

**ETHICS OF CREATION IN CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL
PRECARIOUSNESS:
a study with three Brazilian artistic collectives**

**ÉTICAS DA CRIAÇÃO EM CONTEXTOS DE PRECARIEDADE SOCIAL:
um estudo com três coletivos artísticos brasileiros**


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**Ethics of creation in social precariousness contexts:
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Abstract: This study explores the notion that precarious conditions and limited social rights fail to diminish the ethical decisions of Brazilian artistic collectives. To illustrate this, it examines three artistic collectives based in Brazil: Contadores de Mentira, Trupi di Trapu, and Rede Espiral Encruza. It centrally argues that an analysis of interviews with their members exemplifies work of these collectives. This study articulates the concept of creation ethics by three key markers: community ethics, choice as a political act, and the ethics of reciprocity. It uses Agamben's ideas on ethics and action to show how the ethics of creation function within these collectives. This study concludes that the ethical positions of these groups challenge the notion that social precariousness diminishes their ethical perspectives.

Keywords: social precariousness; poverty; theater groups; performing arts; ethics.

**Éticas da criação em contextos de precariedade social:
um estudo com três coletivos artísticos brasileiros**

Resumo: Este artigo explora a ideia de que as precariedades e as limitações de direitos sociais não minimizam as escolhas éticas de coletivos artísticos brasileiros. Para tanto, investigam-se três coletivos artísticos com sede no Brasil: Contadores de Mentira; Trupi di Trapu; e Rede Espiral Encruza. Exemplifica-se o argumento central no trabalho dos coletivos, analisando entrevistas com seus e suas participantes. Apresenta-se o conceito de éticas da criação a partir de três marcadores: ética comunitária; a escolha como ato político; e a ética da reciprocidade. Tomam-se as noções de ética e ação em Agamben para mostrar como operam as éticas da criação nesses coletivos. Conclui-se que as posturas éticas contrariam a concepção segundo a qual as precariedades sociais podem minimizar o ideário ético dos grupos.

Palavras-chave: precariedade social; pobreza; grupos de teatro; artes cênicas; ética.



1 Introduction

In Brazil and many other places, the notion behind the word “poverty” is linked to a lack of economic resources and food for survival and misery. However, our studies have sought to explore the idea of poverty as a diverse “multidimensional phenomenon” (Crespo; Gurovitz, 2002; Amarilla, 2021), in which those living in it may experience varying aspects related to the “deprivation of their capabilities” (Sen, 2000)—closely related to the deprivation of their rights and freedoms.

Thus, people living in poverty can have enough food for their survival or their own home and still be deprived of certain aspects of their lives, such as work, health, and/or education. Poverty prohibits generalization due to its many dimensions either because it is difficult to grasp it in its multiple implications for people’s lives or because we tend to perceive certain deprivations as unrelated to poverty.

Understanding poverty as related to deprivation resonates with another meaning, which, by distancing itself from the notion of incapable subjects, draws near to the concept of subjects incapacitated by the historical, economic, cultural, and educational circumstances that inscribe them in a certain social space-time. In other words, poverty constitutes a form of disempowerment due to a correlated process of social determination rather than the condition of the one who is incapable.

Subjects’ subservience to their impotence configures the clearest effect of their integration into a social, economic, and cultural system that sometimes presents itself as necessary and immutable and sometimes as insurmountable since it isolates subjects and places the responsibility for their eventual “incapabilities” over them. In this way, we refer to people in neither misery nor in extreme precariousness but to the vast group of Brazilians who have undergone the deprivation of some aspect of their lives in education, work, health, education, housing, leisure, etc. We oppose the neoliberal idea of poverty that depicts people in it as living in complete precariousness. What most of us understand as the underprivileged classes, such as the lower middle class or other similar designations, live in some kind of deprivation and thus in poverty.

The above still refers to the idea of poverty as a notion under a neoliberal discourse that can shape it as an individual failure, adducing a condition that involves shame. Considering all of this, many of us struggle to understand ourselves in poverty. We have argued that the notion of poverty is completely entrenched in the neoliberal discourse, the solution of which describes entrepreneurship as an individualized attitude that is solely supported by the effort of the individual; an idea that disregards social, cultural, and identity determinants (see, for example, IcLe, 2023).

