

Brazilian scientific production: Emerging epistemologies, ontologies and value systems.

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Abstract. There are a growing number of counter-hegemonic Brazilian scientific productions. The gradual process of decolonization of Brazilian universities, a result of the struggle of social movements, has opened space for researchers to present alternatives for scientific production. In this paper we will work with the hypothesis that there is a significant number of Brazilian academic works that seek to detach themselves from hegemonic theories based on new alternatives of epistemologies, ontologies and value systems. To support it, we point to ten works that use emerging epistemologies and ontologies and value systems to formulate conceptions and theories about socially marginalized groups.

Keywords. Decolonization; emerging epistemologies; counter-hegemonic theories; marginalized groups.

1. The power of colonialism

In recent years, a debate emerged within the human sciences about the existence of hegemonic theories within scientific production. These reflections point out that the hegemonic scientific productions are linked to a Eurocentric vision. Such predominance is one of the consequences of the colonization process carried out in the southern continents, such as South America and Africa.

Social colonization was responsible for producing a historic tradition of political and cultural domination, which submitted to its ethnocentric vision the knowledge of the world, the meaning of life and social practices. Universities located in colonized countries did not remain exempt from this reality, they come from reason modern and do not constitute fully autonomous institutions. (Bruno, 2019: 42)

For Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *“we were all so socialized in the idea that the anti-colonial liberation struggles of the 20th century put an end to colonialism that it is almost heresy to think that colonialism did not end, it just changed its form or clothing, and that our difficulty is to name it properly”* (2018: 50). The colonialism pointed out by Boaventura de Sousa Santos also impacts scientific production and produces as a consequence Eurocentric hegemonic theories. Bruno (2019) relies on Mignolo (2010) to reflect on the concept

of "Coloniality of Power" - initially formulated by Anibal Quijano in 1989 - pointing out that the colonialist structure expands on several levels, involving the control of the economy, the knowledge, strength and natural resources. Starting from this theoretical framework, we can draw a parallel with Brazil. This country has a history tainted by three hundred years of slavery, was invaded by the Portuguese Empire and passed only 134 years since the abolition of slavery. It still presents many characteristics of a not-so-distant past. An exemplar case, focus of this paper, are the universities.

The projects of Brazilian Universities were Eurocentric projects. The Federal Universities oldest in the country had a completely white profile and their social role was restricted to the formation of the country's political and economic elite, whose transfer of knowledge European Union, since its formation, has been a source of pride and a way of regulating the quality of the knowledge produced within it. (Bruno, 2019.: 51)

With the affirmative policies of racial quotas¹ and the whole struggle of racial movements there was a

¹Art. 3 In each federal institution of higher education, the vacancies referred to in art. 1 of this Law will be filled, by course and shift, by self-declared blacks, browns and indigenous people and by people with disabilities, under the terms of the legislation, in proportion to the total number of vacancies at least equal to the respective proportion of blacks, browns, indigenous people and people with disabilities. disability in the population of the unit of the Federation where the institution is installed”
Access:
http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato20112014/2012/lei/112711.htm

Expressive advance in the academic formation of ethnic-racially, socially segregated and/or under-represented in the power structures of Brazilian society, stressing not only from the outside, but mainly internally. This advance has revolutionized the institutional dynamics of functioning, production and reproduction of knowledge and generated a great impact on the representation of these populations in the whole of higher education, both in the quantitative aspect and qualitative. (Bruno, 2019: 42)

For this reason, our intention is to describe works that were produced by researchers who are most often part of these marginalized groups and who, based on their research, manage to present new perspectives on such groups and end up becoming symbols of resistance to colonial roots. In this article we will work with the hypothesis that there is a significant number of Brazilian academic works that seek to detach themselves from hegemonic theories based on new alternatives of epistemologies, ontologies and value systems.

