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*Maison du Brésil: a space to live their brazilianness in Paris*¹

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Abstract

This paper presents some reflections on the *Maison du Brésil*. My aim is to analyze the meanings that characterize it as a Brazilian territory in Paris, as a temporary residence for researchers. It looks at the international circulation of students and researchers who live there and have an educational experience of multiple dimensions, while experiencing deterritorializing identities and their consequences in a residential space that is simultaneously public and private. Based on my own experience as a former resident in the *Maison du Brésil* and on a later return to the *Maison*, I present some aspects of its history and daily life. I will focus on the “uses and abuses” of the nation and of the region, to analyze the particularities of established mediation of living in the *Maison du Brésil*, to the education and international insertion of some researchers.

Key-words

Identities, “Brazilianness”, “deterritorialization”, education.

The space

The *Maison du Brésil* is one of the 40 residences that make part of the architectural set of Paris’s Cité Internationale Universitaire. Some of these residencies (around 23) have a “national character” and are responsible for hosting graduate students and researchers during a temporary period that can vary from a few weeks to the time necessary for the obtention of a full doctorate degree in Paris. The CIUP was conceived in the 1920’s, being meant by its main idealizer, André Honorat, as an international space for integration of the intellectual elites in formation in French soil. At that moment, it served to the double need of improvement of conditions of student housing in the period, situated at the *Quartier Latin*, and the development of an internationalist spirit towards keeping world peace, which was shaken by the First World War.

The *Maison du Brésil* was inaugurated in 1959 during President Juscelino Kubistchek de Oliveira’s mandate. At that moment Brazil lived a period of economical growth, characterized by historiography as “national-developmentism”. Its construction

¹ This article is part of reflections on the research project *Maison du Brésil: um território brasileiro em Paris. 50 anos de construção das identidades brasileiras na França (1959-2009)* GEAIC nº: 022106 that I have conducted since March 2008 at the Federal University at Santa Maria.

started with a negotiation between France and Brazil initiated in the 1920's. The Brazilian government, sponsoring the construction of the "Maison du Brésil" in Paris after an agreement with the University of Paris (which is circumscribed to the CIUP), bet on the need to make available a residential structure for its researchers, aiming at the educational internationalization of its "elites".

In October of 2003, when I arrived in Paris to conduct the seven-month "sandwich"² portion of my doctoral studies, the first of many impacts that awaited me on my first trip to Europe was the sight, at the Cité Internationale Universitaire, of a residential building quite different from the others. Seeing the colorful Maison du Brésil reassured me! It was a Friday evening. I had crossed the neighborhoods of Paris until reaching the Maison in an airport shuttle that picked me up at Charles de Gaulle Airport an hour late. But I had arrived safe and sound, I was in Paris, even better, I was in a Brazilian space in Paris, as I realized in my first moments in the city.

My brief narrative of a difficult arrival, disturbed by initial fears of life outside of Brazil, of losing my bags and of linguistic misunderstandings - "I don't understand this French" - I heard repeated often from a number of colleagues who I saw enter the glass hall of the Maison du Brésil for the first time during my stay in 2003-2004. Expressions of exhaustion, large bags dragged with the belongings needed for a year of living - and sometimes longer in the cases of those doing complete doctoral programs. People would arrive with a set of expectations and fears expressed in plural narratives. Mythic narratives recall how it all began in Paris at the Maison, of the new friends who became family, of confusions and misunderstandings with supervisors and problems of insertion in the universities and laboratories.

Living in this universe rich in meanings, a world apart of Brazilians in Paris was unveiled. The Brazilian researchers who live at the Maison du Brésil are not immigrants or tourists, but in some way interact with these two universes. To come to study in Paris in a doctoral or post-doctoral program involves desires for international education, an opportunity to exchange research with professionals from France and other countries, but also invokes the action of other identities and the search for other interests. To get to know the city and other places in Europe, find new friends and loves and, in some cases, to seek temporary work.

² Some Brazilian doctoral students receive a grant to conduct a portion of their doctoral research abroad. This grant is known as a "sandwich" because it comes in the middle of the doctoral program

In this sense, living in the Maison du Brésil makes the international experience of Brazilian researchers unique, because their insertion in the educational scenery is mediated daily by images of Brazil, by the mixture of the Portuguese language with French spoken by Brazilians and by relationships, mostly among other Brazilians in France. It is interesting to note that the probable passage from a local scenario in Brazil to a cosmopolitan scenario (Hannerz 1990: 253) occurs from this space signified as a Brazilian territory in Paris.

All of these situations experienced at the Maison du Brésil, provide a deep sense of wonder and the habitational and emotional structure needed to undertake the sandwich phase of my doctoral studies and support a later university career. From the perspective of my wonder, a desire was born to better understand the international educational experience that I had lived through, like so many other researchers and their companions who pass through the Maison.

To do so, I sought to live the experience and accept its daily contradictions, and also to understand it from an anthropological perspective that enriched my doctoral project, making some notes in my Field Diary and producing some images of the time. After the passage of a few years and other studies, I returned to the Maison and came to see it as a place of a significant memory in my life story, (Augé 2003: 43).

As that author proposes, “Ce Paris-là, ce sont mes ruines à moi, une œuvre d’art hors d’âge et qui, pour cette raison, me donne le sentiment qu’elle n’existe que pour moi,”(Augé 2003: 124), upon analyzing the personally established relations with the past through a visiting and individual reading of a vestige. My stay at the Maison du Brésil looks back at a unique time of my doctoral studies, at the seminars at the EHESS, at the *feijoadas métisse*, at the farewells in the cafeteria, at the endless wines and cheeses with lots of discussion of theses and future plans. It was a time to begin to wonder again! It was a time to perceive this personal connection in relation to other trajectories and to the plurality of meanings that living at the Maison du Brésil instills in the experience of some researchers.

This text is an ethnography of the “Brazil House,” which I consider as a privileged space for understanding the plural educational processes of Brazilian researchers in France, to which Brito (2000: 158) referred upon discussing the characterization and diversity of meanings of Brazilian studies abroad.

Methodological Path

In January 2010, I came back to the Maison du Brésil for the undertaking of a long research journey related to the post-doctorate project *Maison du Brésil: a Brazilian territory in Paris*, financed by CAPES. The field work I have been performing since then encompasses a set of synchronic and diachronic actions that have as objective to perform a historical and anthropological reading of the Maison du Brésil throughout its 51 years of existence, and, mostly, to focus on the everyday life of its residents.

The diachronic analysis happens through the research of the broad documentation (digitalized and in paper) that exists in the archives of the Maison du Brésil. They are official correspondences exchanged between the Brazilian and French governments, articles, regulations, etc. At the Archives Nationaux de la France, in Fontainebleau, where the documentation related to the residences that make part of the CIUP is located, I mostly perform the analysis of the dossiers of the ex-residents of the Maison du Brésil. Part of the research constitutes in bibliographic research and related sites. The interpretation of data from the applications of the current residents makes it possible to perform a mapping of the occupation of the apartments and the academic profiling of the MdB residents.

The process of “participant observation” is plural. It happens, for example, through my presence in collective spaces of sociability (specially the kitchens of each one of the five floors), at the laundry, the cafeteria and in parties (feijoada, barbecue, cheese and wine) and in the so called “cultural activities” that happen at the theater, such as exhibits, cocktail parties, films, recitals, debates, lectures, and so on. I have also observed guided tours of visitor groups, promoted by the Maison du Brésil in its public areas (hall, theater and the *testimonial room*). It is worth remembering that the building, projected by Lúcio Costa and Le Corbusier, is classified as French historical heritage, for being an expression of modernist architecture. Thus, besides being a university housing facility of private character, the MdB also serves as a museum and has a very well marked public dimension in some of its spaces.

In terms of a more synchronic work (though the research is connected and intertwines these two aspects, as I intend to demonstrate in relation to the question of the elite), I watch and photograph farewells and the other rites implied on living in the House. I observed soccer games (suffering with the mistakes our of team at the CIUP championship) and watched some transmissions of Brazil games in the World Cup in

Paris and Madrid. I also take part in the preparation of dinners and lunches (as one of the cooks), where being at the stove grants me a privileged spot for observation and discussion of the research with the residents, who present a plural set of reactions towards its development.

