

## Racism in the construction of local and regional development in Blumenau (SC): Eurocentric, Nazi, and integralist influences

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### Abstract

This article, based on bibliographic research, seeks to recover the racist ways of thinking, feeling, and acting of the colonizers of Blumenau and the surrounding region toward the indigenous population that lived there and toward the Black people who were brought there as slaves or who later came to serve as cheap labor in local/regional development. One hypothesis suggests that many settlers who arrived in the 19th century based their racist practices on ways of thinking and feeling derived from Eurocentric theories. In the 20th century, racist ways of understanding human beings were amplified in Blumenau and the surrounding region by the ideas of Nazism and integralism. Our objective is to present content inherent to Eurocentrism, Nazism, and integralism that serve as a basis for racist thinking, feeling, and acting, in order to demonstrate the interference that these attitudes had in local and regional development.

*Keywords:* Eurocentrism; Nazism; integralism; racism; local/regional development.

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## 1. Introduction

When German settlers arrived in the Itajaí Valley (Santa Catarina), they found the indigenous peoples (Laklãnõ/Xokleng) maintaining their socio-metabolic relationships in their territory and practicing their cultural traditions with very low environmental impact. In the natural environment, they encountered jacaranda, cinnamon, mahogany, cedar, peroba, fig, ariroba, carajuba, and various palm trees, as well as various native animals—tapirs, capybaras, wild pigs—and a sublime array of colorful birds, such as toucans, parakeets, graúnas, and others, providing exuberant and rare beauty.

However, encountering this exuberant natural beauty did not lead to a friendly relationship between whites and non-whites. On the contrary, the relationship that developed was one of war, with persecution, killings, kidnappings, and epistemicide. But why did the relationship turn out this way? Our first hypothesis is that, in addition to the "natural fear" of encountering someone different, there was an internalized idea in the colonizers' way of thinking, feeling, and acting that the indigenous peoples who lived here were not only an inferior race in relation to the white race, especially in relation to the Germanic culture, but also highly dangerous. Blacks and mestizos were also seen as inferior beings and even without culture by the Germans/Europeans. However, they were not considered dangerous.

And where does this racist way of thinking and feeling originate? Our second hypothesis tells us that the origin of racist ideas lies in the Eurocentric theories developed in Germany and other European countries from the 18th century onwards; these intensified during the 19th century and were greatly amplified by Nazi and integralist ideas (in Brazil, specifically) in the 20th century. Such ways of thinking and feeling were well accepted by many colonizers of Blumenau and the surrounding region.

Another question concerns the influence of these worldviews and human beings on local and regional development. Is it possible to identify situations in the local and regional development of Blumenau that stem from Eurocentric, Nazi, and integralist views? Our third hypothesis tells us that yes, it is possible to identify a set of practices stemming from the cultural values of Eurocentrism, Nazism, and integralism in the construction of identities in the territory of Blumenau and the surrounding region.

Our goal is not only to corroborate or refute the hypotheses, but also to bring to the debate on local and regional development the possible interference of Eurocentric, Nazi, and integralist ways of thinking and feeling. To reflect on how these worldviews and views of human beings can interfere in the construction and destruction of culture, how they can build values and customs in a territory and thus produce identities. These aspects are contained in the study presented here. To this end, a bibliographic research was carried out, with emphasis on the search in newspapers from the 1930s and in Blumenau magazines in Caderno.

To present what is intended, this work is structured as follows: in addition to this introduction, we present below some prejudiced and racist actions against the indigenous peoples who lived in the Blumenau region when the colonizers arrived here. Next, we offer considerations on Eurocentric theories that underpin racist practices in the local development of Blumenau and the surrounding region. In the next section, we present some information about Nazi-integralism in Blumenau and its strong influence on the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting of many people, including political leaders. To demonstrate the effectiveness of racist policies against the black population, resulting from Eurocentric, Nazi, and integralist views, we present the next section entitled *The invisibility of black people in Blumenau*. Such actions resulted in the construction of a culture that considers black men and women unimportant in the city's development process. Finally, we present some concluding remarks, but these are far from ending the reflection on the topic, especially since we are only at the introductory stage of this very complex subject.

## **2. Prejudiced and/or racist actions against the indigenous peoples who lived in Blumenau**

A first manifestation of racism identified in the development process of Blumenau occurred with the creation - by the Provincial Government - of the "pedestrian company," also known as pedestrian soldiers. This collective was characterized as a type of protection force for future residents against the "threats" of local natives (Renaux, 2000). The so-called "pedestrian company" aimed to guarantee white colonizers protection from possible attacks by the region's native peoples—the Kaingang and Xokleng—and was established by Law No. 28 of 1836, with the aim of

protect, assist, and defend residents from any assault by Gentios, criminals, and fugitives, pursuing them to their lodgings, quilombos, or settlements, doing everything possible to apprehend them, and in extreme cases of resistance, destroy them" (Provincial Law No. 28 of April 25, 1836, art. 1 §4, apud Voigt, 1999, p. 25 ).

