

# QUILOMBOLAS AS “GREEN COLLECTIVES”: CONTESTING AND INCORPORATING ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE ATLANTIC FOREST, BRAZIL<sup>1</sup>.

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## Introduction

There have been contradictions and synergies between multicultural and environmental policies implemented in different parts of the world since the 1980s. In Brazil, multicultural policies have been implemented to repair historical injustices created by slavery and social inequalities. These policies aim at recognizing cultural and historical differences among rural and ‘traditional’ groups in Brazil. Besides indigenous groups, legally treated as original peoples, the only socio/ethnic group in Brazil which upon recognition may claim access to communal land rights are quilombolas<sup>1</sup>.

Territorial demarcations of these communities, based on ethnic identity and historical ties to land, have aimed at securing human and constitutional rights, and access to local resources (FRENCH, 2009). In many regions of Brazil, quilombola lands overlap with different types of nature conservation areas (usually referred to in Brazil as Conservation Units [CUs]), not uncommonly strictly protected from human uses (PENNA-FIRME and BRONDÍZIO, 2007; MEDEIROS 2006). The overlap between CUs and indigenous, quilombolas and other ‘traditional’ territories in Brazil, as in other countries, has brought with it new challenges and opportunities for local inhabitants, tourists, the private sector, and governments.

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1. The first author would like to thank the Inter-American Foundation for granting a twelve-month fieldwork fellowship. He also thanks the Vice-Reitoria Acadêmica, the Coordenação Central de Pós-Graduação and the Centro de Ciências Sociais (CCS) of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC RIO) for the support in translating this manuscript into Portuguese, as well as for the financial support through a productivity in research and teaching fellowship. We are also grateful for the valuable comments and suggestions of two anonymous reviewers.

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The growth of tourism in conservation units has provided new income opportunities to local communities as well as to the agencies managing these areas. However, in addition to its potential impact on natural resources (e.g., craft industry, infrastructure, among others), tourist agencies tend to reinforce stereotypical images of local populations as living a simple life in harmony with nature (KOLHER and BRONDIZIO 2016; BROCKINGTON et al., 2008). The widespread process of production, marketization, and consumption of ethnic identities often associated with environmental stewardship, is a phenomenon similar to what Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) called *ethnicity, inc.* Ethnic identity and environmental stewardship are providing a new frame of reference for local development strategies. In many cases, what stays hidden from the narrative used in tourism and environmentalism is the reality of poverty and social marginalization that characterizes many quilombola and other 'traditional' communities. In this process, the simplicity or paucity of material conditions, forms of resource and land use, and social history are reframed as markers of ethnic identities (PENNA-FIRME and BRONDÍZIO, 2007). Elsewhere, these intersections have been interpreted as contributing to promote "poverty in paradise" (FISHER and CHRISTOPHER, 2007), as non-evicted residents of CUs are expected to maintain their material culture, and low levels of use and consumption of natural resources. The reality of many communities living in CUs is that of lack of access to social services such as health and education, sewage systems, electricity, agricultural technologies, roads and transportation (KÖHLER and BRONDIZIO, 2016; BROCKINGTON, 2002).

In Brazil, since the Constitution of 1988 was enacted, many rural communities have been granted land rights based on settlement history and Afro-Brazilian ancestry (ARRUTI, 2006). For some communities, the immediate result of these changes has been a complex process of internal rethinking of identity, values, and social practices to conform to the opportunities opened by a legally endowed quilombola identity, and thus, rights to land. In 2000, the Brazilian Congress passed the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC) Law, which has provided a framework for the establishment of protected areas allowing the presence of communities considered traditional including quilombolas, *caíçaras*<sup>2</sup> and other groups (CASTRO et al., 2006). The underlying assumption, however, is that activities such as ethnic and ecological tourism, low-intensity subsistence practices, and management of non-timber forest products can create enough income to foster positive links between local communities and nature conservation.

Since the recognition of quilombola as a social category, rural communities in and around UCs, have been encouraged to mobilize their identity for economic and political purposes (PENNA-FIRME and BRONDÍZIO, 2007, FRENCH, 2009, LIFSCHITZ, 2008). Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) argue that today's world is witnessing the rise of corporate ethnicities, which may contribute to reducing cultural identity to a utility function. They show that many rural communities and tribal groups in Africa are progressively abandoning subsistence agriculture and herding to engage in business activities that leverage on their own ethnic identities, usually with the help of international donors, NGOs, local governments and ecotourism's private investors. As a result, around the world, local communities have engaged in performing identities in response to demands for ethnic and ecological tourism (ex. Medina 2003).