Thus, this study will focus on a specific element of situations of poverty, which we call *precariousness*. It stems from a set of social relations that enables some kind of deprivation of capabilities. Guillaume le Blanc (2007, p. 68, free translation) distinguishes two types of precariousness. The first one, called ontological, “[...] designates the vital insecurity in which each



life is inscribed”¹; the second, in turn, is that to which we refer here and on which we reflect in our research: social precariousness, which “[...] it is part of vital precariousness, but it is not conditioned by it” (le Blanc, 2007, p. 69, free translation)². Social precariousness means a process of “[...] social depersonalization of life the particularly subtle logic of which is based on a set of contradictions that jeopardize daily lives, burdening them with very heavy charges” (le Blanc, 2007, p. 70, free translation)³.

We consider the consensus that the analyses of creative processes, especially of artistic collectives, often focus on aspects that ignore precariousness. IcLe (2023) shows some studies that ignore the precariousness of their participants’ lives. This fails to invalidate such research, but indicates a gap for debate in the area (IcLe, 2023). Therefore, in general, , we have a romanticized view that art is free of social determinants; as well as, that social determinants, such as financial precariousness, could tarnish the ideas or ethics of certain artists in the face of difficult situations, the absence of public policies that support decent work, and the possible commercialization of performances and other activities.

Some research on the relationships of artistic collectives with their communities have explored issues related to ethics and, above all, to the peculiarities of their creation processes. See, for example, Cruz, Bezelga, and Menezes (2020), which have analyzed collectives in Brazil and Portugal. Our approach somewhat complements such research, seeking to focus on ethical values and principles made explicit by these groups.

This research precisely aims to show, based on our fieldwork, that the researched collectives, although under varying social precariousness conditions⁴, firmly hold the beliefs and convictions that make them do their work the way they do. We call this set of beliefs and convictions the ethics of creation. This was made possible thanks to our work of coexistence and, above all, a set of interviews with the participants of these collectives (which the following sections will further discuss). We talked to such artists in separate groups in recorded interviews and informal conversations. For the analyses that compose this study, we chose an interview from each collective: that on December 8, 2022 with Contadores de Mentira from São Paulo; that on January 19, 2023 with Rede Espiralar Encruza from Porto Alegre; and that on March 22, 2023 with Trupi di Trapu, also from Porto Alegre. These semi-structured interviews started from an open script, following blocks of identical themes but with improvised questions.

1 In the original: “[...] désigne l’insécurité vitale dans laquelle chaque vie est inscrite” (le Blanc, 2007, p. 68).

2 In the original: “[...] s’inscrit dans la précarité vitale, mais elle n’est pas conditionnée par elle” (le Blanc, 2007, p. 69).

3 In the original: “[...] dépersonnalisation sociale de la vie dont la logique, particulièrement subtile, repose sur un ensemble de contradictions qui mettent en question les vies ordinaires, les grèvent de lourdes hypothèques” (le Blanc, 2007, p. 70).

4 This, without a doubt, follows the lack of public policies aimed at the specific maintenance of artistic groups and collectives that work in communities in an artisanal way. For example, Santos and Pereira (2021) have widely developed this idea.



We repeatedly read and discussed our impressions of these interviews and analyzed them, trying to find, on the one hand, the recurrences of pertinent ideas and questions and, on the other, their singularities. As we will see below, the question of an ethics of creation, supported by several examples, emerges in our reading from the three groups. The notion of ethics is not recent in the specialized literature on artistic groups in Brazil. To a certain extent, it constitutes a central feature of group theatre, performance collectives, and the tradition of several ensembles. It is a matter of thinking about ethics, in these cases, as “[...] a constant discovery about one’s own desires and needs, which culminate in choices linked to a behavior that privileges authenticity, but which are often unforeseen by the person making the decisions themselves” (Pessoa, 2020, p. 26, free translation). Fernando Mencarelli, discussing the situation and the sense of group and groupality as a characteristic of a large portion of Brazilian Theater recalls that

In the synthesis made by Rosyane Trota at the meeting [of Theater Groups called *Próximo Ato*] in 2006 in São Paulo with invited groups from various parts of the country, group theater was thought of as that which:—feeds on a utopia of collectivization, dialogue, exchange, fraternization;—seeks forms of organization and points to a political action aimed at the recognition of its cultural importance by the public power;—calls into question the internal structure of creation and organization of groups, and, although fighting for sustainability, values risk, flexibility, the unknown, as fundamental factors for artistic creation (Mencarelli, 2015, p. 82-83, free translation).

