Brazilians in Lisbon

Immigrant Association and the Meaning of Urban Spaces

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Resumo

A imigração é uma das principais e mais importantes temáticas no cenário atual. A maior parte desses fluxos migratórios para a Europa tem como destinos as metrópoles, as grandes cidades ou, ainda que menores, as eminentemente urbanas. Estas se apresentam como espaços privilegiados de observação da relação entre os temas mais globais e sua absorção pelas práticas e vivências locais. Assim, Lisboa torna-se locus de nossa observação dos processos de ressignificação, de criação de formas de ocupação e de usos dos espaços como elemento fundamental da constituição de identidades e do engajamento de imigrantes brasileiros como atores políticos que não apenas se conformam à dinâmica urbana, mas também procuram redefini-la.

Palavras-chave: Palavras-chave: Imigrantes brasileiros, identidade, fluxos urbanos, mediação política e cultural

Abstract

Immigration is currently one of the main and most important themes for analysis. Much of the migratory flux to Europe is destined for metropolises, large cities or, at least, eminently urban spaces. These spaces are privileged areas for observing the relationship between more global themes and their absorption by local practices and livelihoods. Lisbon is thus the locus of our observations of the processes of re-signification, of the creation of forms of occupation and of the use of spaces as a fundamental element in the constitution of identities. In this light, Brazilian immigrants are political actors that not only conform to urban dynamics, but who also seek to redefine them.

Keywords: Brazilian immigrants, identity, urban flux, political and cultural mediation

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Brazilians in Portugal

The configurations of migratory processes are currently undergoing significant changes and Brazilian immigration is an interesting case study through which we may consider the new situation of immigrants in Europe and, more specifically, in Portuguese society.

Brazilian immigration to Portugal is not as recent as it may seem, and it is important that it be properly contextualized. Since at least the 1960s, Brazilians have immigrated to Portugal, constituting, after the Spanish, the second largest foreign community in the country at that time (Malheiros 1996). There are, however, two periods in which immigration was more intense and significant: between 1981 and 1995 and 1998-1999 and 2003.

Immigration has not been a homogenous phenomenon. The immigrants of the 1960s, which have been the object of few studies, had very little impact on the Portuguese sociocultural panorama, in spite of their relatively high numbers. This state of affairs differs from that of other Portuguese-speaking immigrants originating from the decolonization of Africa, who, later, constituted the largest flow of immigration until the 1980s.

At that time, much of the migratory flow of Brazilians was composed of qualified labourers and professionals in search of work and better quality of life, mostly fleeing from the economic crisis and the violence of the large

Brazilian cities. They were also drawn to the country following Portugal's admittance to the European Union (EU) in 1986, which resulted in investments and the inflow of multinational companies, expanding the job market for these professionals and opening up new areas of work, such as information technology, marketing and design (Baganha, Ferrão and Malheiros 1999).

In the so-called second wave of Brazilian immigration, which began in the late 1990's, the immigration of a qualified workforce gave way to the immigration of middle and working class people who sought jobs below their level of qualification, mostly in civil construction and commerce (Peixoto and Figueiredo 2007). A further difference involved the rise in the number of migrant women. While in the 1980s young men represented almost the entire contingent of Brazilian immigration to Portugal, the second wave was marked by a growing number of women migrants. This phenomenon was also witnessed in other European countries, although official numbers show that male migrants are still a majority, except in some cases. In the case of Brazilians, with 52,478 men and 66,885 women (SEF 2010[2]). Lisbon (189,220), Faro (71,818), Setúbal (47,935) and Oporto (27,112) are the districts with the largest number of legally resident foreigners, in a total population of 445,262 throughout the country. Brazilian immigrants are already a majority in Portugal. There are 119,363 legally resident Brazilians, followed by Ukrainians (49,505), ahead of the Cape Verdeans (43,979). Information concerning the place of residence of Brazilians is still unsystematic, but there are regions in which the Brazilian presence is expressive, such as in Lisbon, in Oporto, in Cacém, in districts of the county of Amadora, and on the Caparica Coast, among others. But the mobility of Brazilians is a further factor that makes this type of analysis difficult. Their mobility is not limited to Portuguese territory, and includes attempts to secure better jobs in other European countries. Immigration stimulated by employment is highly subject to fluctuations, accompanying job opportunities and market changes.

