# The Status is Dispo AC (DISPOSABILITY POLITICS AC)

## Part 1: Start Learning

#### [Doran] SCHOOLS IGNORE HISTORIES OF DISPLACEMENT – stories of colonialism are barely a blip on the curricular radar.

Doran: Doran, Eve. [Irish & Antinguan Sociologist based in Leeds] “Why don’t we learn about colonialism in school?” *gal—dem*, June 11, 2019. https://gal-dem.com/why-dont-we-learn-about-colonialism-in-school/ CH

“When someone pried about Antigua’s ‘native language’, I realised they didn’t understand its history of slavery” But why is it our burden to carry this knowledge of the system that oppressed us, of which its beneficiaries can choose to remain ignorant? For people living in Britain today racialised as black, we cannot escape this truth, we wear on our skin and our hair and carry the trauma in our genes. It is this colonial duality that caused me to be so abashed when during my first teaching post one of my year 12 students said they had never encountered the word “colonialism”, despite having studied GCSE history. I suddenly got that same feeling I had growing up – constantly having to explain my existence to people who demanded to know where I was “*from* from”. This was the same teaching post where dress codes equally worked to exclude students of colour – “multiple plaits”, which obviously refers to braids or canerows, were explicitly banned. It was not unusual for students to have little to no understanding of colonialism, those who had a keen interest in history were more knowledgeable yet still not fully aware of its continual implications. Only a minuscule portion of the history curriculum is given to colonialism, and the history of colonised countries before the empire is ignored. Yet I do not think that the history department should be solely responsible for imparting this knowledge, to assume this is othering and implies colonial attitudes have been left in the past. Schools do the minimum required to address ethnocentrism – by serving halal food in the canteen and quoting Martin Luther King Jr. during Black History Month they feel they have fulfilled their duty. Our histories and interests are being overlooked because we are being systematically kept out of positions of influence. The diverse nature of this country is not reflected in its educators, only 13.8% of teachers are from a minority ethnic background, and this number only decreases the further up the chain of command you go. Diversity is also something students are taught to tolerate, rather than celebrate. Schools are expected to allocate time to the teaching of British values, but the things that make Britain what it is today cannot be considered separately from its colonial acquisitions. Those of us bothered by the ethnocentric curriculum usually turn our attention to humanities subjects. When sociology students learn about ethnicity and educational achievement, the fact that black students, particularly black Caribbean, do not perform as well as other groups is attributed to the idea that they are more likely to be materially and “culturally deprived”. The difficulty in reaching the highest paid jobs in society is ignored, and the concept of a lack of culture is merely insulting. Maths and other STEM subjects also have their problems. A former biology teacher and examiner told me of students who had lost marks in exams because they had referenced sickle cell disease instead of the one suggested in the specification; although their answer was technically correct it was not indicated in the mark scheme and examiners without a profound knowledge of biology may not have picked it up. Sickle cell disease is most common in people of African descent, many black students would be familiar with the disease as a family member may be a sufferer. This may seem like a pedantic point to some but to me, it demonstrates how things that predominantly affect people of colour are of little interest to the institutions of this country. There has been a push towards “inclusivity” in education – schools make a show of sporadically holding diversity days that span all minority groups. But why is this exclusively extra-curricular? There are abundant opportunities throughout the national curriculum to represent the diversity of the population. We cannot achieve liberation when our histories are not equally honoured; any teaching of colonialism that does happen tends to legitimise the actions of the British Empire. This isn’t necessarily direct, but any omission of the atrocities of the empire only works to glorify it. “Australia Day” and “Canada Day” have been heavily protested in their respective countries as they signify the beginning of a long history of systemic oppression. But how do we protest the homage to empire happening in our classrooms every day?

#### [ROJ] Thus, the Role of the Judge is to Center Colonized Groups, as they aren’t included in mainstream curricula – we can have generic util debates any time, but this topic offers a unique chance to focus on marginalized groups.

#### [ROB & Silberling 1] Since colonization is rooted fundamental dehumanization, the Role of the Ballot is to Promote Alternative Modernities, defined as radical openness to other identities that counters dominant rules for how people live.

