



An interdisciplinary research conference

The Land of the Future?

Futurity in everyday life, art and
politics in contemporary Brazil

Aarhus University, Denmark
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Keynotes

Timothy Power
Teresa Caldeira
Jaime Ginzburg
Gabriel de Santis Feltran

www.conferences.au.dk/brazil2015

Call for abstracts

Futurity, i.e. the way people relate to the future, is an integral part of all social life. Our plans, hopes and expectations, or worries and anxieties, are likely to have as decisive an influence on our present as our past has. The future can be a troublesome presence in daily life, uncertain and fraught with unanswerable questions, but it can also represent an open field of possibilities. The mere fact that it has not happened yet makes it fertile ground for imagination and experiments. This applies to the political, social and subjective levels of life, we will argue, and these levels interweave. The aim of this interdisciplinary conference is to capture ‘the living of the future’ in Brazil during these years of dramatic change. How is the land of the future seen, negotiated and contested in political, artistic and personal expressions?

In his book “Brasilien: Ein Land der Zukunft” from 1941, the writer Stefan Zweig describes Brazil as a promising alternative to the Old World, which at that time was deeply mired in war and destruction. Brazil was “destined to become one of the most important factors in the development of our world,” he found. However, for many years, Zweig’s praise of Brazil was regarded as something of a joke. Brazil would never be more than promising. Extreme social inequality, hunger and poverty marred this enormous country, and military rule for more than twenty years meant that democracy was a far cry from reality in Brazil.

Recent developments have changed this picture. Since the transition to civilian rule in 1985, the country has made major advances, internally and on the global stage. The Brazilian middle-classes are growing steadfastly and the percentage of Brazilians living below the poverty line is decreasing. More and more Brazilians have access to consumer goods such as computers and cars, and now also young people from low-income families may get university degrees. Brazil is the strongest economy in South America and globally the country is gaining more and more relevance as one of the so-called BRICS countries, exercising its influence through diplomacy and social development.

However, the optimism and economic upsurge are accompanied by disagreements about the directions Brazil is taking, and the two global mega-events, the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016, heat up the internal debate about where Brazil is heading as a nation and a society. Huge public investments in infrastructure, stadiums and social housing programmes reshape the host cities and the lives of ordinary people, while government plans are met with public protests, resistance and disillusion. The risk of marginalisation, not just in the present but in relation to future scenarios, evokes anxiety and indignation in some sections of the population. Political disagreement and economic concerns mobilise others. At the same time, lack of public security due to issues pertaining to drug trafficking is a massive problem that often undermines development initiatives on individual, communal or municipal levels.

The present situation gives rise to many questions, such as: What are the social and political consequences of the Brazilian economic upsurge and where will it lead? How is the state-citizen relationship developing and what role do the planned mega-events play in this regard? How do citizens of different ages and socioeconomic status see their future in Brazilian society? What is the relation between crime and violence and people’s sense of the future? Does the present growth of Protestant and spiritualist congregations represent experiments with the forthcoming? Does the Brazilian historical identity as an all-encompassing culture play a role in these expressions and negotiations of the future? And what is the role of literature, film and other forms of artistic expression?

“Where is Brazil heading?” is thus both an analytical question for us and a question lived every day in Brazil. We invite papers of both kinds: prospective or empirically focused on the future of Brazil in the present. The scope of the conference is interdisciplinary, as we see politics, economy, religion, everyday affects and artistic forms of expression as intertwining fields of futurity.

We invite submissions grounded in original research. All abstracts will pass through peer review. Deadline for submission of abstracts (max 300 words): December 1, 2014.

E-mail: etnmnielsen@cas.au.dk (Maria Nielsen). Please write “Land of the Future” in the subject line.

Notification of acceptance: December 19.

Please submit your abstract under one of the following themes:

1. *Challenges for democracy*

We invite papers on citizenship, violence and social recognition as well as more macro perspectives on the present economic changes, expansion of social programmes and its consequences.

2. *Everyday temporalities and disjunctures*

We invite papers on religion, political tensions and movements, struggles over resources and other disjunctures in Brazilian society.

3. *Living futures in art and popular culture*

We invite papers on Brazilian literature, film, and all other genres of fine art and popular culture as well as studies of cultural events that explicitly deal with futurity or point towards new trends and developments.

4. *Urban space and grounds for optimism*

We invite papers on changes and challenges of Brazilian cities, urban interventions by state actors or activists, issues of segregation and politics of exclusion.

Keynote speakers

Timothy Power is the Director of the Latin American Centre and Brazilian Studies Programme, a Lecturer in Brazilian Studies and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. His research interests include democratisation, comparative political institutions (parties, elections, legislatures and executive-legislative relations) together with public opinion and political culture in Latin America. Power is a member of the executive council of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política (ALACIP) and is the former President (2004–2006) of the Brazilian Studies Association. He is the author or co-editor of several books and articles, among these (with P. R. Kingstone) *Democratic Brazil Revisited* (2008) and *The Political Right in Postauthoritarian Brazil: Elites, Institutions, and Democratization* (2000).

