



## Community-Based Tourism and the Political Instrumentalization of the Concept of Community

A New Theoretical Approach and an Ethnographical Case Study  
in Northeastern Brazil

Francisco Javier Ullán de La Rosa, Antonio Aledo Tur, and Hugo García Andreu

**Abstract.** – CBT (Community-Based Tourism) is a very unspecific label behind which lies, in fact, a varied array of models and practices. The main reason of this empirical variability lies in the fact that CBT depends on the also multivocal and highly ideologically and politically biased concept of community. This article develops a new theoretical framework for CBT whereby the empirical diversity of the conceptual pair Community-CBT is spread along a continuum spanning from very “open” to very “closed” models. Being the different models of community nothing but societal ideologies, this continuum has also an inescapable political dimension, which cannot be separated from the CBT models themselves. The open-to-close continuum is, at the same time, a right to left one, to use the classical political terminology. After having introduced the theoretical framework, the article focuses on analyzing the far left pole of the continuum, showing how communitarian movements are currently using CBT projects as a political tool, and how this phenomenon is particularly strong in Latin America. As an illustration of how this is taking place, the article will present the study case of Prainha do Canto Verde, Brazil, which is widely known throughout Latin America, and where the authors have done extensive fieldwork research. [*Brazil, social theory, community-based tourism theory, communitarian social movements, ethnogenesis processes*]

**Francisco Javier Ullán de La Rosa**, Professor, Department of Sociology II, University of Alicante.

**Antonio Aledo Tur**, Professor, Department of Sociology I, University of Alicante.

**Hugo García Andreu**, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology I, University of Alicante.

### Introduction – Aims of This Article

The concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and its actual implementation in the form of CBT projects around the world is not a univocal phenomenon. The literature review shows a lack of universal consensus whether among agents implementing CBT projects, public institutions advocating it, or academics. Far from being an all-encompassing and solidly defined managerial concept, CBT is differently defined and applied by different social actors to a very diverse array of tourist ventures.

This conceptual and empirical non-operationality of CBT stems mainly from its almost total dependence on the concept of community. It is obvious that, in order for CBT to exist, some kind of “community” has to preexist to it or be simultaneously constructed in cooperation with it, but the concept of community itself is “too vague, too variable in its applications and definitions to be of much utility as an analytical tool” (Amit and Rapport 2002: 13); and too variable in its ideological instrumentalizations. As Salazar (2012: 9) points out: “one of the reasons why CBT programs are hindered in their success is because those organizing them ignore the problematic assumptions embedded within the community concept itself.” Any attempt at defining community or establishing its ideal layout is always political in nature. Thus, the coupling of CBT with the concept of community makes it impossible to think of it as

a mere managerial concept and put it, inescapably, into the realm of politics and political ideology.

The only intellectually viable approach to CBT must start by renouncing to analyze it as a single phenomenon and study it, instead, in each of its particular manifestations, each one departing from a specific, context-bound definition of its parameters, which will be managerial, political, and ideological at the same time. In our view, the best heuristic tool to reduce the actual complexity of the phenomenon to a degree in which it can be analytically operationalized is that of the continuum. CBT and community form a mutually intertwined pair and, being the community clearly the independent term in the relationship, this continuum (the Community-CBT continuum or C-CBT) is necessarily organized by the first term. The organizing principle of the C-CBT continuum would be an axis connecting two opposite poles in a gradient determined by a set of indicators or qualities of the community: on the one hand, the pole defined by openness in membership and preeminence of acquired social roles/preeminence of the social dynamics of individuality/sociocultural heterogeneity; on the other, the pole defined by closeness in membership and preeminence of the ascribed social roles/preeminence of the social dynamics of collectiveness/sociocultural homogeneity. Three broad segments can be singled out within the continuum, highlighting a clear connection with the continuum of sociopolitical ideologies ranging from the pro-capitalist/liberal-individualistic pole to the anticapitalist/collectivist one.

This theoretical reviewing of the CBT concept reveals the political dimension CBT has acquired in today's world. This dimension is particularly strong in Latin America as it rides side by side with the strength of communitarian/indigenous anticapitalist movements in the continent. As a result of that, a particular version of CBT situated in the far left side of the C-CBT continuum seems to be becoming hegemonic in Latin America. The postmodern politics of identity and the CBT model based on them seem to have entered the realm of the "politically correct" and been legitimated by an important fraction of the academic community, civil society, and regional, national, and international administrations (ILO, The International Labor Organization, being probably the most significant of all). The CBT project in our study case of Prainha do Canto Verde, Brazil, is a good example of this.

Using the case study of Prainha as a laboratory to analyze and explore continental-wide trends, the article's objectives are threefold:

1. In section 1 we will develop the general theoretical framework for the analysis of CBT.

2. In section 2 we will analyze the historical genealogy of the communitarian/left end of the C-CBT continuum and its raise to hegemony in Latin America.

3. In sections 3 and 4 we will deconstruct this leftist C-CBT model using the study case of the Prainha do Canto Verde, a showcase CBT project well-known throughout the continent. This deconstruction will show the model as a strongly ideological and idealized construct, exposing the contradictions between discourse and practice. The long-term sustainability of the CBT model thus conceived will be questioned.

## 1 Community and Community-Based Tourism as an Intertwined Conceptual Continuum

### 1.1 CBT Models in the Far-Right End of the C-CBT Continuum

Community here is understood as an almost geographical term, a quasi-synonym of a small locality, which, by the mere effect of the spatial dimension, implies a relatively small group of people. Apart from that, community does not imply the subjection to any particular form of local strong institutional bounding (besides those of the modern state bureaucratic apparatus), any set of rules restricting membership to a certain social group, any rigid social boundaries between that group and the outer environment, nor any internal institutionalized social homogeneity, collective responsibility, or ownership.

This definition goes hand in hand with a concept of CBT that loosely equals the phenomenon to small-scale, small-business tourist enterprises as opposed to the mass, big companies tourism. They also generally try to set themselves apart from mainstream tourism by revolving around a customized themed product (nature or different cultural ways of life, but conceived in a non-essentialized manner – that is, not predefining and objectivizing what "different" is, as, for example, in the so common equation  $\text{different} = \text{non-Western or premodern}$  – in so far as it is perceived like "different" by customers). Thus, no distinction is drawn between urban/rural or modern/traditional. Following this formula, our literature review has found small-scale tourist projects labeled as CBT in the outskirts of Hartford, Connecticut (Chen and Raab 2012), as well as in rural Romania (Iorio and Corsale 2014) or in an Australian town (McKercher 2001). CBT ventures are here profit-driven enterprises. Evidently, being so narrowly localized, this is a kind of tourism that benefits some local people, although no stress

is put in the need that the profit reaches directly everyone (The Mountain Institute 2000; Mann 2000) and even less so in a collectively managed manner, for the community does not necessarily exist as a social entity in itself, beyond its geographical and demographical reality. The CBT label can thus be applied to businesses run by individual owners in a totally independent way. According to this notion, there could even be CBT tourism with opposition from a significant part of the “community” (Chen and Raab 2012).

## 1.2 CBT Models in the Middle Segment of the C-CBT Continuum

These models are dependent on an interactional notion of community (Kaufman 1959). Community is understood as a social field, a network of social interactions within a shared daily lived space that is never totally closed (for it always overlaps with other fields/communities). It is a space defined by its flows instead of a cellular structure, and it is in turn composed of several social subfields or groups whose members act to achieve various interests and goals. The function of the community field is to coordinate and direct toward common goals the disparate and often competing social subfields (Marritt-Cascante et al. 2010).

This process fuelled by interaction ... does not happen in some utopian context of harmonious agreement, but rather in normal day-to-day settings characterized by conflicting interests. ... Community is not taken as a given. Instead, it is developed, created and re-created through social interaction (Bridger et al. 2006).

Therefore, community is a site of negotiation, often conflictual negotiation (Sin and Minca 2014). The projection of this interactional concept of community into CBT models is transparent in approaches like the following:

Community-based tourism development would seek to strengthen institutions designed to enhance local participation and promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of the popular majority but also the divergent needs, interests and potentials of the community and its inhabitants (Brohman 1996: 48).