These group, collective, and communitarian principles constitute one of the main characteristics of artistic collectives across their arrangements and contradictions, which we call the ethics of creation. Regarding this notion of ethics, note that it refers more to the generation of a way of being amidst a collective as a placing of the subject in their own way than to the subject’s obedience to an original and universal law of conduct and work that supposedly preceded them. As a matter of fact, ethics means a free use of oneself, which “[...] does not treat existence as a property;” i.e., rather than referring to acquiescence or resignation to a rule, allude to the very exercise of oneself that founds one’s own way of being and happening, one’s singularity (Agamben, 2013, p. 16).

Therefore, we offer three ethical elements that resist the social precariousness in the daily life of the studied collectives: community ethics; choice as a political act; and the ethics of reciprocity. Let us see then how they emerge in each collective.

2 Contadores de Mentira and a community ethics

Young people from the metropolitan region of São Paulo who had taken interest in collective work in theater created the group Contadores de Mentira in 1995. The group calls itself a theater of “celebration” (Pereira, 2015, p. 12). Their work emphasizes celebratory spectacles in the sense of party and commemoration and a theater hinting at the ritual (Image 1). The group builds the



playwriting of many shows by itself, which, in addition to creating and performing street and stage shows, produces various community activities, such as workshops, seminars, and acts with groups of identity claims, especially regarding race, gender, and sexuality.

The core of the group consists of four people: director and actor Cleiton Pereira and actors Kaique Calisto, Samuel Vital, and Daniele Santana. This nucleus consists of those who maintain the headquarters and the continuous work of the group, including other artists into several projects and shows. For many years their headquarters stood in Suzano (in the metropolitan region of São Paulo). However, at the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024 they moved to another municipality after a long campaign by the Suzano city hall against the group's permanence on the ceded land on which the group maintained its headquarters that their members' workforce built out of containers⁵.

Image 1 — Shooting of the film *Apoteose de uma Utopia Estirada ao Limite da Morte* (Apotheosis of a Utopia Stretched to the Edge of Death)
Teatro Contadores de Mentira, Suzano, Brazil



Source: Sandro Casarini, 2015

As they tell us in an interview, the group works as a kind of cooperative as its four members divide the costs and earnings obtained from their work. Their average income remains below a monthly minimum wage for several periods. In addition to the box office of the shows (a very small part of their earnings), their income comes from selling their shows and performances to institutions and especially from government notices, which, most of the time, offer cash prizes (for the construction and/or presentation of shows and/or workshops) or funding (the payment of which involves free presentations, workshops, and events with free admission) (Image 2).

Thus, economic earnings must support the group's headquarters and their own survival as individuals. Members must often engage in some work outside the group to ensure a minimum income. This reveals the presence of their social precariousness as such earnings fail to provide a life without deprivation. Although economic earnings fail to constitute the only difficulty these artists experience, they offer a powerful indicator to the constant lack of guarantee of their rights.

⁵ Future research will address the litigation with the Suzano city hall that displaced the group from Suzano to Mairiporã since this study has another focus.

Image 2 — Daniele Santana in Cícera—Contadores de Mentira,
Galpão Arthur Neto, Mogi das Cruzes, Brazil



Source: Jacqueline D'Angelo, 2023

In fact, participants' narrative in the chosen interview evinces an individual effort to maintain their work due to the gap in public policies toward these workers. As Daniele Santana explains, the remuneration everyone receives serves, in many cases, to maintain their work because, according to her, “when [...] there is no resource coming from a public notice, the other alternative is for you to invest in what would be your own resources. So, if we made money as a worker, it is from this resource that we will contribute again to the work. This happens a lot” (Daniele Santana, interview with Contadores de Mentira, 2022). Therefore, using their individual income to maintain their headquarters or create new shows evinces the precariousness regarding work maintenance and their commitment to support their work.

However, artistic groups living in precariousness constitutes a known fact given the economic situation of most Brazilians. This case shows that, despite such precariousness, these artists continuously reject a more comfortable life in favor of the meaning, values, and concepts of art in their creations.

In the way just indicated, a broad cultural vision that offers a keen critical sense to these participants supports such ethics. Although some have no higher education, these attentive readers have a large literary, artistic, philosophical, and social repertoire. Rather than popular artists with little literacy, these people undergo an intense process of continuing education that is closely linked to activism.

