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In the exteriority of the system: victims, the liberation principle, and normativity in practices of resistance to State violence

Na exterioridade do sistema: vítimas, princípio-libertação e normatividade nas práticas de resistência à violência de Estado

En la exterioridad del sistema: víctimas, principio-liberación y normatividad en las prácticas de resistencia frente a la violencia de Estado

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Abstract

This article analyzes the practices of resistance of the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence, created in Rio de Janeiro in 2004 by relatives of victims of state violence. The problem consists in understanding whether such practices can be interpreted as forms of production of normativity beyond state law. The research adopts a qualitative approach, based on semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis, articulated with Emmanuel Lévinas's ethical phenomenology and Enrique Dussel's Ethics of Liberation. It is argued that the Network's practices not only respond to oppression, but constitute concrete forms of normativity endowed with their own ethical validity, in light of the liberation principle. The results indicate that actions of welcoming/support, denunciation, production of memory, legal follow-up, and political advocacy structure behaviors, guide collective decisions, and institute criteria of justice independent of legal formalization. It is concluded that the condition of victim does not imply passivity, but can constitute a place of ethical enunciation and transformative praxis, challenging the law to recognize forms of normativity produced in the exteriority of the system.

Keywords: State violence; normativity; liberation principle; ethics of alterity; collective resistance.

Resumo

O artigo analisa as práticas de resistência da Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos Contra a Violência, criada no Rio de Janeiro em 2004 por familiares de vítimas da violência estatal. O problema consiste em compreender se tais práticas podem ser interpretadas como formas de produção de normatividade para além do direito estatal. A pesquisa adota abordagem qualitativa, baseada em entrevistas semiestruturadas e análise documental, articulada à fenomenologia ética de Emmanuel Lévinas e à Ética da Libertação de Enrique Dussel. Sustenta-se que as práticas da Rede não apenas respondem à opressão, mas constituem formas concretas de normatividade dotadas de validade ética própria, à luz do princípio-libertação. Os resultados indicam que ações de acolhimento, denúncia, produção de memória, acompanhamento jurídico e incidência política estruturam comportamentos, orientam decisões coletivas e instituem critérios de justiça independentes da formalização jurídica. Conclui-se que a condição de vítima não implica passividade, mas pode constituir lugar de enunciação ética e de práxis transformadora, desafiando o direito a reconhecer normatividades produzidas na exterioridade do sistema.

Palavras-chave: violência de Estado; normatividade; princípio-libertação; ética da alteridade; resistência coletiva.

Resumen

El artículo analiza las prácticas de resistencia de la Red de Comunidades y Movimientos Contra la Violencia, creada en Rio de Janeiro en 2004 por familiares de víctimas de la violencia estatal. El problema consiste en comprender si dichas prácticas pueden interpretarse como formas de producción de normatividad más allá del derecho estatal. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, basado en entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis documental, articulado con la fenomenología ética de Emmanuel Lévinas y la Ética de la Liberación de Enrique Dussel. Se sostiene que las prácticas de la Red no solo responden a la opresión, sino que constituyen formas concretas de normatividad dotadas de una validez ética propia, a la luz del principio-liberación. Los resultados indican que las acciones de acogida, denuncia, construcción de memoria, acompañamiento jurídico e incidencia política estructuran comportamientos, orientan decisiones colectivas e instituyen criterios de justicia independientes de la formalización jurídica. Se concluye que la condición de víctima no implica pasividad, sino que puede constituir un lugar de enunciación ética y de praxis transformadora, desafiando al derecho a reconocer las normatividades producidas en la exterioridad del sistema.

Palabras clave: violencia de Estado; normatividad; principio-liberación; ética de la alteridad; resistencia colectiva.

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1 Introduction

State violence and police lethality in peripheral territories constitute one of the central problems of contemporary Brazilian reality, challenging not only the effectiveness of public security policies, but also the very normative foundations of law. According to the Atlas of Violence 2026, Brazil officially recorded 42,590 homicides in 2024, with a rate of 20.1 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, representing a reduction of 6.9% in the absolute number of deaths and 7.4% in the rate compared to 2023. The report itself, however, warns that this reduction should be interpreted with caution, given the increase in violent deaths of undetermined cause. When hidden homicides are considered, the estimated number reaches 49,673 deaths in 2024, with a rate of 23.4 per 100,000 inhabitants. This scenario reveals the persistence of a structural pattern of the production of death that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations (Cerqueira; Bueno, 2026, pp. 8, 14, 18).

It is in this context that the present investigation is situated, aiming to analyze the practices of resistance of subjects of social injustice and their relationship with law. The study takes as its empirical basis the work of the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence, an organization created in 2004 in Rio de Janeiro out of the mobilization of relatives of victims of state violence, which has consolidated itself as a space of welcoming/support, denunciation, and political articulation in historically marginalized territories. By transforming experiences of loss and suffering into collective action, the Network not only denounces violence, but produces concrete forms of social organization that challenge traditional institutional responses.

The research presented here is part of the community organization in favelas research line, within the empirical project *Powers of Liberation of the Subject of Social Injustice*, which, in turn, is part of the broader research titled *Ethics, Politics and Law: The Ethics of Alterity and the Ethics of Liberation in the Trajectory of Self-Emancipation of the Subject of Social Injustice and its Relationship with Law*, carried out at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, with support from the Rio de Janeiro State Research Support Foundation (FAPERJ) and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). All methodological procedures of the empirical research were conducted with ethical rigor, with approval from the UERJ Research Ethics Committee via Plataforma Brasil, ensuring the protection of participants and respect for their narratives (Brasil, 2025).

From a methodological standpoint, this is qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews with members of the Network, as well as on the analysis of documents produced by the movement.¹ This approach makes it possible to access not only the objective facts of violence, but, above all, the lived experience of the subjects, their interpretations, and the practices that emerge in response to this context. As the research report indicates (Oliveira, 2025, p. 3), the Network functions as a “vital space of resistance and power reconfiguration,” articulating memory, welcoming/support, denunciation, and political education in opposition to the logic of extermination that marks state action in certain territories.

The central problem guiding this article consists in understanding whether, and to what extent, such practices of resistance can be interpreted as forms of production of normativity, that is, as modes of organizing social life that not only respond to oppression, but institute their own criteria of justice. This question becomes particularly relevant in light of the finding that positive law, in various situations, not only proves insufficient to contain violence, but may operate as its institutional mediation. In this sense, taking into account Rio de Janeiro State Law No. 11,003 (2025), which brings back mechanisms that incentivize police lethality², as well as its challenge through Direct Action of Unconstitutionality No. 7,921³ (Brasil, 2026b), reveals that the legal field is crossed by disputes that make evident its structural ambivalence.

