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ARTICLE

Self-entrepreneurship and coloniality of power in the experience of workers in Agreste das Confecções

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Abstract

The main objective of this text is to analyze the implications of the coloniality of power for workers in the Agreste das Confecções, located in the city of Caruaru-PE. To achieve this, we used information provided in ten interviews, carried out in 2019, with workers from nine factions that make up the jeans manufacturing chain in the Salgado neighborhood, in the city of Caruaru. In theoretical terms, we mobilize concepts of modernity, coloniality of power and neoliberalism. As partial conclusions, we point to the fact that the modern/colonial/capitalist logic imposes itself in the Agreste of Clothing in two different moments and in different ways. Particularly in the phase with the rise of a neoliberal capitalist logic, new power relations are observed between manufactures and factions, as well as a new meaning is elaborated around work, marked by the discourse of self-entrepreneurship among workers. We conclude that the neoliberal discourse of self-entrepreneurship is a mechanism of modernity for the maintenance of the coloniality of power in the Agreste region of Pernambuco.

Keywords: Modernity. Coloniality. Neoliberalism. Self-entrepreneurship. Agreste das Confecções.

Autoempreendedorismo e colonialidade do poder na experiência de trabalhadores(as) do Agreste das Confecções

Resumo

O presente texto tem como objetivo central analisar as implicações da colonialidade do poder para trabalhadores(as) do Agreste das Confecções, localizados na cidade de Caruaru-PE. Para alcançá-lo, utilizamos informações concedidas em 10 entrevistas, feitas no ano de 2019, com trabalhadores(as) de 9 facções que compõem a rede de confecção de jeans no bairro do Salgado, na cidade de Caruaru. Em termos teóricos, mobilizamos conceitos de modernidade, colonialidade do poder e neoliberalismo. Como conclusões parciais, apontamos para o fato de a lógica moderna/colonial/capitalista se impor no Agreste das Confecções em dois momentos diferentes e de modos distintos. Particularmente na fase de ascensão de uma lógica capitalista neoliberal, novas relações de poder são observadas entre fabricos e facções, bem como um novo sentido é elaborado em torno do trabalho, marcado pelo discurso do autoempreendedorismo entre os(as) trabalhadores(as). Concluímos que o discurso neoliberal do autoempreendedorismo é um mecanismo da modernidade para a manutenção da colonialidade do poder na região do Agreste pernambucano.

Palavras-chave: Modernidade. Colonialidade. Neoliberalismo. Autoempreendedorismo. Agreste das Confecções.

Autoemprendimiento y colonialidad del poder en la experiencia de los trabajadores de Agreste das Confecções

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este texto es analizar las implicaciones de la colonialidad del poder para los trabajadores de la Agreste das Confecções, ubicada en la ciudad de Caruaru-PE. Para lograrlo, se utilizó la información proporcionada en diez entrevistas, realizadas en 2019, a trabajadores de nueve facciones que conforman la cadena fabril de jeans en el barrio Salgado, en la ciudad de Caruaru. En términos teóricos, movilizamos conceptos de modernidad, colonialidad del poder y neoliberalismo. Como conclusiones parciales, señalamos el hecho de que la lógica moderna/colonial/capitalista se impone en el Agreste de la Indumentaria en dos momentos diferentes y de maneras distintas. Particularmente en la fase con el auge de una lógica capitalista neoliberal, se observan nuevas relaciones de poder entre manufacturas y facciones, así como se elabora un nuevo significado en torno al trabajo, marcado por el discurso del autoemprendimiento entre los trabajadores. Se concluye que el discurso neoliberal del autoemprendimiento es un mecanismo de la modernidad para el mantenimiento de la colonialidad del poder en la región Agreste de Pernambuco.

Palabras clave: Modernidad. Colonialidad. Neoliberalismo. Emprendimiento propio. Agreste das Confecções.

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INTRODUCTION

The social image related to the Northeastern region of Brazil has historically been linked to "archaic" forms related to pre-capitalism, which has been disseminated by various means of communication. This "archaism", however, is a social construction which is a reflection of the Northeast as a peripheral region of the country, marked by an agrarian structure, colonelism, migration, urbanization and poorly directed public development policies, which reinforce the peripheral position of the region and its conditions of social inequality (Bernardes, 2007).

This scenario of inequality calls attention to the Agreste region of the State of Pernambuco, also known as the Agreste das Confecções (Agreste of Clothing)[1], whose economic activity linked to clothing emerged in the 1940s and 1950s by necessity during the region's severe drought, which negatively affected the continuity of the local agrarian economy (Milanês, 2020). The expansion of the production of clothes and commercial fairs commerce for its distribution constituted what was known as the "Territory of Sulanca", beginning in the 1950s, and by 1980 clothing production was already the central economic activity of the region. Since then, it has achieved a national profile, especially during the past 25 years (Pereira et al., 2022). With this increase in production, which according to the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae) (2013) takes place in 10 municipalities which make up the complex, it now consists of 18,803 production units, with 24% of them located in Caruaru, an important city in the dynamics of clothing production.

It should be emphasized that the vigor of the activity did not lead to the abandonment of its original and central trait: informal work realized in domestic micro-communities, which have directed its production since its formation, according to Pereira and Freire (2021). However, this trait is being combined with the diversification of production units, as we will see below.

Even given the informality of family production and the survival nature of clothing production created in the context of the Agreste of Pernambuco, we have recently observed a call for modernization of the businesses, driven by instituitions that we call collective agents, such as Sebrae and the National Service of Industrial Learning (Senai), which have strived to formalize, rationalize, and legitimize practical knowledge for certifications, realizing organizational, institutional, and pedagogical redefinitions based on business logic; elaborating strategic plans, offering consulting, acting as executing agents in public education policies; encouraging new dynamics in worker training (substituting informal processes and practices); as well as installing new management standards (substituting habitual and intuitive methods) that are more and more connected with the dynamic of capital accumulation (Pereira Neto & Oliveira, 2013).

In this scenario, there is a very strong call for entrepreneurship, promoted as a solution to the problems related to economic and social development, but which may reinforce existing unequal social structures. Ferraz (2021) emphasizes that the entrepreneurship discourse is based on principles such as individualism and the individual being responsible for economic and social issues, which has resulted in unemployment and poverty no longer being questioned, for example, as systemic problems related to a lack of public policies and the concentration of wealth which generate inequality. Once again, modernization is present, encouraging the discourse of self-entrepreneurship and reinforcing the precarious nature of work relationships. In this context, the informal Agreste workers are those most affected by this process.

