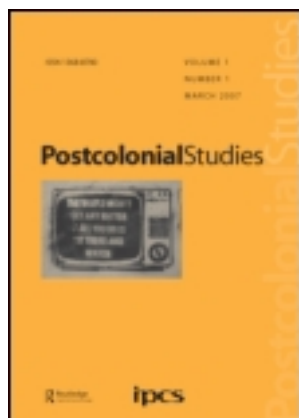


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Why (post)colonialism and (de)coloniality are not enough: a post-imperialist perspective

GUSTAVO LINS RIBEIRO

The need to examine knowledge production in relation to location and subject position is a consolidated trend in several theoretical approaches. In fact, this is a well-known postulate within the sociology of knowledge and its acceptance does not necessarily imply a critical standpoint. Perhaps the novelty of the past decades has been the great visibility and usage of frameworks that put emphasis on (a) enquiry into the relationships between knowledge production and politics; (b) enquiry into the relationships among locations, subject positions and power; and (c) how taxonomies are functional and inherent to the exercise of domination. This is a trend well epitomized by the classic work of Edward Said on Orientalism¹ and by the many interpretations and debates that came to be known under the umbrella label of post-colonialism and others such as the geopolitics of knowledge.²

Indeed, the intellectual and political sensitivity to the complex relationships between difference and power is now widely diffused. It is a consequence of political struggles and macro global processes that in larger or lesser degree made the politics of identity, multicultural policies, expressions such as the ‘West and the Rest’ and the ‘Global South’, part of everyday life within and without academia. These taxonomic devices substituted for older ones, like the ‘Third World’, that kept an obvious link to the Cold War juncture. In the current juncture, the particular/universal tension was submitted to a new round of criticism and, almost everywhere, knowledge producers make new claims to visibility and validity, new claims to the empowerment of a variety of world visions. Such struggles happen in a milieu structured by the hegemony of Western knowledge. The quandaries are particularly intense when the human and social sciences are involved since they are sensitive to context and meaning, to ideology and utopia, to the definition of destiny and the good life. The last and hottest frontier of these clashes is the production of knowledge by indigenous populations. They have become subjects of their own epistemological and philosophical struggles influencing academic and political life in different degrees and places—see, for instance, Ecuador,³ Bolivia,⁴ and New Zealand.⁵

Will all agents of knowledge production—especially in those loci where decolonization is an issue—struggle to prove the equality or superiority of their local knowledge *vis-à-vis* the Western and other less powerful loci of knowledge production? Are we going to end up with a Babel of knowledge

claims? This is not my vision. I believe that we will see new forms of conviviality among epistemologies, paradigms and approaches. As an anthropologist, I cannot believe in total incommensurability among mindsets and interpretations, a position that does not amount to a naïve acceptance of a transcendental universality. I am aware that most claims to universality are based on power effects. In a globalized world, the problem is the imperial pretension to hegemony, the imposition of viewpoints that are disseminated through painless structures of prestige diffusion from global or national hegemonic centres. However, a claim to universality based on power relations is one thing, a claim to universality based on empathy, sympathy, sharing and the art of argumentation and convincing is another. The more different subject positions proliferate and experiences of horizontal exchange within the world system of knowledge production exist, the better for all of us.⁶ Anchored on more diverse grounds, the resulting cross-fertilization will be more complex and capable of surpassing the current monotony of the Anglo-American academic hegemony.

In this regard, the free-software movement may provide a source of inspiration with its global cooperation and articulation of an enormous amount of global fragmented agencies and spaces. Open-source publishing allows us to speculate about the possibility of a wiki-anthropology, for instance, one that would outdo the traditional journals with their referee system which, in the core of the world system of anthropological production, more often than not replicate the styles and agendas of the Anglo-American academic milieu.⁷ Global online publications with free access already exist and may potentially change the hierarchy of journals, visibility and prestige. The possibility of writing with a myriad of other known or anonymous cyber-colleagues may also point to the emergence of post-authorial academic texts. Are we ready to make global wiki experiments in academic writing and theoretical production? Are we ready to go beyond the notion of authorship in academia, another of the bases of inequality reproduction in a world full of individualism and individual power seekers? I don't know. Perhaps my generation is not. Perhaps younger scholars, natives of digital culture completely immersed in cyberspace, are.

