

Higher Education in the *Brazilian way*: a documentary cartography

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ABSTRACT – Higher Education in the *Brazilian way*: a documentary cartography. This article, derived from a doctoral thesis, conducts a genealogical analysis of Higher Education in Brazil, examining the power dynamics that have shaped it. Using *documentary cartography* as a method, the study identifies the convergence between modernity, coloniality, and neoliberalism, which resulted in an educational model aligned with the ideal of *order and progress*. The text explores how these forces constituted a Higher Education in the *Brazilian way*, highlighting its contradictions. In conclusion, it problematizes Higher Education as a space that, while reproducing ontological violence from entrenched epistemological assumptions, also offers potential for transformation and critique. By presenting these problematizations, the text proposes a rethinking of the University's role, highlighting not only its mechanisms of domination but also its destabilizing potential and the possibilities for political and epistemic reinvention.

Keywords: Higher Education. Genealogy. Cartography. Coloniality. Neoliberalism.

RESUMO – Ensino Superior à brasileira: uma cartografia documental. Este artigo, derivado de uma tese de doutorado, realiza uma análise genealógica do Ensino Superior no Brasil, examinando as dinâmicas de poder que o moldaram. Utilizando a *cartografia documental* como método, o estudo identifica a convergência entre modernidade, colonialidade e neoliberalismo, que resultou em um modelo de ensino alinhado ao ideal de *ordem e progresso*. O texto explora como essas forças constituíram um ensino superior à brasileira, destacando suas contradições. Ao final, problematiza o Ensino Superior como um espaço que, embora reproduza violências ontológicas a partir de pressupostos epistemológicos enraizados, também oferece potencial para transformação e crítica. Ao apresentar essas problematizações, o texto propõe repensar o papel da Universidade, destacando não apenas seus mecanismos de dominação, mas também seu potencial desestabilizador e as possibilidades de reinvenção política e epistêmica.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Superior. Genealogia. Cartografia. Colonialidade. Neoliberalismo.

The issues discussed here derive from the doctoral thesis entitled "Order and progress: genealogy of Higher Education in the 'Brazilian way'" Based on points of analysis between Brazilian higher education and neoliberal rationality, genealogically inspired research was conducted in order to understand some of the elements that make up the current arrangements of education and their possible relationships with the forces of capitalist coloniality. Due to the historical and social specificities of Brazil, we present the proposal of a Brazilian way genealogy as a strategy to map and problematize the specific character of the relationship with higher education that has been constructed in this territory. It should be noted, however, that the focus of the research is not higher education itself, but an exercise in opening up this educational device, an analysis of the forms of exercising power in the Brazilian context. To undertake this journey, it was necessary to move back and forth between the past and present, considering contemporary and historical issues, not necessarily in a linear fashion. Thus, we present the idea of documentary cartography as a device that paves this path, supporting a genealogical view of Brazilian higher education. In this way, the following pages will present an overview of the methodological process that enabled this research.

Genealogy and Documentary Cartography

The research process presented here draws on genealogical inspiration as a method (Foucault, 2014), based on the analysis of documents relevant to understanding the conditions that allowed for the emergence of higher education in Brazil and its current state. In any case, this approach does not intend to cut out historical moments and affirm facts, but rather to expand the materiality of some selected documents, understanding them as devices that transcend the discursivity of the text. The documents, beyond historical facts, were taken here as a record of the conditions of possibility of each time and each context, political milestones that constituted themselves as testimonies of their time. In this sense, the genealogical movement presents itself as an exercise in explicating the visibilities and sayabilities of these historical strata.

In the specific context of Brazil, the formality of documents brings an aspect of officiality that is important for research. Brazil seems to write its history in pencil, willing to easily erase what, upon later reading, appears to be an error or deviation. Thus, disregarding the past that is not convenient has become a comfortable habit, a way of erasing one's own history as an exercise in disclaiming responsibility for that context. In this dynamic, the processes of enslavement have been diminished (and sometimes even denied), the terrors of the civil-military dictatorship are softened, and other ontological violences that perpetuate themselves are treated casually. With regard to higher education, documentary analysis helps to understand how other spheres of society and power dynamics interfere in this space of knowledge production. The neutrality of scientific knowledge and the romanticized, y perspective of a factual relationship with knowledge are fractured by

the analysis of conditions of possibility, a movement that challenges the universalist perspective of the history of knowledge and educational institutions. That said, the choice to use certain documents as a guide for the issues presented here also emerges as a form of collective accountability and analysis of the state's participation in the constitution of higher education institutions and, consequently, in the production of knowledge that often reinforces ontological violence.

