Fuelled by the Black Gold: The Road to a Good Life?

The Impact of Accelerated Change in the Petroleum Capital of Brazil

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Abstract

Until the 1970’s in Brazil, a fishing village by the name of Macaé was untraceable on the map. During that decade, petroleum was discovered in Campos basin located at sea outside of the city. The state-led enterprise Petróleo Brasiliiero SA, commonly known as Petrobrás, saw the existing fishing docks in Macaé as an opportunity. The construction of an operational base and in the city, functioning as the main offshore provider to the petroleum extraction, attracted both national and international attention. To develop even further, the municipality accentuated private and public cooperation in the city to become a much desired international hub. Today, the city is known to be “The National Petroleum Capital”. The boom of accelerated change in sectors such as real estate, hotels, consumer goods and services, and catering created several job opportunities for residents, causing an enormous increase of migration to the city. Diverse languages are spoken on the street, and English education is attractive in order to communicate with the foreigner. Based on five months of fieldwork conducted in Macaé during spring 2014, this dissertation explore the diverse possibilities and limitations people experienced due to change as a consequence of petroleum activity. In doing so, it is based on the principles of inequality relating to socioeconomic statuses, to further draw comparisons in the literature concerning flexibility and the good life. The petroleum industry may produce prosperity and wealth for several individuals, yet it also strengthens inequality in Macaé. The impact of occurring changes in the city generates an ambiguity among the population, requiring some people to adapt to the changes, while others shield their privileges. The complexities to manoeuvre within the city will show that flexibility is positive when connected to an aspiration to change, but can prove negative when the desire is to maintain the current situation. In these aspirations and desires, the idea of the good life concerning lifestyle and subjective agency are explored according to the potential of change individual according to socioeconomic differences experience.

Keywords: Petroleum industry, accelerated change, flexibility, the good life, value systems, socioeconomic hierarchy, features of globalisation, infrastructure, Brazil.
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Introduction

Literature concerning the complexity of Brazil uses many descriptions: The “puzzle”, “dilemma” or “reality” of the country, mostly based on a diversity and a mixture. And for a good reason. Brazilian citizens are of different ethnic backgrounds (from Europe, Africa, Japan, and the rest of South America in particular), with several adopted and incorporated religions. The cultures connected to the former categories is the source of these descriptions. Within the extremely vast country, these mixtures are often concentrated in different shapes and sizes, spread out and reassembled in the various regions and states resulting in a form of regionalism. Not only do the citizens of Brazil present a fascinating cite to conduct research, the economical spheres of Brazil create intriguing international attention with speculations of Brazil as an emerging superpower (Brainard & Martinez-Diaz, 2009). The main products exported from Brazil is iron ore, crude petroleum\(^1\), soybeans, raw sugar, and poultry meat (OEC). These products are essentially raw materials produced from all around the country. The sector this dissertation discerns about is the petroleum sector and the state-led oil company Petróleo Brasiliero SA, more commonly known as Petrobrás. Although Petrobrás’ main office is located in the city Rio de Janeiro, one of their offshore cities is my field of research: Macaé. In this city, people from all over the nation and the world are summoned together for one common interest: petroleum and the riches relating to the natural recourse.

As a former fishing village and previously untraceable on a map, Macaé became the main offshore provider to oil extraction in the Campos Basin during the 1970s mainly due to its location and the existing fishing docks. Macaé soon became an international hub with international investors and businesses trying to get a hold on the riches related to the “black gold”. The city soon experienced accelerated change and became a site for booms in construction, expansion and development. Migrators from other regions in Brazil, other countries in South America, the United States and the rest of the world were attracted by the offshore industry. The city became a boomtown. My main focus in this dissertation is how the impact of petroleum activity has affected the city of Macaé and the people within. How does accelerated change due to petroleum activity affect the local life in Macaé? When petroleum extraction are mentioned, the normal connotations are environmental hazards, enormous engineering constructions on the sea and enormous refineries on land. The connotations to petroleum extraction are usually focused on the negative effects it have on our environment –

\(^1\) The type of petroleum occurring natural beneath the surface of the earth.
pollution, toxic waste, oil spills, climate change – and these effects are indeed not to be taken lightly. Nevertheless, is it a great quantity of money to be earned in the petroleum industry, and the world is depended, almost addicted, to petroleum until we find an equally effective renewable energy source. Moving away from the global environment and the negative connotations petroleum industry have, I want to turn the spotlight in a more positive and unconventional direction. A direction with focus on the people in Macaé, and how they themselves experienced the boom caused by petroleum activity in the city. I wonder about the possibilities and restrictions people experience, how they exploit the situation they are in, and how innovative and flexible this makes them? How can a cattle farmer create a niche in his life to earn more money from the stream of migrants, and how does the already existing city of Macaé endure the pressure from the newcomers and new businesses? Is the idea of the good life in closer reach for the population, or do it differ according to socioeconomic differences? Before we go any further to answer these questions, Macaé has to be seen in a bigger picture and the growth of the city need to be elaborated.

**Brazilian oil: historical and economic aspects**

Countries with a rapid growing economy from rich natural resources, low wage labour and a large domestic marked are those who usually stand out, and the BRICS countries are the most recently highlighted. BRICS is an acronym put together by the countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Whereas the top export products in Brazil consists of raw material, the top five imported products consist of refined petroleum, crude petroleum, cars, vehicle parts, and gas (OEC). Brazil is not exactly short of petroleum with the discoveries in both the Santos Basin in 2008 and the earlier discoveries in Campos Basin, so why does the country import this amount of petroleum products? The rest of importation products presents an obvious suggestion. A growing demand for consumer goods do not meet the supply because of a growing consumerism, especially the nationwide desire for a car, but also other products like clothes, furniture, beauty products, electronic devices, household appliances to highlight some examples.

As a result of protectionism implemented over Brazil and motivated by the desire to make the country self-sufficient, the state’s idea was to nationalise certain industries from the 1930’s and onward. The Brazilian state used public financing to build up key-sectors in agriculture, industry and services, making an economic impact on the population. The international demand for Brazilian products gave the major corporations global success and
strengthened the economic dreams of *grandeza*. Some of the state-led sectors and enterprises grew nearly without competition over the next decades. One of them was Petrobrás. Currently, it is the leading company within the oil and gas sector in Brazil. In 1997 the Oil Law was created to “… stimulate competitiveness, to give incentives for private investment, and to regulate the government’s takes from oil and gas exploration and production.” (Narciso & Sennes, 2009, p. 50). The Brazilian government, with President Lula da Silva in front, encouraged the Brazilian companies to become internationally competitive – and it was a success. In 2009, Petrobrás was active in 26 countries. The central role played by the government suggests that they, as stated by the 1997 Oil Law, receives up to 40 percent of “…the profit of giant fields in government takes defined by presidential decrees” (Narciso & Sennes, 2009, p. 50). The 1997 Oil Law also opened up the country for a regulated private participation in the oil and gas industry, ending Petrobrás’ monopoly and giving way for international investment in Brazilian oil and gas (Narciso & Sennes, 2009, p. 40).

Creating arenas for a globalised world to unfold in, the privatisation also created new and unsuspected results. According to the politician Pedro da Motta Veiga (2009), this was the scourge of the lower- and middleclass of Brazil. While some of the projects were successful, the public also had to deal economically with the failed projects. When Lula da Silva was elected as president he used the National Bank for the Economic and Social Development (BNDES), the public pension funds, Petrobrás, and other large companies that were still in state possession to rebuild a more extensive (but milder) state-ownership than the privatization wave that hit Latin-America in the 1990s (Narciso & Sennes, 2009).

The government tried to regulate the gaps of inequality in Brazil by exploiting *o sonho de consumo*, ‘the dream of consumption’, that people have, by lowering prices of consumer goods – like cars, so that people could get jobs further away. This was visible in Macaé due to people from the surrounding cities, primarily Campos and Rio das Ostras, was commuting every day to work. The build-up of commuters created traffic jams during working hours from 07:00 in the morning to around 18:00 in the evening. Many commuters told me that the use of cars in the city had increased enormously in two years only, making it almost impossible to get parking lots. I usually heard people during the day standing in the streets complaining about the traffic, the overcrowded streets filling up with parked cars, and that they had to walk ten minutes from their parked cars to their office.

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2 The economic greatness that have proven elusive in the past due to protectionism (Brainard & Martínez-Díaz, 2009, p. 1).
O sonho de consumo has further implications as well. The emic expression is based on a high demand for consumer goods and a purchase policy of direct consumer credit⁴ which makes it easier for everyone to buy consumer goods. As the Brazilian sociologist Vilmar E. Faria (1991) noted, people not able to buy food could buy a television because of the consumer credit. There was a consumer credit boom during the 1970’s in Brazil which made the television a normal consumer item in the living rooms, and giving people in different socioeconomic positions a view into the imagined lives of telenovelas, Brazilian soap operas, which popularized fictional high-class lifestyles (Banck, 1994). I will later return to the possible affect the telenovelas have on everyday life in chapter five, but these tv-shows highlights o sonho de consumo as a relative good life and it is now spreading throughout the country in the daily prime-time on television. The life in telenovelas is close to impossible for most Brazilians, but the consumer credit makes them come closer, and it is safe to say that media and commercials have had an impact on consumerism in Brazil. Additionally, the problem with consumer credit is the debt the purchaser put themselves in. During my fieldwork people usually commented on those driving a nice car as the owner was estápido, ‘stupid’, because he had put himself in um dépido, ‘a debt’, not being able to support his family. The indebtedness does not affect everyone of course, but for those affected the short-term goals of being achieved as a consumer may have long term affects for the person himself and those dependent on him, for example his children.

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⁴ Also known as consumer debt because the goods or services purchased is not an investment whose value will increase, it rather depreciates quickly. Examples are televisions, automobiles, domestic appliances etc. It therefore excludes goods like mortgage or real estate on investment accounts.
Overview of Macaé

Macaé is a small city located approximately 180 km north of the city Rio de Janeiro. When entering the Macaé, everyone is met with a sign that translates to “Macaé – RJ. National Petroleum Capital” (see Figure 1). The important operational base supports Petrobrás oil extraction at sea with supply, labourers, and services located in Campos Basin. The petroleum industry is recognised as the industries relating to petroleum and gas, compared to petroleum activity which have a broader spectre including businesses and individuals benefiting from the petroleum industry. The petroleum activity relates to real estate, hotels, and several services from clothing and catering to car rental and judicial assistance. With accelerated change in the urban scene, adaption needs to accelerate as well in order to cause continuity, not just for the population, but also the industries and the city itself. One of the major changes occurring over the decades is migration. According to the webpage of Brazilian institute of geography and statistics (IBGE), Macaé’s population of 55 000 in 1980 more than doubled in 2001 to over 130 000. The estimated population in 2014 was to be more than 229 000 registered residents, excluding the commuters and travellers, leading to streets filled with cars, trucks and buses during working hours (IBGE). The urban area in the city predominantly consists of a centre of commerce and a periphery of residency. The suburbs and the surrounding rural area contain upper-class gated communities and cattle farms.
In the late 1990’s it became clear that the continuous growth of the city needed to be regulated. In 2006, Macaé Municipality agreed to be included under the National Law number 10,257 known as *Estatuto da Cidade* (City Statute) which includes *O Plano Direto*, ‘The Directive Plan’. These regulations were to establish rules and laws to the public order in the interest of the social, where regulation of urban property and infrastructure will be in favour of “the collective good, the safety and wellbeing of citizens and environmental balance” (Prefeitura de Macaé, Authors translation). The Directive plan is customised by the Municipality to suit the situation in Macaé, where one of the main directives to achieve this goal is the encouragement of public-private cooperation. The official webpage of *Prefeitura de Macaé* (Macaé municipality) states that the requirements for being included in the Directive Plan is for cities holding “over 20,000 inhabitants, members of metropolitan areas and agglomerations, and members of special tourist interest areas” (Prefeitura de Macaé, Authors translation). The environmental issues is also addressed: “Included in the area of influence is developments or activities with significant environmental impact on regional or national level. [These cities] must have a Directive Plan”. According to the Directive Plan of Macaé Municipality, the objectives in general are to improve the conditions for the city’s residents and the environment through economic development. To reach this goal, with a few exceptions they incorporate the private sector in the financing of the development cost; expand and transform public spaces of the city; support small and medium enterprises to generate employment and income in industries, trade and services; rationalise the use of existing infrastructure, including sanitation, road and transportation, avoiding its overload or idleness and completing its basic network; and encourage development linked to petroleum activities to create new business opportunities.

The results of the Directive Plan are visible in the city as it is thriving with new opportunities and businesses, development projects as well as construction and promising potentials for investment. An example is the gift Petrobrás gave to the city, a street named *Avenida Atlântica*, which runs alongside the beach. Where there were forest and heavy vegetation in the earlier years, there is now a five kilometres long road for driving, walking, running and bicycling. Even though the ocean tears away about 500 metres of the road every

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5 Created in 2001
6 Translated and simplified by the author.
7 Title I, Chapter III, Art. 8 (Lei Complementar 076/2006, 2006)
8 Title II, Chapter I, Section V, Art. 29: III (Lei Complementar 076/2006, 2006)
9 Title I, Chapter III, Art. 8: II (Lei Complementar 076/2006, 2006)
10 Title II, Chapter I, Section VI, Art. 30: V (Lei Complementar 076/2006, 2006)
year, it is sponsored by Petrobrás to be rebuilt. Different enterprises have settled down in the street, such as restaurants, bars, cafes and hotels. The street is visited by all kind of people during the day and evening, creating a new social centre for people to interact but also generating new job opportunities, real estate and businesses. As a result, Macaé is viewed as a wealthy city with catering, real estate and clothing enterprises rising to meet the demand from the offshore activity. The rising population rate and the daily incoming commuters and travellers are bringing about a high demand for residences and hotels, in addition to consumer products and services, making the urban area an expensive location.

Difficulties in meeting these demands result in growing favelas\(^{11}\) and crime, while the densely populated areas are creating more pollution than before. One of these areas are *praia Imbetiba*. Petrobrás decided to place their main offices and shipping harbour not far from this former social centre of the city. The beach area holds the longstanding fishing market, a hotel, grocery stores and bars. What used to be the most popular beach is now an abandoned area of polluted water and traffic jams\(^{12}\). What the city and its residents are experiencing are not only a process of change, it is a process of accelerated change. The change from something old to something new, a transition from the outdated and local to something updated and even international, the transition from a fishing village to Brazil’s idealised national petroleum capital.

**Globalisation**

There are some concepts that will follow either explicit or implicit throughout the dissertation, such as features of globalisation, modernity and individualism. I present these concepts and how they are perceived in Macaé or in Brazil in general, to further rely on specific analytical reasoning or common features in the following chapters. Because of the international presence in Macaé, globalisation and the perception of modernity are the source of many perceptions and values, both subjective and objective. Opposing value systems, one family oriented and traditional, and one individualistic based on competition and equality, are values people must relate to on an everyday basis. In order to sustain a continuity in Macaé, the notion of flexibility will be introduced in the fourth chapter. Flexibility, wellbeing, happiness and the idea of the good life are the main analysis in the dissertation, and will be of importance to understand possibilities and limitations for the individuals in Macaé.

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\(^{11}\) Informal communities

\(^{12}\) Statements from people living there are to be read in chapter two.
Globalisation in Macaé was not viewed as a set of revolutionary stages from less developed to more developed, nor a static relation between the global as a whole compared to an opposing nation-state. During interviews and conversations, I would sometimes ask what globalisation meant in Macaé, and the answers were mostly based on how the city had been included in the world, being recognised and known through international influence due to the petroleum industry. Globalisation affected the population by giving them opportunities and a way of “being part” of that connection and recognition through globalisation. For that reason, globalisation in this dissertation refer to how Macaé are connected to the global with common features manifesting themselves on a small scale where they are locally interpreted. I will therefore rely on Thomas H. Eriksen’s features of globalisation for analysis and comparison (2007). These features are not always recognisable even though they are present, and I will therefore clarify this presence in the last chapter to highlight that globalisation is part of the individual everyday, and in the city regulations. Globalisation locally are dynamic and changing: favoured in the following chapters are processes, mechanisms and arenas of social (re)production, assumed alterations and transformation. This is not a way to understand how the entire world is connected, but rather pointing out similarities and local assumptions of what it means to be connected to the global in Macaé. For example understanding how a highly educated Brazilian in electro engineering remain unemployed due to foreign competition, or the fact that knowledge in English is all it takes to make a living.

**Modernity**

Brazil in general are not new to the concept of modernity. The best example is the Brazilian capital Brasília which is the result of what was known as modern city planning (Garreau, 1992). Ever since the 1950s several foreign automobile companies were willing to expand their business in Brazil by exploiting the Brazilian desire to be a modern nation (Wolfe, 2010). The president at that time, Juscelino Kubitschek\(^{14}\), took great measures in an attempt to create a modern democracy in an increasing capitalistic world. Among other things, the industrialisation with a focus on the automobile industry were seen as modernity and progress, including the construction of roads and the dislocation of the capital from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília to join inland and coast, just to mention some of the major

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\(^{13}\) Assumed because I rely on statements from informants and lack statistics and comparative written data about Macaé before Petrobrás entered the city.

\(^{14}\) President 1956-1961, also known by his initials: JK
accomplishments Kubitschek is known for (Wolfe 2010). Brasília’s modern city planning is
divided into sectors of hotels, banking and federation to mention a few. The city layout and
architecture are designed to tolerate the political activity and the constant pulse of people and
traffic in the capital: the sectors would in theory generate spatial control over the population
crowds and traffic so that it would be consistent with their daily purposes. When these
changes were put into action, Brasília were to become an egalitarian and inclusive city in
addition to combine the public sphere with the private. Even though the result of Brasília’s
modernist city planning generated spatial control, the complete opposite happened socially as
the city is now one of the most segregated cities in Brazil whereas its citizens are known for
their political defiance (Caldeira, 1996, p. 317).

Throughout my fieldwork there were several concrete situations people classified as
modern, such as having a car and being able to drive it\textsuperscript{15}, having a house in a gated
community, the constructions of apartment buildings, knowing English, dressing in expensive
clothes, wearing expensive jewellery, and having a well-proportioned body with styled hair.
However, through discussions and claims, it was more to the concept: modernity was
signified as progress in general, a higher level of both consumption and standards of living,
and heightened individualism accompanied by increased mobility. The type of modernity
experienced in Macaé was not that of a solid and absolute measure, but rather liquid and
conditional. Zygmunt Bauman’s metaphor of liquid modernity is therefore useful: he compares
earlier periods in human history of everyday life conceived as more solid, and the present day
is experienced as more fluid in which individuals and institutions are becoming more prone to
adaptation, change, reinvention and inventiveness (2000). With faster change within culture,
sociality, technology, politics, economy, religion and environment, people adapt and
manoeuvre and get more adept to opportunities based on individualism (Bauman, 2000).

**Liquid individualism?**

Individualism as a form of modern conscience is reflected in Karl Polanyi’s “discovery of
society” (1957). In his scrutiny, individual and autonomous agents are interested in conflicts
to obtain wealth, and together these individuals make up the entity known as society (Polanyi,
1957, chapter 9). According to Bauman, this kind of individualism stems from a more liberal
economy on a global scale, yet there are more to individualism than economic value (2001). If
solely based on interests in wealth due to liberal and global economy, individualism would

\textsuperscript{15} Approximately one third of the people I met had the drivers’ license.
appear as the same phenomena all around the world – which is not the case. Individualism may have its origin from a general idea, but it is interpreted and incorporated by people within structures of social norms and customs. In this regard, individualism appear as a social and cultural condition where moral values play a big role in shaping individualism. David Graeber defines values as “…the way people represent the importance of their own actions to themselves: normally, as reflected in one or another socially recognized form” (2001, p. 47). The socially recognized from is a context in which there are restrictions and opportunities to operate within based on a number of social and cultural variables. Based on empirical data collected in Macaé, these variables are of fluctuating importance consisting of material goods, education, residency, family, and job opportunities. Individualism may have economic aspects, but when integrated with cultural values it also represents social differences. There were one socially recognized form dominating my field of research, and it was a socioeconomic hierarchy.