There is a broad knowledge about the work I have been performing. In January 2010 I sent to the residents a piece of mail making explicit the objectives and the dynamics of the research. The reception is plural and has implied in various developments of the fieldwork, with a meaningful enlargement of the interviews with the expansion of the observations to other spaces in which I have perceived images of Brazil in Paris.

In this sense, I have also contacted Brazilians and non-Brazilians who come to the Maison du Brésil to enjoy their company. I took some residents (who had just arrived from Brazil) to open their French bank accounts, to buy their subway cards, and also to purchase the health insurance required by CAPES and CNPq. I took part in a French course promoted by the BACE/CIUP at the Fondation Franco-Britannique. I went to the university restaurant and the spaces for sports practice (especially the swimming pool), I took some yoga classes at the cafeteria of the Maison du Brésil, capoeira classes at the House of Spain, English conversations classes at the Maison du Cambodja and at the MdB and some seminars promoted about the CIUP, at the Maison Internationale. As part of the research I've also performed interviews with the staff of the Maison du Brésil and its current residents, in order to understand their trajectories regarding this moment and also the meanings that living at the MdB has in the paths of these students and researchers.

Living at the Maison du Brésil I have given and received medication, exchanged objects and bought others from residents who were leaving (my television, the printer, a sleeping bag and a suitcase were purchased in January 2010). I have shared *chimarrão* with other gaúchos and sympathizers, left things I didn't need anymore at the 5th floor donation table and gathered things from there as well. I have shared the collective utensils in the kitchens, received personal donations of objects permeated by affective relations from people who returned to their homes – my cell phone, for example, belonged to Carla, who received it from Marcelo. In these experiences I perceived situations of spontaneity and exchange. Gift and counter-gift. The classification of people and things, the construction of hierarchies and the production of a universe of symbolic kinship, as Miller proposes (2007, p. 548), with the production of networks

which re-signify the very notion of a Brazilian community in Paris, who live in the Maison du Brésil.

As I go back to these stages I admit I live a latent contradiction in the process of participant observation. Writing this text (about and at the Maison du Brésil) is the opportunity to acknowledge that the participant observation has become, many times, a process of observatory participation, in Wacquant's perspective (2005, p.8). Living at the MdB is a daily challenge of relativization of my personal and academic objectives and desires. I'm also a researcher performing fieldwork as many others who live here and establish a set of temporary social ties that help stand and go through with the *séjour* of research in Paris.

In the research project (Brum 2009, p.4), as I set limits to my methodological discourse, I already predicted the possibility of a passage from participant observation to observatory participation. The intangible and the immeasurable was the impact of the fieldwork at the Maison du Brésil for its residents and in my process of subjectification in France, which many times surpassed my possibility of action and understanding. Silences, things unsaid, veiled exclusions, ostensible invitations, excessive significations, demands from people willing to become main informants, being "hit" in the most different ways, linguistic trouble. Panic: my telephone rang and was followed by insistent knocking at my door in the middle of the night, after coming back from a party. An attempt of constant subversion permeates the spaces of the house at night – *Neverland, phantasy island*, as some residents have referred to.

I tried to escape without dodging, keeping my space with difficulty, taking into account Lévi-Strauss's advice to Descola about fieldwork among the Jivaro: "- laissez-vous donc porter par le terrain" (Descola 1985, p.54). I let myself be conducted by the field until my physical and emotional limits allowed. In some moments the loneliness was very intense, even painful I would say. The doors of the 16m² rooms are closed, the halls are empty during the day, and the silence is only broken by Seu Manuel fixing something or by the sound of the *femmes de ménage*. At night the house is filled with noise coming from the kitchens and the rooms are opened, people circulate, but still there is a weight, a mixture of saudade and euphoria, attachment and discontinuity which marks our days here, and goes away little by little with the wine and the smoke in the kitchen at every new encounter, but comes back everyday, sometimes along with a strong hangover.

I thought about giving up many times, for believing I wouldn't be able to "handle" the meanings that emerged. A feeling of anthropological impotence never experienced before challenged me and the "THIS *SPECIAL SPACE*", like a fetiche, followed me in every corner of the house, even in my files. But, was it really a "Brazilian" "SPACE" or a symbolic and temporary territory built by groups in international traffic? Was this their everyday life in Paris? What was the group and the universe of meanings that I was facing, after all?

I kept on doing the fieldwork, and a clue unveiled, starting as an almost hidden personal question. I felt somehow as part of a relatively small universe of people (Brazilian researchers in Paris, living at the Maison du Brésil). This meaning emerged as a form of demand, or as a (minimizing) euphemism in situations where some discrimination took place.

Maison du Brésil³

The contact of Brazilian researchers who want to stay at the Maison, the information needed about residence and the candidacy for a space are available at the website www.maisondubrasil.org:

La Maison du Brésil

Fondée en 1959, la Maison du Brésil est l'une des 23 maisons nationales de la Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris. Depuis plus de 40 ans elle accueille des étudiants, professeurs et chercheurs brésiliens qui viennent à Paris dans le cadre d'un programme universitaire, notamment pour des études doctorales ou post-doctorales, ou encore des artistes et des professionnels brésiliens en stage de perfectionnement. Au long de ces années elle a été la résidence temporaire de Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Jaime Lerner, Zuenir Ventura, Sebastião Salgado, Arthur Moreira Lima, Zózimo Barroso do Amaral, Antonio Abujamra, Francisco Rezek et d'autres.

Cependant, au-delà d'une simple résidence universitaire, la Maison du Brésil représente un patrimoine de grande valeur architecturale et culturelle. Issu d'un projet moderne et original de deux architectes mondialement reconnus, Lucio Costa et Le Corbusier, le bâtiment a été inscrit en 1985 à l'Inventaire Supplémentaire des Monuments Historiques français et reçoit régulièrement des centaines de visiteurs de toutes les nationalités, entre professionnels, étudiants et amateurs de l'architecture. Entièrement restaurée en 2000, la Maison du Brésil combine à présent une infra-structure moderne et un éclat d'origine.

Aux logements de la résidence s'ajoutent un théâtre équipé d'une cabine de projection, un hall d'expositions, une bibliothèque, une salle d'informatique et une salle de cours/réunions. Tout ce réseau d'installations fait de la Maison du Brésil un pôle culturel par excellence, situé dans un espace privilégié de la capitale française.

³ I would like to thank Anne-Marie Thiesse, Afrânio Garcia, Arabela Oliven, Débora Leitão, Gentil Corazza, Rosana Pinheiro Machado and Ruben George Oliven for the support, discussions and incentive for development of this study. I would also like to thank the unmeasurable contribution, data and documents provided by Inez Machado Salim, Sandra Callegari and the colleagues who are residing in or had lived at the Maison, who participated in this study. The names used in this study have been changed to protect personal privacy.

The Maison du Brésil was inaugurated during the government of President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira to provide residency for Brazilian graduate students and to encourage relations between the two countries. According to Salim (2004: 1) although the first documents that mention the project for building the Maison du Brésil are from the 1930s, the legal measures were only taken in the 1950s, with construction conducted in three years, with funds from the Brazilian Ministry of Education, via CAPES.

Through decree 56.728 of Aug. 18, 1965, the Maison du Brésil came to be linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations and its director an agent of the official mission of Brazil in France, with an annual budget of US\$63,800. In the 1970s, the by-laws for the Maison du Brésil were changed. The position of the Brazil government was changed through the new composition of the Maison's Board of Directors, reduced to six - compared to the ten previous members - with only one Brazilian and the Brazilian Ambassador no longer served as president. The Commission de la Fondation Franco-Bresiliénne was created to supervise the activities of the Board of Directors and of the director of the Maison, in order to "better" organize the cooperation between the two countries. The Maison du Brésil came to be called the Fondation Franco-Bresiliénne (Salim 2004: 2).

Despite these changes that resulted in the restriction of Brazilian autonomy in relation to its administration (the new French directors came to be indicated by the Board of Directors), the annual support from the Brazilian government was maintained until 1981. The termination of this funding in 1982 was the target of protests and sparked residents' to organize themselves to question the Brazilian authorities (with some success). From 1982 – 1995 there was a certain discharacterization of the Maison du Brésil as university housing. It began to receive many temporary guests, at prices above those charged to students and researchers who also had their rates raised.

