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ARTICLE (REFEREED)

## Consultation Protocols of Indigenous People in Contexts of Environmental Conflicts

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### Abstract

Our paper analyzes alternatives to overcome the dynamics of epistemicide through processes of Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation of Indigenous Peoples when exogenous actors act in their territories. The objective is to demonstrate the possibilities of resistance of communities in processes that may affect their lives through legal regulations and the Consultation Protocol of the Xukuru Kariri community, located in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, where a reparation governance process is underway. The theoretical background is related to the Bio-Necropolitics and Decolonial approach. This is qualitative research, based on engaged study, since the authors develop projects in this territory to support the strengthening of Indigenous peoples' rights. The Consultation Protocol is problematized as an instrument to be observed when carrying out university-community projects and research activities in Indigenous territories.

### Keywords

**Indigenous People; Necropolitics; Epistemicide; Consultation Protocol; University-Community Projects; Brumadinho, Brazil**

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## Introduction

The Cameroonian philosopher, political scientist, and historian [Achiles Mbembe \(2018\)](#) proposed the notion of Necropolitics based on ideas from the French philosopher [Michel Foucault \(2010\)](#), especially the concept of biopolitics. This approach invites us to understand contexts of cultural erasure that lead to the death of knowledge too, called 'Epistemicide'. In parallel, many Indigenous people, traditional, and ancient groups, social movements, and researchers are discussing the role of the knowledge developed by people, communities, and populations considered not modern and developed by Western capitalistic society and the Global North thinking as a way to block the 'epistemicide' process ([Mignolo 2007, 2017a, 2017b; Quijano 2002; Santos 2007, 2018](#)). In this paper, we mobilize the aspects of Biopolitics, Necropolitics, and the Epistemologies of the South to address the Indigenous People's reality nowadays facing threats of epistemicide to the ancient Indigenous culture in Brazil.

With such discussions, it will be possible to outline the perspective of vulnerabilities of territories and the extermination that, from the perspective of necropolitics, can lead to the end of individuals and their potential. The aim is to demonstrate that epistemicide, as an instrument of death management from a necropolitical perspective, seeks to generate cultural erasure in territories. As a result, communities can be disarticulated and, due to the power of systemic interests, suffer cultural and community erasure.

Our research analyses the role of a legal instrument to guarantee the rights of Indigenous people when their communities are threatened by economic, political, and cultural forces that will impact on the way of living of the Indigenous in some space or territory. This protocol, a legal imperative by international and national norms, is called Free, Prior and Informed Consultation or Protocol of Consultancy. Our discussion also presents the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consultation, consolidated through the called Consultation Protocols, as an instrument to overcome the logic of epistemicide. This is because, through the consultation carried out, communities can move from being mere objects to be observed to the condition of actors who understand and participate in the processes that concern them. This is the point that justifies the study, as it proposes a reading of ills that are deepened in the Brazilian context, with reflections on devices applied by the system.

Our study analyzes the Consultation Protocol of the Xukuru Kariri, from the *Arapowã Kakyá village*, located in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais state, Brazil, to discuss how the protocols can be structured, and to consider the possibilities and challenges of applying this kind of consultation process. In 2019<sup>1</sup>, a massive environmental tragedy was perpetrated by a mining corporation, killing around 272 people, destroying the Paraopeba River in ten municipalities including Brumadinho city, destroying nature, and blocking the way of living of many traditional communities including 'Quilombolas' people<sup>2</sup>, native people that have lived on the land before the Portuguese invasion, small family farmers, and people of the popular classes, in Freire's terms, living on the margins of the river. Nowadays, there is, underway, a process of regeneration, and reparation in Brumadinho municipality, with many outsiders working in the territory as NGOs, government agencies, corporations, consulting groups, and universities.

Many university-community projects are working in the Brumadinho municipality trying to promote regeneration, sustainability, and fighting for rights. Based on this, we intend take into considerations about the need for extension and research practices of universities, when focused on Indigenous territories, to be guided by the Consultation Protocols as a strategy to avoid the risk of suffocating the knowledge of traditional peoples by the actions of an exogenous actor who, historically, acts in an extractive dynamic that leads to the erasure of non-academic knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> In 2019, a mining tailings dam collapsed in Brumadinho, in the state of Minas Gerais, causing extensive environmental damage and the death of more than 200 people.

<sup>2</sup> These are rural free communities formed two hundred years ago by runaway slaves in Brazil.

