

Interactions, trails and paths of a city in the flow: ethnography of Cracolândia

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ABSTRACT

Describing an anthropology of Cracolândia should link the paths around the “flow” with the trajectories made possible through encounters of materials and people. Little has been said about what moves these people to form *sui generis* groups, and about the factors that attract them to the “flow”, and this is the task that we aim to undertake in this article. To this end, we did an ethnographic research bringing us closer to the conceptual imagination and the actions of the people who inhabit these urban agglomerations. This allowed us to inquire about what the “flow” category tells us, about the relationships established there that make that space habitable. We conclude that in the “flow” - and perhaps making it attractive - there is no consummate fact, as an object, but, events, fleeting interlacing of materials in motion, things that, as life goes on, demand the unceasing effort to maintain persons intact in the face of attacks from the environment.

KEYWORDS

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INTRODUCTION

Located in the downtown area of São Paulo city, Cracolândia is a huge environment of crack use, which had a “flow” of fifteen hundred daily users (PMSP, 2015). Such urban grouping was the object of important previous ethnographic research, highlighting widely diverse approaches ranging from the relations between the State, the legal and the illegal (Adorno et. al., 2013; Da Silva and Adorno, 2013; Rui, 2012), to the relationships between health and environment (Costa, 2015), territoriality and its connections with the city (Frúgoli Júnior and Cavalcanti, 2013; Rui, 2014) and self-control and self-care strategies (Adorno et. al., 2014; Raupp and Adorno, 2015), to leisure and resistance practices (Aderaldo and Fazzioni, 2012; Calil, 2016). In addition to Cracolândia, the city has many “biqueiras” [crack houses], places of sale and sometimes of use, with their diverse and busy crack users, which are characterized by the collective consumption of psychoactive substances (Mercante, 2015).

Despite this rich literature, the environment of crack use has been characterized in the media with negative images and associated with diseases, despair and violence. It is a social enclave, perhaps one of the largest in Brazil, with a huddle of “zombies” (Alves, 2017). Many argue that such an enclave stems, uniquely and exclusively from poverty or from the “craving”, from the immediate and impregnable dependence on drugs. However, the ethnographic experience led us to other questions. Ethnography sought to escape the external views of crack users' experiences and, as good anthropology teaches us, enable seeking an approximation to the manners used by drug users to define themselves and to build the “flow”. We are faced with concepts and practices that build a vision of the “flow” far from those we were used to hear.

“Flow” emerged as a category used by crack users to designate the movements and pathways around drug consumption and to define the high-density human agglomeration around crack. However, little is said about what moves these people to form such *sui generis sets* – about what attracts them to the “flow”. This is the task to be undertaken in this article.

What does the “flow” category tell us? Understanding its potential for attraction, we were also led to question: which relationships constituted in the “flow” make it possible to inhabit this environment? Likewise: what relationships and forces were established that allowed addicted crack groups to spread throughout the Luz neighborhood? These questions arose in the ethnographic work that brought us closer to the conceptual imagination and actions of the people who inhabit these urban agglomerations.

Thus, crack users, when moving around the constant exchanges within the “flow”, expose themselves to continuous transformation, through the crack consumption, the frequent adjustments in the use of paraphernalia and the degradation processes which constantly damage their things by the action of rain, wind and sun.

How would it be possible to face such things? What imaginative actions and ways would be able to mix and fuse heterogeneous materials in the findings of things and practices that confront the adversities of life? Finally, we are asking about the experimental character of everyday life (Ingold, 2015). These questions lead us to understand the imaginative pathways that a crack user improvises as life goes on—how, for example, they design and build a dwelling that acknowledges the city context and whose recipient is themselves—an urban utopia materialized in street dwellings.

For this purpose, this article proceeds through the following steps: first, we discuss the ethnography performed and the particularities of an observation in a context that presents challenges. Next, we approach an addicted crack group, focusing on a small usage environment. Then, we describe the “flow”, showing how, inside it, people relate to materials in continuous transformation, understanding “flow” also as a category as important as others in urban anthropology. Later, we show how the practice of inhabiting Cracolândia or the “flow” makes the crack users part of an environment that becomes more and more part of them. Finally, we will suggest that the “maloca”, a somewhat ephemeral construction aimed at providing a minimum of shelter and intimacy, may reveal itself as an urban utopia, opposed to the universalist and functional city homogenization.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN CRACOLÂNDIA

This article emerged from research carried out in the São Paulo region known as Cracolândia. Initially, the first author of this text developed an ethnography in that area for two years. Then, seeking to understand public policies for crack, both authors jointly conducted a survey from February 2016 to July 2018, through participant observation, interviews and monitoring of the daily lives of health professionals and crack users. Thus, this is a work in which the authors have been engaged in dialogues for more than four years and that allowed both to participate in the writing, conception and final revision of the article - which can be seen in the verbal and pronominal forms that are characteristic of the first person plural.

The ethnographic experiences allowed us to live with people who used crack in the streets of the downtown area of São Paulo and with professionals who worked in Cracolândia. We ended up having an addition of proximity, which brought us back to those experienced by our predecessors and Brazilian contemporaries in research on drug use, such as Fernandez (2007), MacRae and Simões (2000), Malheiro (2012, 2013) and Velho (1975), among others, who went to the field and lived with people who used drugs that had become illicit, that is, who made ethnography of these drugs use. This was also the case regarding studies by Bourgois (2006), with crack dealers, and by Bourgois and Schonberg (2009), carried out among heroin users.

