

# Narratives for a Forest City

*Narrativas para uma Cidade Floresta*

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## Abstract

Article with interviews with Indigenous leaders led by the *Traditional Architectures Research Group (GTP)*, from the *Architecture and Biosphere Platform*, hosted by *Associação Escola da Cidade*. In trying to give new meaning/significance to the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Western Culture, the article highlights the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the much needed process of global environmental regeneration. Based on traditional Indigenous practices, the idea of a *Forest City* is defended, calling for the reconciliation of natural cycles and human action, and once again placing man in the position of guardian-farmers who can reclaim a regenerative anthropic attitude towards the globe. The interviews sought to understand the relationship of the interviewees, as representatives of their peoples, with their territories and ways of building, as inputs for the activity of the architect and urban planner. The interviews were transcribed, edited by GTP participants and submitted to deponents for review. They were also the object of some preliminary reflections, still to be expanded in the future.

## Resumo

Artigo com depoimentos de lideranças indígenas a participantes do *Grupo de Trabalho e Pesquisa (GTP) Arquiteturas Tradicionais* (que opera no âmbito da *Plataforma Arquitetura e Biosfera*, acolhida pela *Associação Escola da Cidade*), coletados na perspectiva de compreender formas de ressignificar o contato dos povos originários com a Cultura ocidental, valorizando saberes que serão importantes no imprescindível processo de regeneração que urge para o planeta. Defende-se aqui a ideia de uma *Cidade Floresta*, na qual a ação humana está em harmonia com ciclos naturais, com o ser humano na posição de cultivador e guardião, algo que ecoa e amplifica a maneira tradicional de vida das Culturas indígenas e vai ao encontro da intenção de uma condição regenerativa para a ação antrópica como um todo. Nas entrevistas buscou-se entender a relação dos entrevistados, como representantes de seus povos, com seus territórios e formas de construir, como insumos para a atividade do arquiteto e urbanista. As entrevistas foram transcritas, editadas por participantes do GTP e submetidas aos depoentes para revisões. Também foram objeto de algumas reflexões preliminares, a serem aprofundadas oportunamente.



**Figura 1** - Lideranças indígenas cujos depoimentos estão aqui apresentados: da esquerda para a direita Jerá Guarani Mbya, Time'i Awaete, Yakuy Tupinambá e Thawá Yudjá, em ilustração de Sabrina Carvalho Dias, a partir de fotografias enviadas pelos depoentes ou realizadas durante conversas com o GTP. Fonte: Acervo do GTP Arquiteturas Tradicionais

## Narratives for a Forest City In pursuit of other narratives

The idea of this paper is to promote an interlaced act of listening to the speeches of indigenous leaders with whom the Traditional Architectures Research Group (GTP), from the Architecture and Biosphere Platform, has interacted. Invitations were sent for the responses to the questions presented to the leaders to be returned in writing, audio, or through a recorded conversation that could be transcribed. All involved indigenous leaders are co-authors of this article, and the Traditional Architectures GTP stands as organizer and driver of transversal, compared listening.

The deponents' speeches were transcribed and edited by GTP members, and some decisions were made as to edition, so that the rhythm stemming from the original orality would be preserved, since the speech's pace and structures enable glimpsing into a specific form of comprehension to be valued, away from a so-to-speak *western* syntax. At some points, there was a will to leave in passages such as "they we are" (Time'i Awaeté's speech), which shows a fusion between first and third persons. But

<sup>1</sup>Projects such as the Manual for Kamayurá Architecture – <https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/923178/manual-de-arquitetura-kamayura>; support for the redesign of Kamyurá de Ipawu village circle; support for the design of Awaeté ritual village Janeraka, in TI Koatinemo – see <https://janeraka.org/pt/>; studies for the prayer house in Tenondé Porã, Guarani Mbya village in

the decision was not to present "incorrect" forms of expression, since it could convey the idea of carelessness or even frailty of the narratives made in Portuguese, in most cases not the deponents' mother language. Thus, we opted to modify some excerpts out of respect and admiration for the presented contributions. It was preferred to let the invitees free to manifest themselves.

Inspiration for the sent questions came from readings and from the wish of GTP Arquiteturas Tradicionais participants to better understand and disseminate principles from the cultures with which they have interacted in recent years, representing a unique learning opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

Two great influences for the interviews were the narratives by Davi Kopenawa (2010) and Ailton Krenak (2019) – on the perspective of those who "have already lived through the end of the world", their speeches call for reflection upon three important subjects, which guided our queries:

1. The non-dissociation man-nature, which is reflected in all human manifestations, including architecture in all its levels.
2. The Amerindian view on "white" society ("people of merchandise," as referred to by Kopenawa), indispensable for the revision we have been undertaking as to the western way of acting and thinking.
3. Possibilities for resignification of the relationships between "indigenous" and "whites."

Finally, the sent questions were:

1. How is the relationship between beings (humans, animals, plants, spirits, ancestors, rivers, mountain ranges, hills) in your Culture? How did the world begin for your people?
2. How is the village built, both materially and spiritually? Does the village configuration help on the struggle for the land?