This is a manifestation of hate speech against indigenous peoples, which has been perpetuated throughout local/regional development. The racist practices of the colonists reached the point where, even with the existence of these soldiers, they joined forces to hire men to hunt and kill indigenous peoples (called *bugres* by the colonizers), as they were seen as dangerous and threatening to the development of the colony. The name that best represents these human hunters is *Martinho Bugreiro*, who was paid for pairs of ears presented to the colonizers. The more ears he presented, the more he received. Through him, indigenous men and women were murdered and children kidnapped to be "adopted" by wealthy families in the city to perform

domestic tasks in exchange for education, as shown in a text written by José Ferreira da Silva (a member of the Integralist movement), entitled "O Natal da bugrinha" (The Bugrinha's Christmas):

This happened at a time when the colonization of Blumenau was still in its infancy. [...] The plots of land were increasingly distant from the central settlement, always moving deeper into the impenetrable and mysterious forest. Plots of land were increasingly close to the savages, owners of the forest, treacherous and vengeful. As civilization advanced, the savages retreated. And with each retreat, they became more filled with hatred, with renewed purposes of revenge. Groups of savages roamed the forest, hunting down the gentiles. They destroyed their settlements, driving away or killing the adults, collecting the children [...] the bugreiro hunters returned with two dozen little bugres, boys and girls, some almost infants, others approaching puberty. After being baptized in a grand and ostentatious ceremony [...] they were distributed to respectable and wealthy families, who were obliged to raise them as their own children, in the Christian faith (Blumenau in Cadernos, 1960, p. 233).

According to Wittmann (2007, p. 35), since the beginning of colonization, the Xokleng were seen as bloodthirsty and irrational, and "these ideas appear constantly in various sources, such as newspapers, correspondence, government documents, and even academic works." In these media, it was common to find discourse that treated indigenous peoples as "fierce murderers," whose attacks were marked by strong traces of cruelty. According to the author, in a letter written by Dr. Blumenau to the Minister of Agriculture, he says: "Ferocious savages attacked a family of settlers, this time assaulting the last resident of the stream [...], whom they killed with an arrow to the heart and stole a multitude of objects from the house" (Wittmann, 2007, p. 37).

While the Xokleng used bows and arrows, the settlers used rifles, and when the indigenous people appeared near their homes and crops, they were attacked with gunpowder. The action was justified by the legitimacy of the lands received as vacant. The conflict between settlers and indigenous people intensified as colonization developed, and the severity of the situation was recognized by the rulers of Santa Catarina. To minimize the conflict, the strategy was to hire men to enter the forest with the aim of summarily exterminating the indigenous people. The Batedores do Mato (Forest Scouts) were then created, who would later become the bugreiros. , they became agents of pacification of the indigenous people, using machetes, pistols, shotguns, and rifles. They were basically caboclos hired by agents of colonization (Wittmann, 2007).

However, in the official history of Blumenau, told by the victors, the omission of these persecutions, killings, and kidnappings, carried out at the behest of the colonizers against the indigenous people who lived here, is common. But when the confrontation/killing is not hidden, it is presented as a necessary evil, and shows the colonizer as a hero who fulfilled his obligation for the good of the development of the city and its

people. This way of thinking and feeling is evident in the writings of Eugen Fouquet (1935), who presented the indigenous population as obstacles to European colonization and said, "the best bugre is a dead bugre" (Fouquet, apud Frotscher, 2003, p. 95). And as development progressed and, consequently, colonial settlements increased, the Xokleng population suffered from the reduction of their territory.

In the face of the intensifying conflict, two positions were debated in Blumenau regarding the indigenous peoples: one advocated extermination, defended by Eugen Fouquet, and the other advocated the adoption of indigenous children, defended by Hugo Gensch. The consensus, however, was that the Indians were "the great obstacle to the success of colonization and the realization of the dream of modernity" (Wittmann, 2007, p. 73). This modernity emerged, fundamentally, from the installation of electric lighting, the emergence of factories, and the construction of the railroad from Blumenau to Harmonia (now Ibirama).

According to Wittmann (2007, p. 76)

Electricity transformed Blumenau. The main streets of the city were lit up. Walks and reading could be extended until later in the evening. It was no longer necessary to fetch water from the well or the river. Electric pumps were installed to suck up water without the use of physical force. Electricity also allowed industries to be set up in regions further away from rivers, eliminating the need for hydraulic power in industrial production. Industrial growth significantly increased the degree of urbanization in Blumenau. The Hering knitwear factory and the Garcia and Karsten weaving mills, together with the westward colonization front led by the Hanseatic Colonization Society, contributed significantly to the constitution of the urban area. The factory became the illustrious character that, to this day, is the pride of the population of Blumenau.

The construction of the railroad (1907), a symbol of modernity throughout the world, allowed the incorporation of vast areas of land into the production process and transported various goods, people, and mail. Its construction required: "clearing the brush, building bridges, digging up rocks, draining plains, and all this accompanied by the struggle against dangerous animals and against the primitive lords of the land, the Indians, who retreated in the face of civilization" (Wittmann, 2007, p. 82). It was with the railroad that the first slum (Farroupilha) arrived in Blumenau, consisting mostly of black people who came to build the railroad.

As for the relationship with the indigenous peoples at the beginning of the 20th century, it can be demonstrated through the words of Otto Stange, narrating a walk along the main street of Blumenau in the early 1900s, when at a certain point in the narrative he says:

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Margarida, how are you? [...] Everything is fine. How are things going with the Deutschrussen from Spitzkopf? Not as well as they should be [...] the settlers are uneasy because of the buggies that have been appearing there lately in threatening attitudes. The residents are apprehensive, fearing attacks by the bugres, who have been seen several times on the edge of the forest, and therefore do not want to go to work in the forest and cut wood. Many are willing to move [...] (Stange, Otto, [1900/1903]. In: Gerlach-Schmidt; Kaldletz; Marchetti, 2019, p. 515).

It is also not uncommon to hide, in the official history of Blumenau's development, the existence of enslaved Black people in the colony. In fact, great importance is placed on the idea that the then owner of the colony, Dr. Blumenau, prohibited the use and trade of slaves. However, digging deeper into history, we see that the reality was somewhat different, because when Peter Wagner—the first resident of the future new city—met Hackradt (Dr. Blumenau's partner in the colony) in 1848, near a stream that would later be called "da Velha" (Old Woman), Hackradt was overseeing the construction of ranches, farms, and mills, using the labor of five slaves (Renaux, 2000, p. 37, Moser, 2016). Also in 1848, Dr. Blumenau wrote a letter to his brother-in-law and friend Götter, saying: "I will write to Hackradt [...] and with the money he still has there, he will be able to buy another 6 or 7 blacks. Then we will have 12" (Blumenau, 1848, apud Voigt, 1999, p. 45).