This ethnographic experience and the questions that emerged in the field led

us to Tim Ingold's (1991) theoretical-methodological proposal, i.e., a search for the subject and practice's return. In this way, Ingold postulates an indivisible totality between individual and environment, focusing on the centrality of practical skill; here we have the presumption of the inseparability of mind/body, visible in the studies of action and perception, the senses, language, technology and art, in order to understand the ways of engagement and development in the world (Ingold, 2002a, p. 289-419; Silva, 2011). The capacities to think and act emerge as properties arising from a total development system constituted through the person's willingness to be, from the beginning, within a field of relationships with the world and with other people (Ingold, 2003, p. 20).

An ethnography in Cracolândia has its specificities. There, perhaps more than elsewhere, the more often they are seen, the less concern they will cause, until the point of becoming unnoticed. However, a first approach is always necessary, a moment of arrival. In an environment of prohibited and persecuted activity, such as the crack use, due to the permanent risk of punitive attacks by the police, even the stranger presented in the company of a former customer, as in our case, will be the target of inquiry looking for credentials for being there. The first incursions into the field were carried out in the downtown area of São Paulo known as Cracolândia. In the initial attempts it was not even possible to reach the place. In this case, we had to start with the surroundings recognition. In the first opportunities to enter the place, we observed from a distance, without being able to stop among the crack users. The insertion was only possible after we were introduced, by a mutual acquaintance, to a drug user who was willing to go along with us for a few months, in 2013 and 2014. We were able to return in 2016 now with abundant knowledge about the field and the relationships built with professionals who work in Cracolândia and with some crack users. On this occasion, we lived again in the "flow", following the daily lives of people and we were also able to conduct other interviews.

The anthropological profession proposes a narrative elaboration about the other that starts from the relationships built in the field. When entering the intimacy of our interlocutors (Herzfeld, 1997), as we try to do, some relationships are constantly negotiated. The type and depth of information emerging from them depend on, and even come from, the status of these relationships. Before getting information about the relationships among our interlocutors, we build relationships with them. It is a movement that goes from relationships with them to knowing about the relationships among them (Strathern, 1999). In the ethnographic work, we found that the more intensely affected we were by the relations provided by the field and, mainly, by the same forces that act on them – what was the field for us, and what was life for them – the more we were allowed to feel, not in others, but in us, the consequences of being in the interlocutor's position (Favret-Saada, 2005). From this meeting, ethnographic writing could take place in a more fruitful way.

From the beginning, we had the possibilities opened by the presence of our privileged interlocutor and guide at the beginning of the investigation, added to the willingness to visit the use places, the psychotropic territories under the constant smoke, in the alley, this space at the same time market and consumption places (Fernandes; Pinto, 2004). Our privileged interlocutor made possible the presence in the field with chances to follow practices and, certainly, discourses and rationalizations coming from the interlocutors, in a way closer to the condition of, as they said, “peers”. From the information collected in the field for ethnographic writing, we had to undertake the necessary task of ordering things (Uriarte, 2012) to enable reading by those who were not there, in the sense of narrating our experiences with a minimum of coherence.

To start the narrative, in the next section we will approach an addicted crack group, approaching a small usage scene. This option is due to the crack user’s own experience, which often does not reach the “flow” directly in its interior, but, little by little, through some of its divisions spread across the neighborhoods of Luz and Bom Retiro.

FROM ADDICTED CRACK GROUP TO THE FLOW

In the second decade of the 21st century, Cracolândia in São Paulo began to be concentrated between the Júlio Prestes Station, in a ground abandoned by the state government, where the old bus station was located, and Largo Coração de Jesus, located two blocks away from the former bus station Luz, and from Júlio Pestes Station. Cracolândia even occupied other blocks of what used to be the *Boca do Lixo* region and, even today, it has some outposts around it. It is perfectly possible, for example, to acquire crack on the roads that lead to Cracolândia or, more specifically, to the “flow”: the agglomeration of hundreds crack users who once had more than ten kilos of crack exposed for sale, simultaneously. At Largo General Osório, located on Mauá St., next to the Júlio Prestes Station, crack users were always there. The same happens a hundred meters towards Brigadeiro Tobias St., close to one of the entrances of Luz Station.

In 2012, on the corner of Mauá and Brigadeiro Tobias streets, one or two addicted crack groups gathered together. Sometimes, a “vapor” (a term used to refer to a petty crack dealer) was in the place, supplying drugs to different users. From those with the typical appearance of homeless people and regulars of the “flow”, to men and women dressed as workers – usually office workers, but also manual workers – who went to Luz and Júlio Prestes stations, in addition to some prostitutes that stood in front of the hotel corner. Right in front of the marquee of Luz Station, occupied by sex workers, some of whom also used crack, there was a constant presence of the military police.

Figure 1 shows, in 2012, a professional from the street clinic, working in front of the “vapor” who is standing on the step of the abandoned parking lot, on Mauá St.

At that time, the “vapor” promoted its drug as “packaged” or “in plastic” and declared it to be better than the one marketed in the “flow”, which was sold “loose”. Better because in greater quantity. We watched the



Figure 01

Clinic on the street and “vapor” Source: Author’s private collection.

activities that took place on the sidewalk and without using the “maloca” resource (which we will talk about in more detail later), usually built with canvas or blankets on the sidewalk, to provide greater intimacy. At most, they used a blanket or clothing to cover their heads during the “drag”, ways of using crack that is divided into several “drags”. We were even approached by a professional from the Unified Health System (SUS), a street clinic, who asked questions about people’s general health status, following a questionnaire. Pedestrians passed by without giving much importance or attention, in a frankly blasé attitude (Simmel, 1971), as if indifferent to what was happening there and absorbed in the path ahead, often towards the train station.

