

## **DILEMMAS FOR CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY IN CONTEMPORARY BRAZIL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The culture and democracy agenda is both a global characteristic and a feature of contemporary Brazil. Democracy dominates the current scenario through a complex set of variants that have given rise to a debate between possible complementarities and obvious contradictions. In today's world, democracy has established itself as an (almost) universal value, albeit through versions and visions that often contrast and conflict. Hence the fierce disputes that take place in its name, concerning both its definition and delimitation. In modern times, countless conflicts reflect its omnipresence and omnipotence. In short, its hegemony as an (almost) universally claimed value, is based on the concept of one-size-fits-all. Everyone demands and proclaims democracy, but, as has been noted, such manifestations are characterized by intense struggles over its definition and delimitation. Thus, democracy and its conflicts have become central to the current national and international scene. With culture, something similar takes place, though less intensely, since it comes from a less contentious arena.

### **KEYWORDS**

Culture; democracy, Brazil

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### **RESUMO**

O agendamento da cultura e democracia caracterizam o mundo e o Brasil contemporâneo. A democracia domina o cenário atual por meio de um complexo conjunto de variantes, que se debatem entre complementariedades possíveis e contradições flagrantes. Na atual circunstância mundial, a democracia tem se afirmado enquanto valor (quase) universal, ainda que em versões e visões muitas vezes visivelmente contrastantes e conflitantes. Daí as ferozes disputas que acontecem em seu nome, envolvendo sua definição e sua delimitação. Na contemporaneidade, inúmeros conflitos perpassam sua onipresença e onipotência. Em resumo, sua hegemonia como valor reivindicado por (quase) todos, funciona fundada em um conceito-ônibus, no qual tudo parece caber. Todos conclamam e proclamam a democracia, mas, como anotado, estas manifestações vêm acompanhadas por intensas lutas por sua definição e delimitação. Assim, a democracia e seus conflitos adquirem uma centralidade na cena atual internacional e nacional. Com a cultura acontece algo similar, só que em intensidade bem mais branda, pois ela surge como um campo de disputa mais leve.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Cultura; democracia; Brasil

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Without attempting to be exhaustive, within the universe of democracy, innumerable constellations appear to be in stark opposition, many of them markedly polarized. In addition to the peculiarities associated with democracy in various societies, the contemporary world poses so many new challenges to it, so that it is impossible to make a consistent and detailed analysis of them all. It is therefore necessary, from a panoramic perspective, to list some of the main dilemmas faced by democracy today.

The seeds of the disputes have already been sewn within the current classifications used to discuss democracies. One example would be the distinction between formal and substantive democracy, between conceiving democracy as a set of procedures to be complied with and respected by all, or as a process that must ensure, make feasible and effective those rights achieved through citizenship. A second example concerns the differentiation in the representation mechanisms for representative and participatory democracy, the former exemplified by the profound unrest experienced today in countless countries, the latter the product of recent experiments in participation, still historically undeveloped. Such examples allow us to foresee counter-attempts of confrontation and conjunction between different modes of democracy, developed, as always, in relationships fraught with tension.

In addition to the modalities inherent in the idea and practice of democracy, the contemporary scene is marked by struggles against authoritarian regimes; a desire to bridge the gap between large and small powers, as well as engagement with attempted attacks and protests for and against democracy. Interventions carried out in the name of democracy have produced very unequal results: in some cases, there has been a cementing of human rights, freedoms and citizen participation, whereas others have produced lawless societies, far removed from any democratic conditions or desires. The so-called “Arab Spring” emerges as a symbol of profoundly unequal destinations. For better or worse, this series of episodes has served to impose democracy on the current agenda, making it an ever-present theme on the contemporary scene.

The dispute that surrounds its denominations, definitions and delimitations and the effective interventions developed in its name in the contemporary world are not the only dilemmas experienced by democracy today. Societal shifts are a feature of contemporary life, and have a potent impact on democracy and culture. It is worth considering some of these, by taking a birds-eye approach.

There are many dilemmas confronting democracy due to the redefinition of the place occupied by countries and with the flourishing of supranational bodies and the governance of different typologies, all of which possess fragile (or non-existent) democratic structures and procedures. Democracy, despite, in its modern guise, having been born into the system of the nation state, is challenged by the emergence of these new modalities of supranational bodies and governance, which today hold significant powers in terms of how they frame the world in which we live. International organizations and large regional blocs take powers away from countries and challenge the sovereignty of nations – the traditional places for the development of democracy. In addition to supranational bodies, the contemporary scene has seen the emergence of multinational

mega-businesses that produce enormous power bases in a clear disconnect from the socialization of power, understood as the basic condition for democracy to exist. “Glocalization” creates tension for both democracy and culture. It requires both to adapt to new societies and institutions.