Teresa Caldeira is anthropologist and Professor of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research focuses on urbanization and reconfigurations of spatial segregation and social discrimination. She has been studying the relationships between urban form and political transformation, particularly in the context of democratization. Her work is interdisciplinary, combining methodologies, theories, and approaches from the different social sciences, and especially concerned with reshaping ethnographic methods for the study of cities. Her book *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (2000), won the Senior Book Prize of the American Ethnological Society in 2001. She frequently writes on current events in Brazil, such as the June 2013 demonstrations.

Jaime Ginzburg is an Associate Professor at Universidade de São Paulo. His research interests include Brazilian literature, comparative literature, violence and authoritarianism, cultural studies, contemporary philosophy, Latin American culture and anthropology. He is a member of the Centro de Estudos da Cidadania (Centre for Citizenship Studies) at USP. Among his publications are *Crítica em tempos de violência* (2012) and *Literatura, violência e melancolia* (2013).

Gabriel de Santis Feltran is an Associate Professor at Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCAR), researcher at the Center for Urban Ethnographies of the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP) and coordinator at the Center for Metropolitan Studies (CEM). He is currently researching the social and political dynamics of urban peripheries, with focus on marginalized groups and the “world of crime” in São Paulo. Among his publications are *Sobre periferias: Novos conflitos no Brasil contemporâneo* (2013) and *Fronteiras de Tensão* (2011).

Organisers

Anne Line Dalsgård, Associate Professor, PhD, Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University has conducted ethnographic research in Brazil over prolonged periods since 1997. Her research centres on motherhood, youth, poverty, affect and temporality. She is the author of the book *Matters of Life and Longing: Female sterilisation in Northeast Brazil* (2004), later published in Brazil under the title *Vida e Esperanças*. E-mail: ald@cas.au.dk

Inger Sjørslev, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Copenhagen University, has conducted research on Afro-Brazilian religion in the 1980s and 90s. In 1986, she was the main curator of an exhibition, *Brasil 1986* at the National Museum of Denmark. She has worked with indigenous peoples, political culture, the role of performative phenomena in religion and politics as well as indigenous peoples’ political and cultural struggle for human rights and democracy. Among her publications are the book *Gudernes Rum: En beretning om ritualer og tro i Brasilien* (1995). E-mail: inger.sjoerslev@anthro.ku.dk

Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho, Lecturer at King’s Brazil Institute, King’s College London. Part-time Lecturer for Brazilian Studies, Aarhus University. He has published widely on Brazilian literature, including the volume “*Fora da Poesia não há salvação*” — *Uma hermenêutica literária da obra de Mario Quintana à luz da via negativa* (2006). He is the chief-editor of *Brasiliana – Journal for Brazilian Studies*. E-mail: romvmc@hum.au.dk

Jørgen Dige Pedersen, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, has conducted research on different aspects of Brazil’s political economy, including its foreign economic relations in late 1980s, early 1990s and early 2000s. Among his publications are the book *Globalization, Development and the State. The Performance of India and Brazil since 1990* (2008). E-mail: dige@ps.au.dk

Steen Fryba Christensen, Associate Professor and senior researcher at Research Centre on Development and International Relations, Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University, Denmark. His research focuses on Latin American issues but with particular emphasis on Brazil. He has published widely on Brazilian issues, including on Brazil’s national development strategies and Brazil’s foreign policy strategies and international economic and political relations. Among his publications are *Brazil’s Foreign Policy Priorities* published in *Third World Quarterly* (2013) and *Brasiliens udviklingsstrategier i en foranderlig global økonomi* published by *Økonomi og Politik* (2013). E-mail: sfc@cgs.aau.dk

Marie Kolling, PhD fellow, Department of Anthropology, Copenhagen University, has conducted three research projects in Northeast Brazil. Her current research is on slum upgrading, forced removal and social change and also concerns issues of segregation, security, informality, morality, and new patterns of consumption. She has made an ethnographic film “De Andada” [Moving] (2014), about slum dwellers in Recife who are forcefully removed to social housing, and she has published on Brazilian affairs in Danish news media.

E-mail: marie.kolling@anthro.ku.dk

Maria Nielsen, PhD fellow, Department of Culture and Society, Anthropology, Aarhus University, is conducting research in Brazil for her PhD thesis. Her project focuses on the metropolitan region of Recife and the effects of the World Cup – as both a projected future and now passed experience. Her areas of interest include temporality, the relationship between plans and practice, hope, social inclusion/exclusion and urbanity.

E-mail: etnmnielsen@cas.au.dk

Practical information

Registration for the conference: please visit www.conferences.au.dk/brazil2015 and register by January 15, 2015 at the latest.

Due to limited seats, we operate a first-come-first-serve principle for non-presenters.

Conference dinner: the conference is free of charge, but if you wish to participate in the conference dinner (price: DKK 400), please let us know when registering.