FROM ETHNIC SETTLEMENT TO CULTURAL COEXISTENCE:
GERMAN AND JAPANESE GAÚCHOS IN IVOTI AND INDICATORS OF
CULTURALLY SYMBIOTIC PLACE-MAKING

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Abstract

This paper presents an ethnographic account of German and Japanese Brazilians in the municipality of Ivoti, located in the Porto Alegre metropolitan area, the southernmost part of Brazil. The aim of this paper is to show how the regional identity of Rio Grande do Sul, the so-called gaúcho identity, transcends the racial, ethnic and historical backgrounds of immigrant groups. Gaúcho identity functions to create a cultural symbiotic space between German and Japanese Brazilians in the Ivoti municipality. First, this article provides a historical explanation of the construction of the gaúcho identity in Rio Grande do Sul. Then, after providing the history of German and Japanese settlements, I describe how their gaúcho-ness envelops their community. Finally, I conclude with my reflections on their transition from ethnic settlements to cultural coexistence and its connection with pre-existing theories of ethnicity.

Introduction

'We are all gaúchos here (i.e. in Ivoti). We are very proud of being gaúcho', said Carlos while drinking *chimarrão*. Carlos is a second-generation Japanese Brazilian living in Ivoti who likes drinking *chimarrão*, an iconic and traditional gaucho drink that is caffeine-rich and widely drunk in Rio Grande do Sul (henceforth, RS), Argentina and Uruguay. It is usually drunk in a group, using only one *cuia* (a container made of calabash) and one *bomba* (spoon). After someone has taken a drink from the *cuia*, it is passed to the next person. In gaúcho cultural areas, sharing *Chimarrão* as a group represents friendship and fellowship. Carlos is a farmer. Farming is the typical occupation of both Germans and Japanese in Ivoti, which is famous for its flower industry, being called *a cidade das flores* (the city of flowers). Many German and Japanese immigrants and their descendants have been engaging in farming and the production of agricultural goods such as grapes and flowers for Porto Alegre and other states. This is partly because German and Japanese immigrants started their new lives in Rio Grande do Sul as

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farmers. As a municipality of RS, Ivoti has almost two hundred years of history. It was first constructed as a German settlement in the early nineteenth century, the Japanese coming more than a century later.

Ivoti, the research site of this article, is somewhere one can meet a German who likes Japanese culture and language, or a Japanese married to a German partner. My case study of this municipality shows how regional identity is utilized to create ethnic and racial coexistence between ethnically, racially and historically different immigrant groups that live closely together in the same space. The article nonetheless argues that regional identity seems to be prioritized more than Brazilian national identity, and sometimes even more than ethnic identities in particular circumstances where the latter two are not remarkable enough to create a culturally symbiotic place. As a working concept in this article, the term 'culturally symbiotic place' represents the creation of peaceful coexistence between different immigrant groups in a particular place under the shared belief. Such places are created not only by acknowledging cultural, racial, ethnic and historical differences, but also by recognizing the culturally circulated commonality between them. In the case of Germans and Japanese in Ivoti, they not only admit the ethno-racial and cultural differences between them, they also strive to strengthen their relationships under their shared belief in the gaúcho identity. In this regard, this paper also shows how gaúcho identity may transcend race, ethnicity and the different histories of immigration.

This article is based on an ethnographic account of German and Japanese Brazilians in Ivoti. In particular, I pay attention to how both groups construct Ivoti socially as a culturally symbiotic place. The article is structured as follows. I first provide some background to the construction of the gaúcho regional identity in RS, especially in terms of its transcendent and metonymic significations. Then, after describing German and Japanese immigration to southern Brazil, I present an ethnographic account of the coexistence of German and Japanese Brazilians within the community.

