

## Challenges and New Possibilities: African Studies in Brazil and the South-South Connection

### Desafios e Novas Possibilidades: Estudos Africanos no Brasil e a Conexão Sul-Sul

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#### Abstract

African studies have had a profoundly political history in Brazil that shows that in this country, such as elsewhere, studying Africa is not a natural fact, but depends on political, geostrategic and economic interests as well as quite a degree of intellectual engineering. This article explores the originality of African studies in Brazil when compared with the Global North and addresses a set of challenges and bottlenecks that derive from the institutional fragility of such studies and the present adverse political climate in most of the Brics countries – Brazil, South Africa and India. In the last part the article expands on new paths that should be trailed for the development and consolidation of the South-South connection in African studies as seen from Brazil.

**Palavras-chave:** South-South. Geopolitics of knowledge. African studies.

#### Resumo

Os estudos africanos têm uma história profundamente política no Brasil, que mostra que aqui, como em outros contextos, estudar a África não é algo “natural”, mas o resultado de bastante engenharia social e intelectual. Este artigo analisa a originalidade dos estudos africanos no Brasil, se comparado com o Norte global, e trata de uma série de desafios e entraves que derivam da fragilidade institucional destes estudos e do clima político adverso na maior parte dos países do Brics – Brasil, África do Sul e Índia. Na última parte o artigo apresenta uma série de novos caminhos que podem ser trilhados para o desenvolvimento e a consolidação da conexão Sul-Sul nos estudos africanos realizados no Brasil.

**Keywords:** Sul-Sul. Geopolítica do conhecimento. Estudos africanos.

In my work as facilitator of African studies in Brazil, maybe even as *passer* of African studies, together with a group of colleagues, I have tried to incorporate African studies in the mainstream of the social studies as a part of larger effort to decolonize our production of knowledge by developing new South-South links and promoting what I call a new horizontal curiosity – as a way to counter our historical vertical obsession with

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the Global North. This is being done on shifting grounds as the political context has changed considerably over the last couple of years. In terms of US-Brazil relations we have moved rapidly from a horizon dominated by the couple Obama-Lula to a very different one defined by the match between Trump and Temer and Bolsonaro (the last two presidents of Brazil), and from a world where there seemed to be no end to globalization in which the US were central, to a different world dominated by the globalization of nationalism. A world characterized by anti-globalization feelings and by what Zygmunt Bauman and Carlo Bordoni (2014) called the loneliness of the global citizen – in which, again, the US is central and a bad example. This challenges many tenets of globalization theory and also shows that national borders are in many ways stronger than ever, visas have become harder to get to (even, and most painfully, South-South) and Northern donors have decreased their commitment to social research in Africa and Latin America as they changed thoroughly their agenda from development aid & governance to immigration prevention and control and food security. It goes without saying that these new developments have a bearing on African studies in Brazil.

In fact, in preparing this text I could rely on a number of older and more recent reports on African studies in Brazil, written, mostly, by proper Africanists<sup>2</sup>. Some were more positive such as Zamparoni (1995), Nunes Pereira (2008), Slenes (2010), Wilson Trajano Filho (2012), Diego Marques e Marta Jardim (2012), and Lorenzo Macagno (2014) while others, such as Michel Cahen's (2013), more critical. As we all know African studies are not a natural fact and in each country there is a history of social engineering behind it. Brazil is no exception and also in our country ethnicity and demography are to be kept in mind, in the sense that they end up representing motives for developing African studies: In Brazil whites account for just about 45 % of the total population and in certain state there are well under 30%. Most of the population is of African and/or of mixed African/Native American/white origin. On top of this, even more than in most other countries in the Americas, with the possible exception of Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and smaller Caribbean countries, in Brazil Africa has historically been an important trope that has never left our national and foreign commentators indifferent (ALENCASTRO, 2000; SCHWARCZ, 1999). When it comes to our racial composition, either they loved it, or they abhorred it.

The African content or percentage of our popular culture and of our people, after having being considered an onus or a “problem” for centuries, through a process of inversion of meaning and patrimonialization of intangible culture have now been transformed into heritage and have recently been acquiring a more positive connotation, as something that contributes to make the country and the people “special” also on account of its blackness and African origin.

