



IN FOCUS

## ANTHROPOLOGY ON A GLOBAL SCALE

*In light of the AAA's objective to develop its international relations and collaborations, AN invited international anthropologists and presidents of national and regional anthropological associations to engage with questions about the practice of anthropology today, particularly issues of anthropology and its relationships to globalization and postcolonialism, and what this might mean for the future of anthropology and future collaborations between anthropologists around the world, and relations between anthropologists and the communities in which we work. Please send your responses in 400 words or less to Stacy Lathrop at slathrop@aaanet.org.*

## A Different Global Scenario in Anthropology

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**N**ot surprisingly, new challenges and opportunities are emerging for anthropology in the current global era. Indeed, the discipline has historically reflected



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the transformations of the world system. In the 20th century, anthropology was highly impacted by changes in natives' social positions. From distant others, natives became global migrants, active political and economic members of ethnically segmented nation-states. But now anthropologists have an additional factor to consider: the qualitative and quantitative growth of anthropological production outside of historically hegemonic centers. In the past five decades, the worldwide expansion of Western university systems made anthropology a globalized discipline in itself.

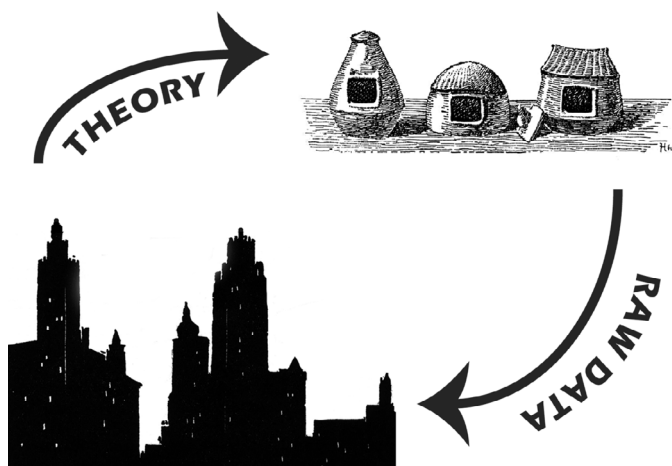
anthropological productions. English has become the global language to the detriment of a more diversified linguistic and stylistic scenario. Think, for instance, of the size of anthropology in Japan or Brazil. But few read Japanese or Portuguese outside of their original language communities. Furthermore, only a small internationalized elite interacts on a global level. These elites often act as brokers, a way of accumulating professional power.

Although anthropologists have long been weaving transnational networks, most of their work—including systems of funding, training and publishing—remain bound within the confines of nation-states. This is mostly because anthropologists keep their allegiances to cliques that operate within these boundaries and partially derive their prestige from being members of national circuits of power. Thus, nation-states remain the primary place where the reproduction of the profession is defined in particular ways. In consequence, there is still a great need for stronger intercommunication and exchange across national borders.

### Diversifying Anthropological Communities

As anthropologists, we can strive to make globalization work in favor of ever more diversified anthropological communities at the international level. We need to foster the visibility of non-metropolitan works of quality and enhance our modes of exchanging information. Translation of different anthropological materials into English is important to help diversify knowledge of the international production of anthropolo-

gy. But unidirectional translation is not enough. If we want to avoid linguistic monotony, we also need to increase the quantity of heterodox exchanges and translations. German anthropologists should be translated into Japanese, Mexicans into German, Australians into Portuguese, Brazilians into Russian, and so on. National congresses of anthropology could always include sessions and debates on other forms of anthropological knowledge and on how to improve anthropological



### COMMENTARY

#### Confined within Nation-States

Globalization has increased the number of contacts and exchanges among people located in different countries. In the academic world, this has meant a growth in the international flows of knowledge and the possibility of increasing cooperation. In many ways, such trends have mirrored unequal relations existing within larger structural globalization processes. Theory, for instance, has flown from metropolitan centers to non-metropolitan centers while the flow of "raw data" makes the opposite movement. Up to the present, anthropologists from the traditional hegemonic centers of the discipline seldom take into consideration other

#### Formation of the World Council of Anthropological Associations

*By Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (U Brasilia)*

In June 2004 the conference "World Anthropologies: Strengthening the International Organization and Effectiveness of the Profession," sponsored by Wenner-Gren, was held in Recife, Brazil, immediately before the 24th biannual meeting of the Association of Brazilian Anthropologists. It brought together 14 representatives from anthropological organizations, including the presidents of the associations for Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, India, Russia, South Africa, the UK and the US. The presidents of the following international associations were also present: European Association of Social Anthropologists, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Latin American Association of Anthropology and Pan African Anthropological Association. The Japanese society sent its director of international relations.

After discussing several possible mechanisms and initiatives to increase international cooperation, participants decided to create the World Council of Anthropological Associations. The council's primary objectives are to promote the discipline of anthropology in an international context; cooperation and the sharing of information among world anthropologists; jointly organized events of scientific debate and cooperation in research activities and dissemination of anthropological knowledge. This network is open to new members. In 2005, the Catalan and the Portuguese associations joined the WCAA. For more information, see [www.wcaanet.org](http://www.wcaanet.org).

diversity within the international community of anthropologists.