This article is also inspired by the cartographic perspective presented by Deleuze (2013) as a composition for thinking about genealogy, an affirmation of strata as fields of possibility, time more as a rhizome than as a line. As presented by Zambenedetti and Silva (2011), genealogy and cartography can be articulated in a complementary manner, producing other ways of questioning research processes based on an opening that presents new coordinates for the exercise of analysis. Based on a movement of differentiation in relation to more linear forms of understanding time, both perspectives “seek to give visibility to forces, their virtualities, possibilities for creation, and risks of capture” (Zambenedetti; Silva, 2011, p. 461).

A genealogical view of higher education implies an explanation of the power games that constitute this space and its regimes of truth. Looking at the materiality of higher education institutions or the discursivity of documents means focusing on the points of convergence of the lines of force that sustain these arrangements. In this regard, it is important to note that genealogy differs from other perspectives on history precisely because it conceives history as a field of possibilities. To this end, it constitutes a method that renounces standardization and predefined procedures—which does not mean renouncing rigor as a work process.

This critical view of history and the conditions of possibility goes beyond the macro-political dimension of history, also focusing on the field of relations and the production of subjectivities. In general terms, we could define genealogy as a strategy for analyzing the forms of exercise of power and the analysis of a micro-physical dimension of power (Foucault, 2018). Thus, if we think of a genealogical perspective of document analysis, it is necessary to understand the document in a way that transcends its textuality, locates it in history, and considers it based on its relationship with the dynamics of forces that culminated in its writing and institutionality. If the documents in question cut across the history of Brazilian higher education, it is important to understand them as emerging points of rationality from a given era. Genealogy focuses on the “knots” of power bundles, as a practice that aims to untangle such clusters, define the gaps, and, in opposition to historical objectivity, present the points of non-occurrence. In this sense, it was necessary to conduct a historical mapping exercise in order to locate some fundamental documents to guide this genealogical process. The mapping of the research territory was based on documentary cartography, a kind of drift through a multitude of materials that produced bridges between themselves based on the tensions and questions made explicit by the theory.

Based on the problematizations of Deleuze, cartography can be thought of as a way of operating from subjectivity, providing methodological inspiration for research that considers such modes of relation (Passos; Kastrup; Escóssia, 2009). The proposal to bring qualitative productions closer to a cartography perspective seeks precisely to break with the idea of a method that is conceived a priori. Dismantling the linearity of thought and allowing an openness to the encounters produced by research and its unforeseen events is part of a method that reserves a certain fluidity for the process, a freedom in relation to the affectations produced by the field of research.

In this sense, documentary cartography was established as a way of mapping the research territory based on what was presented in the harshness of documentary discourse but also based on what was not said in the formal records. An opening to the questions hidden between the lines of the documents, an exercise in opening those lines of writing, of force and form, in order to make explicit the conditions of possibility that allowed for these records. To this end, it was necessary to detach oneself from the idea of prior selection or delimitation of which materials were to be analyzed. We opted for the affectation and randomness of the encounter, produced from the issues raised by the research movement itself. Each document summoned the next based on the questions it produced.

Higher Education in the *Brazilian way*

The path we present is intended to be a genealogy of Higher Education in the 'Brazilian way'. The title in question presents three main points of problematization: higher education as a privileged object of analysis, the idea of genealogy as an ethical method and orientation, and Brazil as the geographical and socio-historical marker of this analysis. The choice of the expression "Brazilian way" is not intended to respond to a romanticized perspective, which places what occurs in the country in a position of optimism and praise, nor to a stereotypical view of indifference and disorganization. The focus outlined here is on emphasizing the conditions of possibility that arise from the Brazilian scenario. The geographical proportions of the country, its political and economic relevance, the fact that it was a Portuguese colony surrounded by Spanish colonies, the weight of having a population of more than 130,000 enslaved people in the 19th century, the condition of being one of the countries with the greatest economic inequality in the world, and so many other peculiarities make the case of Brazil quite specific. These peculiarities constitute a unique turning point for the analysis of the relationships between coloniality, racism, modernity, and higher education.