Recent studies have sought to understand the modern dynamics that exist in the Agreste of Pernambuco, like the work of Santos and Helal (2018, p. 185), which is based on the notion of hybridism in analyzing "intersections between modernity and traditionalism". Particularly in terms of what are referred to as commercial centers which have recently been created in the region, Santos and Nascimento (2018) focus on the work routines of the Santa Cruz Fashion Center to demonstrate the coexistence between modern elements (such as seeking better customer service and product quality, the use of technologies to publicize products and broaden the range of customers, as well as the importance placed on the internationalization of the Santa Cruz Fashion Center) and traditional elements (for example, the Christian faith behind the belief system held dear by many of the fair workers found at the Santa Cruz Fashion Center, the oral learning passed through generations, the ties of friendship that exist between the owners of the boxes, as well as the importance of the element of "trust", which is the basis for the relationship between buyers and producers). Following this line of argument, other studies have all emphasized the tensions between the process of modernizing economic activity and the permanence of informality in various ways, including

1 The term mentioned here "Agreste das Confecções", or Agreste of Clothing, was popularized by Alana Moraes de Souza in the publication of her dissertation in 2012. The researcher used the term to refer to the Clothing Pole in the Agreste region of Pernambuco, the socio-productive aglomeration of clothing production in this region.

salaried work and scams in the production and commerce of clothing, and the organization of managing work, resulting in a complex intertwined dynamic between the formal and informal (Pereira, 2018; Pereira et al., 2022).

Sá (2018), in turn, seeks support in the literature of Pierre Bourdieu to defend the existence of a fair habitus among the children of the fairs, characterized by three main trends: the maintenance of the street fair heritage, marked by ties of friendship and the concession of discounts, for example; the denial of the original fair member conditions; and the adaptation to the contemporary market, characterized by the coordination of the activities of clothing production lines, by monitoring trends and management consulting. According to the author, these are dispositional, individual, and collective constructs.

What these previous studies do not portray is the articulation between modernity and coloniality, given that modern principles of progress and evolution, among others, only exist through the exploitation of people considered to be backwards, or in other words, coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2014). In the case of the Agreste of Pernambuco, part of the Brazilian Northeast, or in other words, a peripheral context located within the Global South, it is possible to perceive that the modernization efforts, illustrated by a neoliberal and self-entrepreneurship discourse, characterize mechanisms that maintain coloniality, understood as a pattern of power forged in the colonization process that still exists today (Quijano, 2014).

Driven by the presented reflections, we have sought to analyze the implications of the coloniality of power for the workers in the Agreste of Clothing located in the city of Caruaru, PE. We believe that this study makes important contributions to the literature by articulating the discourse of self-entrepreneurship of workers whose situation remains precarious due to the maintenance of coloniality. It also demonstrates that the Agreste of Pernambuco is a context marked by the dynamics of internal colonialism, given that it is part of the Brazilian Northeast, which possesses marks derived from the colonization process which distinguishes this context from others, it being important to analyze the phenomena in this territory based on the selected theoretical approach (Freyre, 2004; Albuquerque Jr., 2011). Moreover, we reinforce the political nature of this study, which seeks to "escape the simplifications and reductions of the various peripheral interests which can and should contribute to the formation of a world in common [...] for all of its members" (Couto et al., 2021, p. 78).

The origin and transformations of clothing production in the Agreste region of Pernambuco

The recently denominated Agreste of Clothing (Souza, 2012) arose during the 1940s and 1950s due to the needs of the local population, because it was a dry region which at that time was in the middle of a crisis relating to the main economic activity at the time, namely the cultivation of corn and cotton. In the face of these difficulties, the population began to sew leftover fabric which was brought from Recife, the capital of Pernambuco. These were scraps of cloth, textile industry rejects, collected by merchants, which were brought to the Agreste and commercialized at low cost (Milanês, 2020). Then they began to utilize the leftovers of fabric from the Brás neighborhood of São Paulo, which made the rise of clothing activity in Agreste different from other centers of textile development and production, because its base was not related to any company strategy of an anchor industry installed in the locale, and was not even favored by the development policies of the Northeastern Development Superintendency (Sudene) — which passed by the region and thus made this production different from the Clothing Pole of Fortaleza, for example. It also did not derive from the fiscal incentives conceded by the State. The search for survival associated with the "invention" of an activity to earn income was a central mark of the Agreste of Clothing, bearing in mind the local socio-economic conditions.

The clothes produced in the Agreste of Clothing were known as "sulanca", because the fabric came from the South, and came from synthetic fabrics known as helanca (polyester). These inexpensive clothes were associated with poor quality and directed towards the poorer classes (Bezerra, 2013).

During the 1960s and 1970s there was an increase in demand for clothes and "from family clothes producers, which impelled by the desire for independence to have their own businesses, led them to create a proliferation of 'backyard' micro-businesses which began to have sewing as their main source of income" (Pereira et al., 2022, p. 456). Later on, in the 1980s, clothing production developed and became the principal economic activity of the region. Suppliers of fabric and other inputs for this type of industry installed themselves in Santa Cruz do Capibaribe, and new machines and equipment were incorporated into the production process to improve productivity. The first small manufacturing facilities, registered as companies, were constructed and workers were hired formally. It should be emphasized that this expansion combined with the permanence of autonomous household work, or in other words, there was this base of informality which corresponds to approximately 90% of local production (Pereira et al., 2022).

A little later on, there was an attempt to deepen changes and strategies in this scenario. What was at the beginning just related to the survival of the local population, was consolidated so that the State and collective agents launched projects in the clothing production sector with the intent of transforming the Territory of Sulanca into a Clothing Pole, which meant pushing enterprises to establish tight connections with more capitalized markets and their respective dynamics. At its heart, the objective was conceding a renewed purpose of capital accumulation, as we will describe below.

This modernization process of activities began at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the following decade with the re-elaboration of the discourse with these clothing producers now being termed businesspeople and the Territory of Sulanca now being termed a Clothing Pole. In this sense, the collective agents tried to implement changes and professionalization courses, directed towards the management and organization of small businesses (Moraes, 2013), through rational management practices and the organization of production designed to generate profits. In this way, informality was given a new significance and was no longer related to a survival strategy, but rather a new dynamic of accumulation (Bezerra, 2013).

In the first decade of this century, institutions elaborated a joint action which sought to train the workers of the production units and construct a new image for the Pole, with the creation of commercial centers and business roundtables. Their intent was to "integrate local experience with the production and commercial logic of larger national and international spaces'' (Lima, 2013, p. 419).