The socioeconomic hierarchy was not normally referred to as a hierarchy, but rather the names of the different groups were placed in relation and comparison to other people, which will be presented in the third chapter. Conducts of comparison were not a sensitive topic, and the segregation or separation were not recognizable if only one of the groups were present. However, mixing and moving between the different groups were not uncommon, entailing the concept of ‘socioeconomic hierarchy’ for analytical purposes primarily. Carrying forward Louis Dumont’s analysis on individualism and hierarchy (1986a), Knut M. Rio and Olaf H. Smedal discovered that the overarching value in an hierarchy is not individualism (as Dumont proposes), but rather that individualism is a part of systems where change is essential for the individual:

“[…] a value that is paramount to systems of individualism would be change, and not the individual itself as a category or an essence. The individual is only valued if in states of transformation. Mobility, reformation, renewal, and creativity are some of the characteristics that go along with freedom. This is not a freedom to stay the same, but to remain immobile, to uphold inertness. In itself, democracy is based on the morality of always seeking change in social systems.” (2009, p. 24)

If change is an important trait of individualism, Macaé is a perfect place to search for it when the petroleum activity produces opportunities where changes are accelerating and sometimes
deemed necessary in order to succeed in continuity. Consequently, the individuals operating on a local level may turn ‘liquid’ in the sense of adapting to their liquid surroundings in the Baumanian understanding of the word (2000). If the idea of a petroleum capital is a modern concept, with the liquid capacity, it is based on reinvention and inventiveness in order to keep up with the continuous progress linked to petroleum activity. The fact that the welcoming sign on the roads says ‘the national petroleum capital’ may even be an invention to make the city seem lucrative for investors. The further use of the petroleum capital will therefore be an analytical concept based on liquid modernity – exclusively relating to adaption of petroleum activity – as it appears to be the future desire for the city as a whole.

Individualism may be modern conscience considering it is the individual in the centre of the individuals prosperity itself, it is something the individual achieve by herself, opposed to collectivism where the family or the society are put before the individuals own need and wishes with the ascribed status and the obligations that follow. The purely economic aspect of obtaining wealth is therefore not without cultural and social involvements. Modernisation and individualism would possibly not been able at the same speed visible in Macaé today without the global connection. The three notions (globalisation, modernity and individualism) may have diverse significance, but they have common traits. One commonality is the intangible trait, neither globalisation, modernity, nor individualism are easily descriptive, and variations of liquidity is present (Bauman, 2000). Another common trait is the aspect of progress and development within them all, where detachment from something former and outdated, is a progress towards something new and possibly better. I propose that modernity and individualism in Macaé are associated to the global; being modern is to have individualistic traits somehow related to the global. At the same time a global connection may be needed to become the petroleum capital, the people in Macaé may need to represent a value or characteristic connected to the global to be perceived as modern as well.

The good life, wellbeing and happiness

Generally speaking, people do not automatically adapt to their surroundings out of enforced influence or a lack of will. Adaption primarily comes from an opportunity, certain ideas, aspirations and inventiveness to fulfil a goal or a project larger then oneself. For people moving to Macaé, the motivation were not solely to “follow the money”, but rather aspiring for wellbeing and better lives for themselves and/or their family. But what does wellbeing and a better life entail? Many concentrate on the economics as a source for wellbeing, as is the
case of the economist Partha Dasgupta. He is mostly concerned with the natural environment and its resources as the source of human wellbeing, where social organisation are the basis of allocation and commodities as means to pursue individual perceptions of the good life (Dasgupta, 2001, p. 12). Although commodities and wealth are major means of lowering financial hardship, and thereby having fewer restrictions, there are more to wellbeing than wealth. Moving away from economy and towards an additional and more valuable perspective in anthropology, Edward F. Fischer draws on the Aristotelian idea of eudaimonia, “the power to construct a life that one values” (2014, p. 2), a fulfilled life based on moral values and wellbeing. It contains the hard work of becoming the person one deems worthy of having a good life, therefore entailing moral values and “worthiness” in the eyes of oneself and others. As Fischer focus on the moral values and engagements of wellbeing, he do not pay enough attention to relatively immoral values of egotistic pleasures.

The hedonic and egotistic pleasure stimulus are important to be aware of, which Neil Thin in his search of the good life through social happiness remind us that moral and immoral values are often difficult to separate (2012). I will continue to use “the good life” as the idea of the lifestyle projected in the telenovelas, while wellbeing and happiness will be used interchangeably referring to the current situation a person find themselves in: hedonic, eudaimonic – or both. All the mentioned authors in this section agree to common conditions based on material resources, health, security, and social organisation as important in the good life, but the aspect of moral and immoral values will further play important roles in the following chapters.

When met with change and adaption, there are restrictions and opportunities presenting themselves differently. The socioeconomic hierarchy in Macaé will therefore be the focus in comparisons and analysis throughout the dissertation, and in the differences in obtaining the good life. In a city like Macaé the opportunities are many, whether you want to start a family or another job. Especially in chapter five, I will look into wellbeing, happiness and the good life in Macaé, how these are perceived and how they differ or stay alike in accordance to the socioeconomic hierarchy.
**Stabilizing instability?**

The seemingly chaotic picture of Macaé, with opportunities and pressure on both the city and on people living and working inside it – how are they experiencing their reality? And how are they manoeuvring in this web of possibilities and restrictions to find a way towards the good life? Increased cooperation between public and private funding in Macaé, the desire to fulfil the idea of a petroleum capital and the increased individualism are not separate phenomenon, but possibly causes and effects of modernity and globalisation in Macaé. The petroleum activity creates prosperity, yet it also strengthens inequality in Macaé. Despite the turmoil and turbulence created by the petroleum activity, cultural values and meaningful aspects of life may turn out to cause a sense of stability.

The next chapter is methodological and it will give an orientation into urban Macaé and how my experience to live there and interact with different groups of Brazilians was challenging and even exclusive in some situations. Chapter three will further represent the socioeconomic hierarchy, and how individuals identify and are perceived. In chapter four the focal point is flexibility, and how adaptation, inventiveness and even satisfaction variates according to socioeconomic statuses produces restrictions or limitations. The life and manoeuvres of the people in Macaé will be taken under scrutiny, but also the flexibility of the city as a whole and how it is struggling between being Macaé and the idealised petroleum capital. Chapter five is about the notion and idea of the good life, bringing order into the chaos of flexible and non-flexible situations people find themselves in. The concluding chapter will evaluate and tie the previous chapters together by using the results in a final analysis in showing the manifestations of global features in Macaé.
Chapter 2: Living in Macaé

This chapter will elaborate on the methodological part of my fieldwork and how I got in contact with some people, while others did not want to talk to me. Some obstacles I experienced was language difficulties, social norms and interactional challenges relating to gender. Doing fieldwork in an urban area weirdly brought forth a lack of closeness to others even though people lived closer to each other than in rural areas. This lack was probably because of a higher standard of privacy and security, and distrust in surrounding residents. The urban orientation of the city is small and dense, with a high demand for residences and not a sufficient supply due to business related to the petroleum activity and hotels. Arenas of access was therefore crucial in my fieldwork because I wanted to get in contact with people operating in different socioeconomic groups, located and situated in a variety of places.

Figure 2.1: A roadmap of the urban area of Macaé (“Vias de Acesso à Brasil Offshore[Map],” 2013). The orange road is the main road through the city, and the circles located on the orange road are next to the coastline and the popular beaches at Avenida Atlântica.
**Urban orientation**

The urban area in Macaé is dense and immobile with few social arenas for interaction. The urban area is popular, both for residency and to conduct business as it is in the heart of the action. The high demand and lack in supply of residences created limited options for newcomers. Hotels and office-buildings pushed civilians to buy or rent expensive apartments or condominiums, where many found themselves living with several individuals in a limited space. The answer for some was to live with several families on a small and shared space to be close to the centre. Others lived in expensive gated apartment buildings, some moved to a neighbouring city because of financial reasons, while the privileged lived in enclaves in the suburbs. What seems to be evolving in the city, especially in the centre, is gated apartment- and office buildings, hotels for visitors and new shops, cafes and restaurants. Clearly, there is a desire to do business, but there is not enough space to conduct it. The roadmap over the city (figure 2) proves itself insufficient as there are daily traffic jams hindering mobility and the flow of goods to the operational base and in the urban area in general. The city is no longer a former fishing village; it is rather a future business opportunity. In fact, the Mayor of Macaé, Aluízio dos Santos Júnior, presented on an event located in the city of Rio de Janeiro in 2014, that Macaé as an offshore hub is in need of cooperative institutions for planning the future prospects of the city. He stated that:

"Macaé wants to specialize in petroleum. All industrial activities in Macaé are in some way or the other linked to petroleum already. It dominates the whole municipality, and I would like to invite the industry to take part in the administration of our common future. We need to figure out how to continue this walk, side by side. Macaé is reality, not a promise" (Hestmann, 2014)

The past as a fishing village is mainly forgotten in the quest towards becoming the national petroleum capital. The Mayor emphasised further improvement of roads, increased mobility, more traffic to the local airport, the need for human development and a positive environment to conduct business, where corporation between universities and high-innovation companies should attract knowledge in Macaé (Hestmann, 2014). The Mayor implicitly says that the city is not optimal and needs to be taken into consideration when the petroleum related industries are developing inside of it. As a spokesman for the municipality, the mayor wants Macaé to evolve and adapt around the industry, not that the industry evolve and adapt around the city.
Essentially, the idealized national petroleum capital is not realized yet, and he basically asks to develop Macaé with assistance from the petroleum industries by pointing out the enormous impact it has already made on the city.

By looking at this seemingly chaotic picture of Macaé, my initial idea was to rent a car, avoiding dependency on anyone to get around. The areal of Macaé is 1218.1 km², but this is mostly covered by rural areas surrounded by dense forests and cattle farms, with only 2% of the population living in the periphery (UOL Notícias, 2010). Compared to the actual borders, the urban area¹⁶ consisted of only 12.8 km² by the coast where the rest of the 98% of the population lived (Embrapa, 2011). I mainly stayed in urban Macaé, but I visited friends living in Campos (a city located north of Macaé) and Rio das Ostras (a city located south) through buses or as a passenger in friends’ cars.

Considering the many cars and traffic jams in the urban Macaé due to a debateable road system with only one main road in the city (the orange road on figure 2), I decided to buy a used bike to get around. The upside of a bike actually gave me increased mobility in a close perimeter, but the downside was the absence of shields or windows against the periodically extreme heat, dusty surrounding due to the car traffic, and the lack of respect for cyclists. I also had to find a way to manoeuvre between the tall hotels, posadas¹⁷, apartment buildings, and different types of stores conjoined with each other. What made things more difficult with a bike was the many construction sites building new apartment buildings or demolition sites where I had to ride my bike in the street with the cars, and the biggest mode of transport was the one pushing the others aside creating little room for a cyclist.

On weekday mornings, I normally visited o centro, ‘the city centre’ before it got too warm. The conjoined buildings in the streets and the car traffic blocked off the breeze from the coast and made the air dusty, humid and warm in this area. People hasting from one site to another were nearly as sweaty as I was, and it seemed like time never stood still with so much activity and noise going on at every minute. The primary place I figured I could relax or meet people with time to converse was at Avenida Atlântica, the street Petrobrás build as a gift to the city. The street was built alongside the beach which included a sidewalk, a bicycle trail, and some work-out equipment placed next to the sandy beach. Here, I found people sunbathing and having a beer or cold coconut, playing footvolley¹⁸, kids playing in the water or people eating a meal at one of the many restaurants and bars. The atmosphere was the

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¹⁶ See Figure 2
¹⁷ Small hotels of bed-and-breakfast.
¹⁸ The same as volleyball, just with your feet.
complete opposite compared to o centro, which represented rush, work and stress. Here, people came together to relax, take a break, or a long lunch away from the busy city centre during the day. The evenings in this street presented a scene of people working out by jogging, biking or working on the equipment, while others enjoyed a nice dinner or hanging out with friends and family in one the many bars. The evenings in the city centre, however, were somewhat quiet with a few local bars visited by regulars or by a lost foreign person.

In Macaé, most of the residents are not originally from the city, but from all over Brazil, South-America and the world. There were very few Macaenses19 I got in close contact with, although the “new” residents I met had been living there from two to fifteen years. In the first three months, I lived in a small private room located at the top of a four-floored condominium, with a middle-aged couple, their son, and three cats living downstairs. The husband, Marcos, originally from Minas Gerais, was an educated sociologist and were therefore very interested in my fieldwork. The wife, Ana, worked as a volunteer at the veterinary and the kindergarten, while their son Luiz at an age of 17 lived in Rio de Janeiro with his wife (16), regularly came on visits. On the two bottom floors, there was a separate condominium and a woman named Sharon living with her Norwegian husband Jon, her daughter Amanda, and only one cat. Jon was the one helping me to get the room above, but I usually “escaped” from my cat allergies by visiting them in the downstairs condominium. Because of my allergies and the connection I got with Sharon, I moved in with her and stayed there for the remaining two months of my fieldwork.

Although I had to move, I luckily found myself in the same street as I had gotten to know people and it was relatively central in the urban area. Sharon, originally from Rio de Janeiro, was a woman in her 50’s helping gringos20 in bureaucratic matters she met through Jon. Her daughter, Amanda, was 26 years old and went to the university in Campos, so she came to visit during the weekends. Amanda’s boyfriend Thiago, originally from Minas Gerais, usually lived with all of us when Amanda visited. He had newly graduated as an electro engineer, looking for work in Macaé. This family helped me a great deal to get in contact with others as they had a big network of acquaintances, giving Sharon a key position in my fieldwork and she became a very good and trusted friend in the field. Jon and Sharon constructed a house in a gated community in the suburbs of the city. These places were big plains owned by one of the many cattle farms, and then sold to a project to build and create a

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19 Meaning people born and raised in Macaé.
20 Translated as foreigners, but usually refer to white foreigners.
gated community. These constructions and areas were many, and when driving between Rio das Ostras and Macaé, these huge construction projects were visibly increasing in numbers. I got access\textsuperscript{21} into one of these gated communities and I got a peak into the luxurious life on the inside with grocery stores, gyms, swimming pools and a high level of security.

**Ethical challenges**

My position as a Norwegian and as a woman were not exactly unbiased. Norway was a country recognised by many in Brazil. On a more general basis, Norway was known as *o país dos bacalhaus*, ‘the country of cods’, but some also knew it was an additional country of oil. There were some Norwegians in Macaé, either for business opportunities, training and education on the platforms, or through the Norwegian company Aker Solutions and their service base to support the growth of the offshore activity. But I only got in contact with Jon and his friends. Brazilians in Macaé often met Norwegians with good finance, which gave me the same connotations of a wealthy foreign woman, or *gringa* (female, and usually white, foreigner). During my first week living in Macaé, there was a birthday celebration to one of the people living in the same street as me. A man named Leandro, turning 60 years old, invited his family and all the people he knew in the street to celebrate him. This included Sharon and Jon, so they brought me along to experience a Brazilian celebration. When it was about seven o’clock in the evening, Sharon, Jon and I went outside in the now dark street with only a few streetlights working. The air was still warm and humid, but the direct heat from the sun was gone and created a comfortable temperature. About 200 metres around the corner, the street lighted up in flashing colours and people dancing in the middle of the street appeared. The music was very loud, and kids were running around playing or dancing as well. When we came closer, Sharon and Jon were welcomed with screams from three women running towards Sharon, and the normal greeting with one kiss on each cheek was given. “This is Carolina” Sharon said while pointing towards me. “She is living here for five months and research Macaé before and after Petrobrás,” she explained while people came to greet me with kisses as well. Further into the evening, I was surprised by the immediate acceptance I got (although Jon and Sharon had to translate most of the conversations). I was a bit worried about contact with men, but during this celebration, the men were very interested in talking to me and hearing what I thought about Brazil so far.

\textsuperscript{21} See Appendix
When I woke up the next day, I walked downstairs to Sharon and Jon to eat breakfast, feeling overly confident about access and making friends based on last night. About an hour into a long breakfast, I shared my thoughts with Sharon, and it did not seem like she agreed with me. “Did I do something wrong last night?” I asked her, and Jon immediately made a grin. “Yes” she answered and tried to find the right words in English. “The women think you are tempting their men. I know you didn’t mean it like that, but you should be more careful when talking to men because Brazilians are a proud people and get easily jealous,” she told me in a strict tone. As it turned out, the women on the celebration had been talking about me and decided that they would forbid their men to converse with me ever again. Even though I later tried talking exclusively to the women in the street, they only tolerated my presence around Sharon, but turned their back on me as soon as I came alone and tried to greet them.

Relations between male and female in Macaé turned out to hold bigger ethical issues among Brazilians than I foresaw. Infidelity was relatively normal, and I encountered few families with children which, biologically speaking, belonged to both the mother and the father of the house. Women in particular did not seem ashamed of talking about infidelity either, many women told me stories of how they took the lead and left the man in his misery and how much better off they were without him cheating. Trust in a significant other seemed to be a general problem: the view of men and women following each other around and not letting the other get out of sight was visible almost every day. Seeing men waiting for their girlfriend, or vice versa, outside of restrooms on bars (or paying intense attention to the restrooms on restaurants when the significant other went in there) was surprisingly common. When I asked Amanda how come they do this, she explained to me that in a way, Brazilians view their partner as their “property” and if you let it go it is free to be taken by someone else. Felipe, a married oil and gas agent in his early 60’s, once stated, “If I see an attractive woman, I fail to be a man if I don’t try to get in bed with her. I am Brazilian, you know.”

My position as a researcher often came secondary to being a young and unmarried woman for many of my informants. Occasionally, people tried to set me up with their sons or their friends. Sometimes, men tried to do some roughly romantic gestures, for example when a man waited outside the ladies room to give me a chocolate, or when another wanted to give me a ride in his helicopter, while a few rather bluntly told me what they wanted to do with me. As the incidence during my first week had cost me several contacts, I would not make the same mistake again and create distrust among people. I therefore followed a strategy of first getting to know the women, and when they appeared to be confident about my intentions as a
researcher and a person, I would cautiously try to talk to the men. This strategy made me more aware of how I acted and how I affected other relations, which again made me wary of how people responded to me. Although I needed to spend more time with some women than others, this strategy was approved by most. I would also decline approaches men made towards me, either through ignorance or by humour.

Early in my fieldwork I asked Sharon how to reject Brazilian men. “It is like a game! You ignore those staring or giving comments, like they aren’t there. Watch the other girls and how they do it,” was her answer. So I started to pay more attention to rejections in my surroundings. The first time I observed a rejection I was on my bike and a young woman walking in front of me passed construction workers. They howled and whistled at her, and at once she straightened her back, her walk became more feminine (like a model on a catwalk), and her head pointed upwards in a more proud position. Not once did she look over at the construction workers, not even a twitch was visible in her body, to recognize their presence. Although my body could not move in a similar fashion, I soon learned that ignorance was a great way to reject unfamiliar men. Though when familiar men, or those others knew, started to flirt I followed Sharon E. Hutchinson’s approach of humour (1996). I usually started by stating something which seemed very ethnocentric and naïve, for example “I only date men who has experienced snow”, but that often got a response similar to “I can experience snow as long as I am with you”. From there, I teased the men (often loudly to attract attention) by accusing every Brazilian man to use the same phrases: “you are so pretty”, “I love your eyes”, or “you are everything I want in my life”, and further ask if everyone has participated on the same flirtation course. A roar of laughter normally came after this accusation, both from the flirting man and the people around, thereby ridiculing the romantic relation and moving closer to a relation based on friendship. As a potential for social integration, humour also entails an understanding of others customs and situations (Lien, 2001).