The social-ecological implications of the overlap between multicultural/traditional territories, UCs, and areas of high conservation value in general, however, are far from clear and deserve more critical analysis on the part of social scientists and ecologists alike (KOHLER and BRONDIZIO, 2016; BRONDIZIO and LE TOURNEAU 2016; FERRARO and PRESSEY 2015; BOYER, 2011). To claim recognition and territorial rights, quilombolas have both progressively embodied and also contested a romanticized environmental identity associated with sustainability (CASTRO et al., 2006; KOHLER and BRONDIZIO 2016), but not always reflective of local conditions and expectations.

As Carneiro da Cunha and Almeida (2001) put it, the “traditional population” category is occupied by political subjects who are willing to build a social contract, compromising with the goals of conservation in exchange of tangible benefit, and above all, to secure territorial rights. Regardless of the degree to which intertwined green and ethnic subjects (and subjectivities) are being crafted, multicultural policies are progressively and speedily legitimizing cultural differences and authenticity of various indigenous and rural groups in Latin America (HALE, 2002).

In order to frame these policy and theoretical issues more broadly, we draw on Foucault’s (1991) definition of governmentality. According to him, it is the way people come to naturalize and accept mandates of governments and corporate interests. Following him, Agrawal (2005) argued that environmentality is a form of governmentality that is usually instilled in individuals through, legitimately or not, (co) participation in government and NGO environmental management. It is a process through which people accept and incorporate mandates of environmental governance and policies. For instance, Cárdenas (2012) uses the term *green multiculturalism* to describe the processes that produces “black communities” and indigenous groups as “green collectives” in Colombia - subjects charged not only with being wardens of nature, but also bearers of the responsibility to fix environmental wrongs.

Based on the recent history and ethnographic research conducted in a newly recognized quilombola community within a CU of strict nature protection, we contend that the process of assuming a quilombola identity (and marketing it through ethnic tourism) both fosters the creation of new environmental subjects (i.e., a ‘green collective’) and is stimulated by it. The expansion of ‘green multiculturalism’ in Brazil has compelled many quilombola communities, and others, to further naturalize and accept mandates of environmental governance and policies through local practices and discourses.

Below we examine the benefits and trade-offs associated with the process of crafting a social identity associated with environmentalism. While it promotes new opportunities, it also creates new forms of social differentiation within and between communities. Furthermore, there is growing concern that ethnic recognition alone is not enough to compensate for unequal access to social services, education, health, and infrastructure.

### **Socioeconomic and cultural change in a caicara/quilombola community<sup>3</sup>**

Between 2008 and 2009, the first author spent ten months conducting ethnographic research in the community and the region as a whole. The focal community in this

study is situated between the Atlantic Ocean and the Rio-Santos highway (BR-101). The total population is around 150 people. One of its hallmarks is its relative degree of isolation, even today, 30 years after the construction of BR 101 that connects the core of the village to other neighboring cities and to Rio de Janeiro.

The area in and around the community is situated within one of the largest fragments of the Atlantic Forest in Brazil. This small village lies entirely within a nature-protected area in the southeast of Brazil: the State Park of Serra do Mar (PESM). This park was initially established in 1977. The area of the park covers 315,000 ha of mostly dense, closed-canopy tropical forest, but also portions of mangrove forests, different types of secondary forests, swamp forests, sand dunes, and high-altitude grassland (SECRETARIA DO MEIO AMBIENTE DO ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO, 1998).

Until the 1960s, the community organized itself mostly around the work of families and internal cooperation, living almost exclusively on subsistence production from home gardens and shifting cultivation, as well as fishing, and hunting. Only few goods, such as clothes, came from the outside. Fish surplus was dried, salted, and traded for salt and kerosene in the nearby cities of Ubatuba and Paraty, which were reached only by boat and trails in the forest.

It was only with the construction of the BR-101 road in the 1970s that socio-economic relations among neighboring communities and within this community started to change, profoundly. Elders reported that, in the 1970s, an outsider/newcomer could only gain access to land if he/she had married a member of a family already residing in the community. Having gained access to land in the community, either through marriage alliances and/or purchase of land, newcomers would often establish their place in the community by opening an agricultural plot, a *roça*.

Before the BR-101, land had little monetary value; its value was heavily associated with its actual settlement and production functions: location, size, soil fertility, resources, and any other characteristic that enabled the new household to reproduce materially. Most local residents had no private property titles, although customary ownership was well established within the community. In addition to parcels of land owned by individual families, rights to land for subsistence production were allocated based on pre-established family rights and demonstration of continuing use.