In 1985, when the building for the Maison du Brésil was registered as a French heritage site, it was already beginning to show signs of deterioration, as well as sanitary and security problems. This is reflected in the words of a former resident from Minas Gerais (a doctoral student in Sociology at EHESS from 1988-1992): "when I saw that decrepit room I said to myself, I am not going to stay here, it's too depressing. I looked for another place to live in Paris."

During the military dictatorship, the residency housed some political exiles and in 1968 the Maison du Brésil was used as a space for meetings that preceded the

demonstrations in the Quartier Latin, (Rotmann 2008: 22). In the late 1970s it was mentioned as a space of resistance:

- I was in France at the beginning of November until late January, after the doctorate. I did not live in the Brazil House, but I know that there were a wide variety of leftist groups there, each one with the correct route for Brazil to follow. (...). There was a feminist group at the House called "Our body belongs to us"...

A number of Brazilian students in France were "self-exiled" (that is, decided to go to Paris saying that they couldn't take living in Brazil anymore: this was called "semadol") and they had their "family grant." At that time it was possible to send US\$ 300 per month abroad and with this one could live as a student. Brazilians discovered broken public phones from which they could call Brazil for free (which was normally very expensive at the time). When the Brazilians discovered one of these phones there would be lines of Brazilians there to call for free. It was at one of these places that I saw a young man asking his mother for the US\$300 and responding, "Yes, mom, of course I have pajamas to sleep in."

In the statement above, from a Rio de Janeiro scholar who was a visiting professor in France at this time, the Maison du Brésil is seen more as a space for activists than as a residence for researchers. The very possibility of living on US\$ 300 dollars reflected the separate world in which the Maison du Brésil was found. To live there meant having the support needed to stay in Paris, with or without working as a researcher. Some people lived there secretly, in rooms registered in the name of travelers or researchers used as a cover.

In the 1970s, the relationship between the administration of the Maison and the Brazilian government was more difficult than in other periods. The Maison suffered from a lack of maintenance, culminating in the successive deterioration of the rooms and furniture. In the 1990s, the situation became chaotic, leading to the closing of the theater room by the *Préfecture de Police* of Paris in 1994 and the closing of various other rooms and the entire 5th floor. There were also leaks and floods on the ground floor and basement, in addition to a lack of heating in some spaces. From 1993 – 1995 the director's position was not filled, because the room for the post was not habitable. The ceiling on the ground floor collapsed in June 1996 on the eve of an official visit from President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to Paris.

After a three-year vacancy in the director's post, and 30 years of French management, in 1996 the direction was occupied by a Brazilian architect who took over the Maison du Brésil with the difficult mission of seeking better ties with the Brazilian government to achieve the funds needed for its restoration. Her performance in this job led to closing the Maison from 1997- 2000 for repairs, and modification in its by-laws to allow it to return to autonomy.

This occurred after the Brazilian Ministry of Education agreed to invest millions of dollars for the reconstruction of the Maison du Brésil, as long as the by-laws for the

Board of Directors would be changed. The Brazilian Ministry of Education, through the Foreign Ministry, was formally opposed to the *Fondation Franco-Brésilienne's* proposal for restoration as presented to the Board of Directors of the Maison, which conditioned the restoration on modifications of the donation and annexed the Maison to the *Fondation Nationale*, which would imply a definitive loss of the Maison's national character. With the acceptance by the Cité Universitaire of the conditions presented above, the Maison du Brésil was closed for reconstruction. It was reopened in 2000 and re-inaugurated in 2002.

Its history over the last 10 years has been characterized by a management model aimed at their rehabilitation and financial viability based on priority host fellows from the Brazilian government, since CAPES and CNPq financed much of its reconstruction. Also characterized by its planning and consolidation as a public visitation (museum with guided tours), leading to impact the lives of its residents. In July 2009, the Maison du Brésil celebrated 50 years of opening with a big party and producing a video. In 2010 he was the target of a transformative work in public law foundation (along with a few other houses CIUP), whose implementation has yet to be chancelada by the Brazilian government. This administration was responsible for its reform, its profile of Franco-Brazilian cultural heritage and management model of defense Brazilian national character of the house and its preservation. In December 2012 the director left office being occupied temporarily pending the government's definition about.

Images of the Nation

The relations established between Brazil and France concerning the Maison du Brésil reflect that the image of the nation and its conflicts run through the history of the residency hall and the Cité Internationale Universitaire where it is located. The nation, for Weber (1971: 208) corresponds to a community with a sentiment in solidarity, in which the connecting link is collectively shared. "Le principe des nations est le notre", as Renan maintained (1997: 15). For Thiesse "the pedagogy of the sense of belonging involves the repeated use of first person plural possessives – "our country," "our homeland," which constantly recall that identity is collective" (Thiesse, 2000: 236). Thus, invoking the national is related to the affection shared and exalted by individuals from the same group who produce and evoke this feeling based on certain carefully

selected elements that characterize and identify a nation, a type of check list according to Löfgren:

Every nation should have not only a common language, a common past and identity, but also a national folk culture, a national character or mentality, national values, perhaps even national tastes and a national landscape (often enshrined in the form of national parks), a gallery of national myths and heroes (and villains), a set of symbols including flag and anthem, sacred texts and images, etc. This national inventory was produced mainly during the nineteenth century, but developed during the twentieth (Löfgren, 1989: 9).

The historic and ethnographic “novelty” of this emotional relationship to the nation, to preserved heritage and to carefully prepared images of this Brazilian affection, as well as the repercussion of the conditions of the Maison du Brésil in France and in Brazil is that the scenery of its occurrence is outside the space of Brazilian territory. The experiences of Brazilians occur in French territory, in relation and interlocution with the French nation.

The Maison du Brésil is a space that is simultaneously public (since it is recognized as part of the French architectural heritage and is open for visits, like a museum) and private (composed of the daily web of temporary housing woven by the graduate students), which has been experienced as a set of identities that can be described as national identities as well as deterritorialized regional Brazilian identities.

For Abelés, the question of deterritorialization is related to the international circulation of people, ideas, meanings and goods and can be understood in a broad theoretical and methodological spectrum that can be analyzed considering the complex issues concerning the life of the immigrant as well as the temporal shifts created by tourism: “la manière dont les groupes, dont on dit parfois un peut vite qu’ils sont “déterritorisés”, pensent et pratiquent leur doublé rapport à leur territoire d’origine et avec les pays où ils se trouvent disséminés. (Abelés 2008: 203).

The international circulation of the students observed at the Cité U. is located in a middle ground corresponding to the search for an international cosmopolitan education financed by nation states or by family funds, and, more rarely, personal ones. From a perspective of the housing space for researchers, the dual cultural insertion is expressed through processes of composition of territorial and identity appropriation that relate to the national in their articulations, as highlighted by the organizers of the book *Circulação internacional e formação intelectual das elites brasileiras*:

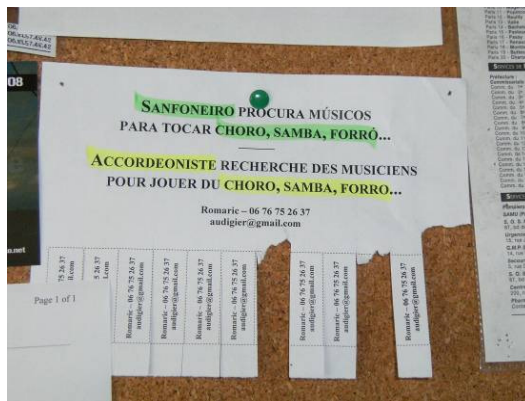
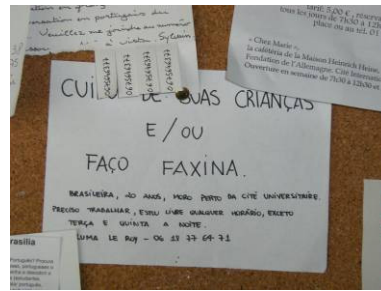
The international world is constituted from resources and themes of thoughts forged in national spaces, that is, the construction of an international space for social relations is,

to a large degree, tributary to resources produced nationally, which, in turn are transformed by the influence of the transnational. (Almeida, Bittencourt, Canedo and Garcia 2004: 11).

