Indigenously controlled tourism as struggle for autonomy: the Pataxó Jaqueira Reserve in Brazil

Turismo controlado por indígenas como lucha por la autonomía: Reserva Pataxó Jaqueira en Brasil

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Abstract

This study analyses the emblematic experience of an indigenous group in Brazil, the Pataxó, who was able to set up and exercise strong control over an indigenous tourism project: the Jaqueira Reserve. Based on document analysis, interviews, and observations, we show how the Jaqueira Reserve was consolidated not only as a strongly autonomous initiative but also as constituent of a greater quest for autonomy (to craft aspired livelihoods conducive to cultural revitalization and environmental protection). The Pataxó experience shows that indigenous tourism can be an instrument in greater indigenous struggles, and as such can develop not only despite marginalization but also against it.

Keywords: territorial control, cultural strengthening, environmental protection, indigenous peoples, Bahia.

Resumen

En este estudio, se analiza la experiencia emblemática de un grupo indígena en Brasil, los pataxós, que logró instalar y ejercer un fuerte control sobre un proyecto de turismo indígena: la Reserva Jaqueira. Con base en el análisis de documentos, entrevistas y observaciones, mostramos cómo la Reserva de Jaqueira se consolidó no solo como una iniciativa fuertemente autónoma, sino también como componente de una mayor búsqueda de autonomía (para construir medios de vida conducentes a la revitalización cultural y la protección del medio ambiente). La experiencia de Pataxó muestra que el turismo indígena puede ser un instrumento de luchas indígenas mayores y, como tal, desarrollarse no solo a pesar de la marginación, sino también en contra de ella.

Palabras clave: control territorial, fortalecimiento cultural, protección ambiental, pueblos indígenas, Bahía.

1 Introduction

Indigenous tourism has the potential to contribute to strengthening indigenous livelihoods and cultures that attach essential value to the environment, supporting therefore also environmental conservation (Bresner 2014, Carr *et al.* 2016, Whitford & Ruhanen 2016, Pereiro 2016, Zeppel 2007). Although definitions of «indigenous tourism» vary, it is usually understood as the type of tourism involving indigenous peoples, *i.e.,* centered on indigenous culture and/or controlled by indigenous peoples (De Burlo 2000, Hinch & Butler 2007, Volkman 1990, Zeppel 2006). Indigenous control is emphasized by scholars who deem it to be the keystone for the success of indigenous tourism —essential not only to reduce the risk of project discontinuation, which tends to happen when projects are spearheaded by outsiders but also to enable indigenous people to obtain desired benefits (Manyara & Jones 2007, Lalander *et al.* 2023, Mtapuri & Giampiccoli 2013, Pereiro 2016, Thimm & Karlaganis 2020, Thomson-Carr 2013, Zeppel 2006)—. As stated by Bresner (2014, p. 136), «control over their participation in tourism is sometimes the difference between continued colonization and exploitation, on the one hand, and sovereignty, self-determination, and empowerment, on the other».

However, despite the overarching consensus on the importance of control, there is still a limited understanding of how this is obtained by indigenous communities and how it is manifested in indigenous tourism projects. We face therefore a critical knowledge gap of catch-22 type, namely that, whereas the exercise of control comprises a requisite for indigenous tourism to generate locally aspired benefits, indigenous communities often struggle with little control over their socio-environmental contexts largely due to the colonial legacies that imply continued prejudicial conditions accompanied by, among other things, limited political power, cultural discrimination, and high levels of poverty (Pailey 2022, United Nations 2021).

To address this empirical gap, this study examines an emblematic case: an indigenous tourism project, the Jaqueira Reserve in Northeast Brazil, that is strongly controlled by an indigenous group from a historically marginalized community, *i.e.,* the Pataxó people. Our focus is on scrutinizing the genesis and the functioning of the Jaqueira Reserve to elucidate how, despite historical marginalization, the Pataxó group was able to set up and exercise strong control over their indigenous tourism project.

This article is based on a case-study design building on a single case (Yin 2003). There are several other ongoing indigenous tourism projects in Brazil and elsewhere but, due to indigenous communities' restricted technical and financial capacities, they are often dependent on funding and technical support from external agents such as non-profit organizations (NGOs) or governmental agencies

(Bresner 2014, Camargo *et al.* 2022, Scheyvens 2002, Zeppel 2006). We deemed therefore relevant to conduct a single-case study, focusing on the Jaqueira Reserve, since it is, to our knowledge, not only a pioneer indigenous tourism initiative in Brazil but also a case that challenges the notion that indigenous communities are unable to autonomously set up and manage their own projects. In other words, we hold the Jaqueira Reserve as an emblematic case that deserves scrutiny.

Fieldwork data was collected during a short pilot visit to the Jaqueira Reserve in January 2020, a one-month period in January 2022, and a final visit in August 2022. We utilized qualitative methods, namely the review of scholarly material, documents, and news, participant observations in tours in the Jaqueira Reserve, and semi-structured interviews with Pataxó individuals who work or have worked in the Jaqueira Reserve.