The construction of BR-101 and the creation of the park towards the end of the 1970s attracted aggressive land speculators and tourism enterprises to the region. Through questionable means of land acquisition, two outsiders were able to gain control of around 80 per cent of the community area, with the aim of building luxury resorts. The implementation of the park contributed to blocking the project. Despite the many social injustices and economic difficulties brought about by the park, it became the main barrier to the implementation of large private tourism enterprises in the area.

In the 1980s, the process of land sales to outsiders restarted. This time, the socio-economic profile of external buyers was significantly different. Instead of corporate buyers of the 1970s, the new ones were middle-class families pursuing the dream of a second house on the beach.

In the 1990s, ecotourism started to intensify in the region as a whole bringing opportunity and trade-offs. The community became the destination for crowds of sur-

fers, hippies and nature enthusiasts in search of wilderness camping. For the first time, the community experienced both positive and negative aspects of tourism, from loss of privacy to job opportunities to increasing amounts of inorganic trash. Growing tourism along with the establishment of the park (and strong environmental enforcement), have marked a transition from a subsistence-based livelihood (agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing) to a rural economy increasingly service-based and market-oriented.

As we discuss below, in 2003 a portion of the community was recognized as quilombola. Since then, ethnic tourism started to play an increasing role in household economy, with profound impacts on how locals portray themselves vis-à-vis notions of traditionality, nature conservation, and local development.

### Motivations behind the decision to join the quilombola association

Local residents of this community have historically self-identified as a *caçaras* (HANAZAKI et al. 2000). The situation changed in 2003, when the government of São Paulo, through ITESP (the Land Institute of the State of São Paulo), officially recognized the presence of slave descendants, who therefore could claim the historical existence of a quilombo in the area (ITESP, 2003).

Despite the promises brought about by the quilombola recognition<sup>4</sup>, such as the devolution of land through the demarcation of communal territories, only half of the families decided to join the quilombola association. Even before recognition, *caçara* households were already clustered in a central part of the community, whereas the self-declared quilombola households remained slightly more spread across the southwest portion of the dirty road that cuts across the community and connects it to the highway BR-101 (figure 1). Many factors seem to have influenced the decision of families who refused to request a recognition as quilombola including religious beliefs, racial views, land tenure issues, and legitimate feelings of belonging to a *caçara* cultural identity.

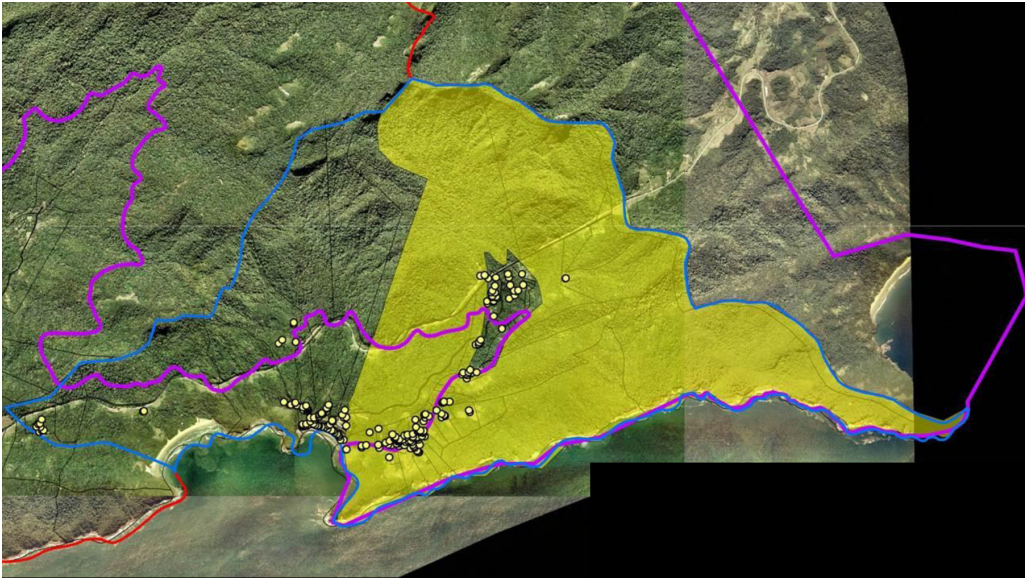
To date, we found that that 45% of the quilombolas self-declared as blacks<sup>6</sup>, another 44% as browns, and the remaining 11% as white, whereas 43% of *caçaras* see themselves as blacks, 29% as browns, and the remaining 28% self-declared as being whites. As for religion, approximately half of quilombolas are evangelical, whereas the other half is Catholic. Around 83% of *caçaras* declared to be evangelical and the rest (17%) Catholics.