The symbolization of gaúcho identity

To explain the significance of regional identities in Brazil, the characteristics of Brazilian national identity must be covered first. Brazilian national identity, whatever it means for Brazilian people, is too amorphous to be defined using a single definition, especially for immigrants. There might be many individual or group definitions of what it means to be Brazilian, as several scholars studying different racial and ethnic groups have shown (Freyre

1986; Lesser 1999, 2013; Nava and Lauerhass Jr. 2006; Eakin 2017). The literature on Brazilian national identity indicates that being of mixed blood and cultural assimilation between several different ethnic and racial groups is a major part of Brazil's cultural identity. However, viewed from the opposite side, this Brazilian cultural, racial and ethnic mixture, which was strengthened by the influx of several immigrant groups from the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, is an indicator of how much Brazil is different, functioning as a paradise of identity politics. In this regard, Eakin states:

> History, geography, culture, language, and economics have reinforced the rise of regional identities within the Brazilian nation. One of the continuing themes in Brazilian history has been the struggle to force these regions into a single nation, a single people. (Eakin 1998: 2)

Then, borrowing Anderson's term, one can argue that Brazil's extreme culture, ethnic and racial differences discourage Brazilians from viewing their national identity as a static identity (Anderson 1991).

Several scholarly works indicate that, given their socio-economic, political, cultural and geographical significance, regional identities are perhaps more profound than national identity in Brazil (Eakin 1998; Blake 2011; Oliven 2006; Reid 2014; Weinstein 2015; Junge 2018). Given regional significance, elites promote and make use of regional identities to achieve regional development and endow their regions with significance. There are several examples of this promotion of regional identity. Through his historical research on *nordestino* (people from the northeast), Blake describes how urban professionals, intellectuals and politicians characterized *nordestionos* objectively and scientifically as an example of regional backwardness and Afro-Brazilian-ness to make this regional identity the object of state-sponsored development projects (Blake 2011). Weinstein argues that, given the promotion of the elite and the popular sector, *Paulista* identity in São Paulo has been historically associated with white-ness, modernity and urbanization, and she shows how the promotion of this *Paulista* identity emerged as a juxtaposition between the more advanced city of São Paulo and other parts of Brazil (Weinstein 2015). Similarly, gaúcho identity in RS was promoted by urban intellectuals and traditionalists as a symbol of regional pride in the twentieth century.

The history of the gaúchos can be traced back to the seventeenth century. Originally, the word 'gaúcho' denoted a semi-nomadic skilled horseman and cowhand of mixed descent, Spanish and indigenous. Gaúchos flourished in the Andean highlands and present-day southern

Brazil, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they had made a living by producing leather and raising livestock, the word 'gaúcho' having negative connotations, such as 'vagabond', 'cattle thief' and 'ranch peon'. In the early nineteenth century, gaúchos began engaging in wars and fought for Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Later, gaúchos were promoted as folk heroes in legends and literature such as *El Gaúcho Martín Fierro* by José Fernández[2]. In Spanish-speaking America, a gaucho identity emerged in contrast to the colonial and third-world identities created by European countries. Now, it is the principal aspect of both Argentinian and Uruguayan national identity, as well as informing the regional identity of RS in Brazil (Machado 1966; Archetti 2007; Bockelman 2011).

More importantly, in RS, gaúcho culture was promoted by urban intellectuals and traditionalists (Oliven 2000). A movement called the gaúcho traditionalist movement sprang up in RS in the 1980s and 1990s, during the re-democratization period of Brazil's cultural and political 'opening up' (*abertura*). As Oliven points out (2000: 128), in this period there existed a 'nostalgia for rural life' that was promoted by the intellectuals and professionals belonging to the urban middle class. As part of this movement, a gaúcho cultural institution called Centro de Tradições Gaúchas (GTG: the centre of gaúcho traditions) appeared. Now there are more than two thousand such centres not only in RS, but in Brazil and even abroad. The movement also provoked market interest in the emerging gaúcho industry (Oliven 2000). Public festivals, traditional barbecue restaurants (*churrascarias*) and gaúcho-style popular music became more prominent in both the public and private spheres (Junge 2018). Gaúcho identity not only has a cultural effect, but also a political effect on citizens in RS. In this regard, Junge argues that 'recent political discourse in Rio Grande do Sul has linked gaúcho identity with democratic civic participation – to represent the virtue of participation as distinctively gaúcho' (Junge 2018: 11).