Parelheiros, in the south of São Paulo municipality, proposal for a Manual of Guarany Mbya Architecture stemming from the participation in the construction workshop at Tenoné Porã village; project for Tupinambá village Zabelê - Lagoa do Mabaça, in southern Bahia, in the context of the Levanta Zabelê collective – see <http://levantazabele.eco.br/>; project for Kuikuru school, in Xingu Indigenous Land – all ongoing in the Architecture and Biosphere Platform.

3. How was the first contact with the white for you and for your people? What do you think about the way non-indigenous view and live the world, and how do such practices influence your village?
4. In an environment in constant transformation, which partnerships (be they with whites or other peoples) do you see as important, presently? From a point of view of technical propositive actions, is there a movement in your Culture for resignifying the relationship with whites?

### Jerá Guarani Mbya, leader at Kalipety<sup>2</sup> village, São Paulo municipality

*Nhanderu Ete*, our father, created the first Earth and everything that existed on it. He became disenchanted with everything that was happening – people were harming each other, and it was not to be so. Thus, he destroyed the living beings, and the planet; and one of his sons, *Nhanderu Tupã*, who is also *Nhanderu Tenonde*, created once again the world and everything that exists on it.

The construction of our world and of our life is very complex – one of the issues is that the bodies here on this planet have spirits, who are between the sacred world and this imperfect world of Earth. And everything we do wrong here on Earth is impregnated only in the physical body, the *Tekoaxy* – our spirit is not impaired. When we die, our spirit returns to the sacred dwelling, and our body suffers until perishing here on Earth itself.

When *Nhanderu* created the world and people, He made it for everyone to live in harmony with nature, with the animals: each had their space, because he created a giant planet. Thus, there would not be lack of land or water for anyone.

Therefore, we have the conception of living in peace in this world. We find it very wrong to harm each other, take the other's life, take what is not ours. Rules of respect towards nature, taking only enough, it is all within *Nhanderu Ete's* teachings. Because of that, we respect everything that is around us. In our knowledge, everything that is in nature, on this planet, has its owners, which we call *Ija* – everything has life: that is why we must excuse ourselves when we use natural resources.



Figure 2. Illustration by Sabrina Carvalho Dias with the location of the interviewees' Territories. Source: GTP Arquiteturas Tradicionais Collection

As to our ancestors, spirits come and go. Inevitably, we get used to living with one another, so we miss them, feel the pain of the loss on this plain, but in our knowledge the spirits return to *Nhanderu's* sacred dwelling, which is where nothing perishes. When someone dies, we go to the prayer house, and stay all night, singing and

<sup>2</sup>Guarani Mbya village, in Parelheiros, in the south of São Paulo municipality, where Jerá lives.

dancing to celebrate that now the spirit is returning to *Nhanderu*. Every time I communicate, talk to *Nhanderu*, I also speak to the *Nhe'e Porã*, spirits who are already at the sacred dwelling.

Traditionally, the Elder had, through their dreams, guidance on where to better construct the village. There is the elder's practical knowledge on the place where the village will be settled, whether there is good raw material for building houses, whether there is water nearby. The materials traditionally used by the Guarani were taquara, bamboo, and palm tree. The village configuration, with the struggle for land, is more permanent nowadays, due to not having where to go, because much of what once were Guarani territories is now city.



**Figure 3.** Construction of the new Prayer House, in the Tenondé Porã territory, 2020. Source: GTP Arquiteturas Tradicionais Collection

As to the first contact with the jurua<sup>3</sup> people, a strong memory for me was a conversation I had with a Guarani woman who had very beautiful stories. She told her great-grandfather, grandfather, and father always said that when the first jurua arrived at the territory, on ship, some Guarani were mistaken, thinking they were sent by *Nhanderu* to live with them here on Earth. And it was very beautiful. Then this thing of

catechizing everyone began. When the Guarani realized it, they began to flee. Most were never fooled – the Guarani always knew the Jesuit were not from *Nhanderu*, by the way they treated, by the way they spoke. Thus, be it by religion, by brute force, by the weapons, dogs, our understanding of the first contact was not good, was not with respect, was not with caution nor with peace. It was always very aggressive. Taking people from their villages, taking their children, stealing their land.

The way the Indigenous live, view the world, influences the village. There are many studies by very serious people, who dedicated their entire lives to thoroughly study, to technically, scientifically, historically point out that the jurua way of life is self-destructive and, even so, many in power are infatuated by this life of greed. They cannot see how much they are harming themselves, their peers, and those who cannot raise the “we want to live, we are part of your life, we are part of the balance for the planet's continued existence” flag, as in the case of the animals. Animals who are illegally sold, trees predatorily cut. Albeit we are in such a technologically advanced world, the jurua, especially politics of all countries, do not truly unite to think of a new way of doing things, planting, building, manufacture, of scientifically studying how to do, how not to do, without destroying that which maintains us on this planet. And the Guarani do not need to go to school, get a master's, PhD, study subjects related to the planet's environment, to discover we will now be able to live without nature, that its resources are necessary. But the jurua, even with several studies, cannot see it. All the influence of greed, of the value bestowed on the material, reaches the village too – via TV, cell phone, internet. Currently, this tends to mess life in the village as a whole, especially with the young. But this is not only in the world of the young, it is in the world adults also. Including, leaderships.