A more in-depth account of the whole process leading to the quilombola recognition in this community is hard to grasp for a couple of reasons. A major one is that there are at least three competing, incomplete and somewhat complementary versions at stake: (1) the official one presented by ITESP, (2) the quilombola narrative and, (3) the *caçara* perspective.

The ITESP version was crafted through the work of an anthropologist hired by ITESP itself. The goal of the consultancy was to assess the claims some locals were making about the presence of a reminiscent of a quilombo in the region. Drawing on historical (written documents) and mostly on oral history (fieldwork and kinship analysis) it was concluded that this community had been part of a coffee farm operated by slaves until the



Figure 1. Local community boundaries and the limits of the claimed quilombola territory<sup>5</sup>.



Source: Penna-Firme (2012).

second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. More importantly, according to the report (ITESP, 2003) there was strong evidence that, at least, a few slaves were ancestors of current inhabitants of this community. Thus, there are both historical and legal basis for locals to pursue the process of the communal land titling as a quilombo reminiscent<sup>7</sup>.

In short, self-identified quilombolas have claimed that a run-away slave female took shelter in a cave situated in the hills within the boundaries of what today is part of the community. From there, they argued, she was able to slowly approach and make ties with an already established caçara village. Then, she married a white fisherman with whom she had a few children. These children are claimed to be the grandmother and grandfather of a group of people still living in the community. Regardless of the veracity of the story, local quilombolas have delimited a tracking route leading to the cave as a tourist attraction, especially for new incoming Brazilian and foreign tourists who seek for an “authentic” experience among slave descendants.

This narrative of origin started to be formalized along with the initial process of demanding a quilombola identity by a small number of locals. It intersects with claims for social recognition, rights to land, as well as interest in developing ethnic tourism. This process has unfolded through complex and nuanced negotiations within the community and between them and an array of external actors.

During the 1990s, few outsiders bought small land lots and shacks from locals, becoming themselves permanent residents. Most have become an integral part of the community’s life. Some have come from cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

in search of a better quality of life by developing a closer contact with nature. Yet, this move, by itself, would not prevent them from being evicted from the park boundaries. As white, middle-class tourists they would hardly fit in as “traditional” residents, regardless of the livelihoods they adopted upon settling in this community, and therefore would be subjected to eviction per regulation of the CU. However, by strengthening ties with locals claiming a quilombola identity, these newcomers saw an opportunity to remain in the community as invited residents. During the anthropological report, around fifteen outsiders (permanent residents) were accepted/adopted by both quilombola leaders and the ITESP itself as members (aggregates) of the newly formed quilombola association.

Around this time, the oldest local quilombola leader (a male, self-declared black, 83 years old, born in the community) became acquainted with a local politician who visited the community during his political campaign. The politician, who at the time was running for the mayorship of the city of Ubatuba (São Paulo), told him that “there would be a remote, but possible chance of regaining part of the land sold and/or grabbed by tourists, land speculators, and the park.” To do it, there should be a new community association claiming land titling as part of requesting recognition as quilombola. This came as a ‘revelation’ since until that moment, the elder only knew that he was a slave descendant, but he was not aware of his rights. He had no knowledge of the laws and policies that would potentially change the fate of his community and many rural communities across Brazil. However, forming a quilombola association required the help of people knowledgeable of the politics and policies behind the quilombola issue. Since then, a few outsiders started playing key roles in the pursuit of ethnic recognition, ethnic tourism and land titling. In exchange, these people were turned into aggregated members of a newly formed quilombola association.

Despite it all, some caçaras contested the idea of being a maroon community. They contend that many families claiming quilombola identity arrived in the community much latter than their families, around the time the BR 101 highway was built in the early 1970s. Many caçaras are explicit in saying that local politicians encouraged locals to claim a quilombola identity in order to get access to land rights and a growing tourism industry.

When asked why they decided to join or to refuse adopting a quilombola identity, some caçaras said that becoming a quilombola would mean a return to slavery. Others said that there has never been a quilombo in their community, so they refused to participate in what they called a “lie.” Others mentioned that it would not be necessary to claim a communal property title to secure private land rights they already had. A few evangelical caçaras feared that becoming quilombolas they would have to adopt an Afro-Brazilian religion, often referring with some prejudice to “macumba”.

