Socio-Cultural Anthropology Today – An overview*

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INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD IN CRISIS

During the last decade or so, we could hear or read that anthropology is in crisis (Scott 1992, Shore 1996, Mafeje 1997), sometimes connected with the 'crisis' of intellectuals (Grimshaw and Hart 1994), and sometimes because of the perceived threat of the so-called 'postmodernism' (Gellner 1992).[1] There are situations where anthropologists get into unpleasant situations because of 'ethnic conflicts' (Khazanov 1995), and sometimes many decades of infighting and problematic methodologies lead to the alleged 'scandals' (for a sound assessment of the 'controversy' surrounding the Yanomami Indians from the Orinoco River Basin in the Amazon, see Geertz 2001). Of course, this crisis talk could be interpreted in a millenarian spirit, as an illustration of a specific end-of-millennium state of mind, a general fascination with all the conceivable forms of disasters, culminating in films like *Titanic*, *The Sphere*, *Armageddon*, and *Independence Day*, but also present in the media hype around all the airplane crashes, occasional earthquakes or floods, climate changes, general terrorism threat, fascination with the ozone layer, unpredictable diseases (like the mysterious SARS), and finally, the AIDS pandemic that threatens to encompass the globe. Obviously, and taking all of these into account, the very fact that we exist after all (and the fact that I am telling you this here today) is nothing short of a miracle. It is quite miraculous that anthropology still exists as well, despite all the critics and advertisements of its sad and inglorious end, and despite the fact that sections for books in anthropology or ethnology tend to disappear from the bookstores.

It is my intention to outline very briefly the road that social and cultural anthropology passed from the first decade of the 20th century, as well as where it is today. I use the term socio-cultural anthropology intentionally, as the distinction between the (mostly British) social and (mostly American) cultural anthropology has vanished in the last few decades, with the intermixing and intertwining of different traditions and methodological approaches (cf. Monaghan and Just 2000, Rapport and Overing 2000, Herzfeld 2001, Eriksen and Nielsen 2001, Hannerz 2002).

Therefore, I am not discussing other sections of the globally perceived 'anthropology' – such as physical/biological or linguistic anthropology – which I believe to be quite distinct. For the purposes of this paper, I will define socio-cultural anthropology as the scientific discipline that studies all aspects of social and cultural communication in a comparative perspective, especially when it comes to the relationship between society and culture. It could also be said that this kind of anthropology is "a comparative study of common sense, both its cultural forms, and the social consequences it produces" (Herzfeld 2001:x).

Despite many questions and open issues, I believe that the introspection and re-examining that entered anthropology in the last couple of decades open a number of important and encouraging perspectives. Fragmentation and open questioning of certain key theoretical aspects (like the positions of power from which one speaks/writes, gender relations, importance of fieldwork, etc.) contribute to the discipline's increased openness and new theoretical debates, and also opens some thought-provoking dialogues. This goes for the different theoretical perspectives, increased professionalization, but also for the fact of opening of new work places – taking into account that the numbers of students who decide to study anthropology is on the constant rise globally (something I experienced in different places and different universities where I taught – from Scotland, via Slovenia and Brazil, and to South Africa). This despite of certain defensive behaviour and awkwardness of the professional anthropologists themselves (Pina-Cabral 2003), who still feel the need to justify or excuse themselves for the sins of the forefathers (Hart 2003 makes a strong case for re-examining the motifs of British social anthropologists – claiming that they were overall more interested in the [British] nation-state, than in the colonial expansion).

THE 'SCIENCE OF THE PEOPLE' OR 'THE SCIENCE OF PEOPLES'

Of course, every story about the beginnings of anthropology depends primarily on the starting point of the one telling it. It is important to note here that the use of the word 'anthropology' does not necessarily (or at all) mean an attempt to constitute anthropology as a particular scholarly discipline. However, when it comes to the beginnings (as well as some current controversies), I believe it necessary to point to the different uses of the terms such as 'ethnography', 'ethnology', *Volkskunde*, *Völkerkunde*, *ethnologie* and *anthropologie*, which all originate and are first established in the German language, between 1771 and 1791 (Vermeulen in Vermeulen and Roldán 1995).

