

**THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF WARAO INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IN MOSSORÓ-RN**

***O PROCESSO DE INTEGRAÇÃO SOCIAL DE CRIANÇAS E ADOLESCENTES INDÍGENAS WARAO NA ESCOLA PÚBLICA EM MOSSORÓ-RN***

***EL PROCESO DE INTEGRACIÓN SOCIAL DE LOS NIÑOS Y ADOLESCENTES INDÍGENAS WARAO EN LA ESCUELA PÚBLICA DE MOSSORÓ-RN***

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**ABSTRACT:** This article brings together a set of ethnographic notes and anthropological reflections on the current process of social integration of the Warao in the Public School of Mossoró-RN, aiming to organize the effort of critical apprehension that has been built within the scope of the research *The Warao in Mossoró: the migratory dynamics and the urban village process in the Covid-19 pandemic scenario*. The dynamics underway since the year 2021 of this winding process that involves the small “foreign” indigenous group and the welcoming local Brazilian society, in a broad sense, has advanced significantly in the current year of 2022. However, bureaucratic obstacles persist on the part of the authorities and, above all, equivocations at a symbolic, moral-emotional and political-ideological level on both sides (the Warao and the surrounding Brazilian society) on how (and if) this Warao integration in the Formal Education of Public Schools should continue, in abstract terms. And, at a concrete and situational level, in a local school unit despite all the well-known regrets in the already precarious and overloaded Brazilian Education. This bureaucratically tense, pedagogically challenging and anthropologically rich process of integration of the Warao in the Public School in Mossoró-RN was problematized in three argumentative moments: the arrival of the Warao in urban Mossoró; the legal diplomas that guarantee the School Education to the Indigenous and to the Migrant; the concrete process of social integration of the Warao at the Padre Alfredo State School.

**KEYWORDS:** Warao. Indigenous school education. Guarantee of rights. Social Integration. Mossoró – RN.

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**RESUMO:** O presente artigo reúne um conjunto de notas etnográficas e de reflexões antropológicas sobre o processo atual de integração social dos Warao na Escola Pública de Mossoró-RN, objetivando organizar o esforço de apreensão crítica que vem sendo construído no âmbito da pesquisa *Os Warao em Mossoró: a dinâmica migratória e o processo de aldeamento urbano no cenário pandêmico da Covid-19*. A dinâmica em curso desde o ano de 2021 deste processo sinuoso que envolve o pequeno grupo indígena “estrangeiro” e a sociedade brasileira local acolhedora, em sentido amplo, tem avançado significativamente no corrente ano de 2022. Contudo, persistem entraves burocráticos por parte das autoridades brasileiras e, sobretudo, equívocos a nível simbólico, moral-emotivo e político-ideológico de ambas as partes (dos Warao e da sociedade brasileira envolvente) sobre como (e se) deve prosseguir essa integração Warao na Educação Formal da Escola Pública, em termos abstratos e principiológicos. E, a nível concreto e situacional, em unidade escolar local apesar de todos os pesares tão bem conhecidos na já precarizada e sobrecarregada Educação brasileira. Esse processo burocraticamente tenso, pedagogicamente desafiador e antropológicamente rico de integração dos Warao na Escola Pública em Mossoró-RN foi problematizado em três momentos argumentativos: a chegada dos Warao no urbano mossoroense; os diplomas legais que garantem a Educação Escolar ao Indígena e ao Migrante; o processo concreto vivido de integração social dos Warao na Escola Estadual Padre Alfredo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Warao. Educação escolar indígena. Garantia de direitos. Integração social. Mossoró - RN.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo reúne un conjunto de apuntes etnográficos y reflexiones antropológicas sobre el actual proceso de integración social de los Warao en la Escuela Pública de Mossoró-RN, con el objetivo de organizar el esfuerzo de aprehensión crítica que se ha construido en el ámbito de la investigación *Os Warao en Mossoró: la dinámica migratoria y el proceso de aldea urbana en el escenario de la pandemia de la Covid-19*. La dinámica en marcha desde el año 2021 de este sinuoso proceso que involucra al pequeño grupo indígena “extranjero” y la acogedora sociedad brasileña local, en un sentido amplio, ha avanzado significativamente en el presente año 2022. Sin embargo, persisten trabas burocráticas por parte de las autoridades y, sobre todo, equívocos a nivel simbólico, moral-emocional y político-ideológico de ambos lados (los Warao y la sociedad brasileña circundante) sobre cómo (y si) esta integración Warao en la Educación Formal de las Escuelas Públicas debería continuar, en términos abstractos y de principios. Y, a nivel concreto y situacional, en una unidad escolar local a pesar de todos los lamentos bien conocidos en la ya precaria y sobrecargada educación brasileña. Este proceso burocráticamente tenso, pedagógicamente desafiante y antropológicamente rico de integración de los Warao en la Escuela Pública de Mossoró-RN fue problematizado en tres momentos argumentativos: la llegada de los Warao al Mossoro urbano; los títulos legales que garantizan la Educación Escolar a Indígenas y Migrantes; el proceso concreto de integración social de los Warao en el Colegio Estatal Padre Alfredo.

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** Warao. Educación escolar indígena. Garantía de derechos. Integración social. Mossoró - RN.

## Introduction

This article aimed to gather a set of ethnographic notes and anthropological reflections on the current process of social integration of indigenous children and adolescents of the Warao ethnic group in the Public School of Mossoró-RN<sup>4</sup>. Ultimately, it aimed to organize the most systematic and in-depth critical apprehension effort that has been built in the context of *the Warao research in Mossoró: the migratory dynamics and the process of urban village in the pandemic scenario of Covid-19*<sup>5</sup> (SILVA; BARBOSA, 2020, 2021). The dynamics still underway since the year 2021 of this process involving the small "foreign" indigenous group and the welcoming local Brazilian society, in a broad sense, has advanced significantly in this year 2022. It also counted on the festive reception on May 18 of this year of children, adolescents, fathers and mothers Warao at padre alfredo State School. However, bureaucratic obstacles persist on the part of the Brazilian authorities and, above all, misconceptions at the symbolic, moral-emotional and political-ideological level of both parties (of the Warao and the surrounding Brazilian society) on how (and if) this Warao integration should be continued in the Formal Education of the Public School, in abstract and principled terms. And, at the concrete and situational level, in the said school unit despite all the well-known regrets in the already precarious and overloaded Brazilian education.

