MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW 11.645/08 IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN RIO DE JANEIRO

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Abstract

As part of affirmative actions targeting racial inequality, Brazil introduced educational Laws 10.639 in 2003 and 11.645 in 2008, which oblige every school in the country to teach African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture. The black movement regards the reform as an important step towards the deconstruction of the ‘racial democracy’-myth and the reparation of injustices caused by the country’s colonial history, slavery and its branqueamento (whitening) immigration policies. By exploring the scope and limitations of different approaches to the implementation of Law 11.645/08, this thesis adds a new angle to the discussion about the effectiveness of multicultural education and its relevance in the creation of a person’s attitude towards racism and cultural difference.

For my fieldwork I spent a year in the city of Rio de Janeiro and its Northern metropolitan area Baixada Fluminense, locating spaces in which institutions, groups and individuals work on the implementation of the law: I carried out research in two very distinct public high schools, two teacher education courses offered by public institutions and with various social activists, students and education professionals. Exploring the trajectories not only of individuals who are active in the implementation process but the profiles of two very distinct school districts, offers an analysis of Brazilian race relations through the lens of the socio-educational context. Different approaches to the law’s implementation from various positions of economic, symbolic, cultural or political capital all have a different effect on those involved in the implementation process and open up different conceptual and strategic questions. Such insights contribute to our understanding of how social policies, as well as ethnic-racial education, can be applied in a meaningful way to various educational contexts and to the design of further affirmative action policies, particularly those categorising and targeting certain ethnic-racial groups.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Introduction

Some of the first things that come to most foreigners’ minds when they think about Rio de Janeiro are the beaches, carnival, samba music, colourful favelas (historically informal neighbourhoods, mostly shanty towns) on hillsides, and often the figure of the sensual mulata. Most tourists who come to the city stay in the wealthy area Zona Sul (South Zone), close to the Copacabana and Ipanema beaches. From there, an air-conditioned subway takes them to the city centre to explore the historic sights and the museums, as well as to the Maracanã stadium to watch football and the market São Cristóvão in the Zona Norte (Northern Zone), where they can buy food and artefacts that are typical in the North-east of Brazil. Those who have enough time take a ferry boat to the municipality of Niterói to visit the Museum of Contemporary Art, and other buildings built by famous architect Oscar Niemeyer; and the more adventurous ones jump on a local train to Bonsucesso in the Zona Norte to take the cable car that connects various favelas of Complexo do Alemão1 and take pictures from above. During the Olympic Games in 2016, many tourists also travelled to the sport arenas in the Zona Oeste (Western Zone), on a subway line that opened just in time for the mega event.

Compared to its size, tourists are encouraged to move in a very small part of the city (see Figure 1 on the next page). Surrounding municipalities (apart from Niterói), such as Duque de Caxias, Belford Roxo or Nova Iguaçu in an area called Baixada Fluminense, seem to be off-limits. Most cariocas (the inhabitants of the city of Rio de Janeiro) scoff at the idea of living further north than the São Cristóvão neighbourhood, let alone of going to the Baixada Fluminense for any reason.

It is thus clear that in Rio de Janeiro centre-periphery dynamics do not only apply to the city’s relationship with its favelas, but also to its relationship with the metropolitan areas. While the Baixada Fluminense is systematically positioned at Rio de Janeiro’s periphery, in this thesis I intentionally place the area, and in particular the municipality of Belford Roxo, at the centre of interest; as a vantage point from which social and racial relations in Brazil, as well as the dynamics and micro-politics of anti-racist education can be explored.

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1 Complexo do Alemão is a neighbourhood that consists of various favelas.
This thesis will look at various spaces in which educational Law 11.645/08 is actively being implemented in one way or another and at the implications and relevance of different approaches to anti-racist education in the classroom and beyond. Law 11.645/08 made compulsory the teaching of African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture in every public and private primary and secondary school in the country. From August 2015 to August 2016, I spent twelve months doing fieldwork in the municipality of Belford Roxo and the neighbouring city of Rio de Janeiro, following the law’s implementation in two public high schools, a public university class, a research group based in the Baixada Fluminense and Rio de Janeiro. There are three intersecting factors that clearly distinguish the municipality of the state-run high school Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH), my main field site in Belford Roxo, from the municipality of my second field site, federal high school Colégio Pedro II in the Northern Zone of Rio de Janeiro: the racial composition, income and unemployment, and religious denomination of the school and the local population. As we
will see throughout the thesis, all of these factors have an impact on the way multicultural education plays out.

In Brazil, racism stratifies the population along skin colour and influences life chances in a way that is particularly affecting Afro-Brazilians (Hordge-Freeman, 2013: 1508; see Telles, 2004). Throughout Brazil, black people find themselves in a situation of racial and social inequality and experience marginalisation in areas such as income and employment, education, infant mortality, healthcare, literacy and safety, which is reflected in various official and unofficial statistics (Htun, 2004; Law & Phillips & Turney, 2004; Telles, 2004; Caldwell, 2007; Paixão et al., 2008; Hernández 2011; Da Costa, 2016a).

Socio-economic disparities between the white and the black population manifest themselves in residential patterns: whereas the city centre and the wealthy area Zona Sul are predominantly inhabited by white middle-class Brazilians, the colour composition of the population darkens with the increasing distance to the city centre. Nevertheless, there is also a considerable black population living in the *favelas* located in Zona Sul. In the national census of 2010, 66.59% of the inhabitants of Belford Roxo declared themselves as black (*pardo* or *preto*, see below) and 32.35% as white, compared to 47.96% of *cariocas* who declared themselves as black and 51.18% who declared themselves as white. In both municipalities only 0.1% of the population declared to be indigenous (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2011b). In Belford Roxo, where the majority of the population declare themselves to be black, the median monthly salary is 2.3 times the minimum salary, compared to 4.1 minimum salaries in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2011c).

Afro-descendants also constitute a disproportionate number of victims of violence (Vargas 2005; Santos, 2006; Cano, 2010; Rocha, 2012; Amnesty International, 2015; Mitchell-Walthour, 2017). Researchers and social activists see violence against blacks as the most severe effect of racial discrimination in Brazil, as a “war on the black and the poor” disguised as a “war on drugs and crime”. Anistia Internacional Brasil reports that in 2012 54% of victims of homicides in Brazil were between the ages of 15 and 29, of which 77% were black. Furthermore, the organisation published a report, which revealed that more than 25% of the killings were done by police (Anistia Internacional Brasil, 2018). In the case of Rio de Janeiro, the majority of homicides are found in favelas and in the Baixada Fluminense, which in 2017 counted twice as many homicides per 100 000 inhabitants than the city of Rio de Janeiro.
Vargas (2010) speaks of the genocide of black communities and argues that genocide can be the physical extinction of a group of people, the biological prevention of birth within a group, but also the cultural destruction (cf. Kuper, 1981: 30-31; Palmer, 1992: 1-6; Totten & Parsons & Hitchcock, 2002: 57), the expropriation of a targeted group’s means of economic survival, and the prohibition of its language, religion, social and/or political practices.\(^2\) The erasure of indigenous, African and Afro-Brazilian perspectives and experiences from official historiography can be attributed to the latter.

Apart from racial discrimination in the public sphere, Mitchell-Walthour (2017) stresses the importance of shedding light on discrimination in the private sphere, which affects black women disproportionately. Osjui (2013) and Hordge-Freeman (2013) have found that families are a key site of racial socialisation. Many families disapprove when one of their members chooses an Afro-Brazilian partner, whereas black women with African features or dark skin experience the most prejudice and are viewed as less suitable marriage partners (Caldwell, 2007). Within families, children are often treated differently according to the colour of their skin. Often, parents show lighter-skinned children more affection, invest more in them and praise their physical features more (Hordge-Freeman, 2015; Rangel, 2015). In Chapter 3, I will come back to this topic.

The significance of religious denomination and its connection to social politics had not caught my attention before entering the field. Once I started talking to academics and social activists working in the field of multicultural education, I repeatedly heard concerns about the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches and their often quite recessive views on social politics with regard to women’s, LGBTQ or ethnic-racial minorities’ rights. Brazil has been a traditionally Catholic country. Whereas the municipality of Rio de Janeiro partly reflects this with 52% of its population declaring to be Catholic, in Belford Roxo Catholics only make up 33.24% of the population. There, evangelical churches have the biggest following: 38%. In Rio de Janeiro, evangelicals “only” make up 24% of people with religious confessions (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2011c). In fact, Pentecostal Christians are the fastest growing religious group in Brazil. It is striking that their followers are among the poorest and least educated people with the darkest skin colour. They are more likely to

\(^2\) The idea that cultural assimilation is a form of genocide departs from many accepted definitions of genocide. Kuper (1985) argues in favour of the use of various different concepts, such as ethnocide, cultural genocide, selective genocide among others, as different types of genocide require different prevention strategies. Defining the term ‘genocide’ has been a difficult task, as a definition cannot be so inclusive that it will lose its significance, and it cannot be so exclusive that it will fail to protect certain groups of people (Totten & Parsons & Hitchcock, 2002).
work as domestic workers or in other low-wage sectors than the average for the Brazilian population (Kramer, 2005: 99). Religion constantly flared up as a topic at CENH in Belford Roxo and in Chapter 5 I will look at the role religion plays in multicultural education in Brazil in more detail.

**Tracing social change through the socio-educational lens**

In the late 1990s, Brazil started to introduce affirmative action policies tackling the disadvantaged position of black and indigenous people in society based on the principle of redistribution along the lines of race/ethnicity, of which the most prominent were racial quotas in public universities. In 2003, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Worker’s Party) signed Law 10.639/03, which made compulsory the teaching of African, Afro-Brazilian history and culture in every public and private primary and secondary school in the country. In 2008, the law was amended (by Law 11.645/08) to include indigenous history and culture.

However, more than a decade after the law was signed, many educational institutions have not started working with the law yet or have done so in a rather tokenistic way. This is symptomatic of Latin American countries: similarly to Brazil, various countries have a rather sophisticated legislative body protecting the rights of historically marginalised groups. However, the gap between legislation and effective implementation is vast. The lack of centralised data collection on implementation efforts of Law 11.645/08 complicates a systematic analysis of the implementation process. The vast majority of literature on the law is produced in the field of education; often by Brazilian researchers with first-hand teaching experience and concerned with methodological questions with regard to the law’s implementation. When it comes to anthropological studies on multicultural education in Brazil, publications on indigenous and bilingual education dominate. There also is a significant body of anthropological literature on race relations and education in Brazil focussing on African descendants. Racial inequalities and their connection to academic performance, and discriminatory pedagogical practices have been discussed, such as the silencing of racial discrimination (Gonçalves, 1985; da Silva, 2012). Moreover, there has been

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1 The term ‘affirmative action’ describes policies that are specifically designed for certain categories of people to eliminate or reduce class, racial, gender, and other discriminations and to assure access to social justice for everyone. They seek to address a range of social exclusions that are manifested culturally, economically, politically and psychologically (Telles, 2004: 16). Contrary to the Anglophone use of the term, in Brazil, affirmative actions is used in the plural and refers only to a quota system in student admissions and public service hiring (Lehmann, 2016: 181).
a focus on the construction of black identity, the educational dimension of the black movement, the overlap between social and racial inequalities, as well as racial quotas (Anderson-Levitt, 2013). With regard to Law 11.645/08, anthropological literature is scarce. Nilma Lino Gomes (2008; 2009) and Kabengele Munanga (2015) stand out; they both focus on the first version of the law and explore how African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture are structurally excluded from knowledge production. The role indigenous people play in the implementation of Law 11.645/08 has represented a gap in anthropological research with the notable exception of work by Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (2016) and Maria da Penha da Silva (2010; 2013); and the topic has been widely ignored by other disciplines (except for some publications in the field of education, see Silva & Silva, 2013 or Russo & Paladin, 2016, among others). A peculiarity of publications on the implementation of Law 11.645/08 is that authors tend to focus either on the experiences of Afro-Brazilians or of indigenous people as well as the relationship between one of these social groups and the dominant society (with the large majority focusing on African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture). However, they do not explore similarities and differences these groups experience in the implementation process nor do they position them in the context of ethnic-racial relations in Brazilian society.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the multiplicity of voices and approaches to the implementation of Law 11.645/08 and the relevance of these implementation processes in the making of a person’s identity and attitude towards racism. The anthropological approach allows me to ethnographically and conceptually capture various ways in which this social policy is interpreted, executed or ignored. Looking at teachers’, students’, educational professionals’ and social activists’ active and passive participation in the implementation process allows for a thorough understanding of difficulties and opportunities, conflicts and synergies that Law 11.645/08 provokes. On the one hand, regarding the advocates of the law as agents of social change and positioning them at the centre of my research allows me to track the implementation process from the law being put on paper to its interpretations being enacted in school and other educational spaces. On the other hand, exploring the trajectories not only of individuals who are active in the implementation process but the profiles of two very distinct school districts, offers an analysis of Brazilian race relations through the lens of the socio-educational context. Such insights contribute to our understanding of how social policies can be applied in a meaningful way to various
educational contexts and to the design of further affirmative action policies, particularly those categorising and targeting certain ethnic-racial groups. In this regard, I strongly agree with Apple (2009) and Silva (1999a; 1999b) who consider the school curriculum as a selective social construct in which knowledge and praxis are produced in a specific historic and political context, which turns it into a battlefield where the legitimacy of knowledge, claims about truth, the concentration of power and the formation of identity can be negotiated. The Brazilian curriculum is built on a Eurocentric tradition, through which the most dominant social groups express their vision of the world and their social project. Moreover, it is a social space in which meanings and interpretations of the world circulate and are consumed, adding significantly to the construction of social and cultural identities. I will argue that while diversity in approaches to the law’s implementation is welcome and necessary in order for it to constitute a democratic process, only initiatives that question the curriculum and traditional knowledge production as a whole go beyond a tokenistic discussion of racism and race relations in Brazil and have a transformative effect on identity formation and a decolonising effect on knowledge production. Moreover, by examining different approaches to the law’s implementation and the way they are influenced by personal trajectories and attitudes, in this thesis I will argue that racism as well as other types of oppression are not simply a question of awareness, knowledge or motive, which can be unlearnt, but rather an issue of structural position. Whereas this argument by itself might put the meaningfulness of multicultural education at least partly into question, my research determinedly argues that Law 11.645/08 is not only a symbolic tool but successfully creates spaces of empowerment and mobilisation of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian identities.

While this thesis is concerned with the way a multicultural educational reform is put into practice, it is, nonetheless, significantly about identity. In this thesis I will clearly demonstrate that identity formation is a crucial aspect contributing to the meaningfulness of Law 11.645/08. The valorisation of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian identity and culture, facilitated by the multicultural education reform, is regarded as an essential step towards the reduction of racism and a more equal society (Hofbauer, 1995). One of the recurrent themes in the document accompanying the law, the National Directives for the Teaching of Ethnic and Race Relations and of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DCNERER), is to challenge popular beliefs that deny the magnitude of racial inequality in the country, built on Brazil’s history of ‘whitening’ (branqueamento) and ‘racial democracy’ ideologies (see
Chapter 1). Through the significant political-epistemic challenges they make to the systematic denial of racism, anti-racist policy reforms and Law 11.645/08 in particular break with this history (Da Costa, 2016). In the DCNERER document this discourse also revolves around the term citizenship: The main goals of the law are to ensure that the distribution and production of knowledge and the shaping of attitudes and values form citizens who are proud of their ethnic-racial belonging, so that everyone can be integrated into a democratic nation where everybody’s rights and identity are equally valued (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2004). As such, Law 11.645/08 pushes the purpose of education in a pluralistic world beyond the preparation of citizens into workers of the global economy and positions critical consciousness at its core. In what way do discussions arising in the context of Law 11.645/08 and its implementation about race and ethnic-racial identity flare up and what does this teach us about ethnic-racial relations in Brazil more broadly? In this thesis, I will particularly address the role of white allies, intersectional discrimination in the educational sphere (Chapter 3), the relationship between indigenous and black activists as well as religious identity (Chapter 4) and the role of religious congregations in the classroom and the anti-racist struggle (Chapter 5).

Multiculturalist policies

Responding to claims from indigenous and black populations, in the 1990s, many Latin American countries have shifted towards state multiculturalism, developing cultural and identity politics and contrasting previous class-based initiatives. In Brazil, Lula da Silva’s inauguration as president represented a time in which ethno-racial policies and multicultural reforms started to take on a more substantial form. Similarly to Modood (2013), I use the term ‘multiculturalism’ to refer to political strategies aiming at social equality by addressing the diversity of a state’s population and by identifying and acknowledging different cultural, ethnic, national and religious groups.\(^4\) The term multiculturalism, thus, designates a state rhetoric in the form of a political programme aiming to provide everyone with equal opportunities and revise exclusionary practices or, as Modood (2013: 5) puts it, to designate “the political accommodation of minorities” within a nation state. Lehmann (2016: 179) adds that multiculturalism is a “politics of recognition”, which takes the form of not only public

\(^4\) In public discourse the term ‘multiculturalism’ is often used to refer to and celebrate a culturally and ethnically diverse society.
policy, but of a range of more intangible initiatives that are meant to redress the cultural and political balance between hegemonic cultures and subordinate populations. More than just guaranteeing civil and political rights for all citizens, the idea behind multiculturalist policies is, thus, to publicly recognise and support minorities and allow for them to enhance and share their cultural heritage, language and epistemologies.

An overwhelming majority of authors connect multiculturalism to the rise of neoliberalism, generally referred to as a government turn toward free-market policies, decentralisation, the rolling back of state welfare (in the Latin American context frequently connected to the dependence on international aid) and privatisations (see Hale 2005; Gustafson 2009; Lentin & Titley 2011; Gledhill 2012, among others). In neoliberalism, the role of the state is confined to ensuring freedom and peace, facilitating private contracts and promoting competitive markets, giving way to foreign investors, capital, trade and information flow, and deregulating the private sector. The changes in economic relationships following neoliberal politics have reshaped the structure of social relationships by emancipating the autonomous individual and unsettling social bonds and solidarities upon which individuals depend (Kymlicka, 2012: 99). Obviously, social relationships and coalitions continue to exist and operate alongside and despite neoliberal policies. In fact, Kymlicka (2012: 100) states that in neoliberal states, ethnicity remains one of the foundations for individual and group identity, social status, cultural meanings, informal networks and political mobilisation. First, neoliberal policies seem to aspire to transform relationship structures, divesting groups of their collective capacity to challenge free market policies. They lead to a particular reconfiguration of multiculturalism where politics is based on cultural difference. At the same time, neoliberal policies seem to incentivise groups to build their identity around ethnicity and cultural traits by linking particular benefits to ‘cultural authenticity’. It thus seems to be easier for the neoliberal multicultural state to engage with certain categories of people in a collective way, despite its rhetoric of individualism. Such ethnic collectivities find themselves in an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, they are expected to integrate into the national culture and become national citizens, while, on the other hand, they have to push their ‘otherness’ in order to access specific rights (I will address this in Chapter 4). In Culture: The Anthropologists’ Account, Kuper (1999: 234) states that “[multicultural] politics are dictated by cultural identity, and they are about the control of culture”. The author however argues that multiculturalists reject the idea of assimilation.
into the mainstream culture, denying that there even is such a thing as mainstream culture, while at the same time, the dominant group imposes its own ideal characteristics as the defining cultural norm while labelling anyone who is different as deviant. Multiculturalists turn the right to be different and the value of difference into a political programme; the protagonist in the multicultural struggle is not the worker or the citizen, but the cultural actor. Hale (2005a) notes that in the neoliberal state, while human rights serve as a basis of indigenous demands for collective rights, the concept of individual human rights has served as the basis for limiting collective rights and the recognition of a cultural group’s autonomy. Moreover, by establishing specific multicultural policies that define collective rights, the state often excludes the demands of indigenous movements deemed too radical (I will come back to this in Chapter 4).

During my research it became apparent that in Brazil ‘multiculturalism’ is hardly debated as there is a policy emphasis on race and affirmative actions, rather than culture. Whereas the term appears more in other Latin American contexts, Lehmann (2016: 4) provides several possible explanations for a possible reluctance to using the term: Latin American intellectuals may refuse to use terminology coined in Europe or the USA. The term may be associated with the wide-spread image of the ghettoization and social fragmentation of Europe’s immigrant populations; and last, the term may evoke connotations of political separatism. The most frequently used term in Brazil is “educação das relações étnico-raciais”, which is translated to “ethnic-racial relations education”; a quite bulky term when translated into English. Therefore, I switch between the terms multicultural education and ethno-education, a term borrowed from the Colombian context (*etnoeducación*). However, mostly I directly refer to Law 11.645/08 and its first version Law 10.639/03, as do most educators in my field.

**The Politics of Recognition**

By addressing the diversity of a state’s population and identifying and acknowledging its different cultural, ethnic, national and/or religious groups, multiculturalism relies on decisions made around the (mis-)recognition of such groups. Within philosophy, “recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal... one becomes an individual only in virtue of recognising, and being recognised by another subject” (Fraser in Garrett, 2010: 1518). In *The Politics of Recognition* (1994) Charles
Taylor explores links between identity and recognition, drawing conclusions from historical philosophical developments concerned with the human need for recognition on an individual and public level. Recognition, he argues, defines the understanding of who we are as human beings. Misrecognition, on the other hand, can act as a form of oppression and thus inflict harm: “… a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, 1994: 25). By the depreciation of a group’s culture an invented identity can easily be imposed on it by outsiders. For the maintenance of the colonial system and the reliance on labour carried out by enslaved people, Europeans needed to dehumanise indigenous and black people and portray them as uncivilised, inferior and primitive. Taylor (1994: 26) argues that many black and indigenous people adopted a “crippling self-hatred” based on the logic of the understanding of oneself depending on external recognition. According to the author, self-depreciation is, thus, one of the most potent instruments of oppression, causing harmed pride and deep wounds on individual or group self-esteem. Fanon states that the major weapon of the colonisers was the imposition of their image of the colonised on the subjugated people and that in order to be free they must free themselves from such deprecating self-images (in Taylor, 1994: 65).

In order to claim rights and recognition within a multicultural framework, it is necessary to foster and exhibit distinctive cultural attributes as the defining feature of a group. Specific parts of society can gain access to resources and negotiate their relation to other parts of society through officialised recognition, if state policies allow them such access. An example would be racial quotas at universities, which identify ethnic-racial groups that are underrepresented in higher education and facilitate access to public universities.

Wade (2013b: 214) argues that multicultural reforms in Latin America have significantly influenced the way blackness and indigeneity are located in the national frame. Whereas indigenous peoples might have been more successful in gaining state recognition and rights, black rural communities have increasingly been awarded similar rights. Moreover, the indigenous struggle reaches beyond territorial and ethnic rights and deals with issues in urban contexts, such as unemployment, racism and mainstream education. Multicultural policies consider indigenous and black people, both historically disadvantaged, as equally eligible for special political, legal and bureaucratic attention under the term of ‘ethnic minorities’. Wade (2013b) argues that such policies have positioned indigeneity and
blackness closer together in terms of their location in the structures of alterity. Within the nation, both social groups figure as ethnic minorities and the ‘other’, whereas the perception of the degree of each group's otherness may vary depending on the specific context (see Chapter 4).

By violating the universalistic principle of equality, affirmative action often provokes resistance against politics of recognition, in particular of redistribution politics based on the recognition of racial differences, which opponents tend to interpret as stirring racial separation. Whereas Taylor sees multicultural curricula as an important step towards the cultural emancipation and self-appreciation of suppressed cultural groups, Fraser and Honneth (2002) argue that such strategies are deficient if economic redistribution is not equally pursued. According to the authors, social justice requires both redistribution and recognition, while politics of recognition are often made at the expenses of politics of redistribution. Politics based on the concepts of identity – regularly associated with the demands of social movements who represent the interests of particular minority groups – should not be dissociated from politics of equality – grounded in class politics but also in anti-racist politics that address racial inequalities, and focused on economic inequality and campaigns for economic justice.

*Economic inequalities are growing, as neoliberal forces promote corporate globalisation and weaken the governance structures that previously enabled some redistribution within countries. Under these conditions, the question of distributive justice cannot be brushed aside. The upshot is that neither recognition nor redistribution can be overlooked in the present constellation (Fraser & Honneth, 2002: 2).*

On the one hand, politics of recognition get rejected because of arguments about global poverty and economic inequality. At the same time, claims for politics of redistribution are met with reluctance, arguing that they obstruct the significance of racial inequality. This is the main axis on which affirmative action policies in Brazil have been debated. However, one problem with a clear distinction between recognition and redistribution politics is that it doesn’t recognize enough how class and anti-racist politics are connected. The most relevant discussion to education in Brazil is the opposition of redistribution based on race-based recognition (such as racial quotas for black and indigenous students in higher education) and class-based or universalistic redistribution (such as social quotas for public school students in higher education). Opinions on race-
based policies are strongly influenced by the myth of ‘racial democracy’ and the Brazilian self-understanding as a *mestiço* nation (see Chapter 1). The Brazilian anthropologist Yvonne Maggie and the British anthropologist Peter Fry are known for their strong opposition to official racial classification, which the racial quota system at public universities put in the spotlight. With regard to Law 11.645/08, Fry (2005) and Maggie (2005/2006) critique the DCNERER for reproducing the belief in a racialized system by using terminology based on the social concept of ‘race’ throughout the document. According to Maggie (2005/2006), rather than stressing the universality of the human race, the document highlights differences and divergence between ethnicities, cultures and races and gives rise to over-developed race-based identities. Moreover, the author equates the implementation of Law 10.639/03, which she calls ‘racial pedagogy’, with a ‘conversion of identity’, reinforcing a bipolar identity and abandoning multiple diverse ways to define one’s skin colour (ibid.). Referring to racial quotas, Lehmann (2016: 180) warns that if affirmative action is merely understood as a tool to open up opportunities and even out life chances, it is ‘liable to miss the point’: he stresses the policies’ importance in recognising the history of exclusion of excluded groups as well as the specifically racial character of that exclusion, as well as the fact that the rationale behind racial quotas is as much about symbolic recognition as it is about material recognition through their presence at universities and the media.

**Multicultural Education**

Banks (1995: 391) describes ‘multicultural education’ as

*a school reform [that] maintains that all students should have equal opportunities to learn regardless of the racial, ethnic, social-class or gender group to which they belong. Additionally, multicultural education describes ways in which some students are denied equal educational opportunities because of their racial, ethnic, social-class, or gender characteristics.*

While understanding multicultural education’s purpose to provide a mode of teaching adequate for students with different backgrounds in order to close the academic performance gap, there is also the notion of reforming the school as a whole to facilitate an environment in which difference is recognised as valuable. Multicultural education does not target merely students that are identified/identify as minorities. Rather, it commits to
educating all citizens and to providing them with the tools that enable them to understand themselves in relation to others as different but of equal value (Milner, 2005: 420). Multiculturalists stress the necessity for white students to go through multicultural education as it ‘encourages the inclusion of different perspectives which critically examine what are believed to be universal truths’ (Huerta, 1999: 150). Rosenberg (1997) put it the following way:

In the case of many of my white students it is not that there has been no recognition of the pain and anger of the other; rather, the pain and anger of the other has been reduced to what they know. Unfortunately, what they know is limited and does not reflect back on themselves or their privilege.

Examining how whiteness works in the American context of schooling, Castagno (2008: 314) focuses on silencing and ‘colour muting’ practices of teachers in two American public middle-schools and shows how teachers’ responses to topics of racial diversity and power are informed by an overwhelming culture of whiteness: ‘Even though issues of race are always present and are often at the surface of school-related discourse, practice, and policies, educators are consistently silent and socialising students to be silent about them’. Not only do teachers discourage discussions revolving around race or racial discrimination, they actively silence students’ attempts to do so, a practice Gonçalves (1985) also observed in Brazil.

Naming involves those practices that facilitate critical conversation about social and economic arrangements, particularly about inequitable distributions of power and resources by which these students and their kin suffer disproportionately. The practices of administration, the relationships between school and community, and the forms of pedagogy and curriculum applied were all scarred by the fear of naming, provoking the move to silence (Fine in Castagno, 2008: 318).

Racially coded language is an important way in which racial dominance is operationalised and legitimised. Often discursive patterns conflating culture with race, equality with equity, and difference with deficit are applied. As Burdick put it: ‘Racial exclusion speaks in two voices: it values whiteness and at the same time says that colour is not important’ (in Pinho, 2009). Racially coded, colour-muting language gives racist views an arena to be expressed, while claiming not to be racist, hiding reproductive practices of unequal power structures related to race in which schools engage (Bonnett, 1997: 180). It
also provides teachers with the belief that they are not differentiating education based on deficit models of students’ racial identity. Trying to find an explanation for this silencing behaviour, adding to the (re-)validation of existing power structures, Castagno (2008) concludes that ignoring race gives educators the feeling that race is non-existent or does not matter.

Silencing practices in Brazil do not necessarily revolve around whiteness but rather around affirmations of mixedness. Akkari (2012: 166) notes that ideas about ‘racial identity’ are often reproduced in the classroom by the language that educators use to naturalise the mixedness of the Brazilian people. Multicultural educators argue for transformative approaches to curriculum reforms, treating them as changes and as on-going processes (Banks, 2011). The transformative approach aims at changing the whole curriculum by infusing multiple views and experiences into it (Banks, 1995: 392-3) and consequently motivating students to think critically and to question structures of power, inside and outside of the classroom. In this way, black people are given the opportunity to learn how not to collude in their oppression while white people learn how not to be oppressors (Derman-Sparks & Phillips: 2011: 3). For such an approach to work, the whole school has to be part of it and willing to include other stakeholders into the design of their curricula. Rather than changing isolated parts of the curriculum, the school’s attitude to pedagogy needs to change.

Examples of educational institutions, scholars and communities working together to deliver transformative educational experiences have been approached from different angles by authors working on Latin America (Gonçalves e Silva & Araújo-Oliveira, 2011; Lehmann, 2013; da Silva, 2014). Lehmann, for example, works on intercultural universities in Mexico that are strategically located in areas where they attract indigenous students and are funded by the state. He observes that, in these universities, interculturality implies a commitment to social constructivism, the preservation and respect for cultural diversity, the environment and sustainability, the creation of a participatory atmosphere, the strengthening of self-esteem and the appreciation of culture in all its manifestations. The resolution to make the learning experience at the universities an interactive process incentivises the mutual exchange between modern science and the knowledge and wisdom of indigenous groups,

5 In Latin America the concept of interculturalidad has become steadily more prominent.
6 According to the author (2013: 792), ‘in the social constructivist perspective knowledge is acquired or built (not merely transmitted) by placing value on a student’s prior experience and potential, with a focus on ‘knowing how to do’ (saber hacer)’.
such that these two elements are of equal weight in the decisions of policy-makers and the daily culture of the institutions themselves (Lehmann, 2013).

At first, in Brazil the document accompanying Law 10.639/03, DCNERER, seems to incentivise an approach that is not too different from the intercultural one described above. The text unequivocally states that the school, its community, scholars and social movement activists should work together on the implementation of the law, which led me to my main research question of how different stakeholders involved with the implementation of Law 11.645/08 negotiate how and to what extent the law will be implemented. Keeping in mind that the document officially recognises scholars and the black and indigenous movements as authorities with regard to the implementation of Law 11.645/08, the state however retains ultimate power over legislation. This opens up questions about the scope of the power of social movements, students and parents in the neoliberal state, and about the shape of the authority of the state and where it ends. The school is not simply a representation of the state transforming children into citizens. Rather it is a space where preconceptions of the state can be challenged and where state directives meet with the relative autonomy of teachers, students and parents. Foucault (1980) states that power relations within the school and the family cannot merely be seen as an extension of the power from the state into the domestic realm of the people:

> Between every point of social body, between a man and a woman, between members of a family, between a master and his pupil, between everyone who knows and everyone who does not, there exist relations of power which are not purely and simply a projection of the sovereign’s great power over the individual; they are rather the concrete, changing soil in which the sovereign’s power is grounded, the conditions which make it possible for it to function. The family, even now, is not a simple reflection or extension of the power of the State; it does not act as the representative of the State in relation to children, just as the male does not act as its representative in respect to the female. For the State to function in the way that it does, there must be, between male and female or adult and child, quite specific relations of domination which have their own configuration and relative autonomy (Foucault, 1980: 187-8).

As power is not fully centralised in any society, the question of how power is acquired and transmitted in society as a whole needs to focus beyond the state. It needs to consider political action in everyday life, and the symbols and actions associated with such political
action and spaces in which power is contested and affirmed in social practice (Gledhill, 2000: 20).

Decolonial Education

Rather than transformative or intercultural education, some groups of social activists, researchers and teachers who work on the implementation of Law 11.645/08 in Rio de Janeiro refer to ‘decolonial education’ (Oliveira & Candau, 2010). Reference is made to the Modernity/Coloniality approach, whose central figures are the Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel, the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, the Argentine cultural theorist Walter Mignolo, the Puerto Rican sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel, the North American linguist Catherine Walsh, and the Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar, among others. The group understands the concept of ‘coloniality’ as a manifestation of power produced by modernity/modern colonialism, which is not limited to a formal power relationship between two countries or groups but encompasses the areas of knowledge and authority and reproduces a hierarchical system based on race. Coloniality, thus, is constitutive of modernity, rather than derived from it (Mignolo, 2005: 38). Quijano (2000) uses the concept of ‘coloniality of power’, which refers to the invasion or westernisation of the consciousness of the subaltern, leading to the erasure of non-European history, epistemologies and axiology. In other words, colonialism made it possible for Europe to produce their version of social sciences as unique and universal model in the production of knowledge, while delegitimising all non-European knowledge production and epistemologies. Mignolo (2005) reiterates that the European expansion was not only economically and religiously motivated but also driven by the quest to gain, political and historiographical hegemony, establishing the coloniality of power/knowledge. Moreover, the group’s concept of ‘coloniality of being’ refers to what Frantz Fanon calls the dehumanisation of the colonised other – the negation of the human status of indigenous and African people (Oliveira & Candau, 2010).

In a decolonial reading of Law 11.645/08 the purpose of the law is not primarily a mechanism to close an attainment gap between different ethnic-racial groups. Rather, it stresses the symbolic and factual recognition of epistemologies that deviate from the Eurocentric norm – and as such it is a form of reparation to African descendants and indigenous people whose voices and histories have long been erased from official historiography. Da Costa (2016b) recognises a ‘decolonising focus’ of the DCNERER, which
offers a tool for black people to place racism and curricular omissions of non-Eurocentric narratives in the context of ideologies of racial democracy, mixture and national identity. He states that anti-racist multiculturalism does, however, not fully break with prior conceptions of race and belonging. On the one hand, racial democracy allowed for the expression of the ‘African’, ‘indigenous’ and ‘European’ elements as well as the recognition of their origins, even though in a very limited way. On the other hand, the ideal of racial democracy embodies the desire to abandon concepts of race and eliminate divisions constructed in their name to promote a more equal society. Nevertheless, anti-racist multiculturalism and the implementation of Law 11.645/08 diverge from this history built on the legacy of racial democracy by virtue of the political-epistemic challenges they pose to systematic racism denial. This thesis is about the ways policymakers, educators, students and social activists formulate racial values and apply them as racialised practices in their daily lives. As we will see in Chapter 1 the public school system in Brazil has been one of the main areas of social action for individuals and groups most active in thinking and re-thinking the significance of race and race relations in the country.

The key objective of this thesis is to understand the spaces and processes in which different stakeholders involved with the implementation of Law 11.645/08 negotiate their area of influence and spread their interpretation of what the law is supposed to achieve. As I will show, different approaches to the law’s implementation from various positions of economic, symbolic, cultural or political capital all have a different effect on those involved in the implementation process and open up different questions. Methodologically, manoeuvring through very distinct but comparable educational contexts in terms of markedly different student populations and local communities, in terms of social class, ethnic-racial and religious profiles provided insight into the very different ways Law 11.645/08 is implemented.

In this thesis I will demonstrate that it is individual teachers or small groups of teachers who complement mandatory discussions about race and racism in the classroom with various extracurricular activities and thus push for the law’s implementation and continuity. Educators with a decolonial or holistic approach to discussing ethnic-racial issues in school have a political agenda in common, based on the refusal to reproduce narratives built around the racial democracy-myth. However, my research strongly suggests that in order to implement Law 11.645/08 more effectively, more room needs to be created to
accommodate students’ input and to allow students to reflect on their own racial identity formation, which is arguably a crucial aspect of Law 11.645/08.

**Methodology**

Rather than looking at only one specific group involved in the implementation process of Law 11.645/08, such as teachers or students, working anthropologically allowed me to position the implementation process at the heart of my research without excluding anyone based on their official role in the education system. Wright (2006: 22) states that ‘Rather than studying up, or down for that matter, anthropologists can select sites from which to follow a flow of events as they move up and down, back and forth, across this field. The point of an anthropology of policy is not to study policies for their own sake — that’s the realm of public administration and organization studies. The point is to use policy as a window through which to see processes of political transformation’. My research is thus local and ethnographic, using the school as a vantage point but moving beyond it to look at relationships and links between the school, the community, social activism and the state (Chapters 1 and 2). This was crucial for gaining insight into the way official and unofficial initiatives based on Law 11.645/08 are distributed or limited and how space for the law’s implementation is negotiated between different stakeholders.

The implementation process of a law as an immaterial object of study requires locating contexts in which actions and activities (can) take place that explicitly or implicitly deal with ideas connected to it. As the people I followed around had many other tasks to perform other than work on the law’s implementation, in a strict sense in my field sites my object of study appeared and disappeared. During fieldwork this allowed for various different topics to emerge and play an important role, such as religion, urban indigeneity or black female aesthetics – all in their own way connected to the implementation of the law and making apparent early on that my research is significantly about identity.

During my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro (August 2015 – August 2016) I followed teachers, school leaders, social activists, students and their families inside and outside of institutionalised educational contexts in order to gain an understanding of the sense the heterogeneous school communities make of Law 11.645/08. The core of my ethnographic research consisted of alternately attending a public school run by the state of Rio de Janeiro
located in the Baixada Fluminense, Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte, and a public school run by the state of Brazil located in Rio de Janeiro’s Northern Zone, Colégio Pedro II. I also attended a teacher education course offered by the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, UFRJ), located in the Baixada Fluminense, and participated in the university’s Research Group on Public Policies, Social Movements and Cultures (Grupo de Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas, Movimentos Sociais e Culturas, GPMC). I also followed around several teachers and social activists advocating the implementation of Law 11.645/08 among other things, of which many turned out to be active in one or both of my schools. Moreover, I conducted several in-depth interviews with teachers, principals, students, social activists and education officials.

Even though I spent the majority of my ethnographic fieldwork in Baixada Fluminense, in the Northern metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, like most foreigners I lived in the wealthy part of the city, Zona Sul, for the first few months. Therefore, in the beginning it took me two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening on public transport to travel to and from my main field site, public state school Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte in a municipality called Belford Roxo. Occasionally, I was lucky enough to get a ride from a teacher who lived close by, which shortened my travel time to thirty minutes in the morning and about seventy to ninety minutes after school. Living in and interacting with people in the Zona Sul, a comparably wealthy and white part of the city, introduced me to the way cariocas (inhabitants of the city of Rio de Janeiro) refer to different parts of and around the city. Whereas Zona Sul and adjacent parts of Zona Norte and Zona Oeste (Barra da Tijuca) are considered wealthy and relatively safe (and in fact receive a more than fair share of public investments), the rest of the city, including the area of the Baixada Fluminense, are referred to as poor, violent and far off. As the interest of my research was the implementation process of Law 11.645/08 in public high schools, I had no specific requirements in terms of the school location. Nevertheless, immersing myself in the life in the Baixada Fluminense drew my attention to the way urban space and race interact in Rio de Janeiro, which I will discuss in Chapters 1 and 2.

Before leaving for fieldwork, my intention to locate public high schools committed to the implementation of Law 11.645/08, led me to the prestigious high school Colégio Pedro II (CPII), founded in 1837 under the last emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro II, and named after him. The school has served as an educational reference point in Brazil for a long time and is
unique in its higher education-like organisation: apart from elementary and secondary education, CPII offers post-graduate courses, has its own research centres and supports the continuous education of its staff. One of the research centres is the Centre for Afro-Brazilian Studies (Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, NEAB), a type of research centre that usually only exists at universities. From their website I learned that in cooperation with the NEAB, the school organises exhibitions and different events dedicated to Afro-Brazilian history and culture. The school has twelve campuses spread over and around the city. I received permission to carry out my research at the campus São Cristóvão III, which is located in the Zona Norte between the National Museum and the São Cristóvão market, close to the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), a popular middle-class neighbourhood that was considered relatively safe. At CPII Raquel, the head of the sociology department at that time, was my main contact point and guided me towards the teachers who talked about ethnic-racial questions, which turned out to be almost the entire sociology staff as well as a few history teachers. Previously having contacted the head of NEAB at that time, Alessandra Pió, I was simultaneously able to accompany some of the research centre’s work and was directed towards students at São Cristóvão III who are part of the student collective Frente Negra (Black Front). My role was mainly that of an observer, or as Wolcott phrases it, that of a ‘participant-as-observer’, which implies that the researcher is well known to everyone in the institution as a scientific observer and therefore rather expected to do what observers do than to perform as others in the specific context would (Wolcott, 1973: 8). In the context of attending actual classes it is more accurate to call my role that of a ‘non-participant observer’ (Biddle, 1967: 338) as I was present in the classroom but did not take on the role of either a student or a teacher.

For my second school I chose a public school that is part of the rede estadual do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro state network), which is the school type most students in Rio de Janeiro attend\(^7\) and thus representative of dominant educational politics and practices in Rio de Janeiro. Students from families who can afford it usually attend private school or public federal schools that have competitive entry exams (like CPII), which leads to students in public state schools coming from middle and lower social classes backgrounds (Akkari, 2013). With the help of the education department at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) I was able to meet Isabela, an education student and high school history teacher at Colégio

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\(^7\) In 2015, 74.7% of all (572 464) high school students living in the state of Rio de Janeiro attended state schools, compared to 22% in private schools and 2.4% in federal schools, such as CPII (QEdu, 2018a).
Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH). CENH is a public state school in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, Baixada Fluminense, whose principal was eager to commit to the implementation of Law 11.645/08 and to count on my presence as researcher and advisor on the implementation activities. On an ethnographic level, my playing an active part in the implementation process of the law is testimony to the spontaneity and irregularity attached to implementation practices that primarily depend on individual efforts (Gomes & Jesus, 2013).

At CENH I occupied a very special position, which allowed me to feel accepted and trusted by staff and students alike: as a white European researcher, which is not a common occurrence in the Baixada Fluminense and attracted broad interest from the entire school body; as an adult who got access to all areas where students were not allowed (such as the teachers’ room, the principal’s office, the kitchen or the unused computer room) and as a young-looking researcher who had to perform hardly any tasks other adults at CENH were performing and was most of the time free to participate in formal and informal student activities (such as using the students’ bathrooms, participating in dance rehearsals and football games, sitting in the school yard during breaks, being late for class, or assembling in front of the school before and after class).

Apart from my time with people from the schools, I attended a teacher education class called ‘The implementation of Law 10.639/03’, offered by the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, which is located in the Baixada Fluminense in the municipalities of Nova Iguaçu and Seropédica. Furthermore, I joined the Research Group on Public Policies, Social Movements and Cultures (Grupo de Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas, Movimentos Sociais e Culturas, GPMC), which is closely tied to the UFRRJ but has members from all over Rio de Janeiro. It is a political-academic research group with a strong focus on but not limited to the implementation of ethno-racial education. It turned out to be a well-known space to which most educators advocating the law’s implementation in my field sites had connections.

Whereas the majority of teachers and researchers at the UFRRJ, CPII and GPMC insisted on my using their real names, I altered the names of CPII students. As for CENH, Principal Laura chose a fictive name for her school for me to use and I altered all students’ and staff’s names in order to assure their anonymity. I struggled with the decision of whether to reveal the specific municipality CENH is located at as its character is quite unique and recognisable. However, as there are several schools in Belford Roxo being referred to as
the best by different people and various relatively small high schools exist, I decided to include the name of its municipality as the Baixada Fluminense is an area made up of many cities that are heterogeneous in terms of size, politics, history and location in relation to the capital. I took all the photographs presented in this thesis and included them with the explicit consent of all the individuals depicted.

A brief discussion of ‘racial’ categories and terminology

It is tempting to reach the conclusion that racial identity in Brazil is highly ambiguous when looking at more than 130 categories of self-identification, e.g. ‘cinnamon’, ‘brown’, ‘mixed’, or ‘coffee’, that make up a large pool of colour variants. In the past, various scholars have written about this ambiguity and described how racial categories in Brazil can change from day to day or depending on each situation, location, region or person (Harris, 1970; Kottak, 1983; Hofbauer, 1995; Telles, 2004). After abolition in 1888, Brazil had no laws defining racial group membership, and decades of whitening politics (mostly through European immigration but also through miscegenation) left racial classification to the individual, functioning as a relational system in which one could be whiter than the other, depending on the situation. Telles (2004) argues that as a result racial classifications in Brazil became increasingly complex, ambiguous and fluid. In Chapter 3 I describe the process of a group of Brazilians who identified as moreno for the larger part of their lives, going through the process of claiming a black identity. The term ‘moreno’ roughly translates as ‘brown’ and reinstates the idea of a racial democracy in which one’s origin is rather ambiguous and based on the mixture of the European, the indigenous and the African, while, at the same time, it minimises the subject’s African ancestry (see Burdick, 2004). Maggie (1991) states that the category might be the Brazilian race category par excellence, as it allows for a discussion of race through inclusion by subverting opposition. Given the absence of the category moreno in the official census, the high frequency of its use in Brazil is striking and recalls its close tie to the myth of racial democracy (which I will discuss in Chapter 1) as it minimises racial differences and emphasises a common Brazilianness (Telles, 2004).

