

Neoliberalising Humanity: Culture and Popular Participation in the Case of the Street Market of Caruaru, Brazil

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Introduction

The Caruaru Market
provides us a very pleasant sight.
It sells everything in the world.
The Caruaru Market.
("A Feira de Caruaru" [The Market of Caruaru] by the
composer Onildo Almeida)

Neoliberalism is not merely one of the main theoretical strands of contemporary thought. It also transcends the economic model that has given new breath to *laissez-faire*. Neoliberalism manifests itself dynamically through the everyday forms of subjects' thoughts and actions, in the constant reconstruction of public and private spaces, in the daily choices that modulate levels of equality and social justice, in the urbanization of cities, in the distribution of goods and power struggles, which often take place without an explicit and direct connection with the abstract concepts of theory. Neoliberalism shapes society itself and only makes sense as an effective set of political actions and contexts. Real subjects live and practice neoliberalism! This "everyday application of the theory" is often not perceived as neoliberal

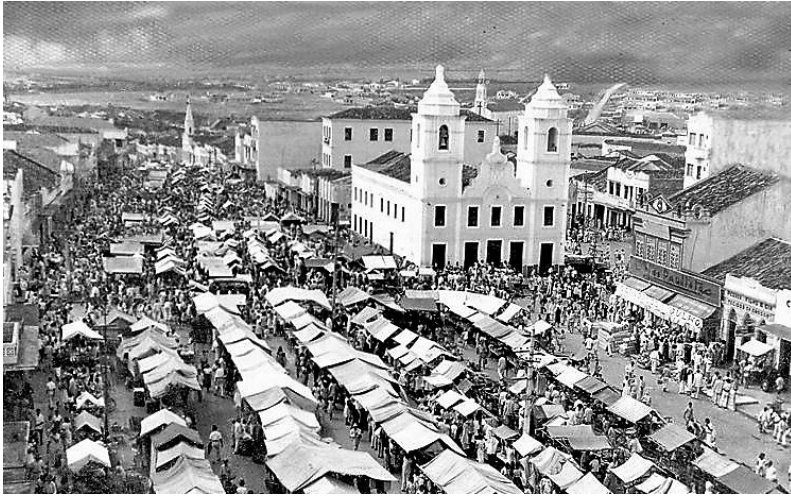
values (individualism, freedom, minimal state interference, defense of capitalism) are unconsciously practiced by the agents themselves (from ordinary people to politicians). This can be partly explained by the force of the neoliberal rhetoric of progress and economic prosperity itself: neoliberalism presents itself as the natural and most favorable proposal for any person. Any discourse against freedom in the market, or against any other issues (environment, education, security) where the freedom of individuals is at stake, automatically becomes a discourse against justice. The pragmatic naturalism of this fallacy seems to be so advantageous to the individual that it excuses neoliberalism from announcing itself explicitly on the stage of social life, as if the ethics of such a model was self-evident. For many, to propose alternatives to this model would be illogically equivalent to acting against oneself and against others. That is why neoliberalism is more than a normative ideal and a transition to an alternative post-neoliberal model requires more than a mere theoretical impulse, but rather a strong reaction against this production of subjectivity. It is important to recognize, therefore, that neoliberalism not only shapes society by theoretical arguments, but also that its principles are countered or sustained by the way the web of power relationships is configured, horizontally and vertically, between social actors and institutions. Analyzing neoliberalism, using the social world and the experience of individuals as a point of reference, allows us to adopt an approach (others are possible) linked to the empirical stance that minimizes the risks of myopic theorization or blind activism. Viewing neoliberalism in the context of its own movement allows us to analyze the possibilities of moving beyond it, especially in Latin American contexts, where studies and post-neoliberal experiences have flourished more strongly. Based on this perception, we propose to study the reality of the Street Market of Caruaru (or Caruaru Market), located in the interior of the state of Pernambuco, in northeastern Brazil. The case we study in this work, involving the local government's attempt to change the location of the market, was the trigger for an intense discussion among traders, other social groups, business people, and institutions, regarding the advantages and difficulties of such a project. However, both the government and most traders, from different perspectives, defend positions that are targeted toward protectionism and economic growth to the detriment of culture. This shows that the preservation of the local and regional culture, symbolized strongly by the Caruaru Market, has been contradictorily discarded in the face of the possibility of economic ascension of the individuals and an increase in municipal power in the region. Thus, the main objective of this research is to understand the relationship between the subjectivity

