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National Identity through Diversity –
Brazilian Nation Building Ideas and Theories,
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1 Introduction

This contribution addresses a pervasive discourse on Brazilian national identity that could be understood as national identity through a double diversity. On the one hand, Brazil would be a country with a divergent and diverse path within the West: a curious *Sonderweg* (to use the German term, not without some irony). It would be full of historical, cultural, political and social "peculiarities". This representation of Brazil, albeit usually attributed to local theories and ideologies, functioning almost as a "local dialect", is pervasive in culture, social imaginaries and sociology both at home and abroad. According to this discourse, *however arguable it may be historically and sociologically*, Brazil would, thus, be *lacking* the elements that would have been central to the development of national identity and unity elsewhere, such as independence revolutions, bourgeois revolutions, symbolically shared political values and culture, homogeneous ethnicity, shared founding wars, integrating the middle class and the public sphere in a culture of rights and procedures, etc. Brazilian (and "Brazilianist") sociology even states that this general "negative hypothesis" was so pervasive that it generated a "national-methodology bias" – a "sociology of inauthenticity" that was often searching for Brazilian "singularity". It is not at all an overstatement to note that, both abroad and domestically, the discourses on Brazilian identity and its representation are pervaded by a discourse on Brazil's fundamental otherness, or diverseness.

On the other hand, in these same discourses and representations, Brazil is thought to have singular *excesses*. The main one would be an excess of diversity, which would supposedly result in different outlines across the country. Brazil would be characterized by plastic, ever-changing, improvising melting-pot-like pools of unchannelled diversity. This would be especially true in culture and politics. This diversity would always maintain itself and live with

its antagonisms in a situation of (unresolved) accommodation of "antagonism equilibria", to use the words of Gilberto Freyre. Personalism, patriarchalism and slavery would go hand in hand with liberalism and bureaucracy; religions would fuse together in a syncretism; ethnicities would be singularly miscegenated and "mixed", etc. In such representations, Brazilian national identity could, therefore, only be understood through this diverse explosion of diversity.

Such discourses found their way into Brazilian social sciences and gained momentum, especially at the time of the 1930s, when the theme of conflicting political representation models was on the agenda of world politics, and social sciences were starting to be institutionalized in the country. The question of Brazilian identity, long pervaded by the aforementioned discourses, gained central political relevance and renewed academic and popular interest. Some say that the issue of the "Brazilian national identity" and the vicissitudes of thinking a political representation, in and for Brazil, became the focus of the emerging social sciences of the period. These would have taken upon themselves the task of functioning as a "lighthouse" to guide the national debates on identity and representation across the land. Others argue that the emerging institutionalized sociology and political theory of the time did nothing more than incorporate and generalize gross stereotypes and popular (mis-)representations of Brazil. Be that as it may, this issue is not the focus of this contribution: its aim is the very recognition of the aforementioned discourse *and* its persistence (in Brazil and abroad). The aim is not to address, here, the theoretical coherence of the "sociology and social imaginaries" of Brazil at the time, but, rather, to point out that this very issue of Brazilian national identity, condensed around the 1930s, gained wide attention at the time and its aftermath still makes itself felt even to this day, *especially in the secondary literature, which, together with the wide impact of these ideas, contributed greatly to the formatting and dissemination of the notion of a "Brazilian national identity".* Even more importantly, it should be noted that the books that will be analysed here are much more relevant from the standpoint of their reception (e. g. in universities and schools) and repercussions, and as examples of the issue mentioned above, than in their internal coherence.

From the 1930s onwards, the question of how to deal with "political diversity" – i. e. how to represent the diverse social groups in politics – was specially linked with notions of nationalism and national identity. In

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world politics, one could see three main currents or modes of dealing with "political diversity": (i) embracing plurality and the atomization of groups or interests by "intermediary powers" and impersonal subjective rights – pluralism / liberal democracy; (ii) centralizing power around the State and channelling representation through a corporative structure – fascism / corporativism; (iii) centralizing power around the State by class-structure representations of diversity – communism / socialism. Nationalism and national-identity building were, nevertheless, already long-established in the political history and debates of Europe. In the Brazil of the 1930s and 1940s, however, the main argument was that the country (still on the onset of its industrialization) could be characterized by "a lack or deficit" of modernization and national identity. A great deal of the debates at the time were centred on how to found the yet-to-be Brazilian Nation and its identity, for it was somewhat considered that the country's "backwardness" was hindering its ability to "enter modernity". This paper presents three variations of this thinking to sustain its main arguments, relating these variations to the above-mentioned three modes of dealing with political-diversity representation, in three monographies considered "classics", which experienced a wide reception and attention: Oliveira Viana (fascism / corporativism), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (liberalism / democracy), and Caio Prado Júnior (socialism / communism). The time frame is set from 1920, i. e. the publication of Oliveira Viana's book, up to 1948, when the second edition of Holanda's book came out.

In the first section, this essay presents its main arguments and develops the interplay of these discourses on national identity, as well as presenting some analysis of it. In the second section, the selection of the three books is presented as examples of the conclusions drawn in the first section. This discussion of the "three examples" is accompanied by some methodological considerations on the limitations and possibilities offered by their analysis. Third and lastly, some final considerations are presented.

2 National identity in a land with a diverse diversity: the "Brazilian singularity-thesis" viewed from both the outside and the inside

In his book, *Brasilien, Land der Zukunft*, Stefan Zweig asks himself why Brazil is not the "most divided, unpeaceful and troubled country in the world". He does so from the perspective of the "standards of European

nationality", and *with "great astonishment"*.[1] To him, the greatly diverse ethnic structure of the country he found himself exiled to during the Second World War should lead one to expect that all its existing groups would be in constant conflict regarding their "rights and privileges". He refers to the overt visibility of diverse "races" that would "live together in complete harmony and, despite their individual origins, compete only in their ambition to get rid of their former peculiarities in order to become as quickly and as completely Brazilian as possible, in a new and unified nation". He then concludes: "Brazil has – and the significance of this great *experiment* seems to me *exemplary* – made a mockery of the racial problem that is unsettling our European world in the simplest possible way: by simply ignoring its supposed validity."[2]

After his visits to some *favelas* in Recife, Brazil,[3] sociologist Niklas Luhmann stated:

> "To the *surprise* of the well-meaning, it must be ascertained that exclusion still exists, and it exists on such a massive scale and in such forms of misery, that they *are beyond description*. Anybody who dares a visit to the favelas of South American cities and escapes alive can talk about it [...]. Whoever trusts his eyes can see it, and *can see with such impressiveness (Eindrücklichkeit)*, that all explanations at hand will fail."[4]

This "impressiveness" reflects itself in the "impressionistic style" of his writings on the matter,[5] which is something quite unusual for him. This is most evident in the recollection of his walks through the streets of Brazil's big cities.[6] The patterns of sociality of this diverse country would result, in the

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1 "*Zum größten Erstaunen*". All translations, when not stated otherwise, are mine. All emphases have been added.
2 ZWEIG (2013) 8–9.
3 For Luhmann's theoretical reaction to dealing with the "social exclusion problem" in his theory, especially after his "travels" to Brazil and contacts with researchers from Latin America, see RIBEIRO (2013).
4 LUHMANN (1999) 141.
5 See only OPITZ (2008) and FARZIN (2008).
6 "When, for instance, one visits Brazil's big cities and moves through its streets, squares and beaches, it demands from one an indispensable social competence [consisting] of a constant observation of the positioning, distancing and gathering of human bodies. One can feel one's body *more than usual*, one lives more than usual inside of it. [...] There is much more of a form of intuition-driven perception, which contributes to the perception of dangers and to their avoidance. [...] All of that, which we would apprehend as a person, falls back, and, with that, also all the attempts to achieve social effects by influenc-

end, "in the *immobilization* of politics, the economy, the law, social mobility and, even, of the academic system".[7] Notwithstanding his overt appeal not to "*exoticize*" or singularize social relations in Brazil,[8] many criticize him for doing precisely that.[9]

Ulrich Beck takes this sociologically astonished impressiveness in relation to Brazil even further by developing his dystopic theorem of the "Brazilianization of the West".[10] He admits using "exacerbation" *(Zuspitzung)* and a "negative stereotype" *(Negativschablone)* to present Brazil as a "contrasting case" and to analyse inequality in Germany. The *Brazilianization* of the West would mean that forms of work and life that are typical of the South would spread to the centre: plasticity, improvisation, a "patchwork carpet" of precarity, and a multi-activity structure of work ("feminization") and confusion, resulting in a place where no full employment is conceivable. In a somewhat counter-intuitive turn, he then changes the dystopic colours of his Brazilian image to almost avant-garde ones. Brazil is presented both as a warning and as guidance in connection with the problems affecting the "late-modern lands" *(den spätmodernen Ländern)*. In a "head inversion", undeveloped Brazil (this profane "place of inversions", of mixed and confused diversity), would serve as an orienting "glimpse" into the future of the "Brave New World of Labour" looming in the West, alongside its risks, networks, plasticity, hybridism and flexibilization.[11]

ing attitudes." He then goes on, in a footnote, to address *"new forms"* of sociality and the *rapidness of adjusting to "occasions"*, something that would be relatable to the popularity of soccer, LUHMANN (1995) 245–246. For Luhmann's soccer metaphor for sociality, see LUHMANN (2000). SCHWARCZ/STARLING (2015) 16 also refer to "soccer" as the greatest metaphor for Brazilian "nationality", representing precisely this widespread notion of an "improvisational aspect" in Brazilian "national culture" and the constant expectation that "something almost magical" would happen to resolve the match.