Incommensurability is a keyword here. Am I incapable of understanding what an Indian intellectual writes in Delhi or the inter-textuality of the formulations of the Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa?⁸ And what of the wide influence and appropriation of Western thought produced by, say, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Freud and many others almost everywhere? Are they only a sad portrait of intellectual misery and subalternity within the world system of knowledge production? A positive answer to these questions would mean the insularity of theory. Theory would be imprisoned in a myriad of places, it would not travel, and we know it is in the nature of theory to travel. More than 20 years ago, James Clifford wrote that

Theory: returned to its etymological roots, with a late twentieth-century difference. The Greek term *theorein*: a practice of travel and observation, a man sent by the polis to another city to witness a religious ceremony. 'Theory' is

a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home. But like any act of travel, theory begins and ends somewhere. In the case of the Greek theorist the beginning and ending were one, the home polis. This is not so simply true of traveling theorists in the late twentieth century.⁹

Were theories to be reduced to a series of local autarchies, no one would ever learn from other people, especially from the most distant ones. Instead, I believe that in a globalized world we are all forced to look for working commensurabilities that open communication channels among different semantic universes. What we need is more ‘traveling theories’ and not only those with Western accents.¹⁰ This is why I consider the role of anthropology to be even more central today than in the past. What is unacceptable, let me repeat to emphasize, is an imperial pretension to universalism whether it comes from the Global North or from the Global South.

I also find troublesome the role of ‘global reception machine’ played by North American academia today. This is why, in the past, I have argued that in Latin America we cannot uncritically accept the dissemination of theories, such as postcolonialism, that arrive in the region after being more or less indigenized in the United States:

If colonial discourse analysis and post-colonial theory are ‘critiques of the process of production of knowledge about the Other’ (Williams and Chrisman, 1994: 8), it would be at least ironic that post-colonialism—with its trajectory marked by its growth and proliferation in English-speaking academia—colonizes—if you excuse the wordplay—the empty space left by the absence of Latin American cosmopolitics and becomes a discourse to produce knowledge about the Latin American Other. In Latin America post-colonialism would be equal to what it condemns, a foreign discourse on the Other that arrives through the hands of a metropolitan power. Post-colonialists would be, unwittingly, doing what they criticized. Obviously, post-colonialism’s dissemination cannot be reduced to the force of the Anglo-American hegemony behind it. Similar to other critical cosmopolitics, post-colonialism has contributions to make in the analysis of social, cultural and political realities anywhere, especially when power asymmetries are at stake. The issue is not to deny post-colonialism but to assert the production of critical narratives in tune with Latin American subject positions, in a heteroglossic dialogue with cosmopolitics from other localities.¹¹

For me, the notion of cosmopolitics is central to understand the current production of theories and disciplines that pretend to have global reach.¹² It is based, on the one hand, on positive evocations historically associated with the notion of cosmopolitanism and, on the other hand, on analysis in which power asymmetries are of fundamental importance. Cosmopolitics comprises discourses and modes of doing politics that are concerned with their global reach and impact. Several cosmopolitics are counter-hegemonic discourses anchored on particular situations. This is the case with post-colonial critique, decoloniality of power, Zapatismo, subaltern studies and *interculturalidad*, a perspective that is being more clearly elaborated in the Andes, especially in Ecuador.¹³ Since there are several progressive cosmopolitics, articulation

becomes a keyword. Indeed, the effectiveness of cosmopolitical initiatives on the transnational level relies on networking. There is not a singular cosmopolitics capable of dealing with the entire complexity of the global counter-hegemonic struggle and with the existence and proliferation of critical subjects in fragmented global-spaces. Supporters of different counter-hegemonic cosmopolitics need to identify their mutual equivalences to be able to articulate themselves in networks and political actions. Effective non-imperialist cosmopolitics that inform transnational political activists and progressive forms of global awareness also require a complex articulation of multilocalized and plural struggles and subjects.