From this perspective, national higher education can be divided into before and after the Proclamation of the Republic, a moment that marks important shifts in the way higher education was conceived and in the very idea of the country. While some higher education institu-

tions have existed in Brazil since the colonial period, mainly due to religious influence, the establishment of the first officially recognized universities only took place at the end of the 19th century and after the Proclamation of the Republic.

The emergence of universities in Brazil (as an administrative category) can be traced back to the early 20th century with the inauguration of the University of Manaus and, later, the University of Rio de Janeiro (Albuquerque Fávero, 2006). However, the literature locates the beginnings of national higher education in the year 1572, the date of the creation of Arts and Theology courses at the Jesuit College of Bahia (Barreyro, 2008). Although there is debate about the emergence of higher education in Brazil, it is noteworthy that since the colonial period there has been a flow of people seeking university education in Europe, mainly in the universities of the metropolis. In this regard, it is important to note that higher education was a privilege of a tiny fraction of Brazilian society at the time, a rural aristocracy that had the economic means to live and study in Europe. This factor would become decisive for the future of Brazil, since the lack of national higher education contributed to the knowledge produced being even more detached from local realities.

In addition to Eurocentric epistemologies, this distance helped shape an intellectual elite that was disconnected from what was happening in their own country, an elite that identified themselves as Europeans living in a colony. At this point, the gender aspect of formal education in Brazil also becomes evident. The first institutions dedicated to women's education emerged in the early 19th century, based on a gender orientation guided by a strong moral bias. Education, in general, was restricted to primary education that reinforced gender stereotypes, relegating women to the roles of mother and wife and an education considered secondary, focused on teaching. If access was already restricted at the primary levels, higher education ended up being an even greater obstacle, with women being barred from existing courses such as medicine, law, and engineering (Beltrão; Alves, 2009).

The Proclamation of the Republic was (yet another) process carried out by the Brazilian elites in partnership with the army. Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca, Brazil's first president, was a military man who graduated from the Military School of Rio de Janeiro. Taking advantage of a moment of crisis in the country and counting on the support of conservative leaders and large landowners, he rose to the most important position in the country. Through a political-military coup, the beginning of the Republic inaugurated a form of institutional rupture that would become frequent in national history: decadent elites, a Eurocentric intelligentsia, and military forces working in partnership to secure their own interests.

The elitist and military character of the Proclamation of the Republic did not signify a break with colonial ideology, but rather an effect of the political processes that were in force, a kind of modernization of the administrative structure in order to maintain the privileges

of the local elites. In this scenario, the expansion and consolidation of higher education played a fundamental role in maintaining social inequalities, safeguarding the elites (mainly those identified with European whiteness and rural aristocracy) a monopoly on the professions with the highest social and economic recognition. The "democratization" of higher education, proposed in the wake of the republican Constitution, took place in line with the expansion of an emerging industrial bourgeoisie and the growth of urban centers.

With the beginning of Deodoro da Fonseca's government, the imperial coat of arms was removed from the flag and replaced by a circle stamped with a representation of the sky on November 15, 1889, the date of the Proclamation of the Republic. A banner bearing the words "order and progress" was placed across the flag, a suggestion made by the positivists who proposed the new standard based on a phrase taken from the work of Auguste Comte (Mesquita, 2021). The choice of the phrase, in addition to marking a position of intellectuality at the time, would prove to be a political calculation, a kind of planning for the country's management.

The influence of positivist philosophy in Brazil was quite significant, mainly due to the fact that the intellectual elite that articulated the Proclamation of the Republic had received their academic training in the context of the emergence of these ideas. The motto "order and progress" emblazoned on the national flag represents, according to positivist philosophy, an opposition to the ideals of social mobility, especially socialist perspectives. Since Comte's propositions, progress could only be achieved through a static social class system, according to which each social class should resign itself to its role for the proper functioning of society (Mesquita, 2021).

