

RETHINKING RETURN: BETWEEN RESULTS AND STAGES

Repensando o retorno: entre resultados e etapas

Repensar el retorno: entre resultados y etapas

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the idea of restitution of data to the interlocutors participating in the research, this article seeks to reflect on the place of genealogies in restitution. The representativeness, the materiality, as well as the meanings of genealogies, become crucial to call into question whether they are a restitution of results, data, or other forms. To do this, the author's most recent restitution (from research still underway on hereditary syndrome) was compared with previous research conducted by the author in which, in all cases and in diverse ways, genealogies were the object of restitution. I argued that genealogies are primarily a contextual object of restitution, in which the uniqueness of each interlocutor and situation promotes differentiated and dynamic dialogues. Also, its status as an image, sketch, drawing, and document allows for multiple ways in which it can be a restitution.

KEYWORDS: Genealogy, restitution, kinship, fieldwork

RESUMO

Partindo da ideia de restituição de dados aos interlocutores participantes da pesquisa, este artigo busca refletir sobre o lugar que as genealogias ocupam na restituição. A representatividade, a materialidade, a forma, bem como os significados das genealogias, tornam-se cruciais para pôr em causa se elas podem ser consideradas uma restituição de resultados, de dados “brutos” ou, se são restituições de outras ordens, dada singularidade de suas formas na pesquisa antropológica. Para tal, a restituição mais recente da autora, de uma pesquisa ainda em curso sobre uma síndrome hereditária foi comparada com pesquisas anteriores realizadas pela mesma autora nas quais genealogias também foram objeto da restituição. Argumenta-se que as genealogias são um objeto de restituição contextual, em que a singularidade de cada interlocutor promove diálogos diferenciados e dinâmicos. Além disso, o seu estatuto de imagem, esboço, desenho e de documento das genealogias permite múltiplas formas, momentos e interesses na restituição.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Genealogia, restituição, parentesco, trabalho de campo



RESUMEN

Partiendo de la idea de restitución de datos a los interlocutores participantes en la investigación, este artículo pretende reflexionar sobre el lugar que ocupan las genealogías en la restitución. La representatividad, la materialidad, la forma y los significados de las genealogías se vuelven cruciales para cuestionar si pueden considerarse una restitución de resultados, de datos «en bruto», o si son restituciones de otro tipo, dada la singularidad de sus formas en la investigación antropológica. Para ello, se comparó la restitución más reciente del autor, de una investigación aún en curso sobre un síndrome hereditario, con investigaciones anteriores realizadas por el mismo autor en las que las genealogías también fueron objeto de restitución. Se argumenta que las genealogías son objeto de restitución contextual, en la que la singularidad de cada interlocutor promueve diálogos diferenciados y dinámicos. Además, su condición de imágenes, bocetos, dibujos y documentos de genealogías permite múltiples formas, momentos e intereses en la restitución.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: Genealogía, restitución, parentesco, trabajo de campo



INTRODUCTION

The possibility of reflecting once again on the theme of the restitution and the return ¹of research to the interlocutors, even with a few years of distance between the first elaboration² and the current reflection is, despite being a difficult exercise, also a privilege. I would venture to say that this is a subject that anthropology is unlikely to run out of, since it brings with it reflections that come and go from fieldwork, forming part of the development of relationships with the people who take part in the research. I would like to believe that this opportunity to return to this discussion is partly due to the continuing theoretical, ethical, and methodological concerns of anthropology, especially Brazilian anthropology³, on the subject of return.

There is another factor that is extremely important for this subject to be continually debated and to arouse interest, given the combination of two important objects: the devolution of results and materials, and the place that kinship studies have for anthropologists and interlocutors. More specifically on kinship approach, the production of genealogies. Genealogies, in this sense, raise questions: what kind of object do they represent in the restitution? Can genealogies be thought of as a less general and more specific object of return? Do they produce and promote relationships? Are genealogies an interesting, recreational object that arouses the interest of the interlocutors? Thus, in this article I intend to outline singularities that kinship studies pose for practices of return, as well as for the issues surrounding the return and sharing of results and data with research interlocutors. To this end, at the beginning of the article I will present how I first encountered the

1 The current post-doctoral research is part of FAPESP project number (2019/02706-4) and has recently been integrated into the “MÉTIS thematic project: Arts and semantics of the creation of memory” (n° 2020/07886-8).

