

Anthropology and the State in Brazil: questions concerning a complex relationship

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Abstract

In this article we argue that, in order to understand the “attack” made on anthropology in Brazil, undertaken in the public sphere since the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we need to look at how anthropological knowledge has become disciplined and institutionalized in the medium to long term. We refer, in particular, to the relationship between what has been constituted as a “field of anthropology” and issues related to the public sphere. It is also necessary to consider the configuration with other institutionalized knowledge throughout the period spanning from the end of the nineteenth century to the present, with discontinuities but also with some important continuities. We look to show that the anthropology initially undertaken in Brazil was basically committed to furthering the interests of the agrarian-based political elites, a situation that continued from the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century and into the first decades of the twenty-first, not only at the level of nation building, but also in the formation of the State. However, since the 1950s, and especially following creation of the new postgraduate courses in the late 1960s and early 1970s, anthropologists developed knowledge that led them to make an ethical and moral commitment to the communities with which they worked, combined with a critique of the military regime’s developmentalism and dictatorial authoritarianism. During a third moment ranging from the constituent process to the present, a portion of Brazilian anthropologists began to work directly in the recognition of rights constitutionally assigned to differentiated collectivities, generating a growing and progressive zone of friction with the hegemonic sectors at the economic-political level.

Keywords: Anthropology and the public sphere; history of anthropology in Brazil; state formation processes in Brazil; culturally differentiated rights.

Antropologia e Estado no Brasil: questões em torno de uma relação complexa

Resumo

Neste artigo, argumentamos que para compreender o “ataque” dirigido à antropologia realizado na esfera pública no Brasil, desde o início da segunda década do século XXI, é necessário olhar para o modo como o conhecimento antropológico se disciplinarizou e se institucionalizou no médio e longo prazo. Referimo-nos, em particular, à relação entre o que se constituiu como um “campo da antropologia” e questões relacionadas com a esfera pública. É preciso considerar, também, a configuração com outros saberes institucionalizados ao longo do período que vai do final do século XIX até a atualidade, com descontinuidades, mas também com algumas continuidades importantes. Procuramos mostrar que a antropologia inicialmente empreendida no Brasil estava basicamente comprometida com a promoção dos interesses das elites políticas de base agrária, situação que se prolongou da virada do século XIX para o século XX e nas primeiras décadas do século XX, não apenas no nível da construção da nação, mas também na formação do Estado. No entanto, desde a década de 1950, e especialmente após a criação dos novos cursos de pós-graduação no final da década de 1960 e início da década de 1970, os antropólogos desenvolveram conhecimentos que os levaram a assumir um compromisso ético e moral com as comunidades com as quais trabalhavam, combinado com uma crítica ao desenvolvimentismo do regime autoritário civil-militar. Num terceiro momento, que vai desde o processo constituinte até a atualidade, uma parcela dos antropólogos brasileiros passou a atuar diretamente no reconhecimento de direitos constitucionalmente atribuídos a coletividades diferenciadas, gerando uma crescente e progressiva zona de atrito com os setores hegemônicos no âmbito econômico-político.

Palavras-chave: Antropologia e esfera pública; história da antropologia no Brasil; processos de formação de Estados no Brasil; direitos culturalmente diferenciados.

Anthropology and the State in Brazil: questions concerning a complex relationship¹

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In 2015-2016, a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (*Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito: CPI*)² was created with the purpose of identifying irregularities in the administrative procedures undertaken by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) for the official recognition of indigenous lands, quilombola communities and land reform settlements. Such recognition is based on rights enshrined in Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution.

In a political context in which the impeachment of President Dilma Vana Rousseff was orchestrated and consummated – made definitive in a second vote in the federal senate on August 31, 2016 – the CPI was set up by representatives of the Farming Parliamentary Front (*Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária: FPA*),³ including the current Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias.⁴ The focus of the CPI's investigation was, in the counterfactual way in which everything has been pursued in Brazilian public life since 2015, to push back against the important – but far from decisive – involvement of anthropologists as specialists in the administrative identification of the lands of collectivities with forms of land appropriation ethnically distinct from individual private ownership. According to the arguments of opponents, official anthropological reports have been produced in a fraudulent way, 'inventing' indigenous and quilombola populations where none exist.⁵ This accusation has been formulated by various actors since the 1990s at least.

1 Research funded by the Foundation for Research Support of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ) Scientist of Our State (CNE) (Proc. E-26/202.652/2019) and PDR-10 (Proc. E-26/202.366/2018) programs and by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) 1A Productivity Fellowship (proc. 302978/2019-4).

2 "Using the investigative powers of a legal authority, the CPI inquires into a specific fact for a specified period of time. The CPI can be instigated by either the Senate or the Chamber of Deputies, at the request of one third of the respective parliamentarians, or by the National Congress as a whole, at the request of one third of senators and one third of deputies. The CPI can summon individuals to testify, hear statements, request documents and determine arrangements, among other measures. On completion of its work, the commission sends a report and its conclusions to the Chair for submission to the Plenary Session. The report may conclude with the presentation of a law bill and, where appropriate, its findings may be sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office in order to initiate civil and criminal prosecution of offenders." Source: Agência Senado. Available at <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/glossario-legislativo/comissao-parlamentar-de-inquerito-cpi>. Accessed on 27/12/2019.

3 In the Brazilian political system, a parliamentary front is a cross-party coalition of members of the legislature committed to pursuing legislative action on a topic of shared interest. Although not included under any statutory provisions, these powerful interest groups can use the space of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate to act, making their involvement inevitable in the real and main political articulations. Some dominate specific commissions, which do possess statutory powers and resources.

4 Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias is an agronomist and agro-entrepreneur, who exercised various parliamentary mandates in her home state, Mato Grosso do Sul (in the Pantanal region on the border with Paraguay, Argentina and Bolivia), where her family has a history of abuses perpetrated against indigenous peoples and their lands. She acted as the principal leader in the approval of law bills favourable to agribusiness and clearly opposed to defence of the environment and of traditional populations, especially the so-called pro-pesticide law (Law n. 6299/2002), approved in 2018, which liberated the use of numerous pesticides previously banned as highly toxic substances. For an official biographical resumé, see <https://www.camara.leg.br/deputados/178901/biografia>. For her personal website, visit <http://terezacristinams.com.br/biografia/>. On her activities as a parliamentarian, see https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/09/26/politica/1537970891_279915.html. On the historical activities of the families from which Tereza Cristina descends in the seizure of indigenous lands, see <https://amazonia.org.br/2019/03/avo-da-ministra-da-agricultura-entregou-terras-para-grandes-empresas-no-mt-e-encolheu-parque-do-xingu/>. Accessed on 27/12/2019. Finally, in relation to the specific case of the Alves Corrêa family and the Terena indigenous people, see Eloy-Amado 2019.