**Silberling 1:** Silberling, Louise S. [Post-doctoral associate in the Rockefeller Foundation programme in Latin American Studies, University of Texas–Austin] “Displacement and Quilombos in Alcântara, Brazil: Modernity, Identity, and Place.” *International Social Science Journal,* July 2004. https://tinyurl.com/3ss2bzz9 CH

Appadurai (1996a) and Gilroy (1993) go beyond Habermasian and other Western-based discussions of modernity towards alternative modernities. Comaroff sees the ‘‘rise of a (re)new(ed) politics of identity couched less in the language of nineteenth-century European modernity than in the rhetoric of alternative modernities’’ (1996: 167). **I find the term ‘‘alternative modernities’’** to be **a useful way of thinking about the politics of alterity, identity, culture, ethnicity; and the ways in which quilombolas1 (or other ‘‘subaltern’’ groups) use their narratives and affirmations of identity, and their alternative** visions, to undermine, subvert, and contest **modernis**ation. Thus, we can understand the project of modernisa- tion by elements of states, corporations, and the international order, whose narratives, ideo- logies and projects seek to undermine, subvert and contest the heterogeneity of people (in the name of benefits to society; and in the name of benefits to the free market, in the case of neoliberal states and corporate allies), especially of the poor, by ‘‘homogenising’’ ideas of citizenship, by naturalising state/capital rights to determine definitions of how to direct and define labour, land, and capital, as well as place. Challenging hegemony brings with it the dangers of engaging with dominant discourses, values, and practices (Gramsci 1971, Hanchard 1993, Roseberry 1996); thus, both the liberating and ‘‘incarcerating’’ poten- tials of quilombo creation are in tension between the quilombo movement (residents, leaders, and allies) and its relationships to the state and other groups. **The phrase “alternative modernities,” by sharing the root “modern-“ with modernisation, nicely includes the tension of the dialectic of hegemony**, of the shared narratives, **between the two opposing forms. There are conflicting state-making narratives at work within Brazil: accounts of a pluralistic, democratic state with social wel-fare entitlements; a sovereignty argument deployed now by the political left in the face of global capital flows and regulation; a ‘‘strong state in the international system’’ argument by elements of the military and neoliberal in the state; and arguments within Brazilian society draw- ing on an international human rights frame**. This of course complicates notions of state-making which hold territorialisation – the right to make and enforce borders and boundaries – as a primary objective of nation-states. In contrast to state narratives of ‘‘civil society’’ and equality under the law, liberation narratives have tremendous power to insist on re-imagining the relationship between sub-altern and dominant groups in society. The **liberation narrative – such as the employment by the movimento negro and the quilombo movement of the figure of Zumbi of Palmares – suggests** a freeing of subjects **from bondage and the unfree aspects of control over** their **labour and material bases of reproduction, as well as the ability to define themselves as a community with their own** everyday **practic**es. Quilombo communities originally formed in order to free themselves from a relationship of bondage, upheld by dominant classes and the state; now they are calling upon the state to uphold their rights to citizenship and entitlement: ‘‘I lost my mother, relatives and friends. All attacked by grileiros.2 I ask the President of the Republic to look to Saco das Almas, to all of Brazil, to all blacks who suffer because it was the blacks who made and constructed this Brazil’’ (Claro Costa, from Saco das Almas Brejo, a quilombo in Maranha ̃ o; Encontro Nacional 1995). This ‘‘construction’’ of Brazil has its roots in the countryside, where African slaves were employed on the cotton, sugar and other planta- tions that were once the primary basis of the Brazilian economy. The narratives of ‘‘con- structing’’ Brazil as slaves, and narratives of ‘‘liberation’’ of those who resisted the plantation economy are combined in quilombo arguments, as well as the implied idea of land rights as a form of reparations for slavery.

**This comes first,** since it determines *whose* pleasure or pain we maximize when we endorse a policy – there’s no such thing as benefiting “everyone” if these calculations let some people regulate others’ life choices.

## Part 2: Dig Deeper, Watson



#### [Messier] WATCH OUT FOR FLYING GLASS – the image above shows Elon Musk and Rick Perry digging up people’s homes to build a space launch site in Boca Chica, Texas –SpaceX’s latest power grab.