The notion of cosmopolitics greatly coincides with one kind of particularism I call 'cosmopolitan particularism', i.e. 'discourses that intrinsically address global issues and pretend to be taken into consideration, if not incorporated, by other people'.¹⁴ 'Cosmopolitics' allows me to explore cosmopolitan particularisms as a form of global political discourse and to go beyond the particular/universal tension that, in one way or another, is a grid framing this discussion. There are several cosmopolitics that may complement each other in a complex heteroglossic conversation of equivalencies. It is within such a framework that I envisage the relations among postcolonialism, decoloniality of power and the approach I call post-imperialism.¹⁵

Post-imperialism is the label I use to define the current juncture in which nation-states have to deal with transnationalism and with the effects of flexible capitalism. This is a kind of transnationalism marked by an intense time-space compression,¹⁶ i.e. by a technological command of space and time that distances itself more and more from the political and administrative forms of exerting power associated with modern imperialism and from the colony in its strict sense of occupation of a foreign land. Undoubtedly, post-imperialism exists with other forms of organizing economic and political life and constructing cosmopolitics. After 9/11, imperialism has resurged in Afghanistan and Iraq, a fact that shows, once again, that history does not move in a straight line and that the conservative military-industrial complex has known very well how to maintain its power and take advantage of certain political opportunities in the United States. However, in Latin American nation-states, the political independence of which started in the first decades of the nineteenth century, post-imperialism predominates over other dynamics. It informs the contents of political, economic and cultural contemporaneity as well as imposes certain interpretative and research needs. I want to advance the idea that post-imperialism is the Latin American equivalent to post-colonialism. It should be clear that I use the term ironically. Furthermore, as a cosmopolitics, post-imperialism mixes utopian horizons (a moment beyond imperialism in which, nonetheless, imperialism remains an issue) and descriptions of specific characteristics of our times. It thus combines programmatic and sociological visions.¹⁷

Currently, a number of some of the most interesting Latin American intellectuals—a few of them long established in North American universities—see themselves as members of a 'school of thought' that takes the

discussion about ‘de-coloniality of power’ as an organizing and congregating axis.¹⁸ The complicated and difficult relationships between Latin American Studies, post-colonialism, and de-coloniality have been outlined in a book edited, in the United States, by Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A Jáuregui.¹⁹ It is not my intention to go over the intricacies and complexities of this debate here. Rather, my goal is to explore the idea that the locus of enunciation on academic subjects is geopolitically marked. In this connection, it is impossible not to recognize a strong Andean (and secondarily Mexican) accent in the decoloniality of power cosmopolitics.

I want to make explicit that my own positionality, like that of many others, reflects different itineraries and engagements. I will highlight but a few, those more relevant for my arguments here: (1) the experience of growing up in the high-modernist Federal city of Brasilia after its inauguration in 1960; (2) the resistance against the Brazilian military dictatorship of 1964–1985; (3) the writing of a history of the construction of Brasilia from the workers’ point of view to criticize the nationalist ideologies covering the construction of the city;²⁰ and (4) my graduate education in a Brazilian and a North American university.

What follows is not an exercise in ‘methodological nationalism’. Quite the contrary, it is a cosmopolitical exercise. I can only argue the way I do because I constantly relate my own cosmopolitan particularism to other cosmopolitan particularisms produced elsewhere in the world.

The many lives of colonialism and its resurrections

The historical, geographical, economic, cultural, political, social and racial diversity of the colonial experience is, sometimes, underestimated by an overall critique of one of the most powerful attributes of the human species: the propensity to colonize the entire earth. Human beings could well be called the ‘colonizer animal’. If we stretch the amplitude of the colonial drive that much, a substantial part of the history of *Homo Sapiens* could be seen as the history of colonization and of its ideological, institutional and political legitimations. In this time frame, one that perhaps could be called an archaeological time frame, post-colonial situations would include an enormous number of scenarios. Such a perspective would allow me to go as far as to call, for instance, London a postcolonial city because one day it was a Roman town called Londinium.

