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A short spring before the long winter: a historical cartography of Brazilian culture before the 1964 coup d'état

A breve primavera antes do longo inverno: uma cartografia histórica da cultura brasileira antes do golpe de Estado de 1964

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Abstract: This article presents a critical cartography of Brazilian culture between 1955 and 1964, a crucial period for the emergence and affirmation of ideological, aesthetic and cultural values that marked the vigorous cultural scene in Brazil. That scene had at its core the formulation of projects shaped by engagement in the construction of a modern and socially integrated Brazil. The intellectual and artistic movements of the period tried to address the dilemmas and predicaments of Brazilian backwardness by attempting to influence state policies designed to overcome “underdevelopment”. My starting point is that the cultural scene of that time referred to certain elements of modernism, such as the search for national identity and the role of intellectuals as protagonists, and helped to prepare the “cultural hegemony” of the national-popular left after the 1964 coup. The article discusses the specific historicity of artistic-cultural projects and maps the various currents that shaped Brazilian cultural life during this key moment, which provided a specific intertwining of politics and culture.

Keywords: Brazil: cultural history, Brazil: culture and politics, intellectual commitment.

Resumo: Neste artigo, apresento uma cartografia crítica da cultura brasileira entre 1955 e 1964, período crucial para o surgimento e afirmação de valores ideológicos, estéticos e culturais que marcaram a vigorosa cena cultural que tinha como principal característica a formulação de projetos marcados pelo engajamento na construção do Brasil moderno e socialmente integrado. Os movimentos intelectuais e artísticos do período tentaram equacionar os dilemas e impasses do atraso histórico brasileiro, visando influenciar as políticas de Estado na superação do “subdesenvolvimento”. Parto do pressuposto de que a cena cultural da época remetia a certos elementos do modernismo, como a busca da identidade nacional e o protagonismo do intelectual, além de preparar a “hegemonia cultural” da esquerda nacional-popular depois do golpe de 1964. Ao longo do artigo examino a historicidade específica dos projetos artístico-culturais e mapeio as várias correntes que protagonizaram a vida cultural brasileira neste momento-chave que propiciou um peculiar entrelaçamento entre política e cultura.

Palavras-chave: Brasil: história cultural, Brasil: cultura e política, engajamento intelectual.

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In this article I shall present a proposal for a critical cartography of Brazilian culture between 1955 and 1964, a crucial period for the emergence and affirmation of ideological, aesthetic and cultural values that marked the vigorous Brazilian cultural scene at the time. The main characteristic of the sociocultural groups that were its protagonists was to formulate projects marked by engagement in the construction of a culturally modern, economically developed and socially integrated Brazil. Obviously, these projects were not devoid of contradictions and limitations. As this is a cartography designed as an essay, many of its statements may be revised and problematized by later research. My methodological perspective attempts to analyze the *diagnoses* and *projects* of some Brazilian “cultural formations” that played a role in the 4th Republic (1946–1964). For Raymond Williams, the cultural formations are self-organized groups that may or not be linked to formal cultural (or political) institutions and that try to provide cohesion to their cultural or artistic productions in a dialogue or confrontation with other cultural formations and with the broader order of society (Williams, 1992, p. 57, 68). Thus, a space of organic convergence is created between politics and culture, and it is potentiated in some historical contexts in which a given society is involved in overcoming its structural, economic or political obstacles. The most instigating aspect is that the theoretical proposition of these groups is not always fully realized in the work of art, leaving a space of tension between the intention and the execution of their aesthetic-ideological projects that ultimately shows the dilemmas of a given historicity.

The historical period examined in this article –1955 to 1964 – could be divided into two parts, historically and historiographically. In the first part one can perceive that the years up to 1962 mark a set of experiences of densification in the cultural debate and aesthetic research characterized by the construction of a progressive nationalism and by the affirmation of the national-popular as the axis of the left-wing cultural policies by several cultural formations. In this period, also, projects for a formal break that went in the direction opposite to the “national-popular” were also taken up again. The latter were more closely connected to the tradition of abstract and constructive modern art, such as concretism.

From 1962 onwards, there is a perceptible conscious affirmation of an engaged perspective in several fields of art, especially popular music and film. The long-play records of Carlos Lyra (*Depois do Carnaval*, 1962) and Sérgio Ricardo (*Um Senhor de Talento*, 1963), as well as the formalization of the Cinema Novo as a programmatic group of film-makers mark this change. The theater had already been undergoing a politicization process since *Eles Não Usam Black-Tie*, a play by Gianfrancesco Guarnieri presented by the Arena Theater in 1959, but at the beginning of the 1960s there were many debates ongoing which showed the search for new directions beyond the realistic dramatic theater. In this debate, the tradition of the Rio de Janeiro musical theater and the problematization of dramatic naturalism proposed in the terms of the Brechtian epic theater were beginning to guide the left-wing Brazilian theater, respectively marking the Opinião Group and the new phase of the Arena Theater, under the direction of Augusto Boal, with distinctive aesthetic and ideological implications (Mostaço, 1982; Costa, 1996).

The historiographical debate

At the level of historiographical debate, the first time block of the periodization proposed in this article is a period that has been relatively little studied, as is the case of the entire 1950s. The studies are concentrated on the period from 1962 to 1968, the golden era of engaged art in Brazil, whose impulse was not shaken by the coup d'état and by the authoritarianism of the first years of the regime, although this new political context required a correction of the course and focus among left-leaning artists.

