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# Intersectionality in the Processes of Leadership Incarnation: a Multisited Approach Based on the Mobilizations of Brazilian Migrants in Japan<sup>1)</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper aims at examining leadership within three forms of mobilization among Brazilian migrants in Japan in the 2000s: Brazilian schools, local organizations and workers unions. The multisited approach stresses the limits of the ethnic leadership approach generally used in the theory of social movements for analyzing the collective action of minorities. In contrast, the determinants and realities of leadership incarnation among Brazilian migrants in Japan highlight the intersectionality of the processes of race, gender and class. The concept of intersectionality helps to capture these processes among Brazilian leaders and also points out the various configurations in which these processes are related.

Keywords: gender, intersectionality, leadership, migrations, mobilizations

Social science literature rarely analyzes leadership as an issue relating to the lives of ordinary people. Many studies have explored leadership in relation to the political field and to the incarnation of political roles, including such high-profile cases as Presidents, Prime Ministers or party leaders. A recent publication based on a range of international case studies in western contexts attests to this dominant trend (Alexandre-Collier, Vergniolle de Chantal, 2015). One of the main causes of this trend is that leadership in western societies is usually related to a dominant position, which has been incorporated in the social image of a white man from an upper or middle class background (Morris, Staggenborg, 2004; Acker, 2006; Achin, Dorlin and Rennes, 2008). A similar configuration is noticeable in Japan where the leadership positions have been gradually monopolized throughout history by men with high social status (Neary, 1996). This historical trend also reflects the patriarchal

paradigm which was widely disseminated from the “modernization period” of Meiji (Ueno, 2004). Furthermore, the early studies point out a so-called “weakness” of Japanese leadership, which would be connected with the seniority system through a specific patronage among the relationships between the *oyabun*, an aged leader, and his or her *kobun*, a young subaltern (Nakane, 1970). In contemporary Japan, the “*rida*”<sup>2)</sup> is still identified with the pregnant image in which his or her position should automatically reach by way of the seniority system.

However, these studies have been criticized for its culturalistic bias and, as it was observed in western contexts, the emergence of leaders in Japan is also related to the charismatic skills’ development, the social distinction and a variety of biographical trajectories marked by disruption and/or by change in private life (Brumann, 1996). The leadership issue more generally leads to address a double problem: the difference that leadership

made in the outcomes of mobilizations and, the making of that difference what it needs to examine the power relationships.

My article aims at focusing on the last point, considering that the outcomes of leadership in collective action have been more documented, particularly in the Japanese context (Hasegawa, 2006; Shin and Tsutsui, 2007). In contrast, the processes of leadership incarnation within social mobilizations have thus far received little attention. The study of these processes has to take account the various forms of domination that the notion of intersectionality enables to capture (Jaunait, Chauvin, 2012). By intersectionality, we mean “*the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations*” (McCall, 2005: 1771). The concept is useful to address the mobilizations of minorities and migrant people in which the intersections of gender, race and class are rather stressed. Moreover, the differences between national contexts and the category of nationality have to be examined carefully when studying the mobilizations of migrant people. This last point is especially crucial considering the Japanese national frame which is arranged around an “*equation of nationality with an ethnonational identity*” (Kashiwazaki, 2000). The ethnoracial representation of the nation or “Japaneseness” is historically based on the ideology of racial homogeneity (Befu, 2001). However, from the mid-1980s, increasing migratory flows resulting in a rise of migrant people on Japanese labor market put the immigration issue on the political agenda (Kajita, Tanno and Higuchi, 2005). Thus, immigration is a rather new political concern in contemporary Japan (Mori, Le Bail, 2013, Tsuda, 2006) which highlights the complex relationship between State policies, representations of nationhood, and the history of migrations (Noiriel, 2001). This social change has given rise to new questions about the boundaries of Japanese society in terms of gendered, racialized and classed differences (Murphy-Shigematsu, Willis, 2008).

Drawing on multisited fieldwork (Marcus, 1995) among Brazilian migrants in Japan in the 2000s, I argue that intersectionality provides an effective

method for analyzing the processes of leadership incarnation within social mobilizations. Hence, I document the notion of leadership in social movement theory and political sociology, and I look at the challenges that this notion represents for studying mobilizations of migrant people who are vulnerable to multiple types of domination. By doing so, I bring attention to the complex category of migrant that a multisited fieldwork reflects based on an intersectional analysis of social mobilizations. By comparing several sites of the collective action of Brazilian migrants in Japan, I also point out the main determinants and realities in the processes of leadership incarnation.

## **1 Leadership and mobilizations among migrant people**

The notion of leadership remains neglected in mobilization and social movement theories, despite being a recurring question in classical political sociology (Morris, Staggenborg, 2004). This can be explained by the importance given to two approaches in the theoretical field. First, the political process approach is focused on the structure of political opportunities and tends to neglect the question of human agency. Secondly, the entrepreneurial approach, based on the resource mobilization theory, tends to overemphasize the leader’s position for making “agency”. Nevertheless, this approach neglects to analyze the ways in which the entrepreneurs of collective action affect movement strategies and outcomes. Leadership actually is an important matter when addressing mobilization processes: the emergence of leadership, the adoption of group strategies, group organization through repertoires of action, the work of “framing”, group action and its outcomes. But, what is exactly behind the notion of leadership in social movements?