I will not concede to the temptation of this overarching vision because it would certainly transform colonialism into a sort of hyper-historicism. Furthermore, the duration of the postcolonial condition is an area of intense debate, one that is particularly interesting for Latin Americans since, historically, postcolonialism started there in the early nineteenth century. Here I want to grapple with the consideration of colonialism as a powerful, all-encompassing historical force that shapes to this day major characteristics of nation-states that are former colonies. Colonialism and its effects were at the centre of critical analysis well before postcolonialism and de-coloniality became focuses of attention. Neo-colonialism and internal colonialism

provided important theoretical frameworks to analyse the existing inequalities within the world system and within nation-states.

The stress on colonialism, neo-colonialism, internal colonialism, post-colonialism and the coloniality of power is welcome. No one doubts the power of structuration of colonialism. However, I would like to explore the idea that we cannot think of the 'structural power' of colonialism as a lasting force that *always* overruns others, especially those that are unleashed by what might be called 'the nationality of power'.²¹ For me, postcolonialism and the coloniality of power coexist in different forms and intensities, in different national scenarios, with the nationality of power as well as with the globality of power. On the one hand, however strong transnational forces may be, we cannot diffuse the power of nation-states in global entities such as the world system, nor can we reduce them to mechanic responses to supranational dynamics. On the other hand, colonialism cannot become an interpretive panacea, nor the latest example of historical determinism.

The fact that peripheral countries are the privileged scenario for postcolonial and decolonial interpretations becomes a problem when we realize that the most powerful nation-state of current times, the United States, is a former British colony. If the explanation for this exception is that there are different colonial experiences that may result in different postcolonial and decolonial experiences then subalternity within the world system is not a necessary result of the colonial experience or an intrinsic quality of postcoloniality and decoloniality. What I am saying is that an overemphasis on colonialism and on coloniality can curiously (re)generate precisely what needs to be criticized and surpassed: an explanation that accepts subalternity as a destiny of former colonies.

My argument calls for a sharper consideration of the 'causal hierarchies' among colonialism and other historical processes in diverse concrete scenarios.²² I am implying that by transforming colonialism and not capitalism into the primordial focus of analysis we underestimate the current importance of nation-states and their elites, as well as deviate from understanding the particular characteristics of the power relations of the current relationships between nation-states and the world system. In some places, these relationships are 200 years old or more, if we include in our list the US, the first politically independent modern republic. Isn't this a sufficient amount of time to create particular interests and dynamics that are central to the construction of any future scenario?

If one of the aims of critical theory is to overcome an unjust past and contribute to the construction of a different future, then utopias are a most important object of desire in the progressive intellectual scene. While I am favourable to ideological struggles—without them it wouldn't be possible to denaturalize the naturalized present—I want to advocate for more utopian struggles in a juncture where there is a dearth of future scenarios strong enough to galvanize the imagination of a great number of political actors. This is one of the reasons why I offered the notion of post-imperialism. Living in a world region that has a longstanding experience with imperialism—in its soft and hard expressions—the imagining of life after

imperialism can prove to be an exercise in creativity and audacity—qualities many times denied to the ‘subalterns’.

In order to clarify how different colonial enterprises may be experienced in history and how they may shape different senses of the future I will recur to a reading of the Brazilian postcolonial and national history. My arguments suppose that colonialist ‘structural power’ coexists not only with world system forces but also with the rise of post-colonial projects that may congeal and prompt the nationality of power.

The post-colonial life of a tropical empire

The Brazilian colonial experience differs from the experience of other countries elsewhere in Latin America. Brazil was the only country colonized by the Portuguese in a large area of lowland South America inhabited by indigenous peoples that were not organized, as in the Andes and in Mexico, under powerful native empires. The early nineteenth century provides a most interesting period to further develop my arguments. It is the time when most Latin American countries were starting their political independence and a true post-colonial period. Although formal political independence in Brazil started only in 1822, more than 10 years later than several of its neighbours, I want to submit the idea that the ‘post-colonial’ Brazilian period started in 1808 under the impact of European power struggles meant to define hegemony within the world system. The invasion of Portugal by Napoleonic troops forced the court of Portugal to flee to Brazil. In November 1807, some 15,000 people crossed the Atlantic under the protection of the British Navy in what is perhaps the largest forced migration of political elites in world history.