Bornholdt (2016) points out that the descendants of present-day gaúchos are poor ranch workers who lead traditional gaúcho life-styles in rural areas of southern Brazil. Even though the descendants of the original gaúchos now belong to the lower class, the gaúcho identity transcends class differences, as well as racial and ethnic differences. Today, many people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds argue about gaúcho identity and what it generally

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[2] José Fernández is an Argentine writer and journalist, well known as the author of *El Gaúcho Martín Fierro*.

means to be Rio Grandeans (people from RS). Now, when one visits Rio Grande do Sul, one realizes that many of the residents there identify themselves as gaúcho because the regional identity functions as a symbol of regional pride and a glorious past. Concerning this symbolic circulation of gaúcho identity, Oliven argues (1999: 107-8):

> The inhabitants of RS (Rio Grande do Sul) consider themselves Brazilian by choice, and they like to emphasize their individuality with regard to the rest of Brazil. In the social construction of their identity, they use elements that refer to a glorious past, one dominated by the figure of the Gaúcho…. Today, the word is a patronymic for the citizens of the state of RS.

In this regard, Junge (2018: 11) explains the underlying reason for this invocation:

> As both a source of regional pride and as the basis for essentialist stereotyping, present-day invocations of gaúcho-ness have in varying ways embraced the cultural figure of the rural cowboy, the values of independence and bravery, masculine virility, and a desire to be close to the land.

In the process of cultural promotion, gaúcho identity came to have a symbolic meaning to the majority of Rio Grandeans. However, its significance lies in the fact that the RS regional identity can incorporate different racial and ethnic groups in the state as Rio Grandeans and juxtapose them to the rest of Brazil. This symbolic circulation of the RS regional identity positively affects the sense of togetherness between German and Japanese in Ivoti.

Settlement of German and Japanese immigrants in southern Brazil

The history of German immigration to Brazil started when the Brazilian imperial government created the first German colony, São Leopaldo, in RS in 1824, soon after gaining independence from Portugal in 1822. Even before this time, Brazil's national interest in foreign occupation in the south was triggered by security issues, its export-oriented policies and the elite's racial preferences (Lesser 2013). At the time, there was political and military conflict between Brazil and Argentina, which pushed the border back and forth, as both countries had ambitions for expansion and growth in the nineteenth century. However, since most of Brazil's inhabitants at the time lived on the Atlantic coast, and only indigenous groups lived in the interior of the country,[3] the southern interior was especially vulnerable to Argentine expansion. Another

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[3] Seyferth (1998) argues that the interior of the country was regarded as a 'demographic void' at the

trigger was the elite's belief that Brazil's economy should be more export-oriented in order to take advantage of growing industries such as sugar, cotton and coffee for efficient national growth. Brazilian elites believed that these growing industries and the exportation of their goods would make Brazil a modern nation. By their very nature, these industries required intensive human labour, which meant that the government urgently needed to secure the human resources to keep growth sustainable. In this context, as the southern economy grew, the demand for labour in southern local industries grew with it.

In order to invest labour resources in these growing industries, the elites favoured white immigrants as a way of achieving the whitening of Brazil, as well as promoting national development, the hope being to replace slavery by white immigrants in the future.[4] Among several candidates as white immigrant groups, the government prioritized German immigrants because Germans were believed to have 'exceptional abilities as farmers and a sense of national pride that would transform immigrants rapidly into devoted Brazilian subjects' (Lesser 2013). German immigration to the south brought several benefits to Brazil. The Germans transformed unused lands in the south into agriculturally productive areas, and they were also regarded as an asset when it came to creating a self-organized, docile and principled German-Brazilian army against the Argentine expansion. Land allocations by the government in the case of the German immigrants was treated as a policy of colonization, and it functioned as the engine of German immigration to Brazil, especially to the south.

On the other hand, there were other contributing factors on the side of Germany and Europe concerning German immigration to southern Brazil. In the early nineteenth century, Germany was suffering from overpopulation, poverty and the effects of the Napoleonic war, issues that were especially problematic in rural areas. Furthermore, the market transformation caused by the industrial revolution replacing the manual labour force intensified poverty in Germany (Yukihiko 2007). Under these circumstances, in 1824 the first group of Germans migrated to São Leopoldo through the colonization policy. In 1829, the imperial government established three more official German colonies in other southern states, São Pedro da Alcântara and Mafra in Santa Catarina, and Rio Negro in Paraná (Seyferth 1998). Overall, the vast area of unused

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time, regardless of the existence of the indigenous groups.