5 A quilombo is a type of Brazilian rural settlement founded by people of African origin (Maroon communities are an example) either before or after the end of slavery in Brazil. The identification of indigenous or quilombola lands is an administrative procedure through which, based on ethnographic research regulated not only by the ethical and scientific principles of anthropology but also by administrative regulations based on constitutional principles, anthropologists and other professionals (biologists, agronomists, cartographers, forest engineers, and so other experts) study and present boundary proposals for indigenous and quilombola lands in the form of a report. On this subject, see Souza Lima and Barreto Filho, 2005; Pacheco de Oliveira, 2006. Like other specialist report procedures involving the scientifically grounded work of anthropologists, identification has been the topic of numerous reflections and productions by anthropologists, channelled by the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) in seminars, books, ethical positions, and videos. On the recognition of indigenous lands, see the dossier "Fighting for Indigenous Lands in Modern Brazil. The reframing of cultures and identities" in *Vibrant*, 15(2). Available at https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_issuetoc&pid=i809-434120180002&lng=en&nrm=iso. The entire issue can be read at <http://vibrant.org.br/downloads/v15n2/Vibrant15-2.pdf>. Accessed on 27/12/2019.

More significant, though, is the fact that the attack was aimed at anthropology as scientific knowledge, especially the practice of ethnography. Its actions were treated as ‘non-scientific,’ even though they had been practiced by scholars with postgraduate degrees in anthropology from highly prestigious institutions in Brazil. In this scuffle, frequent attacks were made on the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA), accused of propagating ‘ideological’ positions and colluding with international institutions (a reference to projects financed by the Ford Foundation, a fact of open public knowledge). These organizations allegedly wished to promote the erosion of Brazilian sovereignty over the national territory, especially in Amazonia. ABA and its president at the time (2015-2016) had their financial confidentiality broken as a result.⁶ This measure was suspended by a court injunction issued by the Federal Supreme Court, though the repercussions of the CPI remain unknown, which, still uncompleted within its statutory time limit (which ended in July 2016), was reinstated a second time, while the process of Rousseff’s impeachment was still unfolding, and eventually terminated in May 2017.

For the purposes of the present argument, it is crucial to stress that the CPI was established through administrative procedures that were highly irregular from the viewpoint of the regulations of the Chamber of Deputies. It was negotiated at the same time as the political articulations surrounding Rousseff’s impeachment by the federal deputy Eduardo Cunha, president of the chamber at that moment, an Evangelical from the same party as Brazil’s vice-president at the time, Michel Temer, the main articulator of Dilma Rousseff’s removal from office, today himself in prison for corruption. Set up to intimidate and criminalize those anthropologists working in these land recognition processes, whether they were employed by FUNAI or INCRA, connected in some way to academia, or linked to NGOs active among indigenous or quilombola peoples. Its final report solicited the criminal indictment of 67 people, including lawyers, indigenous leaders, employees of FUNAI and INCRA, individuals linked to NGOs, federal prosecutors, the former Minister of Justice José Eduardo Cardozo, and 21 anthropologists. This led to the realization of an old dream of the agribusiness sector and the big rural landowners: the complete paralysation of all indigenous and quilombola land recognition processes. This posture would later be transformed into an electoral promise by Jair Messias Bolsonaro in his 2018 campaign. As proof of these connections, members of the FPA heading the CPI are all now in important posts in the current government, simultaneously underlining its conservative and ultraliberal character.

It is not our intention to dissect the CPI here. We set out from this critical event (Das, 1995) since it affects us anthropologists directly and forces us to review the self-image we have constructed about who we are and how we act as anthropologists in Brazil. We also have to take into account the influence of the work of other social scientists in Brazil, as well as other anthropologies produced in diverse national contexts. In any event, widely circulated texts (Ramos, 1990; 2003; Peirano, 1999; Ribeiro, 2014) have projected our professional activity as (always) engaged and our production as (always) expressively heard and respected in the public sphere in Brazil. Given this image, the concerted attack on anthropology in Brazil over recent years has puzzled many people.

While political engagement and activity are hallmarks of a large portion of Brazilian anthropology, and while a certain ‘anthropological subjectivity’ leads us to position ourselves ethically and politically in response to the attacks on the lives of the collectivities with whom we work, this does not mean that all, nor the most internationally well-known, strands of our production are so politically engaged: taking a stance as a citizen does not signify analysing the power mechanisms impinging on such populations, notably those involving state action. On the other hand, what many see (only) as ethical engagement and positioning is, in fact, the product of an ethnographic endeavour and a theoretical production that seldom reach beyond our borders due to the language barrier and the fact we base our work on studies conducted in Brazil. As Oliveira (2008) has

⁶ Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima was president of ABA over this two-year period and coordinated the structuring of the entire wide-ranging process of defence of ABA and all those anthropologists accused in the CPI’s final report, measures continued under the presidency of Lia Zanotta Machado (2017-2018).

emphasized, this sometimes leads to a clear asymmetry in how our academic output is received: “specialists on Brazil” absorb our production as a source of ethnographic data, sometimes appropriating the theoretical tools that we ourselves elaborate and that inform our work without due mention. Dossiers like the present are, therefore, for these and many other reasons, especially significant because they enable a broad-spectrum approach to Brazilian Anthropology.

But how then did we pass from the status of specialists – asked to provide our input to a new national roadmap (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2008), as set out in the 1988 Constitution, advocates for sociocultural diversity – to fraudulent and self-interested zealots, compromised by ‘international capital’ and, simultaneously, ideologues of an ‘environmentalist left’ whose contours remain obscure even to ourselves? For any foreign reader – and, it is important to add, for many Brazilians too – the conjunction of these terms would have been seen as extraordinary until fairly recently. But have we actually, all of us, become fraudulent in this era of fake news and the growing supremacy of right-wing groups articulated with the US alt-right? What is specific about the Brazilian setting and the present scenario of attacks on the practices (both academic and applied) of anthropology within the more global resurgence of totalitarianism?

