

Presentation

Since the late twentieth century, feminist thinkers have placed gender at the center of theoretical and political debates, to gain a more complex comprehension of power relations. Understood as technology (De Lauretis, 1994) or a form of regulation (Butler, 2004), gender performatively constitutes individual, collective and institutional bodies, permeating all social relations. In the Brazilian social sciences, there has been considerable discussion in the field of gender studies about so-called gender politics and how they have shifted from social movements (feminist and LGBT) to public policies, and gradually become assimilated and institutionalized in the form of laws, practices and administrative apparatuses (Debert; Gregori, 2008, Aguião, 2014). Nevertheless, we have not found as many theoretical reflections, particularly in the field of anthropology, about the gendered dimension of the state (Brown, 2006, Das, 2008, Vianna; Farias, 2011, Lowenkron, 2015), understood here as both a representational-ideological construct and as a complex of government institutions, agents, practices and technologies (Souza Lima, 2002, Sharma; Gupta, 2006, Vianna, 2014).

The objective of this dossier is to present articles that can contribute to the reflection on some analytical and empiric interfaces and connections between gender and state, based on studies that discuss their dynamics of mutual and processual construction. We begin with the premise that gender, articulated to other lines of production of social differences and inequalities of power, should not be conceived of and treated as a specific and autonomous theme or field of study in the social sciences, or restricted to particular and marginal arenas of political life and government practices. It is first a mode of social regulation and production of differences and hierarchies that have strategic importance in the constitution and understanding of the state political form and its technologies of government. In this sense, we affirm that gender should also be at the center of studies that strive to understand the power relations that are constitutive of

contemporary political arenas, and in particular of state bureaucratic organizations and forms of government that they engender and performatize.

Based on the presumption that between gender and state there is a dynamic of mutual constitution, the seven articles presented in this dossier explore this interface or connection, based on varied theoretical dialogs and particular ethnographic contexts. To do so, they turn to perspectives that allow, first treating the state not as a stable or cohesive unit, but as a heterogeneous process that can and must be understood through its practices, administrative apparatuses, exercises of authority and disputes over meaning. Whatever their mode, the articles illuminate various effects of state (Mitchell, 1999), capturing how much the ideational and administrative borders of what is the “state” itself are being simultaneously projected to its supposed fields of intervention: peoples, behaviors, relations, spaces and times.

In this sense, it can be as important to observe the production of grand normative ideas about how the state, government or governed should be, as well as daily interactions that take place in and through various administrative apparatuses. The assistance provided by social workers in children’s courts; body searches of people who visit prison inmates; evaluations about migratory requests for marriage; strategies for registering demands, complaints and “problems” of all types that reach different state agencies and agents are shaped and shape narratives, framings and genderfied forms of being in the world, in particular in the world of the “state” (see Lugones, Padovani, Ricordeau, Vianna; Lowenkron, in this issue). The dimension of experience has, in this sense, an important role in the ethnographic understanding of how gender and state jointly weave possibilities for producing subjects in their multiple acceptations of subjectivity and subjection (Butler, 2001, and Lugones, in this issue). In this sense, we can recognize that, taken as regulatory processes, but also those of dispute, gender and state meet and directly precipitate each other in bodies, affects, relations and moralities of people.

The processes of differentiation, hierarchy and distinction between subjects and collectivities are inescapably part of this dynamic of mutual constitution that we collectively explore here. The operation of categories of distinction (and the operation through them) mark and separate in the confused intrigues of life “good sex” “good gender”, “good reproduction”, “good family”, “good community” that are to be pursued, stimulated and brandished in the search for the “good state” and, of course, for its “good citizens”. We are, therefore, passing through various scales and practices of production of borders between the desirable and undesirable found in the constitution of political collectivities, ideas of nationality and legal norms. We are also examining strategies of classification, incrimination and subordination of people, groups and relations that are exercised in the daily activities of state administrations, as well the plane of face to face interactions experienced in neighborhoods, families, and in the criteria that support the choices of loving partners or the ambitions and projects of a better future.

Gender and state, if highlighted analytically in this dossier to better explore the scope of their mutual constitution, cannot, however, be completely separated from other categories and processes of differentiation. As will be seen in the articles, race, class, generation, ethnicity and other markers dramatically and daily traverse gender-state relations, creating inflections, shadings, ponderations and distinctions between policies, forms of management, personal and family trajectories, values and desires. Thus, the way that differences are situationally produced – and not simply how they precede or condition situations – permeate many of the reflections presented here, given that the processes of state are simultaneously supported by the obligation and privilege of constructing these differences and placing them in hierarchy (McClintock, 2010; Brah, 2006; Piscitelli, 2008; Moutinho, 2014; Cho; Crenshaw; Source, 2013; Furon; Glick Schiller, 2010; Mahler, 2001).

