THE SEVEN FACES OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY

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Introduction

In this article[1] contemporary Brazilian society is charted as a product of the complementary, as well as conflictive, co-existence of seven institutions: 1) patrimonialism; 2) the rationalizing state; 3) capitalism; 4) social inequality and heterogeneity; 5) the non-cumulative logic of organizations; 6) citizenship; 7) patterns of sociability. These institutions may overlap, complement each other, or clash, depending upon on how social agents utilize them and upon how each institution unintentionally affects the social system. These seven aspects of Brazil are not flip sides of each other but stand largely face-to-face, influencing and contesting each other. Although they do not account for the totality of Brazilian social reality, they constitute basic mechanisms that organize the society and can help shed light on a good part of the processes of integration and social conflict observed in contemporary Brazil.

Patrimonialism

The term 'patrimonialism' has been broadly employed in studies on Brazil to characterize private appropriation of state resources, either by politicians and public servants or by members of the private sector. This situation contrasts with an ideal-type of liberal or modern society where the state is separate from the market, where bureaucratic agencies operate in compliance with universal rules, and where government is the channel for projects presented through political representations grounded in civil society.

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[1] Based on the first chapter of my book <u>A nova sociedade brasileira</u>, Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 2000.

Patrimonialism is generally cast as a cultural trait inherent to certain societies, which can be loosely grouped as Iberian or Mediterranean. This kind of culturalist perspective, with its trans-historical emphasis, tends to overlook the fact that patrimonialism only persists as long as it serves the interests of specific social groups and that its characteristics vary, depending upon the prevailing social dynamics. Under a patrimonialist system, economic and political powers may relate in a wide variety of ways, meaning that the concept must necessarily be situated in a concrete historical context.

We can observe patrimonialism in a a greater or lesser extend in all societies where the distribution of wealth and power is unequal. By looking at Brazilian patrimonialism not as a folkloric phenomenon typical of a "backward" country, we may come to better understand a trait that is present in all contemporary societies. What is unique about modern Brazilian patrimonialism is in how it is entwined with extreme social inequalities and in the legal impunity of the nation's elites. Countries as different as Japan, Israel or France display strong patrimonialist features, yet sharp extreme social inequalities or a lack of solidarity do not follow. Indeed, a sense of community and of solidarity can develop out of a variety of sources, which do not necessarily require the creation of a liberal polity.

In sociological thought, patrimonialism has been associated in particular with the work of Max Weber[2], who applies the term to a form of traditional domination, encompassing a wide array of feudal and archaic socio-economic formations.

Modern patrimonialism, differently from the forms studied by Max Weber, is a strategy through which social groups (particularly ruling groups but other groups

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[2] See especially Max Weber, *Economía y sociedad* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996). For an interpretation of how this concept has been used in the Brazilian literature, see L. W. Vianna's article "Weber e a interpretação do Brasil" (*Novos Estudos,* no. 53, March 1999). Vianna has leaned towards a dichotomous viewpoint, as if it were necessary to choose between the total autonomy of the bureaucratic state and its complete subordination to local, private interests.

throughout society as well) obtain economic resources or privileges by wielding power **without a legitimacy founded on tradition.** Modern patrimonialism is a form of non legitimate power within the context of urban societies where traditional domination systems have been replaced by democratic values and by formally liberal legal systems that presuppose the separation of political and economic power.

By reinforcing social inequalities and impunity, patrimonialism comes into conflict with a society that has progressed in the spheres of individualization and of citizenship values. The causes of social inequality are no longer seen as stemming mainly from the exploitation of labor but are rather focused on the state's incapacity to regulate, oversee control, and manage a social infrastructure that ensures to all of the population minimum living conditions. Patrimonialism becomes targeted as the prime source of inequity and is considered as a kind of assault on the values of justice, equality, and democratic life.

The origins of Brazilian patrimonialism can be traced to Portuguese colonization, which established the state as a structure that was both independent of society yet overlaid and ruling it, and whose purpose was to extract income from the colony. By the late nineteenth century, the political system had as it base the local power wielded by large landowners. These powerful patriarchal families relied on patron-client relations and blood ties in their control over wide regions, the local administration and justice, and over the vote. This was all part of a patronage system that tied local power to a central power,[3] with a centralized state and an administrative system inherited from the colony and the empire.[4] The system managed to maintain a certain efficiency

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[3] See Vítor Nunes Leal's classic *Coronelismo, enxada e voto* (Rio de Janeiro: Forense, 1948); R. Graham's *Clientelismo e política no Brasil do século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1997); and M.I.P. Queiroz's "O coronelismo numa interpretação sociológica," in *História geral da civilização brasileira. O Brasil republicano* (edited by B. Fausto; vol. I, São Paulo: Difel, 1975).

[4] On the political elite during the Empire, see J.M. Carvalho, *A construção da ordem: A elite política imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980). On the power and autonomy of the "ruling caste," see R. Faoro, *Os donos do poder* (Porto Alegre: Globo, 1976).

and autonomy, guaranteed the nation's defense, and mediated the interests of regions and social groups belonging to a geographically extensive and heterogeneous nation.

As urbanization progressed and social relations in the countryside changed, large landholders political   power diminished and local patrimonialism receded. The following forms of modern   patrimonialism can be found in any contemporary society, since it is impossible to fully control the tensions produced by the separation of the economic from the political/bureaucratic spheres. However they are particularly entrenched in Brazilian society:

a) The patrimonialism of politicians: i.e., the use of elected or appointed offices to gain personal economic advantage by exploiting public resources, nepotism, and special privileges .

b) The patrimonialism of civil servants: , i.e., the use of public positions in the areas of repression, fiscal control, and judiciary   in order to secure bribes and kickbacks..

c) Private patrimonialism: i.e., the appropriation of public resources by private agents, generally by overcharging the state in public bids. In addition to this quite typical form of patrimonialism — which spawned a state-contractor bourgeoisie — there are other ways of benefiting from favoritism, for example, by obtaining low interests loans, the release of pharmaceutical products that have not been properly tested, or winning disproportionately large indemnifications in actions against the state.

d) Lastly, we must mention a phenomenon that could be called negative patrimonialism, i.e.,: the use of political power to injure or discriminate against social groups. Throughout Brazil's history, the police and legal systems have

discriminated against the poorest segments of the population, especially against black people[5].