Despite this flexibility when it comes to racial identification in Brazil, there is a rise in the use of a slightly more restrictive system of racial classification. The implementation of

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8 Nevertheless, Telles (2004) observes that the large majority of Brazilians use a small number of terms, whereas the majority of the terms are used by only a few respondents.
official census categories of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE) in various institutional processes (Gomes, 2011a: 46) increasingly forces Brazilians to identify themselves according to a system of categorisation primarily, but not only, based on their skin tone, namely as black (preto), brown/mestiço (pardo, mostly used by/for people with moreno parents and often used by/for persons with white and black parents as well as by/for indigenous people who do not claim their indigeneity), yellow/Asian (amarelo), white (branco) or native American (indígena).10

Furthermore, in Brazil it is helpful to differentiate between identity and skin colour. Arguing that preto and pardo both describe people of colour, whose appearance influences the position they occupy in society, representatives of the black movement suggest yet another system of racial classification and push for the usage of the term negro (which translates as ‘Black’, but cannot be used as a mere colour term) for official as well as popular use (Sansone, 2003: 22). Similarly, from the 1970s social scientists argued that the categories preto and pardo were best considered as a single category in socio-economic terms, which was an important stimulus for the state to adopt this usage. Whereas until the 1930s the term negro was more derogatory than the term preto, it gained a more positive meaning in recent decades when ethnographers of black culture started using it, and was widely popularised by the Black Brazilian Front. Since then, it has become a term for black ‘ethnic affirmation’ (Sansone, 1995: 72) and black consciousness. Various black organisations have incorporated the term negro into their names as well as agenda, and the government started using it in the 1990s (Sansone, 2003: 47-48). Talking about black people in terms of ethnic group often goes along with the term negro, as in população negra (black population).11 Nevertheless, self-identification as negro continues to be mainly used by those who would otherwise identify as preto (black). Whereas the black movement, elite Brazilian classes and some state representatives advocate the use of the term negro (mainstream media has adopted the term as well to talk about black people), the poorer segments of society have not adopted it and the popular use of the term is limited to those

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9 Until 1991 the IBGE only used the category of colour (cor). That year the option ‘indigenous’ (indígena) was added and since it was not considered a colour, the category race was added (cor/raça). However, the majority of Brazilians define the IBGE category ‘colour/race’ as depending on a person’s skin colour, followed by physical traits (IBGE, 2008).

10 The categories branco, pardo and preto account for more than 99% of the Brazilian population.

11 However, as Selka (2007: 3) argues, the black movement is made up of various overlapping networks of cultural and political practice in which various notions of what it means to be Afro-Brazilian compete and not all do necessarily agree with the use of the term ‘negro’. There are representatives of the black movement who argue for the usage of the term preto when it comes to the black population (população preta).
at the darkest end of the colour spectrum (Fry, 1995/1996; Telles, 2004), although Sheriff (2003) observes that the favela dwellers she worked with use a broad black/white division to categorise the population of Rio as a whole. On the other hand, dark-skinned Afro-Brazilians with higher incomes who have experienced discrimination are more likely to claim a negro identification, similar to young Afro-Brazilians (Mitchell-Walthour, 2017).

More recent views argue that racial categories in Brazil are more essentialised, dichotomous and rigid than previously assumed. Perry (2013) and Santos (2006) warn that social science’s focus on people’s racial identifications overshadows academic attention to racial inequality in Brazilian society. Based on her work with favela dwellers in Rio de Janeiro, Sheriff (2001) argues that they readily recognise a fundamental social distinction between white and non-white despite the complex range of colour terms used in Brazil. Discussing black people being overwhelmingly targeted in police killings, Santos (2006) remarks:

*Brazilian intellectuals declare themselves unable to decipher who is black in Brazil, even though the police, the justice system, public and private employers, the media (especially television), and other social groups and institutions can instantly identify blacks when physically or symbolically attacking them, denying them jobs for which they are qualified, and punishing them more severely than their white counterparts for committing crimes of equal or comparable gravity.*

Furthermore, referring to the national census, Telles states that inequalities between mulattoes (*pardos*) and whites are almost identical to those between blacks (*pretos*) and whites (in Selka 2007: 14). People are more likely to switch between the categories *preto* and *pardo* when talking about themselves or others, than between *pardo* and white (Schwartzman, 2007: 948).

Throughout the thesis I will use the capitalised term ‘Black’ (*negro*) and Afro-Brazilian interchangeably, acknowledging that neither are neutral terms and both denote a specific, politicised positioning with regard to ethnic-racial questions. The term Afro-Brazilian refers to an African origin, which is deeply rooted in Brazil – Martins and Salles (2014: 123) describe the concept as an ideological construction stemming from life stories, cultural histories, the significance of ancestry, as well as other aspects that were crucial for the construction of a Black (*negro*) identity in Brazil. Such a reading of Afro-Brazilianess also accounts for phenotypically white people identifying themselves to a certain degree with Blackness (see Assis & Canen, 2004), as I describe in Chapter 3. Similarly, I use the word ‘Indigenous’, also
capitalised, to stress the political identity of a person. The terms ‘black’ and ‘indigenous’ when not capitalised, on the other hand, signal that a person or group of people are not necessarily politicised (but might be) and refer primarily to a ‘colour-identity’, ‘phenotype’, or group membership. At first, I intended to use the Portuguese term negro for Black, but decided against it for the purpose of readability. Nevertheless, often, I provide Portuguese terms, such as moreno, pardo, negro, in parentheses.

I use the terms ‘black movement/s’ and ‘black movement organisations’ interchangeably and as generic designations for various Brazilian organisations that fight against racism and for the improvement of the lives of Brazil’s black population. Pereira (2011: 36) notes that the Brazilian black movement has experienced continuing exchanges between older and younger generations of activists who have contributed to the construction of black movement organisations in different moments of time and in various regions of Brazil. Throughout the 20th century, there have been many common elements and continuities in terms of forms of action and strategy adopted by activists and organisations across the country.

Similarly, I use ‘indigenous movement’ lowercased to stress the number of different organisations and movements that fight for the rights of indigenous people and the improvement of their lives.

**Thesis Outline**

This thesis opens with a chapter that provides a historical narrative showcasing how ideas about race and racial mixture in Brazil developed over time and how social class and race intersect. It positions Law 11.645/08 in its historical and political context and traces the changes in education policies with regard to diversity and multiculturalism over time. Furthermore, the first chapter provides insights into the Brazilian education system and introduces the reader to both school contexts.

In the second chapter the reader follows the implementation process of Law 11.645/08 from the macro to the micro level, from an education secretariat in Belford Roxo into two different school contexts: Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte and Colégio Pedro II. First, it provides a tentative overview of official initiatives and presents individual and group efforts to advance the law’s implementation. The latter part of the chapter takes the reader
into both school contexts, examines black and white, wealthy and poor educators’ strategies to teach about race and/or ethnic-racial relations and the repercussions amongst students.

In the third chapter, the question of how the implementation of the law can contribute to shifts in racial self-identification or the development of racial consciousness is central. Moreover, questions of the black body and black beauty, especially concerning black women, are explored and the way they flare up in the context of teaching about ethnic-racial relations. Furthermore, the chapter explores the potential role of white allies and the collaboration of black and white anti-racist activists.

The fourth chapter is based on the experiences of indigenous activists and teachers in the city of Rio de Janeiro and explores the questions of who can be indigenous and who can teach about indigenous history and culture. It thus sheds light on questions about urban indigeneity, ancestry, authenticity and indigenous performance. Moreover, this chapter explores the position of urban indigeneity in discussions about race and racism in Brazil.

The fifth and last chapter discusses issues regarding religion that arise when dealing with the implementation of Law 11.645/08. It looks at growing frictions between adepts of Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches with adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé or Umbanda and the way religion and race intersect. These conflicts flare up in school, however often in subtle ways. What this chapter attempts to do, apart from critically assessing the role of religion in the reproduction of racism, is to complicate the often made assumption that Pentecostal followers cannot be anti-racists and add yet another layer to the many faces of anti-racism in Brazil.
1. Education for a better life – social and racial dimensions of Brazilian education

In Brazil, obtaining a higher education degree is regarded as the most direct way toward upward social mobility. Employees with university degrees earn up to three times more than those who haven’t had access to higher education (OECD/ECLAC/CAF, 2016). However, access to private higher education is expensive, and access to public higher education is restricted by a highly selective entrance exam. Most higher education openings have traditionally been occupied by predominantly white or light skinned students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, whose parents were able to afford competitive private elementary and secondary schools (Akkari, 2013). Students from public schools and black and indigenous students have been significantly underrepresented at public universities and more likely to drop out of school. Even though criticised for their scarcity, there have been governmental (and non-governmental) initiatives to help maintain students from lower socio-economic backgrounds at university (such as small bursaries, free transport, affordable housing) and to prepare public school students and black and indigenous students for university (such as so-called pre-vestibular courses to study for the vestibular or university entrance exam); Law 11.645/08 can be assigned to this category of initiative. With the aim of increasing the number of Afro-Brazilians and indigenous people at university, from 2001 onwards several public universities implemented a system of social and racial quotas, which decreed that a certain amount of openings in any course would be reserved for students from public schools and for those who self-identify as black, or who have proof of being indigenous or were born and raised in a quilombo. Fighting racism in the arena of education has thus been part of social policy for a while.

Education is an area in which racial and class-based discrimination intersect strongly. To make sense of this intersection, it is crucial to first look at the current system of social and racial relations, ideas about race in Brazil and how these together set the historical and political context for the education system in Brazil. This chapter begins by outlining
intellectual and popular ideas revolving around the ideological concepts of whitening (branqueamento) and miscegenation (mestiçagem) in Brazil, detailing how ideas about race have developed over time. The chapter continues with an overview of the Brazilian education system and affirmative action policies in the field of education, before discussing the context in which Law 11.645/08 was signed by former president Luiz da Silva, as well as recent developments in terms of its implementation. The chapter closes with an overview of Rio, as a context for the two public schools in which I did research, before looking at how the schools are located in the cities’ social and racial hierarchies and the way these can affect teaching, learning, and upward mobility through education.

Dreaming up the ‘Brazilian race’

Having had much of its indigenous population decimated, Brazil is the country that received the largest number of enslaved people during the transatlantic slave trade. It was also the last country in the Americas to end slavery, which was justified by the elites on the grounds that slavery in Brazil had been less harsh than the working conditions of peasants and wage labourers in Southern Europe and that enslaved African populations had been spared the savage life of Africa (Hanchard, 1994: 170). This narrative played well into the later well-known myth of racial democracy. Not only in Brazil but in Latin America more broadly, black and indigenous people were long regarded as a problem in the process of nation-building, representing ‘savage otherness’ in contrast to the Latin American white and mixed mestizo1 elites (Wade, 2010: 48).

After the abolition of slavery in Brazil, Afro-Brazilians and indigenous people continued to be seen as biologically inferior races but impossible to eliminate. Borrowing from the scientific discourse marked by Social Darwinism, the country implemented a strategy of assimilation, attempting to anchor Brazil exclusively in its European heritage (Akkari, 2012: 165) and whiten its population, which was imagined to be achieved by extensive European immigration. Immigration from Africa and Asia was banned in the Constitution of 1891 (Andrews, 1991: 52) and European immigration was stimulated by governmental subsidies. By the late 1920s, more than two million European immigrants had arrived in São Paulo, of

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1 The term mestizo, derived from the word mestizaje (miscegenation, in Portuguese mestiçagem), implies not only sexual mixture between the three races (Europeans, Africans and Native Americans), but also the interchange of cultural elements, resulting in new cultural forms and religious syncretism. In Brazil, the term is closely connected to the ‘racial democracy’ myth.
which more than half had used travel subsidies provided by the state government of São Paulo (ibid.: 58). Many of them replaced formerly enslaved people working on coffee plantations. Political elites and scholars believed that the mixture of white European immigrants with non-white Brazilians would lead to the whitening of the population and relieving it of its degenerate African and indigenous blood.

In order to establish a unified sense of national unity and citizenship, cultural policies specifically designed for black and indigenous people were put into place to transform them into parts of the ‘majority’ society and integrate them into the national labour market. Part of this transformation was the provision of access to education, which during the colonial period was not regarded as a necessity (Moacyr, 1939: 220). The public school system was built and expanded by pedagogues, doctors and social scientists who regarded public education as a means to spread their notions of nationalism, hygiene, health, physical fitness and prevocational training – all based on a social vision oriented by white, middle-class values, appearances and habits. Dávila (2003: 10) argues that

*They made the school system into an engine that in ways both deliberate (furnishing poor and nonwhite Brazilians with the tools of whiteness) and unwitting (establishing barriers by reifying their narrow values) created a racial hierarchy in the school system that mirrored their own vision of social worth. Their hierarchy was particularly stable, effective, and longstanding because it relied on unimpeachable values of science and merit.*

Hence, public schools were tools that, by providing basic health and culture, awarded the social category of ‘white’ to children independent of skin colour (ibid.: 7). Starting in the 1920s, race was increasingly reinterpreted in cultural and less in biological terms. The Brazilian people’s purportedly negative or degenerate traits were ascribed to the results of precarious conditions caused by the primitivism of an agricultural system centred on monoculture, rather than to racial admixture. Hence, at that time, the *caboclo* figure (a white-indigenous *mestiço* from the hinterland) summed up the image of the widespread lack of education and healthcare in Brazil (Rezende & Lima, 2004: 758). In the 1930s, a decade that saw many education reforms, the ideology of whitening was increasingly disturbed by the idea of ‘racial democracy’, referring to the belief that Amerindians, Africans and

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2 During the Estado Novo dictatorship (1937-1945), ideas about race and racial degeneracy did not change much. With regard to the education system, the most significant struggle during those times was between progressive education reformists and conservative Catholics, who advocated for the recurrence of religious education in schools.
Europeans had peacefully merged, despite their colonial past, into the racially mixed category *mestiço*, supposedly not leaving any space for racial discrimination.

The rise of public education and the expansion of public schools to poor and racially mixed neighbourhoods, and a wave of social scientific studies to disprove the racial inferiority of non-white people contributed to the celebration of racial mixture as a positive national characteristic (Dávila, 2003). Warren and Sue (2011: 46) call Gilberto Freyre’s famous book *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (1986 [1933]), in which he advertises the physical and cultural mixture of Europeans with African descendants and indigenous people, the ‘foundational text of Brazilian multiculturalism’. Even though his work promotes national unity and a unified Brazilian culture (Telles, 2004: 35), Freyre differentiates between African culture, which he does not necessarily deem inferior to Portuguese culture, and indigenous culture, which he regards as significantly inferior.

*For nothing could be more unscientific than to speak of the inferiority of the African Negro in relation to the American Indian without first making it plain what Amerindian, what Negro is meant. Whether Tapuia, Bantu or Hottentot. Nothing is more absurd than to deny to the Sudanese Negro, for example, who was brought to Brazil in considerable numbers, a culture superior to that of the most advanced native. To state that ‘with respect to neither the arts and crafts, nor the cultivation of vegetables, nor the domestication of zoological species, nor family and tribal organization, nor astronomical knowledge, nor the creation of language and legends, were the blacks superior to our forest-dwellers’ is to produce an affirmation that, if conversely stated, would be quite correct, since it was precisely by all these evidences of a material and moral culture that the Negro slaves show that they came from more advanced stocks, and that they were in a better position than the Indians to contribute to the economic and social formation of Brazil. At times, in a better position than the Portuguese themselves* (Freyre, 1986: 81).

Freyre refers to Brazilian ‘Índios’ as inferior to Mayan or Aztec culture and as ‘premature fruits’ that died from the first contact with Europeans due to their incapability to adapt economically, socially and morally (ibid.: 82). Despite his negative views of Brazilian indigenous populations, Freyre believed in his society’s hybridity, marked by harmonious relations between all races, and cultural reciprocity, allowing only for what he understood as the most positive attributes of each race/culture to survive. In this sense, according to
Freyre, the habit of the smoking of tobacco and practices around hygiene were influenced by indigenous people; the culinary and entertainment areas were adopted from Africans; and the Europeans were responsible for the economic system as well as religious structures (Hofbauer, 1995: 92). Rezende and Lima (2004) point to the role gender played in the ideology of *mestiçagem*, which becomes particularly apparent when looking at Freyre’s work: mainly Portuguese men and their descendants mixed with African descendants and indigenous women. While a woman’s brown skin (*morena*) was highly valued in a sexualised way as part of mestizo culture, white male superiority prevailed.

Freyre’s evolutionism was based on the hierarchical order of races and cultures. Even though in his work Freyre provides multiple critical reflections of the repercussion of colonialism and slavery, his work also reaffirms the centrality of whiteness and tells a whitewashed story of slavery. During the early 20th century, this myth was a source of national pride, which was further strengthened during the dictatorship and later government of Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s-1950s, as well as by the comparison and contrasting of Brazil with the segregated and racially violent United States (Bailey, 2004: 729). In Latin America, the lack of formation of sharp group boundaries, however, has not prevented racial difference from working as a social category of inclusion/exclusion that marks the subaltern position of Afro-descendants and indigenous people in the juridical, social, and economic spheres (Wade, 2005).

The 1950s in Brazil were marked by industrial development, recession, and urban growth and poverty. Rather than concerns about racial mixture or the formation of national identity, until the 1970s (and the end of the dictatorship) the Marxist perspective and discussions about social inequalities predominated in Brazilian social thought (Rezende & Lima, 2004). The black movement gained momentum in Brazil in the 1970s (see below) and built its discourse around the country’s significant racial inequalities and the deconstruction of the ‘racial democracy’ myth, making education one of its main arenas. Nevertheless, Da Costa (2016a: 25) points out that the popular social imaginary during most of the 20th century held Brazilians as a mixed people beyond racial categorisation.

Hasenbalg (1979) argues that the acceptance of the ‘racial democracy’ myth leads to two drawbacks within the Brazilian population: It implies that the black population is being

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3 There is continuity in the sexualisation of the black female body. Looking at the enslavement of black women, Giacomini (1988) notes that their obligations went beyond domestic and farm labour and included mandatory gender-related functions, such as nursing white children, sexually satisfying the master as well as sexually initiating young boys.
discriminated against because of its class status and not because of its racial identity. Consequently, it unburdens the white population from any responsibilities with regard to discriminating against non-whites. According to the author, it is thus without a doubt the most powerful symbol for the demobilisation of black people and the legitimisation of racial inequalities in place since the end of slavery (Hasenbalg, 1979: 241).

According to Pinho, the permeating rhetoric of *mestiçagem* and the widespread assertion that Brazil continues to be a racial democracy (Sheriff, 2001; Telles, 2004) have silently made whiteness hegemonic: ‘Brazil’s ‘impure’ formation of whiteness is not a proof of our definition of ourselves as being ‘beyond race’. On the contrary, it is part of the history of whiteness as a superior value’ (Pinho, 2009: 49). The close connection of Brazil’s identity to *mestiçagem* does not homogenise colour or race but instead emphasises gradations of skin tones and hair texture. In Brazil, colour is racialised; in the majority of spaces, lighter skin colours and European traits are more valued than darker skin tones and African traits (Sheriff, 2001; Hordge-Freeman, 2015). Often, blackness is associated with negative stereotypes, such as lack of intelligence, aggression, hyper-sexuality, unattractiveness or poverty, while socio-economic success can lead others to classify someone’s skin colour as lighter than that of a poor person of similar looks (Telles, 2004; Caldwell, 2007). Caldwell (2007) notes that gender plays a crucial role in the way one is classified, providing the example of the embodiment of the hypersexualised Afro-Brazilian woman in the idea of the *mulata/morena*. A popular saying in Brazil that demonstrates this is: ‘a white girl for marriage, a mulata for sex and a black girl for work’ (‘branca para casar, mulata para foder e negra para trabalhar’).

Furthermore, in Brazil people often say that money whitens and, undeniably, class is a strong determinant of who can or cannot be white. Although most Brazilians openly condemn racial segregation and discrimination, a correlation between racial identity and socio-economic status continues to be evident and has been discussed by various authors (Bastide & Fernandes, 1959; Hasenbalg, 1985; Skidmore, 1985; Hofbauer, 1995 among others). Even though lighter skin and European features enable upward social movement and even dark-skinned individuals belonging to a high social class enjoy many of the benefits of white people, blacks and *mestiços* de facto cannot be part of a general understanding of whiteness. Schwartzman (2007: 958-9) notes that

*upward mobility is closed off for most poor nonwhites, they try to marry into white families and then hope that their children become white and are able to*
move up. [...] Only a few nonwhites manage to move to higher social classes [...] Since whites are the majority at this socioeconomic level, they impose a whiteness standard on those few well-to-do nonwhites, who may often be trying to ‘fit in’.

Black Brazilians with a high income and prestigious jobs face barriers despite their equivalent or superior credentials compared to their non-black peers. Whereas the inequality between white and non-white Brazilians in terms of income, education and housing is striking, socio-economic inequality within those groups is relatively small (Guimarães, 1999: 69). In 2009, 82.5% of the richest one percent of Brazilians was white while the black population made up 74.2% of the poorest ten percent (IBGE, 2010). Afro-Brazilian professionals in Rio de Janeiro who work in white-dominated areas, such as law, engineering or medicine, where they are the minority, have experienced racial discrimination, including numerous racist insults (Mitchell-Walthour, 2017). Black women find themselves in a particularly precarious situation and add yet another layer to the intersection of racial and social discrimination: they disproportionately work in the informal labour market without rights to unemployment insurance or maternity leave (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2010 in Hernández, 2011). Moreover, their median salaries are half that of white women (Da Costa, 2016a).

The Brazilian self-understanding as a mixed nation, in which there are innumerable categories of skin colour, contributes to the discomfort of white people to self-declare or openly identify as white. Turner (2014: 86) and Pinho (2009: 44) both affirm that the expression of being too white would challenge one’s ‘Brazilianess’ and belonging to the nation, accelerated by the power of the national celebratory discourse of mestiçagem. The resulting difficulty is that whiteness does not get explicitly articulated while carefully being manipulated by individuals and groups in the protection of their privilege. Pereira (2016) argues that Brazilians have incorporated the concept of racial equality having resulted from extensive biological and cultural mixing among African, indigenous, and European ethnic groups to a point where it prevents them from recognising racism. Furthermore, anti-black racism remains so embedded in the social fibre of society through stereotypes, language, and violence that the subordinated status of Afro-descendants is viewed as logical and neutral (Vargas, 2010; Hernández, 2011; Smith, 2016).
Mestiçagem and the ideal of racial democracy thus complicate the reconciliations that multicultural policies try to achieve. Andrews (in Bailey, 2004: 731) argues that in a racial democracy, programs based on racial preference are not only made superfluous but threaten the most basic principles of this hegemonic ideology. On the one hand there is the imperative of equality represented by mestiçagem and racial democracy, and on the other hand, there is the right to be different, leading to a persisting paradox.

Law 11.645: from ‘diversity’ to the recognition of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous actors

Law Nº 9.394, December 20th, 1996

Art. 26-A.

In elementary and secondary education establishments, public and private, teaching about Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture becomes mandatory (Revision according to Law Nº 11.645, 2008).

§ 1: The programmatic content referred to in this article will include various aspects of the history and culture that characterise the formation of the Brazilian population, based on these two ethnic groups, such as the study of the history of Africa and the African people, the struggle of black and indigenous people, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous culture, as well as black and indigenous people in the formation of the national society, recovering their contribution to social, economic and political fields, which are part of Brazilian history (Revision according to Law Nº 11.645, 2008).

§ 2: The contents referring to Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture have to be taught in the entirety of the school curriculum, especially in Arts Education, Literature and History (Revision according to Law Nº 11.645, 2008) (Presidência da República, 2018).

Law 11.645 altered previous Law 10.639, which in 2003 had itself altered Article 26 (§ 4) of Law 9.394 from 1996. Law 9.394 established the National Education Directives and Foundations (diretrizes e bases da educação nacional), such as the commitment to provide equal access to education for all or the regulation of teacher education and accreditation. Furthermore, the directives emphasised the importance of national education guidelines, which should, however, provide space for each school to take the local and regional
peculiarities of its student body into account. Article 26 refers to the contribution of different segments of society to the formation of the Brazilian nation, explicitly mentioning indigenous, African and European influences.

Until 2003, Article 26 read:

*The curricula of elementary, basic and secondary education have to follow national guidelines, which have to be complemented, in each education system and in each education establishment, by diversity, required by regional and local characteristics of society, culture and economics of the students. [...] § 4: The teaching of Brazilian history has to take into account the contribution of all different cultures and ethnicities to the formation of the Brazilian people, particularly of indigenous, African and European origin* (Presidência da República, 2018; my emphasis).

In the late 1990s, the notions of culture and cultural diversity, as well as those of identities and ethnic relations, began to appear in documents released by the Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação, MEC) with the aim of regulating the practice of teaching at primary and secondary levels, especially in history (Abreu & Mattos, 2008). Abreu and Mattos (2008) note that this shift was far from being a coincidence, but the fruit of the work of the black and anti-racist movements and their new political and social place in the Brazilian political process, and specifically in the educational field. Whereas the original document stresses the indigenous, African and European origins of Brazilian society without questioning the traditional Eurocentric perspective of the curriculum, Law 10.639/03 directly responds to the continuing omission of historical, economic and political perspectives of Africans and Afro-Brazilians from the formation of the Brazilian nation. The introduction of Law 10.639/03 and racial quotas in the public sector and higher education, as well as the introduction of further affirmative actions for Afro-Brazilians, were the fruit of the long-lasting persistent work of the black movement (Da Silva Martins & Medeiros & Nascimento, 2004; Silva, 2012a; Soeterik, 2013; Pereira, 2016).

Pereira (2016) argues that the education of the Afro-Brazilian population and the entire Brazilian society has been on the agenda of black movement organisations from early on. According to Domingues (2007: 101), the specific outcome the black movement is working towards is the elimination of racial discrimination and prejudice, which causes the marginalisation of black people with regard to employment, education, and the political, cultural and social life. As a political actor, the black movement has positioned itself as the
principal mediator between the black population, the state and school (Gomes, 2011a: 39); for the black movement, race and racial identity are central as instruments of mobilisation, but equally as instruments that constitute their political demands. Two of the most important historical black movement organisations, the Frente Negra Brasileira (Brazilian Black Front), created in São Paulo in 1931, and Teatro Experimental do Negro (Black Experimental Theatre), created in the same city in 1944, organised classes to teach Afro-Brazilians to read and write. Black movement organisations started to go into regular schools to teach students and teachers about the history of the black population in Brazil and to produce education materials in the early 1980s when their focus shifted towards the necessity of rewriting school books and curricula (Carneiro, 2002). Since the late 1990s, Afro-Brazilian activists and intellectuals have been actively participating in the construction of new curricular policies (Pereira, 2016: 64).

Law 10.639, signed in 2003, changed Article 26 in the following way:

In elementary and secondary education establishments, public and private, teaching about Afro-Brazilian history and culture becomes mandatory. [...] § 1: The programmatic content referred to in this Article will include the study of African history and the history of African people, the struggle of black people in Brazil, Brazilian black culture and black people in the formation of national society, thus recovering the contribution of the black people in the social, economic and political arenas pertaining to Brazilian history. § 2: These contents have to be taught in the entirety of the school curriculum, especially in Arts Education, Literature and History (Presidência da República, 2018; my emphasis).

The law should be applied in the entire curriculum. The special mention of history and related subjects demonstrates a critical position regarding the role of history and the way history is told, both contributing to students’ understanding of their nation and to their consciousness as Brazilian citizens.

In the same year, the federal government issued the National Plan for Racial Equality Promotion (Política Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial) and created the Special Department for Policies of Racial Equality Promotion (Secretaria Especial de Políticas, SEPPIR), as a response to another historic demand of the black movement. They are regarded as symbols of recognition of the work of historical and present black movement organisation (Guimarães, 2015: 942). Along with the Ministry of Education and drawing on
input from black movement representatives as well as scholars, in 2004 SEPPIR published the document *National Directives for the Teaching of Ethnic and Race Relations and of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture* (Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação das Relações Etnico-Raciais e para o Ensino de História e Cultura Afro-Brasileira e Africana, DCNERER), defining the main goals of Law 10.639/03 and the reasoning behind its implementation: to valorise Afro-Brazilian culture and history and the diversity of the Brazilian people; to provide social, civil, cultural and economic justice; to discuss the consequences of the idea of ‘racial democracy’; to point out the impact of racism; to question ethnic-racial relationships based around prejudices against black people; and to deconstruct stereotypes and folklorisations that imply racial discriminations (Silva, 2012a).

The National Directives emphasise the importance of including the ethnic-racial theme in educational planning, from policy-making to research, documentation and teacher education, and acts as a significant tool and guidance for activists and teachers, who prompt schools and education officials to comply with the law’s implementation.

The black movement’s long-lasting efforts and demands that led to the introduction of Law 10.639/03 are being recognised by the Ministry of Education in their *National Education Directives for the Teaching of Ethnic and Race Relations*: they promote inclusive and transformative teaching through the incorporation of scholars, the school communities and black movement representatives. Channels of educational communication should be established within the school curricula, in particular in the subjects Arts and History, as well as in the daily lives of the school communities: ‘The educational institutions’ autonomy in designing pedagogical projects [as stated in Law 9.394] provides for collaboration with communities that the school serves with direct or indirect support from scholars and the black movement, with whom communication channels will be established, finding ways of how to include them in the experience organised by the school, as well as in discipline contents regarding the subjects in question’ (Prefeitura de São Paulo 2004: 17-18). The National Directives thus recognise the necessity for black scholars, research centres, black movement organisations as well as cultural leaders to occupy a crucial place in policy design and implementation, as well as the centrality of black knowledge and research. Furthermore, the document legitimises the position of Afro-descendants as protagonists who work with education officials on the implementation of the law (Da Costa, 2016a).

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4 Since the 1970s, black movement organisations have worked on the demystification of the concept of ‘racial democracy’ (Pereira, 2016).
Moreover, the 20th of November was chosen to be the National Day of the Black Consciousness (Dia Nacional da Consciência Negra) to be included on school calendars, celebrated as a national holiday by more than four hundred cities and a number of states (Rio de Janeiro, Alagoas, Amazonas, Amapá, Roraima and Mato Grosso). In 2004, the Federal Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity, and Inclusion (Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização, Diversidade e Inclusão, SECADI) was created within the Ministry of Education (MEC). The secretariat unites the work of various secretariats that deal with inclusive schooling policies, diversity issues, human rights, sustainability and marginalised groups, such as indigenous and black people or quilombolas (people who live in quilombos). It also promotes the implementation of Law 10.639/03 by offering particular teacher education and administrator training, developing and distributing of didactic material, as well as analysing and developing school curricula and political-pedagogical projects of public schools. SECADI has involved black activists, educators, and scholars in their work (Da Costa, 2016a). After years of demands for the formulation of a national plan for the implementation of the law from black movement organisations, coordinated actions called ‘Regional Dialogues’ were created. These led to the first National Plan of Implementation of Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic and Racial Relations and the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture in 2009, which focuses on the work of and the dialogue between the Ministry of Education, federal, state, and local governments, the Councils on Education, public and private higher education institutions and Centres for Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEABs), as well as associated groups. A prominent and oft-cited example of a government-led initiative to further the implementation of Law 11.645/08 is the project A Cor da Cultura (The Colour of Culture), founded in 2004 by the Ministry of Education and SEPPIR, and sponsored by Petrobras, Canal Futura, TV Globo as well as the Centre for Information and the Documentation of the Black Artist (Centro de Informação e Documentação do Artista Negro, CIDAN). It has been producing videos, children’s books and teaching material since 2004, and in 2010 started collaborating with universities, NGOs and other institutions to provide teacher education with regard to the

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5 November 20th honours the death of Zumbi, the most important leader of the biggest quilombo (maroon settlement) in Brazilian history, who passed away in 1695. The day was chosen by black activists and replaced the commemorations on May 13th, which marked the abolition of slavery in 1888. Black activists view the May 13th celebrations critically, as the formal end of slavery was not accompanied by real improvements for Afro-Brazilians. In fact, in 1872, 74% of Afro-Brazilians were free, and in 1887, approximately 90% of the non-white population was already free (Hasenbalg, 1988; Hanchard, 1994). Celebrating November 20th reassesses the role of Africans and Afro-Brazilians in the formation of Brazilian society and recognises the black population as the main force behind abolition.
requirements of the law. Several teachers in my field referred to materials provided by A Cor da Cultura when talking about the law. In 2005, the National Program of Affirmative Actions for the Black Population in Federal and State Higher Education Institutions (UNIAFRO) was created. Its goal was to stimulate the work of the Centres for Afro-Brazilian Studies (Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, NEAB), which had formed at various public universities. NEABs are primarily centres of research, but crucial parts of their work are the development and provision of didactic-pedagogical material for teaching about ethnic and racial relations and Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture, as well as supporting teacher training.

The shift from denying the existence of racism to the implementation of affirmative action did not happen overnight. After the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, Brazil experienced a process of democratisation in which black activists reorganised and continuously gained influence in politics as well as in the national discourse on race. Since ‘racial democracy’ was an ideology of non-racialism and therefore frequently interpreted as anti-racist, the importance of making race and racial inequality visible has formed a vital part of the black movement’s agenda. After a long period of extensive grassroots campaigning carried out by black activists, the 1990s saw an increasing number of people in Brazilian society recognising racism and an emerging pressure on the state to extend real democratic citizenship and human rights to the black population (Telles, 2004: 53). As Telles (2004) observes, anti-racist work and the achievements of the black movement in Brazil were not primarily dependent on mass social movements, but rather the acquisition of international allies and global civil-society involvement to denounce the government for its lack of work to counter racial exclusion and inequality. A crucial event was the Third UN World Conference on Racism in Durban in 2001, which brought unprecedented global media attention to issues of race in Brazil. Shortly thereafter, the introduction of affirmative action policies followed, such as Law 10.639/03, providing a new legal framework for black activists to combat racism. In an interview during my fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, Luiz de Oliveira, a lecturer at the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ) and previous state school teacher, remembered his early teaching practice and how it changed when the law first passed in 2003:

Being in school and in touch with various people of the [black] movement, I started to do activist work and talk about racial issues in

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6 In the 1960s and 1970s, apart from fighting against racism, black movement organisations contributed to the struggle to end the dictatorship.
school as early as 1994, and I did this together with a few like-minded people I found inside the school. I started to have this discussion in school, and all of this was before Law 10.639, before 2003. We worked on a few projects. (...) When Law 10.639 emerged, it was like they put a weapon in our hands. Now we could really demand that it be complied with. This is when our work really began!

In 2008, Law 11.645/08 altered the changes made by Law 10.639/03, adding indigenous history and culture and the struggle of the indigenous movement to the existing text. However, the document accompanying the first version of the law (10.639/03), DCNERER, has never been modified to correspond to the changes made to the law in 2008. Even though the document mentions indigenous history and culture, it overwhelmingly focuses on African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture, as well as on the history of the black movement. Despite the law having been altered in 2008, many scholars and black movement activists continue to refer to its unaltered version (Law 10.639/03). In this thesis, I will refer to the current version of the law, 11.645/08, unless used in an ethnographic context or when talking explicitly about the previous version.

According to Fanelli (2018), the work of the Brazilian Indigenous Movement and indigenous teachers were the driving force behind the approval of Law 11.645/08. The Brazilian Indigenous Movement formed on a national level\(^7\) and gained momentum during the dictatorship in the 1970s – at a time when indigenous movements across Latin America gained visibility and grew in numbers. Breaking with past discourses of assimilation into the national culture, discourses of indigenous movements in the 1970s revolved around issues of self-determination and land rights. Bicalho (2010: 110) discusses the role of Indigenous Assemblies for the constitution of indigenous movements and identifies obtaining citizenship rights while maintaining the right to be different within the nation-state and civil society as the common goal of all indigenous ethnicities in Brazil. Since the late 1980s, indigenous teachers have organised in specific associations to advocate differentiated education and the use of indigenous languages in school. The demand for the state to provide public policies in the realm of education by insisting that non-indigenous people be taught about indigenous history and culture appears during the Fourth Encounter of Indigenous Teachers

\(^7\) Bicalho (2010) argues that the Indigenous Movement in Brazil is built on its interculturality and its national scope, as it unites indigenous people from various groups from all over the country, which had not previously happened. Borrowing from Castro (1992), interculturality is a characteristic inherent to indigenous people, who can participate in the dominant culture while maintaining their own way of life (e.g. by speaking more than one language; carrying out paid work and communal labour; or fostering a system of reciprocity while participating in the market economy) (see Canclini, 2007: 69).
from Amazonas and Roraima in 1991, in a document called Declaration of Principles. It contains fifteen claims of which one demands that ‘in non-indigenous schools, the history and culture of indigenous peoples in Brazil will be treated and conveyed correctly to end prejudice and racism’ (Fanelli, 2018: 46). More than a decade later, the governmental agency National Indian Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Índio, FUNAI) and the Ministry of Justice organised the First National Conference of Indigenous Peoples with more than eight hundred participants from more than two hundred groups⁸ where a document was drafted that urged the federal government to create, guarantee and implement spaces within government and public communication channels, which recognised and promoted the diversity of indigenous groups in Brazil.

The state of the implementation of Law 11.645/08

The general consensus among Brazilian activists and scholars (Ferreira, 2008; among others) is that still today the law has not yet caught on (‘A lei não pegou’) and that there continues to be an absence of African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories and epistemologies from dominant knowledge production and reproduction (Gomes, 2008). Many educators have still not even heard about the law (Russo & Paladino, 2012: 914). Schools’ rhetoric often replicates the myths of meritocracy and racial democracy and normalises negative and stereotypical representations of Afro-descendants and indigenous people (Oliveira, 2012: 98; Da Costa, 2014: 116), which eliminate socio-economic factors and historical processes from debates about inequality.

There are still various obstacles that black and indigenous movement activists and their allies encounter with regard to the implementation of the law, some of which are discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 4. Akkari (2012: 166) notes that ideas about ‘racial identity’ are often reproduced in the classroom by the language that educators use to naturalise the mixedness of the Brazilian people. Teachers rarely include reflections on historical processes or on the (re-)construction of race in debates about social inequality and the image of the uncivilised, inferior and primitive indigenous or black person is still rooted in many people’s ideas about indigeneity and blackness (Oliveira, 2005; 2012; Warren & Sue, 2011; Da Costa, 2014). Russo & Paladino (2016: 899) note that it is extremely difficult to find

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⁸ At the same time, two of the most significant indigenous movements in Brazil, the Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) and the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APOINME), refused to attend the event, explaining that they saw the conference as a mere attempt of the state to legitimise its indigenous politics, which in their eyes is retrogressive and tries to maintain the tutelary system.
discussions about indigenous people that do not reproduce representations of them as living
in the forest, isolated and self-sufficient, living off fishing and hunting and being portrayed as
people without history (Wolf, 1997), who only figure as historical actors in accounts of
colonialism. The continuously reproduced image of ‘the Indians’ is that of a people stuck in
time, temporally and spatially separated from the modern Brazilian citizen. Teachers hardly
use literature or music written by indigenous people or speak of their current struggle and
demands. Official didactic material usually does not indicate the significance and magnitude
of experiences and knowledge that indigenous people have added to Brazilian culture (Russo
& Paladino, 2016: 899; Luciano, 2016). Instead, it often reinstates the idea of the Europeans
having discovered and brought social and technical progress to Brazil, omitting precolonial
history and indigenous peoples’ own experiences of colonialism from the narrative.
Indigenous influences in Brazil, such as in the fields of language, cuisine, medicine,
geography or music, as well as internationally, such as the influence of indigenous
epistemologies and culture on thinkers of the French Revolution (Luciano, 2016), are absent
from the national curriculum and thus systematically erased from society’s collective
memory. Furthermore, the way indigenous people are presented in school is usually very
generic, ignoring the significant cultural diversity of more than 300 different ethnic groups
who speak more than 270 different languages (Printes, 2014).

There are moments in which black and indigenous cultures get celebrated. However,
these celebrations are usually limited by popular imaginations of black and indigenous
culture and thus rarely go beyond the (re-)presentation of African influenced music and
food, or traditional indigenous costume. Spanierman and Smith (2017) warn of the pitfalls of
using educational approaches that merely layer diversity on top of the existing operations of
conventional systems. In the classroom setting, adding layers of diversity to a particular class
or lecture rather than approaching the curriculum and teaching practices as a whole has
hardly any effect in fostering critical consciousness among students. On the contrary, such
an approach can be harmful as it tends to perpetuate racial stereotypes. Seemingly, the
space for the challenging of Eurocentric narratives about slavery, colonialism, racial
democracy or meritocracy in the existing curriculum has been exiguous.

With regard to textbooks and didactic material, Rosemberg (1985), Lima (1999) and
Rosemberg, Bazilli and Silva (2003) note that since the 1950s there has not been much
change in the way relations between black and white people are portrayed and reproduced
In textbooks and didactic material. In textbooks, African people are predominantly mentioned in the context of slavery and colonialism, and there is hardly any mention of indigenous peoples at all (see Oliveira, 2005; Watthier, 2008). Rather than racial discrimination being made explicit, in textbooks there is an implicit reproduction of the racial hierarchy between white and black people. It becomes ever more relevant to approach the curriculum reform introduced by Law 10.639/03 in a transformative manner, not limiting its implementation to changes of didactic material or other tokenistic initiatives (de Oliveira & Candau, 2010; Akkari, 2012).

Even though in the 1990s there had been a public shift in the way racial inequality and racism are being discussed and acknowledged as a problem of national scale, colour-blind logics of mixture and racial democracy, such as the denial of racism, continue to permeate public discourse, institutional practices as well as individual thinking (Sansone, 2003; Vargas, 2004; Warren & Sue, 2011; Da Costa, 2014; 2016a). While the category of race has entered the arena of social policies as a way to repair historic injustices and promote the presence of black and indigenous people in higher education and the public sector, in various contexts, talking about race or racism in Brazil remains a taboo (Soares, 2012). Conceição (2010) argues that while the state has officially made antiracism part of its agenda, it has failed to provide the means to advance the antiracist struggle by holding back necessary financial and human resources. In terms of the implementation of Law 11.645/08, there have been efforts and advances made by the Ministry of Education, which, however, have been small. Law 11.645/08 and its directives disturb the values of the structure of Brazilian education, such as the racial democracy myth, whitening ideologies and the naturalisation of racial inequalities (Gomes, 2009: 40). Nevertheless, the growing efforts that various state agencies, non-governmental organisations, social activists and educators have put into the implementation of the law cannot be overlooked. As Da Costa (2016a: 24) states, these efforts have put tens of thousands of teachers, pedagogical coordinators, principals, other school staff and education personnel in contact with the law through specific training courses, workshops and seminars (see Luciano, 2016).
Education system

In Brazil, children attend school from the age of six when they enter compulsory ensino fundamental (basic education). After nine years of schooling, students who opt to stay in school enter ensino médio (high school), which lasts for three years and is meant to prepare them for the university. All levels of education are provided by a mix of private and public institutions, whereas most private primary and secondary schools are considered better than public ones. The opposite is true for higher education institutions, of which the more prestigious ones are public universities that are free of tuition. Public university openings are strongly desired and highly competitive as employers rate public university degrees much higher than those awarded from private institutions. In order to enter a public university, students have to score high in the National High School Exam (ENEM, Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio) or in one of the specific university entrance exams called Vestibular. Lehmann (2018: 111) notes the embodiment of difference-blind universalism in such standardised exams: competition is open to everyone on the same formal terms but structural disadvantages (racial and social backgrounds, schooling, location etc.) are not taken into account.

School is an essential tool to prepare students for admission to a public university. There is a significant difference between public federal schools, state schools and municipal schools. Municipal schools usually cater to primary education only. Depending on the wealth of a city, municipal schools vary massively throughout the country. Public state schools are known for very large class sizes, deteriorating facilities and material, school closures in low-income neighbourhoods, as well as regular strikes over salary and general conditions. Students spend a relatively small amount of time in school: Throughout ensino fundamental and médio, class takes place four to five hours a day, and during the months of July, December and January schools are closed. Classes start again in early to mid-February but are interrupted again for at least a week during carnival. Federal schools are known as educational institutions that provide quality education and enable a high proportion of their students to go to public university. To enter a federal school, students need to pass an entrance exam, and there are not many students from low-income families who can afford

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9 Even though federal schools are known for offering quality education, they are also affected by strikes and occupations. In 2018, the school year at Colégio Pedro II started in April instead of January, due to repeated teacher strikes to protest the government spending cap and planned education reforms.
preparatory courses or private education. There are thirteen federal military schools in the country, catering to the needs of children whose parents work in the military and are subject to frequent relocations across the country. The public can apply to these schools and gain a spot after going through a standardised entry process (*concurso público*). Furthermore, there is a significant number of Federal Centres for Technological Education (CEFET, Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica), now officially called Federal Institutes (IF), apart from regular federal schools, such as Colégio Pedro II.

Since the 1960s, social class has been a strong determinant of whether a child attends public school or private school. Poor children go to public school and those who can afford to do so go to private school (Dávila, 2003). With the rise of a new middle class in the first decade of the 2000s, a growing number of families enrolled their children in private schools to avoid public education and increase their children’s chances of qualifying for a public university. Public schools are much less likely to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to obtain a place at a public university compared to private schools. Recent newspaper headlines have stated that often public high school graduates cannot grasp what they read, are unable to write coherent texts and struggle to express themselves orally. Furthermore, reports state that ten percent of public high schools lack running water, twelve percent do not have libraries, and fifty-five percent have no science labs.

Even though social class is an essential factor with regard to educational inequality in Brazil, racial discrimination has transcended social class barriers. Patterns of educational attainment of white children and non-white children remain unequal after eliminating social class as a factor (do Valle Silva & Hasenbalg, 2002; Dávila, 2003). White people demonstrate higher rates of literacy, are more likely to attend and remain in school and secure jobs with higher salaries given the same qualifications as black people with the same social class background. Gender also plays a decisive role with regard to educational and professional progress, as girls are more likely to attend and remain in school than boys (do Valle Silva & Hasenbalg, 2002: 74), while the employment rate of women (61.2%) is significantly lower than for men (86.3%) (OECD, 2012). Black women are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market (see Chapter 3). In terms of access to education, with the advancement of the educational level, the number of non-white students drops drastically. The document

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10 In the last two decades, private investment in schools has increased rapidly throughout Latin America, in higher and basic education from kindergarten through 12th grade. When it comes to private higher education, with 75% of students enrolled in private higher education institutions, Brazil is the leading country in Latin America (Castro & Navarro, 2017).
National Plan for the Implementation of the National Curricular Directives for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, published by the Education Ministry, recognises that there is ‘evidence that discriminatory processes operate in education systems, penalising black children, teenagers, youth and adults, leading them towards absenteeism and failure, resulting in the reduced number of black men and women who reach higher education, which is about ten percent of the overall population in university throughout the country’ (Ministry of Education, 2009: 7).