Most of those who adopted a quilombola identity said the communal property title would enable them to preserve and revitalize their traditional culture. Others said, it would help reclaiming tracks of land that were grabbed or even inadvertently sold to foreigners by locals. Some also said it would bring new opportunities of development to the community.

Finally, inquiring about land tenure, we found that around 75% of the households interviewed had no document as proof of private property ownership. Among self-declared

caícaras, 67% possessed an official document of private ownership, usually in the form of a deed. Virtually all quilombola households lacked property titles at the time of the interviews. Altogether, these results indicate that despite the complex myriad of factors influencing the splitting of the community into two groups, land tenure status has played a major role in shaping the final decision to join (or not) the newly formed quilombolas association.

### Ethnicizing and greening livelihoods

Since the 2003 quilombola recognition, over sixty different High schools visited the quilombo. None had been registered before the recognition. During one of the visits, a high school Geography teacher, entering a quilombo for the first time, shared his motivation to bring students from São Paulo's capital city to this community:

*“... Such an experience represents a unique opportunity to ‘feel’ the livelihoods of slave descendants who still live similar to their ancestors, in a place slightly changed by development.”* (High school Geography teacher, Ubatuba, São Paulo).

Along with the students, there were two local quilombolas. This was also the standard procedure to take both national and international tourists to visit the community. A preferred tourist route includes hiking to a cave hidden in the mountainous forests, where the first fugitive slave allegedly set foot. Follow-up activities include, conversations with the oldest slave descendent in the community, ethnic food tasting and an experience in which tourists pay a small fee to enter a 45-year-old shack made of mud and wood (locally known as “casa de pau a pique” ou “casa de estuque”). During a short conversation between the house's owner and a Brazilian tourist, the tourist said:

*“I do not understand why some quilombolas want to change their houses. You should never turn your house into something modern made out of brick and concrete, so that you keep your tradition.”* (tourist male, Ubatuba, São Paulo).

The quilombola household owner immediately replied:

*“If I had money I would tear it down and build another new house... this one is dripping, it has rats, snakes, spiders because it is old and made of mud.”* (quilombola, 59 years old male, Ubatuba, São Paulo).

Depending on the season, tourists may have a chance to partake in the planting and harvesting of locally grown corn, beans, and manioc. On the one hand, the management plan of the park has allowed local quilombolas to grow certain staple foods, but only in highly degraded soils that barely yield any production<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, the park has successfully enforced the banishment of slash-and-burn agriculture and the harvesting of forest products. In addition, it started persuading local “producers” to engage in agro-



forestry. When asked about an ongoing rumor that local environmental NGOs would collaborate with the park to implement agroforestry, the interviewee soon intervened:

*“Do you think I don’t know what the park wants? They want us to leave behind our already weak agriculture to turn everything into forest. Once it happens, they will take everything for conservation.”* (quilombola, 55 years old male, Ubatuba, São Paulo).

Allowing locals to grow few crops under these conditions has not increased deforestation (PENNA-FIRME, 2012). To the contrary, as suggested by the 55 years old male quilombola, incorporating unproductive agriculture plots and forest fallows into an agroforestry system would become an effective part of a larger conservation strategy. For locals, however, rather than yielding crops, these small agriculture plots have been used primarily to demonstrate ‘traditional’ agriculture technics to a growing number of tourists (PENNA-FIRME, 2012). For tourists, it creates a feeling that they are experiencing authentic quilombola/traditional way of life in an ecological paradise.

In 2009, ethnic tourism accounted for most of the income differences between caíças and quilombolas, marking a transition from livelihoods that were highly dependent on local subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing to a rural economy increasingly service-based and market-oriented (table 1).

**Table 1. Main sources of household income**

Percentage contribution of each income source by household	Quilombolas (n = 20)	Caiças (n = 20)
Ecotourism	2	2
Ethnic tourism	28	0
Selling of handcrafts	19	2
Fishing	1	22
Housekeeping/house cleaning	2	27
Construction work	4	22
Government pensions/retirement plan	40	20
Cash transfer to the poor (Bolsa Família)	4	5
Average per capita/per day income (US \$)	4.37	2.73

Source: Penna-Firme (2012)

As shown on table 1, overall, those who identify as quilombolas are better off economically than caiçaras. Due to enforcement of the park's restrictions, most people have been pushed to abandon subsistence activities such as fishing and agriculture to engage in activities such as construction work, housekeeping, and house cleaning. In sum, both caiçaras and quilombolas fall within this wage-labor spectrum. The greatest difference is the emerging ethnic tourism opportunities for quilombolas.