model driven by neoliberal capitalism and the loss of tradition and the cultural values that make the Caruaru Market one of the most renowned at an international level. The data collected enables us to question whether popular participation in decision-making processes always acts as a mechanism of resistance against the centrality of the market in social life. The case of the Caruaru Market seems to demonstrate that the dialogue between government and society, widely proclaimed as a tool for emancipation, may function, in some cases, as a reinforcement of neoliberal values.

The socioeconomic development of the Caruaru Market

The history of the Caruaru Market, as with other renowned markets that have stood the test of time (the *Grand Bazaar* in Istanbul, *Jemaa el Fnaa* in Morocco or the *Rialto* in Venice), is mixed up with the past of the city in which it is situated. Caruaru is in the semi-arid region of the state of Pernambuco, in the Ipojuca valley, about 130km from Recife, one of the main capitals of the Brazilian northeast. It owes its name to the fact that the region was inhabited in the period of colonization by the *Cariri* Indians, who named the region *Caruru* or *Caruaru*, which means “main place/field.” At the end of the 17th century the banks of the *Ipojuca* river were occupied and used for rearing livestock and subsistence culture, and a large farm was established, which became a point of support for travelers crossing the state to carry out their trade. Gradually, there was an increase in the quantity of products offered and in the circulation of people. To supply the demand, at the end of the 18th century, the market became a weekly event, consolidating Caruaru as the trade center of the region. At that time, the Caruaru Market was characterized by the fact that it was established by the “Brazilian bourgeois,” the new class of oligarchic merchant proprietors, but also by the traders and craftsmen and a few slaves (Medeiros, F.M.). On May 18, 1857, provincial law no. 416 sanctioned that *Caruru* be classified as the “City of Caruaru.” Due to its importance in the region, Caruaru is known today as the “Capital of the Dry Climate Region,” the “Capital of Forró” and even as the “Little Princess of the Dry Climate.” After almost 200 years, the market was relocated to the *Avenida Rui Barbosa* in 1966, returning to its former location in 1969, near the Church of the Conception (see Figure 6.1). In 1992, it was relocated to the 18 May Park.

Figure 6.1: Photo from the “Memories of Caruaru” postcard series



As Albuquerque Júnior (2013, p.39) explains, the identity of the northeastern region of Brazil was predominantly shaped by the influence of the dry climate and the rustic landscape. From a cultural point of view, it would be characterized by the preservation of popular forms of expression, social rituals, legends, tales, poetry, dances, religious manifestations, festivals, superstitions, and oral literature. The Caruaru Market emerged within this symbolic universe. Walmiré Dimeron, historian and former director of Documentation and Cultural Heritage of the Caruaru Culture Foundation, quoted by Sá (2011, p.32) in his book *Traders: Who They Are and How They Manage Their Business*, states:

Caruaru's cultural trichotomy consists of the market, 'forró' (local square dancing) and clay. The market, however, stands out as the *mother cell* not only of this formation, but also of the identity of our people. Everything that we are today – our way of speaking, of expressing ourselves, of our daily relationships – is impregnated with this inheritance, present since the beginning of the colonization of these lands.

It is because of this cultural richness that the city's main composer Onildo Almeida, who composed *A Feira de Caruaru* (The Market of Caruaru) in 1957 pays homage to it. The well-known song uses the goods of the market to portray its tradition and was immortalized in the singer Luiz Gonzaga's recording of it. The market is also known worldwide for the clay dolls crafted by Master Vitalino. The Caruaru Market has grown abundantly and is currently formed of a cluster of

smaller fairs, including the Cattle Market, Handicraft Market, Free Market and Sulanca Market, Meat and Flour Market, which turn over between R\$20 and R\$70 million per week. Depending on the time of year, the market is visited by more than 100,000 people from various states in a single day. Currently, about 30,000 families are sustained by the products they sell at the markets. In 2017, the Caruaru Market was designated as a site of Brazilian Cultural Heritage by IPHAN (National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage), recognizing its economic dimension, but mainly focusing on its sociocultural importance.