CBT “must also embrace individual initiatives within the community” (WWF 2001: 2).

In this middle sector of the continuum CBT is exclusively confined to peasant economies in developing countries and can, in turn, be subdivided in two more specific segments. On the right side, the community is seen as a part of the open world

system and CBT as a means to further connecting that localized group of people to it. The label CBT is justified insofar as some kind of ownership/management/benefit gets to some members of the community (Dixey 2005). Although somehow is implied that, indirectly, CBT is good for the locality as a whole, its benefits can and actually go to individuals, family units, or specific cooperatives limited to a group of local residents. It does not exclude partnership with external agents<sup>1</sup> and it does not exclude the possible emergence of conflict and inequalities within the community (Salazar 2012).

In this first subsegment CBT meets and overlaps with other members of the “Alternative Tourism” family (Ethnic Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, and some versions of Pro-Poor Tourism). The UK-based Responsible Tourism Partnership could not say it more bluntly: “Do not expect all the poor to benefit equally, particularly the poorest 20 per cent. Some will lose.” This clearly reflects the realistic, transactional concept of community as a heterogeneous arena rather than as a homogeneous objectified social body. It also sets clearly apart the concept of community from the whole family of ideas contained in the string of terms precapitalist/premodern/subsistence, or reciprocity economy. Community and, therefore, CBT, are in this view perfectly compatible with a modern stratified society and the capitalist dynamics:

Focus on expanding benefits, not just minimizing costs to the poor ... the community needs exposure to what makes tourism work ... if competitive products, transport systems or marketing do not exist, the industry will decline (<<http://www.propoortourism.info/>> [22.05.2014]).

Numerous scholars<sup>2</sup> have criticized this subtype as having a neocolonial stance, arguing that tourist ventures are mostly owned by foreigners and some of them totally exclude locals from economic benefits. In response to that, a second subsegment in this middle area of CBT models builds upon the idea of collective ownership and management, redistribution of profits as well as ecological, social, and cultural preservation. The actual form this local collective institution can take is not predefined, nonetheless, but is left open so that it can be adapted to each particular context and to its ineluctable changes in time (Rozemeijer 2001; Chen and Raab 2012). This model does not rule out partnership with external economic actors. Precisely because communities are seen as conflicting social

1 Cañada y Gascón (2007); South African Community Based Tourism (2016); Zapata et al. (2011).

2 Ziffer (1989); Wood (1993); Beckerman (1994); Liu (2003).

fields rather than strong cohesive, corporate bodies, the conclusion is that CBT projects cannot be successfully implemented exclusively from within (Iorio and Corsale 2014). The size of the competing mainstream tourism forces, the argument follows, would be too big for the local communities to resist on their own the latter's encroachment (Reid 2003). As a matter of fact, 40% of CBT projects, according to the survey conducted by Jones (2008) all across Latin America, have been founded by some external organization. The study conducted by Zapata et al. (2011) in Nicaragua showed an even higher percentage – 60% –, which is interpreted as a reflection of the perceived need by communities of leaning on external partnership.

### 1.3 CBT Models in the Far Left Segment of the C-CBT Continuum

CBT models here are built upon the template of the “closed corporate community,” a social formation singled out by social scientists since, at least, Morgan (1877), Tönnies (1955 [1887]), and Durkheim (1997 [1893]) and extensively studied by structural-functionalist anthropology (Fortes and Evans Pritchard 1940; Wolf 1957), which considered it to be a very common form of organization among peasant and indigenous societies in precapitalist formations. It can be defined as a classless social formation strongly bound by clear-cut principles of membership (commonly kinship and/or ethnic affiliation) and some sort of collegiate sociopolitical body. Two mechanisms aimed at guaranteeing equal rights of access to collectively owned assets (the surrounding natural resources) and to an economy based on mechanisms of reciprocity (labor, protection, and other kind of services) while precluding this very same access to non-members. A social formation, in sum, that would produce very low or inexistent levels of structural inequality and conflict, socio-cultural heterogeneity or change. In return for those access rights, which guarantee survival, the individual's self-interest and initiative is submitted to the compelling duties of the collective good by means of a shared world vision and rigid code of behavior embedded in “tradition” (or Durkheim's mechanic solidarity).

The community is thus objectified as a single entity: one collective social actor, with one mind and an unquestioned shared set of goals. In the most widespread of its versions, the one advocated by the political and sociocultural movements of the indigenous peoples, the community thus understood is presented almost necessarily as a rural, semi-au-

tarchic, pre- or non-capitalist phenomenon: a reciprocity-oriented economy as opposed to a market-oriented one.

From this concept of community stems our far left segment of the C-CBT continuum. It has been theorized by many;<sup>3</sup> it is advocated by an overwhelming majority of organizations of peasant and indigenous peoples around the world and particularly in Latin America<sup>4</sup> and it has been given official support and logistic assistance by such disparate international organisms as the ILO (ILO 2005), through platforms like “Redturs,” a network of CBT in Latin America (see <www.redturs.org>), or the Islamic Cooperation body (COMCEC 2014).

CBT in this end of the continuum is understood as an activity necessarily involving “[c]ollective decision-making, collective responsibility, collective access, ownership and benefits” (COMCEC 2014). Tourism is seen as a complementary activity within a rural economy ruled by autarchic goals and reciprocity mechanisms, at odds with the logics of individual entrepreneurship and capital accumulation. The CBT main goals are not, like in the previously analyzed models, economic development or poverty alleviation – two goals that require, in order to be reached, the conducting of the CBT project according to a logic of maximization of profits – but, rather, the preservation of the traditional ways of living, that is, the precapitalist subsistence economy, the supposedly sustainable relation with nature that this allows, the non-Western or at least – in the case of non-indigenous rural communities – premodern cultural traits and the closed corporate sociopolitical structure that holds all the rest in place. For this is, precisely, what CBT thus understood offers tourists: a unique encounter with a world that presents itself as the opposite reflexion of the tourist's own capitalist and modern one. In order to attain its main goal, the community will shun the big scale, market-driven tourism keeping CBT ventures small and capping the number of tourists visiting the community, among other measures (ILO 2005).

This CBT model has taken a particularly strong hold in Latin America. This success can only be understood within the context of the emergence, from the 1970s onwards, of a new generation of grassroots movements having an ethnic and collectivist/communitarian agenda. This concept of community is used as a political tool in the Latin American continental arena in at least two ways: a) as a process

3 Wearing and McDonalds (2002); Maldonado (2005); Kontogorgopoulos (2005); Morales M. (2006); Okazaki (2008).

4 See the Otavalo and San José Declarations of 2001 and 2003, respectively, in Cañada y Gascón (2007).

of empowerment for the most marginalized classes (the Indian and other groups of subsistence peasants); and b) as an alternative, collectivist socioeconomic model to the current capitalist one in the far left of the political spectrum. Reflecting the inseparable intertwining of the community and CBT concepts, this particular model of CBT is currently also been used as a political tool in the construction of the collectivist/communitarian agenda of the above-mentioned actors. Our study case, the communitarian and ethnic movement in Prainha do Canto Verde and its CBT project is presented here as an empirical proof of this thesis and as an argument endorsing our choice of using the right-left spatial metaphor for the construction of our C-CBT continuum.