### **Incorporating and contesting a traditional ethnic identity**

According to BARRETO FILHO (2006), the term *traditional community* has been constructed largely by well-intentioned academics, practitioners, and policy makers working within a particular historical moment and seeking alternative social policies for neglected and marginalized communities. In the process of establishing it as a legal social category, they created partial myths about local identity, common-property systems and collective action, and tough expectations of environmental behavior. While many early proponents are critical about the current use and political deployment of the term, critical evaluation and self-reflection are still rare (and purportedly avoided among some academic circles and journals) (BOYER, 2011).

Some authors have also argued the term traditional has been used as a concept to conciliate people and nature conservation. The uncritical and ahistorical use of the term however, to advance specific conservation and political agendas, is leading to rising contention among local people designated as traditional. The constructed and reified peculiarities of traditional groups are therefore into a political category (KOHLENER and BRONDIZIO 2016; BARRETO-FILHO, 2006, PENNA-FIRME and BRONDÍZIO, 2007, LIMA and POZZOBON, 2005) without necessarily achieving sociological/anthropological or even local consensus. The researcher is then faced with two options: to naturalize/essentialize the category or ethnic group, or to deconstruct it with the risk of devaluing its existence and importance in the real world and the political arena (LÉNA, 2004, LE TOURNEAU and KOHLER, 2011).

In addition to the analysis of this community's socioeconomic trajectory, we have selected a few excerpts of people's narratives about the local meaning of traditionality. For instance, when asked about the meaning of being traditional, a similar answer was obtained from both a quilombola and a caiçaras male:

*"According to the president of the quilombola association, I am not traditional. Also, during a forum held together by the community and the park I was told I am not traditional, because I am not a native of the community." (caiçara, 48 years old male, Ubatuba, São Paulo). A 45 years old quilombola male, claimed "traditionals go fishing, collect shellfish, I am not traditional, I do not fit in that category."*

In other interview with a caçara male, a distinct response was provided:

“Making a living as a caçara has been our tradition. The caçara is tradition itself (...) Quilombolas are not traditional.” (caçara 51 years old, Ubatuba, São Paulo).

A couple of months before this interview, during an informal conversation, this caçara was one of those who contended that the whole quilombola issue in this community was forged. He said that what quilombolas really wanted was to regain part of the property they sold for outsiders, most frequently to outsiders. Given the context, it was clear that he referred to the term traditional as being equivalent to ‘Being born in the community’. For him, everyone born into that community was “naturally” assigned a caçara ethnic identity, so that, he argued there could not be native quilombolas, since before the government intervention/recognition by ITESP in 2003 everyone was locally known as caçara.

His response also suggest that, for him, being traditional is an inherent part of being a caçara, not something dislocate from it, as if there could not be tradition in a social and historical vacuum. In other words, being traditional is more than claiming an ethnic category/label or to take advantage of a political space, but rather it is inherited part of the cultural history of a given social group. His response was also an attempted to shove quilombolas out by asserting, conversely, that they show a lack of virtue, by trying to invent tradition and authenticity.

Interestingly, another five interviewees claimed that they do not fit in the traditional category. Some even suggested that the term traditional is an exogenous language brought by the park staff and officials:

“(...) they [they refer to park staff and officials] come here and keep saying that we are traditional... I have heard it from them many times, but I do not have much foundation on that.” (caçara woman, 53 years old, Ubatuba, São Paulo). Another caçara woman, 40 years old, said “the outsiders are the ones who say it. I do not even know what it means.” A 44-year-old man wondered, “I do not know who invented it, but I have heard about it before. Does it mean being native?” (caçara woman, 43 years old, Ubatuba, São Paulo). Another elderly female born and raised in the community, said “I have never heard the word traditional before” (female 77-year-old).

After having participated in a couple of official meetings between the park administration (staff and officials) and the community (quilombolas and caçaras), it was noticeable that the park’s approach to engage local people was usually framed in the language of conservation, invoking the community as a whole as traditional, rather than following the recent social division setting apart caçaras and quilombolas. However, during the same meetings local leaders reinforced the internal divisions between quilombolas and caçaras, particularly when speaking about their concerns regarding conflicts over land use with the park rules.