There is no hard data about the contingent of illegal Brazilian immigrants, and numbers vary depending on the sources consulted.[3] Official

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2   As of 2007, the SEF also began to control all of the national borders, including maritime frontiers. There is currently a new juridical regime for the entrance, stay, exit and removal of foreigners: Law 23/2007, July 4th. According to a 2007 report of the SEF, the use of data must take into account the fact that Brazilians and Ukrainians benefited from special regimes, such as, respectively, the Lula Deal and "pre-registration".

3   In relation to the removal of immigrants, Brazilians led the number of administrative processes in

Portuguese organs produce a more conservative estimate than those of organizations that work with immigrants. It was estimated that there were some 100,000 Brazilians without legal documentation in Portugal (Benedixen 2006; Padilha 2006). Even in the absence of a consensus concerning the number of illegal immigrants, we may proceed from the premise that this situation has serious implications that have alarmed both the Portuguese and the Brazilian governments. The theme of the "undocumented" has become increasingly central[4], since it concerns not only the impasse between the State and immigrants, the bureaucratization of the means for regulating legality and the political invisibility of hundreds of thousands of persons, but also relates to prostitution and the traffic of human beings. Another concern of immigrant associations and human rights groups are the Immigrant Detention Centres. Data about these centres is restricted and recent events have highlighted the precarious treatment of immigrants, such as a fire in the Vincennes Centre near Paris, following the death of a 41 year old Tunisian man, supposedly of a heart attack. Twenty other people were injured and two buildings were seriously damaged in the blaze. In Oporto, on January 23, 2008, the Rede Libertária organization held a vigil against the deportation of immigrants who were detained in the Espaço de Acolhimento de Estrangeiros e Apátridas/ Unidade Santo Antônio, drawing attention to the immigrants whose lives were in danger after they denounced the illegal network that forced them to board a boat destined for Spain.

In the last few years, the closing of the borders to immigration, the global economic crisis, growing unemployment and urban violence have made immigrants from non-EU countries into scapegoats. The media has played a fundamental role in shaping public opinion through the propagation of stereotypes, reaffirming stigmas and blaming certain immigrant groups for national woes (Champagne 1997).

Despite the motto "Lisbon, the city of tolerance," which is printed on a

2007 (1,362), followed by Cape Verdeans (194), Ukrainians (146), Angolans (144) and Moroccans (91). When notifications for voluntary removal are taken into account, the data show a slight shift, but Brazil remains in first place with 4,678 processes, followed by the Ukraine (219), Cape Verde (166), Guinea-Bissau (158) and Angola (151). The number of actually realized voluntary returns include 194 Brazilians, 29 Angolans, 12 Ukrainians, 10 Cape Verdeans and 7 Kazaks (SEF 2007). According to 2010 data, Brazil (1,173) are still top of the register of processes of removal followed by Cape Verde (374), Guinea-Bissau (222), Angola (210), Ukraine (115) e Morocco (72). In what concerns voluntary returns, the data register 452 Brazilians followed by Angolans (53), Cape Verdeans (14), Ukrainians (12) (SEF 2010).

4   On the French debate on the "sans papier", see Beau, Confavreux, Lindgaard (2008).

wall in São Domingos Square opposite the popular Ginjinha, the cohabitation of the Portuguese and immigrants is not as smooth as a certain discourse hopes to affirm: Africans are associated with drugs and gangs, Eastern European immigrants with mafias, Brazilian women with prostitution (Lages and Policarpo 2002) and Brazilian men with armed robbery and a "culture of violence" (Barreto 2008). These views were repeatedly presented by the Portuguese media throughout 2008.