Given this scenario, I maintain as a central hypothesis that **the practices of resistance of subjects of social injustice not only respond to oppression, but constitute concrete forms of production of normativity that,**

¹ The interviews and the report were produced by the researcher, a participant in the research project Powers of Liberation of the Subject of Social Injustice, Leticia Soares de Oliveira, with field supervision carried out by Alex Carneiro. All of this under my coordination and guidance.

² Article 21 of the aforementioned law reads as follows: *Civil Police officers shall be guaranteed a monetary award, for special merit, to be granted on an individual basis, by act of the Chief of the Executive Branch, following due recognition and official declaration, carried out through the regulatory procedures ordered by the Secretary of State for Civil Police, at a minimum percentage of 10% and a maximum of 150% of the awarded officer's salary, subject to the constitutional ceiling, under the terms of article 37, item XI of the Federal Constitution, in the event that the officer is victimized in the line of duty, seizes large-caliber or restricted-use weapons during police operations, as well as in the case of the neutralization of criminals.* Here, the word “neutralization” is a euphemism for “death.” This type of award had already been instituted in Rio de Janeiro by State Decree 21,753/1995 and became known as the “Wild West bonus”; but it was discontinued in 1999.

³ Direct Action of Unconstitutionality No. 7,921 was filed by the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) and challenges precisely article 21 of State Law No. 11.003/2025, arguing that the norm incentivizes police lethality and the increase of deaths in favelas, contrary to the mission of public security.

in light of Enrique Dussel's liberation principle, possess an ethical validity prior and superior to hegemonic legal-institutional mediations. This hypothesis implies shifting the focus of the analysis: from the insufficiency of law to the normative power of social practices that emerge in the exteriority of the system.

The theoretical framework underpinning this interpretation articulates, on the one hand, Lévinas's ethical phenomenology (1961/2008), especially the notion of originary responsibility before the Other, and, on the other hand, Dussel's Ethics of Liberation (2000), which takes the concrete life of victims as the material foundation of normativity. For Dussel (2000, p. 11), ethics is not founded on abstractions, but on concrete human life, which is the absolute condition of ethics and the requirement of all liberation. In this horizon, victims cease to be understood as passive subjects and come to be recognized as bearers of an ethical-critical power, capable of producing transformative practices oriented by the negation of the negation of their own lives.

Based on this articulation between empirical material and theory, I seek to demonstrate that the practices developed by the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence, by organizing collective actions, producing memory, mobilizing institutions, and establishing forms of care and solidarity, configure not merely survival strategies, but genuine forms of social normativity. This is a normativity that emerges from the experience of injustice and that, by affirming life against its negation, calls into question the very limits of modern law and its claims to universality.

Finally, under the terms of item c of section I of article 9 of CNPq Ordinance 2,664 (Brasil, 2026a), I inform that generative artificial intelligence was used as part of the present research. *ChatGPT* was used as an aid in analyzing the field reports of the empirical project *Powers of Liberation of the Subject of Social Injustice*, as well as in preparing the tables presented in this article. Claude was used for language revision (textual cohesion and coherence; syntax and fluency; grammar and spelling), as well as to assist in preparing the *resumo*, *abstract* and *resumen*. It also assisted in adapting the article to the submission guidelines of *Revista Pensar*. All content remains my responsibility as the author of the article.

2 The experience of social injustice and the emergence of resistance in the Network

Understanding the practices of resistance developed by the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence requires, first of all, considering the concrete conditions in which these practices emerge. This section presents the empirical context of the research, exploring the experience of social injustice based on the accounts of subjects directly affected by state violence, as well as the processes through which these experiences are converted into organized forms of collective action.

The emergence of the Network cannot be understood as a contingent or episodic phenomenon, but as a historical response to a recurring pattern of state violence directed at certain territories and populations. Its origin, in 2004, is directly linked to the Borel Massacre, which occurred in 2003, when young favela residents were executed by police officers under circumstances later disproven by official investigations.

The account of Maria Dalva Correia, one of the mothers interviewed, reveals not only the brutality of the episode, but also the way state violence is articulated with mechanisms of institutional cover-up: "Four young men were summarily killed, shot in the back and in the head... They claimed it was a 'resistance killing' and brought a kit with weapons and drugs to justify the action" (Oliveira, 2025, p. 31).⁴ This type of police practice, historically naturalized under the label of "resistance killing," reveals a pattern of state action that not only produces death, but constructs narratives that legitimize violence. The subsequent forensic evidence proved that, in this case, there was no confrontation. This makes explicit the gap between the official version and the reality of the facts, evidencing the fragility of institutional control mechanisms.

In this context, the constitution of the Network emerges as a gesture of rupture. It is not merely a reaction to the traumatic event, but a process of transforming individual experience of loss into organized collective action. As Maria Dalva herself put it: "If I do nothing, I'm more dead than he is. That's when I joined this Network movement and we started working" (Oliveira, 2025, pp. 33-34). The passage from mourning to action marks the decisive moment when the victim ceases to occupy exclusively the position of object of violence and assumes the condition of a subject of intervention in the social world. The experience of injustice, in this sense, is not exhausted in the negativity of suffering, but inaugurates a process of reorganizing practical life.

⁴ For the purposes of this article, all direct quotations from the original sources have been translated into English.

From this perspective, it is possible to glimpse how state violence is experienced not merely as a one-off event, but as a continuous experience that runs through the subjects' everyday lives. Insecurity, fear, and the perception of state arbitrariness are structuring elements of this experience. Maria Dalva's account of the imposition of a curfew and indiscriminate repression evidences the normalization of exceptional practices in peripheral territories: "The team that carried out the massacre imposed a curfew on the day of their shift. There was a party going on, an American-style party, and they arrived, asked for the party to stop, and people said no, it's an American-style party, so they opened fire on the party, hitting a woman in the shoulder and a young man in the leg" (Oliveira, 2025, p. 31). Violence, in this context, is not limited to the execution of the young men, but manifests itself as a form of territorial control and collective disciplining. The absence of any distinction between suspects and non-suspects reveals the logic of generalized suspicion that falls upon bodies marked by territorial and racial belonging.

However, the Network's practices are not limited to denouncing violence; they organize a complex set of initiatives that reconfigure forms of collective action in contexts of social injustice. Since its initial formation, the movement has been structured into committees that articulate different dimensions of resistance: legal follow-up of cases; support for family members; production of memory; and communication and public denunciation. This organization shows that resistance is not spontaneous or disordered, but involves processes of internal institutionalization that allow for the continuity and effectiveness of collective action. The creation of specific committees indicates the construction of differentiated and complementary functions, bringing the Network's action closer to structured forms of social organization. In addition, the articulation among distinct territories (Acari, Borel, Manguinhos, Maré, Rocinha, among others) reveals the constitution of an expanded network of solidarity, capable of overcoming the spatial fragmentation of experiences of violence. This collective dimension is fundamental, as it transforms isolated experiences into a common field of struggle.