### **Defining leadership and power relations in social movements**

Most of the studies point out the active role

which leaders must assume in social movements. This role means a *mobilizer*, someone who is able to bring together and to influence a group of followers, and an *articulator* who links the collective action to the larger society (Morris, Staggenborg, 2004). Moreover, the usual division between leadership and the “rank and file” emphasizes that the social skills necessary for leading, managing and coordinating a group or a mobilization, are unequally shared among its members.

However, the simple division between *leaders* and *followers*, which is reproduced in most of the studies on social movements, is a stumbling block for overcoming the limits of androcentric conceptions of power (Fillieule, 2009). In many cases, women are active and visible at the beginning of a mobilization but, when the scale of the mobilization becomes larger, tend to be excluded from top positions, which are gradually monopolized by men (Falquet, 2005). Thus, some women succeed in acting rather as a “bridge leader” between the followers and the male leaders (Robnett, 1996). That is one of the main consequences of the gendered division of work among activist groups. However, it is worth emphasizing that *“participants in organizing projects, who carry out tasks such as fundraising and canvassing (...) should not automatically be considered leaders if we want to retain any analytic meaning for the concept of leadership. Moreover, we need to be aware that there is a vertical ordering of leadership in most social movements. When women are excluded from top positions they are separated from a considerable amount of power wielded by top movement leaders”* (Morris, Staggenborg, 2004: 177).

This last point leads us to specify what leadership means in terms of power relationship. In the wake of the types of domination developed by Max Weber, the charismatic type refers to the “not-yet-institutionalized power of a person”. Thus, many institutional positions of power historically resulted from an “everydayness” of some charismatic dimensions – for instance, the ways used to address local conflicts –, which were previously in close connection with the lifetime of an “extraordinary”

individual (Weber, 2013). Charismatic figures were one of the main sources for configuring some of the institutional positions of power. Because leadership may become manifest in social positions which are not necessarily located at a national level of organization, leaders from a more ordinary social background should be considered (public school directors, religious leaders, local union activists, etc.). The variety of leadership roles is not only connected with an unequal access to financial and social resources, and to power positions. It is also connected with an unequal capacity to exist as a leader and, more precisely, to make this political or institutional role sensitive to other people (Lagroye, 1997). Hence, the ways of leadership incarnation have many consequences on collective action, particularly on the processes of collective identity construction which are crucial in the mobilizations of migrant people.

### **Leadership in the mobilizations of migrant people**

Studies on mobilizations among migrant people point out that migrants are supported by individuals who often do not have a migration background themselves and who often do not look like migrants or resemble them in many socially significant respects (Siméant, 1998). That relates to the well-known role of external supporters or “conscience constituents” (McAdam, 1988). Outside the external supporters who sometimes can be in top positions within the mobilizations of migrant people, the ethnic leaders can play an important role by involving themselves in these processes. Nonetheless, they are frequently differentiated from the social characteristics of their migrant counterparts. This is due to the fact that ethnic leaders have accumulated specific elements of social capital over the course of their biographical trajectory. Consequently, it is necessary to look at how each step of the migration process bears upon their specific social profile: the occupation of their relatives in the country of origin, their level of education and qualification, their occupation before and after the migration process, and more generally, the conditions

of their migration. They are generally better incorporated in the host society than the other members of the national group<sup>3)</sup> to which they belong. They often are proficient and sometimes fluent in the language of the host society and they know how to manage with its dominant values and cultural references relatively well (Martiniello, 1992). Hence, ethnic leaders are themselves producers of ethnicity through developing ethnicity-based activities (Barth, 1969), and they look to position themselves as “*operators of social integration*” in their relations with public authorities (Geisser, 1997).

My analysis of leadership incarnation will be based on several case studies of Brazilian ethnic leaders in contemporary Japan. However, it is important to note that there are several limitations of the ethnic leader approach. Some ethnic, racial and migration studies fail to present the process of boundary construction occurring among ethnic groups and tend to naturalize these boundaries using the same ethnic labels in their academic works. In other words, these studies face a double bias related to what Roger Brubaker calls “*groupism*”: “*the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed*”, and “*the tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial, or cultural blocs*”. (Brubaker, 2004: 8) This double bias is connected with the risk of academic analysis focusing on ethnoracial and/or national differences to address mobilization among migrants, instead of examining their heterogeneity in terms of gendered and classed differences. Hence, there is not only the problem of using the same labels as ethnic leaders, but there is also the question of dealing with the discursive strategies used by minority groups. To contest ethnic boundaries, minority groups usually have no choice but to mobilize themselves with discursive categories already produced by the majority and imposed upon the minorities. This is the “*minority paradox*” (Fassin, Fassin, 2006).

To go beyond the above limitations on the ethnic leadership approach, I used a multisited approach to enable analysis of the varied forms of leadership

incarnation within the mobilizations of Brazilian migrants in contemporary Japan.