Patrimonialism should be differentiated from corporatism, although they are often confused [6]. This is especially true when dealing with a phenomenon that straddles the boundary between the two, like political system patrimonialism or, to use the terminology of some authors, state corporatism[7]. The latter (which will discuss below) has lost much of its contemporary relevance and it entails the use of political power to co-opt emerging sectors of urban industrial society, in particular trade union and party structures overseen or sponsored by the state.[8] This system was important in the period from Getúlio Vargas's Estado Novo through the 1964 coup. Since then, it has steadily lost weight as a system of social and political control and co-optation.

Corporatism can be understood in loose terms as the development of a strong *esprit de corps* within a particular occupation profession that is able to defend its interests and rights (wages, benefits, retirement plans), because it enjoys a privileged position within the state or has a strong trade union.[9] In Brazil, corporatism is particularly intense in the civil servant sector. Sometimes we see corporatism and patrimonialism converge in the forms of patron-client relationships, nepotism, and extremely unfair advantages for certain sectors. As a result, non-qualified staff is hired out of political favoritism, jobs are handed out to large groups of people that have not gone through public service exams, and exaggerated compensation packages are awarded in the form of side

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[5] Among others, see S. Adorno, "Discriminação racial e justiça criminal em São Paulo" (*Novos Estudos Cebrap*, no. 45, 1995), and B. Fausto, *Crime e cotidiano: A criminalidade em São Paulo – 1880-1924* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984).

[6] This is, for example, the case with K.E. Ericson in *The Brazilian Corporative State and Working Class Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

[7] See P.C. Schmitter, "Still the Quentura of Corporativism?", *The Review of Politics* (vol. 36, no. 1, 1974).

[8] Of the vast bibliography on this topic, I would like to mention a few works that have already become classics: S. Schwartzman, *São Paulo e o Estado nacional*, (São Paulo: Difel, 1975), which addresses political-party co-optation; L.W. Vianna, *Liberalismo e sindicato no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1976), on union organization and labor law; and W.G. Santos, *Cidadania e justiça: A política social na ordem brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1979. on social laws and citizenship.

[9] On different definitions and uses of this concept in social science, see B. Reis, "Corporativismo, pluralismo e conflito distributivo no Brasil" (*Dados*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1995).

benefits or special pension schemes. Still, one should not underestimate corporatism's importance as a social stabilizing force, and as a mechanism for building communities that share specific sets of professional ethics (e.g., civil servants, scientists), as well as a tool for defending social benefits[10].

The rationalizing state

If the Brazilian state and society were simply patrimonialist, Brazil would be doomed to backwardness. But from 1930 through 1980, the country registered one of the highest growth rates in the world. This growth was based on the central role of the state as a source of capital formation, supporting private enterprises and directly investing in the creation of a communication infrastructure and of state enterprises in key sectors of the economy.

Although Brazilian state engagement in industrialization policies marks a turning point, some level of autonomy, professionalization, and vision of national interests was already present in the bureaucracy of the Old Republic and in the Empire. The policy of bolstering coffee prices by burning supplies already in the 1920's was an indication of the capacity of the state to intervene in the economy. At that time the Brazilian state was already occupying vital spaces in the sectors of transportation, finances, and industry. As pointed out by Topik[11], although patron-client relations characterized the Old Republic's bureaucracy, highly professional personnel were included in its ranks as well. This was particularly true in the diplomatic career and especially in the armed

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[10] See B. Reis, op. cit., 1995 and ; F.W. Reis, "Estado, política social e corporativismo" (*Análise & Conjuntura*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1989).

[11] See S. Topik, *A presença do Estado na economia política do Brasil de 1889 a 1930* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1987), who describes the Brazilian state's important participation in commerce, transportation, industry, and finances as early as the 1920s. The work also shows that although the Brazilian bureaucracy displayed patron-client characteristics, it had strong professional components as well.

forces. From the beginning of the republic, the Brazilian military perceived themselves as both the embodiment and guardian of the fatherland and of national interests. [12].

The relative autonomy of central government in Brazil can be linked to, at least, three different factors: a) Brazil's colonial period created a political central power and administration relatively independent from local interests. b) Its historical continuity. Unlike in Spanish America, there has been no independence wars to cause ruptures or disorganization. C) The vastness of the country's geography and the heterogeneity of its regions and local elites, where the federal government intervened as a mediator.

The rationalizing state was guided basically by the logic of economic growth, dismissing the issues of social inequality and access to education and health care. Though permeated by patrimonialist interests, the state was always able to keep a foreign policy intended to maintain and expand the national boundaries, developing a national infrastructure, creating a modern bureaucracy and crafting an effective fiscal, statistical, and scientific and technological research system[13].

As the process of social transformation advanced in the 1970's conflicts spread between the entrepreneurial state and the new values and interests of ample sectors of society:

- During the second half of the twentieth century, the Brazilian state grounded its legitimacy basically on its ability to generate economic growth, while it neglected social dimensions, especially education, housing and health care. Brazil's state was oriented by a technocratic vision, often linked to authoritarian regimes and/or to an elitist vision of social transformation, removed from the society's growing democratic mobilization.

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[12] On the social origin and role of the armed forces, see A. Stepan, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton University Press, 1971).
[13] See S. Schwartzman, *Formação da comunidade científica no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Finep, 1979).