To formulate responses to these questions, we argue that it is essential to examine how anthropological knowledge became disciplinarized and institutionalized over the medium to long term, or else risk attributing the effects of transformations to various patterns configuring anthropology in Brazil merely to a conjuncture. We refer specifically to the relationship between what evolved into the ‘field of anthropology’ and issues concerning the public sphere. We also need to consider the configuration with other institutionalized forms of knowledge over the period spanning from the end of the nineteenth century to the present-day, with numerous discontinuities but also important continuities.

Before advancing further, it should be emphasized that the literature on the history of anthropology produced in Brazil is relatively scarce and seldom taught in the country. Little or no reflection has been developed on the social conditions of anthropological production or how the profession of anthropology is exercised in reality, either on the basis of documental archives or ethnographic research. In other words, much as the anthropology practiced in the country is postulated to be different, the descriptions adhere to the canons of the discipline’s mainstream historical narrative in which ‘practice’ is always treated as a spurious terrain.

Our argument here is simple but, we believe, no less significant for being so. After all, as Darcy Ribeiro (1986) reminded us, we write about the obvious in order to discover other kinds of obviousness, and that is our greatest challenge. The argument is as follows: we propose to interpret the construction of hegemonic power in twentieth-century Brazil as a successful attempt by our political-economic elites – whose profile has changed over time, but maintaining its essential features of exclusion and arbitrariness – to control access to land and the use of labour, an endeavour in which anthropology in its versions of that period was a fundamental ally of those wielding power. This was achieved through processes based around the use of violence, frequently delegated to sectors outside the official military forces, involving a biased judicial system and police practices with a strongly inquisitorial and arbitrary inclination, as shown in the works of Roberto Kant de Lima (1989; 1995) and an extensive group of researchers. In collusion with these processes, the anthropology pursued from the start of the twentieth century until at least the 1950s – which many discount as part of our ‘tradition’ – was already committed to providing the raciological grounds that would ‘scientifically’ inform diverse administrative practices. During this period, technologies of power were developed that ensured the continuing tense relationship between egalitarian and hierarchical values, as underlined by Roberto Da Matta (1979), allowing the construction of an image of a nation state that was becoming modernized yet simultaneously entrenched a pattern of profound social inequality. In this self-image, the characteristics of a State emergent from Portuguese colonization, associated with the slavery regime and marked by the idea of the monarchy as a

guarantor of social order, are all visible, whether objectivized in organizations or subjectivized in behavioural patterns and feelings.

It should be recognized, then, that a significant proportion of the anthropology produced in Brazil in the 1960s and afterwards contributed substantially to the study of phenomena of change at large scales of time and space. Having emerged in response to the social effects of actions implemented by a State run by a dictatorship, and subsequently developed in studies on the gradual return to democratic life, an important strand of Brazilian anthropology has contributed to the revision of units of analysis, methodological approaches, ethical debates and investigative policies, many of which have been marked by the presence of the imaginary of the Nation State as a political form (Souza Lima, 2004; Teixeira & Souza Lima, 2010).

Later in this text, we seek to show that over the course of the twentieth century, over which short periods of democracy were punctuated by dictatorships, the anthropology produced in Brazil responded to different social demands and presented distinct scientific bases for the development of national narratives. Although anthropological production has not always questioned the bases of this highly unequal domination, the production generated via the modern form of postgraduate studies, established under the civil-military dictatorship installed by the coup d'état of March 31, 1964, did not emerge entirely uprooted from the discipline's trajectory over the first half of the century. In any event, combined with the fight of social movements and large sectors of the Brazilian population in the shared belief in the need to construct a democratic State based on the rule of law, anthropology contributed – albeit in a somewhat timid way – to questioning the automatic reproduction of the dominant elites.

The struggles that developed from the 1970s on were punctuated by the search to build a democracy founded on popular participation, recognition of the right to ethnic, racial, sexual and age diversity, labour rights, and the fight for greater equity of opportunities and equal rights. In these processes, anthropologists contributed through their research and technical work, as well as by forming new citizens imbued with different values. These struggles were coterminous with the installation of new social conditions for postgraduate training that produced professionals in anthropology. Whether through research or social intervention, they contributed especially by supporting collective demands based on forms of land appropriation distinct from individual private ownership.

Just as important as the work relating to the lifeways of indigenous or quilombola populations – especially their fight for the right to the lands they traditionally occupied, even more eloquent today – were the activities of feminist anthropologists, alongside other social scientists, in the analysis of gender violence and forms of patriarchy. To this we can add the support that – not without controversy – anthropologists have given to affirmative action, breaking the historical omission of anthropological production, save for rare exceptions, concerning racial issues in Brazil from the 1950s on. We shall return to this moment and its repercussions later. But first, without attempting to exhaust the analytic possibilities, we need to describe the anthropology produced in Brazil over the course of the twentieth century and its ideological and epistemological commitments.

From *race* to *culture*: images of the *Brazilian people*

As stated earlier, it is a well-known fact that anthropology, like the other social sciences, emerged in Brazil strongly marked by its commitment to the process of national construction (in addition to Peirano, 1981, see Schwarcz, 1993). This point applies whether anthropology supported or opposed (according to the precise moment of its trajectory) the racist questioning of the viability of a 'Brazilian people' emerging from the miscegenation of 'races' – the Indian, the Black and the European White – stimulated by the Portuguese crown

and later by imperial and republican governments after independence from Portugal in 1822. This perspective is closely related to government policies designed to control or manage these populations (Skidmore, 1974; Maio and Santos, 1996; Telles, 2006).

Elaborating a disciplinary trajectory of anthropology through an emphasis on both the dimension of ‘social thought’ and its contribution to national construction has worked to obscure the forms through which medicine-anthropology (Santos, 2008) – or *physical anthropology* to use the terminology of its time – was central to this trajectory, leaving legacies in institutions essential to our understanding of the present, especially the police forces. The discussion on the positive or deleterious character of miscegenation – and the limits to the viability of a Brazilian people – were not only part of an erudite debate, they were also materialized in State administrative practices and policies. They became part of an extensive process of ‘conservative modernization,’ to use the phrase of Barrington Moore Jr (1967), a form of dampening the trend towards greater access to citizenship from the beginning of the twentieth century. In Brazil this process was always mediated by people’s differential access to agencies and agents of the government public administration (what the political scientist and historian José Murilo de Carvalho (1987) called *estadania*, ‘statizenship,’ state-filtered citizenship, for the first period of the twentieth century). At the same time, a mask (Abrams, 1988) was fabricated of a powerful State capable of taming, conquering, pacifying, protecting and civilizing, integrating territories and social networks with a strong centre of power, conjuring the belief in the supposed effectiveness of education in stimulating the advance of the diverse populations under its aegis.