Of course, in such a context, as well as in the US, not only foreign policy priorities which are of course pivotal, but also identity or racial politics have had a bearing on the making of African studies. The main difference in this respect between the US and Brazil, besides of course the relative precariousness of our academic establishment when compared to the mighty US, is that the relationship has been thus far more virtuous than vicious – there is no major tension between the more consolidated tradition of Afro-Brazilian studies and the more recent tradition of African

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<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions and criticism to the text and its argument.

studies<sup>3</sup>. In many ways African studies have come to the fore in our universities as part of the overall process of social reparation for the historical racial injustice of our country, often as a result of claim lodged powerfully by black activism as well as from within Afro-Brazilian studies. Anyhow, when compared to the US, in Brazil African studies are fairly subordinated to African diaspora studies.

Hence, African studies have had a profoundly political history in Brazil: as said they owe a lot to both geo-political and economic interest in the continent and black activism (which means a vast array of organizations and movements, from a wing of the Catholic Church to Marxist and more radical groups) and the world of Afro-Brazilian religion – where memories of Africa have been cherished even in the toughest times – as well as to a pioneering group of anticolonial and left-leaning historians who, starting from the 1980's have insisted that the history of Africa is important to Brazilian history and society. Even in terms of timing, politics are quite present in our history. Alias a history of the South-South is still wanting – and is beyond the scope of this short paper- but here let it suffice by saying that African studies developed in two specific periods of our history that corresponded to two attempts to reposition our nation along the South-South axis. It originated with the progressive government of Quadros (1961) and Goulart (1961-64) and his Independent Foreign Policy (ALBERTO, 2008) – interrupted by the 1964 coup<sup>4</sup> - and as from 2003 was revamped by Lula and Dilma – whose government was unfortunately the victim of a new now more silent coup in 2016. Since then the growth of African studies as well as the investment in the African continent on the side of the Brazilian government have come to a new halt. The period between 1958 and 1964 was seminal.

With the support of the Foreign Office as well as some academic support, and very much in line with the then New Foreign Policy, which meant a de facto association of Brazil with the Non-Allied Movement, two research centres were created: in 1959 the Centre of African and Oriental Studies (CEAO) at the Federal University of Bahia and later the Centre of Afro-Asian Studies (CEAA) at the Candido Mendes University in Rio de Janeiro. The CEAA was created in the period mentioned, but only in 1973 by Candido Mendes de Almeida, a co-founder of the Brazilian Institute for Afro-Asian Studies (IBEAA) in 1961. Also relevant here is the Centre for Studies of African Culture (CECA) at USP, in 1965, which in 1969 was renamed Centre for African Studies (CEA).<sup>5</sup>

In the period between 2002 and 2016 we had a number of quite important changes that contributed to the creation of a more positive political and cultural climate for African studies: in 2003 the 10369 Federal Law made the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian culture compulsory at all levels of education. However vague and underfunded the program was, the law was a Copernican turn and led to a new multiculturalism in education which, coupled to affirmative action in university admittance which also became a federal law soon afterwards, created a new positive climate for a thrust towards internationalization. All in a sudden Africa - and blackness

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<sup>3</sup> There is quite of a scholarship on the social history African studies in the US and on the of to African Studies Association - founded in 1957 and the first president of which was Melville Herskovits,- and its tense relationship to racial politics in the US (see, among many others, Martin and West, 1999 and my own Sansone, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that under Geisel (1974-79) and Figueiredo (1979-85) African Studies were not promoted although there was a significant increase in Brazil's trade and investment in the continent.