7 LUHMANN (1995) 226–227; 231–232.
8 LUHMANN (1992) 3–4.
9 For a warning against a supposed "fascination with the exotic" in Luhmann's "inclusion-exclusion" theory, see NASSEHI (2004) 323 f.
10 BECK (1998) 266 f. and (2007) 138. This use of the "Brazilianization-theorem" is not exclusive to Beck, see e.g. LIND (1995) and DAVIS (2006). For an essay considering, among other themes, the imaginaries of Brazil in social theory, see ARANTES (2004). Included therein is also a critique of Beck's (and others') "Brazilianization" argument.
11 BECK (2007) 28 f., 127 f., and 138 f.

These passages should suffice to illustrate the "fascination" that the supposed idiosyncrasies of social relations in Brazil generate. Brazil, a "different world within Latin America",[12] is hereby viewed from the outside as "diverse" in a twofold manner. Firstly, Brazil would represent a fundamental diverseness, or otherness, within the "West", usually referred to as an "example" and pointed out as a "singularity", for better or for worse. Secondly, Brazil would be characterized as being greatly diverse itself, as a melting pot of ethnicities, beliefs, institutions, cultures and social groups, without any clear homogenizing principle or element, i. e. where the very maintaining of such diversity would constitute its identity. Diversity then becomes permanent and unresolved, assuming the form of a "mixture": a "land of inversions", as Beck put it, or of "fascinating (difficult) paradoxes" and ambiguities,[13] or, to quote Gilberto Freyre, a land of "antagonism equilibria".[14] To put it crudely, Brazil would find its national identity in maintaining its "diversity" as "mixture", i. e. without resolving or organizing it, but leaving it open and permanent, in a plastic, improvisational and "singular" way.[15] This "discourse", however,

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12 See SKIDMORE / SMITH (1999) 32 ff. Such designation would have started already with the contrast between the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, but would also reflect the differences in the organization of the native indigenous people, the economy (slavery and latifundia), the language and so many other factors.

13 SKIDMORE / SMITH (1999) 15.

14 FREYRE (2003).

15 If we borrow some remarks from VIVEIROS DE CASTRO (1992), this could possibly be illustrated by going even as far back as the Jesuit literature of the 16th century. With great resonance even "outside missionary reflections", the idea of a certain "way of being *(modo de ser)*" of the society of the indigenous people, "the *Tupinambá*", in Brazil, was understood as "the *inconstancy* of the Indian Soul". This could be illustrated by the famous metaphor (brought about by António Vieira in 1657) characterizing the *ameríndio* as a "garden myrtle statue", i. e. easily shaped, adaptable and flexible, but unable to retain its form in the long run, quickly returning to its "savage" constitutions and to hybrid, unstructured states of mixtures. In contrast, the European would be a "marble statue", hard to shape, but consistent in retaining its form. Such representations found their way into Brazilian historiography, which sometimes considered the *índios* "incapable" of notions of order, or constancy, see, in English, the book, VIVEIROS DE CASTRO (2011). This could be loosely related to some contemporary considerations. The widespread representation of a peculiar Brazilian "way of being" *(jeitinho brasileiro – "a little way of always finding a way out")* has also (polemically) found its way into academia (influentially: DAMATTA (1997). This "*jeitinho brasileiro*" would imply a social ethos of being laxer and more creative with "rules", and, thus, often circumventing, subverting, bending, or adapting them. One should concede, however, that there is a classic "world figure" of the "trickster" in literature and

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is not only an external or foreign one, but one that is also (and maybe more prominently) present and pervasive domestically.

This could be summarized in the words of Lilia Schwarcz and Heloisa Starling:

> "The country has always been defined by the gaze that comes from the outside. Since the 16th century, when 'Brazil' was not even '*Brasil*', but a deeply unknown Portuguese America, the territory was already observed with a considerable amount of curiosity. Considered to be the 'other' in the West, Brazil seemed represented sometimes by stereotypes that characterized it, on the one hand, as a great and unexpected '*lack*' – of law, hierarchy, rules – and, on the other, as an '*excess*' – of lust, sexuality, leisure, or parties."[16]

The authors have even claimed that "Brazilian history itself aspires to be a *mestiça* ["*miscegenated, half-breed*"], as Brazilians themselves seem to be. […] By mixing colours and customs so much, we have made the *mestizaje a kind of national representation*." Accordingly, there would be a corresponding "*national ethos*" of plasticity and spontaneity of a land with a "mixture without equal" that would define Brazil by a quite specific "(cultural) diversity", resulting in a "miscegenated soul of the country".[17]

It may be somewhat puzzling to speak about "looks that come from the outside" when considering a theme so local as the notion of a "Brazilian singularity or exceptionality thesis".[18] Indeed, such discourses on national

culture, in relation to which the Brazilian social type, "*malandro*", could be considered a local variation, see Cândido (1970). Let it be noted that such "social types" are also usually present in other Latin American stereotypes beside the Brazilian one.

16 The authors also reinforce the persistence of such discourse, or representation: "In the propaganda, in the speeches that come from abroad, the country is still understood as a hospitable place, of exotic values, and where one can look for a kind of universal native, since one would find here a 'summary' of the 'strange' peoples of all places", Schwarcz / Starling (2015) 18.

17 Schwarcz / Starling (2015) 14–18. In this book and in other studies, the authors emphasize the fact that such "mixture consolidated itself in violent practices, of forced entry of peoples, cultures and experiences in national reality. Much different from a notion of harmony, such mixture was, here, much more a matter of arbitrariness […]. Far from the image of a peaceful […] country, or of a racial democracy, the [history of Brazil] […] describes the vicissitudes of this nation, which, albeit deeply mixed, has, alongside this – and at the same time – a rigid hierarchy conditioned by internally shared values, which functions as a social language in itself", Schwarcz / Starling (2015) 20.

18 Theories and explanations that are peculiar to Brazil and its supposed "singular" social relations result in heated discussions in politics, academia, and even popular culture. Such explanations have symptomatically received the popular, pejorative term of "*Jabuticaba-*

idiosyncrasies, which tend to characterize Brazilian national identity, assume controversial and explosive relevance domestically. One could concede that "national-identity discourses" assume cultural and political prominence in almost all countries of a "recent colonial past" and become almost an "obsession", often returning to the agenda, thereby assuming the form of a somewhat complex "local dialect".[19] This may be the case for Brazil, where one could note a confluence of such "national-identity discourse" permeating culture, politics, social theory and art.[20] In the following, we shall address some elements of the aforementioned "discourses", which, albeit internally highly polemical in nature and scattered throughout different disciplines and "lineages", do indeed converge at certain points.

Firstly, there would be the issue of the essentialist representations of "Brazilian (political) culture". For many reasons, the Brazilian people would be fundamentally peaceful, averse to open conflicts, living in "harmony" and in a festive celebration of diversity, without any need for clear-cut separations or resolutions. This notion, heavily criticized under the label of the "myth of the racial democracy",[21] would go hand in hand with the notion that, in Brazil, there would follow a "multi-secular immobilism" in politics "since

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explanations". The notion implies that the plant, *Jabuticaba*, would only exist in Brazil, emphasizing the heuristic bias to overstate Brazilian peculiarities in politics, culture and academia. The term is widespread, but received even more attention after the publications by Brazilian diplomat Paulo Roberto de Almeida, e. g. ALMEIDA (2005).