Figure 6.2: Clay figures for sale in the Caruaru Market



Source: IPHAN, <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/pagina/detalhes/61>

Figure 6.3: One of the busy avenues in the Caruaru Market



Source: Jornal do Comércio, http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_B5q-gGfYR8/VLaAE67MG1I/AAAAAAAAAYdk/n0sVneaX5yY/s1600/feira-da-sulanca-caruaru-A10-CMYK-C%C3%B3pia-660x375.jpg

It is important to emphasize, however, that the market's popular culture is threatened by the pressure to adapt the cities to the needs of capitalism. In the text "Cities and the Geographies of Actually Existing Neoliberalism," Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (2002) discuss the role of urban spaces in "actually existing neoliberalism," arguing that cities have become crucial arenas where neoliberal strategies are articulated. It is the case that, driven by the economy, urban spatiality has often been transformed to the point of weakening or wiping out the values inherent within markets, defiling their mosaic of social experiences.

Nowadays the market receives the same pejorative treatment its commercial opponents were classified one hundred and one years ago. Anachronistic, backward and inadequate are some of the adjectives that are now appropriate. The market did not keep up with the hectic pace of modernization, and it was almost like a crystallized drop in the course of progress. Losing space to the supermarkets that became bigger and bigger, more assorted, safer, hygienic and comfortable, an arrangement that is the perfect fit for the hurried rhythm of today's individual. (Mascarenhas and Dolzani, 2008, p.83)

Harvey's diagnosis in his book *Ciudades Rebeldes (Rebellious Cities)* is bleak: "The traditional city has died, murdered by rampant capitalist development, victim of its insatiable need to have accumulated capital, avid to invest in unlimited urban growth, regardless of the possible social, environmental and political consequences." (Harvey, 2014, p.13) In this sense, the growth of the Caruaru Market, despite being the main economic engine of the city, has brought a series of problems to the population.

1. Due to its growth in the city center, the traffic has become awful.
2. The market has become a public safety problem: the location is considered safe only during the day and in the periods in which the market is open.
3. The extensive circulation of people who are not concerned about the environment (in addition to the absence of public policies) have made the Ipojuca river, the cradle of the city, the second most polluted river in the country.

The Caruaru Market has ended up conforming to the almost insuperable advances of the modern capitalist world. Even with all

these problems, the Caruaru Market is still an oasis where elements of popular tradition can still be found. It is still a prime location for the reproduction of everyday life, not only in the material sense, but especially in preserving the local identity and, recently, in exercising rights. However, its cultural existence is threatened. As such, we cannot dismiss the market as an important agonistic space of legitimation or resistance to neoliberalism. As we will explain later, the Caruaru Market is currently the midpoint of a controversial debate involving culture, urbanization, politics, and the economy.

The change in the site of the Caruaru Market as result of neoliberal psychopolitics

The Caruaru Market is formed of more than 10,000 wooden stands, arranged outdoors, on a rustic floor. Walking through the market's alleys is a unique experience, even for those who are local. This environment, by itself, provides a characteristic experience of the markets and its stalls, immersed in its smells, tastes and ways. But what about turning this traditional space into a large, covered commercial gallery with aseptic spaces, arranged according to standards that would be akin to that of a shopping center? Using an analogy: have you ever wondered what it would be like if the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul had its traditional place of business transformed in a shopping center? This is what will probably happen with the Caruaru Market. The project of its relocation from its traditional place of operation was proposed by the mayor José Queiroz (2012—16) and its main characteristic is the relocation of the Sulanca Market. City councilmen visited the market and compiled a report which was later presented to the city hall. The mayor, in turn, discussed the issue with the Commercial and Business Association of Caruaru—ACIC. Votes and meetings also took place between the municipal powers and the representatives of the market traders, so that there was a public consultation about the proposal, even though several traders have said that the project was not sufficiently discussed. On the day of the vote in the City Council a protest was held by some representatives of the market traders.