What is even more special about this move is that the capital of the Portuguese empire was transferred to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, where the king of Portugal, Don João VI, and the court went to live and stayed for 13 years, until 1821. I am not aware of any other example in the history of imperialism/colonialism (certainly not in the Americas and in Western imperialism) of a colony that is suddenly transformed into the seat of the empire. The colonial status of Brazil was terminated in such an unusual way that calling the 1808–1821 period a post-colonial period may not be very accurate. First, to become the centre of the empire is not a post-colonial condition; secondly, after the return, in April 1821, of Don João VI to Lisbon, some of the typical contradictions between imperial centres and colonial peripheries arose again. They lasted for a short period of less than 18 months and forced Prince Don Pedro, Don João’s son, who had been left behind to take care of the affairs of the crown in Brazil, to declare the country’s political independence in September 1822 and become the Emperor Pedro I.

The Brazilian case is a complex *mélange* of continuity and discontinuity, a major *problématique* when the prefix post is at stake as in post-colonialism. But I will consider 1808 as the starting point of post-colonialism in Brazil anyhow for it was the year when Brazilians began to experience administrative autonomy and, most importantly, the ruling elite started to consider

leaving behind the territorial pattern—a most powerful factor in colonial dominance—structured by the colonial regime, a pattern that had created highly secluded and barely integrated regional systems turned and adapted to Europe's needs. Brazilians, it would be said, are like crabs, they cling to the Atlantic shoreline. Indeed, already in 1808 the King of Portugal and his advisers considered the possibility of moving the capital to the hinterlands. This idea was first linked to what were considered Rio's urban inadequacies to be the capital of the Portuguese Empire: its climate and its lack of adequate infrastructure, for instance. A cosmetic Europeanization of Rio was then promoted.

But the critique of Rio was also a means to criticize colonial life and would soon converge to elaborate geopolitical debates.²³ In different ways and corresponding to different political and economic interests, most discourses of the time pointed out the need to structure a new nation, an 'empire', from within the continental territory controlled by Portugal. Hipólito José da Costa, for instance, in 1813, wrote that:

if the courtiers that went [...] from Lisbon [to Rio] had enough patriotism and acknowledgement for the country that received them, they would make a generous sacrifice of the comfort and luxury they may enjoy in Rio de Janeiro and would establish themselves in the hinterland and central areas close to the headwaters of the big rivers; they would build a new city there and would start to open new roads headed towards the maritime harbors and would remove the natural obstacles that the different navigable rivers have, and would thus lay the foundations of the most extended, connected, well defended and powerful Empire that can possibly exist on the earth of the Globe, according to the current state of the nations that people it.²⁴

French historian Laurent Vidal states that the critique of the lack of regional integration was generalized in early nineteenth-century Brazil but was particularly strong among landowners who wished to optimize their use of agricultural and other economic resources with a view to expanding their power to the whole country. From 1821 to 1824, when the first constitution of independent Brazil was promulgated, the discussion about the capital's transfer revolved around how to 'symbolically mark the passage from the Portuguese Empire to the Brazilian Empire. The task was, in short, to "decapitalize" a colonial and maritime Empire to "recapitalize" an independent and continental Empire.'²⁵ The construction of the new city was thought as a rupture with the metropolis, a geopolitical decision that should be based on visions of the future of the nation meant to foster and consolidate national unity and progress.²⁶

The use of the term empire is not by chance. After the declaration of Brazil's political independence, in 1822, the son of the King of Portugal, Don Pedro, as mentioned before, became the first Brazilian Emperor and the country an 'empire'. As the interests of pro-Portugal new Brazilian elites became more influential during the discussion of the first constitution of 1824, the idea of leaving Rio fell into the background. Interestingly enough,