19 SCHWARCZ / STARLING (2015) 17.

20 For literature, see in priority the illustrative text of CÂNDIDO (1970) and "*Movimento antropofágico*".

21 This refers to the national-identity myth of a "racial democracy", of supposed "social harmony" and "peaceful miscegenation", and to the assumption that, in Brazil, there would be no "racial pride" (HOLANDA (1995) 53), something that the social sciences and the Black Movement in Brazil have struggled to debunk (see, for an overview, among many, SCHWARCZ (1998) 128 f., and 202 f.). On race, and the concept of a "spectacle of races" and "laboratory", analyzing representations of Brazilian "racial issue", both in Brazil and abroad, see SCHWARCZ (1993) esp. 11 f. Schwarcz reminds us that this "myth" was pervasive both internally and externally, and that even UNESCO funded, in 1951, a study on racial relations in Brazil, where the premise of a "racial democracy" was pre-emptively contested by the sociologists of the country. For an overview in English, encompassing analyses of Brazilian social thinking and culture, see STAM / SHOHAT (2012) esp. 31 f., and 185 f. Internally, this "myth" was extensively spread also by the State, especially under the military regime (1964–1988), in a political interpretation of history that aimed to block subversive and "un-Brazilian" conflictive representations of memory. One could say that

the arrival of Pedro Álvares de Cabral in 1500".[22] In this sense, political structures and institutions in Brazil would never suffer drastic changes, in a country where "accommodations" would always be preferable to political resolutions or "real political change".[23]

Secondly, more than these culturalist formulations,[24] there would be other elements in Brazilian sociality that would seem to condition its "experience with modernity". These could be found as a result of "influential magnitude", both inside and outside academia, of "constructions of institutionalized Brazilian social sciences", and in the "diffusion of images and self-perceptions" in Brazil. Such themes are present even now, with many studies arguing that modernity, in Brazil, would always be qualified: selective, epidemical, conservative, State-centred, peripherical, etc. Brazilian "singularities" would, in some measure, oppose those elements that would characterize modernity, i. e. functional differentiation, secularization and separation

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the "racial democracy" myth was, somehow, part of a "culture of remembrance" *(Erinnerungskultur)*, of denying the violence of the "representations of the past" to also curb conflicts, see ASSMANN (2013), especially her debate with Koselleck in 16 ff.

22 For a critique of this argument, see: SANTOS (2017) 139. See also REGATIERI (2020).

23 This persists, even though Brazilian history is permeated by "rebellions, revolts and manifestations from all sides", SCHWARCZ / STARLING (2015) 18. The comparison of Brazilian Independence with its Latin American counterparts is usually the starting point. Nevertheless, there are many studies of legal and political nature that seem to show many such continuities despite institutional change. For the "continuity" of a corporativist structure in the Brazilian labour-union system after 1945 and a comparison with the changes occurred in Italy, Spain and Portugal, see the compelling study by MASSONI (2010). For the continuities of administrative structures of the "Estado Novo" after 1945, see CAMPELLO DE SOUZA (1976). Such debates are still very much alive, for instance, in the sphere of transitional human rights, where Brazil's "differing path" (with its Amnesty Law) would be a case of this accommodational politics, and in the popularly spread notion that the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 would be the patchworked result of a broad political "accommodation" of diverse social groups and would, therefore, have lost some of its normative power. Incidentally, such arguments appear to have bolstered the – quite surprising, to say the least– proposal for the calling of a new Constituent Assembly for Brazil in 2023 by constitutionalist Bruce Ackerman: ACKERMAN (2020).

24 Such cultural determinism, of many variants and origins was even called a sociology of "atavistic culturalism", SOUZA (2000). Nonetheless, see also compelling critiques of Souza's model and the idea of "selective modernity" in TAVOLARO (2011) 26ff, and the views of NEVES (2006) 247–248 that not all centre / periphery arguments forcibly imply a "cultural anthropology", in which he develops a model of peripheral modernity that distances itself radically from such culturalisms.

of the public and private spheres.[25] Here, there would be two main lineages: a sociology of "patriarchal-patrimonial inheritance"[26] and a "sociology of dependence". Whereas the patriarchal-patrimonial (or personalism) analysis considers that these forms would stem from the Iberian legacy brought by Portuguese colonization, fomenting a "diverse" type of sociality differing from that of the "central countries of modernity" (as we shall see below in Buarque de Holanda's version), the sociologies of dependency (whose "example" we shall see with Caio Prado Júnior) emphasize economic conditions and asymmetries, especially the case of the colonial enterprise and slavery in Brazil, focusing on the peripheral condition of the land in a global system and its social exclusion.

In the 1930s and their accompanying "wave of modernization", the national-identity question became not only an issue of relevance for social theory or cultural representations, but thereby acquired a distinct political colouration. One could argue that the period between 1930 and 1945 was one of dispute between three main models of political regime, i. e. fascism-corporativism, liberal democracy and socialism / communism. In such a context, the discussions of the "Brazilian national identity" and its "specificities" gained momentum. Coinciding with the institutionalization of social sciences in the country, numerous publications with an essayistic style and a plural configuration would centre around such issues in a period often called the "classics of Brazilian thought", aiming to develop "interpretations of Brazil".[27] Furthermore, as we have seen above, the wide-spread notion *(however academically arguable it may be)* that Brazil is a diverse country characterized by peculiarities and without a shared "unifying" national identity trait (such as shared imaginaries of a political constitution or an ethnically homogeneous population) also fuelled the debates in the search for the Brazilian national (and political) identity.

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25 See Tavolaro (2011).

26 Regatieri (2018) presents a compelling comparison of the patrimonialism-personalist thesis, with influences of Max Weber's theory, as applied to Brazil and South-Korea, and shows how it was mobilized in both countries: for Brazil, through the Iberian heritage, and in South-Korea through the legacy of its Confucian ethics, both departing from a "singularity thesis" and explaining how this construction, in both contexts, was used to represent a "separation" of these countries from the modernity "of the rest of the world".

27 Brandão (2005). Incidentally, the very use of the terminology, "Brazilian social thought" or "Brazilian political thinking" – being used instead of "sociology" or "political theory" – is also criticized in literature. See, among many, Domingues (2011) passim.

With the centralizing "*Estado Novo*" of the 1930s, there was a great increase in nationalism, bureaucracy-building and centralization. Even now, many say that the "entering" of Brazil into modernity began in that period, even though this is disputed.[28] In any case, the issue of "forming" the people and the nation was at the centre of the debates. A great deal of thinking was centred around the notion that Brazil did not have an ideal, active people – something said to be a permeating trait of Brazilian political and social thought, even gaining the label of the "negative hypothesis".[29] In Brazil, one would only find a passive people that had only "watched, bestialized" independence;[30] a people yet "in need to be formed", something that could be done, e. g. via State centralization, which would integrate and constitute the people, who, at the time, were considered to be nothing more than "amorphous masses".[31] The underlying assumption that the 1930s would be the characterizing milestone of the "late entry" of Brazil into modernity is still present in contemporary studies, especially when addressing Brazil's singular path to citizenship and fundamental rights.[32] Indeed, these issues and debates long predate the discussions of the 1930s, but it was then that they assumed clearer contours of differentiated social thought.

One could, therefore, argue that such "explanations of Brazil", mainly due to the influence of the sociological essay-style of the 1930s, were focused on

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28 See Tavolaro (2011) 56 f.

29 Brandão (2005).

30 Carvalho (1987).

31 Viana (1973) esp. 123 f.

32 As in Carvalho (2001). One of the key issues was the "construction of a modern citizenship" in the period. At around the time of Getúlio Vargas' Government, Brazilian singularity was later described in comparison to T. H. Marshall's theory of citizenship formation and in debates following the "chronological" order of civil, political and social rights. Some studies on models of democracy pointed to the idea that, instead of a citizenship (*cidadania*), the Brazilian "path" would rather imply, in contrast, a "statezenship" (*estadania*) in "a top-down non-participatory model", Carvalho (1996 and 2001). This top-down model, with some level of guaranteed social rights coexisting with elevated levels of political repression (lack of political rights) and with the suffocation of autonomous civil-society organizations, could characterize the realm of politics in Brazil as "drowned in laws", French (2004). Nevertheless, the idea that the Vargas period would be a key feature in shaping citizenship and political culture in Brazil could also be countered for being an "hegemonically shared discourse", alongside explications of great historical tendencies that followed "economic dependency" and "patrimonial-patriarchal inheritance" in determining political sociability in Brazil, Tavolaro (2011) esp. 192.

the specificities of the country and were characterized by the expropriation of "themes and problems" that led authors to "explore certain perspectives of reading the past" in search of the national identity.[33] Many of these explanations were characterized by references to crystalized remnants of the past, in historical continuities that worked as broad and totalizing explanations. They usually highlighted the anomalous, pre-modern and backward character of Brazil, mainly in comparison with "European societies" – e.g. the analysis of the national character through the Iberic ethos[34] and the public ethos, in order to describe the failure to constitute a collective public space in the country.[35] "Brazilian social thought"[36] also comprised different and opposing political agendas that centred around a shared problem: founding the Brazilian nation and pointing out blockages and challenges for its "modernization". Some say this later spread to a broad spectrum of Brazilian academical research, resulting, in the end, in a "nationalist methodological bias".[37] And, as we have seen above, this also made itself present outside both academia and the country itself. The background issue was, thus, not only the theoretical explanation of Brazil, but also the politically oriented description of the nation with regard to the problem of facing up to its "backwardness" or "diverseness" in order to insert itself into modernity, i.e. serving as a "*lighthouse*" to national identity and political thinking, and to the task of "*imagining our nation*" and "our modernization projects".[38]

It should be noted that this seems to be a constant not only in Brazilian sociology. Mascareño and Chernilo[39] argue that the search for these answers, which makes Latin America simultaneously modern (universal) *and* Latin American (particular), is also a characterizing feature of Latin American sociology. This can be otherwise understood as a background problematic that has stimulated many different approaches – politically, theoretically and culturally.[40] Therefore, it is not only a matter of simply stating that this

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33 Lavalle (2004) 69–70.
34 See Villas Bôas Filho (2009) 187 ff.
35 See Lavalle (2004) passim.
36 Brandão (2005).
37 Domingues (2011) 8 and 89.
38 Santiago (2002) xxii.
39 Mascareño / Chernilo (2009) 85 f.
40 For a supplementary epistemological approach to these issues, instead of a more political one, see Ribeiro (2013).