The mutations in contemporary sociability, caused by a vast transformation of transport and communications systems, coupled with the configuration of a networked society, constitute a new mode of sociability, which is distinct from modernity. This commendable new world combines an umbilical coexistence, a way of living in the present, and tele-presence, with long-distance experiences. This has changed the working patterns of sociability, politics, democracy and culture, which have come to depend on non-geographic spaces, on mediated formats, connected by digital networks, which have to become acclimatized to a life lived in real time and one which operates on a global scale. Democracy, politics and culture, forged, in their modern versions, in an environment where face-to-face coexistence in geographical spaces was the norm, now need to make significant changes. In this way, democracy, politics and culture are challenged to adapt to this new networked sociability, which combines the umbilical, the global and the local way of doing things. The expression “glocal” appears as an aposite synthesis of experiences that characterize and single out the contemporary. Virtual spaces are intertwined with the old geographical spaces and coexistence ends up being permeated by teleliving, a life experienced at a distance and with degrees of reality similar to experiences in the present.

Nanotechnologies, with the dematerialization of goods and services, enable the emergence of a societal scenario in which knowledge becomes a vital component of the accumulation of capital, giving rise to a new kind of capitalism: cognitive capitalism. Globalization facilitates economic connections at a global level, strengthening capitalism and the neoliberal configurations it constructs: a system which imposes, as a model for society, market regulation, as well as the reduction of the state, with subsequent prejudicial outcomes for public spaces, politics, democracy, culture, freedom, fellowship, justice and social equality.

In summary, this can be seen as an awkward historical transition from the model instituted during modernity to another model, which seeks to translate contemporary life into unusual sociability, institutions and governance, presenting huge challenges for both democracy and culture, which were historically shaped in modernity and are today challenged to construct new formats that fit the contemporary world. It is not necessary to enter the controversy of the opposing viewpoint, via postmodern, neo-modern, and other perspectives. It is enough to affirm that democracy and culture have been thrown into the whirlwind of this overwhelming societal transition, experiencing both progress and setbacks.

In such historical circumstances, culture acquires very modern modes of production, circulation and consumption; innovative content and formats, in addition to assuming transversality in the areas of science, communication, economics, education, politics, technology, tourism and other, often unusual, areas. Culture associated with manifestations of identity, cultural diversities and intercultural dialogues pressurize

democracy, in the search for inaugural cultural rights, which supports cultural citizenship, including a new dimension of the right to have rights, according to the original conception of citizenship. In short: culture, rights, citizenship, politics and democracy are embroiled in changes that are both open and profound.

This generic and brief outline serves to contextualize the challenges and dilemmas that impact on the association between culture and democracy described here. Despite glocal brands and labels, experimentation takes place in contexts that unequivocally combine global constraints and flows, such as those indicated, with localities, which are derived from each specific economic, political and cultural circumstance. In short, the glocal emerges as all-powerful. It has, therefore, become necessary to form a new movement: confronting these impasses and discussions within a defined economic, political and cultural environment: 21<sup>st</sup> century Brazil.

Taking into account the democracy agenda and its interface with culture on the international stage, we need to focus on our attempts to reveal the relationship between culture and democracy in Brazil today. At the outset, it should be noted that the current Brazilian situation is one of political, economic and cultural crisis. Since the media/legal/parliamentary-orchestrated coup of 2016, the issue of democracy has taken centre stage, as has discussion of this new type of coup (Jinkings, Doria & Cleto, 2016). The cultural arena has positioned itself as a majority in defence of democracy and against the coup. This positioning has even affected some of the cultural sectors that disagreed politically with the Dilma Rousseff administration. This text seeks to analyse the relationship between culture and democracy in the current troubled Brazilian context.

#### **DILEMMAS FOR DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL**

An interesting debate has begun to proliferate in Brazil, caused by experiences of a new type of democratic rupture, and by the historical factors that make it possible to understand the authoritarian traits that inhibit democracy here and enable the cyclical formation of States of Exception. One of the key people central to this discussion, the sociologist Jessé Souza, has insisted on abandoning, analytically, the paradigm of the centrality of colonization as positioned by the Portuguese, replacing this with the anomaly of its past slavery, which was an intense experience for Brazil and a long way from the experience of Portugal (Souza, 2015, 2017). This perspective has sparked controversy, not only because of the author's style, but also as it has been viewed as a radical review of explanations which, to some extent, have been accepted in Brazil since Gilberto Freyre (1990) and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (2005), amongst others.