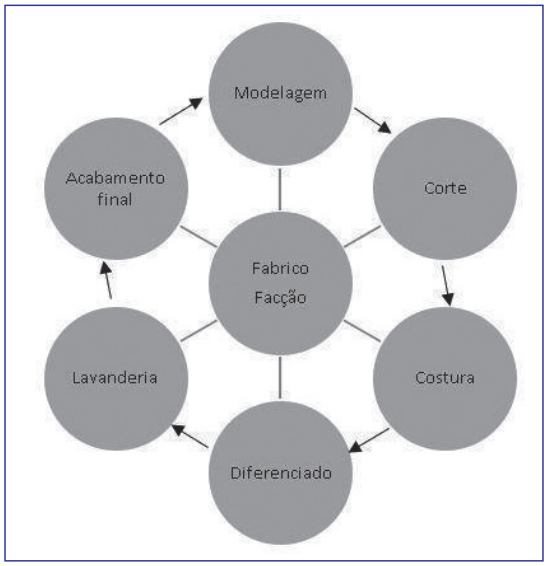
Various agents participated in the consolidation of the Pole, local ones as well as outside ones working in this space, such as trimming and fabric stores which established themselves in the region. On the other hand, important collective agents in this process were Sebrae, the Commercial and Business Association of Caruaru (Acic) and the Clothing Industry Union of the State of Pernambuco (Sindivest) (Pereira Neto & Oliveira, 2013).

In this production territory, there were countless production units known as manufacturers and workshops. Workshops are the production spaces located in homes responsible for the clothing production process, which do not run the risks of the business which includes selling the finished pieces to the final clients, whether they are wholesale or retail (Pereira Neto, 2013). In the production circuit, the manufacturers deliver parts of pieces so that they could realize their work (Braga, 2019). Thus, workshops are part of the clothing manufacturing segment and serve as links between informal manufacturers and formal factories that use these units in their production process (Pereira & Freire, 2021).

In the flow of producing jeans, the first step is the modeling with the creation of molds in accordance with the designations of the manufacturers. Then, the molds are delivered to the cutting workshop, where the fabric is cut according to the sent molds. The next step is the assembly of the pieces, which is the responsibility of the sewing workshop, which can realize the entire process or part of it, depending on its access to types of sewing machines. In this situation, part of the piece is sent to another sewing workshop, which is the case of bar tacks and buttonholing[2]. Then the pieces can follow two paths: they can go to differentiated[3] workshops or go to the laundry. Finally, the pieces are delivered to the finishing workshops to remove leftover points of thread and package the pieces to enter the factories (Andrade, 2019). We can observe the production organization for jeans in Figure 1.

2 Bar tacks and buttonholing are processes realized by workshops. Bar tacks consist of putting more stitches in pockets or where needed to guarantee more integrity for the piece so that it does not rip during the washing process. Buttonholing is placing buttons on the pieces made of jeans.
3 Differentiated processes can be realized manually (as is the case with workshops) or through laser machines (found in large factories). This occurs in the processing of jeans with the application of chemical products and sanding, among other processes which leave the piece with worn effects, which is fraying on the pockets.

Figure 1
Organization of jean production flow in workshops



Source: Elaborated by the authors (2024).

The dynamics of the region differ from other clothing poles in its formation, development, and modernization as well as the dynamics of how it functions. Among its peculiarities, informality can be highlighted as a facet which has reformulated itself during the history of the region, being present from its hiring to its interpersonal relationships in the management and organization of work (Pereira, 2018).

From the same perspective, Braga (2019) points out the formation of the Agreste of Clothing with informal foundations, understanding that the expansion of the activities and attempts at modernization were accompanied by the characteristics of the formation of the Sulanca region.

The coloniality of power and the critique of the self-entrepreneurship discourse

In this study, we understand that there are multiple decolonial approaches. From post-colonialism, passing through the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality group — developed in the Latin American context — to the Epistemologies of the South, there are various concepts and understandings which permit the comprehension of how colonization processes affect the current world configuration (Santos, 2024).

In this work, we will mobilize the concept of the coloniality of power, based on the Latin American context and refer to the relationships of power and control imposed during the colonial period which have persisted even after the formal independence of the colonized territories. In this sense, the coloniality of power can be characterized as a world pattern of power, whose origins date back to the colonization process of Latin America beginning in 1492 (Dussel, 2005), which is anchored in binary social classifications and relationships of domination, exploitation, and conflict among various social groups in a society (Quijano, 2014).

In terms of these social classifications, we emphasize the racial classification which, according to Quijano (2005), is utilized as a criterion of social distinction which influences economic and social relations. We also highlight the notion of internal colonialism, referring to internal social classifications or hierarchies in former colonized nations which reproduce and maintain the colonial logic of these contexts (González Casanova, 2007).

We can say that coloniality is strongly tied to capitalism which becomes particularly evident when we observe the context of work. In the 1960s, Quijano (2003) observes that the coloniality of power, associated with new trends in capitalism, affected

the labor-capital relationship and excluded workers from a stable salaried job, leading them to a process of "marginalization", in which they organized themselves around a "marginal pole" in which relationships were heterogeneous and precarious, but not outside capitalism.

Beginning with the crisis in the 1970s, there was an increase in this marginalization, mainly in peripheral and dependent regions (Quijano, 2003). It was at this point that the term "survival strategies" came into common use to refer to the workers who were at the margin of salaried work, and informal work came to be used to "make work fragile and flexible, making subcontracting universal" (Quijano, 2003, p. 413), based on neoliberal logic which will be discussed below.

The coloniality of power also was strongly interwoven with the idea of modernity, given that the construction of European modernity was only possible through the exploitation of other peoples and continents and its universalist discourse hides the historical dependence related to colonization (Quijano, 2003; Mignolo, 2008; Dussel, 1993). In this sense, to Maldonado-Torres (2014), modernity is not a universal phenomenon; it is a specific historic process, emphasizing its relationship with geopolitical power and colonial exploitation. Maldonado-Torres (2014) demonstrates the myth of empty colonized lands, a justification used by European modernity for the occupation and colonization of territories. However, the concept of emptiness was created based on a European perspective, ignoring the ethnic and cultural diversity of the pre-colonial societies.

Another questioning developed by the decolonial approach in the context of Latin America is the temporal fixation of modernity between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. To the authors, the beginning would be the conquest of the Americas with the extermination of the indigenous peoples and the importing of manual labor, which collaborated with the peripheralization process, marked by the reproduction of European social, political and economic organisations.

The Northeast, in particular, contains the Agreste of Pernambuco, which is the focus of this study, and had its formation marked by the colonial/modern dynamic, which violated local knowledge and instituted a system of sugar cane production based on slavery. Remnants of this system remain in the region's social dynamics to the present day, whether it is the maintenance of the same families in power, or the racial relations of treating black people in an inferior manner, or the stigma of the backwardness of the Northeast in comparison with the "more developed" regions of the country (Bernardes, 2007; Freyre, 2004; Albuquerque Jr., 2011).

The coloniality of power can also be observed in the context of the job market, or in other words, in the permanence of workers in various occupations which reproduce regional, racial, and gender inequalities rooted historically in an agreed upon manner. In this sense, a question to be asked is who gets formal protected work? To stay far away from determinism, let's examine some data from the job market related to the year 2022 [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), 2024], we see that 28% of women work part time (up to 30 hours per week), remembering that they also assume the care of the home and domestic tasks. This is a flexible work week with negative effects on worker income, keeping it low. We may observe that for men during the same period of analysis the percentage was less than 20% totaling 14.4%. However, it is important to emphasize that for black and mixed-race women the figure is 30.9%, compared to 24.9% for white women. By region, the numbers increase, with 36.5% of women performing this type of work, as compared to Brazil as a whole (28%) and the South (22.3%), with this being the smallest participation among the regions.