Messier: Messier, Doug. [Managing Editor of ParabolicArc.com, a daily blog that covers commercial space] “SpaceX Tells Boca Chica Residents: Sell Now or Else!” Parabolic Arc, October 3, 2020. http://www.parabolicarc.com/2020/10/03/spacex-tells-boca-chica-residents-sell-now-or-else/ CH

Vice reports that SpaceX gave a Friday deadline for two Boca Chica Village homeowners to sell their homes or Elon Musk’s launch provider would pursue “alternate approaches” to get them to vacate the settlement near the company’s south Texas spaceport. In an email obtained by VICE, David Finlay, SpaceX’s Senior Director of Finance, told Boca Chica Village residents that this would be SpaceX’s final and best offer and threatened the company would need to pursue alternate means to obtain the homes if the people of Boca Chica Village turned down the money…. “As we have discussed, as the scale and frequency of spaceflight activities at the site continue to accelerate, your property will frequently fall within established hazard zones in which no civilians will be permitted to remain, in order to comply with all federal and other public safety regulations. This email therefore represents SpaceX’s best and final purchase offer.” Finlay’s email gave a hard deadline for the residents of Boca Chica Village to sell their homes. “The offer will expire on October 2, 2020,” the email said. “Please be advised that should this offer expire, SpaceX may need to pursue alternative approaches to ensuring that launch operations within the State designated South Texas Spaceport at Boca Chica Beach can be conducted within all necessary public safety requirements.” The residents said they were adamant about not accepting the offers. Most residents of the small village have already sold out to SpaceX. The residents who remain say the offers would not allow them to purchase similar homes close to the shoreline. The letter doesn’t explicitly say so, but the most likely alternate means would be to have the government expropriate the properties through eminent domain to provide a safe zone for SpaceX’s state-designated spaceport. That process would involve condemning the properties. The homeowners would be compensated. However, the amount would likely be less than what SpaceX has offered. The company has said their offers to Boca Chica residents have been three time the appraised values of the homes, which would be about $150,000. Homeowners say they are getting zero support from local officials, who are more concerned with the jobs and economic impacts of SpaceX’s operations than their rights as homeowners. An interesting is is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) decision to approve a spaceport less than two miles from a residential area. SpaceX’s plan was to launch Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy boosters from the site, which is just north of the Mexican border. The facility is now being used to test much larger Starship and Super Heavy boosters that could launch from Boca Chica. The story says the FAA has now determined the village is not safe for human habitation. SpaceX has warned residents to move outside prior to tests so they do not get hit with flying glass from broken windows in the event of an explosion. The company has also recommended residents leave the area before tests, which are conducted at all hours of the day and night. Residents who remain in the village are skeptical of safety claims. They note that SpaceX has advertised the position of a development manager to build its own resort adjacent to the spaceport. “Boca Chica Village is our latest launch site dedicated to Starship, our next generation launch vehicle. SpaceX is committed to developing this town into a 21st century Spaceport. We are looking for a talented Resort Development Manager to oversee the development of SpaceX’s first resort from inception to completion,” SpaceX said in its job advertisement.

#### [Fox] AND THE HARM IS GLOBAL AND CYCLICAL – private space appropriation forces *quilombo* peoples in Brazil off their land, continuing a legacy of anti-Black violence.

Fox: Fox, Michael. [Independent multimedia journalist based in Brazil; former editor of the NACLA Report on the Americas] “Hundreds of Black families in Brazil could be evicted to make way for space base expansion.” *The World*, February 16, 2021. https://theworld.org/stories/2021-02-16/hundreds-black-families-brazil-could-be-evicted-make-way-space-base-expansion CH