## **2 Intersectionality and multisited mobilizations of Brazilian migrants in contemporary Japan**

According to official reports, there were 316 867 Brazilian nationals registered in Japan by the end of 2007, most of them Japanese descendants. However, after an almost continuous increase since 1990, the Brazilian population in Japan faced a severe drop from 2008 with 230 552 Brazilian nationals registered in 2010 (S mush , 2010). The migration process began in the mid-1980s, during a period of economic crisis in Brazil and a time of economic growth and labor shortage in Japan. Thus, many Japanese manufacturers started to recruit workers from abroad through the development of an international network of brokers (*assen gaisha*). Furthermore, due to a great wage differential between the two countries, many people in Brazil were willing to seek work in Japan (Kajita, Tanno, Higuchi, 2005). But, the strict immigration policy in Japan made it difficult for Brazilians and people from other countries to get unskilled jobs in Japanese industry. Only Japanese nationals who had previously migrated to Brazil and Japanese descendants born in Brazil with dual citizenship were not subject to this restriction. Nevertheless, in 1990, the Japanese government reformed its immigration law, and introduced a new status of residence called “*long-term resident*” (*teij sha*), which allows anyone who is a Japanese descendant up to the third generation to work legally in Japan for three years, with the possibility of unlimited extension. Non-Japanese descendants are also eligible when married to a Japanese descendant. This reform resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of Brazilian migrants and in the creation of new categories of workers in the Japanese labor market ( kubo, 2005). By granting special residence status to Japanese descendants, authorities were

trying to preserve the supposed “racial homogeneity of the nation” by accepting only those foreign workers who were expected to be familiar with Japanese culture (Yamanaka, 1993). However, this social image of Japanese Brazilians fueled an increasing gap between the “Japanese faces” of the migrants and their “Brazilian culture” (Tsuda, 2003). In the second half of the 1990s, media coverage of “foreign criminality” (*gaikokujin hanzai*) grew considerably after the Japanese police agency began using the category to trace the involvement of foreigners (Seizelet, 2000), which particularly meant Brazilian migrants, in public disturbance and crime. Moreover, Brazilian migrants began to relate experiences of discriminations due to their status as unskilled workers from a third world country (Sasaki, 2006). Other studies stress some forms of discrimination impeding the integration of

migrants into the labor market (Ôkubo, 2005), into the school system (Haino, 2010) and into civic life generally (Onai, 2009).

The mobilizations of Brazilian migrants in Japan would achieve relatively more visibility beginning in 2008. First, commemorations of the Centenary of Japanese immigration to Brazil (1908-1973) highlighted the celebrations of a “model minority” (the Japanese descendants) in Brazil. While the event was not celebrated as widely in Japan as in Brazil, it nonetheless involved many Brazilian organizations which settled, for example, in Kobe and were engaged in commemoratives practices (Oda, 2010). Secondly, beginning in autumn 2008, Brazilian migrants were mobilized against massive dismissals in the Japanese industrial sector, resulting from the subprime crisis in the United States. Thus, in 2009, the unemployment rate among Bra-

March in Nagoya during the mass layoffs of winter 2009



Photo by Guénoél Marchadour, Nagoya, 2009, February 1st.

zilian workers rose to 40 %, while it averaged 5 % among the Japanese labor force (Higuchi, 2010). During that same year, Brazilian migrants would gain increasing attention from Japanese and foreign media. From January to October 2009, the public television channel (Nihon Hôshô Kyôkai) would broadcast five reports on this population (Cherrier, 2011). Lastly, during a short period of public demonstrations in winter 2009, there was an attempt to mobilize Brazilian migrants at a national level. In February 2009, a march united approximately one thousand people in Nagoya around several slogans calling for assistance from the Japanese government in matters of “education”, “housing”, and “labor”. Moreover, the slogans emphasized the “social contribution” of the migrants in Japanese society (see photo below). The event sought to draw attention to the heterogeneity of the Brazilian migrants, as the march involved participants with varied profiles in terms of gender, race and even nationality.

However, the public image of the movement remained monopolized by Brazilian men, who mostly were Japanese descendants and were not unskilled workers<sup>4</sup>). Two weeks after the march, a “national group” was founded at the Brazil embassy in Tokyo, the goals of which were to “*support the rights of Brazilians in Japan, as citizens or as workers, and to be united with other ethnic groups who are fighting for their social rights*”<sup>5</sup>). After an organizational chart was set up, it was clear that several categories of Brazilian people in Japan were going to remain under-represented at the top positions of the “national group”: migrant women, unskilled workers and Brazilians without Japanese ancestry. Nonetheless, in 2010, the data on Brazilian population in Japan pointed out a relative well-balanced sex ratio between women and men (45, 7 to 54, 3). Furthermore, 64, 2 % of Brazilian women and 67, 3 % of Brazilian men were employed as unskilled workers in the industry sector (Sômushô, 2010). Third, a survey conducted in 2006 stressed that, while about three quarters of Brazilian nationals were Japanese descendants, 17 % were registered as “Non descendants” and 4, 6 % as people of “mixed racial origins” (Costa, 2007).

Currently, the social representations of Brazilian migrants in Japan continue to be strongly influenced by the image of a male factory worker of Japanese ancestry. Not only is the media framing focused on this social image, but it is also emphasized by academic studies (Mackie, 2002). However, the category of “the migrant” is in reality a complex one in terms of gender, class and race – based on what I could observe through several case studies. Consequently, the concept needs to be adapted so as to permit analysis of this complexity. Hence, I developed a multisited approach to explore gendered aspects of the mobilization of Brazilian migrants which were rarely studied in earlier literature (Marchadour, 2015b).

The leadership issue has been examined in the 2000s based on the data I collected for my doctoral research (Marchadour, 2015a). I identified three fields of migrant mobilization: Brazilian private schools, workers’ unions and local organizations. I explored two feminized fields (Brazilian schools and local organizations) focusing on educational and family environments in which women generally are rather heavily engaged (Staggenborg, 1998, Ito, 2005) and where they have an easier access to top positions. The local organizations studied involved grassroots activities developed by and for migrants (Brazilian children and teenagers) with various purposes, such as cultural exchange, tutoring for Brazilian pupils in Japanese public schools, support for Portuguese teaching and activities in relation to “Brazilian culture”. However, we have to note that not all the organizations founded by Brazilian migrants in Japan are led by women. Numerous local groups dedicated to cultural and sport activities are led by men as well.