To be Brazilian in France and to invoke the Brazilian nation is a constant at the Maison du Brésil where Portuguese is spoken and French is Brazilianized, where parties have lots of Brazilian music, drink and food and in which the notices on the bulletin boards reveal a search for Brazilian products and services in Paris, in a constant appeal to the local (Brazilian) combined with living an educational experience in Paris. The logic and composition of the experience of deterritorialized national and regional identities can be considered from the perspective Hannerz used to consider the tension between the cosmopolitan and the local in the context of globalization:

Historically, we are accustomed to considering cultures in terms of distinct structure in meaning and in significant form, usually intimately linked to territories and individuals who feel linked to these specific cultures. The subjacent supposition, in this case, is that the cultural circulates principally in a face to face relationship, and that people do not move often. This supposition is quite useful to delineate the local as an ideal type. (Hannerz 1990: 253).

Hannerz, upon criticizing the view of territorial enrootedness, demonstrates the difficulty of perception of cultural circulation and of the characteristics of cosmopolitanism. The case of the experience of the deterritorialized identities perceived by invoking the local as expressed by the images below, taken from the bulletin board at the Maison du Brésil is interpreted as a strategy of composition for living an international experience. These strategies can involve (as in the images below) articulation between student activities and the offer of temporary labor by graduate students and or their companions, or those seeking their work as that by a French-Brazilian family. It is interesting to note that the strategies sought for living an international experience also involve a question of production of Brazilian art (forged through “regional rhythms”, such as the forró, samba and choro music mentioned) to be consumed in France, as demonstrated by the note from an accordionist who was looking for musicians to “play.”



Photos: Ceres Karam Brum. Paris, March 2008.

In this reconfiguration of space in the experience of Brazilianness to which is added regional nuances, the Maison du Brésil as a place of temporary residence comes to constitute a limit territory of cultural production, “a place of possible forms of relations with space, in which individuals and groups are transformed, based on the establishment of social relations; a collectively appropriated place delimited by a recognized border and naturalized by a history and by collective memory.” (Bergues and Alphanéry: 2004, 8). These symbolizations occur in forms as varied as the placement of furniture in the rooms, in the organization of collective kitchens on each of the five floors of the house, in the use of images of relatives and friends in Brazil, to playful references to the Maison du Brésil as the “favelão de Paris” [large Brazilian slum of Paris] and the very significance of the spatial relation of the Maison at the Cité Universitaire.

In 2004, Clarisse, from Belo Horizonte, who was preparing for a doctoral degree in Letters, called my attention to the location of the Maison du Brésil between the Maison du Portugal and the Maison de l’Inde, and this coincidental historic causality with the position of these residences at the Cité U.. Clarisse spoke as if this spatial and conceptual placement had an intentionality of relationship tied to the very history of colonization. But, despite any intention and or coincidence indicated by Clarisse, it is

important to note that the Maison du Brésil was built before the residences for Portugal and India, both of which were inaugurated in 1968 (LEMOINE: 1990).

The significance (apparently improbable) mentioned by Clarisse has deeper roots. It alludes to an analogy between the histories of Brazil in relation to European colonization, the history of the Maison du Brésil in terms of a spatial project at the Cité U., of the trajectories of Brazilians in Paris and of their situation often on the threshold of being researchers, immigrants and tourists.⁴ It also demonstrates the perception of three situations signified as peripheral: as a national historical vision, as a spatial one and of oneself in the French world.

The temporary insertion provided by the research trips to Paris, added to the difficulties with language or even the need to divide graduate deadlines and responsibilities with odd jobs, are expressed in melancholic representations of the difficulty of integration with the French world. We found representation of a certain “cultural resistance” to certain more private aspects with the expression of manifestations of Brazilianess, as evident in the statement by Carlos, an economist from Pernambuco, who lived at the Maison du Brésil in 2003-2004:

- Life in the Cité for Brazilians expresses a contradiction simultaneous to the experience of a multicultural context of coexistence with other students, signifying an opening to difference. What I noted was also a factor that marked the life of those who lived there, which is the search for protection through coexistence with Brazilians, against the isolation and to face the difficulty of integration with another cultural environment, a type of compensation for a lack of Brazil. I think that the resistance to speak French in the Maison among Brazilians expresses this somewhat!

Feldman-Bianco (1997: 71) upon analyzing the question of the cultural confrontations in the scenery of Portuguese immigration in the United States, highlights linguistic usage in the processes of (re)construction of feminine identity effectuated by the Portuguese cultural intermediaries. The author focuses the representations by the women of the gender relations among Portuguese immigrants, highlighting the identity negotiation of the intermediaries (which is ably expressed both in English as well as Portuguese), recreating imaginaries related to the past, in specific territories.

Beyond the linguistic difficulties found by Brazilians at the Maison du Brésil, I believe that the option to express themselves in Portuguese refers to the complex production of a scenario and appropriation of a Brazilian territory in Paris that relates to the search for comfort and solidarity to overcome the loneliness, in order to integrate (at

⁴ This was the case with Clarisse, who after concluding her DEA conducted temporary work such as caring for children and as a counselor, to complement her income and finance part of her doctoral studies.

least with Brazilians) in private relations that allow circulating and communicating cosmopolitanism and localism, in the multicultural French context.

Löfgren (1999), upon studying the metaphysical meaning of crossing national borders at locations for entering and leaving, refers to a multifaceted pedagogy of space that is expressed in relations of anxiety and discomfort in face of the unknown: “Another common metaphor is the nation as a home and the immigrant as a visitor knocking at the door or the window, standing at the threshold or in the back yard” (Löfgren 1999: 12). The metaphor of the home as a nation is materialized and becomes complex in the scenario of the Cite U., because the Maison is signified as a territory of shelter, of integration.

In the metaphor of the nation as a home, as Löfgren affirms: “there is an ethnification of national identity involved” (1999: 13) which is expressed in different signified form in the visibilization of the national in their ritual and daily experiences, in the production of regional and national stereotypes, in the images of Brazil, presented at the Maison du Brésil. The difference of a return to home of the image produced by Löfgren, is in the inverse signification, but is also related to living at the Maison. On one hand, the dormitory is experienced as a nation, but this takes place upon leaving Brazil for France, which makes the issue of protection even more significant. It expresses the search for a “safe port” that relates to a welcoming Brazilian space in France, which I perceived as being affirmed through what are basically caricatures of what is Brazil.

This explains the very emphasis given to the preservation and care of the Maison du Brésil, in the perception of the Brazilian and French agents and researchers that relates to the zeal for a territory that is perceived as a cultural good. In keeping with Anderson’s analysis (1996: 145) of the issue of patriotism and racism, the Maison du Brésil and the other residences that compose the Cité Universitaire can be considered as cultural products of nationalism.

At the Maison du Brésil in Paris, it is Brazil itself that is being shown, whether degraded or cared for, prosperous or in decay, clandestine or official. It is the image of the Brazilian nation abroad, conceived as an intercultural project that shelters and dialogues with its administration. The multiple meanings of a degraded residence clash with the glamour of the nationalist projects and their objectives, touching Brazil, France and the intercultural project of the Cité Universitaire, which must be focused on to better understand the supposed ethnicization that occurs at the Maison du Brésil.

Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris

The CIUP created in 1921 (Anuaire 2004: 20) communicates with the dual effort to celebrate the national while “opening to the outside,” in the period between the wars. This period, according to Hobsbawm (1995:21), in addition to being one of crisis in the European democracies, had a strong socialist influence. From the point of view of the arts and education: “whatever was the local baggage of modernism, between the wars, it became the emblem of those who wanted to prove that they were cultured and up-to-date” (Hobsbawm 1995:183). It was in this context that the CIUP was created in France and the Colégios Maiores da Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Concerning educational relations with Brazil, in 1960 the Colégio Casa do Brasil was created and inaugurated two years later, in a context similar to the creation of the Maison du Brésil.⁵

A preliminary reading of the CIUP. reveals that it is part of a modernist and internationalist project as Hobsbawm mentioned, which in some way was linked to the celebration of the national. Examples of this policy, in relation to Europe and France, since the 19th century, were the International Expositions. According to Thiesse (2000: 196-198) the grandiosity of these “identity exhibitions” have civilizing and territorial objectives, doted with a pedagogy of belonging, by exhibiting miniatures of the nations in their diversity, to be revered. Equally grandiose, the CIUP has a civilizing and pedagogic dimension of the permanent learning of the French nation open to abroad, which desires to offer qualified education and to integrate researchers to Paris and to its scientific world, through the proposal of the CIUP.