On the one hand, for the representatives of the park, stressing community unity through the constant use of the term/concept “traditional community” represented a political tool to conciliate people and nature conservation. In this case, park representatives preferred not to highlight ethnic differences in ways that could legitimize the quilombolas’ agenda and, potentially, more control over land use decisions. On the other hand, especially for quilombolas, at least during these forums, accepting nature conservation mandates associated with the label of traditional could weaken their own political agenda, which depended largely on the park’s actual recognition of local differences that would grant special rights over a contested territory. Despite all efforts by park representatives to ‘unify’ the community around an identity as “traditional population,” divisions persisted.

## Final Considerations

Expectations created around the economic behavior of residents of CUs identified as ‘traditional’ are not restricted to caícaras and quilombolas of this community (KÖHLER and BRONDIZIO 2016). Researching a community in the National Park of Jaú, Creado et al. (2008) observed that government officials and environmental NGOs valued more closely the claims and activities of local residents identified as traditional in comparison to those not recognized as such. NGOs and local environmental authorities were more recognizant of individuals whose main sources of income came from local-scale agricultural activities, such as the production of manioc flour, and the extraction of local plants. The “non-traditional” residents of the park, including those who commercialized meat and local species of turtle, and to a lesser degree those involved in artisanal and commercial fishing, were more stigmatized and looked down upon by conservation personnel.

The case presented here further illustrates the complexity involved in understanding what tradition means to different people, particularly those labeled and expected to behave as such. It sheds light on how policies and rule making well intended to address conservation issues may contribute to attaching new vocabularies and meaning to local livelihood, ultimately shaping local identities and ecological behavior. It helps to illustrate how government policies contributing to forging new “green collectives” and subjectivities are also contested, transformed and incorporated into daily-life politics and livelihoods by people targeted by these same policies. But, it also shows that even normative identities can become legitimized and adopted according to local (or external) interests.

Franco and Drummond (2009) pointed out that the issue of traditionalism brings with it the question of modernity. Special rights to a groups depend on the formulation of traditionalism as distinguished, and perhaps to some degree opposed, to the notion of modernity. The contradiction is that these rights and citizenship depend on an expectation of their integration with nature rather than into the larger society. Depending on the circumstance, the traditional community concept is either too broad, capable of embracing all Brazil’s rural poor, or too narrow, unable to include all marginalized rural populations.

The analysis of this community’s past and present and its relations with conservation policies further challenges uncritical uses of the term ‘traditional community’

as a pathway for local communities to improve their social conditions and ecological sustainability. Being named a traditional community downplays the variety and intensity of current and future local uses of environmental resources and its interactions with the regional, national and international markets. Asserting the label of ‘traditional community’ to self-identified quilombolas masks the continuing negotiation of identities and livelihoods on the ground.

For some community members, adopting a quilombola identity has been the best alternative to secure a more positive form of social recognition as well as to secure property rights, and to legitimate access to local resources within a protected area. In the context of a CU, the internal and external process of recognition has led to a community division, but also fostered the crafting of a new narrative about local livelihoods as “green collectives” (Cárdenas 2012). That is, the formation of environmental subjects (Agrawal 2005) increasingly charged with being stewards of nature, which is part of expanding the phenomena of environmentality and green multiculturalism in Brazil.

Finally, more research is needed to critically assess the intersection of conservation and multicultural policies in Brazil and elsewhere, as well as the impacts associated with tourism development projects, and conservation interventions affecting populations in and around CUs. In particular, a pressing issue remains largely unanswered: to what extent are these policies contributing to conserve biodiversity while reducing poverty, by widening and improving access to basic social services and public infrastructures?

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Submitted on: 18/12/2015

Accepted on: 21/11/2016

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422ASOC270R2V2022017>

### Notes

i Quilombola is a designation for local communities in Brazil formed mainly by runaway slaves in the 19th century and former slaves after the end of slavery in 1888. The Brazil's Constitution of 1988 incorporated several special concessions and civil rights including a clause granting land rights to communities of descendants of runaway slaves, known as quilombos. This provision states that survivors of Afro-descendants occupying their lands are recognized as definitive owners, and the State shall issue titles to the land (French 2009; Gomes 2003). In 2003, a presidential decree (Decreto 4.887/2003) asserted that the main criterion to define who belongs to quilombola communities was self-identification. Since this decree was passed, hundreds of communities have claimed communal territorial rights based on descent and Afro-Brazilian cultural markers used to define a quilombola ethnic identity.

ii The term *caçara* refers to fishing/coastal communities in southeastern Brazil with strong ties to the local environment, of mixed European, indigenous, and African descent (Hanazaki et al., 2000). According to Adams (2000), Marcílio (1986), and Mussolini (1980), *caçaras* have historically depended on agriculture and artisanal fishing, not least because of their geographic isolation and limited means of transportation. However, due to processes such as land speculation, for tourism, the creation of parks, the construction of roads, and other development initiatives, few communities today rely exclusively on these economic activities.