This research is qualitative and located within the field of so-called Engaged Research, which can be considered one of the approaches within Action Research. This approach is taken because the authors work in universities that have carried out interventions in the territorial context of Brumadinho since the 2019 disaster perpetrated by the mining corporation. The authors were present in the Indigenous territory through the Knowledge and Innovation for Sustainability University-Community Program (SABIÁS Program). This is a program developed by the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, working with local communities, traditional and ancient groups and cultures, and social and environmental movements to support sustainability in places marked by inequality, poverty, and environmental racism.

This paper is structured in the following sections, after this introduction. Firstly, there is a theoretical section discussing Biopolitics, Necropolitics, and Epistemicide based on Foucault and Mbembe's approaches. Then, we present the legal and practical foundations of the Consultation Protocols, with the example of the Xukuru Kariri people and considerations about the importance of the instruments for overcoming the context of epistemicide discussed in the previous session. Next, the methodological strategies of the study are presented, and these are followed by a discussion of the importance of research and university-community projects based on the instruments of the Consultation Protocols. Our final remarks point to the advances, the risks, and the resistance of Indigenous People in Brazil as they fight for their rights in territories marked by environmental conflicts and racism of which Brumadinho municipality is a huge example, unfortunately. Finally, returning to an academic focus, we present some strategies and interactions that all we in the contemporary university must bring with us, as approaches to block the colonial interactions and the epistemicide of Indigenous and traditional communities' knowledge.

## Consultation Protocols of Xukuru Kariri People

Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) deals with the right to free, prior, and informed consultation of traditional peoples and communities (art. 6), indicating that it is up to 'the peoples concerned to be consulted, through appropriate procedures and, in particular, through their representative institutions, whenever legislative or administrative measures are envisaged that may directly affect them'. This means that activities that affect or may affect the interests of Indigenous communities generate the right to consultation, as well as the obligation for non-Indigenous actors to consult the communities beforehand, offering all necessary information as support for the consultation, as well as an opportunity for understanding and deliberation on the topic.

In Brazil, ILO Convention 169 was ratified by Decree No. 10,088/2019, so that the international standard was incorporated into the Brazilian legal system, assuming the nature of a fundamental right – with constitutional correspondence to article 231 of the Federal Constitution, which provides that 'the social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions of Indigenous Peoples are recognized'. At this point, it is important to remember that Convention No. 107, which preceded the aforementioned 169, dealt with integrationist relations, so measures should be adopted to integrate Indigenous People into non-Indigenous society ([Kayser 2010](#)). That is, there was no need for participation and consultation of Indigenous People since the understanding was that they were a primitive condition that would be overcome by integration with 'civilization' – in the already presented logic of erasure of the 'Other'. Until the promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988, the integrationist theory also permeated the Brazilian legal system. Both Convention 169 and the Brazilian Constitution itself were responsible for a legal shift in the understanding of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, who had the right to be themselves affirmed ([Souza Filho 1998](#)), together with the right to consultation, essential for respecting traditions and culture.

To operationalize consultation processes, Indigenous communities can prepare, either in text or orally, Consultation Protocols which, in short, function as manuals so that external, non-Indigenous actors can

carry out consultations in the territories, directly or through the State, depending on the instructions in the Protocols themselves. The Consultation Protocols also guarantee legal security to the consultants, reflecting the political and social organization of the territory, as they allow for the recording of the violation of rights and the sociocultural organization of the consulted communities. In the same sense, the protocols are an instrument for recording the consideration and knowledge of the rights invoked by the Indigenous communities.

Protocols are particularly important in cases of consultations to be carried out in territories with complex political structures. This is because they allow for standardization of the actions of the consultants, following procedures guided by the community itself, which eliminates the risk of fostering internal conflicts and allegations of violation of free, prior, and informed consultation. Given the right to free, prior, and informed consultation, and considering the need to operationalize this right, the Xukuru Kariri, from the *Arapowã Kakyá Village*, in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, prepared the Protocol, based on a dynamic of autonomy.

It is important to clarify that the following report is made possible by the authors' participation with the Xukuru Kariri Indigenous community, including legal clarifications related to the right to free, prior, and informed consultation. On June 1, 2021, a legal visit was arranged to the *Arapowã Kakyá village*, with a discussion group with the leaders, including Chief Arapowã and Pajé Paulo. On that occasion, a discussion group was organized about the right to free, prior, and informed consultation, and the possibilities of applying the Consultation Protocols were clarified. It was also instructed that it was important for the Protocol to answer questions such as 'Who are the Xukuru Kariri?', 'How is the village organized?' and 'When and how the consultation should take place'. After the discussion, the leaders took their time to have internal debates about the right to consultation, as well as the need or not to prepare a Protocol for the community. After the internal deliberation, Chief Arapowã contacted the community and requested their presence in the *Arapowã Kakyá Village*, so that the information from the internal debates could be shared.