The methodology adopted for this research involved two components. First, I conducted ethnographic observations in the three sites, focusing particularly on collective practices. Secondly, I sought to gather data relating to the biographical trajectories of the mobilized migrants. To do so, I conducted semi-structured interviews with sixty-eight migrants who were engaged in each site and/or in the “national group”<sup>6</sup>). The group of inter-

Repartition by gender and by ethnoracial categories of the Brazilian interviewees encountered on the three sites and in the national group

Sites	Gender	Japanese ancestry	Mixed race origins	No Japanese ancestry
Local organizations (n=21)	Women (n=15)	12	1	2
	Men (n=6)	3	2	1
Brazilian schools (n=18)	Women (n=12)	6	1	5
	Men (n=6)	4	0	2
Workers' unions (n=20)	Women (n=7)	2	3	2
	Men (n=13)	4	5	4
National group (n=14)	Women (n=3)	3	0	0
	Men (n=11)	8	2	1

viewees varied in terms of gender, race and occupation (See table below).

### 3 Social determinants and the realities of leadership incarnation

The multisited fieldwork on the mobilizations of Brazilian migrants in Japan enabled me to identify some of the determinants and realities of leadership incarnation based on the analytical frame of intersectionality. Three determinants were identified among Brazilian leaders. First, the acquisition of language skills allows them to control the collective action frame. Then, successful ethnic leaders tend to find intermediary positions between external Japanese supporters and migrant followers. Third, their biographical trajectories tend to involve occupational transition, and most of them are multipositioned activists. Finally, the intersectional approach toward the multisited fieldwork described above enabled me to capture the variety of racialized and gendered dimensions of the ethnic leadership. These dimensions, as manifest in each mobilization site, shed light upon several variations in leadership incarnation.

#### The acquisition of language skills and the control of collective action frames

Mobilization among Brazilian migrants reflects

an unequal distribution of Japanese language skills. This fact is related to a wider process: immigration to Japan partly displaced pre-existing social divisions among Brazilian migrants to the linguistic field. In all their mobilizations, language skills would remain a key criteria for distinguishing leadership from the “rank and file”. These skills would enable access to power positions and thus to the resources for collective action. In other words, language proficiency would provide spokesperson status to ethnic leaders who, despite the absence of any formalized institutional validation (elections, etc.), become recognized as ethnic representatives by Japanese authorities. However, the content of these language skills varied from a site to another site of mobilization. The knowledge of labor legislation and collective bargaining was rather crucial in the workers' unions (Urano, Stewart, 2007), whereas, in local organizations and, to some extent, in the Brazilian schools, specific linguistic forms and skills were required for fundraising, canvassing or soliciting public authorities. Nevertheless, ethnic leaders had a common feature: they developed an ability to speak out in public.

Furthermore, language skills represent a “skill of interaction” which is usually connected with the socialization of individuals (Wagner, 2007). They can be involved the occupational socialization. Thus, many Brazilian leaders previously played a role of interpreter (*tsūyaku*) or/and carried out the tasks of translation from Japanese to Portuguese

in factories, in public administration or in public schools. While most Brazilian migrants are Japanese descendants and grew up in families of descendants settled in Brazil, their knowledge of the Japanese language is not a given. Therefore, not all of the Brazilian leaders possess Japanese language skills and the skilled leaders can be divided in two sub-groups: the “heirs” and the “autodidacts”.

The first group is more visible within local organizations. There, the Japanese learning and, more generally, the relations to Japanese people form part of an identity continuum taking place in the family, with the transmission of a cultural background. The linguistic capital of the “heirs” is not limited to language proficiency but includes knowledge of Japanese cultural codes and, especially, knowledge of the Japanese language levels. It enables some Brazilian leaders to develop close contacts with local Japanese authorities, who perceive them as credible voices among migrant people living in their administrative district.

In the Brazilian schools, language skills tend to divide the internal and external dimensions of collective action. At the internal level, Portuguese language skills are valued. However, Japanese language ability is required to deal with local authorities and for fundraising. I observed a division of work between both of these dimensions in a Brazilian school of Saitama prefecture. The founder was an “heir” who carried out the tasks of developing relations between the school and the Japanese authorities. For example, he was in charge of leading the school’s accreditation process for obtaining “miscellaneous school” status (*kakushu gakko*). The director of the school, at the time of the survey, was the founder’s sister-in-law. Nevertheless, she was rather close to the “autodidact” profile, as she was, for example, preparing for the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (*Nihongo nōryoku shiken*).

Among Brazilian leaders of workers’ unions, the acquisition of language skills tends to distinguish the younger generation of ethnic leaders. While these younger ethnic leaders cannot call upon the same wealth of activist experience gained in Brazil

to legitimize their leadership among the unionized migrants<sup>7)</sup>, their Japanese proficiency represents a distinctive ability to access union’ activities and to communicate with the top leaders of Japanese organizations. Their language skills are often developed through autodidacticism, and particularly through their unionist participation. This enables them to internalize the specific language used within the workers unions.