In the concept of *misconceptions* we understand, based on Viveiros de Castro (2004), otherness as an agency that produces its own worlds, so that the frictions between cultures are based on the affirmation of distinct ontologies, with all the consequences involved therein. And that should be translated into the tense daily process of symbolic-material and territorial negotiations and moral-emotional disputes. This concept of *misconceptions*, elaborated by Viveiros de Castro (2004), and worked by Estorniolo<sup>6</sup> (2014), emphasizes the importance of the social world in the perception and production of reality lived by the actor and social agent, so that the relationship with otherness is characterized by the shock of different real worlds. And not simply by the confrontation of distinct imaginary ways of seeing the same world.

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<sup>4</sup>The city of Mossoró is located in Rio Grande do Norte, a state in northeastern Brazil. With a territorial area of 2,099.3 km<sup>2</sup>, it has according to the last demographic census 297,378,000 inhabitants. Available: <https://www.cidade-brasil.com.br/municipio-mossoro.html>. Access: 10 Oct. 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Institutionalized at UERN State University of Rio Grande do Norte as a Research Project, this ongoing research has the participation of researchers Lucas Sullivam Marques Leite, Elusiano Da Silva Melo Junior and Mateus Alexandre Pereira da Conceição.

<sup>6</sup> In the words of Estorniolo (2014, p. 493): In these translation procedures, *equivocações* – or communicative disjunctions in which the same words and concepts denote different things – would be inevitable, since each party understands a certain situation from its own conceptual language, that is, the comparisons that are possible to be established within its own universe of meanings, which begin to transform the very things to which they refer.

In the equivocation relationship, therefore, several ontologies are articulated, even in a shared language and that makes use of common words, but which mean distinct phenomena and difficult to understand from the outside perspective. Considering, therefore, that a relationship of equivocation implies the effort of translation and communication of truths from one social world to another, the concept implicitly comprises disagreements and disagreements between different modes of action and reality, so that the tacit negotiations between relational ones are more effects of impositions of assimilated conducts than agreements in fact.

Thus, we first emphasize from this theoretical perspective and in dialogue with the observations-participants in progress and the ethnographic reports already elaborated, in this sense, the enormous distances between the concrete lived in situational daily life, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the urgent demands for guarantees and rights in line with temporalities and deontological spatiality expressed, ultimately, in the right to dignity, - universalism rooted in modern Western ethnopsychology (LUTZ, 1986) that feeds both hopes and struggles and frustrations and pessimisms. In Habermasian language (HABERMAS, 2012) perhaps we could understand the problem posed in terms of *the world of life* and its communicative actancial logic (the urban village Warao) and *system* and its *instrumental institutional logic* (the political-administrative bureaucracy of the Brazilian State).

In fact, this scheme of conflictive polarity naively configured as a vulnerable relational pole that demands material and symbolic resources of the Public Power and another pole such as the state machine that seeks to manage the flames of social tension does not exhaust the reflection provoked in this proposal of academic research and sociopolitical activism by the social integration of the Warao school. For it is worth emphasizing that the ethnographic encounter is now opportunistic by the Warao presence in the urban of Mossoró brings to the fore, - even in silent and unconscious ways, the confrontation of our Western ethnopsychology in a Brazilian mold of normative normality (DAMATTA, 1986) with the fractures and traumas of ancestral Amerindian thought transmitted by memories, languages, body ages and Warao survival instinct. This explosive as much as underground bunch of misconceptions, therefore, we seek to hear and understand in its quality of concrete presence with which we must learn. More than arranged structurally and culturally, the situational lived concrete must be problematized to its maximum real presence always indeterminate as a transintentional symbolic-relational figurational complex and irreducible to schematizations and totalizing planning. Anthropology must refer precisely to this quality of the presence of the lived concrete,

so that its claim, more than ethnographic, is fundamentally pedagogical, enabling the exercise of translation and negotiation of errors inherent to interethnic confrontation.<sup>7</sup>

This article thus sought to problematize, among others, the already anticipated challenges of pluriethnicity and interculturality (LIMA, 2020) and multilingualism in the Brazilian school environment with its teaching-learning traditions based on national education parameters; but also to seek to understand the provocative and even destabilizing potential of the Warao migrant and indigenous presence in contemporary urban of Mossoró by raising public demands for safety, reception, health, social assistance and, what matters most in the discussion of the article on screen, education.

Therefore, the argumentation is woven into three cumulative moments of reflection, the first of which is a brief contextualization of the Warao presence in the territory of Mossoró and in the multiple places and hierarchies that make up the urban sociability of Mossoró-RN. There we also situate the look and itineraries of our research and the sociopolitical engagement around the Warao. The second topic of the on-screen article addresses *the New Migration Law* and how it subsidizes in an abstract and principled way not only the position of the Warao in relation to the State, but also provided the state machine in the political-ideological, technical-bureaucratic and moral-emotional framework of the Warao. The legal diploma, in a collateral way, raises the importance of reflection *on public policies and life policies* for the peaceful and democratic management of difference, diversity and otherness in our complex societies. Finally, the last moment of the article presents situational pictures of the Warao group's trajectory in Mossoró-RN towards the Public School, locating the errors and *translation possibilities* contained therein.