- In its rationalizing effort, the state never freed itself from patrimonialism.. While the public sphere did indeed make headway in creating modern administrative institutions, on the other hand the ruling strata and politicians used their control of state resources for their own personal economic advantage,[14] producing new modalities and practices of patrimonialism. However, skilled workers and the emerging middle classes holding public jobs were not co-opted politically by the military regime and become the social bases of support for opposition parties.

- Brazil's sharp economic growth of the late 1960s and 1970s, during the time of the military regime (l964-1988), had strong nationalist components. While the growth favored specific economic sectors it also caused hardships for others and brought increasing competition problems for the economy as a whole. In particular, the 'reserve market' policy in the computer industry not only made contraband become a generalized practice for acquiring a PC but delayed Brazil's industrial modernization.

- In the 1980s, state-run companies found themselves at cross-purposes with dominant sectors of the bourgeoisie, eroding a good share of its support for the military regime[15]. On the other hand, the state got into such foreign debt that it limited its investment capacity in the public sector.

- Government-run companies, which had enjoyed exponential growth during the military regime[16], also became incubators of militant trade unions — whose strikes had especially significant political consequences since the state itself was the boss.

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[14] Government-owned companies, for example, were a typical landing spot for politicians who failed to get elected.

[15] A.N. Codato, *Sistema estatal e política econômica no Brasil pós-64* (São Paulo: Hucitec/Anpocs, 1997).

[16] L. Martins, *Estado capitalista e burocracia no Brasil pós-64* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985).

Capitalism

Brazil is a capitalist society. The market, private property, and contract relations (including the buying and selling of labor power) are the foundation of Brazilian economy. Although the state has had a fundamental role in stimulating the financing and creation of large industry, private exchange relations and contracts form the substance of the social fabric.

Capitalist society is Brazilian. Just as in any other capitalist society Brazil's social structure is based upon a set of particular institutions, related to its history. Patrimonialism, the level of social inequality, the rationalizing state, the specific forms of sociability and of citizenship can't be deduced from the capitalist character of Brazilian society — even though all these institutions may have been influenced and refashioned through their roles in the process of capital accumulation.

Despite the tremendous importance of patrimonialism, the contemporary literature on capitalism in Brazil has not addressed the issue very often. From the liberal point of view, patrimonialism is a simple problem (inadequate application of market rules related to excessive state intervention), whereas for the left, it has merely been a symptom of the problem (social exploitation and the power of ruling groups). The intellectual left has viewed criticism of corruption as an expression of moralistic right-wing discourse.

Perhaps the Gordian knot of analyses of Brazilian capitalism lies in a tendency to analyze the country's different social institutions as being either functional for the purposes of capital accumulation or not, along with the a tendency to idealize a kind of capitalism and bourgeoisie which is not found in Brazil.

The intellectual paradox of the last decades economic interpretations of Brazilian history influenced by Marxism, is that while Brazilian economists were stressing the more general universal aspect of the country capital accumulation dynamics, social sciences in advanced nations were (re)discovering how the mercantile world was rooted in and bolstered by other, "external" institutions, like traditional values, social networks, or religious orientations.17

Inequality, heterogeneity, and social structure18

It is impossible to understand social stratification in Brazil without relating it to the way it interacts with and builds upon its relation to social policies and patrimonialism :

– Differential access to collective consumer goods is a central element of social inequality in Brazil Social inequality is usually measured in terms of income variations between individuals or families. These differences are doubtlessly fundamental, since they measure the power to buy goods and services offered on the market. They do not, however, reflect differential access to the collective goods and services usually guaranteed by the state. The latter include access to running water, public transit, electrical power, telephone, sewer, personal safety, housing, garbage collection, health care, and education. For instance, in Brazil's modern urban world the distance between a literate person and an illiterate person is infinite, since educational level will affect all of his or her life chances and quality of life even though it is not economically

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[17] This led a number of authors to begin speaking of capitalisms, in the plural, and to use comparative studies to construct typologies of capitalist societies rooted in the diversity of social institutions. See G.M. Hodgson, "Varieties of Capitalism and Varieties of Economic Theory," *Review of International Political Economy,* vol. 3, no. 3, fall 1996.

[18] On social stratification and social mobility see, *i.a.*, M.C. Scalon, Mobilidade social no Brasil: Padrões & tendências (Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 1999) and J. Pastore and N.V. Silva, "Mobilidade social no Brasil," manuscript, 1998. These valuable studies are based on official statistics on declared income, which generally do not capture the real income of the richest strata (nor of the informal sectors). Transferring statistical categories organized by income and by occupation (which are the bases of studies on social stratification in Brazil) to sociological categories like social class requires a painstaking effort and a conceptual debate.

quantifiable. Moreover, nearly one-third of Brazil's population has not completed primary school, meaning that these individuals are illiterate or functionally illiterate. In the same fashion, living in poor areas means running higher risk of being hit by a stray bullet or seeing your child involved in drug-dealing — factors that can not be translated into economic terms.

Such differentiated access to collective services also occurs in advanced countries, particularly in health care, public security, and education. What is singularly Brazilian is the importance of these social gaps, including basic infrastructure, violence in poorer neighborhoods, and educational inequality. Demographic growth and the explosive expansion of Brazil's major urban centers during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s unquestionably added fuel to these problems, which were later revived because the military regime placed social issues at the bottom of their agenda. For instance, the 1970s housing policy main beneficiaries were mainly middle-class sectors (and building firms).

Investment in infrastructure begun to improved very rapidly over the past decade because of the new pattern of urban growth, the relative stabilization of the country's major metropolises, and the democratically elected state and municipal governments' interest in responding to population demands.