“The union was holding regular meetings, but I was the only Brazilian to take part at that time [in the early 2000s]. It was hard but since then I have improved my *nihongo* [Japanese language skills]. At that time, I didn’t understand very well and I was not able to communicate. Because at the union is different. When you are at factory or with your mates, the words you are using are words of everyday life, common words. However, when you find yourself at the union meeting talking about politics or discussing rights and laws, the kind of words you need to know are very different from the words of everyday life.” (Rivaldo, local union’s leader, Aichi)

Beyond the variety of their acquisition in the three sites studied, language skills remain the main source and instrument of “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1982). They enable connections between collective identity and participant mobilization. Moreover, it should be stressed that “*the generation and elaboration of collective action frames are contested processes*”, which generally involve opponents, medias and public bystanders (Benford, Snow, 2000: 625). Thus, the framing process of collective action remains the preserve of leadership, upon which the means of mobilization depend. For instance, during the march organized in Nagoya in February 2009 (photo above), the organizers did not allow the use of slogans mentioning labor rights, of labor union flags, or of explicit claims to the “right to live in Japan”. In this context, the organizers limited the mobilization framing, so as to merely call upon the Japanese authorities to “assist” Brazilian migrants. However, in April 2009, the measures taken by the Japanese government were merely to assist migrants in their

return home (*kikoku shien jigyô*), on the condition their long-term resident status would be forfeited. The organizers of the February march failed to mobilize Brazilians against this governmental measure.

The difficulties in mobilizing Brazilian migrants at a national level are related to the specific position of ethnic leaders, who mostly remain the intermediaries of external Japanese supporters.

### **An intermediary position between external supporters and the “rank and file”**

Beyond the acquisition of language skills, another determinant of ethnic leadership within the three mobilizations studied was the development of intermediary positions between external Japanese supporters and migrant followers. The engagement of ethnic leaders, who are recruited among migrant people, is crucial for ensuring a long term mobilization. Thus, the role of these mediators generally aims at reducing the social and cultural distance between the conscience constituents and the migrants who are following the mobilizations (Lechien, 2003). Nevertheless, the forms taken by this intermediary position have thus far received little attention. I was able to identify two ways in which such positioning was achieved within the mobilizations of Brazilian people in Japan.

The first of these ways of achieving intermediary positioning reflected a feeling of simultaneously belonging to Brazilian migrants and being different from them. This is especially the case of ethnic leaders in local organizations. Based on the policies of interculturality and “mutual understanding” (*sôgo rikai*), these leaders believe that they are playing a crucial role to improve the relationship between migrant people and Japanese local communities. In their view, most of the migrants would be unable to interact with Japanese people because of a “cultural gap”. And that would justify their specific position within the organizations:

“When I came to Japan, I was married to a Japanese national, and I was very surprised by how Brazilians didn’t have any contact with Japanese people. For example, they [Brazilians] had never heard of the ways that Japanese people cook. It was

so strange for me, but after being in contact with families through the organization, I realized that for those who were living with the two cultures, it was easier to understand both sides.” (Tereza, local organization’s leader, Kawasaki)

The second approach used by ethnic leaders to achieve intermediary positioning related to the construction of a limited space of autonomy from their migrant followers. The main source of autonomy was based on opportunities to occupy positions of responsibility, and potentially to become a salaried employee, within the collective action organization itself. I observed this situation in some local organizations, which had obtained as a status of NPO (Non Profit Organization) *hôjin*, and also within some workers unions. For instance, a young Brazilian leader was able to gain a position leading a local network, as a “*rôkaru netto*”, within the organizational hierarchy of a union in Mie prefecture. He told me “*off-record*” that he was earning a wage from the union, because he was laid off and actually blacklisted by local factories, after having been unionized. Another situation was observed in the Brazilian schools, where some migrants managed to find employment opportunities offering viable alternative to unskilled factory jobs. However sustained by the monthly payments of the migrant families, some schools have been represented as a somewhat limited space of autonomy for ethnic leadership. Thus, some school directors were members of the “national group” and used the school building to organize several meetings.

The feeling of being “in-between” external Japanese supporters and migrant followers, along with the effort to create spaces of limited autonomy, would therefore provide ethnic leaders with the framing needed to create intermediary positions within the mobilizations of Brazilians in Japan. However, these same factors would account for a relative gap between the followers and their leaders. This gap was also connected with the biographical transitions experienced by ethnic leaders.

### **Occupational transition and multipositionality**

Biographical trajectories should be analyzed as

a third determinant of leadership among Brazilian migrants. Furthermore, under the “biographical trajectory” heading, two aspects would weigh particularly heavily upon the leadership incarnation process. First, ethnic leaders were often multipositioned activists who operated on several fields of mobilization. This characteristic was much rarer among the “rank and file”. Secondly, most ethnic leaders were leveraging previous social and occupational experiences through their activist engagement. Multipositionality can be defined as engagement in more than one group or organization (school, workers unions, the “national group”, local institutions for foreign people, etc.), at the time of the survey.