It is essential to understand the positivist influence on the structuring of national higher education, after all, it is this theory that lays the foundations for the affirmation of eugenics as state policy in the first half of the 20th century. The term eugenics was coined by Francis Galton in the early 20th century with the idea of outlining the scientific principles for the improvement of the human species (Galton, 1904). The scientific guise of a racist and colonial theory influenced the Brazilian intellectual elite, who, based on positivist ideals, transformed the theory into state policy. In a decree by the provisional government, signed by Deodoro da Fonseca with the aim of regulating the entry of immigrants into the country, it is possible to observe the state's movement to apply eugenic policies in order to encourage a "whitening" of the population.

Art. 1 - Entry into the ports of the Republic is entirely free for individuals who are valid and fit for work and who are not subject to criminal action in their country, with the exception of indigenous people from Asia or Africa, who may only be admitted with the authorization of the National Congress in accordance with the conditions then stipulated (Brasil, 1891).

The attempt to "whiten" the Brazilian population, conceived through the encouragement of European immigration, was based on scientific racism propagated through academia. In practice, an intellectual elite educated in Europe and based on a Eurocentric worldview saw racial differences as the cause of a supposed degeneration of Brazilian society. Based on the changes brought about by the 1891 Constitution, we can establish the period between 1920 and 1940 as the moment of institutionalization of the University in Brazil.

The 1934 Constitution contains a series of references to educational policy, unlike the 1891 Constitution, which addressed the subject of education in a vague manner. The 1934 text places the responsibility for "establishing national education guidelines" with the federal government and dedicates an entire chapter to the topic, affirming education as a right for all and its promotion as a duty of the state. In addition to marking the institutionalization of universities, the constitutional text also contributes to the scientific reaffirmation of eugenics as the position of a significant portion of Brazilian intellectuals. Article 137 of the Constitution explicitly states that it is the responsibility of the Union, the states, and the municipalities to promote eugenic education. Eugenics, formalized as national policy, was supported by a number of intellectuals who, through a supposedly scientific discourse, upheld and justified discriminatory and racist practices.

Since the Vargas Era, increased access to higher education, mainly due to industrial and urban development, has produced a subtle yet significant change in terms of the audience and the questions that drive knowledge production in academia. Whereas higher education had previously been the exclusive domain of an elite detached from local realities, the proximity of higher education institutions to a more significant portion of cities enabled the beginning of some epistemological shifts, with social repercussions. The new reality of higher education allowed for the emergence of a slightly more critical view of the inequalities and hegemonic discourse of the intellectuals of the time.

It is important to note that, despite the greater openness of higher education institutions, especially with regard to economic conditions, the academic environment remained a space largely dominated by whiteness. The expansion of higher education in the 20th century was a much more quantitative than qualitative process. The number of women and black people enrolled in higher education was still completely disproportionate to the national population in relation to white men, which turned higher education into a kind of monopoly. However, slow and gradual access to higher education institutions allowed cracks and tensions to begin to appear in the discourse of Brazilian intellectuals. Gradually, conditions were created for a critical stance, albeit a minority one, to emerge in relation to knowledge itself and the social function of higher education institutions.

Between the end of the Estado Novo (1945) and the civil-military coup of 1964, dissatisfaction grew among the student movement,

which organized and began to demand changes in higher education. This period marked an exponential growth in the public segment of higher education, with enrollment jumping from 21,000 to 182,000 (Martins, 2009). However, even though access had increased dramatically, the number of places did not keep pace with population growth and, above all, with the movements of urbanization and industrialization, which increased this demand. This dissatisfaction, which began in the 1950s, was fueled by the inspiration of the protest movements that took place throughout the world in the 1960s and the resistance to the authoritarian regimes that spread throughout Latin America. The affirmation of the national flag's motto once again became imperative for maintaining the privileges of a national elite that was increasingly being questioned.

Just as eugenics and scientific racism served as the theoretical basis for a state project in the early 20th century, the military and national elites also sought epistemological support in higher education to underpin their political project. In this context, higher education institutions acquired a strategic role for the civil-military dictatorship, both in strengthening nationalism through a discourse of pride and development, and in controlling and repressing critical and subversive thinking. The civil-military coup that ushered in one of the most violent periods in the country's recent history was consolidated as a justification for maintaining order and progress.