– Social inequality has a marked regional component. Social inequality is strongly concentrated in North and Northeast Brazil, in particular in their rural areas.[19] Conservative modernization of agriculture, which kept the land tenure structure, expelled millions of workers from the countryside. While I do not want to negate large landowners' role in sustaining inequality and oppression down through Brazilian

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[19] In 1990, 38% of the entire population in North Brazil and 22% in Northeast Brazil were poor, while the figure was under 8% in all other regions of Brazil. Of the rural population, 22.5% were living below the poverty line, compared to less than 8% in urban areas. Looking at Brazilian cities, the greatest percentage of people residing in precarious housing, with no access to urban infrastructure, was once again found in the North and Northeast. See *O Brasil na virada do milênio*, vol. III (Brasília: IPEA, 1997).

history, one should not overlook the positive medium- and long-term aspects of the massive migration of the rural population to big cities starting in the 1960s. This migratory process not only sped up the demographic transition (rural populations continue to display birth rates higher than urban populations) but also concentrated once-scattered populations that previously were under clientelistic dominance and facilitated access to health-care and educational services, however precarious.

–   Social inequality in Brazil has a strong race and gender component. Statistical data and social research clearly indicate that black people in Brazil are concentrated in the poorest strata of the population and that in practice they are discriminated against in the labor market (be it in terms of job access or in terms of salary), and by the police. Although some affirmative action proposals have been made, none have met with been much successful to date[20]. In addition to constitutional issues and the caveats suggested by US experience with affirmative action, this type of procedure raises a special problem in the context of Brazil's widespread miscegenation: how do we to define who is black[21]? Beyond this practical question, other singularities should be pointed out. In the American model, political identities are shaped through associativism and the affirmation of minority rights, while in the continental European model, minority rights are still dependent on their capacity to claim belonginess membership and allegiance to the nation. Brazilian culture, as we will see later on, has been built on an openness to what is new and the absorption of diversity within a context of religious and cultural syncretism, independent to a large extent of any relationship to the state [22].

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[20] For reference papers on the topic, see C. Hasenbalg, "Entre o mito e os fatos: Racismo e relações raciais no Brasil" (*Dados*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1995) and P. Fry, "Color and the Rule of Law in Brazil," in G. O'Donnell and P.S. Pinheiro (editors), *The (Un)Rule of Law & The Underprivileged in Latin America* (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

[21] The difference between race prejudice against skin colour dominant in Brazil and race prejudice against origin ("one drop of blood") dominant in the United States was highlighted in Oracy Nogueira's pioneering study *Tanto preto quanto branco: Estudo de relações raciais* (São Paulo: T.A. Queiroz, 1985).

[22] See B. Sorj, "Sociabilidade brasileira e identidade judaica," in Bila Sorj, (ed.), *Identidades judaicas no Brasil contemporâneo* (São Paulo: Imago, 1997).

Starting in the 1970s, massive an increasing numbers of Brazilian women began entering the job market, and today female workers account for over one-third of the country's labor force. While women still suffer job-market discrimination — earning less and bumping heads against the 'glass ceiling' — the educational level of women in Brazil tends to be higher than that of men. Considering the positive correlation between educational level and job prospects and wages, the outlook for women is quite favorable 23.

- A central element of social stratification is unequal access to public goods. As mentioned earlier a person's place of residence defines his or her access to running water, sewer systems, trash collection, and electrical power, as well as his or her proximity to health care and education. They also define the kind amount of police coverage and (un)protection from crime that this person will enjoy. Equally the person's job defines his/her access to social legislation. We can define at least three broad categories of employee categories (despite tremendous diversity and stratification within each one) that reproduce relations of privilege, protection, and marginality in relation to social legislation a) public sector employees, which encompasses a large range of salary levels but where all enjoy job security and better retirement benefits than those available in the private sector; b) . Second, wage-earners within the so-called formal sector of the private job market, who are enrolled in the social security system and work for a variety of companies, c) . The so call "informal" sector which includes wage labor with no formal labor contract and a myriad of independent services sellers. This last group is growing and already encompasses more than half of the labor force.

It is worth noting that if access to state resources constitutes one of the main criteria in differentiating Brazil's income structure, the same holds true to a greater or lesser

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[23] See L. Lavinas, "Emprego feminino: O que há de novo e o que se repete" (*Dados*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1997).

extent in all capitalist countries. Unfortunately, this aspect is hardly recognized in the literature, which assigns the state a secondary role in defining social classes.

The non-cumulative logic of Brazilian institutions

In the dynamics of Brazilian institution building there is a permanent creation of new institutions and organization, which rapidly are condemned to obsolescence. The reasons for this perpetual movement is the discontinuity in the allocation of resources, blind spots voids in the chain of command and the tendency of each new government to see himself as the founder of a new era.

Brazilian society presents a tremendous willingness and flexibility in the creation of new alternatives, often meant to fill these voids without replacing the old institutions. Depending upon the observer's angle of vision, Brazil may leave a positive impression, thanks to its state of ongoing renewal and willingness to try new initiatives (compared for example, with European nations), or it may leave a negative impression, because any institutional effort faces a lack of solidity or of continuity. The fragility of Brazil's institutional system and the its flexibility shown in for dealing with its norms is a source both of creativity and adaptability, while, at the same time, it breeds a tendency to not take any new institution very seriously.

Citizenship and political representation

Citizenship - In a well-known article, Roberto Schwartz[24] describes liberal institutions in Brazil as "misplaced ideas", where social practices contradict the principles stated formally in the Brazilian legal system. Although this critique has a grain of truth, it overlooks the importance of the aspiration to citizenship in the shaping of Brazilian

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[24] R. Schwartz, "As idéias fora do lugar" (*Ao vencedor as batatas*, São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1977).

society and politics. Moreover, one cannot expect to find anywhere an idealized country with "full" citizenship.