In the Guarani way, this violence thing does not exist, rape, child abandonment. These wrong things come through oppression and violence on this territory that used to be indigenous. When the community is left without land, then comes the suffering, the influence of alcoholic beverage, and those who start to most suffer are the women, the children, who also watch this life and end up reliving it all.

This brand clothing thing, be fashionable, hair dyeing: all of this negatively influences the youth in the village. In many ways, as with people in the village who earn salaries,

<sup>3</sup>Manner of referring to the “whites”.

who inevitably become a different social class – when a family starts to have different things in the village: clothing, shoes, celebrating birthdays, gifting on Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, birthdays. This causes a social disorder within the village people, sometimes, do not want to see.

I think the jurua, albeit having indeed highly evolved knowledge, scientifically and technically speaking, are dying due to human hands, terribly greedy and frantic. Belonging to people who also have knowledge and religion, who can theoretically have feelings, love towards others, their families, but who cannot multiply that in a broader view, which is living on this planet.

There are Guarani people who, despite having gone to school, cannot speak Portuguese, both in Parelheiros and Jaraguá, which is very close to the city, but want to keep living in the village, smoking pipe, warming themselves by the fire when it is cold. They want to go on like that. Here at *Kalipety*, we recovered more than nine types of Guarani corn, more than thirty types of potato so far. And it is not necessary to deforest acres to attain all this wealth again. It is perfectly possible to live in harmony with that which maintains us on this planet.



Figure 4. Jerá on the farm at Tekoa (village) Kalipety, where she lives. Source: Paula Lyn

The Guarani world is also transforming. Although we remain very Guarani, we encounter many different things. Such as what we eat every day, which food that comes from the outside, from the market. We have schools, we have internet. In the face of that, wanting to remain Guarani, we have, in one of the fronts, the struggle for demarcation. And this means we have counted on, and certainly will keep on counting on, jurua partners. There are several people who support the indigenous fights in this country; there has to be a greater partnership with these good-hearted jurua, who knows this country’s history, that the Brazilian territory was invaded, that there were several indigenous peoples here, many of whom are no more, many ethnicities were killed, massacred, extinct; and that all this miscegenation, this diversity of people in the country, did not happen naturally: it a reality of a country who suffered a lot of rape, where women were violated by the European, being manipulated in various ways, which created this fairly mixed Brazilian. Now, in fact, there are various situations that arose in a peaceful way, like I, for instance, who am married to a jurua, and no one forced me to. We found each other, liked each other, and have been together for ten years. But historically, a lot of women were raped; black women, indigenous women.

I think this is a very important moment for us to organize and really unite. We have different manners of resignifying our way of being, with everything we have, from jurua Culture which also becomes ours. And this does not make us jurua. I think many people are beginning to have concern on the matter of the environment, the planet, and now we must join forces and fight.

The territory strengthens the Guarani way of life in its traditional model, which is where no one harms no one, and we want to live this way because it does not destroy nature, and that means we have more chances to keep living and the generations will keep having space to live their lives. This is all focused on the idea of valuing Guarani Mbya Culture, one on indigenous cultures which, like all others, protects nature. And planet Earth need more protectors, that is why I am issuing a call for all jurua to become savage.

And how can the jurua become savage immediately?

Knowing how to vote, studying the political issues, who the people are, what are their origin; in a manner of being savage. Because civilization is destroying the planet and to be savage is to defend nature, we have indeed to become savage.

### Time'i Awaeté, Awaeté Assurini Pajé, Médio Xingu

In the coexistence of Awaeté with the being that inhabit and share the world at the same time, we are not divided – we are together, but each on their different territory. The jaguar, the macaw, the parrot. We are game, for them to feed, but at the same time they bring healing. Everyone is afraid of jaguars, and they bring remedy from the other world. We live in this world, at the same time spiritual, and where everything lives. There is no such difference between spirituality and coexisting with the animal – everybody is people. Everyone is sibling. The monkey sees us as kin. As so the generation of Awaeté has passed. Respecting the cycle, along with ancestors. Our prayer house is made to safeguard ancient memory, for us to celebrate and bring the dead, because the dead are not dead, only their bodies, but the soul, the spirit, lives. The human body ages, but when we look into the spirit, it is strong, healthy, there is no disease. The world we live in has both: in one of them we do not age. Thus is the world we see: full of connection. Today, it is being weakened. This hurts the forest, hurts the river, and us too, who coinhabit with them.

This is why it spawns depression because it takes away resources. It is the same thing as taking a nose from you, a leg, mouth, tooth, tongue. When the river is killed, a piece of your body is cut. Your heart is nearly stopping. Your spirit cannot breathe. The forest, on its own, is beautiful. We are the ones who tear it down, make our house, our farm, kill the animal we need to eat. It is defenseless there, or even with defenses, because the illnesses that today afflict people no one knows. The water in the city is polluted, without forest. The indigenous are being murdered, the pajés are leaving – thus, there is no more protection –when all this ends, Earth may explode – a lot of things may happen to those who are holding, mediating the spiritual war. A community who does not respect the way of dealing with the spiritual world does not evolve, it weakens, and spawns depression.