A prominent public policy to augment the number of non-white students at public universities was the implementation of racial quotas. Although racial and social quotas in higher education were first adopted by public universities in 2002 (Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro and Universidade de Brasília), it was not until 2012 that the government sanctioned Law 12711/12 to officialise the nationwide implementation of quotas in public universities as well as in federal technical middle schools (CEFETs). The law states that at least fifty percent of places at the above-mentioned institutions have to be reserved for students who have studied in public schools. Quotas for public school students have proven to be tricky due to the significant differences between public state and federal schools. Many federal schools provide better preparation for the ENEM/Vestibular than the majority of private schools, but students from state schools are at a disadvantage compared to both federal and private schools. Furthermore, some private school students switch to public schools for their last three years of schooling, ensino médio, to be eligible for public school quotas despite having mainly studied in private education institutions. Within the public school contingent, places have to be reserved for indigenous and black applicants, as well as for persons with disabilities, in proportion to their demographic weight in each state/city according to the last national census (Presidência da República, 2012). Racial criteria were more central to the initial implementation of affirmative actions in the early 2000s, whereas nowadays public school students are the primary target audience and social class is considered more important than race. In fact, Brazilians are very much in favour of affirmative actions, but they tend to show a preference for colour-blind policies when given that option (Schwartzman & Paiva, 2014).
Rio de Janeiro: beyond the tourist’s gaze (centre and periphery)

Rio de Janeiro, with more than 6.3 million inhabitants the country’s second-largest city after São Paulo, remains the country’s world-renowned visual symbol with lush tropical forests stretching across lots of hills. The city embodies the country’s rich history as well as producing art, media and popular culture, and continuously attracting national and international tourists. Like Salvador, the city of Rio de Janeiro is known for its engagement with representations of black Brazilian culture such as samba music, samba schools, traditional Afro-Brazilian food, capoeira and carnival parades. The Brazilian tourism industry is organized around these products and the luxurious beaches.

Compared to other Brazilian metropolises, the racial composition of the city of Rio de Janeiro is relatively balanced. In the 2000 census, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2000) found that 49.05% of the carioca population declared themselves to be ‘white’ while 47.73% identified as ‘black’ (preto and pardo). Compared to the white and black population, the indigenous population in Rio de Janeiro is small: in the state of Rio de Janeiro, 16,000 people identified as indigenous in the last census, whereas almost 7000 live in the capital (Jesus, 2017: 359). It can be quite challenging to find statistical data on indigenous populations in urban centres, as I will discuss in Chapter 4.

As in other parts of the country, in Rio de Janeiro there are vast socio-economic disparities between the white and the black population. These disparities also manifest themselves in residential patterns: whereas the city centre and the wealthy area Zona Sul are predominantly inhabited by white Brazilians, the colour composition darkens with the increasing distance to the city centre. Contrary to idyllic celebrations of Afro-Brazilian culture in Rio de Janeiro, the high rates of urban violence, poverty, residential segregation and murders committed by police are testament to the level of segregation that escapes most tourists’ eyes (Vargas, 2005). Nevertheless, poverty in Brazil is not simply a non-white phenomenon. In fact, about thirty percent of the population of favelas identify as white (Institute of Applied Economic Research, 2010).

Similarly, schools that are considered good and capable of preparing their students for the university entrance exam are predominantly found in the wealthier and more central neighbourhoods of the city. Due to a financial allocation system that is partly based on merit, poorer neighbourhoods often lack the resources to properly equip their schools or to keep
them open, which in turn influences the implementation of Law 11.645/08 and the teaching of ethno-racial issues, which require special resources. As mentioned in the introduction, the National Directives for the Teaching of Ethnic and Race Relations and of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DCNERER) preserve the autonomy of schools as well as local education systems:

*The educational institutions’ autonomy in designing pedagogical projects [as stated in Law 9.394] provides for collaboration with communities that the school serves with direct or indirect support from scholars and the black movement, with whom communication channels will be established, finding ways of how to include them in the experience organised by the school, as well as in discipline contents regarding the subjects in question (Prefeitura de São Paulo 2004: 17-18).*

However, Da Costa (2016a) states that dependence on local officials can delay the allocation of resources (see Chapter 2), particularly where education officials do not believe in the importance of racial inequality in education. While rewriting and developing curricula is a crucial aspect in the process of implementing the law, the question of allocating resources and funds and equipping schools with sufficient materials, infrastructure and trained staff (with the necessary training and skills to introduce ethnic-racial issues into their teaching practice) cannot be overlooked. In other words, the adequacy of school facilities, institutional norms, relevant teacher training, the relationship between social opportunities and curriculum objectives and students’ aspirations add to the effectiveness of a curriculum and have to be evaluated when talking about particular impacts on and of the curriculum (Jansen, 1990: 203).

In the following section, I discuss the historical, geographic and social realities of my first and second field site; Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH) and Colégio Pedro II’s (CPII) campus São Cristóvão.

**Baixada Fluminense: Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH)**

The municipality Belford Roxo, in which Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH) is located, is situated in the Baixada Fluminense, metropolitan area of the city of Rio de Janeiro. 23% of the population of the state of Rio de Janeiro live in the Baixada Fluminense, which translates to 3.65 million people (Observatório SEBRAE, 2015). Belford Roxo itself has about 485,000 inhabitants, of which in the national census of 2010, 51.19% declared
themselves as *pardo* (compared to 36.5% in the city of Rio de Janeiro), 15.4% as *preto* (compared to 11.46% in the city of Rio de Janeiro), 32.35% as white (compared to 51.18% in the city of Rio de Janeiro), and 0.1% as indigenous (similar to the city of Rio de Janeiro) (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2011b*).

The work of Sheriff (2001), Vargas (2005) and Goldstein (2013) among others suggests that in Rio de Janeiro spatial occupation patterns are inexorably connected to race and that ideas about race are significantly influenced by the way urban space is understood. Referring to the school’s municipality, staff and students of CENH often used the term ‘*lugar esquecido*’ (forgotten place) and questioned my decision to do my research there, let alone live there. When I asked the reason, they either said that the city of Rio de Janeiro with its beaches was much prettier or, more often, that there was a lack of infrastructure and public investments in the Baixada. People I met in or around the city centre of Rio de Janeiro perceived the Baixada Fluminense as distant, poor and violent. In fact, studies have shown that, compared to other metropolitan areas of Rio de Janeiro, poverty rates are particularly high in the Baixada Fluminense, especially for black people (more so than for black people in the city of Rio de Janeiro or Niterói) (Oliveira, 2002: 12). Furthermore, various municipalities of the Baixada Fluminense have demonstrated higher numbers of constructions on irregular lots, which reinforces the notion that poverty in peripheral metropolitan areas is rising (ibid.). Moreover, various municipalities in the Baixada Fluminense are confronted with severe violence, which is regularly exploited by media reports that nurture the association of the Baixada Fluminense with violence and political clientelism (Enne, 2002). Barreto (2007: 187) states:

*[In terms of its external visibility] the early 1980s of the Baixada were shaped by a ‘phase of vigilantes and killers (justicieiros e matadores)’. [...] Apart from those who fitted better into the category ‘professional killers’, assassins and physical coercion for political motives flourished.*

With regard to political clientelism, Belford Roxo stands out – at least in the imagination of its inhabitants and inhabitants of neighbouring municipalities. The assassination of the first Mayor of Belford Roxo, Jorge Júlio Da Costa dos Santos, better known as ‘Joca’, is still commemorated with a bank holiday on the 20th of June. Joca was known to be part of a death squad, involved in armed robberies, drug trafficking and violently ruling the city. The absence of public control and the constant threat of violence shape the reality of Belford Roxo’s inhabitants – then and today. Public jobs are being
awarded in exchange for political fidelity, council members appoint city school principals in exchange for favours, and each neighbourhood seems to be under the control of either one of the *carioca* criminal organisations or the militia. The area registers more homicides than the city of Rio de Janeiro in absolute terms, although its population is less than half the size (Instituto de Segurança Pública, 2016). During my fieldwork, the employees and students at CENH have said that they were always aware and felt scared of everyday violence, which has dramatically worsened since I left the field.

The region of the Baixada Fluminense was initially populated in the 16th century in order to produce raw materials and provide the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro with sugar cane, coffee and meat, among other agricultural products. In the 19th century (1854) Dom Pedro II built the country’s first railway, which connected Brazil’s capital at that time with the Baixada Fluminense and resulted in the area’s rapid population growth. In the 1940s, another population boom occurred when the state invested massively into the area’s sanitation system. As a result, the population grew more than 100% until the end of the 1950s (Barreto, 2007: 185). A lot of people from all over Brazil migrated to the Baixada Fluminense, but most of them came from the impoverished Northeast of the country, an area that had previously received a lot of enslaved Africans. Over the centuries, the region has been marked by a concentration of working-class families and public as well as private investments have never been enough to provide for substantial changes, or have been made without the participation of the population (Souza et al., 2007).

Municipalities in the Baixada Fluminense are referred to as *cidades dormitório* (dormitory towns) as the majority of the population commutes daily to the municipality of Rio de Janeiro for work. Due to a lack of efficient transport systems, commuters spend four to six hours a day travelling to and from work; paying for transport also adds a financial burden. The further one drives from the centre of Rio de Janeiro, the deeper the potholes become, and the less asphalted and dustier are the roads. There is, thus, a historical pattern in which the Baixada Fluminense provides its services to Rio de Janeiro, without getting a proportional return. Although there are various universities in the Baixada – one of them being a Federal University – most people believe it is necessary to leave the place in order to be successful or climb the socio-economic ladder. The majority of students and employees at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte said that they want to leave the Baixada. In the school’s municipality itself, there is an absence of a neighbourhood in which middle- or upper-class
families are concentrated, although the city centre is considered to be safer and ‘more developed’ than certain other parts.

During the year of my fieldwork, in 2016, 628 students attended Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte. According to the school’s principal, Laura, about 21% of the students’ families receive Bolsa Família,\(^{11}\) meaning that their families’ income is below the poverty line. Still, Laura and Lucas, the vice-principal, both emphasised that there weren’t any students who only showed up at school to receive free school meals or other benefits tied to school attendance, implying that none of the students came from very poor families.

Whereas public schools are generally less likely to equip students with the required skills and knowledge to get a place at a public university compared to private schools, CENH produces a relatively high number of successful candidates who end up in public university. Out of approximately 125 students finishing high school in 2016, fourteen were admitted to a public university (and some of them were accepted a year later after retaking the entry exam). CENH has an excellent reputation within the borders of its municipality. From students, staff and parents I heard various reasons for this, the first always being the comparatively good results the school’s students obtain at the SAERJINHO (bimestrial evaluation system of the process of teaching and learning in the state schools of Rio de Janeiro)\(^{12}\) and, particularly, the ENEM. It is also known for its zero-tolerance policy when it comes to violence, drug abuse or sexual acts inside or around the school; its relatively small size for a public high school in the state of Rio de Janeiro; and its engaged teachers. Eduardo, a student of the graduation class in 2016, put it this way:

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\(^{11}\) In 2003, former president Luiz Lula da Silva (Worker’s Party, PT) implemented the social welfare programme Bolsa Família, which provides financial aid to Brazilians who live below the poverty line. It is linked to child vaccination and school attendance. Although the government led by Michel Temer (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, PMDB) has announced various cuts to social welfare programmes, Bolsa Família has not been targeted so far. According to Mitchell-Walthour (2017: 216), 73% of the 14 million families that benefited from the Bolsa Família program are Afro-Brazilian, and 78% of 22 million people that escaped extreme poverty due to this program are Afro-Brazilian.

\(^{12}\) Regarding high school education (ensino médio – the last three years of schooling), the state of Rio de Janeiro obtained the second worst results at the Basic Education Development Index (Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica, IDEB) in Brazil. The governor at the time, Sérgio Cabral (2006-2014, PMDB), announced his ambition for Rio de Janeiro to be among the four best state education systems until 2014 (which did not happen). The former education minister of the state of Rio de Janeiro (2010-2014), economist Wilson Risolia, introduced an educational plan (which Jornal Globo entitled ‘choque de ordem’ – Engl. organisational shake-up) that would reform five core areas: pedagogy, expenditure, infrastructure, problem diagnosis and student-related issues. Other than that, a meritocratic system for the leadership and teachers was implemented, such as regular standardised evaluations, which would help to re-evaluate teacher remuneration or the inspection of the sick certificates of eight thousand teachers in medical treatment. According to Risolia’s meritocratic educational system, teacher remuneration now depends on the completion of 100% of the minimum curricular requirements (currículo mínimo), 85% of their students taking standardised exams (SAERJinho), and obtaining satisfactory results (otherwise the teacher might not have stuck to the currículo mínimo and failed their obligations). The currículo mínimo was drafted within three months and reduced the number of classes taught in the humanities (Nascimento, 2013).
It is already well known! All the students coming here already know; you cannot mess around here, it is serious. The teachers know everything [that happens] inside the classroom, there is a fence; it is a very strict school. If you really want to study, you will thrive here. If you mess around... If you mess around they will say, ah, let’s send them to another place! So, this is what they do here!

The financial crisis in Brazil, and in particular the state of Rio de Janeiro, forced a lot of families, who had previously been able to send their children to private schools, to enrol them at a public school. Due to its excellent reputation, CENH attracted a lot of these students, which in return shapes the characteristics of the student body. The school has a high proportion of students whose parents want them to go to university, some of them being able to pay for private university tuition. The majority of students whom I asked about their future aspirations told me that they wanted to go to university. Only a few of them did not seem to consider this an option and opted for vocational training, and often the military. In fact, even though the number of students who obtain ENEM results that are good enough to attend a public university is higher than at many other public schools, most students are aware that only a small fraction of them will be successful. Whereas the majority of students are not white, among the employees, white people are the majority (with the highest position in school being occupied by the most European-looking white person in school, and one of the lowest positions being occupied by the person with the darkest skin).

São Cristóvão – Zona Norte: Colégio Pedro II São Cristóvão III

Colégio Pedro II has twelve campuses in Rio de Janeiro, two in the neighbouring municipalities of Niterói and Duque de Caxias, of which most offer primary, secondary and high school education. In total, there are about 13,000 students and 2500 employees. In 2016, 281 students finished their last year of high school at CPII São Cristóvão III. Situated in the neighbourhood of São Cristóvão in Rio de Janeiro’s Northern Zone, the school campus is right next to the famous São Cristóvão market and very close to the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, the National Museum, the zoo, the popular Vasco da Gama football club as well as to the Maracanã stadium. It is thus an area that attracts many tourists, families and football fans. In the 19th century (1808-1889) the royal family resided in the São Cristóvão Palace, located in a large garden/park area called Quinta da Boa Vista – less than a five minute walk from CPII. The palace was built by a Portuguese-Lebanese slave merchant
on the grounds that had belonged to the Jesuit Order in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the second half of the 19th century, Rio de Janeiro was feeling the impact of the decline of the coffee economy and invested in the establishment of manufacturing plants, many of which were installed in the city centre and in São Cristóvão, appropriating the mansions that used to belong to white elites who had moved to the Zona Sul (Patrasso, 2012).

Today the São Cristóvão Palace is known for having hosted the National Museum (founded in 1818 but transferred to the palace in 1892) and one of the largest scientific libraries in the country. However, only three months after its 200th anniversary in June 2019, the National Museum suffered a huge fire and was destroyed to the ground. The fire was not a coincidence or random accident, but the direct result of severe underfunding, which caused the destruction of a significant part of the museum’s objects and books.

Despite its glorious past, its prestigious museum and proximity to various popular sights, the neighbourhood of São Cristóvão saw a significant amount of its population leave the area due to the closing of industrial units. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood being a ‘condensate of the city’s history and treasures’, it has long been part of the city’s rehabilitation plan and has received relatively close attention from carioca governments (Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 2006). São Cristóvão continues to be a neighbourhood inhabited by a white middle-class majority. Most students at CPII come from middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds, and the vast majority of teachers and students are white. None of the students I talked to, however, live in close proximity of the school but travel to school from various neighbourhoods in the Zona Norte.

Apart from the campus of São Cristóvão, I worked in the school’s city centre location, which is where the school was founded in 1837, and the Centre for Afro-Brazilian Studies is located (NEAB). CPII was the first official secondary school in Brazil, and with the advent of the Republic, it was turned into a model school for private secondary schools in the country, which some of the students and teachers claim it is until today. In order to gain accreditation for their diplomas, private secondary schools throughout Brazil had to follow the CPII curriculum (Dávila, 2003: 197). The nation’s (until the 1920s exclusively male) nobility was educated and trained at CPII, and imperial bureaucrats were recruited among the students. Teaching at the institution was, and arguably continues to be, seen as prestigious and

13 The school started as Colégio dos Órfãos de São Pedro (Orphan School of São Pedro), founded in 1739 by Franciscan Catholics, and later called Seminário de São Joaquim. In 1837, it was reorganised, extended, and renamed after child Emperor Dom Pedro II.
preeminent. Moreover, being a chaired professor at CPII came with the privilege of
influencing a given scientific or social field throughout Brazil (ibid.). Textbooks were written
and published by CPII educators, a practice that remained up to this day. At CPII, teachers
are responsible for the pedagogical coordination (Pio, 2016) and often develop their own
teaching material, such as textbooks. In 1931, a school reform stripped CPII of its role as a
model school and curriculum developer. Then President Getúlio Vargas created the Ministry
of Education and Health (MES, Ministério de Educação e Saúde) and made it responsible for
the national secondary curriculum. Nevertheless, CPII continued to be a model school – a
model for what a school is supposed to do, the way its students are supposed to behave and
what they are supposed to aspire to do. The school continued to be a symbol for what could
be achieved through education, maintained a close relationship with the minister of
education and hosted speeches about education policy, race, or nationalism (Dávila, 2003:
199).

Still today, CPII preserves some of its elitist profile and has maintained an organisation
resembling higher education institutions. Each subject area is organised in departments,
which operate on each campus and between all campuses. The sociology department at São
Cristóvão III, for example, met every week to discuss previously developed curricula,
classroom experiences and future exam modalities and questions.

Public education compared – federal versus state school

Apart from location, size and student and teacher background, the two schools show
significant differences in infrastructure and staff, in terms of rewards, financial security and
access to further education. This is at least partially due to their organisational affiliation to
the state and the federation, as Colégio Pedro II is a federal school, while Colégio Estadual
Novo Horizonte is a state school.

The infrastructure in the two schools differs a lot, although it is worth noting that there
are state schools in significantly worse conditions than CENH. CPII São Cristóvão III stands
out for having, among other things, a swimming pool, library and study space, canteen,
informatics room, science lab, indoor sports court, conference rooms, an amphitheatre, a
garden, a teachers’ room and various rooms for administrators and the rectorate. CENH has
a covered outside sports court that also serves as space for large meetings and events, a
small canteen that only accommodates a fraction of the students (who usually all finish class at the same time), a very small library, an informatics room (mostly unused), a small teachers’ room, a tiny principal’s office and a secretariat. At CPII, teachers can use DVD players, printers, copying machines, overhead projectors and TVs. At CENH, there are no DVD players or overhead projectors.

In general, teachers at CPII have higher educational degrees than teachers at CENH; they are hired on a full time basis (state school teachers on the other hand usually have to teach at up to four different schools as each school only offers them a few hours of work); they receive a significantly higher salary and have access to a wide range of other benefits that the rede estadual (the state school network, in this case, the state of Rio de Janeiro) cannot offer its teachers. These differences can have an impact on the quality of teaching and the motivation of staff and students. Teachers of the rede estadual spend a lot of time travelling in between schools, they have to adjust to different work environments on a daily basis, hardly earn enough money to make a comfortable living and are not offered any incentives to educate themselves further. Teachers of the rede estadual have to teach for a minimum of three years before they get any benefits, such as the right to sabbaticals. During my time at CENH, two teachers who were enrolled in PhD degrees and planned to spend a year abroad lost their jobs due to this rule. If they chose to teach at the rede estadual upon their return, they would have to go through the concurso público to qualify and start all over again. At CPII on the other hand, teachers fall into a higher salary scheme as soon as they enrol for a higher degree. Clara, a teacher at CPII, is in her sabbatical year in which she wants to complete her Master’s degree and qualify for a PhD. Isabela, a teacher at CENH, on the other hand, has to manage her teaching duty (in three different schools) and her PhD programme at the same time, without getting any time off.

From March 2016 onwards, the crisis-ridden state of Rio de Janeiro stopped paying its public servants their entire salaries at the beginning of the month and paid them in instalments instead. On June 17th 2016, the state of Rio de Janeiro, as well as a few municipalities in the Baixada Fluminense declared a public emergency and many public servants have since not received their full salaries.

Another difficulty that many public school students from low-income families face is that they have to work while completing their high school education. Some enter school at 6.50am to be able to start their shift at work in the early afternoon. Others work in the
morning and enter school in the early afternoon. Taking additional classes to prepare for university, study English or attend vocational training minimises students’ time for homework and test preparation. Pinho (2014) notes that male students are more affected by their families’ need for additional income than female students. Due to ideas about gender, it is more accepted for girls and young women to economically depend on their parents or spouses than for boys and young men.

In 2015, Colégio Pedro II had the best public school ENEM results in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The students from CPII São Cristóvão III obtained 641 points on average and ranked as the sixth best public school in Rio de Janeiro (six campuses of CPII are among the ten best public schools in Rio de Janeiro) (Colégio Pedro II, 2016). 100% of its final year students took the ENEM (Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio) in 2016. As mentioned before, Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte is known for being one of the best public high schools in Belford Roxo, which is also reflected in the relatively high participation rate of its students at the ENEM (71% in 2016) and their results compared to other public high schools in the same municipality (overall average points at ENEM: 509 in 2016, which is the same as the national average for all schools). Out of 32 state schools in the same municipality, only students from three other schools obtained similar results. ENEM participation rates in state schools in the same municipality got as low as 18% (QEdu, 2018b).

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CPII has the better financial resources compared to CENH and highly educated teachers. Students at CPII tend to have more time to focus on studying as they are less likely to work or to be confronted with everyday violence than students at CENH. In standardised testing, they obtain better results and are more likely to attend a public university, which clearly demonstrates the achievement gap between state and federal school, and a structural inequality between black and white students in the educational context. In the next chapter I will explore the way the implementation of Law 11.645/08 is hindered and advanced in both educational contexts.
2. The implementation of Law 11.645/08 – from education offices to schools

The official document accompanying Law 11.645/08, *National Guidelines for the Teaching of Ethnic and Race Relations and of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DCNERER)*, does not only define the law’s intentions and its desired outcome, but lists channels through which ethno-racial education is meant to spread, such as educational institutions, teacher education processes, the community, teachers, students and their parents. The majority of research on the implementation of Law 11.645/08, however, by and large discusses the experiences of teachers and administrative staff (see Russo & Paladino, 2016; Gillam, 2016). Despite the fact that teaching African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture is ultimately meant to shape students’ understanding of Brazilian society, and to transform them into ‘responsible citizens’ who appreciate and value their diverse ancestry (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2004: 10), student perspectives remain understudied. Moreover, Connell (1989: 292) notes that most of the time research on schooling is confined to formal schooling and has shortcomings when it comes to considering where the school is located in larger processes. This chapter takes a holistic approach with regard to the implementation process of Law 11.645/08. By discussing two very distinct ways to approach this implementation process in different contexts, it sheds light on the interplay of education secretariats, school leadership, students (who often play a vital role in change processes), teachers and school staff, and the way these influence the law’s implementation.

Law 11.645/08 being a federal law applying to all public educational institutions in Brazil, the Education Ministry as well as education secretariats on the state and municipal levels are legally bound to further its implementation. Furthermore, *the National Guidelines* give each school the autonomy to decide how to implement the law, which should involve scholars and black movement activists, although the implementation is not the responsibility of the school alone:
The educational institutions’ autonomy in designing pedagogical projects [as stated in Law 9.394-1996] provides for the collaboration with communities that the school serves with direct or indirect support from scholars and the black movement, with whom communication channels will be established, finding ways to include them in the experience organised by the school, as well as in the content of the curriculum regarding the subjects in question. [...] Success depends on the joint effort of articulation between educational processes in school, public policies and social movements, as the ethical, cultural, pedagogical and political changes with regard to ethnic-racial relations are not limited to the school (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2004).

However, there is no guidance defining the amount or content of activities the secretariats, schools or social movements should carry out and their efforts vary significantly. Laura, the principal of the public high school Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte, reminded her teachers about the law’s authority when she presented the school wide ‘Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora’. She emphasised to her colleagues, in order to get them on board, that it was their legal obligation to talk about African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in school. The first time I heard Laura say ‘É lei, gente!’ (‘It is the law, everyone!’) I was surprised, since two black teachers had tried to convince her to offer activities with regard to the law prior to my arrival and Laura had not been interested at all, an experience Russo and Paladino (2016) also had while researching indigenous questions in schools in Rio de Janeiro. Gomes and Jesus (2013: 28) note that in schools where practices that question ethnic-racial relations are found, they can be attributed mainly to the efforts of individual teachers rather than the school as a whole. This reminds us that the sole existence of a law does not guarantee its implementation, or as Flyvbjerg (1998: 325) states: ‘Whereas constitution writing and institutional reform may often be essential to democratic development, the idea that such reform alters practice is a hypothesis, not an axiom’. It is characteristic of the Global South that there is a crucial gap between legislation and implementation. Whereas the passing of legislation has gained significant attention, the politics of implementation needs to be focused on more (Paschel, 2016: 228). Gomes (2001: 89) adds that laws are never neutral. No matter how progressive a law might be, its legitimisation is dependent on social dynamics, political debates and daily practices. Furthermore, the social and educational reality that a law addresses is always marked by

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1 Law 9.394, introduced in 1996, establishes the Directives and Bases of National Education. Laws 10.639/03 and 11.645/08 are both modifications of Law 9.394 (see Chapter 1).
complexity, confrontation as well as contradiction, and never isolated from social and racial relations (ibid.). Looking at the everyday practices of those who are active in individual institutions – such as education officials, students, school leaders, social activists, teachers and other education staff among others – contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of social change (Gillborn, 1994: 147). In this chapter, I thus approach the irregular and complex implementation process (Gomes & Jesus, 2013) of Law 11.645/08 through the examination of various spaces where an anti-racist agenda is being advanced and ethnic-racial education is flourishing – even if such spaces might still be very confined. I examine the work done by education secretariats, school leadership, teachers, staff and students with regard to the law’s implementation in Rio de Janeiro. This chapter starts at the level of education secretariats and offers a look into the successes achieved and the obstacles encountered by an education official trying to advance the implementation of Law 11.645/08 in her municipality in the Baixada Fluminense. The subsequent parts introduce the implementation process at my two field sites Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte and Colégio Pedro II São Cristóvão II. I provide an overview of the activities carried out and the very distinct ways they came about in both schools, and offer a structural analysis of emerging differences.

‘Everything is about political relationships’: education secretariats implementing the law

Law 11.654/08 has given rise to several administrative initiatives, consisting of the creation of bureaucratic infrastructures, which appear to have had little effect at grass-roots level. In 2008, five years after the law’s first version was enacted and the year the law was amended, the State Secretariat of Education of Rio de Janeiro (Secretaria de Estado de Educação do Rio de Janeiro, SEEDUC) created the State Committee for Ethnic-Racial questions (Comitê Estadual Étnico-Racial) as a response to the law. Today, the committee has fifteen representatives, one from each of the Regional Pedagogical Directorates (Diretorias Regionais Pedagógicas) and one from the Special Directorate of Socio-Educational and Penitentiary Units (Diretoria Especial de Unidades Socioeducativas e Prisionais, DIESP). One of the committee’s activities has been the organisation of Regional Pedagogical
Seminars (Seminário Regional Pedagógico) that explore pedagogical practices that aim to implement and develop discussions about ethnic-racial questions in schools. In 2011, the Regional Pedagogical Directorates of the Baixada Fluminense (Diretorias Regionais Pedagógicas Metropolitanas I, V and VII) held a Regional Pedagogical Summit that brought together about 70% of school leaders from their areas of influence (Governo do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2011). However, as the state of Rio de Janeiro has been in a severe financial crisis and the budget for education has repeatedly been cut, it is unclear whether the SEEDUC is still encouraging such activities or what the reach of such events might be. Gomes and Jesus (2013) note that initiatives of regional education offices paired with actions of school leaders are crucial for the implementation of pedagogical practices that comply with Law 11.645/08. However, in October 2015, representatives of the Regional Pedagogical Directorate responsible for the municipality in which Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH) is located were not aware of any such activities. During her three years as principal of CENH in the Baixada Fluminense (January 2014 – 2017), Laura had never been invited to any such event regarding the implementation of Law 11.645/08. When I asked about it she responded: ‘I don’t think the SEEDUC has any interest in the work I put in to make young people think about prejudice, tolerance and ethics. To the SEEDUC [high school] Novo Horizonte is a school that has good results’. She implied that the SEEDUC’s main concern is the Basic Education Development Index (Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica, IDEB), launched by the Ministry of Education in 2009, which measures the correlation between learning achievements in high school and university approval rates all over Brazil. As the students of Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte obtain relatively good results in standardised exams, the SEEDUC does not pay much attention to the school and hence does not try to impose or monitor any pedagogical measures. However, it is questionable whether the law’s implementation would be monitored by the SEEDUC even if the school obtained worse results.

Úrsula is a former employee of a municipal education secretariat in Belford Roxo, the municipality where CENH is located. In an interview she explained that the implementation of measures to promulgate the law depends very much on the individual will of the regional secretariat’s staff, which in turn depends on the political structures in the respective municipality. Úrsula, a blonde European-looking woman in her late thirties, identifies as a white woman and is very passionate about the law’s implementation. She had been working
as teacher in private and municipal primary school education for fifteen years before she
joined the municipal education secretariat in 2013. Her reasons for giving up teaching and
working for the secretariat were that flexible hours allowed her to focus on her Master’s
studies in education, which she connected to her work in the secretariat. Úrsula wrote her
thesis about the implementation of Law 10.639/03. She knew that her superior in the
secretariat encouraged teachers to study further, and she told Úrsula that with her Master’s
project she could contribute to the law’s implementation in Belford Roxo.

With regard to secretariats created by the Ministry of Education that are concerned
with the implementation of Law 11.645/08, Soeterik (2013) observes that there have been
barriers caused by very fragile institutional structures and a lack of financial resources for
specific activities. This is also reflected in Úrsula’s experiences. When she started her work at
the secretariat, she suggested specific activities with regard to the law’s implementation.
However, the lack of a person assuming responsibility who would be able to allocate funding
made it difficult for Úrsula to carry out any of the activities she had planned. When Úrsula
managed to put together a teacher-training workshop with a guest from a quilombo and an
indigenous activist, which involved hardly any costs, she was convinced that she had found a
way to work around the most obvious obstacles. Nevertheless, when she presented her
initiative to the sub-secretary for approval, she was told that no teachers in the municipality
could be taken out of the classroom to undergo this particular type of training. At the same
time, it was also common for the secretariat not to receive any response at all from schools
that had been invited to specific events, and for school principals to be reluctant to release
their teachers from teaching duties in order to attend the seminars and workshops on the
law’s implementation. The demands imposed by the minimal curricular requirements and
the constant monitoring of teachers’ and students’ performances, such as the IDEB, may
explain the school leadership’s reluctance to take teachers out of the classroom. On the
other hand, the lack of cooperation from school leaders could also be a sign of their lack of
interest in or even desire to avoid incentives that promote Law 11.645/08.

Nevertheless, Úrsula’s superior continued to constantly tell her to come up with new
projects and ideas, which ultimately made her feel increasingly anxious, as her awareness of
not being able to turn any of them into reality grew over time. Úrsula told me that the
educational secretariat had avoided promoting the law until one day a lawyer of the Federal
Board of the Brazilian Bar Association (Conselho Federal da Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil,
The OAB (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil) has established a Commission for Racial Equality (Comissão de Igualdade Racial), which is known for protecting the interests of civil society with regard to racial questions. Lawyer Humberto Adami is the head of the Federal Board of the Brazilian Bar Association’s (Conselho Federal da Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil, OAB) National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (Comissão Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade) and assessor of the OAB’s Special Secretariat for Policies that Promote Racial Equality (Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial), promoting and monitoring the implementation of Law 11.645/08 (then 10.639/03). In March 2005, the Institute for Racial and Environmental Advocacy (Instituto de Advocacia Racial e Ambiental, IARA), led by Humberto Adami, as well as other non-governmental organisations and representatives of the movimento negro denounced the lack of implementation of Law 10.639/03 at the Federal Public Ministry of the State of Rio de Janeiro. In 2005, IARA’s mission was to summon public and private school principals of all municipalities in the state of Rio de Janeiro to see to what extent they complied with the law. In December 2006, 92 civil courts of enquiry were installed for the duration of a year (one in each municipality of the state of Rio de Janeiro) in order to evaluate the law’s implementation, and were extended for another year in 2007. After years of dispute about the entity responsible for evaluating and monitoring the law’s implementation, the Federal Public Ministry assumed the responsibility for the implementation in federal schools in August 2009 (Freitas, 2010), while the Ministério Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro oversees state and municipal schools.
distributed. She exclaimed that there was not even enough money for a car to pick up speakers for her events or to visit schools in the municipality, but her superior insisted on printing such a large amount of flyers. To her, it felt like a question of pretence. In the end, due to political restructuring in the secretariat, the event never even took place.

The excuse Úrsula gave the lawyer – that changes in staff hamper the effective implementation of her projects – was not untrue but applies to anyone trying to implement any sort of project in the municipality. Bureaucracy and local politics surrounding municipal schools make the creation of any initiative in this context difficult to create and follow through. Municipal elections take place every four years, which means that almost the complete staff of the education secretariat (and other public offices) is replaced. As a consequence, the continuation of projects and work becomes almost impossible. At the same time, the decentralised organisation of the secretariat into various sub-divisions working individually impedes the efficient development of common projects:

*Each sub-secretary, there was one for human resources, administrative, that took care of the people, pedagogical, nutrition... Each one would do whatever they wanted. There is no centralised work. It’s just craziness! Nobody knows what the other one is doing – very crazy. When the new government arrives they just do what they want, it doesn’t matter what we have started* (interview with Úrsula).

Before the last municipal elections in fall 2016, Úrsula decided to give up her job at the secretariat. The constant rotations and changes in staff that led to the discontinuity of many projects frustrated her, as well as the clientelistic practices regarding the hiring of people:

*Whoever works for the councillor (vereador) will get a position, or from the mayor. Not many people are competent; there is no public competition, all the jobs are allocated by personal ties. In order to get into the secretariat of education you have to have [know] someone. Everything is about political relationships (relações políticas), like a vereador whom you supported in his campaign, and then he puts you there. (...) Every four years there are municipal elections, every vereador acts as the padrinho (godfather, patron) of a school, it isn’t official, it isn’t legal. There is legislation about this, about the influence of the political influential sphere though, about the electorate. They know the school, that’s where they get the votes, where they show their work, have events in school, take care of the school.*
In 2013, Úrsula recalls, a vereador made one of the cleaning ladies school principal, without her having any formal qualification, teaching or leadership experience, simply because she got him a significant number of votes. In the first months of 2016, a vereador candidate for the party in power, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB, Movimento Democrático Brasileiro), running in the elections of October 2016, started frequenting several events at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte with his campaign team. Initially, the candidate came to give a motivational speech about entrepreneurship, in which he encouraged students to be proud for having been raised in the Baixada Fluminense. However, his team showed up on various other occasions and Principal Laura always welcomed them enthusiastically. When I asked the vereador candidate after the elections whether he could have helped out the school had he won, he did not hesitate to affirm that he could have (without further clarifying what type of help either of us meant). His team’s visits were happening during the state-wide school occupations, which prompted many students from occupied schools to transfer to CENH in order to be able to graduate on time. Although CENH was never occupied, the possibility (or rather threat) of an occupation had been on the management team’s mind. Rather than being acknowledged for their political engagement and concern for their right to education, school occupiers were largely regarded as trouble makers who kept the rest of the student body from finishing the school year. Zan and Corsino (2017) describe similar reactions to school occupiers in São Paulo: while students perceived the occupations as a democratisation of education, they were criminalised and accused of drug abuse and vandalism by the school leadership, politicians and parts of the surrounding community. On one of his visits, the vereador candidate made it very clear that he would not tolerate a school occupation in his municipality and that he would remove students immediately, not refraining from violence: ‘If students tried to pull this off here, we’d be in there in less than two seconds to put a stop to it and slap them in the face!’ When I asked two teachers about Principal Laura’s apparent concerns about her school being occupied, they told me that the local government would be upset about any

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3 Just when the school year was about to take off, on March 2nd, the Education Professionals’ State Union of Rio de Janeiro (Sindicato Estadual dos Profissionais de Educação do Rio de Janeiro, SEPE RJ) decided to go on strike to fight budget cuts to an already small budget and demand better quality of education, which would last for several months. On the 21st of March, the first state school, Colégio Prefeito Mendes de Moraes in the city of Rio de Janeiro, was occupied by students in support of the SEPE RJ strike. Until the end of April more than seventy schools were occupied, and some of them violently vacated by the state run military police (Polícia Militar do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) and their special unit for the control of civic unrest (Batalhão de Polícia de Choque).

4 Parents whose children were studying at state schools that had been occupied exceptionally got permission to transfer their children to other state schools, which were running almost as usual.
school being occupied in their sphere of influence, and that there would be consequences for the school leadership if an occupation took place. Referring to the municipal education secretariat, Úrsula stressed the fact that questioning authority/power within this context is not to be done lightly:

*The rain comes into the secretariat, there are rats, the drain just runs through, it’s horrible. It’s horrible, I complain but then people tell me talk less, you have a child to raise, it’s a very tense situation, so I shut up. [...] I don’t like this political party game [jogo político partidário], and especially here [in Belford Roxo] it is complicated. Besides not being ethical, it is also dangerous. Things work with violence. They are criminals. [...] I think this is how it works in other municipalities as well.*

Úrsula and Principal Laura’s accounts demonstrate some of the ways local politics enters the educational sphere and treats schools as an extension of the local government. The absence of specific departments that are responsible for the law’s implementation in municipal education secretariats, the lack of approval from above when planning activities, ever-changing staff and the discontinuity of work, as well as the fear of challenging power create obstacles for the reformulation of the curriculum and teaching practice according to the requirements of Law 11.645/08 and its accompanying document *DCNERER*. Similar to Úrsula’s education secretariat and Principal Laura’s school, in the majority of educational institutions those who actively work on the implementation of the law are the minority and act out of their own motivation. In fact, activities developed by actors from the civil society arena – within the civil society arena but also within the official political and the pedagogical arena – have been the main motor behind the institutionalisation of the law (Soeterik, 2013: 125; Pereira, 2003: 28).

**Two public high schools – two approaches to the implementation of Law 11.645/08**

In federal schools the implementation of the law is overseen by the Ministry of Education and therefore does not depend on regional secretariats, such as the one Úrsula works at in Belford Roxo. At my second field site, Colégio Pedro II, Márcia, the campus principal, manages her school unit but cannot take autonomous decisions with regard to
curriculum design, the distribution of financial resources or the hiring of teachers, who all have to pass a *concurso* (standardised entry exams required for all jobs in the public sector). Furthermore, each subject area is organised in school-wide departments, which collectively take decisions on processes, such as curriculum design, finances, student admission, etc. This can slow down decision-making, as so many different people are involved. The complex organisation of CPII contrasts markedly with decision-making processes at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte. Principal Laura does not have to respond to anyone inside the school and can decide relatively autonomously about human resources, financial resource distribution, penalties for students and teachers, the focuses of teaching and the way regulations from above are put into practice (e.g. prohibiting the use of cell phones in class, accepting my presence before receiving official approval from above, allowing one of the teachers to sell home-made chocolates to students). These distinct forms of school organisation have implications for the way Law 11.645/08 is implemented, and the role staff and students can play in it.

**Centre for Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEAB): a centralised approach at a centrally administered school**

A decade after Law 10.639/03 passed, a Centre for Afro-Brazilian Studies (Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, NEAB) was established at the prestigious school Colégio Pedro II in 2013. NEABs are dedicated to carrying out research and are usually situated at universities. The NEAB at CPII is unique in the sense that it is the first one to be integrated into a primary and secondary education institution. When speaking about the NEAB at CPII, people inevitably referred to Alessandra Pio, a lively woman, who had been the centre’s coordinator from its emergence in November 2013 to March 2016. With her black skin and her Afro hair Alessandra stands out from the overwhelmingly white staff (and pupils) at the school. As part of the pedagogical auxiliary staff, Alessandra’s job at CPII is to deal with pupils who have any type of academic or personal problem. However, she had taught for much of her career in various secondary schools in the Baixada Fluminense, where she also grew up, and she started her doctoral degree in 2016. In Alessandra’s words, NEAB’s mission at the time of its creation was to get the school as a whole to actively participate in the process of implementing Law 10.639/03 into the curriculum; a process that at that point had not yet

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5 There are however various research groups other than the NEAB at CPII, which are dedicated to a broad range of topics.
been officialised. The main focus of the work carried out by NEAB was to make the topic more visible, promote discussion about it, conduct research, and offer extracurricular courses.

The formation of NEAB in 2013 was the fruit of the hard work that Alessandra and Arthur, a history teacher, who, like her, identifies as Black, initiated in 2011 when they met with Education Ministry officials to demonstrate that little or no action had been taken with regard to the law’s implementation. After various unproductive meetings with the school’s rectorate, Arthur explained that the creation of the NEAB would not have been possible without the mobilisation of the school community and a threat to report the school to the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office. Arthur recalls that it had only been a small proportion of the teachers and students who were, in fact, interested in the activities and research of the NEAB. At the beginning, in 2013, Alessandra and her team, consisting of Arthur and a handful of teachers from different campuses, sent out emails to all the teachers, parents and auxiliary staff in order to invite them to join the NEAB and/or find out more about how to integrate African and Afro-Brazilian topics into their pedagogical practice. As Alessandra put it, she thought that what needed to be done for the law to be implemented was to simply take the necessary knowledge to the teaching staff. Many teachers and some of the auxiliary staff possess doctorates and would be, according to Arthur and Alessandra, capable of grasping the law’s importance and finding a way of making it part of their pedagogical practice. Nevertheless, weeks passed and the NEAB did not receive a single response or expression of interest.

There had to be another way to reach the school community and the founding members started to plan activities to initiate the debate at CPII. They were able to find enough engaged teachers to represent the NEAB in each of the eight campuses and carry out some initial activities. According to Arthur, the most significant reactions came from the student body who demanded to learn more about Africa and their Afro-Brazilian ancestors. Soon, the idea of a bigger project encompassing the whole school and its campuses came to life, which resulted in the first Afro-Brazilian Cultural Circuit that took place over two weeks in late October and early November 2014. The Circuit was a series of events using the formats of roundtables, artistic workshops, and artistic and culinary presentations discussing

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6 The first time the Colégio Pedro II was questioned by the Ministério Público in regard to their noncompliance with Law 10.639/03 was in 2006. That year, CPII justified the lack of the implementation of the law in terms of long strikes in 2003 and 2004.
topics such as Law 10.639/03, black leadership, racism and the media, and racism and the school, among others. In 2015, individual campuses organised events in November, however, no school-wide project took place. After that, some teachers found that their events were sabotaged. A sociology teacher told me, that the organising committee of the events for Black Consciousness Day on November 20th had announced the planned activities and booked all necessary rooms at the very beginning of the school year in March 2015, giving the school administration enough time to work around it. Nevertheless, when November approached, the school secretariat decided to hold final exams in the exact same week, which meant many teachers and students were not able to participate in the events. The sociology department also planned a project about African authors with the support from NEAB and managed to reserve the necessary rooms in school. On the day of the event however, they found that someone else was already using their space for another activity. Two other sociology teachers complained that other teachers did not support their events on racial and gender equality, and that most of the teaching body would not talk about such things at all. Students on the other hand, have repeatedly asked teachers to talk more about African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture and to discuss racial inequality in Brazil, requests that resonate with Alessandra’s and Arthur’s experiences.

According to Alessandra, the next steps for NEAB will be not only to further the discussion about the law’s implementation, and racial discrimination within the school context, but also to promote the re-elaboration of the political-pedagogical project encompassing the entire school, which will require tackling the curriculum as a whole. An example is the outreach course on Yoruba culture and mythology,\textsuperscript{7} which Arthur has been offering since 2015. The course was offered in order to, in Alessandra’s words, 

\textit{meet the demand for knowledge that our students don’t have. There is a lack of knowledge about Africa and of knowledge about the African culture [in the regular curriculum], which needs to be filled. There were no activities with regard to this so it was necessary to institutionalise a course. The idea was accepted (comprada) by the campus [central campus], not the postgraduate or outreach directorates (CPII offers postgraduate and outreach activities for teachers in education and other university students).}

\textsuperscript{7} The biggest linguistic groups that enslaved Africans who were brought to Brazil during the Transatlantic Slave Trade belonged to were Bantu and Kwa, in particular Yorubá. Whereas the major linguistic group of Africans in the Southeast was Bantu, Kwa (and in particular Yorubá) predominated in the Northeast and in particular in Bahia, where Yorubá (in Bahia it was called nagô) became the lingua franca. Yorubá turned into the ritual language and cultural base of the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé, becoming a symbol of cultural and religious resistance against the European coloniser (Lucchesi et al., 2009: 67).
Initially, the course was open to pupils of CPII and teachers who work in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro of whom forty signed up. In its second year, which started in March 2016, the course opened up to teachers and education professionals independent of their type of employment, and eight hundred people applied for it. Two parallel courses of forty students each were held over the year. As the growing demand for the course became undeniable, the postgraduate centre adopted it into its programme and decided to promote it further for the upcoming school year. While I was attending Arthur’s class, the overwhelming majority of participants were black female teachers. I only witnessed one (black) student from CPII join the class, however, there might have been more on the days I was not able to attend.

The NEAB as a central body that promotes the implementation of Law 10.639/03 at all CPII campuses, and Alessandra in particular, function as contact points for staff and students to denounce and discuss cases of racism, as well as any other topic related to race, racism and anti-racist pedagogical practice. Even though representatives of the Federal Public Procesutor’s Office have paid visits to CPII because of its shortcomings with regard to the implementation of Law 10.639/03, NEAB does however not have the authority to interfere with teaching practices, curriculum design or the planning of events.

**Colégio Pedro II: ‘But I am white and an academic and talk about black people’**

Nevertheless, the NEAB incentivises teachers to adjust their work to the requirements of Law 11.645/08. Apart from the NEAB, the sociology department developed its curriculum to include a focus on ethnic-racial relations and racism in Brazil, which is reflected in the sociology text books developed by the department. As already mentioned, a significant number of teachers at CPII possess PhD degrees and some of them are actively involved in text book development. When we first met, Raquel, the head of the high school sociology department at one campus of CPII, invited me to join the department’s weekly meetings. About five to eight teachers participated at each meeting. The majority were female and white (in fact, there was only one black teacher at the meetings), and lived in wealthy neighbourhoods not far from the school or in the Zona Sul. During the weekly meetings I witnessed teachers reflecting on their teaching practice and class room experience, exchanging teaching material and ideas, engaging in theoretical discussions about
anthropological theories and the best way to teach teenage students about racial and social inequality in Brazil, complaining about other teachers they regarded as racist, as well as examining the meaningfulness of each student exam question. Particularly interesting is the department’s relatively strong focus on indigenous history, as the majority of educators working on Law 11.645/08 focus predominantly on African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture (see Chapter 4): planned activities included the screening of films by indigenous filmmakers, a focus on Guarani people and a project about Aldeia Maracanã.

