

Foreword

Gilberto Velho and Karina Kuschnir

The texts selected in this Urban Anthropology dossier are intended to provide a sample of just some of the lines of research and analysis developed in this field in Brazil, both in the past and today. The first part consists of interviews with two anthropologists who pioneered work on this theme as researchers and lecturers, Ruth Cardoso and Eunice Durham. Their views had huge influence on colleagues and students who paved the way for research in the city. The interviews published here were conducted as part of the important project “Urban Narrators: Urban anthropology and ethnography in Brazilian cities,” coordinated by Cornelia Eckert and Ana Luiza Carvalho da Rocha.

Gilberto Velho’s article presents his own personal view and analysis of urban anthropology, referring to various points of his career and his academic formation in a broad sense. The texts that follow cover a variety of topics, illustrating the wealth of alternatives found in the field in question. The dossier includes Claudia Rezende’s work on pregnancy as seen from a comparative generational perspective among middle-class groups in Rio de Janeiro; an analysis of urban expansion in Brasília and Goiânia by Cristina Patriota de Moura; an ethnography by Heitor Frúgoli Jr. and Enrico Spaggiari on a stigmatized urban area of São Paulo; a study by Alessandra Siqueira Barreto on associationism among Brazilian immigrants in Lisbon; research by Alberto Goyena on urban transformations based on the experience of demolitions; and finally a proposal for an ethnographic study, exploring the world of urban drawing, by Karina Kuschnir.

Clearly, this group of texts can only hint at the huge variety of Brazilian anthropology’s exploration of the urban environment. Nonetheless, we have looked to present articles and interviews that not only reveal important viewpoints and theoretical perspectives, but also provide a retrospective view of knowledge production and the construction of this field of study in Brazil. Our aim has also been to select texts that signal possibilities and examples for future investigations.

The objectives of the dossier, in line with Vibrant's original intention, is to make Brazilian anthropological production available to an international audience by translating selected texts into languages other than Portuguese. We believe that as well as appealing to an external public, this selection will also be of interest to a Brazilian readership. As much as we have enhanced our communication systems, there is clearly still room for improvement. We are certain that the contribution of Brazilian anthropologists to urban studies is one of the most original and stimulating areas of research today, enabling connections to be made that allow new contexts and spaces for dialogue and debate.

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