<sup>5</sup> In the period until the late 1970's in the development of African studies in Brazil should not be underestimated the role of anti-Salazar exiled Portuguese intellectuals, often associated with the Portuguese Communist Party and the MPLA in Angola, such as Castro Soromenho, Fernando Mourão and Alfredo Margarido.

more generally - changed status from onus to bonus. Let us now see what the status quo is. These days there is a number of Centres that operate as a network often exchanging contacts and visiting scholars from the African continent:

CEAO (Centre of Afro-Oriental Studies) in Bahia – plus the unique Posafro (interdisciplinary graduate program in ethnic and African studies, in which ethnic studies are predominant), CEA (Centre of African Studies) at USP (S. Paulo), CEEA (Centre of African and Asian Studies), UNICAMP (with a powerful research program in African studies) and Research Group in African History at UFF in Rio, plus a number of new Centres of African Studies at UFMG (Belo Horizonte), UNB (Brasília) and UFPE (Recife) and CEBAFRICA at the UFRGS, created in 2015 – these are generally part of the office of foreign relation of the university. In the northern town of S. Luis, at UFMA, a group of young scholars recently has set up a research centre and an undergraduate program in ethnic and African studies. Last but not least we have the UNILAB – the new university founded in 2010, the last year of the Lula presidency, which focuses on the integration of Brazil with Lusophone Africa, where approximately thirty percent of the students are Africans (mostly from Guinea-Bissau) or from Timor.

A few years ago, the Brazilian African Studies Association was founded and has in 2020 over 400 registered members<sup>6</sup>. There are three academic Journals covering African studies, *Afro-Ásia* in Bahia ([www.afroasia.ufba.br](http://www.afroasia.ufba.br)), which is freely available online in pdf, *África* in São Paulo and *AbeAfrica* published by the Brazilian Association of African Studies as from 2018. We have had a number of translation projects into the Portuguese language, also in partnership with Unesco – such as the publication in 2010 of the Portuguese translation of 8 volumes of the *General History of Africa*, originally published in the 1980s - that have aimed at the classics and at producing the hardy needed teaching material for middle and higher education. Moreover, with more intensity since 2003, the first year of the Lula presidency, many junior and senior African students and scholars have been invited to Brazil, to teach or to take courses or for intensive doctoral schools such as the *Fábrica de Ideias* (Factory of Ideas) which has taken place once a year since 1998 ([www.fabricadeideias.info](http://www.fabricadeideias.info)). Some of them have established themselves within the Brazilian academic life<sup>7</sup>.

Let me now focus on a few challenges. Because of insufficient funding, it has been hard to stabilize and consolidate our South-South exchanges. In terms of resources for the South-South to actually happen over the period 1998-2015 several initiatives benefited from the Dutch foundation Sefhis (which was closed down in 2016, by the then much less progressive Dutch government)<sup>8</sup>, a number of funds of the Ford Foundation (especially focusing on South Africa) and, increasingly Brazilian federal funds. There has been very little funding from private companies. The second challenge, if not bottleneck, is the limitation of our geographic focus. We focus on the countries where Portuguese is the official language (not just on account of the common official language and sometimes because of historical connections, but also as a result of foreign language deficiencies in Brazil's higher education system), South Africa (on account of the opportunities offered by the BRIC connection as well as the existence of important comparative lines – extreme

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<sup>6</sup> Information provided by Jacimara Souza Santana president of the *AbeAfrica* on March 15, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> None the less, with the partial exception of UNILAB, there are very few African lecturers at Brazil's 2400 institutions of higher education.

<sup>8</sup> See more on <https://socialhistory.org/en/projects/sephis>.

inequalities, HIV-AIDS, violence, land rights etc.) and Benin and Nigeria (on account studies about slavery, Brazilian returnees to Africa and Afro-Brazilian religions).

The third main challenge derives from the kind of studies we can develop, often from a distance. So, there is a strong emphasis on literature: more than half our PhD theses in African studies are in the field of literature, with a focus on Mozambique, Angola and Nigeria<sup>9</sup>. On top of this there is a lot of archival research – also thanks to networks and digital archives – often in Lisbon, but also done from a distance, not in the African continent or, whenever possible, with very short albeit intensive periods of residence in Africa. Generally speaking, it has been difficult to do fieldwork in Africa, because of the fragility of the South-South connection, but it has been done notwithstanding. Due to dominance of Literature and History and the lack of funding, there is relatively little research related to contemporary African topics.