In total, 17 participant observations of tours and 48 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Observations and interviews were conducted by the main author, who sought to triangulate findings by addressing the same topics through different methods and sources (*e.g.,* comparing explanations in tours with answers from interviews), following the principle of data saturation. In the final fieldwork visit, the findings were double-checked and discussed with participants.

This article is structured as follows. In the following section, we present a conceptual explanation of «autonomy». Next, we present the background of the Pataxó people as a contextualization of the prejudicial conditions they have been subjected to. Then, we explain the creation and consolidation of the Jaqueira Reserve. Subsequently, to complement the description of the Reserve, we describe everyday touristic experiences in it. Finally, we analyze and discuss critical elements underpinning its largely autonomous creation, and how community control has been exercised on different fronts, namely territorial, cultural, and economic. Our analysis highlights that, even in the absence of structural transformation and of external support, local initiatives in the field of indigenous tourism can emerge not only relatively autonomously but also as a constituent of greater struggles for autonomy to shape own conditions and structures experienced as discriminatory and oppressive.

2
Conceptual clarification: autonomy as ability to shape own conditions and overarching structures

Autonomy, as many other widespread political concepts, has been interpreted differently throughout history and by different

theoretical approaches. The word dates to Greek, Aristotelian philosophy, and its etymology indicates «self» *(auto),* «law» or «customs» *(nomos),* which is closely related to self-governance, self-rule, or self-determination (May 1994). As such, the concept of «autonomy» intersects with the notions of «freedom» or «liberty» and communicates with related philosophical discussions on the fulfillment of human potential, human rationality, and ethical behavior.

In general, autonomy speaks of our human capacity to take decisions and live in the ways we value and aspire, free from oppressive and coercive pressure that force us to go against our own will. Simply put, autonomy implies an individual thinking and acting in ways of his own, «not determined by agencies or causes outside his control» (Lukes 2006, p. 52), and therefore closely connects to one's «capacity to act on one's own behalf and make one's own choices, instead of following goals set by other agents» (Haselager 2005, p. 519). Although rather intuitive and comprehensible, this overall understanding is not completely devoid of inconsistencies. A particular tension refers to the role of external forces (*e.g.,* norms, culture, or environment) in shaping the contexts of our existence, our desires, and decisions (see, *e.g.,* Feinberg 1986, Wolff 1970), and connects thus to notions of «free will» and «structure-agency» discussions, indicating the limitations of the above wholesale understanding of autonomy —*i.e.,* ableness of acting freely to meet one's internal needs and wishes.

Additionally, autonomy can relate both to an individual and a collective level (*e.g.,* groups, nations, states, etc.). From a political perspective, scholars from both left and right have underscored autonomy against the authority of centralized power; for example, whereas the founding fathers of liberalism decried against the authority of the Church and monarchies, subsequent critical scholars have denounced the abuses of western modern states as instrumental for the vested interests of capital. However, whereas the individual level of autonomy tends to be emphasized by liberal scholars, the collective level is key to critical scholars who condemn entangled political-economical-cultural structures (western, capitalist, and patriarchal) that benefit some social groups to the detriment of others. Accordingly, from a critical perspective, the autonomy of marginalized groups is curtailed by social inequities stemming from biased structures that inflict externally made norms and claims to authority and truth on subordinated groups (Castoriadis 1991, p. 20). Consequently, from a social justice perspective, the quest to increase social equity goes hand in hand with the dismantling of barriers to autonomy (*e.g.,* poverty or gender and ethnic discrimination). As articulated by Chatterton, critical and collective views of autonomy highlight «a demand to be heard and recognised [...], a battle against [...] repression and marginality» (2005, p. 546). Hence, notwithstanding the view of autonomy not as complete disconnection from external power structures and influences

(May 1994), critical scholars stress the significance of addressing structurally entrenched barriers that preclude people of various backgrounds from leading aspired lives.

Relatedly, the notion of «autonomy» comprises the precondition of reflexive capacity underpinning the understanding of the implications of our choices (Raz 1986). Accordingly, autonomy is intrinsically contingent to critical thinking emanating from reflections such as «what kind of life do I want to live?», «in what kind of world do I want to live?», or «what decisions and actions are conducive to these outcomes?». It is such reflexive capacity that scholars such as Paulo Freire (1970) held as key to «conscious raising» of systematic forms of oppression.

Taking stock of the above, this text embraces the notion of «autonomy» not as complete freedom and consequential disconnection from external power and structures (nor as struggle for such disconnection), but as ability to make choices and construct aspired lives notwithstanding, these structures as well as to shape the latter correspondingly. Such an understanding is in line with a critical and substantial view of autonomy, that includes intertwined individual and collective dimensions to the extent that it is simultaneously anchored on individual critical reflection and guided by experiences of marginalization and corresponding aspirations of social change, that are often collective.