Given this, on June 15, 2021, a visit was made to the Indigenous territory and, under a symbolic tree of the territory, where the first community meetings since the resumption of the territory took place, support was requested for the systematization of the information that had already been constructed and deliberated by the Indigenous community. That is, the leaders informed those who were assembled of the content of the information that should be included in the consultation protocol, so that the lawyer in charge of the task could simply transform it into text and arrange for the layout of the document – considering the community's option for the document to be written.

The systematization of information was carried out based on the transcription of oral instructions given by Chief Arapowã and the layout was carried out with the support of the Nenuca Institute for Sustainable Development (INSEA) with photographs selected by the Indigenous community itself. In the document, the Indigenous People indicate that they came from Palmeira dos Índios, in Alagoas, and that, due to difficulties, they began a fight for territory, until they arrived in Brumadinho, in Minas Gerais. In the same sense, the Protocol reaffirms that the community's life project is the preservation of human beings and the environment (*Pindó Marãhã de Abi Ayala*) and that the Xukuru is 'a bitter and hard root that no one eats'. Regarding the political organization, the text of the document states:

Leaders help organize our community on a day-to-day basis, being the spokespersons for our decisions. Therefore, every consultation process must go through the Chief, who is our representative. It is the Chief who, together with the Shaman, will sign documents and represent the *Arapowã Kakyá Village*. In the absence of the Chief, the Vice-Chief and the Shaman are responsible for representing the Indigenous community and signing documents ([Arapowã Kakyá 2021](#), p. 1).

Therefore, any contact with the Indigenous community in the absence of the Chief, Vice-Chief, or Shaman must be postponed, so that it only occurs when one of the aforementioned leaders is in the territory.

Furthermore, the *Arapowã Kakyá Association* also plays an important role and is highlighted in the Protocol. This is because it was founded to support and promote the sustainability of the community. It is through this association that the village seeks to participate in projects, actions, programs, and policies to promote the well-being of the Xukuru Kariri.

With these indications, the document also reaffirms the importance of the Consultation Protocol itself, which is ‘an instrument for ensuring that our rights are respected. It is through this Protocol that we will participate and interfere in all projects and situations that affect us directly or indirectly. It is through this Protocol that our voice must be heard and our organization and autonomy preserved’. Thus, the Xukuru Kariri must be consulted whenever ‘any activities or discussions are organized or developed’ that affect them directly or indirectly.

Initially, the document indicates the institutions that must participate in the consultation process, necessarily: the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office, Federal Public Defender’s Office, National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI), and Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI). Likewise, all consultations must take place within the territory and, if in the interest of the community, may take place in other spaces – as long as the consultant provides transportation and food for all Indigenous People who will participate in the consultation process. The Protocol also contains an important provision regarding the use of technologies:

Considering the barriers to access to technologies, all meetings, hearings and other activities with our Xukuru Kariri People of the *Arapowã Kakyá Village* must take place in person, as a way of ensuring respect for our culture, autonomy, and organization ([Arapowã Kakyá 2021](#), p. 2).

Regarding the consultation procedure, the document is structured in five steps. The first of these instructs that ‘anyone interested in carrying out the consultation must contact the Chief of our community, by e-mail and WhatsApp, informing their interest in carrying out the Free, Prior and Informed Consultation. The Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office of the Union, FUNAI, and CIMI must also be notified of the request, via official letter’. From this point on, the Chief returns with the date of the meeting for the consultation, which will be scheduled based on the availability of the Indigenous leaders, Justice Institutions, FUNAI and CIMI.

The second step will be to conduct the consultation in person, subject to the presence of the MPF, DPU, FUNAI, and CIMI. Furthermore, it is important that everyone introduces themselves and that the Chief receives the documentation detailing the issues in accessible language. Likewise, accessible language must be used throughout the meeting, exclusively in Portuguese – with the meeting ending after the consultant has presented the demand.