Dr. Blumenau could even be considered an abolitionist. However, he had to back down from his position because many agreements were made with the imperial government to obtain institutional and financial support for his private colony. This retreat is evident, for example, in the letter written in September 1846 to his friend and abolitionist Sturz:

For everything in this world, I beg you, however, to put aside the unfortunate story of slaves, abolition, slave trade, and other similar things. You achieve nothing with this, you ruin what you could have gained, and you acquire even more enemies than you already have. I myself am in danger [...]" (Sturz, 1868, apud Voigt, 1999, p. 51)

And so the colony continues to develop: with slave and non-slave workers, including the purchase and sale of slaves, as shown by Kilian (1958), who presents the 1882 notarial deed (Notebook, no. 13 - Pages 16 to 17) in which Pedro Wagner bought the slave named Camilo from Mrs. Alexandrina Maria da Conceição for the sum of six hundred thousand réis. In 1883, José Henrique Flores Filho, when he moved from Itajaí to take over the presidency of the Blumenau City Council, brought his slaves with him. One of the prominent owners of a relatively large number of slaves was the landowner in Gaspar, Lieutenant Captain Henrique José Flores" (Petri, 1988, n/p).

The "blonde Blumenau" colony then developed what Anibal Quijano (2005) called a "Racial Division of Labor," where on one side there was slave labor (black), which could not be owners, merchants, or farmers, had to work, but could not receive wages, as the racial inferiority of the colonized implied that they were not worthy of being paid. There were also landowners, merchants, doctors, shoemakers, industrialists, and workers who worked and received wages. According to historians Marlon Salomon and André Voigt (2000), about 800 slaves lived in the Itajaí Valley in the period close to abolition.

Thus, indigenous peoples and black people were present in the development of Blumenau and the surrounding region. However, the former were murdered or had to flee into the forest and upriver. The latter were rendered invisible. In order to understand the way of thinking and feeling that underpinned the racist behavior of some settlers who came to these lands in the Itajaí Valley, we will present aspects of the theoretical foundations that were present in the development of Blumenau and the surrounding region.

### **3. Eurocentric theories underpinning racist practices**

When the settlers came to occupy the Itajaí Valley, they were unfamiliar with the slave-based mode of production in their homeland. There, in the year 1850, the German territory was made up of several small kingdoms and duchies, some of which belonged to the Austrian Empire. The Germans still lacked a national state, a basic institution of capitalism. There were also remnants of feudalism, low productivity, and weak industrialization. Or, as we read in *The German Ideology*: "a country where only trivial historical development occurs" (Marx, 2007, p. 27).

Of the many debates that took place there in the 1840s, a few years before the colonizers arrived in Blumenau, I highlight one that dealt with "how one properly passes 'from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of men'" (Idem, p. 44) and another that questioned how one can achieve the end of feudal absolutism. These debates were part of a reality where there was an incipient mode of capitalist production, in which workers freely sold their labor to the bourgeoisie, who, in turn, were concerned with "increasingly fierce competition from abroad and global trade, from which Germany was increasingly unable to abstain" (Marx, 2007, p. 195).

It was then, from 1840 onwards, that the German bourgeoisie began to think about securing these common interests by becoming liberal nationalists and demanding protectionist tariffs and constitutions. Now, according to Marx, "they are almost at the point where the French bourgeoisie was in 1789" (idem). This bourgeoisie developed a literature that no longer expressed the struggle of one class against another and defended "not real needs, but the need for truth; not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of human

beings, of man in general, of man who belongs to no class and no reality, and who exists only in the misty sky of philosophical fantasy" (Marx, 2010, p. 63).

Faced with the situation in which capitalism, without a state, was advancing with its kingdoms and duchies, many workers were expelled from the land and became surplus labor (unemployed) and formed, in addition to the reserve army, the new class of the lumpenproletariat. As a consequence, hunger and misery became part of that reality. From then on, new questions arose, such as: how to overcome this reality? One answer found was to send that army of men, women, and children to the Americas without, however, a class consciousness of their true needs. But with a consciousness and truths that do not belong to any class, much less to a reality that is not fantastical.

It should also be remembered that the "science of races" had been developing in Europe for some time. In 1775, the German Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) published his thesis entitled "The Native Variety of the Human Race," which contributed greatly to "scientific racism." Hegel, for example, published his book entitled "Philosophy of History" in 1837, in which he said:

Africa is the country of the childhood of history. In defining the African (Negroid) spirit, we must completely disregard the *category of universality*—that is, children or blacks do, in fact, have ideas, but they do not yet have *the* idea. Among blacks, consciousness has not yet reached a solid objectivity, such as *God* or *the law*, in which man would have the *perception of his being* [...] which is why the knowledge of an *absolute being* is totally absent. The Negro represents *natural man* in his complete absence of constraints. Although they must be aware of their dependence on natural factors [...], this does not, however, lead them to the awareness of something higher (Hegel, 1837, *apud* Marx, 2007, p. 170).

In Hegel's idealistic conception, blacks are presented as an inferior race without the capacity for self-government. In addition, he spread the idea of *the 'Germanic world'*, "whose consciousness will develop until it constitutes a realm of the real Spirit, and we can call Germanic those nations to which the Spirit of the World has entrusted its true principle. [...] It is the realm of concrete freedom" (Hegel, In: Corbisier, 1981, p. 141).