The researchers, represented here in this Ingoldian theoretical-methodological problematization of the ethnographic encounter with the Warao people, develop academic

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<sup>7</sup> In the words of Ingold (2019, p. 12, our translation): Every study demands observation, but in anthropology, observation is not due to the objectification of others, but by paying attention to them, seeing what they do and listening to what they say. Studied *with* people, rather than doing studies *upon* them. We call this way of working "participant observation." Participant observation takes time. It is not uncommon for anthropologists to spend many years in what they call it the "field." [...] That's what sets the field apart from the lab. In the field, you have to wait for things to happen, and accept what is offered when offered to you. That's why fieldwork takes so long. [...] participant observation is a way of studying *with* people. It is not a question of describing other lives, but of joining the lesions in the common task of finding ways of living. Here, I say, lies the difference between ethnography and anthropology. Thus, for the anthropologist, the participant observation *No* is absolutely a method for data collection. It is a commitment to learn by doing, similar to that of the learner or the student. After all, we don't study with our professors at the university thinking of taking care of what they say, or describing them for posterity. On the contrary, we allow ourselves to be *Educated* for them. For us, as well as for our teachers, this education is transformative. Certainly, this also applies to the education to which we undergo during participant observation in the field. In summary, the primary objective of anthropology is not ethnographic, but educational.



research in the area of Cultural Studies<sup>8</sup> and Ethnic-Racial Relations<sup>9</sup> within the state university of Rio Grande do Norte – UERN and are also engaged in voluntary systematic monitoring covered up by the Intersectoral State Committee for Refugee Care, Stateless and Migrant from Rio Grande do Norte - CERAM/RN<sup>10</sup> of the daily life of Warao families currently living in urban village<sup>11</sup> in the Barrocas neighborhood of the city of Mossoró/RN.

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<sup>8</sup> The research in Cultural Studies developed by the researchers is based in the Research Group on Cultural Studies - GRUESC of UERN.

<sup>9</sup> The research on Ethnic-Racial Relations developed by the researchers is based at the Center for Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies - NEABI of UERN.

<sup>10</sup> CERAM/RN was established in 2019 by the state management of Profa. Fátima Bezerra and has since developed policies for inclusion and social assistance for the refugee, migrant and stateless population in Rio Grande do Norte, with emphasis on indigenous and non-indigenous Venezuelan populations in situations of extreme vulnerability. In the municipality of Mossoró, the performance of CERAM/RN has been present mainly through the efforts of Profa. Dr. Eliane Anselmo da Silva, from UERN, and her collaborators, together with the Warao, so that academic practice and the exercise of promoting citizenship have advanced concomitantly.

<sup>11</sup> The term village, despite giving way to a reading of the processes of interethnic friction that refer to the Brazilian colonizing past, when indigenous populations of different peoples were mixed with each other and even with white populations in order to force assimilation to the surrounding society, as well as to accelerate the appropriation of indigenous lands by colonizing agencies, - it is used here in a nuanced way. For it ambiguously refers not only to the emergency public policies of Warao in a situation of refuge, -- just as we could ethnograph by monitoring how the city of Mossoró - RN addressed the Warao who were in the city, - as well as drawing attention to the integration and belonging strategies outlined by the Warao, always in *live together, work together* and daily elaborate collective solutions to the challenges of the group's life in Brazil. In fact, screen research, which is nourished by the ethnographic encounter in progress with the Warao in Mossoró and other nearby cities (Natal-RN, João Pessoa-PB) since the end of 2019, has registered the interest of Warao in lasting and productive collective forms of inhabiting the urban and even more ruralized spaces, on condition that they are minimally connected to the urban routes of the *Plata* (from the collection of economic resources). The fact that indigenous peoples of the coastal border between Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba refer to their territorial, moral-emotive and traditional conglomerates as *village* seems to have also influenced a project Warao (dream timidly vocalized by some leaders) of organization of villages, - urban or rural, - in the sense of collective management of life. The village fear, therefore, must be nuanced for this ambiguous reading that integrates both the colonizing negative charge, - which in fact is still present, - and the positive and emic burden of confrontation with the surrounding society through the strategic use of a social technology invented by it, but partly resignified by the indigenous. In this reflection, we recover as a provocation the thought of Almeida (2001), when he highlights, in relation to the *aledo indians* that were historically led to the situation of subalternity in the Brazilian colonizing process, - how much indigenous populations struggled in an ambiguous relationship (between *Privileges* and *Charges*) with the surrounding society: they were, in a way, protected in reduced plots of land and forced to compulsory work as Christian subjects, but they were not enslaved and had to give up their beliefs and customs. Here we have an important inflection point and repeatedly experienced in the ethnographic encounter with the Warao villagers in the urban of Mossoró-RN: on the one hand, they enjoy social, legal and medical-sanitary services that *makes you jealous* to poor Brazilians in the neighborhood (especially with regard to the basic baskets fortnightly delivered by FUNAI, CERAM and UERN actions); on the other hand, Warao are pressured, based on the subaltern situation of the urban village, to observe the sociocultural patterns of the surrounding society (such as enrolling children in the neighborhood school, taking vaccine administered by the city hall and recognizing spatial and body hygiene procedures indicated by the Catholic Church). In this sense, we insist that the case ethnographed it's not just about an experience of *shelter* or *passage* of the grouping Warao, but of integration strategies (by the government) and belonging (by the indigenous) in an experimental mode of urban village.

## **Brief contextualization of the Warao presence in Mossoró-RN: migrants, refugees and indigenous peoples**

In a brief excursion over the Warao, we emphasize that they are an indigenous people originating in Venezuela who live mostly in the Orinoco River delta region, located in the vicinity of the Venezuelan Caribbean. Distributed among rural, riverside and coastal communities and surrounding cities, composing the states of Delta Amacuro, Monagas and Sucre. They are thus the second largest indigenous people in Venezuela in terms of population, totaling approximately 49,000 people, as has already presented an opinion on the situation of the Warao in the cities of Boa Vista and Pacaraima, in the Brazilian state of Roraima<sup>12</sup>. Anthropological and Archaeological studies indicate that this territory has been occupied by the Warao for at least 8,000 years, with indications that, in pre-colonial periods, their territoriality and mobility reached the Antilles, and currently still existing in Guyana and Suriname. The Orinoco delta is characterized by the presence of flood lands and river islands, which made colonial occupation difficult, but did not prevent it, as well as the presence of missionaries in the region. The Warao dynamics of mobility, as well as the encounter with European settlers and with local populations would explain the fixation in a more defined geographical area over the last centuries (BOTELHO; RAMOS; TARRAGÓ, 2017, p. 6, our translation).