The addicted crack group was made around the “vapor” – a psychotropic context, a dense social situation with people sharing the same interest, focused on the crack consumption. The other passersby who do not stop at the group, for the most part were not aware of it, they do not participate in this definition of reality common to those who interact with it with great homogeneity. The main attitude is to be careful not to attract curiosity or disapproval looks of “Zé Povinho”¹, or even make “approach” of undesirables, such as the police who were on duty a few meters away. There was a common participation in that psychotropic context that seemed to overcome its heterogeneity in terms of gender, age group, job and ethnic diversity. The shared symbols allowed pedestrians interested in crack use to realize that a drug use situation is happening there.

The common basic language allows for a certain grammaticality, despite the idiosyncrasies. The addicted crack group is a reasonably safe place where performances can match the expectations of virtually unknown passersby, but who know perfectly well what to expect from anyone in the condition, for example, of “vapor”.

The addicted crack group relies on the blasé behavior of the population, which follows its path without caring about their presence, which otherwise would stand out in the landscape. Hundreds of them go untouched because they don’t have much

¹ | The term Zé Povinho sums up the crack user’s point of view about the busy passersby in the city of São Paulo, as they move around the city, involved in their tasks.

to do with this drug that doesn't belong to their possibilities of ecstasy and suffering.

The addicted crack group is part of the field of possibilities typical of the big city, where trajectories and paths can intersect. It allows the workers heading to the train station, returning home after a workday, to put themselves under the empathogenic crack effect. The experience of using crack on the sidewalk allows some social interactions, possibly hard to happen without this clumping agent. Those are sociological crossings that make it possible to put the employee, the “vapor”, the prostitute and the homeless person in contact. In our field a research carried out in a “biqueira” in the neighborhood of Cambuci, in São Paulo, we had as a guide, in our introduction to the field, an engineer who was just under fifty years old at the time and who had attended during his career as a user (Becker, 2009), numerous “biqueiras” around the city. This provided him, according to him, with “extremely pleasant evenings” in the company of homeless people with whom he had kept bonds of friendship for decades.

In the “biqueira”, with its crack users attracting the presence of other users from different places, the idea of border is relativized. Drug users are not isolated, due to the fact that the circulation of crack insists on attracting characters with the most disparate trajectories, each one of them, as Simmel (1971) proposed, the intersection of several realities. The addicted crack group enables exchange through “treta” (an exchange cycle of goods and services) and the alliance with “parças” (peers), that is, a social life through experience, where it takes place the recognition of different values and interests is necessary, such as those of the engineer who attends it sporadically or the worker who only stops for a “drag”; also values and interests, largely influenced by drug dealing. The same applies to the values and interests of the prostitutes at Luz Station who do crack and can see a possible client in the casual user.

This engineer we mentioned earlier developed skills that allowed him to access some codes, originally linked to the homeless population of crack users, enabling them to participate in the consumption groups of this drug. The social logic hierarchy does not allow for the reverse; it is very difficult for homeless crack users to attend the environments in which they live as an engineer. Even so, the addicted crack group allows the coexistence of disparate discourses and worldviews: the aforementioned engineer, for example, liked to comment on technical aspects of his profession under the crack influence, this was his “brisa” [term used to refer to something that some people like to do to escape reality]. These codes and discourses associated with crack use have sociological breadth and historical depth.

Expressions such as “brisa”, “fazer a cabeça” [get high] and “dar um tapa” [to smoke], for example, have a use that goes back decades and may have origins in other society spheres - such as the term “fazer a cabeça” and in religions of African matrix in Brazil. Despite these characteristics, we know that the use of crack and its codes and discourses do not find legitimacy in the wider society. It is, therefore, subject to

restrictions and discrimination, such as the police chase that take place over these places, turning the drug consumption into a semi-clandestine activity, as opposed to the open consumption of alcohol, almost prevalent in the “biqueiras” of São Paulo and in the “flow”, in the small packages of half a liter of cachaça, which cost the same as a single “drag” of crack. It is common among crack users to hear that alcohol works to lower the paranoia resulting from the constant consumption of this drug. However, why don't we think that the crack could be the available energizer to prolong the alcoholic *binge*? (use of drugs until exhaustion of physical energy or funds for buying) Therefore, it is possible to speak of malleability between the apparently underground world of drugs made illicit and those officially kept legal and widely encouraged consumption, as in the alcohol situation.