3 Historical background: the Pataxó struggle in Southern Bahia

The first documented event that marked the Pataxó's relatively recent history was their villagization in 1861. The Pataxó had nomadic customs, living from hunting, gathering, and modest farming in large family nuclei. They customarily transited between Belmonte (in the state of Bahia) and São Mateus River (in the state of Espírito Santo), concentrated around the region of Monte Pascoal, but were forcibly relocated to an area near the mouth of the Corumbau River, a village now called Barra Velha (Cesar 2011, Sampaio 1996). Their villagization fits governmental arbitrary praxis toward indigenous people who, in Brazil and elsewhere, were confined in areas inadequate to sustain them (Oliveira 2018, Stewart-Harawira 2022).

In 1943 a governmental decree created a national park in the Monte Pascoal region, encompassing the Pataxó village. The decree emphasized environmental conservation without acknowledging the presence of indigenous people (Bahia State 1943). Although it was never *de facto* executed, it contributed to engendering the view of indigenous presence in the area as illegitimate (Carvalho 2009). The undesirable existence of the Pataxó was epitomized by what became known as the «Fire of [19]51» —a dreadful attack on Barra Velha

that resulted in the killing and imprisoning of indigenous individuals, and the fleeing and dispersion of Pataxó families (Carvalho 2009)—. Whereas some families settled in newly created villages or in urban areas among non-indigenous populations, the families that eventually returned to Barra Velha faced even stronger hardships particularly after 1961 when a new decree, that was *de facto* executed, recreated the Monte Pascoal Park (Bahia State 1961, Rosário de Carvalho 2009). In the 22,500 hectares of Park area, key livelihood activities such as hunting, extracting natural resources, fishing, and farming were prohibited (Jornal da Bahia 1982).

The adversities in Barra Velha coincide in time with the construction of new highways in the region. From the 1970s, as tourists start discovering the beautiful sandy beaches where the first Portuguese fleet arrived in 1500, Pataxó people settle around the location where the first Portuguese catholic mass took place in what was to become the coastal village of Coroa Vermelha (O Dia 1983).

The first request to officially demarcate Coroa Vermelha as an indigenous territory was submitted by the Pataxó to the National Indian Foundation or FUNAI (Brazil's indigenist agency) in 1979 (Grünewald 2015). The indigenous request sought to ensure the permanence of the Pataxó in the area which was contested by a real estate company. In the words of the Pataxó leader [Itambé],

> when I arrived in Coroa Vermelha, there was nothing here, the area was vacant, and I brought my family members. Nonetheless, from 1979 we started to be molested by this real estate company that has, since then, been trying to expel us from our land. Even before Cabral [the commander in charge of the fleet who first arrived in Brazil] we were here, so this land is ours and we will not leave (A Tarde 1989).

The results from the Pataxó territorial claim were not felt immediately, but in 1985 FUNAI started to formalize the indigenous territory of Coroa Vermelha. The area under demarcation included the coastal urban space where indigenous livelihoods relied mainly on the sales of handicrafts to tourists, and inland areas approximately six kilometers from the coast containing farming space and a forest that provided resources for handicrafts and held intangible spiritual value to the Pataxó (Sampaio 1996, p. 71).

The process of territorial recognition seemed to be advancing until it suffered a setback in 1996 when the state government ordered the eviction of the Pataxó from the village of Coroa Vermelha. The village comprised the area which was planned to become an open-air museum to be inaugurated in 2000, as part of Brazil's «500 years of discovery» anniversary. The governmental measures in Coroa Vermelha included the construction of a museum and a handicraft market, along with the relocation of the Pataxó people (A Tarde 1996a, 1996b). In face of an imminent eviction, Pataxó leaders traveled to the state and national capitals (Salvador and Brasilia) to speak to FUNAI and government representatives. In the words of a Pataxó leader [Boré], «we are the owners of the land.

Cabral did not discover anything here. When he arrived, he found us here. He made a visit, prayed three masses, and left» (A Tarde 1996b).

As the process unfolded, the Pataxó struggle intensified as a real-estate company [«Góes-Cohabita»] started to devastate the forested area under demarcation (A Tarde 1997a). To counter deforestation, hundreds of Pataxó people camped in the area in a common type of indigenous collective action called «re-takings» (or *retomadas* in Portuguese) (Zilio 2022), forcing the company to cease its activities. As justified by a Pataxó leader [Karajá], «we want to ensure our children's rights over the land that is ours» (A Tarde 1997b). Finally, after substantial media attention to the expulsion of indigenous people from the «discovery site», on October 16, 1997, the indigenous land of Coroa Vermelha was formally recognized as a permanent possession of the Pataxó, with a surface of 1,492 hectares (A Tarde 1997c, Cesar 2011). The recognized territory comprised 77 hectares of urban land (*i.e.,* the village of Coroa Vermelha), 827 hectares of Atlantic Forest, and 589 hectares of farming land.