Kaique Calisto states that the process of creating the shows incited him into activism. He says: “So, the very works that I began to enter in put me in situations of understanding and search for political and social understanding. In short, several layers. That is where I started to enter activism” (Kaique Calisto, interview with Contadores de Mentira, 2022). Fed back by activism, the process of reflection unfolds itself in their creations. In fact, their engagement in identity agendas, especially against racism and LGBTphobia, furthers the reflection of the group that configures a pillar of what we call the ethics of creation.



This seems to characterize the type of group formation of which Contadores de Mentira is the protagonist: art necessitates a broader training beyond the communication and social media. A visible impact of artistic performances on group members refers to their highly cultivated sensitivity based on their political, cultural, and artistic background. If this continuous reflection constitutes a pillar of such ethics of creation, another founding element of such a practice of conduct refers to the community element⁶.

The members are adamant regarding this. First because they reject the idea that creation depends on or even benefits from difficulties. Cleiton Pereira states: “We quickly learned that tensions are not welcome” (Cleiton Pereira, interview with Contadores de Mentira, 2022). Second, what interests the artistic collective is related to the production of a collective and community subjectivity. Contadores de Mentira concerns itself with the multiplier effects of artistic actions. According to their concept of creation: “I think this is the world that interests us the most, you know? The possibility of contagion, epidemic almost that ‘look, it is possible. It is possible to produce. It is possible to make your own community spin’” (Cleiton Pereira, interview with Contadores de Mentira, 2022).

These elements — continuous reflection and community subjectivity—shape in themselves the meaning of an ethics of creation for this collective. Rather than a matter of defending the idea that they neither endure precariousness nor that it fails to influence their ways of creating; this paradox evinces a reflexive and political effort—especially in their search to have their work reverberate across their community—that upholds the integrity of this group regarding its ethical and political values (exemplified by the notions of reflection and community subjectivity).

3 Trupi di Trapu and choice as a political act

The Trupi di Trapu group was created in 2008 in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. It researches and predominantly creates animated theater shows. Its members also hold workshops, seminars, and community activities in Quilombo do Sopapo, in which they carry out rehearsals and make their puppets.

The group also performed with puppets for television from 2008 to 2013 at Pandorga, promoted by Televisão Educativa. In the theatrical sphere, their shows evince research on traditional manifestations, such as hand puppets and the playwriting related to *mamulengo*, and contemporary techniques — such as the collective animation of a single puppet or actors. Their chosen themes

6 Rather than exploring the relationship between the collective and the municipality—as in the specialized literature on Group Theater in Brazil [see, for example, Campos and Santos (2016) or Carreira (2009)] or on the relationship of performance with the municipality or urban spaces [as in Carvalho and Veloso (2021)]; we aim to investigate the ethical relationship with the surrounding community as a motto for the type of relationship established within the social precariousness of the group and their surroundings.



are related to emerging social issues, such as gender and ethnic-racial and social relationships. Even when working with a more traditional dramaturgy, the group chooses to adapt their scenes to question its audience. For example, at the end of *As Aventuras do Palhaço Sebastião* (The Adventures of Sebastian the Clown) (2023), a medieval play in which the king promises the hand of the princess to whomever defeats the dragon that plagues the kingdom, the princess poses the question: “has anyone asked me whether I want to get married?” The play ends with a great celebration without a wedding.

Founded by Anderson Borges Gonçalves, the group has had many configurations and participant changes. Our interview included Anderson, Viviane Marmitt, and Leandro Silva but the group may have other participants, depending on the project. Thus, each project has specific demands that are solved collaboratively (as, for example, in “Bandelete”—image 3). Anderson explains that, at each show, members have full autonomy to manage the demands. He says: “Now, for example, we have a project for a new show. I am working on the production, and it is a show in which I will not be on stage. In others, I am on stage. Things are brought to collective management” (Anderson Borges Gonçalves, interview with Trupi di Trapu, 2022). Some decisions that have been analyzed by those who make the production are presented to the group, pondering deadlines and budgets and often directing them to possible solutions that considers everyone’s context.

Image 3 — Viviane Marmitt and Juliano Félix in *Bandelete*, Trupi di Trapu, Teatro de Arena, Porto Alegre, Brazil



Source: Gabriela Baraibar, 2021

Collective management also extends to sharing earnings. Participants told of a phase in which they lived with what was billed at the box office, which became unmanageable. So, they started working with government notices and contracts for specific work in companies or campaigns financed by the government—such as vaccination campaigns. In addition to these strategies, each member has activities outside the group.