Other initiatives can help to create and consolidate a more plural anthropological community as well as to offer more diversified access to global anthropological knowledge. We can take advantage of several means and processes that are already in place, such as online communication and the increased presence of international participants at national anthropology congresses. An electronic collection of classics from different countries and a global anthropology e-journal are real possibilities. Some of us are already participating in projects that have this kind of political goal, such as the World Anthropologies Network that aims to contribute to a more pluralistic

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## Global Scale

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landscape of forms of anthropology around the world. This network is also open to the potential of ongoing globalization processes, ones that break from the historical confines of the flow of anthropological knowledge from powerful metropolitan centers to peripheries.

### Role of Professional Associations

Another way of creating connections and fostering exchange is to capitalize on already existing national and international anthropological associations, which serve as nodal points for professionals, networks, resources, policies and discourses on the aim and scope of anthropology.

The creation in 2004 of the World Council of Anthropological Associations, which I facilitate, was an important step in this direction. The Recife, Brazil, meeting was the first occasion representatives of associations discussed common issues and consistently worked on common perspectives. The council was conceived as a flexible network rather than as an institution so as to avoid the weight of formalization in decision-making.

While the founders of this network were aware of the council's initial fragility, we also knew that such a coalition has great potential to develop international collaborations.

Although anthropologists have long been weaving transnational networks, most of their work—including systems of funding, training and publishing—remain bound within the confines of nation-states.

National and international associations have capillary modes of reaching a great number of colleagues all over the world. They organize conferences, keep newsletters and have different kinds of publications and websites. The council of associations has the capital to be a powerful foothold for the international dissemination of anthropological knowledge in its diversity and a political body for anthropologists to have a voice in today's global world.

The achievement of the council's goals depends, as usual, on the political activity of our leaderships and on the support granted by our colleagues, although surely it is a positive sign that the creation of the council was met with unanimous enthusiasm. Besides anthropologists' propensity to acknowledge the value of diversity, there are other reasons why the council quickly became a reality. One reason is that it is based on a democratic vision of how anthropologists should intercommunicate and cooperate in a global era. The council represents the recognition that now is the time to start new, horizontal modes of exchange and dissemination of knowledge among forms of anthropology around the world, whether they are shaped by national, regional or institutional practices. The 2004 Recife conference undoubtedly initiated a process for deepening international cooperation in anthropology in a more cosmopolitan vein.

I am sure that many colleagues and institutions are willing to explore the plurality of anthropological knowledge that is available today but which unfortunately remains largely unknown. I am also convinced that we need more diverse international voices and perspectives participating in the assessment and development of anthropological knowledge. The creation of the WCAA brings hope that a different global scenario in anthropology is possible. Its consolidation is crucial for a new global anthropological community to thrive. ■

*Gustavo Lins Ribeiro served as president of the Brazilian Association of Anthropology from 2002–04, and is facilitator of the World Council of Anthropological Associations. He is also a member of the World Anthropologies Network and co-editor, with Arturo Escobar, of the forthcoming World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations within Systems of Power. The above text expresses the author's own views and not necessarily those of the WCAA.*

# Reinventing Anthropology, Anew

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In discussing prospects for creating what Gustavo Lins Ribeiro terms a "post-imperial" world anthropology that would promote greater diversity and equality, we need to begin with a strong dash of realism. Imperialism is still with us, albeit cloaked in fresh hypocrisies about civilizing missions, even if the hegemony of North Atlantic capitalism is increasingly disputed. The "War on Terror," not unrelated to the nervousness these shifts are provoking, poses new challenges to civil liberties, human rights and respect for cultural difference. The context, North and South, is one of increasingly strong regulation of institutional academic life by the disciplines of both state and market. The latest efforts to reinvent our subject will remain as incomplete as previous attempts at "decolonization" if they simply perpetuate the professional institutional enclosure of anthropological argument, and if world anthropology is seen simply as a matter of improving communication between professionals located in different national and regional settings while maintaining their segregation.



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## COMMENTARY

### Northern Hegemony: It's the Money, Stupid?

Anyone who attends AAA annual meetings will be conscious of the enforced absence of colleagues invited from less-well-funded countries and, hopefully, that there are thousands of anthropologists in the world whose names they will never know and for whom participation is unthinkable. There are obvious practical steps that could improve that situation, including holding meetings elsewhere in the world, as the Association of Social Anthro-

pologists has been doing periodically, but the problem runs deeper than money, and money does not provide a simple discriminator between Northern and Southern forms of anthropology. In the case of Mexico, anthropology has a long history and connections with state projects; these have given it a powerful institutional presence. Yet, there are obvious resource disparities between, for example, the anthropologists working in the Chiapas branch of the national institution Center for Higher Studies and Research in Social Anthropology (CIESAS) and the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH), the regional institution most focused on training social scientists from local indigenous communities. Researchers in the UNACH's Institute of Indigenous Studies carry out exciting research, but it is less likely to be known unless it is cited by scholars whose work travels more widely.

If patterns of institutional hierarchy (and total exclusion of some perspectives from the institutional academic field) are not restricted to the North, it remains important that there are many countries in the South where anthropology enjoys no institutionalized existence and its practitioners find themselves obliged to teach and research about other matters. Here too practical measures for support and inclusion in an international professional community are readily conceivable, but again the issues run beyond money. What if, as Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar, writing in the June 2005 issue of *Critique of Anthropology*, contend, "dominant anthropologies" (read those centered in Britain, France and the US) act as "normalizing machines that preclude the enablement of different anthropological practices and knowledge worldwide"? Perhaps South-South collaborations would be the best way to promote counter-hegemonic diversity in anthropology, echoing strategies to contest Northern political and economic hegemony more broadly?