In effect, this comprised – and we could approach the phenomenon in more systematic and deeper fashion this way – a magical act of enormous potency in response to the reality of the precarious means available to the state centre of power. This sedimented the real control over space and the exercise of violence by social networks of large rural landowners, territorially dispersed and possessing substantial autonomy – consolidated despite the fragility, even today, of the administrative structure and resources possessed then (and now) by the public administration (federal, state or municipal) in the promotion of what was never more than a pale imitation of a Welfare State at most.

At that time, those practicing anthropology were essentially trained physicians – since the only higher education courses available in Brazil then were in medicine, engineering and law – who worked primarily in the study of three demographic sectors that had emerged as politically dangerous to maintenance of the privileges of the rural-based neo-Brazilian elite: immigrants, simultaneously a solution and a problem; the black population recently liberated from slavery, whether settled on lands free of private ownership, or already living in the urban centres or in the process of migrating there from rural properties; and indigenous peoples, many of whom responded with force to the invasion of their lands by economic agents on the expanding frontiers in diverse regions of Brazil’s territory.

Questions like the limits of civil responsibility attributable to the black population given their “mental state” (Nina Rodrigues, 2011 [1894]), the possibility of exploiting indigenous peoples as a labour force in the development of farming in Brazil, or the potential adaptation and merging of immigrants from different ethnic-racial origins, were the topic of public debates and also, in accordance with the science of the time, informed government agencies and policies.

Examples of this are the raciological and racist content of police classifications, or the policy of civil identification based on dactyloscopy (Carrara, 1984; Corrêa, 2013), directly associated with physical anthropology and clearly connected to the control of so-called *vadiagem* (Cunha, 2002), or the construction of republican indigenist action with the creation of the Indian Protection Service (*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios: SPI*), which was initially assigned the task of the ‘Localization of National Workers’ (Souza Lima 1991; Souza Lima 2018 [1995]), transferred in 1918 to the National Settlement Service (which in 1931 became the National Settlement Department), a State agency responsible for regulating the entry and allocation of foreign immigrants,

as well as the colonization of ‘national workers,’ a category that encompassed the heterogenic reality of the people freed from slavery in the rural environment (Ramos, 2006).

Founded by one of the emblematic figures of republican Brazil, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon (O’Reilly, 1969), with the backing of researchers from the Museu Nacional (Souza Lima, 1989), the SPI presented a ‘practical solution’ for the country in which control of the workforce and the national territory were explicit objectives: inspired by orthodox positivism, an ideology self-designated scientific that was fundamental to constituting republican life in Brazil (Carvalho, 2012) and guaranteeing a tutelary State, the intention was to use a “civilizing pedagogy” (Souza Lima, 1991, 2018 [1995]) to convert those indigenous peoples in a state of war with the invading waves of Brazilians into rural workers, a cheap workforce for the rural elites. Consequently, it was argued, they would need no more than small portions of land. This policy of demarcating diminutively-sized indigenous areas generated problems and tensions between indigenous and white populations in various regions of Brazil with repercussions that are still felt today, including in the context of the CPI (Eloy-Amado, 2019).

Since the nineteenth century when Brazil was still under imperial rule, immigration policies had been premised on the selection of ‘desirable’ immigrants, based on their supposed potential contribution to strengthening the ‘white’ component of the Brazilian population and thus replace the ‘stain’ left by black and indigenous ‘blood.’ Ideas included the ‘fusibility’ of immigrants of different ethnic origins with characteristics attributed to components like ‘Latinness,’ ‘Arianism’ and so on in the case of whites, and those surrounding the tense debate over allowing the entry of ‘Oriental’ or black immigrants (Ramos, 1996). The extensive and in-depth work of Giralda Seyferth (1990; 1991; 1995; 1996; 2002; 2007; 2008; 2014a; 2014b; 2016 among others) has shown us how, from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth, this was a fundamental public and theoretical discussion, with the Museu Nacional located at the epicentre of these debates. Race, ethnicity, immigration and colonization were indissociable, composing ideas and practices both for managing populations and for limiting access to the Brazilian territory and land ownership.

Despite the important participation of researchers from other institutions – like the Bahia Faculty of Medicine and the Recife Faculty of Law – in the production of the arguments of the political elites of a country where republican universalism never went beyond a mirage, it was at the Museu Nacional that these discussions most clearly developed, whether in the form of the physical anthropology of João Baptista de Lacerda (director of the institution from 1895 to 1915), who asserted the need for and inexorability of the whitening of the Brazilian population (Seyferth, 1985), or the approach that would go on to highlight the positivity of racial mixture in connection with the environment, under the influence of German anthropogeography and the exploration of Brazil’s interior.

Prominent in this latter direction was the towering figure of Edgard Roquette-Pinto, a physician by training, who directed the Museu Nacional in the period 1926-1935. A complex figure who worked in many areas of Brazilian public life, Roquette-Pinto was a pioneer in educational cinema and radio broadcasting, as well as in the production of systematic works of scientific divulgation, among many other things. In an anthropology based on expeditions and the collection and study of material culture, enabled by the support of the SPI, in a country like Brazil forever lacking resources for science and technology, Roquette-Pinto, an intellectual from coastal Brazil (like nearly all at the time), was able to achieve what until then only foreign researchers, especially German, had managed: an extensive period of investigation in the country’s interior. The work, although not breaking entirely from the idea of a differentiation between races, resulted in publications – among which *Rondonia: Anthropologia, Ethnografia* (Roquette-Pinto 2005 (1917)) became the most prominent – along with scientific collections and exhibitions at the Museu Nacional, which over time shifted from being classified as *sertanejas* to *regionais* (Dias, 2020).

As Ricardo Ventura Santos (2012) reminds us, Roquette-Pinto performed an important role in the racial debate in Brazil. Although rooted in racial differentiation, the anthropologist's approach posited a kind of defence of the value of Brazilians of all the 'racial types' without, therefore, falling into line with the theories of degeneration then in vogue. This distinct approach could be interpreted to derive from meetings with Franz Boas in the 1920s (Stepan 1991:160), but Roquette-Pinto's positions on this topic in fact preceded them historically. Whatever the case, though, the researcher's trajectory was significant both for the anthropological research carried out at the Museu Nacional and for the broader setting of discussions on race in Brazil. It is in this sense that at the "beginning in the 1920s there was a decreasing emphasis on indigenous studies by anthropology at the National Museum and an emerging interest in the 'types' that made up the Brazilian people" (Santos, 2012, p. S24). This trend would be reversed in the 1940s, however, again with the support of the SPI, when the exploration of the territory of the Xingu river led to a substantial interest in the indigenous peoples of the region. Furthermore, the Museu Nacional also participated on diverse State councils, including the National Council for the Protection of Indians (Freire, 1990), and the Council for Supervising Artistic and Scientific Expeditions in Brazil, a state agency responsible for controlling the scientific expeditions venturing into Brazil's inland regions (Grupioni, 1998).