2 I have published a chapter, the result of a debate in a working group at IUAES 2018, on my initial experience of returning genealogies to interlocutors and their respective communities (traditional fishing communities), which formed part of my master’s and doctoral research. Please refer to CARUSO, 2019.

3 This article is an offshoot of the debate that took place in 2022 during a working group at the Brazilian Anthropology Meeting. I would like to thank the coordinators of this group for inviting me to reopen this discussion and for reading and commenting on the article. I would also like to thank Tiago Hyra for reading this article and for his pertinent comments.



subject of restitution and good practices in fieldwork. I will present this theme through a personal bias, but also by reflecting on how these issues enter the university education of anthropology students. From this point on, I will use the experience of other authors to discuss restitution as a negotiation for conducting research.

An examination of the characteristics of anthropological returns, with reference to the work of Soraya Fleischer (2022), reveals a discernible trend in the way returns are presented in anthropological literature. Following a survey of publications on the subject, Fleischer found characteristics of devolution practices, such as an ‘ethnography of sharing’, an ‘inventory of returned data’ or ‘the return is perceived by the interlocutors’. In addition, the author demonstrates that there are other perceptions, as evidenced by those identified among the participants in the research conducted in Recife on the consequences of the Zika virus. The experiences discussed in this article exhibit two of the characteristics identified by the author. In this article, I will discuss the circumstances and context in which the genealogies were presented, as well as the perceptions surrounding the reactions and applications of the genealogies by the interlocutors. Furthermore, the concept of temporality is important, as emphasized by Fleischer’s research. The initial genealogical returns - from my master’s and Ph.D.-, were conducted following the conclusion of the research project, whereas the last returns, pertaining to ongoing research, were made during the fieldwork phase for the first time.

This discussion will revisit two previous works of mine, notably my master’s and doctoral research, the return of which has already been well documented in a previously published article. I situate these two previous experiences to highlight the malleability and mutability of genealogy in kinship studies as a subject and empirical and theoretical object of the discipline. Also, the experiences and receptions of genealogies that were collective, of communities or large families, were intricately linked to the context in which they were going through or had already gone through some kind of issue of recognizing their traditional occupation of the land. In these contexts, as already discussed in the previous article, genealogies are commonly used in arguments about the occupation traditional of territories by families. This first experience led to reflections on various aspects of the return of gene



alogies. They became a document or a support scheme, both in legal and educational matters and for maintaining memory. It had an important impact on the way people began to talk to me about both the genealogies and the results of the computer analyses of the genealogical data. At the same time, they showed flaws in the systematization, spelling, and data. It helped to improve genealogical collection and representation techniques. This prompted me to consider whether it would be more appropriate to return the genealogies during the research process rather than at the conclusion of the project.

For this reason, in the current research I am conducting and the experience of returning genealogies during fieldwork, rather than after the work has been completed. In this new research, which is still underway, genealogies are carried out with people and families who have a specific mutation, characteristic of a syndrome that predisposes to hereditary cancer. The genealogies are now individual, not of a community, but of a specific family nucleus and were returned as they were systematized in the computer programs. Part of the idea of giving back during the research was the possibility of building the genealogies together, making it possible to make choices about who the relatives are in the final genealogies of the research. The adherence and response to the returned material brings up another facet of the problem of returning research data to interlocutors.

