

AFRÂNIO GARCIA, INTER-NATIONAL RESEARCHER AND GO-BETWEEN

*Conference, December 3-4, 2025,
EHESS and Maison du Brésil, Paris,
France*

Camila Gui Rosatti & Vassili Rivron

Organized by the European Centre for Sociology and Political Science (CESSP) and the Reflection Group on Contemporary Brazil (GRBC), this event brought together 23 speakers who had collaborated with the Brazilian anthropologist Afrânio Garcia. The meeting, organized one year after his death on 30/11/2024, aimed to discuss the contributions of his work, situated within what some have called a “Bourdieuian international”, imagined as a network for the circulation of questions, methods, and researchers. The roundtables were dedicated to the political anthropology of Brazil, transformations of the rural world, the sociology of education and international circulations, as well as the sociology of intellectuals. This thematic diversity is anchored in his academic trajectory spanning Brazil and France: trained in

economics, professor of anthropology at the Museu Nacional of the UFRJ from 1978 to 1995, and then elected in 1995 to the EHESS, Afrânio Garcia continued and widened his research there, in an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective.

His work is particular in that it touches on all the positions inherited from the decline of the plantation system in Brazil. José Sérgio Leite Lopes has shown that his analyses take into account the transformation of the descendants of enslaved populations into agricultural laborers and their migrations towards industrialized cities. His studies have also been used in debates with state experts, particularly about agrarian reform. Thomas Cortado concentrated on his innovative role in a “new anthropology of the house” in Brazil, a habitat that materially and symbolically shapes networks of kinship, neighborhood and power, where autonomy and dependence intertwine. Jean-Pierre Faguer underlined the contributions of his entire œuvre towards understanding forms of workplace domination, from the most violent agrarian structures to more diffuse contemporary forms linked to educational selection and career management. He demonstrated that this approach allows a joint conception of social reorientation “from below and from above.”

It was at the EHESS that Afrânio Garcia systematized his study on the conversion of agrarian oligarchies into political and intellectual elites. Sergio Miceli showed how he was able to mobilize his work in rural sociology to analyze the social and regionalist novel of the “sugar cane cycle.” Anne-Marie Thiesse noted his attention to the transformations of the link between the political and literary fields, an approach that anticipated key debates in current decolonial studies, questioning racial categories and resistances to imperialism. Gisèle Sapiro revisited his study dedicated to Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Cardoso, a sociologist who became President of the Republic, embodies a figure who is both academic and political, two distinct types of dispositions that Garcia considered might intertwine.

Within the framework of the emerging theme of globalization in the 1990s, Afrânio Garcia demonstrated that the analysis of the production of national symbols must also be understood within inter-national relations. Louis Pinto thus revisited an article on *Brazil, land of the future*, by Stefan Zweig, a cosmopolitan intellectual who sought refuge in Brazil. Sketching a cosmopolitan utopia, Brazil appears in it as an alternative to a Europe that had become obscurantist. This inter-national orientation also became a collective research program on Brazil's policy of expanding access to study-abroad scholarships, which Letícia Bicalho Canêdo reported on, showing its

effects on the scientific field and Brazil's leading cadre. Rodrigo Bordignon detailed the appropriation of these questions by a new generation of Brazilian researchers. As for Anne-Catherine Wagner, she showed that this bilateral program was also part of other studies on the international circulation of ideas. Namely, that education itself fit within the logics of the globalization of knowledge markets and of the transformation of national elites. And Yves Dezalay analyzed the intellectual reorientations of Brazilians in Paris (in the social sciences), in opposition to the emergence of a hegemonic American model (in economics and political science, leading notably to high finance). Thus, his work is situated within the very long history of globalized elites who re-compose themselves within the various states of republican meritocracies.

Several contributors emphasized Garcia's attentiveness to collaborative work and international comparison, as well as his openness to dialogue with so-called “peripheral” contexts, such as Romania (Mihai Gheorgiu) and Hungary (Victor Karady). He was also attentive to the asymmetries and homologies between the social configurations that structure North-South and South-South relations. Monique de Saint-Martin and Tassadit Yacine underlined how Algeria, in dialogue with Bourdieu and Sayad, was a constant point of reference to consider the processes of uprooting and migra-

tory dynamics, whether they came from rural-urban trajectories or international circulations.

A series of presentations highlighted the institutional and pedagogical aspects of this scientific work. Benoît de L'Estoile analyzed the Franco-Brazilian accords established during Afrânio Garcia's tenure at the Center for Research on Contemporary Brazil (CRBC/EHESS). They permitted the stabilization and experimentation of sustainable forms of collaboration around major research topics. Thus, Delphine Serre reported on a fieldwork experience on agrarian reform conducted in Pernambuco (1997 and 1999), where Afrânio Garcia was very involved in guiding young researchers, fostering in them a strong sociological imagination. Vassili Rivron sought to analyze how the mechanisms of the Political Anthropology of Brazil seminar and the GRBC allowed him to question the hierarchical logic of the french tradition of "aires culturelles" (Area Studies), understood here as an institutional and epistemological framework organizing knowledge by geographic regions. Maurice Aymard explained how his scientific commitments resulted in publications and host institutions (the Sérgio Buarque de Holanda Chair). Marie-Vic Osouf-Marignier and Michel Agier emphasized to what extent national, thematic, and (inter)disciplinary positions inevitably raise the stakes of competition and integration within prestigious institutions such as

the EHESS. The account of Francine Muel-Dreyfus— as well as those of Franck Poupeau, Francis Chateauraynaud, Laurence Proteau, Camila Rosatti, and Christian Baudelot— reminded us that research collectives also flourish amid friendships which, as Julien Duval analyzed, constitute networks of international circulation and are passed down through generations.

Archives

Video recordings

First Day:

<https://youtu.be/YPgsbSYo3sY>

Second Day:

<https://youtu.be/gleELZAYL6w>

Texts

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