## 2 Community and CBT as a Political Tool in Contemporary Communitarian Grassroots Movements in Latin America – A Historical Genealogy

Since they were first described by the social science, closed corporate societies have been seen through the lens of the aprioristic dichotomous scaffolding built by the modern paradigm, the corporate condition considered a fixture of the premodern, precapitalist rural social formations which in turn were regarded as the symmetrical and opposite reflection of the capitalist modern urban society (Kuper 1988). Because “moderns” consciously wanted to get rid of rurality, rurality had to be construed as an ideal antonym of modernity. In spite of some clear *caveats* spelled out by some of the fathers of sociology like Tönnies (1955 [1887]), his work would, purposefully or not, be misread and used as one of the main “authority arguments” to strengthen the dichotomous paradigm (Deflem 2001).<sup>5</sup> Yet the paradigm would not be per se the most serious threat to the development of a biased image of the peasant and indigenous societies: The most relevant distortion appeared when many leftist intellectuals turned these social formations into models for the reform or substitution of the capitalist society. The closed corporate community, thus, entered into the realm of politics and in those treacherous waters, it was subjected to all kind of ideological manipulations. It was transformed into a “Golden Age” or a “Lost Eden” of humankind; some of its traits were mag-

nified and seen through a moral rather than a structural lens (reciprocity and redistribution were not to be seen as mere economic mechanisms but as “solidarity,” and the absence of a class division of labor, in turn, regarded as “equality”).

The string of authors who plowed this ideological furrow starts with the Romantic movement, with its longing for a bucolic rural life based on the medieval village, a heritage present in the pre-Marxist utopian socialists who dreamt of substituting the individualist bourgeois society with some sort of agrarian communitarian scheme (hence the term “communism,” which was interchangeable with that of socialism during most of the XIXth century) (Taylor 2013). The Russian Romantic nationalists revered the *mir*, the Slavic feudal peasant corporate community and that influence would be bequeathed to their leftist counterparts, from Bakunin, Herzen, or the Narodniky (the ancestor of all Russian revolutionary parties, whose urban ideologues actually moved to live in the *mir* and blended in with the peasants) all the way down to Kropotkin and the soviet *kolkhoz* (Levine 1973). The appeal of premodern agrarian communitarianism would still remain very influential within Western anarchism and would take a particularly strong hold in the less industrialized Mediterranean countries (Hosbawn 1971). Marx and Engels saw “primitive communism” in a sympathetic light (Gandy 2014). Social democrats like Tönnies or the cooperative movement would see the preindustrial *gemeinschaften* as inspirational models in their attempt to infuse less individualistic, “communitarian” values into the Darwinian modern capitalism (Deflem 2011). Latin America would add a new element to the ideological construction of corporate societies: the racial and interethnic issue. The Indian peasant corporate community was looked up by leftist intellectuals in the same way as the *mir* had been in Russia. The Mexican Revolution undertook a land reform inspired by the Indian agrarian corporations, the *ejidos*. In the following decades, indigenism and communism converged all throughout the continent, as in the thought of José Carlos Mariátegui, founder of the Peruvian Communist Party (Chang-Rodriguez 1984). Nevertheless, it will not be until the 1970s, with the emergence of the Indian political movements of self-determination, that this particular sort of communitarian ideology would become actually strong in Latin America. Moreover, for that to happen, the modern leftist discourse, based in the materialist Marxian categories of class struggle and economic exploitation, had to give way to the postmaterialist and postmodernist one of green and identity politics (García Linera 2008). Until that de-

<sup>5</sup> Tönnies had always insisted his *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* concepts were nothing but heuristic tools for the understanding of the complex process of social change entailed by modernization: a process, he clearly highlighted, which always takes place, empirically, in a varied set of continuums of different combinations and degrees of the described ideal traits.

cade, most Indian political mobilization had been ethnically inert, articulated through class organizations, mostly trade unions and socialist and communist parties, with a rather modernizing agenda (Gordillo 2000).

This dichotomous scheme, which opposed pre-modern/precapitalist/homogeneous close corporate societies to modern/capitalist heterogeneous ones, has been proven empirically inconsistent by research, from processual anthropology (Swartz 1966) to Neomarxism (Althusser and Balibar 1970) or world system theories (Wallerstein 1979; Wolf 1982). First of all, the seducing image of a classless society hides the existence, even in those corporate societies that are closer to the ideal type, of a structural division of labor and power that follows the lines of age and gender and the inequality and conflicts that structurally ensue from them. At the same time, some other not so rosy effects of the corporate logic, like the intrinsic totalitarianism that lies in the submission of the individual will to the collectivity or the stagnating effects of the traditional *habitus* over creativity and capacity of adaptation *vis-à-vis* change (Foster 1965), have almost been totally dismissed. In addition, thirdly and probably most importantly, research has shown that most peasant and indigenous societies are, in fact, functioning parts of and have been shaped by the colonial regimes, the nation states, and the capitalist mode of production. For some of them this has been going on for centuries and for most of them, it is an inescapable destiny in the current world, with its ongoing process of globalization.

In 19th century, Russian Chicherin had already pointed out that the *mir* was a tsarist tax collection device rather than the product of a primeval social contract (Hamburg 1992). Similarly, most native societies and the new mixed-blood peasantry in Latin America have been long ago absorbed into the colonial and neocolonial overarching structure of capital accumulation. The subordinated groups were partially acculturated/integrated but then purposefully kept at a distance, “caged” into these “traditional ways of life” that worked as a caste system of ethnic discrimination by which the extraction of surplus from their labor and natural resources was made possible and legitimated. Traditional culture was acting, partially if not entirely, as a proxy of class culture. The Bolivian Aymara COB (Centro Obrero Boliviana) trade unionists surely understood it very well in the 1950s, when they demanded equality through development and modernization (Gordillo 2000). However, as the postmodern paradigm seeped into the realm of politics, the war cries of the Latin American leftist *intelligentsia* changed.

As an illustration, the COB would spawn the Katarist nativistic<sup>6</sup> movement in the late 1970s. “Right to self-determination through alternative economic models”, “Right to remain traditional” ... those were now the new slogans (García Linera 2008). Indians were followed by Blacks and, as this article will show, to some extent by some rural mixed-blood populations. In their attempt to shake off its subordinate status brought up by their forced immersion in the modern capitalist world system, the new movements were paradoxically grounding their political philosophy on the dichotomous scaffolding of the modern paradigm, regarding the rural ways of life as radically different and preexistent to modernity. The idealized premodern closed corporate society was again brought up to the fore for what was now presented as a political project of decolonization. Concepts such as “tradition” and “community,” and even “ethnicity” itself, became subservient of these political goals of grassroots empowerment. The contradictions inherent to the historical closed corporate societies plus all the evident signs of modernization already in process within the peasant and indigenous communities were to be hidden or blamed to the evil contamination of Western colonization.

This renewed idealization and essentialization of the closed corporate community happened to meet halfway with a reemergence of the communitarian longing in the developed world. Whereas from the offer’s end CBT became a tool for the political construction of the ideological communitarian model, from the demand’s end was made possible by the emergence of a new type of consumer, the so-called “postmaterialist middle classes” (Mowforth and Munt 1998) and a postmodern “communitarian thinking and a widespread desire ‘to go local’” (Sin and Minca 2014). A critical current in CBT studies has accused this CBT model of imposing itself upon the local reality (and significantly contributing to change it) rather than stemming from a pre-existent situation.<sup>7</sup> These authors have shown how responsible and alternative tourism agents actively contribute, alongside the local promoters of CBT projects and leaders of the indigenous and peasant organizations, to the recreation and propping up of the concept of premodern closed corporate community, even in a manipulative way. The community

6 We use the term nativism in its anthropological sense to describe a sociopolitical movement whose objective is the restoration of a group’s culture to a previous, supposedly better, historical stage and/or its present and future preservation from change (Linton 1943).

7 Lanfant (2004); Réau et Poupeau (2007); Zorn (2007); Scheyvens (2010); Sin and Minca (2014).

image is carefully crafted by marketing techniques to target Western clients sharing some sort of anti-establishment postmodern values (Scheyvens 2010), a new kind of “moral tourist,” in the expression minted by Butcher (2003). An image of the destination community as a “self-sufficient isolated human consortium, a utopian space where individual subjects can be represented (and visited) as if they were discrete parts of a larger (but vulnerable) collective Self, that responsible tourists want to get to know in person and at the same time help and protect” (Sin and Minca 2014: 97).