In the introductory step of informed consent, I was overly concerned with how to explain what an anthropologist are and do. Fortunately, it turned out that the anthropologist Roberto DaMatta is a rather public character in Brazil with frequent appearances on national television and with columns in the national newspaper O Povo, ‘The People’. “You are like DaMatta,” some people responded when I said what I was doing in Macaé, while others nodded their heads and wanted to know what I was researching. My role as an anthropologist was therefore not in need of thorough explanation, and the more common conception as a person researching an indigenous group of people in the Amazonia was not the case either.
Rather, I became a “reflection” of DaMatta and his brilliant work on urban society and understanding in Brazil. The next step was to explain what I was actually researching. Instead of trying to explain in detail, like I did to Sharon, I learned that she normally introduced me like she did on the birthday celebration, “studying Macaé before and after Petrobrás,” and people usually understood and were even eager to tell me about their personal experience. I therefore used that as a basic explanation, and further got to the last step explaining I could be using our conversations, situations and my observations in my dissertation. Instead of being attentive or suspicious of me, most people I met were eager to tell me their side of the story and even help me to get other contacts.

For example, the Macaensas most eager to tell me about the past and present lived close to the area and harbour Petrobrás now occupy, the Imbetiba beach, the former social centre for the inhabitants of Macaé. A woman in her 60s, Felicia, born and raised in Macaé lived in a residential area on a small island in a river, close to a bridge where the water from the river and the ocean mixed and created brackish water. She told me about the past of the area surrounding the river and Imbetiba:

“Both Macaensas and visitors enjoyed Imbetiba during the day, drinking and laughing. When they got tired of the heat and the sea, most people went to visit the fish market to buy their dinner, or they went to the bar located in the cross section, you know, where the main entrance for Petrobrás is now. We could even fish and enjoy water skiing on the river. Now, nobody is visiting the Imbetiba beach or the river because of pollution. We can’t even touch the water in the river anymore because the newcomers upstream are polluting the water and the wharf are polluting Imbetiba beach. This place used to be a rich neighbourhood, but if we step outside of the island we see favelas everywhere.” (February 20, 2014)

Although Felicia may have romanticised the past, she was displeased with the changes in that area and the visible changes. Her little brother, Rafael, on the other hand, worked in Petrobrás and enjoyed the changes and opportunities in the city. He did, however, specify that the city were too small to sustain the traffic: “in centro, you can’t build anything without demolish something else. That is why the expansion of the city is happening in the outskirts, along the rivers and the beaches”. As the urban area is too small, the result is a continuously expanding
and changing city. Rafael agreed with Felicia that Avenida Atlântica had become the new social centre, especially because of the great efforts initiated by Petrobrás to withhold it.

The level of security and trust between my informants and I were usually strengthened by Sharon’s presence: She “vouched” for me every time we met new people and she was present. Likewise, when I conducted interviews I assured the interviewee that I was the only one ever to listen to the recordings. The identity of people made during participant observation and interviews is anonymised, and in some incidents, their profession, their gender or arena is changed as well. I never continued with research perceived as uncomfortable for my informants, for example with the people in my street after the birthday celebration. Security for myself, however, was sometimes debateable. The insecure traffic around my bike was in my own control, but during the evenings I was a passenger to several people drinking and driving, which lead to a few minor collisions where no one got hurt except from the few bumps in the cars. Feeling the lack of control over the vehicle where I could not do anything other than trying to keep the chauffeur attentive to the road – a few times even awake – was probably the most insecure situations I experienced. On other notes, Sharon and many of her friends advised me never to visit particular neighbourhoods (they were classified as favelas by Sharon), and never to walk outside alone when it got dark (after 18:00). By not following those advices my data collection could have looked different, but I trusted Sharon and followed them. I would rather feel safe than sorry.

Brazilian Portuguese and festivities

Preparing myself for the language in Norway, I bought Portuguese books, attended lectures in Portuguese at the University of Oslo, and met up with a Brazilian exchange student from São Paulo wanting learn Norwegian in exchange for teaching Portuguese. Jon and the exchange student had already explained how people in Macaé had minimal knowledge in English, and I was therefore memorising and rehearsing as much as possible before I got down there. Nevertheless, it was almost all in vain. When I arrived in Brazil, I noticed that the exchange student had taught me a different dialect. I had not learned slang either, which was present in almost every sentence, making it very difficult for me to understand. I luckily found an English teacher, Sabrina, within the first week, and I had private Portuguese lessons with her twice every week during the entire fieldwork. Sabrina grew up in a city bordering to Uruguay, and lived in Great Britain for almost a decade, so her English was very good. She was the person I came to when I did not understand certain situations or expressions: without her, I
would have misunderstood several incidents when I first encountered them. In addition, I worked hard on glossaries and grammar every day. By hearing and reading Portuguese on a day-to-day basis, I was able to understand most of the content in conversations after the first two months, and after three months I was (after a lot of continuously hard work) able to have conversations.

To make the language even more tiresome, I often met up with people in the context of loud music and drinking. It was difficult to pay attention to what people was saying, and I did not always interpret these conversations. As drinking alcoholic beverages was common and it was in some way integrating to do the same, I tried to limit myself to one beer in total each time. I restrained myself from drinking for many reasons. First of all, I wanted to have a clear head to conduct research and to be taken seriously by my surroundings. Secondly, drinking would only limit my ability to understand what people said, thereby not understand the verbal content of a situation at all. I usually held a glass or can in my hand (though the beverage became warm) so as not to dissociate myself from the festivities or displaying a distancing attitude towards drinking. An upside of being around Brazilians were the very expressive body language. Despite the loud music, gesticulations, facial expressions and bodily movement were very clear. The most extreme case I witnessed was when some of Sharon’s friends had been quarrelling. The total ignorance, eye rolling and waving away comments between the quarrelling women created a very visible annoyance for everyone to witness. The language was a restriction for me, but I managed to get to a level where Sabrina was very impressed with me, telling me how other gringos usually did not get this far in such a short period of time.

**Access to arenas**

The hierarchy based on socioeconomic statuses will be elaborated in the next chapter, but a short classification in the hierarchy needs to be presented because the areas I entered gave access to people with different socioeconomic statuses. The classifications consist of the poor, the workers, the middleclass, and the elites. When I talked with people about happiness in Macaé, one of the most regular answers were that every Brazilian are happy as long as they sit on a beach with a beer in their hand. The beach by Avenida Atlântica was therefore a place I went to talk to lifeguards and families, and meeting people during lunch hours. I initially thought that contact with people were going to be difficult, but I often found myself talking to different types of people eager to tell me about themselves. For example, I once talked to a
woman from Amazonia working at a nail polish studio, and after 30 minutes, we both stood on the beach exfoliating our skin and bleaching our body hair together with an occasional “dip” in the ocean to wash away the products. She had lunch, and this was the only period she had the time to be at the beach and treat herself. Other episodes gave me a closer look into the lives of the lifeguards or ice cream- and coconut sellers. When I did not meet someone on the beach, the informal and relaxed surroundings created an arena of ease, observation, to update field notes and to do Portuguese grammar. The interaction observed at the beach normally consisted of workers together at lunch, or interaction between workers and poor when someone wanted an ice cream, coconut or something to drink. Although I tried to connect with people on the beach, the forms of interaction mostly consisted of conversations on our country of origin, or more of a “customer-seller” relation than on a personal level.

Restaurants had a more formal and personal vibe, especially on those occasions I was invited to eat at one of the high-end places where every table had their own waiter, waiting for the next order. One time Amanda and her roommate from Colombia, Mayra, invited me to eat at one of these places where they served special marinated types of the best meat around. I was supposed to meet some of their friends, all in their twenties. Except from Amanda, they were from Peru and Venezuela: two men and one additional woman to Amanda, Mayra and me. The men were an engineer and a mechanic who moved into town about three months ago because of job offers they had gotten relating to the petroleum industry. They all knew English very well, and the men ordered more meat and beer possible to devour by six people. When the bill came, the men did not even look at the price, they only laid down their credit cards together with the bill and the waiter immediately came to pick it up. There were indeed less formal restaurants in Macaé, which normally turned into bars with live music during the evening. One of the liveliest were located at the very end of Avenida Atlântica, called Rubicon, where workers and some middleclass were united by music and good food after a day at the beach, at work, watching a football match with friends or just wanting to socialise. When sitting at Rubicon, you had a beautiful view over a lagoa, ‘the lagoon’, and the small section of sandy beach separating the lagoon and the ocean, with a sunset encouraging numerous to take pictures with their phones and cameras.

The music, the food and the place brought together people from the different socioeconomic groups in a specific context. Rubicon should theoretically produce “identification through differentiation”, a process where social comparison are enhanced in close encounter with one another, leading to greater identification of one self and others based
on their differences (Sarti, 1995, p. 118). Although that is a possibility, the whole scene of people sitting and eating at their tables changed immediately when the music started to play and people got up to dance. A local and popular singer named João usually played commonly known songs, encouraging everyone to singalongs and dancing for a couple of hours. The songs were usually about the repressive state, racism or sex. Except from some very nicely dressed individuals standing in the periphery of the central dancing area, calmly dancing on the same spot and barely moving their lips according to the song’s lyrics, people normally jumped in and tried to find someone knowing the lyrics as well as them. Which was many. Singing and dancing together, despite the socioeconomic differences, seemed unifying and encouraged. In spite of me being a stranger to the lyrics and dancing (samba), I was dragged into the masses myself.

The arenas so far have been public and rather welcoming to everyone with a desire to join. The elites, the individuals considered to have the highest socioeconomic status, were not among those visiting these public arenas. However, many of the elites had an interest in horses. Jon and his Norwegian friend Karl were both retired and constructed a house each in one of the gated communities. They had gotten an interest in horseback riding and wanted to bring me along, despite my lack of skill on a horseback (particularly how to ride “cowboy style” with one hand). The farm we visited were raising cattle, and the horses were primarily used by the farmers to herd the flocks. The farm was owned by a British family with a woman in charge, going by the name Donna, female ‘boss’. The farmers were paid by Donna for taking care of the cattle farm, and by elites for training and take care of their horses. Unlike the elites owning the finest stallions on the farm, Jon and Karl owned two castrados, ‘castrates’ or ‘wallas’, because they were easier to control. Through access in this arena, I also got access to the Donna and the elites, in addition to the farmers. Regardless of the amount of money the farmers earned, the elites viewed the farmers as poor considering their “primitive” way of life and mind-set, their less constrained behaviour, and their lack of education. Felipe, the elite I got in best contact with, warned me several times to stay away from the farmers because of their primitive ways, and Karl told me he would watch over me like I was his daughter when he felt I got in a close proximity of the farmers. Yet, the farmers were still invited to parties where the elites arrived on horses, and on cavalcades to Avenida Atlântica.

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22 The horses had to live on the farm and could be used for either herding or breeding, but the elites bought their usufruct. It was an informal trade, and Jon and I discussed the owner relationship as more close to “renting” the horses for an indefinite time.
As the farmers were skilled on the horseback, they normally did stunts on these gatherings, in spite of them handling a mare to make the elite’s stallions look more beautiful.

The relationship between the farmers and the elite was not that of a friendship, more of a customer-seller relation. The first time I went to the farm, I had to pay the farmer preparing my horse a small sum of five reais for his work. Jon and Karl paid the same farmer a significantly larger sum to train their horses. The farmers had according to Karl and Jon grown up at a similar cattle farm themselves considering their vast knowledge of the horses and the cattle; still, I was sceptical to their presumed lack of general knowledge. I therefore tried to speak with an elderly farmer in his 50’s named Jorge. We were standing in the shadow of a tree while Karl and Jon talked to the farmer training their horses. Jorge’s face and shoulders were sunburned with silver hair sticking out of his cap, and I noticed his worn out and muddy clothes as a result from his work on the farm. Our conversation started with him wondering if I was from the United States, and I explained that I was from Norway in Europe. He then gave me a look, and pointed out “you have to be from the United States, you speak English and you visit here with those guys” he said while pointing at Jon and Karl. After I explained that English education was normal in Norway from an early age, and that the men I arrived with were also Norwegians, he laughed and shook his head. “So where is Norway then?” He asked me in a challenging tone. After several failed attempts at drawing a map with a stick in the dirt, where I pointed to my deformed map, we came to an agreement that I were from the United States. He then asked if I wanted to buy a horse from him, because that was what Americans normally did on this farm. After politely turning down the offer, I returned to the car with Jon and Karl ready to head back home, and I told them about my conversation with Jorge. “I have had the same conversation with him. He has lived on a farm his entire life, and he doesn’t even know his own date of birth, neither how to read it,” Jon answered. Biases and prejudices relating to the farmers seemed to have deeper foundations than just economy.

Lastly, I became good friends with Amanda and she introduced me to students and professors at the University of Campos. Not only did I get a look into the lives of students in Brazil, I also got to know people at the same age as myself. When Amanda was visiting Macaé, she sometimes had a group of students spending the night at Sharon’s house together with the rest of us, and her boyfriend was always one of them. These students were eager to learn English, and many of them spoke it pretty well considering they did not have any additional courses I knew about. The goal for many was to take a year abroad, hopefully in

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23 Plural form of Real, the Brazilian currency.
Japan or in the United States, to appear more lucrative for a future employer. During my stay, the first woman at their line of study were accepted to a year abroad in Japan. She was 26 years old, and she was eager to get her first passport.

**Living in Macaé**

Orientation in the urban area in Macaé was difficult, not only for me, but for locals as well. As a source for obstacles, changes to the urban scene in the form of construction projects creates difficulties to manoeuvre in traffic and as a pedestrian. The directive plan and the major of Macaé emphasises funding from private and public cooperation in order to create the idealised national petroleum capital, where the space of this cooperation push residents further away from the city centre. The ethical challenges I encountered was mainly the heterosexual norms surrounding social relations. After having misinterpreted the incident on the birthday celebration, I became more aware of myself as woman and I realised that the steps towards contacts had to be through women and humour. Through the common discipline as the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, informed consent and presentation of my project were relatively well accepted. People were even eager to be a part of my research. Through arenas such as bars, the beach and restaurants, I got in contact with diverse people with different socioeconomic status. The only people lacking were the ones known as elites, which I got access to through horses on a cattle farm. On the cattle farm, I observed an interesting relationship between the farmers and the elites, not only based on finances, but on how socioeconomic statuses were defining and generalising. The fact that horses were an arena where elites and the farmers interacted, in the context of being a customer and a seller, made the relations and values in the socioeconomic hierarchy become clearer and somewhat more relating to education and behaviour than I initially anticipated. The poor, the workers, the middleclass, and the elites are in a way forced to interact and observe each other in the dense urban area, creating notable detachments and alienation from one another. The next chapter will analyse these differences, and present interactional relations.
Chapter 3: Socioeconomic Hierarchy

Access to the diverse arenas gave me contact to a great variation of people with different socioeconomic statuses and life situations. Both positive and negative biases and prejudices are connected to the different groups, but as mentioned in the introduction, the socioeconomic hierarchy is for the sake of analysis which is why the groups are generalized. I will use the classification they used on themselves, or others used on them. We have *os pobres*, ‘the poor’, which I did not get in close contact with and I only have observations and statements from others on this group. *Os trabalhadores*, ‘the workers’, are the people relating to specific working hours and schedules, including vendors of any type and office employees, like secretaries. The third group are *a classe média*, ‘the middleclass’, which were a growing group in Macaé. The fourth, and last, are the elites, *as elites*, or “oil and gas agents” as they were also known as. Brazil is often one of the prime examples in media of enormous social segregation and inequality, where a normal claim for segregation relates to a “hidden” basis in race and ethnicity (Vincent, 2003, p. 20). The focus of this hierarchy will rather evolve around the social and economic conditions in order to get a different source of comparison. The social and economic are somewhat intertwined: in socially organised relations, individuals take use of the economic conditions to become arranged hierarchal in comparison with each other. “The familiar and same attract the similar,” the elite Felipe once answered when I asked if he thought there were class distinctions in Macaé. Following his answer and the logic of the statement, the similar is easier to include, while the dissimilar is easier to exclude.

The Poor

The Brazilian Portuguese *pobre*, ‘poor’, was regularly used by everyone except from themselves. The notion will further stand for people with an irregular- or no job resulting in earning insufficient money to support themselves and a putative family. There were an additional *social* aspect of the poor pointed out by those not considered poor themselves. They were deemed more “primitive” and “simple-minded”. Being poor in the eyes of others were not only a lack of money or a decent job, it was also a lack of sophistication, education, and proper behavioural aspects. The farmers on a cattle farm became my primary source of the poor, but it was difficult to get close to them because other people advised me with great suspicion to stay away. The people living in my street were my initial source of the poor, and
when I lost this group of people I did not find others I got in close contact with. At dusk in my street, people opened up their garages or first floors and invited people in to buy drinks or exchanging old beer bottles with full ones, a form of informal recycling. Others invited people to an evening sermon, usually to preach about the gospels. For those without a garage or a first floor at their convenience, they bought a food trolley selling beer, hamburgers, or *churrasco*24. People often gathered from other neighbourhoods as well to visit. This street was the busiest after working hours I ever witnessed consisting solely of residents. I once asked Sharon why these people never went to Avenida Atlântica, and she whispered back “they cannot afford it”. I quickly found out that the house next to us held four core families, and the houses up the street consisted of similar situations. Others had taken in solitary people, coming to Macaé alone and without means to live alone. In addition to having a day job, many needed to earn the extra cash in the evening to support their family and paying the rent. If the families had kids, which many had considering the many kids playing in the street every hour of the day, watched over by their mothers or other female relatives, many women were often home during daytime. The people working at the garages and food trolleys were normally women, probably because their husbands were tired after their workday.

One of the solitary men, Flavio (48), in the street were a regular on one of the garage bars. During the day, he carried a cooler on the beach or at schools yelling the different types of ice creams he sold. After buying one of his ice creams at the beach one day, I asked how long he had been doing this. “I have done this for many years. I am from Minas [Gerais], and when the sale went bad there, I moved here. The sale has never been better, especially during the summer! I earn a lot more than minimum wages,” (My emphasis added) he answered while he put the cooler-lid back on. He then picked it up and continued his walk while shouting the types of ice cream he sold. I did not get the impression that “poor” in Macaé seemed the same as in the bigger cities in Brazil where people rather pick through waste than being a housemaid (Millar, 2014). None of those with the “poor” classification from others had a car; most of them had bikes to get around. No one I met knew English either, but they still did not seem like the Brazilian urban poor I had read about in my preparations (see DaMatta, 1995). They did, however, differ in appearance from others. They usually had old, or rugged and torn clothes, sometimes with grease or dirt on it (probably because of their

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24 Translated as barbeque, but not in the same way I was used to. They sold grilled meat in different sizes and shapes on spears, grilled chicken and chicken hearts, served with grilled cheese, *farofa* (potato flour/crumbs), and salsa. *Churrasco* was classified as unique for Brazil, mainly because of all their good meat.
The workers

People working as vendors, in cosmetic services or in desk jobs were the ones defined as the workers by most of the population. They were dependent on working hours during the weekdays and very few had cars or a driving licence. During lunch or after working hours, they were usually to be found on the beach, churrascos and bars. Around noon and five in the evening, Avenida Atlântica was very busy and the most popular restaurants and bars were filled up with people eating and drinking. The rising demand for clothing, catering and real estate created numerous employment opportunities and the request for education was low for the workers. Most workers I talked to had either finished junior high, high school, or primary school, and very few in this group could speak English. But in the jobs they applied for none of these abilities were usually needed: experience, good charisma, loyalty and work ethic were more attractive. Pedro (22), from Brasília, explained that he did not like school when he was younger, and he got in contact with informal sectors in his surroundings where he became a vendor of illegal substances. “I earned more money than I could imagine at that time,” he explained. However, his mother found out and moved the entire family to Macaé so that he would get away from that environment. He was young and handy, and was therefore hired in a clothing store, sewing and selling workwear and uniforms to everything from chefs uniforms to overalls transported at the supply ships. “How can you sell clothes to foreigners if you don’t speak English?” I asked, getting a laughing response from him “my boss has hired a guy speaking English; I don’t have to deal with the gringos.” In his opinion, he earned enough to get by, and he lived with his family where his mother cooked and took care for him. “I got tired of the life in Brasília, although I could buy women and jewellery, and even the driver’s license, I prefer my life here.” He was one of the few workers with a driver’s license I met; nevertheless, he could not afford a car.