From the addicted crack group, with the lessons learned and several experiences, the user proceeds slowly to go to the “flow”, an environment with greater attraction power, number of people and complexity. The “flow” of Cracolândia seeks to exclude, in many ways, those not involved in drug use. It is more difficult for people from São Paulo to venture from the labor place, for example, to the “flow”, as they find it easier to go to an addicted crack group like the one previously described. The “maloca” and the “mocó”, a type of tenement used to consume the drug without non-users seeing and also useful in the sense of avoiding trauma, the shock provoked in the outsider, non-user, by the vision of active smoked cocaine users. The potential to travel through different realities in São Paulo is unevenly distributed. Those who are “crack people” and homeless could be placed at the bottom of this hierarchy. In addition, by becoming a resident of Cracolândia or a daily regular of the “flow”, it is absent the minimum necessary for some “corre” in search of funds for the crack acquisition, the ability to move through the different places of the city decreases: we have come across people that spent years without leaving the restricted area of the “flow” (Rui, 2014a). The category “corre” generally designates the movement of the crack user in search of funds to buy the drug, that is, “fazer um corre” [to get by]. It can also mean a momentary state “estou na correria” [doing what I have to do] or personal characteristic: “Sou correria, mas tô sem um real no bolso” [I try hard, but I have no money in my pocket] (Clemente, 2006: 27). This last meaning is sometimes linked to petty dealer. However, even on the move, it is no longer anchored in the family or neighborhood that expelled it, nor in a political or religious organization. Its ability to trigger codes associated with contexts and domains other than those on the street is being undermined. However, it is not only in negativity that one lives in the “flow”.

In figure 2 we have the image of the “flow” in Dino Bueno Avenue, in 2013.

It is worth to stop here for a brief discussion about the “flow” category. A complex category involves movements, socialities, political interventions and elucidates the social space uses. Those who study urban anthropology in Brazil approach other



Figure 02

The “flow”, in 2013, at Dino Bueno Avenue Source: Author's private collection.

categories, such as time course and fragments, among others (Magnani, 2003, 2008, 2014). Time course, for example, would be “the spatial configuration, not contiguous, produced by the paths of social actors doing some of their practices, in a given period of time” (Magnani, 2014: 9). Fragments would correspond to a spatial component in which networks of social relationships are established. There is also the “quebrada” category used to define spaces, territorialities, without necessarily being contiguous or just geographically delimited (Malvasi, 2012). But what would “flow” be?.

The “flow” is a human agglomeration with dozens or even hundreds of crack users depending on several factors, from climate to police repression, to the proximity or not of paydays. The drug availability is also an important point in the construction and location of the “flow”. The user is where drugs are, and vice versa. Crack is taken close to users and they, in turn, go to the place with greater crack availability. Apparently, close to the “flow”, or rather, within it, the “blocks” are more “well closed”, a term used to refer to larger crack stone with packaging that has not been violated. Inside and outside it, any fraction of the “block” can be acquired until reaching unit doses, that is, enough for a “drag”. These fractions of the original crack stone are exchanged - also the most diverse goods and services - within the “circuito da treta” [tradesman business], making the “flow” a place of excitement and even making room for “profissionais da treta” [tradesman] or individuals dedicated to buying and selling used and new objects. The “flow” is this materials multiplicity, environment and ways of life (Rui, 2016).

Oftentimes, the “flow” expresses a search for staying alive in the face of social death (Mauss, 1974) present in living with the neighborhood and family. Within the “flow” in Cracolândia, life takes place as becoming: come to be, movement, change or process. Everyone must “fazer seu corre” and, thus, be doing it all the time. It is from this relationship that the conditions of possibility arise, in which human social life is not apart from the city: it's part of what happens in it, in a process by which organisms and materials condition each other's existence. There would be no recycling without the paper picker who makes their “corre”, nor “maloca” and pipe in the absence of

recycled materials, which are not only processed in a mill, but, in advance, on the street itself.

The expression “fazer um corre” means, at the same time, the activities to be undertaken by the people who will consume the substance and the previous action performance that will result in the possibility of using crack. Being “do corre” implies self-identification. In turn, “flow” is simultaneously part of the person and something belonging to it: “I belong to the flow” and “I am (or go to) in the flow”. Thus, “flow” is a metaphor (in the sense of turn, back), in which the individual is and belong to.

Similar to this discussion, each component of the urban landscape appears as a path of transformation, such as those presented in the next section, whose paths are intertwined, unfolding in the city's plot.

THE MATERIALS TRANSFORMATION IN CONSTANT GENERATION AND REGENERATION

We propose now to describe how materials, active components of things, continue to mix and react in a world in formation. As we have already mentioned, we will use Ingold's (2015) conclusions regarding what it would be like to describe his ideas under the action of the environment that constantly threatens things with dissolution.

The city's landscape serves as a backdrop for the cracker (Domanico, 2006). In possession of this, while preparing and recalibrating the pipe, the user aims for the next drag, but its conscience does not stop there, it moves towards the “corre”. In these erratic paths, the cracker will be able to obtain new funds, even for the acquisition of more drugs. The binge corresponds to this horizon that can never be crossed; it reveals how life can have unattainable ends. Physician Marcelo Clemente (2016: 57, 58) described the use of crack to exhaustion as follows: “[...] days without sleep, in search of the next drag, and when that drag arrived, they felt refreshed, for one more marathon in search of the next. [...] and only when they reached exhaustion did they allow themselves to lean over somewhere and sleep for a while”.

The everyday life of crack users, like any other life, is experimental (Ingold, 2015). The experience with the use of crack is not limited to the initial use periods. When they start on crack, they usually do it with someone with more experience. Its “caminhada”² is measured by changes. Each new use experience, even with the same drug, brings something new: the body that has aged and is a little bit tired; the rain that fell and changed the conditions of the environment; the sun that warmed the canvas of the “maloca”, low and close to the head; its residents takes turns at the possibilities opened up by the “treta”; a “parça”, not seen for some time, who is met again; a new acquaintance in the street; the paraphernalia items always open to try.

