

BOOK REVIEW: “GUERRA NOS MARES DO SUL. O PAPEL DA OCEANOGRAFIA NA DESTRUIÇÃO DE TERRITÓRIOS TRADICIONAIS DA PESCA”

RESENHA CRÍTICA DO LIVRO: “GUERRA NOS MARES DO SUL. O PAPEL DA OCEANOGRAFIA NA DESTRUIÇÃO DE TERRITÓRIOS TRADICIONAIS DA PESCA”

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MOURA, G. M. Gustavo. *Guerra nos mares do sul. O papel da oceanografia na destruição de territórios tradicionais da pesca*. São Paulo: Annablume Editora, 2017. p.360.

Abstract:

This is a review of the book entitled “Guerra nos mares do sul. O papel da oceanografia na destruição de territórios tradicionais da pesca”. This book is authored by: Gustavo G. M. Moura. The book reviewed here was published in the Citizenship and Environment Collection of Annablume Publishers, 2017.

Keywords: Decolonial studies, marine monoculture, de-re-territorialization, science wars, social oceanography.

Resumo:

Esta é uma resenha do livro intitulado “Guerra nos mares do sul”. O papel da oceanografia na destruição de territórios tradicionais da pesca”. Este livro é de autoria de: Gustavo G. M. Moura. O livro resenhado foi publicado na Coleção Cidadania e Meio Ambiente da Editora Annablume, 2017.

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Palavras-chave: Estudos descoloniais, monocultura marinha, desreterritorialização, guerras científicas, oceanografia social

This is a review of the article entitled “*Guerra nos mares do sul. O papel da oceanografia na destruição de territórios tradicionais da pesca*”. The book is authored by Gustavo G. M. Moura and was published by Annablume in 2017.

Much of what can be learned from the book comes as a result of Dr. Moura's interdisciplinary training as an academic, which has a definite impact in constructing the thematic reflections around the territorial and epistemic conflicts in Lagoa dos Patos. The author holds a major in oceanography and a PhD in environmental sciences from the University of São Paulo. This construction within the author's professional profile allows him to address the spatiotemporal conflict held between the modern state of Brazil and artisan fishers in Rio Grande do Sul in a transdisciplinary and holistic manner. This transdisciplinary approach, which the author combines with ethnographic data and keen observations on the nature of oceanography and oceanographic history, results in a socio-environmental approach to oceanography; an ethno-oceanography, so rich in carefully analyzed data that it allows for building a robust and grounded critique of the hegemonical lens by which orthodox oceanography describes reality and imposes a single truth about it. In the spirit of social oceanography, the book has accomplished its epistemological mission of producing equality in maritime rights by highlighting the importance of local participation in development projects through the inclusion and recognition of the valuable ecological knowledge constructed and curated by local communities.

The book is divided into five chapters, preceded by a very clear preface written by Rogerio Haesbaert, as well as an introduction, the bibliographic references section, two annexes and a list of interviewees. The structure of the chapter is as follows: Chapter 1, Constellations of knowledge on the scene: towards a postcolonial approach of the epistemological diversity of the world; Chapter 2, The territory as knowledge: a perspective on territorial-environmental conflicts. This chapter is divided into two sections: Modern system of fisheries resources management: a way of strategic territorialization and Traditional system of fisheries resources management: a way of tactical territorialization. From being confronted with these subsections, readers should realize that cultural perspectives underlie the serious problem of conflict over resource management arising from conflicting epistemologies. The book also includes Chapter 3: The methodological question; Chapter 4: The history of the production of a modern fisheries resource management system in Lagoa dos Patos (RS); Chapter 5: Deterritorialization of a regional fishing community in Lagoa dos Patos until INC 2004; Final Considerations; References; Appendix A - Joint Normative Instruction No. 3, and February 9, 2004; Annex B - Ibama Ordinance No. 171, of December 22, 1998; and a list of interviewees.

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The well-organized content in addition to the author's sharpness of pen combine to provide readers with a deep logical yet easy argumentative reasoning that allows for the audience to grasp, with little effort, a complex central argument, namely, that oceanography has been instrumental in providing a colonial tool used to dismantle traditional fishing territories in Lagoa dos Patos, in Rio Grande do Sul. In order to reach this conclusion, the territorial conflict of fisheries in Lagoa dos Patos is described through paths and forms that go beyond the realm of the strictly spatial, to account for the intertwined socio-ecological architecture of environmental components present in this conflict. These components are contained in a series of local calendars representing the "time of the other" that managed to get juxtaposed with scientific calendars in order to totalize time in ways useful for the State's agenda. Such a shift in the understanding of local space-time makes it clear that State intervention in Lagoa dos Patos is not only a historical, but also an ontological process.