I will illustrate these two aspects of leadership among Brazilian migrants through three biographical case studies. The first is the case of Joana, who was engaged in a local organization in Kawasaki city. She was born in 1967 in Jacareí, a medium-sized city in the State of São Paulo, where she grew up in a family of small wholesalers of fruits and vegetables. She lived together with her Japanese grandparents, with whom she used to talk only in Japanese. Moreover, her father was the secretary-treasurer of the local *kaikan* founded by Japanese migrants and their descendants. There, she was continuously exposed to various aspects of “Japanese culture”, through her enrollment in a private language school and through her participation in traditional festivals. After graduating with a degree in nutrition from a private university in Mogi das Cruzes, she was granted, in 1991, a scholarship from Oita prefecture (*kenpi ryūgakusei*) where her grandparents were previously born. This scholarship would provide her with her first opportunity to travel to Japan. During her studies, she met her future husband, a Japanese engineer who was working in the private sector. After marrying in 1993, the couple settled in the district of Nakahara, a middle class area of Kawasaki city. There, while working as a housewife, she gradually became involved in local movements of foreign people. In 1997, she played an active role as treasurer within an organization of Latin American migrants who

are living in Kanagawa prefecture. The organization’s membership included Argentinian, Brazilian and Peruvian migrants. Then, from 1998 to 2000, she was selected to “represent” Brazilian residents in the second Representative *Assembly for Foreign Residents of Kawasaki City* (*Kawasaki shi gaikokujin shimin daihyōsha kaigi*)<sup>8</sup>. She was again selected to be member of the seventh assembly from 2008 to 2010. In 2000, along with two other Brazilian women, she founded a local group dedicated to education for second-generation of Brazilian migrants in Japan. The group was settled in Kawasaki but was established on the status of the previous Latin Americans group of Kanagawa. Thus, Joana actually played a crucial role in the transition between the two organizations. In 2002, the second group, which focused almost exclusively on the cause of Brazilian children, took part in the “Liaison Group for Supporting Education of Foreign People in Japan” (*Gaikokujin kyōiku shien zenkoku kōryū kai*) and signed, with thirteen other organizations, a common appeal to local governments. Through her engagement in local organizations, Joana was able to make use of not only her language skills but also her past experiences with identity activism in Brazil. She was able to relate the emphasis on inter-generational issues in local *kaikan*, to the direction taken by her community activities in Japan.

The second biographical trajectory is that of Rivaldo, a young union leader in Aichi prefecture. He is from a working class background and grew up in the city of São Paulo. Both his parents were employed: his father, a Japanese descendant, worked in a watch store, and his mother worked in a hair salon. Rivaldo himself started to work at thirteen years of age, in a gas station, and he took evening courses in order to continue his schooling while working during the day. In 1990, the migration of his father to Japan would be a traumatic experience for him. However, in 1995, at seventeen years of age, he would migrate to Japan as well. There, he would find work as an unskilled laborer through brokers associated with factories in Fukui and Gifu prefectures. In 2003, he married his wife, a Brazilian woman of Japanese descent. Outside the

factory, he would organize some cultural activities as a DJ, as well as social events. Finally, he joined a labor union in 2004 after a friend fell victim to a work-related accident in a factory. He would later see joining the union as a biographical milestone: “there is Rivaldo Narayama before being unionized and Rivaldo Narayama after being unionized”. At first, he only took part in meetings and in activities of the regional union which was affiliated with the national confederation Zenrôren. In 2008, he participated in his mobilization as a union member taking part in a local section (*shibu*) founded by the Brazilian workers of an electronic components factory located in Komaki. The local section aimed at fighting against mass layoffs, which were beginning to affect unskilled workers in the Japanese industry. However, the section was not able to move beyond divisions between unionized and non-unionized workers, and thus it was dissolved about ten months after its official establishment. Nevertheless, after the dissolution, Rivaldo was incorporated into the hierarchy of the regional union. He gradually played a mediating role between local sections founded by Brazilian workers, in Aichi and Gifu prefectures, and the regional direction located in Nagoya. Furthermore, he managed to get a position as a production line leader at the new factory where he was working. In 2009, he became involved in the “national group” of Brazilians in Japan, where he would eventually be in charge of the labor issues board. Moreover, he started to work with the media, particularly with ethnic media. For instance, in spring 2010, he organized a “*sôdan mura*” event which officially aimed at providing free labor consultations for migrant people, but which also served to focus media attention on the role of labor unions and, by extension, on the role of some of the union’s ethnic leaders. Finally, in November 2010, Rivaldo was received with a delegation of six members of the regional union at Ministry of Labor in Tokyo. The purpose of the meeting was to talk about a document sent by the delegation a few months earlier, which was related to the “claims of Nikkei Brazilian workers in Japan”.

The biographical trajectory of Rivaldo is more illustrative of the multipositionality of ethnic leadership than it is of the importance of occupational transition. Rivaldo did not go so far as to become a salaried employee of the labor union. Rather, his engagement would highlight a “career of substitution”. His case bears resemblance to those of people who are “autodidacts” and/or who have low levels of education and qualification. In comparison with the trajectory of Joana, it was rather difficult for Rivaldo to put his previous social experiences to use within mobilizations in Japan. However, his unionization gave him an opportunity to develop skills relating to the Japanese language and the labor issues.

The third biographical trajectory I documented is that of Juliana, a Brazilian not of Japanese descent. She was born in 1960 in Mogi das Cruzes (State of São Paulo) and grew up on a small, family-run vegetable farm. Juliana was brought up in the Catholic religion and attended Catholic schools. In the early 1980s, she moved to the campus of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, which is located in Barueri city. There, she graduated with a degree in geography and pedagogy. However, she started to take part in Catholic-oriented and leftist movements against the authoritarian regime and for helping the poor. During her studies, she could become acquainted with Paulo Freire, and she remained to be influenced by his “pedagogy of the oppressed” (Freire, 1983). Moreover, she became an activist, as a “conscience constituent”, for the Landless Movement (*Movimento dos Sem Terra*). After her graduation, she taught history and geography in a Catholic school for “wealthy people”, as she put it. But, during her free time, she became involved in volunteer activities dedicated to promoting literacy among landless people. She would gain experience as a leader within this movement<sup>9</sup>). Furthermore, she became a member of the Brazilian Labor Party (PT) and gained a position of responsibility as a municipal secretary of education for a medium-sized city in the State of São Paulo. However, in 2005, she was invited by a Japanese professor of Tokyo Metropolitan University to take the