Camila, an eighteen year old black student at CPII and part of the student organisation Frente Negra, described Alessandra as the person with whom she had all the discussions about negritude that she had not had at home. All the doubts she was not able to clarify with her friends, she clarified with Alessandra. She described her school as elitist and white, and Alessandra as a very intelligent person, who knows a lot about the academy and presents a crucial resistance to whiteness at CPII. When I asked Camila about her sociology and history classes with regard to the application of Law 11.645/08, she responded:

*I think in sociology and history, it followed the white logic, traditional, Marx, Weber, etc. Durkheim. We talked about it, but through this lens. We talk about the Black in the history class on slavery; Africa in the process of slavery. Before slavery it is as if Africa didn’t exist. About Black people [we talk] from the start of colonisation, and about Black people in Brazil only from the point of view of slavery. And in sociology, [we talked about] the question of negritude, and that’s it. So there’s not a lot, although it could be talked about more easily. They don’t read black sociologists, they don’t. [...] I don’t think it’s a question of not wanting to, but also not a question of I can do it so I will. I think it’s something people want to leave the way it is now, the majority white. I think it is interesting for them to leave the history of the black people hidden and the way it is. [...] It was much more the demand of the students and the NEAB, not the [majority of] teachers that took these topics into the school. I never had a sociology class about racism in school, in my three years of sociology, social sciences, since the 6th year, I

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8 The building of the former Museum of the Indian (Museu do Índio) was occupied by a group of indigenous people and renamed Aldeia Maracanã. It has been providing physical space for indigenous people from different ethnicities and places all over Brazil to come together and strategise ways to promote indigenous rights, history and culture (see Chapter 4).

9 Each campus of CPII has its own Frente Negra (Black Front), whose name reminds of the Brazilian Black Front – Brazil’s first black political party, founded in 1931. Frentes Negras emerged at various campues over the past few years but probably not before 2013, the year NEAB was founded. (Reports CPII published about Frentes Negras only date back to 2015). Black students who are part of Frente Negra organise school-wide meetings to discuss the best ways to tackle racism at CPII, provide weekly meetings for other black students that can be used as a safe spaces, contribute to and organise activities during the Black Consciousness Week and have the mission to educate other students and teachers about racial discrimination and racial identity.
never read anything about negritude, only scientific racism, and slavery and colonialism.

Her stating that she never had a class on racism while saying that she learned about scientific racism, might show the discomfort she feels as a Black student, who is mainly taught by white teachers in a class room full of white students, where she cannot freely share her lived experiences with and questions about racism. Learning about ethnic-racial relations in an abstract theoretical way does not do justice to Camila’s experience as a young black woman. When I first met her she had already been for the last year part of the student organisation Frente Negra, which facilitates debates between students in the school who identify as black. According to Camila, discussions about negritude increased significantly when the Frente Negras emerged at various campuses. Thinking about sociology again, Camila noted that

*There were also the sociology, philosophy and history departments, which also tried to promote these debates. The Black Consciousness Week was initiated by white sociology teachers, who have doctorate. But they didn’t talk about experience. [It was as if they were saying] ‘but I am white and an academic and talk about black people’. It was not a Black person talking about black people, there was this effort of the teams (departments), but when the Frentes Negras emerged, the debate changed.*

Even though teachers at CPII are highly educated and many have taken an interest in studying ethnic-racial questions and racism, black students and staff, such as Camila and Alessandra might never feel fully advocated for by them, as the majority of them are white and do not share the same experiences with racism. Even when trying to make racism and race visible for discussion in their classrooms, Camila’s white teachers were unable to create an environment (in a classroom where the majority of students is white as well) that felt inclusive to her. As Camila stated, her teachers’ discourse about racism stems from information learned in books but not from personal experience. Vinicius, a white sociology teacher, explained that the sociology department was in the process of restructuring and remodelling the entire sociology curriculum for the upcoming years. One of the main goals was to include black authors, such as Fanon, into the curriculum in order to introduce students not only to the history of scientific racism (i.e. the theories about race that circulated in the 19th and early 20th centuries) but to black leadership and particularly to non-
white perspectives on racism. Vinícius said that he had not done this before and that introducing new authors into the curriculum would take up a lot of time. Nevertheless, he said he was happy to teach the newly developed curriculum and said:

*We are going through a phase in which we are re-thinking our curriculum and how to broach this topic [of race and racism]. However, in my opinion it is not possible to introduce a new narrative and new authors without making sure first that the student understands scientific [supposedly white] discourses about racism. There are teachers who don’t like it [my approach]: the black person should tell their story, not the white person telling the story of the black person. But I think didactically it is better this way, to talk about scientific racism first to facilitate the deconstruction of racism afterwards. Others don’t agree, especially Tatiana, she says that we have to do the deconstruction first, without ever talking about the construction of racism. Some think in this kind of, let’s say radical [militante] way, which offers a different perspective.*

Tatiana, a white sociology teacher Vinícius refers to, is officially part of the NEAB and represents views and didactical approaches that teacher Vinícius deems radical. Whereas he recognises the importance of introducing his students to black authors and to voices that deconstruct common notions of racism, he does not feel comfortable abandoning the way he had been teaching sociology for many years. In discussing the politics of multiculturalism, Black feminist Carby (1992) critiques the increase of symbolic inclusion, in which the texts of Black women are welcome in the multicultural classroom without actually inviting or welcoming Black women into the same space. Vinícius’ approach can be interpreted as such: while he welcomes the introduction of Black authors (however, not necessarily female authors) to his lessons, he refuses an overall approach that diverts from traditionally white teaching strategies. His quote implies that black authors produce knowledge that is less scientific than that of white authors. When he talks about scientific discourses of racism, he clearly refers to non-black discourses of racism, which he was used to teaching. Nevertheless, Vinícius made clear that at least part of the sociology department is in favour of using a newly developed approach focusing on non-white perspectives of racism.

Whereas the sociology department was having such discussions – which some teachers might support more than others – the history department had not thought about making more space for implementing Law 11.645/08 into its curriculum as the following quote by the white history teacher Alexandra demonstrates:
I never needed the law [11.645/08]. I’ve always tried to give the history of indigenous people and Afro-Brazilians a lot of weight. The law is just formalising something I’ve already been doing. However, the law exists, but the history curriculum, for example, has not taken it into account yet. The curriculum is very, very Eurocentric, very conservative in this sense. How are we going to implement the law when there is no space in the curriculum? When I talk about the independence of Latin American countries I talk a lot about Haiti and other revolts that were mainly carried out by black and indigenous people, like the Malê Revolt\textsuperscript{10} in Bahia. As much as I can, when I talk about the history of enslaved Africans and indigenous people, I talk about their resistance to the European. Instead of only talking about the history of enslaved Africans in Brazil we need to talk about where they came from. But talking about Africa is almost impossible. There is no time. I am obliged to follow the traditional curriculum. The departmental structure forces me to do this. [...] But when a student from CPII does the vestibular at Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro for example, they won’t ask about this. They’ll ask about the Brazilian parliament, about the frontiers and such things. And CPII’s demand is not the demand of the working class, our students are not leaving the school to work in a job that only requires a high school diploma, they will leave here to study at university.

While practices that question ethnic-racial questions in schools can be mainly attributed to the efforts of individual teachers and staff (Gomes & Jesus, 2013: 28) the work of the sociology department and the passivity of the history department with regard to the implementation of Law 11.645/08 demonstrate clearly in what way individual teachers are limited not only by internal school structures but also by national curricular requirements dictating vestibular and ENEM questions.

**Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte: ‘You’re actually not bad for a black person’**

The very first time I went to Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte to meet with Principal Laura, the security guard Leonel, an elderly man, whom I would describe as dark-skinned, from the North-eastern state of Bahia, opened the school gate to let me in. I did not even have time to respond to his greeting as Principal Laura already walked hastily towards me and started to greet me loudly, almost hysterically. With her shoulder-long blond hair, her pale face and her modern-looking red glasses, she stood out from the rest of the staff. Located in a municipality where most people identify as black (*preto*, 15.4%) or mixed

\textsuperscript{10} One of the most significant slave revolts, which took place in Salvador in 1835.
(pardo, 51.19%) (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2011b), the highest position in this high school was occupied by a person who had not only white skin but also blonde hair. Apart from the people occupying the highest positions within the school hierarchy – the principal, vice-principal and pedagogical coordinators – about sixty-five percent of the teachers were white as well (none were blonde however), while the large majority of the student body was not.

During the summer holidays Principal Laura called me in for a meeting, as she wanted to discuss the yearly project for the upcoming year with me. Even though I knew that she had developed an interest in Law 11.645/08, I was surprised to learn that the project she had in mind, ‘Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora’, was about Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture. We talked about ways how to include information and discussions about Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in different subjects and about specific topics she wanted her teachers to cover during the upcoming school year. I was positively surprised that Laura was eager to focus for the entire school year on Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture, rather than merely talking about it during the Black Consciousness Day in November – a practice carried out by many schools, which Sleeter (2000: 179) regards as a tokenistic gesture and a superficial way of introducing a multicultural curriculum that is reproductive of existing stereotypes and prejudice and selective about what part of history to include or omit (cf. Milner, 2005: 397).

Before our meeting, Principal Laura had already approached Isabela, a history teacher who identifies as Black and works on Law 10.639/03 for her Master’s thesis, and set up a preliminary curriculum design. I later learned that there had already been at least two female black teachers trying to convince Principal Laura to launch initiatives to implement the law in her school prior to my arrival, one of them being Isabela. However, only when I entered the school as a researcher Principal Laura started to develop an interest in the law and its implementation. During one of the events, for which I had invited a speaker from the black movement and one from the indigenous movement, she texted Eva, one of the black teachers who had always wanted to organise similar events before she moved to another state and left the school, about how successful the event had been. Laura also told her that I had organised this particular event. When Eva replied, Laura wanted me to read her message in which she complained about having tried to talk Laura into working with these topics for a long time, and now that a European woman was there, all of a sudden Laura
would listen. Principal Laura did not deny Eva’s claim. Neither did she explain her choice not to listen to Eva. When I told Isabela about the text exchange, she nodded and put on a serious face, as she often did when we talked about Laura. Isabela agreed and said she remembered that Eva and herself had tried to further these topics, but that their suggestions had repeatedly fallen on deaf ears. I was curious to find out about what had developed Laura’s interest in the law and her idea to implement the Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora. She told me that my presence as a researcher coming all the way from Europe to study Law 10.639/03 made her not only curious, but at the same time believe that it was essential. She did not only want her students to have the opportunity to learn about it, but she herself wanted to be educated further. This was not the only context in which being a European researcher seemed to add significant value to the implementation of Law 11.645/08. At a teacher training event organised by the Municipal Education Secretariat of Belford Roxo, the organisers asked me to present myself to about fifty teachers (who were not invited to present themselves) and proudly pointed out that I was from Europe and in the Baixada Fluminense to study the law. These experiences illustrate how knowledge production is legitimised by Eurocentric values – in Principal Laura’s case apparently unselfconsciously, as Laura did not try to hide the fact that it was my presence that piqued her interest. Eurocentrism as a concept is coined by its critics, who speak of a system that is complicit in reproducing power structures, which legitimise European knowledge by devaluing ways of living and oppressing people who do not conform to European values, norms or ideas. The production and reproduction of Eurocentric knowledge go well beyond Europe and ‘the West’ (Hall, 1992). Hence, knowledge that is produced outside the Eurocentric scientific system is automatically devalued (Lander, 2005). According to Mignolo (2005), the social sciences – legitimised by the state – played a crucial role in this process by establishing a temporal linear scope, which positioned the European as superior and led to the definition of all non-European knowledge and cultural manifestations as stemming from European notions and logic. Chakrabarty (2000: 288) argues that an epistemology pretending that knowledge has no locus is responsible for concepts that are particular for the European experience but are declared to be universally valid and applicable, independent of place. However, as Castro-Gómez (2005) points out, knowledge that is produced in the global South can be valorised if the academic producing it is working in a
European or US-American higher education institution. In fact, at CENH most staff and students (except for the history teacher Isabela) had an exclusively positive image of Europe.

‘It was just a joke’

At the start-of-the-year teacher meeting Principal Laura presented the new project to all of the teachers. The principal started her presentation by saying that no acts of racism would be tolerated in her school and that it was the teachers’ duty to address such incidents and report them to the head coordinator. One of the teachers asked how long they had to keep doing this for (teaching African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture) and Principal Laura replied that it would not just be a project with an expiration date: ‘This will be happening until the day that I leave this school. It is the law, guys!’ (‘Isso vai acontecer até o dia que eu saio daqui [da escola]. É lei, gentes!’). While Principal Laura’s interest in Law 11.645/08 grew, which led to her reading more about it, she repeatedly and apparently unselfconsciously directed racist comments at Isabela, such as: ‘You’re actually not bad for a black person’ (‘Para uma menina negra na verdade você é boa’). Even though most Brazilians recognise that there is racism and agree with ethno-racial policies, they deny that they themselves have racist attitudes. Also, they usually avoid identifying racist incidents when they occur in their daily lives (Da Costa, 2014; Vargas, 2004). Bonilla-Silva (2009) refers to this phenomenon as ‘racism without racists’; while racism becomes more visible as a public issue, acknowledgement of it and the will to confront it do not manifest accordingly. On the one hand, this way of not addressing racist incidents can be traced back to a lack of racial literacy and on the other hand it illustrates the ‘entrenched social custom of denial and naturalisation’ of racism (Da Costa, 2016a: 27). Similarly, Vargas (2004; 2010) speaks of the dialectic hyperconsciousness of race and the negation of the relevance of race, which, in his opinion, is central when attempting to understand Brazilian race relations: ‘The dialectic allows us to understand how a system that is on the surface devoid of racial awareness is in reality deeply immersed in racialized understandings of the social world’ (Vargas, 2004: 446). This dialectic stands for the simultaneous anxious awareness of race/colour and the vehement negation of the significance of race, particularly in situations that are racially charged, which influences how people think about/avoid thinking about, interrogate/passively accept and justify/ignore social hierarchies. The denial of the importance of race and the dynamics of the hyperconsciousness of race are crucial for the survival of the myth of racial democracy (ibid.: 447). Da Costa (2016a) argues that such
deployments of racial democracy and mixture lead to partial readings of race relations, which result in the minimisation of the problem of racism, the denial of its systemic nature and often the refusal of ethno-racial policies, which pose threats to achieving non-racial citizenship.

Even though sometimes Isabela chose not to react to the principal’s comments, she increasingly spoke up about comments she deemed inappropriate and racist. When it was my turn to talk about the ‘Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora’ at the teachers’ meeting, one of the teachers asked me to explain why I was researching this particular topic. Maria, a middle-aged white biology teacher with long straight red-brown hair, questioned the sense of the presented project and why I was studying the law, as according to her, racism was not a real thing. When Maria shared her view that racism was not a real problem, except for the white geography teacher Lucas who agreed with her, nobody reacted and her statement remained unchallenged. After I attempted to answer her question she kept saying ‘No, but tell us the real reason! Tell us the real reason! Be honest, you’re just studying this because you like big black guys!’ (‘Fala a verdade, você estuda isso por causa dos negões!’). The teacher and Principal Laura were laughing hysterically, while most of the other teachers were smirking. I and Isabela remained silent until after the meeting when Isabela addressed the principal and explained to her why Maria’s comment was offensive. Principal Laura kept affirming that Maria had only been joking and that she knew that everybody in the room knew it was a joke. Sue and Golash-Boza (2013: 1586) note that while racial jokes reproduce the racial hierarchy, downplaying or dismissing their racist connotations are acts that deny racism. Everyday practices, such as jokes, compliments and or storytelling, construct, normalise and reinforce raced and gendered power hierarchies. Whereas these practices are often defended as innocent, just fun or insignificant, when they are continuously reiterated their message ends up being culturally normalised and functions as systematic discrimination against minorities, reinforcing majority privilege (Liu & Baker, 2016; Ahonen et al., 2014; Essed & Muhr, 2018).

Isabela’s criticism of the joke as offensive, which thus strips its apparent innocence, is not the most typical reaction to racist jokes in Brazil. In fact, more often the racist content of and the practice of engaging in such jokes remain unchallenged. Isabela did not accept Principal Laura’s explanation and insisted on the severity of the situation until the principal finally agreed and claimed to understand why Maria’s statement was racist and not funny.
During her fieldwork in a small town in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Twine (1998) observed how passive responses to racist jokes led to black people dramatically altering their behaviour in order to avoid being humiliated in the future. When one of her informants was compared to a monkey for eating a banana, she decided not to buy or consume bananas in public anymore and taught her daughter to do the same in order to protect her from racial abuse. The author states that even middle-class Afro-Brazilians typically respond to the racism they encounter with silence, rather than challenging it.

Moreover, Maria exclaiming that I would use the project in order to get close to big black men adds a sexualised component to her joke, insinuating female desire for (big) black men. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Fanon (1986) offers an interpretation of racist stereotypes about black men in Martinique. According to the author, fantasies about the immense sexual potency of black men are the product of suppressed and prohibited desires of the ‘civilised white person’: ‘The civilized white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest’ (Fanon, 1986: 127). By projecting his own desires onto the black man, to the white man the black man effectively starts to incorporate these characteristics. The black man symbolises the biological, not the intellectual: ‘The white man is convinced that the Negro is a beast; if it is not the length of his penis, then it is the sexual potency that impresses him. [...] The Other will become the mainstay of his preoccupations and his desires’ (ibid.: 131). Onyeji (2003: 122) notes that the constitution of the black male body through fear and anxiety is an age-old contrivance of white male paranoia. Ascribing prior intentions to the black body evokes the association of the black body with (sexual) aggressiveness and fear.

Among the teaching staff the project of Africa and the Black Diaspora was partly rejected and partly taken seriously. At CENH teachers decide individually whether or to what extent they teach the history and culture of African, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous people, or talk about ethnic-racial relations. As long as they comply with the minimum curriculum requirements (curriculo mínimo) and their students achieve good grades, Principal Laura does not interfere with curriculum content. However, as the next section will show, once Principal Laura initiated the Africa project and facilitated certain initiatives with regard to African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture, there actually was a lot of interest among the students.
Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte: ‘Project on Africa and the Black Diaspora’

For the ‘Project on Africa and the Black Diaspora’ Principal Laura foresaw that all teachers from all disciplines would talk about topics covering aspects of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture. Therefore, the principal assigned a teacher to each class, who would be responsible for supervising the students’ progress with regard to the project, whereas some teachers simply ignored the task. Furthermore, Principal Laura initiated a street art project, asked Isabela and me to invite speakers of the black movement to talk about Law 10.639/03, and approved a school trip to the Historical and Archaeological Trail for the Celebration of African Heritage (Circuito Histórico e Arqueológico da Celebração da Herança Africana) in the city centre.

The school-wide project

During the school year, teacher Lucas dedicated some of his geography classes to the economic development, present day borders, and mainly the flora and fauna of the African continent. When he asked the students what sector the majority of Africans work in, a student responded ‘slavery’ and a few students laughed, even though it did not seem like it was meant as a joke. Lucas chuckled for a second but then shook his head and told the class that in fact it was agriculture, without unpacking his student’s response. The lesson continued with the topic of industrialisation and the question why ‘Africa was less industrialised than Europe’. The boy’s assumption that the majority of Africans are enslaved indicates that he had not learned about the African continent other than in the context of colonialism and slavery. In this sense, the ‘Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora’ could have contributed, even if in a very limited way, to the deconstruction of the automatic association of Africa and slavery (and agriculture). On the day of the final project, the class Lucas was responsible for decorated their classroom illustrating different climatic zones of the African continent. Some students also dressed in what they believed to be typical garments of a particular climatic zone (see Figure 2). Students were responsible for the purchase of material and enthusiastically showed the class room to other students and teachers who popped in during the day.
In the Portuguese and the Literature classes, teachers encouraged students to read novels and short stories that were written by the Afro-Brazilian writer Machado de Assis, and about Afro-Brazilian culture by Jorge Amado. Sérgio, the Portuguese teacher, read the story *Pai contra Mãe*, written by Machado de Assis, with all of his classes. Written eighteen years after abolition, the story is set in Rio de Janeiro and talks critically about slavery in Brazil. Afterwards, Sérgio showed the film *Quanto Vale ou É por Quilo*, directed by Sérgio Bianchi, which makes an analogy between the old slave trade and the ongoing social exploitation of black people as domestic workers. It shows the hopelessness of those who cannot make a living from their job and are taken advantage of by employers. With the class that Sérgio was overseeing for the presentation of the final project, he asked his students to form small groups and to interpret and re-enact the story of *Pai contra Mãe*. Over the course of three weeks, students used their Portuguese classes and sometimes stayed longer after class to work on their presentations. Most of the groups who were working on the project together chose to produce short films shot on their smart phones and seemed not only to enjoy it but also to be thoroughly engaged with the literature.
Instead of just working with her assigned class, history teacher Isabela carried out a project on the history and significance of samba with all of her classes. Over the course of three weeks, her students worked in small groups to prepare presentations on different personalities who are known for their contribution to samba. Students talked about the historical and political context of samba music. Most of the small groups put reasonable effort into their presentations, but one group stood particularly out. Five boys, who in my view were the darkest-skinned in their class, usually sitting in the back and barely participating, surprised Isabela and their class mates with an outstanding presentation. Whereas most of the other students were reading their presentations off their phones or a sheet of paper, that group mostly spoke freely and with great vigour and enthusiasm. At the end, one of the boys, David, even sang a whole samba song, which earned him excited screams and many rounds of applause. Isabela was so impressed that she kept talking about their presentation in the teachers’ room for several days. The boys’ other teachers were also surprised to hear about their excellent performance and asked to see videos.

**The school wall**

Another project that Principal Laura initiated was to invite a street art artist and paint the school wall with students from two different classes. As the school is located just off the main road in the neighbourhood, the painting on the wall would be exposed to a lot of people passing by daily to walk to the bus stop or to buy groceries. Every day a bit more of black contours that illustrated a face, wearing a coloured turban or headband, with flowers as hair, could be seen, an image that can easily be associated with blackness (see Figure 3).

Next to the image, the students wrote ‘Equal rights for all’ (*direitos iguais para todos*). The school had paid for the equipment and Principal Laura had chosen the image to be drawn. Even though the students had not been involved in choosing the design, they liked the image and seemed to enjoy the process. Nevertheless, the process of the painting the wall was not accompanied by any discussion about the meaning of the picture and when I asked some of the students later on about the activities they had carried out for the ‘Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora’, painting the wall did not come to their minds.
The speakers Isabela and I invited for the Project on Africa and the Black Diaspora were all teachers themselves, as well as part of the Research Group on Public Policies, Social Movements and Cultures (Grupo de Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas, Movimentos Sociais e Culturas, GPMC), based at the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ). Each time an external speaker comes to CENH the whole school, staff and students, assembles on the school yard to listen. The first speaker Isabela invited was Lilian, a young history teacher, who identifies as Black. Her talk was about racial quotas at public universities, in which she tried to untangle general confusion about university quotas and to convince black students

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11 As part of a wider body of affirmative action, in 2000 the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ – Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro) was the first one to reserve half of its university places for students studying in public schools. A year after, in 2001, racial quotas were installed, reserving 40% of the 50% of university places for students studying in public school for students who identify as negro or pardo, apart from a certain number of places reserved for indigenous students and students who were raised in a quilombo. Over the years, the majority of Brazilian public universities have adopted a quota system, either based on socio-economic factors, race, or a mixture of both.
of their right to make use of racial quotas. Educational work in schools has been part of the agenda of the black movement for decades – long before Law 10.639/03 was signed. In the 1980s, the first black movement representatives went into schools giving lectures about black history and distributing educational material in the Northern state of Maranhão (Pereira, 2016: 62). Such educational initiatives have increased significantly today.

Even though various students who had previously studied in private schools decided to complete their last three years of schooling at CENH to gain the right to use public school quotas, very few students seemed comfortable with the idea to make use of racial quotas. Principal Laura also seemed unsure about racial quotas. She first argued against them and said: ‘Although my skin is so fair, I also have black in me. Everyone here in Brazil is mixed, nobody really is white. And still it is not fair that my daughter might not get into university because of racial quotas for black people (which is ironic as her daughter studied in a private school). As mentioned above, in Brazil many ideas about race build on the legacy of the racial democracy myth. While most Brazilians do not believe that racial democracy exists as a present reality, the myth continues to live in the shape of hope and aspiration and the future promise that represent an ‘ongoing desire for an egalitarian, harmonious society that shuns racial divisions’ (Da Costa, 2016b: 496). However, it is typical that future hope overwrites the need for current action to address structural racism. Schwartzman and Silva (2012: 32) observe that Brazilians tend to show a preference for colour-blind policies, when given that option. Even though there is widespread support for affirmative action, racial criteria were more central to the initial implementation of affirmative actions in the early 2000s, whereas nowadays public school students are the main target audience and these class criteria are considered more important than race (ibid.).

After Lilian’s talk, Isabela told me that she had been very nervous while Lilian was speaking, as she had noticed that some of the students had started to talk to each other, to a point that Isabela thought they were being rude to the guest. Isabela felt upset, mainly at herself for expecting her students to be more interested. However, she also noted that there had been a group of students who had approached Lilian after her talk to find out more about racial quotas and how they could make use of them, and that if even only one person had found the talk useful it was worth the effort:

*If there were I don’t know how many percent of girls and if only 20% of them were interested, that is something already. Maybe it changed the life of Clara, who said to [Lilian] ‘Look, I can identify with everything that you*
talked about, because my parents always worked in rich families’ homes and I always played there’. Because normally we only perceive racism in confrontations and I think that many [of the students] here, especially those who talk less, that they talk less because they were treated like this (in a non-confrontational racist way). [...] I really liked it when Lilian said ‘Where is the black person in the soap opera at six? In the soap opera at eight?’ Where is the black doctor in the hospital?’ This demonstrates that, I think for some this was already a thought they had never had and that racism is more than physical violence, than verbal violence, that it is something systemic, that it is something bigger than they see. And I think in this moment she was able to, a little bit and not for all, but I thought in that moment that for some the penny dropped, and this is already a success, it helps.

Little Africa - Preparations

Apart from topics to be worked on in school, Isabela urged the principal to authorise a field trip to ‘Little Africa’ (Pequena África). Resulting from constant demands and continuous pressure from social movements and the black movement in particular (Lima, 2016), in 2013 an educational and memorial trail called ‘Historical and Archaeological Trail for the Celebration of African Heritage’ (Circuito Histórico e Arqueológico da Celebração da Herança Africana), was developed by the city administration. The area it leads through is often referred to as ‘Little Africa’.

On November 20th 2013 (which coincides with Black Consciousness Day) a delegation sent by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), representatives of the black movement, various academics as well as city officials inaugurated the archaeological site of the Valongo Pier, the city of Rio de Janeiro’s newest cultural patrimony. The pier had been excavated only a few years prior to its recognition in 2013 as an important site for the memory of the African diaspora. The Valongo Pier, located in the newly revitalised port area in the city centre, is the most significant site for enslaved Africans who were brought to the Americas. Between 500 000 and a million enslaved Africans entered Brazil via the Valongo Pier between 1811 and 1831, more than anywhere else. Apart from the Pier of Valongo, the trail includes several other sites located in the port area that are reminders of the country’s African and Afro-Brazilian history.

12 Brazilian soap operas are very popular throughout the country. The slots at 6pm and 8pm are the most prominent ones with the highest numbers of viewers.
13 Vassallo and Cicalo (2015) discuss the process that led to the institutionalisation of the heritage of the African diaspora in the port region of Rio de Janeiro, as well as the process of patrimonialising the African diaspora in Brazil.
Located not far from the pier are a hospital to treat those who arrived sick and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos (Cemetery of the new Blacks) for those who passed away before being sold on the slave market situated at the same site. However, the Valongo area cannot at all be reduced to a locale where only slavery left its mark. Many sites are also a reminder of the resistance and cultural perseverance of Africans and their descendants. A popular example, to name just one, is the small, hidden square Pedra do Sal, known as an urban quilombo. In the 19th century, the neighbourhood brought together migrants from Bahia and freed Africans, providing affordable accommodation, and soon turned into a point of reference for samba, capoeira, Candomblé and African derived rhythms and cuisine. Nowadays, an increasing number of schools take their students to the city centre of Rio de Janeiro to experience the Historical and Archaeological Trail Circuit for the Celebration of African Heritage. The trail helps make visible aspects of Brazil’s African and Afro-Brazilian history that have traditionally been left out of school teaching.

AT CENH it was history teacher Isabela’s idea to take the students on this field trip. Like everything that goes beyond the regular school activities, organising a trip to the Afro-trail required approval from the top, Principal Laura. Isabela, Sérgio, (the Portuguese teacher) who was excited to join Isabela on the trip, and I asked Laura for approval. Other state schools had done the trail circuit already, which was information Isabela used to convince the principal. It did not take long for her to agree, however the practicalities had to be resolved and it seemed as if Laura saw them as obstacles. Money had to be allocated for transport and meals on the trip, and teachers had to be found who were willing to join. As the city centre of Rio de Janeiro is very crowded during the week, it would be difficult to speak loud enough for all the students to hear and not to lose any in the crowd. Therefore, the trip had to be scheduled for a Sunday. Principal Laura was convinced that it would be impossible to find forty students who would want to participate and wake up early on a weekend. Isabela agreed. She thought that students would not be that interested and that many students would not want to miss church on Sunday. Before booking transport, a list with interested students was drawn up and immediately almost eighty students signed up to go. When Isabela and Laura learned about the number of students that had signed up to go, they could not believe it. However, they asserted that even though students signed up to go, many of them would not show up on the morning of the day the trip was scheduled. Portuguese teacher Sérgio, who agreed to accompany the students on the trip, agreed with
them. Principal Laura said that she would try to rent two buses, so all of the students who signed up could go. However, two days later she announced that only forty students would be able to go on the bus and that there wouldn’t be a second one. Another concern was that Principal Laura would not find enough teachers to accompany the school trip, as it was on a Sunday. However, in the end she decided that the teachers who accompanied the students on the field trip would get another day off in return. Isabela asked Roberto, the cultural coordinator, who immediately agreed to come. Laura, Isabela and Sérgio agreed on overbooking the bus, as they were convinced that many students would not show up. On that particular Sunday morning at 7am, all but one student who had signed up for the trip entered the bus, which was so full that some seats had to be shared.

**Little Africa – The School Trip**

![Figure 4: Students listening to their teacher at Cais do Valongo](image)

After about ninety minutes in traffic and the driver getting lost a couple of times, we finally arrived at the Cais do Valongo, the old port area. At the first stop everyone took a seat on the steps in front of the excavations of the old port and Isabela explained that this was
the old part of the port where enslaved people arrived and that the new port at Praça XV has always been better maintained as it was the place where passengers from Europe had arrived. Once Isabela had talked about the number of enslaved people arriving in Rio de Janeiro and the destiny that awaited most of them, she stated that the Project of Africa and the Black Diaspora, which was usually just called Africanity Project (Projeto da Africanidade) or Africa Project (Projeto da África), was in fact not only about Africa itself, but the African diaspora in Brazil. She said: ‘When we talk about African history and the history of the diaspora, it is always about resistance too’. Then she asked the students: ‘When there is repression, what else is always there?’ None of the students answered and Isabela repeated the word ‘resistance’ and explained how Africans and their descendants not only attempted to run away, but that they found ways to keep their traditions and culture alive and survive slavery as a people.

Sérgio took the opportunity to draw a connection to the Machado de Assis short story Pai contra Mãe his students had read, and pointed out the role Cais do Valongo played in it. He asked the students whether they could elaborate and one of them explained that Machado de Assis had written about the white people who had already been waiting at the port for Africans to arrive in order to buy and pick them up, and that many Africans had tried to run away, but not knowing the area most had been recaptured.

At the next stop, Jardim Suspenso do Valongo (Hanging Garden of Valongo), a small square built at the beginning of the 20th century, Sérgio pointed to the favela across the street, Morro da Providência, where Machado de Assis was born. During the walk through the city centre, Sérgio explained the urban reform, which took place at the beginning of the 20th century under mayor Pereira Passos, who ordered the destruction of buildings and entire favelas to make way for a city centre inspired by European, and in particular French, architecture and populated by the elites. Sérgio pointed out that the people who were working in the city centre but had lost their homes or could no longer afford to live there, moved to favelas in the Zona Sul and that the Baixada Fluminense had been too far away as there was no train or bus system in place at the time. Washington, in my view a dark-skinned, tall and very shy student in his last year, exclaimed that nothing in this area was made for them. ‘All of this has an order, the street, the bike lane, the plants. Nobody would respect any of that in [the Baixada Fluminense]’. Manoel, a black student who I would describe as lighter-skinned than Washington and who identifies as pardo, added that in the
Baixada Fluminense everything was messy; the bike lane, the street, the plants, everything was chaotic and in a poor condition. He said that nothing would be respected as there simply wasn’t anything to be respected. When the brand new tram (VLT) that had been built for the Olympic Games in 2016 approached its stop on the main street, Washington, Manoel and two other students were eager to take pictures with it. They were really excited until the tram driver honked, even though all of them were standing behind the security line on the ground. As soon as the tram stopped, the students, who were the only ones on the platform, were pressing the buttons to open the tram doors, but the driver kept them shut and drove off again. Washington asked whether it was not obvious that this place was not made for them, but that it was much more beautiful here than in the Baixada Fluminense. Manoel disagreed and said it was not more beautiful. Half an hour later, on the way back from the new port at Praça XV to the bus, another student, Felipe, commented that I knew my way around in that area more than teacher Isabela, who herself lives in the most Northern part of Rio next to the boarder with the Baixada Fluminense. When I agreed, he continued: ‘This area here is for tourists’. I asked him whether he was happy to have come here to learn about the city and its history and he responded: ‘Why would I like to visit a place of the town that has not been made for us? The VLT is not for us, it's for you tourists’.

Washington and some of the other students’ feeling of not belonging in the city centre or posh neighbourhoods of Zona Sul, and the understanding that ‘this was not made for us’, are not only an indicator of wealth disparities, but differences in the racial setup between the Baixada Fluminense and upscale neighbourhoods in Rio de Janeiro. According to Isabela, many of her students have never left the Baixada Fluminense or even their neighbourhood before. She concluded that within the context of the Baixada Fluminense, black students would usually not be forced to reflect on racial identification, as the majority of people look like them. Only when they leave and go to the capital, often they do not know how to act or behave, they are overwhelmed by the big city and might end up at places in which they are the darkest person. Earlier in the year, the private university Universidade Veiga Almeida (UVA), located in the affluent part of the neighbourhood Maracanã in the Northern Zone of Rio de Janeiro, had sent buses for final year students from CENH to visit the university and learn about different scholarship options. Nevertheless, hardly any of the students at CENH come from families that have the financial means to send their children to this university, which made the whole trip questionable. Even before the tour of the university started one
of the students said: ‘*Man, there are only white people here!*’ (*Cara, só tem branco aqui*). The other students next to her looked around and nodded. Later on, on the bus ride back to the Baixada Fluminense, a black boy asked his friends: ‘*Do you think UVA is for us?*’ A black, pregnant girl answered that there were only five black people on the whole campus, and a white girl added that there was one with dread locks as well. She continued: ‘*UVA...! Estácio [another private university, which has branches all over Brazil] is already expensive. It is for middle class people who go there, not for us*.’ As discussed in the previous chapter, black and indigenous students, as well as public school students, are significantly underrepresented at universities (Akkari, 2013) and more likely to drop out of school. Whereas only a small fraction of public school students manages to pass the public university entry exam ENEM, they are also less likely to be able to afford private universities, let alone UVA, which is not exactly positioned in the lowest price range.

**Conclusion**

Educators who support the law’s implementation can leverage its legal authority to advance their agenda and get education officials and school leaders to make concessions. As there are several different public education systems operating in Brazil (municipal, state and federal), aside from privately run schools, supporters of the law have to be creative and come up with distinct ways to make their concerns heard and the law followed in different contexts. The threat of getting authorities involved worked for Úrsula in the municipal secretariat, as well as for Arthur and the NEAB in a federal school. At CENH it was my presence as a European researcher that made Principal Laura reconsider her attitude towards the importance of the law.

Apart from the administrative entity a school belongs to (municipal, state or federal), which has an impact on financial means and infrastructure, vital factors that influence the way Law 11.645/08 is implemented are the student and staff profiles of each school. The majority white prestigious school CPII, which benefits from sufficient financial means to realise various educational projects, as a whole is more active in the implementation of Law 11.645/08 than the majority non-white working-class school CENH. However, in both schools it is black female educators who are most outspoken about the importance of discussing ethnic-racial relations and racism in the classroom and the school as a whole. Whereas the
high number of female educators active in the law’s implementation can be explained by the fact that according to the Ministry of Education in 2017 more than eighty percent of basic education teachers in Brazil were female, the relatively low number of teachers who identified as *preto* (5.3%) or *pardo* (33%) suggests that black educators are proportionally overrepresented in the group of educators who advocate for the law’s implementation.

At CENH in Belford Roxo, where the majority of teachers are white and the majority of students are black, it was mainly the black history teacher Isabela, as well as the black sociology teacher Rita and the black cultural coordinator Roberto (see Chapters 3 and 5), who had been advocating the implementation of Law 11.645/08 in the school as a whole before and after my arrival. Even though there had not been a public demand by the student body to learn more about racial inequality or racial-ethnic relations, concrete initiatives, such as the painting of the wall, the samba project or the trip to the Cais do Valongo, rapidly spurred their interest – without necessarily relating to politicised blackness, which is central to the student-led Frentes Negras at CPII.

While there are quite a few white teachers at CPII and a few at CENH who also promote the law, their approaches are more often limited to their individual teaching practice, rather than addressing the school as a whole (for example the Portuguese teacher Lucas at CENH or the history teacher Alexandra at CPII). The sociology department at CPII, however, is an exception: not only does it rethink its curriculum to accompany the requirements of the law but it also organises workshops and events at different campuses (often with the support of NEAB). Most teachers in Brazil are from average and low-income backgrounds (Pio, 2016), whereas this is not true for the teachers at CPII who often come from middle-class backgrounds and academic families. However, Alessandra, the face of the NEAB, is one of the few teachers at CPII who are not white and who do not come from wealthy families. On the one hand, there are teachers who are intellectual, left-wing, middle-class white allies who take racism and blackness seriously as an intellectual or social justice issues but who – in their role as white educators – are not able to offer their students an approach to racism or blackness that goes beyond being intellectual or being a reified political identity, and instead makes room for black students’ experiences and daily struggles in a white environment. Gillborn (1996: 166) examines the position of white students in antiracist classrooms and writes about white teachers who are committed to antiracist education, stating that they see themselves and their white students as at once privileged by
their majority status, while also denied a full voice in antiracism due to that same status. Taking this into consideration, the question arises of how white teachers and students can contribute to creating an environment in which non-white people feel fully included and as if they belong, and whether creating such an environment is possible in a school where the majority of pedagogical staff and students are white.
3. **Enegrecer** - ‘Black consciousness’ among white and non-white Brazilians

As I started to discuss in the previous chapter, the mere existence of legislative measures is not sufficient to further an anti-racist agenda. Rather, their execution and the particular way they are being executed depend on individual actions, which are informed by personal beliefs and experiences. Therefore, this chapter looks at the actors in the educational sphere who advocate for the law’s implementation in their role as educators, teachers and students, and the personal trajectories that led to them being advocates. I discuss the accounts of several educators and students – most of them women – and the way their pedagogical or activist practice is influenced by a personal process of ‘becoming black’ (politically and/or racially) or claiming a black identity. ‘Becoming black’ is a term used by many black and white people in my field, who described complex processes of racial self-identification as Black, and/or a political awakening with regard to the tenaciousness of racism and racial inequalities in Brazil’s past and present.

The National Curricular Directives for Ethnic-Racial Relations Education and the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DCNERER), accompanying the first version of the law, state the importance of black identity formation processes and the related relevance of re-writing history:

*It is important to gain knowledge about the complexity involved in the construction process of a Black identity in our country. This process is marked by a society, which to discriminate against black people, utilises the devalorisation of African derived culture as well as of physical aspects inherited by African descendants. Within this complex process, it is possible, in Brazil, that some fairer skinned people with European features, identify as Black due to a black mother or father; and that others, with African features, identify as white. [...] The principle [strengthening of identities and rights] refers to the unleashing of processes of identity affirmation, of neglected or distorted historicity (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2004: 15-19).*

The document acknowledges the great complexity involved in discussions about racial identification and the importance of situating such discussion within the school.
Furthermore, it mentions the significance of phenotypical characteristics and the way they can play into someone’s identification. An essential element of the law is to teach children and adolescents about historical processes that led to racial discrimination and racial inequality in the country. Another component addresses the teaching and valorisation of black and indigenous culture and history and thus challenges dominant narratives built on Brazil’s past of whitening politics and the myth of ‘racial democracy’. These aspects add to teachers’ and pupils’ knowledge about the history of their country and their people, and offer a perspective that is not exclusively European. As such – by valorising knowledge and histories that deviate from the European ideal and the deeply rooted ideal of being mixed – what it means to be black, indigenous or white in Brazil can shift. In fact, many representatives of the Brazilian black movement, whose work has been crucial for the legal and practical implementation of Law 10.639/03 (Gomes, 2011b), regard the (re)discovery and mobilisation of a political and positive Black identity in lieu of commonly used identifications, such as moreno or pardo, as crucial in the anti-racist struggle. Various scholars have noted that the social devaluation of black people in Brazil led to their use of such colour categories as a way to position themselves outside of a racial identity, which is regarded as inferior (Silva, 1998; Gomes, 1995; Guimarães, 1995; Moura, 1994). The political strategy of enhancing symbols and cultural manifestations that are attributed to black people is meant to produce a positive self-image and self-esteem for the black population, and to function as a pedagogical mechanism to build racial pride (Domíngues, 2008: 113).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to the Ministry of Education School Census, in 2017, more than 80% of 2.2 million basic education teachers in Brazil were women (1.8 million) from average and low-income backgrounds (Pió, 2016); 60% were white, 33% pardos and only 5.3% were pretos, which by itself makes a compelling case for an analysis of gendered dimensions of racism and antiracist work in school. The teacher education courses I attended (the class at Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro taught by Luiz on the implementation of Law 10.639/03 and the Yoruba mythology class at Colégio Pedro II taught by Arthur) only partly reflect these numbers: whereas the large majority of participants were female, white teachers were a small minority. White and black teachers at CENH as well as at CPII talk about racial discrimination and the socio-economic situation of Afro-Brazilians but significantly more black teachers attend specific teacher education courses and work on projects encompassing the school as a whole (Isabela,
Roberto and Rita at CENH, and Alessandra and Artur at CPII). It can thus be said, as previously mentioned, that most teachers demonstrating a holistic approach to the implementation of Law 11.645/08 are female and black.

Whereas more than 80% of basic education teachers are female, the same is true for only 45.28% of higher education faculty; an area where salaries are significantly higher; and less than one percent of university teachers is non-white (Carvalho, 2005). If we take a closer look at black women in Brazil, Caldwell (2004) notes that ‘[t]he experiences of Afro-Brazilian women indicate that they face multiple forms of discrimination as their bodies are assessed and valorized according to standards established by dominant discourses on race, gender, sexuality, and beauty’. Speaking about women of African descent, Collins (2000: 18) examines how oppression affects them and explains that black women are particularly affected by the intersection of the dynamics of race, gender, class and sexuality: ‘Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice’. The 2011 study by the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômico Aplicada (Research Institute of Applied Economics, or IPEA), ‘Retrato das Desigualdades de Gênero e Raça (Snapshot of the Inequalities of Gender and Race),’ showed that in Brazil, compared to white men, black men, and white women, black women have the highest levels of unemployment (12.5%) and the lowest monthly earnings (USD $223). Furthermore, black women possess 6.9 years of education at age 15 or older compared to 8.9 years of schooling among white women (Harrington, 2015). In 2007, Brazilian women earned 54 centavos for each real earned by men, whereas the average monthly income for white men was R$974; for white women it was R$583; for black men it was R$422; and, lastly, for black women it was R$296 (Hautzinger, 2007). Particularly black women have limited employment alternatives when compared with other groups and are forced into employment as domestic, rural and commercial workers. They are more likely to be poor, have limited access to sufficient health care, education and public services (Lima, 1995; Sheriff, 2001; Rezende & Lima, 2004; Hautzinger 2007; Harrington 2015). These data are crucial for understanding the various oppressions black women face and set part of the context for black women’s processes of political awakening and racial formation.

Even though there is a broad scholarly interest about racial consciousness in Brazil, Afro-Brazilian women’s processes of racial and gender subject formation have gone largely unexplored (Caldwell, 2007: 109). Afro-Brazilian women who go through the process of
‘becoming black’ often go through a transformation of their appearance as well and ‘visibly become black’. What does visibly being black mean in the Brazilian context? Is it facial features, hair texture, style of dress, skin colour, or all of these? Racialising aesthetics can be highly problematic as what it means to be black or white or to look black or white is not only contextual but subjective. As we will see later in this chapter, the process of ‘visibly becoming black’ links together a sense of blackness or black identity with adjustments to beauty routines, hair care and choice of fabrics. Caldwell (2004) discusses whether one can be authentically black without adopting black aesthetics. In this chapter I will argue that while a process of black conscientisation is often accompanied by a turn towards black aesthetics, it does not rely on them. Tate (2009: 7) states: ‘Just as all beauty judgements are about a comparison between one’s presentation and racialized ideals so beauty is about practices of enracising. [...] As Black beauty is performative it can be performed differently and disrupt the beauty normalizations, the taken for granted ideas of our beauty ideals’. She argues that the ‘ugliness of black beauty’ is normalised in contexts where white beauty is the ideal, and ‘mixed race’ beauty is despised if the beauty ideal emerges from anti-racist Black aesthetics.

**Straight hair, curly hair, don’t care?**

*To be black in Brazil means to become black
(Ser negro no Brasil é tornar-se negro)*


It was an unexpected encounter with six women from the Municipal Education Secretariat in the municipality of Baixada Fluminense where my primary field site is, which led me to join the Research Group on Public Policies, Social Movements and Cultures (Grupo de Pesquisa em Políticas Públicas, Movimentos Sociais e Culturas, GPMC) and meet several teachers and other education professionals who fight for and work on the implementation of Law 11.645/08.