Within the early concept of anthropology as 'the general science of man', ethnology was supposed to study 'different forms of civilization'. In contemporary anthropology and sociology, use of these terms is associated with the distinction between German concepts of *Volkskunde* ('the science of the people', studying exclusively Germanic culture) and *Völkerkunde* ('the science of peoples', studying non-German peoples – the ones who were distant and exotic). This distinguishing is important for the methodological discussions in social sciences, as well as for understanding of the concrete political conditions in which ethnology developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. 'The science of the people', which will give rise to ethnology, was inspired by the German travel writers, romanticists (J. G. Herder in the first place, who mentioned the word *ethnologie* for the first time, in

1775), and in particular with the work of the brothers Grimm (who collected folk stories of German peasants). On the other hand, 'the science of peoples,' which will give rise to ethnography, is constituted in the second half of the 19th century, and between 1885 and 1918 the basic preoccupation of scholars working in this tradition is the reconstruction of the 'original' civilization or culture.

For the purposes of this brief discussion, I will regard ethnography as a discipline similar to the German *Völkerkunde*, 'the science of peoples', thus being (in theory at least) different from ethnology, dedicated to studying one's own people or ethnic group. From the beginning of the 19th century, ethnography had a decisive effect on the whole range of popular representations of 'alien', 'other' or 'exotic', through the formation of the specialized ethnographic museums (the first one in Sankt Peterburg in Russia in 1836 [although the *Kunstkamera* was opened in 1711!], followed by the museums in Paris, Copenhagen, Berlin, etc.). This period of foundation of museums coincides with the period of significant expansion of the European colonial powers, primarily in Africa.

Although *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* definitively diverge at the end of the 19th century, they both have some shared characteristics:

1. they are both associated with the intensive development and establishment of 'exotic' and 'folkloristic' [folklore] museums;
2. both defined culture along a polarity between the 'material' and the 'spiritual' elements, and this tended to obliterate (or render totally insignificant) the study of social organization; and
3. they both struggled to become distinct from sociology and stay away from the (then) emerging concept of the social sciences (*Sozialwisssenschaften*).

German ethnologists later began to affirm the specificities of a national identity (derived from the G. W. F. Hegel's concept of *Volksgeist*, 'the spirit of the people')[2], which clearly separates them from the rationalists. In doing so, they introduce a hierarchical vision of the world, with the national (in their case, German) culture occupying the highest pedestal. This type of studying national cultures will influence the development of ethnology in The Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, as well as the development of *cultural anthropology* in South Africa, with all of its political baggage (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1997). Similar ideas were present in Nazi Germany. The hierarchy of values between different peoples and their traditions was justified using evolutionist arguments, but it was also very important in the context of colonial domination (whether external, as with some West European countries, or internal, as with Russia) – strategies of domination over other peoples or ethnic groups needed justification, and ethnology or cultural anthropology seemed appropriate. This concept of ethnology was also established (on the evolutionist premises as well) in the countries of East Europe and the Balkans, where in the early 1990s it gets renamed into *cultural anthropology*.

Of course, this needs to be seen in a context-specific perspective; the distinctions mentioned here arise only from the mid-19th century, becoming prominent only in the first decades of the 20th century. Early ethnologists/anthropologists used all of these terms interchangeably (as pointed out by Vermeulen 1995), and in some countries (like the ones of the former Yugoslavia) there is a considerable confusion about them even today.

I should also stress the fact that there was a lot of exchange and free flow of ideas from the mid-19th century. Early anthropologists, like E. B. Tylor, were very well informed about all the major publications in different languages. Tylor's own masterpiece, *Primitive Culture*, was translated into German, Russian and Polish only a few years after its original publication in 1871.

THE BEGINNINGS OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

There are several years that are crucial for the beginnings of anthropology as we know it today – but in my view, the most important one is 1911. This is the year in which W. H. R. Rivers in his opening address to the Section H of the British Association for the Advancement of Science claimed that changes in human societies were a direct consequence of the mixture of peoples and cultures. Here Rivers referred to the works of German ethnologists (Fritz Gräbner, Bernard Ankermann, both of whom presented their groundbreaking papers in Berlin in 1905), who were establishing a diffusionist model for the development of cultures. This model would provide crucial tool for Rivers' monumental *History of Melanesian Society*, because as Melanesian cultures were 'complex' (as they included a mixture of elements from a variety of different cultures), their histories could not be studied using evolutionary theories (Boskovic 2004:430). In the same year, J. G. Frazer began the publication of his monumental, 12-volume edition, of *The Golden Bough*, and only a year later Durkheim will publish *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*[3].

These events are important for understanding a specific theoretical foundation that Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown provided for contemporary anthropology. Between 1915 and 1918, Malinowski conducted intensive fieldwork (today we would call it 'a multi-sited ethnography') in the Trobriand Islands, off the Southeast coast of Papua New Guinea – which resulted in a series of brilliant monographs, the first one being *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922. In the very same year, Radcliffe-Brown published his study of *The Andaman Islanders*, the culmination of his ambitious theoretical program for establishing anthropology as a rigid scientific discipline based on fieldwork, comparative method, and Durkhemian sociology. Malinowski would establish functionalism, and Radcliffe-Brown structural functionalism, and these two 'schools' will dominate social and cultural anthropology (especially in the English-speaking countries) for the next half century.

This kind of social anthropology was characterized by:

1. being a synchronic and not a diachronic science – in practice, this meant rejection of speculations and historical reconstructions;
2. the main aspects to be studied were kinship, local politics, laws (normative systems), conflict and religion – and the research was conducted in small societies with low population and without a written language (so-called 'primitive societies');
3. the conclusions were reached after long-term, intensive fieldwork in the area that was clearly defined (and spatially clearly limited); and

4. social anthropology was established as *a comparative science* – all the data were also put in a wider context of the comparative studies of other cultures and other traditions. (cf. Eriksen 2003)

Of course, many of these aspects were already present in the research. For example, functionalists did not 'invent' fieldwork — Malinowski had with him in the field a copy of the *Notes and Queries* revised by Rivers, and they were all very well aware of the groundbreaking work already done by the Russian geographer Nikolaj Mikluho-Maklaj (1846-1888) in the Papua New Guinea in 1871/72. However, it was with the functionalist paradigm that clearly established itself as the dominant one after 1922 that they all become part of an integrated whole, a set of methodological parameters that will dominate social and cultural anthropology.

In the US, Boas, Kroeber and their students were crucial for the establishment of the importance of studying the concept of 'culture' (influenced by the works of the German 19th century ethnologists), while Redfield and the 'Chicago School' (under the influence of Radcliffe-Brown, who taught there in the early 1930s!) emphasized the importance of studying social structure. Lowie attempted to save some aspects of diffusionism without much success, but wrote the first really good and wide-ranging history of anthropology (or 'ethnology' – cf. Lowie 1937)[4].

Marcel Mauss was the determining influence in France – all the most important 'anthropologists' after the Second World War (Lévi-Strauss, Dumont, Balandier) were his students. This was the direct consequence of his incredible openness, his sharp mind, as well as almost encyclopaedic knowledge – Mauss himself never did any fieldwork, and never published a single-authored monograph! Between 1920 and 1950, Mauss and his students use the term 'ethnography' to refer to the study of 'pre-industrial societies' (cf. Leiris 1996:886-887). Only beginning with Claude Lévi-Strauss during the 1950s, there is insistence on more precise definition of concepts from a humanistic and comparative perspective. Lévi-Strauss founded the Laboratory for Social Anthropology and became Professor and Chair of Social Anthropology at the Collège de France in 1959. He also insisted on distinguishing the terms 'ethnography' (used to describe the actual fieldwork) and 'ethnology' (used to describe the analysis of the data obtained through fieldwork). In that sense, Lévi-Strauss primarily saw himself as an 'ethnologist' (Lévi Strauss 1987). When comparing the publications between the First and Second World War, it becomes apparent that Anglo-American (primarily British) social anthropology was much more empiricist-oriented (following upon the idea of Radcliffe-Brown that anthropology should become as exact as the natural sciences), while French scholars were more deductive in their reasoning and were much more open to speculation.

After the Second World War, there is an impressive quantitive growth of anthropology, with programs being opened all around the world, and from 1960s, it is institutionally established in Brazil (with the first meeting of anthropologists in 1953, and the establishment of the professional organisation in 1955) and in other Latin American countries. Of course, in Mexico, for example, anthropologists were very much engaged in the nation-building project, including the insistence of studying the country's indigenous cultures from the first decades of the 20th century (cf. Krotz 1991). Unfortunately, the 'main currents' of anthropology have for a long time (until very recently) been quite oblivious to the works of the scholars outside the 'major' traditions. Still, in a global perspective, this is the real 'Golden age' of anthropology, with the new departments and institutes being opened from the US, to Australia, Japan and South Africa.

The period immediately following the Second World War is also the time when some leading scholars present devastating criticisms of some basic postulates of functionalism. For example, Raymond Firth claimed that social structure does not provide an adequate description of social practices, because they are individual and open to improvisation – hence, one must pay attention to the differences between what is normatively regulated and how do people actually behave. Edmund Leach in his brilliant monograph *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954) challenged the theories of social structure and cultural change, and this was one of the important works to demonstrate the shortcomings of functionalism. Leach demonstrated how the Kachin and the Shan societies were constantly in the state of flux, change and conflict – so it was simply impossible to study them as bounded, fixed entities. Similar to Malinowski's unplanned spell among the Trobrianders, Leach's military service inadvertently enabled him to break off from the anthropological model of intensive fieldwork in a single community, with limited generalization to larger social units. During the war, he travelled widely through the Kachin country, obtaining a unique view of the range of cultural variation, especially in relation to the Shan valley peoples. Furthermore, most of his notes were lost (twice!), and the resulting ethnography was written from memory and subsequent archival research. Hence, Leach was forced to write a more sociological, historical and theoretical book than he probably wanted when he started his research. He identified two contrasting types of political organization (*gumlao/gumsa*), which alternated historically between egalitarian and hierarchical modes (something like the swinging of the pendulum). This approach, combined with some more traditional participant observation in a single community, clearly demonstrated that anthropologists could move beyond ethnography. Finally, E. E. Evans-Pritchard (who succeeded Radcliffe-Brown as Chair and Professor in Oxford in 1946) claimed that social anthropology could never achieve the level of generalizations that the exact sciences have, so it should dedicate itself to translation and interpretation ('translation of culture' is the famous expression that he used – cf. Eriksen 2003; Evans-Pritchard 1950).

On the other side of the Atlantic, psychology influenced the development of the school dedicated to the study of 'culture and personality', and anthropologists began to increasingly conduct fieldwork in the developing ('Third World') countries (Geertz 2002). There was a growing interest in urban anthropology (influenced in part by the Philip and Iona Mayer's studies in the Eastern Cape in South Africa!), and during the 1960s Schneider conducted very important research on kinship in the American urban context. During the same period, Clifford Geertz developed his interpretative theory through lectures and texts (most of which will be published in the *Interpretation of Cultures* in 1973), while Marshall Sahlins presented a very original mix of historiography and ethnography. Both Geertz and Sahlins insisted on cultural relativism as the basic method of anthropology. These approaches by the American-based scholars are also interesting because of an underlying interdisciplinarity – several decades before it became popular and widespread.

Lévi-Strauss's basic works get translated into English only in the 1960s, and this is when his version of structuralism influences new approaches in theory and methodology. It is quite difficult to understand scholars like Mary Douglas, Victor Turner or Sahlins without the influence of structuralism and their reactions to it. Elsewhere, there is an intensive research of social phenomena and urbanization in South Africa. Georges Balandier and other French scholars publish important works in political anthropology, while transactionalism and modelling

of ethnic boundaries by Fredrik Barth, Robert Paine, Jeremy Boissevain and A. P. Cohen represent an attempt to break with structural functionalism, while still keeping some of the empiricist heritage of social anthropology (cf. Eriksen 2003).

AFTER THE 'GOLDEN AGE'

In the early 1970s, many anthropologists accept various neo-Marxist approaches (in the case of South Africa, almost all of the anthropologists of the then younger generation). There was a time when it was simply very popular being a neo-Marxist in the English-speaking world, just as until recently everybody was structuralist in France. Since 1971, 'gender studies' and different forms of feminist anthropology became more present and prominent, and Foucauldian discourse analysis and Bakhtin's dialogic narration also became more popular in Anglo-American theoretical debates. These will also heavily influence the growth of the 'post-colonial studies' and what is sometimes referred to as the crisis of representation. On the one hand, anthropology is severely criticised as a 'colonial science' (as a matter of fact, a great number of anthropologists between 1930s and 1950s worked for colonial administration – unlike Rivers, Haddon and their contemporaries, who were left-leaning and who despised colonialism)[5]. On the other hand, there is an intensive period of self-questioning within the discipline itself, especially through the books written or edited by George Marcus, James Clifford and Michael Fischer – and inspired by the criticism of anthropologists like Geertz, scepticism of philosophers like McIntyre and Rorty, and the 'deconstruction' movement which came to the US through the works of Derrida. This type of introspection is sometimes called 'postmodernism', but I find this term completely inadequate, as the clear distinction between the concepts of 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' was never made in anthropology or in other social sciences. Therefore, different scholars use these concepts as they like, so one of the easiest strategies is to simply dismiss someone who we do not like and with whom we do not agree as a 'postmodernist'.

This introspection contributed to better understanding of the challenges that anthropology faces in the beginning of the third millennium. They include a re-thinking of the discipline's role and place in the world, what Mariza Peirano has very appropriately called 'anthropology without guilt' in her recent paper (2006; also Peirano 1995:160). Anthropologists have also started to question the whole idea of not just its own (often uncomfortable) involvement with politics, but also politics of doing anthropology and social sciences in general (Vincent 1990; Segalen 1989).

Some of the crucial aspects and challenges of contemporary anthropological research will become more apparent through the presentation of the most prominent topics of current social and cultural anthropology. These challenges also open important spaces for future research, as anthropology moves towards studying problems appropriate to the world we live in. I believe that the most important aspects of contemporary research can be grouped around five distinctive themes (or sets of themes):

I. In the first place, it is the question of *identity*. Identity – whether ethnic, gender or race identity – becomes the key word of contemporary anthropology. Of course, fieldwork is still very important – for example, Eriksen (2002) presented ways of studying ethnicity and nationalism in anthropological perspective, primarily based on his own fieldwork in Mauritius and Trinidad. People tend to question different cultural identities, as well as contemporary notions such as 'multiculturalism.' Another set of research questions is opened with the issue of globalisation: how does it influence formation of different identities? Here we are faced with the whole series of changes associated with modernisation and social changes, forcing anthropologists to pay attention to the contrasting sets of symbols (on the one hand, emotional ones, on the other, instrumental ones). Much more importance is given to the discrepancy between what people say and what people do, and this becomes an important theoretical problem (on the lines of the brilliant study of Holy and Stuchlik 1983).

II. *Research of the body*, including *medical anthropology*. Although already Mauss (1950) during the 1930s already established studying the body as a social phenomenon, great importance given to this set of questions is much more recent. Here I should mention important works on new reproductive technologies and re-conceptualisation of the kinship system as influenced by new technologies (Marilyn Strathern, Emily Martin), as well as contributions to the anthropology of the gender (Henrietta Moore, Donna Haraway). A particular attention is given to the body, understood to be fragile and perishable, and diseases like HIV/AIDS in some regions (like Southern Africa) heavily influence changes in the dynamism of social relations. Construction of the gender is also a very important field of study, because terms sex/gender are now used much more carefully, and the construction of gender relations is seen primarily as a social process – something that has a lot in common with the power relations, but very little with biological (or 'objective') premises.

III. *Consumption and material culture* have been for a long time marginalised as research topics, as anthropologists insisted on studying social relations. This changed with the studies of complex societies and symbolic characteristics that they attribute to particular objects. (A relatively recent book by Keith Hart [2000] on money is also worth mentioning!) Of course, this is also something that has been present in the classical economic anthropology – from Mauss's "Essai sur le don" (Mauss 1950) and the ring of kula as described by Malinowski (Eriksen 2003).

IV. The study of *space, place, movement and hybridity*. This looks like the most radical among the new foci of contemporary anthropology. Research on trans-national flow seems to question several key premises of the 'classical' anthropological theory: 1) social life is not seen as spatially limited, so it is very difficult to clearly define boundaries of any society; 2) cultural meanings are described as something subject to negotiations and change, something that people accept only partially; and 3) diffusionism is being re-introduced – the approach assumed to be dead and buried since the time of Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski. However, Eriksen (2003) rightly claims that not everything is as new as it looks, for this set of research questions opens some that are clearly founded even in the 'classical' or 'traditional' anthropological research. These include:

a) What are the possibilities for establishing and maintaining of stable collective identities, as well as functioning of social communities, in the conditions of migrations and cultural change?
b) To what extent can various segments of a society be integrated, taking into account their increased ethnic and cultural complexity?
c) Is cultural retention possible in the conditions of change and with the external influences among the migrants? and, finally,
d) Which social boundaries remain operational in increasingly complex situations?

Among the French anthropologists (*ethnologues*), Marc Augé has conducted studies dealing with some of these issues on a micro-level since the 1970s. More recently, Jean-Loup Amselle in his studies of globalisation and anthropology (2001, 2002) also points to important continuities between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' anthropology.

V. *Media, technology and popular culture*. This is the field of research that has been really thriving in the last decade. Although media and technology have already been important in the works of philosophers (Barthes, Adorno) and sociologists (Goffman), anthropologists finally notice them in the early 1990s. One of the most influential Internet activists, Hakim Bey, has a Ph.D. in anthropology in his 'Earthly' *alter ego*… New forms of communication (digital communication) and new forms of community (like the Internet) create new forms of social and cultural interaction. I should mention important contributions towards studying these forms of community published in recent years by Michael Fischer, Donna Haraway and Thomas Hylland Eriksen. The role of anthropologists in understanding of these processes is extremely important, for they are by their very profession trained to do some form of the 'interpretation of cultures.' In that sense, anthropologists increasingly 'translate' certain cultural patterns, explaining what is it that various media try to tell us. On the other hand, people like the French sociologist Bruno Latour, with his historical and ethnographic research on science communities and scientific discourses, showed how this area (the so-called 'epistemological field') is also quite opened for research (1999).

Obviously, there are topics that could have been added to this list (cf. Eriksen 2003), like the political anthropology, or interest in various theoretical aspects of the disciplines, like 'an anthropology of knowledge' (Barth 2002). However, these are the issues that I believe to be the most present and the most promising at the moment.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY AS A WORLDVIEW

There are a number of very concrete applications of anthropological knowledge – and this is something that both professional practitioners and especially lecturers rarely notice[6]. As a matter of fact, one of the paradoxes I encountered (in countries where I taught so far, but I know of other examples, such as The Netherlands, France and Mexico) is that studying anthropology is frequently perceived as something very 'general' or 'non-profitable.' However, in the 'real life', the fact is that anthropology graduates always get jobs – and this is not always the case

with their colleagues with degrees from sociology, politics, or economics. The knowledge acquired through studying anthropology is clearly seen as practical and *applicable* – understanding of concrete social relations in the fluid world we inhabit is a significant (not just cultural) capital. Anthropology can and needs to be more present in public – for example, that would be a way to demonstrate all the absurdity of some theories on 'genetic predisposition', as well as some theories presented by socio-biology (and more recently evolutionary psychology). By the virtue of their education, anthropologists are ideally qualified to debate with people advocating that everything is pre-determined in human lives, geared towards increased productivity, survival and breeding. The arguments of evolutionary psychologists (as well as socio-biologists) present examples of both bad biology and bad psychology, a terrible abuse of theory and total misunderstanding of anything even remotely resembling social relations, but these need to be confronted publicly.

This might again be seen as one of the consequences of the 'crisis of reception' (Marcus 2002, Pina-Cabral 2003) – it is important to do more to adequately present our scholarly discipline to the public. One should not be shy of publicity because, for example, who is more qualified than an anthropologist to give a theoretical contribution to a public debate about culture?

On the theoretical plane, introspection from 1980s provided a much-needed refreshing for the socio-cultural anthropology. On the one hand, there is a steady increase in the number of 'Third World' anthropologists, frequently educated in the rigorous academic environment of the 'First World' – they have worldviews (as well as a theoretical input) very different from their colleagues from the developed countries. I especially have in mind here what Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira called 'a critical Third World vision' (2000:11). On the other hand, the flow of information is much better than a couple of decades ago – the institutional organising of European anthropologists (EASA) since 1989 presents a good example of 'networking' within the discipline. (And I must mention here that I fail to understand the need for fragmentation and constant bickering in most former communist/East European countries – instead of supporting the development of different anthropology programs!) Questioning of the prevailing canons within the profession is something that many 'Third World' anthropologists can easily identify with. The instability and changeability of certain methodological premises is quite understandable for many non-Westerners as well – contextualisation is of course present in anthropology at least since the time of Leiris and Evans-Pritchard, but it is only today, with the increased mobility of people and ideas, that we can see all of its consequences.

To conclude: the stories and predictions of the end of social or cultural anthropology are definitively exaggerated. Of course, while it would be unfair (and incorrect) to claim that our discipline offers all the answers to the dilemmas of the contemporary world, there is definitively a potential to better understand the world we live in, as well as to see all the inherent complexity of the processes determining contemporary social and cultural changes. All that we need is to use this potential.

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NOTAS / ENDNOTES

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Over the last 10 years, I have been fortunate to get to know and be able to talk to some of the most brilliant world anthropologists – like the late Professors W. D. Hammond-Tooke and Ladislav Holy, as well as Professors Thomas Hylland Eriksen (University of Oslo, who also sent me an unpublished typescript of his paper, which was quite freely quoted in a few places in this paper), Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (Universidade de Brasília), Mariza G. S. Peirano (Universidade de Brasília), Nigel J. Rapport (Concordia University), William H. Fisher (College of William & Mary), Joanna Overing (University of St Andrews), Bruce Kapferer (University of Bergen) and Allen Feldman (New York University). Although some parts of our conversations did make it into this paper, all the potential errors and value judgments are exclusively mine.

1 Although Latour (1993) rightly claims that "we have never even been modern". I wrote about Gellner's total misunderstanding of the concepts and traditions from the late 1980s and early 1990s elsewhere (Boskovic 1998).

2 Of course, Hegel took over this concept from Herder. A version of this "spirit of the people" is present in the beliefs that peoples/nations have particular character traits – similar to individual human beings – so that 'nations' can be 'brave' or 'cowardly', 'warlike' or 'peaceful,' etc. This very exotic way of thinking was quite influential in the Balkans after the First World War (Cvijic's use of "characterology"), and in the 1930s heavily influenced some representatives of the 'culture and personality' school in the US (primarily Mead and Benedict, but also Lowie – although from a different theoretical perspective).

3 Another obvious choice would be 1859 – when both Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace publish their works. However, I would call this period 'the prehistory of anthropology' – the exact methodology of the emerging discipline was still non-existent, and there were also great ambiguities over the very name. Tylor is important for the institutional establishment, as he was elected Reader in 1884 and Professor of Anthropology in 1896 at the University of Oxford. In the *Primitive Culture*, he calls the new discipline he is writing about *ethnography*. At Cambridge, anthropology is established with A. C. Haddon and W. H. R. Rivers as *Lecturers in Ethnology* from 1899 (Leach disagrees in his masterful essay on the influence of class in the British social anthropology – 1984: 4-5.). J. G. Frazer was elected the first Professor and Chair of Social Anthropology in Liverpool in 1907, but he was not very fond of teaching (perhaps all of his lectures in his lifetime would combine into a single semester!). Franz Boas (who actually had a Ph.D. in physics!) became the Professor of Anthropology at the University of Columbia in New York (USA) in 1899.

Stocking (1995) gives by far the best general outline of the origins of social and cultural anthropology. The book edited by Vermeulen and Roldán (1995) contains several interesting chapters with less known episodes from the development of the discipline. A general theoretical overview with some good chapters is provided by Van Bremen, Godina and Platenkamp (1996). Moore (1996) is much more specialised than it sounds, but both Barnard (2000) and Kuper (1996) provide interesting general overviews. Leach (1982) is still highly relevant (especially for understanding the traditions that he himself went through, with the idea of anthropology as a kind of comparative 'micro-sociology'). Monaghan and Just (2000) wrote a clear introductory text accessible to students, while Rapport and Overing (2000) does require a certain amount of knowledge. As far as I know, the best general overview for all levels is provided by Herzfeld (2001), in the book that resulted from a collective effort within the *International Social Science Journal*.

4 According to Lowie, ethnography is the science that studies 'cultures' of human groups (Lowie 1937:3). At the same time, it constitutes "that part of anthropology (as the term is understood in English-speaking countries) which concerns culture" (1937:vii).

5 While questioning of anthropology's role in different historical and socio-political contexts certainly has its merits, I believe that this type of criticism must look especially naïve to scholars from 'non-central' traditions, like Brazil, Cameroon, Norway, Peru or Hungary, for example. Critics like Mafeje base a great deal of their critique on the actual ignorance of the processes that shaped anthropology in the 20th century — nicely described by Vincent (1990), for example.

6 I do not mean here the so-called 'applied anthropology' – following Fredrik Barth, I believe that the only difference between 'applied' and 'theoretical' anthropology is that the latter one is much more applicable in practice. Attempts to put anthropology into the service of states, governments or ideologies are in recent years visible primarily in the attempts to re-locate all the offices and institutions of

the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to Washington. The underlying idea seems that the AAA should serve as a kind of a think tank for the US administration – and it was (fortunately) exposed in the last few years (following the US military intervention in Afghanistan). These and similar attempts can (financially) benefit certain individuals, but they bring nothing for anthropological research and render the whole idea of an autochthonous and independent scientific research completely meaningless.

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Aleksandar Boskovic

Antropologia Sócio-Cultural Hoje – Uma visão

RESUMO

Este artigo oferece uma desconstrução da idéia de 'crise' da antropologia, ligando-a com um modo de pensar em moda na virada do milênio, mas que recebeu pouco apoio na prática. Argumenta-se que esta noção de crise só pode ser aplicada a alguns segmentos da antropologia anglo-americana, não à disciplina como um todo. O artigo também inclui uma apresentação de alguns dos mais importantes debates e questões terminológicas presentes nos séculos 19 e 20, com ênfase especial no funcionalismo. Um dos argumentos é que algumas das críticas recentemente popularizadas da disciplina devem ser contextualizadas; sua relação com o colonialismo, por exemplo, dado que o papel do antropólogo neste empreendimento foi na verdade muito limitado. O artigo apresenta cinco grupos de temas cruciais para os quais a antropologia contemporânea se volta e sobre os quais algumas das pesquisas mais interessantes estão sendo feitas. Eles são: questões de identidade; pesquisas sobre o corpo; consumo e cultura material; estudos sobre espaço e hibridismo; mídia e cultura popular. Finalmente, advoga-se que a antropologia social e cultural desenvolveu-se muito desde 1911, alcançando um ponto em que pode servir como uma ferramenta poderosa para o entendimento de todas as complexidades do mundo contemporâneo.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: história da antropologia – teoria antropológica – antropologia contemporânea.

Socio-Cultural Anthropology Today – An overview

ABSTRACT

The paper offers a powerful deconstruction of the idea of the 'crisis' of anthropology, linking it with the fashionable way of thinking at the turn of the millennium, but very little support in practice. It is argued that this notion of 'crisis' can only be applicable to some segments of the 'Anglo-American' anthropology, not to the discipline as a whole. The paper also includes a presentation of some major theoretical debates and terminological issues present in the 19th and 20th centuries, with special focus on functionalism. One of the points made is that some of the historically popular criticisms of the discipline (for its role in the colonialism, for example) should be contextualised, as the anthropologists' role in this endeavour was actually quite limited. The paper presents five crucial sets of themes where contemporary anthropology is moving today, and where some of the most interesting research is being published. They are: the issues of identity; research on the body; consumption and material culture; studies of space and hybridity; and media and popular culture. Finally, it is claimed that social and cultural anthropology moved a long way since 1911, reaching the point where it can serve as a powerful tool for understanding all the complexities of the contemporary world.
KEY WORDS: history of anthropology – anthropological theory – anthropology: contemporary aspects.