In terms of informal work, the percentage of men (37.3%) is slightly less than the number for women (39.6%), however, when we look at the social marker of color or race, "black or mixed-race women and men present larger proportions of informal work compared to the white population" (IBGE, 2024, p. 4). This data reinforces the persistence of coloniality/modernity in the current work context, at the expense of the female and black population, even though we understand that other groups have also been marginalized by the colonial logic.

It should be stressed that the persistence of coloniality and modernity, to Meneses (2014), occurs through what the author terms the colonization of bodies and minds, as articulated by Fanon (2008). To Fanon (2008) and Meneses (2014), colonization went beyond the exploitation of the material resources of a people, and involved the colonizers' imposition of social, cultural, and psychological patterns on the colonized. These patterns were introduced to shape the behavior and mentalities of the colonized through symbolic domination which presented itself in various forms like religion. In this way, to Meneses (2014),

the colonization of bodies and minds still have profound consequences, because social, political, and economic relationships are still marked by these colonial patterns.

In this work, we understand the self-entrepreneurship discourse as a mechanism of modernity to maintain the coloniality of power, which perpetuates itself due to the colonization of bodies and minds mentioned by Meneses (2014). In this discourse, we perceive jointly the individualization of economic and social problems, and the naturalization of the precarious nature of work, and the dynamics of capitalism and exploitation (Ferraz, 2021).

Self-entrepreneurship connects itself to a new work culture that encourages risk, uncertainty, free initiative, which stands in contrast with the pattern of salaried work experienced in the Fordist social pact of advanced capitalist nations and Brazil, even from its partial nature in this country. This is an ideal of autonomy which camouflages informal work, producing gray areas between formality and informality, as well as subjectively capturing the adhesion of workers to precarious working conditions, which are at the margin of social protection (Lima, 2010; Rosenfield, 2015).

According to Lima (2024), the deconstruction of salaried culture refers to changes in the organization of work which occurred in Brazil in the 1990s under the umbrella of the restructuring of production, following the neoliberal recipe of the Washington Consensus for countries on the periphery of capitalism. According to the author, "Latin America followed the formula of privatization, of diminishing the state apparatus, and outsourcing production [...]" (Lima, 2024, p. 7). In addition, the discourse of entrepreneurship, which up until then was restricted to technological changes in the 1970s, gained greater force and the general reorganization of the job market now forges the ideal of "being one's own boss".

In a broader form, this is a discourse linked to neoliberalism that, according to Harvey (2005), is a political and economic model that features an ideology that the well-being of people can be achieved through the maximization of business freedom, and that the principles of private property, the free market, and free commerce should be implemented in economies in general. The main consequences of this was the reduction of the role of the State as the regulator of labor relations, the privatization of state companies, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small portion of the population. This reduction of the role of the State as well as the change in the correlation of forces in the labor-capital relationship made room for increasing flexibility in labor laws and, as a consequence, increased precariousness in labor relations — the example of reduced salaries and workers' rights and the absence of social benefits, such as retirement.

It is important to emphasize that what is understood as the more precarious nature of the process is the loss of previously conquered rights, or in other words, it can only be observed by comparing two or more moments in history. In this sense, the reference in this debate are salaried societies and, as a consequence, protected and stable although we understand that this is not the only possibility for fair work, although we understand that this is not the only possibility for fair work. In contrast of salarial societies, we refer to the precariousness of occupations lowered and characterized by the instability (of income, ties) experienced by workers, as argued by Leite (2011).

In Brazil, the confirmation of a properly modern job market occurred in the 1930s, with its main characteristic being salaried urban work in the industry of São Paulo (Barbosa, 2016). Even with the regulatory order implemented in the following decade, a large contingent of the work force was excluded from regulated occupations, seeking means of survival outside of the normative framework of the Consolidation of Labor Laws[4]. The denominated period of development from the 1950s to the 1970s, in which the political intervention of the State in the economy resulted in economic growth, included the creation of Sudene and incentives for local industrialization, accentuated regional disparities (between the Northeast and the South-Central regions) with isolated points of development and the persistence of social inequalities. This was the way in which the accumulation of capital became viable in the country, producing asymmetries (North-South, formal-informal, rural-urban, etc.) with the modern benefitting from the traditional. In the words of Oliveira (2008, p. 60): "introducing new relationships in the archaic, and reproducing archaic relationships in the new."

4 Within the purpose of this article, we will not trace a timeline of the constitution of this country's workforce until the 1980s, given that our larger purpose is to recover several elements that contributed to the understanding of the relationship between self-entrepreneurship and the coloniality of power. For a more accurate characterization of the formation of the labor market, consult Barbosa (2016).

We emphasize that this more recent entrepreneurship discourse ignores certain barriers which are significant in the market, such as access to capital, education, and the contact network; or in other words, this rhetoric promotes a discourse which makes all equal, without dealing with the favoring of people with socio-economic advantages. In this scenario, self-entrepreneurship is not a free choice, but rather a precarious option forced upon workers by the lack of formal jobs.

First, it is possible to say that the discourse of entrepreneurship also is tied to development projects, is part of neoliberal logic, and tends to structure grandiose projects for economic growth which favor elites and increase social and regional inequalities (Harvey, 2005). In other terms, the entrepreneurship discourse maintains the coloniality of power.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The information presented in this study comes from semi-structured interviews realized to produce this study of informal work, self-entrepreneurship, and working for oneself, which became the concluding work for a degree in Administration in 2022. It is, above all, a qualitative and exploratory study (Gil, 2008; Minayo, 2009), to the extent that it seeks to interpret the context of the Agreste of Pernambuco, widely studied by an interdisciplinary literature.

This study was realized in the production sector in the Salgado neighborhood of Caruaru, a city of the Agreste of Pernambuco, specifically devoted to the process of producing jeans. Ten interviews were conducted in the year 2019, two in the exploratory phase with an unstructured script, and eight semi-structured interviews with a script of questions referring to the subjects of informal work, self-entrepreneurship and working for oneself. All of the interviews were realized in person in the interviewees' work environment in Caruaru (house, garage, and veranda), with more than seven hours of recordings averaging 43 minutes per interview.

The interviewees worked in nine Caruaruan workshops which make up the production process for manufacturing denim clothes, including: one cutting and modeling workshop; four sewing workshops; one differentiated workshop; and two finishing workshops, thus providing a broad vision of the work's organization. The names of the subjects were substituted for pseudonyms to preserve their identities and here will be designated as E01 to E10.