To take slavery as a fundamental analytical axis for the formation of Brazil and its profound social inequality, its democratic difficulties and its persistent authoritarianism seems a plausible approach toward revealing the contemporary Brazilian reality. This interpretive attitude not only redefines analytical axes deep-rooted in Brazilian thinking and even in daily life, but also produces a remarkable reintroduction of the issue of slavery within the national political context. This approach thus ceases to be uniquely claimed

by the black population in its struggle for social reparation, for the construction of its memory and its political-cultural identity, and becomes a wider issue for all Brazilians, since it both defines how present-day Brazil is constructed and explains the fragility of its democratic existence. This shift in approach makes slavery and its historical consequence a central issue to be faced by Brazilian politics and culture, in their modalities, singularities and necessarily different temporalities.

Further to this current historical review, other authors, from different and even conflicting theoretical standpoints, have already pointed out the structural authoritarianism that runs through Brazilian history, even during democratic and non-dictatorial times. Florestan Fernandes (1975) speaks of the process of conservative modernization that constitutes the country. Marilena Chaui (2000) points out persistent authoritarianism in the founding myth of the Brazilian state. Carlos Nelson Coutinho (2000) draws attention to how transitions within Brazil always occur following agreement between the dominant powers and with the constant exclusion of the subordinate sectors in the change process as they impose limitations, including limitations on the size and extent of such transformations. In summary, all these authors refer to this phenomenon as a fundamental element in explaining the structural authoritarianism that permeates Brazilian society.

The difficulty in contemplating the breadth of societal changes can be exemplified by peculiar historical circumstances, such as the independent attitude posed by the heir to the Portuguese throne or by the proclamation of the republic by a member of the military loyal to the monarchy. On the rare occasions when dissonant governments were installed, at different levels, by the ruling classes, there was always a rupture with democratic conventions. In 1954, the elite's brutal opposition to the second democratic and nationalist government of Getúlio Vargas led to the suicide of the president-elect. In 1964, President João Goulart, who sought to develop grassroots reforms to incorporate popular sectors into Brazilian capitalism, was overthrown by a civil-military coup, with the support of the United States. In 2016, President Dilma Rousseff, from the Workers Party (PT), was re-elected via the popular vote but then dismissed from the government through a media-legal-parliamentary coup.

In each of these historical events, governments that differentiated themselves from those of the Brazilian elite, and which sought to include popular elements of society within national development, were overthrown by political forces representative of the Brazilian ruling classes, and, despite the historical timescale, by similar means: extensive use of a media that is unanimously partisan and positioned as a true political agent; selective use of corruption charges; criticisms of "populism" in the management of the government and its relationship with subordinate sectors that fulfilled the demands of the non-dominant sectors of society; use of the right to free speech in defence of a supposedly threatened "democracy". The difficulty of coexistence with democracy is evident in those historical periods that fall outside the strict parameters and prescriptions of the governments of the Brazilian ruling classes.

Currently, the imposed State of Exception is instigating, with the support of a congress corrupted by the corporate financing of political campaigns and other negotiations,

a set of ultraliberal “reforms” that remove rights, exacerbate social inequalities, privatize publicly-owned assets and redefine Brazil’s position in the world by dismissing independent foreign policy and returning to a foreign policy of subservience to the interests of dominant countries. Internally, contempt for the democratic norms of social coexistence brought about by the media-legal-parliamentary coup has led to the emergence of a climate of disrespect for the rule of law, with oppressive actions on freedoms, such as interventions against artistic exhibitions, and attacks on universities and other institutions. Both the media and the judiciary, neither of which were democratized by post-dictatorship governments, have actively participated in the construction of this State of Exception, which is opposed to democracy, either through explicit support or through the silence surrounding the subjugation of democratic rights and liberties.

### **DILEMMAS FOR CULTURE WITHIN BRAZIL**

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, in the eyes of its elite, Brazil was as a white population in line with the “western” model. The native people were subjugated, and black people, brought forcibly through slavery, had either been forgotten or kept silent. The intended ideal of whitening the Brazilian population appears as one of the driving forces behind immigration from Europe that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Implicit in the imagined process of “civilization” in Brazil, of becoming white and western, is collective amnesia towards profound social inequality coupled with non-recognition of the black and indigenous population, who remained discriminated against, unseen and unheard.