leadership of an experimental school in Toyota city (Aichi prefecture). He had come into contact with Juliana through an international network of activists in the education field, which was previously developed around the teaching of Paulo Freire<sup>10</sup>. The school was located in the middle of a residential area where the population of Brazilian workers and their families had rapidly increased since 1990. In that context, Juliana engaged herself, alongside her husband, to the education of the children and teenagers of migrant workers. Drawing inspiration from models for the “pedagogy of the oppressed”, she focused on social change through education. She also used the school as a space for mobilization. Thus, during the period of mass layoffs of unskilled Brazilian workers in Japan in autumn 2008, the school building was used to develop initiatives for solidarity and aid benefiting migrant families in need of housing, food and employment. Beginning in spring 2009, the school reduced the cost of student tuition and sometimes applied the principle of a free attendance for students when both parents were unemployed. Although Juliana took part in the demonstration in Nagoya (see above), her engagement was motivated by the school. This particular focus may be related to a lack of language skills necessary to expand her engagements into the Japanese context. Moreover, she felt social distance from the reality of Brazilian migrants. Nonetheless, she remained a multipositioned activist situated at an international level. She maintained regular contact with Brazilian activists affiliated with the environmentalist and consumer movements. Furthermore, she continued her efforts against authoritarian regimes, by advocating for the protection of human rights in Latin America. Thus, the international mobilization of Latin American activists against the military coup in Honduras in June 2009 highlighted her close connections with the network of activists.

Juliana’s trajectory illustrates how the reconversion of previous activist experiences can be used to provide leadership within mobilizations, including, in this case, in mobilizations for the education of Brazilian youth in Japan. In spite of many

differences in the migration process, the three biographical trajectories stress the impact of occupational transition in the processes of leadership incarnation. Moreover, multipositionality being both a result and a determinant of leadership, it is a very useful criterion for the purpose of identifying ethnic leadership positions. However, an intersectional approach toward analyzing leadership should also identify leadership’s gendered and racialized dimensions, highlighting different configurations found in the different sites studied.

### **The gendered and racialized dimensions of leadership incarnation**

Leadership incarnation does not merely result from ethnic resources (language skills) and class-based differences (intermediary position and occupational transition) between the ethnic leaders and their followers. It is also produced by gendered and racialized processes which structure top positions among Brazilian migrants. Some of these processes are cross-sited, such as the gendered ways for naming ethnic leaders. Female leaders, for example, are often called by their first name, whereas male leaders are generally called by their surname. However, the division between those called by their first name and those called by their surname is simultaneously racialized insofar as the latter are more often of Japanese ancestry while the former generally are more strongly associated with Brazilian or Latin identities. Beyond this parallel, the processes of leadership incarnation amount to an “accomplishment” of the social relations of class, gender and race (West, Fenstermaker, 1995).

The local organizations studied are led by Brazilian women who can boast Japanese descent on both sides of their family. Their parents generally are Japanese nationals or descendants (*Nisei*, *Sansei*, etc.). They faced the racial stigma of being a “Japanese woman” (*Japonesa*) in Brazil, even though it is not always related to negative experiences in their narrative. Although they mostly grew up in rural or suburban areas of Brazil<sup>11</sup>, they had access to a relatively high level of education in comparison with the average Brazilian migrant in

Japan. Furthermore, they married Japanese nationals and/or are live in the Japanese middle class areas. Some of them have never worked in a factory. However, when they immigrated to Japan, most of these women had to “negotiate the politics of “passing” as Japanese in their daily lives” (Chung, 2010, 54). That is a key point of their leadership incarnation within the mobilizations of Brazilian migrants, because they had to adopt a double strategy to “brazilianize” their social image and to reverse the negative stigma against Brazilians in Japan. They did so by making certain ethnoracial features visible: the use of (large) earrings, the use of their Brazilian name and of their surname in katakana to emphasize their foreign origins. Moreover, they link the mobilizations with a valorization of “Brazilian culture” and the Portuguese language. Nonetheless, the leadership of these Brazilian women relies on the common experience of motherhood and on their wish to develop a special relationship with their children who are born or grew up in Japan:

“I actually engaged in the organization because of my sons. I wished that they learned Portuguese and they had more contact with Brazilian people. Because they were born here and the attended [only] the school of Japan” (Joana, local organization’s leader)

Hence, their language skills and the incarnation of an ethnicized motherhood enabled them to develop close contact with local authorities. However, in their contacts with local authorities, female leaders tend to conform to the expected image of a middle class Japanese woman involved in the education of her children.

By contrast, leadership within labor unions is incarnated by men from a working class background who have mixed ethnoracial origins (*mestiços*). Most of them are descendants of Japanese and other ethnoracial groups settled in Brazil. Although they have a Japanese surname, they generally do not pass as Japanese in their everyday lives. For instance, when Rivaldo is walking in public with his

wife, who has Japanese origins on both sides of her family, Japanese people spontaneously talk with her. Furthermore, many union leaders who came to Japan to work in factories, dropped out of school to do so. Thus, they not only face difficulties related to status as a foreigner and as an unskilled worker in the Japanese society, but also difficulties arising from racial prejudices against Brazilian migrants. However, they manage to incarnate a strong representation of the union leader in Brazil (masculine, mixed racialized and linked to working class<sup>12</sup>), which enables them to gain relative legitimacy on the labor issues among Brazilian migrants.