2. Work selection methodology

Between the months of January and March, as part of the task of the UNIGOU International Exchange Program, we mapped academic works made by Brazilian researchers in different online repositories². Because the first author resides in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, we focused on preference for repositories from universities in Rio de Janeiro, such as Universidade Federal Fluminense, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro and Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

We chose the online repositories of these universities because of the ease they present for filtering academic works. We gave preference to monographs, dissertations and theses, searching for works that used counter-hegemonic methodologies and with themes different from the usual ones.

We aimed at finding emerging epistemologies, ontologies and value systems made invisible by the colonialist structure of scientific production, and for this operation we selected around 20 works. The academic productions were selected from searches for specific keywords: "quilombolas"; "territory"; "favelas"; "public security"; "popular territories"; "anti-racism"; "popular education"; "social movements"; and "culture". We opted for these keywords since these cover topics in which debates about alternatives approaches in universities in Brazil are more prominent.

As previously mentioned, Rio de Janeiro presents itself as the perfect territorial scope for this research.

However, for an analysis of these emerging counter-hegemonic theories we decided to select 10 among this sample of 20 works. In the selection of

the works, we gave preference to the ones in which the researcher himself would have a "speaking place" on the subject discussed. The concept of "place of speech" is linked to the visibility of marginalized subjects within the social structure. Such individuals, for being part of socially oppressed groups, have alternative theoretical conceptions and constructions to the hegemonic ones. "The place of speech" is the claim for these groups to present their views.³

This factor was decisive for the choices because the empirical experiences of the authors appear as crucial for their analyzes and perceptions about the particularities and subjectivities of the themes studied. When the researchers themselves are part of this marginalized group or place they study, they bring with them a baggage of understandings and visions that reveal specificities that were not present before.

In the process of mapping the works, we started by reading the summaries, objectives, methodologies, and hypothesis, in order to obtain a broader understanding of each of them and from this to select those that we would go deeper into. Finally, we seek to contextualize and compare the selected works, drawing parallels and highlighting commonalities, research methodologies, types of approach, theoretical constructions, which consequently lead us to reach the final objective of our research: map invisibles epistemologies, ontologies and counter-hegemonic value systems.

3. The decolonization of universities

The Eurocentric domain is still very pervasive over the production of epistemologies and value systems. The colonialist roots erase, oppress, marginalize, and make invisible the knowledge produced by the colonized. These characteristics are reflected, for example, in the Brazilian educational system. The pedagogical methods applied aim to reproduce the contents and not to produce knowledge. According to Meneses,

In many of the countries that left the colonial relationship the modern Eurocentric project continues to perpetuate itself through education, where school usually has the role of standardizing and homogenizing knowledge considered valid. (2019; 21)

This hegemonization results in a pattern of scientific production in which oppressed social groups are increasingly silenced since university itself maintains practices based on this Eurocentric axis. Hegemonic practices of knowledge increasingly repress alternative academic thinking suggested by those who do not occupy the top of the social

² Online repositories function as a database for publications carried out at the University. On the repositories websites we can find PDFs of Monographs, Dissertations, Theses and Articles.

³ "Speaking is not restricted to the act of uttering words, but of being able to exist. We think of place of speech as refuting traditional historiography and hierarchy of knowledge resulting from the social hierarchy". (Ribeiro, 2017: 37)

structure. The westernization⁴ institutions also constantly seek to erase the memory of those who were exterminated in the past, posing as if there was a single way of producing history, knowledge and science.

The problem – because there is a problem indeed – with this tradition is that it has become hegemonic. This hegemonic notion of knowledge production has generated discursive scientific practices and has set up interpretive frames that make it difficult to think outside of these frames. But this is not all. This hegemonic tradition also actively represses anything that actually is articulated, thought and envisioned from outside of these frames. For these reasons, the emerging consensus is that our institutions must undergo a process of decolonization both of knowledge and of the university as an institution. (Mbembe, 2016: 33).