A topic that still deserves a more detailed examination from a greater distance is the affirmation of nationalism as a fundamental axis of the cultural projects in the period before the coup². The bibliography of the 1980s, beginning with the seminal critique by Marilena Chaui regarding the perspective of cultural action of the Popular Culture Center [Centro Popular de Cultura – CPC] of the National Students' Union [União Nacional dos Estudantes – UNE] (Chaui, 1980), highlighted the contradictions of this project, a hostage to the nationalism and authoritarianism of the elites towards the popular classes. According to Chaui, the former masked the class

² In our opinion, the matrices of nationalism (and of national-popular elements) that informed the progressive sectors of Brazilian politics in the 1950s and 1960s are of various historical and intellectual origins. At least four starting points can be pointed out: 1) the works and essays of modernist artists and intellectuals who formulated a new paradigm for the Brazilian culture, outstanding among which are the reflections of Mario de Andrade on the correlation between modern and national elements; 2) The cultural policy of the Estado Novo which instituted the symbolic bases of “Brazilian-ness”, even though within a conservative context, helping establish images and values that migrated, partly, to the left in the 1950s; 3) the anti-imperialist discourse that defended the workers’ and urban popular culture disseminated by the Communist Party since the 1930s, at least; 4) the folklorist perspective that existed since the end of the 19th century, but that became stronger from modernism on, valuing the myth of the cultural authenticity and purity that resided in the rural and semi-rural communities. In other words, the national-popular of the 1950s did not arise from an artificial ideological project imposed by a group of official thinkers, but was disseminated in an intellectual and political environment that was favorable and had been densified by the previous discussions. The industrializing developmentalism, taken as an economic policy, potentiated the belief in nationalism as Brazil’s historical fulfillment, qualifying the perception of the many contradictions of this historical process.

struggles inherent in the historical process, while authoritarianism in turn undermined the liberating intention of the engaged culture of the left, transforming popular culture into raw, passive material to form the dreamed-of “national-popular culture”. More recently, authors such as Marcelo Ridenti and Miliandre Garcia revised this critical tradition (Ridenti, 2010; Garcia, 2007). Ridenti argues that the left, since the 1930s, developed its own idea of “Brazilian-ness”, at the same time as and often in a confrontation with the conservative nationalism of the right, materialized in the cultural policy of the Estado Novo (1937-1945). Therefore, there was a “revolutionary nationalism” potentiated by the situation of economic dependence of Brazil, which cannot be understood only as derived from the right-wing nationalism, although both shared certain symbolic elements and aesthetic materials. Miliandre Garcia, in turn, in her discussion on the cultural action of the CPC, analyzed not only the guidelines – which, it must be said, were really reductionist – of the famous “CPC Manifesto” about how left-wing art should be, but also highlighted the great debate and polemics aroused by the document among engaged artists. This perspective qualified the supposedly monolithic and simplistic character of *cepecismo* by demonstrating that CPC housed a live, heterogeneous ensemble of artistic and cultural militants connected to the student context, who saw Brazilian culture and the relationship with popular culture in various ways. For instance, around the initial *cepecismo* there was place both for the critical realism of an Oduvaldo Vianna Filho and for the allegorical perspective and narrative experimentalism of Glauber Rocha’s films.

We almost always think about the Brazilian cultural scene in the 1950s and 1960s based on categories that have been well-established in political history and that are increasingly challenged as explanatory panaceas: populism, nationalism, modernization. In other words, we should not simply discard them and claim that they are no longer valid to think about the culture in the period, but reiterate the need for a perspective that is more focused on the mediations between the political and ideological influences and the cultural and artistic projects that guided the Brazilian culture of that period. The latter category – modernization – appears to be the most connected to the representations of the Juscelino Kubitschek [JK] Administration period (1956-1960). Even so, the cultural scene of the JK period often appears, at the level of social memory, as the discrete overture of the great main show of Brazilian culture, reserved to the 1960s, which is a predominant view, especially in the historiography of the film, theater and popular music. In these cases, besides the predominance of a historical vision in progress, we often find in the critical fortune of

these artistic fields the view that a large part of the 1950s were hostages to an aesthetics connected to the naïve and crude demands of urban popular culture, symbolized in the hegemony of the *chanchada* [burlesque humor] and the bolero, which are labeled minor genres compared to the Cinema Novo and Bossa Nova and MPB. In the case of film there is still a strong evolutionary view that sees in the 1950s the formative moment of the critical consciousness of Brazilian cinematography, which was to really mature under the Cinema Novo (Napolitano, 2013). In the historiography of the theater, the 1950s were the consolidation of a professionalization, implemented in the empire of the Brazilian Theater of Comedy [Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia – TBC] and in the rise of professional companies, culminating in the emergence of the Teatro de Arena and in the break represented by the already mentioned play “Eles Não Usam Black-Tie”. In general lines an equally evolutionary view of cultural history associated with political consciousness is affirmed, which peaks in the well-established groups in the 1960s: Arena, Opinião, Oficina (Mostaço, 1982). In the historiography of visual arts, the issue is more complicated since the 1950s had a vigorous production anchored in the constructive tradition that imposed itself as the canon of critical evaluation and “good taste”, established in the critical tradition of Mário Pedrosa or Frederico Moraes, for instance. For literature, likewise, the 1950s were marked in prose and poetry by the densification of the modernist expression, be it by the view of language as an examination of being-in-the-world, as in *Grande Sertão: Veredas* and *Morte e Vida Severina*, be it by the self-examination of the communicative structure of the word, as in the Concrete Poetry movement.