The Warao people speak a language common to their various groups, and Spanish is a secondary language for a considerable part of this people, with varying degrees of fluency. According to Muñoz (2009, p. 116-117), the preservation of the language is one of the strongest characteristics of the Warao culture. The Warao language is one of the most far-reaching in Venezuela. And like other Indigenous Venezuelan languages, it is originally not a written language, because, like all its cultural manifestations, it relies primarily on orality.

As for social organization, the Warao form "[...] inbred units, with a relatively egalitarian social structure, with leadership in each community exercised by the elder, an Aidamo." The standard of residence is matrilineal, in which men move into the house or community of the wife's family soon after the wedding. Women usually have the responsibility to distribute and redistribute resources and food to the family group, while men act primarily in public contexts of mediation and interaction with the surrounding society (BOTELHO; RAMOS; TARRAGÓ, 2017, p. 13, our translation). It should also be emphasized that there is

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<sup>12</sup> Technical Opinion No. 208/2017/SEAP/6<sup>a</sup>CCR/PFD, prepared by Luciana Ramos, Emilia Botelho and Eduardo Tarragó, anthropology experts of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF). Available: <http://www.mpf.mp.br/am/sala-de-imprensa/docs/parecer-tecnico-warao>. Access: 10 Oct. 2021.

a diversity among the Waraos themselves, which translates into their different cultural practices and ways of life, according to the groups in the different regions of the Orinoco delta. And this is obviously also reflected in the differences between the groups that migrated to Brazil. But still, it is possible to say that the Warao "[...] they constitute a differentiated ethnic unity, verifiable in linguistic and intra- and interethnic social relations, forming a broader sociological unit" (IBID, p. 28).

Muñoz (2009) describes the Warao people as skilled navigators and fishermen, canoe builders, who domesticated the river for their own benefit, even in the construction of their *dwellings*, the *janokas*, raised from logs extracted from local trees and placed on the waters, like a kind of stilts. The navigations made through the canoes, a means of transport par excellence of the Warao ethnic group, thus enabled a great knowledge about traditional local fishing (MUÑOZ, 2019, p. 03, our translation). It is perceived, - even in a foreign urban settlement regime, - the close relationship of the Warao people with water, since this is a constant element of the territory where they traditionally live. Such is the influence of water for the Warao people that their own denomination originates from the words *wa* (canoes) - also called *curiara* - and *arao* ("owners of" or even "people"). Therefore, the word Warao can be interpreted as "canoe owners/*curiara*" or "water people" (MUÑOZ, 2019, p. 04, our translation).

In Muñoz's view, the growth of discriminatory attitudes towards this ancestral people forced him to undertake a kind of internal and external diaspora in search of new life alternatives. The developmental actions carried out by the Venezuelan state from the mid-twentieth century directly impacted the spaces and sociocultural dynamics of the Warao people, as well as their mobility, pushing entire families out of the Orinoco River delta region. They were thus obliged to create alternatives in the urban contexts of the region and, later, also in other countries, such as Brazil. The traditional territory of this indigenous population began to be threatened more intensely between the 1920s and 1940s, when *the cultivation of ocumo chino* (yam) was introduced in regions where moriche extractivism (*buriti*) existed. Then, for the undertaking that greatly affected the Warao way of life in the 1960s: the construction of a "road dike", a dam on the Manamo River with the objective of building a road access to the city of Tucupita and fostering the expansion of agricultural activities in the region (BOTELHO; RAMOS; TARRAGÓ, 2017, p. 10, our translation).

Among the negative impacts of this construction for the Warao we can mention mainly the effects on water: the salinization of the river in the dry season, directly affecting the fishing activity; soil acidification, hindering agricultural practices; increasing the water level, causing flooding; deforestation, pollution and the emergence of diseases in regions of still water. Thus,



according to technical opinion prepared by Botelho, Ramos and Tarragó (2017, p. 10, our translation), the bus of the Manamo River "[...] it immediately generated the forced removal of ethnicity and the impediment of access to areas previously in use, in addition to passing their areas to non-indigenous populations, encouraging them to undertake family farming or agricultural enterprises." And finally, in the 1990s, the oil sector projects installed in the Orinoco River delta region led to a new migratory flow from the Warao to the cities. The need to supplement the income of indigenous families in the delta region was and still is the main motivation of their displacements, since subsistence is no longer fully affected with the natural resources of its traditional territory. In addition to the search for food, the urban environment is also seen as the most conducive to obtaining medicines and health care. It is under such circumstances that the Warao people have developed specific means to ensure their survival, including the "practice of asking", stigmatized as "begging".

Thus, the economic crisis in Venezuela, which has intensified over the past few years, has boosted the Warao's migration flows to urban areas, including neighboring countries such as Brazil. We can say, a priori, that the coming of the Warao to Brazilian cities is motivated mainly by the basic needs of survival, the search for food, work and money. This migrant practice is according to scholars a characteristic of the mobility of this people. And this causes the oscillation in the number of indigenous people in each locality in which they pass.