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debate would be one of "misplaced ideas"[41] stemming from the centre of modernity to the "periphery". When analyzing the tension between universalism and particularism, the authors address the question of the ambivalent manner through which Latin American sociology dealt with the modernity issue, associating, on the one hand, its identity to national borders and its "immutable cultural ethos" and, on the other, adopting the more general and abstract sociological theories from various conjunctures, created and devised for periods and contexts that were different from the Latin American ones. According to the authors, no argument is to be made in the sense of a total impossibility for Latin American sociology to both consider its empirical specificities and tackle the demands of a "universally oriented knowledge of the sociological canon". Their argument is, rather, to recognize that both a position that focuses only on particularisms, and another that would focus only on generalizations are themselves unattainable.

Be that as it may, such discourses on "national identities" and "singularities" can, of course, be academically questioned and criticized. That is even more so if we consider that such discourses are understood to be persistent in academia – foreign and Brazilian – until today. This has already been verified, not only by studies of post-colonialism or decolonialism, or even by models of the circulation of political ideas or 'translation' of legal and political institutions, but also within Brazilian social sciences themselves, especially after the 1990s.[42]

Nevertheless, the presence and pervasiveness of such discourses on Brazilian idiosyncratic "diverse diversity" in the country's social relations seem to be out of the question. Whether social theory (or "Brazilian social thinking") influenced such "national-identity discourses", working as an orientation and a guiding beam, or "lighthouse",[43] or if it is otherwise, meaning that social

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41 SCHWARZ (2005), recognizes "misplaced ideas" – i.e. political ideologies outside their original centre in the European context – as a constitutive feature of the "Brazilian national character". His views attracted much criticism because they did not take into account analysis issues linked to the social structure of "Brazilian society". See e.g. VILLAS BÔAS FILHO (2009) esp. 195 ff. For a reply explaining "misunderstandings", see SCHWARZ (2012), and RICÚPERO (2008) 64–65 and 68. The latter highlights the element of tension between "form" and "environment" in Brazilian social thinking, stating that there were necessary "torsions" of borrowed forms that the periphery took from the centre.

42 See BRANDÃO (2005).

43 SANTIAGO (2002).

theory was only reproducing gross popular generalizations,[44] is not the issue to be discussed here. Their confluence, however, seems to be strikingly symptomatic. More importantly, one hopes to have shown that these "homogeneous discourses" on Brazil's double diversity were constitutive of the thematization of national identity. These should provide the context for the analysis that follows.

3 Three examples: Oliveira Viana, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Caio Prado Júnior

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a growing visualization in world politics of three modes of political representation, i.e. how to represent the diverse social groups in politics: (i) embracing plurality and the atomization of groups or interests by "intermediary powers" and impersonal subjective rights – pluralism/*liberal democracy*; (ii) centralizing power around the State and channelling representation through a corporative structure – *corporativism/fascism*; (iii) centralizing power around the State through the class-structure representation of diversity and through the control of the means of production – *communism/socialism.*

These debates and concurring representation modes of political regimes were themes of world politics and also took place in Brazil. In the following, a selection of three authors that were (and still are) linked to thinking about the "adaptation" of these regimes "to Brazilian singularities" is examined. They are Francisco José de Oliveira Viana, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, and Caio Prado Júnior. One book by each author was selected, based on its being considered a "classic", its reception, its diffusion in Brazilian literature, and its focusing on political thinking and political projects in Brazil (see, for this definition of "political Brazilian thought".[45]

Before that, some preliminary considerations are due. It must be clearly stated that these authors are not to be presented, here, as coherent advocates of such political projects, nor are they to be analysed through the lenses of theoretical coherence. The somewhat eclectic (essayistic) style of these works already attests to this. It is not a question of analysing such ideas through the lenses of theoretical purity or point-by-point equivalence of such political

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44 SOUZA (2000); REGATTIERI (2018) 377.
45 FAORO (1994).

regimes. The "political reading" of these books and authors, and the emphasis on the political relevance of their considerations on "Brazilian national identity (and diversity)" can actually be attributed much more to the aforementioned background, historical context and later anachronic projections of the debates on the still pervasive question of Brazilian national identity in academia and elsewhere – as we tried to show, above.

The aim, here, is to present these three authors against the background of our considerations above, and mainly filtered through the *reception* of their works, which acquired later the aura of classics of Brazilian social thought concerning State theory and political projects. It could even be said that such "political reading" of the books is more a creation of the secondary literature, ascribing these political overtones to them afterwards. This may also be due to the success of these works, their wide reception, and their inclusion in the institutional syllabuses of universities and schools in later decades. It is precisely this "reception", however, which justifies the selection of these books for this presentation.

In such a context, the considerations of Oliveira Viana on the centrality of the State and, even, his political and institutional relevance in the *Estado Novo* are not to be understood, here, as a theory of corporativism, especially because Viana constructs his arguments under the notion that others have called "instrumental authoritarianism", and justified his project by the notion of preparing Brazil for democracy. In turn, Sergio Buarque de Holanda, when addressing the Brazilian Iberic ethos, draws on Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in the same breath to develop the notion of the "cordial man" (see below), i.e. in order to represent the average Brazilian's imperviousness to impersonal rules and a tendency to rely on networks of friends and favours. Moreover, he also develops arguments of a specific type as to a Brazilian democracy that should emerge from "molecular revolutions" – something that cannot be understood only as a sociology of "inauthenticity" (Souza, 2000), or as a mere copy or adaptation of "misplaced ideas". And there are many critiques stating that Caio Prado Júnior, later characterized as a relevant figure of Brazilian communism, "had never even read Marx".[46] Even the more empathetic commentators of Prado Júnior's work openly assume this to have been the case.[47] This, however, could highlight and

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46 See e.g. Coutinho (1989).
47 See Ricúpero (1998).

support our claims, instead of rebutting them. Caio Prado Júnior's later political reception and his importance to the political debates of the Brazilian communist left stand out as the most noticeable aspect. Prado Júnior was even praised as "the first Brazilian Marxist".[48] Once again, the critique of his arguments is not what is at stake here, but, rather, the acknowledgement of the wide reception of his work, to help us think about the vicissitudes of a communist and socialist project for Brazil. The wide reception of his books in the subsequent decades (even if he had not read Marx at the time) only corroborates the argument that Brazilian national-identity issues prevailed over more theoretical concerns.

Of course, this selection of books and authors is severely limited. It deals with books that had a greater *political* reception and focused on the national-identity issue. We have no intention to present a comprehensive review of the books in full, but only to pinpoint the elements in them that can illustrate our arguments above.