A very positive point is that the market traders, for the first time, although in an incipient way and despite the clashes and different opinions about the relocation of the market, stepped up and were seen as a collective with sufficient power to face the public one, participating in the creation of a policy that would seriously affect them. According to Butler (2017, p.159):

... the gathering already speaks before uttering any words, which by the mere fact of joining, this multitude of people already represents a popular will; and that this representation has a very different meaning from that which is transmitted by one subject to another when he expresses his will through a verbal affirmation.

But, as we will observe later, popular participation, although democratic and effective, is conditioned by the values and limits of the subjects who practice it.

The project was approved by the City Council of Caruaru on July 31, 2015. The casting vote of the councilman “Nino do Rap” was decisive. The congressman, who was against the relocation of the market, changed his position unbelievably “to prove that he was not afraid of the threat he would have suffered related to the approval of the law.” Despite the approval by the City Council the relocation has not yet taken place due to a series of judicial obstacles that remain in process. The new address is on the margins of the BR-104 highway, moving the market from the center of the city to the periphery. There is 60 hectares of land and the capacity for 5,946 vehicles and 380 buses. It would feature a food court and restrooms.¹ The implementation of the project would cost the public coffers around R\$300 million, with most of the money spent initially by the state government of Pernambuco. The new market would be managed by an association of the market traders, that is, by the private sector. Such a change, which could take place under the management of the current mayor Raquel Lyra, would significantly alter the movement of goods and people in the Brazilian northeast, in particular, the sale of typical products and the clothing trade, which currently corresponds to the market’s most prolific sector. The case of the Caruaru Market’s relocation drew our attention because of its neoliberal aspects, in such a way that it can assist us to think about post-neoliberalism. Our research combines the contributions of theory with data collected in empirical reality. In this sense, Boltanski’s observation, regarding studies that seek to redeem the critique of neoliberalism by analyzing the local and global advances of capitalism and the ways in which the state operates, is salient:

... this requires that researchers and analysts keen to follow critical projects do their work in a modest way, that is to say, that they abandon the fascinated contemplation of their televisions, where the “misery of the world” finds a deformed reflection, instead they go to the things

themselves. Let them undertake to continue the empirical study, not only of the condition that is the most needed today, but, and above all, of the new devices of power ... (Boltanski and Nancy, 2016, pp.87–8)

According to this perspective and aiming to understanding the reality of the Caruaru Market, 50 traders were interviewed, and 100 questionnaires were completed over a period of two weeks in June 2017.² The application of the research instruments was random, in relation to those who agreed to participate, and occurred in the various sub-sections of the Caruaru Market (18 May Park), with 50% of the data collected specifically at the Sulanca Market. Participants were kept anonymous and all procedures were carried out to ensure their safeguarding and to uphold research ethics. The comments and data collected are revealing. Some of the characteristics of neoliberalism function strongly in maintaining the very system that underpins it. From the case we analyze, I would like to highlight four possible obstacles to post-neoliberalism: a) neoliberalization of subjectivity; b) privatization of public space; c) minimum market regulation; and d) globalization of localisms.

Neoliberalization of subjectivity

Perhaps the greatest fundamental flaw of neoliberal discourse lies in an illegitimate reductionism of social reality, making the functioning of the Market appear in an artificial vacuum. As if the companies and other economic agents were not situated within a natural, social and political framework that shapes them and that condition their action and its possibilities. (Calcagno and Calcagno, 2015, p.135)