The first records of the presence of the Warao people in Brazilian territory refer to the year 2014, when they began to enter by land in the state of Roraima. And, from mid-2016, new displacements began, taking them from Pacaraima (RR) and Boa Vista (RR) to Manaus (AM), Santarém (PA) and Belém (PA). Finally, in the first half of 2019, the Warao began to move to capitals and medium-sized cities in the Northeast region, with records of their presence in São Luís, Imperatriz and Açailândia, in Maranhão; Campo Maior and Floriano, in Piauí; Fortaleza, Caucaia, Itarema and Sobral, in Ceará; Natal and Mossoró, in Rio Grande Norte; Recife and Caruaru, in Pernambuco; João Pessoa, Campina Grande and Guarabira, in Paraíba; Aracaju, in Sergipe; Maceió, in Alagoas; Salvador and Feira de Santana, Bahia (SANTOS; SONEGHETTI; TARRAGÓ, 2018).

It is in this context of migratory flow, from the year 2019, that Warao arrived in the city of Mossoró, in Rio Grande do Norte. And it is from the perspective of thinking about contemporary emergencies related to political and social crises that led the Warao people to the current condition of stigmatized foreignness in Brazil, that our reflections, starting from the local urban context of Mossoró, frame the Warao as indigenous, *as foreigners*, *as refugees*, *as*

Venezuelans, as a homophilic vulnerable collectivity and as a creative and daring sociocultural agency in the pursuit of own life projects and almost never revealed to the external observer.

The Warao families arrived in the city of Mossoró/RN soon began activities to collect food and values at the traffic lights of the main avenues, generating enormous apprehension by the local population who were surprised by *the practices of begging and exposure* of children, adolescents and adults to the threats of COVID - 19. The reaction of the population of Mossoró was to trigger the state (including with the attempt to remove newborns from their Warao mothers in begging situation), to provide food assistance (which caused some unease in relation to the refusal of the Warao to assume the local diet offered to them) and even the offer of land so that the Warao families could jointly develop agricultural projects.

It is important to investigate, in this sense, how the Warao culture classifies possible economic situations of poverty, dependence, satisfaction and success. The Warao economic dynamics, for example, is linked to unusual and unofficial urban strategies for the production of values, either with the collection of resources in strategic points of the city, or by triggering the State for the perception of circumstantial aid. The Warao discourse points to the possibilities of the group turning more systematically to subsistence agricultural activities, as well as in the urban area, to activities and manual labor.

Regarding the daily sociopolitical dynamics, Warao families seem to prioritize a form of collective organization based *on urban villages*, that is, places relatively far from urban buzz, and therefore discreet, in which the joint work of families, the continued moral and emotional monitoring of their members and collective economic reciprocity are indispensable as devices for preserving their ethnic contrast. The urban village, politically represented by the *figure of Aidamo*, or *cacique*, articulates the immediate contacts with the Warao groups accommodated in the adjacent cities and also with the family located in distant territorial distances.

It can also be seen that the Warao indigenous people present themselves as a group in transit who are very experienced in relation to strategies of traveling enormous territorial distances and crossing international borders. The Migratory Dynamics Warao seems to occur from the articulation of projects of the larger group with the families that compose them. In fact, it is perceived that families enjoy relative autonomy to establish their particular interests in terms of itineraries and belongings to the larger group. The senses of loyalty and belonging to a nation state, such as Venezuela, still need to be investigated.

The Warao indigenous peoples currently make up a group of 84 people organized into 21 families (variable number due to the constant migratory flow between Mossoró/RN, Assu/RN, Caicó/RN, João Pessoa/PB, Recife/PE and Teresina/PI), who have lived in Mossoró

since the end of 2019, and have been established in the Baroque and Ouro Negro neighborhoods, with a brief passage through the Santa Delmira neighborhood. Other Venezuelans in a situation of refuge came to the city through the support actions and management of reception spaces of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). But in the case of the Warao, the first families arrived by the migration flow independently, receiving the support of the Home of the Poor Child, a Philanthropic Institution that has the direction of the well-known Sister Ellen Scherzinger, and that provides benefits to the needy local population. And within their kinship circuit, new Warao families began to arrive.

As soon as it became known to the Warao in the city, - because they were on the streets with the children, especially in the context of the pandemic of COVID - 19, - the Municipality of Mossoró, through the Specialized Reference Center of Social Assistance (CREAS), began to make, as soon as the monitoring of the group was triggered, in January 2020. The aim was to ensure the group's access to social programs, such as emergency aid made available by the Federal Government through registrations in CadÚnico and Bolsa Família, - as well as to trigger the family health system of the neighborhood in which they are sheltered. With the same perspective of monitoring and guaranteeing rights, CERAM - Intersectoral State Committee for The Care of Refugees, Stateless persons and Migrants of Rio Grande do Norte, begins to work with the Warao in Mossoró.

In a perspective of enabling contact with the Warao, understanding their culture and raising awareness of the local population why they were on the streets, CREAS, still in 2020, requested the support of the State University of Rio Grande do Norte - UERN, which took place through the Center for Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies - NEABI. NEABI immediately sought partnerships, through the Federal University of PiauÍ - UFPI, which has been accompanying the Warao group in the State, performing activities in conjunction with the Federal University of Roraima - UFRR and the Federal University of Minas Gerais - UFMG<sup>13</sup>. CREAS/Mossoró, advised by researchers Muñoz and Lima of the aforementioned universities and under the coordination of researcher Silva, from UERN<sup>14</sup>, soon sought to inform and raise

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<sup>13</sup> UERN, UFPI, UFRR and UFMG are in constant dialogue with researchers from universities in Venezuela from the researchers Muñoz Lima and Anselmo and researcher Cirino, who are currently working to build a network of researchers on Warao in Brazil.

