

ISSUE TWENTY : WINTER 2022  
OPEN RIVERS :  
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

# RIVERS AND MEANING

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An interdisciplinary online journal rethinking water, place & community  
from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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The cover image is of low clouds in Glen Forsa on the Isle of Mull, Scotland, UK. Image by Jill Diamond on Unsplash.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

# PHOTO ESSAY OF ILHABELA RIVERS

By Francisco Pereira Da Silva, Laelcio Pereira Da Silva, and Helena Beutel

## *Note from the Guest Editor*

**F**rancisco and Laelcio Pereira Da Silva are two brothers living on the island of Ilhabela in São Paulo state, just across the channel from São Sebastião, Brazil. Fran and Lau, as they are

known, and Lau's wife, Helena Beutel, have been assisting my research since 2018 on the island's culture, history, and ecology.<sup>[1]</sup> The brothers identify as Caiçara, a group of Indigenous



*Castelhanos from above. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*

peoples who are ethnically a mix of native Tupis, descendants of escaped African slaves from colonial days, and descendants of some of the colonial European settlers, largely Portuguese, Germans, and the Dutch. As with most of the islanders, Fran and Lau are Portuguese speaking, with their island's distinctive accent. Helena is a translator from French and English, and is trained as a chef.

The Caiçaras are proudly identified as artisanal fishermen. They and their families live on the east coasts and islands of Brazil in tropical rainforest conditions, in an island range extending from above Rio de Janeiro to the edge of Rio Grande do Sul state, and most of them

live a traditional lifestyle. Fishing has been the mainstay of their lives for the last three hundred years, but with great changes, especially over the last five years.

Fran and Lau are no exception to the Caiçara way of life; there is scarcely a day that they are not out on the water, whether in the rivers weaving through the mangroves, or out on the sea, fishing and—in Fran's case—guiding eco-tourists in scuba diving, fishing, and exploring the protected state park that occupies the majority of the mountainous land on the island. The Caiçara families generally prefer to live quiet lives in the less populated side of the island. Fish are the daily diet, augmented with vegetables from the



*Boneta Village from above. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*

*gardens and fruit from the trees. The fish are not only their main food, but also their means to earn an income, as the men take their daily catch around to the populated side of the island where they can sell at the fish markets. And now, tourism plays an additional role in the economy of these people.*

*Living lives so closely attuned to the island's ecosystem, with seasonal changes and close*

*observation of every detail of the natural environment, the Caiçara have the deep traditional knowledge upon which stewardship depends. As keen observers, they share in this photo essay some of the rivers, waterways, riverbanks, and wildlife of their island home.*

*—Mary Modeen, Guest Editor*



*The river meets the sea. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Sun at the river's mouth. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*River and sea coming together. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Queroquero by the river. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Egret close-up. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Egret in the mangroves. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Urubos above the river. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Urubos closeup. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Blue crabs by the river's edge. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira da Silva.*



*Roseate spoonbill and offspring. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Underwater view. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Watching you. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*The river from a high viewpoint. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