In the beginning, *Mayra* created the woman and the man – the animals did not exist. We did not know how to speak, we Awaeté came on a generation of macaws. We have connections to macaws, parrots, haws. We came from such beings, such birds. There was no man, so *Mayra* took the bow, because there was no one to talk, to hunt, to help farm, plant, and created the man. He wanted to create people – created the people. Then he took the *awoi-yve* cane and turned it into woman. And went on creating tortoise, birds, chestnut. Went on creating these animals to communicate

with us. And setting limitations; if this is done, that will happen. If you tinker in this way, you will get sick, will die – the elder practice this lesson a lot. And also left His arm, which is the Pajé, who is His direct communication. Because the Pajé's path treads the spiritual world, heaven, it is His path.

Later comes *Ajaré*, the world ends, and we arise again, through the macaw, through the heron. Thus, we replicate – When we die, in heaven, we become heron, become jaguar. We, humans, here our bodies may end, but animals will never end. So, we will always live. We will not return with this face again, but with other thoughts, but we live again. This is how we view creation: with connection with those who were and with those who are here.



Figure 5. Awaeté Tawywa (motherhouse). Source: Instituto Collection

As we tamper a lot, we were very spiritually connected to the earth, where we plant, to the house, to the lumber, to the buildings. And, also, we are very territorial, marking territory. Since we did not stay in one place, we were a familial group – each for a single place. Thus, to make home, produce crafts, to sing, practice singing, then be able to return to the mother village, the motherhouse, *Tawywa*, to be able to share with others, it important to demarcate your territory. To mark that our family passed by such place, such bush, such river. We name each river. It is all waters our

grandparents have passed by, where stood our village, where war took place, so we will mark the territory to be aware of where we are. Because Awaeté are never lost. They are good at locating themselves. Never navigated much on the river, but walked a lot on the ground, a lot. So, they needed to mark the territory to locate themselves, through east, south, north – they needed to locate themselves through the houses and the river too.

We always had to look at the *karaí*<sup>4</sup> hidden. We never sought contact due to disease, fear. But tired from so much war, so many people dead, my mother's uncle dreamt with *karaí* who will help. He dreamt, midnight, when it was two in the morning, he incorporated and said, "Tomorrow will arrive *karaí* and won't kill us, will talk and I will talk to him." He did not speak Portuguese. When it was eight in the morning, three priests arrived. Then everyone ran. The priests with shotguns. Then the old Pajé took the bow and said, "I won't run."

Then the priest, "come, come" – "not I, you come, you come speak to me."

Then the priest said, "you have the bow, throw!" – he said, "no, you take and throw yours. Take your weapon and throw. I will throw mine. Then we will talk." So, the priest took the belt, put it in the corner. So, he took his bow and threw. Then he went and embraced the priest, and the priest held him. He warned the others (everyone hidden, watching) – "Look, he will not kill me, he is only holding me. We will be in touch and use his weapon now: the head, especially the mind." He says *karaí* often-times thinks too much, produces too much, and the knowledge he is producing ends up disturbing many beautiful things. Making hydroelectric, which kills the river. That he thinks too much, but what exactly is he producing with such thinking is the issue. And when this kind of knowledge, *karaí* knowledge, reaches the village, we end up repeating the destruction, we think it is nice: "I will cut lumber, will sell lumber, will sell fish, will sell meat, will sell gold." Soon, there is no forest, there is no river. We ourselves are killing ourselves. It is the same as taking the knife and piercing our whole selves.

We have problems in the community. But we do not have people starving, we do not leave the elder in asylums. Where is the *karaí* knowledge on fostering they speak so much of? They do not foster: they abandon the elder. Not us: the elder is sacred. It

is different here. This made me curious, at the same time sad, because I was raised with my grandmother, until her last living days. This type of depreciation, when it reaches the community, it generates conflict. And spawns depression. Creates inequality, one wanting to figure over the other, and it is not like that: everything is equal.



Figure 6. Awaeté weaving straw, making baskets. Source: Time'i Awaeté

I come from an ethnicity called Awaeté – *Awa* is person, *Eté* is truthful. Truthful person. Are we unique? No. We are guardians of our knowledge, our singing, our practice. When we expand our knowledge, when we want to talk to others, we enter a connection. Problem comes, yes. But nothing takes away our focus. Today, in this world of illusion, many are losing themselves in this contact. And many *karaí* also suffer oppression. I must not think "*karaí* are no good." Then you will tell me, "You are also drinking cachaça there. You are fighting there too, amongst yourselves. So, you too – everything is no good." No! We know we have enough to respect each other, listen to each other, within our difficulties, because I have difficulty, oftentimes, in expressing the Portuguese, but at the same time, there is a moment a catch on nice. I explain in a good way for the person to understand. When we unite our knowledge, be it from the forest, be it digital, the world we live in today sums. When there is a purpose greater than money, the rest happens.