4 Results

4.1. Indigenous tourism emerges

Once the forest was recognized as indigenous land, the Pataxó people that were camping there went back to their daily lives. A small group however was determined to stay. The main persons articulating this decision were three sisters named Nitynawã, Nayara, and Jandaya, and their brother named Karajá, who was indigenous leader *(cacique).* Their goal was dual: to strengthen the Pataxó culture and to ensure the protection of the forest that was threatened not only by external commercial interests but also by indigenous persons in search of resources (*e.g.,* wood for handicrafts) and potential farming land. As justified by Jandaya (January 7, 2022), «growing up in Coroa Vermelha, our children would never know the physical environment in which our culture is based [...]. Our culture cannot be detached from the environment».

They faced however a key impasse: how could they stay in the forest, have livelihoods that did not require deforestation, and have time to engage in cultural activities? The idea to bring tourists to the forest which is approximately six kilometers from the urban area of Coroa Vermelha, and ten kilometers from Porto Seguro, a famous destination among Brazilians and international tourists, emerged as a solution to these challenges. As explained by Nitynawã (January 8, 2022),

> throughout the years, our culture had fallen asleep. When we arrived here, we did not sing or dance our traditional songs, we did not practice

> our traditional medicine, or painted ourselves. Here we could recover our culture and protect the forest. The earth and the forest here are very strong […]. But for us to stay here, we needed to have a way of sustenance, because we did not want to hunt or farm, and the river is too small […]; we needed a means of survival.

Nayara (January 19, 2022) complements the account: «Tourism is also a form to spread our history and culture to visitors here […], because we were very discriminated […]. So, by opening the forest, we can tell our own story and views to tourists that come here to experience our culture».

The name of their initiative was set: Reserva da Jaqueira (in English, Jackfruit Tree Reserve) —as an analogy between the Pataxó culture and a jackfruit tree that was felled in the center of the Reserve but from which new trees were sprouting.

To enact their vision, the group was recognizant of the importance of being knowledgeable about the forest and Pataxó culture. To mobilize environmental knowledge on the forest, the group counted on two Pataxó brothers who had experience guiding groups of visitors in a nearby private protected area and were familiar with the local flora and fauna. To mobilize cultural knowledge, they formed the Group for the Research and Documentation of the Pataxó Culture and Language or Atxohã. This group was largely an initiative of one of the founding sisters, Nayara, who was also the first teacher of Indigenous Culture in the indigenous school in urban Coroa Vermelha.[1] Her goal was to, in a systematized way, revitalize the Pataxó language and culture which was mainly oral and consequently fading away. To somewhat recover a language that was no longer spoken, and to counter the weakening of the Pataxó culture, the Atxohã group started a process of compilation, analysis, and dissemination of knowledge. The work unfolded through interviews with elders in Pataxó villages (about the Pataxó history, traditions/customs, language, etc.), compilation and analysis of oral material (*e.g.,* songs, and tales) and texts (books and reports containing historical information on the Pataxó people). This empirical material enabled the compilation of an expanding lexicon of the Pataxó language which the group named «Patxohã» —literally, «language of warriors»—. The accumulated knowledge has been disseminated among indigenous students in indigenous schools and incorporated into everyday life in the Reserve. The Atxohã group has expanded and continues active now also through the work of indigenous scholars (Bomfim 2017).

To initiate a tourism project required however that the group detained more than just knowledge to be shared with tourists; support from the Pataxó people who also had claims over the newly recognized indigenous territory was also indispensable. Resistance from the Pataxó was multiple and articulated both in terms of deceived expectations of personal gains from the forest's natural resources as well as in terms of the inappropriateness of Pataxó

1 For an overview of Pataxó education in Brazil's public school system, see Thomazine Porto and Bonin (2020).

women to occupy spaces of leadership. To counteract these views, the group relied on the influence of the leader *cacique* Karajá, who organized meetings with other *caciques* and their communities, ultimately gaining their support.

Resistance was also exerted by FUNAI, which admonished the initiative amid avowed concerns of a series of risks associated with tourists in indigenous territories (*e.g.,* drugs, alcohol, and sexual exploitation). Complicating matters further, the group had no savings to construct basic infrastructure (*i.e.,* traditional houses called *kijemes*), and they did not want to use wooden resources from the forest which would entail the felling of trees. Thus, the initial group (in total approximately fifteen persons) brought wood from agricultural areas in the surroundings and fetched hay from palms elsewhere. Their work was arduous, but the first *kijeme* was completed in October 1998.

Despite the overall skepticism from tourism agencies around this indigenous initiative, visitors started arriving. The first visitors were mainly students on school tours brought by two small tourism agencies (*i.e.,* «Brazil Travel», and «Pataxó Turismo») but also private individuals curious about the initiative. Among these initial visitors was an Australian missionary who helped the group purchase material to improve the *kijemes,* and an engineer who was working with Brazil's five hundred years celebration in Coroa Vermelha. The latter suggested to the group that they should form an association not only to manage the Reserve more systematically but also to be eligible for public funds. The group embraced the idea and, with the support of friends (non-indigenous individuals working in NGOs), wrote a statute and registered an association. On January 25, 1999, Aspectur (Pataxó Association of Ecotourism) was created.