What do these historical and ontological origins of the conflict consist of? Moura explains that these conflicts are not the product of European contact, though, on the contrary, these are the product of a colonial posture that the contemporary Brazilian State exercises within its own political boundaries to homogenize realities, citizenships and natures and, thus, submit territories, people and resources to the governmental imaginaries of national development. Thus, through intervening and transforming Rio Grande do Sul, the region experiments the creation of the largest industrial park in the country.

Understanding the transformation in Lagoa dos Patos in the context of decolonial studies and progressive geographies requires a *long durée* vision and a deep theoretical exploration. Such a profound vision is presented to the reader from the onset as it is in the first chapter that the author analyzes and tests the validity of emic/ethical epistemologies. This dichotomic classification of the world has been, for long, a central part of the core ideology of social sciences. Such ideology divides reality into parallel and mutually unintelligible realms; one constructed from the perspective of local views and the other constructed from an alleged scientific objectivity. By criticizing the ontological validity of emic and etic categories, Moura demonstrates the many limitations that come as a result of understanding the socio-environmental world through such dichotomy.

The emic/etic dichotomy is insufficient to understand the processes of des-re-territorialization occurring in Lagoa dos Patos. Claiming validity towards emic/etic categories blurs the epistemic diversity of the invisible world, displaying only two ways to describe it: scientific knowledge and others' way of knowing. This division, treated carelessly, can lead into thinking that an integration of both realities is possible despite the epistemic particularities of cognitive systems. The product that emerges when detecting the emic/ethical fallacy is the realization of the existence of many other types of knowledge involved in creating a Nation-State philosophy of resource management within which, in an unbalanced way, three types of knowledge are combined: 1)

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traditional ecological, 2) modern reductionist-positive science, and 3) governmental thinking.

In Rio Grande do Sul, the fusion of knowledge at the service of the government's logic and the subsumption of traditional territories took place through the practice of oceanography and the merging of modern reductionist-positive science and governmental thinking. This action became possible because the agendas of oceanography scholars were compatible with the national project of the civil-military dictatorship. Together, scientists and government officials mutually benefitted from transforming the fishing sector into a national industry. To reach this goal, a campaign to devalue and discredit artisanal fisheries and fishing livelihoods was launched. On the one hand, fishers were portrayed as ignorant, unproductive and unsustainable. On the other hand, oceanography, supported by the discourse that emanates from technoscientific knowledge and qualified personnel, was portrayed as neutral, innocuous, objective and multidisciplinary constructed knowledge. In such a narrative, science was singled out as the authoritative tool for producing knowledge and, consequently, as the only truthful source of marine and maritime knowledge. In short, the reverence of oceanography as a technical advancement became synonymous, proclaiming the inexistence of other knowledge about the seas.

Oceanography became the battering ram with which governmental thinking broke the "time of the other" to re-calendarize and de-territorialize artisanal fishers' livelihoods. It was not only the lives of citizens that became regulated, but a new logic to perform fishing activity was inscribed. Nonetheless and in spite of terrible forces that propelled this imposition, projects like this tend to fail because new calendars of techno-scientific origin tend to be the reflection of a simplistic model of reality. Such models, unlike local calendars, do not take into account the multiplicity of climatic, biological, hydrological and social factors with which the communities settled around Lagoa dos Patos were able to establish intercommunity codes of fishing conduct. These codes generated traditional management models based on the flexible, irregular and cyclical rhythms of local ecosystems. These broad and encompassing characteristics make local management different from the colonial undemocratic project that prescribed a marine monoculture in terms of how resources were used, what they were used for, and how resources were managed to favor development.

The book *Guerra nos mares do sul* leaves a truthful testimony of epistemic and spatiotemporal conflict. After reading it, I distinguish three main approaches towards understanding its content: a) from the critical studies perspective aware of the lack of neutrality of prevailing truth. A truth that, far from being neutral, is invested with authority by those seeking to benefit from the dispossession of resources and epistemicide; b) an interpretation from a human geography standpoint, which allows for understanding both the materialization of the signs of memory and the production of realities and how these realities are confronted, contested and conquered. Finally, readers can examine the book through c) the lens of ethnoecological studies. This

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approach allows for contrasting the ways in which different societies understand the flow of matter and energy around them. Among these approaches, from my perspective, the ethnoecological reading is the most encouraging one, because it shows that despite the existence of a plurality of calendars running simultaneously in the same lagoon, the ideal of a world where many worlds fit is attainable, democratic and sustainable.

In terms of pointing a downside on Dr. Moura's work, I hold only one critique, as it seems the author quite extensively uses acronyms and abbreviations for things, institutions, and contexts. As a reader, I find it frustrating to have to go back 40 or 60 pages to remember the meaning of MM, CMp, or MEY, for example. A glossary or at least a list of terms of reference would be something readers would, assumingly, greatly appreciate.

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