What is observed, therefore, is a movement that transforms the experience of violence into political practice. Pain, far from paralyzing, becomes a mobilizing element for action. The memory of the dead, in turn, ceases to be mere remembrance and becomes the foundation for the demand for justice. In this process, the Network operates a reconfiguration of the very meaning of social action. By articulating welcoming/support, denunciation, and mobilization, it creates conditions for historically silenced subjects to intervene in the public sphere, disputing narratives, producing visibility, and calling institutions to account.

3 Law in tension: critique, use, and ambivalence

The analysis of the empirical experience makes evident that the relationship between subjects of social injustice and law cannot be understood in a linear way. This section examines law in its practical dimension, highlighting both its limits as a structure of protection and its possibilities as an instrument of contestation, so as to make explicit the tensions that run through its operation in this specific context of state violence.

The practice of the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence reveals that law does not present itself only as an instrument of protection, but may operate as an institutional mediation of the very violence it should contain. This finding is not limited to the level of the subjective perception of interviewees, but finds support in concrete normative provisions that, instead of restricting state lethality, may contribute to its intensification. In this sense, Law No. 11,003, of October 22, 2025 (Rio de Janeiro, 2025), by restructuring the staff framework of the Rio de Janeiro State Civil Police Department, rekindles the debate around mechanisms that incentivize police productivity associated with lethality. In particular, article 21 of the said law, by reinstating bonuses tied to job performance, revives a harmful practice historically known as the "Wild West bonus," frequently criticized for encouraging violent actions as a form of institutional recognition and financial gain for police officers. The relevance of this normative provision lies not only in its technical content, but in its insertion into a concrete reality marked by repeated reports of state violence. Alongside accounts of summary executions, institutional cover-ups, and practices of collective intimidation, the existence of mechanisms that incentivize lethality reinforces the hypothesis that violence is not merely tolerated, but, in certain cases, functionally integrated into the logic of state action (Rio de Janeiro, 2025).

The legal controversy surrounding this model is attested by the filing of Direct Action of Unconstitutionality No. 7,921 (Brasil, 2026b), brought by the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) before the Federal Supreme Court, challenging the constitutionality of the aforementioned legislation. At the time this article was written, the case had

been submitted to the reporting justice, Justice Alexandre de Moraes, indicating that the matter remains open at the institutional level, the object of legal and political dispute.

This situation reveals a point that is central to the analysis developed here: positive law does not constitute a homogeneous and stable system, but a field crossed by tensions, in which norms coexist that can both protect and expose certain populations to violence. The simultaneous presence of provisions that expand the lethal power of the State and of mechanisms of constitutional control indicates that law is itself a space of conflict.

Beyond the normative analysis, the empirical research also demonstrated that access to the justice system can be marked by structural barriers that limit its effectiveness for subjects of social injustice. The accounts gathered indicate not only practical difficulties, but a consolidated perception of institutional inequality. Along these lines, Maria Dalva's statement is striking: "What's left is the feeling that we seem unworthy of life. That we don't have the right. Because we don't have the right to life. And justice, unfortunately, that justice isn't for the poor, it isn't for Black people" (Oliveira, 2025, p. 35). This perception cannot be reduced to an isolated subjective assessment. It expresses the repeated experience of subjects who face procedural delays, penal selectivity, and difficulty holding state agents accountable. Law, in this sense, appears as a structure that, instead of guaranteeing universal protection, reproduces social and racial asymmetries.

Moreover, the accounts indicated that the production of evidence, the conduct of investigations, and the adjudication of cases sometimes operate under a logic that privileges the institutional version to the detriment of the victims' narrative. This dynamic reinforces the sense of impunity and contributes to the delegitimization of the justice system among the subjects directly affected.

Despite such limitations, the research also demonstrated that the Network's subjects do not abandon the legal field. On the contrary, they develop strategies for using law as an instrument of struggle, albeit in a critical and cautious way. Consider what interviewee Patrícia Oliveira said:

One thing that the Network has always worked on a lot, always does a lot, is, for example, every prosecutor's office, every, every police station has a prosecutor, there are the so-called PIPs, the Criminal Investigation Prosecutor's Office. And, many times, we take that family member to the PIP, instead of taking them to the police station, because it's also the responsibility of the Public Prosecutor's Office to follow up on the, the investigation cases, because the prosecutor comes from the police station, the prosecutor has to speak in the inquiry. So, many times, direct contact with the prosecutor makes a huge difference (Oliveira, 2025, p. 46).

In the same evaluative tone, here is the testimony of interviewee Gláucia Santos:

What disappointed me most was the prosecutor. She was very racist. She treated my son's case as if he were a dog. She was very negligent, and that was very hard for us, the family. The judge and the jurors, on the other hand, took a very positive stance. I have nothing to complain about (Oliveira, 2025, p. 41).

Interviewees' accounts reveal that there is no abandonment of law, but rather a strategic and selective relationship with the justice system, one that is not naïve.

Engagement with the Public Defender's Office and the Public Prosecutor's Office, as well as the monitoring of judicial proceedings, indicates that the interviewees understand law as being appropriated as a possible tool for state accountability. In addition, participation in broader-reaching actions, such as ADPF 635 (known as the "Favelas ADPF"), evidences the Network's capacity for articulation at wider institutional levels. This strategic dimension reveals that law is not simply rejected, but incorporated as part of a broader repertoire of political action. Litigation, in this context, does not present itself as a sufficient solution, but as one of the means available to put pressure on the system and produce concrete, albeit limited, effects.

The joint study of these elements makes it possible to identify a central characteristic of the relationship between the Network's subjects and law: its ambivalence. Law and the justice system are simultaneously perceived as: i) structures of oppression and/or exclusion; ii) potential instruments of protection; and iii) fields of political dispute. This ambivalence should not be interpreted as a contradiction, but as an expression of the very nature of law in contexts of structural inequality. For subjects of social injustice, law is not a neutral given, but a space to be constantly disputed, appropriated, and, when necessary, circumvented. Thus, empirical experience indicates that the Network's practices cannot be understood solely through traditional legal categories. Although they engage

in dialogue with law, these forms of action are not exhausted by it. On the contrary, they frequently go beyond its limits, creating forms of organization and action that do not depend on institutional validation to affirm themselves.

The insufficiency of law to account for these practices does not imply its irrelevance, but indicates the need to broaden the analytical horizon. It is precisely at this point that it becomes necessary to turn to a theoretical framework capable of understanding the production of normativity beyond the institutionality of the legal system, from the very exteriority in which subjects of social injustice find themselves, as the victims that they are.