In Portugal, the attempted burglary of a bank and the kidnapping of its employees by two Brazilian immigrants in 2008, during which one of the burglars was killed and another seriously injured by the police, prompted an avalanche of various generalized accusations against Brazilian immigrants. One of these was made by the criminalist Moita Flores in a primetime broadcast on the SIC television station, in which he affirmed that this type of crime, in addition to carjackings and others, were essentially perpetrated by Brazilian and Eastern European immigrants. Among the many manifestations that followed the burglary, I would like to draw attention to that reproduced below, taken from http://arrastao.org/sem-categoria/coisa-de-brasileiros/[5]:

> It's like a family. The members of our family may misbehave sometimes, but this is a concern of our family, which must control them and reach a solution. When members of another family misbehave in our homes, this misbehaviour must be controlled and resolved, but it should be clear that they are undesired guests in our home and they should be expelled once the appropriate penalty is applied. In the future, we must also be careful regarding the quality of the people we allow into our homes. (Atom, in response to the critical tone of the blogger concerning Moita Flores' affirmations)

The response of the Brazilian ambassador to Portugal, Celso Marcos Viera de Souza, was immediate and decisive. In a television broadcast, he called the criminalist's claims xenophobic, untrue and irresponsible. This was perhaps the first time that an ambassador responded so quickly and categorically to an attack on the image of Brazil and Brazilians.

Shortly after this episode, news agencies again reported on the association between Brazilians, violence and criminality. This time they reacted to a video on the internet (*YouTube*) about a purported armed gang. Without

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5   Consulted on 15/08/2008.

confirming whether the video was merely a joke, the media ran head-lines such as "Mafias from the *favelas* enter Portugal. Brazilians create the Portuguese First Command [*Primeiro Comando Português*] on the southern coast" (Jornal Correio da Manhã, 19/09/2008). The repercussions of this incident reached Brazil, prompting replies from the ambassador and clarifications from the Portuguese police.

At the same time, the Brazilian film *Elite Squad* [*Tropa de Elite*] opened in Portuguese cinemas, accompanied by special television reports on the BOPE[6], strengthening the association between Brazil and violence. This reference to a Brazilian "culture of violence" acted as an exegetical filter that obscured what was, in fact, an accusatory discourse.

These are some examples that illustrate the political and social climate in which Brazilians live in Portugal, which must be understood alongside growing unemployment in the country. This discourse, however, is surrounded by ambiguous feelings and representation regarding Brazilian men and women, as highlighted by Xavier:

> "(...) the stigma cuts across gender and national origin, being manifest in men and women, Portuguese and Brazilian.
> In this way, a paradoxical relation between an individual and his or her identity is constituted. If, on the one hand, a series of positive characteristics are attributed to Brazilians, these are absent in the Brazilian who immigrates. (Xavier 2004: 117-118).

Life in a foreign country demands of the immigrant constant adaptation. This adaptation is evident at the moment an immigrant arrives in the host country, with differences in language (which, for Brazilians, concerns not only the accent, but also the use of words, expressions and contexts), the occupation of a new residential space, new rules of cohabitation and sociability, a new job, and so forth. In this way, feelings of exclusion, and manifestations of discrimination, can be perceived in various ways, and are at times related to the use and occupation of urban spaces.

According to data on immigrant populations in the Lisbon metropolitan

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6   Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais (Special Operations Police Battalion) is a part of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro. It was created in January of 1978, number 400 police officers specialized in combating crime in high risk areas, including situations in which hostages are taken. For more information, see www.boperj.org

area (AML) from 1991 to 2001, certain patterns of habitation were observed among different immigrant groups, pointing to a greater peripheralisation of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Brazil– the second suburban ring and peri-urban spaces – and Asian populations in the metropolitan centre, particularly in the area around Martim Moniz. A decrease in the segregation index of various immigrant populations was nonetheless observed, including that of Brazilians whose index went from 33 to 28. Among the most important aspects highlighted by the study concern housing. Most Brazilians live in rented accommodations, many of which are overcrowded or shared by more than one family, a situation common to much of the immigrant community (cf. Malheiros et al 2007). According to this study, the vulnerable situation of the more recent waves of Brazilian and Eastern European immigrants is different from that of immigrants from the PALOP (*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*; 'African Countries with Portuguese as an Official Language').