Modern citizenship historically is always the   product of *bricolage* [25] of different influences. As   a concept it has two faces: the normative-utopian dimension merges with an analytical-descriptive aspects, and both   are dependent on social and historical contexts.   According to national traditions and historical periods, modern citizenship will emphasize different rights and obligations, defining   specific ways of belonging to a given community and access to a series of rights.

In Brazil, the private appropriation of public resources as well as the social porosity and clientelism manifested in the   functioning of the state apparatus (especially its police, fiscal, and legal systems) has made for a fragile and incomplete citizenship system, understood as a set of rights shared equally by members of a national community. In fact, the use of such concepts as sub-integrated citizen, to refer to socially excluded groups, and super-integrated citizen, to refer to socially privileged groups [26], can be misleading, since their use presupposes a dichotomy while the reality is much more gray and fluid. Citizenship implies a system of equality before the law, therefore there can't be 'sub-citizens' or 'super-citizens' and the entire population in some way suffers from the lack of control and inefficiency of the legal and police system (in this sense all Brazilians are sub-citizens to some extent).

Despite its numerous practical limitations, citizenship — as a political horizon — constitutes the reference system of what would be a desirable world for the Brazilian

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[25] See J.G.A. Pocok, "The Ideal of Citizenship Since Classical Times," in R. Beiner, *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[26] These terms are used, for example, by Marcelo Neves, to refer to processes of sub-integration and super-integration in the arena of rights guaranteed by the constitutional system. Those who are sub-integrated have no access to the rights guaranteed under the law but are nevertheless subject to the law's obligations and impositions. Those who are super-integrated, on the other hand, can use the legal system to their own benefit and even roadblock it when in their interest. See "Entre subintegração e sobreintegração: A cidadania inexistente," (*Dados*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1994).

population. Opinion polls are unanimous in indicating that all Brazilians feel that one the country's greatest problems is the absence of social justice and the impunity enjoyed by its most powerful members. This feeling implies a common ground of believe in democratic-egalitarian values, which in the last decadeswere forged in the struggle against the military regime, the mobilization against corruption during Collor's Administration(1990-1992), in the trade union, in the new organizations of the civil society and reinforced by the mass media.

The struggle for citizenship in Brazil will remain central until certain conditions of social equality are met, especially in terms of access to collective goods like education, jobs, and social security. These are prerequisites to active participation in the modern world.

b) Political representation - Brazil, like all modern societies, has had to devise its own ways of establishing institutions that can organize social conflicts involving the distribution of social wealth within a liberal capitalist order. For example, trade union and party organizations have played a central role in the European model, while social fragmentation, individualism, and the formation of *ad hoc* interest groups have predominated in the USA.

In the Brazilian political system, one of the main mechanisms for minimizing social conflict has been he cooptation of emerging social groups: professional urban an middle class were provided with public jobs and social benefits, trade union leaders benefited from resources thanks to mandatory union dues and entrepreneurs used the state to secure subsidized loans and customs protection. However from the late 1980's onwards the fiscal crisis of the state and the democratization process put an end to this system of "fragmented cooptation". The new social policies begun to be increasingly oriented to integrate the poorest sectors of society.

Finally on the vast area of political parties[27] some issues are worth mentioning:

1) The need to o modify laws on party fidelity: it is common for members of parliament to change political parties several times in their life times and even during a term, increasing the fragility of the parties. More solid political parties should limit the *private appropriation* of political representation, so that the lawmaker would no longer be a mere lobbyist for particular or fragmented interest and identify with a given political program.

2) There are recurrent proposals to change the electoral system to a district or mixed vote, as well as to change the system of government itself from the current presidential one to a parliamentarian system.

In Brazil, a wide array of factors has historically conspired against the consolidation of parties representing the poorest sectors of society. These factors range from the absence of a peasant tradition to the population's social and spatial mobility and the nation's expanding frontier[28]. They also include the patrimonialist and corporatist traditions as well as social heterogeneity. Under the military dictatorship, politicians engaged more intensively in patrimonialist practices because the regime — which kept Congress open after destroying the existing party system — rewarded this body for its political support through clientelistic favors which included, e.g. granting radio station licenses, providing jobs, and providing resources to 'foundations' controlled by members of Congress members.

In Brazil, patrimonialism and corporatism involve the left as much as the right. The *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers Party) — the most significant contemporary

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[27] See Amaury de Souza's excellent summary, "El sistema de partidos políticos," in H. Jaguaribe (ed.), *La sociedad, el estado y los partidos en la actualidad brasileña* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992).
[28] For an analysis of the role of large landholdings, non-wage labor and of the open frontier in the constitution of Brazilian capitalism see O. Velho, *Capitalismo autoritário e campesinato* (São Paulo: Difel, 1979). On the social and political role of the Amazon frontier, see B. Sorj and M. Pompermayer, "Sociedade política na fronteira amazônica: Interpretações e (contra) argumentos" (*Cadernos do DCP*, no. 6, 1984).

move towards change on the Brazilian political scene — has been strongly associated with an a-critical defense of the corporatist interests of civil servants and the employees of state-owned enterprises.

One of the most notable phenomenon of Brazil's post-democratization party system has been the *Partido da Frente Liberal* (Liberal Front Party), a by-product of the group of politicians who supported the military dictatorship. Led by highly skilled politicians, the party has constantly recycled itself and has managed to combine its members' patrimonialist practices with pragmatic adaptation to the democratic game and support for economic liberalization.

In a socially heterogeneous society like Brazil, in which a mass of people still need to get access to basic education, urban infrastructure and services and the legal system, while the middle and upper classes are much better situated to defend their privileges, a political party survival depends on its ability to navigate between rhetorical recognition of social inequalities and practical maintenance of the *status quo*.