All members of Trupi di Trapu have a higher education degree and some exercise a profession together with their work with the group. Pedagogy, theater, law, and letters exemplify their areas of training, which could give these artists a different economic and social status. However, they unanimously state that they would support themselves solely by their group work without batting



an eyelid if they could do so. Viviane says that she teaches in public education but that she would renounce this stability if it were possible. For now, she requested a reduction in her workload to have more time to dedicate to the group's activities. Note her awareness that their work of creation requires a specific involvement for a satisfactory result in the dimension of technique and in their personal surrender to the process. Working with the Theater is the choice of the interviewees. Precariousness manifests itself in the conditions of development of this choice, which necessitate other sources of income. Image 4 shows another of the collective's shows.

Image 4 — Ajeff Ghenes in *Trapos e Farrapos: Negrinho*, Trupi di Trapu, Festivale, Rolante, Brazil



Source: Joseph Ponciano, 2023

In addition to the activities that guarantee their livelihood, the group's participants also undertake individual projects, such as Leandro, who is currently doing a PhD on the implications of the cyborg on human life and contemporary artistic creation. Leandro chose his PhD after completing his master's degree, which described a case study of theater groups in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, that opted for contemporary approaches in animation theater (Silva, 2019). At the time of his master's degree, he wrote an article on the contributions of puppetry to the formation of contemporary dancers (Silva, 2018). Such individual actions feed the group's repertoire because such research creates workshops, seminars, and experiments that are disseminated and shared in their contact networks.

As in the introduction of this text, the notion of poverty dispenses with misery or precarious living conditions. All members have housing, food, leisure, etc.—conditions above the average Brazilian population. They might have had better conditions if they had followed their academic training as they find it difficult to maintain themselves in artistic action. They also lack neither entrepreneurship nor work since it is what they do most (in view of the production of their shows).

The condition of the group is related to the notion of poverty in Sen (2000), concerning the deprivation of full development of their capabilities if they worked exclusively with art. Such a meaning is related to one of the implications that philosophy poses to the question of choice: the problem of freedom. That is, “[...] the important choice is not between good and evil, but between



choosing and not choosing” (Abbagnano, 2007, p. 345, free translation). From this point of view, choice guarantees the movement of furthering, defining, and expanding, whereas neither choosing nor being able to act on the choice withers capabilities. The ethics guiding the members of the group aims to sustain their choice for their desire, bearing the burdens of what this represents in southern Brazil. The onus would exactly refer to the act of choosing out of limiting possibilities or not that which best meets the demands of the group’s creative processes and its context since the group is sometimes included in public notices (and some processes may have greater investment), whereas other times more greatly evince their precariousness. Even with this seesaw of situations, participants continue to reaffirm their desire to remain in the field of theatrical art.

Based on the perspective of another philosophical implication of choice, it is impossible to choose not to be what one is. Choosing “[...] what one already is and cannot not be” (Abbagnano, 2007, p. 345) eliminates the very idea of choice or that of the possibility of choosing something for which there only remains acceptance. Based on this perspective, the members of the group are coherent with themselves and accept who they are, accepting the impossibility of being anything other than artists.

Regardless of whether we take the problematization by the first or the second philosophical dimension of the problems of choice, two conformations are perceptible in the ethical conduct of the members of the Trupi di Trapu regarding their work.

The first one refers to personal history: interviewees reported an experience with puppet theater they had throughout their development that was remarkable enough to shape their choice to work, prioritize, and delve into the area. All could reconstruct and narrate this experience in detail and, at the end, stated having found something they could no longer abandon. The second conformation concerns the development of the meaning of such experiences, i.e., the search to further develop their art developed an awareness in them about the importance of artistic making. Anderson evidences this idea when he says:

I had to understand the process of personal maturity, cast it into the professional because then the story of Trupi di Trapu is my story of maturation as a man, as a professional, as a Black man. I discover myself throughout this trajectory, which will guide the themes and aesthetic choices and repertoire, which we have more and more. Today, for me, I know what makes sense and what does not make sense on a scene and how to link this to the idea that we need to make a living from our work, we need to value our work (Anderson Borges Gonçalves, interview with Trupi di Trapu, 2022).

This discourse reveals that the notion that Trupi di Trapu’s productions have financial value. After all, making money is essential in the world in which we live. However, participants also have the awareness of the imbricated cultural value in their proposal and production that is full of contradictions and of ways of seeing the world in their artistic productions and creative processes. This choice imposes itself on their actions and makes interviewees continue to find meaning in being a group. Their choice constitutes a political act.