As early as 1855, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau wrote "Essay on the Inequality of Human Races," in which he defended the superiority of the "white race" and said that miscegenation produced weak and genetically inferior individuals. These ideas were exploited by the Nazis and Hitler himself. Other racist theories could be presented: social Darwinism, phrenology, anthropometry, craniometry. In Brazil, meanwhile, the "science of races" had been known since at least 1860. This "science" was based on a hierarchy of races and defended the superiority of the white race, while disqualifying non-whites on the basis

of their supposed inability to perform free labor, thus hindering the end of slavery. Enslavement and slave labor were naturalized, with no consideration given to abolition or the replacement of slave labor with free labor (Butzke; Theis; Santos, 2022, p. 6).

The theories of evolutionism and social evolutionism, nationalism, and later Pan-Germanism also form the theoretical basis for the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting of many Germans who came to the lands of the Itajaí Valley. Social Darwinism (a term coined by Herbert Spencer), for example, whose foundation was racial determinism, understood that races could not be improved and, therefore, racial mixing was understood as a mistake that would lead to racial and social degeneration. Blacks, Indians, and mestizos are seen as those who only have labor to offer; they have no culture.

This conception differed from the evolutionary theory that was also present in the thinking of the inhabitants of the Blumenau colony, who understood the differences between ethnic groups as temporary, that is, they started from the idea that all groups would go through the same stages of development. Its representative here in the colony was Hugo Gensch, who advocated the adoption of indigenous children to remove them from savagery. From 1850 onwards, this thesis of miscegenation was linked to the discourse and practice of nationalists, aiming at the formation of the nation through the whitening of the population and the constitution of a future historical Brazilian race, together with the occupation of the territory. These positions were part of Brazilian immigration policies (Seyferth, 1996 apud Butzke; Theis; Santos, 2022).

Such theories form the basis of Eurocentrism. This, in turn, is characterized as a form of knowledge/power in which the codification of differences between conquerors and conquered is based on the idea of race and a supposed biological structure that naturally places some in a position of inferiority in relation to others. From this perspective, colonizers felt justified in expropriating colonized populations; repressing as much as possible their forms of knowledge production, their patterns of meaning production, their symbolic universe, their patterns of expression, and their objectification of subjectivity ; to force the colonized to learn the culture of the dominators in the fields of material, technological, and religious activity (Quijano, 2005), thus effecting epistemicide (Machado, 2019) against the indigenous peoples who lived here, as well as against the peoples of America and their descendants and the African peoples and their descendants.

Eurocentrism, then, can be understood as a perspective of knowledge whose systematic elaboration began in Western Europe in the 17th century and became hegemonic, following the same flow of bourgeois European domination from America. It refers to a specific rationality or perspective of knowledge that became globally hegemonic by colonizing and superimposing itself on other or different forms of knowledge (Quijano, 2005).

Another important theoretical and ideological field that shaped ways of thinking, feeling, and acting among some German-Brazilians in Blumenau and the surrounding region was Pan-Germanism. This originated in 1895 with the creation of the Pan-German League, which advocated a type of "ethnic nationalism" (Santana, 2010) aimed at expanding the German empire, based on values such as the tradition of hierarchy, biological superiority, territorial imperative, worship of the national above the international, and valuing caste over social class (Brepohl, 2013). According to this author,

in Brazil, the Pan-German League brought together 6,000 members who were responsible for various commercial agreements and religious and/or cultural exchanges in the southern region, also reaching Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile. The Pan-German League subsidized schools with teaching materials, supported recreational associations, and promoted the German-language press (Brepohl, 2013, p. 15).

From a Pan-Germanic perspective, black people are naturally inferior and should be submissive to white people. Thus, when we examine the history of the colonization process in Blumenau, we see that the colonizers tell it from a Eurocentric (racist) perspective, and in various ways they made the participation of black men and women in the city's development process invisible and omitted racist practices that were in effect at the time, such as, for example, in the words of Eugen Fouquet in 1898 (apud Seyferth, 1982, p. 61):

[...] We must firmly reject any mixing with Africans and mestizos. The idea of forming a culturally homogeneous nation through the continued intermingling of all the different elements represented in Brazil is disconcerting. I am not promoting the contempt of one race against another, but emphasizing the need to keep each race pure. [...] European immigration, first and foremost, has to do only with the Brazilian State and not with the Brazilian Nation, which, after all, does not exist.

In the historical narratives told by some white leaders in Blumenau, we can see the constant practice of making the presence of black men and women invisible in the local development of Blumenau. According to anthropologist Ilka Leite (1996), invisibility is one of the many "supports of the ideology of whitening, which can be identified in different types of practices and representations. [...] It is not that black people are not seen, but rather that they are seen as non-existent" (Leite, 1996, p. 41). The practice of invisibility was developed by people who based their beliefs on scientific theories from the 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe, the United States, and Brazil. Added to these theories were two new situations that deepened historical racist actions and contributed to the invisibility of the Black population in the development of Blumenau: Nazism and integralism, which arrived here with considerable force. Both movements defended

doctrines that were close to nationalism, authoritarianism, intolerance, anti-communism, and racism. According to Natalia Cruz (2004),

the identification between the two movements led to the establishment of a close network of collaboration between Nazis and integralists, revealed in leaflets, articles, meetings, and correspondence, suggesting that the integralist rapprochement with Nazism was stronger than integralism admitted (Cruz, 2004, p. 44).

This rapprochement enabled some actions that intervened in the development of the city and region, as we will see from now on.

