these ties can generate new economic modalities, monetary and financial ecology wise, the ecology of resource exploitation, and knowledge and how this knowledge brings in the identity elements to reinforce the recognition of these actors in this space. I can give you an example. We are working on supporting the animation of the governance process under a co-management regime in the community protected marine area of the Urok Islands. Here, the State is involved in the entire decentralised and sectoral structure, at the levels of fisheries, agriculture, forestry and territorial administration, but is not the only entity that has decision-making capacity. Traditional structures include, for example, the council of elders, where traditional authorities manage the territory according to customs, and for example, the priests and priestesses who care for the spiritual. The women who collect shells are vital for the entire system of age class transition, a social security mechanism. The youths have a role of watching over the whole space since they are users of the resources for market purposes. Still, they are also structuring elements to guard the entire productive labour force locally, which allows them to benefit from this tie-building system to the extent that they also become part of the so-called council of elders. At the same time, this mechanism engages in dialogue with the users of external resources who come to this space knowing and acknowledging the traditional laws but adapting these traditional laws to more modern instruments, such as regulations, laws or ministerial orders. This college meets to make decisions according to the community's vision, that is, it is not the State coming along and saying, "now we are going to build a tourist resort here". The State decides to alienate a space for a certain purpose, but as soon as the community says that this purpose is something we recognise and will assist in the management of this heritage, which in the first place should allow for the regeneration of resources. From that viewpoint, our concept of governance is not only the institutions' operation. It is feeling the impact of the policies institutions adopt because they must ensure representativeness and that they are effective in people's lives. That is far more holistic at understanding the human condition in its relationship with other dimensions, such as nature, the spiritual and the economic.

**RC:** Such integrated action has been recognised internationally. Tiniguena was awarded the Ecuador Prize 2019 (UNDP), which recognises outstanding efforts in the fight for nature conservation combined with social inclusion. What are the main challenges for the future?

**MB:** I believe there are four fundamental challenges. The first challenge, which has been much neglected, is integrating local cultures and traditions within the

decision-making process. When we started creating Guinea-Bissau's protected areas, we found communities within those protected areas. For example, human communities are outside the natural parks in many places in southern Africa. But not in Guinea-Bissau. Why did this happen? One, because those spaces are more productive from a biodiversity perspective, they became more productive because there was a cultural capacity to preserve those spaces and resources. What was the mechanism? The mechanism was by making this space sacred, allowing for biological rest, the availability of resources and educating in the sense that the resources must be available for future generations. The land is holy. The land is not sold. The land is managed sustainably so that our intervention today will provide space for future generations. But the most interesting element was when the zoning of the zones that should be conserved within the traditional model came about: the buffer zone, which is the absolute conservation; the transition zone, which allows some extractive activity; and the exploitation zone. The most interesting thing in Guinea-Bissau is that the most productive spaces for species reproduction coincided exactly with the areas that the ethnic communities sacralised. Both in the coastal marine zone, which in the case of the Bijagós are beaches, sandbanks, and the continental area in the Cantanhez region, which are the last sub-humid tropical rainforests in West Africa. These are 14 sacred forests with the highest concentration of medicinal plants and the greatest food availability. So, this type of knowledge must be included in the governance mechanism of natural spaces and resources, so as far as the sustainability of the governance process is concerned, the cultural and spiritual dimension is fundamental.

The second challenge is to find a balance between exploitation for economic development and nature conservation. We have witnessed globally a disaster with the bias of exploitation, basically a practice of extractivism without the capacity to allow these balances, from a natural point of view, to play their role, and we end up spending more money on investment to preserve what we destroy. As we see it, the exploitation of natural spaces and resources must be conducted according to ecological methods and practices safeguarding the creation of clean employment income through the blue economy. For example, the exploitation of marine and coastal resources within an environmental perspective and the green economy, valuing ecosystem services, especially services stemming from the potential of non-timber forestry in terms of biological transformation. That leads us to consider how to safeguard the productive capacity of peasant family farming within the economic system. In other words, not speculators, multinationals or large companies, but rather those who produce, who live off their work and who generate well-being, should also be able to create services to ensure this well-being. So, in this way, there is a much more sustainable relationship in the conservation of spaces and resources, safeguarding sustainability with the ability to generate income and employment through a much more integrated vision.