In the 1930s, the Brazilian government abandoned this narrative and purported the official line of miscegenation as a national characteristic. In extreme cases certain formulations gave rise to proclamations of a “racial democracy”. Since then, such official discourse has permeated society, even entering the cultural sphere. Brazilian culture is identified as coming from a synthesis of different cultural roots: white-western, indigenous peoples and people from black African nations brought to Brazil. However, the official discourse does not give due recognition or provide equitable treatment to these so-called cultural “roots”. The supremacy of white-western culture is overwhelming and almost always appears in its more conservative guise, contrary to the ideals of the Enlightenment, of the anarchist, socialist, worker, communist, member of the avant-garde movement, and so on.

Black cultures and indigenous peoples, despite having valid reasons to be part of the national reality, have been discriminated against, exploited and even persecuted and repressed. The infinitesimal support from the nation state simply involves lamenting the situation of “forgetfulness” and the subjugation to that which they have been subject. The troublesome Afro-Brazilian cultures only obtained a measure of institutionality in the Brazilian state in 1988 with the creation of the Palmares Cultural Foundation, a landmark event highlighted by the actions of the organized black movement in the recent struggle against the dictatorship and by the passing of a hundred years since the abolition of slavery in Brazil, the penultimate country to legally end black slavery, despite being one

of the largest recipients of slave traffic in the world. It is estimated that over four million black people were forcibly brought to Brazil on the terrible slave ships. An ongoing study has drawn attention to the meagre budgets allocated to the Palmares Cultural Foundation in absurd contrast to the proliferation of Brazilian black cultures (Guimarães, 2017). Even today, almost 90 years after the inauguration of the official discourse of the “roots” of Brazilian culture, the indigenous culture is in an even more parlous state, not having been institutionalized or even having designated cultural policies.

To summarize, in the almost 90 years since the official discourse over the three constituent sources of Brazilian culture there has been no effective recognition nor more equitable treatment of black cultures or indigenous peoples in the country. As the years have passed, state and society have continued to discredit and even discriminate against such cultural manifestations, which are these days carried out on a smaller scale and to privilege white-western culture, often revered as the culture most admired and supported by current cultural policies. The distinction between such cultures and their immense cultural, political, social and economic repercussions remains all too apparent.

Difficulties surrounding Brazilian culture are not limited to the mismatches between official discourse and effective cultural policies. They have suffered from misconceptions and constraints that have profoundly affected their development and characteristics in Brazil. They were hampered by the prevalence of an ornamental vision of culture (Coutinho, 2000). They were considered out of place in times of coexistence between slavery and liberal ideas (Schwarz, 2005). They were late to submit to institutions, such as the implementation of the university system in Brazil in the twentieth century. They had their most brilliant moments and movements prohibited by authoritarian regimes, as happened with the Estado Novo (1937-1945) and the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985). In short, relations between culture, society, politics and democracy have been extremely problematic and strained in Brazil.

#### **DILEMMAS AND IMPASSES IN BRAZILIAN CULTURE TODAY**

The contemporary challenges experienced by democracy in the world now include the problems recorded in both past and present Brazilian history. The historical trajectory, sketched in rudimentary form, enables the construction of a context that can provide meaning and also throw light on the current situation. In analysing the present, it should be pointed out that a historical investigation of the country’s cultural policies has led to the conclusion that this history has been marked by three lamentable traditions: absence, authoritarianism and instability (Rubim, 2011). The book cited analyses how these traditions of cultural policies were, or were not, treated by the Ministers of Culture Gilberto Gil (2003-2008) and Juca Ferreira (2008-2010).

The management of culture during the two Lula governments (2003-2010) placed the state in the role of promoter, formulator and enforcer of cultural policies, in an effort to overcome the tradition of absence. In order to combat authoritarianism, it sought to develop cultural policies according to democratic norms, adopting an expanded the

notion of culture through public policies based on the express participation of cultural communities in the discussions about and deliberations of policies, seminars, councils, chambers/colleges and national conferences on culture. Instability was addressed by the construction of state policies, such as the decennial National Plan for Culture (PNC), approved as a constitutional amendment in 2005 and becoming law in 2010, and the National System of Culture (CNS), initiated in the early years of the administration and becoming a Constitutional Norm in 2012.