<sup>4</sup>Manner of referring to the "whites".

At the moment, we want peace, we want more transparency, harmony, we want to tell a real story. Both for non-indigenous, and for us. Because many things were made on Culture, on language, on shamanism, but all disrespecting. So, in this new moment, we tell the right story, together. The language we speak is also very important. Studying meanings, what is being conveyed of the information, how we coexist and want to coexist, from now on. I think we are at this moment of redoing. It is clearer for us each one's position. Two heads do not think the same thing as one. Imagine four. Each one has a goal that may be common. That may be shared, agreed upon, that will be positive for all four, that may transcend. So, everything complements. In this forest, each one has its importance. The chorisia tree is not more important than the bacaba, nor the chestnut. Each one with its importance. Can you imagine if there was only the bacaba? It would not work. So, we view thus, perceive thus, in this struggle, in this resistance. We need, even if it makes it a little harder, sincerity. Sincerity and love at heart. It is so, in this new community, which we are willing to share our knowledge, and are also curious to acquire more and strengthen the other side too, so that everyone is happy.

#### **Yakuy Tupinambá, Southern Bahia leader**

I belong to an ethnicity some anthropologists, including late Darcy Ribeiro, considered extinct. He did not comprehend what it is to belong to a root that has all this historical process.

I was born in 1960: 460 after such process, of the encounter such as it took place. I was even lucky to hear someone who was born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who passed on to me things that today are part of my education. I learned habits of western Culture and I also have those of original people's Culture, which were passed on to me by the people responsible for my family education.

For us, Tupinambás, part of our Culture was already lost when we lost tupi, forbidden for being spoken as early as colonial Brazil. When you lose the language, it is practically 50% of your Culture that you lose. Even so, we resist and feel this will in our core for restituting this ancestral memory.

I was born and lived in the country, learning this relationship with nature, with the animals, with the plants – this thing of asking for permission from the plants when

taking a branch or a flower, fruit, wait for the ripening of the fruit, I did not learn all of that in books, I learned it from my grandmother.

I learned about the figure of Caipora, who for us is the protector of the animals, owner of the bushes, and said we should only hunt the needed for sustenance. I was a hunter as a child, learn how to set traps, went with my uncle into the bush, placed offerings on the stumps for Caipora.

We learned this relationship and have not lost it. It is interesting the criticism that there are no more indigenous in the Northeast of Brazil, due to this process and biological mixture, but people did not experience that. I learned as a child to hide if we were walking on a road, to place my ear on the ground from afar – in hearing steps, you hid. This people that was raised since childhood to hide was not extinct. If there was extinction, it was some peoples, not the amount researchers usually say. Here, in Tupinambá land, we still find relatives with a strong phenotype: not even biological mixture could erase such genetics. It also could not attain total erasure of the ancestral memory of habits, cultures, and traditions. But we lost many things, we strayed a little from our belief, there is the matter of language that hinders us unable to keep our secrets, because language guards the secrets of a people.

We also lost our buildings as they were, but not this relationship with the animals, the relationship with fauna and flora – we feel as part of the whole. The same importance I have, all animals have. We know of the importance of the exitance of these other species in our lives, of this balance, because if a species in a certain place ceases to exist, we know it causes unbalance, and we know it in this coexistence with nature, in this observation, this dialogue.

We know each people has its genesis – each ethnicity, or each group, has its genesis. Here the elder did not pass this on to us, they passed it already influenced by western Culture and by roman catholic apostolic religion.

Olivença has a church built with indigenous slave labor by the Jesuit in 1560-1580: in other words, how much catechization time, how much erasure time we have lived through. So, our genesis was lost along this way, but we know other peoples still experience that. And we know about the ones we call *enchanted* of nature, we have relationships with them as deities – we have the relationship with the sun as deity, with the moon as deity, the wind as deity, so, in a way, we have not lost so much.



We have this relationship with what gives us life: with fire, with water, with earth, with air, which are deities – it is in that sense that we relate.

We thought of building this movement for forming, encountering people, a collective, which we called “Levanta Zabelê,”<sup>5</sup> to consolidate an intercultural space of knowledge, a philosophical school we are trying to put together here in Tupinambá territory. A philosophical school of original peoples, to exchange knowledge with all other Cultures, different from the imposition made by western Culture when it arrives here, denying all other existing Cultures, and creating erasure strategies.



**Figure 7.** Photo of part of the Tupinambá territory in Southern Bahia, where in a clearing, on the right, the Four Elements Sacred Circle can be seen, where Útero Amotara Zabelê (Philosophy School of Original Peoples) will be erected. Source: Levanta Zabelê Collective

At one moment in my life, I thought my head was a world of its own – I had difficulty establishing a more profound dialogue. But when I began to have more strength in my legs and go out, I started to meet people who are in the same frequency as me – we can sit and talk. Today I know I am not alone, nor crazy. Because I heard a lot, “you’re crazy, you’re mad,” and they did not listen to me – “you’re talking nonsense,” and this makes you go quiet, I did not have the freedom to express what I thought and how I view the world. But I kept meeting people and, in these encounters, listening, I discovered how thoughts, which lead to action, are built – what makes you be, think, act.