Neoliberalizing subjectivity is the starting point for neoliberalism. It is to make the individual lose himself by focusing his existence within the market. As we already know, the clash between neoliberal ideology and the left, being reformed in the tension between north and south (as expressed in the cartography of Boaventura de Sousa Santos), reveals distinct equations regarding the relationship between individual and society. Without entering into the discussion about the existence of collectives as “society,” we may ask ourselves: who is this individual that neoliberalism speaks of? It is an individual (*Individuus*, which means “indivisible,” “which cannot be divided”) in the sense of being cast into a way of being in the world without openness to other

possibilities. Therefore, we must understand neoliberalism essentially as a civilizational model, which promotes a specific *ethos*. Hence the left's focus (with all the practical problems and disastrous experiences that have occurred throughout recent history, especially in Latin America) on emancipation and a social justice that derives directly from the self-consciousness and liberation of the individual. Neoliberal power acts quietly, subliminally, imprisoning the individuals within themselves, preventing them from constructing what Hannah Arendt (1998) calls the "common world."

Byung-Chul Han (2016, p.14), based on Foucault's thought, explains that this power treats the population as a mass of production and reproduction that it must meticulously control. It subjects the subject to a code of norms, precepts and prohibitions, as well as eliminating violations and anomalies. According to the Korean author, the neoliberal modeling creates a subject that seems close to the one we describe when we analyze the Caruaru Market trader:

Neoliberalism, as a mutation of capitalism, converts the worker into an entrepreneur. Neoliberalism, not Communist revolution, eliminates the working class that is subject to outside exploitation. Today each person exploits himself in his own company. Each one is master and slave, in the same person. The class struggle becomes an internal struggle with myself. (Han, 2017, pp.36–7)

Power in this context operates in a secretive and diffused way:

Power as coercion manifests in imposing one's own decisions against the will of the other. A reduced degree of mediation is demonstrated. The self and the other behave in an antagonistic way. The self is not welcomed into the soul of the other. On the contrary, more mediation restrains that other power that does not operate against the project of action of the other, but rather through it. (Han, 2017, p.38)

In this sense, neoliberalism is not only a free-market project, it is, above all, an adjustment of the subject to a way of being in the world. Neoliberal psychopolitics is a powerful weapon for the reinforcement of domination through psychological programming. The case of the Caruaru Market traders is emblematic in this sense. As Colombani (2008, p.169) explains:

“Work is the political technology par excellence to achieve the desired subjectivation process, as a productive device of docile, yet productive, subjects, active while conducive to the flow of capital, but controllable in their unproductive, and therefore undesirable aspects.” From the political-existential perspective of the philosopher Hannah Arendt, we can affirm that these people only survive, because their whole existence is orientated toward the maintenance of life, as they remain imprisoned in the world of necessity and end up not affirming themselves as properly human.

Privatization of the public space

Although neoliberalism proposes, among other things, the minimization of state interference, this does not mean that the neoliberalization process is impeded in its action as a disciplining power that manipulates the forms of life. One of the most important consequences of the *modus operandi* of this power is the absence of political participation: “The neoliberal system has, therefore, an important and necessary by-product – a depoliticized citizenship, marked by apathy and cynicism.” (Chomsky, 2002, p.4) In the context of the Caruaru Market, this is mainly because the traders,³ as well as other individuals working under similar conditions, experience the drama of not being fully suited to the requirements that would make them employable in the conventional business structure. Therefore, they remain on their sidelines, fighting a daily struggle for subsistence and economic success (Helal et al, 2013, p.107). Hannah Arendt’s diagnosis of the human condition provides an explanation of this worldview. A trader answered when was asked if they had been engaged in the debate about the relocation of the market:

We live to work. From Sunday to Sunday wondering if there will be people coming to buy the next week. There is no time to go to the meeting or to argue. Everyone has their opinion. It will not help at all. They have already decided. The only question is whether it will be to our advantage.