The opening given by constant experimentation allows us to say that: 1) the crack user is the one who “faz seu corre”; 2) the “vapor” is who “is in charge”; 3) the “noia” is someone who “get carried away by the addiction”; 4) to be a respectable user

is to “fazer seu corre”; and, in this sense, we can say with Ingold (2015: 45) that, for our interlocutors, it could be worth the observation that “...I am what I am doing. I'm not an agent, but an industry”. Thus, knowledge is forged by the paths of life and travel; locomotion is inseparable from cognition.

Social life cannot be ontologically distinguished from physical realities external to it. The materials in the “flow” are in continuous transformation, through degradation processes caused by the action of rain, wind and sun. Things too. A whole maloca resounds to the taste of the wind that inflates the black canvas like a sailboat. It appears, to the less-accustomed observer to the image of Cracolândia, to end up leaving at some point. The place visitors play a main role in these transformations, not only the human beings involved in recycling materials, but their dogs, domestic animals of these itinerant people, without a fixed place, also gnaw, trample and lie on the things that are pay to lull their light sleep. The rodents are also there, inhabiting the layer just below the surface of the city and, preferably at night, emerging to hunt for materials such as cloth and plastic, in addition, of course, to the leftovers on the ground and also not swept by rain to the subsoil by the access available through the manholes.

Among rodents and dogs, the latter stand out for their empathy and rapport with humans. However, there is an exemplary story, told over and over again by the crack groups in the downtown, of the canine misunderstanding on the relationships between humans. As is usual in contacts between police officers and crack users, the performance of each actor in their role appears dictated by the need to affect seriousness in an activity that could be well explained by the popular expression “enxugar gelo” [waste time]. Police officers do not have the slightest intention or even pretend to reduce the sale or consumption of crack, but they need to maintain their ostensible presence in the face of complaints or occurrences, which, actually or allegedly, may be associated with users. Therefore, from time to time, they take some action, probably more exemplary than punitive, to remind them of their existence, which otherwise would not make any greater difference to downtown life.

Once, when they saw a group of crack users near the Anhangabaú valley, downtown region of São Paulo city, military police officers patrolling the area, possibly with no motivation greater than simple routine, initiated an approach. Protocolly following the script for which they received training, they ordered those approached to get up from the ground and stand in front of the nearest wall so that they could be inspected. They kicked the right leg to one side, the left to the other, frisk them, threatening, questioning, and the pipes are being separated. Now all facing away, hands behind, the way children in schools and militias do in barracks, the crack users watch their pipes being trampled one by one by the police, with only a slight desire to trample the heads of those blessed with kindness, police manners. However, crack, the drug that could provide a touch of humiliation and violence or, even who knows,

¹ | Expression related to the wanderer's journey through the city; the same term refers here to each one's life: its "journey".

create a “report” at the police station, does not appear. Frustration on the police side and apprehension among the crack users. But, why are they apprehensive? That's where the dog comes in. The officers didn't notice, but as they went through the approach routine, their eyes were fixed on the animal lying a few feet away. It's just that, when they felt the approach of the *enxugadores de gelo* [who are wasting their time], they tried to hide the drug under the animal's body, confident in their mythical loyalty. Behold, the animal calmly gets up, opens its mouth in a delicious yawn and starts to move in the opposite direction of the police raid. Everyone looks in disbelief. In the conscience of the animal owner and, unfortunately, also from the scarcely “*mosado*”¹⁶[hidden] crack, comes the thought that would give the title to this story: “the dog didn't want to hold the flagrant”. Thus, due to the animal will, ill-adjusted to the human needs imposed by the legislation, this common case from our streets and the war on drugs became known as “the story of the dog that didn't want to take a break”. We could, for this case, reverse Ingold's proverb (2015: 57) that “human beings pick up where non-humans left off” to: humans want to run when the non-human moves.

16 | Disciplinary administrative process.

The “*exposé*” that the dog in our story did not want to hold was also the pipe, a necessary contraption that allows you to enjoy the crack rock. In it, the plastic heated by the “Bic” (any brand's lighter) melts and adheres to the “small stove”.¹⁷ After cooling down, it becomes hard and will not continue to adhere to the hands of the user who manipulates its “Boris” (pipe for crack consumption). Plastic can only participate in this composition because it has different and even contrary properties: sometimes malleable and suitable for manipulation, sometimes hard enough to seal the top of the “*chimbó*” (another nickname given to the pipe). We can think with Ingold (2015:65) that “[...]some materials show properties while being worked which are lost when the work is done”. The smoke flows, the plastic sticks, the “*caninho*” [small tube] (metal cylinder used in crack pipes) heats up, the smoke condenses and settles, sticking to the walls of the small stove and the small tube. The pipe is not manufactured and then used, but constantly calibrated and remade. The “*maloca*”, the same thing, also the *biqueira*. There are the crack, the pipe, the user, the *maloca*, the *biqueira* as materials in the “flow”. The plastic that does not stick to the ground and flies in the wind—an atmospheric resource capable of deflecting the flame of the “Bic” and burning “all fingers” (Clemente, 2016: 60) – unfolds in the environment. It can be, first, incorporated by the resident of the “flow” to a *maloca*, either by the user or by someone who wants or needs to “favor”. Later, the same plastic that was once a supermarket bag, something that the crack users have returned to the material condition, it can be torn into some precise fillets and adjusted to the need to seal the junction of the “aluminum” (holed base over which is placed the ash and the “drag” in a pipe) with the “small stove”, then rolled and heated until melted and sticking on itself. Plastic is in the context of “flow” as much as human beings.