[4] Lesser (1999, 2013) points out that Brazilian governmental elites also promoted official immigration from all over the world to make good the labour shortages caused by the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888.

land in the south and the government's land-allocation policy attracted impoverished Germans from rural Germany. The immigrants were called *colonos*, the social identity used to welcome immigrant peasants at that time.

The German settlements played an important part in presrving German ethnic culture because they were located distant from urban areas. In these settlements, the Brazilian cultural presence was scarce, preserving them from cultural assimilation. Schools, religion and language were also important in the making of a German-Brazilian ethnic identity. For instance, German-language newspapers first appeared in the 1860s. Along with German settlers, priests and pastors accompanied them in their immigration and established churches, both Catholic and Lutheran, in their own settlements. Community schools where German was the language of instruction were also built in each settlement. Although these examples are too numerous to mention here, all establishments of this kind led to the preservation of *Deutschtum*, or Germanhood (Seyferth 1998; Eppelmann 2018).

As the underlying reason for the preservation of German ethnicity and culture, Willems argues that a shared memory of colonization and the contribution of the pioneer generations, both of which are regarded as ethnic symbols, are the two most important elements of German efforts to preserve their own ethnicity and culture (Willems 1946). Suffice it to say that in the very first phase of immigration the German settlers strove to create a small Germany on the new frontier, their pioneering efforts being mystified subsequently as a shared ethnic history and embedded in Brazilian-born Germans' subjectivities. Allocated land by the government much later, Japanese immigrants also followed this settler-colonialism-like path of immigration. Although German immigration to Brazil was less than to the USA, it played an important part in changing the demography of southern Brazil. According to Kent, at the end of the nineteenth century, there were 150,000 to 200,000 Germans in southern Brazil (Kent 2006). Now, over ten million German Brazilians live in Brazil, with significant numbers in the south.

Japanese immigration to Brazil started almost a century after German immigration began. 2018, when I conducted my fieldwork, was one of the more memorable years in the history of Japanese immigration to Brazil, of which it was the 110th anniversary, having started in 1908 with just 781 Japanese immigrants. Just as German migrants were pushed and pulled by internal and external factors, so Japanese immigration to Brazil also had a number of different influences. In a non-fiction work called *Sōbō*, by Tatsuzo Ishikawa (1951), who also went on board an immigration ship to Brazil to interview Japanese Brazilians and record their life-styles

in Brazil, it is written that Japanese immigrants had high expectations about their new lives in the New World and were quite positive and happy about their choice to immigrate. However, scholarly works also argue that at the time the Japanese government had been concerned by problems of overpopulation and poverty in rural areas at the very time when it was striving to modernize and westernize Japan[5] (Tsuda 2003; Nishida 2017).

On the other hand, because of the national issue of the labour shortage due to the abolition of slavery in 1888 and constant protests and riots among European immigrants, the Brazilian government sought a new source of labour to sustain the growth of the country's principal industries such as coffee. One of the Japanese government's posters promoting immigration at that time said, 'Let's go! Take your family to South America!', with a brave Japanese man holding a hoe in his left hand and with his family on his right arm. The poster presents the expectation of new opportunities, possibilities and hopes for Japanese immigrants in South America. The poster's representation is partly realistic, as many Japanese decided to emigrate themselves to enrich their families and start a new life. However, the underlying dynamics of the Japanese government's promotion of immigration were its desire to depopulate impoverished rural areas as part of the process of western modernization by encouraging young people and their children to emigrate. Brazil, conversely, took this opportunity to welcome them as westernized, culturally white and very hard-working immigrants, making them the ideal work-force for coffee plantations (Lesser 2013).