While the production surrounding a particular brand of physical anthropology had a kind of epicentre at the Museu Nacional, it was also mobilized in other areas of reflection. The argument on miscegenation proposed by Gilberto Freyre in *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933) alludes to Roquette-Pinto (Santos, 2008, p. S18). To illustrate this correlation, we can highlight the way in which the author grounds his book on a distinction between *race* and *culture*:

It was the study of anthropology under the supervision of Professor Boas that first revealed to me the Negro and the Mulato in all their true worth – separating the effects of the environment or cultural experience from the racial traits. I learnt to consider the difference between *race* and *culture* to be fundamental; to distinguish between the effects of purely genetic relations and those of social influences, cultural heritage and the environment. This criterion of a fundamental differentiation between race and culture provides the groundwork for this entire essay. (Freyre, 2003 [1933], p. 32)

The extent to which this distinction is viable⁷ is questionable, but the fact is that cultural description – equivalent here to an essentializing narrative of the construction of a people – led to the emergence of a type of analysis in which conflict resolution and pacification come to the fore. In this sense, the structural and symbolic components of the processes underlying the production of inequality are subsumed in a culturally fatalistic perspective. The potency of a miscegenated culture is interpreted as an indication of this analytically instigated process of pacification, but also enormously as a justification for government actions.

In this sense, while the symbolic production of the country was disputed – a process that influenced the formation of the Brazilian State – certain aspects can be comprehended as organizing factors. One useful interpretation of this presence of the cultural – or social or even economic – formation of Brazil through miscegenation is to think of it as a kind of *dominant symbol* (Turner, 1967: 27-29) – that is, as a trigger for social action.⁸

⁷ Discussions on the effective adoption of an idea of culture in detriment to the concept of race can be found in Lima (1989), Araújo (1993) and Souza (2000). The reflection of George Stocking Jr (1966) on the way in which the notion of culture is modified in Franz Boas's work would also help deepen this debate.

⁸ It is worth recalling that Turner formulated this expression while reflecting on the symbols relating to numerous ritual elaborations, whose multiple presence is ensured by their polysemy.

The narratives surrounding a Brazilian people, whether informed by a culturalist approach or by the physical anthropology that provided a basis for typological processes, were affirmed through a teleological view of miscegenation.⁹ These explanatory models tend to ignore hierarchical processes in which they were embedded and the production of inequalities that they systematically produced. In this sense, the plasticity of these narratives is one of their fundamental characteristics. It is through this plasticity that political assemblages as diverse as those cited above could be justified. They are connected, therefore, to a series of institutional innovations that, in a feedback process, they helped to institute.

Brazilian anthropology, university institutionalization and the establishment of postgraduation as a process of State formation

These discursive constructions were not dispersed in later decades. On the contrary, they can be seen still as organizing factors behind a series of intellectual and governmental practices. In the populist drive towards national development that emerged in the 1950s, especially after the collapse of the Getúlio Vargas dictatorship (1937-1945), we can observe the grounds being prepared for the large expansion into Amazonia that occurred after 1964, especially after 1969, with the selling of lands through legal machinations in the regions of Central Brazil and Eastern Amazonia. These processes had an impact on the development of anthropological studies, but were equally important to an increasing demand for rights from rural and urban sectors. This period also saw the emergence of democratic institutions and practices, especially during the period of Getúlio Vargas's constitutional government, from 1950 to 1954, when, under strong pressure from so-called liberal sectors, Vargas committed suicide in one of the political acts of greatest significance in Brazil's republican history.¹⁰

Over this period, the anthropology produced in Brazil gradually abandoned the assimilationist narrative of acculturation and turned to examine the sociological problems posed by a racist society, rurally based but increasingly hegemonized through urban sectors in a perfect articulation of what was then already called unequal combined development¹¹. The role played by the colonization of the country's interior via federal government initiatives would only tend to increase. Once again the history of indigenism and anthropology intersected: in 1942, the SPI was restructured (Souza Lima 2018 [1995]) and a studies section was created where, for a short time in the 1950s, three anthropologists would work whose trajectories are emblematic of prominent aspects of contemporary anthropology in Brazil: Darcy Ribeiro, who, as well as an interpreter of Brazilian nationality, became a writer and politician of considerable importance (Mattos, 2007; 2018); Eduardo Enéas Galvão, the first Brazilian anthropologist to obtain a PhD from the University of Columbia in 1952 (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2018); and Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, perhaps the most prominent figure in the inauguration of the modern institutionalization of anthropological training on contemporary foundations (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2008; Silva, 2018).

It was also in the 1950s, more specifically in 1951, that the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and what was then the Campaign (today the Coordination) for the Advanced Training of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) were created with the mission of training personnel for public administration and for research and technological development in Brazil. Under the auspices of CAPES,

9 It is important to emphasize that physical anthropology did not simply vanish. Morales (2002) shows us how it was institutionalized in the form of a candidate selection process run by the service that managed the recruitment of so-called 'rubber soldiers,' individuals who applied to work as rubber tappers in Amazonia following the revival of rubber extraction in the region as part of the Second World War effort.

10 For information on the Brazilian history of the period, see Fausto, 1999.

11 Here we refer to the appropriations made by Francisco de Oliveira (2013) of the theories of León Trotsky (in *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky 2007) and Rosa Luxemburg (Luxemburg 1964) concerning the maintenance of tardiness and precapitalist social forms (relations of production, but also worldviews, notably those based around the slavery regime) in his interpretation of the Brazilian economy and society. Oliveira's first text dates back to 1972 and was first published in 1975. In the international setting, these ideas became better known through the work of the Egyptian-French economist Samir Amin (Amin 1976).

as well as the Indian Protection Service (SPI), which had created the Indian Museum in 1953 as part of the campaign to combat racism promoted by UNESCO in the post-war period, the first Advanced Training Course in Cultural Anthropology was set up under the coordination of Darcy Ribeiro, implemented in 1955-56.