Since the possibility of building new residences is at present reduced, and since access to public housing in the AML (Lisbon metropolitan area) is practically impossible considering that, in the last decade, policy has almost exclusively focused on the re-housing of the old shanty neighbourhoods, the housing opportunities for "new immigrants" is substantially limited, and concentrated in the rental market, frequently of an informal nature. It is noteworthy that, between 1991 and 2001, Eastern Europeans, Brazilians and Asians underwent a significant increase in the portion of residents in rented housing (over 60% in all these groups and close to 80% in the case of Eastern Europeans) while, there was a decrease of those paying reduced rents – less than 5% in all cases, while the number was greater than 10% in 1991. [...] This situation reveals that new arrivals chose to rent houses or parts of houses, as we may expect, thus coming to pay market values that are superior to those paid by residents who are already established, whether the latter are local or foreign [...] The main means for overcoming the difficulties concerning the high rent prices consists in the adoption of a strategy for sharing residences, which – with the exception of the Brazilians – reaches indexes of overcrowding as high as the Africans, except that, in this case, with recourse to the cohabitation of individuals from different families (for example, the co-residence of various male individuals of the same nationality and, occasionally, originating from the same region, who work in civil construction). [...] The groups exhibiting the highest degree of residential segregation are the

Asians – Pakistanis and Indians –, communities structured around original and salient cultural and religious elements, such as a strong entrepreneurial dynamic of an ethnic character. These are components which, along with a very small demographic contingent, are geared towards the strengthening of communities through spatial proximity. [...] The Eastern European and Brazilian populations, groups that have undergone a very significant rise in the last decade and are prominent in the AML, present the lowest levels of residential segregation, making evident a more significant degree of geographical dispersal. (Malheiros et al. 2007: 82-83)

The research stresses that there is a difference in relation to territorial occupation and indexes of discrimination in relation to the first and last waves of Brazilian immigration. This is partly due to a significant change in the patterns of this migration, with a decrease in qualified professionals and a stronger presence of the working classes. Housing for these immigrants has thus been undergoing an increasing peripheralization, as living conditions have deteriorated while nonetheless remaining within the Lisbon metropolitan area.

In the typology adopted in this research, the urban spaces inhabited by Brazilians correspond to areas of "non-isolated host communities – in which the group of the host society represents 50 to 79% of the total resident population in the area and the presence of minority groups is significantly reduced or otherwise expressed through a single group" (ibid, p.85). One of the conclusions of the research is that in the region under study it is unwarranted to speak of ethnic ghettos, since even where we find a high concentration of immigrant population, they remain statistically insignificant, particularly when compared to areas where the co-residence of different immigrant populations and groups predominate. We can thus perceive how the forms of occupying urban space in the Lisbon region have changed with the more recent migratory flow, which leads to a re-signification of these spaces.

It is by attributing meaning that spaces are constituted as places, where actions and forms of interaction qualify the territory and produce its representations. Interaction and cultural contact bring to the fore questions such as the comprehensiveness and extension of integration and the concomitant perception of urban spaces.

Focusing on the growth of Lisbon and its metropolitan area, Cardoso and Peirista (1994) emphasize increased degradation in areas of the city and the precarious conditions to which the many immigrants are submitted.

In this context, we have witnessed the development of two parallel processes: on the one hand, the consolidation of existing degraded neighbourhoods, mostly in the city centre, which become pluri-ethnic neighbourhoods, in which, for example, whites, Africans and Indians cohabit; on the other hand, new urban spaces are spontaneously created, mostly in the periphery of Lisbon, in many cases occupied exclusively by immigrants. In other words, in a global context of difficult access to dignified housing, immigrant communities in Portugal are profoundly affected by phenomena of socio-spatial segregation. As the opinions of immigrants attest, housing thus emerges as the main problem that must be faced, both at the moment of arrival and at the present time (Cardoso e Peirista 1994:103).