Another limitation is the time frame. Oliveira Viana's *Populacoes Meridionais do Brasil*[49] was published in 1920. Caio Prado Júnior's *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* was published in 1942.[50] Sergio Buarque de Holanda's *Raízes do Brazil*,[51] however, was published in very different editions, the first of which came out in 1936. Greatly edited and augmented second and third editions followed in 1948 and in 1956.[52] Nevertheless, even though those

48 Ricúpero (1998).
49 Here cited as Viana (1973).
50 Cited as Prado Júnior (1996).
51 Cited as Holanda (1995).
52 As it is widely known, there are differences in content and tone between the first (1936) and posterior (1948, 1956, 1969, etc.) editions. Holanda's "democratic and liberal" configuration is, indeed, more present in the later editions. In the first edition, the use of the theories of the "antiliberal" Carl Schmitt (albeit punctual) and others seems to play a greater role and was diminished in the others. Leopoldo Waizbort, for instance, shows how the German Conservative Revolution influenced Holanda during his time spent in Germany and this was reflected in the first edition of the book (1936), even if he did not subscribe to the notion of a strong organic State in its Brazilian adaptation. Waizbort (and others) contrasted a book with somewhat more "organic" and "antiliberal" overtones in its first edition (1936) with a more clearly revised, liberal second edition (1948). This would be most visible when analysing the *deletions* and *omissions* of passages and names of a conservative nature that were made between the two versions. Moreover, Waizbort points out that the reception of this book (also in universities, schools and in its wider circulation) was great, but the addition of introductory remarks by literary critic Antonio Cân-

editions came after the Second World War, it can fairly be argued that the *issues* that shaped the book in all its versions were inspired by questions stemming from the period of the writing of its first edition. Furthermore, our considerations above should make it clear that there is a continuity of such "discourses on national identities" in the following decades. Anachronical readings of such texts in contemporary discourses are a feature of the debate and should function, here, as strengthening the argument that not only the historical context of these works is relevant, but also the aftermath of these discussions, often readdressing such works whilst addressing the issue of the national identity of Brazil.

Here, as we saw before, the discourses on Brazilian diversity and singularities assumed (for good or ill, correctly or as stereotypic generalizations) the "*negative hypothesis*" of the *lack* of social elements of modernity – something that became relevant to thinking about nation building from the 1930s onwards. This was reflected in the idea that national unity and homogeneity could not be presupposed in Brazil, which had (as the widespread notion goes) none of those elements that seemed to be relevant to nation building in other parts of the globe: no homogeneous people; no true politically constitutive moment of independence, nor defining war; and no cultural homogeneity, or even a middle class. Having "*lacked*" a bourgeois revolution, Brazil also lacked a public sphere and a culture of rights and procedures, so dear to modernity. The social requirements of nation building seemed to be missing and had to be searched for, or created.[53] Moreover, the specific, unorganized, and mixed (or "amorphous") complexity of Brazilian society was also thought to be a problem of "*excess*": excess of unorganized diversity; excess of personalism and affections; and excess of social gaps and inequalities that generated social, spatial and economic inequality.

dido in the fifth edition (1969) greatly influenced the readings of the book, presenting Holanda as a radical democrat and smoothing away the book's internal contradictions. See the arguments in Waizbort (2011). Even so, and this is important, Waizbort and others state that they are presenting an interpretation of *Raízes do Brasil* that is "*swimming against the current*" of its conventional and widespread interpretation. For our purposes, here, as stated above, it is the circulation of these books and their popular reception, and *not their relevance to the academic debate or theoretical elements,* which are the object of our analysis.

53 It should be once again stated that this "hegemonic discourse" is academically highly debatable. Nonetheless, that is not the issue at stake, here. The point is much more that its relevance, persistence and pervasiveness seem to be undisputed.

3.1 Oliveira Viana

In his work, *Populações Meridionais do Brasil*, vol. 1, Oliveira Viana makes the effort to develop a theory that takes into account the peculiarities of the Brazilian case, and he does so in direct opposition to the liberal "constitutional idealists", who would elaborate mere transposed copies of theories imported from beyond the seas.[54] Such work had a great repercussion in academia and politics,[55] mainly in the wake of the conditions created by the Revolution of 1930. However, tainted by Viana's participation in Vargas' government and his support for the 1937 dictatorship, the influence of his work declined afterwards and opposition to it grew, especially after his death in 1951, and with the posterior alleged appropriation of his thought by the military dictatorship (1964–1985/88) and its ideology. Thus, José Murilo de Carvalho categorically states that, along with his racist theories, "Oliveira Viana was sent to hell" – meaning, here, oblivion and condemnation.[56] Carvalho sustains the metaphor and affirms that Oliveira Viana is still there (in hell), but he (Carvalho) would nevertheless pay him an "unarmed visit", not in the sense of removing him from over there, but of "bringing to light his main contributions to Brazilian political thought".[57] It could be stated that Oliveira Viana's reflections faced up to the problem of the organization

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54 The considerations regarding racial and evolutionist aspects of his work are not the focus, here, such as the influence of authors such as Gustave Le Bon and Vacher de Lapouge, and, in Brazil, the influence of Alberto Torres' works, see Carvalho (1993) 17–18. Bernardo Ricúpero argues that Oliveira Viana acquires from Le Bon the idea of a "soul of the race", constituting a "national character", and that different "races" would differentiate themselves from one another both by psychological and physical characteristics. Even though Oliveira Viana admits that there is a certain "hierarchy" among them, he does not incorporate the "protagonist aspect of the Aryan race", see Ricúpero (2007).

55 So that, in the preface to the fourth edition of the work (1938), the author states: "I would like to highlight a point. The theses defended in this book and the conclusions that were reached in my objective study of our social and political formation have acquired splendid and integral consecration, both here and abroad, in the agitated period in which we live today", Viana (1973).

56 Carvalho (1993) 14.

57 He further states his undeniable influence "on almost all main works of political sociology produced in Brazil after the publication of *Populações Meridionais no Brasil*". This work would even "echo in authors that strongly disagree with his political views, with a long list: Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque, Nestor Duarte, Nelson Werneck Sodré, Victor Nunes Leal, Guerreiro Ramos, Raymundo Faoro, […] and even Caio Prado [Júnior]", Carvalho (1993) 15.

and direction of society and the State. Brandão states that, "if the racist archaic garbage is discarded", interest in the text should be preserved and this work could "appear in a selection" next to *Casa Grande & Senzala*, by Gilberto Freyre, *Raízes do Brasil*, by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, and *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*, by Caio Prado Júnior, as one of the foundational texts of what has conventionally been called Brazilian "political thought" or "Brazilian social thought".[58]

Oliveira Viana's starting point was evolutionist and, within this framework, he also made use of physical anthropology when seeking to recognize national identity through its specificity. He developed types of environments and types of societies in Brazil as analytical instruments. However, critical of what he called "utopian idealism", i.e. of the attempt at institutional transposition by the liberals, Oliveira Viana belongs to the theoretical line of the organic conception of politics. He thinks along "realistic" bases, starting from Brazilian society in its specificities, and then opposing them to the needs of other countries such as the United States and England. He analyses three types of Brazilians in three types of environment, concluding that it would be necessary to develop a rural sociology of Brazil.

In *Populações Meridionais do Brasil*, the author basically analyses the southwestern region of Brazil, in which he finds the seat of political power. This would be a region "of the woods *(mata)*", its inhabitants, therefore, being the "*matutos*". With this division based on the size of the country and the *lack of unity* of the Brazilians, we can already see beforehand that Oliveira Viana did not presuppose an element of nationality in Brazil. In fact, in his analytical key, the author considered a plurality of explanatory elements, but reserved considerable space for the element of the environment. For Oliveira Viana, there were no fixed social types, but fixed *environments*.[59] This premise is important to understand why the author places the rural as the locus of Brazilian nationality.

From the very beginning, Oliveira Viana states that the first colonizers who came to Brazil were people linked to the "most illustrious branches of the European nobility". They would be like a transplanted court in the wilderness of a South American territory. Therefore, the arrival of these settlers characterized by urban habits alongside their *centripetal* tendencies

58 Brandão (2002) 302.
59 Viana (1973) 29 ff.

(the "European tendency of urban and political centralization") would clash with the *centrifugal* character of the Brazilian territory, in all its extension and rurality. The author affirms that these settlers could not adapt to Brazil – a very different place.[60]

According to the author, the second group of settlers who arrived had "more plebeian" origins, and consequently had greater capacity for adaptation, combined with the "psychology of the country man". The environment stood out, and the adaptation occurred. There was, then, the prevalence of the environment over the social type, with the large property, in the form of the latifundium, being the instrument for implementing this process. According to Viana, "the rural environment is, everywhere, an admirable conformer of souls".[61] This "adaptation" of the social type to the environment is the process he calls latifundium-mediated ruralization:

> "We said that, in the fourth century [*Oliveira Viana counts up from 1500*], the Brazilian population is completely ruralized. In fact, this forced the need for a permanent presence in the agricultural latifundium, which ends up generating, within colonial society, a state of mind in which rural living is no longer a sort of trial or exile for the upper class, as it once was, but becomes the very sign of noble existence, a proof even of distinction and importance. [...] Indeed, at the dawn of the fourth century, the feeling of [the existence of a] rural life is perfectly fixed in the psychology of Brazilian society."[62]

Oliveira Viana characterizes the latifundium (or "great rural domain") as greatly affecting Brazilian society and its national identity. This was one of the main arguments of the author's political proposal for an authoritarian and centralized political structure in Brazil. Oliveira Viana became famous as an "organic thinker" who opposed the liberals that would promote a "naive legalism", or "constitutional fetishism". First, we can see that Oliveira Viana

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60 "In this environment of forests and fields, this new society, yet only in its formation, is – and will be for a long time to come – a society with a fundamentally rural structure, based entirely on an exclusive base of agricultural estates (latifundia). Therefore, a society of habits and customs [that are] characteristically rural." And he continues: "Hence, this very interesting conflict, which we have seen throughout the colonial period, between the peninsular spirit and the new environment, that is, between the old European tendency, of a visibly centripetal character, and the new American tendency, of a visibly centrifugal character: the former attracting the upper classes of the colony to the cities and their charms, the latter impelling these same classes to the countryside and their rude isolation", VIANA (1973) 33.

61 VIANA (1973) 52.

62 VIANA (1973) 39.

considered the latifundia as the central element in Brazil, so that, accordingly, a Brazilian sociology should be a rural sociology. He even stated that, in Brazil, "we are the latifundium". Its centrality is such that he affirmed that the process of ruralisation, carried out by the "great agricultural domination" of the latifundium, would be the "centre of the polarization of all the social classes of the country", and that "its entry into the scenario of high national politics is the greatest event of the fourth century".[63] This occurred because this form of property crushed and swallowed the smaller properties, and made the appearance and maintenance of the latter unviable.

The central element of this analysis is the "simplifying" (and disruptive) function that the self-sufficient latifundia generated in the country's social organization. Oliveira Viana points out that, being "dispersed and isolated in their disproportionate territorial enormity, the lands are forced to live by themselves, with themselves and for themselves". Thus, from its need for self-subsistence, the "great dominion, as seen from its past constitution, is a complete organism, perfectly equipped for an autonomous and proper life".[64] In this way, the functioning of the latifundium could be compared to that of a fiefdom. The latifundium is understood as a small world; it is self-sufficient. It produces almost everything it needs, reducing trade and communications, and generating a "simplifying function that 'decentralized' the Brazilian people, making a national identity unviable".[65]

This "simplifying function", however, would not be the only obstacle to the main objective of the period (post-independence): the creation of national unity (and, one might dare say, of the Brazilian nation itself). Two additional key factors would be the inexistence of "elements of solidarity" together with the absence of development of a middle class, or "people", and the local power of the rural aristocracy (centripetal caudillismo). The power of the rural aristocracy is emphasized as one of the greatest obstacles to the formation of State power in Brazil. The landlords *(senhores de engenho)* had real power, which violated "even the determinations of the metropolis". Such fundamentally local power[66] did not allow for the development of central-

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63 Viana (1973) 49.
64 Viana (1973) 121–123.
65 Viana (1973) 124 f.
66 "What, then, is the basis of this prestige, of this ascendancy, of this undeniable power? The prestige, the ascendancy, the power of the São Paulo nobility are of purely national origin and have an entirely local basis. It is on the *sesmaria*, on the rural domain, on the agricul-

ized and national State power. This was so, as Oliveira Viana argues, because in "vast areas [made up] of agricultural estates, only the great rural landlords exist. Outside of them, everything is rudimentary, shapeless, fragmentary. They are the great domains as if they were solar foci: villages, industries, commerce – everything is overshadowed by their powerful clarity."[67]

In turn, the same process of ruralisation would prevent smaller properties from developing and, with them, the emergence of a bourgeoisie and a middle class, i.e. this "simplification of the structure of rural society is accentuated by one of the most serious failures of our collective organization: *the inexistence of a middle class, in the European sense of the expression.* It is mainly in the smaller, flourishing and progressive rural estates that this class has its best base."[68]

The latifundium, which, at first, generated accommodation, conformism and ruralisation in its 'simplifying function', could not form "a society or something similar to it" in Brazil. What resulted from this was the creation of a society "without complete social frameworks; without differentiated social classes; without organized social hierarchy; without middle class, without industrial class; without urban classes in general. Our rural society is the ruins of a vast and imposing building – in a framework, [which is] incomplete, unusual." This would have disastrous consequences for national solidarity and for the formation of the Brazilian people. Oliveira Viana envisions a situation that could

> "result in the constitution, among us, of a strong, wealthy, independent, prestigious middle class, with the capacity to exercise, in the face of the large landed estates, the admirable role of the Saxon *Yeomen* or the bourgeois [...]. The great dominance [of the latifundium], in creating an environment which is very unfavourable to the vitality and expansion of smaller estates, prevents their emergence from happening at all. Hence, the accuracy of that statement by Luiz Couty, when describing, in [18]82, our society – '*Brazil has no people!*'"[69]

tural and pastoral latifundium that they are based." Oliveira Viana continues: "This society, yet in its formation, dispersed, incoherent [...], really revolves around the rural domain. The rural domain is the centre of gravitation of the colonial world. Within the general spread of the population, it resembles a small solar nucleus with its laws and its organized autonomy. It is from it that the determination of social values begins. It is back to it that the spheres of influence are traced", Viana (1973) 66.

67 Viana (1973) 125.
68 Viana (1973) 131.
69 Viana (1973) 135 ff.

In the vision of Brazilian society supported by Oliveira Viana, there would be no space to create institutions, which would, therefore, result in a recurring search for the strongest: the lords of the land, who ended up acting almost like great "clan chiefs".[70] In the opposition between caudillismo ("*caudilhismo*") and the Nation, in an "un-constituted" Brazil, the greatest danger of "oppression" would come from the local, divisive segmentary power of the rural aristocracy, and not from the power of the State.

Therefore, we are now close to the political project of Oliveira Viana to found the Brazilian Nation, giving it political *and* social unity. This project could only be carried out "by the slow and continuous action of the State – a sovereign State, uncontested, centralized, unitary, capable of imposing itself on the whole country thanks to the fascinating prestige of a great national mission".[71] This "mission" of the centralizing State was conceived by Oliveira Viana through the opposition of the Brazilian political problematics to the European ones, i. e. an opposition between the concepts of freedom and authority. Thus, while Europe had achieved its freedom by extirpating the oppressive central power (authority), Brazil, by importing liberal political ideas from Europe, would find itself "afraid" of central authority, even without ever having known it in practice. "Brazil's problem would be a problem of lack of central authority rather than excess of it."[72]

Thus, for the author, the

> "comparative study of the new American societies and the old European ones, in their history and structures – in the factors that carry out their formation – shows, with evidence, how deep the intrinsic difference is between the new social type, which is formed in the New World, and the old social type, formed in the European world. The two models are founded on very different bases, each one revealing a specific organization, with its own structure and a psychology that reflects, in all its

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70 The "unifying and integrating agents" who acted overseas would, therefore, be totally absent when it comes to Brazil. Thus, "such a lack of the institution of social solidarity results from the fact that, among these multiple agents of social synthesis, whose integrating function is so decisive in the formation of European societies, not even one, throughout our historical evolution, has had an impact on the rural clans in order to force them towards a general movement of concentration and solidarity. On the contrary, since the first century, these clans have maintained their initial insularity. Coming from the regime of the great independent [landed] domains, they have reached our [present] days without having succeeded in elevating their organization above the small human group that forms them", Viana (1973) 157.

71 Viana (1973) 259.

72 Viana (1973) 286 f.

manifestations, the stamp of these natural singularities. The economic, social and political problems of these new societies demand, for this very reason, in the forms of their equation, the inclusion of absolutely new data, resulting in information that Western thinkers and statesmen could not, and cannot, even presuppose the existence of."[73]

For Oliveira Viana, "this is one of the most unique aspects of our social structure. We are entirely different from European societies. Nothing that exists there, at this point, happens here: we are completely *other*."[74]

Thus, Oliveira Viana wins another argument as he opposes the so-called "institutional fetishism", because, unlike Europe that feared oppression from above, stemming from the strong State, in Brazil, oppression would come from local power, the strong State being needed to protect the population and found the nation. These are the main reasons why Oliveira Viana considers that the latifundium founded the notion of a society "yet-to-be-constituted" and, therefore, advocates a strong and centralized State. This is also why he was called a supporter of conservative modernization by means of an *instrumental authoritarianism*. His authoritarianism is instrumental, because his ultimate political blueprint – namely, a strong and centralized State that would serve as a guarantor (or, even, a founder / builder) of Brazilian nationality – implied a "temporary" authoritarianism, which would one day be replaced. It was not the State itself that was of superior value (as it can be argued in the case of the totalitarianism that was forming at the time in Europe), but the foundation of a national unity that constituted the pressing matter. Thus, modernization (Brazil's entry into modernity) should also be achieved through the State, which is why commentators have called him a theorist of "conservative modernization".