The third dimension has to do with generational transition. How will the older generation, which lived in a world with much more traditional ways of life, pass on this legacy to the younger, more urban generation, which lives with new technologies and does not

have a direct relationship with the land? How will we pass on this type of knowledge? Here is where the challenge of environmental education, food education, nutritional education, education for clean employment comes in, to foster in the new generations a stronger commitment to their natural, cultural and living space. The education system must be able to incorporate these values, and teacher training must follow a completely different logic from what teachers have today. The knowledge production space itself should also not think that scientific knowledge is completely different from the knowledge that the communities can bring. It is where we achieve this generational synthesis in terms of knowledge, appreciation, commitment, attitudes and practices that are much more favourable to a dimension of durability while also safeguarding their effective participation in governance.

The last challenge has to do with institutions. How can political institutions get closer to these possibilities we are addressing? It has to do with changing the mechanism of political representation. For example, today, saying that only political parties should be in parliament is a completely obsolete model. Parliaments should be more open, more dynamic and more plural spaces allowing for the integration of social movements and adopting the vision of a relationship with the physical, territorial, cultural, human and natural spaces. That way, public policies may also have a much more naturalised component of the livelihoods. Once we manage to combine these four axes, we will have an intercultural dimension. The challenge is to balance gender issues, equality between people and cultures. But, above all, it is also another rationale within the public imagination of what the intervention of each citizen is and should be like in their own territory, but also on a planetary scale.

**RC:** Since Guinea-Bissau is a country with so much cultural and language diversity, how does this communication work between the different communities, namely the language communities?

**MB:** I see this as an opportunity, and I will give you some examples. Guinea-Bissau has more than 33 ethnic groups, each of which has its own language and its own way of managing society and politics. For instance, we have ethnic groups with a hierarchical social structure, ethnic groups with a horizontal social structure, and ethnic groups with a matriarchal structure. The lingua franca, Guinean Creole, does not belong to any of these ethnic groups but has at its base the contribution of all these ethnic languages, plus Portuguese. So, Guinean Creole should be regarded not only as a language or communication tool but as a national intangible cultural heritage that is a symbol of national unity for Bissau-Guineans. As I see it, this is the first challenge and the first dimension. For example, how can we safeguard the coexistence of Guinean Creole and Portuguese with other languages? For more than 20 years, we have been developing very interesting initiatives related to communication for social mobilisation through community radio stations and now community television stations. All regions in Guinea-Bissau have at

least one community radio station. Besides broadcasting the news in the official language, Portuguese, and in the lingua franca, which is Guinean Creole, these community radios have specific programmes for the local communities by members of those communities in local languages. For example, we are currently in the agricultural campaign, at the local level, it is not interesting to produce a programme in Portuguese. Still, it is very interesting to have a programme in Balanta, in Mancanha, in Bijagó, for example, because the producers themselves produce and present their programme, bringing the codes and knowledge of production demonstrating the risks and opportunities of local mobilisation. When we are doing this type of action, we are not only contributing to the vitality of these languages, but we are also seizing the chance to transform these languages not only into communication tools but also into heritage linked to the productive and identity system itself. So, I think that this challenge involves the capacity to systematise our learning. Bringing this learning, once again, into the educational space so that children get to know the stories and origins of the languages developed by the communities and which elements are capable of safeguarding these groups' cohesion, and what kind of uses they have. For example, the codes in the production system, the construction of housing, the management of space, and the memories of these people through stories, songs, gastronomy, and economic production. I see it as an advantage for Guinea-Bissau to be within a context where the Guinean identity is not a singular one but one of multiple constructions interacting with these different matrices. Whether ethnic groups professing an African religion or ethnic groups that were Christianised or Islamised, they share the same space, and from that space, they develop a confluence of interethnic relations allowing a greater multilingual dynamism. That's what we should do and not impose one language as a federating language, killing all the existing capacity and development potential that these languages bring into the cultural, economic, identity domain, and production field where there is extremely important knowledge in space management.