This can be perceived in the architecture of the houses, in the collective spaces, in the norms, cultural activities, etc., through which the CIUP’s international project (like the international exhibitions of the time) is in dialog with the nations and regions that have Maisons, as well as with its unique organization and relative autonomy. This

⁵ “Our School is one of the four inscribed to the [Universidad Complutense](http://www.universidad-complutense.es/), whose purpose is the promotion of the language, culture and civilization of other countries. The others are: the Colégio Maior Colombiano Antonio Caro, now a university foundation; the Colégio Maior Nossa. Sra. de África and the Colégio Maior Argentino Nossa. Sra. de Luján. The Colégio Casa do Brasil is also one of the oldest, because construction began there in 1960 with the signing of the Brazil-Spain Cultural Agreement, which remains in force until today, and at the same time when the Brazilian capital, then in Rio de Janeiro, was transferred to Brasília”. Source <http://www.casado brasil.org/Historia-br.html> consulted on July 21, 2009.

A more detailed analysis of the two Casas do Brasil (both in operation) and of the extinct Casa do Brasil in London, was undertaken by a research project mentioned in foot note 1.

historic project has its own dynamic and peculiarities related to each one of the Maisons and to the Cité U., which was regularly revised over time.

An analysis of the context of the creation of the CIUP. and its current meaning goes beyond the limits of this article, but it is possible to understand some of the consequences of this internationalist policy today through an analysis of the statements on its site:

Cité Universitaire

Située entre la Porte d'Orléans et la Porte de Gentilly, et à trois stations de métro seulement du Quartier Latin, la Cité Universitaire propose de nombreux avantages à ses résidents.

Tout d'abord, c'est un parc de 40 hectares, où les bosquets et les pelouses partagent l'espace avec 37 résidences de taille et styles architecturaux différents qui accueillent chaque année 5500 étudiants de toutes les nationalités. Au centre du parc, la Maison Internationale rassemble plusieurs services communs: une bibliothèque de plus de 30.000 titres ; 3 salles de spectacles où se développe une intense activité de création théâtrale, musicale et chorégraphique ; des équipements sportifs (tennis, piscine, gymnase) ; un restaurant universitaire et une cafétéria ; une agence bancaire et un vaste hall d'accueil. A toutes ces commodités s'ajoutent encore un stade et une bureau de poste. La Cité Universitaire représente un agréable village intégré au tissu urbain de la métropole parisienne.

Ensuite, les habitants de ce vaste ensemble, issus de multiples origines nationales et scientifiques, sont des étudiants en fin de formation, des professeurs et des chercheurs qui sont à Paris dans le cadre d'un programme universitaire ou d'un stage auprès d'un établissement d'enseignement supérieur ou de recherche de la Région parisienne. Leur séjour peut aller de quelques semaines à trois ans maximum. Parmi eux, les Français ne sont que 30%, et chaque année plus de 100 nationalités sont ici représentées, justifiant pleinement le nom de " Cité Internationale ". Cependant, l'originalité de la Cité est plus profonde et subtile. Elle se trouve dans la création d'une véritable communauté dont les mots-clé sont : tolérance, compréhension, échange et respect de l'individualité. La présence des différentes maisons nationales n'implique pas la formation de ghettos nationaux puisque, par le moyen d'un programme de " brassage ", chaque maison accueille des résidents de plusieurs origines, réunissant ainsi les conditions essentielles à la multiplicité des contacts entre les habitants.

Toujours fidèle à l'esprit d'ouverture initié par ses créateurs, la Cité entretient une vie en collectivité qui favorise les échanges entre plusieurs cultures, entre les futurs décideurs de plus de cent pays qui se croisent ici tous les jours. Les étudiants ont toujours la possibilité d'établir avec des chercheurs et des professeurs des contacts moins formels que le rapport professeur/élève. Les différentes activités culturelles et sportives qui se déroulent à la Maison Internationale comme dans chaque résidence favorisent ce type de rencontre.

Ouverte au monde extérieur, la Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris est, en résumé, un lieu de communication entre les différentes cultures, au service de la coopération intellectuelle et culturelle internationale.

The current proposal for the *Cité Universitaire* of Paris seeks to encourage the international circulation of students and researchers through their residency at the Cité U. The offer of a housing structure "integrated"⁶ to the city of Paris communicates with the production of knowledge in a wide variety of fields. The structure and conditions offered relate to education in a broad perspective, which presents the integration between nations, in a collective setting, as support for the individual development of each resident.

⁶ It is worth recalling the changes in and expansion of the Parisian university system during the 20th century. The Parisian universities were initially concentrated in the Quartier Latin. In the 1960s and 1970s there was an expansion to other campuses such as Jussieu, Nanterre and Vincennes/Saint Denis, and in the last decade they have been moved to the peripheries.

As a collective project, the opportunity for integration through the co-existence of students from various nations and regions is created by the 23 residences that compose the Cité U, with global diversity materialized in the collective spaces shared by the residents, such as the Maison Internationale, for example. In this space, the language used to attend the public is French, as are the norms of courtesy and behavior standards.⁷

One of the characteristics of the CIUP as a territory of international circulation is the emphasis on the French nation in its public spatial dimension combined with its opening to the (compatible) ways of the foreign other in the respective Maisons. This composition of public-private dialog that occurs at the level of CIUP, is also visible within the spaces of each one of the residences in a number of dimensions, in which the occurrence of the international circulation is always measured by the weight of the national, expressed in social relations and networks, interfaces and circularities.

Nevertheless, at the CIUP this promotion of French nationalism as a prescribed behavioral standard has some limits, such as the concern expressed for avoiding French domination and the formation of ghettos in different residences. At the Cité U, this nationalism is restricted in order to achieve integration. This effort occurs through “brassage” (action de remuer, brasser pour mélanger) which corresponds to the occupation of up to 30% of each one of the national residences by students from nationalities different than that of the Maison. But each house has a certain leeway to do so.⁸ At the Maison du Brésil, Brazilians who are sent to other residences at the Cité U. are those younger than 30 and this is usually the age of the foreign researchers received.⁹

It is through this brassage, which literally seeks to mix, that the international circulation is achieved among the foreign residents within the limits of the Cité U. This

⁷ In these cases, to say *bon jour* and *merci* at the beginning of a conversation is required and represents the difference between a good and bad desire to understand French among researchers to the employees of the Post Office or the library located in the collective spaces. In the residences, there is greater flexibility in relation to French and national languages are widely used, but the *rappels* (notices) are always bi-lingual.

⁸ This percentage corresponds to the interpretation of the data cited by the residents at the time of the interview for admission with the director of the Maison du Brésil. It is also indicated on the site of the Cité U. In relation to the presence of this same percentage of occupation by French people in the residences.

⁹ Upon analyzing the legislation for the CIUP, I did not find any reference to this age preference that I mention here as a practice observed at the Maison du Brésil in 2003-2004, in relation to Lucy; Marcos Sandrine, Cássia. Brazilians who live in the houses of India, Norway, Sweden, Italy and Lebanon and Krishina and Philip who live in the Maison du Brésil. Another fact in this sense was my informal request to the administration to conduct the brassage, which was refused with the argument that there were no available spaces. At the time I was 35 years old.

phenomenon is important to understanding the education that occurs in France, principally because it allows seeing the affinities and construction of networks that interfere and interact in individual trajectories in the life of residents:

- I met Lucy the night that I arrived at the Maison du Brésil, but we did not speak because I had to go right up to my room to rest from the long trip and the time difference that left me dizzy. The following Friday we met in the kitchen when Krishina, Amina and Lucy arrived to cook and invited me to dinner. Despite the misunderstandings caused by the French of the Indians and our broken English we were able to have a lot of fun. On Saturday, Lucy came with me to get my Carte Orange (a monthly access card to the city mass transit) and we explored Paris. At night we went to dinner at the Maison de l'Inde, where Lucy lived and where I was introduced to some people. I remember two of them, Lucien, a Frenchman who circulated a lot at the Cité U. and Suradj (who Lucy married the following year). It was October and *nuît blanche* (when a number of museums were open at night for free, among other attractions) and we decided to go to the Louvre. That first weekend in Paris was unforgettable for me. I was beginning to meet people, to go out and explore the city, the next week I would be better prepared to meet my advisor (Diário de Campo).

Despite the criticism that many Brazilian students were chosen for the brassage with foreigners without being given a choice, I realized its importance in all of our lives and of its practical intercultural dimension at the Cité U. The presence of “foreigners” in the common spaces of the Maison du Brésil obliged us (at least those with greater fluency) to speak French. Nevertheless, this international circulation - understood here in a somewhat distorted way and that was expressed in the co-existence of foreign researchers of various nationalities on French territory - raises misunderstandings and contradictions that clash with the native discourse, interpreted here as “multicultural” as presented on the Cité U. website.

An example of these misunderstandings was the situation of an Indian resident at the Maison du Brésil who was called to the administration to explain why he was using the bedspread to sleep instead of the sheets that were exchanged still untouched in his room every two weeks. His explanation was that in his region, white sheets are used to wrap the dead and it was bad luck to use them.¹⁰

Recalling this event illustrates the difficulty that coexistence with difference raises for a wide variety of actors who share life at CIUP. No one is to blame for this situation, but the lack of knowledge of a “detail” that has meaning from a cultural perspective, becomes essential. I understand this coexistence and its difficulties as an educational experience of broad scope, a civilizing process that involves the learning of the language, new customs and rules of etiquette. The brassage can be more or less

¹⁰ The information reported above took place in 2004. It was presented to me by a Brazilian resident very close to the Indian resident, Sérgio de Fortaleza, when we spoke and he complained about the lack of privacy in the Maison, the rigid norms and the difficulty in accepting cultural differences.

traumatic, depending on the ability of the resident to enter the interior of the “nation house” or to position oneself in the doorway or backyard, as in the analogy presented above (Löfgren 1999: 12).

I think that the difficulties of collective or individual learning of the national ethos correspond to perspectives of insertion in these situations of cultural “exchange” in which having linguistic competence becomes essential, but not the only guarantor of this learning. To live in a bilingual residence can be seen as facilitating or complicating this insertion, depending on the conditions of opening to difference, time of stay and objectives established by the researcher in these terms.

Arabela Oliven, upon comparing U.S. and Brazilian colleges, in order to analyze the university systems in both countries, referred to the fraternities and sororities as national organizations that congregate closed groups of students who reside in houses located within or at the periphery of the campuses (Oliven, 2005: 115) and that function as social filters. Internally, for the students, to belong to these organizations signifies a mark of distinction. From the perspective of their non-members, the organizations correspond to an exclusionary universe with a certain permissiveness that often clashes with the norms of the colleges themselves.

Recognizing the peculiarities of each, Oliven’s analysis has relevance to the Maison du Brésil, since it encompasses a reflection about the significations that collective living raises in relation to the private residences, even if these are shared.¹¹ In the student residences, even for graduate researchers, there is a clear intentionality to establish rules and promote a collective experience that finds a limit at the private life of the residents, represented and signified by the closed doors to their rooms.

In a residence with a national character such as the Maison du Brésil, the promotion of collectivism takes place through references to Brazil in leisure activities related to Brazilian culture even in its regional variations. The promotion and or support of the direction of the Maison du Brésil for parties, film festivals and debates about Brazil are part of this effort: the Choro Club, Domingo de Sol, June Festivals, Carnaval, Christmas and New Year, as well as the realization of art exhibitions in the hall that seek to display Brazilian diversity.

¹¹ There are a set of very clear differences, not only in terms of the costs involved in living in a studio in Paris and living at the Maison du Brésil (which is much cheaper). According to Luisa, from Campinas, who in her first months in Paris rented a studio at prices that varied considerably, in addition to feeling quite alone. “The decision to live at the Maison was the best solution for me, because I adjusted my budget and felt more integrated, I made new friends.”

But the issue of reception of the Brazilian national character collectively invoked in this scenario is also realized in the daily activities as in the management of the residence and its repercussions on the relationships established between the employees of the Maison administration and the residents.

“Please, don’t ask me to break the rules”

- Each person who arrived to live at the Maison was scheduled for an appointment with the director (individually or in groups). The conversation basically consisted in the presentation of the principal rules of the Maison, which were: “please don’t ask me to break the rules.” The warning is based on the assumption that Brazilians don’t follow rules, are averse to discipline, and are always looking for a way to get around them.

This statement by Carlos, an economist from Recife who lived at the Maison du Brésil in 2003 and 2004, relates to a very formal and ritualized moment experienced by all the residents in their first days at the Maison. I also remember the first rendez-vous that I had in French with the director, along with two other people (Philip, a Swiss man who studied Political Science and Alejandro, an economist). I also perceived a very special emphasis on the issue of compliance with norms and a subtle attack in search of a personal and differentiated approach.

As a Brazilian, accustomed to the “jeitinho” or efforts to get around the rules, I understand the message that the norms were clear and just needed to be complied with to guarantee a good stay at the house, but my two companions in the meeting appeared (by their facial expression) to not understand the director’s emphasis. After the meeting, Philip, who, like me, lived on the fifth floor, asked me to explain and I realized the profound difference in interpretation, in the reception of the director’s talk by each one of us. It was not an issue of linguistic translation, but of signification of the interpretation of the norms through the *ethos brasiliis*, which does not make sense to non-Brazilian residents of the Maison du Brésil. The administrator was clearly indicating that the personal relationships (so important to Brazilians, who may consider them even more important because they are living in Paris) would not be considered at the Maison du Brésil. This has implications that I realized in daily life there.

I tried to explain to Philip that in certain situations in Brazil, some people seek differentiated treatment outside the norms for general behavior, alleging their distinct personal character. It was the famous “jeitinho” of interacting. But, I emphasized that

these people did not understand this as a request to disobey the norm, but as more of a favorable accommodation to a situation.

This is significant because despite the “please do not ask me to break the rules,” and the scope and consequences of this statement, a tension permeates relations at the *Maison du Brésil* that I interpret as a cultural misunderstanding of the current administration by various individuals. This misunderstanding is expressed in the complaints, by the administration, of non-compliance of previously established norms such as care for collective spaces and their equipment and the prohibition against electric irons in the rooms, for example. The residents complain bitterly about the intervention of the employees in their private lives, who go through their garbage and make commentaries, and principally of the lack of subjectivity, the lack of affection, flexibility and courtesy when they are required to leave their rooms, many hours before their flights, that their presence does not mean anything to the administration of the house, which is only interested in numbers.

Various flights from Paris to Brazil are at night. The daily stays at the Maison du Brésil end at noon and the key-cards used to enter the rooms are programmed to stop working at this time. There is a room next to the entrance where residents can leave their luggage until they leave the Maison. This is agreed to at check-in with the resident. A deposit payment corresponding to a monthly rent is made upon check-in, which is returned after the final inspection after the apartment is vacated. Nevertheless, complaints are common and are based on the lack of care of the administration with their departure (that it just wants to get rid of them) or of punishment for misunderstandings that took place during their stay.

What happens at times, is the simple forgetting of conditions agreed to many months earlier and the administration is seen as the villain and is constantly questioned about: why did my card stop working or why “was I driven from ‘my’ room like a nobody, after one year in the house”.

DaMatta, Pandolfi and Vasconcellos (2008: 3), in a case study about transit in Espirito Santo, highlight the controversial and structural relationship between equality and hierarchy, given that, although public space is ordered in an egalitarian form and norms are general, behavior in the appropriation of this space is hierarchic. Relations are also processed in this sense when they involve a search for personalization and differentiated treatment at the *Maison du Brésil*. It is worth remembering that the dual relationship between the House and the Street proposed by DaMatta (1985: 30), which

opposes public and private values, are made complex here, because at the Maison du Brésil these two worlds (up to a point signified as opposites in the Brazilian imagination) present quite tenuous borders.