At the beginning of their immigration, Japanese immigrants faced harsh working environments and quasi-slave-like treatment on coffee plantations because they were just a replacement for the former slaves as far as coffee-plantation owners were concerned. Because of their harsh treatment, many Japanese immigrants escaped from their plantations, and some of them petitioned the immigration office to be allowed to return to Japan. Even worse, the Great Depression caused the collapse of the once stable Brazilian coffee industry, which functioned as the engine of Japanese immigration. The price of coffee beans fell on the international market, and fewer Japanese immigrants and their descendants were needed by plantation owners than before the Great Depression. Affected by the latter, Japanese immigrants started to shift their profit-making activities to their own agricultural entrepreneurship in the 1930s and helped each other create Japanese settlements (Kinshichi

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[5] The political reawakening of Japan started in 1868, when the new imperial government replaced the old Japanese shogunate monarchy.

2000). They imported the seeds of Japanese crops into Brazil and succeeded in adapting them to Brazil's red soil. As in the case of German immigrants, this early generation of Japanese immigrants established their settlements in relatively isolation from Brazilian society. They engaged in the large-scale farming of cotton, rice and several Japanese vegetables that had not existed in Brazil before. Later, these settlements were called *colônia* and functioned as ethnic enclaves, as in the previous example of German settlement in Brazil.

Japanese immigration to Brazil continued until the 1970s, although it was temporarily suspended because Japan and Brazil were on opposite sides in World War II. In 1953, Japan and Brazil restarted the immigration programme. Post-war Japanese immigrants can largely be categorized as technological or agricultural immigrants. Japanese immigration to Rio Grande do Sul began in the 1960s. Compared to the number of Japanese Brazilians in other states the Japanese population of RS is smaller, but nonetheless approximately thirty thousand Japanese immigrants and their descendants reside in the state today. The focus of this paper is on those who came to RS as agricultural immigrants. Given land by the state government in the post-war period, they settled in *colônias* and initiated large-scale agriculture. One example is *a colônia japonesa de Ivoti* ('the Japanese settlement of Ivoti').

Overall, the history of German and Japanese immigration is similar in that Germans and Japanese both established their own homogenous settlements, a small Germany and a small Japan, in their new land. Their settlement preserved their own ethnic identities and functioned as a suitable environment for passing on to the next generation. Ivoti, located around the area of the first German colony of São Leopaldo, first had a distinctly German character. The *colônia japonesa de Ivoti* also had Japanese characteristics at first. The gaúcho identity had an important role in integrating these two other identities into the gaúcho community.

A brief history of *gaúchismo* in Ivoti

With a population of twenty thousand, Ivoti is a municipality located in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre, next to the larger municipality of Novo Hamburgo (New Hamburg). Although the area had been explored by *brandeirantes* (profit-seeking explorers) in the eighteenth century, its first immigrants were a wave of Germans who settled in the area of present-day Ivoti in 1826. They received land through the government's colonization policy, but to begin with these German immigrants suffered in the tropical climate of southern Brazil because they were from Hunsrück, a low mountain range in the Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany. In the nineteenth century, this area functioned as a place for the entrepôt trade where farmers could

exchange things in shortage at home, such as fabrics. In 1867 the area was named Bom Jardim ('Good Garden') and was incorporated into São Leopaldo as its third district. Later, in 1938, since the land was suitable for the production of high-quality flowers, the name Bom Jardim was changed to Ivoti, from *yvoty*, 'flower', in the local Guarani language.

As the economy and population grew, Ivoti was separated from São Leopaldo and became a municipality in 1964. The municipality decided to accept 26 Japanese families in 1966 because the municipal leaders wanted to set *um belo example de diversidade cultural* ('a beautiful example of cultural diversity'), according to the municipal history.[6] These Japanese families produce grapes, kiwi fruit, vegetables and flowers. The first-generation Japanese immigrants lived in the Japanese settlement called *colônia japonesa de Ivoti*, but as further generations went by, their descendants moved to the municipal centre or the state capital.