“I cried like a child. Crying in the car, looking back,” said Silveira, who is now a great-grandmother. “It was really hard when we arrived. Really hard. We didn’t have any crops, or fruit trees or places to fish … If it wasn’t for help from other communities, we wouldn’t have survived.” In the early 1980s, in the final years of Brazil’s military dictatorship, hundreds of Black families like Silveira’s were removed from their land to make way for the construction of the Alcântara Satellite Launch Center. The families were relocated to agrovilas, or agricultural villages, where the government promised they would receive food, support and compensation. Ultimately, they received little help, according to Silveira and other community members. Today, hundreds more Black families from the region could be evicted to make way for the launch site’s expansion as part of a 2019 agreement between Brazil and the United States. The treaty grants the US permission to launch nonmilitary and commercial rockets from Alcântara. President Jair Bolsonaro's government has said it hopes the agreement will become a key source of revenue for the Brazilian state by opening the door to the facility’s rental for commercial launches from abroad. Alcântara’s location is key because of its proximity to the equator, launches burn less fuel and rockets can carry larger payloads. It could yield “tens to hundreds of millions of dollars a year,” said Carlos Moura, head of the Brazilian Space Agency. Dozens of Brazil’s 3,000 *quilombo* communities — Brazilians of African descent — surround the Alcântara Launch site. Roughly 800 families are now scheduled to be removed to make way for the launch site’s expansion, though their removal is on hold, in part due to the coronavirus pandemic. 'At risk of becoming extinct' For some, the expansion project’s planned evictions are part of an all-too-familiar cycle of disregard for the *quilombo* inhabitants. “Never, in these 40 years has the threat of removal of these communities been so real because the Bolsonaro government is known around the world as one that does not respect the constitution or legislation. And it’s a government that is clearly racist,” said Danilo Serejo, a lawyer with the Movement of People Affected by the Alcântara Launch Site, who was raised in the Canelatiua quilombo. From the Mamuna quilombo’s communal yucca fields, residents can see the top of the installations of the Alcântara Satellite Launch Center, which borders their land. They are sustainable farmers. They fish in the ocean, a short walk from the village. Their fruit trees are plentiful. “This land is abundant. Land. Ocean. Fields of crops. Everything you plant here will grow,” said resident Lorenza Vera, whose family has lived on this land for generations. “We are Black, Indigenous, quilombola peoples. We are being threatened today. Just like in the past, we are at risk of becoming extinct,” Vera said. “We are living the same things as in the past. Running the risk of being extinct from our place of origin, our roots and our identity.” Can Biden put a stop to the expansion project? The expansion project has received pushback in the US, and some hope the Biden administration will put a stop to it. In January, nongovernmental organizations and Brazil experts delivered a policy paper to the Biden administration, asking it to reconsider agreements with the Brazilian government because of Bolsonaro’s disregard for “democracy and the rule of law.” The Alcântara accord was listed among the top issues. “As Trump and Bolsonaro administrations negotiated this accord, *Quilombo* communities were promised that there would be no land expropriation,” the document reads. “But those promises were unceremoniously broken amid Brazil's deepening pandemic in March 2020 when the Bolsonaro administration announced its plan to illegally expropriate 12,000 hectares of forested Quilombo land of some 800 Quilombo families who have long practiced sustainable rotating agriculture and forest preservation.” The paper highlighted that the Alcântara Launch site was already larger than the 7,300-hectares Spaceport America, in New Mexico, and urged the Biden-Harris administration to take a “firm stand against any expropriation of Quilombo land.”

#### [Pereira et al 1] In fact, the *quilombolas*’ disposable status leaves them NO security – they’re under CONSTANT threat of displacement.

Pereira et al 1: Pereira Jr., Davi [*Quilombolo*; works at the Latin American Studies, at The University of Texas at Austin; researcher in Cultural Anthropology], and Chanda Prescod-Weinstein [American theoretical cosmologist; Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy and a Core Faculty Member in Women's and Gender Studies, University of New Hampshire] “Science Shouldn’t Come at the Expense of Black Lives.” *Scientific American*, June 4, 2021. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/science-shouldn-rsquo-t-come-at-the-expense-of-black-lives/ CH