In the few works that summarize the cultural history of the 1950s, there are predominantly analyses based on the categories of “romanticism” and “populism”, which, even though pertinent in general lines, in my opinion cover up more complex tensions and problems (Velloso, 2002; Ridenti, 2000). However, since the 1990s many research studies have signaled the rise of new topics and subjects for reflection. As an example of this trend we cite the works by Rodolfo Vilhena (Vilhena, 1997) on the folklorist movement, by Anna Maria Figueiredo (Figueiredo, 1998) concerning the publicity and imaginary of modernity, and by Maria Arminda Arruda about the metropolization process in São Paulo and its consequences in the field of culture (Arruda, 2001). One of the most promising topics in the cultural history of the 1950s is the study of Brazilian capitals as the focus of specific modern projects, diversified and complementary facets of national modernity. In this field, besides the already mentioned work by Maria Arminda Arruda, we underscore the instigating history of Salvador as the capital of an avant-garde project in the

1950s written by Antonio Risério³. Other urban centers, such as Belo Horizonte, Recife and Porto Alegre, which generated intellectual cadres and their own movements for the Brazilian modern project, certainly still offer many topics for research that are already being explored by the graduate studies programs in those cities.

Having made this brief summary about the historiography of culture in the 1950s, I would like to propose a general picture of problems and tendencies as a cartography of the great cultural projects that marked the decade, above all the five-year period of JK. It should be recalled that the JK Administration was later remembered from the perspective of a “nostalgia of modernity”, an initially paradoxical feeling that took over a large part of Brazilian society. This nostalgia appeared after the military coup of 1964, which showed the more acute contradictions of our capitalist modernization and betrayed the “promise of happiness” of the 1950s by separating the economic modernization process from social inclusion and political democracy and thus generating traumas whose sharpest symptoms, paradoxically, can be perceived in the instigating cultural life of the 1960s and 1970s. However, on the level of social memory, the break with the illusions catalyzed in 1964 froze the JK period in the guise of an idealized project that promised to conciliate the gifts of modernization with the rhythms and forms of sociability of traditional Brazilian life and offered a gradual social integration without reversing the political order. During this period, topics and categories were established that are essential to understand the “participatory turn” of Brazilian culture in the first half of the 1960s, such as “authenticity”, “alienation”, “national-popular”. These categories, systematized in the debates at the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies [Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros – ISEB], spread in cultural movements that were more politicized and had a strong power of attraction for university youth, such as UNE’s Center of Popular Culture [Centro Popular de Cultura – CPC] and the Movement of Popular Culture [Movimento de Cultura Popular – CPC] in the city of Recife. The latter, created around 1959, has a direct connection to the political and cultural environment of the capital of Pernambuco, involving militants of the Catholic left, Communists and Socialists, catalyzed by the dynamics of the municipal administration and later, after 1962, also the state administration headed by Miguel Arraes (Souza, 2013). Beginning in mid-decade, Pernambuco took on a role as protagonist in the Brazilian political and cultural scene, and was the

place for fundamental experiences, such as the Recife Front [Frente do Recife] (coalition of left-wing parties that won the city administration in 1955), the Peasant Leagues and the literacy-teaching experiments of Paulo Freire. The effervescence in Pernambuco largely inspired youth in the Center-South of Brazil to form the CPC of UNE between 1961 and 1962. Thus, the CPC densified the political and cultural experience of the 1950s, marked by “going to the people” and the search for a transforming national consciousness which would overcome the obstacles caused by the so-called “underdevelopment”. Despite the simplifications and idealisms on the part of the followers of that cultural policy and the undeniable verve of guardianship over mass actions – which could be interpreted as remnants of a certain authoritarianism in the relationship between activist intellectuals and popular classes – both movements were fundamentally important to agglutinate a cultural action that was practiced diffusely since the 1950s.

Searching for the Brazilian modernity

The articulations between culture and politics in the second half of the 1950s as well as the first half of the 1960s appear to express perfectly the equation proposed by Perry Anderson to analyze the relations between modernity and revolutionary projects, since they present the three elements of this equation: the “imaginative proximity of revolution”, the presence of academicism in the cultural life and the social impact of technical and technological innovations (Anderson, 1986). Let us take a further look at each of these terms.