4 Rede Espiralar Encruza and the ethics of reciprocity

Rede Espiralar Encruza is a collective of Black artists that, according to its members, seeks to blur temporalities and perform life in our present. It was articulated by the process of creating the show *Sobrevivo - antes que o baile acabe* (I survive - before the dance is over) (2019), the dramaturgy of which stemmed from the experiences of the cast, combining performance and audiovisual languages.

In 2020, a group of young artists, who had created together, decided to perform as Espiralar Encruza, strengthening bonds and producing performances and artistic actions on several platforms, including a poetic documentary about the process of creating the aforementioned show. In 2020 and 2021, Rede, with a few more female guests, got together to promote the Espiralar residency, having, as a resulting work, the short film *Será que fica pronto a tempo?* (Will it be ready in time?) (2021).

Since then, the collective has produced art at the intersection of theater, dance, performance, and video. Currently, Espiralar is responsible for one of the spaces of the Usina das Artes public notice, which provides continuous groups with work and presentation rooms at Casa D in Porto Alegre. The group works, as the others in this research, cooperatively, producing works that are not supported by the collection of their box office, depending on public funds that partially subsidize the production needs of new works without, however, guaranteeing the maintenance of participants.

The roots of the ethics of a networked collectivity, as per our conversation with Espiralar, stem from a mode of relationship that is shaped in plurality. This is due to the racial characteristic of the collective, a group of young Black people producing Black performance today. The alluded notion of “Black performance” corresponds to the one in Silva and Peixoto (2022, p. 2), according to which “[...] Black Performance [is] not a manifestation of the exotic but [...] a political and aesthetic movement that, together with the Black Movement, rises up in favor of the dignity and citizenship of the Black population.”

Such plurality can engender an ethics of reciprocity as a principle and power of the very relationships within the network. In the words of Gabriel Farias, a Rede member:

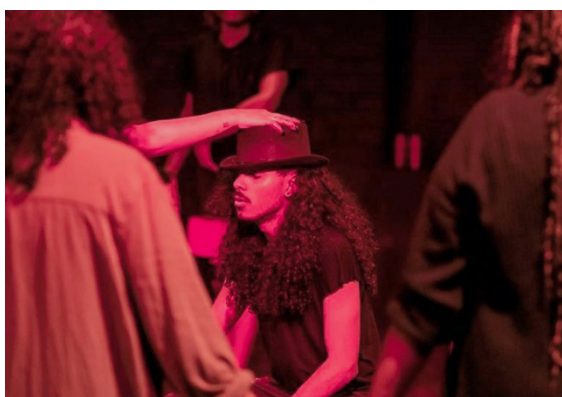
[...] we thought ‘Okay, network of artists’—this idea of the network, having several threads that grow and carry on, meet and carry on. So, this image of the network, if we think about it, it holds, sustains what can be a person resting, a play, or an idea. So we identify ourselves like this, as a network of artists, a network of Black artists who create [...] (Gabriel Farias, interview with Rede Espiralar Encruza, 2023).

Thinking about the notion of network and the fused meanings of plurality, entanglement, and mutuality can draw a parallel with the notion of confluence the *Quilombola* thinker Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2019, p. 68) defended: “[c]onfluence is the law that governs the relationship of



coexistence between the elements of nature, and teaches us that not everything that comes together is mixed, that is, nothing is the same.” Transposing this metaphor to the work of the group, their strength and greatness (as the power of the actions and the ethical support by the collective) avoids seeking to equalize (as in making differences disappear, in seeing oneself subsumed at work or in relationships with others in the collectivity), looking for the singularities that pulsate and occur in their non-equality or, in other words, in the profusion and diversity of bodies, thoughts, and practices. Thus, the idea of network has to do with the perception of participants regarding the multiplicity of experiences of the group members and their collaborative relationship regarding ideas, skills, possibilities. Image 5 shows one of the collective’s works.