#### **4. Nazi-Integralism in Blumenau**

The Nazi party had its first organization on Brazilian soil in 1928, when a regional group of the party was created in Benedito Timbó (district of Blumenau), the first Nazi movement outside Germany (Dietrich, 2007). In 1929, two other local party groups were founded: one in Bela Aliança, now Rio do Sul, and another in Blumenau (Frotscher, 2003). Due to several points of convergence between Brazil and Germany, the Nazi party was able to operate from 1928 to 1938, implementing various trade treaties and political agreements, such as the hunt for communists and agreements for the training of Brazilian police officers by the GESTAPO (Dietrich, 2007). The Nazi organization was basically made up of Germans living in Brazil and their descendants and was opposed by a large part of the Brazilian population, which was made up of mestizos of indigenous and black origin, as these were considered inferior races. "Because they were seen as a threat to German racial purity, 'pure' Germans in Brazil were constantly warned not to mix with Brazilians" (Dietrich, 2007, p. 127), seeking to establish marriages only among Germans. Of course, this reality did not materialize, as several Nazis married non-Germans. This situation is compounded by other actions that are particular to Brazilian Nazism, constituting what Dietrich (2007) called "tropical Nazism."

Sympathy for Nazism was present in several newspapers in the region, constituting the main means of spreading Nazi ideas, such as the *Blumenauer Volkskalender*, which disseminated propaganda glorifying Germany and the Nazi regime. The headquarters of the Nazi Party in Blumenau was located on Rua das Palmeiras, and since the 1930s, sympathizers had been parading with swastikas on Rua XV de Novembro. In 1932, a meeting of German and German-Brazilian teachers took place in Blumenau. At this meeting, people wearing Nazi uniforms could be seen for the first time (Zanaletto, 2013, p. 4). For the members of the organization, the German national community, based on the National Socialist worldview, was represented not only by those born on German soil, but also by the descendants of Germans abroad (Frotscher, 1998).

The Hitler Youth, the German Labor Front, the Women's Association, and the Teachers' Association were part of the party organization. The party collected donations to send money to German Winter Aid and carried out radio programs, newspapers, lectures in clubs and schools spreading Pan-Germanism, which had as one of its principles the idea of unity through race and language, aiming to conquer a great empire that would reach Africa and America.

The party avoided recruiting people who did not speak German correctly and those of mixed race. It was also a rule of the organization that Nazis did not participate in elections or get involved in local politics. For this reason, the party did not participate in any election campaigns in Brazil. In Santa Catarina, specifically, many sympathizers and even members of the Nazi organization joined the integralist movement.

Integralism, or Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB), was a political movement inspired by European fascism and created by Plínio Salgado in early 1930. In Santa Catarina, the movement intensified from 1934 onwards, and by that year, integralism already had 26 groups (Cruz, 2004). According to Ewald Baericke (1934) – one of the founders of the Integralist nucleus in Itajaí – since March of that year, “the movement has an organization identical to German National Socialism. [...] Today we have done away with the Triumvirate and adopted the National Socialist principle of leadership, with a *Führer* and deputy leaders in each state and municipality” (Cruz, 2004, p. 51).

Its goal was “the construction and formation of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. To achieve this goal, integralism advocated racial miscegenation or ethnic and cultural melting pot, aiming at the predominance of the white race and culture” (Cruz, 2004, p. 109). This stance differs from Nazi racism, which is based on “the segregation or separation of distinct ethnicities and cultures, achieving the homogenization of a nation’s population through the principle of racial purity” (idem, p. 116).

Thus, both integralism and Nazism were and are racist. And both were accepted by a significant part of the community in Blumenau and the Itajaí Valley. Nazism, because it improved the living conditions of those who lived in Germany and because of Hitler's speeches, which were quite successful. And integralism, as a new political option for those who did not recognize the republicans and liberals as their representatives (Hackernhaar, 2019) and also because of the anti-democratic character contained in the proposals of both movements.

On June 12, 1935, the first anniversary of the local integralist nucleus was celebrated in Blumenau. In October (on the 6th, 7th, and 8th), the third anniversary of the AIB and the first Congress of the Provinces of Southern Brazil were celebrated. Images of this grand event can be found in the video made by Blumenau

Integralist Alfredo Baungarten<sup>1</sup>, who, in addition to being a filmmaker promoting Integralist ideas, was a city councilman in 1934 and vice president of the Chamber in the legislature presided over by José Ferreira da Silva (also an Integralist).

Thousands of AIB members from seven states (or provinces, as the green shirts called them) participated in that event, marching through the streets of Blumenau in Sunday's parade. (Hackernhaar, 2019). Their proposals were disseminated through books and newspapers, the latter being the main means of popularization, such as those published in the Alvorada newspaper on May 17, 1935, which presented aspects of the integralist vision on the end of political parties; the creation of a national workers' assistance service while the government is not in charge; the subordination of individual interests to the interests of the Fatherland; and the important message saying: "Until we see Brazil organized, without the evil of parties, the Brazilian State expressing classes, directing the Nation through the brains of its elites, we will not rest in the propaganda we impose on ourselves (Alvorada, May 17, 1935, [n.p.]

In Vieira de Alencar's article (1935), it is stated that

Integralism is a revolution of ideas in the sense of creating a new Brazilian mentality, it does not engage in secret meetings, it does not conspire, and it seeks to destroy liberal democracy based on the lie of universal suffrage in order to replace it with true democracy founded on the national corporatist doctrine (Alvorada, May 17, 1935, [n.p.]

A situation that greatly interfered with the development of Blumenau and the region, and which is directly related to Nazi-integralist practices, was the breakup of Blumenau by the then intervening governor, Aristiliano Ramos. First, he separated Rio do Sul from Blumenau and, second, in February 1934, he emancipated the districts of Hamônia (now Ibirama) and Gaspar, followed shortly thereafter by Indaial and Timbó (state decree-law No. 86, dated March 31, 1938). Many Blumenau residents understood that this dismemberment was an action to weaken Germanism in the state and generated a movement of repudiation in Blumenau, closing the doors of businesses and industries; marches were held and rallies with the slogan "for a united Blumenau." The demonstrations lasted about a week and tensions rose as the state government sent armed forces to put an end to the demonstrations (Gertz, 1988).