4.2. Indigenous tourism is institutionalized through the Pataxó's own terms

The creation of Aspectur can be understood as the institutionalization of this indigenous tourism initiative. The association counted on three elected members for periods of three years: a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. Its main attributions comprised the everyday organization of tourism in the Reserve (with rules directed to members and to tourists), the economic administration of the project, the nurturing of institutional relations, and the capturing and management of grants.

The rules guiding the organization of tourism in the Reserve reflected the vision of the group and encompassed opening times and days, the maximum number of tourists in the Reserve per day, the activities offered to tourists, and the prohibition of certain behaviors (*e.g.,* hunting and extracting wood, drinking, smoking, and throwing trash in the Reserve, and entering the Reserve without a Pataxó guide).

The economic management of the Reserve comprises the administration of entry fees, including invoicing agencies and charging private visitors at the entrance and allocating the revenues to various ends, such as purchasing food for a common kitchen, sharing revenue among members engaged in the project including the Aspectur's staff, and putting aside savings for emergencies and repairs.

The nurturing of institutional relations involves contact with tourism agencies, governmental authorities, NGOs, and private companies for various ends. These activities are undertaken not only by Aspectur members but also by the traditional local leader *(cacique).* Although during its first years of operation, the agencies connected to the Reserve were mainly small ones, currently it receives large operators.[2] There has however been some tension, as the latter have demanded contracts of exclusivity and pushed for the admission of large groups of visitors (*i.e.,* over one hundred persons per day). Aspectur, determined to keep the experience originally envisioned for tourists, has persistently rejected exclusivity, and set ceilings on the daily maximum (30) number of tourists from each agency.

Additionally, institutional relations include nurturing contact with private companies such as the forestry-company Veracel, which sponsors a yearly event in the Reserve called Aragwakicã («victory and conquest of the Pataxó people») —a three-day celebration attended by thousands of Pataxó and other ethnicities—. Institutional relations also comprise interactions, with the government to ensure basic services to the Pataxó people; for example, after years of exhorting schooling opportunities inside the Reserve, a public primary school was built in 2008.[3] Since, according to governmental regulation, public schools are required to serve meals to students, a refrigerator was indispensable —which forced the municipality to connect the Reserve with the electricity line—. Furthermore, following the worsening of water availability and quality in what had been the Reserve's sole water source, the nearby Itinga River, due to the construction of an upstream dam, after years of contentious interactions, in 2010 the government constructed an artesian well in the Reserve.

Finally, a central attribution of Aspectur is capturing grants to be invested in infrastructure, and in human and institutional capacities. Securing such grants involves several stages. First, Aspectur continuously receives calls from civil society organizations and the government, which are analyzed and discussed among its staff and the Reserve's leadership (the sisters and the Cacique). Subsequently, selected calls are discussed in meetings with all community members. Aspectur then writes and submits the applications. Lastly, when successful, Aspectur's staff implements projects and produce final reports.

2 One of the first largest operators to take tourists to the Reserve was SOLETUR (bankrupt in October 2001), and currently CVC Agency, which is the largest tour operator in the Americas.

3 The school in the Reserve is from kindergarten to 5th grade; it has 36 children from the Reserve and other children from surrounding villages (approximately, 60 in total).

In October 2002, Aspectur was contemplated with their first large sum,[4] stemming from the Environmental Ministry. The grant was used for the renovation of *kijemes,* for marketing, and for various courses within the Reserve —namely «ecotourism», «forest inspection», and «prevention of fire and firefighting»—. Subsequently, Aspectur secured a grant from FUNAI to produce a book on the activities offered to tourists, which was published in 2011. To further structure their work and vision, Aspectur obtained a grant (from an NGO called Fundo Socioambiental Casa, the municipality of Porto Seguro, and FUNAI) to write a territorial and environmental management plan. This plan, published in 2017, includes an assessment of the Reserve's biodiversity, along with the aspirations, challenges, and opportunities envisioned by the group. More recently, Aspectur has written successful applications amounting to 700,000 Reais.[5] These recent grants are from the World Bank (channeled through the Bahia State)[6] and from the United Nations Development Programme (channeled through FUNAI) and projected to enable the construction of new *kijemes,* a seedling nursery, and the fencing of part of the forest.

4.3. The everyday life and experiences in the Reserve

Since its formation, there have been between 15 and 110 persons living inside the Reserve. Currently, there are approximately 110 persons living in the Reserve, most of them are relatives of the founding sisters. Most adults are engaged in tourism in the Reserve, but some also have public positions (*e.g.,* teachers in indigenous schools or officers in the Secretariat for Indigenous Issues). Most families sell handicrafts at the Reserve. Some families also have access to farming fields elsewhere, fish on rivers and in the ocean, and collect shellfish from mangroves.