When asked in a questionnaire about their participation in the proceedings of the market relocation, 93% of the marketers answered that they are not interested in discussing the subject because they are very busy trying to guarantee their survival. According to Arendt, in the modern age, labor (activity directed to immediate subsistence needs) would have been placed above of work (activity of production

of durable goods) and action (political activity, which gives human meaning to the people), because the *homo faber*⁴ was replaced by the *animal laborans*. These transformations would be related to the changes in the spaces destined to these activities. The distinction between public and private space, so fundamental to the Greeks and the Romans, would have become almost obsolete, allowing the emergence of a hybrid sphere, which Arendt called “society,” a kind of extended domestic space that would span entire nations. It would be the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for subsistence would have acquired public importance, and in which activities which concern mere survival would be admitted into the public space. The market, returning to the case in question, the public space par excellence (remember the dialogues of Socrates in the dialogues of Plato), becomes the space of the private, the “social.” The speech of another trader denounces what he considers to be the loss of this shared space represented by the current market: “They are wanting to privatize the market! They want to make the market into something it is not.” The trader does not realize, unfortunately, that the market has already been privatized, in the Arendt sense. According to the mayor of Caruaru’s proposal, the current traders would be required to pay about R\$27,000 to continue with their stand at the new market. This reveals one of the most striking features of neoliberalism: the market is not for everyone. The current Caruaru Market reflects the diversity of the social world, a place of differences, with all its hierarchies both formal (which are sold from a stall) and informal (for example, the person that sells their products on the floor, on a towel). Neoliberalism reduces complexity and homogenizes social relations, privileging a standard individual who has purchasing power. We must not forget that the market is not only a place of money, but of symbolic reproduction and local identity. Caruaru is not known by the economy of its market, but by the culture and tradition that survived there.

Minimum regulation of the market

The new market would be regulated by the government simply in terms of feasibility and control of the use of the new location, the obligation to maintain security and tax collection. This reminds us of the famous book *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, where Hayek uses the term “catallaxy” to describe “the order brought about by the mutual adjustment of many individual economies in a market.” Hayek believed that the term “economy” was insufficient, as it meant “domestic

management,” indicating that economic agents would have shared goals. As the economist explains:

As the term ‘Catallactics’ has long been suggested to define the science that deals with market order and, more recently, resurrected, it seems appropriate to use the corresponding term for the market order itself. The term ‘catallactic’ was derived from the Greek ‘kattalletein’ (katallassein), which means, not only ‘to exchange’ but also ‘to admit into the community’ and ‘to convert from enemy to friend’. (Hayek, 1973, p.57)

The ex-mayor José Queiroz, interviewed on local television, aptly expresses the catallactic nature of the proposal to relocate the market:

The Treasury Department inspectors went to each of the traders and explained that it is necessary to be registered and, in fulfillment of their obligations, to pay taxes. If someone ‘stumbles’ and does not fulfill their obligations, they are not a normal trader. All those who are registered will have their rights and even those who are not, will be regulated. We have established, by law, that we will only be opening space to third parties—as there are many who have already asked me and would like to participate—after all the traders are attended to. Now, if the trader gives up and opens the space, it will be filled by a third party who is looking for one.⁵

That is, those who do not conform or do not agree with the new market cannot be considered “normal.” They are system anomalies and must be replaced by people who agree to submit themselves. They would probably be part of the reserve army of labor, namely unemployed or informal workers.

The utilitarian belief in a market that is capable of accounting for the wellbeing of individuals falls to the ground when we consider that there are other dimensions of the human to be considered and that cannot be subjected to the “invisible hand of the market,” since its existence is only maintained to the extent that they are advantageous for the reinforcement of the system. The spontaneity of the market described by Hayek particularly favors the economic aspect. According to the data collected, 44% of traders believe that the market’s culture is being preserved in the current location. But 72% believe that the

traditional culture of the market will be lost if the move to the new location occurs. It is interesting to note that the traders themselves agree with this phenomenon, since 85% of the traders responded that they would agree to the market relocation if it would bring more money, even if it meant losing the market's cultural identity. This is the contradictory dialectic of the disposable. Not only are people disposable in a neoliberal market, but humanity is too. Localisms work in some cases as mini-globalizations seeking to consolidate hegemony.