In the Brazilian schools in Japan, many leadership positions, but not all of them, are incarnated by non-Japanese descendant women. They are generally married with Japanese descendants who came to Japan as unskilled industrial workers. These Brazilian women are often identified as “White” and sometimes “American” in the Japanese context. They generally have some previous experience as teacher in the Brazilian education field, or else some experience in private management. They incarnate the otherness (*gaijin*) in relation to the “Japaneseness”, which can be a strategic advantage when it comes to mobilizing migrant families for the benefit of Brazilian schooling and the promotion of the Portuguese language in Japan.

However, as Juliana’s case illustrates, female leaders without Japanese origins, working in Brazilian schools, tend to lack the language skills, necessary to develop meaningful contact with Japanese authorities. On a more general level, though, the leadership incarnation process is also gendered because most Brazilian women, even those who are fluent in Japanese, do not have access to top positions within the “national group”. Furthermore, a similar trend was visible in the Association of Brazilian Schools in Japan (AEBJ), which nonetheless represents a relatively feminized sector of migrant work. Out of five association presidents elected since the association’s founding in 2001, only two have been women, and both were elected after 2008. The most recent, who took over leadership of the organization in 2009, is a director of a

Brazilian school in Ibaraki prefecture. She is proficient in Japanese and had already gained a wealth of management experience in multinational firms in Brazil.

#### **4 Intersectionality and leadership incarnation in the space of minority mobilizations in Japan**

To conclude, I would like to come back to the issue of how leadership plays out in ordinary life. Although leadership is rarely used as a conceptual tool to examine intermediary positions, in particular among underprivileged populations, my paper serves to demonstrate its usefulness for analyzing the mobilizations of migrant people. Three determinants have been identified in the processes of leadership incarnation: the acquisition of language skills, the emergence of an intermediary position between the external supporters and the migrant followers, the occupational transition and the multipositionality which are crossing the biographical trajectories of the ethnic leaders. Thus, my paper points out that leadership incarnation is not necessarily determined by an upper or middle class background and/or by previous activist experiences. However, not all social experiences develop the skills necessary for the collective action.

The use of multisited fieldwork is helpful for the purpose of identifying the limits of the ethnic leadership approach. Thus, leadership incarnation among Brazilian migrants in Japan remains heterogeneous and, above all, connected to gendered and racialized dimensions. Compared to class-based identities, gender and ethnoracial categories usually are introduced in public debate as “natural” categories and not as “political” categories, which contributes to hiding the historical construction (*historicité*) of these identities (Achin, Dorlin, Rennes, 2008). To counter this phenomenon, the multisited approach toward mobilizations of Brazilian migrants in Japan highlights the variety of the authority figures which are articulated in the

processes of race, gender and class. I observed the figure of mixed racial men from a working class background, active in labor unions; the figure of women from wealthy backgrounds, passing as “Japanese” and active in local organizations; and within Brazilian schools, the figure of women living in the Brazilian working class areas in Japan, passing as “white”. Hence, leadership incarnation follows the strong and complex processes of social relation. But, it also emphasizes the reflexive attitude of the ethnic leaders, who selectively highlight some aspects of their identity rather than others, including dimensions of gender, race and class, depending of the site of mobilization. The variety of the configurations observed is indicative of how Brazilian leaders take part in producing specific claims and interests, in (re)defining the boundaries of the migrant group itself and, finally, in stressing its “discriminating features” (Tournon, Maiz, 2005).

Lastly, the analysis of leadership incarnation among Brazilian migrants has to take account of their incorporation into the space of minority mobilizations in Japan. Such a space is structured by the division and coalition processes which occur between several ethnoracial and national groups (Chinese, Koreans, Philippines, etc.). Ethnic leaders actually play a crucial role in maintaining relationships between all these groups. More generally, the mobilization of these groups takes part in redefining the boundaries of contemporary Japanese society.

#### **Notes**

1. I am very grateful to Daniel Hotard for his thorough proofreading of English. His help was invaluable for improving this article.
2. The word currently used in Japanese comes from the English “leader” and was translated in katakana.
3. By national group, we mean that migrant people is primarily categorized by their nationality in most of the countries around the world and, particularly, in Japan where the regime of nationality is exclusive. However, the na-

tional categorization of migrant people can be divided into ethnoracial dimensions which are related to the minority issue.

4. About five men of the organization committee, four were Japanese descendants: two independent managers, one manager of a multinational firm and one professor of university. The only non-Japanese descendant member was an old soccer player of the Japan league.
5. <http://nnbj.brasilbunkacenter.org> [accessed October 10, 2010]
6. Five migrants were simultaneously engaged in one of the three sites studied and in the “national group”.
7. Many old leaders were involved from the early 1980s in the Brazilian unionist and leftist movements against the authoritarian regime (1964-1984).
8. Founded in 1996, the assembly is a consultative body of Kawasaki city. Each assembly is established for a period of two years.
9. In the 1990s, about one third of the Landless Movement leaders are women (Veltmeyer, Petras, 2002).
10. He had been himself a student of Paulo Freire at the University of Campinas from 1989 to 1991.
11. The occupations of their parents are connected with smallholding or with small business often linked to the vegetables production, which was widely developed among Japanese migrants settled in Brazil.
12. Some union leaders, in particular among the younger, refer to the figure of the President Lula, who previously was an important leader of the Brazilian unionist movement at the beginning of the 1980s.

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