25 Although unproblematic for me, it was a marker of differences because other groups went through a great extent to make the best appearance they could afford.
26 According to Sabrina, lunch was considered the main meal of the day.
An example workers not making much money, but loved their line of work were the lifeguards. They all had a Petrobrás logo on their uniforms (a t-shirt). In addition to watching the beaches, they taught children how to swim although the waves usually were too rough so they went to the local swimming pool (also financed by Petrobrás). Other workers I met were friends of Sharon. Raquel (28), from Rio de Janeiro, had a desk job in one of Petrobrás’ offices. She told me that most of the time she stamped and forwarded papers to the prescribed receiver, or ordered food. She lived with her sister in an apartment, but their rent and her consumption of clothes and make-up were so high she had to establish a nail polish studio in her apartment at night to make the ends meet. Another one of Sharon’s friends was Clara (49), working in a small store selling women’s wear. She lived alone, and struggled to earn enough money as to send the profit to her daughter. My initial impression of the workers were that they were living on one pay-check to the other, without a possibility to actually save up or buy what they actually wanted, like a car for Pedro, material goods for Raquel, or helping Clara’s daughter.

In appearance, it was easy to recognise a worker either through their job-outfit (which they normally wore after work), or even through their regular appearances. They differed from others in their way of dressing because they normally wore clean clothes, but not stylish, branded consumer goods. Both males and females had well-kept hair, but not to the same extent the middleclass and the elites had. Both sexes wore necklaces and earrings with a variation of watches and bracelets. Overwhelming perfume and strong fragrances was normal among the workers, the middleclass and the elites, but for the workers it also worked to cover a potential smell of odour because showering and taking care of oneself in this matter often took time they could not spare. Sadly, the workers’ appearance were often considered “tacky” because they used to exaggerate their hair, make-up, clothes and jewellery with cheap products of bad quality.

The middleclass

As the classification suggests, these are people in the middle of the workers and the elite, but they do indeed have more money compared to the workers, which were visible on their level of consummation. Still, there were certain people moving in between being a worker and a middleclass as well, those which were difficult to “place”. The reasons for the difficulties are situational and depended on context. Students, for example, are most likely the children of wealthy or influential families, local artists was depended on gigs, and those in between jobs
normally did not stay in that position for a long time. However, there are common traits among those classified as middleclass. They usually did not relate to working hours, but responsibilities and assignments they needed to organize and solve. They had enough money either because of their amount of work, or through the family. Those who did not relate to working hours had a higher rate of flexible time schedules and were therefore able to control their work in a higher degree than the workers described above. The educational level was considered higher, and there were a higher number of people who had some English skills (mainly because they had married a foreigner and/or took an English class). This group both included university students, people who had minor working connection with the oil and gas companies, or helped foreigners in public matters. Excluding the students, most of the middleclass had both a driver license and a car. Since there was a demand for English speaking mediators, the people in this group could easily be recruited in communicating with foreigners. Likewise, Brazilian English teachers were recruited by both foreigners and Brazilians to learn the other language, which they could charge plenty. Sabrina was one of those teachers, though she was more interested in giving her two daughters what they needed instead of spending the money on herself.

There were many women in the middleclass, some had created a career by themselves and others had married a rich and/or foreign man who helped them with jobs and opportunities. Those women marrying a rich Brazilian usually became housewives because women were the usual caretakers of the household and the family, while their husbands were the economic providers. Those marrying a foreigner usually had to acquire some English skills, and in the case of Sharon, used those skills into helping other foreigners she met through Jon in bureaucratic matters, charging them with a symbolic cost, thereby creating an income source by herself. Sharon was considered middleclass, although she regularly referred to herself as a modern woman. On that note, it is important to show forth how a middleclass Brazilian, like the others socioeconomic groups also is a state of mind, although also expressed through consumer goods (O'Dougherty, 2002). The middleclass not only represent themselves, they rather represent who they want to be, like Sharon’s self-identification with what she perceives to be the modern. The middleclass people I got in contact with in addition to Sharon was Gabriela, the wife of Felipe who was an artist; My English teacher Sabrina; A graduated professor named Lucas; And the siblings Vitor and Lara Silva working as estate agents in one of the gated communities located in the suburbs.
People from the middleclass, with emphasis on women, used an enormous amount of time on their appearance. They had the spare time to work out and to treat themselves with services to enhance their appearances. Normally, Sharon visited her hair salon and Raquel’s nail polish studio at least once every week. She often used hair cures and made sure Jon bought some perfume from the airport for her to get the best brands. Occasionally, she jokingly expressed that she herself disliked to buy expensive clothes and shoes, so she often brought Jon to buy them for her. Waiting for Sharon, Amanda and her boyfriend to get ready was some of the most time-consuming situations I found myself in, and plans to take a daytrip somewhere were often cancelled because of this. The middleclass men, Lucas, the students and Vitor, were also attentive and used a lot of time on their appearances, but they used less jewellery compared to elites.

The elite

In Macaé, the elite were defined in accordance to their relation to the petroleum activity. The oil and gas agents, those directly connected to oil and gas either as consultants, juridical advisers, mechanics or engineers, were among those classified as the elite. The indirect agents, such as the real estate agents, the head of a catering firm, or people in a high position organising the supply sent to the ships, were considered elite as well. Felipe, the oil and gas agent mentioned above, were working as a rig manager with focus on performance and experience in timed operations. He could be contacted at any time, meaning he could have several weeks off or several weeks on. In his opinion, he had a freelancing job where his wife had taken care of the house and the kids in decades so he could support them with as much odd jobs as possible. In this way, he had accumulated an enormous amount of sought-after experience, and he considered himself the best in his field: his hard and dedicated work was his source of success.

More elites I met were a man commonly known by his last name, Jeferson, a leading hotel manager. Others also considered Jon and Karl as elites. Their classification were linked tightly to their time and money spent in the same manner as the elites, where hobbies like golf and horseback riding were some commonalities. In the beginning of my stay in Macaé, I did not seem to find any of those classified as elites in any public place or the more common and popular restaurants, cafes or bars. If they were in the urban area, they were apparently seen in their cars driving towards or away from a high-end restaurant or offices. Sabrina explained how I could recognise the elites on the type of cars they used: newly polished, usually white,
pickups with tinted windows. Her explanation on the elite’s absence in the urban area was the difficulties in getting a parking lot with such sizable cars. Instead of being in the urban area, the elites normally held private parties for their friends and family in one of their mansions inside a gated community. The fact that the elites earned high wages and spent them in a similar matter seemed not the only criteria of being elite. It was an atmosphere of sophistication surrounding them, they talked about art and architecture, what the next location of their family holiday would be, where their children went to school, and that dancing in the streets were only suitable during the carnival.

The Informants in this section primarily consisted of men in their forties and up, and many of their wives were considered middleclass. I figure the main reason for this was self-achievement; their wives did not achieve their position in the same way elites did. Felipe in particular told me how hard he and his friends had worked to get where they were now, and how men in a similar position as Felipe usually went through some grey areas in the law to reach it. Most elites had a solid education, but it was surprisingly hard finding those who spoke English; those who did had lived in an English speaking country over a period of time either through education or because they had married a foreigner. The most regular explanation was the unnecessary aspect of knowing English until previous decades, and now they rather hired a translator. The elites normally worked when they were called upon by their enterprises based on demand, and they worked from a couple of days to weeks at a time. Expensive and thick gold necklaces accompanied with gold watches was visible on every Brazilian elite I met. Jeferson also had a silver hipflask he often retrieved from his pocket to take a sip. Those having hair was very neat and attentive to it, in addition to their hands and nails. Once when I prepared my horse, I overheard Felipe and Jeferson talked about their hands and nails in relation to the horseback riding, and their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their current manicure services. Their clothes also consisted of foreign brands, and not the cheap and replicated kind the workers sometimes wore, but the brand clothes bought at high-end shopping malls.

27Corruption was often mentioned during interviews and conversations, but I did not want to pursue this theme since I discovered that several people used corruption as a scapegoat for their day-to-day problems. Although I will not deny that corruption is a generally recognized problem in South-America, it was difficult to separate those who knew these cases and those who needed someone to blame. See appendix for more.
Relations in Macaé

There is still one detail in the scene of Macaé I have not mentioned: The influx of foreign people and foreign services. Different languages and foreign people were commonly heard and seen in the streets and restaurants, yet not at the bars or restaurants were workers and middleclass stayed. Perhaps the means to communicate was a barrier, or they had Brazilian contacts taking them to places I did not visit, but I witnessed many foreigners staying at the many international hotels. While some worked on and off the supply ships, others – especially those hired by some sort of service company – lived in a gated community in the suburbs rented or bought by petroleum- and service businesses. The presence of these foreign workers in public areas were as present as the elites: close to none. Another petroleum city experiencing rapid change and immigration similar to Macaé is Fort Murray in Canada, where foreign workers are struggling to fit in (Foster & Taylor, 2013). These foreign workers in Fort Murray were considered skilled or unskilled, and many resided in work camps outside of the town site regarding the already dense city, known as “shadow workers”. The odd differences about the foreigners in Macaé and the shadow workers in Fort Murray are how they are perceived: In Macaé the foreigners consists of highly educated people from all over the world in care by their company. The former have created an almost unnoticeable group of people living in hotels or high-end residences driving a car from one parking garage to another, similar to the elites. Macaé also have newcomers from Brazil from other regions in the nation, both educated and uneducated. However compared to Fort Murray, the uneducated newcomers in Macaé are probably easier to accept because they are Brazilians in no immediate need for integration and certainly not lessons in the language. In Fort Murray, the shadow workers were neither integrated, nor skilled in language. To put it simple, the foreigners in Macaé are elites, or possibly perceived as elites due to the amount of foreigners fitting the description, myself included when I met the cattle farmer.

Based on the level of exclusion and inclusion in the socioeconomic hierarchy, education holds a significant position not only relying on perceived intelligence, but also in shaping the individual to become an independent agent. Amanda and I explained the educational system in Brazil and in Norway to each other. She stressed the fact that private primary- and high schools were qualitatively better than the public, however public universities were better than the private. The problem of being accepted at a public university

28 I did not have access to these hotels.
29 Confirmed by the reception in the different gated communities.
30 Individuals not recognized as residents even though they lived in a certain region (Haan, 2010)
was good grades, which, in her opinion, was only possible if having attended a private primary- and high school, or to pay for extra tutoring. Unfortunately, private schools were not the case for the majority. And to make it even harder, foreign education was generally preferred over an education in Brazil regarding the employers in Macaé. Therefore, foreigners testing their luck in Macaé were considered as better educated than the Brazilians. Besides, most of them knew English too. One of the Mayors wishes was to attract knowledge to Macaé, and now when the presence of Petrobrás was highly notable, it was a visible motivation by the younger generations I talked with to educate themselves in something relating to the petroleum activity, mostly engineers or mechanics.

The two conditions the hierarchy in Macaé rely on a general conception of economic and social relations. The economic condition of the hierarchy are based on an education, the job an individual have, how high the salary is, and if the money go to serve the family with adequate house or buying material goods – or even both if the salary is high enough. The social conditions in the socioeconomic hierarchy are based on relations, equality, inclusion, exclusion and context. The position an individual holds in the hierarchy is not necessarily based on something essential. The position is based on who is considered to be equals, who consider you as an equal, and in what context. The boundaries between the different groups are liquid and able to surpass, as long as equality are established. For this reason, the socioeconomic hierarchy may be viewed as homogenous in relations within the groups and heterogeneous in external relations, as was the grounds in “the familiar and same attract the similar” statement above. However sameness and equality differ according to context, how people are acting, and when comparison are made. Sharon, for example, lived in the same street as those she classified as poor. The context of this situation are found on her past: She grew up as an orphan and was adopted by a family. Her relations and friendships with those in the street stemmed from her upbringing and the years before she met Jon. When Jon first met her, she was sewing clothes. In the context of that street, she did not act as the other residents were more primitive or simple-minded than her. But when the daylight rose over the horizon, she was ready to work with the foreigners and the development of Jon’s and her house in the gated community (being a middleclass).

Similarly, the context of music and dancing at Rubicon with both workers and middleclass together created something they had in common – their putative love for music – where the boundaries separating them to a certain extent were “danced off” during the live music. Even though the economic condition of the socioeconomic hierarchy seems to hold the
overarching values, I rather propose wealth as a justification, or even a product, of social organisation and stratification. Although clothes, residence and material goods may hold symbols of wealth, it is the people and their relation to each other that exclude, include, or have prejudices. The way others classify situations and even other people in a social manner, like the elites did to the farmers, is not only processes of exclusion, but also of social suppression and a clarification of their own perceived superiority.

The socioeconomic values intrigue the curiosity in the field in Macaé. If there are already existing factors and values surrounding the Brazilian city, how does the people relate to the rapid change coming from external distributors? Are new concepts created, or are new meaning integrated in old ones? If changes due to the petroleum activity creates a larger gap between the socioeconomic groups in the hierarchy, what do people identify with and how do people identify who they are themselves?
“Onde está a crise, mulheres?” ‘Where is the crisis, women?’ a man said while he waved his arms and looked concerned at the three other women and me. Sharon had brought her friends, Raquel and Clara, and the four of us were eating churrasco at a café. I had asked the women if they thought the changes in Macaé over the last decades were positive or negative. A loud discussion arose between them, attracting the attention of the people around us, including the man asking the question. The three women stopped and gave him a sceptical look: was he insulting them because they were too engaged in the discussion, or was he actually interested? The man introduced himself as Bernardo and said he was um vendedor das ropas, ‘a vendor of clothes’, while he comfortably sat down in a spare chair. Bernardo had listened to the conversation, and he seemed eager to contribute by explaining how Macaé were a cidade de oportunidades, ‘the city of opportunities’, for everyone, and not only for those with an education. Clara worked in a clothing store as well, while Raquel was an office worker, and Sharon helped foreigners in bureaucratic paperwork. Only one, Sharon, had entered higher education but had to drop out because she got pregnant. The discussion of Macaé continued in a more practical direction, considering people without a car usually had to live in the city centre and pay a higher rent than their salaries could support. “But I live in Rio das Ostras,” Bernardo said while taking a toothpick with a bit of grilled cheese in his mouth, “and I take the bus back and forth to Macaé every day,” he claimed while pointing the toothpick back at the rest of us. The most negative result of the discussion was rather how Brazilians with an education were now competing with educated foreigners, but the lively groups of people around the table toasted with their glasses and agreed that it did not affect them anyways – they were not a part of that game.

This chapter will evolve about the flexibility of people in the socioeconomic hierarchy, and their adaption to the changes and opportunities found in Macaé. Some find opportunities in the foreign influx of the city, while others find the changes in the city as the source of hardship and adversity.
The city of possibilities?

Residents in Macaé may find the city as an adversary because they are unwilling or unable to see their own potential and find the possibilities in front of them. When the city and the petroleum industry is changing, the residents do not only have to change themselves; they have to adapt. The game they talked about at the café usually had contestants of newly educated students, or people losing their job for the benefit of others more qualified. At social gatherings, I sometimes had conversations with people too young to enter the university, and they were more than often curious about my presence at the gathering. After conversing and giving my usual introduction of myself, they told me what they wanted to study when they were old enough. Most of the youths seemed motivated to study something relating to jobs connected to the petroleum activity, normally engineering or mechanics. These effects of the petroleum activity, these inspirations to the coming generation to educate themselves accordingly and to adapt to the industry, have given the young generation something familiar to aspire towards. Yet, the many Brazilian graduates and students I met during the fieldwork rather met a city of adversary than of opportunities.

Two of the students about to be presented chose different disciplinary directions, however both aspired towards a job related to the petroleum industry. The first is Amanda’s boyfriend, Thiago, a newly graduated electrical engineer. During one of the many breakfasts I spent with Amanda and her boyfriend, he shared his experiences in his search for a suitable job. The few times he had been called in for a job interview, he was rejected either on the spot or afterwards. The common explanation was the need for someone with more experience, or someone able to speak and read English. Usually, these competitors were graduates from Peru, Colombia, or Venezuela. The men mentioned in the previous chapter, the engineer from Colombia and the mechanic from Venezuela whom we had dinner with on a restaurant, are examples of foreigners getting these jobs. Other foreigners, those living in the gated communities, are not similar to these graduates because they are temporarily hired by businesses already connected to the petroleum activity, like Aker Solutions and their operational base in Macaé. The second student was one of Amanda’s friends, Diogo, a Brazilian man at the age of 24. In addition to law school, he attend English subjects at the university so that he could become a translator. He had recently been “headhunted” by a catering firm to work with delivery, handling phone calls and meetings with foreign personnel. He was the only one in the firm speaking English, and the firm relied on him when
they got foreign customers. Despite his busy schedule, he had through the catering firm obtained his driver’s licence and gotten a car he could use on his spare time.

Both ongoing and graduated students use their education to build up a certain potential, but the lack of experience at a workplace and knowledge in English made Diogo more attractive compared to Thiago. These graduates adapt to the petroleum activity in Macaé, with fresh sources of knowledge, but remain unused due to foreign competition. The graduates have the potential of change through their education and their assumed lack of experience may even be an advantage because they are new to situations and therefore adapt better\(^\text{31}\). The students and graduates have varied potential, and they are flexible in accordance to Gregory Bateson’s notion of flexibility: “uncommitted potentiality of change” (Bateson, 1972, p. 497). Flexibility is certain potential an individual have to do things differently, to change in order to adapt. Increased flexibility will enhance adaptability to changes, while decreased or a lack of flexibility will do the opposite. Not participating in diverse activities does not entail that people are more flexible due to a high level of uncommitted potential, it is rather a potential and a need or motivation for change. Flexibility is therefore contextual due to the limitations surrounding the individual, and situational depending on the individual’s need for change. People in Macaé have varied potential, but many stay uncommitted because of national and international competition, while others would rather resist change in order to avoid turbulences.

Comparing Thiago and Diogo in the terms of flexibility, the uncommitted potentials of them both have great variations. Although different specialisation in education, they were both needed in relation to the petroleum activity, but Diogo had more potential compared to Thiago. Diogo was able to drive and he had English skills, in addition to primarily becoming a lawyer. Thiago was “only” an electrical engineer, without a driver’s licence and no knowledge in English. In the niche of gaining access to the petroleum activity or industry, students and graduates are motivated alike with few variables, for instance becoming an engineer or mechanic. Other attributes, or potentials, are therefore needed in to be chosen when the competition becomes too big due to the global attention to the possibilities in Macaé. In the case of people aspiring towards a job in the international petroleum industry happening in Macaé, communication and mobility are attractive traits, and it is probably why the demand for English classes were high. Being able to communicate with non-Brazilians is

\(^{31}\) Those with previous experience are possibly used to do things in a certain way, and may find it harder to adapt.
crucial when cooperation with private and international businesses are encouraged by the municipality itself. Moreover, when the hotels, stores and restaurants are slowly pushing residents outside of the central urban area, the need for increased mobility is rising.