The third step will be an internal community meeting, with or without the presence of the Justice Institutions, FUNAI, and CIMI. ‘The decision-making process will last as long as the Indigenous community deems appropriate, and those interested in the consultation will not be able to contact the community during this period.’ This will prevent pressure on the leaders.

If there are any doubts regarding the process, the Indigenous community may submit questions and request preliminary information:

If the community believes that there is a lack of information to make a decision, the Chief will contact the interested party by email or WhatsApp to schedule a new face-to-face meeting. In this case, the meeting must take place in the territory, with the presence of the MPF, DPU, FUNAI, and CIMI, so that the community can request clarification. Within 2 business days after the meeting,

the interested party must formalize, by email and WhatsApp, all additional information, with a copy of the documentation to the Justice Institutions, FUNAI, and CIMI. This process may be repeated as many times as the Indigenous community deems necessary ([Arapowã Kakyá 2021](#), p. 2).

The fourth step will be to call a meeting with the interested party, MPF, DPU, FUNAI, and CIMI, at which time the Chief will communicate the Indigenous community's decision, 'with the interested party not being allowed to raise any questions that could embarrass the leaders'.

Finally, step five is the continuation of the transfers and information to the Indigenous community, if the projects are accepted. In this phase, compliance with the terms informed during the consultation is monitored. If any non-compliance is found, the community may seek to guarantee its rights and, eventually, penalize the violating consultant.

At this point, it is important to point out that Brazilian law does not expressly provide that any failure – partial or total – to comply with the right to free, prior, and informed consultation will give rise to administrative, criminal or civil liability. In any case, it is important to point out the possibility that the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, FUNAI and other Indigenous agencies, whether or not provoked by the Indigenous community, may take legal action in the event of collective damage resulting from non-compliance with the Consultation Protocol – which may give rise to discussions about the payment of collective compensation.

What we see is that the Consultation Protocols are instruments that allow the Indigenous community to understand the actions of exogenous agents within the territory – allowing or regulating the proposed actions, which may occur within the community or externally, with indirect implications. This creates opportunities for resistance to epistemicide, to the extent that the participation of the people in the processes that concern them distances the community from being a mere object of observation, the 'Other', to assume a place in which its reason and organization also generate impacts.

It is in this sense that the importance of observing the Consultation Protocols when carrying out extension and research practices within Indigenous territories is also affirmed. This is because submitting the work of extension workers and researchers to the organization of the territory can distance extractive practices and guide non-Indigenous People towards contexts of understanding non-traditional knowledge – which eliminates the risk of epistemicide through operations in the community.

## Methodology

We developed an Action Research based on the principles of Engaged Research too ([Harari et al. 2021](#); [Harari & Pozzebon 2023](#)), trying to support the protagonism, autonomy, and centrality of Xukuru Kariri people to fight for their rights in the context of the Governance for Reparation process in the Brumadinho municipality. The work developed with Indigenous communities enables readings about the behavior of agents in the territories, understanding them as active social actors as much as traditional communities. The research happens continuously in this territory through the permanent university-community program "Saberes e Inovações pela Sustentabilidade – SABIÁS<sup>3</sup> – that means Knowledge and Innovation for Sustainability.

SABIÁS is one of the Action Research activities of the research group Núcleo de Pesquisas em Ética e Gestão Social (NUPEGS), (Research Group on Ethics, and Social Management), belonging to the Postgraduate Program in Management (PPGA) of the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC Minas). In the SABIÁS, and NUPEGS initiatives we can find post-doctoral researchers, Ph.D, and

<sup>3</sup> Sabiá is a common Brazilian bird.

M.A. candidates, and graduate students from multiple areas such as Management, Economics, Geography, Psychology, Biology, Law, and Medicine. Some of the members of the SABIÁS Program, and NUPEGS came from popular classes and represent some of the local actors that work in partnership with the university in these initiatives. The proposal is to have some kind of representation of black, Indigenous, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, poor, and popular classes inside the research group.

The main theoretical references for the SABIÁS Program, and NUPEGS research and university-community projects are the principles of ‘social validation’, and ‘thinking-feeling rationality’ from [Borda \(1994\)](#), the ‘critical pedagogy’, and ‘hope pedagogy’ of [Freire \(1981, 1997, 2005\)](#), and the engaged research as proposed by [Harari et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Harari & Pozzebon \(2023\)](#).