Certain cultural policy devices have made it possible to manage the three traditions. The PNC appears as a good example, since it seeks to overcome absence, authoritarianism and instability with the construction of long-term democratic cultural policies. A recent study showed how the drafting of the PNC enabled not only the broad participation of cultural agents and communities, but also allowed the proposals to be incorporated into the PNC (Turenko, 2017). In this way, the National Plan of Culture acts, simultaneously, against: absence, since it is an effective policy; authoritarianism, since it was elaborated in a democratic and participative way; and instability, since it makes provision for the long term, looking beyond specific governments.

Obviously, the clash within the longstanding traditions of cultural policies in Brazil did not occur without contradictions or problems. The book about the Lula administrations also deals with the various limitations of the Gilberto Gil and Juca Ferreira terms of office. Even considering these limits, cultural administration in Brazil in the period 2003-2010 attained commendable political-cultural levels. This period stands as beacon of light in the history of the three lamentable traditions that reflect the history of cultural management, to the extent that the suggestion that the Ministry of Culture was reinvented in these years seems neither absurd nor misplaced. It can also explain certain recent events that have taken place in the field of culture in Brazil, such as the reaction to the attempt to abolish the ministry itself, which occurred in the immediate aftermath of the coup. These themes will be taken up later in our text.

However, this standard was not maintained in the Dilma Rousseff government, when Culture took a back seat under the administrations of the Ministers Ana de Holanda (2011-2012) and Marta Suplicy (2012-2014). Some relevant policies continued, albeit at a slow pace, such as the PNC, which set its targets in 2011; the CNS, approved in 2012, but still not regulated by law today, and the “Cultura Viva” program, with its well-known cultural points of reference, whose national law was deliberated in 2014. However, the standard of political-cultural involvement, on a national and international scale, of the Ministry of Culture has visibly decreased (Calabre, 2015; Rubim, 2015). The ministry no longer formulates policy, acts and mobilizes cultural communities and Brazilian society to the extent of previous years. This reduction in the extent of state intervention has been visible both nationally and internationally.

The return of Juca Ferreira to the ministry in 2015, during Dilma Rousseff’s second term, was meant to herald a return to a more dynamic approach, although in practice this fell short of the desired effect. The stormy political scenario of 2015 and 2016, exacerbated by the economic crisis and the ongoing coup under the impeachment process,



paralyzed every government department, including the Ministry of Culture. Little could be achieved in such a turbulent context. The energies of the entire government and the Ministry itself were engulfed in the political and economic crisis, whilst the short period of time available to the new direction of Juca Ferreira – less than two years – added to the difficulty in achieving the desired goals.

Despite the reduction in performance levels witnessed during the first Dilma government and the improbability of being able to resume initial levels in its second term, in overall terms the Workers Party (PT) administrations from 2003 to 2016 in the sphere of culture generally and in cultural policies in particular, can point to important advances in their efforts to overcome the lamentable traditions. For example, the registration of the PNC, the CNS, democratic participation in cultural policy decisions as well as a variety of programs, such as *Cultura Viva*, a program that has since evolved into *Viva Community Culture*, operating in more than 15 countries throughout Latin America (Turin, 2015; Rubim, 2017). Other relevant programs should also be remembered as important landmarks from this special period, presided over by a management of culture at a national level. Amongst many such programs, we would like to cite the following: *Plural Brazil*; *Doc-TV*; *Revealing Brasís*; *Brazil for All Screens*; *More Culture in the School* and *More Culture in the Universities*. Undoubtedly, despite certain limitations, during this period the Ministry of Culture presided over one of its most consistent and creative periods in history.

However, despite such efforts and initiatives, the successive governments of Lula (2003-2010) and Dilma (2011-2016) were not able to deal with certain issues vital for the consolidation of policies of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue innovatively developed during those years.

Difficulties stemmed from a number of factors, some of which are structural, such as the fragile nature of the position traditionally occupied by the Ministry of Culture within the general framework of government, including its relationship to budgetary resources allocated to the agency. Other factors were more sporadic in nature, such as specific management-related difficulties. Three problems should be highlighted, given their relevance to the persistent impasses.