Sociability and cultural patterns

In the 1950s, Brazil entered a process of rapid urbanization, the mercantilization of social relations, social mobility, and integration into the consumer world, bringing the consequent disappearance of traditional systems of authority and power. These social transformations strengthened individualistic values and aspirations, which in principle display the features described in contemporary literature on the topic of individualization: the disintegration of traditional forms of authority, uncertainty, and new collective identities organized outside the workplace. Processes of individualization acquire certain common characteristics in all modern-day societies, but the bibliography on the topic has downplayed or discounted the role that each national society still has in the practical, cognitive, and affective orientation of its

members. While tradition may no longer be a principle of authority, the differences between each nation's institutional systems and cultural traditions — (in the broad sense of shared expectations, values, tastes and attitudes that are taken for granted—) still are fundamental and will set the Japanese apart from the French, or the Germans from the Brazilians.

Individuals have a *habitus*, which, generically speaking, refers to the internalization and embodiment of attitudes and knowledge shared by the specific social class or group to which they belong. But each individual is also are able to engage in active, creative social interactions beyond his/hers social groups based on a cognitive and affective charting of society as a whole. This ability to map out and deal with the social world is affected in both practical and intellectual terms by the position each individual occupies in the social system. However this very ability presupposes that a world of values, codes, and knowledge is shared with the rest of society — and this is what constitutes the form of sociability observed in a given nation (or any other social system or subsystem). Cognitive maps, like any other practical set of rules, can only be conveyed through "on the job training" or expressed through vicarious experiences like literature or film, . However, sociologists identify the main institutions forming the sub-stratum through which an individual learns how to behave and relate to others in a given society [29].

No system of social values — i.e., set of moral beliefs and practical norms that help people know how to conduct themselves in social life — is coherent or logical in character. This an illusion of certain social theories, that assume we can understand human behavior in terms of rationality and/or fidelity to a single set of values or interests. The complexity of human nature and of social life requires each human being

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[29] I am of course using the concept *habitus* much as Norbert Elias developed it. See especially *O Processo civilizador* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1990) and *Os alemães* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1997). For culture as "on the job training" more than discursive practice, see M. Bloch, "Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science," *Man*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1991.

to be extremely malleable in opting between possible forms of conduct in different contexts. Individuals are always open to learning and to creativity, and to make decisions based on a varied repertoire of possible values and rational elaborations offered by our culture and worked out through personal experience.

In the cultural heritage of any social group we find stories that justify love and hate, individualism and solidarity, acceptance of one's neighbor and xenophobia, war and peace, curiosity and fear. Every system of sociability displays contradictory facets that reflect each culture's diverse institutions and traditions, as experienced by each social group and individual. A set of common - but not univocal nor coherent - values and expectations emerge from life within one same single environment largely shared by the entire population, social inequalities notwithstanding. When we assume that a common code of sociability exists, this doesn't mean does not mean that we are introducing a concept of national character that homogenizes and equalizes everything, nor that there are no vital subcultures or differences between social classes. In fact shared forms of sociability are necessary mechanisms for the reproduction of social differences.

Brazilian contemporary sociability, especially urban, displays complementary and contradictory features, chief among which are the following:

– **The civic components of Brazilian sociability are fragile, that is, there is a low degree of identification with the state's political symbols and the notion of public interest.** A distinctive feature of Brazilian sociability is the distance that separates cultural collective identity ('being Brazilian') from identification with the nation's political parties, public institutions or civic symbols. This lack of civic consciousness finds its origin above all in the population's low educational level — since education is usually the fundamental basis upon which modern societies form their civic values —.

As stated by Hobsbawm[30], in Europe, schools were central in shaping the national ideologies. Although the Brazilian state demonstrated amazing economic efficiency until the 1970s, it failed to forge a civil and national(istic) culture — unlike Argentina, Uruguay, or Chile, for example — because the nation-state's main ideological tool — the school — was abandoned. Patrimonialism and impunity have also contributed to this weak identification with civic values and the notion of a common public space as well as to a clientelistic relationship to power. Because citizens hold the state in low esteem, what has developed is a culture of no respect for and generalized mockery of the law. Brazilian culture and identity have thus been fashioned somewhat independently of the political system. This gap between collective identity and Brazil's political symbols has produced and is associated with a number of anti-democratic traits (inadequate education, social inequality). But on the other hand, it has also fostered development of a non-xenophobic culture and of a political life not easily penetrated by conservative nationalist attitudes or discourses of intolerance.

One of the consequences of Brazilian patrimonialism has been a certain promiscuity between public and private space. As a consequence, there is little perception of a public space differentiated from private space. The former is seen either as an extension of the latter, where the existence and fellowship of other interests is ignored — or seen as a sphere where spoils are to be captured or goods to be appropriated. Inadequate education, impunity for the privileged, and the prepotency of ruling groups undoubtedly help undermine the formation of a public space while reinforcing contempt for the law. Sociology and judicial anthropology show us how customs are transformed into laws and laws into customs. In Brazil, the custom is to not take laws seriously[31].

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[30] See E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990). Or in D. Schapper's terms: "It was with the French Revolution that the schoolmaster was no longer called *regent* (someone who directs studies) but became instead an *instituteur* (someone who institutes teaching), because from then on they were charged with instituting the nation", *La communauté des citoyens*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

[31] Other factors also contribute to the tendency to disrespect social norms, including a playful desire to "beat the system" and a subconscious need to confront danger, perhaps even as a form of pleasure — like

–**Brazilian sociability is gregarious and is based on participation in networks and, by extension, on the valuing of personal contacts.** The notion of an individualistic society is without doubt merely an ideal-type that does not exist in the real world, for in all modern societies social networks and ties of solidarity bonds are still a central element in how a person fits into the market and into society. In the Brazilian case, this participation in networks gains greater importance because of the society's patrimonialist character. In Brazil valuing networks comes along with a strong corporatist element and usually with the valuing of group interests over and above a greater individualization or identification with universal values, which even affects intellectual individualization and debates within academia. At the same time, as part of a system whose operational basis is personal favors and good will, Brazilian culture has little inclination for confrontation or open criticism — since you never know when you might "need" someone else.