Image 5 — Phill, in *Sobrevivo, antes que o baile acabe*, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

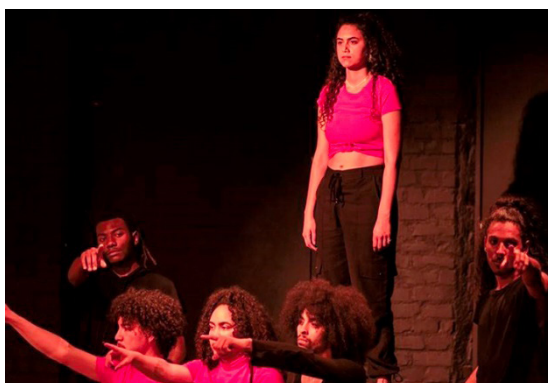


Source: Moisés Nobre, 2019

Therefore, in the way the collective thinks of this network, includes the idea of crossroads, i.e., by the way in which paths and experiences meet and intersect in the practices of the network. Being in a network is sharing knowledge, practices, ideas from multiple dimensions and references. On the other hand, this endeavor precisely aims to enhance the singularities that guide the group’s work rather than leading to a common term for all.

According to this, Rede Espiralar Encruza constitutes a process in which the collectivity offers a space for sharing and differentiation — exalting the individual riches that are brought to the processes. As Mayara Marques, an interviewee, says: “we are not all the same, we do not always agree, we are not one thing, we come together because we understand the power of *aquilombamento* and collectivity in our lives and artistic practices” (Mayara Marques, interview with Rede Espiralar Encruza, 2023). Image 6 illustrates a Rede Espiralar work.

Image 6 — From left to right: Gabi Faryas, Esly Ramão, Leticia Guimarães, Cira Dias, Maya Marqz (standing), and Phill. *Sobrevivo, antes que o baile acabe*, UFRGS, Porto Alegre, Brazil



Source: Moisés Nobre, 2020

Consequently, such ethics of reciprocity refers to dimensions such as *quilombismo* (Nascimento, 2019), crossroads (Martins, 2021; Rufino, 2019), and the erasures, demerits, and invisibilizations of structural racism (Almeida, 2020) toward Black bodies, which are intertwined in these elements since these dimensions have elements that permeate Black bodies and subjectivities by ancestral heritages such as *quilombismo* and crossroads and the colonial legacy of racism that dehumanizes these bodies. Unsurprisingly, this collective consists of young Black artists for whom notions such as *aquilombamento* adduce ways of existing, coexisting, and organizing that have certain Black civilizational values as their aegis (Trindade, 2013, p. 132). Such values of Afro-Brazilian ancestry, and, in this case, of *quilombismo* (Nascimento, 2019), refer to forms of coexistence linked to communitarianism/cooperativism as a way of organizing and maintaining Black lives.

In turn, the dimension of the crossroads, also originating in Black knowledge, offers a space of dispersion, gathering, diversity, and horizontal relationships and inclusion as a principle and foundation. For Martins (2021) and Rufino (2019), the space of the crossroads is one that has no place for univocal syntheses, answers, and/or choices. A place of conflict (unlike combat in the sense of the destruction of the Other), this space/time as a crossroads configures the place of respect for the Other (rather than acceptance that tolerates. An understanding the nature of indispensability of this Other), precisely the opposite of what the racist relationship establishes with Black subjects by considering their lives as non-human and disposable. Thus, the work of the network (which is also *networked*) is directly related to the meeting of ideas, skills, and possibilities each member brings to the collectivity. A radical ethics of reciprocity as a conjunction of differences that act in favor of creative practices. This ethic connects the members of Rede Espiral Encruza to each other and to their work as it is food and support for their productions.

Performer Mayara Marques clearly explains the crossroads as follows:

[...] because we find ourselves from various researches but also from the research of the crossroads, of the encounter, of the street, of the paths, and both one concept and the other, no matter how discordant or very similar they may be,



they start from different places and find themselves in some way in us, in what we seek [...] (Mayara Marques, interview with Rede Espiralar Encruza, 2023).

After all, this notion of crossroads supports a reciprocal relationship between collective participants. For us, this reciprocity consists of a kind of ethics in which plurality offers the strength to collectively face precariousness, supporting an intertwined way of creating: at the same time dispersed in movements that spiral and intersect in and with their diverse and singular knowledge.

5 Ethics of creation against precariousness

This study sought to describe the ethical choices of each group, which, as we perceive them, are related to the mitigation of the limitations due to precariousness in the three researched groups. Contact with these collectives evinced the effort of these artists to swim against a tide of lack of political will and scarce resources and investment in the Brazilian culture. Such unromanticized effort and the set of practices, investments, and artistic elaborations of each group seem to include what we called “the ethics of creation” in the face of their precarious situations. Ethics that also constitute political forms of facing precariousness in their specificities.