Ivoti was first established as a German settlement. Even today it is still regarded as a German municipality, given its approximately two hundred years of history. Before Ivoti was established, German settlers lived in the area, only undertaking commercial interactions with others when necessary. Although they struggled to adjust to the local environment, they managed to establish a base for living in the new land. They built communal organizations such as a school, a church and even the municipal office, keeping their distance from the centre of Brazilian society. This led to the retention of *Deutschtum* among their descendants. However, the municipal practice of accepting migrants from abroad and other Brazilian states, as in the example of Japanese immigration to the municipality in the latter half of the twentieth century, diluted the communal homogeneity that had prevailed hitherto and replaced it with the notion of the 'beautiful example of cultural diversity'. Carlos, a descendant of a German immigrant, remarked:

> When my dad was a kid, some Japanese came to Ivoti. It was a long time ago. We get along with each other now, but when they came here, people must have reacted like, 'Oh, Japanese came to Ivoti !?' My father was saying it was a bit surprising when he first heard of it. Later, we realized that Japanese are so gaúcho. They are hard-working, serious, and very focused on their things, just like us (German). I have some Japanese friends here, and we get along with each other very well. Also, I like going to their *feira* (market) and eating Japanese food there.

Strictly speaking, the twenty-six Japanese families mentioned earlier did not initially settle

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[6] The history of Ivoti is described on the municipal website: http://www.ivoti.rs.gov.br/historia

down in the centre of the municipality, nor did they assimilate into the community at the beginning. Receiving land from the state government, the first generation of Japanese immigrants went to the suburbs to start a new life. Only then did they create the *colônia japonesa de ivoti*. Their own Japanese agricultural community adjoined the municipality, having similar characteristics to the German settlements. Although it is not certain how deep the interaction between Germans and Japanese was in this period, this Japanese community was built to sustain the Japanese group through the first phase of its immigration. Within the settlement, the immigrants established a communal school, held regular meetings and sports events, and instituted a *Memorial da Colônia Japonesa* (a 'Museum of the Japanese colony' in Ivoti), where visitors can learn about the pioneering activities and memories of the first generation of Japanese settlers.

However, despite being relative newcomers to the community, Japanese immigrants and descendants have good relationships with the German descendants. Germans and Japanese hold markets called *feiras*, where, they sell German and Japanese traditional foods and sometimes other products as well. They frequently visit each other's *feiras* and enjoy German and Japanese culture. They also had a football team with both German and Japanese players. Yet, it is not only these materialistic and visible examples that represent communal solidarity between German and Japanese. They have a harmonious relationship because, unlike the first generation, which only retained a Japanese ethnic identity, Japanese descendants have gradually come to regard themselves as gaúchos.

In this context, Masaru, a second-generation Japanese Brazilian, claimed that here the Japanese have *o orgulho dos gaúchos* ('the gaúcho pride'). Another Japanese descendant, Maria, also remarked: 'I think I am Japanese, but maybe more importantly, I am gaúcho because I was born here'. She placed greater importance in her gaúcho pride because being gaúcho is a cultural prerequisite for human relationships in Ivoti, creating a commonality between herself and others, especially Germans, and thus transcending both race and ethnicity. She continued by saying that RS is very different from the rest of Brazil, a remark indicating a radically different feature of this regional identity. In relation to her remark, Harold, a Japanese descendant from Ivoti, reported:

> One time I went to some sort of agricultural conference. I met Japanese from other states. I felt that we (Japanese from RS) and other Japanese are very different. Maybe,we are gaúcho and others may be proud of their region, too. I think that is how Brazil works. Brazilian people tend to judge

others by where they are from, and I also tend to do that.

'We (gaúchos) are different', said German and Japanese residents in Ivoti. This remark implies that if one retains a strong regional identity, it will differentiate one from others even in the same immigrant group. Another German descendant mentioned that RS is different from other states because 'We are more westernized and whiter'. As their remarks imply, gaúcho identity has the power to transcend race, ethnicity, and cultural and historical backgrounds. It does not matter where one's ancestors are from as long as they were born in RS. This identity provides the individual descendants of immigrants with a sense of difference from others. Beyond the regional level, this power also can detach individuals from the Brazilian national identity. Felipe, a German descendant from Ivoti, reflected on this as follows:

I have no problem with Japanese here. We have a lot in common. Germans can be gaúcho and Japanese, too. However, I don't like Brazil. When I visited Germany, I didn't like the way people judged me. They think I'm Brazilian. In a way, there is the impression that Brazilians are lazy and always play and dance around outside, right? We (Germans) here are so different from normal Brazilians. Of course, I like the beaches and root for the Brazilian national team during the World Cup, but I prefer gaúcho identity because I feel it is closer to my mindset.