**RC:** Regarding gender inequalities, what are the current intervention priorities in Guinea-Bissau?

**MB:** Recently, enormous progress has been made on this topic. For example, from the political point of view, we now<sup>2</sup> have a government where half the ministers are women, and the protagonism of a strong women's social movement, led the parliament to adopt the parity law, setting a quota of 36%. We have, for example, interesting legislative progress such as the criminalisation of female genital mutilation through the strong action of civil society organisations, which demystified the taboo of female genital mutilation, a harmful practice to women's health and dignity. The common law is extremely sexist and excludes women's rights of access, use and possession of land when we talk about a country where more than 65% of the labour force in the entire production chain

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<sup>2</sup> The situation changed with the new government in 2020 and the low representation of women in the current government, which took office in 2021, remains.

is ensured by women. Still, women do not have the right to possession. There are even more severe cases where women do not have, for example, the right to make a profit out of their own production, which deprives them of all the protagonism in decision-making, influence and, at the same time, affirmation of their condition in rural areas. We also have a country where the highest illiteracy rate is among women and where more than half of every 100 women cannot give birth alive, and children have a critical survival period up to the age of six with malnutrition problems. We have many inequalities, many disparities. While we can celebrate the achievements I have highlighted, they are not enough. More achievements are needed, and how do we ensure this? Firstly, we must completely change our education system, prioritising investment, especially in women's involvement and participation in the education system. About 30% of school-age children fail to access the system in Guinea-Bissau. More than half of this percentage are women because the biggest obstacle to the girls' permanence in the education system is the lack of incentives and public policies. The patriarchal system does not give any advantages to girls to be available in the classroom because the burden of domestic work is extremely strong. I once did a group dynamic in the south, separating two workgroups, boys and girls. I asked them to draw a clock and describe how they spent their time from midnight to the following day. The boys wake up at 8 am, go to the field to keep watch for 2 or 3 hours and then come back, eat, then go to school and have all the free time to play ball. The girls wake up at 5 am, help their mothers with the household chores, take the food to the field, come back and look after their brothers, even if they are older. They have no time to study and do not achieve the desired school performance. So, the education system does not favour the autonomy of time for girls to have leisure time or learning possibilities. The existing public policies do not give girls the opportunity, for example, to benefit from scholarships and to have programmes that transform the educational space into a more attractive space and not into a depressing one. We are not talking about school drop-outs. We are talking about constraints that jeopardise the real possibilities for girls to be on an equal footing with boys within the education system. What is the outcome? We reach the end of the 12th grade, finding more boys than girls finishing compulsory education. Still, the few girls who manage to complete it have the highest grades. Thus, if the social, educational, family and economic conditions of those who can finish are on an equal footing with the boys, they would manage to produce more interesting effects than the boys themselves. So we are talking about the absence of public policies to empower girls through the education system to address all the constraints. Another example, in 2018, we conducted a study in Guinea-Bissau to understand the levels of nutritional food insecurity at the national level, both in rural and urban areas, and what did we find? In rural areas, those within the reproductive food system are women, but female-led households are the most vulnerable to nutritional food insecurity. In urban areas, the families led by women are less susceptible to nutritional food insecurity because there is a higher level of education, more sustainable jobs, higher income, and they have the autonomy to make decisions. In other words, if we do not change the educational system to empower

girls from the creation of empowering self-esteem and, at the same time, capabilities to make autonomous decisions, make their own choices and from there lead their own agendas, it will be very difficult to achieve the desired political transformation. We should not start from the top down. It has to be a movement from the bottom that influences all sectors so that, both in urban and rural areas, we can have equitable conditions that enable the desired structural transformation.

**RC:** This work from the grassroots has been recognised internationally, for example, the African Humanitarian Award for excellence in research and social impact, and also the recognition as the most influential personality in the year 2018 by the West African Youth Confederation. You have done a lot of work with youth movements...

**MB:** In Africa, youth represent over 60% of the population. If we look at the representative structure of the African public, political and economic space, we see people over 65 years old in a continent where the young determine consumption and productivity. The gap between this segment regarding their expectations for the future and the capacity of public actors to make decisions influenced very practical things, such as the rural exodus, since all opportunities were concentrated in urban areas. We are talking, for example, about illegal emigration, a mass exodus of young people from the continent in search of other destinations, but where they hardly have the possibility of effective integration because they do not share the codes of those spaces. That happens because there is a disconnect between the representative system and the capacity to meet expectations. Firstly, it has to do with the idea of the future. The concept of the future, for example, transports young people to this condition that they can only be considered actors of tomorrow, which ends up emptying the potential of young people to be actors of the present, of today. At the same time, it takes away a certain capacity for public intervention. It empties the possibilities of political emancipation of these actors. On the other hand, regarding young people merely as engines and workforce and not as committed brains who can also lead their agendas ultimately weakened democracies in Africa because a very strong cultural imprint of the gerontocracy deprives young people of decision-making spaces. Still, fortunately, I believe that things are changing, especially at the level of cultural movements. For example, youth movements around protest songs have brought to the public agenda an intergenerational debate on the issue of governance, the youth condition, how to face social precariousness and to what extent they are prepared. Because today, they have a greater notion of mobility actions, language and knowledge of spaces, which give them tools to manage their own destiny. That has influenced a greater involvement of young people in the economy, greater involvement of young people in political parties, but above all, rethinking the parties' traditional models, and how these social movements can play a role both in updating their own demands and how these demands challenge the public space in their condition as Africans and, in this case, as Bissau-Guineans. From there, we can also draw some very fruitful dialogues. One of those interesting dialogues