The three authors of this paper are non-Indigenous people, but many of the achievements, analysis, and arguments developed here were discussed inside the SABIÁS Program and NUPEGS team. Besides this, the authors of this paper, by actively listening to the organic demands of the community, supported the understanding of the right to consultation, the development of workshops, and the drafting of the Consultation Protocol. Since then, the actions have been concentrated on different fronts guided by the Indigenous leaders, based on the practice inside university-community projects – which aims to facilitate the reading of theory based on field experience.

Based on the principles of engaged research ([Harari et al. 2021](#); [Harari & Pozzebon 2023](#)), the main research question and the object of study of our research were discussed previously with the Xuruku Kariri people, representing a demand of this community too. We call this process social validation. After that, we designed the research in dialogue with other academics and carried out the scientific validation of our research too. In engaged research, it is quite important to build knowledge together with the Indigenous people, ‘not for’ this community, but ‘with’ this local group. In this way, the knowledge belongs to the community that achieves more degrees of autonomy, protagonism, and centrality at the same time that the knowledge of the researchers is incorporated in the Protocol Process.

From the perspectives that are constructed by the protagonism, autonomy, and centrality of local communities, it is possible to reflect on the applications of Mbembe’s theory (2018) regarding epistemicide, as well as the importance of free, prior, and informed consultation processes for Indigenous People, especially the Xukuru Kariri. This means that the dialogue with and between the communities of Brumadinho makes up the methodological strategy of the study, as a way of carrying out theoretical applications in territorial experience, with a view to shedding light on new forms and contours of necropolitics and alternatives for overcoming the systematic erasure of knowledge and peoples.

Through the SABIÁS Program, the authors have been present in the Indigenous territory since 2022 and, by actively listening to the organic demands of the community, we have supported the understanding of the right to consultation. The work was supported by the development and implementation of workshops within the Arapowā Kakyá Village, with the presence of community leaders and members. After each meeting, the community took time for internal discussions on the sociopolitical organization flows – with a subsequent call for a new workshop until the drafting of the Consultation Protocol was finalized. The actions, since the publication of the document, have focused on different fronts guided by the leaders, based on extension practice – which aims to facilitate the development of theory based on field experience.

Through open dialogue with communities as the leaders of the debate, understandings are constructed about the realities and hardships suffered in the territory. With these reflections, the theoretical notions that make up this study are worked on, to seek practical applications and identifications of the processes of epistemicide and resistance through consultation processes – with reflection on the importance of protocols in the context of research and university-community projects.

## Consultation Protocols & University-Community Projects

The proximity and dialogue with the communities make possible the aforementioned work with the Indigenous community of the *Arapowã Kakyá village*, Xukuru Kariri – where the Consultation Protocol presented in this article was drawn up and on which the discussions presented here are based.

The Xukuru Kariri are a people inserted in the context of the regeneration industry, due to the rupture of the Vale SA dam, with the totality of the impacts suffered in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, and the historical vulnerabilities to which this community is already subjected. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the challenge of maintaining the traditional and immemorial culture in the context of reparation, with the participation and presence of several exogenous actors. This demands the engagement of the leaders and can generate processes of social and economic fragility.

In addition to the challenges directly experienced by the community, the arrival of diverse exogenous actors in the territory must also be considered. Many of these actors present regenerative proposals for the local economy that do not adhere to territorial realities, which can lead to the erasure of demands from the communities themselves – especially in the Indigenous context.

It is in this sense that research and extension work must be marked by sensitivity, as it is necessary to understand the territory without the stigma of subordination – which is what makes a people inferior and erases knowledge based on work that proposes solutions based on Western thought, and not on the knowledge of the territory itself. When the work of the University is limited to observation or interventions of ‘true science’ as an alternative to internal problems (whose causes, as a rule, derive from the hegemonic logic itself), there is a risk of deepening the dynamics of epistemicide – even if the good intentions of extension and research are the initial tone of the action.

These dynamics, when centred on Otherness and the sovereignty of university knowledge, without the sensitivity to understand the territory as self-sufficient, inevitably result in the dismantling of cultural and political potential, which can also be read in the light of epistemicide. In other words, there is the possibility that the actions of exogenous actors in research and extension contribute to the overlapping of historical damages and, even more, to the cultural weakening and production of traditional knowledge that can direct the processes of cultural strengthening based on the active engagement of communities.

What is being argued, therefore, is that a ‘Westernized’ approach to Indigenous territories, along the lines of traditional university practices, leads to the death of meanings, knowledge, and culture. This creates the risk of erasure and disappearance of the knowledge in territories and their meanings, which implies the disappearance of peoples and communities.