From a room to a home

At the Maison, the rooms correspond to the private world. They are individual ¹² and 16m² in size. Most have a bathroom with a shower and a sink - which was described by Paulo, from Belém do Pará, as a “sanitary capsule” because of its rounded form – placed in an elevated portion of the room and closed by a metal door with a magnet. The entrance wall that accompanies the door, and the roof are colored (black, red, green or blue). The other walls are white and the windows are white. The front rooms have a *balcon* (balcony), and those in back a glass window with a view of the park of the Cité U.. All have *chauffage* (heating) which Brazilians from the south think is too hot, while those from the North and Northeast think “doesn’t heat.” In addition to a bed with storage space and a small bed stand, there is a closet with shelves for books and clothes that serves to divide the space and to which is attached a small refrigerator and a box for clothes, also used to wash clothes for those who prefer not to use the laundry. There is also a small table with space for a computer keyboard, two chairs, a light, telephone, internet connection and a metal bulletin board hung on the side wall that is soon decorated by residents. For Elias:

The bedroom became one of the most “private” and “intimate” areas of human life. Like most of the other bodily functions, sleep was being transferred to the depth of social life. The nuclear family continues to be the only legitimate enclave, socially sanctioned for this and many other human functions. Its visible and invisible walls hide the most “private” and “intimate” aspects. (Elias 1994: 164).

Although a bedroom is a private space par excellence, at the Maison du Brésil, it acquires meanings that exacerbate its common functions, because it is more than a place for sleeping. It is also an office, dining room and living room for receiving friends when more privacy is desired or when groups are small. It is possible to have 4 – 5 people relatively comfortably when the bed space is used (as a sofa) and chairs are available. The study table becomes a small buffet for cheeses, breads and wine is served in cups or glasses found in the collective kitchens.

¹² There are also larger rooms with two spaces, and a separate kitchen that are reserved for couples with or without children. The maximum age permitted for children is 12 and no animals of any kind are allowed.

During the stay, the private space occupied by each resident undergoes a broad process of personalization. Cups and utensils are acquired, decorations, clotheslines, placemats, incense, flowers, coffee makers and electric bottles to heat water (although they are prohibited), televisions, and even microwaves in some cases. The space of the side shelves, at first empty, come to be occupied by a significant number of books and other acquired objects.

With the passage of months during the internship in Paris, a broad transformation in the life of the researchers is realized. The adaptation to the new international scenarios of graduate study dialog with the changes occurring in the private universe. With the initial payments from the study grants from CAPES or CNPq, in most cases a few leisure or study trips are taken individually or in groups. Their planning and organization allow for circulation, also internationally, of plural information that occurs during the visits and encounters among the residents in their rooms. Information is exchanged about the prices of utensils, tips on libraries, good prices for the ballet, opera,¹³ musicals and museums that are worth visiting, accessible hotels and travel agencies, plans for good-bye and welcoming parties, etc.

Living these moments means entering each person's private world, communicating current experiences in Paris, the path taken, the difficulties, conquests and future plans expressed in their life stories. Social ties are established, inaugurating proximities, ties and alliances that often endure beyond the periods of common residence:

- My new neighbor seems very pleasant. One day we began to talk in the kitchen while we prepared our lunch and she invited me for tea in her room. I love dogs and was enchanted by a sweet Labrador on her wall named Patife. There was another dog, a cat, her entire family, photos of her house in Brazil and of her husband Nilson. Together with the photos of a postcard of a Klimt painting that she recently

¹³ *Faire la queue*, which literally means staying in line, is a common expression at the Maison du Brésil. Those residents who love opera and ballet make plans the day before and set a time to leave. At about 6 AM they take the train to the theaters and wait for the distribution of numbers and at about 10 AM go back and get on line, in the place designated by the number they were given hours before, in order to purchase low-price tickets. The organization of the line is informal and it is the first person who arrives who produces and gives out the numbers. Since the opera and ballet seasons are only in winter and the lines are outside the theater, the cold is unbearable, and it is too early for the cafes to be open. In January 2004, I experienced the *faire la queue* with some friends from the Maison. It was about to snow and in addition to me, who as one from southern Brazil is used to the cold and Cristiano, also a Gaúcho, there was a colleague from Bahia, Clésia and one from Pernambuco, José. The comments about our resistance to the cold were inevitably accompanied by an exchange of jokes about Gauchos and Nordestinos. Cristiano alleged our historic differences in relation to the rest of Brazil which, added to the climate and our proximity to Argentina and Uruguay, distanced us from Northeastern Brazil. I believe that the invoking of regional identities in shared daily situations, beyond the search for heightening the north-south difference, and disputes and animosities stemming from the pretense of a region-nation opposition, is related to the issue of regional diversity, which filters, perceives and reorganizes the national in a plural manner at the *Maison du Brésil*.

purchased on a visit to the Guggenheim Museum in Venice. Upon showing me and explaining each of the photos I was transported to her world. We spoke for hours that afternoon about our lives and our doctoral research in Anthropology. We became interlocutors, exchanged articles and discussed them. Then we met at ABAs and RAMs. Our lives that crossed in those months took new routes in Brazil, after our doctoral defenses, but the shared experience was enriching for our intellectual and personal trajectories. (Field Diary).

The diversity of encounters and the coexistence among researchers at the Maison du Brésil are learning experiences in which various forms of “symbolic” relationships are sealed: “the word relationship when used of a social relationship implies a basic contradiction between its own normative aspect – the ideal that we ascribe to that category of person – and the actual entity that constitutes that person at the time.” (Miller 2007: 548-550).

In this constitutive perspective of subjects, the networks built during the period of stay at the Maison are configured in a shared emotional support (through kinship), generating a notion of family that is processed in various forms, such as the temporary deeply rooted ties and fleeting romantic involvements that help to “endure” the distance from family and friends, as Miller mentions (2007: 548) upon indicating the meaning of the term relationship as a euphemism for sex, in one of the colloquial uses observed by the author in current day London.

The establishment of emotional ties involves issues as diverse as the intellectual affinities to regional issues of sharing of certain habits, for example. I realized an initial trend of approximation of people from the same regions and states, principally from the same universities, but in contrast I found affirmations of the requirement of common coexistence and of nearly forced acceptance: “- we did not choose to live together, but since we are here” (as Paulo from Santa Catarina confided in me at a party when commenting on his living experience at the Maison).

His affirmation relates to the plural relationships that the residents establish with the Maison and the meanings that this acquires in the narration of their trajectories at the time of their stay at the Maison du Brésil (during the study period abroad) and after its conclusion. The metaphor of the kaleidoscope (Lévi-Strauss 1996), serves to consider the situation of an unprecedented combination of elements and of people that occur at the Maison du Brésil, in the sense that - the individual choice of coexistence is to a point random - the choice was already made. The unprecedented combinations of these elements is also signified, as in the statement above, in the lack of autonomy and a necessary submission to the rules of the Maison, which generate a certain anguish, also

perceived in the allegations of the lack of privacy that lead many people to leave the dorm as soon as they feel more secure in relation to the language of the city.

Moods oscillates strongly. There is euphoria at the parties with lots of music and relaxation, but at times a feeling of loneliness and discomfort in the daily life that can also be linked to a sense of temporality of the experience lived in France, the hours writing theses and the equally transitory relationship with the other residents of the dorm, and a time of life that will not return. The parties extrapolate the difficulty of this coexistence, in terms of the relationships of attachment and detachment observed.

The uses and abuses of nation and region

In addition to the organization of events and parties that occur with the support of the administration of the Maison du Brésil, there are also “not so official” encounters in the collective kitchens and cafeteria. The realization of goodbye parties, feijoadas [traditional Brazilian bean and pork stews] and some churrascos [Brazilian barbeque], organized by Gauchos on the weekends, are part of this perspective, in which efforts are made to reproduce the characteristics of a Brazilian feijoada or Gaucho churrasco:

- Our desire for authenticity (in the search for Brazilian flavor) has as its practical limits the acquisition of the ingredients. In Paris, we rarely found manioc flour, much less couve. We made farofa from couscous and broccoli leaves for couve mineira. The beans were a product of transnational circulation since they were brought from Brazil by family members or friends who came to visit, but we also tried to cook (with some success) the red beans used for salad in France, in our feijoadas, which we baptized *Feijoada Métisse*.