The time I spent in college helped me very much, especially in Law school, with a lot of History. It was possible to greatly broaden such knowledge. Then in sprang this idea for forming the intercultural space of knowledges. I think of this philosophical school, and it is obvious: it is there – just make it happen, it is something that may move, that may strengthen, and motivate human species to seek balance!

In all relationships, there is a comprehension that we need to listen – thence the idea: it is necessary to reunite people towards such listening, to exchange knowledge, and a space is needed. Thus, thinking of that, of also having, here in the territory, a replica of our ancestors’ dwellings: how much will this strengthen our people when they go into one of the malocas and we say, “This is a maloca, in which, according to historians, our people could lodge 100 people, and from inside one such maloca they fought for life, and today we can have it here, and future generations may experience it.”

It was a problem in the beginning, when we met with various architects who did not know the reality here. Hence the importance of houses in circles, with spaces between them, facing the cardinal points as to allow wind entry and circulation – a design that to us is sacred architecture. What the architect will do is to add elements of other Cultures because the differences complement each other – it is in that sense that we have been highlighting the importance of original peoples having such building respecting our ancestry, because this is the foundation that supports it. The importance of such foundation is cultural strengthening, and from that, work on other

<sup>5</sup>The Levanta Zabelê Collective is formed by a network of supporters from various origins, cultures, and areas of knowledge, for the realization of the project for the space of Universo Autônomo Intercultural dos Saberes Útero Amotara Zabelê (UAISZ), which consists of a philosophical school of

original peoples, idealized by Yakuy Tupinambá, and whose first headquarters will be located in Tupinambá Territory in Una, BA.

things: the restitution of the autonomy we lost, unity, although we know that historically there were conflicts – today we know these conflicts may cease to exist if people are more open, if they have the understanding that the different complements, does not divide.

It is important that we bring this exchange of knowledge with other cultures, especially western Culture, which has interesting things, very good things.

It is interesting that, when it comes to this greater uterus that is Mother Earth, the human species goes in pursuit of the comprehension of the whole. Hence the interest of the Culture of original peoples – from the relationship we have with such whole, because we have this relationship with animals, of looking at the animal and feeling as if it were one of us, it has to be treated with respect, they must be left to live as we also want to live; science nowadays says plants communicate through their roots, and it may not be only through the roots. I believe these relationships must be worked, lapidated.

It is important that the Academy gets close to indigenous peoples and be open because, up to now, they come for their research, their theses, collect data, do masters and doctorates, on whatever may be, and we do not even know later what that is used for. There is not, per se, a recognition. It is important for us, original peoples, that there be this respectful, comprehending relationship of which everyone is part. When you achieve the condition of being useful, you personally gain strength to keep doing and improving yourself, and you put interesting things in the world that help, but when there is this thing of superimposing one another, to the point of denying the other's existence, this is death, it is genocide.

I was born in the municipality of Buerarema – there is Ilhéus, Itabuna, Buerarema, Una – all close. But they had a relationship with Olivença, where the elder were born. All the festivities in Olivença were connected to the catholic religion – all those festivities I was brought to attend. And this tourism thing had not happened. It was mostly indigenous really – there were few non-indigenous in Olivença at that time. The little houses were made of rammed earth, many covered with straw.

Even in the 1960s and 1970s, there was not a concern for making houses that lasted a long time – those big lumps kept coming out, they got full of holes, and they did not even care to do maintenance: sometimes they preferred to make another house

somewhere else. In the indigenous construction, the house is for spending little time, it was a house on the beach shore, on the ravines. There was only the concern that the flood did not penetrate the dwellings – it was closer to the river, the sea, because of fishing, and in a place where there was game also. In those constructions, it was, “let’s set up camp here because there is game and fishing.”



Figure 8. Illustration produced by Sabrina Carvalho Dias, with references present in Yacuy's speech. Source: GTP Arquiteturas Tradicionais Collection

My partner was born here in 1963. He spent some time here, then did not want to stay any longer, and left for a nearby location – thus, this relationship for us, original peoples, is not the same western Culture has. Territory for us is the place where you live, where you can live, there is no, “this is mine, it is my property, and it is where I will settle and that’s ~~that~~ it.” These conditions that were given to us hinder part of our Culture and today we are forced to be sedentary.

In 2002, there was the official recognition of the Tupinambá people of Olivença. There had already been some demarcation here at the time of the Crown – it was still Marquis of Pombal – a measure that where there were Jesuit camps, seven squared leagues were to be demarked. Much more than the area we are pleading now, which are forty-seven thousand hectares. At the time of the Crown, they placed bronze marks – in the implementation of the cocoa plantation, the farmers remove the marks, and also ACM<sup>6</sup> granted many land titles in this area, which was already delimited by the Portuguese Crown, and which, with squatting, became small. In these forty-seven thousand hectares, in the municipalities of Ilhéus, Una, and Buerarema, there are twenty-three communities. After anthropological studies, there were some recoveries. There are recovered areas and never-sold traditionally occupied territories, belonging to the Union.