Star Trek portrayed a vision of the future that was more equitable and just than the world we live in—but the way it articulated space as a “final frontier” recalls a legacy of violent frontier exploration and colonialism in the name of displacement and resource extraction. *Quilombolas* from the ethnic territory of Alcântara, are all too familiar with this history. Quilombolas, the descendants of enslaved Africans who escaped from plantations in Brazil to create their own settlements, called *quilombos*, have historically faced racism and exclusion at the hands of the Brazilian state. One current example is their displacement from their land in order to expand the development of an equatorial launchpad that promises to enhance international investment in Brazil as a destination for space launches. Although *quilombo* lands are explicitly protected in Brazil’s constitution, and these families have been living there for at least 200 years, the *quilombolas* of Alcântara have never formally been recognized by the Brazilian state as owners of their land. This absence of recognition allowed the military to take about 56 percent of Alcântara’s territory and remove 312 families in order to build the Brazilian Air Force’s Alcântara Space Launch Center in the 1980s—all by claiming that the area was essentially uninhabited. Beyond the trauma of forced displacement, the removal deprived these families from their main sources of food, exacerbating food insecurity in the area. This is not just a matter of tragic, decades-old history. In 2021, it may all happen again. In 2019, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro signed a technology safeguard agreement with former President Trump that will allow Americans to use the Alcântara space base to launch rockets and satellites. This time, displacement threatens even more families and 12,000 hectares of quilombo territory. This means that 800 families risk being forced to leave their land at any moment. As with the debate about the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on Mauna Kea in Hawaii, the discussion about quilombo land rights and dignity is being framed as a discussion of science versus tradition.

## Thus, I affirm:

#### [Tadiar] Resolved: The appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust. I critique private space appropriation through a rejection of disposability politics, a neoliberal strategy that treats segments of populations as fungible for future social gain.

**Tadiar:** Tadiar, Neferti X. M. [Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Barnard College] “Life-Times of Disposability within Global Neoliberalism.” *Social Text,* 115, Vol. 31, No. 2, Summer 2013. https://tinyurl.com/2acpfkax CH

The question of land appropriation cannot, however, be confined to the era of classical liberalism but in fact persists as a crucial though overlooked condition of the global project of neoliberalism. As the process of “primitive accumulation” that must recur for the expanded reproduction of capital beyond the limits reached in a prior cycle (inducing “crisis”), the severance of people from their means of subsistence and their transformation into “free” and “unattached” wage laborers has as its basis “the expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil.”18 Land appropriation does not only undergird the “boom” cycles of economic growth in Asia through the transformation of land into capital (providing new sites of financial investment in commercial and residential real estate, public works, and construction). As the case of China spectacularly demonstrates, the conversion of rural land into capital through privatization and marketization/industrialization also creates a newly “freed” proletariat for export-oriented manufacturing and agricultural industries, which in turn fuel debt-financed consumption in the postindustrial North.19 Prior to 1978, three-quarters of the population in China was rural and mostly engaged in local agricultural production. By the early 1990s, nearly 120 million of these rural workers were employed in off-farm, township, and village enterprises.20 Beyond these familiar “real economy” implications of “primitive accumulation,” the question of land highlights a crucial phenomenal shift and condition of neoliberalist financialization: the important role of the violent “surplussing” of populations by their governments and other ruling national (economic) agents in the postcolonial and postsocialist global South as part and parcel of the latter’s respective bids (as neoliberal investor-subjects) to play the global market. That is to say, in order for national developing states and economic elites to become viable players in the financialized global market, they must have at their disposal a population that can be made redundant to any particular lines of industry as dictated by the sudden vicissitudes of capital flows and that will ultimately shoulder the costs of fallout of any and all speculative maneuvers. Such surplus populations of sovereign states (i.e., as “citizens”—really, nationals—subject to the regulations and controls of particular nation-states but effectively reduced to the status of nonsubjects, dispossessed of their rights to national commons and claims to their sovereign state) thus serve as securitized assets for the risk-taking ventures of proper investor subjects.21 In other words, these investor subjects do not require the dispossessing processes of “primitive accumulation” solely for the creation of a new waged labor force, or for that matter a labor reserve army. They require processes of dispossession to create and maintain a population of “surplused” people as monetized aggregates of disposable life. Monetized, surplus human life can serve not only as flexible labor, readily available and eliminable as capital moves from one site (or one line) to another, in effect enabling the speed of capital circulation and minimizing losses to capital in downturns, crashes, and crises; this disposable life can also serve as risk-absorbing collateral, particularly for state and state-allied enterprises, which can offer it bundled as wholesale life commodities promising future life-times of surplus labor and money (in the form of taxes)—value—that can be advanced, that is, cashed in now (through “cuts” in the national budget, social services, and so on, currency devaluation, to service bad debts, as exemplified in the bank bailouts in the aftermath of the US subprime mortgage crisis and in the austerity programs now being installed in Europe).22 In this context, land continues to serve as an important means of production from which rural populations are continually dispossessed even as it remains a “flexible” and supplementary means of subsistence for those newly “freed” and increasingly surplused people. Indeed, against the widely shared notion of the increasing if not complete obsolescence of the peasant as a historical category, Silvia Federici argues for the continuing importance of agricultural work in today’s political economy, not only because of its size as a productive sector (employing about two billion people globally) and evidenced by the World Bank’s recent prioritization of agrarian reform in its restructuring programs but also because subsistence agriculture in particular underwrites the social reproduction of “the millions who would otherwise have no means to purchase food on the market.”23 In other words, land signals not only the overlooked processes of “primitive accumulation” within global neoliberalism but also the overlooked processes of social reproduction of surplus (not just directly productive) life.24 As the work of indigenous scholars, for example, J. Ke¯haulani Kauanui’s Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity (2008) and Andrea Smith’s Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide (2005), has long demonstrated, land continues to be an absolutely vital issue for the survival and future of communities destined for disappearance.