<sup>14</sup> It is also worth mentioning the first contacts mediated by UERN through the performance of this research, made with the Warao: the Solidarity Action PET Solidarity, promoted by the Tutorial Education Program in Social Sciences (PETCIS) and association of teachers of UERN (ADUERN), which collected donations in cash, milk, disposable diapers and food, distributing among the group; the Invitation to the NEAB to make up the CERAM as a representative member of the UERN; a Meeting with Sister Ellen on the situation of the "shelters/lodgings" of the Warao in the city, with CERAM, CREAS/Mossoró and UERN; and the meeting with the Rectory of UERN with CERAM, to enable proposals for actions on behalf of indigenous Warao in the city and in the state, via university campuses.

awareness among the population of Mossoró about the presence of the Warao in the city at that time. A pedagogical and assistance campaign was carried out in support of the Warao, and soon after, a training activity was carried out for professionals who worked at that time with the Warao indigenous in Mossoró: health professionals, health surveillance and CREAS. Throughout these activities, between encounters and strangeness, an important material about the Warao has been produced and published.

### **Warao rights in abstract and principled terms**

The arrival of the Warao in Brazil generated several questions. The first way was the search for understanding access to indigenous rights enshrined by the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, even if it is a people, ethnicity, which did not traditionally belong to our territory, therefore, considered foreigners. The Federal Constitution, in article 231, guarantees indigenous peoples the right to social organization, customs, language, tradition, as well as traditionally occupied land. In the case of the Warao, "foreigners", not having traditionally occupied land, the other rights remain guaranteed, even because Law No. 5,371/67, which created the National Indian Foundation - FUNAI, as well as Decree No. 9,010/2017, which regulates its statute, does not restrict its performance to Brazilian "Indians". In this understanding, "the indigenous migrants remain indigenous, and all rights guaranteed to national indigenous peoples must be extended, without distinction, whether in rural or urban context" (IOM, 2018).

According to *the International Organization for Migration (IOM)*<sup>15</sup>, among the main challenges observed in the face of the migratory flow of indigenous groups, understood as unconventional, is the establishment of an effective indigenist action of the State for these indigenous migrants. Especially in relation to the peaceful understanding of the legal support for the performance and support of the federal government in the establishment of policies and budgets for States and Municipalities, as well as the definition of mechanisms to regularize the

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<sup>15</sup> The IOM is the United Nations migration agency and the world's leading intergovernmental organization active in the area. Established in 1951, the organization works closely with governments, other international organizations and civil society to address the challenges of migration. With 169 member states, 8 observer states, 401 offices in more than 100 countries and approximately 9,000 employees, the IOM is dedicated to promoting human and orderly migration for the benefit of all, providing assistance and advice to governments and migrants. The IOM currently has 9 regional offices (Bangkok, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Dakar, Nairobi, Pretoria, San José de Costa Rica and Vienna), two special liaison offices (Alse Ababa and New York) and two administrative centers (Panama City and Manila). The IOM had its Meeting Agreement with Brazil legally established on August 18, 2015, with the publication of Decree No. 8,503, granting it privileges and immunities, inaugurating a national office in Brasilia and substantively expanding its activities in the country.

documentary situation of these same indigenous migrants based on the principle of non-discrimination and non-criminalization of migration (IOM, 2018).

Thus, supported by the main international human rights and human rights instruments of indigenous peoples, in the conventions and declarations applicable to Brazil, which guide both migration policy and indigenist policy, we can affirm that indigenous peoples in migratory movements, among which the Warao are inserted, have at least three sets of rights: universal rights, recognized in treaties and extended to all citizens, without distinction; the Rights of Migrants, which are those guaranteed to all migrants, regardless of whether they are indigenous or not; and rights as indigenous peoples themselves (IOM, 2018). Complementing their rights as migrants, observing emphatically the principles, guidelines and classifications established in the New Migration Law and its regulatory decree, the Warao also have binding instruments in the national legal order on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (CIRINO, 2020).

The New Migration Law - Law No. 13,445, of May 24, 2017, replaces the Foreign Er Statute and establishes a perspective of migration based on human rights based on the principle of repudiation of xenophobia, racism and any forms of discrimination. Adding principles and rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the new law advocates, among the various provisions, document regularization, equal treatment and opportunity for migrants and their families, social and labor inclusion, access to social services, programs and social benefits, public goods, **education**, full public legal assistance, work, housing, banking services and social security.

The Warao, in this sense, also have support in the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, resolution of the United Nations (UN) on the commitments established by states guided by the purposes and missions established in the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter was proposed by the Human Rights Council on 29 June 2006 and approved by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007. Among other important points, the Charter states that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples; it recognizes at the same time the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different and to be respected as such. The Charter of the United Nations recognizes the urgent need to respect and promote the Rights of Indigenous Peoples signed in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements with states.

Another important provision is Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) - United Nations Agency (UN) - on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent States, which presents important advances in the recognition of Collective Indigenous Rights, in its economic, social and cultural aspects. Convention 169 is the most up-



to-date and comprehensive international instrument regarding the living and working conditions of indigenous peoples, and, being an international treaty ratified by the State, is binding. In Brazil, the approval of the text of ILO Convention 169 was sanctioned by Draft Legislative Decree (PDL) No. 34/93, approved on June 19, 2002, establishing the guidelines of the international document in the country. Among the rights recognized, we can highlight the right of Indigenous Peoples to land and natural resources, to non-discrimination and to live and develop differently, according to their customs. As well as the responsibility that governments must assume, with the participation of stakeholders, to protect these peoples, guaranteeing their rights, respect and integrity, as already ensured by our Federal Constitution of 1988.

And, as a legal support, the Warao have the legislation on refugees. Formally adopted in July 1951 by the UN Convention to resolve refugee situations in Europe after World War II, it defines refugee status and consolidates the legal instruments of rights and duties between those in such a condition and the host countries. With the emergence of new situations, the Protocol on the Status of Refugees enters into force on 4 October 1967. With the ratification of the Protocol, countries were led to apply the provisions of the 1951 Convention for all refugees within the definition of the Charter of the United Nations, with no limit on dates and geographical space. Although related to the Convention, the Protocol is an independent instrument whose ratification is not restricted to states signatories to the 1951 Convention.