Mbembe's (2016) approach to the question of the decolonization of the university and knowledge is very important for our intention. Exposing that there are authors who belong to repressed groups producing knowledge in different ways and with great impact is very important in this decolonization process. According to Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu,

‘Decolonising’ involves a multitude of definitions, interpretations, aims and strategies. To broadly situate its political and methodological coordinates, ‘decolonising’ has two key referents. [...]Indeed, one of the key challenges that decolonising approaches have presented to Eurocentric forms of knowledge is an insistence on positionality and plurality and, perhaps more importantly, the impact that taking ‘difference’ seriously would make to standard understandings.[...]The emphasis on reflexivity reminds us that representations and knowledge of the world we live in are situated historically and geographically. The point is not simply to deconstruct such understandings, but to transform them. As such, some decolonising approaches seek a plurality of perspectives, worldviews, ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies in which scholarly enquiry and political praxis might take place. (2018: 2)

In Brazil, affirmative action policies for racial quotas promote a change in the profile of participants in Public Universities. For example, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE⁵ 2018), between 2000 and 2017 there has been an increase from 2.2% to 9.3% in the number of black people with bachelor degrees in Brazil. However, the number of white people who graduated in 2017 was 22.9%. Another interesting number, also raised by the IBGE, is that in 2005, one year after the formulation of racial quotas, the number of black people in universities was 5.5% and in 2018 this number rose to 50.3 %, representing more than half of the number of enrollments in Brazilian public universities. However, this increase in enrollment only represented university entrance data, not permanence data. Therefore, as much as the quota policy increased the number of new entrants, staying within the university was still very difficult.

⁴ “They are ‘Westernized’ in the sense that they are local instantiations of a dominant academic model based on a Eurocentric epistemic canon. A Eurocentric canon is a canon that attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production”. (Mbembe, 2016: 32)

⁵ <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/educacao/noticia/2018-05/cotas-for-am-revolucao-silenciosa-no-brasil-afirma-especialista>

This is reflected in the data collected in 2017 by the Institute of Applied Economic⁶ Research that only 32% of university graduates were black.

In any case, our objective here is not to detail all the impacts (see, for example, Guarnieri e Melo-Silva, 2017) caused by affirmative action policies. Here, we contextualize some works to highlight how they are challenging the Eurocentric structure of Brazilian universities. Since the number of black people entering universities increases and they begin to occupy spaces that were previously completely infeasible for them, there is a change both institutionally and in relation to an increase in counter-hegemonic academic productions.

4. Results

To develop our research, we selected ten (table 1) academic works that we believe have great relevance within this proposal.

Author	Title of work	Institution	Source of access to work
Marina de Oliveira Mendonça	Conflicts over use and definitions of territories in traditional caiçara populations	Institute of Research and Urban and Regional Planning of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro	https://pantheon.ufrj.br/
Marianna de Araoz e Silva	Counter-hegemonic cultural and communicational processes in Rio's favelas: an analysis of the hip-hop	Center for Philosophy and Human Sciences at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro	https://pantheon.ufrj.br/
Diana da Silva Barbosa	Importance of territory for the identity process of the Quilombolas and their territorial conflicts: Pedra do Sal and Sacopã - RJ	Institute of Geography of the State University of Rio de Janeiro	https://www.bdtid.ufrj.br:8443/
Eblin Joseph Farage	State, territory and daily life in the Maré Favelas Complex	Faculty of Social Service of the State University of Rio de Janeiro	https://www.bdtid.ufrj.br:8443/
Palloma Valle Menezes	Between the "crossfire" and the "minefield": an ethnography of the process of "pacification of Rio's favelas".	Institute of Social and Political Studies at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro	https://pantheon.ufrj.br/
Jonara dos Santos Fernandes	Did he come to apologize to me? The look of poor children and adolescents on the Public Security Policy in Rio de Janeiro	Postgraduate Program in Sociology and Law at the Federal Fluminense University	https://app.uff.br/riuf/
Mayte Rodrigues de Oliveira	The exchange of fire scares you, but exchange of looks with me is more tense	Department of Anthropology at the Federal Fluminense University	https://app.uff.br/riuf/
Renato de Souza Dória	Antiracist education, memory and identity in Quilombo of Camorim	Philosophy and Human Sciences Institute of Federal Fluminense University	https://app.uff.br/riuf/
Denilson Araujo de Oliveira	Territorialities in the globalized world: other readings of the city from the Hip Hop culture in the carioca metropolis.	Graduate Program in Geography at the Fluminense Federal University	https://app.uff.br/riuf/
Natá Neres do Nascimento	The favela is sending the message: constructions of new narratives in the Alemão Complex	Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro	https://ocid.org/000-0-0003-4408-8991

Table 1 - Author, title, Educational Institution and access link of the selected works.