is about entrepreneurship, whether it is not the State's disengagement towards labour precariousness or whether they are possibilities of generating alternatives to create well-being. Today that dialogue is alive and has made it possible to rescue traditional ways of mobilising resources, especially financial resources, through savings and credit systems called the "abota". They are groups of women who work together to generate income by making deposits of certain amounts they receive in rotation. That allows them access to social protection, which funds, for example, childbirth, obsequies, baptism, their children's schooling or enables a family member to start an economic activity. These are interesting elements. But when we do not have, for example, a financial and banking system inserted in the community that does not have initiatives to enable access to credit for local productive activities in favourable conditions, all the potential for growth, the creation of well-being and promotion of new ideas is disempowered. Therefore, we must be able to adjust public policies on forms of representation, the mechanism for access to public funding, and, at the same time, the possibility of reforming the education system. So the school itself is connected to the space of production and the ability to generate income opportunities and allows young people not to have the primary ambition of becoming politicians but the autonomy to develop their potential in the different sectors (agriculture, services, etc.) and turn this into their political action. If we manage to do this, the high competition to hijack the State through political parties will decrease considerably. It is a challenge that we must be able to overcome, but without discussing these three pillars, it will be very difficult: the political, the educational and the economic.

**RC:** Protest songs and community radio have shaped activism in Guinea-Bissau. Theatre also plays an important role in social transformation...

**MB:** The movement is very important because it does not emerge from an international foreign aid agenda, nor is it tied to public funding mechanisms, but it is an interaction that stems from the local communities themselves, both in urban and rural areas, from what the new generations understand could be movements to retrieve and update the memory and culture of the peoples who traditionally inhabit these spaces. In Guinea-Bissau we tend to call, for example, regions or territories the land of the ethnic group that arrived there first, for instance, Chão Papel - Biombo, Chão Nalu - Catió, Chão Bijagó - Bubaque, Chão Balanta - Mansôa. That is perfectly normalised because it recognises the most ancient cultures inhabiting those areas that allowed other ethnic groups to settle there. In Guinea-Bissau, popular culture is very important. I must draw attention to another heritage that deserves to be valued and elevated to the status of national cultural and material heritage: the Guinean Carnival, which is completely different from other carnivals because it is artisanal, popular, traditional and ethnic, both in the production of masks, songs, choreographies, musical instruments, and everything that emerges from this traditional space. Popular theatre brings something new to this more recent movement we are talking about, which is not only about recovering the memory

but also about intervening by questioning and, at the same time proposing alternative ways to manage the public space. There is an extremely important cultural group in Guinea-Bissau, the Netos de Badim. It emerges from a peripheral context and brings together children and grandparents to interact through theatre. It is essentially a kind of recreation of a pedagogy of coexistence and proximity relations (family, neighbourhood) and interest in the performing art manifested through popular culture. These elements enable us to share the same codes, which are useful resources within our cultural system and the logic of affective economy because from the moment they are with us and share those codes, they can make decisions and care for what is ours. So this dialogue, provided at the local level, at the community level, for me, is what allows us to overcome extremism, for fear of the unknown, for fear of the adversary and, at the same time, will enable us to overcome any possibility or attempt to diminish other cultures that are not the majority. So I think that today in Guinea-Bissau, this is also becoming something that the public actors recognise. When there are any events, even governmental, regional or international, these actors attend to demonstrate the Guinean spirit, which we share and is indivisible. I think that theatre has helped a lot in this, although unfortunately, we do not have any theatres today. In the neighbourhoods, we have spaces for the production and realisation of popular theatres and the cultural centres of the periphery are now emerging. These have allowed children to feel they have a place for integrating not only with each other but also with other generations, enabling the recreation of a whole connection system that is being lost with technological transformations, the expansion of cities and a sort of personalisation of today's lifestyles and consumption.