CBT constitutes a very useful tool for the implementation of the communitarian project based on an ethnic essentialism (Van den Berghe and Flores Ochoa 2000). Just as an example of how this can be done, some handbooks of good practices encourage the regulation of cultural practices within the communities, recommending the purging of those that “doesn’t match with tradition” (ILO 2005). Such a project of sociocultural engineering is most likely doomed to attain its goals completely, for any community is structurally bound to tenaciously resist the attempts aimed at making it fit into any idealized template. In the empirical world, communities are always of the interactional type: they are not by nature at odds with modernity, *capitalism*, or any other kind of social organizational logic for that matter; they are always a particular and unrepeatable blend of collective and individual interests. For this reason, as our study case will show, the communitarian agenda and its proxy, the CBT, can almost never be other than actors vying for hegemony within a heterogeneous community of contending interests and visions on how society (and tourism) should be organized.

### 3 The Communitarian Movement and CBT Project of Prainha as Products of a Political and Ideological Class Conflict

#### 3.1 Prainha’s Origins

Prainha is a 1,000 inhabitants fishing village located in the state of Ceará, in the Northeast Region of Brazil (Região Nordeste do Brasil). At the end of the 19th century, with the decline of the export-driven cattle and sugar economy, some cowboys and plantation workers turned into fishermen along the scarcely populated coastline (Mussoline 1980) whose economic value was so low that it was unclaimed land. The unbothered squatters in these fishing villages formed simple aggregates of nuclear or extended families, lacking any endogenous

political articulation. Some sort of reciprocity existed (as recalled by oral tradition) as a spontaneous form of cooperation for survival. The fishermen were, from the beginning, providers for the local urban markets. Prainha, only 21 miles away from the nearest town of Beberibe and 75 miles from Fortaleza, was never an isolated place. Peddlers (some of whom would end up by settling down in the village as shopkeepers) were also common. This situation was the closest to “traditional” life Prainha ever was. It had nothing to do with ancestral/ethnic practices but was the result of major changes in the national economy.

In the 1920s the whole coast was subjected to a modernization plan carried out by the Navy. Fishermen were forcefully affiliated in *colônias*, local bodies forming part of a national organization (Villar 1945; Callou 1994), which were much more than a vertical trade union. They intended to be the local cell of the State administration; whether for the collection of taxes, the recruiting of sailors for the Navy, the transmission of values of Brazilian identity, or the implementation of the first services of an embryonic welfare state, such as primary and fishing vocational schools or surgeries. Intent at asserting the control of the federal state over the territory vis-à-vis the local oligarchies, the Navy put people from the fishing villages in charge of the *colônias*. Prainha was integrated in the Colônia Z 11 as well as in the institutional structure of the Beberibe municipal administration. In a scarcely populated country like Brazil, with an endemically underdeveloped local administration, correlating geographical discontinuity with administrative autonomy is a very wrong assumption. In administrative terms, all these fishing villages are just districts dependent on some city center. Since 1932, these localities were given the right to elect a local representative (*vereador*) in the town council (Fausto 1994). Prainha was never historically a self-governed community in the sense Indian villages were but just a section of the Brazilian state administration.

This first wave of modernization will give way to a temporary encroachment of the old politics of patronage in the newly created institutions. The *colônias* would be overtaken by oligarchs (Diegues 1983) and municipal democracy sequestered by the *cabo eleitoral*, charged with the task of weaving networks of clients-voters for the oligarch-candidate. Many of these middlemen were recruited among the local fishermen themselves (Greenfield 1975).

In the 70s, the dictatorship attempted to transform the fishermen into modern entrepreneurs through a development body, SUDEPE (Superinten-

dência do Desenvolvimento da Pesca). Its agenda backfired. State investment was coopted by big enterprises and led to the proletarianization of many fishermen. These enterprises resorted to an intensive predatorial exploitation of the fisheries that put in further jeopardy the small scale fishing activities (Lima 2002; Diegues 1983). With a state incapable of enforcing legislation, the Catholic Church, ideologically aligned with the Liberation Theology, stepped in to defend the fishermen's interests, organizing them in the Pastoral Council of Fishermen (Guedes 1984). Prainha's fishermen were clearly behaving as a class segment within the national working class. There was even an incipient class and wealth stratification within Prainha itself: the *cabo eleitoral*, those who lived off the remittances sent by migrants, fishermen who owned their boats employing others for wages, small groceries' owners, and civil servants as school teachers and health promoters.

### 3.2 The Fight against Real Estate Speculation

Tourism development in the Northeast was boosted in the 80s by PRODETUR, another public development plan (Benevides 1998). Public investments on infrastructure and tourism promotion triggered a real estate rush.

Most of Prainha's land was unregistered when in 1984 two speculators from the Fortaleza oligarchy claimed property rights over huge tracts of it through a historically very well-known ruse in the area; the forging of land registry deeds. One of them, the realtor Henrique Jorge, claimed property deed over great part of the inhabited center of the village, and immediately presented a project for a huge tourist resort of more than 4,000 houses; the second one, Mr. de Sá claimed an inhabited coastal strip one mile away from the village (Mendonça 2004). Most of the villagers were suddenly faced with eviction.

However, they were not alone nor politically inert. The Pastoral Commission for the Land was assisting rural populations in the fight for their land rights since 1975. Locally, it used Prainha's pre-existing Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) to organize collective action. Some of its members were already seasoned political activists within the *colônias* and the Pastoral Council of Fishermen. Mobilization against encroaching forces had been limited so far to the fishing companies and had involved the only group directly threatened: that of the fishermen. For fishermen, all along the coastal village, the real estate development entailed their cutting off

from direct access to the beach: a serious hindering of their main means of subsistence. But big speculators like Mr. Jorge were claiming a huge swath of land, representing a threat for the whole population: the threat of remaining homeless. Lacking registered property rights, Prainha's dwellers were not entitled to any sort of compensation. The dimension of the threat would now trigger a widespread process of political awareness. Some hitherto politically non-existing social actors joined the stage of the class struggle play: the local teachers, the shopkeepers. Teachers, in particular, were in a privileged position to gain a pivot role in the mobilization: better educated and economically more independent (as state wage earners) than the rest, on the one hand, they had always been, on the other, the cornerstone of the BEC, thanks to their educational role as catechists.

In these initial stages of Prainha's social movement, the communitarian and ethnic ideology was pretty much absent. The discourse was dominated by the Theology of Liberation. Although teachers would be the first to introduce some sort of idealization of the "traditional way of life" in their discourse, Prainha was mostly reacting as a local segment of the Brazilian landless peasants to defend itself against the new regional elite of realtors spawned by tourism. Speculators were taken to court (Mendonça 2004). For the rural populations lacking a property title the only legal way of resisting this encroachment was claiming *usucapião* – ownership granted by the Federal Government on the grounds of a long-term uncontested dwelling – while trying, at the same time, to proof the forgery of the property deed by Jorge and de Sá.

For the first time, a strong sense of togetherness had emerged in what had been so far no more than a mostly fishing neighborhood of Beberibe. However, it had few to do with an essentialized vision of community. It was, rather, a pragmatic "community of shared interests." The court ruling would be pending for more than a decade, though, leaving in the meantime the rights over the land on a legal limbo that had important consequences for the development of the movement. Officially, the land was put out of the market: no property can be bought or sold until the court ruled. The community of shared interests had become an interim de facto collective domain, acquiring some sort of institutional reality.

That institutional reality will keep growing up along the years. In 1989, the embryonic political body constituted around the BEC spawned a new one: an Association of Neighbors (Associação de Moradores – AM), a collegiate body composed of a democratically elected General Assembly and an Executive Board. The AM was basically a continua-



tion of the previous BEC whose leadership filled the Executive Board chairs. The event not only can be understood as a local process but in the context of a nationwide phenomenon. AMs appeared all over Brazil in the 70s as an attempt on the part of the civil society to fill the institutional void existing in the metropolitan slums and many parts of the countryside, where the organized crime (in the former case) and the huge distances and patronage networks (in the latter) weakened the reach of the state. The dictatorship tolerated them because the local and concrete nature of their demands was perceived as a harmless mean of appeasing popular unrest. This tolerance somehow backfired as the AMs rapidly organized into a nationwide confederation, which wove an alliance with the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT) and other leftist organizations (CONAM 2012), acting as an important factor in the defense of the popular sectors' interests. The leadership in Prainha is just a local manifestation of that process and capitalized on that momentum: the statutes of Prainha's AM were written using the template provided by CONAM and they joined the confederation immediately gaining access to all its political and legal backing and expertise (AM 1989; CONAM 2014). Prainha's AM leadership would later meticulously create a mythology aimed at presenting their fight as that of a small "traditional" David prevailing, against all odds, over the Goliath-sized forces of real estate speculators, but this evidence shows that Prainha was just one of the scenarios of a nationwide struggle.