RETURNING GENEALOGIES: BETWEEN IMAGES, DATA AND RESULTS

The first time I encountered the subject of giving back to interlocutors was in the second half of the first decade of the 2000s. At the time, I was in the early years of my degree in Social Science⁴ and the debate on this subject came up during a methodology class in anthropology. On that occasion, the professor gave some examples of anthropologists who returned to the place where they had done their fieldwork to give their interlocutors photographs, images (film recordings), audio recordings and, in many cases, some written work (theses, articles, books) because of their forays into the field. Other examples were given of initiatives by anthropologists who, in addition to returning material records and results, had also organized a presentation or talk explaining the research they had accomplished to the people who

4 I graduated in Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC).



had taken part in the study. Part of the lesson consisted of presenting such examples to reflect on the discipline's colonialist history and a decolonial "turn". It was explained in a certain way through the notion of good scientific practice, in which the return of materials and results to the interlocutors appeared as an ethical relationship. At the same time, the return brought with it recognition of the dialogue and the rights that the people who were the subject of research had over their image, history, narratives, and everything that came to be included in the research.

At the time, this way of thinking about return seemed to be a two-way street since feedback also made it possible to recognize and encourage the collaboration and participation of the people taking part in the research. The explanations about return in that class were also very much emphasized as part of an important epistemological shift. There was a clear shift from one anthropological practice to another, from "a past" and from another, "colonial" one. It was characterized as a practice that did not care about the impact, reading and production of the research and materials obtained through fieldwork by the interlocutors, towards a post-colonialist, reflexive and dialogical anthropology in which giving back would be an act of "good anthropological practice". Part of these practices, and probably also one of the motivations for that class, lies in what Daniela Knauth and Nádia Meinerz (2015) point out; that in Brazil, making returns is provided for in anthropology's codes of ethics formulated in the last decades of the late 20th century. Thus, talking about the good practices of researchers was clearly a strategy - at least in that class - to introduce students to the debates that began with the history of the discipline up to anthropology's most current stances on ethical issues.

The main one was approaching the code of ethics in anthropology with the students, especially in the light of theories from the global north that certainly had an impact on the generation of my professors in the 80s. One example is the book organized by Clifford and Marcus (1986), "Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography", which discussed post-reflexivity and provoked new positions in anthropology at the end of the 20th century. And another book, which certainly influenced the generation of my professors in the 1990s and had an impact on our education at the beginning of the 21st century, was "When they read what we write: The politics of Eth-



nography” (1993), organized by Caroline B. Brettell. Many of the questions and discussions they raised during our university education were certainly related to the debates brought up in this book.

From this first contact with the subject, an important doubt arose about the genealogies I would produce. During my training and in the bibliography, which I had access to at the time, devolution was always seen as something to be negotiated, listening to the demands of the interlocutors. If nothing specific was requested, it was up to the researcher to return what had been produced, and occasionally, it was advised to look at what made sense to return to interlocutors. In some cases, the restitution of results or materials/data is a precondition for conducting the work and in others. As Telma da Silva (2013) puts it in her article on the Karajás dolls, it can be something that goes beyond fieldwork and the research as a whole. Tiago Hyra Rodrigues, in his chapter on argues that in some situations, the anthropologist is seen “[...] as a point of contact between the community [...] and the university and, as such, would have an obligation to help in any way possible to solve the community’s problems. (Rodrigues, 2023 p.110).” Among the possible resolutions and aid would be the counterpart and the return to the participant institutions and communities. Based on the work of Eunice Durham, the author evokes the notion of “observant participation”, in which the researcher is summoned to participate and to give back in some way to the group or people who were their interlocutors. Silva’s article raises an important question about what to return and when to return it, since the return, when it is not the result of an outcome - films and written texts, such as images (photographs, videos) - can happen during the course of the fieldwork, while the outcome can only happen at the end.

Despite this flexibility in terms of the object to be returned, since the beginning of my career I have rarely, if ever, come across mentions of genealogies as something to be returned to the interlocutors. When they did appear, they were either related to some kind of expertise in work to recognize the ownership/ancestrality of traditional land use, or they were within dissertations and theses, as part of the work being returned. Also, it always seemed to me that genealogies occupied a unique space⁵. They are images

5 As I have been saying regarding genealogies, as well as in this excerpt from the article published in 2019: “I have always sought to consider genealogies more as tools and documents than purely as a result



that do not have the same status as a photograph, as a capture of something inherent to the researcher, but at the same time they are not like drawings or sketches made by anthropologists, since they contain information that does not always depend on them alone.