The reference to the words on the national flag is no coincidence, and its defense is not empty rhetoric. At various moments in national history, the ideals of "order and progress" have guided a national project aimed at maintaining certain arrangements and oriented toward a specific vision of progress. Far beyond a reproduction of the words on the national flag, positivist ideals have presented themselves as the moral compass of the country's political project, leading to a future that insists on repeating itself.

In this sense, it is essential to highlight the transversality of the ideas of order and progress in the context of Brazilian higher education. While these concepts spread as political calculations and national projects and influence the ways in which life is managed, their effects also reverberate in the specificities of higher education. An example that can be taken to attest to the close relationship between Brazilian rural elites and the maintenance of a certain national order through higher education was the so-called "Lei do boi" (Law No. 5,465, of July 3, 1968). This legislation was in force for seventeen years (during the civil-military dictatorship) and guaranteed the reservation of places in agronomy and veterinary medicine courses at federal institutions for the sons and daughters of farmers who were members of the National Farmers' Union (). In practice, the "Lei do Boi" was yet another political maneuver by rural elites to ensure the maintenance of land concentration—which has its origins in the colonial period—through the state apparatus and access to higher education.

Based on the authoritarianism of the civil-military dictatorship and the expansion of economic interventionism, the colonial pact has been updated from a neoliberal perspective. With regard to higher education, this process can be seen in the expansion of private initiative in the sector and the growing commodification of education. The context of the civil-military dictatorship had a severe impact on Brazilian educational policies, enabling the emergence of a "new" private education system, while public institutions faced persecution, censorship, and repressive measures against the student movement. The combination of repressive policies against federal institutions, increasing elitism in access, and a focus on postgraduate studies significantly altered the profile of public universities. In contrast, the alignment of the military with the business community boosted private higher education in the country, with 759 requests for the regularization of private institutions being granted between 1968 and 1972 alone (Silva, 2001).

With regard to national higher education, the second half of the 20th century was marked by strong institutional and epistemological clashes that, in general terms, translated into more critical or conservative positions in relation to modern reason and its ways of managing life. This clash can be seen at the institutional policy level starting with the first Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education, signed in 1961. After thirteen years of parliamentary debates and extensive discussions, it was arbitrarily replaced by Law No. 5,540 of 1968, also known as the University Reform Law, and Decree-Law No. 464 of 1969, instituted by the civil-military regime. While the LDB was conceived from a broad political and social debate about the nature of education in the country, the decree of the dictatorial regime curtailed university autonomy and regulated the transfer of responsibility for access to education from the public to the private sphere.

In this context, the period of redemocratization marks an intense political struggle on the part of civil society and organized social movements to regain some political ground and some possibility of autonomy in the sphere of education. Both the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education were documents constituted through broad popular participation and political debate, bringing into dispute the interests of civil society and the arrangements of political and institutional governance. Although both texts have questionable aspects and points of divergence between different sectors of the political spectrum, it is undeniable that they were produced through a democratic exercise (within the limits of what modern democracy allows) and as an attempt to recover the possibility of popular participation that was destroyed during the civil-military dictatorship.

Based on a National Constituent Assembly, convened in 1985 and lasting about twenty months, with the participation of 559 parliamentarians, suggestions sent by the general population, and debates by representative entities, the so-called "Citizen Constitution" was promulgated in 1988. To assist in the production of the constitutional text,

eight thematic commissions and 24 thematic subcommissions were organized in order to broaden the debate and provide diverse points of view during the process. In this regard, we can recall the statement made by Lélia Gonzalez in 1987, when she participated in the "Subcommission on Blacks, Indigenous Populations, People with Disabilities, and Minorities." Her speech presented how the issue of racism is closely related to the constitution of the Brazilian State and modern-colonial rationality. In her statement, the thinker questioned how, despite the majority of the population being black, Brazil perceives itself as "a white, continental, and masculine society" (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 245).