Here, in passing, I need to comment on the politics of funding: over the last two decades Brazil has changed status from a country where to come to do “tropical research” onto a tropical research country: quite an epistemological change, of course rife with contradictions. When compared to Europe and the US in Brazil there has not been a process of long-term structural investment in African studies, or in any area studies for that matter. When money was available it was used to pay grants to African scholars or to enable fieldwork in Africa rather than in institution building or libraries. This kind of funding has certainly contributed to make African studies in Brazil exciting, but it has added up to certain institutional fragility.

Let me now turn to a few bonuses of our effort to develop African studies. Despite this inherent precariousness African studies done from Brazil – or from any other place in the so-called Global South – can offer a refreshing and new perspective of Africa – if only because of its different angle of observation and, in general, less imperial aura. This is self-evident when we consider the research themes of our projects, which somehow reflect the Brazilian context: inequality and poverty reduction, land rights, women leadership in social movements, slavery and its aftermath, returnee black Brazilian communities, heritage and national biographies, Creole cultures or populations.

In Brazil, and if I can expand, all over South America, African studies cannot and must not be developed along the lines they were developed in the Global North. We have not got the past and resources for that neither we have a similar ethnographic or historiographical sensibility. We should also ask our African colleagues, and their organizations, such as Codesria (Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa) for the social sciences, what do they need and expect of us. And we should ask it repeatedly.

Good news is that there is a growing “horizontal curiosity”, in both Africa and South America, and we should work on that. More than before Brazilian PhD students opt to spend their very valuable sandwich grant in an Africa university – we should bear in mind that it is difficult to travel internationally from Brazil and for many young Brazilian scholars the PhD travel grant (the so-called sandwich grant), or, in case, a post-doc grant is an important investment in future contacts. Traditionally Brazilian social scientists preferred to travel to the US, France and the UK – and tend after the PhD to go back to the same foreign institution whenever they can get funding.

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<sup>9</sup> The study of literature of the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, however, played an important, albeit scarcely acknowledged, role in the creation of a new sensibility towards Africa. Amidst the contemporary generation of Africanist scholars in Brazil few know that already in the early 1970's, for instance, Vilma Areas taught a course on Camoes at the UFF while teaching in fact on Agostinho Neto.

Doing African studies from Brazil is also a way to decolonize our mind and oxygenate our curricula, stimulating a South-South perspective at the cost of our historical “vertical obsession” with the North. This is a very good reason for putting so much of our energy on this scholarship rather than repeating what has been done in terms of African Studies in the Global North, tries to add something new as well as to establish connections that, if only on account of our precariousness, are on a less unequal basis.

In closing this first part of my paper I want to stress that the South-South relationship is still fragile and very much subjected to the whimsies of national and international politics. Generally speaking, progressive governments emphasize it more than conservative governments which, at least in our region, tend to be more in line with the US. I would therefore like to suggest to organizations such as the European Conference of African Studies and the annual conference of the US African Studies Association, that over the last couple of years are engaging with improving the working conditions for scholars in the African continent<sup>10</sup>, to take it as one of their priorities to help making the South-South cooperation sustainable.

The encounter across continents can stimulate research and support the re-orientation of funding towards South-South. This is especially important in our changing world, where, for instance, three of the Brics countries are in a crisis and risk isolation. In sum, the following are the challenges for our near future: Consolidating centres, journals and graduate programs – guaranteeing their sustainability; Finding a place for African studies in the main disciplines of the humanities – in Brazil there is no development studies; Contributing to the empowerment of graduate studies in African countries – also in association with Codesria and Clacso (Latin America Social Sciences Council) in the context of the social sciences.<sup>11</sup>

In Brazil, the development of African studies has to do with a relatively new and growing South-South curiosity and perspective. The South-South perspective is an urgent and topical political project - especially if we want to develop a really universal perspective on issues of identity formation on ethnical or regional basis, nationalism, racism, the interconnection of racism and populism, the reproduction of difference, and the impact of technology on identity formation and cultural production. We are also convinced that the production of knowledge for such purpose needs to be interdisciplinary and multicentered. However, for this very reason the South-South connection and perspective are not a natural fact in the social sciences and require quite a degree of social and theoretical, methodological and political engineering – even more so in the present new Era of the Extremes. It is worth the while to ask ourselves why it has taken so long for it to make inroad in the mainstream of the social sciences – that is, to move from being a political manifesto, the intellectual penchant of the Bandung movement, on to become a tool towards decolonizing our practice as researchers.