Junge argues that 'invocations of "gaúcho-ness" have long been deployed to assert the state's historical relationship – in political, economic, and cultural terms – with the rest of the country' (Junge 2018: 11). The discourse of 'We are different', not only from others in other regions, but also from Brazil as a whole, is embedded in the German and Japanese regional mindset. In RS, the gaúcho identity functions as a *status group* (Weber 1978). Individuals embrace it for the sake of their own values and communal solidarity. Having a gaúcho identity does not make them lose their ethnicity. Rather, they can be German and Japanese, and at the same time they can be differentiated from other Brazilian people while preserving communal solidarity. The significance of 'gaúcho' as a status group is that it is not incorporated into the same ethnicity. Rather, it consists of different ethnic and racial groups with the same belief and regional philosophy that being gaúcho is a good thing to be. Invocations of gaúcho identity lead to communal solidarity in Ivoti. In this context, Ignacio, a philosopher of German descent living in Ivoti, added: 'If the German and Japanese identify themselves as gaúcho, they can share the same beliefs, world views, celebrations, and so on, despite having a different background to be proud of being gaúcho'.

One day, I was invited to a local agricultural festival called 'Jogos Ruais', where an agricultural community consisting of three municipalities, including Ivoti, meet to celebrate their efforts by holding several events associated with agriculture. The festival is meant for practising gaúcho traditions and keeping the communal ties strong. The finale of the festival was a traditional gaúcho dance by the children of German and Japanese descent, signifying that the community was united under the name 'gaúcho'. Ivoti was first constructed as a settlement by German immigrants in the nineteenth century, where a group of Japanese immigrant families joined them roughly a century later. As Ignacio explains, the communal basis of Ivoti is that, ethnically and historically, different groups of German and Japanese align themselves with the shared and circulated value of gaúcho identity.

Conclusion: the construction of a culturally symbiotic place

The construction of a community such as Ivoti can be regarded as a new phase, or another path, of immigrant settlement in Brazil, which indicates the formation of a culturally symbiotic place and tolerant acceptance of newcomers by means of a shared belief. Finally, I conclude this historical and ethnographic account of German and Japanese settlement in Ivoti with some reflections on three traditional theories of ethnicity: primordialism, instrumentalism and social constructionism, to suggest another path to understanding immigrant settlement. Each theory can be used essentially to grasp settlement patterns and changes to identity construction step by step, although there may be significant exceptions and criticisms, since this is a new scholarly endeavour in progress.

Although many scholars have already shown that ethnicity is an equivocal entity (Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Banks 1996; Barth 1998; Eriksen 2010), these scholarly contributions established several approaches to analysing the vagueness of ethnicity, although arguing whether or not these approaches made ethnicity vague or whether ethnicity was vague from the beginning is something of a chicken-and-egg problem. However that may be, primordial and instrumental approaches substantiate the early immigration phase, while the social constructionist approach is a practical way of grasping the assimilation of immigrant descendants into Brazilian society and the resulting complications to their ethnic identity.

First of all, although somewhat paradoxically, primordialism argues that ethnicity is a taken-for-granted entity fixed across time. There were two leading scholars of this primordialism: Clifford Geertz and Pierre Van den Berghe. Geertz pointed out an inexplicable aspect of ethnicity, namely that humans are innately driven by 'primordial attachment' and that

their innate affiliation with ethnicity is 'ineffable' (Geertz 1973). On the other hand, using socio-biological perspectives, Van den Berghe argued that humans practice ethnic nepotism, meaning they are more favourable to close-kin relationships, which leads to the formation of a homogenous community (Van den Berghe 1986, 1987). Their perspectives are similar in that they both regard the human representation of ethnicity as a natural phenomenon driven by an innate tendency.

Instrumentalism argues that the representation of ethnicity is not natural, in that it is manipulated by the political intentions of those in power. Ethnicity is utilized by elites to strengthen communal solidarity and its characteristics. Therefore, instrumentalists pay attention to the institutional practices and manipulation that formulates ethnicity in a particular group (Hobsbawn 1983; Brass 1985, 1991; Gellner 2008). State propaganda and national education are examples of instrumentalism.

