

ALMANACK FOR WHAT?

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When, in 2005, a group of researchers conceived of the *Brazilian Almanack* while working on the project “The Foundation of the Brazilian State and Nation (c. 1780-c.1850)” directed by István Jancsó and funded by Fapesp (São Paulo State Research Support Foundation), their bet on this journal’s longevity could not have been more precise. Conceived as a space to reflect on the formation of the state and nation in a broad social dimension with an inclusive spatial scope, linking continents, people, and experiences, the journal responded to anxieties surrounding calls for globalization and to the impasses that had been placed on historical thinking about reality. A few years later, in 2011, this journal was no longer just the record of a single project. As researchers

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from various universities in Brazil participated in expanding the journal's foundation; they baptized it, in commemoration of this new moment, *Almanack*.

From these beginnings, we have now arrived at edition number 23 together with actions that will further strengthen our space for reflection. These actions are built on the capital we have accumulated over the years and will be carried out in the increasingly internationalized academic universe in which we operate. The first of these actions is renewing of part of its editorial staff, welcoming editors from other countries joined together with the motifs that inspire us—some of whom were already our contributors. We are also inaugurating this *Words for Debate*, a space to express questions, controversies, and opinions on our subject area. This space is for us to articulate the concerns that we hold as social scientists, but also as citizens of the world whose perception of the speed at which we live today, and the banality of daily explanations of reality, still frightens us.

Substantially, our intention is to reaffirm our mission at the present time in which we live. As a journal specialized in the history of the abovementioned processes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, our thematic space has revealed a predilection for the Americas, in all its local, regional and/or global relations. This journal also has an affinity for the dimensions that involve reflecting on the tortuous path from the transition from colonial rule to independent sovereign units, and the implications of this at its various social levels. We believe that valuing the role of these *histories* is essential today, in light of the polarization of positions that we observe daily in the continent. acing of what we could call new forms of authoritarianism, which may or may not go back to dictatorial pasts, but which invariably feed on the loss of social effectiveness of democratic devices that, in the New World, have always been far from being universally agreed upon, in view of the multi-ethnic and multicultural society as its constitutive mark. In facing of the fiercest disputes between left and right, as well as for the current libertarian and progressive flags, true movements of the people in the streets, that coexist with the rise of conservative slogans based on ultraliberal theses in the

name of supposed individual rights. Finally, in facing of the task of understanding the meaning of this moment of jurisdictionalization of society evident in the permanent desire for a greater regulation of relations between individuals, groups, and others, at the same time that existing institutions are being discredited, hostage to harmful phenomena that eventually lead to the depoliticization in the name of the social common good. No to mention the thunderous role of social networks as a challenge to current democracies.

After all, what does it mean to speak today of history, of political subjects, of the State? We believe that being aware of an apparent loss of interest in the study of history also means that history is being valued more than ever; this juxtaposition strikes at the heart of how history is hijacked for exploitation as a tool for political disputes. Historians have been and continue to be targeted, but now public spokespersons have had their space increasingly invaded by dichotomous and simplistic versions of reality. Working within a space of complexity to understand the process of formation of the contemporary world in its most varied shades continues to be our most urgent task now more than ever. For us, it also means assuming that, beyond the global dimension of all phenomena, thinking about the specific cases in the Americas is not just a methodology to remember that the world has always been hierarchized and that the localization of things and people should not be a simple rhetorical exercise. *Almanack* must assume that, as the only journal in the area dedicated solely to explore the historical discussion of this space-time, we must double down on our support of debate, without abandoning the utopia that the New World will continue to surprise us with avant-garde solutions.

In this endeavor, our goal is to strengthen the space of our Forums further. As face-to-face discussions that ultimately result in texts for *Almanack*, our bet is that their themes will continue to be challenging and that expert theoretical opinions will be amplified. This is the situation that happened with the last Forum, made in the spirit of these *Words for Debate*, on the premises of the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP, Campus Guarulhos) on November 18, 2019, entitled “On the eve of 200 years of Independence: what

and how to discuss?”. This Forum displayed the work of researchers Rodrigo Turin (Unirio), Cecília Helena de Salles Oliveira (USP), and Lucia Maria Bastos Pereira das Neves (UERJ), whose texts will be published soon in the journal. Discussing who appropriates this date in today’s Brazil, in the midst of a government that has routinely tested any democratic achievements and tolerance for differences, is salient for many people, to say the least.

As such and being the same, *Almanack* feels the need to renew itself in the face of these challenging times for all of us.

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