The students find themselves “betwixt and between” (Turner, 1999) their former and adolescent life, and their new and presumably changed life. In general, the students and the workers have to find potential in themselves to find opportunities, which often leads to two jobs. The middleclass have the resources to explore and develop themselves with fewer restrictions compared to the workers, and the elites are the ones taking part in the changes the rest of the population in Macaé needs to adapt to. Due to lack of information on the poor, their flexibility will not be elaborated in the same depth as the others in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

The adaptable workers

The two women introduced in the beginning of this chapter, Raquel and Clara, are both workers and do not have sufficient education. At first glance, these women do not seem to have flexible lives, but potential for change does not only evolve around documented achievements through the years. Raquel’s job in an office did not cover her expenses in rent and her high level of consume, involving clothes, make-up, hair and nails. She often pointed out how important it was to take several showers during the day because the worst thing in the heat was to smell. On several occasions, she even said my way of dressing was boring and wanted to give me a makeover. Her interest in beauty may have triggered her imagination and adapting to the inflow of newcomers in Macaé with the same desire as herself. To earn an extra income, she used her apartment during the evenings as a nail polish studio, promoting her informal business through her friends and social media. At the time I met her in January, the income from the nail polish studio was close to the income she earned at the office. For Raquel, the additional income gave her less financial restraints to buy what she wanted without having to leave the apartment. She found uncommitted potential in herself and started beauty-services, a potential she may not know she had, in order to adapt to the situation of changes in rent. Clara, however, working in a clothing store, was motivated to give her daughter the surplus she earned, and was therefore cutting down on her expenses, and possibly her desired way of life, so that her daughter could enjoy hers. Despite these motivations, she did not find anything else with herself or her interests to benefit from; she did not adapt to the changes in Macaé by seeing possibilities in the same way Raquel did.
Clara was soon to be 50 years old, and was *sacrificando*, ‘sacrificing’ herself so her daughter could get a better life. Although in a pressed situation, her creativity was not sparkled. A pressed situation may be the force of creativity, but it may also be a source of adversary and hopelessness, as was the case for Clara. She was “stuck” in that position because her own wellbeing came second to her daughter.

The flexibility of the workers are both motivated by necessity and by motivations. Pedro, another source into the life of the workers, was flexible because he lived with his parents and he did not have to pay rent as long as he listened to his mother. There was no immediate need in his current situation to explore uncommitted potential, however he was motivated to get a car. He sold clothes in Macaé, but as mentioned in the previous chapter, he was a former drug dealer. He continued his informal business in Macaé to earn an additional income. Although illegal, he had the experience and knowledge to conduct this business, and he highlighted the fact that he was only doing small jobs in order to save and buy himself a decent car. If he was satisfied with his current situation, his potential as a drug dealer would have stayed uncommitted, but he was motivated to use his potential to increase his mobility to create a different life for himself through a car. By gaining this car, his mobile flexibility will in theory increase32, but his temporal flexibility at the present is decreasing because he have to be at work and continue his informal business.

**The inventive middleclass**

The middleclass have many successful adaptations to the changes in Macaé, creating numerous forms of flexibility. Take the example of English teachers making more than a decent living solely on the demand from learning an international language. My Portuguese teacher, Sabrina, was primarily teaching English to Brazilians. Her potential to create changes for herself was temporal, meaning dependency on the amount she worked, rather than finding other and unexplored domains of potential. Compared to Pedro, she was satisfied with her current situation. Vitor and Lara Silva, the estate agents, had found potential in the demand for housing in high-end gated communities, thereby adapting the demand. Sharon’s business with the foreigners are a perfect example of adaptability to the changes and the influx of foreigners in Macaé wanting to invest. She had power of attorney over twelve lots in a gated community, all belonging to foreign people (including her husband Jon), which she administered by getting building permits and paid their ground rent after they had transferred

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32 The ongoing traffic jams hinder the car’s mobility.
money to her. At the same time, she helped these foreigners in obtaining a *permanência*, ‘residence permit’, or *autorização de trabalho*, ‘work permit’, in the country. The foreigners also had to register their permanent address to Sharon’s address for her to organize the mail. On a day-to-day basis, she had to visit public offices and do some paperwork, leading to a huge amount of spare time for herself. Sharon was an independent and informal agent for these foreigners, but she would not have been in this situation without her spouse.

This leads to another important aspect of flexibility in Macaé: the importance of a supportive partner. Jon had given Sharon contacts, he had paid for her driver’s licence and her car to conduct her business, he gave her daughter money for education, and he was now paying for the house they were building in the gated community. The way Raquel and Clara lived was not an option for Sharon because she had married a wealthy man taking care of her responsibilities and limitations in order to conduct her own business. Uncommitted potential is not always “discovered” either, it sometimes needs to be explored. Gabriela, Felipe’s wife, found herself in a situation where she could explore her potential of being an artist because of the support from Felipe. Spouses in Macaé is what created the life of several middleclass (especially women) in Macaé.

**The satisfied elites**

Lastly, the elites were highly educated and highly experienced in their line of work. They were not exactly adapting to the petroleum activity considering they were hired in by different service and development businesses. The elites have specific potential dealing with the petroleum activity, hotels, catering or real estate. Instead of being an adaptation to the petroleum activity, they rather implicitly part of the change: the most notable changes happening in Macaé may be under their influence by means of hotel and catering managers, and the leading parts in the service and development of the petroleum industry. They may have certain potential to do things differently for themselves, but in reality they do not need to, nor did they give any expression that they wanted to change their life either. The leading hotel manager in Macaé, Jeferson, lived in one of the gated communities in the suburbs only to be seen in the urban area at his hotels, the golf courses, or on a horse during the cavalcades.

The first time I witnessed one of the cavalcades was on Avenida Atlântica. It was dark, and Sharon and I waited on a bar for Jon, Karl, the elites and the farmers to arrive. Suddenly, we heard noises from a distance, and we crossed the road to get a clearer view on the beach. In the distance of the dark beach, we could see several shapes become clearer and
the noise were these men shouting and laughing. Within two minutes, the beach in front of us were covered with men prancing and rearing with the horses around the sand and on the street in front of the bar. “Este é um circo!”, ‘This is a circus!’, Sharon uttered when people in the street gathered to get a better look, shouting back and clapping their hands. These cavalcades did not only take place in the urban area of Macaé. After this episode, I was invited to a birthday party for Felipe’s son, and Felipe insisted that I joined them to the party on horseback, which I did. The party was overwhelming, with a roasted piglet, waiters serving every participant with new appetisers regularly, open bar, a DJ playing music, and an enormous cake.

The elites made a great impact on the city through their projects and businesses, but they did not take any notice of Macaé as a whole set of social organisations and interrelationships. In a way, they were raised above the public scene of Macaé. Compared to those with shortages and great limitations where flexibility is lacking, the elites do not lack the means to create change in their lives. Rather than introducing change to a steady, safe and satisfactory life, they maintain their current situation. The elites therefore tend to resist any possibilities towards change, as it is not a road towards new and required possibilities, it is rather a source of instability and ambiguity – a threat – to the secure, steady and privileged lives inside of the gated communities.

**Planning ahead or planning for the present**

In the creation of flexibility, an individual’s potential varies according to social norms to laws and regulations. As Bateson noted, flexibility entails variables, which in the case of people in Macaé holds restrictions or possibilities, a top and bottom limit (1972). For every individual flexibility has its own limits, where long-term flexibility such as education or knowing a second language may be an asset your entire life. Noted by others before me (Lund, 2001), getting documented proof that an individual is what he claims to be, for example a birth certificate or a university diploma, is something defining the individual for the rest of his life, corresponding to potential in long-term flexibility. Compared to short-term flexibility – which is dependency in others, consumption, money saved or used under particular circumstances – do not define an individual or a certain attribute through documentation.

Although the juridical student Diogo does not have flexible time and lack spatial control over himself during his study and work, his future holds a graduate lawyer with work experience, possibly a large network of contacts, and a second language; a significant amount
of potential compared to the engineer Thiago. For that reason, flexibility must be analysed in a demarcated view with respect to job possibilities, choice of spouse, and spare time. Flexibility does not decrease after a choice has been made, it changes in order for the individual to do something different. In terms of education, flexibility holds more potential in a long-term schedule, but the time invested during education is decreased when studying. Diogo may not be flexible at the present moment, but in the future his uncommitted potential will become very attractive.

Short-term flexibility at its most productive in Macaé are at the level of direct adaptability when changes are about to occur. When Raquel’s rent increased, she attained new limits to her flexibility by establishing her informal studio, however it is short-term because she is dependent on costumers to gain the income she wants. Yet, her informal business may prove to hold long-term flexibility if she gains a reputation and experience in the nail polish industry, but she is not going to get documentation of her skills. Sharon’s informal business with the change of foreign influx is an excellent way to handle the bureaucracy hindering the foreigners in conducting business. Sharon discovered the demand, and responded to it. Her business is currently short-term as well because she is dependent on foreign clients, but the long-term possibilities she can gain through contacts and experience in the bureaucratic field further gives her less dependency on her husband in the future. In a similar way did the cattle farmers presented in the previous chapter see uncommitted, short-term potential in what was already there – the horses – to bring forth a hobby for the potentially bored elites in their spare time.

Ability to find uncommitted potential may be difficult where a leap into something unknown is sometimes deemed necessary to avoid reaching a limit to one’s flexibility. The individuals in Macaé experience a level of ambiguity when they reach the limits of their flexibility. Time, even years, can pass in these phases before a necessary step is taken as it did in the cases of Clara and Thiago. In a situation where someone or something is forced to its limits and are about to collapse, Eriksen argues that “loss of flexibility may entail changes in tolerance limits (new ways of exploiting nature etc.), which could in turn deepen the more fundamental flexibility deficit” (2005, p. 55). The desire of changing into something known is a less fearful road than changing into something unknown, which is normally the case when individuals are forced to their limits and they have to engage in something or someone to avoid collapse. What is interesting in Macaé is that the possibilities of expanding these limits are increasing for those willing to take the ambiguous road. Raquel’s initial situation was
about to be forced to her limits: either cutting down expenses or creating a new income. 
Raquel’s financial limit forced her to explore her own creativity and she found potential to do 
things differently with demand for beauty-services. There are several outcomes of a forced 
situation, but a pressurised collapse is not necessarily what sparks creativity. Limited options, 
adaptability and desires can also create flexibility, by finding uncommitted potential of what 
is already at hand, which was the case for many middleclass (Sharon), the poor (cattle 
farmers), and the workers (Pedro).

The interesting similarities in long-term and short-term flexibility in Macaé is how 
they both expand limits of flexibility for the individuals. Sharon’s flexibility may be short-
term because she has invested too much dependency on her husband and her clients, but the 
day-to-day limits she experienced was paperwork and car traffic, compared to her worker 
friends limited by their finances and their time. The students and graduates found limits in 
time and foreign competition, pushing them to go beyond their limits to produce attractive 
qualities, such as Diogo’s skills in English. Surprisingly, individuals with less limits quickly 
become less creative when facing the changes in Macaé. An individual with potential for 
long-term flexibility, for instance education, become almost fixated in that particular 
potential, creating a smaller scope for adaptability or creativeness to change the current 
situation, although the need for change is present. Thiago did not want to find a temporary 
job; he wanted to become an electrical engineer, thereby staying unemployed until the day I left in his search for a suitable job. Reaching a limit and getting close to a collapse, possibly 
the condition Clara found herself in, is a situation of ambiguity, insecurity and even danger 
where self-reflection, adaption, creativity and solution orientation is needed to change the current situation. Raquel found a solution to expanding her limits by establishing her own 
informal nail polish studio; Sharon, Pedro, the estate siblings and the cattle farmers expanded 
their limits and benefited from the influx of people and their demands; And Sabrina found the 
demand for English education.

The short-term flexibility exists in the current situation compared to long-term 
flexibility, which to a certain extent is possible to rely on forever because it is documented. 
Although the petroleum activity produces opportunities to benefit from in Macaé, these 
opportunities change in accordance to new alterations in the city. When big changes occur, for 
example when the cost of building a house in a gated community increase due to demand, or 
the lost of a client because of a disagreement creates repercussions, the different 
socioeconomic groups adapt differently. People accumulating long-term flexibility seems to
have bigger problems adapting to occurring changes unless they have additional assets. Those generating short-term flexibility are more likely to see opportunities or be pressured to a limit, thereby adapting to the changes more easily by creating short-term solutions to expand the limits of flexibility. The limits of those with long-term flexibility relies on adaptability to changes. Because of the investment of time and money in specialisation, the motivation to attain more potential in order to respond to changes seems to be variating. Nevertheless, if these limits of flexibility do not expand and possibly lead to a breach (or collapse), it is important to have a safety net to catch you if you were to fall.

**Creating flexible limits**

The limits of flexibility in Macaé needs further elaboration. How can the elites create the changes in Macaé without having limits in their projects? They may hold long-term flexibility both in education and in experience, but how does their flexibility differ in the end compared to Sharon or the cattle farmers? Creating a positive or negative outcome of their adaptability to changes depend on how the individuals distribute their flexibility in order to expand their limits of movement. Bateson compare distribution of flexibility to an acrobat on a wire:

> “He must be free to move from one position of instability to another, i.e., certain variables such as the position of his arms and the rate of movement of his arms must have great flexibility, which he uses to maintain the stability of other more fundamental and general characteristics. If his arms are fixed or paralyzed (isolated from communication), he must fall” (Bateson, 1972, p. 498).

By creating freedom for movement, the acrobat has better chances to create balance. Bateson argues further that a safety net is necessary when building up the flexibility, in case the freedom of his arms is limited and he must fall. When the acrobat has practised and enough flexibility is gained, he do not need the safety net anymore, and he is free to move. In Macaé, however, the chances of having a safety net to begin with are limited and not everyone has the opportunities to create one. The safety net in this analogy therefore differ from that of Bateson. The net is rather made during practice, and the variables constituent for the socioeconomic hierarchy (material goods, education, residency, family, and job opportunities) are what constitutes the safety net. The more control an individual have over these variables, the freer is the distribution of flexibility on the wire. Especially for the workers and the poor,
the possibilities presented in Macaé are comparative to “the American dream”: arriving empty handed, and through hard work they can create something new and better. Though it requires a leap of fate on the wire, where a safety net may not be in place yet. For the workers, students and the poor in Macaé, flexibility is adaption to new systems and situations so that change followed by ambiguity paradoxically can lead to new possibilities. For the elites and the middleclass, they have a safety net made either by themselves or by others. Additionally, lacking control over own flexibility through dependency on others, thereby lacking own freedom to move, is uneven distribution of flexibility.

For example, Sharon’s distribution of flexibility is based on the several variables she has in her informal business: flexible working-hours, contacts, and her general knowledge in English. She is relatively free to move in her current situation, but if she experience a decline in customers, she will have to restrict her movement to stay balanced. If her business inevitably should collapse, and she was to reach a limit to hinder her movement, Jon is her safety net. The juridical student Diogo, on the other hand, have a limited distribution of flexibility because his boss and his education are restricting his movement. Nevertheless, he is producing his own safety net and “strengthening the fabric” with every potential he is accumulating, a potential that also creates greater movement for himself in the future.

The poor and the workers distribute their flexibility by exploring their creativeness in other domains in order to adapt and expand their limits of balance by creating short-term flexibility. For those unable to do so, as is the case of Clara supporting her daughter, her limits will soon be reached. If Clara was the acrobat, she is currently paralysed on the wire with minimum effort needed to make her fall. Her safety net is also non-existent because of her support to her daughter, and her willingness to change her distribution of flexibility seems weak. Although the nature of short-term flexibility in Macaé does not have to be an informal business, the marked and developments of these businesses are increasing. Informal trading of narcotics and drugs to keep a steady flexibility has become easier in Macaé due to an influx of both customers and dealers. Several gang members fleeing from the police in the favelas in Rio de Janeiro comes to Macaé, giving unemployed people a possibility as a dealer, either fulltime or on the side, to bring in extra money for themselves (Novacich, 2011). Some of the workers, like Pedro, had to tend to this additional business in order to keep a level of flexibility in their lives and avoid ending up in Clara’s position.

The middleclass, on the other hand, can move more freely considering their distribution of flexibility has a greater set or variables, and their movement are based on their
knowledge of their safety net. Knowing they could try to do something new, and perhaps fail, the safety net will save them. The knowledge of this situation created more possibilities in their businesses because they could afford to take the risk. Vitor and Lara Silva, the estate agents, both educated in real estate in the United States, took a risk in becoming agents for the real estate company. One afternoon at the real estate office, Lara pointed out that she and her brother both worked on commission: if they do not sell, they do not earn money. Their working situation have a risk: they can gain huge amounts of money if the sales are good, but they can also end up empty handed. Their distribution of flexibility were temporal in accordance to their clients. When many clients wanted a property, their time as estate agents were consumed in work, and if they had much spare time, they would have less clients and earn less money.

Distribution of flexibility involves risk-taking, especially for those without a safety net. If risk is “a function of probability and consequences”, the risk is greater when the consequences are high and probability for success is low, compared to few consequences and high probability of success (Eriksen, 2007, p. 124). Individuals with a safety net are in a better position to take risks compared to those without. The graduate Thiago may not risk a possible job offer by exploring other temporary options, even though other options would expand his limits of flexibility and create supplementary potential. The risk of having an additional job is the consumption of time. The risk of dependency in others, like so many individuals in Macaé experience, is an uneven distribution of flexibility and an imbalance in their control over themselves. Poor, workers and middleclass alike experience this form of vulnerability in Macaé, however in varied degrees. Do the elites share the same experience? Vulnerability and risk did not seem to be an immediate threat for the current lives of the elites, but they did encounter spatial challenges. Following Eriksen’s analysis of Bateson’s notion of flexibility, the differences in such matters are spatial and temporal (Eriksen, 2005). Felipe worked in a flexible time schedule, yet he could be contacted on his mobile phone at any moment with the expectancy he would drop everything in order to get to work. Despite his flexibility in time due to his on-and-off job, his spatial flexibility was low considering space did not matter if someone from work contacted him. With this form of technology, he could be “summoned” to work, having to get home to his computer to send documents, or even send them from his phone. The loss of flexibility in one area (space), increased flexibility in another (time).
The (non-)existing mobility

Sharon often made honest and blunt remarks on situations. Although she tried to be amusing and have a humorous distance, she was very insensitive about her situation compared to others. *A vida dos pobres*, “the life of the poor” was a common phrase coming from her when she witnessed something she found suiting the expression, or she had to do something inconvenient. When I bought a used bike, she was repugnant to have it in her garage. “Only poor people use a bike, I don’t want people visiting thinking I am poor,” she uttered when I arrived with the bike. One time when the batteries of the car was dead, we had to take the bus. When we stood in the overcrowded and cramped bus, she uttered, “I am so ashamed,” while she giggled and covered her face with her hand. “Only workers and poor people take the bus, those without a car. I have a car!” She said with extra pressure on the last phrase. Increased or decreased mobility are convenient for both temporal and spatial flexibility, the greater extent of mobility the greater flexibility of time. Having a car will in theory give the owner a greater sense of mobility, which again will lead to a faster and more direct way for transportation. If not hindered, the car is an excellent tool to increase both spatial and temporal flexibility.

The workers, the poor, and to some extent the middleclass, did not have cars, and possibly not a driver’s license. The local bus in urban Macaé was a game of chance for people unfamiliar with the city: there were no schedules or listings of routes, and the stops did not have any other indication of a name or a place other than a sign with a bus on it. Taking the bus from one of the neighbouring cities, Rio das Ostras or Campos, were more straightforward. Schedules and timetables were easy to get a hold on, yet the buses were overcrowded and people had to stand in the same place for one-two hours depending on which neighbouring city they were going. The low frequency of buses also made people switch buses halfway to their final stop to get a seat for the rest of the journey. This was the weekday journey two times the workers, the poor, and few middleclass without a car.

Aside from knowing the urban bus schedule by experience, or by walking, the cyclists using their bike as a means of transport were few in numbers. Those using a bike for increased mobility, including myself³³, were classified as poor people. The only time I ever witnessed workers, middleclass or elites on a bike was during evenings alongside Avenida Atlântica to exercise. One of the reasons was, based on people’s reaction to my own use of a bike, because it was stigmatised to transportation associated with the poor and those without

³³ At first, I did not understand why people stared at me when I used my bike for transportation, but I later understood that I did not fit the description of the “normal biker”, which was poor people.
the means to buy a car. Through my own experience as a cyclist, the traffic on the street made
the bike a dangerous means of transportation as well. Even though the vast numbers of people
taking the bus, the motorists were too many for them all to fit inside Macaé, regarding parking
lots and space on the roads. Eriksen notes that “the car made people living in the suburbs
spatially more flexible, but less flexible locally” (2005, p. 53), indicating a detachment from
the local milieu with their neighbours, for the benefit of increased mobility. In the case of
urban Macaé, however, the vehicle do not increase mobility within urban orientation. The
unimaginable amount of employees, workers, industrial goods, construction materials,
petroleum, and even visitors going in and out of the urban area every day – all cramped up in
one main street together – creates the worst case of immobility I have ever witnessed. The
insufficient infrastructure and the Directive Plan opposing expansion to preserve the existing
infrastructure makes the external pressure on the urban area unbearable, regardless of any
means of transportation in use. How then, can the infrastructure stay within the limits of the
Directive Plan and increase a flexible mobility for the people dependent on visiting or
residing in Macaé?