17 | Expression that designates the transfer of prisoners between units of the prison system.

An umbrella rod is placed, by the cracker, in relation to the “small tube” and

“small stove” under a certain field of common activities in the “flow”, where it can exert some effect. The “raspador” [scraper] is named for the effect it has on the activity in which it is characteristically involved, for its story that the user knows and understands in order to use it appropriately. The “raspador”, an aluminum rod, one of the things the umbrella is made of, appears as a tool from the moment the umbrella object enters the crack user's perception field on a “journey”. The way to use it considers its story by the junctions of the past that users have access to, but it is also revealed in the light of the task to be performed, whether it is the removal of the “rapa” [remains] from a small tube or stove or even from the inside aluminum, opposite to the face where the ash is deposited and where the sludge from the smoke condensation also accumulates. With new materials, such as the numerous available in the city, which lend themselves to serving as pipe parts, the “scraper” will be used according to strands of past practices, carried forward in current contexts; put to use by the hands, guided by remembered traces of past performances, inscribed in a habitual, usual pattern. It is in that way that the body remembers. The hands, due to their life history of past practices, keep a compendium of capacities, even if blackened by ash and burned by the flame of the “Bic”. Ash, flame, stone and all the activities related to the manipulation of paraphernalia have made the hands, through an organic synergy, what they are; then, they put themselves to use and, through their skillful gestures, tell the biography of the “scraper”. Neither paraphernalia, nor the hands that manipulate it are things-in-themselves, no matter the context of “flow”: the “maloca”, the recyclables, the “treta” and the “flow”, in the sense that this designates the crack marketing, one more of its meanings, they are a modified story each time it is retold.

The crackers skills are in tune with their activity, also made possible by the crack consumption, since it is usual to say that the dexterity in working with the pipe, which we could define, in this case, as the multisensory coupling - the burned fingers touch, the sight, to feel all the smell that comes from the practice of dealing with crack, its smoke and dregs – between perception and action it flows better under the crack effect. This effect hides a purpose of coexistence that always crosses it, and which enjoys under the conditions present in the “flow”, in dwelling and journeying, as we try to describe in the next section.

LIVE AND PATH IN THE CRACOLÂNDIA LANDSCAPE

The crack consumption in the “flow” allows living a daily life full of coded gestures, practices and behaviors within a certain community lifestyle with its daily choices and underlying values. The search is not only for the effects of a drug, in “direct relationship with the more global context of the experience” (Xiberras, 1989: 23), but to be in the presence of others, among peers. There is a purpose of living together that

3 | The term “mocosado” (hidden) has an animal origin coming from the moco rodent of the Caviidae family, found in stony Northeast area, where, to avoid becoming human food, it usually hidden itself [mocosaj]. In the city, moco can also be used for stony purposes.

4 | It takes its name because it is commonly a piece of stove. It is the place where the crack stone is burned. Inside it, rapa accumulates. When made of copper, it produces a very appreciated white rapa. Rapa is a material that comes from the sublimation of crack smoke in contact with the inside of the pipe, which may be black or white in color.

runs through the effect. Therefore, it is hard to say if getting the “brisa” would be the main expected or even desired effect in this context. This introduces a new aspect regarding the intensity of these effects: would they be more intense the greater the “tuning”?⁵ It is not just the drag in a crack pipe that have an eminently social character. Since antiquity, piped opium had this gregarious aspect (Escohotado, 1989).

The practice of inhabiting Cracolândia or the “flow” makes the crack users to belong into an environment that becomes more and more part of them. Their senses, sharpened by the experience, start to see, hear and feel what matters around them, when living on the street, most of the time, outside. However, the city, with its buildings, does not allow them to look at the landscape, as people do on a beach when they admire the sunrise. The gaze is constantly stopped by the buildings. The ground that is walked on is generally concrete, with the almost exclusive exception of squares and vacant lots. Buildings and other properties have, of course, their entrances, but the cracker who lives or go into the street notices recesses that are invisible to untrained eyes, possible “mocós” in openings in the concrete of viaducts, manholes, houses and abandoned buildings.

The “maloca” does not allow itself to be objectified, in the sense of stopping and moving away from the paths by which it came to be. Its surface is mobile, the black plastic, which often covers it and inflates in the wind. Its materials are on display and the observer, necessarily immersed in the city, can entertain itself by catching sight of it and by reflecting on how they got there. It is in an open world of come and go, continually coming to be, through formative and transformative processes: the maloca is raised to be constantly adjusted. These lumps emerge from the concrete and substances are connected to the sidewalk, in an area of mixing and intertwining plastics, blankets, wood, cardboard, baby carriages, among many other objects and materials, all living in the city in mutual permeability and binding. That’s why the cracker connects to the passerby through the smell that they often tries to disguise. The smoke carries a thread of characteristic aroma, the “flow”, which, as much as any street, is full of these threads emanating from cigarettes, sweat and the “block”, connecting humans and non-humans in its mesh; inside the cracker, it happens as if the smoke resonates in a “tuim” [a kind of sound], a real ringing in the ears that denotes satisfactory effects of the crack consumption. In the “flow”, substances come together with the environment in the constitution of beings that, through their activity, inhabit and participate in the construction of the city’s textures in living forms, which each crack user gathers in his/her own way.