According to the UN Refugee Status, it is the responsibility of the UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency, to promote international instruments for the protection of refugees and supervise their implementation. The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol are provisions ensuring that anyone who needs it can exercise the right to seek and receive refuge in another country. Finally, to indigenous migrants, as is the case of the Warao, all rights granted to national indigenous peoples apply. The right to **education** is guaranteed to them, as well as the right to documentation, nationality, housing, health, self-determination, as well as the right to cross borders and to be in the urban, and also to have access to social policies aimed at indigenous peoples.

As we have seen, all rights guaranteed to indigenous peoples by international treaties received by the Brazilian legal system and the Federal Constitution of 1988 itself, as well as all social policies, extend to migrant indigenous peoples. In an urban context, such as the Warao, through specialized information and consultation, - considering the right to self-determination, - access to benefits and services in the country of immigration are protected. There is no fence provided for in the legislation; there are no obstacles to its application in the context of the migration of Indigenous Venezuelans to Brazil. The great challenge is, in fact, in the

implementation of these rights. Even with all these available devices, it is evident and urgent to offer adequate and specific public policies for indigenous peoples, in general, that consider and respect their differentiated ways of life. And in the case of education, specifically, that attention is attention to bilingual education and the possibility of support to community education.

In this tuning session, we emphasize the importance of ensuring spaces of dialogue and engagement of all federal entities involved in the management of the migratory flow, especially when it comes to indigenous peoples. We are concerned about the regulation of Article 120 of the New Migration Law No. 13,445/2017, which refers to the creation of the National Policy of Migration, Refuge and Statelessness, and the issue of indigenous migration should be taken into account. In Rio Grande do Norte, the creation of CERAM, based on this proposal, has become a reference for all the country.

### **The Warao way to school: the concrete lived and its challenges in Mossoró-RN**

Indigenous School Education is ensured in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education. Our Magna Carta, in its article 205, affirms Education as a right of all. Since then, Brazil has been building regulations that ensure the right of indigenous peoples to a specific and differentiated education. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB No. 9,394/96), promulgated in 1996, in its Art. 32, item 3, for example, reaffirms this right by attributing to indigenous peoples an education that provides the recognition of their ethnic identities, as well as the valorization of their languages and sciences, as well as the recovery of their histories and memories.

CNE/CEB Resolution No. 3/99 administratively recognizes the indigenous *school* and *teacher categories* in the education system, guaranteeing communities the right to create specific curricula and exercise autonomy in school management. In the same perspective, RESOLUTION CNE/CEB No. 5/12 extends to the whole of Basic Education the right of indigenous peoples to a specific, community, differentiated, bi- or multilingual education. Law No. 11,645, of March 2008, amends the LDB, previously modified by Law No. 10,639/2003, and establishes the Guidelines and Bases of National Education and includes in the official curriculum of the school system the mandatory the theme "Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture". And Law No. 12,416, of June 2011, amends the LDB, providing on the provision of higher education for indigenous peoples.

In view of the above, through the Brazilian experience of Indigenous School Education, we can affirm that the inclusion of migrant indigenous children and adolescents in

state or municipal schools cannot happen without due observations to specific rights, as has occurred so far with other Venezuelan children, which, in turn, happens at the initiative and need of their parents themselves. As already explained above, the right to a specific and differentiated Education for Indigenous Peoples is consolidated in opinions, guidelines and parameters of legal diplomas that ensure, among others, the right to maintain their languages and, thus, the right to bilingual, differentiated and specific education.

In the city of Mossoró/RN, the inclusion of Warao children and adolescents in the school environment has been characterized as a meandered process. We listed, there, from the challenge of a pandemic national scenario, with all the difficulties related to social isolation and the remote format adopted by schools, - to the negatives of local managers, either due to lack of understanding of this set of indigenous school education guidelines, or by technical-administrative incapacity in relation to the full presence of indigenous children and adolescents in the school. Undoubtedly, all the difficulties faced in the process of inclusion of Warao children and adolescents in school occurred due to the lack of adequate interaction between migrant indigenous peoples and local public institutions. All necessary attention to indigenous migrants, especially children, depends on an engagement in the guidelines of both social assistance actions, as well as strengthening social protection mechanisms and guaranteeing the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of shelter and migration.

In the State of Rio Grande do Norte, state action aimed at meeting this demand takes place through CERAM and the sectors that compose it. In the city of Mossoró, specifically, is the State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), which through a small group of volunteer researchers, who carry out this work. All dialogues and meetings of Warao leaders in the municipality with the Department of Education, as well as other secretariats and demands, were organized and mediated by UERN, as a member of CERAM.

All the needs of the Warao families in the city, all the demands, and here, in particular, of education, - by offering appropriate alternatives under the existing legislation for the search for solutions, with regard to the insertion of indigenous migrant children and adolescents in the formal education system, were presented and, unfortunately, frustrated. Let us remember only some of the relevant and applicable regulations for the situation: Conanda Resolution No. 181/2016, which deals with the application of children's rights to the context of traditional peoples and communities; CNE Resolution 3/2012 on the adoption of School Education for the itinerant population; and FUNAI Normative Instrument No. 1/2016 that defines the body's competencies in the care of indigenous children and young people. Faced with all the insistence that was reported in ordinary meetings of the CERAM, the Public Defender's Office of the

Union (DPU) - which also composes the committee, - decided to make use of the administrative ways to face the situation that limited the access of the right to education by Warao indigenous immigrants in the city, thus resorting to judicialization. Through the Letter of No. 65/2021/SETHAS-CERAM sent to the Municipal Department of Education of Mossoró, in July 2021, reporting and listing more than twenty Venezuelan children and adolescents in a situation of refuge in the municipality without access to the regular public school system, requesting that school enrollment be made possible.