**RC:** Fighting asymmetries has been a priority, namely asymmetries in knowledge production. What are the strategies for action in countering “cultural and racial hierarchies” (Cunha et al., 2018, p. 6) in producing and disseminating knowledge?

**MB:** Societies have greatly lost with the imposition of single cultures or with language supremacy, for example, which ultimately opens a dialogue around the issue of civilisation and the academies reproducing it drastically by legitimising knowledge through so-called scientific production in a solely academic space, when it should be something with a much broader vision, knowing and recognising popular knowledge, articulating spaces of living, coexistence, teaching and learning, and at the same time a greater elasticity of research methodologies. The imposition of single cultures, single civilisations and single languages, which are compulsory and unique, has led to the loss of an enormous heritage of know-how, knowledge, and what could be today not only a greater cultural diversity but a greater wealth of knowledge about our societies. That has become even more crystallised with English as the communication language in the digital networks within the neoliberal expansion. As I see it, the universities play a role in crystallising this space once the production of knowledge has become a much colder production. It is geared toward books and the academic space and not towards

dialogue with other knowledge spaces, such as the indigenous communities, spaces of production systems and not speculation. The neoliberal logic has also come to rule in the governance models of academic spaces. That is very obvious, in the issue of the production of patents, which prioritises the researcher, for example, to keep the royalties of everything that comes as knowledge produced as of the moment s/he catalogues and registers a certain type of knowledge. When the whole ancestral, indigenous, local community and populations in dynamic community spaces allowed for the existence of this knowledge. The most paradigmatic case is that of natural medicine. There has been much dispute regarding the patenting, for example, of genes, of plants that help fight some diseases. That is speculation, and it is neoliberalism because this is knowledge of the peoples. If these peoples do not patent this, it is because they understand that this is their contribution to humanity. So I advocate that the academy must approach the space of knowledge production in a warmer, more involving way, without supervising the production of knowledge, but with a kind of co-participation, with accountability and the involvement of those who own this space in sharing information. That involves, for example, in publications, including those who provide information as co-authors. When we publish, it means placing the local interpretation centres in the same category as the universities supporting us. The university can fund it, but if these people do not give us the information, do not guide us and do not explain it to us, how will we produce knowledge? Ultimately we say that we have discovered it. No, we are sharing the knowledge available in these spaces, and the ridiculous thing is that this knowledge is not given back to the communities afterwards. In other words, it is necessary to remodel the mechanisms of knowledge production, transform the protagonists, whom we usually call informants, into actors of knowledge, and create ways of creating patents that allow knowledge to be freely accessible. I strongly believe in this vision. So I think that the way academic research is being done today is an interpellation of what dialogue should be in the neoliberal model of knowledge production towards more emancipated models of knowledge generation and sharing. The challenge we face today lies in this much more humanised dialogue.

## **2. PANDEMIC CRISIS, CLIMATE EMERGENCY, HISTORICAL REPARATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

During the pandemic, we were confronted with realities that we would have thought unthinkable in the 21st century, like the increase in flagrant forms of social discrimination and new forms of apartheid (TVT Network, 2021). The pandemic has made social inequalities more dramatic and made it even more urgent to raise awareness of the need for social transformation. That gave a new impetus to several movements, namely the movement for open science, to provide conditions for cultural fruition and access to knowledge through digital channels. Scanning documents that were so far confined to museums and libraries has allowed a wide dissemination of works that have long been in the shadows and are now retrieved and read in the light of current concerns, bringing new

issues into public debate. Furthermore, the new communication technologies have provided a platform for creating and disseminating ideas and artistic interventions that have fuelled demands for historical reparation and climate, health and food justice. Historical reparation entails rethinking and rewriting the history of humanity (cf. Chakrabarty, 2021; Macamo, 2021), the history of science and the dialogue between diverse knowledge systems. Knowledge production requires a more involving and participatory process, both inside and outside the academy, more than ever.

In November 2021, 2 years after the interview on which the first part of this text was based, we met again. This time through Zoom, for a conversation during which we addressed the challenges of knowledge production, historical reparation and social justice in the current planetary context.