One time the ingenious answer was a railway. Built by the state, a railway stretched all
the way from the city of Rio de Janeiro to Macaé to make transportation of goods, workers
and supply easier and possibly cheaper. The train was exclusive and only people and goods
connected to Petrobrás was authorised to use it. Despite a release of external pressure on the
urban area, the railway was not operational any more. I asked Felipe why this alternative was
abandoned, and he told me that in the following years after the railway had been initiated the
complaints from bus drivers, taxi chauffeurs, and car rentals piled up as they ran out of
business. Therefore, the train was stopped. Today the railway line and the final train station in
Macaé still exist and lawn mowers are still clearing the railway. As an alternative, the now
existing main road was built next to the railway. The traffic on this road is close to a standstill
several hours during the weekdays, equally with commuters, trucks, buses and heavy goods
vehicles, where the Federal Highway Police (Polícia Rodoviária Federal or PRF) normally
have to redirect the traffic.

The freedom of mobility for the entire socioeconomic hierarchy are limited either by
buses, social norms (for example bikes as a vida dos pobres), or by insufficient infrastructure.
The flexible time and mobility are equally decreased for everyone within the urban area. The
city is not built to sustain the pressure from the petroleum industry, producing equal limited
mobile flexibility for everyone trying to visit urban Macaé. For a greater understanding of
equal limitations in the urban area, we need to see the bigger picture in urban Macaé and the challenges the residents are facing together.

**Parasitic Petropolis**

Compared to *company towns*, which is mainly habituated by employers of a company or relating companies (Crawford, 1995, p. 1), Macaé is rather a city of composed *companies in a town* surrounding a specific industry – petroleum extraction. An architectural and engineering project at Rice University in Texas even portrayed Macaé as a horror example of land-based urbanism associated with oil production (Bhatia & Casper, 2013). Attracting national and international industries to service the petroleum extraction creates an almost parasitic Petropolis, where the city is “feeding” on the petroleum industry to develop (Bhatia & Casper, 2013). The elites are agents in this development, not with an agency to develop the city, but rather to develop the industry in relation to the companies they themselves work. The elites are therefore not a part of the local life, they are “lifted out” of context where they deal with the National petroleum capital, and not Macaé. They are the agents constituting the parasitic Petropolis, either by having hotel agreements with petroleum companies, which was the case for Jeferson, or by being a rig manager on the fleets in the extraction cites, as was the case for Felipe.

The flexibility of the elites are more or less based on their connection to the petroleum activity where they are relatively free to move and in control over their own distribution. Not only do they earn more than they can use, their companies or enterprises are their safety nets when they distribute their flexibility. In the eyes of the others in the socioeconomic hierarchy, the elites are “above” and absent of the public sites of the city. The elites are interconnected with the global, while the actual streets of urban Macaé are vanishing beneath their legs. The sense of “above” and “lifting out” of context is a mechanism set to a feature of globalisation, namely *disembedding*. Disembedding is when distance and location becomes irrelevant and get abstracted from their current context, including social life (Eriksen, 2007, p. 8). The social and public life in urban Macaé are irrelevant for the elites, because their focus is either on their enterprises/companies, or on their hobbies. Their hobbies, in this case golf or horses, get accessible for the elite because of the adaptability from the rest in the socioeconomic hierarchy. Further, the amount of money accumulated in their line of work through hotels,

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34 A term borrowed from a project conducted at Rice University, Texas, called “The Petropolis of Tomorrow” (Bhatia & Casper, 2013).
catering or petroleum services generate options for investment to accumulate more flexibility in the case of money or contacts. Felipe, for example, owned three houses in three different gated communities (in addition to his own house), because he “had to invest them in something” he innocently stated. Through that investment, he earned even more money. These gated communities are responses to the growing population with a demand for residency, and the lack of residences in the urban area. The idea behind the gated communities result in disembedding mechanisms as well. The gated communities in Macaé are located in the suburbs due to lack of space, however the same principles of disembedding apply; segregation and the safety of the enclave are protecting the residents and sealing off the ‘dangerous’ life outside on the streets. The location becomes irrelevant considering the life on the inside are luxurious in many ways with no need to exit because everything you need is to be found inside the enclave. As explained in the previous section, mobility becomes an obstacle, where increasing cars are the result, reproducing and even increasing the already existing troubles with immobility.

**Macaé in a crisis?**

The lives of those working and living in Macaé may be chaotic and vulnerable, involving hard work to gain a flexible life. However, the possibilities are many, especially when concerned with short-term flexibility. The parasitic Petropolis may have the right circumstances in becoming the idealised national petroleum capital, but it has weaknesses inherited from the fishing village it used to be. As pointed out by the sociologist Susan L. Star, “Infrastructure [...] wrestles with the inertia of the installed base and inherit strengths and limitations from that base” (Star, 1999, p. 382). One of the strengths in Macaé is the expanded (fishing) docks where supply ships have a direct line to Campos Basin and the extraction site at sea. The weaknesses, however, is the location on the mainland. As a fishing village, the city was not intended for an increasing traffic and population growth, which is what a national petroleum capital apparently requires. The possible risks of accelerated change are already visible in the urban expansion, the massive traffic jams on inadequate roads, and the insufficient supply and demand of housing. Yet, as the Mayor of Macaé points out (see previous chapter), the possibilities are present as long as there is cooperation and assistance with private businesses to evolve the city, thereby becoming the national petroleum capital.

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35 Investment in contacts will be elaborated in the next chapter.
The present infrastructure in Macaé have several elements lacking to make it manoeuvrable, and the operators behind construction projects do perhaps hold different motivations when evolving the city. Academics in numerous disciplines have tried to analyse infrastructure, but Brian Larkin presents an overview worth noticing:

“Infrastructures are built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space. As physical forms they shape the nature of a network, the speed and direction of its movement, its temporalities, and its vulnerability to breakdown. (2013, p. 238).

According to Larkin’s overview, the Mayor of Macaé is devoted to create an optimal infrastructure networked to the petroleum industry. Infrastructure is usually intertwined with technopolitical affairs, constituting infrastructure to connect the abstract to the physical: the petroleum related industries to the physical urban space. In the case of Macaé, the petroleum related industries (for example real estate) may not be sufficient intertwined in the future of the city, hence the Mayor is asking for assistance to make it sufficient. Without infrastructure to connect the abstract links to the physical grounds, the city is on the verge of becoming a non-place, that is “a vision of the city of flows that dissolves into transmissions and connections” (McDonogh, 2014, p. 31). This is perhaps what Larkin meant by infrastructural networks of physical forms and its vulnerability to breakdown. The national petroleum capital is developing above the ground, while urban Macaé is standing still and lack the support to develop with it.

The municipality in Macaé is in a somewhat unique situation. As mentioned in the introduction, the petroleum activity has encouraged public-private policies by emphasising corporation in accordance with the Directive Plan of the Municipality of Macaé in favour of the collective good, the safety and well-being of citizens and environmental balance. This is supposed to be the incentive of investing in Macaé by the private sector, as stated by law. However, a survey done in Macaé by the University of North Fluminense (Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense) stated that urban land in Macaé is under direct influence of mainly real estate agents, who treat the land as commodity for profit rather than an objective in a bigger urbanisation plan (2004, p. 14). Despite the fact that the real estate sector creates opportunities in employment and experience for the residents in the city, and give oil- and gas agents a place to stay, it also produces a lack of connection to the urban space. The
qualification of investment in urban space is easy according to the Directive Plan, but the survey and the experience of the urban scene presents otherwise.

The situation in Macaé may not be as turbulent for the naked eye, then by looking a bit closer it seems like Petrobrás and the service industries linked to the petroleum industries are not creating an international hub, but rather an international parasitic Petropolis. If flexibility is applicable here, the increased flexibility in the area concerning the parasitic Petropolis and the petroleum capital is decreasing the flexibility in the city of Macaé and the urban infrastructure. The instability of uneven balance in the structure of the city can be expected to reach a limit and create a crisis where adaptability is deemed necessary to become something new and better³⁶. Despite the existence of a global interconnectedness, there is an internal detachment in Macaé from the changes occurring. The awareness of this situation was normally reflected in the most obvious of everyday-life: the traffic jams. Car, bus or bike – the traffic were an annoyance for everyone.

The possibility of the changes in the city, the transformation from a fishing village to a petroleum capital has left the city to become a parasite Petropolis. It is not surprising that these changes are reflected in the population by creating ambiguity in their lives. Students specialise in one field connected to the petroleum activity, where they are fixated in their own field in a competition with others in a similar position. The only way to get out is to accumulate other forms of traits. The poor and the workers live ambiguous lives and lack safety nets and long-term flexibility, though more prone to change and adaptability because they are not fixated in one form of potential. Although they seem to have less uncommitted potential for change because they do not have documentations of their attributes, they are more inventive and adapt when changes occur to avoid collapse. The middleclass are also adaptable because they have a safety net and can therefore explore their own potential more freely, compared to the workers and the poor being forced by variables such as a dropping economy or motivation. The elites are agents inflicting many changes to the rest of the population through real estate enterprises or their influence on the petroleum related industries. They are to the people as the parasitic Petropolis is on urban Macaé.

Flexibility is certain potential an individual have in order to do things differently or adaptation to changes more easily. This potential is used depending on a need or a motivation to change and it is contextual due to limitations and individual experience. Staying uncommitted does not entail a higher level of flexibility, nor does the opposite implies a low

³⁶ See Appendix
flexibility. In Macaé, the question is rather about the need to be flexible. Some individuals, like Pedro and Raquel, were motivated or in need to find uncommitted potential to increase their limits of flexibility. Those without a need to change, for example the middleclass or the elites in general, have uncommitted potential, however the need to change is absent and therefore the potential stay uncommitted without immediate loss of flexibility. The ambiguous state in urban Macaé is reflected to the population through possibilities or restrictions leaving the population in a liquid state where they have to “flow” in the direction the elites are pointing towards. What Bernardo seems to have meant in the introduction to this chapter, was that Macaé are the city of opportunities because the possibilities may seem endless as long as you are adaptable to changes. For those who are not, for example the students and possibly the coming generation of graduates with specialisation in a petroleum related field, they may stand face to face with the city of adversary.
Chapter 5: Moral Dualism and the Good Life

In Macaé, the city of possibilities or adversary, an individual’s actions to increase flexibility is based on motivation, aspiration, or forced adaptability. However, not everyone are in need of a flexible life, where the stress of instability may come to dominate an individual’s subjective wellbeing and sense of happiness. Some may desire a stable life filled with prosperity, without concern for futuristic choices and life planning. It is rather when something is absent that the importance of flexibility becomes central, and even intertwined with an individual’s dreams and the idea of the good life. The road to a perceived idea of the good life in Macaé is possibly fuelled by the black gold – but if the fuel is directly from the petroleum industry, or indirectly imposed through social interaction and observations, is another question to be answered in this section. The good life is ranging all over the world, but differs according to contextual values and the freedom to fulfil it. To figure out the limitations, options or possibilities the people in Macaé faced, I tried to explore what seemed important for the people in different positions in the socioeconomic hierarchy, and what motivated and supported diverse actions. How then, does the accelerated change in the petroleum activity affect the idea of the good life among the people in Macaé?

The study of happiness was brought into the light by the Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson in his theories of human nature, which include morality and concern for others (1725). Hutcheson was quickly followed up by Adam Smith and David Hume. Hume concentrated his work on moral and political theories, while Smith’s focal point was economics. Despite their difference disciplines, they both emphasised that individualism is of importance, but the main requirements to make people happy is through social recognition by others (Smith, 1982; Thin, 2012, p. 4). The notions of happiness and wellbeing have been taken into many studies in economics, statistics and environmentalists, where happiness and wellbeing wrongfully are made into something quantifiable through the measurements of universal factors. One of which is the Happy Planet Index (HPI), though with the best intentions, measure sustainable wellbeing through this formula in more than 150 countries:

\[
\frac{\text{Experienced Wellbeing} \times \text{Life Expectancy}}{\text{Ecological footprint}} \approx \text{Happy Planet Index} \quad (\text{HPI, 2015})
\]
The problem with such a formula is noted by many before me (Fischer, 2014; Mathews & Izquierdo, 2013), Neil Thin in particular points out the naïveté and ethnocentrism situated behind the creation of these universal measurements of happiness undertaken by surveys, environmental wisdom of carbon efficiency, and health (Thin, 2012, p. 85). Further, the works of Adam Smith’s theories of happiness relies on two public virtues of justice and beneficence, and one private, which is prudence. The economist Michael Busch interprets these virtues and emphasises a happy life of tranquillity and steadiness, where “Smith attributes much of the misery in human life to overestimating the importance of changing one’s current situation” (Busch, 2008, p. 72).

Following the previous chapter, being flexible in order to adapt to sudden changes are crucial, especially for the workers and the poor. How can the population experience happiness and wellbeing when according to Busch, change is an attribute to misery, and tranquillity and steadiness is the source of happiness?

**Anthropological theories of happiness, wellbeing and the good life**

Assuming that happiness, wellbeing and the good life holds different meaning in different places, it exists “multiple pursuits of happiness” in the world (Mathews & Izquierdo, 2013, p. 1). As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, eudaimonia is a fulfilled life of moral values and wellbeing, holding a central position in Edward F. Fischer’s research. In addition to necessary elements such as adequate material resources, physical health, safety, family and social relations, he draws on subjective domains of importance to fulfil the good life (Fischer, 2014, p. 5). Fischer’s first subjective domain emphasises aspirations towards something, an agency built up of strategic choices for accomplishment within a structure of what seems possible. The possibilities and limitations available for these aspirations are determined by opportunity structures, that is; “social norms, legal regulations, and market entry mechanisms that delimit, or facilitate, certain behaviours and aspirations” (Fischer, 2014, p. 6). I presumed that the idea of the good life would differ according to the opportunity structures segregating the socioeconomic hierarchy, but the general idea of the good life seemed surprisingly homogenous within. Moreover, Fischer highlights dignity and fairness, which include basic rights, recognition, respect from the surroundings, and a fair treatment by others. Fischer’s last subjective domain relies on building future projects, committing to larger purposes, going beyond the individual itself and being a part of something bigger and meaningful (Fischer, 2014, p. 7).
The students in Macaé and in the neighbouring cities are in general aspiring towards a job in the petroleum industry, but national and foreign competition (and a low income) are the opportunity structures limiting their aspirations. As educated and graduates, they are treated with respect and dignity because getting an education is either through hard work or they have an influential family supporting them. Through education, the students get a bigger view on the world in general, and several get active in political organisations, environmental protection, and supporting people in need. In that way, they commit to a larger purpose than themselves. Others may be interested in gaining a job in the petroleum industry to take care of their family financially in the future. Agency in this context is subjective, with “the internal capacity and psycho-social power of individuals to make decisions. […] Subjective agency acts on and through available resources (including income) and socio-political opportunity structures” (Fischer, 2014, p. 153). As a graduate, the electro engineer Thiago is aspiring towards becoming an engineer on the extraction rigs in Campos Basin. He is qualified, but the opportunity structures surrounding his aspirations, including his non-existing income to take an expensive English-class, is limiting his agency towards his aspiration. Diogo, the judicial student, is facing the same problems with his agency. He wants to become a lawyer working for the petroleum industry, but he has a bigger internal capacity, or potential, considering his advanced English language and skills in his field.

Individuals generally have several aspirations with either different or interconnected agencies to fulfil them. Gaining a family, getting a specific job, or obtaining a healthier life are a few examples. When a particular aspiration is fulfilled, will the individual experience happiness and wellbeing? The general answer to this question is no, within the anthropological study of happiness and wellbeing. The valuable state of mind is not that of completing the aspiration, the value rather lies within the process of completion (Fischer, 2014; Mathews & Izquierdo, 2013; Thin, 2012). It is the hard work and the striving towards something, the sense of accomplishment after every small step towards the aspiration, and the social recognition gained at these steps. Happiness and wellbeing are not passive enjoyments of accomplished aspirations; it is about facing challenges and overcoming them. The aspirations must therefore be adjusted to a level of possible attainment. Being unable to reach an aspiration because it is unattainable will only lead to failure, frustrations, deterrence and discouragement (Fischer, 2014; Thin, 2012).

According to Busch and his interpretation of Adam Smith above, the completion of an aspiration is the best state people can find themselves in because it is tranquil and steady for
the individual with few changes to create insecurity. When an individual has “settled down” and being contempt with the achieved aspirations, will he or she be contempt and satisfied with that life? Will individuals finally be able to enjoy and indulge the assumed paradise they find themselves in? Thomas Hylland Eriksen answers this question with the analogy of the big bad wolf syndrome (2015). The Big Bad wolf (the individual) finally catches the three pigs (the aspiration), but his life becomes meaningless because the hunt is the reason he gets up in the morning; the hunt gives meaning to his life (2015). The lack of aspiration can create a sense of meaningless existence, leading to an urge to find new projects to aspire towards. In a blunt and banal word, *boredom*, strikes them if they do not have aspirations. This does not entail a justification that happiness and wellbeing are experienced at a higher level for people less prosperous, because they may find bigger financial limitations to reach their aspirations, limiting them to stay put in the process. It is rather to highlight the fact that money and wealth cannot buy the process of wellbeing and happiness. The tranquillity and steadiness is not happiness and wellbeing as Busch states (2008), it is rather the ability an individual have to aspire towards something and strategically plan his life accordingly. However, there is an important distinction between happiness and wellbeing, compared to the idea of the good life. The life without worries, commitments or hard choices – a tranquil and steady life emphasised by Busch – are more likely the idea of the good life rather than the subjective sensation of wellbeing and happiness. Although the eudaimonic features related to happiness and wellbeing have limitations according to the opportunity structures, the general idea of the good life may be the same regardless of limitations.

Fischer further makes a clear distinction between eudaimonic and hedonic pleasure, as the latter is seen as the happiness and pleasure of everyday contentment, separated from life satisfaction (eudaimonia) as a broader state of mind (2014). Neil Thin contribute to the analysis of social happiness saying that egotistic and antisocial pleasure is often what the individual needs to resist in order to get social recognition (2012, p. 46). In accordance with Fischer, Thin argues that the hedonic pleasures are momentary, but Thin emphasises the difficulty to separate these mind-sets. An example is material goods such as clothes. One may argue that the process of making clothes gives people a line of work, and thereby committing to a bigger purpose by helping the economically disadvantaged through buying these clothes. Turning it around, shopping clothes can contribute to the suppression and bad working conditions at production factories so that you can wear a new outfit every day, a pleasure based on your temporal wellbeing, at the cost of the wellbeing of the people producing these
clothes. The temporary pleasures are not often aspirations, but rather desires. When there is a
desire to be socially recognised, rather than recognition as an effect of aspirations, the
pleasure of recognition can be said to be hedonic. The difficulties in separating eudaimonic
and hedonic pleasures is that happiness and wellbeing might also be temporary based on
temporary recognition of an accomplishment. Similar to the example of shopping clothes, the
subjective perception of an action or activity is what constitute the individuals opinion.

Happiness and wellbeing is a process towards the idea of the good life based on social
recognition of the process, the aspirations, dignity and fairness, and committing to a purpose
conceived to be larger than the individual itself. Pleasure can be both eudaimonic and
hedonic, however when the pleasure is based on temporary desire it is more likely to be an
egotistic and immoral state of mind rather than moral and valuable. When people in Macaé
experience a rapid and increasing base of income due to the petroleum activity, the ability to
live a life more desirable than before is easier to grasp and the hedonic pleasures get desirous.