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<sup>1</sup>[www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJPDhQh0jak](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJPDhQh0jak) Another video about integralism and Nazism in Blumenau is "Anauê! Integralism and Nazism in the Blumenau region" ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=srcitNSPXgQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srcitNSPXgQ)).

In the 1936 elections, the Integralists elected eight mayors in Santa Catarina and 72 councilors, most of whom were descendants of German and Italian immigrants. In Blumenau, Mr. Alberto Stein was elected mayor. At the time, the City Council was made up of 15 councilors, twelve of whom were supporters of the Brazilian Integralist Action. It was from that year onwards that the slogan "if you're not an integralist, you're a communist" began to spread throughout the city. Both Nazis and integralists were vehemently opposed to communism, as expressed in an article by Americo Palha, published in the newspaper *Cidade de Blumenau* on September 5, 1936:

Nineteen years ago, an enemy of humanity was unleashed upon the world [...] The ferocity of this monster knew no bounds. It fed on the blood of its victims. Launched upon the earth by diabolical forces, it began the gruesome work of destroying civilization and human culture. [...] It is no longer possible for the Christian conscience of the world to remain indifferent to the crimes of the communists.

At the same time, the dissemination of the integralist motto God, Country, Family was expanded through the newspaper *Alvorada*, the main integralist news source. Its owner, José Ferreira da Silva, was the most voted councilman in the 1936 elections, and the other integralist candidates received 70% of the votes in the city (Cruz, 2004). It was in that newspaper that one could read phrases such as: "Integralism is the soldier of God and the Fatherland. The new man of Brazil, who will build a great nation." Or, "Should the family be maintained? Yes, because the love of the family is what distinguishes men from animals" (*Alvorada* newspaper, May 7, 1935).

The AIB's proximity to Nazism can be evidenced, for example, by the fact that the German consul, Oto Rohkohl, head of the Nazi Party's Economic Department in Santa Catarina, had a daughter enrolled in the Women's Section of the AIB in Blumenau (Cruz, 2004). This closeness can also be exemplified, by the response given by Nereu Ramos when asked in Rio de Janeiro about the victory of his opponents in the 1936 municipal elections. According to him:

I will explain this victory of integralism, or rather Hitlerism, in my state. I say Hitlerism because there the integralist phenomenon does not present itself with the characteristics that this party has in other states of the federation. In all the municipalities where integralism won, the German element predominates. The flag is not Plínio Salgado. It is Hitler. Ask the settler, "Are you an integralist?" and he will answer, "I am a Hitlerist!" It is the mystique of German militarism, as Minister Marques dos Reis so brilliantly defined it (*Correio de São Paulo*, 1936 apud Hackernhaar, 2019, p. 60).

And this was happening in a city that published almanacs (*Kalender*), three in German and one in Portuguese, whose target audience was the "German comrades" – jargon used by the National Socialists. In an editorial in the 1936 almanac, for example, the editors present their intention to reach industrialists and merchants as well as workers, peasants, and artisans and to offer everyone, precisely because it is a *Volkskalender* (folk calendar), a 'moment of friendly leisure' (Frotscher, 2007, p. 212). Their editorials reflect the ideology that German immigrants and their descendants in Brazil belonged, together with those living in Germany or other countries, to a single German racial and national community (idem, p. 229).

That same year (1936), Nereu Ramos, a staunch opponent of Nazi-integralism, prohibited, by decree 117 of September 5, the use of uniforms and any symbols related to the AIB, and several conflicts with the police began to occur, resulting in arrests, injuries, and deaths. One example of these conflicts was what happened in a hall in Rio do Serro, on the road connecting Jaraguá do Sul to Blumenau. There were more than two hundred people in the hall, including supporters of integralism. "In an attempt to break up the meeting, a shootout ensued. Those who tried to flee were grabbed and beaten; children were thrown to the ground; the walls and floor were stained with blood. At the end of the attack, two people died and 82 were injured" (Hackernhaar, 2019, p. 73).

Another notable conflict occurred on February 13, 1937, when the integralist center in Blumenau (on São Paulo Street) was attacked by police authorities. According to *A Gazeta*, the district police chief had been asking Mayor Alberto Stein for some time to call the attention of his supporters, as they held their meetings in the centers with open doors and windows, contrary to Ordinance No. 117 of September 1936. That night, Sergeant Francisco Mauristano ordered those present to hold their meeting with the doors and windows of the premises closed. This request led to a general discussion, followed by a conflict in which soldiers from the State Public Force and several Integralists were injured (Idem, p. 78).

With the establishment of the New State (1937), political parties were dissolved and the AIB was shut down. Starting in 1938, an intense and abrupt nationalist campaign began to be implemented. In Santa Catarina, the process began with Getúlio Vargas's intervener, Governor Nereu Ramos, determining that private schools could only hire teachers who spoke Portuguese; the German language was banned; street and establishment names could not be in other languages; newspapers not written in Portuguese were banned from circulation; associations that spread the traditions of other cultures were prevented from operating. There was an internalization of ways of thinking among Brazilian workers in Blumenau and the surrounding region, based on a standard that characterized workers as not being lazy, disobedient, or distracted. Instead, they were dedicated to their work, understanding it as an affirmation of citizenship, industriousness, and love of work as ways of preserving German customs and traditions.

The nationalist project forced the assimilation of immigrants and their descendants with the aim of achieving national unity in a Portuguese-Brazilian configuration. This project also included the formation of a type of Brazilian citizen-worker that was homogenized at the national level and, to this end, "the government began to monitor the world of work and the factory space, aiming to adjust it to the new Fordist universe" (Frotscher, 1998, p. 145). All of this had an impact, in various ways, on the development of the city and region.