GENEALOGIES IN COMPARISON: AN OVERVIEW OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF GENEALOGICAL RESTITUTIONS.

From this perspective, my first return experience in 2011 was quite “classic”: I returned the printed photographs to the people I had photographed during my fieldwork. After the defense of my master’s degree, I presented the dissertation at a meeting of the residents’ association to the people from the community of traditional fishers (both men and women) that I had studied. This community, which at the time had 778 inhabitants, was also a neighborhood in the city of Florianópolis, in Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil. This community known as Costa da Lagoa, had (and still has) no access by car, and could only be reached by boat or by a trail. In addition, most of the residents made their living from artisanal fishing, tourism, and restaurants. These jobs were managed by each extended family and the community had a few families that formed an important network established through marriages and conjugal unions⁶. Thus, from the very beginning of the fieldwork, it became clear that it was important to understand the relational networks that exist within each extended family group and between these groups and nuclei.

When my master’s dissertation was finalized and defended, I returned to the place of study carrying a copy of my dissertation to leave with the residents’ association, which I would keep in the school library. One chapter included genealogies and graphs generated by the computer analyses of Puck (Program for Use and Computational Kinship data) and Pajek.⁷ Peo- or objective mirror of kinship relations. That is, genealogies have always been seen by me in complementarity with other aspects that orbit kinship” (substances, commensality, discourse, etc.). Caruso, 2019).

6 One of the main objectives of my study in that locality was my interest in understanding the practice of conjugal unions, known as “fuga” or “fugir,” “running away” or elopement (see Caruso, 2011)

7 In the previous reflection, apart from the return of the genealogies, I was more focused on the perceptions of the graphs and the results of the computer analyses of the empirical kinship networks. Pajek is free software designed to analyze, systematize, and visualize “large networks” with “thousands of vertices”. The program was created by Andrej Mrvar and Vladimir Batagelj and the analyses can be used in studies that go beyond kinship relations, such as in the fields of health and economics. Link to access the program, manual and books written to follow up and discuss the analyses: <http://mrvar.fdv.uni-lj.si/pajek/>.



ple's reaction and interest in this part, rather than the photographs, maps, and written parts, made me look at returning this material differently. In a previous publication (Caruso, 2019), I reported on this experience and compared both the situation and reactions to the genealogical return, both for my master's degree and my doctorate field research, which I conducted in traditional fishing communities more than eight hundred kilometers apart.⁸ During my doctorate, I carried out fieldwork in seven traditional "caiçara"⁹ fishing communities located in the Ilhabela archipelago in the Southeast of Brazil. Unlike the community in the first study, these seven localities had an economy based more on fishing than tourism. At the time, tourism activities were still developing beyond the two largest communities. Another major difference concerning the community studied in Florianópolis, in southern of Brazil, is the self-identification of the people who lived in these communities in the Ilhabela archipelago. The interlocutors in this fieldwork designate themselves as people belonging to the group of traditional communities known as "caiçaras".

The initial aim of the study was to understand kinship and marriage relationships in these communities, which revealed different relationships among and within the communities. As I have already shown in Caruso (2017), the networks of relationships established between the communities ranged from kinship networks¹⁰, created from marriages between different - and sometimes distant - communities, to other ties, such as belonging to the same church/religion or participation in associations and political activities.

In the first reflection, from my master's thesis, I hypothesized that part of the interest in this genealogical material, something I would see again in my field research for my doctorate, was based on the political importance

⁸ It is important to thank once again and always the people who welcomed me and took part in the two research projects mentioned.