- iii Because of the sensitivity of the issues dealt with in this article, both the name and exact location of this community are not provided.
- iv Government recognition brings the implicit promise of modernization, including the provisioning of electricity, running water, better roads, technical assistance for agricultural production, and health care (FRENCH, 2006, p. 343).
- v We reproduce the image exactly how it was provide by ITESP, as a flat, colored figure, without legend, north arrow, legend, coordinates and scale. The first author has agreed to not to add any further geographical clues that could lead readers to identify the location of the community. The goal of this image is just to aid to the visual description of the territory claimed by quilombolas, which corresponds to the light green area on this image. The core of the image (not green), is the territory that will eventually continue being occupied exclusively by caiçara households.
- vi According to the current methodology adopted by IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística), which is the official Brazilian government agency responsible for the national census, all self-described blacks may fit into one of these two categories: preto (black) or pardo (brown).
- vii Despite its official recognition as a quilombo by ITESP and the Fundação Cultural Palmares, until September 2016 this community had not been granted a communal land title.
- viii The management plan of the park has recognized the presence of ‘traditional communities’ by establishing a historical cultural zone (zona histórico cultural antropológica) where certain activities based on limited direct use of natural resources can be done, such as small subsistence agriculture plots without use of external inputs, suppression of forest vegetation and fire.





# QUILOMBOLAS AS “GREEN COLLECTIVES”: CONTESTING AND INCORPORATING ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE ATLANTIC FOREST, BRAZIL

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**Abstract:** By reconstructing major events that took place over the past 50 years in a small caçara village situated within the Parque Estadual da Serra do Mar, São Paulo, this article explores the issue of environmentality, a process through which local people incorporate mandates of environmental governance and policies, progressively mobilizing and performing the position of environmental stewards. In 2003, this community was recognized as a quilombo reminiscent. The recognition led to a self-division of the community into two groups with around 35 families each. One group maintained a caçara self-designation, whereas the other adopted a quilombola identity. Using qualitative data obtained through long-term participant observation and interviews with local residents, the article shows that over time, socioeconomic, environmental, institutional and cultural changes, culminating with quilombola recognition, have contributed to an ongoing formation of a “green collective” among quilombola families.

**Key words:** environmentality, nature conservation, quilombolas, ethnic identity, traditional populations.

**Resumo:** Ao reconstruir os principais eventos que ocorreram nos últimos 50 anos em uma vila caçara localizada no Parque Estadual da Serra do Mar, São Paulo, este artigo aborda a questão da “ambientalidade”, um processo pelo qual populações locais tendem a gradativamente naturalizar mandatos de políticas ambientais, ao protagonizarem o papel de protetores do meio ambiente. Em 2003, uma comunidade foi reconhecida como quilombo, dividindo-se em dois grupos com cerca de 35 famílias cada. Um deles manteve a autodenominação caçara, enquanto o outro adotou a identidade quilombola. Com base na reconstrução da história da comunidade, observação participante e entrevistas com moradores locais, este artigo argumenta que, ao longo do tempo, as mudanças socioeconômicas, ambientais, institucionais e culturais cumulativas que levaram ao seu reconhecimento como um quilombo, têm contribuído para a formação de uma “coletividade verde” entre as famílias quilombolas.

**Palavras-chave:** ambientalidade, conservação da natureza, quilombolas.

**Resumen:** Mediante la reconstrucción de los principales acontecimientos que ocurrieron en los 50 últimos años en una aldea caiçara situada en el Parque Estatal de la Serra do Mar, Sao Paulo, este artículo aborda la cuestión de la “ambientalidad”, un proceso por el cual la población autóctona acepta como naturales los mandatos y políticas ambientales, desempeñando el papel de protectores del medio ambiente. En 2003 esta comunidad fue reconocida como un quilombo y se dividió en dos grupos con cerca de 35 familias cada uno. Uno de ellos mantuvo la autodenominación caiçara, mientras que el otro adoptó la identidad quilombola. Según los datos cualitativos obtenidos mediante la observación participante y entrevistas con los residentes locales, este artículo sostiene que, con el tiempo, los cambios socioeconómicos, ambientales, institucionales y culturales acumulativos que culminaron en su reconocimiento como quilombo, han contribuido a la formación de un “colectivo verde” entre las familias quilombolas.

**Palabras clave:** ambientalidad, conservación de la naturaleza, quilombola.

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