UNESCO's initiative was fundamental and much broader in terms of the research on race relations in Brazil (Maio, 1997; Maio 2001; Maio 2005; Pereira & Sansone, 2007), reflecting its mandate to combat racism and overcome the legacy of colonialisms. The same applied to research on indigenous issues, given that under its auspices Darcy Ribeiro was able to develop nationwide studies using material available in the SPI to which he had privileged access (Mattos, 2007). The intention of Ribeiro and his collaborators was to set up a more wide-ranging centre for research and postgraduate studies in anthropology based at the Indian Museum. However, the course was discontinued when the entire organizational team left the SPI during this same period due to political changes following the end of the Vargas government. With the dispersal of these professionals, Luiz de Castro Faria, from the Museu Nacional, invited Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira to join the institution and create specialization courses along similar but distinct lines to the course at the Indian Museum (Souza Lima, 2005; Mattos, 2007: 113-126).

Years later, in a broader articulation, Castro Faria and Cardoso de Oliveira created, along with David Maybury-Lewis (Prins and Graham, 2008), the Postgraduate Program in Social Anthropology (PPGAS) in 1968, with the support of the Latin American Centre of Research in Social Sciences (CLAPCS) in Rio de Janeiro and the Ford Foundation (Bringel, Nóbrega, Macedo, Macêdo and Machado, 2015; Blanco, 2017). It also received support from CAPES and CNPq, compliant with the guidelines for modern postgraduate studies in Brazil, established by an official report in 1965 from the Federal Council of Education, called the Sucupira Report (Cury, 2005). PPGAS was created to train professionals with a grounding in ethnographic research within the framework of social anthropology, in dialogue with sociology and political science, situating our discipline at the centre of debates on Brazilian society, whether in the rural or urban environments, in contrast to the previously dominant culturalist anthropology (already criticized earlier by Darcy Ribeiro). Between the establishment of specialization courses and the institutionalization of PPGAS, the civil-military coup d'état of March 1964 put another dictatorship in power.

It is not our intention here to venture a reconstruction of the history of how modern postgraduate teaching in anthropology became institutionalized in Brazil, or the close relationship this involved with the political conjunctures through which we passed, but rather to point out that the over-emphasis on those aspects connecting our discipline to the process of national construction in studies analysing the themes in question – based more on collecting testimonies and interviews than analysing documents – has tended to overlook the relationship between anthropology and State formation.¹²

Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1997a; 1997b) highlighted the link between anthropology and State, not just in the Brazilian case, but also in numerous other Latin American countries – a link that if it is not to become one more sterile denunciation (like the obvious relation with historical colonialism) would require research yet to be undertaken, at least not in the Brazilian case, including focusing attention on its relation to 'internal colonialism.' But the relationship with the State also – and primarily – involves the centrality of the promotion of postgraduate education and federal regulation of the procedures for organizing and recognizing courses.

Anthropology, like the other social sciences, grew in Brazil under the shadow of the military dictatorship's post-1964 investment in the training of a technobureaucracy capable of managing its developmentalist plans. These were largely focused on training engineers to implement infrastructural works that would have serious impacts on the more vulnerable sectors or inhabitants of the regions across which the new wave of colonization was directed: the Centre-West and, especially, the North – Amazonia in particular.

¹² On the distinction between State formation and nation building, see Elias, 2006 [1972].

Thus, however contradictory it may appear to a foreign readership, at the same time as anthropological production adapted to the guidelines set for postgraduate studies by the authoritarian governments, it did so very often through a critical approach to the military's initiatives. This did not happen without major tensions and disputes, including within areas of anthropology itself, much of whose history still needs to be studied and analysed.

Browsing the lists of dissertations and theses produced on the postgraduate programs created or reformulated in Brazil during this period, we can observe that the studies of such aspects were extremely important, setting out from an ethical and moral commitment to our interlocutors. After all, the country was going through a major transformation in which the urban world's influence seemed to be surpassing the rural world(s) and not just the ways of life of indigenous peoples were under threat. In the urban environment too, the government's 'spectacular interventions' made themselves felt, especially in Rio de Janeiro, with the compulsory removals of favelas in a context of increasing demographic flow to the cities.

Although it is worth recalling that meetings of the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) had included a session on indigenist policy since the association's creation in 1955, the ethical commitment to indigenous peoples and the defence of their life and rights being founding principles of ABA, it was without doubt from this period that a particular ethos became dominant in our anthropology that presumes its own unique style of engagement. It is important, however, to emphasize that anthropologists do not necessarily adopt such a stance through their research, but rather as an exercise of citizenship that, while significant, does not imply a reflexive, critical and propositional involvement.

As has already been shown (Souza Lima and Barroso-Hoffmann, 2002), the young anthropologists trained in the new postgraduate departments created or restructured from 1968 became intensely involved in the social movements that organized to fight for rights in response to the civil-military dictatorship, many setting up NGOs or working from positions in university, especially on indigenous and land ownership issues. At that moment, anthropologists became identified as *personae non gratae* by the authoritarian regime, placed under duress and threatened. The Brazilian Anthropology Association frequently spoke in their defence. However, there was no attempt to discredit anthropological knowledge per se or the ABA.

This intense public activity is constructed in a context in which research and intervention work in tandem, where the theoretical, ethnographic and critical production of state action combine not just to construct a theoretical and empirical corpus active within the borders of academia, but also to suggest and debate alternatives for public action, solutions more convergent with the interests of less privileged sectors of the population with whom anthropologists usually work. These questions are characteristics of the mode of research and action particularly apparent during the years of 'redemocratization' (1985-2013).

These processes are thus signals of the disputes surrounding the production of persistent long-term inequalities in Brazil. Hence they impacted anthropological production in a systematic way – whether through its insertion in postgraduate studies as an indication of state articulation, or in the defence of the rights of diverse populations. If we consider this scenario as a political process underway, with unequal disputes that allow those groups in power to perpetuate their structural positions, land issues – especially those involving so-called 'traditional' populations whose logic of use and belonging appear to challenge individual private ownership – naturally emerge as central to political articulations. And here, as already outlined earlier, anthropologists performed a fundamental role. If we compare the situation with the period from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1950s, what the new postgraduate courses offered was an anthropology committed to those with whom it works, whether in rural or urban contexts, and to the deconstruction of hierarchies of power and forms of maintaining inequality.