3.2   Sérgio Buarque de Holanda

A central theme in the work of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda comprises the issue of the obstacles that the culture of the "cordial man" places in the way of the constitution of democracy. This was something to be found in the Iberian "roots" of the formation of Brazil. Holanda recognizes this in the "wide social plasticity" of the Portuguese, in their lack of "pride of race", and

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73 Viana (1973) 285.
74 Viana (1973) 126.

in their manifest flexibility concerning hierarchies.[75]According to him, the Iberian culture would foster a predominance of the culture of personalism, which, when introduced in Brazil, would have results that would be harmful to the constitution of democracy, precisely with regard to notions of impartiality and abstract rules. Therefore, Holanda states that, "by bringing from distant countries our ways of coexistence, our institutions, our ideas, and in keeping all this in an environment many times unfavourable and hostile, we are still today *outcasts in our very land*".[76]

The personalistic *ethos* in the colonization of Brazil would have enticed the "adventurous social type" to come to Brazil. As found in a "nobleman's ethic", this social type of the adventurer would be marked by the devaluation of physical work. Thus, "the adventurous type" aims to gain without the need for work, unlike the "worker social type" (who would recognize the obstacles, rather than only the gains). This would have had various consequences for the colonization of Brazil.[77] According to Jessé Souza, "right from the start, we have the critical direction of the entire book. It will be the institutionalization of the culture of personality that will hinder solidarity, forms of organization and the horizontal ordering of our country: in a land where all are barons, no lasting agreement is possible."[78] Thus, we can understand that, according to Sérgio Buarque,

> "in societies of such clearly personalistic origins as the Brazilian one, it is understandable that simple person-to-person bonds, which are independent and, even, exclusive of any tendency towards authentic cooperation between individuals, have almost always been the most decisive. Aggregations and personal relationships,

75 Besides being an "ambiguous" country forged between Europe and Africa, marked by a culture of personalism, Holanda argues that, "to this, we must add another facet highly typical of its extraordinary social plasticity: the complete, or practically complete, absence among them of any pride of race. […] It is largely explained by the fact that the Portuguese are, in part, and already at the time of the discovery of Brazil, a people of mixed race", Holanda (1995) 53.

76 Holanda (1995) 31.

77 These consequences can be illustrated through the anecdote by Vincent do Salvador, according to which the Bishop of Tucumã, from the Order of St. Dominic, found himself unable to buy certain food items on the streets or in markets, but could indeed do so only in residential houses: "Indeed, said the Bishop: Things are truly inverted in this land, because the whole of it is not a republic, but each of its houses is one", Holanda (1995) 81.

78 Souza (2000) 162.

although sometimes precarious, and, simultaneously, struggles between factions, between families, between regionalisms, made it an incoherent and amorphous whole. The peculiarity of Brazilian life seems to have been, at that time, a singularly energetic accentuation of the affective, the irrational, the passionate, and a stagnation or, rather, a corresponding atrophy of the ordering, disciplining and rationalizing qualities. *That is to say, the exact opposite of what seems to suit a population in the process of organizing itself politically.*"[79]

It is in this context that we must understand the notion of the "cordial man" that Holanda was working with. According to this notion, appropriated from Ricardo Couto, the "cordial man" would not be the one who would act with politeness, as one might expect at first sight. Rather, "cordial" is that which is guided by the heart, i. e. by emotion (which can be of love or hatred), rather than by interest. Together with the analysis of the "cordial man", Holanda works on the idea of *favour* that engenders an absence of public dimension. Clarifying its exact meaning, Sérgio Buarque observes that 'cordiality' does not necessarily refer to the characteristics of harmony and goodness. It encompasses feelings that are born from the heart, the intimate, the familiar and the private sphere, and, as such, it also encompasses negative feelings. This cordiality is, thus, a "product of our historical and peculiar formation of the Brazilian [style of] life".[80]

The "cordial man" makes social life an extension of his intimacy. The family and the domestic environment overlap with the impersonal, public one: "the private entity always precedes the public entity […]. The result has been the predominance, in all [aspects of] social life, of feelings specific to the domestic sphere, naturally particularistic and anti-political– an invasion of the public by the private, with the family invading the State."[81] All this would support Holanda's classic statement that, faced with the predominance of personalism, paternalism and patriarchalism, democracy in Brazil would always have been "a lamentable misunderstanding".[82]

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79 HOLANDA (1995) 61.
80 HOLANDA (1995) 61–62.
81 HOLANDA (1995) 82.
82 "We brought from strange lands a complex and finished system of precepts, without knowing to what extent they adjust to the conditions of Brazilian life and without considering the changes that such conditions would impose. In fact, the impersonal ideology of democratic liberalism has never become naturalized among us. We only effectively assimilate these principles as far as they coincide with the pure and simple denial of an uncomfortable authority, confirming our instinctive horror of hierarchies and allowing us

Without going into the analysis of the origins of the "cordial man" as a Brazilian cultural trait, what is interesting to note is that, for Holanda, this "cordiality" seems to constitute a great obstacle to establishing public order and, above all, democracy, whose future depends on the elimination of the personalist foundations over which Brazilian social life would have been historically based. In other words, "only through a similar process shall we have finally revoked the old colonial and patriarchal order, with all the moral, social and political consequences that it has brought and continues to bring".[83]

Thus, Holanda understands that social relations, in Brazil, would be determined by the logic of person-to-person relationships, in the form of primary relations, valuing the culture of personalism and, by definition, would be contrary to the rational and impersonal dictates of abstract norms of democracy. Thus, according to Souza,[84] the thesis of the culture of personality makes Brazilian modernization superficial and epidermal – a *façade*. In fact, in Brazil, the personalist culture and the primacy of the "cordial man" ended up creating a situation in which "the public was invaded (dominated) by the private", that is, in all public instances in which primary relations should not exist (as they should be replaced by impersonal relations). Impersonal relations would be lacking in Brazil, whose public sphere would be altered by the sphere of the private (comprising the individual, the favours and loyalty typical of intimate relations, the logic of affects, and friend / foe distinctions).[85] Holanda focuses on the primacy of the patriarchal family (in which the principle of *"I love one more than others"* prevails) in the constitu-

to treat the rulers with familiarity. Democracy in Brazil has always been a misunderstanding", HOLANDA (1995) 160.

83 HOLANDA (1995) 180.

84 SOUZA (2000).

85 "The framework of the family thus becomes so powerful and demanding that its shadow pursues individuals even outside the domestic enclosure. The private entity always precedes the public entity in them. The nostalgia of this compact organization, unique and non-transferable, where preferences based on affective ties prevail, could not fail to leave its mark on our society, our public life, [and] all our activities. Representing, as noted above, the only sector where the principle of authority is undisputed, the colonial family provided the most normal idea of power, respectability, obedience and cohesion among men. The result was that, throughout social life, feelings specific to the domestic sphere, naturally particularistic and antipolitical, prevailed – an invasion of the public by the private, of the State by the family", HOLANDA (1995) 82.

tion of the Brazilian State. The author then uses the reference of the play, *Antigone*, to defend the opposition between the family and the State, the latter not being understood as a mere extension of *oikos*, i. e. family and domestic life.

What Holanda seems to propose is that we free ourselves from our "Iberian Roots", alongside our personalist culture and the structure of the patriarchal family, so that we may meet the imperative of a public and democratic space in the national constitution:[86]

> "The State is not a widening of the family circle and, even less so, an integration of certain groups, certain particularistic desires, of which the family is the best example. […] The fundamental indistinction between the two forms is nothing more than romantic damage that had its more enthusiastic supporters in the 19th century. […] Only through the transgression of the domestic and family order is the State born and does the simple individual become a citizen, a taxpayer, eligible, recruitable and responsible under the laws of the City."[87]

However, and this is an important point, the author believes that a "molecular revolution", at a "slow and safe" pace, would be happening since the abolition of slavery, with the fall of the great premises of the patriarchal family, and the substitution of sugar cane by coffee (supposedly, a more "democratic" plant, with the possibility of planting across small properties that would constitute something similar to the *farms*, in the USA). This "molecular revolution" would be the adaptation of European democracy to Brazilian reality. Adopting a position sometimes called "Americanist", the author goes so far as to affirm that there would *be favourable conditions for the constitution of democracy in our country*, even if it seems that this democracy should undergo an adaptation – into something more properly "ours" than the mechanical transposition of European liberal democracy.[88]

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86 The impossibility of distinguishing the public from the private, of creating an impersonal order of legal, rational domination in Brazil, generates a scenario characterized by institutions that do not work, since they are always obstructed in their functioning by interests that are alien to them, since they belong to the rationality of the person. This is clear from the following statement by Holanda: "Constitutions made not to be enforced, laws that exist only to be violated, all for the benefit of individuals and oligarchies, are a common phenomenon throughout the history of South America", Holanda (1995) 182.