The works carried out by Mendonça, Barbosa and Dória on the relationship of traditional communities – quilombolas and caiçaras communities - with their territories is intriguing. We would like to draw attention to the way in which they approach the question of the identity of these communities.

Cultural practices quilombolas enable the emergence of links between the group and its territory, as it is the from these practices in certain spaces of their territories that attribute to these meanings and become what Bonnemaïson (2002) calls geosymbols, that is, for the author these assigned places of meaning for certain groups assume a symbolic dimension that strengthens their identity. Therefore, quilombola practices allow the characterization of the group differentiating from others, and thus creating its borders. (BARBOSA, 2012; 12)

The authors' ethnographic approaches capture specific particularities and subjectivities in their research and present the territory as a place endowed with meanings and symbologies. The authors emphasize that the relationship of these social groups with their territories is a symbol of resistance, as they fight for their right to preserve their identities and memories, seeking recognition

⁶https://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35896

of their cultures and preservation of their territories. In the case of the existing communities in Rio de Janeiro, much of this struggle for existence and preservation is concentrated in the resistance against real estate speculation. These territorial disputes result in urban conflicts and aggression between residents and the state police force. According to Dória,

"Both memory and the identity of a social group are a social product and not a given, being therefore collectively constructed and subjected to fluctuations and transformations constants (POLLAK, p.2, 1992). Thus, memory and identity are constructions triggered from the specifics of each social context in which they are made emerge, having its frames of reference (the social group), its contexts of disputes (places) and the traumas that make them emerge (events)." (2020: 13)

The works of Farage, Menezes, Fernandes and Oliveira have a different object of study from the previous ones: the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Maybe de Oliveira's monograph is one of the most provocative. Living in a favela and experiencing the oppressive daily life of Rio de Janeiro, she conducts an ethnographic study seeking to understand the processes of construction of the accusatory category "involved with crime", how it is manipulated and its effects on identity inscriptions and trajectories of youth in the favela.

There are, through the structures that criminalize poverty and maintain structuralized racism, a profile that has local and cultural characteristics that inserts individuals into this category. [...] Living in the favela, dressing like a bandit – that is, dressing like the "trends", since the bandits are also inserted in the consumer society – without take excesses into account, articulate as a favelado, with whom they have etc., all this associates the individual to the involvement with the crime. [...] However, the latter, once recognized as fully involved-with the criminality, would be the killable. In other words, they would be owners of unqualified lives, as indicated by Agambem (2002), or of wasted lives that would not require rehabilitation, as pointed out by Bauman (2005). (Oliveira 2018: 51-53)

Also the works of Menezes and Fernandes bring an insight into the daily life of favelas. Menezes' research is based on nearly four years of fieldwork in the Santa Marta and Cidade de Deus favelas, where the author delves into the relationship between the Pacifying Police Units.⁷ She points out that the entry of the Police into the favelas, for residents, drug dealers and merchants, seemed just another routine intervention. As usual in police incursions, there were exchanges of fire, deaths and red-handed arrests, characteristics that were part of the harsh reality of Rio's favelas. However, something unusual in the eyes of the mentioned subjects happened: the military police remained in the territory and transformed the daily logic.

As a consequence, the peripheral population started to constantly live with conflicts between police and criminals or rival factions, as their living space became a space for shootings, military interventions, drug and weapons trafficking. In these conflicts many innocent people become a target and "collateral damage". Menezes points out that these

events end up becoming "*structuring principles of the phenomenology of everyday life in the favelas*" (MENEZES, 2015; 24) Starting from the constatation that the creation of the UPPs completely changes the structure of life in the periphery, she investigates, through extensive and detailed fieldwork, the adaptation process and the community's view of the UPPs.