The city should belong "to all," but this is not always the case, particularly when we refer to a context of intense circulation of people of distinct cultures and nationalities, such as occurs in metropolises throughout the world. Like Lisbon, these cities clearly point to the dilemma of integration and of conflict between ethnic and cultural-national groups. If, on the one hand, they seek to create alternatives for coexistence in public spaces, on the other they reveal enclaves. Immigrants emerge as the Other who, in the process of integrating into their host societies, comes to be mostly restricted to specific areas of the city (its peripheries or margins), corroborating an association between economic and ethnic and cultural discrimination. A discourse on equality that nonetheless affirms the right to diversity, ultimately dissimulates situations of exclusion, enabling the emergence of positions that, by using the same discourse through the idea of the irreducibility of cultural differences, fed into prejudice and segregation (Stockler 1993). Its consequences, however, were not limited to peripheral areas or to immigrant populations, and a response was sought through the institutionalization of the processes of the (re)valuation of social bonds through public policies for conflict resolution, school integration, or reintegration of families, remodelling of public spaces such as squares, and so forth.

When immigrant discourses on sociability are analysed, the "street" emerges as one of the most significant spaces.[7] In this sense, it takes on connotations of nostalgia, of "the time of childhood" or "when I was young" in

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7   In *A Rua: Espaço, Tempo ,Sociabilidade*, Graça Cordeiro and Frédéric Vidal (2008) gather a number of articles on the ways of using the streets and capturing the senses. On the relationship between the street and sociability in Lisbon, see, among others, Cordeiro (1997) and Costa (1999).

the country of origin. This conception of the street contrasts with the street in the host city, because while the first was an extension of the home, the second is a strange place to be explored and known, but always with care, since over-exposure can be inconvenient.

In an interesting study of exterior spaces and immigrants in Portugal, Oliveira (2009) refers to Brazilians in the following way:

> For most of the participants of the three nationalities, a large part of their childhood was spent in exterior spaces, the "street" being the space *par excellence* (…) Contact with nature constitutes another childhood memory loaded with meaning, recalling contact with animals, fruit trees, flowers and the feeling of liberty. Brazilian participants referred to "the forest," "the ranch," "the waterfall," "the rivers" as exterior spaces free for childish play. (…)
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> As is to be expected, for nationalities whose country of origin has a long tradition of using coastal areas, as is the case for Cape-Verdeans and Brazilians, "the beach" has revealed itself to be an exterior space of great importance. It should be stressed that, for Brazilians, "the beach" was not mentioned in relation to memories of childhood, occupying, instead, an important place in their adult preferences. In contrast, some of the Brazilian participants who lived in non-coastal zones mentioned "waterfalls" and "lakes" as areas of leisure. (2009:116 e 117)

In attempting to reconstitute a daily life that presents significant elements of their former lives – that is, of their lives in their country of origin – some of the immigrant forms of sociability create situations of conflict or of potential conflict. This is the case with parties, with the volume of music or with large events and activities in public spaces such as sidewalks or parks. Many of the conflicts concern residential spaces and the uses of the street, such as, for example, barbecues on the sidewalk. Residential spaces are, for the most part, small and or shared by friends, family or even immigrants who meet in the host country, and do not have a yard. The street is thus used as an extension of the private space of the home, and the "party" or meal is transferred to the public space.