4 The Ethics of Liberation and the liberation principle

It is in this context that Dussel's Ethics of Liberation (2000) presents itself as a privileged interpretive key, by recognizing in the experience of victims not merely a fact of injustice, but a principle of critique and transformation. This section presents some central elements of Dussel's Ethics of Liberation (2000), with emphasis on the notion of victim, the material criterion of life, and the liberation principle as an interpretive key to the social practices analyzed.

The Ethics of Liberation, as conceived and proposed by Dussel (2000), starts from a decisive rupture with the formal ethical models of the modern tradition, by affirming that the ultimate foundation of normativity does not lie in abstract structures, but in the concrete life of historically situated subjects. Against an ethics centered on the formal universality of the norm, Dussel proposes a material criterion: the production, reproduction, and development of human life in conditions of dignity:

By human survival, or by "production, reproduction, and development of the human life of each ethical subject," we shall always understand, in this text, the universal material criterion of ethics par excellence: the concrete human life of each human being.

[...]

In this Ethics of liberation, the words "production, reproduction, and development" of the human life of the ethical subject "always" mean not only the vegetative or the animal, but also the "higher" mental functions and the development of human life and culture (Dussel, 2000, p. 636).

As can be seen, life is not merely an object of ethics, but its very foundation. This perspective implies a profound methodological inversion. The starting point of ethical reflection ceases to be the abstract subject and becomes the concrete subject, especially the one whose life is threatened. Ethics, therefore, is not constituted as a closed system of universal principles, but as a response to the negation of life.

In the context of the empirical research analyzed, this perspective makes it possible to understand that state violence does not represent merely a legal violation, but a radical negation of the very ethical foundation. The execution of young people, institutional cover-up, and the naturalization of death in certain territories configure situations in which the material criterion of life is systematically negated. This negation of life occurs at the local level, as demonstrated by the empirical material of the research, but it also seems to be the destiny toward which humanity is advancing, given the contradictions of the world-system. For this reason, Dussel (2000, p. 11) states that the Ethics of Liberation is an "ethics of the total affirmation of human life in the face of the murder and collective suicide toward which humanity is heading if it does not change the course of its irrational action." And, as a form of resistance and transformation, he maintains that "the philosophy of liberation is a counter-discourse, a critical philosophy born on the periphery (and from the victims, the excluded) with a claim to worldliness" (Dussel, 2000, p. 73).

From this perspective, Dussel assigns centrality to the figure of the victim. Unlike approaches that conceive of the victim as a passive subject, the victim occupies, in the Ethics of Liberation, a privileged position: she is the point of exteriority from which the system can be criticized. Thus, the victim is not merely the one who suffers injustice, but the one whose existence reveals the insufficiency of the prevailing normative system. Her condition of exclusion evidences the limits of institutional structures and allows for the formulation of a critique that is not merely internal, but radical. It is along these lines that Dussel denounces the fact that the system that presents itself as the good, that should protect and organize life, is, in truth, an evil, because it organizes society to protect the life of some, while relegating the life of others to their own fate. In his words:

The system appears as a contradiction, since, while purporting to be the feasible mediation for the reproduction of life (like every institution), it operates as the cause of the negativity of the said subject, of his life (manifested in the very victim). The victim herself reveals the contradiction of the system, its impossibility *in the long run* - for failing to mediate necessary transformations - of producing and

reproducing the human life of those affected (the victims), that is, it shows a certain “inefficacy” (a problem of non-feasibility) with reference to the existence of victims (Dussel, 2000, p. 559).

This formulation is decisive for the interpretation of the empirical material analyzed. The subjects of the Network Against Violence do not appear merely as recipients of public policies or as holders of violated rights. They present themselves as subjects whose experience of suffering destabilizes the very claims to legitimacy of law itself. The statement of one of the mothers interviewed, affirming that she does not accept execution (murder) as a state response, regardless of the conduct attributed to her son, expresses precisely this critical dimension: the victim does not merely demand the application of the existing norm, but questions the very foundation of state practice. In this sense, the victim ceases to be an object of protection and becomes a subject of ethical enunciation. It is from her experience that it becomes possible to identify not only the injustice of particular situations, but the structural inadequacy of certain normative arrangements.

This centrality of the victim leads to the formulation of the liberation principle, the normative core of the Ethics of Liberation. This principle establishes that every practice, institution, or norm must be evaluated based on its capacity to overcome situations of oppression and affirm the life of historically negated subjects (Dussel, 2000, pp. 564-574). Dussel defines the liberation principle as the requirement to transform the conditions that produce victims:

The ethical-liberating obligation always imposes itself, first of all, as the duty to confront the real deconstruction of the causes of the victim's negativity... The praxis of liberation is the “dangerous” one par excellence because it confronts illegitimate power with the weakness of the defenseless corporeality (or with means that are always inferior but legitimate) of the victims... A negative, deconstructive, necessary praxis, that clears the ground in order to dig the foundations and then build upon them the walls (the institutions) of the house where life is produced, reproduced, and grows (Dussel, 2000, pp. 565-566).

Unlike formal principles, the liberation principle is not limited to guiding the application of existing norms, but imposes the need to transform the very structures that produce injustice. It is, therefore, a dynamic principle, oriented toward praxis.

This dimension, which can be understood as dialectical, is explicitly recognized by Dussel when he states: “The praxis of liberation, for its part, is the universal mediation because the unjust system is deconstructed (destroyed), negatively, and the new system is created, positively. There is an entire dialectic between positivity and negativity” (Dussel, 2016, p. 202). Liberation, therefore, is not reduced to critique or to the negation of the prevailing order. It simultaneously implies the delegitimization of the structures that produce victims and the construction of new forms of organizing social life oriented by the affirmation of life. This is a fundamental practical dimension. The liberation principle does not operate solely on the level of critique, but demands transformative action. It is not exhausted in the denunciation of violence, but implies the construction of concrete alternatives that do not lose sight of the utopian horizon:

To liberate is not only to break the chains (the negative moment described), but to “develop” (to liberate in the sense of giving positive possibility to) human life by demanding that institutions, the system, open new horizons that transcend the mere reproduction as repetition of “the Same” – and, simultaneously, the expression and exclusion of victims. Or it is, directly, to effectively construct the possible utopia, the structures or institutions of the system where the victim can live, and “live well” (which is the new “good life”); it is to set the slave free; it is to culminate the “process” of liberation as an action that reaches the effective freedom of the previously oppressed. It is a “liberating toward” the *novum*, the success achieved, the realized utopia (Dussel, 2000, p. 566).

It is precisely at this point that theory meets empirical material. The practices developed by the Network Against Violence, by organizing welcoming/support, mobilization, memory, and political advocacy, can be interpreted as concrete expressions of this principle. They do not merely react to violence, but seek to transform the conditions that make it possible.