In the 1950s the revolution was not just a distant utopia, although conservatism still marked the tone of Brazilian life. The workers had shown their vigor in large strikes, such as those of 1953 and 1957, and the peasants were also organizing for land reform and to achieve their rights in labor law, always put off for later in all official development projects. The presence of the Brazilian Communist Party, although it hesitated between a politics for the masses and a politics for insurrection, gave the peasants and workers a theory of revolution that had already been tested in other countries of the world. The famous “crisis of utopias” did not exist and, strictly speaking, the revolution was not a utopia, but rather a plausible political project despite all the political obstacles to carrying it out. The different left-wing groups, such

³ For this, see also the study on the sphere of action and attraction of the large European cities as “cultural capitals” according to Charle, 2004. Save for the historical and institutional differences, we might see a few Brazilian capitals as poles of cultural attraction, formation and irradiation, with characteristics of their own, not subordinated to the Rio-São Paulo axis.

as Communists, Socialists and Christians, grew not only among the popular classes, but increased their influence among the intellectuals and artists, especially the Communist Party of Brazil [Partido Comunista Brasileiro – PCB] (Ridenti, 2010). The success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 showed that the “proximity” of the Revolution was not only “imaginative”, but a concrete prospect, almost a “manifest destiny”, of the Third World countries. In that context the engaged culture was to prepare national liberation, be it in terms of redeeming developmentalism or the socialist revolution. The front-based politics advocated by the PCB since 1958, with the publication of the “March Declaration”, articulated the two poles of this imaginary of historical liberation, leading to the belief that reform and revolution were reconcilable strategies on the Brazilian historical horizon (Segatto, 1995).

As to academicism, its presence must be qualified in Brazilian cultural life because, since the 1920s, a vigorous modernist movement had been constructed. This movement challenged the academicist canons in several fields of art and became almost an official aesthetics over the 1930s, under the patronage of the National School of Fine Arts [Escola Nacional de Belas Artes], whose traditional annual exhibition in its 1931 edition confirmed the importance of modernism (Lima, 2008). Despite this, a great number of intellectuals in the 1950s were guided by their nationalism and folklorism, which were heirs to canons in the traditionalist taste, even if tempered by a modern sensibility. Although the Brazilian modernism touched on the issue of folklore, especially in the reflections of Mario de Andrade about the need for a Brazilian culture, the folklorism of the 1950s appeared to move backwards to the romantic past, idealizing the “popular” under the mantle of primitivist cultural purism and preservationism, which were elements that did not have a value in themselves and for themselves in Mario de Andrade’s reflections (Napolitano, 2003).

Aligned to the academic and naturalist taste, there was a left-wing art still guided by “socialist realism”, seeking easy communication with the popular classes and rejecting the avant-gardes that were more inclined to formal research. Therefore, there was still a large field for questioning by the more radically modern artists and intellectuals, since academicism, folklorism and realism were patterns that connected the Brazilian cultural life to the past, to the traditions and to the pre-modern cultural heritage. We must acknowledge, however, that the “Brazilian modern project” did not close its eyes to the past. On the contrary, from the early modernism of 1922 onwards, the past was a focus of attention of the avant-gar-

des, since there resided the slumbering embers of Brazilian-ness, of the popular cultures that were supposed to supply the basic material of our modernity. What modernism in fact rejected was the elite culture built by the institutions of the Empire and the First Republic. That culture was accused of being artificial, provincial, a bad copy of European academicism, besides transforming what is popular into “exotic”, in other words, something external to the intellectualized and urban modern Brazilian culture. In this ambiguous operation, what is popular might even be valued as “typical”, but completely external to a culture considered legitimate, sealed by the bourgeois elites and still the object of a look that was sometimes idealistic and at other times prejudiced and racist, but always the fruit of ignorance regarding the culture of the “other”⁴.

Finally, regarding the impact of new techniques and technologies on the life of society, the “50 years in 5” of JK indeed introduced new habits of consumption, including cultural consumption, broadened a cosmopolitan middle class, changed the face of the large cities with daring architectural and urbanistic projects and established the foundations of a modern industry, based on the production of cars and electrical domestic appliances. At the end of the 1950s, television began to expand into the middle segments in large cities, but radio still was dominant as the main means of communication. The expansion of higher education was timid and could not absorb the youth who were of university age, forming a bottleneck of demand which would have major implications in the student movement of the 1960s. JK’s Plan of Goals had assigned about 93% of the funds to the sectors of infrastructure, energy and transport. Food and education, which were part of the five large strategic areas of the Plan, received only 7% of the resources. The perception of this mismatch between the new horizon of consumption and development and the archaic character of access to education and land ownership to a large extent fed the dynamics of the social movements during the João Goulart Administration, with a strong impact on the cultural agenda. Not by chance, peasants, particularly Northeastern peasants, were the heroes of the Brazilian revolution, as can be seen in the classic films of the early Cinema Novo, such as *Vidas Secas* [Barren Lives] (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1963) and *Deus e Diabo na Terra do Sol* [Black God, White Devil] (Glauber Rocha, 1964). The JK era consolidated the modern vocation of the elite, but stirred up the contradictions of this project even more.

Concurrently with this context which gave new political meaning to the heritage of the modernist cultural movements, two basic tensions should be underscored

⁴ On the category of “exoticism” as an object of reflection on history see Flechet, 2007.

on the Brazilian cultural scene in the 1950s, with very profound ideological consequences that served as markers of the cultural struggles and projects for sociocultural renewal. The first tension occurred between the tradition of the more conventional lettered culture and the return to avant-garde modernist projects and was expressed in the poetic clash between the lyrical verve of the so-called “Generation of 45”, which was established by poets such as Vinicius de Moraes and Cecília Meirelles, and the search for the mathematics of composition advocated by Concrete Poetry. However, one must be careful with the myths of rupture that the history of the concretist movement wanted to inculcate. Even though in the field of poetry the so-called “Generation of 45” had taken up again the more academic and lyrical form to express itself, Brazilian literature as a whole was already giving signs of a parallel experimentalism, different from poetic concretism, as shown by the work of João Cabral de Melo Neto and Guimarães Rosa.