## Part 3: Identity Theft

#### [McCoy et al] IT STARTS WITH DEHUMANIZATION – leaders use disposability politics to strip *quilombolas* of their status as people to justify stripping them of their land.

**McCoy et al:** McCoy, Terrence [Foreign correspondent, *The Washington Post*], and Heloísa Traiano [Research Fellow at Escola de Comunicação da UFRJ]. “A story of slavery — and space.” *The Washington Post,* March 26, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/brazil-alcantara-launch-center-quilombo/ JP/CH

The clash, now unfolding in local and international courts, is the distillation of one of Brazil’s most urgent and polarizing dramas. **What is more important: Developing a vast country with unrealized potential and a lagging economy? Or protecting** some of **its most vulnerable communities? Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, a right-wing nationalist friendly to business interests, has made clear where he stands. He has vowed to exploit the riches of the Amazon rainforest, supported illegal gold miners, ceased awarding land rights to Indigenous peoples —** and has described *quilombola* residents in language so offensive that federal prosecutors sued him. “I went to a *quilombo*,” Bolsonaro said in the widely condemned public speech in 2017, before he was elected president. “The **skinniest African descendant there weighed seven arrobas,” the measure by which cattle is weighed**. “They don’t do anything. Not even to procreate are they worth anything. More than $200 million per year we spend on them.” **Alcântara’s quilombola communities have since dug in.** They’ve begun to organize and joined legal actions. **In Mamuna, the pillar of the forest communities, the resistance is led by Pinheiro**. For years, she has organized collective action against the launch base, including building barricades to keep out space companies. **She understands her community has little power**. They are sustenance fishermen and farmers. Many are illiterate. All are poor. **But they’d been on this land long before Bolsonaro came to power. Long before United States took an interest in it. They aren’t going to give it up without a fight.**

#### [Pereira et al 2] AND states tell marginalized groups to give their land up in the name of “common humanity,” yet make it so they never reap the benefits.

Pereira et al 2: Pereira Jr., Davi [*Quilombolo*; works at the Latin American Studies, at The University of Texas at Austin; researcher in Cultural Anthropology], and Chanda Prescod-Weinstein [American theoretical cosmologist; Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy and a Core Faculty Member in Women's and Gender Studies, University of New Hampshire] “Science Shouldn’t Come at the Expense of Black Lives.” *Scientific American*, June 4, 2021. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/science-shouldn-rsquo-t-come-at-the-expense-of-black-lives/ CH