– **Brazilian society is religious.** Although Brazilian religiosity is not easy to conceptualize, for almost all Brazilians it is the main source of hope, of resignation, and of confidence in the future. Although Brazilians usually define themselves as Catholic, their religiosity has its own singularities, like the strong influence of African religions and a pragmatic/ecumenical tendency to be open to diverse religious experiences that favors syncretism and permits people to move about among different religious beliefs, sometimes simultaneously. Religious diversity and tolerance can be related to the long term fragility of the presence of Catholic Church in the rural areas and to its openness to syncretism capacity, to the vitality of African beliefs[32] as well

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pedestrians ignoring traffic signs, which is a very common part of Brazilian urban life. But another reason pedestrians do not obey traffic lights is that they know drivers do not obey them either. So the strategy is to try to cross the street when no danger is to be seen. Drivers, on the other hand, justify their disrespect for traffic signals because they are afraid of being held up, particularly in the early hours of the morning. Yet this is not the case with bus drivers, which may quite possibly be the group that respects the least traffic laws.

[32] Despite the brutality of slavery in Brazil, Brazilian blacks, unlike their American counterparts, have managed to preserve their religious practices. This has been a positive phenomenon from the angle of culture,

as to the consolidation of an urban culture with a pragmatic, multi-faceted religiosity. In the recent decades the new evangelical groups have been extremely successful in their proselytism and at the beginning of the millennium they represent around 10% of the population. Differently from the Catholic Church they have a more exclusive and aggressive relationship in relation to their competitors in the religious market.

Popular urban Brazilian religiosity untill the arrival of the new wave of evangelical groups was disconnected from the political system. By "disconnected" from the political system, I mean that Brazil's modern political institutions were established through a process that involved neither the integration of nor contraposition to the religious discourse. In most republican countries civic values have been affirmed in contraposition to and in struggle with the Church and religious tradition, while in Anglo-Saxon and most of the protestant countries, the ideas of civic pact and the constituent values of society were built on religious values [33]. This disconnection may have affected the Brazilian state's capacity to construct a civic culture and to colonize social life, based on a system of universal values [34].

In fact Afro-Brazilian religions and "popular" Catholicism may have strengthened patrimonialist culture because of certain elective affinities — the former by prizing interpersonal relations and feelings (hate, envy, love, jealousy) and the latter through the belief in miraculous hope and resignation. To what extent they are in fact a by-product of patrimonialist culture or were themselves strengthened by it is a complex issue that requires more thorough historical research. In any case, it is safe to say that a

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although the US black population's adherence to Protestantism has had its own positive side, in terms of promoting literacy related to reading the bible.

[33] See B. Barret-Kriegel and J. Halpérin, "Judaïsme et état de droit," in G. Lévitte (ed.), *Colloque des Intellectuels Juifs – La question de l'état* (Paris: Denoël, 1998).

[34] The persistence of religious education within Brazilian schools well into the twentieth century demonstrates not only the strength of the Catholic Church's lobby (as was the case in Argentina, for example) but also civic culture's weakness in producing its own system of values. On the space reserved for religious education under Brazil's different constitutions, see O. Fávero, *A educação nas Constituintes brasileiras 1823-1988* (Campinas: Editora Autores Associados, 1966).

renewal of Brazilian civic culture will probably encompass, elaborate on, and sublimate the religiosity that pervades Brazilian sociability.

- Brazilian sociability includes racist practices, although it doesn't include any form of organized or ideological racism. As we have seen, social inequality in Brazil comes associated with racist practices. If this is true, why then is there no major black movement in Brazil fighting for a separate, differentiated identity? In short, why is the black movement's appeal limited to such a small number of sympathizers? One answer proposed by the black movement and certain social scientists (generally from the US) is that alienation, oppression, the absence of a democratic culture, and internalized racism still conspire against the shaping of a black consciousness [35]. Although these factors cannot be discarded, I believe a simpler approach would be to recognize the specificity of Brazilian culture, which has fashioned a dynamic of tolerance, syncretism, and the absorption of differences, without eliminating prejudice in practice. The vitality of Brazilian culture lies in a sociability that kept some distance from the state ideological apparatuses capacity of homogenizing and/or normatizing of cultural diversity.

Although "in practice" Brazilian social life displays racist components, there is no systematic ideology of stigmatization, nor has there been any political party or relevant organization in civil society — that directly or indirectly assumed racism as an explicit ideology during the latter half of the twentieth century. The African roots of Brazilian culture have been openly affirmed in a wide variety of artistic manifestations, particularly during the second half of this century. Although Brazilian blacks are mistreated, they do not feel that Brazilian culture has expelled or excluded them, thereby compelling them to seek their original '"home." Moreover, dominant Brazilian ideology characteristically devalues the past and tends to look towards the future, and

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[35] See, for example, T. Skidmore, "EUA multirracial vs. Brasil bi-racial" (*Novos Estudos Cebrap*, no. 34, November 1992), and R. Ortiz, "Da raça à cultura: A mestiçagem e o nacional," in *Cultura brasileira & identidade nacional* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985).

this deprives the black movement of a reference point from which it can begin to understand and internally process the period of slavery.