Through a fellow colleague in the university, we entered into contact with the first interviewee in the empiric field, a woman who works as a thread remover[5]. Later, the ten people accessed indicated others who were part of the circuit — acquaintances or relatives who worked in the clothing production sector — always taking care to cover the entire jeans production process, which is known as the snowball strategy (Vergara, 2000).

Of the ten people interviewed, six were women, sewers and thread removers, and four were cutters in the differentiated and sewing workshops as can be visualized in Table 1. Most had worked in clothing production for more than ten years.

5 Person responsible for removing threads from clothes.

Table 1
Profile of the interviewees

Workshops/Workers	Profile
Finishing Workshop Interviewee 1 – Thread Remover	Owner/worker, female, separated, three children, began by necessity to add to her income through relatives who included her in the thread removal network.
Sewing Workshop Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 3 – Seamster and Seamstress	Couple who are owners with one child. The wife began working in this process at an early age, learned the entire assembly stage working in factories. The husband began working in production through working at a laundry.
Sewing Workshop Interviewee 4 – Seamstress	Owner/worker, 50 years old, female, three children, began working at 16 years of age. Entered clothing production through her stepmother and learned the jean assembly process in practice.
Cutting Workshop Interviewee 5 – Cutter	Owner/worker, 33 years old, male, two daughters. Transfers patients in a hospital and works as a cutter. Learned to cut in practice working in factories, where he established a contact network.
Finishing Workshop Interviewee 6 – Bar Tacker and Buttonholer	Owner/worker, 40 years old, female, married, one daughter, high school. Learned in practice, observing the work of her sister-in-law. Has a finishing workshop.
Differentiated Workshop Interviewee 7 – Diferentiated Specialist	Owner/worker, 31 years old, male, married, technical major in human resources. Learned the production process in practice, working in laundries in Caruaru and Toritama.
Cutting Workshop Interviewee 8 – Cutter	Owner/worker, 36 years old, male, married, incomplete elementary school. Was introduced to clothing production by his brother.
Sewing Workshop Interviewee 9 – Seamstress	Owner/worker, 33 years old, female, married, 2 children, incomplete elementary school. Works with the assembly of the pieces.
Sewing Workshop Interviewee 10 – Seamstress	Owner/worker, 29 years old, female, single, incomplete high school. Has a sewing workshop for children's and adolescent clothes.

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2022).

For the analysis of the empirical material, we utilized Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), according to Braun and Clarke (2019), because it permits the analysis of each step of the study to be realized in an interpretive manner, with scientific rigor and the necessary coherence. For this tool, several elements are necessary to compose the analysis, such as: the information generated in the field, the codes created by the researcher based on interpretation, and the thematic map which permits the organization of the themes and subthemes.

In this manner, the analysis phases followed the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006): first, the transcription of the information and the reading of the material permitted the initial familiarity with the information. The second phase was the analysis of the information in a systematic manner, grouping it in relevant groups for each code, thus generating the production of the initial codes. In this step, we took into account that in the codification process, the role of the researcher is always to question the codes that are being generated, as well as the interpretation and codification of the information (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In the third phase, the codes were grouped, constructing the potential themes, which were defined based on the analytical and interpretive process performed by the authors, which arises from the "[...] intersection of the researcher's theoretical suppositions, resources and analytical abilities, and the data itself" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594, our translation). This process was realized manually, through marks in the empirical material.

In the fourth phase, we verified that the themes were consistent for the construction of the thematic map, thus revising the initial themes. In the fifth step, we realized a new analysis of the themes, defining the specificities of each one and naming them. Finally, in the last phase we elaborated the final report with the selection of examples to compose the analysis of the results based on the codes and themes which were defined, connecting them with the literature and the research problem (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Some examples of the codes selected in the codification process were: working hours; health conditions; income; the production process; the beginning of production; the "service provider-client" relationship; personal relationships; and the relationship between management and the organization of work. These codes were designated as potential themes at first, namely: precarious working conditions, entering the job market, self-entrepreneurship, sociability, and power relationships. Later, during the review of the initial themes, we defined the following themes: precarious working conditions; [instability of income, the organization and control of the work, health and safety of the workers]; entering clothing production work; self-entrepreneurship; sociability; and power relationships. It should be noted that these codes are inserted in the broadest problem of the current study, which involves the notion of the coloniality of power and its implications for the workers of the Agreste of Clothing.

The choice of Reflexive Thematic Analys is connected with the decolonial approach, because both involve critical reflexivity in the interpretation of empirical material. Using RTA it is possible to establish themes and subthemes that emerge from the narratives of the interviewees in a critical and reflexive manner, providing voices which have been marginalized and silenced by the pattern of colonial power with room to be heard – which is aligned with the decolonial approach.

As researchers working in a type of institution which has a history of epistemic violence, and which, for many years, was oriented towards favoring elites, we have sought to listen to the voices of those who have not been heard in the spaces of power, namely, the workers who constitute the periphery of the Global South. Moreover, we are conscious of the privileged position that we occupy in relation to the vulnerability of the workers who co-constructed this study, and this is why we are placing their voices in the center of the debate, in order to strengthen the denouncing of their working conditions through a critical approach that is not aligned with the hegemonic neoliberal logic.

DISCUSSION

The history of the activity of clothing production in the Agreste indicates two times in which modern/colonial logic imposed itself in this context. The first time was during its "origin", during the 1940s and 1950s, when residents of the region needed to survive a crisis in agriculture and new trends in the labor-capital relationship. At this time, we perceive what Quijano (2003) refers to as "survival strategies" in the growing marginalization of peripheral areas, marked by an extension of informal work, considered at the time "that which the poor had to do to survive" (Quijano, 2003, p. 413).

It is a global phenomenon, despite the singular nature of the Agreste context, demonstrated by the "glocal" characteristics of the dynamics that occurred there. In addition, the development of an informal economy, based on scraps of fabric from large capital cities, can be understood as a true resistance developed by the residents, especially female residents of the Agreste region at the time. After all, it was the women who were the great protagonists of the rise of the Agreste of Clothing, given their sewing abilities and the need to dress their sons and daughters.

The second time that this imposition of modern/colonial logic occurred began in the 1980s but grew deeper in the 1990s and the first decade of the new century, when there was a growing investment in textile economic activities and the clothing production already established in the Agreste of Pernambuco. This time can be distinguished from the first mainly due to its connections to a new neoliberal approach. In this case, informal work, which was previously a local survival strategy, came to be used to "make work more fragile and flexible, [and] universalize subcontracting" (Quijano, 2003, p. 413). Thus, we can observe the presence of neoliberalism, generating changes in labor relations (with State incentives) that spurred a shift to more precarious and outsourced labor activity, with the argument that these changes were necessary to resolve the unemployment issue and increase productivity (Pochmann, 2016).

This modern/colonial imposition marked by neoliberal logic, directly affected the lives of workers and Agreste workers, creating new dynamics in the organization of work and new power relationships, mainly between the owners of factories and workshops.

