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**Fredrik Barth' s work between the Old and the New World: About Researchers' Internationalisation and the Circulation of Ideas.**

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Except in the European French speaking world the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth is well recognised for his innovative transactional notion of ethnic borders he developed on the grounds of his studies on minorities in complex societies. His extensive fieldwork experiences have contributed also to the academic discussions concerning the comparative method in social anthropology. It is also important to mention the political attitude Fredrik Barth adopts in his academic work by making his knowledge and expertise available for decision makers.

Born in 1928 in Germany, Fredrik Barth undertakes in 1946 his studies in palaeontology and anthropology at the University of Chicago. The three years in Chicago represent an important time of inspiring intellectual encounters. Among others, Barth meets during that time Erving Goffman. After his studies in anthropology in Cambridge, Barth founds at the University of Bergen the first department of anthropology in Norway.

I myself was trained as an anthropologist in Brazil and I brought from there Barth's theory of the transactional ethnic border, which I

applied in my Ph.D. onto the European construction and national identities at the University of Liege. There were only some French speaking colleagues that knew Barth's work and my effort to introduce his work by a publication of his most important papers failed throughoutly. That is the reason why the publication I prepared together with Fredrik Barth finally was published in Brazil where the demand for such a book was great. Nevertheless I used constantly Barth as main author during the seven years I taught at the University of Liege. Apart from the ground breaking *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, I used however many of his papers on field research methods. Several of my students trained in this spirit decided to make their MA and PhD in an English university, where the approach to fieldwork methodology meets more this spirit. Others have even done their fieldwork for the final work of the bachelor degree in Brazil, being supervised by Brazilian colleagues and former professors of mine. One of my students finally went to the same Brazilian university where I had done my undergraduate studies and my MA, to do her PhD.

The Brazilian way of teaching anthropology is a hybrid, meaning that French influences are present as well as American or English ones. Barth's writings and particularly his work on ethnic boundaries fell therefore on a fertile soil in Brazil where the growing problems with its indigenous people needed new solutions. To offer a scientific, meaning an objective solution for this highly socio-economic problem became urgent to prevent a human catastrophe. In this sense to make a government recognise a scientific definition of indigenous people took the dimensions of a humanitarian action with needs for 'politicised' anthropologists. Barth's writings are fast adopted in the MA and PhD courses. In 2000 finally the first collection of Barth's most important papers — following Barth's own appreciation — is published in Brazil. The translation to Portuguese permits also to

introduce Barth into the program of undergraduate teaching, contributing to the dissemination of his ideas.

This paper shows the straight link between *Moments and their men* — to pick up the name of Yves Winkin's biography of Erving Goffman — because, as we will see, the circulation of ideas does not depend entirely on their quality, but also on the context of where they are received and their aptitude to be re-appropriated in another context. The mobility of persons implies also flexibility of the ideas they take with them, in the sense that they must adapt to new context if they want to survive.