First, the contrary system of financing and stimulating culture in Brazil, based on laws to provide incentives, was not modified, in spite of many debates and the initiative entitled *Pro-Culture* sent to the National Congress, which advocated a new model of support for culture. This project was only sent during the last year of the Lula government and did not receive due attention during the Dilma administration. The system, still in force today, depends almost entirely on incentive laws, with tax exemptions that revolve around 100% of the amount anticipated by companies. Direct support from the national government, via the National Fund of Culture, besides being practically insignificant, presents management problems from both a democratic and republican perspective (Paiva Neto, 2017). In short, the current model of financing and incentivization is still based on public money decided by companies, which favours commercially viable culture to the detriment of the complex universe of goods, products, artistic endeavours and manifestations integral to culture in general (Rubim, 2016).

Creativity and diversity suffer exponentially with this unilateral model of financing and incentivizing culture, which is, in itself, insufficient for encouraging the rich diversity of Brazilian culture (Rubim & Vasconcelos, 2017). The model of financing and promoting the hegemonic culture that remains in force after 14 years of PT governance does not meet the cultural diversity policies that were implemented throughout those years. Imprisoned by the logic of fiscal incentive laws, it has no ability to address the complexity and plurality of the cultural arena. The model supports cultural manifestations that are more closely linked to the market, which naturally take into account the cultural marketing interests of the company, which is theoretically a sponsor, yet operates with the almost exclusive use of public money. The majority of the complex cultural fabric in Brazil simply does not get support and resources for its development, thus directly compromising the promotion and preservation of Brazilian cultural diversity.

The second aspect, crucial for cultural policies, emanates from the disconnect with education. The absence of a link between these policies can be seen as a feature of Brazilian history, whether we look at the period of the joint Ministry for Education and Culture (1953-1985) or their subsequent separation, from 1985 onwards. The Lula government achieved little in this area. Under President Dilma, two inaugural projects from the Ministries of Education and Culture sought to establish such connections through the programs “More Culture in Schools” and “More Culture in Universities”. However, because of the scale and extent of the disconnect and the short time available to enact the programs, there has been no consistency to the measures needed to properly assess their impact. There are several ongoing studies but, as of today, these have not been able to produce a substantive and definitive evaluation. Undoubtedly, in addition to these initial programs, such a complex situation requires more profound and longer-term measures.

The third question involves the relationship between culture and communication via the media. Since the 1930s, the Brazilian government has opted for a private communication system, which has created a substantial divide between culture and communication policies. The separation was further accentuated by the deliberate “national security” policy of the civil-military dictatorship to symbolically integrate the country via telecommunications and communication, which resulted in countrywide networks for radio and, most notably, television.

From this perspective, it should be noted that free-to-air television has played a substantial role in Brazil, including the shaping of a culture effectively shared by all Brazilians. Soap operas take a prominent place in this cultural framework (Rubim & Rubim, 2004). More than simply teledramas, they became symbolic goods that inhabit, feed and shape the daily lives of Brazilians, becoming part of their experience of living the world. In addition to this dimension (of being a symbolic construction of life experience), soap operas represent a powerful culture industry, both nationally and internationally. Such television products are now exported to over 100 countries throughout the world.

Free-to-air television in Brazil structured a television model in a way that was clearly antidemocratic, since it was highly concentrated and centralized. Broadcast network companies remain in the hands of very few families, who exercise strict control over

free-to-air television. This almost always functions as a national network, making it impossible to produce regional and local programming. More than 90% of Brazilian television programming is broadcast from the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Add to this the paltry regional and local production, the radical detachment between the actions of the TV broadcasters, dynamic cultural agents, as noted above, and regional and local cultural dynamics. Television is not accessible to the extent that it does not effectively connect regional and local cultural production, nor even to disseminate, on a daily basis, the existence of such cultural goods. In Brazil, it has become a vehicle that remains some distance from regional and local culture and, in practice, is opposed to the cultural diversity that originates in the territories that constitute the Brazilian nation. The absence of powerful Brazilian regional culture from television screens broadcasting free-to-air is symptomatic of the negative attitude toward cultural diversity that is the essence of Brazil's rich culture.

This picture becomes even more worrying if we take into account another feature of Brazilian free-to-air television: it produces almost all of its own programming, with the exception of homogenized north-American films and religious programs, which dominate the TV screens, and also generally purchase their own air-time. This practice is yet another barrier to the production, circulation, distribution and dissemination of goods and services that constitute Brazilian cultural diversity.

Although the 1988 Constitution foresaw a model for a television service comprised of state broadcasters, both private and public, as being fundamental for the democratization of communication in Brazil, such a model has failed to materialize. The same has occurred with the regionalization of television programming, a provision for which was also included in the 1988 Federal Constitution. Conservative forces and the mainstream press have prevented the application of laws as defined in the Federal Constitution. In other words, constitutional mechanisms have not been applied since it was established and Brazilian free-to-air television remains highly concentrated and centralized, with all the fall-out that this entails for society and culture, as well as for Brazilian cultural diversity.