⁹ According to Diegues and Arruda (2000), the population known as caiçara, a term that in the past was pejorative and today is part of the self-affirmation and recognition of a traditional population, is the coastal population of fishing communities on the coasts of the south and southeast. These are communities whose economy is based on fishing and traditional, subsistence agriculture. There is a divergence between authors and traditional communities, who tend to consider traditional caiçara fishers especially those communities located in the states of Paraná, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. For this reason, the community studied during my master degree in the state of Santa Catarina is not

¹⁰ It is important to say, as has already been observed in the Ilhabela's Arquipelagos, that there were communities with more exogamous tendencies and others with a greater tendency towards local endogamy. However, even the most exogamous communities also had family nuclei that intermarried, notably between cousins at different distances.



that genealogies occupy¹¹. Some families from the community I studied during my master's degree had been questioned about the legitimacy of their occupation of the territory, and they applied for legal recognition as a traditional community months before I submitted my dissertation. In this process and context, they requested individual genealogies, which I promptly handed over so that the interlocutors could attach them to their files. Later, in my doctoral research, when I began my fieldwork with people from some of the traditional caiçara communities, some of them had been going through questions and legal proceedings for land recognition to keep their land. A land conflict was noted even by authors who have studied in the same places years before me, such as Paulo Silva Noffs (2008). So, given the argument that genealogies occupy in reports, from the outset, they were the object of interest and return from the interlocutors.

In addition to the fact that both experiences took place in traditional artisanal fishing communities that were being questioned about their occupation, another similarity is that the genealogies were returned collectively. They all took place during meetings. Today, they are under the care and ownership of each of the communities and their residents' associations. These experiences had both positive and negative reactions from the interlocutors, which in a way inspired the current experience of genealogical devolution that I have been carrying out in my current post-doctorate, which is still underway.

When I returned to one of the communities I had studied during my PhD with the printed genealogies, the genealogies were a few meters long and contained the real names of the interlocutors. It was important to include this information in the returned material because the genealogies were being returned to the residents of the communities and this material could serve as a basis for consultation. In the first community where I returned the material, I gave a presentation at the local school, which people of all age groups attended. At the end of the presentation, I opened the roll containing a genealogy which was more than six meters long. People from the

11 In the previous article, I described how Brazil mechanisms and tools for recognizing the ownership of land (or traditional territories) go through bureaucratic red tape. These procedures and government reports are supported by reports drawn up by professionals from various fields, including anthropologists. And among the requirements often requested to make up the reports are genealogies and population and family censuses. For more details on this argument, see Caruso, 2019.



community decided to open the genealogy on the floor, like a carpet. Participants readily came forward to find their names and those of their relatives and ancestors. Most of the interlocutors were interested in the connections between families. Until a young boy, about nine years old, called me over, a little angry, and asked me: who gave you my name? I was a little disconcerted by the question but promptly answered how I got the names and families. I explained that I had interviewed people from his maternal family, that they had taken part in the research, and that during the interview they had given me his name. After listening attentively, he replied: how did they get the spelling wrong? My name starts with the letter K and not the letter C. Looking at the situation, I apologized and said that I would fix it as soon as possible in the dataset and that it was probably me who had made the mistake.

Of course, this mistake was a simple situation to resolve, complaints and questions about how we got the first names, last names, nicknames, and what anthropologists do with family data are not new in the field of anthropology. It is enough to remember the dialogue between Edward E. Evans-Pritchard and some of his interlocutors in his work, *The Nuer*, who asked him why he was asking for names and what he was going to do about it. Although the way he dealt with this question is quite different from the way we conduct such questions today, it is always valid, as Frederico D. Rosa (2011) proposes, that there are embryonic ideas of modern anthropology in what we conventionally call the classics. In my case, however, the criticism came during the return of a genealogy. It is certainly impossible to exhaust the theme of criticism and negative reception of anthropological devolution. However, the situation of the questioning makes me think of a text that describes some of the misfortunes of returns very well: Carmem Rial's (2014) article on the "difficulties of restitution". In this article, Rial describes a restitution situation that led to a negative response to the return to the field. In the reported case of restitution, an interlocutor complained to her that because of her work and the fact that she had taken her students to visit her, this had, according to the interlocutor, led to an increase in the IPTU (Urban Property Tax). Rial's text makes us think about the maintenance of relationships that the return of materials and ethnographic work provides.