Yet, in the integration process, new habits are incorporated and even speech mannerisms can be altered and used as a strategy for conviviality (Machado 2003). In this way, Oliveira (op.cit) stresses that some communities, such as the Brazilian and the Ukrainian, reported engaging in new forms of outdoor activities, mainly, according to the author, in light of the

feeling of security that Portuguese public spaces afforded in comparison to those of Brazil, for example, as illustrated in part of an interview transcribed below:

> I also discovered this thing of reading in the belvedere, because I also found very strange this thing of ordering a coffee and staying I don't know for how long sitting there… This isn't done in Brazil, right? Because you're occupying the table. After I discovered this I could do it without being embarrassed… I just stay there slowly. I read *O Público* twice, very slowly, in the belvedere. My God!! For me this is treatment, it's a therapy. Every Friday I buy *O Público* and go read the *Ípsilon*, you know… [laughs]. I like it! I like it!" (interview with a Brazilian woman, in Oliveira 2009:120)

Brazilian immigrants do not restrict their contacts only to people of their own nationality. Contact with other immigrants is also important, mainly in the workplace, as is, of course, contact with the Portuguese. But what seems to predominate is an interest in maintaining their identity, their "Brazilian-ness," which involves attending places where Brazilian food can be consumed, Brazilian foodstuffs can be bought, Brazilian music can be heard, etc.

Markets that sell Brazilian products (whose owners may or may not be Brazilian) are also converted into places of sociability. Going regularly to these markets to buy products that are not found elsewhere results in new friendships, puts people into contact with one another, and even enables sporadic conversations that always mention longing for Brazil and, above all, for the state or city of origin.

Bars and restaurants that serve Brazilian dishes are a meeting point, mainly for the young. Feijoada and beer on the weekend, or dishes typical of north-eastern Brazil, such as acarajé, promote the gathering of groups of friends who may have known each other when they lived in Brazil or who met in Portugal. It is common for Brazilians who live in different countries to meet at certain times of the year. These cases concern people who migrated together but who, for some reason, had to embark on a further migratory process, such as, for example, a Brazilian couple who currently live in Holland but who first migrated to London with other Brazilians. The latter then migrated to Portugal while the couple went to Amsterdam. These young people take the summer off to meet in the Algarve region or in Lisbon, thus maintaining ties of friendship.

It is evident that in Lisbon people occupy and make full use of the street next to their private residences. The street is the most immediate spatial link with the public domain and, in fact, it allows for temporary creative extensions of the private, domestic space, acting as a stage for expressions of group identities, particularly through cultural means.

> People perceive and resist the usurpation of their fundamental liberties in using the street in this way. (...) When people are barred from the street, they end up creating it. (Sieber 2008:61-62)

Streets also take on other dimensions. As well as being spaces of sociability, extensions of the home, "places of memory," they are also important political spaces.

In the current situation, in which many Brazilians are in an illegal situation and the stigmatization of immigrants in general is widespread, associations and entities linked to immigrants are often their only source of support, and have steadily gained attention in the media and through public demonstrations in the city.

Cultural mediation and politics in the Lisbon scene

Immigrant associations have existed in Portugal since at least the 1970s, even before their official recognition. It was nonetheless only two decades later that the Portuguese government recognized the need for a policy of integration, resulting in the creation of the Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas [High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities] (ACIME – Decree 3-A/96, currently called ACIDE – Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural) [The High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialog]. The creation of this government agency facilitated dialog between the government and immigrant associations; towards the same end, Law Decree 115/99, which concerns the legal organization and activities of Immigrant Associations, was approved in 1999.

Prior to this date, the associations functioned informally, welcoming new arrivals and assisting with housing and other necessities without any official support from government. The increase in immigration in the 1980s and the official measures for assisting immigrants in the 1990s also led to a proliferation of associations, which numbered only 10 in 1980 and increased to 78 in

1996. Of these, only the Casa do Brasil is exclusively concerned with Brazilian immigration (Albuquerque, Ferreira and Viegas 2000).

In this context, the associations are not only a place of sociability and conviviality among Brazilians, nor do they only serve to maintain national identities; they are instead fundamental actors in the current political process, delineating new paths for the relations between immigrants and nationals. Whether acting as a legitimate channel for dialog with the government or as mediators in crisis situations and those in which human rights are violated, the associations and organizations that protect immigrants have carved their role into an arena of greater visibility.