We need to discuss the future of South-South exchanges, with special emphasis on Africa. This is quite to the point nowadays, because even though most of us researchers and centres in the South have been having historically many connections with African studies in the North, and many of these contacts and networks have been very

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<sup>10</sup> In this respect, see the 2018 Jean Alman’s presidential lectures at the ASA annual conference, available on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSb\\_N2Ly8VY&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSb_N2Ly8VY&feature=emb_title), the meaningful title of which was “Herskovits must fall”.

<sup>11</sup> I have tried to develop the issue of academic equality in South-South connections within African studies in my recent article “Africa has no special smell” in the Codesria Bulletin 1, 2018.

important in our effort to re-position African studies from the South, I am afraid we have to start envisaging a situation co-determined by decreasing support from Northern donors. Many agencies from the Global North are withdrawing their support and are leaving the Global South to fend for itself. All this considered, in order to develop a new agenda, I suggest a few steps.

To begin with the South-South priority requires a new ethnographic sensibility. Historically, as seen from the South, our curiosity has mostly been South-North much rather than South-South. This is the way poverty, violence and ethno-racial studies have been developed as social problems in Latin America. Also, regional comparison, for instance in terms of inequalities of human development, have mostly compared, for example, Brazil and the US or France, much less than Brazil and, for instance, South Africa. In the case of the US this makes sense, since historically Brazil has more in common with this country than with South Africa, but an excessive focus on the Brazil-US comparison is limiting. This has to do with a set of reasons relating to funding, networks, academic careers, global hierarchies in specific fields of studies and, more generally, the geo-politics of knowledge – which determines which are the places to be researched and the places where data is processed, stored and made available through publication.

Something is changing, however, over the last two decades, and nowadays in investigating in which way Brazil can contribute to the development of Africa we can even speak of a certain South-South Orientalism and Africanism. Orientalism and Africanism were the quintessence of the way people in the global North were conceptualizing the Global South. Nowadays images of the South also travel across the South itself. Especially China, Malaysia, South Africa, India, Turkey<sup>12</sup> and Brazil have become new actors in the Global South, making new things happen and creating new images of (under)development. Brazil is therefore part of this larger trend, but, at least when it comes to State sponsored initiatives, is trying to make a difference: we are not like the Chinese and are not in Africa just to make money, it is said by Brazilian policy makers. In fact, in Africa Brazilian companies have been pursuing profit as any other company, and often operate as ruthlessly as most companies, for instance in terms of pollution, corruption and labour relations. However, they operate in close connection with Brazilian diplomacy in Africa and this compels them to keep certain “developmental” profile at least in their public narrative.

It is necessary to deal with this larger complexity of South-South economic exchanges as well as to focus on a few academic exchanges that elicit both the advantages and drawbacks of South-South connections. There is a few concrete cases of scientific Brazil-Africa projects that make, to my opinion, good news. Let me provide two examples. First, the Brazilian Research Council (CNPq) has managed for a number of years the Pro-Africa Program<sup>13</sup> that requires that in order to qualify for funding the Brazilian research team needs to identify a research team in an African country of similar academic standing; accordingly, funding is in part made available directly to the African partner-team.

Second, several Brazilian graduate programs at universities in the states of S. Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Maranhao, Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais, as part of their effort to internationalize, have singled out similar graduate programs in Africa with which they cooperate and exchange faculty as well as students in a somewhat equal basis,

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<sup>12</sup> For some commentators Turkey is not part of the Global South.