Alcântara is an ideal space launch site because it is on the equator, where Earth’s rotation gives rockets an extra velocity boost. In addition, Alcântara is a region that has traditionally been economically underresourced in the global capitalist economy. As with the debate about TMT, the argument goes that science is a hallowed activity and the region can benefit economically from the expansion of the Alcântara launch pad. However, as one of us argued with Keolu Fox in the Nation, the setup of science versus tradition or religion is a false juxtaposition. The question of whether we should stop scientific projects in the name of promoting social justice highlights more of a false dilemma than the reality. In fact, we believe that framing the issue this way masks a much deeper problem of democratic governance. Bolsonaro’s government, at the behest of the United States, is making decisions that advance the business interests of a growing, billionaire-driven private space sector under the guise of being science-driven. The reality is that these authoritarian moves are driven not by curiosity about the universe but rather by the satellite market. Our leaders are arguing that the rights of Alcântara’s *quilombolas* should take a back seat in order to promote technological efforts that will supposedly benefit all of humanity. However, the groups suffer a double loss. In addition to having their fundamental rights violated, they are excluded from the supposed financial and technological benefits of this science-advancing project. There is a violent logic which situates Black people in the Americas—descendants of kidnapped and enslaved Africans—as responsible for the scientific “backwardness” of humanity. This encourages people to turn against those of us who are calling for an ethical approach to science by encouraging the general public to see us as anti-science. It is notable that many people’s first introduction to *quilombolas* is through this question of whether it is okay to displace them in the name of science. Not only is it not okay, but it is also fundamentally unnecessary. We as a global community have access to other launch sites, and we can work together to come up with other approaches to our growing need. We can also come together to decide whether we do in fact have a growing need and, if so, what values are driving this. As we face global warming, a planetary transformation that has been driven by technological development, it’s time to acknowledge that our old way of doing things is killing us. It’s time to democratize how decisions are made about land use and put the people of the land in a leadership role. We call on Biden to withdraw the U.S.’s request for further development of Alcântara, and we demand global support for quilombola land claims.

#### [Silberling 2] Next, *quilombola* displacement targets not only the land, but the IDENTITIES of the people affected.

**Silberling 2:** Silberling, Louise S. [Post-doctoral associate in the Rockefeller Foundation programme in Latin American Studies, University of Texas–Austin] “Displacement and Quilombos in Alcântara, Brazil: Modernity, Identity, and Place.” *International Social Science Journal,* July 2004. https://tinyurl.com/3ss2bzz9 CH

Further, Malkki’s (1992) interrogation of ‘‘rootedness’’ (as a natural and unproblematic state) brings us again to trying to understand the notion of home and belonging as constructed, rather than naturalised – and challenges the idea of a quilombo being ‘‘rooted’’ in a particular place. If we look at ‘‘localities’’ (cf. Raffles 1999) rather than ‘‘local’’ places, then we understand place to be always made in relationship to other places. Rapport and Dawson’s (1998) treatment of ‘‘home’’ as including practices, memories, and stories, and as something plurilocal that is ‘‘taken with’’ migrants and exiles in a ‘‘world of movement,’’ is useful for thinking of how those who are resettled will remake their ‘‘homes’’ within ‘‘places’’ which are not fixed and do not have fixed social relations (1998: 4–5). This can be contrasted to an increasingly vocal, and sometimes violent, defence of place in a world increasingly full of nonplaces; and often reified identity in a world of increasingly globally fluid identities. These tensions between homogenising tendencies and heterogeneous claims are taken up again at the end of this paper in a discussion of hegemony and alterity. How to think of the relations between place and identity, when both are shifting? These ‘‘imaginings’’ of the quilombo communities will be re-imagined by the communities themselves when they are moved. ‘‘Place’’ is interesting to look at socially, because in addition to thinking of a location on a map (in a ‘‘physical’’ cartography), it is also a site for production; it is where one is located spatially to others in one’s collectivity, and in relation to those with whom one has market relations; home is a space for family and all of the affective things one has related to place, as well as religious meanings attached to place. Most importantly, place can be understood as a relation rather than a thing, just as identity is a relation and not a thing. It is produced socially. Place and the meanings attached to it are constructed; thus, one location can have multiple meanings for different groups and individuals, and those meanings are open to contestation. In the struggle over Alcântara, the struggle and its meanings (as well as material outcomes) are transformed, as are relations to the place. If the physical location and spatial arrangement of quilombos are shifted, there would be a shift in how *quilombolas* relate to each other as a community and as a collectivity. In making and remaking their identities – who they are in relationship to each other and to a new place (spatial considerations, ideas of memory in relation to place, affective relationships) – Alcântara’s residents will be deciding whether and how they are able to think of themselves as *quilombolas* on quilombos. Importantly, since the quilombos of Alcântara have been brought into the quilombo movement, their self-identification as *quilombos* (or as black communities), as opposed to just ‘‘rural worker’’ communities, has been made or strengthened. The struggle itself reinforced, or brought new meanings to, their sense of community solidarity and their traditions. While a move would shift their affective ties to those pieces of land and their spatial relationships, the struggle itself (against being moved) is part of a process of producing a shift in their self-identification – towards a self perception as people who struggle, as blacks, as a collectivity, and as quilombolas. Additionally, their self-identification as citizens who are addressing claims of entitlement to the state, however unresponsive the state may be, relates quilombolas, in a common discourse, with the dominant elements of the political economy. This engagement with the state and the ensuing codification and reification of what a quilombo is undermine *quilombo* communities’ ability to define and produce, as an ongoing process, their own alterity; these are the dialectics of hegemony.