However, the Nazi-Integralist legacy remained ingrained in some of the citizens of Blumenau, and in view of the growth of Nazi and Integralist ranks in Blumenau and the surrounding region, journalists from other locations came to the city to seek information about this phenomenon. One example was the special correspondent for the newspaper *Diário da Noite*, Edmar Morel, from Rio de Janeiro, who published the following statements about Nazism in the region in 1944 (issue 03606):

In the Itajaí Valley, I met two types of Germans. The Germans who arrived before 1914, men entirely dedicated to farming, and the Germans who arrived after the Great War, between 1918 and 1937. While the former lived on the land, entirely on the margins of national life, the latter, educated in the school of Pan-Germanism and Hitler, used every resource imaginable to form a dangerous Nazi enclave in Brazil, the largest in America. Hence, the older generation lived in conflict with the younger generation. In the struggle, the Nazi movement won, of course, because the children of the first settlers, the descendants of the Germans who arrived in the Itajaí Valley after 1918, and the Nazis formed a single group in the service of Hitler (*Diário da Noite*, 1944).

The special envoy continues, now transcribing the words of Captain Antônio de Lara Ribas (delegate of the Political and Social Order, from 1938 to 1943), saying that in the cities of the Itajaí Valley there was contemplation on the days of celebrations commemorating German dates, "sad spectacles, in the face of the characteristic fanfare and marches carried out by uniformed Nazis, displaying flags and banners with the swastika" (*Diário da Noite*, 1944). Ribas goes on to report that

The Nazis, united in body and soul with thousands of German-Brazilians and native Brazilians, under the trilogy "God, Country, and Family," exploited by the Integralist Action, were the masters of the Itajaí Valley. In Rio do Sul alone, there were 3,032 followers of the sigma and the swastika, with blind obedience to Mr. Plínio Salgado and Mr. Adolf Hitler. In Blumenau, there were 7,147; in Harmonia, 1,150; in Rodeio, 1,053; and in Timbó, 1,637 (*Diário da Noite*, 1944).

Given these worldviews and conceptions of humanity, Nazism, integralism, and Eurocentric theories characterized by racism, we can infer that many people involved in the development of Blumenau and the surrounding region had racist ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, and thus contributed to persecuting, killing, kidnapping, and preventing indigenous people from participating in local/regional development, and rendered the black population invisible. This invisibility occurred, for example, through the expulsion of 150 black families, about 600 residents, who lived in the Farroupilha slum.

This situation began on March 17, 1948, when then-councilman Herbert Georg began discussing the situation of the Farroupilha slum in the City Council and requested an immediate solution to the problem he called a "social cancer." He suggested that the Council establish an internal commission to study the issue (City of Blumenau, 1948, p. 1). This slum was located on the left bank of the Itajaí-Açu River and was basically made up of black men and women from cities such as Gaspar, Ilhota, Itajaí, Tijucas, Porto Belo, among others, who formed a significant part of the workforce in the construction of the railroad begun in 1907 by the Berlin-based company Bachstein & Koppel, in which about 1,500 workers participated (Schmidt-Gerlach; Kadletz; Marchetti, 2019).

In 1949, as the city approached its 100th anniversary of colonization, the then mayor Frederico Guilherme Busch Júnior, followed the City Council's guidance and expelled the people, forcing them to move to Pedro Krauss Sênior and Araranguá streets, locations considered to be at high risk of landslides in the upper areas and flash floods and flooding in the lower areas (Moser, 2015). As a result, black families began to occupy the places with the highest environmental risk. Far from the gaze of the wealthier classes and people, because in the eyes of the city's elite, the slum detracted from the natural beauty and exposed the intruders, the unlucky, the poor, and the black people of the city. And so they remain to this day.

Another form of invisibility of the black population of Blumenau can be seen on page 3 of the book commemorating the centenary of Blumenau. It says that "Blumenau is a municipality created and enlarged by scholars and settlers" (Silva, 1950, p. 3). The local integralist member goes on to say:

By wise men such as the founder himself, who was a laureate in philosophy, a naturalist and astronomer, and, above all, a great, intelligent, and cultured colonizer; by wise men such as Fritz Müller [...]; wise men such as Friedenreich, Augusto Müller, and dozens of others who remain in obscurity, but whose works were no less beneficial to the Blumenau community. By the settlers, those active and orderly elements who, from other lands, brought us examples of tenacity, sacrifice, and patriotism as well; settlers who, leaving their hoes behind, [...] studied by the light of fish oil lamps, so as not to become brutalized by idleness, not to forget what they had brought with them from their motherland, [...] (Silva, 1950, p. 3).

It is clear that blacks, caboclos, mestizos, or indigenous people are not among those who created or enlarged Blumenau. This is evident in Blumenau's centennial anthem, which says: "A hundred years ago, in these parts—fertile, immense, ownerless lands—a brave tribe of rough savages saw the first settler arrive [...] Blumenau! Blumenau! Your sources tell legends of European heroes [...]". At other points in the historical narrative, as told by white men, indigenous people appear as beings who attack the city and kill its citizens.

In the city of Blumenau, black people have always been a minority and invisible, and racist manifestations have continued and continue to occur in "blonde Blumenau," not only with poor, black, or indigenous children, but also with workers, lawyers, university students, etc. In 2012, for example, the company Santa Rita - Autopeças Ltda. was ordered to pay a fine due to the racial humiliation and discrimination suffered by a black employee in the workplace. The worker stated in the lawsuit that there was disrespect towards black people in the workplace and that he was always the target of jokes without his bosses taking any measures to prevent the embarrassment. According to the Ministry of Labor and Employment, after a complaint was filed, there were racist slurs on the doors of the company's bathrooms (Rede Brasil Atual, 2012).