It is possible to address the role of university organizations and projects in diluting power-violence in the social fabric, and in applying life conditioning factors based on the influence of their activities on society and the context in which vulnerable communities are inserted. Whether through the impacts on the discourses presented in the territory, through extractivism in research practices, or through actions that do not place Indigenous People at the centre of implementation, there is a conditioning of the lives of the communities that are under the spectrum of interest and influence of these exogenous organizations.

From these biopolitical dynamics – which are the mechanisms for executing biopower – the maxim outlined by Foucault becomes paramount: make live and let die. Exogenous institutions assume the role of controlling aspects of the life of the community and, through this control, they let communities perish (or make communities perish).

It is also important to understand that the expansion of the participation of various organizations and extension and research projects in the territory generates external interference in the political and social organization of the community. This is because, in addition to the need to establish mechanisms to assist

visitors, there is also a dynamic of suggestions and actions that can alter flows of ideas and conversations previously established internally.

These interactions, as verified in the field, alter culture and knowledge and put the survival of the subjectivities of communities at risk. According to the theoretical analysis presented, this is configured as a stage of epistemicide – in terms of the risk of symbolic disappearance of individuals and collectives due to the disintegration of cultural cohesion and the production of knowledge.

From this perspective, the role of Consultation Protocols for territorial strengthening in the face of research and extension activities is reinforced. As can be seen in the case of the Xukuru Kariri Protocol, compliance with the consultation phases established by the community allows for an understanding of the actions offered, as well as the limits that can be created to protect the territory from exogenous agents. In other words, Consultation Protocols can be used as instruments to limit the actions of organizations within the territory, making contacts and actions that violate the sociopolitical organization of Indigenous communities unfeasible. That is, by reflecting the wishes and needs of the community, the Protocols have the potential to validate and permit interactions. Likewise, through comprehensive knowledge of the extension and/or research project, the community – when duly consulted and respected – can build strategies and alternatives to prevent extractive practices, so that its role will not be that of a simple observed object, but of an actor who also influences movements, demands and work.

In other words, when carrying out extension work in the territory, the practice should always be to make the University's skills available based on all possible information, so that the community – based on its organization – can decide whether it intends to request support and what type of extension work will be necessary for the group. It refers to free, prior, and informed consultation as an instrument for strengthening autonomy and overcoming – albeit partially – the epistemicide directed at Indigenous communities.

## Epistemicide and Indigenous People

[Carneiro \(2005\)](#) sees epistemicide as an instrument that promotes the disqualification and devaluation of the knowledge and culture of peoples considered subjugated, among them, the Indigenous population. Historically, Indigenous communities have been the target of intense extortion of knowledge to the detriment of knowledge considered superior: non-Indigenous, European, and Global North knowledge ([Carneiro 2005](#); [Grosfoguel 2016b](#)).

The concept of epistemicide improves the comprehension of necropolitical practices ([Mbembe 2018](#)). The overvaluation of Western capitalistic societies' knowledge and the retention of this knowledge by traditional science implies and generates the disqualification of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge production, which is understood as 'non-science'. For this practice to operate, it is also necessary that a hegemony of knowledge, culture, and understanding be crystallized ([Borda, 1987](#)).

Not only were Indigenous physical territories taken and devastated over the centuries, but territories of knowledge were also taken. There was an expropriation of native knowledge, making the European, scientific, and Global North societies' knowledge hegemonic. It is precisely the interiorization of non-Eurocentric knowledge production, produced by other political bodies, that leads to cognitive injustice, but not only that. Epistemicide allows colonialist projects to prevail, especially in Indigenous communities ([Quijano 2005](#)).

Science is formulated in a world that is predominantly global and capitalist, and it is produced to serve it primarily. In this sense, the logic of knowledge as a provider of maintenance of the current system is in the interest of this very system. Therefore, scientific knowledge can eradicate traditional knowledge, which is overthrown and disqualified ([Grosfoguel 2016b](#)).

The epistemicide of Indigenous People is well illustrated through the lens of necropolitics. [Mbembe \(2018\)](#) created a marked criticism of Colonialism and Eurocentrism, and coined the concept of necropolitics based on a non-European reading of [Foucault's \(2010\)](#) concept of biopower. Mbembe's work (2018) complements the studies of the French philosopher, based on the notion of necropower. For [Foucault \(2010\)](#) a policy of 'making life and letting die' prevailed, and for [Mbembe \(2018\)](#) not only does one let these bodies die, but mechanisms are also created that operate for their direct destruction ([Mbembe 2018](#)).