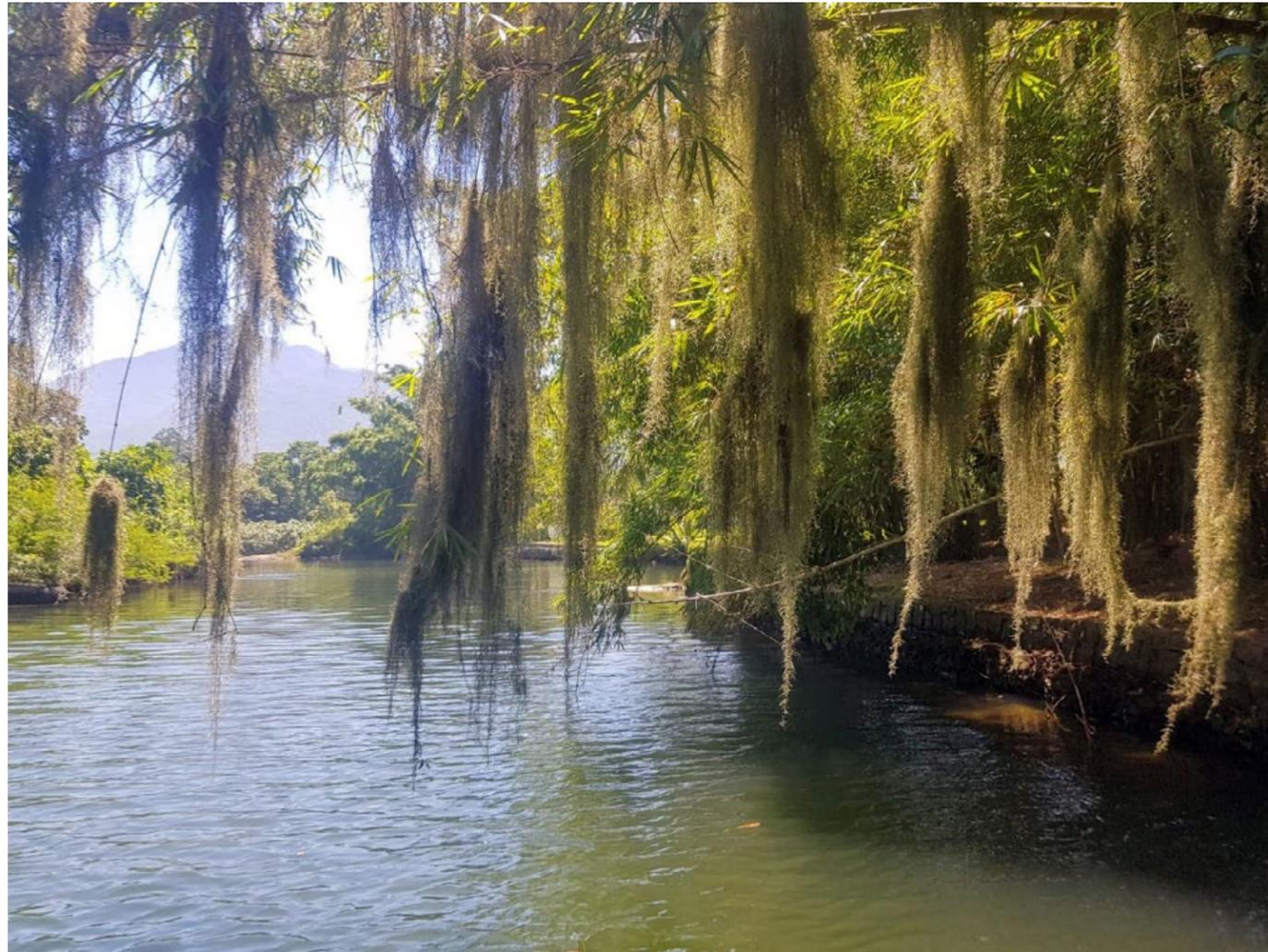
*Ilhabela River in town. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Mangroves from the river. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Mirror-like reflections on the river. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Moss trailing on the river. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*The river as a waterway. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*The river from a high viewpoint. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Living by the river. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*High mountain dam. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Rubbish in the mangroves. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*The sorrows of pollution. Image courtesy of Fran and Lau Pereira Da Silva.*



*Fran and Lau Pereria da Silva. Image courtesy of Mary Modeen.*

## Footnote

[1] Mary Modeen, “Traditional Knowledge of the Sea in a Time of Change: the Caiçara of Ilhabela, Brazil,” *The Journal of Cultural Geography*, 38, no. 1 (Nov. 14, 2020): 50–80.

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## About the Authors

Francisco “Fran” Pereira Da Silva, born in 1985, is a Caiçara fisherman, scuba-diving instructor, and eco-guide living on Ilhabela Island, São Paulo, Brazil. He is also a naturally gifted photographer and translates his passion for his beloved island and waters in compelling photographic imagery. He also captures the immense biodiversity of these waters in the island archipelago in underwater views. Both Fran and his brother Lau have been indispensable research assistants, providing expert knowledge and access to remote communities.

Laelcio “Lau” Pereira Da Silva, born in 1987 and brother to Fran, is also a Caiçara fisherman. Like the other island fishermen, he has extensive specialist knowledge of the marine environment and artisanal fishing practices. He is a dedicated conservationist in all aspects and has deep knowledge of the mountainous tropical rainforest on this Atlantic island. He feels deeply the ravages of climate change and pollution, and to the best of his ability, quietly protects the land, the marine environment, and his family to the best of his abilities. He, too, is an inspired photographer.

Helena Beutel, born in 1984, is partner to Lau, and mother to their young daughter. Helena was originally from São Paulo, and has four languages: Spanish, French, English, and her native Portuguese. She studied culinary arts and has travelled widely, working in Uruguay, Buenos Aires, and France, specializing in vegetarian cuisine. She found in Ilhabela a paradise to create, and it includes a family within the Praia de Castelhanos community of Caiçara on the eastern side of the island. Helena has been a key translator and research assistant for much of the work with Mary Modeen since 2018.

Professor Mary Modeen, as an artist/academic, lectures in fine art and more broadly across the humanities in relation to creative practices. Her research has several threads: perception as a cognitive and interpretive process, and especially place-based research, which connects many of these concerns with attention to cultural values, history, and embodied experience. As such, this research is usually interdisciplinary. Part of this work appears as creative art, and part as writing and presentations. Modeen addresses aspects of seeing that go beyond the visible, questioning what we know as sentient humans, and valuing the cultural and individual differences inherent in these perceptions.

Her most recent publications include a co-authored book with Iain Biggs, *Creative Engagements with Ecologies of Place: Geopoetics, Deep Mapping and Slow Residencies* (Routledge, 2021), and “Traditional Knowledge of the Sea in a Time of Change: Stories of the Caiçaras,” in the *Journal of*

Cultural Geography (November 2020). Her edited book and essay just published is titled *Decolonising Place-Based Arts Research* (Dundee, 2021). She is chair of Interdisciplinary Art Practice and associate dean international for Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design at the University of Dundee, in Scotland and visiting fellow with the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota.