Editorial

The last issue of *Lusotopie*, a humanities and social sciences journal devoted to the political analysis of social spaces produced through Portuguese history and colonisation, launched in 1994 by Michel Cahen, Christian Geffrey and Christine Messiant, came out in 2009. The journal is relaunched in 2018, with new editorial committees, a special issue exploring the question of impeachment in Brazil and offering open access to previous issues (1994-2004) via the site Persée.org.

The initial ambition of the founders – embraced in the relaunched publication – was to create a forum for pluri-disciplinary, multi-lingual and international exchange between researchers across the social sciences and humanities working on so-called ‘Lusophone’ spaces. Explicitly positioned outside well-established academic networks of Portuguese literary and linguistic studies, humanities and social sciences were placed at the heart of its intellectual project in order to better analyse contemporary political dimensions of societies shaped by Portuguese colonisation, including in Portugal itself. The journal thus sought to bring together social research dealing with these societies, reducing the fragmentation and isolation of historical, sociological or political enquiry across broad cultural regions. In this way, *Lusotopie* facilitated the intersection of generalist studies grounded in field surveys, and regional approaches (America, Africa, Europe, Asia) in order to address the existence of a contemporary global space, produced by a particular history – that of Portuguese colonisation – made up of nations-states, local, national and transnational communities, as well as multiple flows and connexions.

If original in academic terms – something still the case today – this venture can be considered less an academic exercise and more of an intellectual, scientific and, in many ways, political wager. This wager is multi-faceted. Of course, the desire to transcend disciplinary hegemonies and boundaries, to break with the linguist isolation of specialised fields, to rethink practices shaped by pre-defined cultural areas, and to widen disciplinary horizons was not going to automatically prevent falling into the trap of creating yet one more ‘luso’ cultural area that could be as artificial and restrictive as other social spaces. Nonetheless, this ambition made possible the opening up of a social science laboratory of globe-spanning scale. In the field of history, the *Lusotopie* initiative galvanised research on the contemporary moment, shedding light on

the present time and the recent past (anti-colonial wars, state-making, social conflict, democratic transitions etc.) through comparisons of African, Asian, Europe, and South American social spaces. If political science research tends to focus on the national scale, researchers also engaged in comparative exercises, examining the complex processes of democratisation, social mobilisation and the structuration of political fields. Prior to that time, anthropology and ethnology did not necessarily dialogue, separated via disciplinary convention up to the mid-xx century into fieldwork in 'foreign climes' and that closer to 'home'. This was particularly the case, given that the economic, religious and cultural globalisation that was to push structuralism out of the window was still not a major preoccupation for anthropologists.

Notwithstanding that the fortunes of these and other disciplines that appear in the journal have unquestionably been shaped by diverse institutional orientations, acknowledging that knowledge practices have been shaped by the emergence of a global history and various thematic studies, and bearing in mind that the provincialisation of research centres in the northern hemisphere has become a recurring feature of academic life, from 1994 *Lusotopie* has persistently set itself the task of examining so-called 'Lusophone' societies in ways that move beyond disciplinary and geographic boundaries and that transcend linguistic and political barriers. The editorial and research horizons of the journal have not changed, and continue to seek a more equal research paradigm and a more level playing field between long-established 'Western' centres and the various 'souths' through the promotion of research in the three languages long used to analyse Portuguese-speaking social spaces – Portuguese, English and French; via the encouragement of cross-case comparative analysis; by avoiding a priori ranking of knowledge forms; by inviting early-career researchers to participate in debates; and through the establishment of an open and shared space where other forms of knowledge production and different theoretic models can be tested out.

Such promises and aspirations can sometimes be difficult to keep. Regular confrontations between these egalitarian ambitions and the 'academe' continue to underline that international classification systems and inter-institutional competition remain relevant when it comes to seeking legitimacy and recognition. Moreover, the tense or smouldering socio-political context of certain official Portuguese-speaking countries does not always offer free reign to intellectuals and researchers to carry out their investigations. Likewise, different levels of investment in higher education and research make the goal of academic equality difficult to achieve. This is why, with warmth and friendship, we wish to extend our thanks to our colleagues who chose to continue this adventure, and to all those who recently joined *Lusotopie* with the view to create

greater horizontality and equality between America, Africa, Asia and Europe, the four great regions of the world that will be the focus of the journal.

The theme for the first special issue – understanding the political and social processes behind the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil – has been chosen as it enables us to develop these broad areas of enquiry into contemporary politics that have driven *Lusotopie* since its creation. As a procedure that has become embedded within the practices of a recently-formed democratic regime like Brazil, the question of Rousseff's impeachment draws attention to the porosity of the frontiers between the end of the authoritarian era and more recent evolutions that are played out against a backdrop of unstable national, regional and international landscapes undergoing economic and social reconfiguration. This analysis makes it possible to reconsider the notions of political and democratic crises within the temporality of the restructuration of parliamentary and socio-economic systems, where the awareness of a political past remains present. For *Lusotopie*, the exploration of impeachment as a political practice cannot take place without expressing what Camille Goirand and Marie-Hélène Sa Vilas Boas describe in their introduction as a “shared concern” in the face of the situation in Brazil in 2018. By interrogating the logics and the causes of the emergence of this political prosecution it is possible to examine the dynamics, indeed more precisely, the fragility underlying the functioning of the Brazilian political system.

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