**RC:** Some of the issues we addressed in the conversation held before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have become even more pertinent in the framework we are currently experiencing, namely regarding scientific production. Who produces knowledge. Who is given the conditions for this production. Who is recognised in it, and how the benefits of knowledge are distributed. As you mentioned at the time, the interviewees are often presented as mere informants and not as producers of knowledge, thus making invisible the knowledge passed on from generation to generation and which is often patented by third parties, leading to flagrant injustices and omissions.

**MB:** These are ways of looking at the world and how scientific production stands before these world views. At how societies are being confronted with transformations that are often the result of human action itself, which has not been carefully managed. On the other hand, societies that have never been predatory become victims of predatory activity. How to create bonds of communication and solidarity and share instruments based on scientific and popular knowledge? There are very challenging elements such as vaccines, the digital passport, the economy, social protection issues, the role of the State...

**RC:** When we talk about historical reparation, we tend to focus on the past and not so much on building the future<sup>3</sup>. The pandemic has made different forms of reparation more urgent, from material to symbolic dimensions.

**MB:** We need to bring in the dimension of economic and related concerns, but the symbolic aspect is more productive, and here one can retrieve the historical heritage, the cultural heritage, the related knowledge. For example, how rice farming integrated the culture in the Americas through slavery and how it contributed to the transfer of knowledge about food security. Recognising this leads to a more complex issue, which

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<sup>3</sup> On this subject, refer to the study by Licata et al. (2018) on the social representations of colonisation and attitudes towards historical redress among higher education students in various African and European countries.

is the question of food sovereignty. These very people who shared the knowledge are the ones who are now lacking the capacity to produce healthy food and are in a situation of injustice to access food products. Bringing this up relates to the issue of intellectual property... This is a very complex issue that needs to be problematised.

**RC:** For example, the open science movement has gained new momentum. However, the issue should not be limited only to access as mere consumers of knowledge, but the recognition that one is a producer of scientific knowledge. We also need to question binarisms, for example, between what is considered scientific knowledge and “endogenous” knowledge.

**MB:** I prefer the term traditional knowledge, which is broader than endogenous. I was just in Alentejo, and I can see clearly how the multinationals are crushing family production. Within the tradition, there is modern, and there are innovation processes in the tradition itself. The traditional is not always the opposite of the modern. What differs are the forms of innovation — the question is to what extent innovation creates or deprives people.

The market economy and the various economic transitions have weakened the structure of traditional knowledge. For example, structural adjustment programmes have created situations of extreme inequality. With COVID-19, we are now dealing with the consequences of this economic model. The political processes that conditioned the financial, the neoliberal model, both in Africa [e.g., Lopes & Kararach, 2020] and South America and Southern Europe... The perverse effects of the economic and labour model that we see in large intensive monoculture farms are very visible... these are processes that translate into the suffering and disruption of societies.

**RC:** Indeed, the asymmetries in the distribution of material and symbolic resources became quite evident during the pandemic. Social inequalities also translate into the economy of attention, reinforcing social stereotypes. It impacts the way we invest our time when we want to know, to learn about the world... Namely in what we read and whom we read... Furthermore, the scientific referencing systems often reinforce asymmetries, namely the language asymmetries, which prioritise publications in English, thus contributing to focusing attention on the “big scientific centres” and making the knowledge production of the so-called peripheries invisible<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the contribution of people in more precarious professional situations in the structure of scientific organisations (e.g. fellows and temporary workers) is often not properly recognised in terms of authorship. Nor is the contribution of people who make illustrations and design the scientific works, but whose role is sometimes decisive in scientific creation and dissemination processes. Gender and other inequalities make this issue even more complex (cf., Merton, 1968; Rossiter, 1993; García-Jiménez & Simonson, 2021).

**MB:** Hence the importance of fighting such hegemonic hierarchies of knowledge. It is necessary to combat historical amnesia and make the process of knowledge production more participatory and involving. Historical reparation entails thinking about how to build the future together and preserve biological and cultural diversity. It means pondering how the historical past interferes in all the dimensions of our every day and creating new knowledge in dialogue.

**Translation: Anabela Delgado**

#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Rosa Cabecinhas is responsible for conceptualisation and writing – original draft, review and editing. Miguel de Barros is responsible for conceptualisation and writing – review and editing.

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