We are fighting for this territory we have not abandoned. When Jesuit encampment took place, and since then, the peoples kept moving around it. They also had to face various processes: rural exodus, and the violence they suffered.

### **Thawá Yudjá, maker of agroforestry in Alto Xingu**

The world, within our Culture, already existed with its own view, its own spirit, its own heart, its own mind. Before, well before, human being existed on earth, there was an opus of the Creator. Plant species, variety of animals, which the Creator spiritually brought and put to rise within Earth. Times pass and all his works took place, were drawn, and were the first human being to exist, before the true human being. There were various plants, power plants, mountains, rivers, creeks, hills, winds, the air: so, this relationship between all, this union was one of the moments in time in which all these, let us say, varieties of people who existed first, were put on Earth, it was as if it were us existing today. This was our drawing. When it comes to the right time, changes, transformations, and those, who came as people, transform with their own spirits, such as the various species of plants, types of vegetation, mountain, hills. To us, they all have their spirits because of that. So, the world began to us. We know how each plant, each thing has its own owner, its own spirit, which sprung to take this first step for humanity to rise. We are the second humanity which rose. For the

Yudjá people, in this relationship between plants, animals, spirits, rivers, mountain ranges, hills, everything has spirit and its strong communication. We know how to deal with all these spirits.

On how our villages are materially built, we build a village always chosen by the elders. We have changed a lot the villages, due to walking a lot – the people like to walk very far. Thus, we build our houses – traditional houses. Nowadays, our village still stands in the way it used to in the past: the shape of the village, always round. Thus, we construct our village, our houses. This, for us, has the strength of the ancestors. We keep living with the energy of our ancestors, as we use our ancestors' model. This leads us ever steady.

Today, we fight to keep preserving our territory, our forests, our rivers, our game, our fish, our farming foods, caring for the farming seeds, seed native from the forest, panting. This strengthens us to keep caring for our land. And fighting for the land. This is what we have in our hearts and our minds, to take the struggle always steady, and with positive energy, building a better future.



**Figure 9.** Day-to-day at the Yudjá Village (in the back, Traditional House). Source: Clarissa Morgenroth

<sup>6</sup>Acronym of Antônio Carlos Magalhães, influent Bahia politician during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first contact of non-indigenous with the Yudjá began centuries ago, somewhere in the Amazon. As time went by, conflict arose between Yudjá and non-indigenous – the whites. So, the Yudjá people started to build their paths to be free of conflict: they began to enter the jungle and go upriver. The contact began with their arrival – the whites – it was good at first, but later the conflicts began. In a first contact, let's say, the dirt comes along. The conflicts began and they began to spread. Then the Yudjá arrived in Pará – before there was no such division – it was all forest everywhere. They arrived where today there is a city called Altamira – there the Yudjá people gathered, they made the villages in that time, and then came other invaders. Also, upon arrival it was good, and as time went by, they also began to pressure, there were many bad things. So, the people began to divide too, and part came to Mato Grosso. Today, we are here in Mato Grosso, and we have had much conflict with non-indigenous, especially the rubber tappers. Last and third contact we had here in Mato Grosso, in Xingu – it had been a long time the people lived here. Years later, the Villas Bôas brothers arrived here in Xingu and also had contact with the Yudjá people. This is the story of the contact of the Yudjá people with non-indigenous. Today, we see, we have this ample view in the world, of looking at non-indigenous society and its thoughts, different view, different focus, different experiences, and much more they want to destroy. This also tries to influence the villages. But from what I understand, and my people understands of how the white man lives the world: it is totally different from what the Yudjá people have, its thoughts with the world, its views on the world – there is a better way for the Yudjá people to learn and discover and build things to the world – not only destroying, but correctly using the things the world offers us. All this is being abandoned in white society – we see this here in Xingu Indigenous Territory. This is what the Yudjá people see to try to bring these profound lessons that come from the heart, the mind, and from their feelings to the world.

Here in our territory, we have this coexistence of caring, preserving our forest, we have our custom, our traditions, keep taking our living Culture. We had conflict with the lumber industry, with the invasion of predatory fishing – and until now we are also alert to the limits of our territory so that we remain with such care, because everything you do today, we are in Brazil, with different Cultures, both indigenous and non-indigenous. Oftentimes, we have encountered these situations that come to attack, to bring complicated situations to our side. This gives us great concern and we keep

going with this caution, this focus – this way of protecting our territory. We have this struggle. There are also our non-indigenous partners, who are people who have been doing a lot of good work – these people work with their feelings. Oftentimes, this has strengthened our work. In fact, we count on, we look for all partners who are becoming part of history, who are part of the construction of this path for all.

What we really want is respect within humankind. The most important for us is to keep living and respecting one another. It does not matter whether it is the white, the indigenous, the black, from other countries – what matters to us is that we are all conscious of how we want to build our futures. What the world says about life to us. We must discover all of this and let this feeling towards nature grow. Because we, human beings, are nature's children. Oftentimes, humankind itself is disrespectful to our mother nature. We always fight along with our partners, with other institutions, with other kin, with other non-indigenous brothers who are in the fight – this does good to everyone. Both to us humans and to the world, to nature, to the universe. And to our air, our way of life. The way of living. This is what the Yudjá people thinks on the partnership and the relationship with everyone.