Brazilian society focuses on the future[36]**.** One of Brazil's originating myths — and one that the twentieth-century acceleration of economic growth brought to the fore — is that the country has a promising future, despite its past legacy. The latter is indeed considered as a weight, owing to a negative view of the Portuguese colonizer, of the black, and the native peoples (seen as the three original "races" making up Brazil). According to this vision, the weight of the past will be overcome by "whitening" the population, by miscegenation, and by realizing the country's potential, expressed above all in its size and natural wealth[37]. Focusing on the future means having an especially open attitude about foreigners. While other cultures may see foreigners as a source of contamination and deformation of national roots — the opposite happens in Brazil. Brazilians orientation towards the future means that they have a certain disdain for the past and fail to nurture its national memory. Perhaps this focus on the future, combined with the non-existence of egalitarian values transmitted through the educational system, has engendered another characteristic of Brazilian culture: it has a low level of animosity towards wealth, apparently little resentment or envy towards ostentation, which in more egalitarian societies might breed opposition and rebellion.

– **Contemporary Brazilian society is authoritarian and displays profound social inequalities, yet it is not markedly hierarchical.** In part, this trait most likely stems from a certain informality typical of Brazilian society during the more recent decades, but it also has to do with the non-acquisition of civic standards at home or at school.

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[36] I developed this theme in B. Sorj, op. cit. 1977.

[37] See J.M. Carvalho, "O motivo edênico no imaginário social brasileiro," in D.C. Pandolfi, J.M. Carvalho, L.P. Carneiro, and M. Grynszpan, *Cidadania, justiça e violência* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1999).

For a large share part of the population, socialization takes place at work. Much of the urban population has simply never been socialized in forms of civic treatment. Reverence for hierarchies is handed down through tradition or incorporated in school, which creates a new system of values and teaches how to "respect them." Compared to much more egalitarian societies — for example, like France or England, not to mention Japan — Brazilian sociability at first glance displays egalitarian traits insofar as it does not recognize hierarchies, albeit by default.

Although a sense of equality is gaining ground in Brazil, social distance is still visible and reproduced in the cheap labor power available for personal services, in poorer people's diffuse feeling of fear and defenselessness, and in the social distance in relation to the wealthier groups, despite — or in combination with — the warmth and informality of human relations [38]. Without the mediation of institutions of representation, poverty is a breeding ground for paternalism and paternalistic attitudes espousing a symbolic "concern and respect for the poor".

- Brazilian society is violent. Despite its gregarious, playful characteristics, Brazilian society is extremely violent. This violence is multi-faceted and its main source is the government's longstanding abandonment or minimal presence in regions where the poor and socially excluded are concentrated. This violence is felt acutely by favela dwellers in large cities, ruled over by gangs of drug-dealers who are at war (and in collusion) with the police, and also in Brazil's poorer rural regions, where large landowners still command private armed groups. Violence escalates and acquires dramatic features inside jails, where large numbers of prisoners are crowded into small cells under sub-standard living conditions, where they suffer moral and physical degradation. Violence reaches the middle and upper classes in the form of extortion,

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[38] A central phenomenon of Brazilian sociability, which has been examined very little by the social sciences (including gender studies linked to the feminist movement) or even, to my knowledge, by psychoanalysis as far as I am aware is the role of the housemaid in the making of Brazilian sociability, a pattern of relationship that blends social inequality and affection.

armed robberies, muggings, as well as nd kidnappings. Brazil's violence is also rooted in the military police which still haven't completely eradicated the use of torture and the assassination of presumed delinquents.

The most worrisome social phenomenon is the state's abandonment of urban spaces, which are taken over by armed gangs of drug dealers in collusion with members of the police. This creates mini-states and breeds a psychosis of fear, which can trigger support for repressive policies and disregard for human rights.

The culture of violence extends to groups in poorer areas who occasionally take justice into their own hands and resort to lynching; to night clubs where violence is organized sometimes by sponsors themselves, to soccer fans; to violent groups of middle class youth who practice martial arts and provoke fights at nighttime meeting places. This same middle class youth drive drunk and drag-race, confident they will not be punished. Last but not least let us recall the secular violence against women and children.

- Brazilian society is playful. Although this statement deserves a long digression and proof as well, it cannot be left unsaid. The main source of this playful component lies perhaps in the African and indigenous contribution to Brazilian culture. Its less repressive relation to the body represents the positive side of the limited capacity that the traditional Catholic Church and Brazilian school system had in disciplining minds and bodies. This playful sociability also derives from a devaluation of the past — a prime source of angst, remorse, and guilt — as well as from the valuing of personal contacts. Basic to survival in a patrimonialist society, this attitude towards personal contacts makes Brazilians find pleasure in camaraderie and prize their

relationships with other people. It is this particular cultural trait that perhaps most catches the eye of to foreigners who visit Brazil or set down roots settle here.[39]

Final Remarks

The most important underlying social process in contemporary Brazilian society is the increasing individualization and the democratization of social relations. These processes, as we have seen, are based on, the disappearance of traditional rural forms of production and domination, on everyday life in urban context, as well as on the political processes of the last decades.

The military regime's main legitimization was delivering economic growth without displaying any important ideological frame, while the struggle for democracy and the constitution of 1988 did increase expectations about access to a wide range of rights and The African roots of Brazilian culture have been openly affirmed in a wide variety of artistic manifestations, particularly during the second half of this century.

A decade and a half of inflation (from the early eighties to the mid-nineties) along with permanent corruption scandals augmented the rejection of politicians and increased distrust of the state. This processes, along with global trends, opened the road to policies of the nineties, of privatization of public enterprises and stress in state reform and more efficient and better public services and goods.

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[39] As Fluzer has pointed out, in Brazil there are two words that mean 'play': *jogar* and *brincar*. *Jogar* refers more to traditional games, while *brincar* has to do with an attitude of trespassing a given situation. When something is easy to do, one uses the expression "dá para fazer brincando" (you can do it playing). See V. Fluzer, *Fenomenologia do brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 1998).