This was particularly true of those who worked in the workshops, and there was a proliferation of them which spread to various residences in the region. As can be observed in the workshops represented in the Figures 2 and 3, domestic elements are mixed with machines without much space, indicating a "disorganization" at first glance, but which in truth is managed by the workers.

Figures 2 and 3
Sewing Workshops



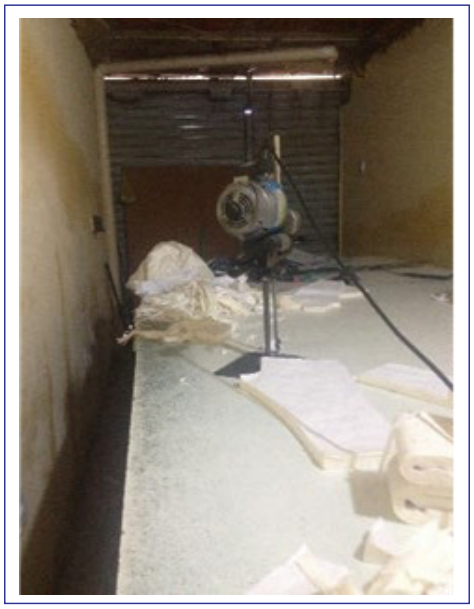
Source: Research data (2019).

The objects used by the workshop workers were used without the proper protection. In the cutting workshop (see Figure 4), for example, we can observe the worker operating the machine without the proper individual protection equipment (IPE), making them susceptible to accidents as was demonstrated by the interview with worker E08:

> Sometimes [these contractors are in such a rush]. Many arrive desperate and you almost become crazy. They stay to make sure you finish quickly. I've already been cut because of this, in my rush my finger got caught in the machine.

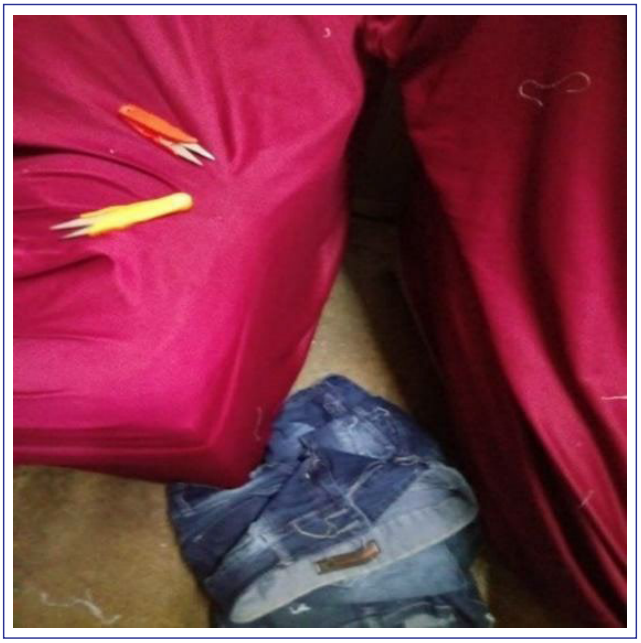
The sewing workshops are the ones that have the most machinery due to the assembling of the clothes. On the other hand, the cutting and finishing workshops, specifically the thread removers have little equipment, this being the last and simplest thing needed, which usually requires just specific scissors for this as we can see in the Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4
Cutting Workshop



Source: Research data (2019).

Figure 5
Finishing Workshop (removing threads)



Source: Research data (2019).

The average earnings vary greatly from workshop to workshop, with the greatest earnings coming from the sewing workshops. The thread removers—who are part of the final finishing workshops—are the ones who earn the least, with each piece costing R$ 0.15, leading one of the interviewees to receive from R$ 150 to R$ 200 every two weeks. In the sewing workshops, the values are greater, varying between R$ 1.65 and R$ 3.80 per piece, depending on the complexity of putting them together. The cutter, in the cutting workshop, receives R$ 0.25 per meter of cut fabric. These earnings demonstrate the precarious situation experienced by the workers of the Agreste of Clothing, even with the economic investments realized for the

modernization of this context. This demonstrates that the idea of modernization, in fact, is not necessarily linked to a guarantee of well-being for the marginalized populations, but maintains the exploitation already identified by decolonial authors such as Maldonado-Torres (2014).

In terms of the dynamics of the organization of the labor of these factions, its control occurs in a peculiar fashion. In the interviews, we observed three main points: deadlines, the counting of pieces, and quality control. The rhythm of the work is directly related to the day of the fair in each city, which occurred on Mondays[6], therefore it was necessary to have the coordination of deliveries on the Sunday before the fair. Interviewee E06 mentioned the difficulty "of tight deadlines and the rush of their clients, because they already want to take them to the laundry, so I don't have a way to do things in a normal rhythm. Everything is last minute."

In the sewing workshop, for example, there have already been cases in which contractors made video calls to verify the work and enforce deadlines. On the day the pieces are delivered, the quantity of pieces and the quality of the workshop's services are verified. This exaggerated control over the work is characteristic of modern logic, which is based on an instrumental rationality. As Latin American decolonial authors inform us, modernity does not exist without coloniality. This can be perceived when we realize that control (a modern element) is exercised over the workers, sometimes in the most vulnerable situations.

In terms of new power relationships, we perceive that financial instability is common, given that the workers do not have control over their income, and they do not know how production will be this week or month (Pereira & Freire, 2021). According to Corteletti (2020, p. 20) "[we perceive] through interviews with workshop workers that the dreamed of autonomy and freedom are relative, given that they depend on the work of the 'boss' contractor and they do not receive the same quantity of work each week.'' As observed in the field, the interview participants are dependent on the contractors' demand, which occurs seasonally, leading to financial difficulties caused by this instability.

The sewing workshops which assemble the pieces and have the largest number of machines receive the largest amount. According to interviewee E03:

> He pays two thirty for each piece, for this piece here he pays three reais, for another two eighty, the long ones if they're not difficult, he pays two eighty, while this one requires a lot of stitching and work, so the value ends up being three reais.

Meanwhile, in a finishing workshop, specifically for bar tacks and buttonholes, the value indicated by interviewee E05 is "forty centavos. The bar tacks are ten centavos apiece and the buttonholes are five centavos apiece."

The bar tack is a process of putting more stitches on the pockets and places that need to be reinforced so they don't rip during the washing, while the buttonholes are needed to close the buttons. Just taking into account the financial returns, the finishing workshops are the most precarious in terms of the value paid per piece which usually are counted in centavos. We can observe the case of the thread remover E01, when she says: "it was seven centavos per piece, sometimes eight centavos."

Given this, we can observe that the interviewed workers live in a condition of extreme financial insecurity, receiving little and dedicating many hours of work to guarantee a certain level of productivity, in a flexible work dynamic. This dynamic is a mark of neoliberal capitalism which is interwoven with coloniality and modernity, but also heteropatriarchal. This last element can be observed in the reality of women in this region, who find themselves in an even more precarious situation, given the accumulation of working hours — in clothing production and caring for the family — as pointed out by the literature about this subject (Bezerra, 2018, 2013; Milanês, 2020; Souza et al., 2024).