**Brazilian values in urban life**

When I visited the University of Campos I met several employees at the University of Macaé
living in Campos due to the expensive house rates in urban Macaé. The first time I visited
Campos in February I was invited to a celebrate that one of the PhD’s, Lucas, had been
employed at the University of Macaé. He was thrilled by his new job, and the celebration
included churrasco, *caiprinha*[^37], loud music and dancing. The only thing he was not excited
about, though, was the fact that he had to wake up at five in the morning to take the two-hour
bus ride into Macaé every weekday from now on. Lucas was in his late thirties with very thin
glasses to match his hairless head and a belly indicating his love for food. He was a
sympathetic and reflected man, and we ended up having several conversations about the
whole situation in Macaé. The portrayal he found to illustrate Macaé in its total innovative,
prosperous and segregated picture was one he was faced everyday outside the university he
was now working:

> “Macaé is quite representative if you want to see too rapid changes for the
> infrastructure to keep up in the same pace, and to see a great gap in socioeconomic
> differences. If you go to Shopping Macaé [A high-end shopping mall] you see the mall

[^37]: A sweet cocktail translated to “small village girl”. The main ingredient is *cachaça*, distilled spirits from
sugarcane juice.
on one side of the road and a public university on the other side. In the middle, on the actual road, there is a bus stop where the bus is always overcrowded with people sweating and unable to move. In addition, there is an open sewage canal running alongside the road making it smell really bad. It is a picture of reality actually, especially in Macaé where the social economic status is so highly visible. The social economic status and icon like the mall, and then you have the sewage flowing in front of there. Combine the picture of the mall, the sewage and an overpopulated bus. And on the other side of the street you find the public universities, with sewage in the middle! It’s like an island of different socioeconomic development. It is very disturbing for me.” (Emphasis added).

The portrait given by Lucas represents the everyday struggle of people living and working in Macaé. The values and the socioeconomic hierarchy are faced with differences based on disparate value systems operating within a limited space, forcing everyone and everything to face each other and the differences in society.

The value systems operating in Brazil in general are scrutinised by the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta. He studied the urban poor in São Paolo and Rio de Janeiro, resulting in the representation of diverse values in urban Brazilian life in general (DaMatta, 1995). The fact DaMatta showed forth is the way an evidently egalitarian and individualistic state, or value system, is challenged by social values with a foothold in the household. The challenge occurs when the two value systems collide: close social relations found in the household compared to the overarching national rules of equality and individualism generate diffuse frames of action. DaMatta is separating two spheres in the urban life; the street and the house. The house represents a traditional arena with harmony, reciprocity, obedience and respect within a seemingly hierarchical and patriarchal value system (DaMatta, 1995). The street, on the other hand, implies movement, action and individualistic struggle where it is “every man for himself” with imminent universal laws and anonymity imposed by the government (DaMatta 1995). Following DaMatta, there seem to be a strong value distinction between the two spheres in Brazil: one with a traditional ideology based on familial and

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DaMatta explains the term “traditional” by comparing it to the reign of the Catholic Church in the mediaeval times. A glorification of poverty as a means to reflect the image of Christ as rich in spirituality, compared with the nobles which were powerful and wealthy, but maybe not in virtues (DaMatta, 1995, p. 6). Therefore, they could be represented as equals. DaMatta continues by explaining the mobility by the poor as a threat to the social order with values based on individuality and economic difference.
hierarchical values opposed to an individual ideology based on egalitarian, competitive and proactive values.

As the streets are becoming more universal, individualistic, and presumably “wild”, more solutions for security and protected residents stand as a solution. The concept of selling imaginaries derived from globally recognised countries (USA was one of the most prominent in Macaé) was a common sight both on national television commercials and on billboards in Macaé. What I call gated communities, Teresa Caldeira famously named “fortified enclaves” found inside the urban area, giving the residents a way out of the pollution, crime and noise, into a world of security and exclusive service (1996). Another solution is similar, but the gated community is not placed within the urban area, rather in the periphery of the city with nature and cleanness surrounding the residents; it is what the journalist Joel Garreau named “edge cities” (1992). These edge cities are similar to the gated communities found in the suburbs of Macaé. Both authors claims the gated communities produce social separation, but Garreau accentuate the fact that it creates protection and a sense of “happy life”, while Caldeira view the separation as a matter of status. Caldeira continues to say that “…the transformations going on at the level of the urban environment represents an attack of a different kind. They reject the principles of openness and equality, and take inequality and separation as their values.” (1996, p. 316).

Comparing with DaMatta, the principles of openness and equality are a part of the individualistic value system of the street, while inequality and separation equals the values in the traditional value system. The situation in Macaé seems to have a close relation between the two value systems. The gated communities separate the two so that the wealthier population can operate within the limits of the gated communities with equality and openness, namely the individualistic values. However, what they actually produce and reinforce is greater social distinction and separation in Macaé, a continuous reflection of the traditional value system and its hierarchical composition. In the end, the gated communities created to protect holds a side effect of enhancing social segregation, which again may result in alienation and hierarchical segregation between common citizens construing “the others” as possibly dangerous, inferior, primitive, and poor. Or as elitist, superior, more intelligent and wealthy – a reproduction of the socioeconomic hierarchy. On several billboards and commercials to prompt the gated communities, a “happy life” was used as a synonym with security, possibly because the residents of the gated communities were happier when they did not need to worry about the dangerous others on the outside.
Unlike other South-American countries, Brazil has a place in the international spotlight not only as a country rich in culture and natural resources, but the glamour of the Brazilian body is also widely recognized. The body is one of the main mediators used as a symbolical expression of values the person holds. Brazil are in general recognized through international media with attention directed towards the body promoted by dancing samba, Brazilian wax, small swimwear, well-groomed hairstyles, plastic surgery and tight-fitting clothes. When I visited the beach, both men and women wore minimal swimwear. The men’s wear was called **zunga**, a small and tight swimwear. The women’s smallest swimwear was referred to as **fio dental**, ‘dental floss’. The idea of a Brazilian lifestyle, especially for women, is even commercialized through a book by one of seven sisters claiming to have introduced the modern treatment of “Brazilian wax” in the United States where their book allegedly holds “the secrets to living a gorgeous and confident life” with the title “Brazilian sexy” (Padilha, Frankel, & Williams, 2011). Following one of the sisters, Padilha, the confident Brazilian lifestyle not only relies on being confident about showing your body, it is also about making your body look gorgeous to increase your confidence. I usually spent hours waiting for both women and men to get ready before we were going out. They had to take a shower, fix the hair, smell nice and put on makeup. Even though men did not use the same amount of time as women, my waiting normally lasted at least an hour for others to get ready. The inconvenience of arriving late to an event was not an issue.

Considering DaMatta’s opposing value systems, the Brazilian body express values in relation to these systems, has visibly been enhanced through the body where the *telenovelas* have had a particular influence on the collective idea of how the body should appear. The social anthropologist Thaís Machado-Borges elaborates that the telenovelas present how consumption surrounding the body, consisting of everything from clothes to diets, are embodied social differences and can be used as means to gain access to the telenovela-lifestyle (2003, p. 111). She emphasises that the message the telenovelas are conveying is that the individual chose to be recognised through embodiment of a certain lifestyle. The different lifestyles are therefore conceived as a decision people makes, and not as a lifestyle as an effect of wealth or poverty. Even though there probably are no absolute passive receivers of values and meaning, social differentiation and identification are influential. People stand relatively free to “apply” the value systems to accentuate a certain value or meaning, either through their bodies or through other traits where they express the values as the person or lifestyle they wishes to be perceived as.
The embodiment of a lifestyle and the value systems of the street and the household is possible sources of recognition, with separate impressions of a desired status for a person. When the differences of diverse individuals are forced to face each other due to limited space in Macaé, self-reflexivity and presumably a higher level of comparison occurs. The proximity of contact may even evolve into a growing desire to be recognised as an equal, according to the individualistic value system, and not as a subordinate. Recognition and respect according to lifestyle, consistent with happiness and wellbeing, are crucial in understanding the values relating to the idea of the good life in Macaé.

**Consummation: Desire and segregation**

The people in selling beer and churrasco outside my house brought about many customers during primetime television. On days when the most popular telenovelas were showing, a television on a small table with wheels was rolled out on the street with a cord stretching at its maximum length into the house. Everybody gathered around the television to discuss and be surprised by the next shocking moves in the dramatic series. When a conversation about appearance were brought to the table, the topic of physical beauty and the lifestyle in the telenovelas were nearly inevitable. The telenovelas portrayed wealthy families with good education, exceptional clothing and beautiful appearance, huge houses in a beautiful and safe neighbourhood, several types of cars, and characters with many friends. The intriguing part was that even though the characters seemed to have perfect lives, they had several secrets and interactional problems that called for a lot of drama when they were revealed. Although it is difficult to compare telenovelas with individual lives I encountered in Macaé, there are several comparable behavioural and desired aspects to it. When I joined the groups of neighbours to watch, I first found the engrossment of everyone watching its dramatic turns at every moment amusing. After watching the series regularly, I also noted some patterns in people’s comments: The beauty of the actors; that they themselves could manage to get that set of nails; or they knew someone with that particular car or table. The environment the characters lived in was indeed a perfect life for many, and day-to-day references to the characters or the lifestyle in the telenovelas was common. The close contact of people in the urban area made the telenovela-lifestyle a visible reality for those unable to attain it. Recognition and respect are central in achieving dignity and fairness as a part of subjective wellbeing, and this section will show that consummation products and services are used in
diverse ways to achieve or convey that recognition. Although the telenovela-lifestyle might not the ideal for everyone, I will further use it as an example of the ideal lifestyle.

The new shopping mall mentioned by Lucas had commercials in the form of ads directed to people in general and not for Brazilians in particular with many international brands. Even though these places and stores were expensive, consumer credit made it possible to be a part of the lifestyle in the telenovelas. Being a consumer is emerging as the norm in Macaé, and being a consumer was also emphasised to get the telenovela-lifestyle. *O sonho de consumo*, ‘the dream of consumption’ is, as the expression indicates, a *dream* to consume what they want, when they want, without implications. Although not explicitly conveying a *need* to consume, the recognition of consummation goods were equal among the poor, the workers, the middleclass and the elites as a certain way of life. The poor and the workers generally used telenovelas or customers form the elite or middleclass as examples to what they preferred or motivated to achieve. For example, the worker Pedro wanting a car. The cars on the street in Macaé varied in size and quality where the most impressive and noticeable cars where huge pick-up trucks, usually white with a newly waxed bodywork, dazzling everyone it passed. The ideal car Pedro wanted was one of these pick-ups. One owner of these cars were the elite Felipe. During a conversation with Felipe, we entered the topic of cars and I asked why he would drive it in Macaé, considering it was almost impossible to park due to lack of space. Felipe justified his choice of car by telling me it was the safest and most robust car on the market. However later, when he gave me a ride home in the car itself, he admitted to the fact that he enjoyed how the car looked and that people gazed upon it when passing them. Although he tried to justify his ownership through practicalities, the car gave Felipe a hedonic and temporary pleasure from others admiration. The cavalcades the elites carried out to Avenida Atlântica mentioned in chapter two, were also a source of admiration and pleasure based on the reaction from the spectators. This leads to the assumption that the elites and the middleclass did not need to express what they wanted, they conveyed what they already had: a telenovela-lifestyle.

Consummation is closely related to segregation of others by the elites and the middleclass, while the workers and the poor use consumer credit because a desire, in the hedonic sense, to be recognised and conceived of living the telenovela-lifestyle. The anthropologist Néstor García Canclini writes that consumerism can be considered as a marker of difference and symbolic distinction involving a logic of satisfaction rather than need (2001, p. 40). He further argues, “The rationality of social relations is constructed less in the struggle
for the means of production and satisfaction of material needs than in the appropriation of the means of symbolic distinction.” (Canclini, 2001, p. 40). The weakness in viewing consumerism as a symbolic distinction and assumedly as reproducing socioeconomic differences, is the necessity of a common denominator where every individual or different group knows and share the meaning of a particular commodity or means of consumption. In Macaé, and possibly in Brazil in general, this is where the telenovelas comes in. The telenovela is the common denominator of commodities and lifestyle. The telenovela-lifestyle illustrates a specific way of living, broadcasted on the most common television-channel (Globo) in the country, during primetime broadcasting of the day. It is safe to say that almost every Brazilian has watched at least one episode in their life. When sharing a meaning of different commodities, be it beauty-services, specific jewelleries, clothes, or cars, the people wearing and using these commodities are projecting a certain standard of life. The elites and middleclass’ usage of those commodities portrayed in the telenovelas serve a purpose of segregation in the socioeconomic hierarchy. This again leads relations of inferiority for the poor and the workers. If they buy cheap replicas of products, they are quickly labelled as cheap copycats with bad quality goods. The short-time solution to avoid inferiority is to buy products with consumer credit to satisfy the desire to be recognised as an equal, but the solution is temporal. There are no subjective agency connected to aspiration, it is rather a desire of recognition in immediate social interaction. The pleasure experienced by responding to this desire is therefore hedonic.

Distinction and alienation from certain lifestyles further enhance segregation and the desire to live different lives. When Sharon classified inconvenient situations as a vida dos pobres in chapter four, it did not solely relate to mobility. When we did not have water in the shower, toilets or the sink because of summer drought, Sharon had to open the floor hatch and collect water directly from the cistern with a bucket; a very inconvenient situation she classified as a vida dos pobres. The remarks made by Felipe in chapter two on the farmers having a primitive mind-set relies on a common understanding, or bias, of what poor people essential are. Not only through disassociation and alienation from the “poor” mind-set and way of life, the elites and middleclass also portray themselves as the opposite. This is reinforced even more through their ability to follow the dream of consumption, creating visible markers and meaningful distinctions to separate themselves from the poor. Even though I was not a poor person in the eyes of the society, using a bike was classified as being a distinct marker for a vida dos pobres. Sharon did not want to have the bike in her garage
considering the weekly efforts to enhance her lifestyle to those of the telenovelas. She did not want to be confused with the poor or the workers living in her street solely because I wanted to have my bike in her garage.

The consumer accentuate a meaning, assumed as the source of a certain lifestyle, to get recognition as an equal and a certain satisfaction. Such as Felipe’s car when he said he liked the way people looked at his car, and Sharon’s reluctance to have the bike in her garage. The middleclass and the elites conveys meaning and value through socioeconomic symbolism to make themselves distinct and, in a way, superior compared to people with a lower socioeconomic status. Their lifestyle are superior in comparison to those of the workers and the poor. In this way, the telenovela-lifestyle is the common denominator where value and meaning are conveyed and from there, interpreted through social relations and comparisons. The middleclass and the elites have to some extent worked hard to get their status through education and experience. However, economy and wealth are not necessarily the primary source of the lifestyle. If the mind-set of the poor is perceived as primitive, then the opposite is perceived as developed and sophisticated, and the status has to be maintained as such. This perception varies in degree according to the statuses in the socioeconomic hierarchy, a level of individual development, coinciding with the individual competition on the street, to use DaMatta’s expression (1995). Wealth is merely an outcome of individual development which is used to enhance the differences in order to make the status of an individual inferior or superior compared to others. The recognition of the lifestyles through the telenovelas creates hedonic desires for those unable to live the desired life, while those who do get satisfaction through conveyance.

Consummation products and services are central for recognition and respect in Macaé due to associations to certain lifestyles. Recognition and respect are part of the subjective domain of dignity and fairness to reach wellbeing and happiness. For the poor and the workers, a short-term solution to achieve the recognition and respect they desire is the to use the body to convey the lifestyles connected to that particular recognition. The poor and the workers can become consumers through consumer credit, satisfying a hedonic desire to reduce the differences between them and the telenovela-lifestyle in order to appear as equals to the elites and middleclass. This solution is only temporary because the poor and the workers put themselves in a debt. As explained in the introduction, if they cannot pay the loan, they cannot continue consuming without further damaging themselves and others depended on them, like their family. For the middleclass and the elites, the telenovela-lifestyle
was a reality or it was close to becoming one. The conveyance of that lifestyle was both enhancing the desire of the poor and the workers, but also increased segregation based on socioeconomic status.

Aspiration and interruption

Being able to consume at all was not only a symbol of status and wealth in Macaé, it was also a sign of being a modern human being. In her fruit bowl presented at the table, Sharon always placed grapes on top. I presumed that grapes were a domestic commodity because imported goods were expensive, and Sharon always made sure to buy a cluster of grapes. When my Portuguese teacher Sabrina took me to a food market to learn the names on the food in Portuguese, she made remarks to domestic and imported goods. Among other food products, I learned that grapes were imported and they were very expensive. Sabrina emphasised, with a tone of distaste, “I don’t understand why anyone want to buy grapes.” When I came home after my lesson, I was curious about the grapes in the fruit bowl. I asked Sharon why she bought grapes, and she answered “I am a modern woman. If I want grapes, I buy them.” This remark puzzled me. Why did she consider it modern to buy grapes? I further noted several comments on different situations where Sharon highlighted herself as a modern woman; when she was driving her own car; because she had an upcoming house in a gated community; and when she made independent choices without her husband present. One time I came along to see how the construction of the house was progressing, and she made some remarks to the architect on some adjustments. The architect responded, “You are a modern woman, Sharon, I trust you.” The fact that she was in control of her own life may have given an impression of independency, but in what way was it considered modern? Part of the answer relies in aspirations and opportunity structures either limiting or strengthen subjective wellbeing.

The two opposing value systems, individualism on the street and traditionalism in the household, are not only competing; one of them is exceeding the other. The household maintains the traditional value system, where there are hierarchical relations to gender and family members. The individuals are organised in relation to family members and are categorised accordingly. The traditional value system have countervailing forces to the individualistic value system, where every individual stands alone and are organised according to merits and traits they gain, compared to organisation due to family relations. In Macaé, there are many residents living without their family, or with only a few members of it. The countervailing forces of the traditional value system is weakened in the absence of family
members, while the individual value system is strengthened by it. If the socioeconomic hierarchy is based on an individualistic value system, then the individuals are, as Rio and Smedal proposes, most valued when they are in a state of transformation and change (2009). The implications for the individuals are that they are forced by their surroundings to get in a state of transformation to achieve a valued status. If modernity is progress away from something old and outdated to something new and prosperous, then the individual choices Sharon made are a step away from subordination of the man in the house, and step towards her own individuality. According to the traditional value system, she is inferior to Jon, the man of the house, but when she is moving away from that value system and is regarded as an equal. If the individual succeeds and reaches the individualistic value system, the individual can be perceived as modern.

The poor often live with their family or several families together, creating a stronger traditional countervailing force against the individualistic value system. Having a family and children dependent on an individual to survive, the individual is held back because he can experience a higher form of pressure to support those dependent on him, rather than educate himself and build up experience to get a better paid job. The last scenario would be an egotistic choice based on desires, compares to the former where he commits to a larger purpose. The workers often find themselves in a similar situation as the poor, but the workers have bigger variables in life situations. Pedro lived with his family and he had to follow his mother’s rules, but he was free to save up money for himself and to buy himself a car because his family was not dependent on his salary. Raquel lived with her sister, but they both worked and she earns enough money through her nail polish studio to be a consumer. Although living with their families, they are mutually independent from each other economically. Unlike the poor, which are mutually dependent on the common household. The future aspirations are for many interrupted because they gain a family, but it does not entail a deficit in happiness and wellbeing.

I decided to walk across the beach one day, where the waves had torn away the road. When I was twenty metres across, a lifeguard came to the rescue. He told me it was dangerous to walk there alone because they had experienced several attacks from men hiding in the bushes and trees next to the beach. For my own security, he decided to walk beside me until I came across, and we started a conversation. I explained what I was doing in Macaé, and he told me his name was Miguel. Like all the other lifeguards, he went barefoot, wore a small zunga, a red t-shirt with the Petrobrás logo, a matching red caps and black sunglasses.
He spoke English very good, and I asked him how come. “My father was a flight attendant and he spoke four languages. He was the one teaching me English,” he said while looking attentive into the bushes. “I always wanted to be like him when I grew up, travel everywhere and speak with everyone, but that was not the case when I got a wife and a child.” We continued walking and I asked if he was satisfied to work as a lifeguard. He turned his head towards me, “Yes, I am! Especially here where I can speak English to gringos, enjoy the beach every day, and still be with my family,” he answered enthusiastically. Miguel’s story tells that starting a family may interrupt the current aspirations and subjective agency, but the commitment to a larger purpose gives a new meaning to a life, and even new aspirations.