Globalization of localisms

One of the comments made by the traders is that the municipal government has not made any investments in the current market, which led to a disadvantage when facing competition from other markets in the region (from the cities of Toritama and Santa Cruz do Capibaribe):

If we do not have security, when it rains it fills with mud, the lighting is not good... why should we resist the mayor's proposal? I believe the right thing would be to improve the market that we have today. But how can I be against the relocation of the market if they are offering what we do not have?

It is certain that the degradation of its infrastructure (intentionally or not) leverages the rhetorical power of the relocation of the market, anchored in the urgent needs of the merchants. This is compounded by the competition of the markets of the neighboring cities, which have already been transformed into large commercial galleries. Several interviewees spoke of a phenomenon they called "Chinese invasion." According to the traders, the addition of oriental products in the market has been damaging. One of the interviewees explained:

It's difficult to compete with the Chinese products. They sell at a low price and are produced in large quantities. Now, the factories of the region are closing and beginning to sell these Chinese products. It is much better.

It is interesting to note that the market pressure resulting from globalization is reproduced at a local level. This is what I call the "globalization of localisms." In the case of Caruaru, there is intense pressure on the municipal government not to lose space to the two neighboring cities, Toritama and Santa Cruz do Capibaribe. Indeed,

buyers are increasingly abandoning shopping at the Caruaru Market because these competing cities have created gigantic shopping centers that seem more attractive from their point of view. If, on the one hand, these two cities have already suffered the “Chinese invasion,” and have embraced the import and export market, on the other, Caruaru is seen by the traders and the population as a city that was left behind. According to the tradesmen we consulted, the Chinese invasion is inevitable, and it is necessary to follow the same model as that of the cities that have already “modernized.” According to this view, the ideal market is precisely the one that abandons whatever it needs to (culture, tradition, values) and commits itself to maximizing profit. The “real” place is not ours, but the neighbors’.

According to neoliberalized individuals, the only way to make the market subsist is to globalize it, which indicates high power of reproduction and adaptation of the neoliberal “virus.” Furthermore, globalizing is not simply practicing foreign trade, it is adopting the market forms of those next to you if there is evidence that their model is more advantageous. According to our research, 92% of the market participants who answered the questionnaire believe that Caruaru should adopt the Santa Cruz do Capibaribe market model. Localisms work in some cases as mini-globalizations seeking to consolidate hegemony.

I am not against changing the location of the market. Regardless of whether the market is in the same place or if there is a change, what cannot happen is that its value and rich culture be cast aside, otherwise the city of Caruaru will lose its own identity. I believe that resisting neoliberalism will be feasible when spatial development is seriously rethought in the face of urbanization and the market, which, in turn, is permanently and dynamically situated between the local and the global.

Conclusion

Not all regulative public policy that substantially alters the life of the market and the population is anti-neoliberal. Each case deserves to be analyzed from the point of view of the rhetoric involved, since a strengthening of the state can be, under the guise of promoting citizens’ rights, a way of increasing capital gains. As we have seen in the case of the attempt to change the location of the Caruaru Market, the implementation of a control over the traders and their activities seems to be more than a concession to the business sector of the region, but rather the application of the neoliberal mechanism of psychopolitics. The local government itself submits to this device. If it does not meet

market pressures, the Caruaru Market will probably be devoured by the markets of the surrounding cities (turned into gigantic galleries that offer several advantages of shopping malls). If the market is relocated according to the approved project, it turns it into a set of shops that bears vague resemblance to what the market once was. The market would be no longer a market.

On the other hand, immersed in an existential environment where the “society” (in the Arendt sense) prevails, the traders themselves are largely incapable of overcoming the unconsciousness of their apolitical condition, placing subsistence needs above everything else. Selling more and more is the only thing that really matters and culture can be cast aside. The most direct consequence of the social is that culture deserves to be preserved for only as long as it serves to guarantee the reproduction of this system. The foundational value, which makes the Caruaru Market immaterial heritage of Brazilian culture, is lost.