For the churrasco we purchased meat at a Chinese market close to the Maison. Nothing like our succulent Gaucho cuts. The meat was cooked on a grill outside the cafeteria like the *assados de tira* eaten in Uruguay and Argentina. It was a January day so cold that we also left our beers outside, close to the improvised churrasqueira. (Diário de Campo).

Feijoadas and churrascos were special occasions that brought together 20 – 30 people and at which, although we debated our intention to produce stereotypes, and we tried to deny them, we celebrated Brazil and Rio Grande do Sul. As indicated in the analyses of Fry (1977) and Maciel (1996) these food rituals have clear identity dimensions. At the Maison du Brésil they relate to the maxim that we probably never felt so Brazilian as during those months in Paris. The reciprocal seems to be true for regional ties, in relation to Rio Grande do Sul. A group of Gauchos, satirically representing their participation in the expansion of Gauchism through the world, in

2003 created the CTG Coxilha do Eliseu at the Maison du Brésil.¹⁴ As Cristiano explained:

- The CTG Coxilha do Eliseu began with the fact that we had chimarrão every Saturday afternoon, a habit that I came to share with you and from there it grew, in particular our friendship. But our sports rivalries remained. I always took a chance to make fun of the Colorado monkeys and vice versa...as we typically do, which one doesn't find among Cariocas, Paulistas and other residents of the country with as much intensity as ours.¹⁵

One of the activities of the CTG was to perfect the typical Gacho meal most viable in Paris, rice with sausages or arroz de china,¹⁶ roughly translated as “riz au saussice de mouton or riz à la putaine pauvre.”

Thiesse (1997: 114), upon discussing the issue of the exaltation of the regional, in a context of affirmation of nationalism, maintained that the voluntary celebration of traditions sought to impose the consensual image of the national community through the pacific cultivation of diversity, the goal of which is to supply the new generations a healthy declared culture, but obsolete, in opposition to a cosmopolitan modernity.

Upon studying Gauchismo, Ruben Oliven characterized it in consonance with Brazilian nationalism, as a very successful case of regionalism, “in which the continuity and vigor of this regionalist discourse indicates that the meanings produced by it have a strong suitability to the representations of Gaucha identity” (Oliven 2006: 90). Likewise, the emphasis on Guacho identifies does not create an opposition to identification with Brazilian nationality at the Maison du Brasil, to the contrary, it is emphasized from the selection of the diacritical signs that affirm and celebrate the

¹⁴ CTG is the abbreviation for Center for Gaucho Traditions, which in Rio Grande do Sul is a social club organized to express Gauchismo, a movement that emphasizes the Gaucho of the past, in the present, based on the production of representations and practices that date back to the formation of the Gaucho. The CTG is a representation of the old Gaucho estancia or ranch and reproduces this structure. An example of this is the denomination of the male participants as *peão* (in a reference to the rural ranch hands of the Plata River basin region). The CTG Coxilha do Eliseu is an allusion to the *Champs Elysee* in which the fields are known as Coxilha, which is an elevation in the land, in a reference to the region of the Rio Grande do Sul plains that have this kind of terrain.

¹⁵ Cristiano's mention of chimarrão refers to a typical beverage from the southern cone of South America. An infusion of herbs is placed in a round recipient (a *cuia de porongo*) [a dried hollow gourd] and is served with hot water through a metal straw. The reference to *macacos colorados* denotes Cristiano's animosity, as a fan of the Gremio team from Porto Alegre (whose colors are blue white and black) for the fans of Porto Alegre's other major team, Internacional (whose colors are white and red). The allusion to “colorado” corresponds to a classic Gaucho designation for the color red. The *macaco*, which means monkey, is a demeaning and racist reference to fans of Internacional used by supposedly “civilized” fans of Gremio.

¹⁶ The *arroz de china* or *arroz de puta pobre*, is an allusion to the women designated as Chinas (used as a synonym of prostitute) who inhabited the Gaucho plains in the 19th century. This is a cheap dish made by combining pork sausage and rice. It was also a cheap dish for the residents of the Maison, which has the advantage of being simple and fast to prepare. The sexual connotation and the weekly frequency with which we prepared it was symbolically reverted in support of our situation of student poverty in opposition to the *churrasco* that was very expensive for our standards and which only took place once during the seven months I lived at the Maison.

regional (Brum: 2006: 259), without these clashing with the Brazilian nationality. Even so, in this case, the regional diversity is emphasized and reinforces the stereotypes of Gaucho machismo expressed, for example in the designation of arroz de china or of puta pobre.

Even though this is a satire of Gauchism, this exaltation is serious play. From Ortner's perspective (2007: 46) serious games imply the game of actors, seen as agents that involve the production and recognition of the power of the individual agency and of the collective recognition or aversion of the promoters of the parties, at which take place the exaltation of the national and of the regional.

These experiences, in turn, occur in a territory that is not national or even a Brazilian local-regionalism, but one in which the subjects are experiencing a situation of international circulation to acquire a cosmopolitan education. In this context, the contact with the other foreigner who is also present is a constant, and its interpretation is bi-directional, as in the feijoadas at which participated residents from other countries such as Krishina for whom we would prepare beans without meat and with more pepper (since he was Indian).

The ritualization experience went beyond the national character of the feijoada "restricted" to Brazilians, according to Fry (1977) and comes as a shared national symbol, to influence the issue of international circulation of the subjects in formation in a cosmopolitan scenario imbued with reciprocity, in which they exchanged dinners and parties, teach customs and music: they are total social facts (Mauss 2003: 209). Feijoadas, churrascos and other parties, and private Indian and Lebanese dinners such as those at which I participated at the Maison du Bresil, were inscribed in the learning of the reciprocal national characters in which were established social ties. These events are reciprocal and interchangeable stages of belonging and recognition of affirmation of identification, as Ricoeur maintained (2007: 260), in a route of self-identification to the power of individual agency of its participants.

The construction observed in the experiences of this circulation of researchers, also presents a "local" dimension and is based on readings of images and on the affirmation of the Brazilian national abroad, through the presentation of an "exotic" diversity, of behaviors and flavors that highlight an erotic connotation, reinforcing the very stereotype of Brazil abroad in terms of music, dance and gender.

But as Leitão emphasized when addressing the issue of Brazilian fashion in France and the exotic nature that characterizes it: "This reinvention of the country,

however, must be taken much more as a source of reflection on the Brazilian imaginary – and the French one – of Brazil than as an accusatory instrument.” (Leitão 2007: 228). This allows affirming that in this situation of international circulation and its experiences, the weight of the reception of this Gaucho-Brazilian stereotype is simultaneously dual and divided.

For Bhabha, the stereotype is a complex and ambivalent form of representation of fetishistic and phobic identification that acts in the construction of the collective imaginary. “The fetish gives access to an identity based both on domination and pleasure as well as on anxiety and defense, because it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition and rejection of difference” (Bhabha 1998: 116).

Both the affirmation of the Brazilian national identities as well as the regional diversity, in terms of Gauchismo, are related to a route of reconstitution of the layers of time and space lived, expressed in the representation of the researchers residing at the Maison du Brésil, filtered by my own position as ex-resident and an ability to wonder. For Fieldmann Bianco (2004: 293), this recognition relates to the issue of individual memory which, in turn, is related to collective memory about an experience lived and represented by the groups as a common identity discourse.

In this sense, the Maison du Brésil can be understood as a territory of international circulation that is characterized by the exaltation of Brazilianness through images of Brazil and its regions that also dialogs with the tenuous images of other nationalities of the “foreigners” who live there. Its meanings in the trajectories of its residents are plural and ambivalent and reflect, as a simulacrum, the logic described by Bhabha of the power of feeling cosmopolitan, but with the colonial tendency of oppressive domination of the local that incessantly dialogues here in the signification of the international university educational experience of these subjects, expressed in their statements and other supports for memory.

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