This movement becomes even clearer when one observes that the Network's practices not only abstractly align with the liberation principle, but concretely enact the constitutive tension between its negative and positive dimensions. On the one hand, by denouncing summary executions, contesting official narratives, and exposing state violence, the Network's action assumes a clearly deconstructive character, aimed at delegitimizing the practices and structures that produce the death of victims. On the other hand, by constituting spaces of welcoming/support,

promoting the political education of family members, articulating support networks, and engaging in the formulation of public policies, these same practices point toward the construction of institutional and social alternatives oriented by the affirmation of life. The Network's praxis, thus, is not exhausted in resistance, but projects itself as a process of producing new conditions of existence, in which the denunciation of injustice and the construction of possibilities intertwine as inseparable moments of the same dynamic of liberation.

The articulation among life, victim, and the liberation principle makes it possible to understand that the Ethics of Liberation is not limited to a theory of denunciation, but constitutes a theory of praxis. The victim, upon recognizing the negation of her life, does not remain in a position of pure negativity. On the contrary, this experience can be converted into a power for action. The liberation principle itself already contains this understanding:

The liberation principle, in turn, enunciates the ought-to-be that ethically obliges the realization of the said transformation, a requirement that is fulfilled by the community of victims itself, under its own responsibility, and that originates, practical-materially, as normativity from the existence of a certain power or capacity (the being) in the said victim. Because there are victims with a certain capacity for transformation, one can and must struggle to negate the anti-human negation of the victims' pain, intolerable to an ethical-critical consciousness (Dussel, 2000, p. 559).

This idea is central to the hypothesis I maintain in this article. It makes it possible to overcome an understanding of the victim as an inherently defenseless and dependent subject, recognizing her capacity to produce social practices oriented toward transformation. In other words, the social vulnerability of the victim does not stem from a natural situation, but from her condition as a subject of social injustice, a condition that results from economic, political, and cultural arrangements that shape the totality of social life. Given this, the great power of the victim lies in the different ways of insurgency. In the case of the Network Against Violence, this power manifests itself in the conversion of suffering into collective praxis, in collective organization, and in the construction of strategies of resistance that articulate different dimensions of social life. Pain, in this context, is not merely an experience of loss, but a condition of possibility for action. A reading such as this makes it possible to understand that normativity is not exhausted in positive law. By affirming life in contexts of its negation, the practices of subjects of social injustice produce criteria of justice that do not depend on institutional validation to become legitimate.

5 The production of normativity in practices of resistance

The articulation between the empirical material and the theoretical framework makes it possible to advance the analysis of the practices developed by the Network beyond their descriptive dimension. This section examines to what extent such practices can be understood as forms of production of normativity, investigating the ways in which they guide actions, structure expectations, and establish criteria of justice in contexts marked by the negation of life.

In the interviews conducted with its members, it was possible to perceive that the Network's actions are not limited to episodic responses to violence, but constitute a structured set of practices oriented by shared purposes. The organization into committees, the division of functions, and the articulation among different territories indicate the existence of relatively stable patterns of collective action, which cannot be reduced to the spontaneity of indignation.

As recorded in the research report, since its formation the Network has been structured into specific units (legal, psychological, communication, and mobilization), aimed at producing coordinated responses to situations of state violence. This organization shows that collective action does not occur in a disorderly manner, but follows internal criteria that guide decisions, distribute responsibilities, and define priorities. In addition, the articulation among different communities (Borel, Acari, Manguinhos, Maré, Rocinha, among others) reveals the construction of a common field of action that transcends the individual experience of each group. The formation of this network expands the reach of actions and allows for the circulation of knowledge and strategies, consolidating a collective repertoire of resistance.

These elements point to the fact that the Network operates on the basis of repeated practices, which produce expectations of behavior and guide the action of its members. It is not, therefore, a matter of isolated reactions, but of a continuous process of social organization. Based on this organization, it is possible to maintain that the Network's practices possess a normative dimension. This ordering dimension is not expressed in the form of formalized or codified rules, but manifests itself in the practical orientation of collective action.

In the first place, one observes the definition of implicit criteria of justice. The systematic refusal of execution as a state response, regardless of the conduct attributed to the victim, reveals the affirmation of a clear normative principle: life cannot be legitimately suppressed as a means of managing the social order. This principle guides not only the discourse, but the actions of the Network, functioning as a parameter for evaluating state practices. In the second place, practices of welcoming/support and solidarity establish expectations of behavior that bind the organization's members. Support for victims' families, the follow-up of cases, and the production of memory are not arbitrary actions, but expected responses within the collective, configuring patterns of conduct that guide participants' actions. In the third place, the Network's public action, through demonstrations, denunciations, and participation in institutional bodies, contributes to the construction of narratives alternative to the official versions, disputing the meaning of events and redefining the terms of public debate. This narrative dispute possesses a normative dimension, insofar as it establishes criteria for what should be recognized as injustice.

As stated, these elements make it possible to affirm that the Network's practices produce a form of social normativity, understood as a set of guidelines that structure collective action and define parameters for evaluating conduct. This is a practical ordering that emerges from the concrete experience of injustice and that develops independently of legal formalization. The characterization of these practices as normative raises a decisive question: what is the status of validity of these forms of social organization? In other words, to what extent can such practices be recognized as legitimate, especially when they find no support in traditional legal structures?

Based on the framework of the Ethics of Liberation (Dussel, 2000), it is possible to maintain that the validity of these practices does not depend on their conformity with positive law, but on their capacity to affirm life in contexts of its negation. The liberation principle (Dussel, 2000, pp. 501-574), as stated earlier, provides, in this sense, a criterion of evaluation that lies beyond institutional mediations, making it possible to recognize the legitimacy of practices that emerge in the exteriority of the system. In this horizon, the normativity produced by the Network can be understood as bearing an anti-hegemonic validity. It opposes dominant forms of normativity not only at the discursive level, but in the very organization of social life. By affirming the centrality of life and refusing the naturalization of death, these practices institute criteria that challenge the logic guiding certain state policies. In dialogue with Ernst Bloch, Dussel (2000, p. 459) draws attention to the fact that the corporeality of victims and their real demands, such as for food and respect, produces an explosive and revolutionary force directed toward self-development. There is no doubt that this is the material production of anti-hegemonic validity of the victims of the system, of the victims of totality.

On the other hand, when one considers the passage, by the Rio de Janeiro State Legislative Assembly, of Law No. 11,003 (Rio de Janeiro, 2025), which reinstates mechanisms that incentivize police lethality (the "Wild West bonus"), the existence of norms becomes evident that, although formally valid, operate in tension with the material criterion of life. In this context, the Network's practices not only contest such provisions, but offer alternative parameters of evaluation, based on the concrete experience of the subjects affected. This opposition should not be interpreted as a simple conflict between legality and illegality. It is, rather, a dispute between different forms of normativity, in which the social practices of subjects of social injustice claim a status of validity that is not subordinated to the hegemonic legal structure.