It is also possible to think about the reactivation of ties and rela-



tionships that the return of research, materials, and contact with the researcher can provide. In a chapter recently published in a book on the misfortunes and unforeseen events of research work in anthropology, titled “E quando a limonada azeda” (And when the lemonade turns sour), Clarice Cohn (2023) talks about a problem she had with her interlocutors and long-time friends, the Xikrin who live in the south-western region of Pará. Precisely because of her long journey and work among the Xikrin, Cohn was called in at the end of the first decade of the 20th century to make a diagnosis of the impact that the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam would have on their lives. For several reasons, some of the leaders and interlocutors did not like her work and there was a split between them. This rupture was broken when, years later, she returned the photographs. Returning with this material was an opportunity to re-establish relationships and dialogues that were in a state of echoes and difficulties because of the complex interpretations she had made of her work as an expert on the works and impacts of the dam.

In other contexts, in which the return of data is very positive, ties are strengthened and relationships with the researcher are re-signified, as is the research itself. This was the impression that previous returns gave me, especially when, on seeing the genealogies, people asked new questions and became interested in the material they were seeing. The feedback and dialogue produced new engagements. As Jaqueline Ferreira (2015), in her reflection on restitution in health research, noted, “restitution of data can also be a way of prolonging fieldwork, interactions” (Ferreira, 2015 p.2645). In this way, with both previous experiences in mind, by proposing the return of the genealogies I began to consider them “in progress¹²” and to count error as a productive factor, since its existence could be seen through relationships and collaborations.

OTHER MOMENTS AND DYNAMICS OF THE RETURN

The current experience of genealogical returns differed from the others and offered an interesting perspective for thinking not only about genealogies but also about data returns. Based on the aforementioned experiences, “mistakes and suc-

12 Seen in a wider and philosophical way, strictly speaking, most genealogies are in progress or under construction. Whether it is a bet on the next living people in the chain of succession of time or on the archives and new data that may be found in future surveys and added to the genealogies.



cesses”, I reformulated the strategy for returning the genealogies in the current research. It is important to emphasize two important characteristics right now: the first is that the genealogies are not the only material planned for return, but this would be important during the “genealogical process” and the period of the ongoing research itself. As Ana Claudia D. R. Marques has shown, genealogies can be a valuable tool for accessing individual and collective memories¹³ on various subjects: “[...] I argue that the genealogical knowledge of my interlocutor’s functions as one of their essential tools for accessing the past and collectivizing memory. At the same time, the act of recounting memories has an effect on how kinship is reckoned in the present” (Marques, 2013 p.718).

In contrast to the previous study, the second feature, which differs from other genealogical return experiences, is that the genealogies were returned only to the person who was interviewed, in this case, EGO¹⁴. They are not collective genealogies, and, given the subject of the study, the names and surnames can only be consulted by the interlocutors themselves. Thus, the context of the research was different from the previous one, being research in kinship studies, but also with a subject of interest to the anthropology of health. The context of the return of the genealogies took place in a survey conducted with people and family members with Li-Fraumeni Syndrome, contacted through the Li-Fraumeni Syndrome Association, Brazil chapter¹⁵. According to one of the most prominent researchers into the syndrome in Brazil and the one who identified a Brazilian variant, oncogeneticist Maria Isabel Achatz (2008) and her studies with other collaborators (Achatz et al 2007; 2009), classic Li-Fraumeni syndrome, found in various parts of the world, and its Brazilian variant, are known to considerably increase the chances of carriers developing tumors of various types throughout their lives. One of Achatz’s major findings in the field of oncogenetics studies is the existence of a common ancestor for most carriers of the Brazilian variant. Given that Li-Fraumeni syndrome is hereditary and that a considerable proportion of the people who took part in the research had a common ancestor, genealogies beca-

¹³ Moreover, it is relevant to note that access to genealogical memory does not necessitate consistent practice of graphic genealogy, as demonstrated by Yara Alves (2016) and Sandra Bornand (2012): the manner in which family relationships are articulated and remembered is more important.