The Ministry of Culture, spearheaded by the Gilberto Gil administration, addressed these problems through different initiatives. He proposed the transformation of the National Cinema Agency (Ancine) into the National Agency of Cinema and the Audio-visual (Ancinav), to expand its remit for recording communications. The proposal was vehemently opposed by the mainstream press and their affiliated cultural creators, and by conservative sectors. The Lula government backed down and withdrew the draft bill. For the rest of the Lula administration and in the successive Dilma governments no substantive measures to this end were adopted. The ambiguity and lack of substantial initiatives from both administrations on a subject so central to democracy and cultural diversity is striking (Lima, 2012).

Unlike many countries around the world, including Portugal, Brazil has no general law that democratically governs communications in society. The current telecommunications code dates back to 1962. All the attempts that have been made to provide Brazil with democratic legislation in this field have been met with a hostile response from the

mainstream press and the ruling classes, who traditionally resort to denouncing supposed attacks on freedom of the press and attempts to impose arbitration and authoritarianism in matters of communication. There is a question for democracy that refuses to go away: can this section of society not be subject to democratic order like the rest of society under democracy? From the perspective of democratic parameters such a position is unsustainable.

The initiative to discuss how a broader public television service in Brazil should be constituted was also led, at the outset, by the Ministry of Culture, although with strong opposition from the Ministry of Communications within the Lula government. Eventually created in 2007, the Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (EBC), with its subsidiary, TV Brasil, was established in the government's communication department and, at the beginning, included members from the Ministry of Culture, who were then gradually discarded. The project lost its focus, becoming less consistent and less radical, having been compromised from the outset by negotiations in the National Congress for its approval (Rocha, 2014).

Having completed the overthrow of the Dilma government and the project of democratic transformation, one of the very first measures of the State of Exception under Michel Temer was to propose the abolition of the Ministry of Culture. However, this proposal was not carried out due to the resistance of artists, intellectuals, agents, groups and cultural communities who, amidst a variety of actions and manifestations, occupied regional Ministry of Culture offices throughout Brazil, with creative and highly visible political and cultural activities, forcing the government to backtrack on the proposed abolition. Relevant to the fight was the fact that six outspoken women from the cultural sector, who had been invited to take over a department intended to take the place of the Ministry, refused to do so. However, this first victory against the State of Exception did not ensure that cultural policies under development would be maintained. The ultraliberal government program; the personnel appointed to the Ministry, the latent instability within the organization, with four ministers in less than two years, as well as drastic budget cuts have made it impossible to continue the significant cultural policies inaugurated during the Gilberto Gil administration.

The state of culture becomes even more worrying with the climate of polarization and acrimony prevalent in the country and fuelled by the mass media who are totally partisan in outlook, and in the "everything goes" attitude that has taken over the country and Brazilian politics, with the rise of a government that has no democratic legitimacy, itself blighted by serious accusations of corruption. Attacks, including killings, of subordinate and minority social leaders and groups, whether rural or urban, have intensified. Persecution of those with differing opinions has intensified. Aggressive responses to freedom of expression and creation have emerged as a result of this climate. Various artistic exhibitions have been threatened, attacked and suspended, with reactionary and moralistic views being voiced about the body and sexuality. Academic seminars have also been threatened and even banned. Universities have been invaded and their directors humiliated on flimsy pretexts. Ultimately, the environment of freedom of public

expression and democracy experienced under the Lula and Dilma governments has given way to violence and a patent lack of freedom, a situation that is the enemy of creation and cultural debate.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Applying a panoramic retrospective and looking at the current picture of the tense relationship between culture and democracy in Brazil, certain considerations can be made about the impasses in the connection between culture and democracy in Brazil. The current situation seems to express and mirror the frictions and clashes that characterize Brazil's history. There does not seem to be there anything new here: culture is once again taken by the government to be a class privilege, in its most conservative and elitist aspects – an assumption characteristic of a deeply unequal society that does not recognize its cultural diversity and does not respect differences.