#### [Silberling 3] Further, disposability politics props up the *illusion* of democracy while actually advancing the military-industrial complex.

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The role of the state in protecting and entitling its private citizens becomes marginal when faced with larger regimes of global capital expansion; here the state returns to disciplining its citizens (keeping them away from sites of global capital) and to exclusionary practices – in the name of “development.” Takings by the state in the case of Alcântara can be seen in the context of global takings by states in concert with global/transnational corporate interests. The military-industrial complex is a multi-located phenomenon, tied partially to nation-states, but circulating between and through them; the military in Brazil, in current international configurations/ narratives of democracy, must be subordinate to the (accountable, legitimate, representative) democratic state apparatus, which can then “legitimately” take land from its citizens. Then, development (and modernisation) in Alcântara become defined by the geo-strategic priorities of international corporations and states as well as by Brazilian government entities and corporations. The quilombo movement astutely moves its struggle over place to the international arena, calling on the OAS and international human rights narratives, during a time when African diasporic struggles are highlighted around the world. And the progressive elements of the Brazilian Supreme Court and office of the Attorney General seek to balance the conflicting interests and uphold the Constitution. Silva (1996: 60) interprets this in terms of the Supreme Court’s obligation to guarantee that everyone should respect ‘‘the rules of the game, constitutionally established in the construction of a nation, where difference is recognised and respected’’. Thus, on the one hand, difference is used as a legitimating basis for rights in an emergent democracy; yet on the other hand, the seeming requirements to maintain the authenticity of that difference poses a challenge for quilombos. Seeing quilombos as fixed, in relation to their own identities and to place, only serves the modernisation narrative of development, which, according to Wilmsen (1996) is actually orthogonal to modernity, which recognises difference, human rights, and construction by the people. ‘‘Modernity is the salient substrate (…) of all contemporary discourse on ethnicity’’ (Wilmsen 1996: 18). The *movimento negro* and the *quilombo* movement can be understood as engaged in a struggle to cut through, go around, or subvert the dissatisfying (and disempowering) dualisms of “traditional” and “modern” by constructing their own terms of the debate: asserting their ethnicity as a basis for special treatment; asserting their right to incorporate afresh traditional African symbols; asserting their citizenship and rights in an international human rights framework; and asserting their rights, as citizens, to affirm and define their relationship to place. At the same time, it is important to see how incorporating cultural symbols can lead to potentially incarcerating culturalist (apolitical) constructions of their struggle; how engaging with citizenship debates may be proscribing; and how historic ties to place as a basis for (ethnicised) land rights can be both empowering and limiting. The struggles in Alcântara over the launch site both challenge the quilombo movement, and, perhaps, might allow it to recapture the ‘‘modern’’ on its own terms.