It is illusory to believe that citizen participation in debates, councils and public consultations, through democratic mechanisms, is a lasting antidote against neoliberal subjectivity. The field research has shown that, in the context studied, independent of popular participation, the economy is prioritized to the detriment of culture, insofar as that which is sold (but also the Caruaru Market itself) has become a product of the cultural industry. This is when the “globalization of indifference” reaches the local level. Surprisingly, we observe that the market has become a space for the diffusion of neoliberal psychopolitics. And in case of the relocation of the market in the manner proposed, the death of its cultural spirit would instantly occur, leaving the propaganda of a past that no longer belongs to it, which would instrumentalize its traditional values in favor of his market survival.

I agree with Han (2017, p.117) when he says that the openness to the “Event,” a liberating experience of the submissive subject, is essential for a de-psychologization that releases the subject. A crisis of neoliberalism has as a pre-condition the potential for a crisis of the model of subjectivity that it promotes. The transition to one (or several) “posts” will occur when succumb to the “Other” that liberalism shelters. According to Del Percio (2015), we should not, therefore, naturalize politics, but rather view it as a set of possibilities which includes conflict as an important tool for balancing expectations and interests. Chantal Mouffe (2014, p.131), in turn, says that the current state of globalization would be not “natural” but the result of a neoliberal hegemony, and is structured through specific power relations. But this state can be challenged and transformed because there are alternatives available. It would always be possible to change

things politically because one can always intervene in power relations with the aim of transforming them.

The case of the Caruaru Market shows us that we must consider the peculiarities of localisms and that for post-neoliberalism to exist it is not enough to merely have effective popular participation in the public sphere, it is necessary to first develop an anti-neoliberal ‘conscience’. Ironically, in the case studied, the market should not be the core of the market, at risk of losing its democratic and multicultural profile; it is the socially enriching informality, symbolism, and tradition that makes it culturally strong. In other situations, places, and countries, it may not be the culture that is damaged by this world view. The environment, human dignity, the bonds of solidarity, and other dimensions of the human are lost in detriment of the economic. “Self-care” is necessary. Deleuze (2005) explains that this concept means that a person (of this era) unconsciously holds his consciousness in things other than himself. He finds himself “forgetting his forgetfulness,” as Heidegger puts it. In my opinion, to return to oneself would enable the subject to return and transfigure the world, denaturalizing the market as the center of human life. In the case of the Caruaru Market, the relationship between neoliberalism, culture, and popular participation reveals something very simple: a post-model only makes sense if people are post-market! Even if one speaks of the need for a counter-hegemonic “consensus” (Sader, 2009), a third middle way (Giddens, 2001), or the redeeming of a general willing, the greatest challenge of post-neoliberalism is to break with this kind of subjectivity inaugurated by the moderns and deepened in contemporaneity.

Notes

- ¹ A summary of the project can be found at <http://feiradecaruaru.com/portal/conheca-o-projeto-da-nova-feira-de-caruaru/>
- ² In a subsequent survey, we intend to increase the number of participating subjects, including city councilors, the head of municipal government, entrepreneurs, business leaders, civil society organizations, and public prosecutors. For the initial purposes of our research we chose to collect data only from traders.
- ³ According to research conducted in 2011, the traders are mostly children of farmers who were born in the countryside and studied for an average of only three years. Most of them are between 35 and 54 years old (64.5%). Six out of ten traders did not complete basic education and only 13.3% of them had some formal employment before working at the market. (Helal et al, 2013, p.107)
- ⁴ Arendt explains that the Latin word *Faber*, which is probably related to *facere* (to do something in the sense of production) originally applied to the manufacturer and artist who worked with hard materials such as stone or wood and was also the word used as a translation from Greek *Tekton*, which would have the same connotation. The word *Fabri*, referred specifically to the construction workers and carpenters.

As for the term *homo faber*, which certainly has modern and post-medieval origins, she says she could not determine where and when the expression first appeared (Arendt, 1998, p.136).

- ⁵ The interview is available at <http://g1.globo.com/pe/caruaru-regiao/noticia/2015/07/prefeito-preve-inicio-das-obras-da-nova-sulanca-de-caruaru-para-ate-120-days.html>

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