That same year, an incident of racism occurred at the Regional University of Blumenau (FURB) when a student mocked a security guard by making monkey noises at him. After the incident, the security guard was fired. According to the labor justice portal (TRT of the 12th Region SC), both FURB and Brasil Sul (an outsourced company) had to pay R\$ 30,000 for moral damages due to the embarrassment suffered by the employee (Labor Justice, 2014). Racist practices also occur with black professionals, as was the case with lawyer M. A. A., an activist in the black movement " " (Black People, No More) and a practitioner of African-based religions, who suffered threats through posters placed on his front door and on lampposts on the street where he lives (UNEafro, 2017). Or, as happened to 23-year-old musician Raphael Guilherme, who was assaulted while waiting for the bus at a bus stop in the city (ND+, Balanço Geral 02/20/2021).

In 2017, one of the main leaders of the black movement in Blumenau, Lenilso Silva, took office in the City Council for 30 days as an alternate councilman. In the Blumenau Report of 09/07/2017, the news was reported in the following text:

The conservative, white-dominated city of Blumenau and its City Council will see their structures shaken up. In November, alternate council member Lenilso Silva (PT) will take a seat in parliament. It is historic and emblematic. Lenilso will be the second black person to take office. He is also openly gay, a taboo in the city's legislature. Lenilso is a social activist in these two areas and others. He is the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement of Blumenau and the LGBT Freedom Collective.

It is noteworthy that when other white, heterosexual councilors and other "normal" people assume their variance, it is not reported in the news that they are white, heterosexual, etc. But in Lenilso's case, part of the press, which is racist but does not admit it, says that Blumenau and its City Council will have its "structure shaken" with the arrival of this councilor. Thus, in Blumenau, the population, which is predominantly white, middle class, and capitalist, descended from grandparents and parents who were sympathetic to Eurocentric theories, Nazism, and integralism, gave 75.28% of the votes to candidate Bolsonaro in the last presidential election. Not because the candidate presented something new, different, or innovative. On the contrary, what Bolsonaro presented was exactly what part of the population of Blumenau has always defended through Eurocentric, Nazi, and integralist positions, passed down from parents to children. From grandparents to grandchildren. From friends to friends.

## 5. Final considerations

Several racist cases could be presented to illustrate the situation experienced by black men and women in Blumenau, as well as indigenous people in the region, resulting from the Eurocentric, Nazi, and integralist theories that were widespread here. If racist practices still exist today within companies, universities, on the streets, in schools, etc. in Blumenau, it is because there was a time and a place where ways of thinking, feeling, and acting were legitimized, common to a social group made up of white and racist people who consider themselves superior to non-white people.

By not talking about the genocide and epistemicide practiced by the colonizers on the culture of the original peoples who lived here, an attempt was made to construct a narrative portraying those who lived here as dangerous, threatening, and hindering the development of the colony. However, those who arrived here, with their culture and theories, were unable to recognize themselves as the invaders, the dangerous ones, the ones who threatened the peace and lives of the indigenous peoples. Their theoretical foundations did not allow them to see themselves this way. Based on Eurocentrism, they saw themselves only as superior, civilized beings, while other peoples were barbarians, savages who should be domesticated and, because they were inferior, could be kidnapped, murdered, and enslaved.

When Nazism began to be defended by "villagers" in Blumenau, another significant leap was taken to expand racist practices. Integralism also contributed to internalizing in many Blumenau residents the view of white supremacy over other races and the values of tradition and good customs through the slogan "God, Party, and Family." However, when the New State began to prohibit the speaking of German here, the naming of streets after German figures, when it began to close traditional German clubs and arrest people who

claimed to be more German than Brazilian, all of this contributed to German culture and identity becoming even stronger in the cultural memory of German-Brazilians, to the point of expelling black people from the city center to places where the eyes of the white elite could not see them.

The indigenous and black children who were born and lived here did not have the history of their ancestors told to them. They did not have black teachers, let alone indigenous ones. They were subjected to the principles and values of European churches and education, and experienced various forms of racism within schools without any reprisals for the aggressors. Indigenous children, kidnapped by bugreiros, were educated under the Eurocentric logic that detested the original peoples. Black children, in turn, were and are "the little black boy" or "the little black girl" who serves to do this or that service for white people. They were the children with "bad hair," the "burnt cookies." But they were also the invisible ones, who went to live behind the hill so as not to be seen.

Thus, we can see that there were several influences of Eurocentrism, Nazism, and integralism on local and regional development, mainly in the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting of various inhabitants, providing the domination of one culture over another and imposing forms of identity that provided the basis for the constitution of the territory without, however, the proper historical visibility of the indigenous people who lived here and the black people who came to live here.

We conclude, then, that our three hypotheses have been corroborated: there were colonizers who thought of themselves (and still think of themselves today) as superior beings; this superiority is based on the ideas of Eurocentrism, Nazism, and integralism, and these ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced local/regional development. Based on these worldviews, human beings, and society, indigenous people were expelled from the city and black people were made invisible in the development process.

The fragmentation of Blumenau into other municipalities is the result of the interventionist government of the state of Santa Catarina's reaction to the actions of Nazi-integralism in Blumenau. Its elite and part of the population remain racist and, at present, part of the city's dominant elite, in addition to openly defending the slogan God, country, family (an integralist slogan), is attempting to replace the name of the Vale do Itajaí region with "European valley," thus exalting the superiority of white Europeans over indigenous peoples, Black people, mestizos, and Brazilians in general. However, much research remains to be done on what Nazi-integralist leaders (mayors, councilors, and other leaders) proposed and implemented in local and regional development. We are at the beginning of a process that brings Eurocentrism, Nazism, and integralism closer to local and regional development.

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