Understanding this normativity produced by the Network therefore requires a shift away from the traditional legal gaze. Instead of taking law as the sole center of normative production, it is necessary to recognize that normativity can emerge in the exteriority of the system (Wolkmer, 2001), from the experience of subjects who are not fully included within its structures. This marginal position does not imply the absence of normativity, but its reconfiguration. The Network's actions demonstrate that it is possible to organize collective action, establish criteria of justice, and guide conduct without depending on legal formalization. In doing so, these subjects not only resist oppression, but produce alternative forms of social ordering. Maria Dalva's previously cited statement, affirming the need to act in order not to succumb to her own symbolic death, expresses this dimension: "If I do nothing, I'm more dead than he is" (Oliveira, 2025, pp. 33-34). This statement reveals that action is not merely a response to violence, but a condition for the affirmation of one's own existence. The normativity that emerges from this context does not present itself as an abstract system, but as a practice oriented toward the preservation and dignity of life.

In this sense, the margin of the system should not be understood as a space of absence, but as a locus of normative production that challenges law's claims to centrality. It is from this exteriority that it becomes possible to formulate a deeper critique of the structures that produce injustice and, at the same time, identify practices that point toward alternative forms of social organization.

The analysis developed thus far has made it possible to identify that the action of the Network Against Violence is not limited to reacting to injustice, but constitutes structured forms of action that guide behaviors, establish criteria of justice, and organize collective life. In order to make more explicit the mediation between the empirical material and the theoretical framework employed, I present, below, an analytical synthesis that articulates excerpts from the interviewees' statements, the description of the experiences lived, the central categories of Dussel's Ethics of Liberation (2000), and their normative implications. This systematization is not intended to reduce the complexity of the experience to theory, but to show how certain social practices can be interpreted, based on the liberation principle, as forms of production of normativity that emerge in the exteriority of the legal system.

Table 1 – Correlation between empirical material and the Ethics of Liberation

Excerpt from testimony (interviewees)	Description of the experience	Category in Dussel	Normative implication
"If I do nothing, I'm more dead than he is."	Transformation of grief into collective action	Praxis of liberation	Action is a condition for the affirmation of life
"Justice is not for the poor and Black people."	Experience of institutional exclusion	Victim / exteriority	The legal system does not exhaust normativity
"They claimed it was a 'resistance killing' [...] and brought a kit to justify it."	Institutional cover-up of violence	Oppressive totality	Norms can legitimize violence
"I never said my son was innocent [...] that's not how it works, we don't have the death penalty."	Refusal of execution as a state response	Material principle of life	Life is a criterion prior to legality
Organization into committees and support for families	Structuring of collective practices	Community of victims	Production of social normativity

Source: Table produced by ChatGPT based on the empirical research report.

The identification of a normative dimension in the practices of resistance exposes a fundamental tension between different forms of production of normativity. On the one hand, state law, structured on claims to universality and formality; on the other, the social practices of subjects of injustice, which emerge from concrete contexts of the negation of life and are oriented by the affirmation of their dignity. In order to make this tension clearer, I present, below, a schematic synthesis of the distinct forms of normativity at play. The table below synthesizes this relationship, highlighting not only oppositions, but different modes of grounding normative validity.

Table 2 – State law versus the normativity of resistance

State law	Network practices	Reading in Dussel
Formal legality	Legitimation through experience	Material validity of life
Abstract universality	Concrete contextuality	Exteriority
Normative monopoly	Plurality of practices	Praxis of liberation
Formal protection	Concrete care	Affirmation of life
Institutional control	Collective resistance	Critique of totality

Source: Table produced by ChatGPT based on the research sources (empirical and bibliographic) selected by the Author.

The synthesis presented in the previous table should not be understood as a rigid opposition between two irreconcilable normative systems, but as an expression of a structural tension that runs through the field of law in contexts of social injustice. What becomes evident is the coexistence of different grounds of validity: on the one hand, formal legality, oriented by abstract criteria of universality; on the other, a practical normativity that emerges from the concrete experience of the negation of life and is oriented by its affirmation. In light of the Ethics of Liberation (Dussel, 2000), this second form of normativity cannot be reduced to a merely social or pre-legal plane, but must be recognized as bearing a material criterion of validity that allows for a critical evaluation of state law itself. In this sense, the exteriority occupied by subjects of social injustice does not represent an absence of normativity, but a condition of possibility for the emergence of practices that, by affirming life in contexts of its negation, challenge and reconfigure the limits of the juridical.

6 Between Lévinas and Dussel: responsibility, victim, and liberation

Among the philosophical foundations underpinning the Ethics of Liberation, Lévinas's ethical phenomenology stands out (1961/2008), for it introduces a decisive shift in the understanding of normativity by situating its origin not in rules or institutions, but in the relation with the Other. The experience of the face (Lévinas, 1961/2008), as the manifestation of an irreducible alterity, imposes an ethical demand prior to any formalization. This is an interpellation that does not depend on legal mediation or official recognition to produce its effects. From this unfolds a responsibility that is not the result of a pact or a rational decision, but an originary condition of subjectivity. The subject does not choose to be responsible; he is, from the outset, placed in this position by the presence of the Other. In the words of Lévinas (1961/2008, pp. 172-173):

The face that I welcome makes me pass from phenomenon to being in another sense: in discourse I expose myself to the interrogation of the Other, and this urgency of the response – the sharp point of the present – gives rise in me to responsibility; as one responsible, I find myself led back to my ultimate responsibility.

The recognition of responsibility as an originary condition of subjectivity makes it something prior to freedom itself, that is, before being free, the subject is already responsible for the Other. However much law may protect and safeguard freedom, ethical responsibility remains prior. This means that ethics is prior to law, and this priority of ethics in relation to law implies that normativity is not exhausted in legal structures, but finds its source in a more fundamental relation.

The concrete experience of the Network Against Violence, according to the interviews conducted with its members, makes it possible to recognize this dimension. The accounts of the mothers who make up the Network not only describe the loss of their children, but reveal a form of ethical interpellation that goes beyond the individual sphere. The death of the other, especially when produced by state action, does not present itself as a neutral fact, but as a rupture that demands a response. Maria Dalva's statement that the execution of a young person is not admissible, regardless of his conduct, expresses precisely this dimension: "I never said my son was innocent, because if you say that, people understand that if he weren't, he'd have to die, and that's not how it is, we don't have the death penalty" (Oliveira, 2025, p. 32). This is a refusal that does not depend on any prior legal qualification, but on the affirmation of an ethical limit: the life of the other cannot be instrumentalized. At this point, the experience of social injustice draws near to the structure described by Lévinas (1961/2008): alterity imposes a demand that precedes any normative calculation.