Not by chance, the theme of composition of nation-states and of borders between them arises in various articles (see Vianna; Lowenkron, Ricordeau, Padovani, Aguião, in this issue), exploring

how much the tensions and anxieties around nationality and its eventual contaminations and detours reveal highly gendered and racialized state processes. Interdictions to entrance or exit of nation-states, expulsions, brutal actions on bodies and spaces, regulations and excitations about reproduction and descendance, distrust about the authenticity of romantic ties, and other issues, indicate to us that the geopolitics of nations is not made in an aseptic or disembodied manner. In the same way that, complementarily, personal and family cartographies dialog, validate themselves or are discredited by countless visas, regulations, certifications and treaties between nation states.

The projection of states that strive to create and exhibit themselves, considered here as a political construct and a way of forming collective ideologies, also does not take place without operations that give value and distinction to tolerable, intolerable or desirable differences. “Diversity”, “modernity”, “democracy”, “order” and other terms, are included in a broad political grammar that shapes and negotiates the terms with which different social actors dispute the idea of state – and the state as idea (Abrams, 1988). The way that certain projections in certain moments gain strength, giving space to others that follow – speak to us of both different conjunctures, and of deeper and structural processes of inequality (see Aguião, Feltran, in this issue) in which, as we see today with brutal clarity, gender does not perform a secondary role. The way that the public arenas are occupied, how incandescent questions are produced, how experiences are framed as crime, violence, justice, intolerance, disease, rights or banal elements of life, triggers webs of meaning, categories of understanding and repertoires of action that coproduce gender and state. State and gender produce themselves in action in the debates about who should be protected in what way, who can have their pain recognized or their pleasures ratified and about the correct behavior of administrative specialists responsible for producing and applying these distinctions.

Not by chance, ambivalences between forms of protection, control and contention of peoples, collectivities and relations are

indicated in various moments in the studies presented here. “Victims”, “criminals”, “sufferers”, and “opportunists” appear in these processes of state and gendered classification, at the same time that government practices distribute in a not always Cartesian manner recognitions and punishments to each one of these characters. State administration, after all, is ripe with gender, whether in its control technologies and practices, or in its routines of activity or even in the contradictory affective loads that traverse its quotidian norms, contours, performances and interactions (see Vianna; Lowenkron, Lugones, Padovani, Efreim Filho, in this issue).

To place our own bodies in their constitutive marks and in their relational variations, as well as our trajectories of family, race, class, gender and sexuality, often proves to be essential for capturing these complex processes of producing state (and producing life). The radical distinction between the experience of being a female researcher, or a family visitor at a prison (Padovani, in this issue), the connection of affection and trust established by the trajectory shared in militancy (Efreim Filho, in this issue), the reflexivity about distances and proximities between trajectories placed in dialog (Feltran, in this issue), as well as other discussions raised in the articles in this dossier, emphasize the central place that we occupy for that which we want to understand. The dense processes that we try to untangle – statization, racialization, genderfication, etc. – do not simply surround us, but produce us as subjects.

In this sense, one of the ambitions that we pursue through the dialog among this set of articles is that of problematizing not only concepts of state and gender, but, in a certain manner, the framings of their relationship in the worlds that we study and in the worlds of research where we are located. This proposal is born and is sustained in this shared questioning by the authors gathered here – and many more – of limits, hierarchies of values and forms of addressing the coproduction of gender and state. Far from wanting to offer a cookbook of studies or a stock of more refined and unchallengeable concepts, we seek to expand the questions

and challenges that allow us to pursue reflections about these processes.

For all these reasons, we understand that the dossier that we are presenting is part of long dialogs among men and women researchers from various institutions. We would thus like to thank *cadernos pagu* for the opportunity that was offered to us, and especially Regina Facchini, Iara Beleli and Luciana Camargo Bueno for the generous and competent support in various steps of the process of preparing the publication and the authors who are gathered here in this project: Gabriel Feltran, Gwenola Ricordeau, Maria Gabriela Lugones, Natália Padovani, Roberto Efrem Filho and Silvia Aguião. We must also recognize the special importance that some institutional spaces have for us, to which we have been or are linked and that have allowed, through different opportunities for exchange, joint work and education, to ripen the questions raised in this dossier, such as the Nucleus for Gender Studies – Pagu/UNICAMP, PPGAS/Museu Nacional/UFRJ and CLAM-IMS-UERJ. While it is impossible to thank everyone who has contributed with their research and discussions in these spaces and others, we register our indebtedness through the names of Adriana Piscitelli, Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima and Sergio Carrara.

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