[Lima \(2018\)](#) argues that the concept of necropolitics allows us to analyze power diagrams in different contexts, whether post-colonial, or in the processes of colonization and in the traces of coloniality that mark Latin American contexts. Resuming [Foucault's \(2010\)](#) notions of sovereignty, [Mbembe \(2018\)](#) emphasizes that '[...] the maximum expression of sovereignty resides, to a large extent, in the power and capacity to dictate who can live and who must die' ([Mbembe 2018](#), p. 10).

It is important to remember that necropolitics is precisely the reflection of the achievements of the processes of slavery and colonization that operated and continue to operate in the intricacies of society, on subalternized populations. In the past, for example, there were black and Indigenous People who, after being enslaved or predominantly exterminated, were 'left to their own devices'. As [Mei \(2020, p. 2\)](#) rightly states: 'the accumulation of capital and neoliberalism promote the exacerbation of the necropolitical character of a country formed under the impact of colonial conquest and slavery'.

Necropolitics operates not only through the physical death of bodies, but also through symbolic, cultural death, and it is from this perspective that epistemicide occurs ([Mbembe 2018](#)). Therefore, the knowledge that is produced from a Global South logic is interiorized by Western knowledge, undergoing an 'Epistemic *Apartheid*', including within knowledge-producing institutions, such as universities ([Mignolo 2017a; Santos 2007](#)). Epistemicide dates back to the colonization processes of the Americas, despite being a practice that persists in contemporary times. [Zeifert, Papłowski & Agnoletto \(2023\)](#) highlight that the colonization of Indigenous People served to colonize and destroy their culture on a massive scale.

Regarding the correlations between necropolitics and epistemicide, which was well exemplified by the expropriation of knowledge through observation of the subaltern, it is important to highlight that such dynamics are closely linked to the notion of enmity. According to [Mbembe \(2018\)](#), those who do not meet the systemic claim are always seen as enemies to be studied and eliminated, and as a threat to life itself. Since this is a threat not only to security but to life itself, a violent and exterminating approach to such a threat becomes necessary ([Mbembe 2018](#)).

Epistemicide occurs in two main ways: ontological denial and epistemic disqualification ([Maldonado-Torres 2007](#)). In other words, it occurs through the denial of being and the disqualification of the knowledge of the Other. These subalternized individuals are condemned from the earth. This means that it matters little how they are killed, whether physically or symbolically. There is no harm to capitalist logic in eliminating knowledge, as long as non-Indigenous hegemony operates. Indigenous subjects have been positioned outside the place of the experience of citizenship and humanity, exposed to continuous violence that does not require a moral, ethical, or legal transgression; it is experienced not by action, not by what they do, but by what they are ([Maldonado-Torres 2007; Acosta 2016](#)).

[Quijano \(2005\)](#) says that is important to understand the nuances of the consequences of colonialism for Indigenous Peoples and its correlation with epistemicide: the notion that colonialism meant the dispossession of peoples and their singularities, and the creation of a new identity, which was colonial, racial, and negative. These factors implied the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples of their place in the production of humanity's culture, and their identity-based submission, as beings capable of producing, from this perspective, only inferior cultures.

It is possible to point out a common practice in Indigenous territories that promotes a progressive epistemicide towards these communities: epistemic extractivism. This extractivism occurs as a way of being,

existing, and acting in the world, in such a way that it is practised through the appropriation of beings, culture, knowledge, and natures of communities transformed into subalterns ([Gudynas 2009](#); [Zhou & Laschefski 2010](#); [Acsehrad 2018](#); [Dias & Oliveira 2018a, 2018b](#)). This extractivism generally occurs without consent and without consideration of the negative impacts it generates on the lives of human and non-human beings. Thus, Indigenous territories, Indigenous People, and nature itself are decimated and extorted in favour of the production of knowledge that feeds a largely imperialist, colonialist and European model of the world. This extortion also contributes to the subjugation of peoples considered racially inferior, sustaining a non-Indigenous society ([Barbosa 2018](#)).

These practices are often dressed up in subtlety and legitimized by different organizations, by the current capitalist system, as well as by the notion that the epistemicide of undesirable bodies is a security measure for the survival of knowledge useful to society. This knowledge, which reaches Westernized universities, has therefore become consensual. It has been considered normal and common within academic fields that knowledge is produced almost exclusively by white, Western men, who produce the canon of all academic knowledge. [Grosfoguel \(2016a, p.19\)](#) states, 'there is no scandal in this, it is all a reflection of the naturalization of the racist/sexist epistemic structures of knowledge that prevail in the modern and colonial world'.