The Reserve is open from 8 am to 3 pm on weekdays, and from 8 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. Tourists can come to the Reserve on their own (with their own cars or in taxis —there is no public transportation to the Reserve—) or with tourist agencies. When arriving at the entrance of the Reserve, tourists are greeted by a Pataxó guide, who shares information about the tour and rules in the Reserve. The tour, which lasts for approximately three hours, starts with a presentation given by the sisters, the *cacique,* or other well-articulated members. The presentation addresses themes such as the Pataxó history and traditions, past and current struggles, and the history of the Reserve as an endeavor to protect the environment and strengthen the Pataxó culture.

After the presentation, groups usually not larger than ten persons are accompanied by a Pataxó guide through different places and activities amidst the Atlantic Forest. If the weather permits, the tour includes a trek in the forest, where visitors learn about the flora and fauna, and about the traditional life of the Pataxó in the past.

4 The sum was equivalent to approximately 550,000 USD today (*i.e.,* 130,000 Reais then) —2022 conversion rate.
5 The sum was equivalent to approximately 140,000 USD today —2022 conversion rate.
6 More specifically, the Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Rural do Estado da Bahia.

Regardless of the weather, the tour includes a visit to a traditional house; an art gallery, where various artifacts created by an artist and community member are exposed, such as statues, paintings, baskets, and other handicrafts; the primary school, where visitors learn about the school curriculum that now includes the Patxohã; the center of the spiritual authority (*i.e.,* the Pajé), where visitors learn about traditional medicines; a «fish tent», where visitors can taste a traditional fish dish; a bow-and-error station; a painting station, where visitors can have their face and body painted, and a photography station, where visitors can be photographed on traditional Pataxó costumes. The tour also includes a stop in the store, where families from the Reserve sell their handicrafts to tourists. Last, a heyday in the tour is the performance «AWE», during which the Pataxó perform traditional chants and dances joined by the tourists.

5 Analysis/discussion

5.1. Fundamental elements in the genesis of the Reserve

How can we make sense of the emergence of this tourism project that was initiated by a group of historically marginalized indigenous people? What were the central elements or conditions that enabled its relatively autonomous emergence?

We assert that, first, formal territorial control, *i.e.,* the formal rights to the land through the State's recognition of the forest as a permanent possession of the Pataxó people, was key. Without the sense of being the legitimate holders of the territory, the Pataxó group would likely not have embraced a risk-taking ambition in a place they could easily be evicted from (cf. Deininger & Jin 2006, Zeppel 2006, p. 286). Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the legal right to the forest was the result of wider indigenous mobilization in processes of «re-takings» (or *retomadas* in Portuguese) (Zilio 2022). The links between territorial rights and indigenous mobilization are rather evident in contexts where indigenous people's achievements (such as the official recognition of territorial claims), as a matter of rule, do not result from the benevolence of governments but instead from indigenous peoples' confrontation against these (Coates 2004, Fisher 2014, Hale 2011, Hoogesteger & Verzijl 2015, Rocheleau 2015).

Secondly, territorial rights most often do not translate into indigenous tourism projects. In the formally recognized indigenous territory, livelihoods could, with relatively less effort, be reproduced following the reliance on handicrafts, fishing, and farming (which were commonplace activities in the urban Coroa Vermelha).

Thus, a critical element for the genesis of this indigenous tourism project, in combination with territorial rights, was a transformational vision. Although the espousal of indigenous ontologies that merge the nature-society divide is extolled as critical to sustainability (Gudynas 2022, Kealiikanakaoleohaililani & Giardina 2016, Virtanen *et al.* 2020), the importance of indigenous transformational aspirations is widely overlooked in indigenous tourism research which tends to stress managerial requisites in indigenous tourism initiatives (Bresner 2014, Zeppel 2006).

A third element that contributed to the emergence of this indigenous tourism project was the group's ability to harness community support around it. Although previous studies have acknowledged the importance of community support to tourism (Khalid *et al.* 2019, Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2011, Richards & Hall 2000), they do not shed light on the preceding character of political influence in the enactment of nouvelle visions in common territories. In this case, the group led by women had a chance thanks to the influence of their brother, who was a leader among the Pataxó. This internal influence is critical because, in irremediably heterogeneous communities, different people will have different ideas on how the territory should be used.

Finally, internal resources such as labor, knowledge, an instrumental network, and skills, or at least the group's ability to mobilize these, were also fundamental in the absence of external support. Studies often stress limited internal resources as substantial hinders to the emergence of indigenous tourism projects or as explanations for projects being mainly spearheaded by external factors, such as NGOs (Bresner 2014, Camargo *et al.* 2022, Scheyvens 2002, Zeppel 2006).

This case shows that, when there is territorial recognition, an internal transformational vision, and community support, limited internal resources do not constitute substantial hinders to indigenous tourism. In this case, the group relied on its own labor to construct the initial infrastructure. Furthermore, members of the group held environmental knowledge, and they were able to mobilize substantial cultural knowledge through the concerted efforts of their Atxohã initiative. Additionally, through an instrumental contact network, the group formalized an association which enabled them to systematize their activities and capture external grants. Lastly, the management of the Reserve required literacy and accounting skills, including writing pertinent grant proposals, managing budgets, and writing accountability reports. The group has continuously attracted skillful members. Thus, key internal resources (although limited), or the ability to mobilize them, were critical in a context marked by high levels of inequality where formal institutions are often hostile to initiatives that may challenge the dominant *status quo* (Lacerda 2019, Silva 2017).