Brazil was ruled by the same royal house as in Portugal, the Bragança, for 67 years, until the declaration of the Republic in 1889. It might be said that this peculiar transition from colonial to postcolonial times contributed to the maintenance of Brazil's territorial unity in a stark contrast to the results of the Bolivarian and San Martinian projects of a unified postcolonial Spanish-speaking South America. It also might be said that such a peculiarity meant a rather different postcolonial experience *vis-à-vis* the other Latin American countries that moved from the colonial condition, i.e. from the subordination to a royal European power, to the Republican form of government. Brazil was the only country in the Americas that became a monarchy after its independence. During the Brazilian monarchy period the idea of moving the capital to the hinterlands did not disappear. Quite the contrary, it was so much alive that it became a formal provision of the first Republican constitution of 1891. The need to construct a new capital in the centre of the country was now a goal of post-imperial Brazil.

During the first half of the twentieth century a few initiatives were taken and prepared the scenario for the moving of the capital. Even though the transference had been formally considered by the ruling elites since the early nineteenth century, only in 1960, more than 150 years later, was the capital finally transferred to Brasilia. The continuity of the capital in Rio was an expression of the continuity of colonialism's structuring power.

The nationality of power of a post-imperial city

The transference of the Brazilian capital allows me to think in hierarchical causal terms. While the hegemony of the post-colonial structuration ends with Brasilia, the prominence of the nationality of power starts at the same moment. In 1960, as in 1808, the main goal of moving the capital was to integrate the country from within. Alongside the construction of the new city, new roads were opened to link all regions by land. Now the colonial regional systems and the expanding capitalist agricultural frontiers would have to coexist with other internal dynamics related to the creation of an integrated national territory, actually an integrated capitalist national economy/market, from within the hinterland of the country. Norbert Elias has pointed out the importance of territorial integration for nation-building: 'societies become nations when the functional interdependency among their regions and social strata, as well as among their hierarchical levels of authority, becomes sufficiently large and reciprocal so that none of these groups may completely disregard what the others think, feel or wish'.²⁷

Predictably, nationalism was the main ideological force behind the transfer of the capital, and the source of legitimating discourses. Juscelino Kubitschek, the president (1956–1960) who led the construction of Brasilia, is, to this day, the most popular president of Brazil. But in as much as the role of national political leaders was central to the process, the deepest moving force underneath the capital's transfer was the expansion of the agricultural frontiers westward, to the huge savannah area, an ecosystem that was almost

entirely destroyed with the new expansionist moves the construction of Brasilia generated. The savannah area became a stepping-stone for the colonization of the Amazon region and is currently a major exporter of soya beans and beef.

Brasilia is the only capital city in the Americas that is not built over or adjacent to a former colonial settlement. What did Brazilian national elites want to say when they built the new capital? They certainly did not want to say the country was the hyper-West, as North Americans seemed to say with the oversized neoclassical architecture of some of the major federal buildings in Washington. Brazilians wanted to affirm their difference, that they were modern and in charge of their own history. The fact that Rio—the metonym of the tropicalist-colonialist image of Brazil, stereotyped as the land of natural exuberance and sensual happy-go-lucky natives²⁸—was left behind in favour of a city that represented a sum of creativity, ingenuity and toil was contradictory to the prevailing Orientalist view of Brazil (including within the academic milieu). The force of the nationalist claim materialized in a large-scale project is the strongest index of the change in the relations between postcolonial and national forces, between the coloniality and the nationality of power—the construction of a futurist and utopian city intended to send the message that the future was happening in the hinterlands of Brazil. This is a particularly effective trope given the importance of the future and of scale in the nationalist imaginary of Brazil, the giant ‘eternally laid in a splendid cradle’, a well-known phrase of the national anthem.

Some final remarks

In this section, I will make a few general concluding remarks and will draw conclusions that are specific to the Brazilian scenario but that relate to the need to further develop post-imperialist perspectives.