The cracker constantly inhales the smoke from the sublimation of the crack stone so that it can breathe it out of its body; its “maloca” in the “flow”, where the play of life is enacted, is based by a continuous coming and going of the “peers”, which can eventually bring new “blocks”. The “maloca” is an experience. It is not comfortable to let it be bathed in sunlight. When lying down under the black canvas, the roof is only

5 | A good relationship, a kind of harmony in attitudes. Tuning is also a drug effect. The crack only opens the way, walking along it in the company of a parça [peers], or even with a stranger who has just arrived at the *biqueira* [place to buy drugs], is a possibility opened up by use. Being all in tune is a pleasure in itself and, why not, the main pleasure made possible by the stone.

a few centimeters from the body; you can feel its heat.

Cracolândia as a landscape cannot be separated from the people; it is not simply a matter of observation, description and empirical measurement regardless of who builds it. Its landscape must be considered in relation to its inhabitants. The countless meanings arising therefrom are attributed by those who develop skills there, acquire knowledge, appearances and identities. This in line with their movements and purposes, in short, their lives, from which they extract the meaning of their relationships. The landscapes vary according to the multiple perspectives of its inhabitants: through the seasons of the year, times of torrential rain, scorching sun or bitter cold. This scenario cannot be abstracted from the person who perceives it, from the perspective of its inhabitants. In summer, the rains fall harder and make puddles under the malocas; the waters run and take with them countless things to the gutter until they go inside the manholes. At first, the waters are black with dirt, which, with increasing water precipitation, becomes more and more clear. Over time, similar things in the landscape can be perceived differently, making time less an object of perception and more of what we perceive in it.

The crack user is part of the landscape and was shaped by it. If it weren't for the asphalt, its feet wouldn't bear the marks of successive healed wounds, its thick skin, hardened by the scrape of the burning pavement. The blackened crust that sometimes covers the skin, was acquired by skinning the dirt that was on the floor. The things placed on the ground, as they crumble, start to mix with it, because particles, stones, dust are also released from the asphalt and sidewalks. Until it becomes hard to distinguish between what is ground and the things that are detachable from it and deposited on it, to remain there for the skin and clothes of the Cracolândia regular, where they can settle down. Today's dust was yesterday's plastic bag, the pack of cigarettes and their ashes, the dropped food, the hair, skin, nails and excrement. The floor of Cracolândia is an area that, through the rain, the sun, the shuffling of badly shod or barefoot, the successively built, undone and remade malocas, is formed and transformed by bodies and materials that is put in motion. No wonder Cracolândia is marked by the flow of things that compose and detach from fleeting objects, such as pipes, in constant and uninterrupted becoming. The asphalt of its streets and sidewalks bear witness to the liveliness of the forces and relationships of a time-city, where crack users perceive and act.

Cracolândia is never complete or finished, it is constantly woven from the lifelines of assorted human and non-human components as they weave their paths through many relationships in which they become entangled. People and things are identifiable by the ways they came from and by which they keep to go. They are inseparable from the movements that brought them there and from their relationships in practice, in a relational web of links and unlinks. Knowledge, for these people, is also acquired through the movement path there, in the "path" like a trail through a mesh.

Crack has a "walking spirit" that makes the body wander around the city. The user

inhabits the city as a pilgrim, in a life that unfolds along paths. The “peers” are products of the meeting of vital paths that are strongly intertwined and linked in a knot of greater density. Crack boosts meetings in the city and becomes a solution against loneliness. The “maloca” provides an inviting environment for crack consumption, where high density knots can be formed from the threads tied by pilgrimage lines in the “path”. The “corre”, the “path”, driven by the “walking spirit” of crack, encourage the user to attach to other lines in other places outlined by the movement, forming a mesh along which these people live their lives on the streets and sidewalks in the city.

The user is constantly on the move; does not want to be considered a “parasite” (a person who does not pay for its drugs and uses crack at the expense of other users), does its “corre”, uses the drug of the “walking spirit”, “it’s from crack”, “it’s from the movement”. Using crack is more than being on the move; the user in the city, just like the pilgrim, is its movement, which, to be sustained, depends on an active engagement with the street, with the “flow”, with Cracolândia, in short, with the consumption of crack. The “flow” never ends, even at rest there will always be another place to go. Being in the “hustle” is a way of being, of being in the world. More than occupying an area, the crack user inhabits linearly and, perhaps for this reason, we feel surprised by those who have greater difficulty in moving away from the “flow”.

How does the homeless person deal with exclusion from this point of view? First, it is difficult to characterize it as excluded from society, as it resides in the city’s environment, interacting with the landscape: the sidewalk, the wall, the marquee, the viaduct, the railing. It is also forced to interact with public and private agents such as: security guards, police, shop cleaners, door attendants, public cleaning workers, missionaries and preachers. At times, it may seek out these same people in an attempt to satisfy some need for shelter, food, clothing, or a simple companionship. On the other hand, it can be contacted by them and by a range of other inhabitants who are interested, for any reason (which can range from the desire for information about drug acquisition) in interacting. However, the greatest pleasure seems to be in the company, not of outsiders, but of peers, “partners” in a similar situation. Possibly, because among those who take the same shape, one can have a name (common) and an address (maloca).

In “Zé Povinho” eyes, the homeless who, apparently, is under the influence of crack, is a generic zombie. It is given a lower status than those considered by Ingold (2015) to designate the person without a name and address, such as the “bum”, the “runaway” and the “savage”; and even animality can be denied it. The animal is the animate being, which has soul or vital breath and is able to respond to the environment that surrounds it, the opposite of the zombie.