Lastly, social constructionism is the concept associated with individual identity politics. It looks at how individuals negotiate with society to maximize their gains in respect of citizenship, equality and human rights as a means of rebelling against social discrimination. Some claim that social constructionism describes contemporary Brazilian society, together with all its racial, ethnic and cultural differences. In this regard, Kearney sums the matter up as follows (2012: 42):

> In Brazil, ethnicity is a powerful element of local and national history and is likely to have arrived at its present state as something that is not merely a maintenance of what is remembered or drawn from social memory, nor is it exclusively a metaphor of unity drawn from ancestral connection and innateness. Quite the opposite, ethnicity in Brazil is a negotiated terrain, a work in progress, in which individuals and collectives seek to distinguish the character of their ethnic loyalty in relation to contemporary politics around rights and equity, colour, and nationalism.

Being extremely heterogeneous, Brazil offers several opportunities and incentives for individual identity formation: national identity, regional identity, race, ethnicity and history are all related to the power dynamics that further complicate the diversity. Certainly, Brazilians today, who are the descendants of immigrants, including slaves, have several racial and ethnic backgrounds. Social constructionism therefore seems to be the best way of examining identity politics in Brazilian society. However, concerning the transformation of immigrant ethnic identities, it is also the case that the different approaches to ethnicity can explain its pattern. The case of Ivoti suggests a new possibility for identity construction.

Primordial and instrumental approaches explain the early phase of immigrant settlement. Immigrants often migrate to a new land as a group. Even though they may not receive land from the local authorities, they still establish their own settlements in which they create their own educational, cultural and ethnic establishments, such as schools, churches and even local political systems. For endogenous purposes, as Van den Berghe argues, as they strive to increase their numbers, marriage is usually conducted within the community. It is through all these endeavours that their home ethnicity is preserved within the community and is taken over by the next generation. In periods of the less intense cultural assimilation of the new lands, early immigrant generations strive to preserve their home ethnicity because it is more comfortable for them or ineffably 'natural', to borrow Geertz's term, or because they are innately driven by ethnic nepotism, to cite van den Berghe again. Thus German immigrants succeed in preserving their Germanness, as did Japanese immigrants. In fact, in the case of immigration to Brazil, not only Germans and Japanese but also Italians, Chinese, Jews, Arabs and Koreans, that is, most immigrant groups in Brazil, established some sort of ethnic enclave (Lesser 1999, 2013). Primordialism and instrumentalism thus explain the early phase of immigrant settlement, which is characterized by the socio-biological, cultural and political aims of preserving their ethnicity among the pioneer generations.

Nevertheless, immigrant descendants do eventually enter into the society of their new land and also come to represent its national identity. Although whether descendants themselves try to assimilate into the society or the society urges them to do so is another chicken-and-egg problem, the socio-cultural assimilation of immigrants' descendants can be regarded as a new phase in identity construction. In the case of immigrants' descendants in Brazil, some individuals retain a dual identity, such as German-Brazilian, Japanese-Brazilian, Italian-Brazilian, Chinese-Brazilian, and so forth. As such, their ethnic identity becomes hyphenated and more complex. In this phase, on the one hand they proclaim their sameness to others in the society, but on the other hand they do not forget their ethnic subjectivity. They do not instrumentalize their ethnic identity, nor is it produced by any innate tendency or desire for psychological comfort in this phase. Rather, individuals construct their own ethnic identities.

However, the case of Ivoti gives us a picture of German and Japanese Brazilians trying to make Ivoti a culturally symbiotic place under the shared regional belief in the gaúcho. This practice differs from individual identity politics, which merely argues and perceives differences in relation to others. Rather, it can be regarded as the utilization of a shared belief and identity to establish a peaceful coexistence. Different groups of immigrants perceive differences

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between them, but what is more important is the shared gaúcho identity for formulating a place like Ivoti. To view things from the opposite side, the ability of the gaúcho identity to transcend differences of race, ethnicity and the past makes this creation of a community possible, enveloped by its power. Cultural placemaking of this kind will appear under circumstances where different groups have a positive value towards their common beliefs, but such placemaking will be another possible phase or path in immigrant identity politics, being radically different from merely representing ethnic and racial differences. However, further research is needed into this topic.

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