<sup>13</sup> According to CNPq, from 2005-10, five calls for projects were published. Thereafter the program was suspended.

even though most of the funding comes from Brazil. The Federal Agency Capes was, until 2016 quite supportive of such endeavour, especially through the CAPES/AULP Program, for supporting exchanges with African Universities that use Portuguese as teaching language. Fapesp, the State of S. Paulo Science Foundation, has also had a major role in supporting both junior and senior researchers in Africa.

In fact, in the making and coming of age of the social sciences in Brazil, the South-South connection was important right from the beginning albeit implicitly more than explicitly. For Latin American studies and especially Afro-Brazilian studies this is self-evident. The construction of the notion of Africanism, largely through the pioneering work of Melville Herskovits as from the 1930's, is a very good example of a process that worked also South-South, but in which the South – that is, West Africa - was rather a source of inspiration and had little of an agency. Pretty much the same can be said as regards many of the categories associated with the construction of race, racialism and racism. In the construction of these categories local and foreign agendas have been intertwined right from the start, for instance in the case of Bahia, the State that played such central role in the making of Afro-American studies (SANSONE, 2018). Despite this, seen from the point of view of my work at the Federal University of Bahia, it has proven quite hard to make the move from object to subject in the social sciences.

Soon the notion of Africanism travelled back to Africa, as much as the idea that Africans can be divided into two big groups, the Bantu and the Sudanese, roughly corresponding to the Nietzsche's division between Apollonian and Dionysian – a polar perspective dear to Ruth Benedict and later Melville Herskovits and the researchers he deeply inspired in Brazil (HERSKOVITS, 1941). It was a South-South creation, relating West Africa to Brazil by eliciting and even reestablishing historical links when time had severed the cultural continuity between the two shores of the Atlantic. It was largely the result of the work of those, one can call the white heroes of the Black Atlantic (Melville Herskovits (1895-1963), Pierre Verger (1902-1996) and Roger Bastide (1898-1974)). Brazilian scholars (first Edson Carneiro (1912-1972) and Arthur Ramos (1903-1949)) and African scholars take part in it mostly as key informants.

Over the last few decades the sociology, flows and networks of the South-South has seen some important changes. Nowadays this process is taking place in an even more rapidly changing context due to the advance and consolidation of globalization. Below I cite some examples of this change, along with new actors or catalysts:

1. South-South voyages are no longer the preserve of priests, anthropologists and diplomats: over recent years, they have involved black activists, capoeiristas, musicians, candomblé priests, students, business leaders, Pentecostal pastors, advertisers and marketeers, as well as adventurers. Researching these new personal trajectories and the survival strategies that these evince strikes me as important. This could be than of better and lesser known characters, such as the famous musicians Gilberto Gil and Martinho da Vila and the less known, but more numerous Brazilian capoeira *mestres* (masters) who over the last two decades have been setting up capoeira schools and associations in several African countries – sometimes with support from the Foreign Office.

2. The emergence of the internet<sup>14</sup> and new communication technologies in general.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that a large amount of information exists on the web concerning the topics discussed in this text. The exhibition on the web of what until recently were relatively isolated cultural phenomena



3. The strengthening, now in the Global South too, of a set of international agreements and even laws intended to support and divulge not just heritage per se, but more specifically intangible or living heritage. There is plenty of publications on this topic starting from the early 1990's, the same years the term globalization started to be used in the social sciences (FEATHERSTONE, 1990).

4. The maturing of the democratic process, which has by itself generated a growing demand for internationalization and opening, both in Brazil (or Colombia) and in many African countries.

5. While the Global North becomes increasingly invisible or unpredictable, as seen from the South, there are new economic actors in the South: Brics and others. Amazing in the first decade of this century is the growth of the number of embassies of countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina across the South and of economic exchange – of course according to the rules of capitalisms, but it is a novelty anyhow. Presently this general growth of interest for African cultures and commodities experiences a crisis since Brazil, South Africa and India have become more inward looking in term of their foreign relations – for example, cutting down embassy personnel in the South to focus again on the North or making visas more difficult for citizens of the Global South.