The stories of murderous violence practiced by people who live or go to Cracolândia are told by the media and broadcast to exhaustion in moments of moral panic surrounding crack; they help to create an all-encompassing vision of that territory and its residents. There are real images to compose a fantastic description,

in order to unite the country “through the epistemological obscurity of the space of death” (Taussig, 1993: 138), where torture and terror practiced by public agents and rulers become not only justifiable, but also falsely necessary. Violence on people whose way of acting can, paradoxically, give the impression of a certain alienation from the world and, even so, capable of terrifying an unsuspecting person who crosses them on a sidewalk.

Ingold (2015) described the act of walking in public, outlined by Goffman (1971), as an almost predominantly visual activity in which the passer-by walks as if surrounded by an oval shell, narrow on the sides and elongated in front. To move among other pedestrians, he/she constantly needs to estimate the necessary adjustments to other people's paths and performs sudden movements, when necessary, in a sociality immediately sensitive to the movements of others and small obstructions on the ground. The crack user will respect these rules less, the more immersed it is in a “walk” or “daydreaming”.

It is usual, in the street, to have a common persona who is attributed according to personal characteristics of physical appearance, temper, origin, and this is how it ends up being known by its peers. It may or may not have a “maloca”. It also has its location in the city, which often remains the same over the years. This location can be, for example, the “flow”, because there is an activity of selling drugs there that causes the coming and going of people and objects and it is their nexus. People who may come to live there are often strong crack users, because they spend their days there, moving between “malocas”, participating in the “tretas” and other displacements in search of funds, characterizing certain patterns of activities. Those activities are what they are when unfolding in the city in permanent formation. The nickname “craqueiro” [people who smoke crack] gives the dimension of what a person is for what it does. Being “from crack” is, generally, going through the city on the “path”, much more than smoking crack.

What forces will be able to mix and fuse such heterogeneous materials in generating the things present in Cracolândia? It is not about giving shape to inert matter, but about intervening in the material currents that generate the shapes.

Following the materials that are mixed so that a “maloca” is generated allows us to realize how they are not passive or subservient to human projects, and how this house demands a relentless effort to keep itself intact in the face of the attacks from the environment brought by the wind, sun, rain, insects, rodents and, of course, the disorder caused by visitors and passersby. The “maloca” is not a *fait accompli*, like an object, but an event, a fleeting interweaving of moving materials, a thing. The “maloca” and the pipe are improvised as life proceeds along the paths of the world: “journey”. In figure 3, an example of “maloca”.

The “maloca” and the “mocó” make us think about the anchors of the relationships between human beings and environment, how they work and how they change; on what is general and what is particular. The spatial dimension of the crack user construction is presented whether: 1) a resident more permanently fixed in a *biqueira* or even in Cracolândia; 2) assiduous regulars of certain “mocós” throughout the city; 3) pilgrims more fond of the outdoors and transiting the sidewalks, choosing this or that marquee where they can rest when they feel the need.



Figure 03

Maloca located on Helvetia Street almost on the corner of Cleveland Avenue.

The unification of the urban landscape, made by modern architecture, ignored the context of each city, as if it were a proposal geared towards a human being endowed with universal needs (Rui, 2014b). A functionalist architecture, which uses industrial techniques aimed at making constructions extremely cheap by means of scale gains produced by homogenization. In the maloca, aspirations in terms of the constructed scope are often defined by a single entity. The housing's recipient is also its builder/designer: despite the poverty and dramas present there, the “maloca”, in a way and provocatively, can be seen as an urban utopia materialized in the street dwelling.

At the end of this journey of research and relationships that we tried to outline through this article, we believe that we were able to clarify the links and forces that were established for the crack users to spread through the Luz neighborhood, telling us regarding the category “flow” and about which relationships established in the “flow” made it possible to inhabit that space. Always following Ingold, we tried to show how it would be possible to deal with forces that could imply a lack of capacity for life, as people who inhabit the “flow” end up building other ways of living.

Crack use places are perceived as spaces linked exclusively to the crack consumption. However, living with our interlocutors allowed us to realize that there was also a common participation in the crack users that overcame its heterogeneity as part of the field of possibilities proper to the big city, where trajectories and paths can cross. The experience of using crack on the sidewalk allows for some interactions, sociological crossings, possibly hard to take place without this interaction. When becoming a resident of Cracolândia or a daily regular of the “flow”, it is absent the necessary least for some “corre” in search of funds for the crack acquisition, the ability to go through several meaningful places in the city, however, decreases. We have

come across people spending years without leaving the restricted area of the “flow”, a very busy place.

The consumption of crack in the “flow” allows living a daily life full of codified gestures, practices and behaviors within a certain lifestyle, with its daily choices and underlying values. The cracker is not just looking for the effects of a drug, but to be with other people, in similar conditions, with those who understand the codes. There is a purpose of living together that goes through the effect of smoking crack. The cracker and its peers are indistinguishable from their journey, nor from their relationships extended along multiple paths intertwined in the tangled environment. The “caminhada”[path] is a way of inhabiting the world, weaving one’s own lifeline and contributing to its constantly moving plot. Crack consumption boosts meetings in the city. The cracker outlines itineraries and builds new ways of being in the world. Substances, objects, presences, encounters, paths, itineraries that, despite the seriousness of the situation, and the social dramas involved, build the attractiveness and resilience of the “flow”.

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