People seen as 'without rationality', such as Indigenous People, are systematically and epistemologically excluded from the intricacies of the knowledge production structures of universities, for example. It is worth noting, however, that this exclusion does not only occur in university settings but also in schools and professional settings. The school model with Enlightenment roots, which exalts reason and places the West as a world reference, contributes to the devaluation of Indigenous cultures, as well as their erasure, promoting a cultural, linguistic, and social murder of these communities ([Santos 2016](#)).

Epistemicide can also be found in an attempt to undo connections and knowledge production between communities within Indigenous people. The presence of non-Indigenous People, in a hegemonic way, promotes the erasure of these Indigenous individuals, whose subjectivities and knowledge are erased and who, little by little, cease to exist ([Souza Filho 1998](#)).

It is therefore said that epistemicide kills without killing directly or biologically. What is cause for concern is precisely the need to ensure that Indigenous populations have their socio-environmental rights and dignity safeguarded, but also that their production of knowledge, wisdom, culture, and legacy are equally respected and maintained. In this dynamic, epistemicide seeks to strip Indigenous Peoples of reason, emptying them of humanity and objectifying them ([Lima 2018](#)). If good and valid knowledge is solely and exclusively related to thinking that is Eurocentric, so-called scientific, predominantly masculine, and heteronormative, then justifications are created to block the possibility of the subaltern placing himself as a subject of knowledge, of culture, capable of thinking, discerning and creating ([Quijano 2005](#); [Moreira 2007](#)).

Overcoming the cycle of epistemicide, in principle, demands the consideration of Indigenous bodies as producers of knowledge and capable of organizing a reason that, despite being non-Western, retains value and is independent of hegemonic knowledge. This is possible, among other ways and from a practical perspective, by strengthening autonomy for decision-making and participation in non-hegemonic and hegemonic spaces of society: a path to overcoming the condition of being vulnerable, which can be overlooked, erased, and ignored in sociopolitical processes. ([Zeifert, Paplowski & Agnoletto 2023](#))

It is in this sense that the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation – consolidated through the Consultation Protocols of Indigenous communities – is indicated as an instrument to confront the logic of epistemicide. This is because, as has been shown, it is an alternative for Indigenous Peoples, as organizations, to build relationships with other institutions, integrating exogenous systems with endogenous ones, minimizing the risks related to extractivism and the erasure of information and knowledge ([Kayser 2010](#)).

## Final Remarks

Epistemicide is indicated as a conceptual path that can enable readings about Indigenous Peoples in Brazil. Through Mbembe's (2018) discussions, it is understood that it is viable to apply epistemicide as a theory for interpreting systemic movements that intend to undermine cultural aspects in territories to affect the potentialities of living of Brazilian Indigenous People.

On the other hand, the Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation Protocols can be used by Indigenous communities as an instrument to change the path of epistemicide on which they have inserted by non-Indigenous People. The Protocols allow the deconstruction of Otherness, removing the original communities from the place of being mere objects to be observed – as exotic beings that demand intervention and/or integration. Thus, the consultation can be used to guarantee the condition of participants, creators, and organizers of knowledge and wills that are not passive to exogenous action in the territory.

Using the Xukuru Kariri Consultation Protocol as an object of research, which indicates how the process of free, prior, and informed consultation in the community should occur, our paper indicates the importance of research and extension projects being guided by community consultation. This is to avoid the occurrence of processes of weakening culture and knowledge due to the University's actions in the territories, with the erasure of the Indigenous Peoples' ability to take action. This gives rise to the possibility of applying the notions of epistemicide through the exogenous actions of the communities, but also the possibility of overcoming the cycle through actions that guarantee autonomy, access to information, and participation in the construction of knowledge by the Indigenous People themselves.

We believe that more research about Indigenous People should happen through new approaches, bringing advances to our research in this paper. In the future, studies are important to advance the dialogue with powerful ideas and theories that have come from Indigenous intellectuals and thinkers. Nowadays, in different parts of the world, especially in Brazil, more and more Indigenous people are conquering space to contribute in the ideas debate about rights, culture, environment, rights, and knowledge. In this way, we can advance engaged research and the research from the Global South through more interesting, and complex analyses, and debates.

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