5.2. The exercise of control in the Reserve

In the text above, we showed that the Reserve originated as an indigenous initiative anchored on three fundamental elements: political mobilization, a transformational vision, and internal resources to enact it. In the following paragraphs, we will elaborate on how the group established and exercised strong control over this indigenous tourism project. For analytical purposes, we dismantle the exercise of control over this indigenous tourism project on three fronts, namely territorial, cultural, and economic.

Tourists arriving at the Reserve will first meet a gate. Among other things, the group has decided about the opening hours of the Reserve, how many visitors per day can enter it, where they can go, and what they can do inside the Reserve. These decisions start to be enforced at the entrance by an indigenous gatekeeper and by indigenous guides, who take visitors to specific places and activities. The group has also decided about activities that are forbidden in the Reserve, such as extracting wood and hunting, which is enforced mainly through the work of a brigade also responsible for firefighting in the forest. Accordingly, exercising effective territorial control goes beyond official territorial recognition, involving the everyday taking and enforcing of internal decisions (González 2015, Larson 2010). Indeed, *de facto* territorial control has been deemed essential for indigenous peoples' self-determination in general (Kröger & Lalander 2016), and to the success of indigenous tourism projects (Barker 2005; Ulloa 2017; Zeppel 2006, 2007).

Additionally, the group also exercises what we call «cultural control» by holding traditional knowledge and choosing what should be shared with tourists. Their cultural control largely emanates from the work of the Atxohã group, which initiated a concerted effort of cultural revitalization (Bomfim 2017), and it is enforced through the protagonist role of the indigenous guides in the Reserve. Accordingly, as tourists arrive in the Reserve, alone or with tourist agencies, they are accompanied by Pataxó guides, who run the tour. These requisites (*i.e.,* the holding of traditional knowledge and of protagonist space) are critical to allow them to exercise voice and determine how their culture is (re)presented (Pereiro 2016, Ryan 2005), in ways that counter their objectification and pejorative «otherization» by external agents (Bhabha 2003, Niezen 2004).

Regarding cultural control, two related points should be elucidated: first, as noted above, the holding of knowledge and ability to deliberate over what and how is shared with non-indigenous others (*e.g.,* tourists) was key to ensuring the prevalence of the Pataxó narratives in the Reserve; secondly, and beyond the Reserve, we should note the role of the Atxohã group in the cultural strengthening of the Pataxó people —it was largely through the efforts of the Atxohã group (birthed in the Reserve) that the Pataxó language and culture were invigorated and, among other things, also disseminated in indigenous schools in the region (Bomfim 2017).

Ultimately, the group also exercises economic control over the project, mainly by *a)* refusing strong dependency on individual agencies (*i.e.,* refusing contracts of exclusivity with larger agencies), and *b)* managing the project through its own association (*i.e.,* Aspectur). Accordingly, the Reserve is not economically dependent on external agents or «partners», such as NGOs or the government. Instead, it relies strongly on the entrance fees from tourists, and on the sales of handicrafts to tourists. In other words, mainly tourists allow for the economic reproduction of the project and of livelihoods engaged in it. After a short initial phase, ensuring enough tourists was no longer a concern. On the opposite, the group had to negotiate with larger agencies to limit the number of tourists brought to the Reserve. This situation nonetheless changed dramatically in 2020, when COVID-19 forced the Brazilian society to close. The closure of the Reserve from March to December 2020 made clear that, although the Reserve was not dependent on outside agents, its existence and vision (environmental protection and cultural strengthening) were strongly dependent on tourists. When the flux of tourists was interrupted, families survived on savings, donations, and fishing and farming in other areas. When vaccination started early in 2021, the Reserve was reopened.

Economic dependency on external agents is often noted to be a factor leading either to the discontinuation of projects or to the prevalence of external interests to the detriment of indigenous' agendas (Bresner 2014, Manyara & Jones 2007, Pereiro 2016, Thomson-Carr 2013, Zeppel 2006). The experiences in the Jaqueira Reserve show that, even with little resources and no formal support from external agents, it is possible for a disenfranchised group to initiate and manage a project in very successful ways —successful both in sense of matching the internally envisioned goals, as well as in the sense of its lastingness.

5.3. The Jaqueira Reserve as constituent of a struggle for autonomy

By shedding light on the emergence and consolidation of a tourism project strongly controlled by an indigenous group, without substantial external support, we do not seek to imply that contributions from non-indigenous agents are necessarily negative. In fact, substantial external support may have enabled its members to avoid the strenuous hardships they endured in the initial enactment of their vision, albeit the risk of altering it (cf. Bresner 2014). Furthermore, once the project had been initiated, one of its important endeavors was the capturing of external funds for activities outside its reproduction realm, such as capacity building and infrastructural improvement. Although these grants were not readily available, they may be understood as a form of external support that facilitates the implementation of local plans. Thus, in comprehending the emergence and consolidation of the Jaqueira Reserve,

what we seek to highlight is, mainly, *a)* the viability of indigenously controlled initiatives, despite marginalization but also as a reaction to it, and *b)* that indigenous tourism projects can be the means to enact transformational aspirations (*e.g.,* of cultural strengthening and environmental conservation) and thus may be understood as pertaining to a greater indigenous struggle for autonomy amidst structures experienced as oppressive.