One day, Laura, the school principal of Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH), invited a cohort of six women from the Municipal Education Secretariat (one of them being
Úrsula) for us to meet and exchange ideas. Whereas Laura had told me that she thought these women could help with my research, Úrsula – who was the only white woman of the cohort – later said that she had had no clue about the reason they were coming to CENH, apart from her colleagues being excited about the ‘Australian researcher’ having an interest in the law. ¹ From the day we first met, Úrsula showed a particular interest in helping with my research project and, following her visit to my school, invited me to join the research group she was part of, the GPMC. The group, which is a space where people work on and share their experience with the implementation of Law 11.645/08, is led by Luiz, a lecturer at the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ). Its activities go beyond strictly academic discourse and entail the organisation and participation of various public events and protests. The entire research group, comprising of over fifty members, meets at least twice a year, while sub-groups get together at least once a month to work on specific topics.

A few days later, I was on my way to the first sub-group meeting and had no idea what to expect. Another GPMC member had offered to host the meeting at her house, which is located in a neighbourhood that could not have been more different from the agitated, dusty and hot streets of the Baixada Fluminense. The quiet and neat neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro called Grajaú is only a few bus stops away from the tube that connects this part of town with the city centre and the wealthy Zona Sul and known for its white population, mainly made up of young families and elderly people. The few cars and buses on the streets lined with trees seemed actually to follow road traffic regulations and look out for pedestrians, and the foothills of the Floresta da Tijuca, Rio's tropical rainforest, embraced the magnificent Portuguese-style houses of the area. Although it promised to be a sweltering day, the proximity of the forest offered some relief. Once I arrived at my destination, a three-story house, Clara, a slim white woman with long brown straight hair from the North-eastern part of Brazil and the hostess for the day, opened the door and walked me up the stairs, which led to her garden and living room.

There were six other people present at the meeting, who all knew each other from a teacher education post-graduation course on the implementation of Law 10.639/03 at UFRRJ, also led by Luiz. Except for two attendees, Luiz and Úrsula, all work as history teachers in public schools. After finishing his doctorate in education, Luiz – who in my view is

¹ Describing my informants as white, fair-skinned, brown-skinned, etc. is obviously based on my subjective process of categorisation. Even though my first attempt was to fully rely on the colour/racial self-identification provided by my informants, I have decided to provide my subjective categorisation to account for the large diversity of skin colours and hair textures, which add to the high subjectivity of racial/colour ascriptions in Brazil.
fair skinned, has dark curly hair and who identifies as Black – quit his teaching job at a state middle school for a lecturer position in education at UFRRJ. Úrsula gave up her teaching jobs in a private and a municipal school in the Baixada Fluminense for her position at the education secretariat. Among the teachers at the meeting, Clara was the only one who worked at a federal school (Colégio Pedro II). Like Clara, the majority of teachers at CPII are from a white middle-class background and can afford to live in the more beautiful and calmer parts of the city. The other four teachers at the meeting all work as state, municipal, or private school teachers and some of them have to work several jobs to make ends meet.

During this first encounter with the GPMC research group, I heard a particular narrative, which would repeat itself many more times in Luiz’s teacher education classes at UFRRJ. Everyone at Clara’s house had to explain why they were studying Law 10.639/03 and what their motives were for joining the meeting that day. What they all had in common was that they had only learned about institutional and systemic racism as adults, opposing previous ‘truths’ they had grown up with, which deny structural racial discrimination while idealising the European way of life, aesthetics or knowledge production.

LILIAN

Lilian, a young history teacher, explained that she comes from an interracial family, which she described as comprising a white mother and a black father. It seemed to me that I could best describe her as a brown-skinned woman who had only recently decided to stop straightening her hair chemically and to grow back her naturally curly hair. Therefore, she was wearing a coloured hairband made into a turban, which covered her hair that was still in transformation: as the chemical treatment damages the hair down to the roots, it is necessary to let it grow out for the natural curls and waves to grow back. All the women I talked to who were in this process of transformation during my fieldwork either braided artificial hair into their outgrowing hair or wore turbans to cover their hair until it reached a length that they felt comfortable with. Braiding hair and/or wearing a coloured turban made out of fabric influenced by African prints can both be read as expressions of a Black identity, as both diverge from white European norms of female beauty. Gomes (2006) and Harrington (2015) argue that black curly hair and black bodies in general act as symbolic expressions of black culture in Brazil, and function as symbols of sociocultural resistance to oppression. More so than skin tone, hair texture has long been used as an indicator of racial background
and a basis for racial classification (Caldwell, 2004; Hordge-Freeman, 2015), and among the phenotypical traits associated with blackness, hair is the one that white people feel most disturbed by and consider the ugliest (Figueiredo, 2002). Those who suffer most (and more than black men) from prejudices regarding hair texture are black women, who experience innumerable incidents of humiliation concerning their hair and bodies (Gillam & Gillam, 1999; Caldwell, 2004). By the end of my fieldwork, almost a year later, Lilian was content with the result of her naturally grown wavy hair and stopped covering it.

Although her father was a black activist, for the significant part of her life Lilian had been blind to racial discrimination: ‘I was living our racial democracy, thinking that I am white as my mother is white’. It was only very recently when Lilian entered public university to obtain her Master’s degree in education, that she first had a powerful feeling of not belonging, due to the majority of students looking a ‘lot whiter and more European’ than her, a phenomenon Cicalo (2012) thoroughly discusses in his book on racial quota students at Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro.

Luiz, her supervisor, described Lilian as shy and scared when taking her university admission exam. According to him, she seemed ready to be refused. At the public university, Lilian got in touch with black activists, who offered her a perspective on race-related questions that was new to her. Cicalo (2012) argues that it is quite common for non-Black-politicised students to start thinking about racial identity when coming into contact for the first time with ideas of the black movement through interactions with politicised peers at university. During her time at university (2014-2016), Lilian dedicated herself to studying and debating and started to think of herself as Black, while at the same time developing the feeling that she needed to fight racism and contribute to changing black people’s lives. In her practice as an educator, Lilian uses the knowledge gained at university and within the research group, which allows her to examine the current curricular requirements critically. Apart from her work as a teacher, she advocates racial quotas at public universities and visits various schools to talk to pupils who are applying for university about the opportunities, controversies, and issues revolving around racial quotas, always weaving her personal story into the narrative.
CAMILA

Camila, a student at Colégio Pedro II (CPII) and part of the student organisation Frente Negra, who identifies as Black was also in the process of growing out her straightened hair. To her, having natural black hair is part of her activism. Camila went through the experience of not feeling accepted in an environment that is mostly occupied by white people much earlier in life than Lilian. When she was seven years old, her mother started to relax her hair. While she studied at private school and when she first entered CPII, where the majority of students are white, her classmates teased her and pejoratively called her hair Bombril (the Brazilian equivalent to Brillo pads, made of wire wool. Referring to someone's hair as Bombril is the same as telling them that their hair is rough, nappy and not good).

Nobody thought I was pretty or that I was interesting, it was a really bad moment for me. You want to have a boyfriend and kiss someone, and nobody wants to do this with you as you’re the only black kid in the school. I did everything to look less black; I straightened my hair, used lighter make-up, never used strong lipstick, so my mouth wouldn’t seem even bigger than it is. I always tried to be as similar to the white people as I could. I knew I was doing this to be more beautiful but this beautiful was more white. When they called me índia I liked it, I thought it was a good thing, although the índio suffered a lot he is still considered beautiful, and the black person is considered trash, sewage (esgoto), nothing. Although the índio is seen as lazy, he is still considered to be beautiful, and the black person is very far from that. When people called me índia I didn’t say anything, although I knew my hair was curly. I accepted it as if it was true but I knew it wasn’t and this was a whitening process (processo de branqueamento). That was until last year really, when I wanted to go back, reverse this process. I put all the make-up in the trash and started to use strong lipstick, and I started with these braids. Now I liberated myself from this, and I am grateful to the Frente Negra for having liberated me from that.

It was not only her classmates' derogatory comments about her hair that made Camila feel like she was not good enough for the white environment she found herself in, but also the fact that boys did not want to date her because she was not as white as the rest. As a result, Camila tried to look as white as she could, even though she always remained aware of her natural hair being curlier and her unpainted lips being bigger than those of the kids around her. Caldwell (2007) states that, within the racialized gender hierarchy, black female bodies can be attributed with physical features that either categorise their bodies as beautiful or sexual. Given the Eurocentric aesthetic standards that prevail in Brazilian
society, Black women have traditionally been defined as being sexual, rather than beautiful. Europeans have long differentiated between a ‘morally pure aesthetic beauty’ and ‘morally tainted animal sexuality’, linked to hierarchies of power – and to a distinction between whiteness and blackness (Wade, 2013a: 188). Hair that is associated with blackness is often referred to as *cabelo ruim* (bad hair), blue and green eyes are typically desired and noses that are not deemed thin enough are often seen as ugly and in need of surgical correction. However, as Wade (ibid.) shows, age is also a crucial factor as images of older black women can be desexualised. In Camila’s case, the boys in her school might have had sexualised ideas of her but were not willing to publicly commit to a girl they perceived as less white than other girls.

Camila accredits her process of claiming her blackness to her time with the Frente Negra. Before she joined the student organisation, Camila says that she had no notion about her blackness and that her time and work with the organisation helped her understand herself as Black and defined her as an activist. Both Lilian and Camila had experiences with political organisations whose goal is to fight racial discrimination as well as to teach about negritude and racial identification. These encounters led them to change their way of thinking about their role in a racist society and their identification as black women and were followed by externally visible physical transformations in the form of hairstyles and make-up. Gomes (2006) describes the construction of the Black identity as a process that does not only come from within a person but is also created in relation to the outside world and how others perceive one's body. The biology of a body does not have a single fixed meaning that speaks for itself since their meaning is socially constructed. Referring to Camila’s decision to grow back her natural hair, Alessandra, the coordinator of the Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros mentioned that it was Camila’s mother who tried to stop this process: ‘Why? Because she (Camila) has white skin, so if she *assumir* her hair there will be discussions and conflict. Then she will be black, and the family wouldn't be able to deal with that. So, it is painful to go through this hair process’. The use of the verb *assumir* can be read as a reflection of her racial consciousness. It is consistent with the term *negro assumido*, a way black activists describe individuals with a strong sense of racial consciousness (Caldwell, 2003), or as Sheriff (2001: 207) states:

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1. In this case, the Portuguese verb *assumir* can translate to ‘taking on an identity’, or ‘personal assumption of one’s identity’ as well as ‘assume responsibility for her (black/African) hair’ or ‘recognise her (black/African) hair’. The word ‘assumido’ was also very much used, in the 1970s, for example, within the gay movement for ‘out of the closet’. 
To become a negro assumido is to reject the polite discourses and miscegenated identities associated with common racial terms (moreno, mulato, pardo, among others) in favour of an unambiguous, unsoftened, and unqualified Black identity. It is to make a psychological leap into what activists sometimes call ‘negritude’ and to undergo what they describe as something akin to a conversion experience.

JACKIE

The story of another history primary school teacher present at the GPMC meeting, Jackie, demonstrates how the internal process of becoming a negra assumida can conflict with views from outside. Jackie described herself as being in a very similar situation to Lilian’s. I would describe her as a brown-skinned woman who, the first time I saw her, was still straightening her hair, but asked Lilian about her hair transformation. She said very encouraging words of admiration to Lilian, but smiled timidly and told us she would not be brave enough to start the process of growing back her naturally wavy hair. At the meeting, Jackie let everyone know that she identifies as Black, but that her mother, whose skin is slightly darker, disagrees and keeps telling her that she is morena (brown, mixed). In her book The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families (2015), Hordge-Freeman uses the term ‘affective capital’ to show that within Brazilian families love and affection are distributed unequally. As a result, investments in education and mobility are also made in a way that penalises children with darker skin colour and features perceived to be more African. This lack of affection and investment results in lower self-worth and self-esteem and easily reinforces children’s wish to look less black.

When Jackie is outside of the context of people who identify as black or see value in being black, she says that she continues to think of herself as morena. Alessandra once said: ‘If you’re black and you say you’re not, that is fine but if you say you’re black and this and that, then there will be a conflict’. According to Alessandra, Camila had this conflict with her mother, and it appears that Jackie would put herself in the same situation if she started to grow back her natural hair. However, more than interpersonal conflicts, black aesthetics can generate prejudices and create obstacles in various situations. Speaking of ‘representational intersectionality’, Harrington (2015) speaks of marketplace discrimination against women and refers to the broader labour market where black aesthetics are often not welcome.
During her life, Jackie claimed, she had never suffered any prejudice as she always ‘passed for morena’ and was not treated in the derogatory way that she imagines black people would be. Jackie's concurrent identification as negra and morena depending on the context demonstrates that the usage of racial terms is strongly influenced by the specific contextual framework in which people interact (Cicalo, 2012: 94). Jackie may also not feel entitled to entirely call herself Black, given her impression that she had never been treated negatively due to the colour of her skin and her appearance. Her skin complexion and straightened hair equip her with the flexibility to shift between her negra and morena identity, without fully committing to either.

In her profession as a primary school teacher, Jackie found a different way to express and develop her Black identity. As her political project, she started to work with abayomis, little dolls made out of cotton fabric that represent the dolls that enslaved African mothers made out of their garments (see Figure 5). Through the production of such dolls, she introduces pupils to the Brazilian history of slavery from an angle that stresses the caring and creative qualities of African mothers and thus diverts from traditionally pejorative narratives about slavery, which often portray enslaved Africans as primitive, cultureless and mere victims.

Figure 5: Abayomis made by GPMC members
When Jackie first presented her *abayomis* at the GPMC research group’s first meeting of the year, she was very emotional and started crying (which happened again six months later at another meeting). She seemed to be moved not only by the idea of enslaved mothers giving joy to enslaved children creatively using the little they had, but also by the idea of reaching her pupils playfully. For her, this opened up the possibility of reaching hundreds of other pupils through her efforts and making them receptive to the abundance of African and Afro-Brazilian culture and history. Black activists might see Jackie’s reluctance to let her hair grow back naturally as a rejection of blackness, or a lack of racial consciousness. Nevertheless, her pedagogical work demonstrates that Jackie politically identifies as Black, standing up against racial discrimination and fighting for the implementation of Law 10.639/03, even though she does not feel comfortable to fully claim her Black identity in contexts in which being black might be regarded as disadvantageous or generate conflict.

**JÚLIO**

Júlio, another teacher who attended the research group’s meeting, opened up about his past as a police officer, a fact about himself he had not told anyone in this group before. Given his known history of being a very active member of the trade union Unified Workers’ Central (Central Única dos Trabalhadores, CUT), which has very close ties to the Worker’s Party and the Landless Workers’ Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, MST), imagining Júlio in a police uniform elicited puzzled faces and astonished looks. Despite his – in my view – curly black hair and brown skin, Júlio, who is in his late forties today, grew up believing in his whiteness and that it was impossible for him to date a woman who was not white. He remembered his mother always telling him and his brothers that they were white. Similarly to Lilian, he only came to think of himself as black when he was an adult and entered university; however, he never brought up his hair:

*It wasn’t easy; I also started this process of becoming black (enegrocer) very late in my life. You have to find it very weird how in a country full of black people these people have to become black. It is a tense process. I discovered myself as black when I was an adult. My mother had several children and called none of us black, and we didn’t either. She would always say ‘limpar o útero’ (‘clean/whiten the uterus’). We were three boys, and we always heard her say this.*
Júlio uses the terms becoming black and discovering himself as black interchangeably, although the first implies that he was not black and then became black, while the latter suggests that his blackness had always been there – he just needed to uncover it, which is similar to the meaning the black movement usually gives this process. An interesting question is in what ways blackness is conceived to have been there: Júlio did not once mention his physical appearance, which suggests that he was referring primarily (but probably not exclusively) to his parentage/blood. Through education and the input from Black people at university, Júlio started seeing what he came to perceive as always having been there but having been denied. During my fieldwork I did not hear any stories from men who talked about their hair in connection to claiming a black identity and in Rio de Janeiro I have noticed many more black women who grow their natural hair out compared to black men, who mostly kept their hair short.

Nevertheless, even with short hair, Brazilian black men cannot escape the racialized hierarchy, in which their bodies are constantly noticed, fetishized and hyper-sexualised (Pinho, 2005). One day in the beginning of the semester during the coffee break of Luiz’s class about the implementation of Law 10.639/03 at UFRRJ, Júlio approached me to ask about my research and my impressions of Rio de Janeiro. While we were talking, another student who was not involved in our conversation commented something like ‘Júlio, always chatting up girls’ in a loud voice, which made everyone in the room chuckle and look amused. I assumed that all the students knew each other quite well and that this type of joke was common between them. However, many months later Júlio brought up the incident to me and expressed that he was still quite annoyed about it. He explained that as a Black man he considered the joke inappropriate and offensive and that to him it showed that as a black man he cannot talk to a white woman without being accused of having ulterior motives. In Brazil, the whitening of the population was imagined to be achieved primarily through European immigration and miscegenation, which was imagined through sexual encounters between dominant white men and subordinate black women, while ideologically excluding black men (Souza, 2012). There has been historical continuity in the stereotypes surrounding black men, such as being aggressive, immoral, delinquent, bad parents, oppressors of women and hypersexual. Using the terms ‘hegemonic masculinity and manhood’, Souza (2012: 520) argues that in the West the idea of masculinity is predominantly white and heterosexual and thus disqualifies other masculinities. This
reproduces stereotypes that equate poor, black or homosexual men with failed or incomplete masculinities – categorised as subordinate masculinities. Rituals of masculinity are often described as demonstrations of power and strength, from which emerges the rhetoric of violence, as well as representations of domination. Compared to the white man, however, the black man is emasculated through the racial subordination he is forced into (Pinho, 2005: 138). Nevertheless, the black man continues to be hyper sexualised and marked by sexuality through the strong significance of his physical presence; his presence will never go unnoticed (ibid.).

Today, Júlio is one of the more politically active members of the GPMC (influenced by his past involvement with CUT) and he thinks that further education and work inside the classroom are not enough to make change happen. Rather, he sees the GPMC not only as a research group but also as a political collective that has an obligation to be active on the streets to reach as many people as possible to – ultimately – change legislation; an opinion shared by Luiz and a few other GPMC members.

JOANA

Júlio and Lilian both came to CENH to talk about the importance of Law 11.645/08 and racial quotas at public universities. During his speech, Júlio read a letter from one of his students, which talked about learning to accept her body and her skin colour and thanking Júlio for it. Even though Júlio must have read this letter a couple of times before, the student’s words brought tears to his eyes. When Júlio discussed the importance of celebrating black bodies, he referred to one of the students in the audience and called her hair, worn in an Afro, a crown. The student, Joana, cheered with a big smile on her face and some other students cheered and clapped. Referring to Lilian’s talk about racial quotas and her personal experience with her Black identification, Joana later said to me:

*With all the online movements that speak about acceptance of your skin, and also your hair, people say stuff like: ‘ah, I’m not morena, I’m not parda, I’m Black. So I got to the point, like the girl who gave the talk (Lilian), who said that she discovered she was Black. I kind of took on my blackness (me assumi negra). But there are always people who say: ‘No, you’re not Black, you’re morena’. So, there always is this doubt, but I kind of overcame it, I consider myself Black, not pardo, dark, or anything else.*
Joana did not start to claim her blackness as a response to an encounter in her immediate environment, for example with black movement activists or educators, but instead through reading discourses on the internet that valorise and appreciate black hair and skin. Social network platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter have increasingly served as mediums of black activism (Mitchell-Walthour, 2017: 19). Similarly to Jackie, other people who keep telling Joana that she is not black but morena influence the way she experiences her blackness. When I asked about her hair, she responded:

*I used to straighten my hair. Back then I thought straight hair was so beautiful. I still think it is. I thought that once I straighten my hair, and I did it for a long time, and my fringe got really straight, that I want all of my hair straight. But my hair looked so weird because my hair doesn’t stay straight, it becomes crinkly. After some time my mum convinced me to stop. I stopped having straight hair and relaxed it so it would be less curly. Then I got tired of it; I didn’t want this anymore because it was the same process as the chemical treatment and I had to go there every third month. [...] To be honest, I don’t want to go through all of this to have straight hair. But if I could have chosen between straight and curly hair, I would’ve chosen straight hair, because it is so much more practical and easier to take care of. So I’ve been letting it grow naturally for three years now.*

Unlike Lilian, Jackie, Júlio or Camila, Joana does not make a direct connection between her Black identity and her naturally curly black hair. Instead, she justifies her preference for straight hair with the fact that it needs less grooming, and her decision to let her natural hair grow back with the work involved in straightening curly hair. Nevertheless, the attention Joana’s hair gets from other people makes it difficult to escape the racialized meaning attached to it. One day after class, Joana was the last student to exit the classroom, and the Maths teacher asked whether she could take a picture of Joana and send it to her son. Her son would be in awe to see such a courageous and wild girl whose natural hair is so big and who wears a nose ring. Without protesting, Joana smiled and agreed to be on the teacher’s photo. When I asked her about that incident a few weeks after it happened, Joana told me that it was just a piercing and simply hair and that she could not understand why people said she was courageous. Nevertheless, she said: ‘I don’t feel offended. It is better if we don’t get more into this topic, because if you really think about it… You will find people who see a lot of issues, but I’m fine with it.’ Furthermore, she told me that in school a few students made jokes about her hair, but that she usually laughed it off. However, when strangers on the
street or in a passing car made derogatory comments about her hair (one time a man stopped his car to offer her a brush to comb her hair, and she responded ‘No, thank you’), it made her incredibly sad. First, Joana said that the choice of hairstyle is a mere question of vanity or practicality. Her reaction to people making fun of her hair, her proud reaction to Júlio using the word ‘crown’ to refer to black women’s natural hair and her decision to let her hair grow to a considerable length despite requiring intensive care all show, however, that Joana is aware of the racialized meaning carried by her hairstyle and that her hairstyle goes beyond the question of vanity or practicability, reflecting a socially-historically constructed aesthetical norm, which privileges straight blonde hair.

In an informal conversation, Rita, Joana’s history teacher, who identifies as Black and has very short curly hair, urged the school to support black students better. She lamented that the majority of black women straighten their hair and rhetorically asked why they wouldn’t cut it to show off their negritude. According to Rita, the school is responsible for black students’ racial consciousness – a responsibility that CENH has neglected, however:

A student saying he’s ugly. ‘This monkey face is very ugly’. I say: ‘I think you are beautiful. They have to feel beautiful, alive, and it is very difficult. There’s a student with big hair, and she is very beautiful, but in her classroom, students make fun of her, and she doesn’t respond ‘I am beautiful, I am Afro-descendant’. She doesn’t say this. She doesn’t think like this. So it is the school’s duty. There isn’t any other place that precisely works on the history of Afro-culture, on our ancestry and Black identity. It is the school! You won’t find this in a factory. And within the family context, the parents will call you ‘neguinho, crioulinha, japonesa’, denigrating their own racial identity. They [the students] have to see themselves as beautiful; they have to be Black! But I think it is also the school’s fault because it doesn’t work this aspect. So there has to be a project inside the school that assists you in recovering your own identity. Last year the school didn’t talk about black consciousness at all. We didn’t do anything.

In her work as a teacher, Rita introduces examples of black resistance, such as the quilombos, the Malê Revolt or the Chibata Revolt (a naval mutiny against whipping as a punishment for Afro-Brazilian sailors, which took place in the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1910). She also talks about black personalities from Brazilian history and strong black women, such as Luíza Mahin (an ex-slave who bought her freedom and was involved in various slave revolts), Clementina de Jesus (a samba singer) or Jovelina Pérola Negra (a samba singer and composer), who black girls can look up to and who otherwise would remain unknown to
them. She would like to have a day in school dedicated to black beauty and to show movies that black students can identify with, such as Besouro.³

The accounts above show that for many black women in Brazil growing their natural hair out is an integral part of becoming black, and that for them black consciousness is closely connected to black aesthetics. They also demonstrate certain flexibility of racial and ethnic identities (to become black in different ways and at different stages in life). Lilian, Jackie and Júlio all adopted a Black identity when they entered university, an environment in which they learned about racial discrimination and got in touch with black activists. Camila and Joana adopted a Black identity in high school – one through her interaction with the student collective Frente Negra and the other through her research and exposure to debates on social networks. Júlio calls this process of claiming a Black identity ‘becoming black’ (enegrecer). In the following part, we will see that white Brazilians also share this terminology.

**White people becoming Black (enegrecer)**

Clara, Úrsula, and Ana-Paula, the only women, who identify as white and whom I would describe as white, at the GPMC meeting, stated that they had also learned about racial discrimination only as adults. Their perception of themselves as being white has not changed, however.

**CLARA**

Similarly to Júlio, Clara, the history teacher at CPII and hostess of the GPMC meeting, used the term ‘becoming black’ (enegrecer). Clara had grown up believing she lived in a racial democracy, despite her father having prohibited her from going out with a black man. When Clara was a teenager he said to her: ‘*If you are going out with a black man, don’t even think about coming back home!*’, and as a teenager she obeyed. Until Clara entered high school as a teacher in 2009, she had associated the term ‘negro’ with a slave. When she left Pernambuco, a state in the Northeast of the country, where she was born and grew up, to move to Rio de Janeiro she met the man who would become her daughter’s father, who is

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³ Besouro (2009) is a Brazilian movie based on the person Besouro Manangá, a capoeira fighter who lived in the hinterland of Bahia in the 1920s. Set in Brazil at a time when slavery was officially abolished but black people were suffering from prejudice and slavery-like working conditions, the film tells a story of black physical and spiritual resistance.
black. When one of the coordinators of her school at that time assigned her to a project that was meant to discuss the deconstruction of the myth of racial democracy, she started to question the beliefs she had grown up with for the first time. Consequently, she continuously read and studied about racial injustice and enrolled in a Master’s degree at UFRRJ in which she focused on the implementation of Law 10.639/03.

At the meeting and later in class, Clara repeatedly used the term *enegrece* when referring to the process of learning about racial inequality in Brazil. As Clara identifies as white, her use of the term *enegrece* does not carry the same meaning as when Júlio uses it. Whereas the way Júlio uses the term goes beyond the re-conception of society and history in terms of injustice and racial discrimination and refers to him becoming conscious about his own racial identity, Clara refers to her awakening (*acordar*) from the belief of living in a ‘racial democracy’. Most of the times that I saw her, Clara wore very colourful shirts and a pendant in the shape of the African continent on a necklace, and carried a backpack, which had a print showing a black woman on it. Sansone (2003) observes that negritude is not only celebrated through music but also through the body, dance, aesthetics as well as artistic symbols and cultural artifacts. Even though Clara did not undergo any bodily transformation, such as changing her hairstyle, her usage of symbols related to Africa and Afro-Brazil, visibly show her appreciation of blackness.

**ANA-PAULA**

Ana-Paula, another white teacher present at the meeting describes the (re-) construction of her identity process as having begun in 2006, the year she started to work at a municipal education secretariat in one of the municipalities close to the city of Rio de Janeiro. She oversaw the implementation of the project A Cor da Cultura (The Colour of Culture) in thirty-five municipal schools. Although Ana-Paula describes her history studies at the prestigious Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) as having taught her to examine society critically and to reflect about inequality, they failed to make her look beyond social class and kept her blind to racial inequality. She stresses the importance of getting to know and being around social activists, who fight against racism. Through them, she learned to question the meaning and privilege of being white in Brazil and discovered herself as a social activist against racism in the domain of education; on the one hand using her work as a teacher to reach her pupils, and on the other hand educating herself further.
At the meeting, she used the term *enegrecer* the following way: ‘Some people discover themselves as black (descobrir como negro). I became black (enegrecer). White people become black’. She differentiated between people, like Júlio, who do not look white and can, therefore, discover their blackness, and white people like herself, who can become black. When I asked her explicitly about becoming black (*enegrecer*) she answered:

> When you ask me about the moment that I became black, I can tell you that it is through each learning experience, social activism, altruism, solidarity and the wish for social justice for black people and any other subaltern segment. Every time another person’s pain hits me, it makes me sad, and this sadness transforms into strength to work and denounce the injuries to the subaltern parts of the population caused by hegemonic segments. I think that every white person should have the possibility to live and feel the importance of this displacement. To create a different world, it is necessary to blacken (*enegrecer*) your soul.

According to Ana-Paula’s words, becoming black goes beyond the perception and understanding of the existence of racial injustice and discrimination, and entails an element of empathy and embodied knowledge in the shape of the ability to put oneself into the position of the subaltern, or in her words, to blacken your soul.

Her work with the then pedagogical coordinator of the project and Black activist, Azoilda Loretto da Trindade, was fundamentally important for Ana-Paula’s development into an antiracist activist and teacher. She told me one day that to her it is essential that the white population recognises its advantages and privilege compared to other ethnicities. She thinks the only way to reach this goal is through love, affection, and admiration of anything considered black.

> Zô (Azoilda) has always welcomed me and welcomed everyone who wanted to advance the anti-racist struggle in our country. Her sweet attitude was the fuel that nurtured my enchantment with the racial debate, such a rough field that is marked by countless violent episodes, globally as well as in Brazil.

This quote shows that Ana-Paula has a lot of empathy for the suffering of black people, which motivated her to become an anti-racist activist. At the same time, to her, the racial debate is something someone can be enchanted – fascinated and drawn in by – after years of never having thought about it, whereas non-white people can usually not escape from and might not feel enchanted by it.
ÚRSULA

Úrsula, who grew up and lived in an impoverished area until she got married and moved to a white upper-middle-class neighbourhood, put it the following way:

*I never regarded myself as black, but I am Afro-descendant, but I am a white woman.* [...] A woman of the [education] secretariat stopped her chemical hair treatment, let her hair grow naturally. This is a process, for other people and the individual. [...] It is not just to fall asleep white and wake up black. It is a painful process that I have not lived, but I see it through other people that I know. A girl of five years [one of her former students], suffering and discovering her body, her identity.

Even though Úrsula described herself as Afro-descendant, she did not identify as Black as she did not consider her physical appearance to be that of a black person: in my view she has very light skin, straight bright hair and no physical traits that would mark her as non-white. Her African descent stems from having a grandmother she considers to be Black, which, according to her, however, does not influence the colour/race she identifies with, which she bases merely on her physical aspects/markers. Despite not being directly affected by racism, having a black grandmother who suffered because of her appearance (see below) turns anti-racism into a personal matter for Úrsula.

**Shifting Identities**

Thus, in Brazil, it is possible to become black without being black, at least in some contexts. Furthermore, rather than a state of being, becoming black is an active process (Caldwell, 2007: 127), as we have already seen from looking at the transformation black women go through when growing out their hair. Hall (1996) states that:

*Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.*

In Brazil, becoming black can signify becoming conscious of one’s black racial identity or cultural ancestry, but – depending on one’s appearance and/or knowledge of one’s parentage – it can also mean to claim a political identity/social activism stemming from the awareness of the prejudice against black people in Brazilian society or a strong feeling of
empathy. Based on her research on black women in England, Ahmed (1997: 157) urges us to think in terms of identification instead of a more static concept of identity:

*We no longer can assume that the subject simply ‘has’ an identity, in the form of a properly demarcated place of belonging. Rather, what is required is an analysis of the processes and structures of identification—both psychic and social—whereby identities come to be seen as such places of belonging. By shifting the analysis in this way, both race and gender can be theorised not as fixed and stable ‘essences’ but as construction-in-process where meanings are negotiated and re-negotiated in the form of antagonistic relations of power.*

When Clara uses the term of becoming black (*enegrecer*) it describes the process she went through from being a white woman denying racism to a white woman identifying with the struggle of black people and the black movement. Cardoso (2016: 13) argues that ‘*this adjective [Black] has much less to do with the color of Black women who are feminists and much more to do with a political conception, a way of seeing and interpreting the world to intervene in it and to produce knowledge. In this sense, as a worldview, it can be shared by non-Black women*’. Júlio, who today identifies as Black and who might be perceived as looking a lot less white than Clara, uses the term in a slightly different context. His mother raised him to be blind to racial discrimination while telling him that he was white. *Enegrecer* describes the moment that he came to see his misconceptions about racism and took on his place in society as a Black man and not a white man. He decided to fight racial discrimination, accompanied by a process of claiming a political, symbolical and personal Black identity. Being Black is usually seen as an ontological category of being; here it is an experiential category of becoming, which focuses on the centrality of knowledge. Similarly to Jackie, Júlio’s relatively light skin provided him with the option of switching between a Black and *moreno* identity and gave his mother the power to raise him in the belief of being a white boy. Whereas black people have to give up their whiteness to become black, white people become black and stay white at the same time. In this sense, Júlio, Lilian or Camila taking on their Black identity is a political statement, in a way that Clara’s ‘blackened’ identity cannot be. What de facto differentiates them is the position from which they experience racial discrimination, which can have implications when it comes to building anti-racist coalitions and alliances.
As I have shown, becoming black can mean claiming one’s Black identity, becoming an ally to black people by intellectually or empathetically understanding how racial discrimination works in society and going through a significant psychological and emotional, if not physical, change. However, as we will see it can also evoke the idea of having experienced any discrimination or prejudice. Talking about the pain that black people feel due to systemic racial discrimination encouraged other participants in Luiz’s class at UFRRJ, who identify as white, to open up about their personal experiences with discrimination. Clara who is originally from the impoverished state in the Northeast of Brazil Pernambuco, which had vast plantations and received a large number of enslaved Africans up until the first half of the 19th century, said she suffers from discrimination because of her origin. There have been repeated emigration waves from the Northeast to the metropolises of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in search of employment and a better life. Often, people in the Northeast are said to be lazy and festive and hence subject to similar stereotypes as blackness in general. After various black students talked about their process of becoming black and the pain involved in this process, Clara responded: ‘Being Nordestina, I feel like being part of an excluded group, because I am Nordestina. Black people are being excluded and discriminated against, but there is a similar prejudice against people of the Diáspora Nordestina’. Interestingly enough, no one seemed irritated by Clara’s comparison between the discrimination against black people and being discriminated as a phenotypically white Nordestina. Subsuming racism into the more general category of discrimination (by ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, disability, or age among others) is a well-known tactic used by the state and by ‘post-racial’ approaches that seek to minimise racism (see Lentin, 2011). (Nevertheless, as we will see below, other people strongly criticised the subsumption of racism into the generic category of discrimination).

Úrsula shared a similar experience. Today she lives a few blocks away from Clara in the wealthy neighbourhood Grajaú but she grew up in one of the impoverished and crime-ridden municipalities of the Baixada Fluminense and found it, therefore, challenging to manoeuvre through social relations in the city of Rio de Janeiro as learning about her origin makes people look at her differently. During Luiz’s class at UFRRJ she said:
We suffer as women, as being from the Baixada Fluminense. We suffer prejudice but not as severely. I was never denied a job, but I am not rich and fine. I have three jobs so my family can travel. My black grandmother married a white man to lighten the family (limpar a família), after that no one was allowed to marry a black person. When I look at this painting (another girl had shown a picture of the painting A Redenção de Cam⁴, Engl.: Ham’s Redemption, by Modesto Brocos, 1895, to demonstrate whitening politics in Brazil, see Figure 6) I think about my grandmother who isn’t even alive anymore.

At this point, Úrsula started to cry and continued: ‘How can people not like themselves and want to lighten the family (limpar a família)? I have never talked about this; I always loved my grandmother. I thought she was strong. She was a widow when my mum was still a

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⁴ Showing a dark-skinned elderly woman, her lighter skinned daughter with a white male partner and their white baby, the painting ‘A Redenção de Cam’ by Modesto Brocos can be understood as the synthesis of whitening politics in Brazil. The title ‘Ham’s Redemption’ is a reference to a Bible passage, in which Noah curses his son Ham through a malediction laid upon Ham’s son Canaan. According to the book of Genesis, all humankind descends from Ham and his brothers. In ‘Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery’ Haynes discusses the controversial question of the extent to which Europeans used Noah’s Curse to justify the enslavement of Africans, as Ham and Canaan are often imagined to be of dark skin (Haynes, 2002). Souza (2012: 521) notes that the painting also demonstrates the exclusion of the black man in the strategy for successful miscegenation and adds that the black man became a cause for concern for hygienists and police chiefs who were following the ideology of whitening Brazilian society.
child’. While Úrsula shared her personal experience of being treated differently because of the area she was raised in, she acknowledged that there is a difference between the discrimination that a white and a black person experience in terms of securing work. That her grandmother wanted to have a lighter skinned family infuriated and hurt her as it represents the unequal treatment black people continue to experience and the depreciation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture and history, while at the same time it represents a mother’s wish to better her children’s lives, which she only imagined to be possible through the whitening of their skin.

Another girl who identifies as white, Victoria, had had an accident years ago in which a high percentage of her skin had been burnt. She is a corpulent woman with straight blond hair. In class, she elaborated in detail on her life after the accident and how people looked at her and treated her differently. For years she was not able to return to her previous routines as she felt bad about her appearance and people’s reactions to it. She got very emotional and cried while sharing her story. Ana-Paula joined in, and the two women cried together while the latter told Viviane how proud she was of her transformation and her regaining confidence. As a response to the women speaking up about the discrimination they experienced, Rodrigo, an elderly in my view very dark-skinned man, told the class how, even after many decades of teaching, pupils would still stare at him on the first day of school. They did not expect a dark-skinned man to be their teacher. He did not have tears in his eyes, but he seemed very emotional when he spoke. All of these stories were similarly met with great sympathy and encouraging words.

Jackie then addressed the class as a response to Clara talking about her work at her high school and being a white woman talking about the law. She said that there are black spaces (espaços negros) in which white people cannot enter or participate, like in a research and activist group at UERJ, which, however, she does not agree with:

If you are white you cannot enter, but how can anyone choose who gets to talk about this? If it wasn’t for Clara at [her school], then who would? If it wasn’t Úrsula in the Baixada, then who would? Politically they identify as Black; they became Black (enegreceram), they talk for or about it and spread this [discussion] in their networks.

She questions whether black people should have the right to create spaces in which white people are not welcome and argues that in several cases, such as Clara at CPII or Úrsula in the education secretariat, the only people talking about racism and the importance
of Law 11.645/08 are white people. As we have seen above, and in the previous chapter, there is a Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros at CPII and various black and other white teachers who work on the implementation of Law 11.645/08, and there are several black women who work alongside Úrsula in the education secretariat (even though Úrsula is probably by far the most engaged one). Furthermore, in this quote, Jackie does not recognise an essential difference between a person who is politically black and a person who might also be perceived black. Her comment started a brief discussion about white people being able to speak with black people, but never for them, which the class agreed on.

After the end of term, I asked Luiz, the course giver, about this particular moment and how he interpreted the students’ reactions to the people who shared their personal experiences with discrimination and prejudice:

_I remember, yeah I remember. That was a difficult class. I think this class was very productive, because sometimes you don’t need to express intellectually or rationally a condition, and at this moment, it wasn’t even the individual but the collective subject that was manifesting itself. When I speak of collective subject, I mean that diverse oppressions of the Brazilian society were expressing themselves and people were showing how it operates. I think Victoria left an impression, Victoria who is very white, who shows the conditions, a norm (padrão identitário) that the Brazilian society cultivates. It’s a hetero, masculine, white, adult norm, and then the beauty norms that are built around this. For Victoria, for example, in Brazilian society, her shape is not a standard beauty. So there is a big system of norms behind all of this, the condition of the woman, of the homosexual, of the black person, and it comes together with the regional condition, like in Clara’s case (being Nordestina), the perception of Úrsula, that she works in the Baixada Fluminense, even being Christian. Other oppressions that people are living were mobilised through this condition that we have to face, the discussion of it. [...] I’m saying this to say I know how this stirs up people’s emotions, and this is why Victoria made this statement, this expression was only possible in this space, it would’ve never happened in 2013 [when her accident happened]. [It was] an environment that gave her each time a bit more security. It stirs up people’s identity, and how Victoria said it, that day, I think that day helped a lot to illustrate how the racial situation is for people._

There had been no critical voices coming forward in Luiz’s class, or in any of the research group’s meetings, rejecting white people’s claim to understanding racial discrimination based on empathy and their personal experiences with other types of
discrimination. When I told Alessandra (the head of NEAB at CPII) about students in Luiz’s class comparing their personal experiences with different types of prejudice she responded:

_Whiteness thinks it knows what racism is. They minimalise it, compare it. This makes the struggle more difficult. It turns into a debate about who suffers more. It isn’t very common for black people to speak out loudly enough to question the suffering of whiteness. They suffer together. White bodies cause the bigger commotion. Even for black people, unfortunately. Who would say something against it, do you think? It would have to be someone very secure, very engaged._

In a different setting from the GPMC research group and Luiz’s class at UFRRJ, namely the NEAB at CPII, Clara’s claim to understand racial discrimination was interpreted as white entitlement to black suffering and the discomfort of letting a black person take centre-stage.

Informed by their research on comparisons between racism and sexism among people at least some of whom are involved in anti-racist work, Grillo and Wildman (1991: 401) state that the analogy between sexism or other forms of oppression with racism ‘perpetuates patterns of racial domination by marginalizing and obscuring the different roles that race plays in the lives of people of color and of whites’ (cf. Lentin, 2011). As such, the comparison minimises the impact of racism and turns it into an insignificant phenomenon. This marginalisation and obfuscation, according to the authors, is evident in three recognisable patterns: first, white people take back the focus and attention from non-white people, even in discussions of racism. Consequently, white issues remain central in the conversation. Second, by claiming to understand black people’s experience of racial discrimination, white people appropriate pain or even deny its existence. Third, analogising gender to race implies the assumption that each is a distinct category whose impact can be neatly separated. By fostering this type of essentialism and viewing women and black people as belonging to mutually exclusive categories, the experience of black women is made invisible (ibid.). However, empirical research shows that people who experience a particular type of oppression may be more empathetic towards another, a phenomenon Boushel (2000: 76) refers to as ‘experiential affinity’, while suggesting that it is helpful to white allies. At the same time, Delgado (in Spanierman & Smith, 2017: 610) speaks of ‘false empathy’ and suggests that white people only demonstrate an insufficient understanding in which they wish to believe that they are identifying with black people. In her book _Beyond the White_
Negro: empathy and anti-racist reading (2014), Davis emphasises that cross-racial empathy is a state of mind and an aspirational process, a struggle that is ongoing and never complete.

The accounts of Úrsula, Clara and Ana-Paula show that what motivated them to actively fight racism was not to simply know about its implications but some sort of empathetic feeling towards black people. Alessandra’s positive attitude towards white teachers at CPII who support her work and continuously approach her for advice demonstrate that she generally welcomes the support from white allies. In the following section, we will see that the way white anti-racist activists position themselves significantly influences their role as allies to black people.

Black (female) leadership

Even though white people associating themselves closely with political blackness did not particularly evoke resentment or astonishment in the research group or the teacher education class at UFRRJ, it was not met with comprehension everywhere, as we have already seen. These divergent opinions about the role of non-black people in anti-racism work surfaced when Clara gave me a lift into the city centre after one of Luiz’s classes. I asked her about the NEAB at Colégio Pedro II. She told me that she herself had been crucial in the research entity’s founding phase and made it very clear that the group’s coordinator, Alessandra, could not be trusted. She said she had decided to leave the NEAB as, in her view, it was not a democratically led group but built around Alessandra’s narcissism and thirst for power and attention. She believed Alessandra’s speeches to be too radical and sarcastic and thus scared people off. Furthermore, Clara warned me not to expect any support from Alessandra, as she might be suspicious of a white European researcher showing up at the NEAB. According to Clara, the NEAB does not hold elections, meaning Alessandra could stay in control as long as she wanted to.

When Alessandra and Artur, a history teacher and founding member of the NEAB, told me separately about how the NEAB came to life and about the initial struggle to even get it started, Clara’s name was not mentioned. When I next met Alessandra at the Sociology teachers’ event on gender equality, I expected her to be cold and reserved, keeping Clara’s warning in mind. Instead, I witnessed a remarkably lively, approachable and helpful woman. Indeed, her speech at the event was straightforward, full of sarcasm and unapologetic.
However, the students and teachers seemed very enthusiastic about it and were engaged in the discussion afterward.

During one of our last encounters, Alessandra told me about a teacher who had left the NEAB because of her, without mentioning Clara’s name:

*It was a personal matter. She put that into her letter of resignation because she thought that the NEAB had to be more democratic. She believed in a collective. I signalled to her that this collective, [which] she believed had to exist, is a white collective. And the NEAB is a Black group, by the way, the only one in the school. It is difficult for these people to accept that the NEAB has to have a black leadership. So, this did a lot to their sense of honour. It became a matter that was dragged into the personal, as in ‘Alessandra wants to be seen, Alessandra has this event that is unnecessarily big because she wants to be seen’. The difficulty of understanding that there has to be black leadership operating throughout the school was very significant. This resulted in confusion, fuss, many discussions, and arguments.*

Alessandra insists that the NEAB has black leadership and that this fact irritates white people, some of whom feel uncomfortable with this idea. According to Alessandra, Clara disguised her discomfort as an issue she had with Alessandra personally, independent of her role as the head of NEAB. Alessandra said that in total there had been three teachers who had wanted to be part of the NEAB but did not accept its black leadership, two of them white and one of them black: ‘I stood firm, and it was a big problem, and the two white teachers used texts from black authors to talk about our necessity. And by ‘our’, I only realised later, they were talking about the school as a whole’. Grillo and Wildman (1991) argue that often liberal whites do not see themselves as prejudiced or collusive in domination through coercion. Nevertheless, *they cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination and oppression that they profess to wish to see eradicated* (bell hooks in Grillo & Wildman, 1991: 399).

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5 Org.: ‘Foi uma questão pessoal mesmo. Ela colocou isso na carta dela de saída, porque ela acreditava que o NEAB tinha que ser mais democrático. E acreditava num coletivo. Eu sinalizei para ela que esse coletivo que ela acreditava que deveria existir é um coletivo branco. E o NEAB é um núcleo negro, ou aliás o único na escola. É difícil para essas pessoas assumirem que o NEAB tem que ter um protagonismo negro. Então isso mexeu muito com os brios. Ficava muito uma questão se levando para o pessoal como se “a Alessandra quer aparecer, a Alessandra está fazendo esse evento grande demais sem necessidade, porque ela quer aparecer”. A dificuldade das pessoas entenderem que tinha que ter um protagonismo negro atuando em toda a escola foi muito grande. E isso deu muita bagunça, muito barulho, muita discussão, muito bate-boca’.
According to Alessandra, the black teacher did not like the NEAB identifying the privileges white people have and thought that the group was being racist towards white people. However, Alessandra explained that she did not want white people to be the leaders of the NEAB, as they were the protagonists of all other research groups at CPII and elsewhere. Repeatedly, she spoke to me about white and non-white people who think of themselves as anti-racist, but cannot deal with Black people being in a leadership position or with the idea of black leadership in general. She said CPII, a very traditional school, had not been ready for her and questioned a lot of decisions and initiatives of the NEAB, which other research groups that existed in the school were able to carry out unquestioned. Furthermore, her being a woman and her position as a pedagogical coordinator (doing a lot of administrative work) and not as one of the teachers who are usually responsible for CPII’s research groups (although she was trained as a teacher and taught in state schools in the Baixada Fluminense for many years) seemed to trouble people who responded to the NEAB's existence and work by just ignoring it.

