

Ethnography, beyond the limits of the global present

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Issue 20 (2023) of *Vibrant* comprises our regular *Articles* section and two dossiers: *Ethnography of Governance Institutions* and *Utopias of Recycling and Circularity* – a total of 37 texts covering themes of contemporary relevance, revealing, from different angles, the marks of an increasingly dystopian global reality, as complex as it is interdependent. Although most of the authors published here are Brazilian, the issue also reflects the growing participation of foreign academics as authors or coauthors – our collaborators in networks of cooperation and dialogue, a clear demonstration of the internationalization of the discipline in Brazil, along with the presence of Brazilian anthropologists in other national contexts.

The texts thus explore Brazilian contexts but also those of Mexico, South Africa, Cape Verde, the Netherlands, Argentina and Uruguay. All these scenarios are approached in terms of both urban and rural settings, among citizens of the peripheries and indigenous peoples. From field research based on ethnographic observation to the study of archives and literary texts, the limits of ethnography as an epistemic perspective are expanded and creatively delimited. This scenario shows that even with the interruption of funding for research in Brazil, which until then had been stimulating anthropological research outside the country (Schuch, 2018), this facet of internationalization has proved consistent and still capable of renewing itself, generating new lines of inquiry.



Many of the texts from the *Articles* section are strongly marked by the discipline's contemporary setting, whether this involves the study of techniques and human/non-human relations, or the intersections that produce and perpetuate durable inequalities (Tilly, 1998). But they also address the profound social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the theme of the dossier *COVID-19 in Brazil* (Segata, Grisotti & Porto, 2022). Additionally, evincing the effects of the international scenario described above, three of the eight texts from the section focus on non-Brazilian contexts, namely those of South Africa, Cape Verde and Mexico – the latter explored in a comparative perspective with Brazil. As well as comprising locations where ethnographic research is being conducted, the dialogues developed in the articles demonstrate the horizontal internationalization of the anthropology produced in Brazil through diverse South-South networks (Ribeiro, 2018).

The dossier *Ethnography of Governance Institutions* (Teixeira, Crewe & Bernardes, 2023), firmly anchored in the experience of research laboratory groups and networks of scientific dialogue and debate (see Castilho, Lima & Teixeira, 2014; Teixeira, Lobo & Abreu, 2019), confronts us with the metamorphoses of authoritarian traditions of governance and their transformations in the contemporary era. Here too, ethnographic exploration of contemporaneity, especially the dimensions of the global shift(s) towards the far right, reveals the twisting complexities of the mixture of forms deeply rooted in the colonial and servile past of Latin America (but not only) with neoliberal management technologies. Brazil's recent history surfaces in a number of investigations on themes as wide-ranging as the management of sexuality and the recruitment and structuring of public administration in Brazil, also including police action, hospitals, forums for social participation and other themes. International borders, the legislature during the period 2019-2022, or the relations between anthropology and agribusiness are just some of the aspects that demonstrate the scope and capacity for a scientifically-based elaboration of 'hot topics,' perhaps the main reason why we need to keep asking ourselves "Who's afraid of anthropologists?" (Machado, Motta & Facchini, 2018; Machado & Motta, 2019).

Utopias of Recycling and Circularity (Caje & Arisi, 2023) brings ethnographic experience to the inquiry into the social processes involved in the management of solid waste – 'garbage' – continuing the investigations of a consolidated network of researchers working in countries like Argentina, Brazil, the Netherlands and Uruguay published in a series of recent works (see Rial, 2016). This thematic framework reveals the quickening transformations of a global world increasingly left to deal with the deleterious effects of capitalist production, including impacts on the environment, and the emergence of 'solutions' whose limits never cease to become apparent and overcome, generally at small scales. The dossier's texts highlight the tensions of the present and the plausibility of dystopian futures, showing us how an anthropology engaged in the Brazilian setting is directly linked to global circuits and tensions.

So we complete 20 years of *Virtual Brazilian Anthropology – Vibrant*, more than ever situated among our discipline's contemporary theoretical trends and assured that the journal continues to fulfil its remit of promoting the internationalization of Brazilian anthropological production, now deeply intertwined in the international scenarios and networks of the discipline in the Global North and the South. And it does so through ethnographically dense explorations of some of the most critical problems of our contemporary historical moment and our immediate future.

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