The second tension that characterized the period occurred between the traditional popular culture – with a community and rural base – and the new urban popular culture, marked by the communications media. The latter were mistrusted by intellectuals on the left and on the right because they were seen as the vehicles of fads, crudeness and cultural and political alienation. Both the folkloric intellectuals and the Communist intellectuals, for different reasons, imagined an authentic, pure popular culture which would be the reservoir of the ancestral nationality or of the potential revolutionary consciousness.

We might say that the period of the JK Administration and its belief in the capitalist modernization that would redeem national life as a whole pointed to overcoming these two dichotomies – academicism versus modernism and rural popular culture versus urban popular culture. What occurred was a dialectics, full of contradictions, which made the four poles of these cultural struggles interact, namely: (a) the traditional lettered culture; (b) the avant-gardes; (c) the community-based traditional popular culture; (d) the modern popular culture, conveyed by the mass media. The crossing of these several traditions and cultural ensembles, which is one of the markers of the hybrid cultures defined by Nestor Canclini (Canclini, 1996), has not yet been fully understood regarding all its peculiarities and details. The fact is that this crossing process marked the cultural debate, the aesthetic renewal and the reorganization of the market of symbolic goods, guiding the “modern Brazilian tradition” which would be fully affirmed during the 1960s (Ortiz, 1988).

Along general lines, this is the broad picture of the “Brazilian modern project”, renewed in the 1950s and here understood as the convergence of the political

will of Brazilian elites. It articulated economic, political and cultural segments in formatting a social, cultural and aesthetic project agglutinated in the general will for modernization. This project guided an ensemble of cultural and institutional actions, and it repositioned and updated national life as a whole vis-à-vis itself and vis-à-vis the Western world (Velho, 1994). The major contradiction in this process, despite all of its possible generosity, is that the popular classes were seen as adjuvants. They were always mentioned as the source and destination of the national projects, but not often included as protagonists in the sphere of cultural creation or consumption. The political failure of 1964 not only revealed the vocation of the Brazilian elite to be “the avant-garde of backwardness” in the Western world, but it can also be considered on the basis of the contradictions and gaps in our modern project. The latter, in spite of creating an instigating and sophisticated national culture, did little to broaden its circuit of dissemination through the massification of education and of the cultural circuits as a whole, not to mention substantive political and economic reforms to democratize society. When these issues began to come onto the agenda of Brazilian modernization, we were already on the eve of the 1964 crisis.

A cartography of the Brazilian culture before 1964

Having sketched this general picture of problems, I will risk the elaboration of a cartography of the cultural actors, projects and policies that were the protagonists of the cultural scene in the second half of the 1950s, in an attempt to demonstrate that the dilemmas of the second half of the 1950s in the field of culture cannot be summarized in the category of “populist romanticism” or subsumed in the larger scenario of economic modernization. As an initial map I propose the presence of five large cultural projects that should not be seen as watertight ensembles, but carry out frequent exchanges of values and ideas, besides having tactical and strategic disagreements in the field of cultural policy. They are: (i) The engaged art of the left, sanctioned by the Brazilian Communist Party; (ii) The folklorist movement, whose epicenter is the Brazilian Academy of Letters and the more conservative nationalist intellectual currents; (iii) Developmentalist reformism, anchored in ISEB; (iv) The left-wing Catholic currents, located in sectors of the clergy and laity, organized in the form of lay organizations and movements, such as the Catholic University Youth [Juventude Universitária Católica – JUC] and the Movement of Popular Culture in Recife; (v) The avant-garde neomodernist currents,

particularly strong in erudite music, in plastic arts, in architecture and in poetry, whose most famous expression was the Concretist Movement in São Paulo.

In general lines, the interaction and tensions among these variables marked the Brazilian cultural scene until the military coup of 1964, despite the predominance of the engaged currents aligned with the left-wing national-popular culture⁵.

The cultural policy of the Communist Party received fresh air in the second half of the 1950s, after the doctrinal excesses and aesthetic restrictions of the period in which "socialist realism" prevailed (1947-1954), which coincided with a period of political isolation of the party in relation to the left-wing forces and to the political system as a whole (Moraes, 1990). From 1958 onwards, the intellectuals connected to the PCB, organic or sympathizers, constructed a front-based cultural policy whose corollary in the political field was the "Declaration of March 1958", which beckoned with a politics of alliance between classes to defend the nation against "imperialism" and to unite the left-wing progressive sectors in the struggle for democratizing institutional reforms. From then on, the Party established an even greater presence in the cultural scene, stimulating the creation of art groups, such as the São Paulo Students' Theater and later the Popular Centers of Culture. The openness to new aesthetic values did not mean abandoning the Communist belief in realist art and in the merger of the particular (the people-nation) with the universal (the cultural heritage of bourgeois society), so dear to the reflections of Georg Lukács, a theoretician who was introduced in Brazil around that time (Frederico, 1995). The young artists who gravitated around the Party went beyond the official directions of the leaders, whose centralism in the field of culture diminished after the death of Stalin and the end of Jdanovism in 1953. Over time, the Communist artists and sympathizers constructed their own reading of the Brazilian cultural traditions in film, theater and popular music and carried out a fusion between tradition and modernity, lyrical and engaged themes, realist narratives and collages which referred to other language figures and strategies, whose great creative laboratory was to be UNE's Popular Center of Culture (Garcia, 2007). The theater of Oduvaldo Viana Filho, Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, the engaged phase of Carlos Lyra and Sergio Ricardo, and the first phase of the Cinema Novo originated in this process of opening up the

left-wing culture, already in the 1950s. In these manifestations, elements of the national-popular culture, of the urban and rural popular cultures, of socialist realism and of the avant-gardes were all mixed together in art works that were impactful and innovative.