We would like to point out that this neoliberal modern logic takes advantage not only of the informal ways of realizing production, but also the sociability network that sustains these informal ways which began in the 1960s and 1970s. This sociability is considered backward, inefficient and traditional, which distinguishes it from modern and metropolitan ones, and marks the hierarchical difference between various regions of this country, reinforcing the backward image of the Northeast Brazil and Agreste region of Pernambuco (Bernardes, 2007).

6 Currently, the fair takes place on Fridays, due to a change that occurred in 2023.

In this sociability, it is possible to perceive ways of learning and dynamics based on personal and reciprocal relationships, elements that constitute invisible economies, as Santos and Cunha (2022) point out. Friendship, trust, affection, "doing things on faith", the financial control "of the notebook", among other aspects are examples considered backwards that maintain the sociability that marks various dynamics in Northeast Brazil and the Agreste region of Pernambuco. We recognize that this distinction between dichotomic forms of sociability is based on the coloniality of power, given that it creates social classifications and hierarchies that reserve the benefits of modernity for one part of the population and exploitation and violence for the other part (in this case, the Agreste and the Northeast). In other terms, we can refer to the phenomenon of internal colonization (González Casanova, 2007), given that these internal hierarchies in Brazil maintain global colonial logic.

In terms of entering work, most of the interviewees entered the jeans production sector through relatives, friends or neighbors, like worker E01:

> It was in another house below. There the girls were removing points of thread in one house every time I passed by. Later another girl began working there too, bringing work to her home, and I was always looking and observing, and picked up the pieces to help her and I learned how to remove the points. Then I began to do it for myself, because I needed to.

Machado da Silva (1971) already mentioned this characteristic of informal markets, influenced by personal relationships, as can be seen in the interview of worker E05: "My sister-in-law had a factory ten years ago, and I went there, became interested, and began to do finishing."

In this way, since they did not have professional and academic training, a large portion of the people who entered the clothing production field through oral learning or close contacts were seen, from a colonial/modern/neoliberal perspective as unsuccessful, with a low level of knowledge or ties with the past. However, from a decolonial perspective, it is possible to perceive alternative paths to hegemonic logic in the dynamics of these workers.

One of these alternative paths seems to be reciprocity, which aligns with the issue of sociability present in the investigated context. This is evident when the interviewed workers mention the issue of trust, seen as one of the pillars most important in the negotiation between parties. In relation to interviewee E06, which refers to contracting, for example, this becomes obvious: "People come more because of trust, this is what's doing the test with these samples."

This trust also is related to the payments which are made without invoices, as told by worker E06: "Normally the clients in my case are trustworthy and I know more or less how the payments will take place."

Despite the situation of vulnerability which exists in the work context of the Agreste of Pernambuco, and the presence of the element of reciprocity, there is a strong ideal of self-entrepreneurship in the discourses of the workers mainly when they refer to the importance of being the owners of their own businesses and having autonomy over their work hours. Again we perceive here the imposition of modern/colonial and neolibeeral logic, coming this time not just from the working conditions, but in the senses constructed around them. It should be pointed out, therefore, the intertweaving of various forms of discourse and logic, namely the neoliberal discourse of self-entrepreneurship and the relations of reciprocity, which reveals the complex dynamic of the Agreste of Clothing. Thus, we can say that distinct cosmic visions coexist in this reality, making it possible to envisage, productive, and utilitarian rationality (repeatedly associated with a market vision) present in the sociability of everyday life (repeatedly associated with a more substantive vision).

Most of the interviewees acted alone in their workshops, which seems to be the key element to understanding them as self-entrepreneurs. Of the 10 interviewees, only two counted on the help of someone as worker E04 mentioned: "Generally, when production increases, I'm the person who has to work longer hours, because he only helps from time to time. I can't demand that he come more often. I'd need an employee."

The interviewee of the differentiated workshop also was in the same situation, affirming that "I only [ask for an assistant] when the routine is really getting heavy, then I'd need to call him."

In relation to the interviewees' concept of being the owners of their own businesses, similar opinions were perceived, mainly in terms of autonomy and working hours. Interviewee E05 said that he feels like a business owner, because in his words: "at the end, I'm the one who solves everything; people look for me."

The self-entrepreneurship discourse also is evident in the interview of worker E07, who told us how he began working with this activity:

> I began to cut, you know? I began working in the factory doing other things, but I've been cutting fabric for more or less eight or nine years. When I began, I was fixing pieces and was part of the factory as well, fixing pieces, separating clothes to remove threads, and then I became an assistant cutter and that's when I learned. And I'm still working for myself. It's better than depending on others.

However, the contradiction in this self-entrepreneurial discourse becomes evident in a context marked by marginalization and precarious conditions. Soon after the interview above, the same worker (E07) mentioned control of the quality of the cut: "They look at everything to see that nothing is wrong, if there is some defect. They look at everything." This indicates that the work developed by the interviewee is evaluated by another person, or in other words, his autonomy about his own work can be questioned.

According to Corteletti (2020), the workers in the clothing production segment see their own work as an opportunity for freedom and autonomy due to the presence of an ideal of self-entrepreneurship which appears to be more accentuated in the region due to its history based on informal training. In the interviews, the workers talked about the autonomy of choosing their working hours, which is not in keeping with reality, given that many work 12 hours per day to deliver pieces in the face of constant requests from the contractors as demonstrated by the working couple E02 and E03: "And the stress that it causes? We're losing almost all of our hair. The worst part is the stress, the pressure. This young fellow he delivers the merchandise on Tuesday and by Thursday he wants it to be just about ready. He keeps on calling." Worker E01, on the other hand, in talking about his work hours, mentions that:

> It depends on when (the pieces) arrive. Sometimes I stay until 6 or 7 pm, then I take a shower, drink some coffee, and rest a little. Other times if [the contractor] wants the work done soon, I stay until 10 pm, but this is when I can stand it. When I can't stand it, I sleep and wake up the next morning at 4:30 or 5 to be able to deliver the pieces at 8 AM, when he comes to pick them up.

In many of the field reports, the workers entered the factories or workshops and over time decided to have their own workshop, encouraged by the ideal of autonomy and the purpose of managing and organizing their own production and work, and in many cases they do not come to fruition, given that the other service providers are subordinate to the contractors as becomes evident from the interview with worker E04: "As soon as I deliver the merchandise, he already pays. He's a great boss." At another point, the same worker says that "I don't have other work, and I maintain this house here through sewing, but it's stressful. Sometimes I'm under a lot of stress when the boss puts pressure on me."