Brazilian AMs were born to address a "lack of modernity," not to fight against it. There was very few, if anything, of "traditional" in this nationwide community awareness surge. In addition, more importantly, they were very different from the traditional indigenous and rural closed corporate organizations. The affiliation was not a fact "given" by something else (kinship, ethnicity, etc.) but a totally voluntary act; membership rules were of an open kind, with newcomers been easily integrated; AMs very rarely affiliated the whole population in a locality; moreover, as opposed to closed corporate community governing councils, there was no obligation for members to ever serve in the Executive Board (Fontes 1996). As organizations, AMs were never institutionally devised to fulfill executive or legislative political functions. But in Prainha, as in many other communities around Brazil, the actual lack of official forms of sociopolitical organization at the microlocal level pushed them almost "naturally" in that direction. This evolution could not be carried out without inevitably arising some level of conflict because it was taking place in modern hetero-

geneous, class stratified communities. For starters, it was very unlikely that an AM could represent the interests of all groups in such social environments. As mechanisms of political empowerment, AMs lacked some of the fundamental principles of a governing body, such as universal legitimacy and policy enforcement power.

Prainha's AM membership, as a continuation of the BEC, was constituted essentially by the most politically conscious individuals, a significant but nonetheless minority part of the village inhabitants (around 300 members according to the AM documents we had access to). Its agenda was never shared by all, although it is fair to say that it was widely backed in the initial stages of the land conflict. Hargrave (2003) admits, reluctantly, that the communitarian feeling was not preexistent to the land conflict. It was this conflict which created the "community of interests" embraced by most of the population. Aggressions by Henrique Jorge (he was sending thugs to terrorize dwellers and try to force them to relinquish their claims on the land) and the continuation of the fishing predatorial activities created an emotionally charged atmosphere favoring further adherence and legitimacy to the AMs decisions.

### 3.3 Postmodern Politics Take Over

In 1991, the Swiss René Schärer would join the stage adding further momentum and a new direction to the movement. His decision of relinquishing his job as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Swiss Air to settle down in Prainha and become a social activist was driven – as acknowledged in a personal interview – by his postcapitalist, ecologist convictions. He saw in Prainha a place already representing to a certain extent his ideal of society, a place, which could constitute a good raw material to advance in the construction of the society he wanted. The character and the values he brought with him are key to understand the ideological turn taken by Prainha's AM. Sporting the aura of a senior foreign citizen, managerial skills, and international connections Schärer would quickly win substantial charisma over the villagers. His marriage to the sister of the school's head allowed him to enter the AM inner circle. Since then, he is been playing an unacknowledged but evident role of leader in the shadow, acting as a "social hinge" between local actors and the outside world. Schärer founded the Swiss NGO "Amigos da Prainha do Canto Verde" (APCV) in 1991, a fundraising machine for a varied array of development projects in the village (<www.prainha

docantoverde.org>), and co-founded the Terramar Institute in 1993, a regional think tank advocating a postmodern agenda based on indigenous nativism, communitarianism, and downsizing ecologism (<www.terramar.org.br>).

Altogether, this set of actors set off on a political journey to transform Prainha into a model example of a postcapitalist, nativistic, communitarian agenda. Preservation of the allegedly traditional (and ecologically sustainable) small-scale fishing economy and of the corporate organization became the main objectives of the AM leadership. By the mid-90s, the initial almost complete consensus on the land was withering away and Prainha was slipping towards the logics of an open community to some extent affected by the dynamics of the market economy. Eventually, the interim collectivization did not manage to preclude completely the real estate market. Until the pending lawsuit was resolved, no land could be officially bought or sold in Prainha, but, as a proof of the diversity of interests among Prainha's dwellers, some people had started selling plots and houses to small buyers from the surrounding cities (local migrants and holiday makers, mainly) who would willingly acquire these properties even in the absence of a property deed. They were probably hoping the court would sooner or later rule in favor of a liberalization of the land. The possible spreading of that practice was presented by the AM as a threat to be stopped, on pain of ending up in total dispossession by Jorge or any another big realtor. A whole scheme of collectivization was presented as the only solution to avert the danger. In 1996, the newly created Land Council issued a regulation that prohibited dwelling, land or real estate ownership to those born out of Prainha, imposed a cap on the size of the land allotment every native was entitled to, restricted property to one house per adult dweller, and created areas of collective ownership and use (orchards, grazing meadows, recreational areas, school compound) (AM 1996). Prainha's "closed corporate community" had just been created by decree. As such, it could not be but a coercive attempt of political engineering because the AM did not represent everybody and had no legal or traditional competence to enforce these measures. Very aware of that, AM leaders attempted at legitimating the collectivization measures by means of a nativistic discourse. The measures were presented as the reconstruction of the alleged traditional closed corporate community of old times, as an empowering tool of an oppressed and distinctive ethnic group to fend off the Brazilian and international (in the form of overseas mass tourism) colonial encroachment. A blatantly ideological construct because, as we have

already seen, that traditional closed corporate community had never existed.

The AM leadership and the NGOs backing it launched a persistent and designed awareness-raising campaign aiming at building a completely distinctive cultural and political narrative for Prainha and the whole of the fishing populations of the Northeast utilizing a "multimedia" display of symbols and elements. At a regional and national level, the Terramar Institute has been one of the major agents in this process propping up the image of the fishermen as a distinct "quasi-indigenous" ethnic group. It built on the work of some anthropologists (Mussoline 1980; Diegues 1983), who had found connections between some (mostly secondary) cultural traits of the fishermen and practices of Amerindian or African origin, and on the physical characteristics of the population (most of the coastal villagers were of Afro-Indian descent) to somehow highlight a certain racial issue. Lacking a proper ethnonym, the new ethnic group was to be labeled as "Povos do Mar" (Peoples of the Sea) (Callou 2010). However, the most important building block was the rewriting of their disadvantaged position on the capitalist class structure in terms of a "traditional," precapitalist, "ecological" economy, making this concept the core of their "ethnic" difference.

The created ethnic label would be progressively accepted by civil society and state institutions in the following decade, particularly since the arrival of the PT – sensitive to the postmodern identity discourse – to the federal government. In 2012, the Povos do Mar eventually released their official statement as a distinctive ethnic group, the Declaration of Iparana. "Terramar" and the "Tucum" network (a spin-off of the former to promote communitarian tourism in the Ceará state – <www.tucum.org>) had a significant role in that event (*II SESC Congress of the Peoples of the Sea* 2012).

The AM also displayed a very intensive campaign aimed at portraying Prainha as a social system with clear boundaries vis-à-vis the Brazilian society, as something, in fact, different from the latter, and the history of its fight against big fishing companies or realtors as the resistance of that distinctive people (a people operating with a different world vision) to succumb to political, economic, and cultural colonization. The history of the village was sang and written by the local organic intellectuals of Prainha's AM in the popular poetry genre known in all Brazil as *literatura de cordel* and these artistic productions functioned as a sort of *chansons de geste*, with their heroes and villains, to create an identity narrative. The most important elements of that narrative were transformed into icons and painted in a popu-

lar, colorful naïve style on the walls of a purposefully built communal hall where the community was incarnated into solid brick. The whole village was additionally flooded with propaganda: on big billboards and on many walls. As a significant illustration epitomizing the nature of his ideological position, Schärer had written down on his own house's walls in the very center of the village, the famous allegedly Native American saying, which has become an icon of postmodern ecogism: "When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, only then will we realize that one cannot eat money." The "community," in the "indigenized" version intended by the AM leaders, became omnipresent to the eyes and ears of Prainha's citizens: it became part of the landscape itself, part of people's ordinary lives.