Contemporary scenarios of a 'dangerous' anthropology

Over the period of redemocratization, the anthropology produced in Brazil paid serious attention to the resumption of elections and the analysis of the patronal and clientelist practices typical of public life in Brazil (Teixeira and Souza Lima, 2010), as well as the implementation of governmental policies focused on differentiated rights, among which the territorial rights of indigenous and quilombola populations and other social collectives are central. Anthropology's contribution and the presence of anthropologists themselves went far beyond the sphere of issues relating to the territorial rights of indigenous and quilombola communities, extending to innumerable other areas like women's rights, LGBT+s groups, cultural heritage and policies, affirmative actions in the access to higher education and postgraduate studies in public, federal, state and municipal universities. We work with social sectors whose access to citizen participation has been mediated historically by diverse forms of violence and domination, meaning that, among other things, they have acquired the basic knowledge needed to represent themselves in a form unprecedented in Brazilian history.¹³

This happened especially during the years when the Workers' Party was in power (2003-2016), which saw a significant, though always insufficient, expansion of funds for research and education, especially higher education, including the creation of diverse new federal universities and federal technology institutes, the latter combining secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate education.¹⁴ Following the directives of the national plans for postgraduate education (Feldman-Bianco, 2018), the postgraduate training programs in anthropology and archaeology tripled in number and strove to train a new generation of researchers, largely coming from less privileged sectors of Brazilian society.¹⁵

This expansion occurred in tandem with the creation of undergraduate courses and closely accompanied government plans for the Central-West, Northeast and Amazonian regions, breaking, at least partially, the regional asymmetries that have historically situated the South-Southeast-Federal District axis as the centre of Brazilian academic life.¹⁶ The results can be assessed when we travel through Brazil and come into contact with the research, training and social intervention activities undertaken by colleagues working on courses in the most violent regions of the country, like the states of Mato Grosso do Sul, southern Bahia, or Pará.

In this process of generating knowledge and training new professionals, anthropologists find themselves embroiled in such discussions, producing knowledge, debating with the national and international literature, becoming immersed in ethical-scientific discussions, mediating initiatives to liaise with sectors of the government public administration and channelling their scientifically-founded professional activities to provide support for policy formulation. It seems plausible that various of these policies (sometimes called identity policies) may have indeed contributed over time to changing historical patterns of social inequality and income concentration, reconfiguring the Brazilian State and the relation between classes, class sectors and social strata, thereby altering the conditions of hegemonic power in the process. So-called cultural policies, in particular, had an unprecedented prominence, becoming, despite their contradictions,¹⁷ as a central sphere in which scenarios of real change in certain political exchanges were observable. This applies especially to the *Cultura Viva* program – created when Gilberto Gil was the Minister of Culture (2003-2008) and continued under the administration of his successor, Juca Ferreira (2008-2010) – which, operating on the basis of a supposedly anthropological idea of culture, financed important cultural initiatives at a community level.

¹³ For a survey of anthropology's investments in the public sphere in Brazil and its 'social impact' (one of the new measures that CAPES seeks to measure in the process of evaluating postgraduate education), tracing the actions of ABA, see Souza Lima, Beltrão, Lobo, Castilho, Lacerda and Osorio, 2018.

¹⁴ It is essential to point out to foreign readers that Brazil's system of higher education and research institutions is essentially public and supported by public funds, meaning that federal, state and municipal institutions responsible for almost all the growth in these areas.

¹⁵ For recent data on the area of anthropology and archaeology in Brazil, see Souza Lima, Almeida and Miranda, 2019a and b.

¹⁶ For the Amazon region, see Almeida, 2018.

¹⁷ For an analysis of the construction of cultural policies as a category of intervention in contemporary Brazil, see Gonçalves Dias 2014 and 2015.

However, these timid alterations took place in parallel to the economic strengthening of sectors like agribusiness and the mining industry under the influx of the commodity boom, leading to an increasing financialization of lands and their sale to international corporations.¹⁸ This scenario was combined with the construction of large infrastructural works that would have major impacts on the traditional local inhabitants, principally in Amazonia where large construction firms expanded and made huge profits, accompanied by the rapid diffusion of Evangelical churches and their own forms of generating profit, progressively acquiring the capacity to assume management of significant areas of social policies. Just as exuberant as these previous sectors was the growth and enormous profits made by the large private higher education establishments. All this without mentioning the untrammelled power of investment capital, largely materialized in the huge revenues generated by the banking sector.

The effects of the minimum income transfer policies, one of the essential instruments of an attempt to extend citizenship through consumption, were not accompanied by any effective redistribution of resources: income concentration persisted and indeed increased, accompanying more global trends. In parallel, the price of the services consumed by the middle classes rose as part of the more general and positive partial valorisation of labour, which served as fuel for a growing social rancour of these sectors, historically conservative in their values and identified with elites that know nothing of them, but whose way of life emerges as a paradigm, whether to be attacked or emulated.

Everything appeared to be going relatively well while international commodity prices, including oil, fed the surplus that enabled a few years of apparent social well-being. This was the economic scenario that enabled, contradictorily, some of the changes mentioned earlier to unfold, especially access to land (and here overlooking just how problematic and imperfect this process was), and that gave the impression of Brazil living under a real democracy and a new pact emerging between classes, albeit not for those on whom our interest was most focused: in the rural sphere, indigenous, quilombola and river-dwelling communities and landless rural workers, and on the periphery of the major Brazilian cities, black or brown young people whose route to the world of work via education finally seemed to be opening up.

Political developments from 2011 to the present and the aftermath of the election of the current government of Jair Bolsonaro – a period in which the so-called June 2013 movements retain a singular political and symbolic importance, along with the presidential election of 2014 – are known but not yet sufficiently studied, and doing so would be impossible in this text. However, this does not mean that we can avoid pointing out the absence of any profound ruptures. Although they are not the same elites today as the start of the twentieth century, attempts were made to maintain control over access to land for other motives. The intense work of the fairly heterogenous Farming Parliamentary Front (FPA) to force through changes to the legislation relating to the environment – in which the changes made to the Forestry Code were a turning point – were continued through what some parliamentarians openly call a “war over indigenous lands” (Rauber, 2019).

Outlining this scenario is imperative, however. It shows how we anthropologists have worked seriously and ceaselessly to help bring about social transformations capable of breaking these long-term patterns. In doing so, our efforts have been backed by legal frameworks and policy directives present, though not dominant, during the period of the return to democracy, albeit with splits and divergences among ourselves, and never with sufficiently generous budgets to respond adequately to the task at hand.

Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) shows that in 2018, for the first time, students self-classified as black and brown formed a majority compared to white students enrolled in the country’s federal, state and municipal public universities, matching the demographic reality of Brazil.

¹⁸ This process has a huge impact on indigenous lands and their possession. On the indigenous fight for lands, see the dossier “Fighting for Indigenous Lands in Modern Brazil. The reframing of cultures and identities.” *Vibrant*, 15 (3), organized by João Pacheco de Oliveira (2018); see also Eloy-Amado (2019) and Alarcon (2019).

In the space of a decade and a half, the indigenous population – a numerically very low proportion of Brazil's total demographic – rose from an estimated 1,400 students in public and private higher education to around 50,000. In both scenarios, the actions of anthropologists and anthropological production itself played a fundamental, though by no means solitary, role: we were in tense dialogue with broad sectors of society.

It was because we touched on this ample universe of the production of inequality, even if few advances were made given the brutal reality in which we live, that anthropologists became noticed and increasingly visible as a profession: today it is unlikely that a representative of agribusiness is unaware of what anthropologists do, although his or her view may be extremely distorted. Our scientific work, we repeat, touched on some of the possible ways to mitigate inequalities, challenging the maintenance of privileges and, potentially, the social reproduction of both the country's hegemonic sectors and the middle classes that mimic them. While the sectors in power today are different, the mechanisms that ensure the maintenance of inequality in our society are, it seems, long-lasting, not only in terms of values but also their own political and financial means. Positions are entrenched in order for these privileges to be defended and perpetuated – even if this entails that some things must be changed and other things are already effectively different.

Far from being merely a crude and ignorant group that came to power, even though they may be this too, this right-wing political block, still relatively formless, has known how to attack the very conditions for the development of our work and our professional lives, and, in certain cases, even our personal lives. Disparaging and disqualifying them as ignorant or incompetent is to reveal an arrogance typical of the old elites of the colonial era, which certainly do not correspond to the profile of these contemporary factions identified with the international far right.

To return to our opening arguments, we have rapidly traced some of the key points of Brazil's history over the twentieth century with an emphasis on how anthropology acted to influence and inform state practices, stressing the degree of continuity in the patterns of inequality that extend from at least the beginning of the republican period when control over access to land and the means of production central to the political work of domination were – and continue to be – essential.

We have sought to show that from the end of the nineteenth century to more or less the 1950s, the anthropology produced in Brazil was predominantly, albeit not exclusively, committed to assisting the elites in their State formation processes. This was especially evident in the debate on the 'formation of the Brazilian people' – that is, the constitution of a workforce and the possibilities for creating a Brazilian civilization based on its contribution. It was thus a question of governing a diversity conceived as racial in nature and then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, of building a nation, an imagined collectivity in which the different racial components were hierarchically organized with the 'whites' (the end point of miscegenation) at the top.

Changes to this pattern occurred from the 1950s due partly to transformations in Brazil and more widely in the context of the post-war period and the fight to overcome colonialism, and partly to the absorption and reelaboration of anthropological theories about processes of cultural transformation, reframed in light of autochthonous experiences of research and intervention. These changes converged with a broader restructuring of higher education at postgraduate level at the beginning of the 1960s, in a new model of postgraduate studies, by now under the 1964-1989 military regime. This model was based on the close association between research and teaching, and was guided by a strong ethical-moral and political commitment to the populations studied by us anthropologists within the Brazilian 'continent.' Anthropological research, even when not directly focused on the authoritarian capitalist development in course, had to respond to its effects on the studied collectivities.

This shift involved the intense participation of a significant portion of Brazilian anthropologists (though not all of them) in the fight for the return to democratic life in the country, eventually resulting in the elaboration of the text to the 1988 Constitution, in the struggle for its subsequent implementation, in the assistance given to social movements in pursuing their demands for basic rights and, above all, in the construction of government

polices for their implementation. Here the old ties with the elites were definitively broken, replaced by a no less committed endeavour to help build a democratic, less unequal society, more diverse and plural too at the level of the exercise of political and economic power. The political elites, especially those rooted in the rural environment, but also those allied with them, have competed for space in the political arena through the defence of so-called '(neo)conservative' values. More precisely, as Oliveira (2013) has shown, such elites seek to perpetuate their commanding position by maintaining brutal inequality and the physical extermination of those opposing them, gradually acquiring more space, in parallel with wider movements towards democracy and a less unequal society that have reflected the more general political setting in Brazil and internationally.

The Brazilian Anthropology Association continues to protest through its diverse committees and commissions. Statements proliferate along with the inequities. A democratic arena is emulated and the importance of these actions celebrated. Arbitrary power grows, impunities multiply, the Constitution is maintained at the same time as it is quotidianly torn apart through administrative and judicial actions. Public resources are limited to the most elementary actions, a panorama inaugurated by the post-impeachment government of Michel Temer and only continued and deepened by Jair Bolsonaro's administration.¹⁹ The dramatic setting of the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the stark limits of this modality of action. Indigenous peoples and other social movements have worked intensively via the judiciary, especially the Federal Supreme Court, which is not always receptive to them.

If we take *state formation* and *nation-building* as dynamic and inconclusive processes, we are compelled to make explicit what we understand by each of these terms with each new analytic investment made, thereby ethnographically approaching the prescriptions inscribed in laws and regulations too, taking them as part of the cosmologies that we internalize and that guide us acritically, very often raised to the status of theories. In this way, we can theorize on the basis of ethnographies, rather than making ethnography in order to prove pre-established theories. The anthropology we produce has a singular contribution to make in the study of ideas and systems of State that heavily shape the contemporary social alternatives in many postcolonial States. These perspectives have, for example, provided important guidelines for the re-elaboration of the notion of citizenship in all its multiple meanings, both as a moral community and as a legal concept.

As for the rest, what can we do? It seems to us that we need to continue doing what we do well, in the available conditions while these remain viable: research, analyse, teach and train new generations, now originating from sectors that have been historically excluded, even though this may require us to reinvent ourselves in the process. In this work, scientific associativism and the connection to social sectors that desire a more equitable society at national and international level is, we believe, indispensable. We need to find comfort and build alliances to replace the permanent psychopolitical war in which we live today, and continue to invest in breaking the masks, always renewed, of the same old modes of domination.

Submitted: July 03, 2020

Accepted: August 20, 2020

Translated by David Rodgers

¹⁹ For a broader survey of the situation of pandemic among indigenous peoples, quilombola collectivities and river-dwelling communities especially, but not solely, see Almeida, Acevedo Marin & Aleixo, 2020.

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