Accordingly, our assertion that indigenously controlled tourism can emerge within communities not only in a rather autonomous (*i.e.,* self-reliant) manner but also as constituent of indigenous struggle for autonomy is in line with our understanding of the notion of «autonomy»: *i.e.,* not as disconnection from the rest of society and its structures but as re-connections conducive to internally aspired lives and corresponding wider social changes. Autonomy, from such vantage point, requires, as explained in our conceptual section, critical reflective thinking guided by enquiries such as «what kind of life do I want to live?» and «in what kind of world do I want to live?». Furthermore, and clearly in contexts of wide social inequalities, autonomy has an important collective dimension since personal experiences and opportunities are often shaped by collective belongings into ethnic, racial, gender, religious, and class intersectional structures. Accordingly, we posit that the emergence and consolidation of the Jaqueira Reserve derive from such critical and collective experiences that underscored what we called the «transformational vision» of the founding sisters —*i.e.,* their aspiration of everyday lives embedded in, and conducive to, cultural strengthening and environmental protection, and of a consequential positive revaluation of indigenous culture and environment by the wider society.

Furthermore, in this article, we have indicated the role of the Jaqueira Reserve in the cultural revival of the Pataxó people (anchored on Atxohã's efforts to compile and disseminate cultural knowledge among the Pataxó). We have not mentioned, however, economic, and political interfaces of the Reserve with wider indigenous communities and movements. Although these wider social connections are important, they fall somewhat out of the scope of this article, which focused on the emergence and consolidation of the Reserve. However, we would like to note that the Reserve provides economic support to indigenous collective actions, including to territorial «re-takings». In addition, prominent indigenous leaders have occupied positions in Aspectur. Generally, the Jaqueira Reserve is portrayed by them as a «school» that teaches its members important administrative skills (key to Aspectur), discursive skills (exercised face tourists), and the everyday praxis of living within a forest and enacting Pataxó culture.

We find these observations important in order to avoid perpetuating what indigenous peoples themselves have been trying to combat, namely, others' view of indigenous peoples as «inept [...], as having problems and needs rather than capacities to make deci-

sions or devise solutions» (Pailey 2022, p. 33), and, in the tourism sector, as being necessarily dependent on «deliberate help, collaboration and co-operation of major international donor agencies, NGOs, international tour operators, and multinational companies» (Tosun 2000, p. 339). Finally, the observations above also point to an opening for academics and activists interested in indigenous tourism and indigenous movements, namely synergistic interactions of these fronts in the combined countering of the systemic marginalization of indigenous peoples and of the destruction of environments inherent to indigenous cultures.

6 Conclusions

Indigenous tourism has the potential to deliver social and environmental benefits to some of the most disenfranchised groups in the world (Foucat 2002, Lama 2000, Sebele 2010). Nonetheless, the achievement of these benefits is largely dependent on indigenous peoples being in control of the tourism projects (Manyara & Jones 2007, Mtapuri & Giampiccoli 2013). This requisite points to an apparent catch-22 challenge bearing in mind the historical prejudicial conditions endured by indigenous peoples (Pailey 2022).

The Jaqueira Reserve is emblematic in the sense that it shows that historical marginalization is not an impediment to the consolidation of an indigenously controlled tourism project. As we showed, the Reserve emerged as a response to (*i.e.,* an attempt to remedy) such marginalization. Accordingly, indigenous tourism developed without substantial external support, with its fundamental elements being internal to the group —namely indigenous political mobilization (key for territorial recognition and community support), a transformational vision that included indigenous tourism, and the basic means to enact it (*i.e.,* labor, knowledge, an instrumental network, and skills, or at least the group's ability to mobilize these)—. Building on these internal elements, the group managed to exercise a strong level of control over territorial, cultural, and economic fronts.

Thus, we posit that the Jaqueira Reserve emerged not only in a rather autonomous manner (*i.e.,* largely reliant on internal elements), but also as a constituent of a greater struggle for autonomy (*i.e.,* a struggle to lead aspired lives and alter structures experienced as oppressive). In this case, aspired lives were conducive of cultural strengthening and environmental protection —against the dominant views of nature as commodity and of western culture as superior—. Accordingly, in understanding this indigenous tourism project, it can't be overemphasized that engaging with tourism was never an end, but the means to reach aspired transformations. Hence, the Jaqueira Reserve represents not only a case of successful indigenously controlled tourism but also of indigenous struggle

for re-engagement in more autonomous ways with historically oppressive structures.

7
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8
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