Most of the elites’ children were adults with a job or a study elsewhere. The elites earn enough money for the whole family to unfold, especially for their wives attending to new hobbies or jobs for themselves without considerable restrictions. Sharon for example, had many ideas for what she could do after she finished helping the foreigners. She wanted to open a café, to establish a cleaning business within the gated community, to make clothes – her possibilities and ideas were endless. She only had to decide for one idea to fulfil it with the help from Jon. Felipe’s wife, Gabriela, found her life in the gated community so boring she started to paint and call herself an artist. For the middleclass without support from an elite-spouse, like the siblings working as estate agents in the gated communities, they possibly found comfort in working with each other. Both of the siblings pursued real estate and studied abroad, pursuing the individualistic value system. I became curious about the siblings work relations, so I decided to ask Lara in order to establish if the relations were based on the traditional or individualistic value system. She told me that they had different assignments and that they respected each other to be equals on their respected fields. Their fields of expertise, and not their relation as siblings, defined their work relations. According to her, they were therefore valued through the individualistic value system and not through the traditional. The elites, however, where somehow part of both value systems. They were the providers of the family, and they had earned respect from their surroundings through their merits, assets, and work. They had pursued the individualistic values through hard work, but they were also the superior in their household, thereby making the wife and the children inferior.

This is not to say that family holds you back, it is rather to highlight different stages of life and different life processes. Starting a new family means you had to take care of others in a way you did not have to when the children grow older. Similarly, not having children, which was the case for the estate siblings and several workers and students, indicated more
freedom to pursue individualistic values and own desires. To pursue the individualistic value system and move away from family relations and the traditional values, the more independent a person was conceived to be in Macaé. The visibility and knowledge of a person’s independence and individuality can be conceived as modern because they have moved away from the traditional value system. Having or starting a family do not necessarily ruin aspirations or independency of an individual, it can rather alter the opportunity structures, aspiration and subjective agency into something other. Having a family indicates a commitment to a larger purpose than the individual itself, and strengthening the countervailing effects in traditional value system opposed to the individual value system.

The idea of the good life, happiness and wellbeing

As illustrated, gaining recognition from social interaction and observations in Macaé is complex and situational, yet recognition is central to gain social wellbeing in Macaé because the telenovelas favour a certain lifestyle where the dream of consumption is emphasised. Every individual have aspirations toward something, either as a means of interest or inflicted (knowingly or unknowingly) by the surroundings. To fulfil an aspiration, the individual produces subjective agency through a process, which again is limited by the opportunity structures. In Macaé, these opportunity structures (material goods, education, residency, family, and job opportunities) have similarities within every socioeconomic group, but they have heterogeneous differences outside the groups. Surprisingly, the idea of the good life stay similar regardless of the socioeconomic hierarchy. The life of the street with the individualistic value system enhance the competition between individuals, and appearance plays an important role in social interaction in Macaé. Comparison and differentiation are reinforced by individuals trying to distance themselves from certain types of lifestyles, for example a vida dos pobre compared to the telenovela-lifestyle. The elites and the middleclass in particular are enhancing themselves through their body, doing an excellent job to fit into the category of the telenovela-lifestyle. The workers and the poor, however, are seen as cheap copycats of the middleclass and the elites unless they use consumer credit to satisfy the desire. Being able to be treated with dignity and fairness, the workers and the poor have to be with equals in order to get this treatment. If they surround themselves with middleclass and elites, they will probably get condescending comments about themselves, for example when the farmers and the elites interacted on the cattle farm, and the farmers were distinguished as poor and primitive by the elites. Dignity and fairness are not easy to attain in Macaé when the
socioeconomic differences of separation and distinction between the different groups are highly visible. The elites and the middleclass are usually treated with dignity and fairness from everyone, while the workers and the poor are perceived as inferior in multiple stances.

Dignity and fairness may also be an outcome through commitment to a larger purpose. The possibility to achieve the idea of the good life may be out of reach for the poor and the workers, but the experience of happiness and wellbeing is not. The lifeguard Miguel wanted to be a flight attendant, yet when he gained a family he decided to commit to the life as a father. By doing so, he went beyond himself and became a part of something bigger and meaningful for himself, and he could stay on the beach that he loved. Committing to a larger purpose have diverse meaning for diverse individuals: Through subjective agency, it can be documented, like education or work experience, but it can also be to open a café or starting a family. Commitment to a purpose is meaningful for the individual. Most of the elites and middleclass had reached their aspirations and continued to maintain their status. Many middleclass women were chased by the big bad wolf syndrome, for example Sharon when she invented new ideas she wanted to pursue. For the elites who “have everything” in accordance to the telenovela-lifestyle, they seemed contempt and satisfied with their current situation. The common idea of the good life was as close as it could get for the elites, and the need to aspire towards something new was absent. Perhaps they experienced happiness and wellbeing in their current situation, and a possible change or a new aspiration could alter or even damage what they had work hard to gain.

The opportunity structures create and reproduce limitations to subjective agency, making the idea of the good life unattainable for most people in Macaé. However, wellbeing and happiness are attained through the commitment to a larger purpose, dignity and fairness. A father can therefore achieve a good life even though the general idea of it do not fit his current situation. Although the aspiration is interrupted and the individual may never try to pursue the same aspiration again, which is the most likely scenario for the lifeguard Miguel, newfound aspiration to commit and alter the subjective agency, can also lead to happiness and wellbeing.
Chapter 6: Globalisation and the Good Life

Increased cooperation between public and private funding in Macaé, the desire to fulfil the ideals of a petroleum capital and the increased individualism are not separate phenomena, but causes and effects of global integration taking place in Macaé due to the activity produced by the petroleum industry. Although petroleum activity creates possibilities in the form on influx of people and industries with demands waiting to be fulfilled – be it spare time, beauty, mobility, counselling and residency – limitations and segregation are also present. The fast changes I have described in this dissertation produce wealth and poverty, inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. The poor and the workers are by definition faced with bigger financial challenges compared to the middleclass and the elites. When changes occur, and poor and workers face an ambiguous situation where change has to be implemented, they can reach a potential limit. To avoid a possible collapse, they needed to adapt to the changes, creating inventive forms of short-term flexibility, usually in the form of a second job. Not all workers are in a pressured situation, flexibility can be used on the basis of a certain motivation towards fulfilling an aspiration. This was especially noticeable among those with less financial and contextual adversity, those considered to be middleclass and elites. Those with minimal limitations for inventiveness was the middleclass, mainly those women with elite spouses. When the spouses eliminated restrictions and created temporal and spatial niches to unfold in, the absence of restrictions generated inventiveness and motivation for aspiration. There was no immediate need among the middleclass to increase flexibility to induce change. The search to increase flexibility was rather a motivation to change in order to get social recognition and to avoid the big bad wolf syndrome mentioned in chapter five. The elites, on the other hand, were mostly satisfied with their current life. Those in need of change search for a positive outcome, but the elites did not want to risk a possibly negative outcome by increasing their flexibility.

Individuality and modernity are linked together with the perception that individuality is a step away from the old and traditional value system in Brazilian urban life based on a patriarchal ranging and familiar relations in the household. By taking this step towards something new, identifying oneself with the individual value system dominating the street and alienate the old traditional value system, the perceived individuality is intertwined with the notion of modernity. I started with globalisation in the introduction, and I will end the dissertation by showing that features of globalisation are presented implicitly throughout.
Macaé is a global city with common features known for resource-based cities around the world. Through continuity and change, Brazilian characteristics of inequality, poverty, prosperity, value systems and behaviour, have found new arenas in Macaé for expression and reflection due to the rapid economic and social changes. These are notable features of globalisation manifesting themselves locally in individuals, the infrastructure and Macaé itself.

**Global features**

Globalisation is not easy to grasp and difficult to recognise. To clarify, I rely on key features of globalisation analysed by Thomas Hylland Eriksen, and how they are locally interpreted (2007, pp. 8-9). Although the concepts as such are not emic in Macaé, I am interested in their local significance. For example, *Standardisation* as a global feature entails comparative and shared standards around the globe (Eriksen, 2007). In Macaé, the demand to know English to communicate with foreigners were high, further spreading the already “common denominator” of communication around the world. Another form of standardisation is the increased level of consumption several places in the world (see Canclini, 2001; Shah, Friedland, Wells, Kim, & Rojas, 2012 for examples). Noticeable in Macaé is new shopping malls with commercial directed to people in general, not for Brazilians in particular, with many international brands. Even though these places are expensive, the consumer credit makes it possible to take part, further enhancing the emerging norm of consummation standards. In order to conduct international business and private cooperation, certain laws and regulations have to be altered for it to be successful. One of these alterations is the Directive Plan mentioned before.

Locals marrying foreigners seemed to be a relatively common kind of mixing in Macaé. *Mixing* is when culture and information is exchanged between people of different origin, and especially in urban areas with accelerated change (Eriksen, 2007). Exchanging information does not only happen between individuals, procedures in corporate collaboration is another way of mixing where several cultural traits are exchanged. This mixing, both on the corporate and at the individual level, leads to a broader network regionally, nationwide, and international. As Brazil is a country with a history of protectionism, and with somewhat strict sectors regarding import to this day, there exists a network connecting people together, especially on the corporate level and international cooperation. Through the petroleum industry, businesses and individuals are linked together on the web, on legal documents and
agreements, or through marriage. This is what Eriksen identify as *interconnedtedness*, which becomes faster, denser and wider with time being (Eriksen, 2007, p. 8). The interconnectedness with the rest of the world are slowly creating diminishing national borders, and therefore a need to establish international agreements which again needs new foreign policies and produces new standards. There are strict rules for international investment in Brazil, with administrative and organisational adversity regarding foreigners wanting to invest in Macaé. Finding grey areas to accomplish this sort of access, mediators like Sharon was paid to help in bureaucratic matters by transferring authority to Brazilians, Sharon her self in this particular instance.

The most notable features of globalisation in Macaé on the urban level were *acceleration*, entailing an elevated speed especially considering communication, construction and transport (Eriksen, 2007). The acceleration in communication between international and private businesses in Macaé – the petroleum services, hotels, real estate and consummation products – created an acceleration in construction in the urban area, and a greater need for transport. However, the weaknesses in the urban area inherited from the former fishing village created an almost immobile means of transportation. Although acceleration is present, the infrastructure did not support the accelerated change and pressure, not creating a collapse, but immobility. *Movement*, yet another feature of globalisation, were present in Macaé, not as mobility, but the physical movement of people (Eriksen, 2007). Outside of the urban area, Macaé had tourist areas where hikes to waterfalls and mountains had become a popular destination. Inside the urban area, Brazilians and foreigners from South America, the United States, England, and Norway among others, came to work through their industries on temporary contracts. Those foreigners Sharon helped were independent individuals seeing potential for future investment in Macaé. Others married and moved to Macaé, for example the Donna of the cattle farm or Jon, raising the family in a selected area.

As communication are extending and getting faster the international relations and cooperation are brought closer, creating an interconnectedness of mutual dependence and new set of regulations so that their collaboration have fewer obstacles. According to the Directive Plan, the encouragement to development linked to petroleum industry as to create new business opportunities, are creating an even bigger pressure on the existing infrastructure. Urban residences are either becoming more expensive in the forms of apartments buildings, or people have to move to the outskirts of the urban area. As a short demonstration in the speed of construction, three new apartment buildings came into construction in the surrounding area.
of my house during five months. Other options were to move to neighbouring cities or to highly expensive gated communities in the suburbs, both involving more commuting cars on the road. The gated communities are a perfect example of disembedding mechanisms as a feature of globalisation (Eriksen, 2007, p. 8). The gated communities is not only accentuating a luxurious life inside the walls; safety and protection of the residents seal off the ‘dangerous’ life outside on the streets. Disassociation from the public life in urban Macaé, either due to safety or to distancing themselves from the socioeconomic statuses associated with the public urban scenes, is a typical trait of the elites and the foreigners working on temporary contracts. Even though they are mediators behind the accelerated change occurring, these people are the personification of disembedding mechanisms based on their social and economic alienation from urban Macaé. Their distance becomes irrelevant and abstracted from the local context, including the social life and their indirect changes in the city.

The features of globalisation are closely related to the individualistic value system in Brazilian urban life. The logical countervailing effects, or re-embedding, are the traditional value system imposed in the household. Re-embedding is countervailing responses of mainly disembedding mechanisms, but all the features of globalisation have opposing forces be it organisations, local networks, morals or even monuments (Eriksen, 2007, p. 9). For example, many in Macaé lack important family members because of traveling, studying, economies needs or simply the wish for independence. The countervailing effects of the traditional value system is therefore weakened, and the individualistic value system is strengthened even more. The global features in Macaé are in constant movement and change. Although examples of global features are possible to represent, globalisation is not a solid mass or a directly noticeable phenomenon. The liquidity of modernity is present in the features of globalisation, not globalisation nor modernity have a final result, its essence is not solid (Bauman, 2000). As I have shown, the features of globalisation and modernity is further implemented in the individual value system, where change and transformation is embodied in individuals in a pursuit to become independent and to make individualistic choices. Being modern is a way to show that they are part of the global and are a modern individual – either through consumerism, the great mobility of a car, general wealth, a place of residence, making individual choices, education – the individuals are not only part of their community anymore; they are part of the cosmopolitan world.
Flexibility and the idea of the good life

Before I left to conduct fieldwork in Macaé, I was determined to analyse relations within and between four groups with diverse socioeconomic statuses. Although I made a mistake in the group with the lowest status, the poor, surrounding perceptions and observations about them gave me insight in interaction and disassociation relating to the socioeconomic hierarchy. As I have shown throughout the dissertation, differences in social interaction, loss and gain of flexibility in formal and informal sectors, contributions to overheated change with acceleration as a consequence, materialistic motivations due to the telenovelas as a common denominator, aspiration, adaptation, and motivation to implement change, alienation and identification with certain lifestyles, are all noticeable phenomena in Macaé. But these phenomena differ according to the socioeconomic hierarchy based on opportunities and limitations due to opportunity structures. The petroleum activity creates prosperity, yet it also strengthens inequality in Macaé. Despite the turmoil and turbulence created by the petroleum activity, the cultural values and meaningful aspects of life turn out to be surprisingly resilient. Moreover, notions of the good life have shown themselves to be remarkably similar regardless of different preconditions of individuals. The connection between flexibility and the idea of the good life becomes clear when the need of flexibility is present, either because an individual is in immediate need of change, or when the subjective agency to fulfil an aspiration or motivation require more flexibility. The aspiration can be the desire of consumer goods and services, the assumption that a car will grant greater mobility, to become a better painter, or to conduct a new business, but it may also evolve around family and social recognition. Happiness and wellbeing can be experienced without the good life, but they are temporary, and as explained in the precious chapter, eudaimonic and hedonic pleasure becomes difficult to separate. The poor and the workers may never experience the common idea of the good life relating to the telenovela-lifestyle, but they might experience wellbeing and happiness along the way in their attempt to reach it. The middleclass and their inventive to increase their flexibility are closely related to the idea of the good life. They are in no immediate need to extend their flexible limits, but the considerable spare time they experience gives many the big bad wolf syndrome without any pigs left to catch (Eriksen, 2015). The elites on the other hand, are satisfied with their current situation. They do not experience any need, not motivation, to expand their flexible limits. Perhaps they have reached the good life, enjoying the tranquil, stable and secure state of careless pleasure. Or perhaps they have more to lose than gain with increased potential for change. Only shortages stimulates a wish for
flexibility and change. If you have nothing to lose, anything is possible and perhaps even desirable. By contrast, the privileged tend to resist change and defend their privileges rather than extend their flexibility.

To sum up, this dissertation has painted a picture of a Brazilian boomtown fuelled by the expanding resource industry, attracting migrants of all socioeconomic statuses and creating both opportunities and constraints, wealth and frustrations, flexibilities of liberation and flexibilities of desperation. In this, Macaé is typical of resource-driven economic ‘booms’ anywhere in the world. What I have argued is that in spite of its global connectedness and pattern resemblance to similar places elsewhere, Macaé retains its peculiarly Brazilian character. In particular, I have argued that the basic value orientations, and ideas of the good life, are quite uniform across the social classes, although they are easier to satisfy among the rich than among the poor.
Appendix

My primary motivation to conduct fieldwork in Macaé was because my parents had bought a lot in one of the gated communities, granting me access to the area and to the estate siblings Lara and Vitor. However, some weeks before I left for fieldwork, my parents decided to sell the lot. Their initial offer to construct their planned house increased with over 50% over three years, creating a distrust in the architect and a motivation to sell for profit. Since my upcoming presence in Macaé was to become very convenient for them, they wanted me to sell their lot while I was down there. The paperwork needed to sell the lot was exhausting and complex for me to conduct during fieldwork\footnote{However, the connection I got with Lara and Vitor proved to be an important asset in the field and afterwards.}, especially because the house was in Sharon’s name until my parents got a residence permit. After waiting several weeks for a specific document, the validity of the document did not have the considerable amount of durability to gain the second required document, resulting in many turns back to the beginning. After four months, Lara, Sharon and I managed to get a hold on the final document granting me the ability to sell the lot for my parents. We now had one month to complete the sale of the lot, or we had to begin from the top with the documents. Then we were met with yet another demand at the public office. I had to prove that I was my parents’ daughter with a birth certificate translated into Portuguese by the Brazilian embassy in Norway. When my parents got the final news, they hasted down to Macaé to get the papers in order and to finally sell the lot. Luckily, the lot was sold three days before my departure (summer 2014). Conversely, the people buying it, and everyone else in Macaé, experienced a great turnaround at the end of that year, with devastating consequences for many.

A thorough investigation was conducted in the government, and Petrobrás was charged with one of the greatest corruption scandals the country had ever seen. This had huge consequences for Macaé on a regional level, and individuals were hit hard by the impact. Sharon and I talked during spring 2015, and she was very concerned about the implications and repercussions the corruption scandal had on the city and on mutual friends. According to Sharon, Macaé had become a ghost town. The thorough investigation stretched all the way from the government and other suspicious activities and movements. Sharon had huge amounts of money in her bank account from the many foreigners she helped. Not only was her payments in that account, it was also the foreigners’ payment for their investments in Macaé, which Sharon was supposed to transfer for them. Because Sharon did not have any official job, the activity on her bank account made the bank freeze both the account and the
money on it in order to investigate the source of her money. Her account was opened after two months, and Jon transferred the money to his Norwegian account until the investigations cooled down. Others were not so lucky. Due to a standstill in the estate marked, Lara did not earn any money and was not able to pay down her loan on the apartment she lived in. Inevitably, she was forced to sell in order to avoid a heavy debt, and she found herself living together with her mother. Jeferson was nowhere to be found and nobody could get a hold on him, not even his family, and the last Sharon had heard from Felipe was that he was now living in a country in Africa.

On a personal level, I felt very sorry for my friends in Macaé. Many had worked their entire life to end up where they were when I met them, just to see their accomplishments collapse due to corruption investigation. The researcher in me nevertheless identify the situation as a collapse of the primary source of prosperity in the city. The parasitic Petropolis did not have a source of livelihood during the period of investigation, with repercussions going all the way down to the individuals. The city economy collapsed, and the source of flexibility and the good life in Macaé temporarily disappeared. Close to everyone were left in an ambiguous situation where they either could wait for the whole thing to “blow over”, or they could find other ways to change their current situation by pursuing a new aspiration, gaining new subjective agency and to increase their flexibility. Or perhaps they could do as the elites did; disappear or escape from the country. In the aftermath of the investigation, Macaé will most likely rise from its ruins, and in a couple of years the city may even have reached the idealised petroleum capital.
References


