

Introduction

The book that the reader has in hand, the fruit of an interdisciplinary seminar held in Berlin in December 2004 which brought together scholars from Germany and different regions of the Americas, is guided by a dual perspective and objective, a fact reflected by the authors and themes that it brings together. It is on one hand, a view from outside Brazil that seeks to understand how Brazilian society is responding to the processes of global integration. At the same time, there is also an internal perspective of observation that documents the plurality of ways that social actors and analysts interpret the transformations underway. The common thread of the various perspectives of analysis involved, which, therefore, unifies the different articles joined here, is not their focus on Brazil, but more properly the interest in the relations between Brazil and the world, based on the context of the Americas. It can be said that it is not a book about Brazil, but of a set of reflections, oriented by the case of a specific country, about the way that local, regional and global processes and contexts have been interweaving in various fields.

In the political realm, the deep crises generated by the corruption scandal in the government of the Workers Party in 2005 triggered ambivalent reactions and sentiments among the analysts. Whatever the lesson that one can learn from it, the Brazilian crises has important consequences, to the degree to which it marks the expectations placed in the Latin American left, at a time in which governments have been elected in various countries on the sub-continent, which, like the Workers Party in Brazil, earned their principal electoral conquests from the defense of social justice and a solid base among the poorest sectors.

The new forms of insertion of Latin America and Brazil, in particular in the “post-national” world, are treated in historical perspective in the article by *Jorge Larraín*, revealing the connections between the history of (subordinated) integration of the countries of the region to modernity, the neoliberal cycle of the 1990’s and the alternatives presented to these policies.

From a more programmatic perspective, *Gustavo Lins Ribeiro* continues the analysis begun by Larraín. His immediate interlocutors are post-colonial studies. Thus, in place of a maximum “provincialization of Europe”, proposed by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Ribeiro defends a post-imperialist agenda that could provincialize the United States. In the realm of institutional policy, *Jean Daudelin* studies recent movements of Brazilian diplomacy, showing that if the country’s foreign policy does not – and this is not its objective – provincialize the Empire, it at least leads to expressive growth of the importance of Brazil in the international arena.

In the economic realm, apparently ambiguous developments are noted, marked by the complete insertion of the Brazilian economy in the context of global accumulation simultaneously with a certain disintegration of the national economy. While, since 1990, Brazil has followed, with certain success, an aggressive strategy of opening to the world market of goods and capital, internally an apparent disorganization of the economy is found, with exponential growth of informal relations and even of illegal and criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and the predatory exploitation of natural resources. This does not indicate, by any means, the emergence of a dual economy: the informal and illegal sectors are completely intertwined with the more modern and dynamic economic sectors and are also transnationally connected. The article by *Marcos Antonio Macedo Cintra* presents an overview of developments in Brazilian economy during the accelerated phase of internationalization. It considers both the changes noted in the economic policies adopted in recent years, as well as their repercussions on the “real economy”, thus indicating the difficulties imposed on economic growth in the present context.

The paradoxes of economic integration are reflected in an amplified manner on the social plane. On one hand, the non-governmental social movements and organizations that have multiplied since the final years of the military dictatorship have been able to establish increasingly effective alliances on the American continent and worldwide. This has increased their effectiveness and power in political negotiations. Nevertheless, simultaneously to the strengthening of these forms of mobilization, there has been a growing vulnerability of politically unorganized sectors. Thus, the many years of policies to limit social spending, associated to the deep social inequality that ap-

pears chronic in Brazilian society, make the poor sectors even more vulnerable to the offers of populist politicians and leaders who seek to instrumentalize less organized groups. New religious leaders who promise immediate benefits in the living conditions of their followers have thus had growing influence among the groups that live at the limit of anomy. Equally concerning is the explosion of violence and criminality, mostly associated to drug dealing and the control of dealers over favelas and neighborhoods of the periphery of Brazilian metropolitan regions. Therefore, *pari passu* with the civil society that is pluralized, transnationalized and which seeks to broaden the effectiveness of democracy and the rule of law, an incivil society has been growing, which takes advantage of the absence of the State and of law to impose its power.

The tensions between civil and incivil society are reflected in different contributions found in this book. The article by *Alberto Olvera* is concerned with placing these discussions in context, by showing how Latin American civil societies, even those squeezed by the authoritarian history and by the draining of the space of politics that accompany the processes of structural readjustment, effectively contribute to the deepening of democracy in the region.

The many dimensions and contradictions in the processes of internationalization of civil society are addressed in the contributions of *Bila Sorj* and *Aparecida Fonseca Moraes* about the women's movement and by *Patricia Pinho's* article about the connections between African Americans and Afro-Brazilians. In distinct manners, both articles show that transnational relationships between social actors are marked by expectations that are not always realistic, and principally, by the asymmetries of political power present in the relations between the respective nation states.

In the article by *Marjo de Theije*, the paradoxes of transnationalization are treated from a frequently forgotten focus: the relationship between migration and religion. Based on a careful ethnographic study, the author discusses the daily life of the actors, showing how social relations, values and beliefs are being recodified by migratory movements.

In the field of cultural and symbolic production, we have witnessed in recent years a reordering of that which is defined as national culture. Historically, the construction of the national identity took

place through the ideological eulogy of the racial mixing that celebrates Brazil as a melting pot capable of combining the cultural differences and preferences of the various groups that compose the country. In the context of globalization, a plurality of a different nature is celebrated. This involves a broad and creative reception of various and contradictory cultural influences which, at times, as in the case of Funk and Hip Hop, seek to denounce the assimilationist policy that presided over the formation of the national culture. In cities such as Recife, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, these cultural manifestations are already mass movements, leaving forms of expression such as samba, frevo or maracatu adapted, refunctionalized and challenged in their role as the principal carriers of national culture. Nevertheless, what is found in the cultural field is not a national/global dichotomy, but varied processes of recreation, fusion and reinvention, from which constantly arise new configurations and mixtures.

The articles by *Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda* and *Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha* conduct an analytical inventory of the new cultural creations. Buarque de Hollanda focuses on the dynamics of cultural production, also studying it from the perspective of aesthetic analysis and classification, while Cunha is interested in one of the contexts in which the new creations emerge – the space of the favela.

Esther Hamburger uses a film that documents the tragic assault on a passenger bus in Rio de Janeiro as the theme of a study of relations between violence and culture in new Brazilian audio-visual production.

In the contribution from *Robert Stam* which concludes the book, culture and violence are also present. Stam begins with a look at the Tropicália cultural movement; but the analysis is not limited to history. Through interpretation of song lyrics, films and videoclips, Stam shows how the celebration of mixture and the persistence of symbolic mechanisms of racial violence combine in equal proportions in the formation of Brazilian multiculturalism.

Because of the breadth and currentness of their themes, the articles joined in this book are an invitation to reflect upon phenomena that go beyond national borders. They involve a search for categories suitable to the analysis of new configurations and constellations marked by a redefinition of relations and articulations between the regional and the global, the local and the national. They are cultural, social and

political processes with a dynamic and open character. For this reason, what the book offers the reader are not definitive analyses, but various places to examine and interpellate a reality in full movement. In any case, the book has completed its rule if from its reading arise new questions and new modes to observe studied realities.

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