The Brazilian folklorist movement, which was already vigorous since the end of the 1940s, became very strong over the next decade, when four large national congresses were held (Rio de Janeiro, 1951, Curitiba, 1953, Salvador, 1957 and Porto Alegre, 1959) as well as an international congress in São Paulo (1955). The action of intellectuals with a strong presence in the press, in the Brazilian Academy of Letters and in the official bureaucracy of culture, such as the National Committee of Folklore (connected to the Brazilian Institute of Education, Science and Culture/Ministry of Foreign Affairs), shows the vigor of this current which originated in the 1930s (Velloso, 2002). Folklorism attempted to conciliate scientificist strictness, the anthropological perspective and the profession of nationalist faith in the identification, cataloguing and dissemination of the traditional expressions of the Brazilian popular classes, above all those connected to the rural communities, which were considered uncontaminated by the media. Believing that the popular culture was a "thing-in-itself" threatened by modernization and by the predominance of the mass media that disseminated foreign fads, the folklorists believed themselves to be imbued with a mission of salvation, which idealized the rural popular culture and denied the urban popular elements which were increasingly present in Brazilian life (Vilhena, 1997; Wasserman, 2002). Although it was closer to political conservatism, to the ideology of a country without social tensions and to the mythification of the virtues of the poor rural communities, even so the folklorist perspective fed many left-wing intellectuals. The latter saw in folklore a valid method to construct the left-wing national-popular culture, which would be the base of the common cultural language of the progressive alliance against imperialism and against the oligarchic large landownership, in the terms of the PCB. However, it should be pointed out that the incorporation of folklorism into the cultural policy of the PCB was more vigorous between 1945 and 1956, and slowly wore thin from then on, mixed with the cosmopolitan traditions and the experimentalism of the modernist line. The young Communist artists of the second half of the 1950s

⁵ The issue of the "national-popular" in Brazil is a complex matter. In principle, the concept should be analyzed on the basis of the formulations of Antonio Gramsci, who defined them as the mediated encounter between the (local) "dialectal-folkloric" and the (universal) bourgeois-cosmopolitan. However, the topic of the national-popular in Brazil is previous to the arrival of Gramsci's texts among us. In my opinion, the category is an appropriation, by the left of the 1950s, above all of the conservative nationalism of the 1930s, which is the axis of the so-called "Brazilian-ness". Over this decade, the term gained a more precise political and ideological meaning, as an expression of the policy of class alliances (forming of fronts) in the search for national liberation and the overcoming of underdevelopment. From the aesthetic standpoint, the national-popular seeks an aesthetic language that conciliates the canonic cultured tradition and elements of the popular cultures, seasoned with social critique, for the purpose of building a cultural language common to several classes and regions of a given country. See Napolitano, 2011.

increasingly rejected the folkloric values as the only procedure for cultural research and aesthetic material. Besides, folklorism itself, as a panacea to understand the popular traditions, began to be challenged as a result of the shift of sociological paradigms in research on popular culture, represented mainly by the São Paulo Sociological School⁶.

The current connected to ISEB, the Communist left and the folklorists made up the ensemble whose ideological base to think about the directions of modern Brazilian life was nationalism. In the case of ISEB, the nationalist formulations were marked by a lack theoretical rigor and by political voluntarism, which were elements that overestimated the progressive virtues of the “national bourgeoisie” vis-à-vis international capitalism (Toledo, 1997). ISEB had been created as a body to formulate strategies and ideological lines that could legitimize national-developmentalism and attempt to break with the situation of dependence and backwardness typical of the capitalist periphery. Fluctuating between liberal political currents (Helio Jaguaribe), the philosophy of Sartre’s existentialism (Roland Corbisier) and historical materialism (Nelson Werneck Sodr ), ISEB attempted to formulate a discourse for the new developmental elites that constituted the bureaucracy of the JK and Jo o Goulart Administrations, presenting the abstract ensemble of the nation as the great protagonist in this process. This belief was summarized in the expression “national being”, so dear to ISEB, and laid the foundation of a new articulation between civil society and the State in achieving a new historical stage of development (Ortiz, 1994). In the formulations of ISEB, national autonomy, social and political democracy and industrialization went hand in hand in fulfilling the promise of happiness contained in the modern Brazilian project. The failure of one of these terms would be the failure of the entire project. The military coup showed that the march towards capitalism was not exactly so, since Brazilian capitalist modernization was completed without democracy and without national autonomy. The consequences of ISEB’s discourses in culture can be seen in the manifesto of the Popular Center of Culture of UNE, written by Carlos Estevam Martins in 1962, as well as in the works of art that sought to explore the contradictions of Brazilian archaism, which was challenged by the revolutionary will of the people, as we can see in the first movies of the Cinema Novo (1962-1964).