The AM's ideological campaign also has to be understood in a more encompassing scheme plotted by the conglomerate of leftist social movements and aimed at turning Prainha into a nationwide showcase of their agenda. It is in that context that the S. O. S Supervivência (Survival) campaign of 1993 must be understood: an event, which put Prainha on the spotlight of the media. Four fishermen sailed off from Prainha for a seventy-six days trip on a *jangada* (the local traditional fishing boat) to Rio de Janeiro, becoming prime time on national TV (Mendonça 2004). The feat triggered a snowball effect: awards would start to be won, journalists and academics to pilgrimage to the "model community" of Prainha, epitome of the anticapitalist resistance.

In the following years, the collectivization policy seemed to succeed reasonably well, although it was always far from being complete. Most ethnographies buying the AM's discourse present this success as a proof of the resilience of the traditional sense of corporateness. We believe the success can be better explained by analyzing the community as what it really always was – a social field composed of several subfields in constant changing interaction between cooperation and conflict – rather than as what the ideological discourse wanted it to be. In this light, in spite of the lack of enforcing measures, the AM regulations were generally respected because the "community of interests" to which they serve was holding together reasonably well. There are several factors that seem to have contributed to it in addition to the already mentioned ones, such as the external threat or the emergence of a ethnic/collective identity. These are: 1) The otherwise paradoxical absence of incentives for the development of a real estate market in Prainha. With some already mentioned exceptions, most prospective buyers were discouraged by the protracted legal limbo

created by the pending lawsuit. Investment in Prainha was simply too risky at that moment and there were plenty of coastal villages in the area where property could be bought without legal hindrances. 2) The Swiss NGO AMPV had become a major employer in Prainha through the funding of many development projects. All funds and jobs were directly allocated by the AM leadership and, thus, it was in the population's interest to align with the AM policies and discourses, even if they did not wholeheartedly agree with them. We have collected evidence supporting that the AM's leadership discretionally used this allocation power in a reward and punishment strategy, to force adherence to its policies.

In spite of all these factors, there were always cracks in the wall of community cohesion. Those cracks made visible the real nature of the community the AM discourse was trying to hide and to change. Resistance to realtors had been fierce when it entailed a direct danger of eviction but things were pretty different where the building encroachment did not. Mr. de Sá, the second speculator, built a very big villa on his claimed uninhabited tract of beach without facing any resistance at all and hired a native family as housekeepers. Members of this family were interviewed by us: they were very happy to work for the oligarch. However, the most threatening cracks for the success of the communitarian agenda were those that opened among some of the AM leaders and the rest of the villagers, cracks showing very dangerous contradictions between discourse and practice.

There are people here who have more land than others do. Before the regulations were issued, they just took the land and fenced it around. For instance, Mrs. Mirtes' [member of the AM's leadership] children have big houses with big plots and my son will have to content himself with a little house with no plot at all (informant: fisherman, 53 years old, Prainha do Canto Verde)

The implementation of the CBT project would only make those cracks bigger.

### 3.4 The CBT Project

At first, the AM was against tourism. Fueled by their own ideology they were focused in encouraging small-scale fishing as the main economic source of revenue for the village. Most funds channeled by the APCV (Amigos da Prainha do Canto Verde) were destined to improve fishing activities (<[www.prainhadocantoverde.org](http://www.prainhadocantoverde.org)>). Development projects introduced some organizational and technological improvements but never aimed at changing the

small-scale nature of fishing because this was seen as the main feature of the traditional culture to be preserved. This created new cracks in the community cohesion, for our fieldwork research has gathered evidence showing that the enthusiasm to preserve the fishing decision was rejected by a significant part of the population and, in particular, by fishermen themselves. That rejection would only become bigger as new generations of villagers would come of age. Our interviews with youngsters revealed an *en masse* rejection of fishing and a clear preference for other kinds of activities that did not fit in the romantic idea of the “traditional” life advocated by AM leaders.

The AM leadership, nonetheless, was determined to impose their model overall local society and they were quite wary of tourism because they saw it as an agent of cultural and economic colonization. The nativistic ideology and, most effectively, the *interim de facto* collectivization of the land so far had kept mass tourism at bay. Thanks to that, by the mid-1990s, Prainha had become an island of “traditional” fishermen surrounded by bustling tourist towns, all of which had previously been fishing villages themselves. However, Prainha was only some twenty miles away from the mass tourist destination of Canoa Quebrada and could not completely stop the incoming flow of tourists. Schärer himself had been initially one of them. At some point, the AM got to the conclusion that some sort of tourism was inevitable and laid out a plan to turn it into a tool to advance its agenda.

The design of the plan took four years, starting in 1994 when the AM conducted a study to assess the impacts of tourism in the region (Schärer 2003; Mendonça 2004). The AM’s study abhorred of what they called “The Baron’s Tourism,” i.e., big- or medium-scale ventures owned by non-local businesspersons. The study – methodologically weak and lacking solid empirical evidence – associated this model with a set of rather apocalyptic sociocultural impacts that were presented as universal, inevitable, permanent, and morally reprehensible, the epitome of which was incarnated by Canoa Quebrada. The study reveals the double ideological imprint of the AM leadership. The catholic morality stemming from the BEC (Basic Ecclesial Community) can be perceived in statements such as those criticizing the changes in the dressing styles or sexual behavior allegedly brought by tourism. The nativistic/indigenist bias surfaces in the grim tones used to describe the relinquishing of the fishing way of life as an automatic path towards subproletarianization, identity loss, and cultural impoverishment and, ultimately, all the symptoms of anomie (alcoholism, disintegra-

tion of family bonds, extreme individualism, criminality, sexual promiscuity, and prostitution) (AM 1994). It is very significant that this apocalyptic view is absent in other ethnographies conducted in Canoa Quebrada (Barros e Moreira 2005; de Moura et al. 2005).

The AM resisted giving in to tourism until 1997 when the Tourism Council was created and the first tourist venue, owned by one of the leading AM families, started lodging visitors in a regular basis. The AM operated CBT project, aimed at protecting Prainha from the consequences of the “Baron’s Tourism” would not properly start off until 1998 (Schärer 2003). The AM sought the expertise of the Federal University of Ceará and founded a cooperative with a hybrid formula that can be summarized as follows: The cooperative owns and manages collectively a couple of lodges but the bulk of the initiative is left to individual entrepreneurs, provided they are natives. These privately owned enterprises would have to pay a percentage of their proceeds to the cooperative (that should subsequently be reinvested in development projects for the benefit of the village as a whole) but were also supposed to receive their share on the cooperative profits. The cooperative limited the number of tourist venues to one per family and capped the number of rooms per lodge. In addition, it established a monopoly on the rest of touristic services: buggy, horse and boat rides, guides, catering, crafts and, most importantly, marketing and advertising (AM 1997).

Revenues from tourism were intended to be complementary to those of fishing, and mass leisure tourism to be discouraged in favor of a kind of tourist looking for a deep and authentic experience with the “traditional” culture of the “Peoples of the Sea.” However, the AM did not content itself with selling Prainha’s allegedly traditional ways of life. It went further in its tourist planning strategy and pioneered a couple of new types of touristic products: the “political” and “academic” tourism. The AM did not only target “cultural otherness” seekers but also ideologically akin clients and researchers; to put it in the words of Mendonça (2004: 129): “ecologists, NGO members, scholars and students, human rights activists and church groups.” To the former they sold the communitarian project and the history of the mobilization/revolution as a show (the revolutionary narrative incarnated in art, the visit to the places where “the historical facts” took place) and as a know-how that could be applied to other fishing communities (visits to the development projects, seminars with the AM councils’ leaders, etc.). To the latter they sold a whole set of “prepackaged” services destined to guarantee the “success” of their re-

search (documentation center with all the available literature, informants, and interviews already pre-arranged, etc.). The overwhelmingly acritical nature of most of Prainha's ethnographies is in great part the result of this "academic" tourism. The "political" and "academic" tourisms would also work as propaganda tools. Through the Tucum organization, the Terramar Institute would extend the model to other fishing villages in the state of Ceará.