For Afro-Brazilian women in leadership, the theme of invisibility ties the issues of racial democracy, machismo, and socio-economic inequality together. The solution is not only ascension up the socio-economic ladder; the racial hierarchy of Brazil restricts not only working-class black women, but black women in all socio-economic classes are forced to operate under the cloak of invisibility (Harrington, 2015).

As discussed in the introduction, black women occupy the lowest paid jobs in the labour market and suffer disproportionately from unemployment. Even when black women manage to achieve a high level of education, racial discrimination in the selection processes persists. Harrington (2015) argues that black Brazilian women’s political activism around economic access and education are motivated by their life experiences at the intersections of class inequality, racial democracy, and machismo, and states that black women leaders cite education as a doorway to political and economic power. Alessandra used her education and professional experience to occupy a leadership position in a conservative prestigious white school, which makes her experience deviate from the statistics mentioned above.
Conclusion

Exploring the experiences that turned a group of teachers into advocates of the law and anti-racism activists can provide a vantage point from which to think about the implementation of the law and a way to urge more educators and education officials to advance its goals and take an anti-racist stance in their pedagogical and administrative work. If the commitment to anti-racism is intimately tied to personal experiences and beliefs, creating space for similar experiences and beliefs to develop inside school may be a useful way to approach the implementation of the law and to foster anti-racist attitudes among staff and students.

For most of the educators I talked to, it took until they reached their adult life for them to understand their place within a differentiated racial framework that structurally puts white people at an advantage compared to non-white people. Rather than being able to rely on their families as inspiration for their political mobilisation, the teachers who identify as Black started by feeling excluded and not belonging in predominantly white contexts, and later experienced input from black activists. This led to a change in the way they identified but also sparked their quest for measures that would effectively combat racism. Except for Alessandra, none of those mentioned above were encouraged by their family to valorise blackness. Nevertheless, they joined spaces in which their experiences and identities as Black could be affirmed.

To Camila, Lilian, Alessandra and Jackie the transformation of artificially straightened or relaxed hair into natural black hairstyles is an essential aspect in the process of becoming black. It can be said that, for them as well as for Júlio and Alessandra, black hairstyles can be seen as a form of resistance to anti-black beauty norms. As Caldwell (2007: 129) notes, ‘[s]elf-identification as a mulher negra can be seen as an act of resistance precisely because it involves the inversion and rearticulation of dominant racial significations’. A transformation of her racial consciousness did not initiate Joana's change in hairstyle; the reaction to her new hairstyle might have contributed to her looking for or being more receptive to information and guidance about negritude and black aesthetics online. It is thus not entirely possible to draw a direct connection between black women wearing their hair in natural hairstyles and black women being or becoming racially or politically conscious but the accounts suggest a very strong link between those two. The personal narratives indicate that
not only is hair a significant indicator of racial consciousness but also a sign of preparedness to publicly take on the issue of racism.

At the same time, this chapter shows that doing anti-racist work does not automatically turn someone into an ally to Black people or prevent them from perpetuating racial hierarchies. Da Costa (2014) notes that the directives accompanying Law 10.639/03 present a multi-layered understanding of multiculturalism, anti-racism, and diversity. Rather than being the sole responsibility of black people, the directives argue that anti-racist pedagogies can strengthen among blacks and awaken among whites a ‘black consciousness’: ‘Black consciousness can encourage in blacks critical knowledge, pride, and confidence, and, in whites, the ability to ‘identify the influences, contributions, participation, and importance of black history and culture in their way of being, living, and relating with other people, notably blacks’ (Ministério da Educação, 2005 in Da Costa, 2014). Such a reading of black consciousness encourages all members of society to rethink power and privilege, while promoting a shared struggle against racism along with the recognition of ethno-racial differences and the privileges/disadvantages they form. While appointing white and black educators to carry out anti-racist work in schools, the directives do not address traditional racial hierarchies, in which white people find themselves on top, per se. Some of the white teachers in Luiz’s class discovered the prevalence of racism and the privilege that comes with their skin colour when first accessing knowledge about the law and its intention to deconstruct the remains of the myth of racial democracy. To some of them, the embodied knowledge of the pain and suffering resulting from any discrimination has been crucial in their understanding of racism. Different from the teachers attending Luiz’s class, Alessandra was very outspoken about the incommensurability of a white and a black person suffering from different types of prejudice and discrimination. She rephrased what Luiz called the ‘collective subject manifesting different oppressions of the Brazilian society’ as white people’s need to take centre-stage in the narrative of racial discrimination and as the absence of a black person who feels secure enough to tell other students off in this particular context. In one context Clara is able to present herself as an anti-racist activist, while in the other she is perceived as perpetuating racial hierarchies.

While the teachers who identify as Black in the research group let white allies decide rather freely what position to take in the anti-racist struggle (in line with the directives’ phrasing), it is questionable whether their equating of racism with other types of
discrimination will produce pedagogical anti-racist practices that truly go beyond tokenistic initiatives and are transformative in character by creating room for non-whites to take centre-stage and become protagonists. In the context of a US-American law school class on racism, Grillo and Wildman (1991) observed Jewish students feeling offended by anti-Semitic remarks and Afro-American students feeling that during the one course in the curriculum designed to address their issues, the white students once again had taken over the airwaves from black students for their own purpose. The authors argue that both groups were correct and that coalition work is crucial to guarantee that each group is heard. However, I agree with Da Costa (2014) who suggests that it is necessary to create space for dialogue between Black educators and scholars, and their would-be allies, in ways that simultaneously bring them into encounters on the basis of their current positionings and challenge them to go beyond those limits. Such alliances have the potential to develop and sharpen white anti-racist people’s honest desires for cross-racial connectedness and solidarity. In order for antiracism to succeed, it must leave room to create valid roles for white people.
4. Law 11.645/08 – contested space

Nobody appreciates what they don’t know (Ninguém vai valorizar se não conhecer).
Andila Kaingang (Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã, 2013)

Indigenous education in Brazil has been discussed extensively in the field of anthropology (Tessinari & Cohn, 2009; Silva & Grupioni, 1995; Silva et al., 2002, among others; for the wider Latin American context, see Gustafson, 2009; and Botero, 2015). In this regard, scholars have predominantly looked at the relationships between indigenous people – predominantly those living in rural areas and indigenous territories – and the state, frictions between laws that apply to the individual and those that apply to a specific group, indigenous languages, and indigenous epistemologies.

This chapter takes a different angle by shedding light on indigenous knowledge and culture in non-indigenous education, particularly in the context of Law 11.645/08, and the issues that arise when it comes to the law’s implementation. Similarly to Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture there is a severe lack of indigenous history and culture in official didactic material (Grupioni, 1996: 425; Gobbi, 2006: 107; Silva, 2010a: 240; Printes, 2014; Russo & Paladino, 2016: 905). The majority of didactic material that talks about indigenous history and culture is made specifically for the literacy teaching of indigenous children and not for non-indigenous primary and secondary schools, and much less for higher education (Luciano, 2016: 21). Luciano (2016) speaks about his own educational work with regard to Law 11.645/08 in Alto Rio Negro (Amazon) and compares his work, which consists of teaching non-indigenous people about indigenous history and culture, to the work he had previously done with indigenous people in the Amazon. After centuries of colonisation, many indigenous peoples had abandoned their indigenous ways of life and, according to him, came close to abandoning their identities, languages and cultural peculiarities. 'My goal was to talk about the importance of our cultures, traditions, languages and ways of life, while deconstructing the prevailing repressive colonial discourse and practice. [...] We can call this a Brazilian Amerindian revolution – that those that the academy suspected were, and political leaders had declared, “extinct” or to be “in danger of extinction” in the 1960s
and 1970s, had undergone a historically significant demographic increase’ (Luciano, 2016: 16).

While there has been significant thinking about how to teach more or less bounded indigenous groups about their history and culture, the significant increase in people declaring themselves indigenous in Brazilian metropolises towards the end of the last century raises pressing questions of how urban indigenous people who have never been to indigenous schools learn about their indigeneity, and what indigeneity constitutes for them.

From 1991 to the year 2000, a striking increase in the number of indigenous people living in urban areas could be observed in Brazil, reflecting a general trend in Latin America (see Warren, 2001; Mendoza, 2010; Echeverri, 2012). The number more than quintupled; it went from 71,026 indigenous people in 1991 to 383,298 nine years later. In the same period of time, the number of people declaring themselves indigenous living in rural areas increased only by 1.6%; it went from 223,105 in 1990 to 350,829 in the year 2000 (IBGE, 2012). Arbona and Kohl (2004) observe that indigenous people in Latin American cities mainly reside in informal settlements located in the periphery. Moreover, urban indigenous populations remain disproportionately affected by poverty compared to other urban residents and continue to be confronted by ‘historically established patterns of exclusion and discrimination’ (del Popolo et al., 2007; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010). Nevertheless, Bengoa (2000) reminds us that urban indigenous people do not represent passive victims of exclusion, discrimination and spatial segregation. Throughout Latin America, urban indigenous populations increasingly mobilise around their ethnic identities and fight for ethno-racial justice (as this chapter demonstrates). Whereas indigenous people living in rural areas and often in demarcated territories have been attracting the attention of researchers and government bodies, such as the National Indian Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Índio, FUNAI), for quite some time, the presence of indigenous people in Brazil’s cities has yet to gain more attention (Simoni & Dagnino, 2016: 304; Poets, 2018). In the state of Rio de Janeiro, 16,000 people declared themselves as indigenous in the last census, of which almost 7,000 live in the capital (Jesus, 2017: 359): this turns Rio de Janeiro into a compelling case study about questions of indigeneity and indigenous mobilisation in a pluri-ethnic urban environment.

1 When Brazil ratified International Labour Organisation Convention 169, which continues to be one of the most powerful and binding international instruments of protection for indigenous peoples, for the first time it allowed people to identify themselves indigenous without third-party approval. Previously, in order to prove one’s indigeneity, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) had to give its approval. Apart from one’s self-identification, the leader of the indigenous group one belongs to had to provide a written confirmation. The problem was that many indigenous people had lost ties to the groups their families had grown up in, due to colonialism, persecution during the military dictatorship and poverty.
environment. The re-emergence (and also rural-urban migration) of indigenous people comes with the question of ‘authenticity’. Who counts as a ‘real indigenous’ person and what are the implications of self-identification as indigenous in urban spaces? This is crucial in order to understand which educators have the skills, knowledge and access to teach about indigenous culture and history in the non-indigenous schools of urban centres.

Taking a closer look at the implementation of Law 11.645/08 it becomes obvious that indigenous people and their history and culture are a lot less visible than black people and their history and culture. Soon after I received the authorisation to do research at the Colégio Pedro II, I met with the head of the sociology teacher department, Raquel, a young, white European-looking woman with curly brunetted hair. When I started to tell her about my project on Law 10.639/03 she interrupted me right away to correct me. ‘You mean Law 11.645, right?’ she asked, ‘that also includes indigenous history and culture?’ Her question took me by surprise. Most of the literature I had encountered up to that point as well as the educators and researchers I had met, had talked exclusively about the law’s first version, 10.639/03, rarely referring to the struggle of indigenous people and their representation in school. Even though there are publications with regard to Law 11.645/08 that address the teaching of indigenous history and culture in non-indigenous schools (Funari & Piñon, 2011; Lopes, 2013; Medeiros & Antunes, 2013; Silva & Silva, 2013; Russo & Paladino, 2016; Fanelli, 2018, among others), the discussion about the law’s implementation continues to focus predominantly on African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture represented by the law’s first version, 10.639/03 (Candau & Russo, 2010). It is striking that the legal document accompanying the first version, DCNERER, albeit mentioning indigenous history and culture, focuses heavily on African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture as well as the history of the black movement. It has not been altered since its first publication in 2004 to correspond to the changes made to the law in 2008. Do advocates of the law address this relative absence of indigenous history and culture in non-indigenous education and, if so, in what way?

**Aldeia Maracanã: a step towards the visibilisation of indigenous education in non-indigenous schools**

In 2006, a group of indigenous people, the Movimento Tamoio dos Povos Originários, (MTPO) occupied an abandoned building in the neighbourhood of Maracanã located in the
Northern Zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro right next to the famous Maracanã Stadium. Previously, the building had hosted the Indian Protection Service (Serviço de Proteção aos Índios, SPI; from 1910), later on the Museum of the Indian (Museu do Índio, from 1953) and now belongs to the state of Rio de Janeiro. One of the movement’s main goals was to occupy a space that would gain visibility for indigenous history, diversity and the ongoing indigenous struggle. On its Facebook page, the MTPO explains its goal as spreading the history and culture of Brazilian and Latin-American originary peoples as well as ideas about how best to implement Law 11.645/08. For years, the building, which was renamed Aldeia Maracanã, provided physical space for indigenous people from ethnicities and different places all over Brazil to come together and develop strategies to promote indigenous rights, history and culture. On the Facebook page of Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã (AIAM), the organisation succeeding MTPO, it says: ‘In October 2006, indigenous people from seventeen different ethnicities as well as non-indigenous supporters met in a seminar at the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro to discuss the best way to make the struggle for indigenous rights in Rio de Janeiro more visible. They decided to create a unified indigenous movement, which brought indigenous people from various ethnicities together and resulted in the creation of the Movimento Tamoio dos Povos Originários’. The indigenous movement involved in the occupation of the abandoned museum (which later split into the Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã, AIAM and the movement Aldeia Rexiste) was the first to attract the attention of the national and international public, as well as of Brazilian government officials, labour unions and NGOs. Aldeia Maracanã turned into a symbol for pluri-ethnic indigenous mobilisation in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

Contrary to its history as a museum, the building and the newly occupied space were not meant to quietly exhibit objects that followed a single narrative, but were planned as a place that would be kept alive by encouraging interaction, and would be a centre from which indigenous culture could spread out, gain visibility in the urban context of Rio de Janeiro, and enter the realm of education (Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã, 2015; cf. Rebuzzi, 2014). During an interview, Marize, one of the initiators of the occupation, explained the movement’s vision in the following way:

*When we occupied this [the building of the former Museum of the Indian] it was because we noticed, when we went to the schools, the ignorance of*

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2 The Museum of the Indian (Museo do Índio), which was founded in 1953 by Darcy Ribeiro, was transferred to the neighbourhood of Botafogo in the Southern Zone of the city.
teachers, how ignorant they were towards indigenous people. They didn’t know anything [but] stereotypes, music, but ignorant things. We [indigenous activists] saw that we hadn’t permeated the educational sphere yet, a very Eurocentric space: studying 300 pages of European medieval history, but what was happening during those times in Brazil, in Latin America? What indigenous peoples were doing during those times, nobody talks about that. The mongrel-complex [complexo de vira-lata].³ We [indigenous people, or Brazilians more broadly] didn’t have [know] our roots anymore. We are enchanted by everything that comes from the other side of the ocean. All of this has always permeated our need for having this space [Aldeia Maracanã]. It wasn’t a village [aldeia]. It was a space for the promotion of indigenous history and culture through education.

Marize is a Guarani woman in her late fifties, who lives and works as a history teacher in a state and a municipal school in Duque de Caxias, one of the biggest municipalities of the Baixada Fluminense. As a teacher, her goal within the movement (Aldeia Maracanã) is directly influenced by her work as an educator in non-indigenous schools, where knowledge about indigenous culture and history is either informed by stereotypes or simply non-existent. When I asked Marize whether the movement had influenced her views on the importance of educating non-indigenous people about the indigenous struggle, she told me that it had been the other way around and that she had been one of the advocates for discussing the way Law 11.645/08 can be implemented. The idea of Aldeia Maracanã was to institutionalise the practice of indigenous activists and to guarantee the continuity of their work. Other leaders of the movement, such as Andila Kaingang or Carlos Tukano, also stress the importance of taking indigenous culture and history into non-indigenous schools in order for them to get valorised and appreciated. Oliveira and Santos (2016: 309) note that the educational work of the Aldeia Maracanã movement has been crucial for the introduction and preservation of indigenous knowledge and culture in many schools of the state of Rio de Janeiro.

As such, Aldeia Maracanã provided a space in which indigenous people could not only exchange ideas about their cultures, habits and languages, and dance and sing, but also share and discuss their experiences with a non-indigenous audience. Non-indigenous people were invited to discussions and workshops. Events in non-indigenous schools and other public places were initiated. In April 2014 (the same month as the National Indian Day),

³ This is a common Brazilian expression, usually used to refer to Brazilians who feel inferior to Europe or the USA.
AIAM first organised the Indigenous Cultural Week in Rio de Janeiro (Semana Cultural Indígena Rio), which took place in the wealthy South Zone of the city. Sponsored by the State Secretariat for Culture and the Pro-Índio Commission among others, various events, such as film screenins, speeches, workshops and other cultural activities were offered. Furthermore, the prestigious Parque Lage next to the Botanical Garden turned into an artisan market and a stage for indigenous performances. Since then, every year in April, indigenous people from Rio de Janeiro and all over Brazil have travelled to the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro to promote their culture and history, and sell their art work. Jesus (2017: 359) highlights the importance of presenting and selling craftwork for the promotion of indigenous cultures, as well as being a way to generate income. The AIAM sees such events as crucial for the promotion of indigenous cultures and as a way for indigenous people to deconstruct deprecating narratives and prejudice as well as to fill the gap where information about indigenous people is missing. In their view, filling this gap would ultimately lead to society recognising and feeling pride about its indigenous roots (Associação Indígena Aldeia Maracanã, 2016).

Even before the first event was held at Parque Lage, leading up to the football World Cup hosted by Brazil in 2014, the state government decided to demolish the building occupied by Aldeia Maracanã to make way for a parking lot. In 2013, the residents were forcibly removed by the Military Police and relocated first to shelters made of repurposed shipping containers in Jacarepaguá, a distant area in the Western part of the city, and later moved into a building provided by the public housing program Minha Casa Minha Vida in the city centre. Even though former governor of Rio de Janeiro Sérgio Cabral had promised to hold off the demolition in order to return the building to the group of indigenous people and turn it into a Point of Reference and Centre for Indigenous Culture (Centro de Referência da Cultura Indígena), the building remains empty (Jesus, 2017: 359-360). However, at the time of writing, AIAM continues to negotiate with Adriana Rattes, State Secretary for Culture, about the use of the building, and especially about financing its renovation.

Marize was one of the people who had initiated the building’s occupation. One day she told me that she had dreamed about a gigantic shaman (pajé) picking her up and placing her on the palm of his hand. The shaman then told her that she had to occupy the building and that if it was not done by October it would never be done. The fact that the dream occurred on the night before Marize’s birthday gave it special meaning and Marize got to work the
very next day. Even though the shaman in her dream thought it best to occupy the building before October 12th, a symbolic day – the day Columbus first arrived on the American continent in 1492 and the day Marize describes as the day the indigenous genocide started – the actual occupation of the building happened eight days after that.

Apart from teaching and studying for her Master’s degree in education, Marize is an active member (and used to be part of the management) of the state school’s teacher union. During the early years of her work at SEPE RJ (the state school teachers’ union, Sindicato Estadual dos Profissionais de Educação do RJ), she had been responsible for the Secretariat of Gender, Antiracism and Sexual Orientation (Secretaria de Gênero, Anti-racismo e Orientação Sexual). Years before Law 11.645/08 came into existence, Marize used her position within SEPE RJ to organise workshops about the fight against racial, sexual or any other type of discrimination for people who work in education throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro. Giving discrimination against indigenous people special weight, Marize invited indigenous people from different locations in Rio de Janeiro (state) to speak at these workshops. Shifting her focus from educators to students, in 2004, Marize started to promote indigenous rights and visibility in municipal schools in Duque de Caxias – in her work as a history teacher, and as an activist, inviting various indigenous people to give talks in schools. Repeatedly, Marize stated the importance of SEPE RJ’s support during the occupation of the former Museu do Índio. The union facilitated the arrival of several indigenous people who travelled from their villages to Rio for the occasion, and provided meals and water during the first week of the occupation. The National Supply Company (Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento), which is located in the building next door, provided electricity and water.

According to Marize, without her vast social and political network the mobilisation of all people and organisations enabling the occupation would not have been possible. The continuous work of Aldeia Maracanã as well as other political and social organisations, in particular SEPE RJ, has been crucial for the promotion of indigenous visibility in Rio de Janeiro. Especially AIAM members who work as teachers stress Aldeia Maracanã’s mission to target the education system and take knowledge about indigenous culture and history into schools.

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4 This day is celebrated as El Dia de la Raza in Spanish-speaking American countries, celebrating Columbus’ arrival in America.
Being an urban indigenous teacher in Aldeia Maracanã

Like any movement or organisation, Aldeia Maracanã was not immune to conflicts with regard to the distribution of power or, later on when the movement split into AIAM and Aldeia Rexiste, to disagreements about its mission. Rebuzzi (2014) stresses the importance of social capital in the Aldeia Maracanã gained from formal university degrees or public sector jobs. Understanding legislative texts and being able to speak the legal language used by the state were crucial skills for the enforcement of Aldeia Maracanã’s interests. According to Marize, the right to speak, participate or take decisions was not only influenced by someone’s degrees and formalised knowledge, but repeatedly framed along the lines of being an indigenous authority, a status that provoked discussions on authentic indigeneity (see Warren, 2001; Ramos, 2003; French, 2009; Pinheiro, 2009; Poets, 2018).

Recalling an incident from the second week of the occupation, Marize told me that there were moments in which her authenticity was questioned because she was not born or raised in a village:

In the second week of the occupation so many indigenous people came. We had our first meeting and only indigenous people took part in it. Those who were already living in Rio and others who came from other parts of the country to stay with us. On the day of the meeting, it was a Saturday afternoon, when we all sat down, Toni started to talk to a few people silently, and he told Zarapo that Artur, Jesa and I were not indigenous. When we sat down he said: ‘It is only for Indians’. I sat down. We sat down, all of us and he said that it [the meeting] couldn’t start, because there were still white people present. I didn’t feel addressed by him, so at first I just stayed silent. Artur said ‘okay’, and he got up to leave. He said: ‘I don’t want to cause any problems”, and left. Then Toni said that there were still white people here. He looked at me and said: ‘Would you leave the room!’ I turned around to look but there was no one behind me, so I asked: ‘Are you talking to me?’ He said: ‘Yes. With you and the person next to you’. Before I did anything I asked who else in the room was thinking the same thing as Toni. [I said that] ‘If it wasn’t for me none of this would have taken place today!’ The Pataxos got up and said that if I had to leave, all of them would leave. I said we should ask everyone: ‘Who thinks that I should get up and leave?’ Tukano said: ‘I’ve not known Marize for very long, but she

5 I changed the name.
6 The Pataxos are an indigenous group who mainly live in the state of Bahia.
always identifies as indigenous, she had a cocaç on her head, always fighting for the indigenous people in Rio. Who am I to say whether she is indigenous or not? Time will tell!’ Then Toni got up and said: ‘She declares herself [indigenous], she is [indigenous].’ I asked: ‘Only those who are aldeados⁸ [are indigenous]?’ and he responded that this was not what he had wanted to say. A Pataxo said that it was exactly what he had wanted to say. Everyone then sat down and we started the meeting.

Marize, Artur and Jesa were all born and raised in urban environments and only started identifying as indigenous in their adult lives. In the moment of the meeting, Toni, who was born in an indigenous territory in the North of Brazil, questioned Marize’s right to take part in the meeting by calling her white and disputing her indigeneity, which was only stopped by a group of Pataxos and Carlos Tukano, who was born and raised in an Amazon village, interfering. To Tukano it did not matter whether Marize was born in an indigenous village or a city – her actions and attitudes will tell whether she is truly indigenous or not.

Paradoxically, in order to claim specific rights and the protection of their lands, indigenous people have to learn the language and the skills to use legal and administrative mechanisms imposed by the national society, while at the same time maintaining their ‘authenticity’, which is more readily recognised if they do not leave indigenous territories. Albuquerque (2011) speaks of the authenticity prejudice, which functions as a continuance of the poder tutelar⁹ (the power to protect and supervise indigenous people): when leaving indigenous territories or their village, indigenous people are perceived as either assimilated (phenotypically), acculturated (linguistically) and/or desaldeados (born or raised outside the indigenous village), (political-administratively).

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⁷ Feather headdress
⁸ Aldeado is a Portuguese term for indigenous people who were born and grew up in an indigenous village.
⁹ In 1910 the Service for the Protection of Indians (SPI) was created in order to establish pacific relationships with indigenous peoples, guarantee their physical survival, motivate them to adopt ‘civilised’ customs, bind indigenous people to specific land, stimulate the populating of Brazilian hinterlands, facilitate the production of economic good on indigenous lands, integrate indigenous people into the national labour market, and encourage indigenous people to identify as national citizens (Lima, 1987; 2012). The Civil Code of 1916 and Decree 5.484 of 1928 awarded the guardianship over indigenous people to the state, who then administered their lands, political representation and cultural lives. This guardianship turned the category of índio into a legal status, which allowed the state to award special rights to some and exclude others by not categorising them as índio. Oliveira (1988) points out the ideologically paradox of the tutela, which aims to physically and morally protect indigenous people while dominating their lives and repressing their choices. Lima (2015: 431-2) describes poder tutelar as a legal and administrative system that functions as the non-violent continuance of the military conquest of Brazil. As a way to exert control on a national level, in the beginning of the 20th century, administrative territories were created, which allowed for indigenous people to be generically classified into collectives and positioned in a hierarchised system consisting of positive and negative attributes, deciding about status and the inclusion or exclusion from certain rights or protective measures.
Similarly to Brazil, Ramos states that the Colombian Constitution of 1991 causes an ‘insoluble contradiction when it affirms the rights of indigenous peoples to their traditions and cultures and charges them with government-style management, while demanding from them a cultural authenticity that would justify these rights’ (in Stoll, 2011: 137). Indigenous people in urban spaces thus have to define mechanisms through which their indigeneity gets recognised and collective rights get awarded by the state. Whereas AIAM was willing to continue negotiations with the state of Rio de Janeiro about the fate of the building, the other part of the original group that occupied the building, Aldeia Rexiste, had not agreed to negotiate with the State Secretariat for Culture, insisting on building an autonomous space, which could host an Indigenous University (Poets, 2018). Referring to Hale’s (2004) concept of the ‘authorized Indian’ (*indio permitido*), a term initially coined by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, this conflict can be understood as between an indigenous group that plays by the state’s neoliberal multicultural rules in anticipation of rewards, which are given at the expense of an indigenous group which chooses not to cooperate. AIAM is expecting to receive the right to use the building to create the promised cultural centre – under, however, the supervision of the State Secretariat for Culture – whereas Aldeia Rexiste was not able to effectively advance their demand for an autonomous use.

Crucial issues for indigenous groups living in rural areas are land demarcation and the protection/possession of natural resources. As Wade (2010: 122) notes, class is an important factor when it comes to the demands of indigenous social movements. Although many indigenous movements are concerned with culture, language, violence and political representation, most of them include a struggle for material goals, especially land. As the occupation of Aldeia Maracanã demonstrates, the struggle for visibility and the valorisation of indigenous culture requires property as well as financial resources, even if the primary use is not to make a livelihood but to facilitate education and build a political-social community. When it comes to collective rights, such as land use or the protection of customs and cultural memory, ethnic identification plays a crucial role. Indigenous people are used to having to ‘prove’ their indigeneity in legal terms in order to access entitlements defined in law. In other words, only ‘real’ Indians as defined by the state have the possibility of being granted legal rights and territories.

It had been through the state school teachers’ union SEPE RJ that Marize not only developed what she calls an ‘indigenous political-pedagogical’ attitude, but where she
learned about indigeneity. Marize was born in Rio de Janeiro and grew up in the Northern part of the city before she moved to the Baixada Fluminense to work as a teacher. She always stressed her support for the black movement and the implementation of Law 10.639/03, in fact she had regarded herself as a black movement activist long before she identified as indigenous activist. Having followed her political work and witnessed her knowledge about the indigenous struggle, finding out that it had been quite recent that she started to identify as indigenous surprised me:

I knew my dad’s mother, my dad passed away when I was a year and a half old. I went there [the aldeia] and they said that my grandmother was indigenous. On my mother’s side it is the same, but I didn’t know my grandmother. I am the granddaughter of indigenous grandparents. But one thing is to know what you are, to identify yourself as such is another thing. My self-declaration [as indigenous] was relatively recent, in the mid-2000s. Because I was active within the black movement to help with Law 10.639 that had just recently been promulgated, and I learnt what self-declaration was, that I can’t deny it, silencing my grandparents.

It was not until her forties that Marize started to identify as indigenous based on her grandparents’ ancestry, and to develop a thorough interest in the indigenous struggle. Knowing that she had indigenous ancestors did not automatically make her understand herself as indigenous though. Rather it was a conscious process that led to her identification as indigenous, which challenges the often reproduced essentialist assumption that indigeneity is simply inherited, tied to soil, and that the relationship between indigenous people and their culture is intrinsic, spontaneous or even unconscious.

When Marize started her Master’s course and she presented her work on Guarani education in class, she introduced herself as an indigenous movement activist. During the break, when she went to the bathroom, another student approached her to ask whether she was indeed a ‘real Indian’. Marize was puzzled and asked her what a ‘real Indian’ was, whether it was only one that was born in a village (aldeado) and not one who had indigenous ancestors. The student had brown skin and curly hair. When Marize asked how she identified the student responded ‘Black’. This was what Marize had suspected and she told the student: ‘But you are not from Africa, you are a descendant. Why can you be one thing and identify as such, and not give me the right to do the same?’ To Marize, anyone who has any amount of indigenous blood from indigenous ancestors can be indigenous. The same
is true for the three children she had with a white man. All her children identify as indigenous and one of them declares her three-year-old son as indigenous, even though none of them are as political, outspoken or educated about indigenous traditions in the way Marize is. Her children were already adults when Marize started to identify as indigenous, which suggests that they adopted their mother’s new identity, accepting their indigeneity as dependent on ancestry alone.

Marize’s involvement in political organisations, specifically the SEPE RJ and the black movement, raised her awareness about her family’s indigenous ancestry. It was her personal commitment to re-educating herself about this specific part of her family history that led to her identifying as indigenous. The similarity to the stories I had heard (and discussed in Chapter 3) from Júlio, Lilian and Jackie, who started to identify as black in their adult lives, is striking. Their processes of becoming black (enegrecer) followed experiences they had made in political organisations (Júlio) or higher education institutes (Lilian, Jackie). Nevertheless, even though involvement in political work or higher education were the catalysts for all five to rethink their ethnic/racial identification, Marize never used the term ‘becoming indigenous’. Rather than becoming something she had not been, she had just not claimed it before. It may be that, because blackness is usually marked more clearly on the body than indigeneity (which depends more on dress, adornments, or language among others), indigeneity is forced to depend more on ancestry as a criterion. Marize had always known that two of her grandparents were indigenous and grew up in an indigenous village, which led to her conviction that she was ‘born indigenous’, independent of where and how she grew up. As such, despite having chosen to claim her indigenous identity, Marize sees her indigeneity as something inherent. Even though Marize’s birth certificate states that she is white and although she had lived most of her life identifying and being perceived as a white woman, ultimately she discovered that she could not – in her words – ‘escape’ her indigenous ancestry, which implies that her destiny is in her blood. Her recent identification as indigenous woman was followed by an increasingly profound process of learning about indigeneity, which included many visits to aldeias in Brazil and Peru, political involvement in indigenous organisations as well as university research about differentiated schools for Guarani children in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This implies that in order for her to speak up in indigenous contexts and about indigenous matters in white contexts, her ancestry was not enough – she also had to learn how to be indigenous.
Marize felt that Toni, who was born and raised in a Guajajara village, had repeatedly questioned her indigeneity. Nevertheless, she was convinced that her actions and attitudes justify her right to be indigenous. In order to prove this, she referred to her record of political work: Apart from being a member of SEPE RJ, she is the director of the Institute of Knowledge of Native Peoples Jacutinga (Instituto dos Saberes dos Povos Originários Aldeia Jacutinga), based in the Baixada Fluminense, and currently Executive Secretary of AIAM:

If he [Toni] accepts it or not, I am part of the National Council for Indigenous Rights, I am part of this construction, a struggle going back twelve years! And also, my institution here in Caxias, Aldeia Jacutinga. I am the lead coordinator of Aldeia Jacutinga, the Institute of Original People’s Knowledge (Instituto dos Saberes dos Povos Originários), an institution that will make up the state council of indigenous peoples. I am institutionally recognised as indigenous!

Even though Marize understood indigeneity in terms of ancestry, this quote shows that not only had she had to learn how to be indigenous through various visits to aldeias, her university research and activism, but felt compelled to use her formal status as leader of various indigenous organisations as indisputable evidence.

Even though there are aldeados who visit non-indigenous schools and travel throughout the country to promote their culture, often it is indigenous teachers who have never lived in indigenous territories that have access to a large non-indigenous audience. In their work environment in non-indigenous schools, indigenous teachers do not have to convince indigenous people of their indigeneity or persuade the state they are indigenous in order to benefit from special rights; instead they have to awaken students’ interest in and appreciation for indigenous history and culture. Nevertheless, questions about authenticity do not disappear in non-indigenous educational contexts, as I will show.

**Being an urban indigenous teacher: ‘authenticity’ and invisibility**

At a meeting of the Research Group on Public Policies, Social Movements and Cultures (GPMC) in Rio de Janeiro I met Luiz, who invited me to the UFRRJ to attend his weekly teacher education seminar about ethnic-racial questions in education. It was here that I first met Marize, who at the time was studying for her master’s degree in education. Her long straight black hair, feather earrings and necklaces made out of seeds, as well as her
outspokenness, strong voice and willingness to share her opinion on most topics discussed in class, made Marize one of the most noticeable students. When the seminar was announced, Marize approached Luiz, whom she had known for many years from her work at SEPE RJ, and made him commit to broaching the issue of indigenous struggles in the field of education. As Luiz did not feel comfortable teaching the classes himself due to his lack of experience of teaching indigenous history and culture as well as of knowledge about indigenous peoples, the indigenous struggle or academic references, Marize offered to invite the academic Kelly Russo, a white Brazilian who works at the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), and Carlos Doethyró Tukano,10 the president of AIAM and cacique (chief) of Aldeia Maracanã, to give talks. Marize also offered to prepare a presentation about her work as a teacher. The presence (or absence) of an expert on indigenous questions also became an issue at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte (CENH). Once Principal Laura started to educate herself about Law 11.645/08, she planned on including indigenous questions in the annual project of her school (as discussed in Chapter 2) but was not able to implement her plan except for one event, due to teachers who were untrained and unprepared with regard to indigenous history and culture. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend class the day Kelly Russo was invited. It would have been my only moment during fieldwork to witness a white person speak publicly about the indigenous struggle. Even though Raquel, the coordinator of the sociology department at CPII, had pointed out that Law 11.645/08 included indigenous history and culture, the topic was not discussed at any of the meetings or classes (held by other teachers of the sociology department) I attended. All the other times I witnessed academics, teachers, politicians or activists discussing indigenous matters, they were individuals who identified and were identified as indigenous.

On the day Doethyró (Carlos Tukano) joined the class, Marize gave her presentation first. Everyone in class knew about her self-identification as indigenous, her political work and that she grew up and had lived in Rio de Janeiro all of her life. In previous classes, I had witnessed other students getting into many heated discussions with Marize, which most often had to do with the fact that Marize accused them of neglecting the importance of the indigenous struggle. Because of the theme of the course, Marize did not spend much time talking about her involvement with AIAM or other political involvement and instead focussed on her work inside school, the activities she carried out with students and teachers,

10 In Brazil, the indigenous Tukano group is mainly located in the Northwest of the country (Amazonas).
and obstacles she had to overcome, such as the lack of support from education secretariats or school leadership. That day I noticed that the noise level was particularly high while Marize was speaking. Marize’s voice is naturally loud and a lot of the students were very eager to constantly voice their opinions on top, some of them initiating discussions about their personal experience with discrimination in and outside of school and others questioning Marize’s experience as an indigenous teacher. This prompted her to talk about her personal struggle involving visible signifiers of indigeneity: when she dresses in jeans and a shirt or a dress and doesn’t wear any stereotypical item that could give away her indigeneity, people hardly accept her as indigenous. When she is wearing indigenous clothing, face paint and feather jewellery on the other hand, she feels as if people do not take her seriously and do not believe that she is an academic. According to her, many indigenous people in Rio de Janeiro go unnoticed as they live an urban lifestyle and do not visibly carry their indigeneity on their bodies. This gives the wrong sense that there simply are no indigenous people in Rio de Janeiro – when indigenous people do not paint their faces or wear traditional gear, people do not even acknowledge their existence – they become unrecognisable or invisible.

Once an indigenous person leaves their village, they miraculously seem to become non-indigenous in the eyes of the legislator and the general public, which makes them invisible in the urban context. Even though urban indigenous populations are being counted in population censuses and catalogued through specific research, their status as indigenous is often questioned and collective rights are not being respected (Rebuzzi, 2014: 79). In his work Albuquerque (2011) demonstrates how official bodies, such as FUNAI or FUNASA (National Health Foundation), keep indigenous people, especially re-emerging indigenous populations in cities, in a ‘legal limbo’ (the lack of legal or administrative instruments) because a significant part of the organisations’ initiatives only target indigenous people living in indigenous territories (see UN Habitat, 2010). In the metropolitan area of São Paulo, where 59,989 people identified as indigenous in 2000 (according to the census carried out by IBGE), FUNASA only registered just over 2000 indigenous people in 2007, which means that only about 3.6% of the indigenous population living in this area benefitted from differential treatment in the health system.

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11 The National Health Foundation, founded in 1991, is part of the Health Ministry. It is responsible for the development and maintenance of programmes that guarantee and protect indigenous peoples’ health by preventing and controlling illnesses, and offering general health services throughout the country.
Marize’s description of her experience as a Guarani woman, teacher and political activist motivated some of the black students to immediately draw connections to their own experiences as black teachers and their experience with racial discrimination and with the introduction of African and Afro-Brazilian history in school. At first, Marize listened calmly but she became increasingly irritated and ended up shouting: ‘We only have two classes dedicated to indigenous questions, so maybe we should really focus on this!’ The lines between the presentation and the discussion afterwards were blurred, as her entire talk developed into a discussion in which all students participated. The second part of the class, in which Doethyró gave his talk, was very different however. He had been absolutely quiet during the first part and maintained a rather guarded posture until the very end. When he introduced himself, he said that his name was Doethyró and explained that it was his indigenous name, which he received when he was born in a Tukano village in the Amazon, and that Carlos was the name his parents had to put on the birth certificate. Even though Doethyró did not wear face paint, traditional costume or any type of indigenous jewellery, his facial features and long dark straight hair made him more easily recognisable as indigenous than for example Marize (which suggests that there is a ‘typical’ indigenous phenotype that is not, however, shared by all indigenous groups in Brazil). The students were fascinated about his upbringing in the indigenous village and after Doethyró’s presentation inquired further about the way life is organised there. When Doethyró spoke about the history and political significance of the Maracanã Village with a very serious demeanour, Marize smiled happily, and complemented his story from time to time. Doethyró also talked about indigenous invisibility and about a significant number of indigenous people who identify themselves as pardos, especially in the North and Northeast of the country. He concluded that in the census this would give the wrong impression of indigenous people being less numerous than they really are, which in turn makes it more difficult for the indigenous movement to mobilise, and which might make the demands of the movement less audible. Overall, the class remained relatively silent throughout his presentation and saved their question for afterwards.

Usually, Marize is very political and advocates strongly for what she believes in, which is not always appreciated by the other students. However, in her presentation she stuck to the overall objective of the course – to discuss the implementation process of the law in the

12 It was only in 2012 that indigenous people gained the right to register their indigenous names in birth certificates.
teaching practice. Doethyró’s speech on the other hand, after providing an insight into village life, became more political. Contrary to the argumentative reaction the class often showed when Marize defended her points of view (which did not differ in any way from Doethyró’s that day), his audience seemed genuinely interested. Marize was neither born in the village and thus able to share profound insights into village life, nor does she look unmistakeably indigenous or carry an indigenous name. Whereas she had to justify her indigeneity in the context of Aldeia Maracanã, in class no one directly questioned her ethnic/racial identification. However, the students did not seem to be interested in her experience as an indigenous teacher and questioned her experience with discrimination, which indirectly had the same effect, whereas Carlos Doethyró Tukano’s talk was received in a more respectful and curious way. Having grown up in the Amazon, telling a story about his indigenous name, as well as his facial features and skin tone translated into cultural capital and gave Doethyró an authority to speak without his authenticity being questioned, which Marize did not have in this context.

**Performing indigeneity**

When Principal Laura asked the history teacher Isabela and me to invite speakers for the school wide project on African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture, the first person that came to my mind was Marize, as she had a lot of experience giving speeches and organising workshops in various schools and universities. Even though the project was designed around African and Afro-Brazilian history, Principal Laura was more than happy to welcome an indigenous speaker to her school. Nevertheless, none of the teachers prepared the students for the visit or worked on questions concerning indigenous history or culture before or afterwards. The topics talked about disappeared again completely after that specific day.

On the morning of the talk, I met with Júlio, who had agreed to talk about his experience as a black history teacher, at Marize’s house to drive to the school together. On the way Júlio and Marize kept going on about corruption in the municipality where the school is located, about the shortcomings of the state and city governments, as well as the alleged Pentecostal religiosity of the majority of staff and students. Altogether, neither of them seemed to be particularly looking forward to their appearance at CENH and stressed
the fact that they never get paid for their appearances in schools. When Marize arrived at school she was wearing inconspicuously western clothes: a long white skirt and a plain black t-shirt. Principal Laura waited by the gate to welcome our guests and led them into the empty teachers’ room. Neither Júlio nor Marize had had breakfast yet and since the school yard was not ready for their talks yet, I invited them to the bakery across the street. Júlio and Marize took their time eating and drinking coffee, while I walked back to the school to inform Principal Laura of our whereabouts. The geography teacher Lucas was now in front of the gate waiting for us. He seemed extremely excited when he told me that he had never seen an ‘Indian’ before, which he thought was particularly amusing given that he was a geography teacher (and also very unlikely as there is a significant number of indigenous people in Rio de Janeiro, as mentioned above). His comment confirmed Marize’s point: without wearing traditional costume or face paint, indigenous people cease to exist in urban contexts and become invisible, while nevertheless being exoticised during school performances or carnival.

When all of the students and staff had assembled at the school’s sports field, the only area big enough to accommodate this number of people, Marize started her speech. She told the school about the existence of indigenous people in the urban context, the importance of learning about indigenous history and culture as well as the lack thereof in the curriculum. While she was talking, she took off her shoes and I helped her put on a wine red woven belt with seeds on one end, several necklaces made out of seeds and one made out of small red beads, and a black, red and golden feather crown. After she had put on her jewellery, she started painting her face in an orange colour. Pupils and teachers observed her with awe. The performance clearly fascinated them. Now her transformation from an invisible to an unmistakably indigenous woman was complete. To finish off her presentation, she started to sing a song in Guarani and danced in a wide circle. At this point some of the students imitated animal sounds, which drew no comment from the teachers. Marize, however, interrupted her performance to point out how disrespectful the students’ behaviour was and that it proved how crucial it was to take the discussion about indigenous people’s lives into schools. When all of the speeches were over and the event was coming to an end, various students approached Marize to take pictures with her and to tell her proudly about their indigenous ancestors (see Figure 7). During the following week students still looked for me in school to let me know about one or another indigenous ancestor in their
family. Their reactions show the potential an ongoing conversation about indigeneity can have with regard to the valorisation of indigenous culture and history. However, it is questionable whether their overall attitude to and ideas about indigeneity as a whole were in any way changed by this isolated experience.

The point Marize wanted to make by appearing in her western clothes – being an ‘invisible Indian’ – and slowly adding face and body paint, a feather crown, jewellery and taking off her shoes – making her into a ‘real Indian’ – was that indigeneity continues to exist without visible signifiers of indigeneity. Nevertheless, she chose to use these very same signifiers in her performance to demonstrate her indigeneity. Graham and Penny (2014) compare such performances to museums and other heritage management venues in the sense that they become ‘sites of persuasion’, a term borrowed from Howard Morphy. In order to persuade her audience that being indigenous does not depend on a specific appearance, she first demonstrated or performed indigeneity for them.
Another time, a few days prior to the events taking place for the Cultural Indigenous Week in Parque Lage, I joined Marize at one of her events to promote indigenous culture at the higher education institute Educational Foundation of Duque de Caxias (FEUDUC). Marize was hosting three Fulni-Ô¹³ men and a woman in her house, who had come from their village in Pernambuco to sell their artisanal products at the Cultural Indigenous Week and attend different events to promote their culture and talk about the problems their community faces. Two evenings in a row, Marize, Júlio and another indigenous woman from Caxias, Sylvia, assembled students and lecturers from FEUDUC in one of the classrooms. Marize’s house was in the same street as the institute and she maintained an amicable relationship with its administrators, who had already allowed her and other indigenous activists to organise several events in the past. The first day I arrived at FEUDUC towards the end of the event. When I entered the classroom Marize and Sylvia were already wrapping up the session and taking questions from the audience. Outside, in front of the classroom, I first met the four Fulni-Ô who stayed at Marize’s house. They had laid out blankets on the floor to display various handmade jewelleries, cocars and pipes for people to buy them. All of them wore cocars themselves, face and body paint, jewellery made out of seeds and feathers, no shoes and no shirts (the men). As soon as the students came out of the classroom, a few of them started brief conversations with the indigenous vendors and bought some of their items. Before they left, they made sure to take pictures with at least one indigenous person.

After everyone had left, Júlio, Sylvia, Marize, all four Fulni-Ô and I walked back to Marize’s house to have dinner. Once dinner was ready, the Fulni-Ô had washed off all of their paint and changed back into their everyday clothes – blue jeans and t-shirts – and stored the cocars in their bags with the rest of the jewellery to be sold. During the evening until late at night, we ate, drank, smoked, sang and danced to all sorts of music. On the evening of the next day, I accompanied Marize and her guests to FEUDUC again. We had to be there at least an hour before the event started, during which I witnessed all Fulni-Ô getting ready to visibly transform into ‘real Indians’ or to visibly ‘wear their indigeneity’ by putting on indigenous jewellery, painting their faces and bodies, taking off their shoes and shirts, and putting on cocars. Graham and Penny (2014) note that usually indigenous groups only wear traditional clothes and face paint, and perform specific songs and dances either in

¹³ The Fulni-Ô live in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco.
ceremonial contexts or at public performances for non-indigenous audiences. In this sense, indigenous people ‘performing indigeneity’ is nothing more than an oxymoron. A dance and vocal performance executed by the Fulni-Ô, which put expressions of fascination on the audience’s faces, was followed by the eldest of them introducing the group and talking a little bit about life in their village. Right after, Sylvia and Marize addressed the importance of indigenous rights and the urgency of taking them into the educational sphere.