The example of Contadores de Mentira evinces that the set of efforts they implemented is joined by a community ethic that can place at the center of such efforts the concerns with the Other, i.e., with the group that surrounds the theatrical headquarters and the community. Community ethics means favoring this Other that constitutes the territory in which they work and the conviction that theatrical work is greater than the spectacle, moving in the relationship between group and community.

In Trupi di Trapu, we observe the very choice to continue working with theater as an ethical/political act. From the collective management in the production of their shows (which rotates roles within the group) to the acting, costumes, direction, production of stage materials, and their very posture in the face of precariousness, the collective remains united in affirming the choice of doing theater as a political act. This element defines the ethical conduct of its members. Working with theater and composing the collective, rather than meaning a lack of options, constitutes a political engagement with work, giving meaning to its practices and, therefore, resignifying its choices. Group work, despite the precariousness, constitutes a decision imbued with the certainty of the importance of their actions.

Rede Espiralar Encruza clearly configures an ethics of plurality in which elements such as *quilombismo* and crossroads make collective work possible. Singularity configures the power to create and be together, constituting a policy of resistance and production of life; just as *quilombos* were for the Black ancestry in the time-space of enslavement and, therefore, currently offer references of ways of life for the network.



However, the operation that exemplifies the relationship between each group and its different ethics, namely, the communitarian in Contadores de Mentira, choice as a political act in Trupi di Trapu, and plurality in Rede Espiralar Encruza, serve merely didactic purposes in our research. These collectives revolve around similar ethics because they adduce political practices: the community as a common goal, choice as a political act, and plurality as a form of organization and creation. Such modes of existence show well how the ethical posture constitutes a kind of resistance to precariousness together with activism. This means a struggle from this inflection point, which we call the ethics of creation. A fight against the demobilization of culture and art. This happens in the face of the fact that

[...] instead of noticing an increase in the quantity and quality of the promotion of the cultural production network (production-distribution-exchange-consumption), there is an effort to deactivate the elements of this chain, impacting not only the people involved (artists, producers, curators, and the public), but also undoing ideas, proposals, and actions (Monteiro; Greiner, 2020, p. 3).

Hence the importance of such creation ethics including political activism. In the realm of political thought, activism invariably refers to actions by individuals or collectives that seek to ensure that subjects can act in their own way and exist and manifest themselves as a singularity or *identity* belonging to a set amidst the diverse and the collective. Although it may sound redundant, this research deems action as a peculiar type of activity — unlike labor and work, to take advantage of the categories from Hannah Arendt's (2016) famous "The Human Condition" — that enables subjects to assert themselves in their own existence and appropriate their own happening, i.e., being able to inscribe and orient themselves according to their conscience in a historical-social narrative composed in common (in the joint appreciation of differences and their apprehension by a general denomination) rather than of a common (as adherence to a whole, which would recognize the singular forms as part of the same identity).

In fact, ethics precisely refers to the modality by which singularity can be assumed and recognized as such, configuring only one among countless — which, to be so (each in its own way), must establish a common (even if in an uncommon) form of habitation, coexistence, and co-participation in the world.

Nevertheless, the space of action (especially, in our case, against precariousness) can be taken, in the strong sense of the word political as an adjective of action, as an open space delimited by ethics and filled by the *whatever*. In the judgment of another contemporary political thinker, Giorgio Agamben (2013, p. 64), the *whatever* designates "a singularity that is finite and, nonetheless, indeterminable according to a concept"; "the event of an outside", an exteriority that would be at the door, a "being-*within* an outside" (Agamben, 2013, p.64, emphasis added).

Up to this point, the problem of poverty seems to first concern the idea that society comprises a static structure that would absorb — following current *a priori* principles that undoubtedly follow economics — the belonging or not of subjects to its form of functioning and organization (as if



this entity called society were to determine the power or impotence of its coreligionists). *Mutatis mutandi*, poverty would represent a decisive factor and maintainer of the social order. Recognizing oneself in a situation of poverty would thus already configure a form of activism.

This understanding outlines the activism, struggles, resistance to precariousness, and identity agendas of the studied collectives by recognizing the singularity of belonging to similar singularities. The meaning of the ethics of creation only persists if the form of cohabitation and coexistence coincides with the “totality of its possibilities,” as per Giorgio Agamben (2013, p. 63).

In short, our research understands the notion of ethics of creation in contexts of social precariousness as operative functions in the performative practices of the three collectives. Sustained by action, these artists undertake resistances that are expressed in communitarianism, choices, and reciprocities.



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