One of the milestones of the 1988 Federal Constitution in relation to higher education is Article 207, which defines university autonomy and marks the inseparability between teaching, research, and extension, indicating a change in the conception of higher education, contrary to the mercantilist logic of education. The article was the subject of much tension and political debate, as it was the cornerstone of a significant change in the way higher education had been conceived until then (Mazzilli, 2011, p. 214). After extensive social mobilization, its content was maintained in the following text: "Universities enjoy didactic-scientific, administrative, and financial and patrimonial management autonomy, and shall obey the principle of inseparability between teaching, research, and extension."

The importance of Article 207 of the Federal Constitution lies in the fact that it articulates the idea of university autonomy with the function of higher education institutions, summarized in the trinomial teaching-research-extension. This means that the political movement that reverberated in the article in question intended to mark a freedom in political-administrative and knowledge production issues, while ensuring the social function of higher education institutions. The inseparability of research, teaching, and extension speaks to a responsibility for the knowledge produced and an understanding of its impact on the general population. At the same time, the issue of autonomy was intended to protect educational institutions from interference by the market or the state itself, especially those that directed knowledge production in a way that privileged individual interests over the common good.

However, despite the importance and the idea of repositioning higher education, legislative movements aligned with neoliberal rationality circumvented the constitutional text. In a process similar to several other Latin American countries, the period of national redemocratization was accompanied by strong international pressure to adopt a neoliberal agenda. In this sense, the wording of the 1996 Law of Guidelines and Bases made it possible to shift Article 207 of the Federal Constitution. The new wording of the LDB defined the characterization of higher education that is currently used, delimiting educational institutions as universities, university centers, or colleges. In terms of their administrative category, they can be public (federal, state, or municipal) or private. The differentiation between University,

University Center, and College allows private institutions to often offer higher education courses with fewer administrative requirements and significantly less stringent quality standards.

The creation of the legal-administrative figures of university centers and colleges has reduced the bureaucracy involved in creating higher education institutions, in a clear nod to the market. As a result, it has also removed much of the social responsibility of educational institutions in relation to learning conditions and the effects of the knowledge produced. The legislative movement paved a path that was already being followed and allowed for the expansion of the commodification of higher education. In this sense, we can say that neoliberal rationality has also permeated higher education through legislative mechanisms that have facilitated its spread.

The events of the first decades of the 21st century illustrate the complexity of the situation of higher education in Brazil. In general terms, it is correct to say that the government policies established between 2002 and 2016 expanded higher education as a whole, both in its public and private dimensions. During this period, notable actions include the implementation at the federal level of affirmative action policies, the growth of FIES (Higher Education Student Financing Fund), which had been created by the previous government, the implementation of PROUNI (University for All Program), with the aim of offering public school graduates or low-income individuals places in private institutions financed by the federal government, and REUNI (Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans for Federal Universities), focused on the physical and pedagogical expansion of HEIs, among others. Federal investments aimed to expand access to higher education for new students, in addition to restructuring and expanding the physical structures of educational institutions.

The complexity of the issue lies in the fact that, on the one hand, access to higher education is democratized, reverberating in a significant impact on people's lives and future possibilities for an entire generation. On the other hand, there seems to be a rebound effect, in which neoliberal rationality adapts and returns to produce inequality. Despite the growth in the number of places and opportunities for access, the increase in relations with the financial market has had a short-term effect on public institutions, which are subject to the volatility of government policies, while accelerating a substantial change in private institutions, mainly through the intensification of state-sponsored academic capitalism.

It was the 1996 LDB that organized the legal framework for the creation of educational companies, mainly based on Article 20, which defined the framework for private institutions. The new legislation created the possibility for these institutions to be categorized as private, community, religious, or philanthropic. According to Carvalho (2013), the effect of this categorization was an increase in the number of institutions (and enrollments) focused on profit compared to non-profit ones. This movement gained even more weight with the adhesion of

for-profit HEIs to PROUNI and the massive financing provided by FIES. State investment in for-profit educational institutions enhances a process of financialization, oligopolization, and internationalization of higher education.

Attesting to the complexity of the situation, despite the neoliberal shift in higher education, recent years have seen a significant change in the conditions of access and the profile of those entering HEIs. The last decade has seen important changes, the most significant of which is possibly the affirmative action policy, regulated by Law 12.711 of August 29, 2012. In an attempt to democratize access to higher education, the law regulated a process that had been underway since 2003, when the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) pioneered the process of reserving places (Basso-Poletto; Efrom; Rodrigues, 2020).