The Tourism Council gave birth to a planned tourist economy aimed at monopolizing and shaping the business. Marketing was purposefully designed to target only this particular kind of clients. Advertising through mainstream tourist operators was shunned (Hargrave 2003). However, the CBT project also introduced the most overt contradiction so far between the AM's ideological discourse and the actual praxis. Whereas ideology was insisting in presenting Prainha as a subsistence corporate community, the CBT model had implemented a sort of middle way between the communitarian template and an economy scheme of individualist market. The big bulk of the activity was left in the hands of private investors, whose profits only were limited by the rules set by the Land and Tourism Councils. The redistribution mechanism (a key element in any corporate community) was very weak: the "tax" levied by the cooperative on the venues' profits was so low that it hardly could fund any development project. These would continue to be mostly externally financed by the APCV and, as one of the NGO chairs in Switzerland confirmed in an interview, directly controlled by Schärer.

This formula could not satisfy the majority of the population in the long run. The model was, indeed, to encounter resistance almost from the beginning: practices aimed at skipping the cooperative controls have been reported even among its own members. On top of that, relatives of the AM leadership were accused of been privileged in the allocation of jobs in the tourist activities. Due to practices of this sort, the Tourism Council was soon tainted with a reputation of hypocrisy and corruption that added up to the already existing critical stance vis-à-vis the AM leadership. As long as tourism remained an embryonic activity, upfront criticism was kept at bay, but things changed as years went by and the CBT brought in a steady and very significant flow of revenue for those families owning tourist venues (our research had access to the accounting books of the Tourism Council). Consequently, the socioeconomic stratification and inequality levels of Prainha increased dramatically. The situation observed by us and revealed by many testimonials was something very different from the advertised egalitarian sub-

sistence community. On the one hand, there was a well-off stratus of people somehow linked to the AM leadership and/or to urban migrant families, sporting urban middle-class living standards. On the other edge:

People don't want to talk about it but there is a "rotten" part of the community: malnourished children, drugs, alcohol, single mothers, crime. We have a slum here that we call Caucaia. Television only shows the good things (informant: Health Promoter, female, 47 years old, Prainha do Canto Verde).

The CBT project, with its constraining regulations, would increasingly be perceived by some not as a project of and for the community as a whole but as an oligopolistic tool designed to concentrate profit in the hands of a few: those who had the control of the AM and its niche tourist market. With other families in the community, such as shopkeepers and relatives of urban employees, having capital to invest in the growing tourism sector, the field was ripe for the birth of a "free market" political faction in Prainha. In 2004, one family would break the rules on size capping and opened a new venue boasting 11 rooms. They would not overtly defy the communitarian ideology (they still defended the restriction of ownership to natives) but advocated a spirit of free enterprise challenging the client profiling and the strict limits to growth imposed by the AM. They promoted leisure tourism. Finally, reassured by their own success, they eventually stepped out of the cooperative and the AM altogether.

### 3.5 The Extractivist Reservation – A State-Backed Strategy of Communitarisation

By the time this internal bickering was taking place, the fate of Prainha was still in the hands of a pending lawsuit. The realtor seemed to have the local authorities on his side. As a token of it, police officers never opened an investigation against the realtor's thugs (Bursztyn et al. 2003). However, with a leftist PT (Workers Party – Partido dos Trabalhadores) government sitting in Brasilia from January 2003 the tables turned. The PT, which owed its victory in large part to the social movements (Angelo e Villa 2009), would give its support to Prainha's AM's cause. It is this external backing, which eventually explains the most recent success of the AM's political agenda. Mr. Jorge lost the case in 2003 and appealed to the Supreme Federal Court only to lose again in 2006. The land, thus, was reverted to the public domain.

At that point – as Schärer (2003) himself writes – the AM found itself facing a dilemma: applying for individual *usucapião* rights or requesting the transformation of Prainha into an Extractivist Reservation (RESEX). The RESEX are federal protected areas created by the Federal Bill 9985/2000, granting the collective right of management to populations living off “traditional” and “sustainable” economies based on the extraction of some natural resource. As an illustration of how far the postmodern politics of “indigenization” of Brazilian rural populations have gone, RESEX, clearly inspired on the Indian Reservation model, is being widely promoted by the PT government (Angelo e Villa 2009). Both of them are mechanisms of sociopolitical engineering and have at least the following similar characteristics:

- 1) they bestow collective rights to an specific population on the grounds of the existence of a premodern (and threatened) cultural difference;
- 2) they have a conservationist stance vis-à-vis those differential ways of life and the natural environment that sustains them;
- 3) they grant a limited political autonomy in the managing of the territory; and
- 4) they are supervised by an umbrella organization, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) in one case, the Brazilian Institute of the Environment (IBAMA) in the other.

The AM opted for the RESEX strategy because it was the only one that could ensure the viability of its communitarian/indigenist agenda. The other solution would have been tantamount to a liberalization of the land and the AM knew very well that there were a significant number of dwellers that would not follow the banners of communitarianism, that were willing to sell and grab the money or to buy from their fellow villagers to set up large leisure tourism venues. The RESEX declaration granted collective ownership of the land, with the additional reward of giving control over the marine resources: the ultimate weapon against fishing poachers. Equally important, the RESEX was the opportunity to legitimate the AM as the political governing institution of Prainha. The federal legislation granted, indeed, powers of comanagement over the RESEX resources to an ill-defined category of “local popular organizations” in coordination with the IBAMA. In non-Indian rural localities lacking a political organization based on chieftaincy or kinship, like Prainha, AMs were the only locally based organizations ready to step in when the state called for a political actor to occupy these newly created loci of power.

Prainha was declared a Marine RESEX in 2009

(Governo Federal do Brasil 2009). A competing Association of Independent Neighbours (Associação de Moradores Independentes de Prainha – AMI) was immediately founded by the “free market” party, claiming a membership of around 300 people (AMI 2009), almost a third of the village population. AMI was openly backed by Mr. de Sá, the remaining businessperson with vested interests in Prainha. The AMI took the Federal Government to court hoping to revoke the RESEX declaration. By this time, however, the issue had clearly overflowed the limits of a local land conflict. Prainha was one of the headquarters of the leftist social movements in the state of Ceará and Mr. de Sá was the vice-president of the executive board of the regional branch of DEM (the main center-right party of Brazil) (de Lima 2009). The anti-RESEX strategy was backed by his party and the Brazilian center-right media.

The historical tide seems so far to favor the AM’s side. It is very unlikely that in Brazil’s current political environment any court dares to rule against the environmental and cultural hegemonic discourse. The eyes of hundreds of NGOs, social movements, media, and the government are set on Prainha, which has become a showcase not only of CBT but of the PT rural and regional policies as a whole and, particularly, a symbol of the Northeast Region of Brazil (Região Nordeste do Brasil), the poorest region in the country. Although the case has not been settled as to the writing of this article, the lawsuit has already reaped a setback, on December 2010, as the 4th Chamber of the Attorney General supported the AM’s arguments. But in doing so, the state is not only turning down the claims of a set of particular plaintiffs, it is also dismissing those of a legally constituted organization of dwellers, ironically invoking the defense of the local population’s interests (as represented by the AM position) without caring to ask which percentage of the “community” do they really represent. In the face of a nascent opposition, the old AM has revealed itself what it always was: something closer to a political party, confronted by a competing ideological agenda, than the legitimate political body of an indigenous corporate community. In spite of that, it has been recognized by the IBAMA as the “community organization,” the one called to codesign and to co-manage the future policy of the RESEX.