This alterity is something that provokes sensibility (Lévinas, 1974/2011, p. 133), and sensibility, in Lévinas, does not designate a secondary or merely psychological dimension of subjectivity, but the very concrete condition of its exposure to the other. The subject is not a self-sufficient consciousness that subsequently relates to the world and to others; it already arises committed by an originary vulnerability that places it in relation. For this reason, the Levinasian self cannot be understood as a rational abstraction detached from material existence. It is a subject "of blood and flesh," marked by hunger, need, suffering, and finitude. Corporeality ceases to be a simple biological given and becomes the very locus of ethical signification, for it is through it that the subject feels, suffers, welcomes, and responds. Likewise, the other who interpellates the self is not an idealized or conceptual figure, but someone equally embodied, whose presence manifests itself in the concrete precariousness of life. The vulnerability of the other does not appear as theoretical information to be known, but as an ethical experience that dislodges the self and breaks indifference (Lévinas, 1974/2011, pp. 136-137).

It is precisely at this point that Levinasian phenomenology opens space for the radicalization carried out by Dussel. If the face of the other is always the face of someone materially situated in the world, then ethical responsibility cannot remain restricted to the level of subjective intention or abstract morality. The hunger of the other, his exposure to violence, his condition of exclusion and suffering become unavoidable elements of the ethical relation itself. The self is called to respond not before a generic humanity, but before historically situated subjects, whose real conditions of existence denounce historical forms of the negation of life. Sensibility, in this sense, prevents ethics from being reduced to mere formalism, because it obliges the subject to consider the materiality of human existence. It is precisely this understanding of the embodied subject that will allow Dussel to direct Levinasian alterity toward the

ethical-political horizon of victims, making wounded and vulnerabilized corporeality the starting point for the critique of the social structures that produce death.

In this sense, the Ethics of Liberation produces a shift by situating the origin of ethical normativity in the exteriority of the system. The victim, as the subject whose life is negated by social and institutional structures, constitutes the point from which totality can be criticized. If, in Lévinas, the face of the Other interpellates the subject, in Dussel, the victim reveals the insufficiency of traditional normative structures. Her condition not only demands responsibility, but denounces the contradiction between law's promise of universality and its effective incapacity to protect certain lives.

In the context analyzed, state violence directed at peripheral populations makes this contradiction evident. The subjects of the Network Against Violence are not fully included in the legal order; on the contrary, they are exposed to practices that negate the very foundations of that order. It is from this position of exteriority that it becomes possible to formulate a radical critique of the system. The victim, indeed, is not merely a recipient of protection, but a subject of enunciation. Her experience is not limited to evidencing the injustice of particular cases, but points to the structural inadequacy of certain forms of social organization. It is at this point that the Ethics of Liberation goes beyond an ethics of responsibility and constitutes itself as an ethics of transformation. This is the basis of the liberation principle: "The 'liberation principle' explicitly formulates the deontological moment, or the ethical-critical duty of transformation, as a possibility for the reproduction of the victim's life and as the feasible development of human life in general" (Dussel, 2000, p. 564).

It is important to clarify here the theoretical status of this approximation between Lévinas and Dussel (and its implications for the analysis of the Network's practices), since such an approximation cannot be read as a simple continuity or as a mere radicalization of one by the other. Between the two authors there is a productive tension that, if left unexplained, risks being erased in favor of an artificial convergence. This tension lies, precisely, in the difference between responsibility as a subjective structure and praxis as a collective transformative demand, and it is there that the densest philosophical core of the articulation proposed here is found.

In Lévinas (1974/2011), responsibility is originally asymmetrical and pre-reflective. It does not result from an agreement, a deliberation, or a reciprocal recognition, but precedes any form of constituted consciousness. The subject is responsible before being able to choose to be so, and this responsibility is, in principle, infinite: it is not exhausted in any concrete response, because the face of the Other always exceeds what the self can offer. It is, therefore, a structure situated on the plane of singular subjectivity, of the face-to-face relation, prior to any institutional or political mediation. Levinasian responsibility is, in this sense, irreducible to the norm; it is what makes the norm possible, but is not to be confused with it. In the author's words:

Diachrony is the refusal of conjunction, the non-totalizable and, in this precise sense, the Infinite. But responsibility for the Other — for another freedom — the negativity of this anarchy, this refusal opposed to the presence (to the appearing) of the immemorial, impels me and orders me toward the other, toward the first one who comes and brings him close to me, making him near to me. In the same way, it withdraws from nothingness as from being, provoking, despite myself, this responsibility, that is, it substitutes me for the other as hostage. My whole intimacy is invested for-the-other-despite-myself. Despite myself, for-the-other: this is the meaning par excellence and the sense of the self, of the oneself, an accusative that derives from no nominative, the very fact of finding oneself by losing oneself (Lévinas, 1974/2011, pp. 55-56).

Dussel, for his part, does not abandon this ethical priority, but shifts it from an intersubjective plane to a historical-material plane. The Dusselian victim is not merely the Other who interpellates the self in a singular relation; she is the collective subject whose negation reveals the internal contradiction of the system. Whereas, in Lévinas, responsibility remains structurally open and without possible synthesis, in Dussel it is articulated to a demand for transformation that is, necessarily, collective and mediated. The liberation principle does not operate on the plane of individual consciousness, but in the community of victims that, upon recognizing the negation of its life, constitutes itself as a historical subject of praxis. Responsibility, in this horizon, is not only ethical in the Levinasian sense, it is also political, organizational, and institutional. Thus states Dussel:

The foundation that justifies the creative, positive praxis of liberation is the consensus of that "remnant" which, having assumed in the name of the entire people the responsibility for transformation, begins,

secure, confident, with an approximate practical certainty (not an absolute certainty, which is impossible), the creation of the new. Practical consensus assumed with full awareness (the rational “faith” of a Kant, as a postulate applied to the concrete situation) confers upon the community that creates the new order the legitimacy necessary for action. This legitimacy rests upon a modality of the subjectivity of the creative actors who have committed their lives to the time of struggle. They have the authority, sufficient and necessary, to conduct the creative process. Authority does not derive from law, but is prior to law. The future legality of the order is founded on the legitimacy of the communal consensus of the former victims, now authorized actors in the creation of the new order (Dussel, 2016, p. 160).