In the context of Brazilian public universities, affirmative action aims to compensate segments of the population that have historically had their rights taken away, with these policies focusing on economically disadvantaged people, black people, brown people, indigenous people, and people with disabilities. One of the modalities provided for by affirmative action is the reservation of places for access to higher education, with the aim of reestablishing the idea of education as a common good and a universal right. Affirmative action differs from anti-discrimination policies in that it is not punitive in nature, but rather seeks to empower a community that has been deprived of its rights. It can be understood as both a preventive measure and a form of redress (Daflon; Feres Júnior; Campos, 2013).

In 2022, a decade has passed since the implementation of the quota policy. Despite political and social advances, the data that could allow for a more detailed assessment of the policy's effects are still scattered. A report issued by the Federal Government for the 2021 fiscal year states the complexity of establishing a national overview of the quota policy "due to the difficulty of accessing individual data on admission and academic or work performance, [since] most studies address the cases of specific universities." Even so, the same report presents data that shows a significant transformation in the ethnic-racial and income profile of people who attend Brazilian universities.

In 2011, about 52% of the Brazilian population identified as black, brown, or indigenous, and of that 52%, only 40% were enrolled in public higher education institutions. In 2019, the self-declared black, brown, or indigenous population rose to 57% of the national total, of which 51% were enrolled in public HEIs, representing an 11 percentage point increase in access to higher education compared to a 5 percentage point increase in the self-declared population. In terms of income profile, considering per capita earnings of up to 1.5 minimum wages, the profile of the population in this stratum changed from 71% in 2011 to 74% in 2019. Despite the insignificant change in terms of the national profile, the number of entrants into public higher education within this socioeconomic bracket changed significantly, from 50% in 2011 to 70% in 2019.

The above data help illustrate that, despite the short duration of affirmative action policies, their effects are significant in terms of changing the profile of higher education. Furthermore, if we compare the time these policies have been in place with the forces of colonial-modern-neoliberal rationality, their effects become even more relevant. Beyond empirical data and raw numbers, affirmative action policies produce subjective effects and tensions with hegemonic rationality that are immeasurable.

Affirmative action policies and the attempt to democratize access to higher education do not only call into question the selection process and the number of places available. The attempt to break with the elitist and restrictive logic that cuts across our educational history calls into question the very production of knowledge, notably marked by intersections of race, class, and gender. As a result of democratization in access, institutional, epistemological, and socioeconomic transformations are produced, made possible by the removal of whiteness in relation to exclusivity in occupying spaces of relevance. Although this process is much slower and more gradual than it should be, its effects can be seen in terms of tensions in positions that until then had been crystallized.

Despite the evident success of affirmative action in democratizing access, several points still need to be studied due to the novelty of its character and the questions it raises. Enabling access, in itself, is not sufficient redress, especially when issues such as permanence, insertion into the labor market, and epistemological repositioning do not keep pace with legislative decisions. The positive effects of affirmative action policies and the expansion of higher education are undeniable and tend to reverberate over decades, thanks to an entire generation that can experience flashes of universalization in relation to education. However, the rebound effect produced by the intensification of the commodification of education also has medium/long-term effects, including on achievements that were thought to be guaranteed, such as a democratic state.

Considerations

With regard to higher education, it seems correct to say that Brazil has strictly followed the ideals of order and progress that adorn its banner. Order, sustained by the normativity of modern thinking, and progress, represented in the unbridled developmentalism of neoliberalism, have guided the country's policies and higher education to this day. Taking these documents as emerging from the conditions of possibility of each era and given the intimate relationship between neoliberal rationality and modern thinking, we problematize the place of higher education in the nation. It is fertile ground for the production and maintenance of ontological violence based on epistemological assumptions and, simultaneously, a space for the transformation of reality and critical exercise. The research process we present does not aim

to resolve these points into a truth to be affirmed, but based on overcoming the traumatic and Manichean logic of modernity, we bet on a certain ambiguity as a place to be sustained.

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Availability of research data: the dataset supporting the results of this study is published in this article.

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