For that event, neither Sylvia nor Marize, who for her speech at CENH had transformed into an unmistakably indigenous person, took part in this visibly transformative or performative process. Both kept on their western clothes and neither of them took part in the music performance. Although the oldest of the Fulni-Ô answered a few questions about life in the village and differentiated education, it seemed as if their main task was to demonstrate indigenous culture, whereas Sylvia and Marize were responsible for the discussion and the more political questions.
Uncomfortable silence (*Silêncio que incomoda*)

In the last class of the year, lecturer Luiz asked his students for an evaluation of the class. It was officially titled ‘The implementation of Law 10.639/03’, apparently referring to the first version of the law, which implied that the teaching of indigenous history and culture was unlikely to be addressed. As mentioned above, at the beginning of the term, Marize had requested at least two class units to be dedicated to indigenous matters and Luiz scheduled two classes to discuss the requested topics. Weeks after the course had finished, Marize told me that she had already signed up for Luiz’s class two years earlier, but had decided not to take it as no time was reserved to discuss how indigenous history and culture are taught in school. She had felt very depressed about the fact that most discussions about ethnicity, race and racism do not include indigenous people and solely focus on black people.

As part of the evaluation, Viviane, a white woman, directed a comment at Marize: ‘*It’s nothing personal, Marize. But if Luiz had only worked with the question of black people, then we would have gone deeper with the course*’. Marize looked incredibly irritated but responded in a very calm manner, addressing the whole class: ‘*Again, people, if racial-ethnic issues are only about black people, it should have a different name! We speak about the decolonisation of Eurocentric knowledge, but all you want to talk about are black people. Indigenous stuff is always left out. This course has to be longer, it is too superficial!*’ Luiz reacted to Marize’s comment in a rather evasive way by saying that the time of the discipline was indeed very limited and that people who would like to talk more about this topic should form or join specific research and study groups. Another comment he made was that it was easier to talk about black racial matters than indigenous, as what it means to be indigenous was so far from his and the majority of the students’ imaginary. Even though Marize did not feel happy about the way indigenous topics were treated during that course, overall she seemed content that the topics received any attention at all.

A few months later I asked Luiz whether talking about the indigenous question made some students feel uncomfortable and he laughed before he answered:

*Yes, it did bother some, it did. I saw two things. It bothered them because of people being ignorant, not in the pejorative sense, but in the sense of not knowing. They had a discussion about the African and black, that criticised, and criticises, the society for its ignorance and then they find themselves in the same condition [vis-à-vis indigenous issues]. And it bothered them*
because in fact this discussion needs to happen as it disturbs the dominant way of thinking of Brazilian society. And people don’t want to waste time, they have to spend time on this, they have to invest their time. They are already investing it in issues that concern black people and now they have to invest more? So they’re putting themselves in the position of the teacher who does nothing. And this irritates them. It bothers them a lot. And I also think Marize’s attitude bothers people, as she has a very strong political posture, which I think is necessary. And this bothers people, as not everyone has the vision that a political intention is necessary.

At the beginning of my fieldwork Marize was not part of the Research Group on Public Policies, Social Movements and Cultures, but she joined towards the end of my stay and was continuously confronted by micro-aggressions. The research group was divided in several sub-sections, which reflected the geographic regions of Rio de Janeiro its members lived or worked in. When I first saw Marize at a general meeting, I was surprised at how quiet she remained. Previously, for example when I came over to have lunch with her, she spoke in a loud voice and often got very irritated about the things we discussed. Witnessing her listening to everyone else and hardly voicing her opinion did not seem like her natural behaviour. Later on I learned that she had felt very uncomfortable in the research group. Even though there were a few other people working on questions concerning indigenous people, they were usually not discussed in the group and again, ethnic-racial questions were treated as issues concerning only black people. Nevertheless, Marize did not give up fighting for space to speak about indigenous questions and managed to organise a debate during another meeting of the research group. She told me that there was time reserved to talk about black people and about women. Therefore, there should also be time to speak about indigenous people. In the group’s WhatsApp chat Anastácia, a white teacher and member of GPMC, responded that it would not be possible to take any other topic out of the schedule in order to make room for Marize’s request. Shortly after, Marize noticed that she had been removed from her sub-group’s WhatsApp group. She told Luiz about it who prompted Anastácia to add her to the group. Anastácia said to Luiz that she had not been aware that Marize was part of her sub-group. In the end, Marize managed to speak about indigenous questions at one of the GPMC’s general meetings, but Anastácia did not stay for her part of the debate. Overall, Marize felt that when she spoke about indigenous issues nobody in the group said much compared to how animated they were when the topic was old people, sick
people, women or black people. To her it was a silence that felt uncomfortable (*silêncio que incomoda*).

One day I asked Luiz explicitly not only about the title of his class but about the reason why many people know about Law 10.639/03 and its requirements while Law 11.645/08 and indigenous history and culture as well as the history of the indigenous movement are less known. He responded:

*The black movement has always been more present in the political history of the country. Indigenous people were..., recently the indigenous movement in terms of participation, were, let’s say a bit similar to the black movement. First, [indigenous people] are much more visible when it comes to debates about land, in the rural context, although there are thousands of, millions of indigenous people in the cities, but less visible in the cities. So the black movement, a lot stronger, managed to get Law 10.639. When 2008 happens, well, in 2008 [Law] 11.645 revokes Law 10.639. [...] 10.639 was a symbolic political and extraordinary milestone, because the black movement entered a space, which it previously hadn’t penetrated. [...] In 2008, there is an empowerment of the indigenous movement in the country side and the cities, especially in the cities where people use Law 11.645 symbolically. This is where the confusion starts. [...] Marize said something very correct in class: that there is a lack of knowledge [on the part] of the black movement, of black people, of experts, about indigenous matters. A total lack of knowledge! And this lack of knowledge is also about the relevance of this indigenous debate, because socially the weight of black people, of African descent, is much bigger than the indigenous debate. [...] The issue of racism, when you talk about racism, theoretically you have to talk about all other, ahm..., ethnicities and races, let’s put it like this, that are not white. Also about indigenous people. But when you talk about racism in Brazil, the debate about Black people, Black men and women, is much stronger, much more present and eloquent.*

**Conclusion**

Since the colonial regime, black and indigenous people have both been marginalised and characterised as others, which however does not mean that they have been treated equally by the state or that they should automatically be allies. At first glance the implementation of indigenous history and culture and of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in schools seems to share the same obstacles: neither is overly present in textbooks or didactic material, educators often lack knowledge about both, and structural
problems (such as the lack of funding for projects or initiatives) affect them both. Nevertheless, when looking at the implementation of Law 11.645/08 in academic and other educational contexts, as well as in social movement contexts, it is apparent that a significant amount of discussions with regard to ethnic-racial questions revolves around blackness and the concept of white-against-black racism. Given Marize’s background of activism for the black movement and the implementation of Law 10.639/03, she expected the same energy from black educators and activists when it came to implementing the part of Law 11.645/08 that talks about indigenous history and culture. However, ideas about race and racism are often thought of as merely applying to black people, attributing indigeneity to questions about ethnicity, rather than race.

Anderson (2007: 407) argues that an analysis of race and ethnicity in Latin America should do without clear-cut distinctions between indigeneity and blackness. Instead, the ways they are produced as ‘relational categories of ancestry and culture, sameness and difference, inclusion and exclusion’ should be examined. Similarly, Wade (2010: 37) stresses the importance of placing blackness and indigenousness in the same theoretical frame while recognising their differences and their different positions in the structures of alterity and the way they have been institutionalised as ‘others’. The author states that the otherness of indigenous people is generally perceived as much more significant than that of black people, and that this otherness is primarily understood in cultural terms. This is allied to the fact that indigenous groups are often seen as deserving of special policies, such as the protection of indigenous lands and languages (in many countries, including Brazil), or their recognition and valorisation as ancient forebears (e.g. in the Andes and Mexico).

However, my data show that while this may be true in rural areas, in urban Brazil indigenous people are entirely marginalised in the attentions of the state, which has been captured (in this respect) by blackness. Even though indigeneity continues to be regarded as more ‘other’ and exotic, while black communities hardly fit into the category of an ‘ethnic group’ due to a lack of a different language or particular value system and to their adaptation to the majority culture (Grueso & Rosero & Escobar, 1998: 199), the Brazilian state as well as social movements pay more attention to blackness. In fact, indigenous people are often omitted from discussions about racism and in educational spaces where ethnic-racial issues are discussed. They are much less visible than black people in urban spaces. Even though indigenous identification typically depends on culture, it seems that
there is a ‘typical indigenous phenotype’ as there is a ‘typical black phenotype’, as the reactions to Carlos Tukano demonstrated. Nevertheless, it might be easier for indigenous people to get associated with phenotypical whiteness, than it is for black people.

The fragile position of the urban indigenous population, which finds itself in a constant battle for recognition – by the state as well as by some indigenous groups whose identification is tied to its life in an indigenous village – demonstrates that the discussion about authenticity is still prevalent. Wade (2010: 121) writes that ‘the matter of authenticity is a terrain of struggle and negotiation, not a question of simple definition – just as one would expect of an important cultural value’. Just as what it means to be black in Brazil is not always derived from Africa and blackness is not constituted for everyone by a relationship to Africa (Wade, 2010), indigeneity is not only constructed around traditional indigenous ways of life or an upbringing in the village.

Educators who identify as indigenous and teach in urban contexts initiate the large majority of discussions about indigeneity and the indigenous struggle in educational contexts. As we have seen here and in Chapter 3, people who previously identified as white can arrive at black and indigenous identities through political awakening. Their work and the work of indigenous people who have migrated to the cities from rural aldeias have the potential to move such discussions from their marginal position to take on a more central role in ethnoroacial education. Whereas having been born and grown up in an indigenous village is important to Toni, Marize and Tukano are in favour of descendants and desaldeados claiming their indigeneity and see a rise in the number of indigenous people as a step towards indigenous empowerment. It is important to them to show non-indigenous educators and students that indigenous people in cities exist – even if they do not play into stereotyped ideas of what an indigenous person should look like, or how they should behave. These are questions that are negotiated between different indigenous people and groups, particularly those who understand indigeneity in terms of having grown up in an indigenous village and those to whom indigeneity is primarily based on ancestry. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on culture and history to constitute indigenous identity. However, as the stories of some of the members of AIAM show, maintaining indigenous heritage and traditions is not strictly tied to an upbringing in the village but is something that can be learnt. On the other hand, having indigenous ancestry is the central element of their indigeneity and the vantage point from which indigenous history and culture get explored,
studied and adopted further. Marize identifies as indigenous as her grandmothers were indigenous and according to her, her own grandson can claim indigeneity too.
5. No space for Exú

This chapter discusses the complicated relationship between followers of different religions – in particular Afro-Brazilian religions and Pentecostalism – and the way religion flares up as a topic in school and in the context of the implementation of Law 11.645/08. Whereas religious affiliation is often overlooked when studying race and ethnicity (Emerson & Korver-Glenn & Douds, 2015), Brazil being a very religious country suggests that religion affects a large part of people’s lives and needs to be taken into account when studying social change with regard to race and ethnicity. In 2010, when the last census took place in Brazil, 92% of the population declared a religious affiliation (IBGE, 2011). Furthermore, in Brazil, churches are among the social institutions that most enjoy the population’s trust. A study carried out by the polling company MDA, published in the Business Standard (2015) has shown that Brazilians trust their churches (43%) more than their government (2%), the military (19.2%) or the press (13.2%). Referring mainly but not exclusively to the US American context, Emerson, Korver-Glenn and Douds (2015: 354) lament that in race and ethnicity studies, religion has often been left out, and argue that the overlooking of deep connections across time between race and religion (and class) leads to a misunderstanding and misdiagnosis of today’s inequalities. This chapter starts by providing information about Protestant churches and Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazil, which will allow the reader to better understand the complicated relationship between these two. At the core of the chapter is a discussion of the way Pentecostal and more broadly Christian values structure the school environment and pupils’ lives and views, of how they shape the experiences of pupils who follow or are open to Afro-Brazilian religions, and of how they shape the way ethno-educational initiatives are put into practice. The chapter ends with a more general discussion about the relationship between black activism and Pentecostalism, questioning whether an anti-racist alliance would make sense despite severe cultural differences.

Religious intolerance has become an integral part of the conversation about anti-racism in Brazil. Although Catholics are still the majority in Brazil (64.6% in 2010, ibid.), it is impossible to overlook the conspicuous increase of evangelicals over the past thirty years (Machado, 2012) and mushrooming presence of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal
denominations, supported by rather aggressive Protestant proselytism. In fact, Pentecostal Christians are the fastest growing religious group in Brazil.¹ In the year 2010, the number of Pentecostal Christians reached 22.2 million, which is about seven times higher than it had been in 1980 (3.2 million followers; cf. Kramer, 2005). Compared to Pentecostalism, Candomblé and Umbanda, the biggest Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazil, have a very small number of followers (0.3% of the population declared themselves to be followers in 2010, IBGE, 2010). Hofbauer (2011: 66) argues, however, that many followers of Afro-Brazilian religions avoid revealing their religious affiliation and declare themselves as Catholic (which some of them are as well), in order to escape hostility and discrimination. Indigenous spirituality and cosmologies are not only threatened by the dispossession of indigenous lands but become victims of everyday prejudice and racism.

Nevertheless, as we will see, Evangelicals in Brazil also often see themselves confronted with religious intolerance. In 2015, students who took the national University entrance exam ENEM (Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio) had to write a text about religious intolerance, based on short examples about adolescents from various religious affiliations being discriminated against. This shows that the Education Ministry is aware of religious tensions in Brazilian society and sees it as the schools’ duty to broach this topic. However, its discourse constructs religious intolerance as a universal phenomenon, which equally affects followers of all religions. Whereas followers of all religions can become victims of verbal attacks, data show that followers of Afro-Brazilian religions are disproportionally affected by actions motivated by religious intolerance. The Ministry of Human Rights reported 800 cases of religious intolerance in the state of Rio de Janeiro that had come to its attention during the year 2017, of which 71.5% were crimes against people, buildings or objects representing Afro-Brazilian religions (Globo Comunicação e Participações S.A., 2018).

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I talked to various academics and school teachers who are in favour of Law 11.645/08, many of whom work on issues surrounding its implementation. Repeatedly, the steady growth of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal denominations, their increasing influence in national and regional politics, and their stance towards cultural pluralism were mentioned, often with an apprehensive facial expression. Even though there is a multitude of different Pentecostal churches that have diverse

¹ Compared to the previous census in 2000, the number of Catholics decreased by 9% and the number of followers of Afro-Brazilian religions remained about the same, whereas the number of Protestants increased by 6.8% (IBGE, 2010). In 2010, 60% of Protestants in Brazil were Pentecostals (Machado, 2012: 34).
approaches to how to live life, Pentecostal politicians and followers are widely known for their conservative attitudes towards different fields of social politics — such as LGBTQ rights, women’s rights or race-based affirmative action and the institutional support of Afro-Brazilian religions. The constant growth of Pentecostal denominations worries many social movement activists, who see Pentecostal adepts as spreading religious intolerance against Afro-Brazilian and indigenous religions, which can be understood as a clear point where religion and racial politics intersect (Selka, 2007: 82). Vial (2016) argues that: ‘Race and religion are conjoined twins. They are offspring of the modern world. Because they share a mutual genealogy, the category of religion is always already a racialized category, even when race is not explicitly under discussion’. According to the author, race and religion are two of the most important categories people use to organise their social worlds and create personal and collective identities and thus both need to be studied in the same framework (ibid.).

At my main field site (Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte, CENH) religion often flared up as a topic. On the one hand, Christian and Pentecostal God and church were omnipresent in conversations and speech patterns. On the other hand, a small number of black teachers openly criticised Pentecostal attitudes. Two teachers stood particularly out: Rita, the sociology teacher, and Isabela, the history teacher. Privately, and in front of their students, Rita and Isabela made derogatory comments about their students’ evangelical beliefs. Once, Rita shouted in front of her class that what they had written was ‘scary stuff’ because they believed the word of God over everything, and that they were being manipulated. At the same time, she insisted on organising a field trip to a Candomblé temple, which, although it also acts as a site of African and Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage, similar to a museum, Pentecostals usually see as merely a religious site and often perceive as a place of devil worship. As this chapter shows, on the opposite end of the spectrum from Rita and Isabela are those who fiercely argue that religion has to be kept out of school, but of whom many nonetheless reproduce an environment dominated by Christian culture.

**Pentecostalism and Candomblé – an intricate relationship**

In the following, I provide a historical overview of Protestant and Pentecostal churches, as well as Candomblé and Umbanda, leading to a discussion of the relationship
between Pentecostal churches and Afro-Brazilian religions. Looking at the complicated relationship between Pentecostalism and Afro-Brazilian religiosity sheds light on how the membership of these religions informs social relationships inside school and, more broadly, in Brazilian society. Even though in Brazil all Protestants are colloquially called crentes (or evangelicals; literally: believers), there are striking differences between the various Protestant and Pentecostal churches, with regard to their doctrine, spiritual approach and stance against racism. The same holds true for Afro-Brazilian religions; even though they are all influenced by African (most prominently Yoruba) mythology and often generically and pejoratively called macumba, their interpretations of rituals, spirituality or religious obligations, as well as their attitudes towards anti-racism vary significantly.

**The rapid rise of Pentecostalism**

Protestantism first arrived in Brazil together with a massive flow of European immigrants in the 19th century in the shape of the Anglican (in 1808), the Lutheran (in 1824), and later on from North America the Congregational (in 1855), the Presbyterian (in 1859) and the Methodist (in 1867) Churches (Kramer, 2005: 97; Coutinho & Golgher, 2014: 76). Until the 1950s, these ‘historical’ churches grew in membership and achieved middle-class status (Freston, 1993). However, today, Pentecostal churches attract significantly more adepts. Pentecostal churches arrived in Brazil somewhat later and their arrival can be divided in three waves, which each represent a characteristic doctrinal emphasis of Pentecostal Christianity (Freston, 1993: 67-69). Congregations that were founded during the years of the first wave (1910-1950) were traditionally known for promoting glossolalia, the charismatic gift of speaking in tongues. They tend to maintain an apolitical stance, in line with their strict dualism separating the profane world and the sacred (Freston, 1993: 68), a stance the biggest Pentecostal denomination (Assemblies of God),\(^2\) founded in 1911, broke with in 1986. The second wave of Pentecostal congregations (1950-1970) is associated with the churches’ role of divine healing as well as innovative (secular) techniques to evangelise the masses, such as radio and television. At the same time, some churches of the second wave started to get directly involved in politics. However, Pentecostal denominations that were established during the third wave (1970 onwards), usually known as neo-Pentecostal denominations, are the most contested ones because of their practices embedded in a

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\(^2\) From 1934 to 1964, the congregants of Assemblies of God in Brazil increased about twenty-three percent per year. In some years it grew almost fivefold (Stoll, 1990: 108).
discourse of spiritual warfare and their theology of prosperity, which promises instant wealth and health. Neo-Pentecostalism has attracted a significant number of Brazilians, especially in urban areas, and has thus experienced a remarkable increase in membership. What set neo-Pentecostal churches apart from ‘historical’ Protestant and Pentecostal churches is their use of business management techniques in running churches (Silva, 2007b), their rejection of traditional customs and their use of a range of familiar popular practices, including the use of elements of Afro-Brazilian religions, which figure as manifestations of the ‘devil’ (Lehmann, 1996: 137; Silva, 2007b; Selka, 2007: 100). Furthermore, neo-Pentecostal churches are usually more liberal on moral issues, such as vanity or pleasure and consumption, which also accounts for their rapid growth. There are less restrictions and prohibitions found than in traditional Pentecostal churches. The recognition of a neo-Pentecostal follower is less based on restrictive and disciplined behaviour – such as modesty or humbleness – than on individual happiness and success, the ability to consume and material prosperity (Dias, 2008: 100).

Although Brazil continues to be predominantly Catholic, Birman and Leite (2000) point out that the ‘mushrooming’ of a multitude of Pentecostal churches is the biggest threat to the Catholic Church. Although Catholicism was the official religion in Brazil until the end of the 19th century when the country was proclaimed a republic, the Catholic Church failed to incorporate effective and exclusive conversion to its doctrines. As Hoornaert (1985: 543) reminds us, during colonisation the Catholic Church was an agent of social control and called upon to create a general climate of agreement in favour of slavery: “The [Catholic] religious orders directed their activity above all at converting the Indians and, it might be said, transforming their way of life and work to fit in with the new priorities of the Portuguese colonizing state”. The proximity of mission settlements to centres of colonisation led to the cultural and physical destruction of significant proportions of the indigenous, African and Afro-Brazilian populations. Nevertheless, Birman and Leite (2002: 272) argue that rather

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3 The most prominent neo-Pentecostal church, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, is known for its ‘exorcism-Thursdays’, in which people frequently experience a possession by malevolent preternatural beings – often Afro-Brazilian deities – which the church congregation, rather than a spiritual authority, helps to expel.

4 An example is the exorcism ritual.

5 Even though there are varied stances towards different social issues to be found in Brazilian Pentecostalism, the vast majority of the churches have a conservative attitude towards LGBTQ and women’s rights and decisively condemn homosexuality as well as abortion.
than fully eliminating non-Christian values and practices, to a certain extent colonial Catholicism was pressured into adjusting to local beliefs and practices.\textsuperscript{6}

By contrast, Pentecostal churches have always demanded the exclusive devotion of their members. The spiritual work of Pentecostal denominations circles around the battle against all evil, manifested through the devil and his works. This can simultaneously be equated with a secular battle against social evil and all forms of urban violence, phenomena the Catholic Church does not seem to be able to provide an equally straightforward answer to. The Catholic Church tends to see social inequality at the root of urban violence, rather than the devil, and is thus perceived as refusing to use its divine and saintly powers to fight evil (ibid.: 274). Other than the Catholic Church, Pentecostal denominations have mastered the conversion of a significant amount of people by using mass media, such as radio and TV.\textsuperscript{7}

Coutinho and Golgher (2014: 74) also mention the search for spiritual comfort and financial assistance as well as for social capital, which Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches may attend to more effectively than other denominations. Machado (2012) points out their use of political elements of social movement agendas, the approximation of religious leaders and political parties, the increasing presence of religious leaders at legislature (cf. Freston, 1993), and the formation of social partnerships with government agencies. The majority of followers are of African descent (Burdick, 1999: 110; Prandi in Selka, 2007: 42) and poor. Looking at the socio-demographic profile of the congregants of two prominent and widespread Pentecostal churches in Brazil – Assembly of God and Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – it is quite striking that they are among the poorest and least educated people with the darkest skin colour. They are more likely to work as domestic workers or in other low-wage sectors than the average for the Brazilian population (Kramer, 2005: 99).

Compared to followers of evangelical churches, the socio-demographic background of those who practice Umbanda or Candomblé is very different: 51.9\% of these followers

\textsuperscript{6} A popular example is the Celebration of the Lord of Bonfim (Lavagem do Bonfim), which continues to be a symbol of religious syncretism (Roca, 2005). It takes place every second Thursday in January in and around one of the most famous Catholic churches in the North-eastern city Salvador, the Basilica Senhor Bom Jesus do Bonfim. Before the abolition of slavery in 1888, the church used to be washed by enslaved people in order to prepare for Catholic festivities. After abolition, the preparation and cleaning of the church continued, but transformed into a ritual to praise Oxalá, a main deity of Candomblé. Even though the Archdiocese had prohibited the Celebration of the Lord of Bonfim for sixty years, it continues to be one of the main popular festivities of the city and demonstrates the continuous acceptance of religious syncretism by the Catholic Church (Birman & Leite, 2000: 273).

\textsuperscript{7} The neo-Pentecostal Church Universal Church of the Kingdom of God particularly stands out: In the 1980s, it acquired the 5\textsuperscript{th} largest television and radio network for $45 million USD, apart from organising street demonstrations and stadium rallies.
identify as *pardo* or *preto* and 47.1% as white, while only 0.8% are illiterates and, of the 73.7% followers in employment, only 2.1% work as domestic workers (IBGE, 2010).

**Candomblé – religion and cultural memory**

Candomblé is widely known for its African influenced origins, heavy drum rhythms and chanting, spirit possessions, blood sacrifices to orishas\(^8\) and the use of white garments, symbolising peace as well as the orisha Oxalá. While many Christians regard Candomblé simply as a religion, at least since the 1980s black activists and scholars have often referred to its historic and cultural relevance in relation to black identity and political struggle during the colonial and post-colonial period (Bastide, 1985; Harding, 2000; Capone, 2004; Selka, 2007). Selka (2007) identifies the practice of African-derived religion during slavery, which had to be masked as Catholic worship, as crucial for the maintenance of African ethnic identities and the resistance against European cultural domination. African religious beliefs and practices resisted and persevered during slavery, despite the Christian catechesis and their disqualification as superstition, folklore, witchcraft and the work of the devil. They developed into a significant form of cultural, social and religious resistance that kept alive African ethnic identities (Silva, 2010; Lima & Alves, 2015). Although Candomblé developed based on the experiences, rituals and myths of deities that were originally cultivated in Africa, it has historically, socially and culturally been determined by the Portuguese colonial system, slavery and continuous white hegemony: ‘It formed as a reserve of memory, of supposedly African relationships and ties, but at the same time of aspects created during colonisation, slavery, abolition, as well as cultural and religious syncretism, and the experience of race, racism and racial inequalities’ (Lima & Alves, 2015: 586). Rather than solely being places of spiritual worship, Candomblé temples can be understood as memorial places, which preserve the history of African and Afro-Brazilian resistance during colonial times and after. Thus, Candomblé cannot simply be understood as a religious system, but much more as a space in which Africans and their descendants have been finding refuge and solidarity (Lima & Alves, 2015: 592). It has developed into a pool in which African-derived memories, traditions, language and social relations that developed during colonisation, slavery and after abolition are kept alive (Lima & Alves, 2013).

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\(^8\) Orishas are deities of the Yoruba people who originated in the Southwest of Nigeria. In Brazil, they have been at the centre of Candomblé and an essential part of Umbanda.
Even though Candomblé practice is usually not political per se and there are no officialised links between black movement organisations and Candomblé terreiros (temples), many activists who combat racism or explore their own racial identity foster ties with Candomblé leaders. According to Harding (2000: 38), before and after the abolition of slavery in 1888, the ‘development of Candomblé as a formalized religion in nineteenth-century Bahia was in many ways correlative to the formation of a nuanced, multi-textured, Afro-Brazilian collectivity’ (cf. Selka, 2007). In the 1970s and 1980s, Candomblé temples gained significance as centres of ethnic affirmation and community solidarity for the black consciousness movement in Salvador; the biggest city in the impoverished Northeast, and the city with the highest amount of Afro-Brazilians in the country. Many black activists regarded African-derived religion as a basis for a shared ‘ethnoreligious and socio-political identity’ (Selka, 2007: 12). For many, the Afro-Brazilian community in Salvador has been setting the tone of what it means to be Afro-Brazilian, culturally speaking, and the city itself continues to act as a Mecca for many black activists and Candomblé followers from all over Brazil. Towards the end of the dictatorship, in the second half of the 20th century, Candomblé became increasingly accepted by the state and absorbed into popular culture, particularly in Bahia but also in other parts of the country (ibid.; cf. Matory, 2005). Even though only a small proportion of Afro-Brazilians are initiated in the religion of Candomblé, to many Black people it represents their African heritage based on the history of African resistance during colonisation and slavery.

Umbanda and Candomblé are often grouped together as religions of African origin (*de matriz africana*), e.g. in the official census, but their history and lived experience are very distinct. Umbanda is often referred to as the Brazilian religion ‘par excellence’, as it combines elements of Catholicism, Candomblé and Spiritism (Prandi, 1997: 3). When

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9 Even though Candomblé is often referred to as a symbol of political blackness, it is necessary to note that there are various differences and tensions between different temples and traditions (Selka, 2007: 73).

10 Even though, due to its history, Candomblé is often associated with blackness, it has been accumulating non-black followers for a long time. Initially, white elites were welcomed with open arms in order to gain official legitimation and protection (Reis in Lima & Alves, 2015). However, it was not until the 1960s that Candomblé expanded in urban areas and turned into a religion for everyone, independent of ethnic background, social class, gender or life style (Silva & Amaral, 1996). There seem to be instances in which white and often wealthy followers are being accepted because the money they bring is crucial for the survival of the temple (cf. Lima & Alves, 2015).

11 There is terreiro (temple) tourism, especially in Bahia; a central small lake in Salvador was decorated with human-sized statues representing some of the orishas; offerings to orishas are made on New Year’s Eve, carnival and other festivities throughout the country and non-followers often seek counselling at terreiros.

12 Scharf da Silva (2017: 34) notes that Umbanda is usually classified as Afro-Brazilian religion. However, it is likely that it had also been crucially influenced by indigenous religiosity. Indigenous influence and life in the urban context in Brazil have not been studied thoroughly enough yet.
Kardecist Spiritism\(^{13}\) arrived in Brazil in the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century, it initially attracted mainly white middle class Brazilians, but the number of poor and black followers increased rapidly and brought Afro-Brazilian religious influences with it. However, followers of European Kardecism rejected the presence of supposedly inferior spirits, such as *caboclos* (indigenous spirits) or messengers to the orishas, which gave way to the first Umbanda centre, founded in the 1920s in Rio de Janeiro,\(^ {14}\) from where Umbanda spread rapidly towards São Paulo and the rest of the country. What followed was the ‘cleansing’ (Prandi, 1998: 156) of the religion’s most controversial elements, such as blood sacrifice or complex initiation rituals, while following the Catholic liturgical calendar, keeping rhythms and dances similar to those of Candomblé as well as some orishas, *caboclos*, *pretos velhos* (spirits of enslaved Africans), *exus* (spiritual entities; not to be confused with one of the most notorious orishas, Exú, in Candomblé) and *pombagiras* (like a feminine version of exu), some of which were already known from traditional Candomblé *terreiros* in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Similarly to Candomblé, in Umbanda people are supposed to enjoy their lives, have fun and strive for worldly fulfilment. Social mobility is regarded as an important goal and, most importantly, through ritual sacrifices, as open to everyone, independent of their socio-economic status or race (ibid.: 157).

**Being a follower of Candomblé or Umbanda among Christians**

Twenty years ago, Burdick (1998) noted that the growing popularity of Pentecostalism was a significant concern to black movement activists as its verbal attacks on Afro-Brazilian religiousness paved the way to an increasing number of physical attacks on Candomblé temples. Almost ten years later, Selka (2007) opened his book *Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia, Brazil* by posing the question of whether a holy war was raging Brazil. He referred to news reports of evangelical Christians attacking Candomblé *terreiros*, acts that are often interpreted as racism, since much discourse on Afro-Brazilian identity centres on Candomblé (Harding, 2000; Selka, 2005; 2007).

Rather than brushing Afro-Brazilian religions and spirits aside as folklore or ignorance, Pentecostalism acknowledges these deities’ existence, but asserts that they are demonic

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\(^{13}\) Allan Kardec (1804-1869), born Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, was a French intellectual. He was born Roman Catholic, but later turned to Spiritism. Based on information he received by spirits, Kardec wrote several influential books on Spiritism. His doctrine arrived in Brazil in the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century, where Spiritism today is the third biggest religious group (2% of the population in 2010) and the religious group with the highest income and educational level (IBGE, 2012a).

\(^{14}\) Rio de Janeiro continues to have the highest concentration of Spiritists.
supernatural entities, which are responsible for a large proportion of the evil in the world. Despite the use of certain elements that stem from Afro-Brazilian religions into the Pentecostal liturgy (cf. Kramer 2005; Selka, 2005), Afro-Brazilian religions are regarded as offering space to the devil to manifest itself through their deities and spirits. Evangelicals regularly become possessed by Candomblé spirits and thus position the demonization of Candomblé at the centre of their process of defining evangelical identity (Selka, 2007: 100). The Christian demon goes through the process of what Silva (2012b: 1109) calls ‘orishalisation’ – taking the shape of an orisha, a process that is characteristic of Brazilian cultural hybridisation. The two main weapons against evil used by (neo-)Pentecostal churches are rituals of exorcism and the word of God. Rather than protecting themselves from evil, they aspire to expel evil from the world. Since neo-Pentecostal churches see it as their mission to eradicate all manifestations of the devil and all evil in the world, they condemn Catholicism for lacking engagement in this battle. As mentioned above, Pentecostal denominations often regard poverty, crime and urban violence as the works of the devil. Their spiritual war can be translated to a more secular battle against social problems. Birman & Leite (2000: 279) note that Pentecostals often believe that drug traffickers must enjoy special protection from demonic spirits in order to be able to resist police and the state; hence leaders of possession religions such as Candomblé are assumed to be complicit with drug traffickers and responsible for the violence surrounding drug conflicts. Even though Afro-Brazilian religions were also demonised in earlier stages of the Pentecostal movement – specifically in the context of the cure, which entails the act of blessing the sick to show that God prevails over the evil that is generally associated with Umbanda and Candomblé (Rolim, 1990: 49) – followers were not urged to disrupt Afro-Brazilian rituals or vandalise Candomblé terreiros, in contrast to neo-Pentecostal churches, which more or less subtly encourage their followers to do this.

Some of the followers of Afro-Brazilian religions tend to hide their religiosity out of fear. One of the teachers I met in a teacher education class, once said during class, with her eyes tearing up:

*My son, in his school they are forcing Easter on him,* and the teacher says in front of everyone that his religion sucks because they kill animals. My son

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15 Such as the manifestation of ‘evil’ Afro-Brazilian spirits during service
16 Discussions about the justification of Christian holiday school celebrations and the need for their abandonment were recurrent in Luiz’s teacher education class. Some argued that they should be upheld as long as other religious holidays were
is Afro-descendant, my husband is Black. So, this makes me really emotional. He is a teenager and in school it was easy for him to hide it [his affiliation to Candomblé] as a kid, but now he would never hide it because he listens to me talk about the struggle and he is proud.

On the day that the school had the Afro-Brazilian activist and teacher Júlio and the indigenous activist and teacher Marize give speeches about the importance of Law 11.645/08, their cultural beliefs and their experiences with racism, a sixteen-year old student approached Júlio. Sofia, in my view a light skinned girl with very long wavy dark hair, had heard Júlio talk about the black movement, his praise of black hair and, most importantly, his attacks on the bancada evangélica (evangelical fraction).\(^{17}\) The latter part of his speech elicited partly astonished and partly uncomfortable looks between the teachers of whom a few were briefly looking at each other. Such a public critique of evangelical ideas was not often witnessed at CENH. Sofia felt encouraged to open up to Júlio about her religious affiliation with an Umbanda temple, something no one else in school knew about. A few days after Júlio and Marize’s visit, Sofia asked me for Júlio’s Facebook details and told me more about her decision not to tell anyone in school about her religion. We sat down in a quiet corner in the yard and, while Sofia gave me permission to record our conversation, I had to promise to her that I would not speak to anyone in school about her secret. Even though I had been at the high school for ten months, Sofia was the only student I knew about that attended an Umbanda or Candomblé temple. Nevertheless, she suspected that there would be more students who follow Afro-Brazilian religions, without knowing of any:

_There are more. But they’re like me. They’re quiet, because it is a really heavy religion, you cannot [tell], you will be judged. They will say to me that I’m a Spiritist\(^{18}\) and thus they’ll call me macumbeira,\(^{19}\) that I am doing harm, ah you’re a macumbeira, and so on. But it isn’t like that! Ah, [they say], you will dance in circles, catch demons, so therefore it is [bad]. This is why we don’t talk about it. But there are many people. I think there are a_
lot of people, right? [it’s] curiosity... Here in school I don’t know of anyone, I can’t name anyone.

The girl assumed that in order to avoid judgemental and discriminatory comments, other students were hiding their Afro-Brazilian religiosity too. Sofia had already been struggling with the negative reactions and the disapprobation she experienced in her private life. When she decided to follow the invitation of one of her class mates from her previous school to attend an Umbanda temple, she was accompanied by her mother. When her father, a devoted Pentecostal Christian, found out about it, he could not believe that his own wife and daughter had chosen to turn their backs on the church. Although her father was able to forgive his wife, he had been living under the same roof without talking to Sofia anymore, which had created a very stressful environment for her. Sometimes her father played evangelical music and she would feel very uncomfortable. She knows that at church he prays for her soul: ‘It is very difficult to live in the same house and not being able to talk, and he knows where I go on Sundays, so this is even more annoying, because I head into one direction and he goes to church. He is like that; he puts my name into his prayers, so it keeps being complicated’. When I asked about Júlio and Marize’s speeches, Sofia said that to her they were ‘fundamental’ and that she enjoyed them a lot, as what they were talking about ‘is a part of her’ as well (‘Eu gostei também porque faz parte de mim’). She told me: ‘But a lot of the people didn’t like it. Let’s be honest. Many of them did not pay attention, many didn’t like it’. I asked her why they did not like it and she continued:

Because like I said, it was about religion. Nowadays in Brazil it is like this, in Brazil and anywhere else, religion will always be a problem. Independently of your being Spiritist, Catholic, Protestant, or whatever else, they will always argue with you. If you, let’s say you’re one thing, they will curse you, they will tell you that you’re doing the wrong thing and so on. So, when she [Marize] demonstrated her culture, put on the clothes and sang, many didn’t like it. Let’s be honest, isn’t it, a lot of the people got scared, like they get scared about Spiritism. [...] It is my opinion, but I think when something different appears, different from what we, from what the people are used to see, they’ll feel like that. They’re not used to seeing an Indian woman. They’re not used to seeing a person dressed all in white. They’re used to seeing a person with a bible in their hand, walking around and praying, only that. They’re not even used to the Jehovah’s Witnesses, they curse them and all.
Even though Sofia sees a degree of religious intolerance among followers of any religion, she particularly hints at the cultural dominance of Protestantism and the discomfort her peers might feel when experiencing cultural manifestations that deviate from what they perceive as the Christian norm. Teachers from other schools in the region recounted incidents that had happened inside their schools, in which neo-Pentecostal teachers boycotted public displays of Afro-Brazilian musicality, rhythms that are often associated with Afro-Brazilian religiousness. During a school project called ‘Africanities’ (Africanidades) in a public high school in Duque de Caxias in the Baixada Fluminense, not far from CENH, which involved the visit and performance of a group of axé20 and Afro-dance dancers, neo-Pentecostal teachers reportedly attempted to reject the project. Pentecostal students were asked to remain absent from school during the days the project took place, biblical damnation was threatened upon those who took part, and the dance performance was met with scornful laughter, offensive jokes and slogans, such as ‘Here come the macumbeiros (witchdoctors)!’ (Santos, 2015: 164, 165).

At Colégio Pedro II, students reported that their teachers are usually not very outspoken about religion. Given the socio-cultural background of the staff and the students – the majority being white and from middle class families – the religious set-up was very different from the one at CENH where the majority of students are not white and from working class families. Most teachers I worked with were atheists and the majority of students I talked to about religion were Catholic, with a few Protestant and Pentecostal, as well as Buddhist exceptions. During my time at CPII I did not learn about any students who were followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, which might mean that there were hardly any or that they were not comfortable sharing this information with me. Once I witnessed a history teacher talk about religious intolerance in his class. He asked whether any of his students could provide an example of intolerant discourse but went on to answer his question himself and said that there was a lot of intolerance to be found in the field of religion, particularly against Afro-Brazilian religions. A student raised her hand and then replied that the same was true for Christians; when she had told someone that she was Christian they asked her whether she was Catholic or Protestant and when she responded the latter, the other

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20 Axé is a term frequently used in Salvador, Bahia, which can be roughly translated to positive, powerful and creative energy. It derived from the Yoruba word asé, which is a creative energy that ancestral spirits share with human beings. In Candomblé rituals, axé is produced through music and dance. Over time rhythms that were exclusively played in Candomblé temples, entered Brazilian popular culture, producing axé as an independent Afro-Brazilian popular music style (Henry, 2008).
person said that this was even worse. José, the teacher, agreed that this was another example of religious intolerance but tried to make the point that intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions was often tied to physical attacks and closely connected to racism. After the girl had responded that her church had nothing against people with other religious backgrounds, José quickly changed the topic. Other teachers at CPII, who had organised events that involved Afro-Brazilian dance, art and music, however, told me that certain teachers deliberately refused to release their students from class so they could not attend and that a group of Pentecostal teachers had prayed to protect themselves from evil spirits while the dancers were in school. These incidents show that while there seems to be a desire to discuss religion and religious conflict in school, the school itself does not feel a duty to address these topics as a whole.

**Claiming the Truth**

In 2006, a study carried out by the US-American Pew Research Center (2006: 153) found that 51% of Brazilians rate their religion as more important than their nationality, continent or ethnic group. 80% of Pentecostals indicate that religion is the primary source for their identity (29% higher than for the average). Rather than simply occupying someone’s free time, the importance of Pentecostal churches in some of the students’ and staff’s lives can position the knowledge school teaches (or in the case of Law 11.645/08, is supposed to teach) in direct competition to the knowledge church teaches. Oliveira and Rodrigues (2015) note that in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the traditionally neo-Pentecostal view of a battle between the worldly and the sacred has entered schools in the form of neo-Pentecostal students and teachers who exclusively believe in the bible as the source of truth and mistrust scientific knowledge. Looking for the exact words or rephrasing what their pastor had said/taught them was a recurrent reaction in school when I asked students who were part of Pentecostal churches about their opinions on matters related to the creation of the world, social and racial inequality, sexuality, women’s rights or lifestyle choices. David, one of the darkest-skinned students in school, who identifies as Black, constantly referred to the bible when talking to me. He aspires to be a historian. Previously, David went to a private school. However, when his parents could no longer afford to pay for school he started attending public school. It is no coincidence that David chose Colégio Estadual Novos Horizontes, since his family had known Principal Laura for a while, as she used to attend the
same (Pentecostal) church, Igreja Cristã Nova Vida (New Life Pentecostal Church). When I asked him about CENH and whether he was happy with how the school was being led by Laura, he told me that ‘Laura manages the school very well, also because she is Christian. The food served here is good, there is no corruption here’. Hence, according to David, Laura’s religious denomination automatically implied her being immune to corruption and being an efficient leader. David explained further:

Protestantism is the only religion. No other [religion] is as just, as right as the Christian one. If the guy says, ‘Ah, I am a Spiritist’, the person already does not pass [as a morally good person], it is different. Other religions always have something that they don’t comply with. Jesus will come back. Christians are differentiated people. It is not the best religion, it is the only religion. Other religions can be misinterpreted. [Other people] have religion but they don’t live religion. But the Christian lives religion. He doesn’t merely understand it as religion, but he lives it.

In David’s view, Protestantism is the only true religion and the only one that allows people to truly lead moral and good lives. If someone tells David that they follow Spiritism – let alone Candomblé or Umbanda – in his opinion this person is lacking morals and in danger of losing their ways, as religious denominations other than Protestantism do not hold the same moral standards. Furthermore, the way David describes it, following other religions might be an erroneous choice, which does not easily happen to Protestants, as their religion is more than just a choice, or in fact not a choice at all – it encompasses the entirety of their lives.

This vision is reflected in the following account of two girls who have been chosen by the Christian God. Two sixteen-year-old girls I spent a lot of time with, Carolina and Cecília, who both identify as black, experienced an incident at the bakery next to the high school one afternoon. Cecília and Carolina had previously been attending Pentecostal churches, but stopped going at some point to dedicate themselves to more ‘worldly’ pleasures, such as going to night clubs and going out with guys. When Cecília went into the bakery to buy something, Carolina and I tried to find some relief from the sun under the tree opposite the bakery while waiting for her. It was an incredibly hot and humid day. A few minutes later, Cecília came running back, talking and gasping hysterically. The reason for her demeanour was that the vendor of the bakery had suddenly said to her that she was a servant of the Lord (levita do Senhor) and that this meant that she had to go back to church. What Cecilia
told us did not make any sense to me at first, but after she had calmed down the girls explained to me that this was a call from God who had spoken through the employee of the bakery, telling Cecília not to turn her back on God or the church any longer. The two girls then talked about their duty to go back to attending and being part of the church. I asked Carolina about Cecília’s call from God, and whether she was called to go back to a Protestant church or whether a Catholic church would serve as well. Even though the denomination was not part of the calling, it was clear to Carolina that it had to be a Protestant church: ‘If we think about it, the only church that has most to say about the Lord and about his love, and that doesn’t say contradictory things about the scriptures [of the Bible], is the Christian one’.

Even though David and Carolina both generically refer to Christian/Protestant churches, it is clear from their choice of churches that they feel most drawn to evangelical denominations. Both believe that Christian (particularly Pentecostal) denominations are the sole fully valid religion and the only path to truly follow God’s will. The church David goes to, Igreja Cristã Nova Vida, stresses the importance of being faithful to historical knowledge and practices with regard to Christianity, and criticises ‘society’s prejudice against the past’ and the current ‘fascination with progress’. Therefore, his church is committed to ‘cultivating a historic consciousness in order for the church’s identity and vocation to safely survive in a society that increasingly ignores its origin and therefore lives unsatisfied with the past, but also the present and even the future’ (Igreja Cristã Nova Vida, 2016). This is meant as a commitment to spiritual liberation through the conservation of historical ecumenical practices, such as exercising discipline, the proclamation of the word of God, traditional catechesis or the constant remembering of and reference to Christ. In 1968, McAlister, the Canadian founder of the church Igreja Cristã Nova Vida, published a book about the former mães-de-santo Georgina Aragão dos Santos Franco, who was born into a Bahian family and was initiated in Candomblé, but later attended McAlister’s church and subsequently converted to Christianity. In his book, McAlister clearly identifies Afro-Brazilian deities as demons, shows the path to salvation in the form of the liberation by Christ and the expulsion of the demons. Another function of the book is to describe the origins of ‘Spiritism’ in Brazil and provide Bible passages that clearly justify its condemnation (Silva, 2007a: 197). As mentioned before, David is fascinated by history and always tries to find historic

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21 In Candomblé Ketu (referring to the Ketu-region in Benin) and Umbanda, mães-de-santo (literally mother of the saints) are the priestesses and leaders of a temple (terreiro).
explanations for the status quo of society and human life. He manages to mix knowledge based on science with his own interpretations of certain passages of the bible. On the field trip to the Historical and Archaeological Trail for the Celebration of the African Heritage (Circuito Histórico e Arqueológico da Celebração da Herança Africana) I had heard David talk enthusiastically about abolition and Princess Isabel’s contribution to it, and when I had an opportunity I asked him about his understanding of race relations and whether black and white people were understood to be equal in his church. He explained to me:

This question goes further back. When you talk about something that is ethnicity, then there is also the part of Judaism, that I am not sure whether I can talk about it correctly. But within it, there are promises that have concretised, as in ‘I will give you my name’. These promises applied to Christians as well as the white part of society, which followed the values that are being preached within Judaism and Christianity. Like this thing of the eight days of age of the child in Judaism, among other values. And one of these values is also to be a good servant of the Lord. Israel’s enemies, or enemies of Judaism, because they were against them [these values], they were cursed, both spiritually and socially. So these enemies of the Israeli people, that are located between Egypt and Lebanon, when you look at Africa it is a cursed and very rough continent. Everybody talking about ethnicity, their social way of life, totally behind. Not that they’re less human, but it is a continent that is totally behind. The GDP isn’t even one percent of that of the white countries; white people aren’t racist, just because they developed! Black people got this curse, because their father was against the Jew, they chose this option to be against, you can look at Israel, Jewish people are white. But you can see that Israel isn’t that big, so you see that it is all countries that followed [Judaism]. And the enemies aren’t [wealthy] not because God segregated, but because they’re the people that did not follow. The most developed countries are the Scandinavian countries, that have a Protestant majority, like the USA, you see, also, I think sixty-four percent of the population is Protestant and part of them fled religious persecution in England. [...] Africa is a continent that industrialisation has not reached, but the Europeans developed on their own, I am telling the truth. (He went on to quote a Bible passage to support his argument).