It would be no exaggeration to say that in the field of culture ISEB was the great bridge between the 1950s and the 1960s. Reformist nationalism and revolutionary nationalism converged at the end of the decade, insofar

as the Brazilian Communist Party constructed its “New Politics”, moving away from the political sectarianism and the doctrine of “Socialist Realism” which had marked its trajectory between 1950 and 1956. Seeking new alliances that included sectors of the imagined “national bourgeoisie” which was to be anti-imperialist, at least in the handbooks of doctrinaire Marxism, the PCB helped format a national-popular culture that tried to conciliate reformism and the revolutionary tradition, the national-socialism that had been ongoing since the JK Administration and the future “national-democratic revolution”. The hegemony of the Communists in the final years of ISEB (1962-1964) was not accidental, but the result of this interpretation of the revolutionary potential of nationalism.

There were sectors of the left, Marxist or not, that did not accept nationalism as a solution for all evils of Brazil. The Workers’ Politics [Pol tica Oper ria – POL-OP], that appeared at the beginning of the 1960s and had some influence in intellectual circles, attempted to distance themselves from the programmatic nationalism of the Communists and emphasized that the Brazilian revolution would not occur by “stages” (initially “national-democratic” and only then “socialist”) and would not result from alliances with all sectors considered “nationalistic”. Besides, since the end of the 1950s, academic Marxism was becoming stronger, and its main expression was the so-called “Group of ‘The Capital’”, gathering young professors and researchers linked to the University of S o Paulo, such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Roberto Schwarz, Jos  Arthur Giannotti and Fernando Novais, among others. The group proposed a re-reading of Marx’s texts, distant from the PCB doctrinaire schemes, and sought to provide the foundation for a global view of capitalism as a world system. This perspective, which in the 1950s was limited to small intellectual circles at universities, would soon grow in the cultural debate after the 1964 coup d’ tat and become increasingly important in the critique of ISEB’s and PCB’s nationalism from the end of the 1960s on. The main theoretical categories of this current, such as “authenticity”, “alienation” and “national consciousness”, would suffer harsh criticism and be accused of “reformist illusions” and ideological traps that not only led to the 1964 disaster but, insofar as they continued to set the tone of the culture of resistance to the regime in the first four years, prevented a real cultural critique of the new authoritarian context (Schwarz, 2001).

The end of the 1930s saw the birth of another cultural policy matrix, which would also gain more space in the 1970s: progressive Catholicism. The affirmation

⁶ For this, see Fernandes, 1978. Since the beginning of the 1960s the S o Paulo sociologist was already challenging the theoretical categories that informed the folklorist movement, as shown by his article published in the *Anhembi* journal in 1961 (“Folclore e mudan a social na cidade de S o Paulo”).

of this group began with the growing autonomy of the members of the Catholic University Youth [JUC], who became increasingly sensitive to social issues, critical of the hierarchies and the conservative tradition of the Catholic Church, values that, at the end of the decade, would be reiterated by the debates and deliberations of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In the beginning of the 1960s many members of JUC broke with the Church but not with Catholicism and founded the Popular Action [Ação Popular] based on their own reading of the socialist tradition.

The cultural projects of left-wing Catholicism, in turn, did not have their fundamental axis in the category of “nation”, and this was possibly their greatest difference in relation to the ensemble of the left marked by the national-popular. Even so, in the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s the reformist and nationalist atmosphere made its militants join the ranks of this general project of the left, concentrating above all on the activities of teaching adult literacy on the basis of a valuing of everyday life and the autonomy of the human person in the community. Popular culture was seen as dynamic (not static, as in traditional folklorism) and potentially liberating, as long as it were stimulated to construct the self-consciousness that would transform it into an autonomous political subject seeking social justice (Pecaut, 1990). Besides, the role of the intellectuals was less the role of a mediator with the national State and messiah of the revolution but rather of an agent driving this self-consciousness, even if they continued to be tutors of the masses.

The Catholic turn to the left was rooted in a set of new values that were gradually theorized in various texts produced by the Catholic clergy and laity, addressing above all the issue of popular education (Favero, 1983). Among these fundamental values we can cite: the cultivation of community life, sharing collective responsibility, the conciliation of Christian spirituality with political action in the world, the search for social justice and the critique of capitalist or communist materialism. A large part of the cultural policy of the Catholic left, which has not been well systematized and studied yet, appears to have been directed at the construction of participatory methods to teach literacy and to the politicization of communal cultural elements – such as in the case of Paulo Freire –, rooted in the oral tradition and rejecting the market of symbolic goods that marked urban popular culture. Indeed, this was another difference in relation to the Communist artists, who never rejected the market as a potential circuit to disseminate engaged culture and art. The massive presence of Communists in the cultural industry of the 1960s and 1970s proves this openness to the market, which was then seen as a neutral circuit

whence one could talk to the people-nation as a whole. On the other hand, the Catholic militants operated within a communal, grassroots-oriented and pluralistic cultural project and were not concerned about synthesizing all popular cultures in the form of a cultural language that would be common and rooted in the merger between conventional nationalism and the aesthetic canons of Western art. Without much attention to the aesthetic forms in themselves, the cultural policy of the Catholic left concerned itself more with the process of constructing the “human person” in community, the being-in-the-world on the basis of an amateur and artisanal art and the word as a vehicle for self-consciousness.