It is precisely in this difference that the leap produced by the articulation between the two authors resides. Levinasian responsibility provides the ethical foundation of interpellation: it is because the face of the Other affects me prior to any norm that state violence cannot be reduced to a question of legality. But this interpellation, by itself, is not enough to understand the practices of the Network Against Violence. The passage from mourning to struggle, the organization into committees, the articulation among distinct territories, the advocacy within institutional bodies — all of this requires a category that Lévinas does not offer: that of collective praxis oriented toward the transformation of the structures that produce victims. It is Dussel who provides this category, by showing that ethical responsibility, in order not to be reduced to a moral gesture without consequences, must be converted into organized action, capable of confronting not only individual suffering, but the systemic causes that produce it.

The articulation between the two thinkers thus reveals an asymmetrical complementarity: Lévinas anchors normativity in the irreducible experience of the Other; Dussel projects it toward the horizon of collective transformation. Without Lévinas, the liberation principle risks becoming a political program without subjective ethical grounding, an ethics without a face. Without Dussel, Levinasian responsibility risks remaining a formal structure of subjectivity, incapable of responding to the concrete demands of subjects whose life is systematically negated, an ethics without praxis. It is in the tension between these two insufficiencies that the Network’s practices acquire their most precise philosophical status: they are, at the same time, a response to the interpellation of the face and an expression of a collective praxis of liberation. In them, responsibility and transformation do not exclude one another, but mutually require each other.

The connection between i) the Ethics of Alterity (Lévinas), ii) the Ethics of Liberation (Dussel), and iii) the concrete experience of the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence can be visualized through some fundamental analytical correspondences. The table below seeks to synthesize how certain philosophical categories find practical expression in the forms of resistance, welcoming/support, and collective organization developed by the research subjects.

Table 3 – Alterity, liberation, and practices of resistance

Category in Lévinas	Category in Dussel	Statements/practices of the Network
Face of the Other	Victim as critical exteriority	“I never said my son was innocent...”
Sensibility / vulnerability	Material criterion of life	Psychological support and emergency protection for threatened family members
Responsibility for the other	Liberation principle	Collective organization of reporting, legal follow-up, and political education
Proximity	Critical community of victims	Building networks among mothers and family members from different territories
The Other as interruption of the Same	Critique of the system that produces death	Denunciation of police lethality and of the “Wild West bonus”
Saying prior to the Said	Liberating praxis	Transformation of grief into political mobilization
Embodied subjectivity	Production, reproduction, and development of life	Distribution of food baskets and community support during the pandemic
Infinite / ethical transcendence	Feasible utopia of liberation	Formulation of public policies and institutional advocacy by the Network

Source: Table produced by ChatGPT based on the research sources (empirical and bibliographic) selected by the Author.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the practical dimension is what distinguishes the Ethics of Liberation from a merely contemplative ethics, and it is also what gives the Network’s practices their most precise philosophical status. These are not practices that merely illustrate theoretical categories, but forms of action that, by organizing

welcoming/support, denunciation, memory, and political advocacy, concretely realize the articulation between responsibility and liberation. In them, the face of the Other does not remain as an interpellation without response, nor does the demand for transformation dissolve into an abstract program. The normativity that emerges from this is affirmed not despite the absence of legal formalization, but precisely from it. This is because it is in the exteriority of the system, where life is negated, that the ethical force capable of questioning the very foundations of law and pointing toward more just forms of organizing social life is produced.

7 Concluding remarks

The path developed throughout this article makes it possible to affirm, first of all, the importance of empirical research as a condition of possibility for a more rigorous understanding of the relations among social injustice, law, and normativity. Far from constituting mere illustrative support for theory, the empirical material reveals itself as an instance that produces intelligibility, insofar as it renders visible concrete experiences of violence, resistance, and social organization that escape the traditional categories of legal thought. Listening to the voices of subjects of social injustice, in this case the mothers and family members organized within the Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence, not only evidenced the occurrence of lethal state practices, but brought forth the voice of those directly affected by such violence. This is not the Said of the system, but the Saying of the victims themselves. With this, it was also possible to identify forms of collective action that challenge the conventional understanding of normativity as a monopoly of law.

The central hypothesis of the article, according to which the practices of resistance of subjects of social injustice not only respond to oppression, but constitute concrete forms of production of normativity endowed with their own ethical validity, found, in light of the analysis carried out, consistent confirmation. The field interviews demonstrated that such practices organize behaviors, establish criteria of justice, and guide collective decisions, configuring a normative space that does not depend on legal formalization to affirm itself. The articulation with Dussel's liberation principle (2000) made it possible to understand that this normativity is not only socially relevant, but ethically grounded, insofar as it is oriented by the affirmation of life in contexts of its negation.

In this sense, the condition of victim, far from implying passivity or mere vulnerability, reveals itself as a locus of ethical enunciation and of the production of transformative praxis. The experience of injustice, by exposing the insufficiency of prevailing normative structures, can be converted into a power for action, giving rise to practices that articulate memory, denunciation, care, and political mobilization. The struggle of subjects of social injustice is therefore not limited to the demand for previously established rights, but constitutes a process of self-emancipation, in which these subjects produce forms of organization and meaning that affirm their dignity and reconfigure the conditions of their social existence. This is a liberation that is not granted, but built in practice, from the very experience of negation.

The analysis also revealed an ambiguous character of law. On the one hand, law presents itself as a structure capable of reproducing inequalities and, in certain contexts, of mediating state violence itself, whether through its selectivity or through the institutionalization of mechanisms that increase lethality. On the other hand, it remains a space of dispute, capable of being strategically mobilized by subjects of social injustice in the pursuit of recognition and accountability. This ambivalence precludes both a naïve reading of law as a neutral instrument of protection and its simplistic rejection. Law is, at the same time, limit and possibility, a field of exclusion and an arena of struggle.

It is precisely at this point that the articulation between Lévinas's ethical phenomenology (1961/2008) and Dussel's Ethics of Liberation (2000) proves decisive. The priority of ethics in relation to law, whether in the form of originary responsibility before the Other, or in the centrality of concrete life as a material criterion of validity, makes it possible to shift the axis of analysis beyond formal legality. From this perspective, it is possible to recognize that social practices that affirm life in contexts of its negation possess a validity that is not subordinated to hegemonic legal-institutional mediations. Law, in this sense, is not the starting point of normativity, but one of its possible mediations, always subject to critique in light of more fundamental ethical criteria.

The implications of this shift are relevant for the legal field. Instead of understanding law as a closed system of normative production, it is necessary to recognize it as part of a broader field, in which different forms of normativity coexist and compete for legitimacy. The practices of subjects of social injustice, by producing criteria of justice rooted in concrete experience, challenge law to open itself to exteriority and to rethink its own foundations. Such a movement does not imply the negation of law, but its reorientation, so that the agents who operate in the legal

field may respond, more adequately, to the demands posed by the effective life of historically negated subjects. By recognizing the ethical and political power of victims' practices of liberation, the possibility opens up of constructing a theory of law more sensitive to exteriority, capable of critically articulating empirical material and normativity, life and justice.

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