


The “others” of the favelas: humans, animals and environments weaving tracks for a multispecies health project

Os “outros” das favelas: humanos, animais e ambientes tecendo pistas para um projeto de saúde multiespécies

Los “otros” de las favelas: humanos, animales y ambientes tejiendo pistas para un proyecto de salud multiespecies

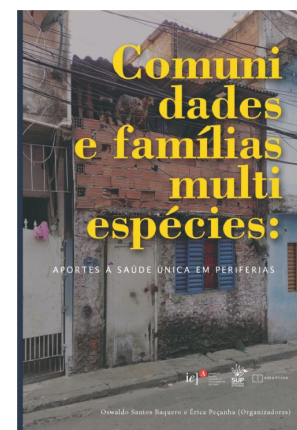
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“Communities and multispecies families: contributions to the One Health approach in peripheries”¹ is a collective authorship book, organized by Oswaldo Santos Baquero and Erica Peçanha, professors and researchers at the University of São Paulo (USP). Released in 2021 by the Amavisse Publishing House in São Paulo, shows the concurrence in its writing of multiple living beings, bodies, territories, most of which experience marginalization and resistance processes.

We find ourselves in the presence of a work that blends a multiplicity of textual productions such as essays, autobiographical reflections, theoretical debates, research reports, among others. Such approach is positioned as inter(in)disciplinary when summoning different fields of knowledge to approach health, but also for opening a space of struggle against the epistemicidal erasure of the knowledge of the peripheries. As stated in the introduction: “this book opens a space from the intersection between the peripheries of knowledge, both urban and animal”² (p. 14).



Baquero OS, Peçanha E, organizadores. Comunidades e famílias multiespécies: aportes à saúde única em periferias. São Paulo: Amavisse; 2021.



During this journey, undergraduate students from different courses at USP, doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows, will present themselves, but not only them. Susi and Pitchula, domiciled dogs, the companion cats Janette and Joe, the jabuti (land turtle) Sid, the puppies Baby and Beethoven, the dogs Bidu and Bob, a parrot and a "brave" rooster also are encompassed by the crossing to which the book invites us. Not to mention the between-places where we are taken by the hands of the authors: the USP campus -so close and at the same time far - from the slums São Remo, Jardim Keralux and inside it, the open-air water course and the Haitian community that cohabits in the territory. Thus, the book displaces the narrative of the single universal subject of health - the Human - to present us with epistemic and ethical coordinates that conceive the health of marginalized multi-species collectives through other differing logic.

The book as a whole ends up being an extensive and therefore comprehensive material. The people who sign the chapters come from different backgrounds that result in more than 20 texts that exceed 300 pages. Therefore, in order to construct this review, I preferred to focus on the central argument that runs through the various chapters, and which I will explain in the lines that follow. The introduction section of the book is very correct in the way it introduces the chapters, leaving an irresistible taste for an in-depth reading of them.

The trove of situations that the book presents us with can be aligned with what seems to be the key question of the work: what do the multispecies collectives, located in the urban peripheries of the city of São Paulo, have to teach us about health? A question from which the various works scrutinize and elucidate the central argument that guides the authors in their endeavor. Such argument operates a fissure in the hegemonic conceptions of health, claiming the decentralization of the Human as the exclusive target of health policies, the refusal of the ontological binarism that separates humans, animals and nature, and the rescue of marginalized knowledges that inspire cosmo-politics of the "living well" of multi-species collectives.

Thus, the authors take the peripheries as a space to outline a critical health proposal. Such proposal is inscribed in a matrix of decolonial thought and praxis that, by choosing this framework, invites us not to leave out of the grammars of care the great majority of the people who live in the peripheries. In other words, we are facing a work that calls for a rethinking of structural health policies, based on local experiences. In the dialogue woven throughout the work, we come across humans, animals, and environments that challenge researchers and certain ways of doing research in the outskirts. As the following questioning shows: "[...] after the woman from the census left, my neighbor came here to complain that they didn't ask about the pig. There were questions about cats, dogs, and birds, but none about Mel"³ (p. 100). The pedagogical value of the book also lies in this type of tension that the subjects involved in the research pose to the actors in the academic milieu.

The present work contributes to think the political dimension, the role of the State, of the public university in the management of health considered as a project of multi-species social justice. As a result, one of the central issues of the book is the urgency to embrace the relations of multi-species co-constitution, as a way to break the complicities with necropolitical, neoliberal, anthropocentric and colonial projects



that have been negligently guiding health actions in peripheries. Using the research instruments as a starting point, some of the texts emphasize the importance of censuses that include animals and environments and not only humans. The need to create disciplines that provide this training is highlighted, which has been finding a space in university extension projects mentioned in the book.

Faced with the limits of the mapping processes that do not always contemplate the complexities of the peripheries, the trajectories of those who were born and/or live in the peripheries are relevant. The experiences, accounts, and insights of several people who live in the peripheries and study at USP provide eloquent data about the marginalization mechanisms that affect them and their non-human relatives. In this aspect, one of the texts refers: “our house in São Remo was poorly ventilated, with only one window in the kitchen that stayed open, and the gate was open, which made it impossible to control our cats’ traffic”³ (p. 75).

Far from a perspective of a universal health subject, the texts in the book allow us to look at multiple specificities; from the obstacles of the circulation and coexistence of animals in the contexts of the peripheries to the tensions of being racialized migrants living in Jardim Keralux. The book then directs its gaze to issues such as “race” and migration as vectors crosscutting health.

These premises guide the methodological choices of the different works. It is based on them that, in order to build the analyses, the authors dwell on places like the cat alleys, the water course, backyards and alleys, but also on the memories of floods and inundations, on the only three asphalted streets of Vila Guaraciaba. This critical observation makes it possible to open the scope of some theoretical notions such as sustainable cities, one of the many addressed in the book. In the end, do the sustainability criteria promoted by international agencies such as the UN welcome the reality of the urban peripheries?

Another value of the work lies in its resonance with the times in Brazil, a privileged locus of health neglect under the administration of current president Jair Bolsonaro, who, in the midst of the global health crisis caused by the Sars-Cov-2 virus, has placed it in the dimension of “just a little flu”. This management has shown very well that the State is also empowered in the function of killing the “other”, using the rhetoric of threat to its sovereignty. Against this backdrop, the book becomes an important record of another political grammar, opposed to this administration. Several texts make use of the concepts of biopolitics by Michel Foucault and of necropolitics by Achille Mbembe to explain how the figure of the slum is taken as the constitutive exterior that threatens “national security”. It is from this perspective that escapes conventional census analyses that several works show us the persistence of the colonial paradigm, responsible for environmental racism in territories like Jardim Keralux.

To counteract this deadly grammar, the book places a wager on a multi-species ethics, interested in elucidating the mechanisms that jointly produce outcast lives. At the same time, it is on the basis of this ethic that the book breaks with the image of the slums as a mere reflection of the ‘Waste Room’ described in the words of Maria Carolina de Jesus. The texts discuss notions of Latin American well-living that are present in these territories, and rescue the disputes that the



slum dwellers articulate in forums and other formal spaces. As one of the works points out: "São Remo is a place full of lives, whether in the streets, alleys, blocks, or houses"⁴ (p. 182). Precisely, the plurality of pulsating lives constitutes the mark of the multi-species alliances that, without erasing singularities, weave focal points of resistance. In this sense, the book is a breath of fresh air, an anchor where we can be sure of our lives in the present times. Throw yourself into this captivating reading that traces paths to another Brazil that already exists, and that has much to teach us about ethics and politics committed to the flourishing of otherness.

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Conflict of interest

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