Our research gathered some evidence supporting the critiques by the AM about the AMI’s role as an instrument in the hands of Mr. de Sá: De Sá is deploying traditional patronage tactics to “buy” the loyalty of some (i.e., the donation of an ambulance to the village). However, our research has also collected plenty of evidence showing that the AMI

is also driven by its own agenda (the tourist interest plus a justice feeling of restoring the real communitarian spirit). No matter how big the difference of power and resources between Mr. de Sá and the AMI may be, the AM's attempt to depict them as the inert puppets in thrall to a regional oligarch can only be understood as the product of a calculated ideological discourse, aiming at constructing the Northeast rural villages as what empirically they never were: an ideal *gemeinschaft* with a closed corporate society ethos. Very much on the contrary, Prainha, on the side of a main national paved road, with its high school full of students that dream of becoming lawyers, doctors, or football players, its constantly packed cyber café and its cell phone frenzy, its all-year-round influx of all kinds of tourists, its national and international migration flows and, most of all, its ever more complex division of labor, and its raising Gini index<sup>8</sup> is just a part, a local projection, of the Brazilian national open *gesellschaft*. A process of modernization in which, paradoxically, tourism in general and CBT in particular (being the main tourist activity) are playing a significant enhancing role.

#### 4 Are CBT Projects in the Left Segment of the C-CBT Continuum Successful and Sustainable? Reflexions on the Study Case of Prainha

CBT projects cannot be analyzed with a universal set of criteria. As we have shown in our theoretical section, it is necessary first to understand what kind of CBT we are dealing with, that is, in which segment of the C-CBT continuum it is located. It is imperative that the reader understand that our article does not intend to assess all forms of CBT but just the particular one linked to political communitarianism and, most concretely, in its Latin American and Brazilian regional versions.

How can we measure the level of "success" and sustainability (i.e., its capacity to be successful and, therefore, to survive in the long run) of a CBT project and how can Prainha's experience help us in this regard? In order for a CBT to be successful, and therefore sustainable, we believe the key lays in coherence between its theoretical premises and its actual practices. Now, concerning CBT projects in the

left segment of the C-CBT continuum two are the basic premises: the existence of some sort of egalitarian homogeneous corporate community with a small-scale, preindustrial economy and some kind of "cultural otherness" stemming from it. Each of both premises arises its own set of problems.

The problems with the first premise start with the fact that this kind of community is nothing but an ideal type. All throughout our globalized capitalist world system communities are never anything else than open heterogeneous social fields where values, practices, and resources are subjected to constant negotiation, conflict, and change. This is the case in Prainha, where the closed corporate community, rather than as a structural reality, must be understood as a superstructural (ideological) construct devised by the AM's leadership and its external allies as a (temporarily) successful psychosocial strategy of social mobilization and cohesion at a particular moment in time, when the interests of Prainha's individual dwellers were threatened by real estate speculators and fishing companies. Certainly, the AM can be seen as a corporation but one that, unlike the traditional ones, never entailed full membership for all its members. As the immediate threat weakened and then disappeared altogether, the communitarian ideology would progressively lose steam and contradictions between the real social dynamics and the idealized ones would steadily grow. The contradictions are very similar to those observed in the Indianist political movements between their electoral discourses and their actual policies once they are in power (Ullán 2008). The communitarian idea would be rekindled in the CBT strategy, only to make the contradictions bigger, because the AM leadership, the best positioned to profit from CBT, refused to fully collectivize tourism. A clear indication that they too were regarding the closed corporate community in a purely instrumental way. Prainha's CBT project was based in a more flexible, interactional concept of community that was seen by many villagers who had internalized the egalitarian, collectivist discourse like a betrayal. Critique became outraged resentment when the economic success of CBT tourism started widening the socioeconomic differences between tourist ventures' owners and the rest of the population. Those lacking capital or knowledge to enter the tourist business would long for a stricter application of the collectivist discourse. Those seeing possibilities of increasing their profits claimed for a scraping of the CBT and land constraining regulations and the collectivist discourse altogether. As a result, Prainha ended up being a social field contended by three different concepts of community (and tourism).

<sup>8</sup> In economics, the Gini coefficient (sometimes expressed as a Gini ratio or a normalized Gini index) is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income or wealth distribution of a nation's residents, and is the most commonly used measure of inequality. It was developed by the Italian statistician and sociologist Corrado Gini in 1912.

The main problem with the second premise is that tourism, whatever its particular model may be, inevitably entails a modernization process that runs against the “traditional cultural otherness” CBT intends to sell. If the distinctive complex of shared beliefs and meanings of a traditional culture are supposed to be rooted in their also distinctive economic practices (Ingold 1992; Milton 1996), this symbolic universe will also change when the economic practices change. Tourism, to begin with, implies a complex set of social, cultural, and economic capitals and skills that are mainly acquired in the outside world. This is why in Prainha CBT has mainly benefited the most modernized individuals (migrants, school teachers, political activist involved in the fishing and land conflicts, relatives of the old *cabo eleitoral*), opening a steadily expanding class chasm between a handful of well-off hotel owning families and the rest of the population, many of whom work as part-time employees for the former or for the cooperative, but are still stuck with small-scale fishing. Whatever the relation with the means of production is, tourism triggers a widespread process of tertiarization with the appearance of a new set of activities that introduces nontraditional habitus, values, and world visions. Tertiary activities are associated with the outer world and with a less toilsome life than traditional fishing and acquire, in spite of its proletarianization effects, a general aura of prestige, as the case of Canoa Quebrada shows (Barros e Moreira 2005). In addition to that, there is the acculturating effect of the constant flow of tourists. As a result, the small-scale traditional fishing starts to be perceived, particularly by the youngest, less as an acceptable or even desired cultural goal and more as a structural trap to escape from. Frustration and even anomie ensue from that. Prainha’s AM’s insistence in preserving traditional fishing against the will of fishermen themselves highlights the nature of its agenda and contributes to activate the conflict for the control of the means of production and the definition of the model of tourism development; and fosters migration as an individual way out for many youngsters excluded from the CBT benefits.

This CBT model has been characterized as a postmodern phenomenon (Harkin 2003; Beeton 2006): a modern activity working with the logic of a market economy, which intends to sell the experience of a premodern culture. Once the allegedly traditional practices have been exposed to the tourist industry, that way of life starts to cease being traditional and becomes, instead, a prepackaged product for a sort of postmaterialist consumerism. The identity based on that traditionalist discourse is also a postmodern one in the sense pointed out by Ullán

(2001): one that exists only in the aesthetic-symbolic dimension as an icon, separated from the actual social practices and ethos.

In spite of all these contradictions, the Prainha’s political and tourist experiment has had some positive effects that should be taken into consideration. First of all, the population has not been evicted from the land. Many works about the impacts of tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean have extensively described the high vulnerability that ensues from the loss of the natives’ property over the land.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, decades of collective fight for the land and the sea have created a social and political capital among a previously mostly passive population that will be very important in order to face better the challenges that the upcoming future will surely bring. Last but not least, the restrictive policies of control of the tourist activity implemented by Prainha’s AM, although not totally effective and undoubtedly authoritarian, have slowed down the speed of change and bought some time for the local population to adjust in a less traumatic and more advantageous way to the inevitable sociocultural changes caused by tourism.

However, the survival of Prainha’s CBT will be at risk in the medium and long term if its promoters keep walking down the essentialist road. If the ideological model of community proposed by the AM and now institutionalized by the RESEX refuses to acknowledge change, it will be undermining the power of resilience and adaptation that every culture needs. In addition, it will only make the conflict between the promoters of this model and those who bet for a mass leisure one more virulent.

Surely, the best strategy to sort out the contradictions and try to minimize the existing conflicts is not that of trying to freeze up social change but to change at a different speed, formulating hybrid strategies. If the CBT model is to be viable in the future, whether in Prainha or anywhere else, it will have to abandon the left segment of the C-CBT continuum: stop nurturing the utopian myth of the closed corporate community and walk away from the nativist denying of sociocultural change. It will have to be capable of managing the tensions inherent to changes brought by tourism, constantly adapting its goals to an ever-changing environment and negotiating its agenda with a local population composed by a heterogeneous set of actors.

<sup>9</sup> Lansing and De Vries (2006); Dantas et al. (2010), Jackie-wicz and Craine (2010); Van Noorloos (2011); Cañada and Blázquez (2011).



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