Completing this initial cartography we have the currents of the experimental avant-garde which sought to advance in the form and in the concept of work of art itself, in relation to the conventions of language and expression. The cultural action of the modern avant-gardes of the 1960s took up again the more radical formal proposals of early Brazilian modernism and went deeper into the search for new forms and the discussion about artistic activity in a society that was already modern in its basic social structures. The “Pilot Plan of Concrete Poetry” (1958) clearly showed this view. Its purpose was to update art forms and re-discuss the realist and academic canons of art, creating provocative works not for the sake of the themes or mimetic representations contained in them, but mainly because of their role in opening up a new formal sensitivity. In the avant-garde project, this sensitivity was supposed to allow the construction of a critical look at the urban, industrial, cosmopolitan and planned reality of modern capitalist life. The dialogue with the tendencies of the Western avant-garde, seeking a new status for art and the artist, distanced this current from the conventional nationalism that was so dear to many left-wing intellectuals, but did not prevent artists identified with the avant-garde from seeking forms of expression that would conciliate the politicization of engaged art with the formal avant-garde research, as demonstrated by the so-called “participatory turn” of concretism at the beginning of the 1960s or the new avant-garde of erudite music, summarized in the Manifesto of the New Music, in which many composers and maestros were connected to the PCB (1963). However, the politicization of the Brazilian avant-garde is a phenomenon that is more connected to the second half of the 1960s, as demonstrated by the movements of the New Figuration and the New Objectivity in plastic arts, which began to appear in 1965. In the 1950s the belief in the updating role of the avant-garde, helping the general modernization of the country, was more predominant.

Despite the ideological and aesthetic differences, there was a central dilemma in all these projects that

expressed a contradiction that was connected to mass politics itself in the Brazilian democracy of the 1950s: *how* to incorporate the “popular” into the new national project forged amid a quick and dramatic process of capitalist modernization? Furthermore, *who* was this “popular” that emerged from this process? These, in my opinion, were the central issues of the cultural and ideological struggles of the period, which were approached (but not solved) in aesthetic and ideological manners that were different in the various cultural currents.

The different projects stumbled into a trap of modernization in the JK period: education and culture were not priority government “goals” and they created an abyss between the projects to integrate the popular classes in the Brazilian cultural renewal and the real institutional possibilities of this integration. It should be recalled that the education “goal” received only 3.4% of the total resources and it was described in the official document of the famous Plan of Goals only as a preparation of technical personnel to make developmentalism possible. This situation of school exclusion was in contrast with the good quality schooling reserved to the elites and to the middle sectors that supplied the intellectual and artistic cadres of the various artistic and cultural movements of the period.

Finally, seeking a more diachronic reflection, situated in the idea of the historical “long term”, how can we see the period of 1955-1964 in the history of Brazilian culture? Was it the point of maximum tension between the “two Brazils”, the archaic and the modern one, culminating in the overcoming of the former without the full affirmation of the latter? Or did it establish a form of idealized representation of the archaic (and popular) Brazil as a formal aspect of our modernity, a symptom of the guilty conscience provoked by the social apartheid in the cultural and artistic circles? Or was it a cultural spring, fully flowering, but interrupted forcibly by the change of historical direction of the country after 1964, thus becoming an empty heritage of a time when we dreamed of being modern?

It is undeniable that literature has filled gaps and proposed new reflections on the brief Brazilian cultural spring that ended with the coup d'état of 1964. But these issues still have great potential for academic research in several areas. Besides, the conservative and liberal traditions on the intellectual and artistic level still need to be further studied. Whereas the right-wing nationalists, the authoritarian and liberal-conservative intellectuals of the years from 1910 to 1930 are relatively well known to historiographical research, the same cannot be said of the

post-1950 period. It is still necessary to know more about the cultural projects of the period beyond the fields of the – socialist, communist, nationalist or Catholic – left⁷. Where were the clearly right-wing intellectuals and artists acting? How was the “Cultural Cold War” expressed in the Brazilian cultural environment? How did the political and ideological projects of the right, gestated between the 1950s and 1960s by bodies such as the Superior War College [Escola Superior de Guerra] and by the Institute of Social Research and Studies [Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Sociais – IPES], influence the Brazilian cultural and artistic scene? What are the real points of contact on the level of cultural actions, if there were such, between the nationalism of the right and the national-popular of the left? Did anti-communism, which was so strong in the liberal press, have a noteworthy artistic facet in the Brazilian scene of the 1950s, or was it a point off the curve vis-à-vis the growing cultural hegemony of the left in the intellectual and artistic milieu?

The critical cartography proposed in this article symptomatically did not elaborate on these final questions not only due to a matter of focus, but also given the lack of a consolidated bibliography. But they are just as important for a future map, in order to know more about the Brazilian cultural scene before the 1964 coup.

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⁷ In this sense we highlight the seminal reflections of Elizabeth Cancelli about the Brazilian Association of the Congress for the Freedom of Culture, created in 1958 as a branch of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an arm of anti-Communist liberalism in the cold war context. See Cancelli, 2004.

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