Fernandes' (2017) work has a similar methodology but with a different and innovative focus: the children who live in the favela and their experiences. The research was realized within a social project maintained by a large congregation of the Catholic Church that assists around 250 children and adolescents. Based on interviews and perception of experiences, the author points out different types of domination, the relationship of these individuals with both parallel power and state power, the individual's relationship with their territory of experience and perception of children and adolescents about rights and security.

The last work we selected focusing on the criminalization of the favela is the one by Farage. The thesis seeks to overcome homogenizing views on peripheral territories and their residents. These views treat the favela as a "space of absence", which attribute to it its characteristics of being a "city apart" from bourgeois territories. The bourgeois hegemonic view describes these spaces as places of prostitution, crime, trickery and disorder, which results in segregation from both a spatial and social points of view, since the favela population is often treated as disposable or as non-citizens.

For this analysis, Farage deepens the daily life of the Complexo de Favelas da Maré, in an attempt to give visibility to the contradictions of that territory and also to the social relations that exist there. The author suggests an interesting approach, understanding the favela as heterogeneous territories. Territories that express distant singularities from the point of view of both social relations and historical formations of the urban and political composition of the territory as well as of the capitalist relations of production. In the author's words, "the study seeks the existing connections between capitalist development and its materialization in the intra-urban space, considering the heterogeneity of the constitution of the territory and its population" (Farage 2012: 25). This is because, "the territory is both a product and a producer of social relations, expressing contradictions, disputes, tensions and resistances" (Idem.: 26).

Nascimento, Oliveira and Silva, have the hip-hop and "passinho" movements existing in the city of Rio de Janeiro as their research objects. They seek to understand how hip-hop and funk music became important symbols of resistance in Rio's favelas, and how these are often used to challenge the existing social order that marginalizes popular culture. Silva, works with the idea that hip-hop becomes a symbol

⁷https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/03/11/politica/1520769227_645322.html

of resistance against the idea of a "true culture", that is, an elitist and hegemonic culture that treats popular culture as empty artistic manifestations.

For this, the author observes the dualism between "culture of the people" and "culture for the people", where the latter is part of the hegemonic conception that peripheral communities do not present an adequate culture. A characterization that justifies the elite to assume the position of "true culture" to reinforce its values and to legitimize its leadership in front of the favela. Hip-hop culture is the way that the people find to reinvent themselves within a social organization of domination and oppression, in which the popular demonstration becomes a symbol of resistance.

In the opposite direction of the media empire that classifies the favela as a stronghold of criminals and who describes it as a space of need, graffiti artists show their communities from their own perspective, away from control and stereotypes of the dominant layers. In response to a high-rated program that makes misery, a consequence of exploitation and social inequality, a diversion, favelados sing the indignation of the periphery and turn it into poetry. And for the residents who are just another number on the count of deaths after the invasion violence of the police, the tribute is reserved in the form of a portrait painted on the facades of the community's masonry houses. (SILVA, p. 11, 2007).

5. Conclusion

All the works presented have a differential: the researchers have a "place of speech". All authors research their own experiences, seeking to show conceptions to the academic environment through subjective and more sensitive perspectives. The vast majority carry out a dense ethnographic work, paying attention to more peculiar and sensitive details, bringing an important complement to ethnographic studies. The plurality that exists in Rio de Janeiro demands attention and unique specificities. The authors presented were able to approach with their alternative methodologies, which sought to understand phenomena as subjects, not treating them as simple objects of research. Selected authors describe struggles of traditional communities against real estate speculation; reflections about the different daily experiences lived by favela residents; and reflections on how cultural movements function as symbols of resistance against oppression. In doing so, they demonstrate how much the sensitivity and subjectivity behind research is capable of generating new epistemologies, ontologies and value systems.

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