In spite of the power of structuration of colonialism, it cannot be seen as an overall force determining all current sociological, economic, political and cultural scenarios in previously colonized nation-states. The duration of the post-colonial period and the prominence of the coloniality of power vary in different historical settings. The definition of such moments needs to be found on a case-by-case basis. I would argue that in Bolivia, for instance, the moment of shift from the prominence of the coloniality of power to the beginning of the construction of the nationality of power happened only with the election of Evo Morales as president in 2006. This leads me to think that the close relation between the formulation of the theory on the coloniality of power and the political life of Andean countries such as Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, is an index of the relative strength of the power of structuration of colonialism in these countries. In view of the variability of glocal historical experiences, the ‘nationality of power’ cannot be subsumed under colonial frameworks of analysis, nor under globalized ones; it is a specific object of enquiry. Therefore a more complete framework of analysis includes causal hierarchies that are sensitive to the different geographies and

histories of colonialism and of nation-building, the power of structuration of which varies over time according to the outcome of different historical conflicts in different nation-states. In sum, former colonies are differently subject, today, to the diverse powers of structuration stemming from the coloniality of power, the nationality of power (which includes the histories, specificities and contradictions of the local and regional levels) and the globality of power. All of the latter needs to be understood within the framework of an ever expanding capitalist political economy with its dynamics and contradictions.

Throughout the postcolonial and national history of Brazil, a strong ideology of the ruling elites developed, according to which the country is destined to become a world power. The construction and consolidation of Brasilia as the country's new capital was a most important step in the development of the Brazilian nationality of power; it reassured the 'great destiny of Brazil' to nationalist ideologues and reinforced the discursive matrix of a powerful future. In the current moment of the world system, especially after the 2008–2009 crisis when the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) became the most publicized examples of fast response to the crisis, the sense that the 'sleeping giant' is about to wake up has increased within Brazilian political and economic elites. It is already possible to see that Brasilia will become in the near future the capital city of a major global player with part of its elite with (sub)imperialist pretensions.²⁹ The role of critical thought in Brazil in this regard is to make a preemptive move in order to go beyond such pretensions and favour the rise not only of a post-imperialist capital city but also of a post-imperialist country. By this I mean a kind of cosmopolitics that imagines a world system without imperialisms and fosters national formulations and actions in international arenas that stress and truly promote cooperation and peace at the same time that it criticizes inequality and war. To do that there is a need to dedicate more time to a post-imperialist imagination, critique and programme; to dedicate, in sum, more time to utopian struggles than to ideological ones. Post-imperialism would thus be a cosmopolitics capable of pointing to new moments of the world system and its unfoldings.

Notes

- ¹ Edward W Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- ² Walter Mignolo, 'Introducción', in Walter Mignolo (ed), *Capitalismo y Geopolítica del Conocimiento: El Eurocentrismo y la Filosofía de la Liberación en el debate intelectual contemporáneo*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2001, pp 9–53.
- ³ Catherine Walsh, 'La (re)articulación de subjetividades políticas y diferencia colonial en Ecuador: reflexiones sobre el capitalismo y las geopolíticas del conocimiento', in Catherine Walsh, Freya Schiwiy and Santiago Castro-Gómez (eds), *Indisciplinar las ciencias sociales. Geopolíticas del conocimiento y colonialidad del poder. Perspectivas desde lo andino*, Quito: Universidad Andina Simon Bolívar/Abya-Yala, 2002, pp 175–214. See also Catherine Walsh, 'Interculturalidad y colonialidad del poder. Un pensamiento y posicionamiento "otro" desde la diferencia colonial', in Santiago Castro-Gómez and Ramón Grosfoguel (eds), *El Giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del*