In the case of the Portuguese-speaking countries there is a growth – or, in a certain sense, the revival – of the influence of Brazil (and of Angola) in terms of culture, music, fashion, popular religiosity and the neo-Pentecostal churches, which has introduced more variety into the relation with Portuguese-speaking countries – among which Portugal no longer dominates as a source of inspiration.

6. Even though nobody knows with any precision what the Global South means, a new field of studies has developed with at least three qualified journals with the catch phrase Global South in their title: The Global South Journal (Indiana University, merely one person from the Global South in the editorial committee with approximately 30 people from the Global North); Bandung: The Global South Journal (owned by publishing house Brill); and the E-bulletin Global South once promoted by the now demised Dutch Sephis Program. However, it does not seem encouraging that two of the three periodicals are still based and financed in the Global North.

All this considered the question it bears is how to develop within the humanities a new curiosity for the South in the South? How can be engaged in doing so the many peripheries of the Global South? How to construct African studies in Latin America and Latin American studies in Africa? Such “Studies” have often been conceived of as a natural outflow of political priorities – such as in the case of colonial studies in Europe and area studies especially in the US – as well as intellectual dynamics and ethnographic sensibility developed in the North, especially in the former colonial *metropoles*.

One good example to develop further is joint research projects based on themes that are priority both in Africa and Latin America, rather than centred on priorities established by Northern donors. In this respect I think we should collaborate with efforts

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continues to grow exponentially, shifting from invisibility to hyper exposure. This should be considered in our research methodology, as well as in the subject-object relation during research.

<sup>15</sup> See the exhibition *Africa Away From Home* curated by Antonio Motta, in 2011, at the Museu Federal da Abolição in Recife, which shows how much mobile phones, blogs, Orkut, Facebook and Skype have altered the play of forces in day-to-day Brazil-Africa relations.

in this respect endeavored by, for instance, Clacso and Codesria<sup>16</sup> – and see regional cooperation as trampoline to transcontinental cooperation, rather than its opposite. Africa and Latin America are, in many ways, very similar and comparative and collaborative research could tease out project on a vast variety of topics, such as: Violence and poverty, Durable and extreme poverty and the processes of identity formation and cultural production they engender, impact of new communication technologies on daily life, especially socialization and economical activities, Social movements, Sexual culture – such as gay scenes, (Dis)organized crime, urban (un) planning, patrimonialization of historical city centres, globalization of Unesco criteria – that often operate as global icons with local meanings, the politics of tangible and intangible heritage. It goes without saying that the viability of these research proposals relies on political priorities and the availability of funding.

Let us focus on one of them, namely heritage, heritage preservation and heritage economics – a topic that deserves a careful South-South perspective and that offers interesting insights into how we can promote the South-South perspective. Many continuing contradictions and tensions notwithstanding the quality of the exchange between the North and the South has changed dramatically, and to the better. Over the last century and a half, we have moved from encounters in the North – from expos, exhibits, museum, circuses where a sort of exotic gaze of the South and the South-South was created– to collaborative projects with a somewhat equal distribution of power and responsibilities between partners in the South. The field of intangible heritage is especially interesting, if only because our two continents are, as it were, the continents of the intangible, with few regional exceptions, especially in Egypt and Mexico. They are anyway the regions where the list of intangible culture has grown the most over the last two decades. There is already at least one comparative research South-South in such a theme, by Evaldo de Barros (2014), that compares the patrimonialization of the dance and performance of *bumba meu boi* in Brazil and *timbila* in Mozambique.<sup>17</sup>

B. It also requires that we improve our methodology, by refining the techniques of comparison, not only questioning what we compare and why we compare, but also going beyond the large scale of the nation as is usually done. In ethnic studies, for instance, there is a tradition of comparing nations, or colonial styles of different empires, but much less so there has been an endeavor to compare cities (conceived of as systems of opportunities), cultural phenomena and their reinvention or revival, the politics and practice of different heritage sites, biographies of national leaders, processes of patrimonialization of, for example, a music genre, politics of archeological excavation in various sites and so forth.