**Figure 10.** Yudjá village of Tuba-Tuba, Xingu Indigenous Territory. Source: Kamikia

## Inputs for another condition – paths for a Forest City<sup>7</sup>?

Some questions have mobilized GTP participants since the beginning of its activities and have been present throughout the entire process which resulted in this paper: What can we learn with the original peoples and how, with them, can we co-create a way of interacting with the planet in which the various knowledges are interlaced? What is the role of the western-educated architect before the original peoples' Culture, whose demands and knowledge have so much to teach in the context of the socio-environmental crisis we face?

The path under construction, fed by such queries, is that of a Forest City, idea that defends and alternate urbanity, with the transformation of our cities so that they cease to platforms of exhaustion of what we call "natural", to become strong allies to its existence. The structuring concept is simple: "(re)building nature in (re)building cities. What it implicates, however, is the change in paradigms rooted as universal or immutable values, which in the context of the climate crisis arise as obstacles to long-term development" (DIETZSCH, 2021). Some of these principles are noticeable in the speeches compiled here, in which ways of dealing with coexistence and with the environment are identified and go with the pressing needs: comprehension of the connection between all beings to ensure balance in the system, care with the natural cycles, solidarity, and respectful sharing of knowledge and of the community concept.

In this sense, there is a perspective that permeates the deponents' speeches that, in this planet, the human being is part of a whole: according to Jerá, "there are also the spirits, who are between the sacred world and this imperfect world of Earth," and say that she communicates with them and with the ancestors. Time'i speaks of "beings who inhabit and share the world at the same time" and that "we are not divided – we are together, but each in its different territory." Yakuy addresses the "enchanted on nature," and when talking about herself and the Tupinambá people, says: "we have a relationship with them as deities – we have the relationship with the sun as deity, with the moon as deity, the wind as deity." For the Yudjá, according to

Thawá, "all have their spirits": humans, animals, plants, hills, rivers. As far as all forms of existence – beings and elements – are understood as part of a whole, respect towards any of them and towards Earth as a living whole is indispensable.

This manner of comprehension is instrumental in the revision western thinking must undertake, basic condition to halt the suicidal destruction movement we see under way. The idea brought by Jerá that "everything has life: that is why we must excuse ourselves when we use natural resources", and therefore that there are "rules of respect towards nature, taking only enough" is key at this point, something that also presents itself in Yakuy's speech, who reports "this thing of asking for permission from the plants when taking a branch or a flower, fruit, wait for the ripening of the fruit" as something inherent to her Culture. It is important to recall that such perspective of relationship between the beings is present both in statements from ethnicities who live in regions where natural conditions are more present, as well as those who are in urbanized regions, in greater or lesser measure, all under pressure of the advance of a so-called modernizing dynamic that disorganizes life in the village.

As to the construction of the collective place, the community's spatial dimension, Jerá tells us that "traditionally, the Elder had, through their dreams, guidance on where to better construct the village." Yakuy, in turn, says the traditional principle of Tupinambá construction is to "set up camp here because there is game and fishing" and that territory is "where you live, where you can live," which unveils a relationship with the environment in another, more subtle, response. And, for the Yudjá, according to Thawá, the "village still stands in the way it used to in the past," and states "thus, we construct our village, our houses. This, for us, has the strength of the ancestors." So, another connection with the inhabited place is perceived, very distinct from the market view we approach our territories. Here, "urbanity" stems from an intimate understanding not only of what is the place's natural structure, but also from that which was passed on as cultural and identity inheritance.

The deponents' speeches point to a possibility of a different form of relationship between beings. In this sense, Time'i recalls that "a community who does not respect the way of dealing with the spiritual world does not evolve, it weakens, and spawns

<sup>7</sup>For the concept of Forest City, see:

DIETZSCH, Anna. "For the design of an Amazon Forest City – part 01" Available at: <https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2020/06/11/third-landscape-part-1-for-the-design-of-an-amazon-forest-city/>

DIETZSCH, Anna; MORGENROTH, Clarissa. "For a Forest City" (video) Available at: <https://youtu.be/ldL5ubtZtug>

depression". According to him, "we are guardians of our knowledge, our singing, our practice" and we may think of a "new community" – referring to the Awaeté, states: "we are willing to share our knowledge and are also curious to acquire more and strengthen the other side too, so that everyone is happy." A generous invitation for knowledges to be shared in the name of a common growth. In that trail, Yakuy reflects upon the perspective of a reinvented encounter: "It is important that we bring this exchange of knowledge with other cultures, especially western Culture, which has interesting things, very good things," as far as "It is interesting that, when it comes to this greater uterus that is Mother Earth, the human species goes in pursuit of the comprehension of the whole." We wrap up by adding to Yakuy's invitation our own, for that together we may think and create another way of building. Not only our cities, but also our relationships with them.

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