¹⁴ Ever since the genealogies systematized by William Halse Rivers (1900;1914), certain starting positions have been necessary for making genealogies. The term Ego, for example, arises from the need to identify who is talking about one’s own genealogy. Or it indicates who is passing on the genealogical information to the researcher.

¹⁵ I would like to thank the members and leaders of the Li-Fraumeni Syndrome Association, especially the people of the ‘Brazil chapter’ for their support for my current post-doctoral research, which



me one of the approaches to reflecting on kinship studies.

This article is not intended to cover the long debate surrounding genealogical diagrams in anthropology, but it is worth remembering that since before David Schneider (1957), the genealogical method has been the subject of epistemological and ontological disputes¹⁶. In this work, as I like to point out throughout this research, the genealogies conducted are destabilized and are the object of reflection, criticism, and denaturalization. However, as Schneider himself demonstrated during his genealogical systematization exercise, the conversations during the interviews and the way people organize their kinship ties are vital information for our elaborations on kinship relations. This is how I have established feedback during the research (which is still ongoing) and in a dialogical way, as far as our genealogical research and questions allow.

When they received the informed consent form, all the interlocutors were given the option of checking whether they would like to do just the interviews or whether they would also like to do the genealogical survey. Not all interlocutors chose genealogies. Approximately two-thirds of the people who took part in the research chose to conduct the genealogies. Most of the conversations about genealogies took place individually and in one case, an aunt and niece decided to do it together. As soon as we started each of the genealogical interviews, I explained that real names would not be used in the work and that as soon as I had systematized the genealogical data, I would send them a first version. If they found any information that they thought needed changing, including misspelled names, or missing people, or even if they wanted to remove someone and edit it as they wished, they could do so.

The interviews took place spaced out and some systematizations took longer than others, but they were conducted using a computer program called Genopro¹⁷ to “draw” the diagrams and names. At the same time, I was feeding a database into the PUCK. The purpose of using PUCK was to analyze genealogical networks and check whether genealogical lines could cross the possible common ancestor and show data on memory and the empirical network. PUCK and Genopro are also guides for further historical research and in-depth genealogies of families and their localization in places.

Each genealogy is singular, in the sense that, unlike previous research, in which

¹⁶ Important discussions on the genealogical method in anthropology are found in BOUQUET, Mary (2015).

¹⁷ Program available at <https://genopro.com/>



all genealogies by Ego were connected over several families and generations, in this case, each interlocutor was a remnant of towns far from each other, with surnames, professions and other characteristics that were not at all similar. Most of the interlocutors were women who preferred to take part in the interviews and genealogies. Even though the majority of the interlocutors belonged to economically privileged groups, there were still differences and variations between them. In addition to the singularities in the profile and location of the interlocutors, the genealogies presented different issues and challenges. In these, recurring themes in kinship and relatedness studies frequently appeared, such as the inclusion of different lines marking the marriages of two brothers with two sisters, adopted people or people with more than one origin, and multiple unions, among others. The way in which generations were organized for each individual also varied, as each had its own narrative of time, memory and family organization.

I attempted as much as possible to follow and “draw” the specificities of each family in their kinship narratives within the computer programs, including diverse types of lines and colors to try to represent these singularities. Once each of the genealogies had been finalized, they were reviewed by me and transformed into PDF files. These files were sent as an attachment by email to each person (EGO) who took part in the research. In each e-mail, I thanked them again for taking part in the research and once again sent the message that any suggestions and edits to the genealogies would be welcome.