C. We must advance also in terms of the politics of the university and funding. In Brazil we are experiencing an ironical situation: we are too great and “wealthy” to receive US and, to some extent, European money, but the mastering of our national money is rather whimsical. The Brics, which seemed the engine of the South-South, are nowadays much less in evidence in terms of leadership – as I said, South Africa, Brazil and India have become much more provincial. The real question is how to conceive of the South-South exchange so as to make it sustainable: based on our own resources

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<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, both CLACSO and CODESRIA are also largely dependent on funding from the Global North – nowadays mostly Scandinavian countries.

<sup>17</sup> *Bumba meu boi* is a popular dance and music combination of African origin performed all over Northern Brazil that was declared national cultural heritage about a decade ago. *Timbila* is also a music and dance combination originated in central Mozambique that had become popular already under colonial rule, and that was declared national heritage of the country also about ten years ago.

(perhaps also crowd sourcing plus the support of a selected number of private companies) as well as the support of key programs in the North such as the program of excellence Africa Multiple at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. Ours ought to be an exchange based on the win-win principle, where both sides benefit somewhat equally. For this reason, the agenda of each partner, including Bayreuth University, should be stated in good detail in order to make the desired South-South cooperation less dependent as possible on the goodwill of the North.

Personally, I am convinced that, rather than operating once again as gatekeepers between Africa and the Americas and arguing endlessly on that which defines black cultures or what is exactly Africanism, as especially anthropologists from many countries have tended to do, social scientists from the North as well as the South should act as facilitators, creating bridges rather than channeling or funneling. If only because there are millions of Afro-Latino and tens or hundreds of dynamic African cultures: too many to fit into essential categorizations of what being black, “afro” or African could be. In fact, in Brazil we have also been challenged in our traditional description of the tenets of Afro-Brazilian culture, very much focused in Afro-Catholic syncretic practices, which do not account for the many Afro-Brazilians who participate in the (new) Pentecostal churches.

Finally, I would like to expand on how new communication technologies, in spite of the fact that they offer new challenges to the practice of the social sciences in the Global South, can also offer new opportunities for collaborative projects based on new combinations of distance and face-to-face teaching/learning (just think of international doctoral schools), crowd sharing, crowd sourcing and new forms of collective curatorship of research data of a variety of genres. Let me give, quickly, two good though relatively small examples of what can and should be done, also thanks to a critical and creative use of communication technologies, and I am sure that there is more to it. The first one is the PhD intensive summer school Factory of Ideas, based at CEAO - Federal University of Bahia, which has been going on for the last 20 years and started to practice the South-South connection before the Global South was even invented as a catch phrase. With a heavy teaching load and discussing project in full time immersion workshops, it creates networks and makes internationalization accessible to students from peripheral universities and disadvantaged backgrounds. The course introduces ideas from abroad while presenting our research and ideas to a broader audience.

The second project is the Afrodigital Museum – a virtual museum without ownership which is centred on three key notions: digital repatriation, digital donation, digital ethnography and historiography (investigating on the net but also through the net) and, overall, digital generosity. This digital museum has stations in a few Brazilian universities (UFBA, UFPE, UFRN, UERJ, UFMA) and in the University of Coimbra, and has been collaborating with the Mozambique Historical Archives and INEP in Guinea Bissau. I reckon that the Afrodigital Museum could very well be an important tool for a transnational South-South network centred on supporting the development of African studies. Its technology is very simple and always based on “poor technologies” as well as open sources software and platforms, and it can easily be shared. It could be a good tool for both teaching and doing research – as a digital repository as well as means to circulate our research findings by means of digital exhibits.

The Factory of Ideas has thus far managed to survive by becoming a network of graduate programs (at UFBA, UNICAMP and UFMA) which together produce and raise funds for this summer school (even though it always a challenge to get funds for African

students to attend). The Afrodigital Museum, however, has a tougher time struggling for sustainability in a context where in both Brazil and the African continent, thus far, there has been little investment in the field of digital humanities – in spite of the political progress in the field, such as adopting Creative Commons in our practice. Both projects in order to yield their best fruits require continuity of planning and investment, consolidation and constant experimentation. This, again, begs the crucial question of the politics of funding of the South-South.

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