87 Holanda (1995) 141.

88 Holanda (1995) 171.

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3.3 Caio Prado Júnior

Even with the polemics surrounding his academic erudition in relation to Marxist theory at the time of the publication of his book, *A Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo*, Caio Prado Júnior exerted great influence and was regarded as an "inaugurator of historical materialism" in the political analysis of Brazil.[89] Indeed, Prado Júnior made an effort to use elements of the Marxist method in the study of the Brazilian social historical experience. This implied not only to consider the theory as of "universal validity and abstracting it from reality"– as, supposedly, the Brazilian communist parties, supported by the Third International, had done[90] – but to adapt the theory to the Brazilian reality. Prado Júnior opted for the prevalence of the latter, emphasizing a looser and more essayistic adaptation of Marxist ideas, rather than their theoretical discussion.

Those who analyze the repercussions of his ideas sometimes affirm that he would be a *Latin American* Marxist, whose resonance ended up being a gateway through which the historical experience of Brazil can be approached.[91] Along this line of thought, considering the differences and historical peculiarities of Brazil in relation to Europe, a priori, Marxism could only take place at the level of ideas. For the same reason, Brazil's (and Latin America's) own relationship with liberalism should be understood as distinct from that of classical Marxism.

The contribution attributed to this author was that of bringing the Marxist-inspired notion of totality to the centre of Brazilian historical analysis.[92] From such a standpoint, the author could open the way to understanding how the different elements of the colony could be combined. As a result, Prado Júnior was able to realize an "interpretation of Brazil" that would lead "to that distant past, but that still surrounds us on all sides".[93] He recognizes that, although history is made up of the "muddy entanglement ("*cipoal*") of secondary incidents" that may even confuse us, there is a certain 'sense' or direction that gives them intelligibility, something that should guide our

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89 Ricúpero (1998) 66.
90 Ricúpero (2007) 149.
91 Ricúpero (1998) 67.
92 Ricúpero (1998) 71 ff.
93 Prado Júnior (1996) 9.

history.[94] Then, through this vision of totality, Caio Prado Júnior offers an analysis starting from the perspective of this "sense of the colonization", and progressively approaching "the unity of the diverse, this dialectical experience that would be shown in the totality that is the colonial life". Such point of view would differ from e. g. Buarque de Holanda, for it would not be possible, starting from the patrimonial family, or the *ethos of* the adventurer, to perceive how the "sense of the colonization" as a totality was established.[95]

The argument goes that, whereas predecessors analysed the colony through its "internal optics" (e. g. the self-sufficiency of the latifundium; ruralisation; the effects of the "Iberian roots of a personalist culture"; and correlations linked to the balance of antagonisms), Caio Prado Júnior situated Brazil's colonization in the context of world capitalism in formation.[96] Thus, with overseas expansion and the demands of mercantilism ("external" factors), there would be two possible types of colonization: the colonies of settlement (as in New England), and the colonies of exploitation (i. e. the Brazilian example). The focus is more on "types of colonization" than on a typology of the "environment" or the colonizer, such as "worker and adventurer" and their respective ethics, as put forward by Holanda. From Caio Prado Júnior's perspective, the typology of Holanda could not explain how a colony (prosperous and organized) such as Australia could be formed, having been, once, colonized by "bandits and deported persons". Conversely, the explanation could be found in the analysis of the types of colony (exploitation and settlement).The colonization of exploitation, understood as a "system",[97] was deployed in Brazil as an enterprise aimed at the production of goods for export markets, which provided intelligibility to the work done by the Portuguese in the country. In other words,

> "from the mercantile objective, or rather, as a function of it, what would become the Brazilian colony would be organized. Different elements would be combined in an original social organization, quite distinct from the European one, which would practically answer to a single objective: to supply primary products to the metropolis."[98]

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94 PRADO JÚNIOR (1996) 13.
95 RICÚPERO (2007) 150.
96 That is why many credit Prado Júnior's "lineage" of Brazilian social theory (or social thought) as one of the pioneering theories of the "sociology of dependence".
97 RICÚPERO (1998) 71.
98 RICÚPERO (2007) 140.

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Therefore, the colony was subordinated (as a totality) to another social body: the metropolis.

Due to this "directional sense" and this totality of the colonial experience, the colony was organized on the basis of slave labour, production by large units, and the supply of valuable goods to the metropolis – that is, according to the author, the constitution of *the "great exploitation"*: something that would be more important and determining for the characterization of the national identity. Thus, such would be an "outwards-oriented" social organization of large-scale exploitation. The link colony-metropolis, within the emerging worldwide capitalist system, would be centred on an organized form of exploitation, which, in turn, meant for Brazil that its internal market and internal relations were chaotic and disorganized. In fact, the social organization was structured by this precise relationship, the only form of organization being that of the relationship between "masters and slaves".[99]

Furthermore, Caio Prado Júnior does not recognize the notion that the social forms prevailing in the country would be assimilable to feudalism, or fiefdoms. Moreover, he does not see the great productive unit (the latifundium) as self-sufficient, but as determined by the general orientation system of colonization, which demands from it the production of certain goods valued by worldwide capitalism [capitalist world markets]. As for the patriarchal family, even Caio Prado Júnior agrees that it would be "the organic cell of our colonial society", but its formation should be understood only through an analysis of the totality of the colonial experience: "the Brazilian patriarchal family would be formed from the great exploitation itself".[100]

With this tool of totality, the author tries to tackle a contradiction existing between the "political legal organization and the social economic structure of the country. On the one hand, in order to create the National State, we take as a model what exists in the capitalist centre, which tends to transplant liberal institutions that should be guarantors of citizenship". On the other hand, the mode of production based on slavery was determined by needs that were alien to the country and imposed upon the local population, fostering a great deal of social exclusion for the majority of Brazil's population.[101]

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99 Novais (1999) 1112.
100 Prado Júnior (1996) 286.
101 Prado Júnior (1996) 286 ff.; Ricúpero (1998) 73 ff.

4   Final remarks

We have been able to see that, after the proclamation of the Republic, but especially after 1920, the "interpretations of Brazil" took centre stage in the debates. The authors studied here focused their concerns on the issue as to how the State could organize a supposedly amorphous society and turn it into a nation, and how the State could put together a political programme for Brazil. Oliveira Viana advocated the foundation of a strong State, which, through "instrumental authoritarianism", would found the Brazilian Nation; Caio Prado Júnior thought that a socialist programme for the country could not bypass the analysis of Brazil describing it as a colony; and, finally, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda analyzed the establishment of public rationality and democracy in Brazil. Common to all three analyses (even if they are very different from each other and described with a great deal of oversimplification for our purposes) was the assumption that Brazil presented structural differences in relation to the centre of European modernity of that time, and that these structural differences required a great theoretical effort in order to understand the consequences of these Brazilian peculiarities.

Such interpretations also dealt with the problem as to how certain theoretical references to advanced capitalism would work in the Brazilian context. This is the case, for example, of European liberalism, which, in Brazil, coexisted with slavery.[102] Roberto Schwarz's evaluation highlights the mismatch existing between liberalism in Europe and liberalism in Brazil:

> "We had just achieved independence in the name of French, English, and American liberal ideas, […] which were thus part of our national identity. On the other hand, with equal fatality, this ideological ensemble would clash with slavery and its defenders, and, what is more, [with the reality of] living with it."

In a more categorical way, the author affirms that, "throughout its social reproduction, tirelessly, Brazil adopts and restores European ideas, always in an improper way", ideas that were "subjected to the influence of the place" and which, without losing their pretensions of origin, "gravitated according to a new rule, whose graces, misfortunes, ambiguities and illusions were also

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102 See also Faoro (1994) 80: "Throughout history, the Brazilian national State was born from an absolutist tradition with a liberal form to coopt divergent economic interests, such as those of the rural lord and the urban merchant. The anomaly of this liberalism was not so much its coexistence with slavery, but, above all, the tonic of the constitutional system, vested in the State, and not in the individual, in its rights and guarantees."

singular. To know Brazil was to know of these displacements, experienced and practised by all as a kind of fatality, for which, however, there was no name, because the improper use of names was in its nature."[103]

One hopes that this presentation should suffice to demonstrate how the notion of Brazilian "singularity" and "diversity" has been relevant to the discussions of the national identity, both within academia and without. The aim here was to present the debate, without advocating any theory, or discussing its merits. Nor was the intention to explain such confluence of political ideas by more contemporary models of the circulation of ideas. The goal has been, merely, to show how the representation of Brazil in its double diversity (i. e. a land on a divergent path within "the West" and with great internal diversity) became (and may still be) a topic relevant to the debates on the country's national identity.

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103 SCHWARZ (2005) 24.

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