On various occasions, the same interviewee refers to the contractor as her boss, showing a subordinate relationship that is demonstrated by another phrase by the same worker: "Saturdays we don't work because [the contractor] is an Adventist. He doesn't permit work on the sabbath; we have to stop work at 5:30 pm on Friday, because he doesn't want us to work." Studies by Pereira, Andrade and Silva (2018) and Andrade (2019) identified a hidden subordination in this segment, in the relationship between the service provider and the contractor. This also demonstrates the myth of entrepreneurship, which in the neoliberal conception self-entrepreneurs have no "boss", have independence in working hours, and the organization and management of work, thus being "their own bosses" — which is not perceived in the interviews with the workers of the Agreste of Clothing.

Given this, we highlight that the imposition of a modern logic in the context of the Agreste of Pernambuco is associated with a pattern of colonial power, since modernity does not exist without coloniality (Quijano, 2014; Maldonado-Torres, 2014), and colonialism does not exist without capitalism (Santos, 2018). Coloniality refers to power relationships and the domination which arises from the colonization process and is still present today, especially in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Modernity, in turn, is seen as a group of values, beliefs, and practices which arose in Europe beginning in the 15th century and spread around the world, influencing the form in which societies organized themselves and related to each other, through the invisibility of ways of being and knowing "others".

The discourse of self-entrepreneurship, with which the workers of the Agreste of Clothing have identified themselves in recent years, is a result of neoliberal logic which has existed in this context since the 1980s, and more profoundly since the 1990s and the first decade of this century, through a series of investments by the State—which until then was not present in the social and economic formation of this context—and the organizations which work with a market logic, like those linked with the S system (SEBRAE, SENAI, etc.). This neoliberal logic we perceive, for example, in the fact that workers deem themselves responsible for their own success or failure, as well as the precarious conditions and exploitation in which they live, as pointed out by Ferraz (2021). From the interviews we can perceive a naturalization of the conditions that they are submitted to as workers, such as the interview of worker (E05), who says:

> I work [on weekends]. In truth, since I work for myself, weekends don't exist. I take one day off during the week. I choose which one, generally Monday, because Monday is the day of the fair and clients generally don't come here.

In terms of working hours, worker E08 affirmed: "I stay here the entire day. When a lot of work arrives [with lots of fabric to cut], I arrive here at 5:30 or 6 am. If there is a lot of work, I stay here until 10 or 11 pm. Since I live here, I can work overnight.[7]"

The neoliberal ideology says that the well-being of people can only be achieved through the maximization of business freedom (Harvey, 2005). This understanding is encouraged by the Brazilian State when it promotes neoliberal policies and fully implements development projects oriented around dominant internal classes and international capital. Through neoliberal policies, workers are encouraged to see themselves as entrepreneurs in the sense of modernizing their processes, mainly those linked to management. Adhesion to this entrepreneurial discourse masks the maintenance of wealth in the hands of the few through the exploitation of many — the basic premise of the coloniality of power, which is associated with modernity, capitalism, and the heteropatriarchal (Santos & Cunha, 2022).

Moreover, the incorporation of the self-entrepreneurial discourse, characterized by capitalism in its neoliberal format, appears to point out what Meneses (2014), inspired by Frantz Fanon, points out in discussing the colonization of bodies and minds, emphasizing the manner in which colonial ideas and practices are reproduced and internalized in individuals and societies. The author argues that colonization is not limited to the exploitation of material resources, but also involves the imposition of cultural, social, and psychological patterns regarding the colonized. These patterns have been transmitted through various forms of symbolic domination, such as education, religion, and the media which mold the mentalities and behavior of the colonized, as appears to be the case of the workers in the Agreste of Clothing.

In this manner, it can be affirmed that the discourse of self-entrepreneurship demonstrated in the interviews with these workers is a mechanism of modernity, with neoliberal contours, for the maintenance of the coloniality of power. This understanding does not permit us to perceive what moves this discourse and its main implications for the workers in question, demonstrating the maintenance of the exploitation of work in the context of the Agreste of Clothing.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article has sought to analyze the implications of the coloniality of power for workers of the Agreste of Clothing, located in the city of Caruaru, PE. Based on the premise that the context in question is a peripheral reality within the Global South, given that it is located in the Brazilian Northeast, it is seen as backward in relation to other regions of the country, indicating the existence of internal colonialism. The Northeast is also part of Brazil, a former colonized nation, which still carries today the marks of coloniality, as do many other ex-colonies.

Through this study, it has been possible to perceive that modern/colonial/heteropatriarchal logic has imposed itself on the Agreste of Clothing in a conclusive manner at two distinct times: at its "origin", when workers found themselves facing the necessity to create survival strategies; and the 1990s and the first decade of this century, when neoliberalism imposed itself, creating new dynamics in the organization of work, new power relationships among workshops and new meanings among workers.

7 This working at night extrapolates the working hours of nomal work.

Thus, due to the implications of these impositions of modernity and capitalism, mainly in its neoliberal logic, these workers have come to experience, for example, insecurity in terms of income and the strong control which the "bosses" exercise over their work. The relationships between workshops reflect great flexibility and precarious conditions, and the self-entrepreneurial discourse is strongly disseminated when attributed to work.

In particular, the self-entrepreneurship discourse reveals itself as a manifestation of neoliberal logic by making the workers themselves responsible for their success or failure, as well as naturalizing the precarious conditions and exploitation that they experience. Thus, it is possible to perceive that the self-entrepreneurial discourse configures itself as a modern and neoliberal mechanism for maintaining the coloniality of power, often reinforced by the State itself and its developmental ideology, reinforcing the articulation between coloniality, modernity, and capitalism.

Utilizing the undertaken analysis, this article contributes to the literature by demonstrating how the modern-colonial logic still remains present today and can be strongly observed in vulnerable contexts such as the Agreste of Clothing. In these contexts, the precarious conditions of informal work inform the persistence of the darker side of modernity and at times are the fruit of modern/colonial processes of control, productivity and the construction of meanings which are not connected with the reality of the workers' insecurity. In this sense, the present work contributes to the literature by demonstrating the role of management in the processes that maintain colonial logic, mainly in terms of the colonization of bodies and minds through the discourse of self-entrepreneurship.

In addition, this study also contributes by articulating the self-entrepreneurial discourse of workers in precarious conditions with the maintenance of coloniality, and demonstrating that the Agreste of Pernambuco is a context marked by internal colonialism. At the same time that it indicates the maintenance of colonial logic, this study also points out signs of decolonial movements, mainly in terms of the elements of invisible sociability, such as reciprocity and affection, despite understanding them as being intertwoven with colonial logic, since they are used by it to maintain the stigma of "backwardness". We recommend that future studies investigate these decolonial possibilities in the Agreste of Clothing in greater depth, indicating the existence of various economic principles in the complex story which constitutes this region.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request to the corresponding author, Fernanda Maria Almeida de Andrade. The data as a whole is not publicly available due to its containing information which would compromise the privacy of the study participants.

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