In this new context, the results and the innovative and diverse developments, in relation to both thought and practice in culture, that stemmed from Gilberto Gil's term of office, are under threat. However, because of the energy endemic to these cultural policies, it may be that they are able to resist these remedial forces. The hypothesis that the victory against the illegitimate government in the struggle to retain the Ministry of Culture in 2016 was due to changes brought about by cultural policies does not seem unlikely. By expanding the concept of culture, developing broader cultural policies and widening the participation of cultural agents and communities, the Ministry has created new social agents. Such agents exist in addition to artists and heritage personnel, the usual cultural interlocutors, and even the privileged public bodies, which predate its creation, such as the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) and the National Arts Foundation (Funarte). Since 2003, the Ministry has begun to interact with wider, and more socially and culturally diverse sectors, most of which had no prior political or cultural contact with the Ministry or even the state itself. This genuine reinvention of the Ministry enables us to be hopeful about the struggle for the maintenance of certain policies that are vital to the culture of the Brazilian citizen. Obviously, the conditions will be difficult, but one can imagine that their vitality will permit them to resist political and cultural setbacks. Future studies will be necessary to confirm or deny this hypothesis.

In spite of the advances made during the Gil and Juca periods, the Ministry was unable to incorporate culture within the development model of the Lula and Dilma governments. The simultaneous presence of Gilberto Gil and Lula enhanced the possibilities of linking culture and development, without being able to raise it to another level. It is worth mentioning that incorporating culture into this development model is far from an easy task, since governments and politicians almost always view culture as a series of events: the 'cherry on the cake', as Gilberto Gil has often said. The different timeframes involved in the realities of politics and culture also affect the desired connection between culture and development. While politics often seeks short-term results to sustain the everyday political struggle, culture requires, through an opposing dynamic, a longer timeframe to

produce results, since cultural mutations are significantly more difficult to achieve. Culture is at the heart of bodies and minds, at the core of institutions and values, and needs more time for its transformations to occur. Temporal dissonance between culture and politics can thus create tensions when making a political evaluation of the place of culture within the development model. This may be one of the greatest challenges for cultural policies: to understand culture as an essential dimension that permeates and gives meaning to human relations in society and, as a consequence, becomes the basis for development.

In the Lula and Dilma governments, the development model gave preference to socio-economic dimensions, emphasising the social as an essential component of development. Attention to the social as an inherent agent of development can be considered a feature of these governments and of experiences generally in Latin America during the 21st century. This attitude is a remarkable advance on the position that reduced development to mere economic growth as it is viewed from the neoliberal perspective, where the market becomes the privileged agent of development.

Progress made through an umbilical connection between the economic and social dimensions of development did not recur within other spheres. The attitudes of both the Lula and Dilma governments were ambiguous in relation to the environmental dimension, although some progress was made. The political dimension of development was to all intents and purposes overlooked through the assimilation of the mechanisms and procedures of the existing political system, which paralyzed the changes required for political development, such as more in-depth levels of democracy, citizenship and rights. The implicit acceptance of the existing archaic political system, as well as its modes of operation, was, undoubtedly, one of the cornerstones of the crisis in the Dilma government.

Another failing, as serious as the non-incorporation of culture into the development model, is worth mentioning as it relates to an attitude that requires a level of evolution and a high degree of innovation in current terms and on a global scale. This concerns the realization of a process of significant societal changes, attempted through democratic means, but with neither the careful attention nor the willingness required for the dispute for what Antonio Gramsci calls the “political, cultural, intellectual and moral hegemony”, within Brazilian society. Given the potent validity of this ideology throughout the world and in Brazil, especially in spheres of society such as the mass media, elements of the judiciary and the legislature, the dominant classes and sectors of the middle classes, this lack of attitude and understanding has proved disastrous for the political and cultural struggle in these neoliberal times. Inattention to this dispute was evident in the absence of communication and culture policies able to deal with the absence of pluralism, the acute partisanship and the influence that the mass media exerts on Brazilian public opinion. From this perspective, the non-democratization of the media and media-controlled communication has created huge obstacles for the process of the democratization of society that took place during the Lula and Dilma governments: a process characterized by a range of freedoms, the gradual reduction of social inequalities and the securing of rights for important sections of Brazilian society.

The significant advances made by cultural policies, especially in the Lula government, cannot make amends for the non-fulfilment of the solemn promise inscribed in Minister Gilberto Gil's inaugural address: "the cultural policy of the Lula government from this moment (...) is now seen as part of a general project of building a new hegemony in our country" (Gil, 2013, p. 231). The non-realization of this dispute for hegemony and new values has prevented, at least for a time, "the construction of a truly democratic, plural and tolerant nation" (Gil, 2013, p. 232).

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