David’s explanation reflects the view that black and white people are at different ends of a hierarchy, which is not necessarily based on intellectual capacity but on spiritual

22 In 1888, Princess Isabel signed the ‘Golden Law’ (Lei Áurea), which formally abolished slavery in Brazil.
superiority that is connected to economic well-being. He centres his narrative on what seems to be a version of the myth of the curse of Ham (which we have already come across in Chapter 3) and on further curses black people supposedly suffer from. Equating the right spiritual choices with ‘economic development’ by making a correlation between the wealth of Scandinavian countries and the United States and their populations’ religious commitment, speaks to Protestant prosperity theology. Devotion to (the right, or the only) God is rewarded with material and immaterial wealth. David clearly states that wealth and immaterial well-being come from having the right morals and the right way of life. On the one hand, it is Christianity that provides these values, on the other hand it is the European per se who holds a monopoly on knowledge and truth. The only way for the ‘black man to achieve salvation’ seems to be by his approximation to Christianity. In other words, Afro-Brazilians do not have the right to their own cosmological explanations of the world, free from being judged by Christian standards. At the same time, between the church and school, neither David nor other Christian students get exposed to narratives that contradict their Pentecostal understanding of Afro-Brazilian religiosity. Christian churches directly condemn racism (by which people frequently mean openly racist practices, which are criminalised by law), but these churches, especially those of the Pentecostal variety, also produce and reproduce discourses that reinforce the superiority of Christianity and European knowledge and condemn African spirituality and morality, and these values are promoted by people within these churches who spread the Christian word.

Religion, history or cultural heritage?

On the morning of a rainy and slightly chilly day that was characteristic of the month of March, I arrived at Colégio Estadual Novos Horizontes (CENH) and Roberto, the school’s cultural promoter, asked me to step into the computer lab, which had long since

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23 The position of the cultural promoter (animador cultural) emerged in the 1980s when Leonel Brizola, then governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro (Democratic Labour Party, PDT), and vice-governor and anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (PDT) established all-day schools called Centros Integrados de Educação Pública (CIEPs, Integrated Public Education Centres). They were predominantly located in poor areas with high illiteracy rates and offered cultural and physical activities as well as meals and medical care on top of the regular curriculum. The intention of the CIEPs was to provide a pedagogical response to the situation of disadvantaged youth by ‘incorporating the students’ universe into school, respecting their language and the cultural characteristics produced by the environment they live in, in order for the institutional routine to gain meaning and for the pedagogical experiences to resonate beyond the space of the school’ (Secretaria de Estado de Educação do Rio de Janeiro, 1991: 62). The position of the cultural promoter was created to facilitate the exchange between the school and the community it is located in, while promoting the pedagogical-political project of the school (Esteves et al., 2005). An important aspect was to bring the community to life inside school and integrate it into the school routine in the form of
abandoned its initial purpose and now served as his office. Over the previous months, I had been to his office many times to talk about his involvement in the famous Samba school Beija Flor, located in the Baixada Fluminense; to get a lesson on the Brazilian political system; to borrow DVDs about Afro-Brazilian history; or to listen to anecdotes from his time at the high school. A dozen computers were standing around, collecting dust as there was no one in school who knew how to use their Linux operating system. When we entered the room, the sociology teacher Rita was already inside, sitting on a chair, sipping her coffee and waiting for us. Neither Roberto nor Rita spent much time in the teachers’ room. Roberto did not come to school more than twice a week. He usually worked in his office and only came out for lunch. Rita was known for spending most of the breaks in her class room, talking to students or reading the newspaper. Nevertheless, their constant teasing of each other and their superfluous little arguments reminded me of an ‘old married couple’ and created an air of intimacy between them. Both Roberto and Rita are in their mid-fifties and have worked at the school for over fifteen years. I would describe Rita as light skinned and having very short wavy hair, dyed red. Roberto has darker skin and always shaves his head. Both refer to themselves as Black, but Roberto was much more outspoken about issues concerning Afro-Brazilians when talking to me. Neither of them is initiated in Candomblé, however, I did not ask them about any other religious affiliation. The reason for the surprise meeting that morning was that for quite some time their suggested field trip to one of the traditional and famous Candomblé terreiros in the Baixada Fluminense had been rejected by Principal Laura. She was against the idea, simply arguing that religion had to be kept outside of school. Rita and Roberto, on the other hand, argued that the primary point of interest was in fact the adjoining centre for the documentation and research about Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage, managed by the same people who are responsible for the terreiro. Nevertheless, both of them insisted that Afro-Brazilian religion and spirituality were as much part of Brazil’s history as slavery, which students usually learn about in their history class. Especially Rita had for many months been talking about the field trip to the Candomblé terreiro Ilé Omiojùàrò, led by the well-known black activist and mãe-de-santo Mãe Beata de lemanjá, which is located in Nova Iguacu, one of the biggest municipalities in the region. I recalled the

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24 On May 27th, 2017, Mãe Beata passed away and the students of CENH have still not been to her terreiro.
morning in October, 2015, one of the few occasions I had spotted Rita in the teachers’ room. She had burst into the room, taking a newspaper out of her handbag and dropping it on the table in front of me. In it was an article about Mãe Beata’s terreiro Ilé Omiojúàrò receiving the prestigious National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute’s (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, IPHAN) prize ‘Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade’, which recognises ‘efforts to preserve the Brazilian cultural patrimony’. On their web page, IPHAN justify the decision in the following way: ‘Cultural manifestations of African origin are fundamental to understand Brazilian history. The diaspora of African slaves brought with it an enormous cultural charge. In order to keep this memory and protect these forms of expression, the traditional community of the terreiro Ilé Omiojúàrò in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu (RJ), promotes acts of preservation of African derived knowledge and values through their project Ilé Omiojúàrò: Cultural Patrimony’ (IPHAN, 2015). Rita had seemed profoundly excited about reading in black and white about the temple’s cultural and historical value being publicly recognised. The other teachers in the room, all sitting around the same big table, on the other hand, had not shown any reaction at all to Rita or the article. Shortly after, Ana the school inspector (inspetor dos alunos), had come in to send the teachers to their classrooms.

Since Laura had voiced repeated discontent with the work Roberto had been doing in school, and it had been an open secret that she did not get along too well with Rita, the two teachers chose me to try to convince her about the temple visit one last time. Principal Laura was generally known for her support for extracurricular activities and for having involved me in the school-wide project on African and Afro-Brazilian history, so the three of us hoped she would reconsider. When I suggested to Laura that we could accompany Rita and Roberto to their first meeting with a representative of the Candomblé temple to explore further options for the teachers and students, she responded that there could never be a ‘religious fieldtrip’ under her supervision and asked me what she was supposed to tell the parents. She also told me that in her opinion Rita had not been able to write a project proposal that was clear enough for her to understand what she wanted to achieve with this terreiro visit. I was surprised to learn that Rita had written a project proposal in the first place, as to my

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25 In Brazilian schools, the so-called inspector is responsible for the avoidance of conflicts and the solving of instant problems of the student body. Usually, inspectors know most students and teachers by name. Ana also monitored teachers’ arrival and break times as well as students’ school uniforms. Laura felt annoyed and distracted by the rigour Ana put into her work: She repeatedly complained about Ana disturbing her with ‘absurd’ problems, such as a student’s outfit deviating from the public school uniform.
knowledge Principal Laura had never asked any teacher involved in other fieldtrips to present a project proposal to her.

It is unclear whether Laura felt personally uncomfortable imagining herself setting foot in a Candomblé temple, or whether her main concern was indeed the parents. At CENH, it is publicly known that the entire leadership and a good proportion of the teachers are evangelical. The school does not survey anyone’s religious confession, or the lack thereof, and even though crentes may not be the majority, everyday life in school can feel like they are. Catholics and atheists are usually less outspoken about their ideas related to religion (cf. Oliveira & Rodrigues, 2015: 34), which provides a stage for evangelicals who often see it as their duty to convince others of their church’s spiritual and worldly benefits. I cannot think of one day at CENH in which God or church were not mentioned (‘tonight I’ve got band practice at church’; ‘let me tell you about last night at church...’; etc.). God and church were not only present in everyday dialogues but language as well (e.g.: ‘God willing’ (se Deus quiser); ‘may God be with you’ (vá com Deus); ‘everything is possible when you believe in God’ (tudo é possível com fé em Deus)). These phrases have been long-established in Portuguese language and arguably lost their exclusively religious connotation. Teachers in Luiz’s class however, felt equally uncomfortable with their usage as with the celebration of Easter in schools.26 Repeatedly, I received invitations to accompany students to their church’s events. Many of them attended service several times a week, which appeared not only to be of spiritual value, but a popular free time activity and an opportunity to see friends and family. For some students, the desire to share their relationship with God went beyond affectionate invitations. Repeatedly, students warned me about the risk of ending up in hell, should I not work on my relationship with God.

Although God and religion were recurrent topics among the staff, they were usually not as interested in my religiosity. The only time I was directly asked whether I was Catholic was at lunch with Laura, the Pentecostal principal, Sérgio, the Portuguese-language teacher, a white, European-looking Catholic, and Mereille, the pedagogical coordinator (coordenadora pedagógica), a white, European-looking Pentecostal Christian in her late forties. Mereille had only been working at the school for a few months, but was one of Laura’s close friends outside school. When I responded that I had no religious confession, Mereille, who was the one who had asked me about it, gave me an agonised look. She went

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26 Whereas in Bahia, many Yoruba terms commonly used in Candomblé have entered every language, the same is not true for Rio de Janeiro.
on to inquire about how I would raise my children, adding her assumption that, however, I would raise them evangelically. According to Mereille, letting children choose their own religion was ethically correct, as long as they were raised Christian first, after which they could possibly choose another religious affiliation later on. Sérgio gently questioned her statement for a moment, while Laura listened quietly. As the pedagogical coordinator (coordenadora pedagógica), Mereille’s job is to articulate the political-pedagogical project of the school, to support teachers and to recognise their need for training and development. Her role is best described as that of a mediator between the curricular requirements, the principal’s vision, the students’ needs and the teachers’ work, while keeping a critical attitude towards her own and the school’s practices. Therefore, the tasks go far beyond administrative ones and entail the ‘formation of Brazilian citizens’ (Ignacio, 2008: 51), as well as the implementation of public policies regarding education. With regard to Law 11.645/08, it is the pedagogical coordinator’s responsibility to protect the students’ right to multicultural education, which valorises social, racial and historic diversity. Ignacio (2008) notes that the majority of pedagogical coordinators are not aware of Law 11.645/08 or are by no means qualified to guide their school’s teachers through its implementation. With Mereille’s belief that the only moral option to raise children was Christianity, it is not surprising that she did not approve of the visit to the terreiro either. Like Laura, she argued that the school, as a secular institution, could not get involved with a Candomblé terreiro in any way, while also taking for granted that Christianity should form part of the fabric of the school environment.

Vieira and Botelho e Silva (2011: 6) point out that an integral part of Law 10.639/03 is the deconstruction of prejudices against Candomblé and other religions of African origin, a process that cannot be disconnected from teaching African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in school. In the document accompanying the law, the National Directives for the Teaching of Ethnic and Race Relations and of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DECENER) the law’s goal to foster respect for Afro-Brazilian religions is made explicit (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2004: 12). With regard to the implementation of the law, one has to ask how to separate Afro-Brazilian and African cultural manifestations from their religious aspects and whether such a separation would make sense. Oliveira (2015: 106) argues that if the school cannot talk about Afro-Brazilian religion, it won’t be able to talk about Afro-Brazilian culture, given that mythological dimensions are not dissociable from other cultural
and political dimensions, as is the case with any other culture. Arthur, history teacher at Colégio Pedro II and co-founder of the Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, states that, just like Greek or Christian mythology tell us about European history and culture, Yoruba mythology (which serves as a starting point for many Afro-Brazilian beliefs) teaches African history and culture without forcing religion on anyone. Acting as an example himself, as Arthur is not initiated in Candomblé or any other Afro-Brazilian religion, he managed to convince the school leadership at CPII to implement a weekly history class on Yoruba mythology, held at the school campus located in the city centre, which interested students and teachers enrolled in education courses from various institutions all over Rio de Janeiro can attend and use as credits towards their degrees. Nevertheless, for the school leadership to agree to Arthur’s mythology class required perseverance and hard work over years, during which the history teacher insisted on the historic – and non-spiritual – value of teaching African mythology. As Oliveira (2015) notes, the Christian narrative has permeated the school environment for a long time and has been naturalised and reproduced over the years. At CENH, Roberto recounted, that a group of crente students used to be able to ‘do their gospel in the classroom’ – play the guitar and sing church songs – until he intervened and convinced the principal to prohibit it. It is very easy to find Christian symbols or rituals in many schools, and Christian holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, are routinely celebrated in a significant number of schools, and at CENH. The celebration of Christian holidays and the invisibility of non-Christian festivities are a frequently discussed topic among teachers who work on the implementation of the law, such as Isabela, the history teacher at CENH, who said:

At Colégio Estadual Novos Horizontes, things happen inside the classroom, which are absurd to me, like the commemoration of Easter. This was the first thing I noticed at CENH, that this is very strong, it is undeniable, even though the school is a secular space. There is no one who says: Ah, but Easter, and will we do Ramadan as well, or something else. Will we do São Jorge as well? This is undeniable, this is not fair, it isn’t ethical, it should not happen.

Neither Laura, nor Mereille saw the historic or cultural value of a temple visit in the Baixada Fluminense. At CENH, Pentecostalism is pervasive among staff and students and often serves as the most powerful source of their social values and beliefs. As their churches demand exclusive devotion and provide a strict set of rules – one of them being to fight all
evil that is often understood to manifest itself as Afro-Brazilian deities – Pentecostals position themselves in a space that conflicts with the goals of teachers and social activists who support Afro-Brazilian religion as an integral part of Afro-Brazilian culture. The fear of African influenced cultural manifestations, usually associated with Afro-Brazilian spirituality, leads to the expulsion of Exú, an integral part of African or Afro-Brazilian mythology and history, from school, while normalising Christian values and beliefs, as well as telling history from a European point of view.

However, the understanding that Candomblé is much more than religion and acts as a reservoir of historic and cultural knowledge handed down and developed over generations (which was also confirmed by IPHAN) is particularly valid in the region of the Baixada Fluminense. In his book *As Chaves da Liberdade: Confluências da Escravidão no Recôncavo do Rio de Janeiro (1833-1888)* (2008), historian Nielson Bezerra discusses the influence of enslaved Africans and their descendants on the development of the Baixada Fluminense. In the beginning of the 18th century, the region of the Baixada Fluminense saw a significant number of people passing through, due to the gold trade, travelling in between the gold mines in what is today the state of Minas Gerais and the Court and port in Rio de Janeiro. The area urbanised increasingly and experienced its first significant population growth towards the end of the 19th century, when enslaved Africans and their descendants, as well as freed people, relocated from Bahia to the Baixada, either voluntarily or due to the internal slave trade and the economic needs of the Brazilian Empire. They brought with them African-influenced rituals and ceremonies, the popularity of which grew rapidly not only among enslaved people and their descendants, but also among the manorial elite, who enjoyed the imported music, the women and the food. Apart from offering entertainment, the sites where these encounters took place offered a refuge for fugitives. When the area experienced a moment of massive population growth in the 1940s/50s, in which a wave of people from the impoverished Northeast of the country arrived, coming from an area that had also received a large number of enslaved Africans, some of the ‘most authentic’ Candomblé terreiros were established in the Baixada area, of which a few had connections to one of the most traditional terreiros in Bahia (Vieira & Botelho e Silva, 2011; Sansone, 2004: 105, 106). At the beginning of the 20th century, when the city of Rio de Janeiro went through a substantial re-urbanisation process, inspired by the European Belle Époque, several terreiros had to move from the city – either due to high rent or by force – and found
a new home in the Baixada Fluminense. Even though they point out the development of two important black movement organisations, União dos Homens de Cor and Centro Cultural José do Patrocínio, that acted only in the political sphere, Vieira and Botelho e Silva (2011) consider Candomblé one of the historically most important elements for the development of a Black identity in the region of the Baixada Fluminense.

The point of liberal secularism is that religion can and should be separated from other aspects of public culture and politics. As the history of the Baixada Fluminense so clearly demonstrates, Afro-Brazilian history and religion are however inseparable – similar to European history and Christianity. Just as Christian values permeate the school culture, talking increasingly about Afro-Brazilian culture and history in school has the potential to add to the growing acceptance of Afro-Brazilian religion, without necessarily turning anyone into a Candomblé adept – just as celebrating Easter in school does not automatically turn anyone into a Catholic or Protestant. As a class council meeting at Colégio Estadual Novos Horizontes shows, there are teachers who advocate religious tolerance but the school as a whole does not seem interested in their ideas. During a meeting of the class council at CENH, which takes place every third month and consists of student, teacher and parent representatives, as well as the principal, Carlos, a Catholic black teacher broached the topic of religious intolerance. He urged the council to remind teachers and students to be careful when talking about other people’s religion and the festivities that are commemorated inside school. Even though he did not refer to Easter celebrations directly, as his colleague Isabela had, he stressed the importance of tolerating and celebrating all religions that are represented in school: ‘We have to listen more to the students and not only talk about one religion. This is difficult and it [religious intolerance] happens because a dialogue is missing. Every human being has deficiencies. We have to do this together and we have to do this now’. Even though Carlos had offered an opening to an important discussion for the school to have, only one teacher verbally agreed to his words, while the rest of the council went on to discuss other topics. Similarly to CPII, at CENH the teachers and leadership have not found a way to open a discussion about religion in school that welcomes contributions from everyone, independent of religious affiliation.
Conclusion: (un)denominational anti-racism

Dilson, a self-identified Black history teacher in his late forties, who attended one of the teacher education classes in the Baixada Fluminense I went to, said one day: ‘When you put on your Candomblé clothes, you also become black’. When he speaks of becoming black by wearing garments typically used in Candomblé he refers to the close association of this religion with Afro-Brazilian identity. Nevertheless, it would be too simple to conclude that Pentecostals disapprove of Candomblé because of its followers’ strong affirmation of (Afro-Brazilian) ethnic identity. Many who are initiated in the religion of Candomblé identify as white, which, however, does not protect them from social stigma. Following Dilson’s comment, another teacher, a white European-looking woman, went on: ‘Yeah, this question goes beyond the question of skin colour. I suffered prejudice because I’m part of a religion of African origin. When I went to certain places, people would say [negative] things. It makes me very emotional’. Various representatives of the black movement openly accuse Pentecostals of racism. However, the accounts above show that Candomblé followers suffer from religious discrimination independent of the colour of their skin, which implies that evangelicals are not aiming to be racist. Rather, their objections against Candomblé or Umbanda are religious and against a religious system that is so different from their own. Nevertheless, there clearly is a racist element in their refusal of Afro-Brazilian religions because of the close association of Candomblé with black identity and African culture, independent of the racially diverse following. It is difficult to understand as anything other than racism the fact that non-religious symbols of African heritage in Brazil, which however allude to Afro-Brazilian religions in some form, are attacked and stigmatised (Silva, 2007b). Furthermore, black and white followers of Candomblé interpret evangelical attacks on them as racially motivated. Oliveira and Rodrigues (2015: 37) argue that rather than solely being a manifestation of religious dispute and prejudice against African derived cosmological expressions, neo-Pentecostal discourse is to be understood as epistemic racism and a theoretical project that reaffirms occidental secular and religious thought and thinkers as the only legitimate body to produce knowledge, and the only ones that have access to universality and truth.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Pentecostalism cannot be articulated to anti-racism, which can be as much about racial equality as it is about recognition and the
respect for cultural difference. In fact, Burdick (1999; 2005) demonstrates that the evangelical black consciousness and anti-racist movement is growing in Brazil. During a year of ethnographic fieldwork in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Burdick (1999) aimed to explore Pentecostalism’s potential impact on Afro-Brazilian members’ ethnic consciousness, as it has been the religion that has attracted the highest number of new Afro-Brazilian members. While Pentecostalism is far from turning into a ‘bastion of racial or ethnic consciousness’, he concludes that ‘although evangelical Christianity involves a variety of beliefs that are incompatible with a strong ethnic identity, this religion also includes a range of ideas and practices that nourish rather than corrode black identity’ (Burdick, 1999: 109), and urges members of the black movement as well as researchers not to overlook this paradoxical relationship. Sansone (2003) adds that a person who does not claim a polarised racial or ethnic identity can demonstrate an anti-racist attitude. Non-Christian members of the black movement who denounce Christianity as the religion of the coloniser may estrange millions of Brazilians who consider themselves Christian. Coupled with their belittlement of evangelicals’ belief that Afro-Brazilian deities are a manifestation of the devil, black movement activists may miss an opportunity to counteract popular images of Afro-Brazilian religion as the worship of the devil (Burdick 2004). Souza (2012: 529) agrees that Pentecostal churches, which have the largest contingents of followers of African descent, have the potential of being ‘one of the main agencies for combatting racism and all forms of discrimination, for the biblical message is clear about equality among people regardless of their appearance or the colour of their skin’.

It is thus possible to be anti-racist and/or a black activist without being an Afro-Brazilian religious follower, and even being instead a Pentecostal Christian who is opposed to Afro-Brazilian religion. At the same time, it is possible to follow an Afro-Brazilian religion without being a black movement activist or committing to anti-racist work. Even though Principal Laura does not agree to take her school to a terreiro visit, based on her fear of the parents’ reactions and maybe her own scepticism towards Afro-Brazilian religions, she has actively tried to address racism and anti-racism in her school as a whole and educated herself further with regard to Law 11.645/08 (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, many black activists might regard Principal Laura’s anti-racist work as tokenistic and failing to address structural racism built on Eurocentric epistemologies marked by Christianity.
Conclusion: Brazilian classrooms – battlefields for cultural politics?

Supporters of Law 11.645/08 lament that more than a decade after it was signed not more has been done in order to successfully implement it in educational institutions all over the country. However, overall, my research argues that Law 11.645/08 is a legal tool that allows those who want to have African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture – and possibly epistemologies – included in the school curriculum to advance their agenda. Without doubt, the emergence of Laws 10.639/03 and 11.645/08 has resulted in the creation of various spaces and preconditions, which facilitate collaboration, conflict and negotiation between teachers, education professionals, students, social activists and academics who want to challenge the status quo of institutionalised education in one way or another.

The key objective of the thesis was to understand in what ways different stakeholders involved with the implementation of Law 11.645/08 negotiate their area of influence and disseminate their interpretation of the law, and the effect their various visions have on different people and the latter’s attitudes towards racism. The most obvious take-away from this thesis is that the most present voices talking about race and ethnic-racial identity in the educational context are social activists who work as teachers and other educational staff. This demonstrates that since the 1980s there has been a continuity in the trend of schools being a favoured field for black and indigenous activists to advance their agendas, as initially discussed in Chapter 1. While the majority of educators, researchers and activists addressing institutional racism in school might be black (Da Costa, 2014), my research has shown that there is however a significant number of indigenous and white educators and social activists who work on the implementation of Law 11.645/08.

A central undertaking of the thesis was to use the context of the implementation of Law 11.645/08 to position indigenous and black people in the
same analytical framework, borrowing the concept of the structures of alterity from Peter Wade (2010) (Chapter 4). Indigenous people are often omitted from discussions about racism and less visible than black people in urban spaces and in multicultural education. Since the colonial regime, black and indigenous people have both been marginalised and characterised as others, which however does not mean that they have been treated equally by the state or that they should automatically be allies.

By exploring the role of anti-racism teachers, black and indigenous activists and white allies and posing the question of what anti-racist activism in the educational context should look like, this thesis contributes to the discussion of multicultural education and its effectiveness. In this sense, the meaningfulness of Law 11.645/08 is not explicitly reflected in redistributive terms or in material output (or the decrease of the achievement gap between poor and wealthy or indigenous, black and white students), but is based on a symbolically charged output.

Because of these objectives I put particular emphasis on Brazilian racial politics and identity formation processes, which are far from being static and continuously in motion. The narrative of this thesis has addressed race, religion, gender and urban space – which acts as a structuring factor encompassing all other factors. On a socio-political level, I attempted to critically assess the Baixada Fluminense’s historically continuous location on Rio de Janeiro’s periphery by turning it into the central point of my research – without detaching it or isolating it from the capital of Rio. The significance of socio-political ideas coming out of the Baixada Fluminense, in particular with regard to Law 11.645/08 and the reappraisal of local African-influenced history and culture (especially Prof. Nielson Bezerra’s work at the higher education institution Fundação Educacional de Duque de Caxias and the work of cultural centre and Candomblé terreiro Ilé Omiojúárò) cannot be overlooked. The educational and politicising practices taking place at the public Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro – and in particular within lecturer Luiz’s work and network, which unite a significant number of teachers and researchers from all over the city of Rio de Janeiro and neighbouring municipalities – as well as within Marize’s political and educational work in labour unions and
various indigenous organisations counter common narratives about violence and social decay in the area.

In Chapter 2 I follow the implementation of the law from official initiatives by the Education Ministry and local education secretariats to the stage where it reaches the group it is ultimately aimed at, the student body. While in Chapter 1 the historical and political background of the law is discussed on a rather theoretical level, in Chapter 2 the law’s political character becomes more evident in the everyday struggles of advocates of Law 11.645/08 within the ever-changing structures of local politics and school leadership, which often show little support for its implementation. Federal legislation has been shown to be a protection mechanism the implementation of which was hindered by reluctant education officials or school leaders. However, in the education secretariat in Belford Roxo, as well as at the Colégio Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro the threat of consequences by the Prosecutor’s Office was enough to change both institutions’ attitude towards the law’s implementation and to support the individuals advocating it – albeit not in the exact way they had hoped for.

Summing up all four ethnographic chapters (Chapters 2-5) with regard to the motivations and approaches in implementing the law, I conclude that those who advocate a holistic anti-racist or even decolonial approach to the law’s implementation share a political agenda. This is based on the refusal to blindly celebrate Brazil’s multicultural society and narratives built on the ideology of racial democracy, and on a belief in the need to repair historic and ongoing injustices against black and indigenous people to secure their physical and cultural survival. This is as true for Black and Indigenous educators who identify themselves as victims of structural racism as it is for white educators who identify with political blackness and the political struggle of indigenous people, whether on an intellectual level, from a place of profound empathy or because of knowledge about their own family’s history. In Chapter 2 I discussed the work of white sociology and history teachers who can be understood as intellectual, left-wing, middle-class white allies who take racism and blackness seriously as intellectual or social justice issues. This is partly contrasted by the narratives of white history teachers who appeared in Chapter 3. They are mainly from working-class backgrounds and stress not only
intellectual knowledge about racial inequality but the embodied knowledge of the pain they have suffered resulting from non-racial discrimination as crucial factors for their activism with regard to Law 11.645/08.

Other approaches, which cannot be classified as following a decolonising or transformative agenda, are those in which educators make an effort to increase the presence of narratives about and of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous people in the curriculum and commit themselves to fighting racism, without fully recognising the structural character of racial discrimination. Chapter 2 clearly demonstrates how a school can commit itself to anti-racist work while perpetuating racist attitudes and Eurocentric epistemologies. While initiatives that question the curriculum and traditional knowledge production as a whole have a more transformative effect on identity formation and a decolonising effect on knowledge production, my research has shown that even activities and discussions addressing racial inequality in a more superficial way make educators and students more aware of the pervasiveness of racism. Affirmative action has thus the implicit power to contest cultural censorship about race (Cicalo, 2012: 171). Even if the law and the activities revolving around its implementation do not turn students into militants, non- or less politicised students and teachers get involved in discussions about structural racism in the country and develop greater sensibility towards race.

Chapter 3 contrasts a group of black, white and indigenous anti-racism teachers, who readily compare different types of discrimination and suffering to racism, with the anti-racist narrative of black activists, who stress the specific political, social and historical aspect of racial discrimination and advocate for black leadership. While acknowledging that anti-racism can take many shapes, Chapter 2 and 3 discuss the limitations and shortfalls of white anti-racism in the classroom and beyond. Similarly, Chapter 5, which analyses the intersection of race, social class and religion in the school context, is concerned with the question of what anti-racism should look like in order to be most effective, but takes a conciliatory tone by suggesting an alliance between black activists and Pentecostal social movements, even though most Pentecostal congregations refuse to fully accept and respect Afro-Brazilian religions.
I attempted, through exploring the motives, practices and narratives of those advocating the implementation of Law 11.645/08, to further our understanding of the scope and limitations of an educational rhetoric based on the politics of difference. While my research has confirmed that the implementation of Law 11.645/08 and talking about racism and race in school indeed depends heavily on the individual effort of teachers and education staff (Gomes & Jesus, 2013), arguably, the outcome of the educational policy depends on how seriously the school takes its implementation as a whole and what practices the implementation process consists of. At Colégio Pedro II and at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte attempts have been made to turn the implementation of the law into a permanent and school-wide project. At Colégio Pedro II (CPII) this project has primarily been undertaken by the NEAB, acting as a point of reference not only for black students but for anyone who is interested in issues regarding race and racism, also fostering debates about racial inequality through extracurricular activities, teacher training and continuing research. Furthermore, the sociology department has reformed its curriculum to accommodate intellectual debates on racism and racial inequality. Even though black female teachers at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte had urged Principal Laura to take Law 10.639/03 seriously and implement it at the school, it was not until my arrival that the principal showed any interest in these topics. However, since then she has further educated herself, has collaborated with a few interested teachers and at least verbally committed to thoroughly and continuously implementing Law 11.645/08. Nevertheless, in both schools it is individual teachers or small groups of teachers who complement mandatory discussions about race and racism in the classroom (taking place at least in some subjects) with various extracurricular activities and push the law’s implementation and continuity. At CPII, students have demanded that a discussion about racial inequality take place and black students founded the student organisation Frente Negra shortly after the NEAB had been established.

Nevertheless, educational practices in both schools have shown that one of the main shortcomings in the implementation process of Law 11.645/08 is that not enough room has been created for students to reflect on their own racial identity formation processes and locate their personal experiences in the context of social
and race relations. Reflecting upon the activities that had taken place within the Africanity/Africa Project at Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte before my departure, various students expressed the need for interactive workshops or discussions and debates about race and racism that involve them directly and a forum for the exchange of their personal experiences. Even though the excursion to the Historical and Archaeological Trail for the Celebration of African Heritage, as well as the activities inside the school were appreciated, students did not feel involved in the process of creating and carrying out the project. At CPII, NEAB and the sociology department have planned various extracurricular activities for students to participate in discussions about race and racial inequality. However, such activities do not take place more than twice a year and the predominantly white teaching body and its rather intellectual approach to these topics have not provided much space for students to process their own experiences.

A crucial goal of Law 11.645/08 is the recognition of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous contributions to Brazilian society and the valorisation of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous identities. Whereas learning about racial inequality can evoke empathy among white and black people, Chapter 3 clearly shows that for Black people this process is often closely tied to a transformation of their racial consciousness. White people develop racial consciousness and continue to be white, even if they politically identify as black. However, Black people who previously identified as white or pardo, develop racial consciousness and go through a process of becoming black – politically and often aesthetically. Both chapters 3 and 4 discuss issues arising around the formation of ethnic-racial identity, demonstrating that identity formation is a crucial aspect contributing to the meaningfulness of Law 11.645/08. It is reiterated in these chapters that Black and Indigenous people have become conscious of their racial identification once they came into contact with Black and Indigenous activists, often working on the implementation on Law 11.645/08, and not simply by having intellectually learned about it. In this sense, the implementation of Law 11.645/08 in the framework of the politics of difference has been transformative and was proven to be a way to fight inequality and foster self-esteem in underprivileged groups (Taylor, 1994). Nevertheless, the intellectual aspect of identity formation and continuous learning
are central aspects of politicised Black and Indigenous identities. These findings emphasise the need for educational spaces, in which students can share their experiences of ethnic-racial identity formation and racism, taking into account the already existing attempts at intellectual debate on these topics.

This also poses the question of who implements the law (whether they are black, white, indigenous, female, male, etc.) and what difference this might make. Chapters 2, 3 and 5 have shown that it is not always clear what role white allies and anti-racism teachers should take on or what anti-racist activism should look like in order to most effectively support its intended beneficiaries. On the one hand, the white history teacher Clara was criticised for trying to adopt too central a role in the black struggle. On the other hand, her work was praised and deemed necessary, as in many white spaces, such as Colégio Pedro II, there are not a lot of Black representatives who could do the work in her stead. There are limits to how far a white ally can truly empathise with victims of racism, which seems to shape the way educational policy can be implemented. The predominantly intellectual approach by white sociology teachers at CPII – even if trying to include non-white voices and to teach non-Eurocentric perspectives – misses the element of providing a space for non-white students to feel like they fully belong or where they can safely share their personal experiences. In the end, despite the inclusion of black and indigenous personalities and ideas into the classroom, this approach reproduces a Eurocentric model of passing on knowledge, which focuses primarily on institutionalised knowledge, rather than the exchange of lived-through experiences. Compared to black and indigenous teachers – many of whom have not identified themselves as Black or indigenous before their adulthood and thus have gone through a process of ethnic-racial identity transformation – for white teachers it can be more difficult to provide meaningful space for students to reflect on their own identity-formation processes. Furthermore, this demonstrates that learning and teaching about racism and other types of oppression do not change one’s positionality. The student-teacher relationship does not exist independently of the structural position the teacher and the student occupy.

Racism cannot be simply unlearnt and is not only a question of awareness, which means that the multiculturalist approach, which does not specifically target
students identified as minorities falls short. Da Costa (2014: 185) reminds us that not all parties are equally affected by societal and state efforts, which reflects the very nature of coloniality, rooted in its anti-blackness and white supremacy. An education that aims at the provision of an environment in which difference is recognised as valuable thus needs to address structural inequality first and foremost – an aspect of Law 11.645/08 that too often falls into the background.

Chapter 5 also leads us to the question of what the most meaningful version of anti-racism looks like. There is without a doubt a socially regressive front in the evangelical church; there are nevertheless evangelical voices who have the opportunity to reach a lot of people and who believe in the anti-racist struggle. Their views might be better accommodated within the framework of the politics of equality, based on the belief that every human being is equal in front of God and putting an emphasis on structural disadvantage and special rights (at least economic rights), than within the framework of politics of difference, based on the recognition and respect of cultural difference (whereas these two frames overlap, of course). Such an approach can have implications for vulnerable groups such as black and indigenous people, who are structurally excluded from material and immaterial resources and not treated equally by the state, and thus to a degree depend on policies based on the politics of difference to ensure their cultural and physical survival and well-being. Nevertheless, I agree with Burdick (2004) when he argues that the black movement in Brazil has to be careful not to estrange evangelical followers. Instead he recommends the collaboration of black movement activists and Pentecostal churches, which have the largest contingents of followers of African descent. The implementation process of Law 11.645/08 in Colégio Estadual Novo Horizonte serves as an example of a Pentecostal leadership (Principal Laura) collaborating with black activists (history teacher Isabela) to further an anti-racism agenda. Principal Laura has proven to be eager to educate herself further with regard to ethno-education as well as Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture to find a meaningful way to teach her school about racial relations and racism in Brazil. Moreover, she trusts teacher Isabela’s guidance in the process and increasingly treats her as an intellectual authority in this area. At the same time, Principal Laura lays down limitations such as a visit to the Candomblé terreiro Ilé
Omiojùàrò to avoid repercussions from evangelical students, teachers, parents and maybe even local politicians. Furthermore, the overriding Christian ethic of the school effectively marginalises Afro-Brazilian religions and thus undermines recognition and respect. As such, the school limits identity formation processes that deviate from the Eurocentric norm, which contributes to a society in which many black and indigenous people are economically marginalised too.

Not only in Brazil but worldwide right-wing politics has gained significant momentum over the past decade. After centuries in which the church played a subordinate role to the state, in Brazil right-wing politicians increasingly emerge from within Pentecostal churches or are backed by Pentecostal congregations, whose followers increase rapidly. In order to build a strong opposition against right-wing evangelical politicians and influencers with a conservative agenda that often stands in conflict with universal human rights, Pentecostal attitudes towards anti-racism and the possibilities of building strong alliances with social movements need to be investigated further. This is not only important in the context of Brazil, but arguably anywhere in the world, as right-wing rhetoric and neoliberal policies increasingly highlight individual self-reliance and responsibility, which creates an ideal environment for churches to attract new followers by offering emotional and even material well-being that the state does not provide for.

**Final considerations**

The worst recession in recent Brazilian history has hit poor communities hard and resulted in a significant rise of crime and violence. Over the last years, the topics of fighting crime, violence and corruption have been an important part of voter mobilisation (other topics included the mobilisation of social and economic inequalities, social rights etc.), which is reflected in the election results of state and city governments, as well as the presidential election. At the same time, social and cultural questions have increasingly become part of the political agenda. In October 2018, Brazil elected far-right nationalist Jair Bolsonaro (Partido Social Liberal) as president who during his campaign has not only vowed to fight crime and corruption but made incendiary remarks about black and gay people, women and
indigenous communities. He pledged to take away indigenous territory and invest heavily in agribusiness and mining (‘If I become president, there will not be one centimetre more of indigenous land’).\(^1\) With regard to questions affecting indigenous populations the majority of legal attacks on their rights come from the rural caucus, which is one of the biggest fractions in Congress. One of their legislative proposals was PL3509/2015, which regulates the exploration of mineral resources on and cuts into the protection of indigenous territories.

Dispossessing indigenous communities of their land is likely to destroy them as a people, as the prominent case of the Guarani-Kaowá people in Mato Grosso do Sul tragically demonstrates. As a result of their land having been invaded and stolen by ranchers, they live in overcrowded camps or in tents by the side of the highways. Without any future perspectives or the promise for a better future an alarming number of young Guarani take their lives (Vilanova & Fenerich & Russo, 2011; Alcantara et al., 2012), leading to the group having one of the highest suicide rates worldwide. Indigenous groups fighting to keep or regain their lands is a crucial way to fight for their life as distinct peoples since their spirituality and cultural vitality is based on their lands (Short, 2010). In the city of Rio de Janeiro, the indigenous (and often black) urban poor population fights eviction and land dispossession for similar reasons. Aldeia Maracanã is a popular example but the often less visible mass evictions of entire poor neighbourhoods to build prestigious projects or to simply make room for the rich and wealthy are equally severe. With the ongoing dispossession of rural indigenous communities, the poor urban indigenous population is likely to further rise. Law 11.645/08, if applied effectively, can be an instrument to maintain indigenous identities in the urban context – if not a measure to indirectly contribute to the social and economic success of urban indigenous populations.

Ex-President Temer’s and President Bolsonaro’s endeavour to provide safety to the Brazilian population has thus been very selective, excluding indigenous, black

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1 On his first day in office, President Bolsonaro transferred responsibility for certifying indigenous territories and protected lands from the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) to the ministry of agriculture, which has a long history of colluding with agribusinesses and industries that want more access to protected lands.
and poor people as beneficiaries. In terms of protecting the lives of the youth and of black people who are the prime victims of homicides in Brazil (Anistia Internacional Brasil, 2018), ex-president Temer did little to identify the root of the problem but authorised the armed forces to intervene in Rio de Janeiro, seemingly inspired by the widespread belief that ‘the only good criminal is a dead criminal’. Newly elected governor of Rio de Janeiro, Wilson Witzel, said that killing armed ‘criminals’ was the only right thing to do for police officers (many of whom lose their life during operations) and that they should not be held responsible for such homicides under any circumstance. Moreover, he appealed to President Bolsonaro to keep the armed forces in Rio de Janeiro for another twelve months after their mandate ended in December 2018. The murder by professional killers of the young black and gay carioca politician (born and raised in a favela), Marielle Franco (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade), in March 2018, and the political incapacity or reluctance to solve her murder, are symptomatic of the way the last and the current governments in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro have been dealing with the rights of black people, poor people and minorities. Marielle Franco had worked on the exposure of crimes committed by the police and milícias (paramilitary groups) for many years, and oversaw and verbally attacked the army’s intervention in Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian sociologist José Cláudio Souza Alves repeatedly draws attention to the growing impact of milícias in the country, their very likely involvement in Marielle’s killing, as well as their ties to powerful politicians, such as President Bolsonaro himself (e.g. see his interview in Agência Pública, 2019). The Secretary of Public Security of Rio de Janeiro, Richard Nunes, agreed with Alves when he stated in an interview in December 2018 that Marielle Franco was murdered because she had disrupted land speculation in the Western zone of the city (O Estado de S.Paulo, 2018).

\(^2\) Nevertheless, it cannot go unmentioned that former presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Roussef (both Worker’s Party), despite having implemented a range of social policies to protect and support these groups, have disappointed the expectations of many social movements and failed to provide the protection and support of vulnerable groups (e.g. the military intervention in some of Rio’s favelas started during Dilma Roussef’s administration).

\(^3\) In Brazil, the history of paramilitary groups goes back to the time of the military dictatorship and the formation of so-called death-squads (esquadrões da morte). In the 1980s civilians started to join these organised groups; then dominated by military police. In the 1990s, various members of militias started to run as political candidates in elections. Apart from professional killings and extracting protection money, paramilitary groups control water, fuel and tobacco supply and operate illegal rubbish disposal sites. One of their main sources of income, however, are the militarised control of urban spaces and land speculation.
Removing the basis of survival of a particular group, such as land, or even taking their physical lives is only one strategy to either eliminate the group or absorb it into the dominant culture. As mentioned in the introduction, genocide can be understood as being of a physical or biological nature but can also be culturally motivated. However, I do not mean to put physical destruction and cultural assimilation on the same footing. Rather, an attack on a group’s physical existence is at the same time an attack on its cultural existence and often vice versa. Short (2010) states that the destruction of culture is in fact a key method of group destruction. As I have argued above, Law 11.645/08 is one factor in fomenting processes of racial consciousness-raising and identification, which could contribute to the overall persistence and strength of indigenous and black identities in Brazil. In turn, the successful implementation of the law could perhaps have some effect on the economic viability of these groups, for example by enhancing their educational prospects and thus their life chances (although in the current political and social climate the opposite effect might also occur – the strengthening of black and indigenous identities could provoke an even more genocidal backlash or at least an increase in physical/moral attacks and rights violations).

Even though Law 11.645/08 has not been directly under attack by political or religious representatives in a significant way, after President Dilma’s impeachment and under Michel Temer’s and later Jair Bolsonaro’s government, a lot of setbacks have happened in terms of social politics in Brazil, some of which directly affect the implementation of the law. The approval of the Proposal for the Constitutional Amendment N° 55 (PEC 55) froze spending in the areas of health, education and social security for twenty years. Moreover, in December 2016 the large majority of the House of Representatives voted in favour of abandoning the obligation to teach Arts, Sports, Philosophy or Sociology in high school due to a study claiming that teaching these subjects would lead to worse results in Mathematics. The proposal to include political education and citizenship rights into the curriculum were declined. As Arts is one of the subjects in which teachers are most expected to work with Law 11.645/08, and as my research has shown that Sociology is one of the subjects in which teachers are most active in the law’s implementation, erasing them from the curriculum will automatically diminish efforts to implement the law.
and can be interpreted as an indirect attack on it. Moreover, President Bolsonaro is planning to cut funding for social sciences and humanities courses at public universities.

Furthermore, while the movement Escola Sem Partido (School without Political Party), which has ties to evangelical churches and enjoys the firm support of President Bolsonaro, has officially announced its intention to defend the principles of an apolitical education free of indoctrination and ideologies, it has claimed that Brazilian schools have been indoctrinated and politicised by left-wing Marxist teachers, promoting homosexuality and promiscuity (which a lot of evangelical churches have problems with). In 2015, the movement turned its programme into a legislative project (PL 867/2015), the outcome of which is still not known. Supporters of Escola sem Partido stress that teachers do not have a right to confidentiality and encourage students to record teachers deemed as indoctrinating them with a ‘partisan’, ‘Marxist’, ‘communist’ or ‘gender’ (a generic term used by the movement to sum up non-conventional ideas about sex and gender) ideology. There have been various reports of teachers losing their jobs over remarks ascribed to one of these categories. If we keep in mind that Brazil’s current president, Bolsonaro, has declared himself to be a supporter of Brazil’s past dictatorship, the appeal to monitor and denounce teachers for their ideological or political beliefs is daunting. Hence, the current educational backlash strongly limits space for critical or progressive discussion, which directly affects the implementation of Law 11.645/08 in a negative way.

Furthermore, the growing force of evangelicals in Brazilian politics, as well as in Brazilian schools, poses an immediate threat to aspects of the law that are tied to Afro-Brazilian religion and indigenous spirituality – an area that has not gained much visibility in school until now and is likely to be kept out completely in the future. In addition, the rights of black people, indigenous people, women and the LGTBQ community are increasingly under attack, including in the school context. As discussed throughout the thesis, any information passed on in school is not neutral but the result of political and historical developments. The extremely high density of legislative changes and law proposals in the area of education and cultural politics in Brazil demonstrates how important classrooms are in Brazil to negotiate
socio-cultural politics and to fight for political power. In this thesis, I have examined spaces in which the implementation of an educational social policy addressing collective ‘minority’ identities is negotiated. At the same time, I show the many limitations and opportunities in the implementation process, which help us reassess society, belonging, racism and coloniality.
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