In August 2021, the Public Defender's Office of the Union, in joint action with the State Public Defender's Office, issued a Recommendation that in addition to enrollment, an active school search aimed at the migrant target audience would be carried out, noting that the group has been in the city for more than two years. In response, the Municipality of Mossoró informed, through Office No. 566/2021-SME/GS, that it would not be possible to appoint a Unit for the care of these children, **because they would not have been informed of the children's address of residence, emphasizing the unfeasibility of performing the assessment/school classification because they did not have the technical conditions to perform the procedure.**

Thus, the recommendation issued by the DPU was not met. As the last attempt to resolve the demand out of court, in November of that same year, the DPU scheduled an internal hearing with interested parties and witnesses. The representation of the State of Rio Grande do Norte confirmed interest and participation in the realization of the out-of-court solution in question, however, the attempt was once again frustrated by the absence of return of the municipality. The DPU, subpoenaed to manifest itself in the file and considering the final judgment, approved the judicial agreement in May 2022, when, aware that the Municipality of Mossoró remained inert before the process, the steps are being carried out by the State of Rio Grande do Norte, and all the aid and support to Warao migrant families in the city, mainly in the process of enrollment and school inclusion, it has been provided by UERN, with the support of CERAM, although its implementation depends on the organs of the federated entities, especially those related to the departments of education.

In these circumstances, described in summary form, the Secretary of State for Education, Culture, Sport and Leisure of RN (SEEC), triggers the 12th DIREC - Regional Directorate of Education and Culture-Mossoró/RN, which directs the school enrollment of the 26 children and adolescents Warao in the city to the **Padre Alfredo State School**, elementary school, since the demand is for an initial process of literacy. The school, chosen simply for the availability of vacancies, is located in the Neighborhood Abolition I, *at Avenida Lauro Monte*,

nº 360, neighborhood surrounding which is located the shelter where the Warao resides, marking a distance of 3.5 km. The distance highlights the need for school transport, which is currently the most urgent problem.

In opposition to the great reception of the school's management, the Warao enrollment process was faced with the difficulty related to the lack of documentation of children and young people living in refuge. Always pointed out as a serious problem, the lack of documentation of migrants and refugees should not prevent access to health benefits and services, education and social assistance. The legal provisions, as already presented, show that the State must adopt differentiated measures to deal with the lack of documentation among indigenous migrants, so that it does not penalize those who have not been satisfactorily documented in their countries of origin or in the migratory flow. Even so, the obstacles happened and required energy of those involved to be to the minimum overcome and for the long-awaited registration to be performed, while a symbol or representation of bond of acceptance and inclusion in the then welcoming society, - even with all the noise resulting from the misconceptions and communicational asymmetries implied in the confrontation with Warao otherness.

The moment of welcome at school, carefully organized by the pedagogical team to receive the Warao children and adolescents and their guardians, on the morning of May 18 of this year, pointed to enormous demands of *translation* of Warao thought into Brazilian culture and vice versa, including strangeness about how moral-emotional and cognitive-behavioral mediation will take place to understand these modes of action and reality. For the reception event, UERN ceded a small bus to the Warao shuttle from the shelter to the school. The moment featured music, snack, symbolic delivery of school uniform and textbooks. It was attended by UERN researchers, also members and representatives of CERAM, representation of the DPU and the 12th DIREC/Mossoró, also as SEEC/RN, and had journalistic coverage of the local media. It was a moment of euphoria and satisfaction for the conquest of a demand that has been spread for more than a year. But also of concern, especially of us who follow the whole process of inclusion of the Warao in school, because we were able to witness the restlessness, discomfort and fears on the part of those who make the school daily when they realize that they will work with indigenous children and other nationality. All these feelings, - mainly of fear of the unknown, of resentment for the presence of foreigners in a space traditionally thought to be the construction of a hegemonic *brasilidade*, of anger contained in the urgency of adapting to the new pedagogical scenario destabilized by the Warao presence, - were exposed and accused on demand and claim of all the problems already existing in the school, common to the deficit conjuncture of Brazilian Education. The continuity of this experience of tension of the Warao's



school insertion in the city of Mossoró is the target of our studies and our upcoming productions.

But all the tension and concerns perceived by the school staff could not overshadow the beauty that was the shy and curious encounter of Warao children and adolescents in the school environment with the other children who study at Padre Alfredo School. That, yes, was the real welcome. In the innocence of invitations to play, in the question by names, in the amusing strangeness of the different language, children show that education and that the true teaching-learning process, are found in what makes us more human: in the encounter with the other.

### **Final considerations**

The proposal of this theoretical-ethnographic essay on the Warao in the process of school insertion in the urban of Mossoró was based, although briefly, a brief reflection on the arrival of the Warao in Mossoró and the process of insertion in the school trodden by them. In this sense, we approach the legislation applicable to the appropriate treatment of the situation of indigenous migrants in Brazil, - situating the abstract and principle of the confrontation between the Warao and the surrounding society, - and analyze the main international human rights instruments on the theme of migration and related to indigenous peoples, including treaties of the Brazilian legal system, as well as the conventions and declarations of international organizations to which Brazil is a signatory. In particular, we mentioned the applicable domestic legislation, both indigenist and on migration rights, - with an emphasis on the New Migration Act.

The anthropological experience with the Indigenous Venezuelans of the Warao ethnic group in a situation of refuge and migration, - by way of conclusion, - has presented great challenges for our ability to listen and learn with them. In this pole of the lived concrete of disputes, negotiations, misconceptions and translations between the Warao and the Brazilian society and culture of Mossoró, we perceive, throughout the ethnographic encounter, the enormous potential of interactional vulnerabilities that separate the abstract right to Education from the daily realization of being in the classroom of the Padre Alfredo School: the registration document, the bus for transportation, the snack on a foreign diet, the book and the uniform for all, the enrollment at all bureaucratic levels, the daily communication in multiple idiomatic records, the hierarchical position of Brazilians and Warao, the basic socialization brought from home in the form of respect for the school ambience and its authorities, among many others,

emerge as challenges of this bureaucratically tense, pedagogically challenging and anthropologically rich process of integration of the Warao in the Public School in Mossoró-RN.

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