The reception of the genealogies was quite varied. Two respondents simply thanked me for sending them, with an almost automatic e-mail. Others, the vast majority, never replied to the e-mail about genealogy. And a minority, just four people, were more engaged and replied something about their genealogies. In all the cases where I received a reply, some name, surname, or relative was missing. In one of them, the person had mentioned the same relative twice and I put it in the wrong places (in different generations), and it was after looking at the genealogy and talking to older relatives that they realized the duplicity. In addition, looking at the genealogies and reading them in search of errors led three of the interlocutors to remember people with kinship ties that would have been important to include in the genealogies, but which they had forgotten to mention during the interview. Thus, in two of the interlocutors’ answers, new relatives were added to each genealogy. In a way, it is possible to think that the return and joint construction of genealogies is not just a return of data and a way of “prolonging the relationship” (Ferreira, 2015), but above all,



it is about considering the importance of relationality and bilaterality in documents and dataset such as genealogies.

After receiving the suggestions and corrections, I made the changes within the programs, generated a new document, and sent it via email. In all cases, this generated a new dialogue, including about remembering and forgetting people, as well as more subjects about kinship. It was interesting to see the choices, in some cases by the interlocutors, of relatives who should or should not appear in the genealogies after the corrections. Some people who did not have much information or contact details were mentioned, such as “there’s a cousin who is this aunt’s son, whose name I don’t know” or “I know that this person had several brothers and sisters, but I don’t know their names”. In many cases, the loss of contact and links between relatives, whether for emotional, geographical, or temporal reasons, was used to talk about the limits of family genealogy.

Although the genealogies are not the only result of the research, in this case and at this time, they are a document created from the memory of each interlocutor’s relatives, based on the logic of the systematized genealogical diagrams. Talking about genealogies is certainly a way of accessing themes in the sphere of kinship and relatedness. During the initial interviews, these themes came up when talking about each relative, types of affective unions, parenting and other themes were revisited and clarified in this dialogue of the returned material, the genealogy. Feedback can be an important way of keeping the dialogue going with the interlocutors and even allows us to learn more about the data we have collected. At the same time, questions and conversations about genealogies can make us question genealogical models and memory access. It is also important to think that the systematization of family genealogies is a document that can be interesting in situations other than research. It can be used for future generations of the family, in documentary and family history research, as well as in medical consultations.

THE BACK AND FORTH OF GENEALOGIES, OR SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The return of this first piece of research material, the genealogies, which are not photographs and not even the results themselves, has led to some reflections on this experience. The first is the importance of genealogies as a way of talking about conceptions and kinship memories, taking them out of a static position and putting them into motion in a continuous and joint construction of information with



the interlocutors. The possibility of collaboration in the construction of genealogies, even if it is not a final product but part of it, makes it possible to think about the participation of the interlocutors beyond the data and information provided in the interview. To the extent that corrections and edits are made to the genealogies and family information, it makes it possible to participate in checking and preparing the data. A new conversation emerges. The genealogies from that perspective played a dialogical role. During the restitution, occupied the place of an outline and, at the same time, an image of the anthropologist's understanding of the kinship data passed on during the interviews.

This made me consider how contextual the importance and representativeness of genealogies and objects of return are for each situation and group being researched. In previous cases, where genealogies are often used in processes to demarcate and recognize traditional territories, they seem to have higher expectations than individual genealogies. On the other hand, the interlocutors who interacted and participated in the construction of the genealogies had, in some cases, a prior interest in their family histories and at the same time in genealogy as a way of understanding the passage of the mutation that predisposes to the syndrome. This gives us cause to think that not only the context but also the use of genealogies is something important to consider. At the same time, to the extent that the interlocutors engaged in dialogue about the correction of the data, both when the genealogies were returned to the communities and to those who commented on the correction in the ongoing research, it shows that genealogies need to be dialogical.

Other results and the research itself will be more engaging when they are returned to the interlocutors in the future. One final reflection is on the ways and possibilities of thinking about restitution in multiple stages and in a continuous dialogue with the people who take part in the research.



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