- capitalismo global*, Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores/Universidad Central/Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2007, pp 47–62.
- ⁴ Álvaro García Linera, *La potencia plebeya: Acción colectiva e identidades indígenas, obreras y populares en Bolivia*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO/Prometeo Libros, 2008.
 - ⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London/Dunedin: Zed Books/University of Otago Press, 1999.
 - ⁶ The notion of a ‘world system of knowledge production’ is inspired by Takami Kuwayama, *Native Anthropology: The Japanese Challenge to Western Academic Hegemony*, Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2004. It is an obvious metaphor of the unequal capacities of production and dissemination of knowledge on a global scale.
 - ⁷ Gordon Mathews, ‘On the Referee System as a Barrier to Global Anthropology’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 11(1), 2010, pp 52–63.
 - ⁸ Bruce Albert, ‘O Ouro Canibal e a Queda do Céu: uma crítica xamânica da economia política da natureza’, *Série Antropologia* (Universidade de Brasília) 174, 1995.
 - ⁹ James Clifford, ‘Notes on Travel and Theory’, *Inscriptions* 5, 1989, pp 177–185.
 - ¹⁰ Edward W Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
 - ¹¹ Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, ‘Post-Imperialism: A Latin American Cosmopolitics’, in Peter Birlle, Sérgio Costa and Horst Nitschack (eds), *Brazil and the Americas: Convergences and Perspectives*, Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Verduert, 2008, pp 31–50, p 38.
 - ¹² Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, ‘World Anthropologies: Cosmopolitics for a New Global Scenario in Anthropology’, *Critique of Anthropology* 26(4), 2006, pp 363–386. See also Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
 - ¹³ See Walsh *et al*, *Indisciplinar las ciencias sociales*; Néstor García Canclini, *Diferentes, Desiguales y Desconectados: Mapas de la interculturalidad*, Barcelona: Gedisa, 2004; Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, *Procesos Interculturales: Antropología Política del Pluralismo Cultural en América Latina*, México: Siglo XXI Editores, 2006; Joanne Rappaport, *Intercultural Utopias*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.
 - ¹⁴ Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, ‘Cultural Diversity as a Global Discourse’, *Série Antropologia* (Universidade de Brasília) 412, 2007, p 14.
 - ¹⁵ Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, *Postimperialismo: Cultura y Política en el Mundo Contemporáneo*, Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial, 2003. See also Ribeiro, ‘Post-Imperialism’.
 - ¹⁶ David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
 - ¹⁷ For more on post-imperialism see Ribeiro, *Postimperialismo*; and Ribeiro, ‘Post-Imperialism: A Latin American Cosmopolitics’.
 - ¹⁸ Ramón Grosfoguel, ‘Izquierdas e Izquierdas Otras: entre el proyecto de la izquierda eurocéntrica y el proyecto transmoderno de la nuevas izquierdas descoloniales’, *Tabula Rasa* 11, 2009, pp 9–32, p 9. Two crucial texts on the coloniality of power are Anibal Quijano, ‘Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina’, in Edgardo Lander (ed), *La Colonialidad del Saber. Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 1993, pp 201–246; and Enrique Dussel, ‘Europa, Modernidad y Eurocentrismo’, in Lander, *La Colonialidad del Saber*, pp 41–53.
 - ¹⁹ Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A Jáuregui (eds), *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
 - ²⁰ Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, *O Capital da Esperança: A experiência dos trabalhadores na construção de Brasília*, Brasília: Editora da Universidade de Brasília, 2008.
 - ²¹ For the notion of structural power see Eric Wolf, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
 - ²² For the notion of causal hierarchies see Josiah Heyman and Howard Campbell, ‘The Anthropology of Global Flows: A Critical Reading of Appadurai’s “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”’, *Anthropological Theory* 9, 2009, pp 131–148.
 - ²³ Laurent Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa a Brasília: A invenção de uma capital (séculos XIX–XX)*, Brasília: Editora da Universidade de Brasília, 2009.
 - ²⁴ Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa a Brasília*, p 41.
 - ²⁵ Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa a Brasília*, p 51.
 - ²⁶ Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa a Brasília*, p 52ff.
 - ²⁷ Norbert Elias, ‘Processos de formação de Estados e construção da nação’, in Federico Neiburg and Leopoldo Waizbort (eds), *Escritos e Ensaios*, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2006, p 163.

- ²⁸ Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, 'Tropicalismo y Europeísmo: Modos de Representar al Brasil y a la Argentina', in Alejandro Grimson, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro and Pablo Semán (eds), *La Antropología Brasileña Contemporánea: Contribuciones para un diálogo latino americano*, Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2004, pp 165–195.
- ²⁹ The *Correio Braziliense*, Brasilia's most important daily paper, on the front page of its edition of 17 July 2011, had the following headline: 'The Fall of the American Empire . . . and the Rise of the Brazilian Empire'.