There are many immigrant associations in Portugal. Some of them have acted for decades, and their work has received local and national attention. Brazilian immigrants participate both in immigrant associations directly concerned with Brazilian immigration and in entities that help immigrants of all origins, such as Solidariedade Imigrante, SOS Racismo and so forth. These entities and organizations, based in Lisbon, assist immigrants without regard to specific ethnic or national identities.

In Portugal, the Casa do Brasil (CBL) has emerged as one of the main associations, perhaps the best organized and most influential association for Brazilians[8]. The Casa was founded in January 1992 by a group of Brazilian and Portuguese friends. It was initially a space where people could meet, interact, share their problems and seek solutions, and also discuss politics, a legacy of the political activism of its founding members. As with the vast majority of the associations, before being formalized, it existed as an informal and spontaneous organization, as a place where certain native practices could be reinforced in an attempt to create a feeling of belonging for people who had become deterritorialized. It is also very common for these types of networks of sociability and solidarity to make themselves more present in specific parts of the city, thereby supporting the main regions where immigrants live and work (Hily & Poinard 1987). This is the case for many immigrant associations or organizations in Lisbon, such as, for instance, the Cape-Verdean

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8   At the time of my research there was the Mais Brasil (Oporto), the Associação de Amigos Brasileiros in Madeira (Funchal), the Associação Brasileira de Portugal (Seixal), the Casa Grande do Brasil (Setúbal), the Associação Brasílica de Portugal (Sintra), as well as associations geared towards students and members of certain professions.

associations studied by Sousa (2003)[9]: the MORNA (Luso-African Cultural Association), the Unidos de Cabo Verde[10].

If sociability and a less politically engaged type of solidarity were the original motivation, and if, according to one of its presidents, "the Casa was not at first geared towards political action in favour of the immigrant due to the less significant presence of Brazilians at that time," and was more concerned with "cultural matters," it later became one of the main political actors in regard to Brazilians in Portugal.

The association was recognized in 1999 (Law 115/99, of August 3, 1999, and reaffirmed through Decree 75/2000 of May 9, 2000), creating a closer relationship with the Portuguese state. Ever since its foundation, the Casa do Brasil has remained at the same address, in the Bairro Alto – São Pedro de Alcântara St, n. 63, in a historic area very popular with tourists that is relatively close to the Brazilian Consulate, which is located on the Luís de Camões Square. In August 2010, the CBL moved to Luiz Soriano St, n. 42.

According to one of the former directors of the CBL, when the association was created, it occupied only one of the rooms in the address where the association functioned until August 2010, thanks to personal contacts and friendship with people of the Abril group, a group of Portuguese political activists who rented the whole floor.

The association has a busy agenda during the week, with activities ranging from work groups, a data bank of employees (within the UNIVA Network, managed by ACIDI), film and documentary screenings, as well as more specific issues. They also offer days for music and dance classes. But there are also conflicts, since the building from which the CBL operates has other occupants.

The association acts as a meeting place for Brazilians and their friends,

9   In general, the associations are stronger in urban areas, and many studies of immigration from Portugal's former colonies in Africa find that the immigrant association and the neighbourhood are superimposed, which shows that immigrant communities are not only concerned with preserving cultural identity, but also with other problems linked to adaptation and interaction, many of which are expressed at a more local level, at their place of residence or the neighbourhood.

10   The associations are constituted through the right to association, guaranteed and ratified in Portugal by Article 46 of the Constitution of the Republic, and by the dispositions applied in article 157 of the civil code. The IPSS, Instituições Particulares de Solidariedade Social, [Private Institutions for Social Solidarity] make up a further juridical model, regulated by Law-Decree n. 119/83 and by decree n. 778,83, dating, respectively, from the February 25 and the July23, 1983; although they enjoy more favourable conditions in obtaining deals with the State, unlike the Associations their activities are subject to government control.

although less than it did in the 1990s. It never came to be a "Brazilian territory" in the city, perhaps because of the large circulation of foreigners in the region in which it is situated, and also due to the fact that it marks a certain fluidity in the relations and interactions of Brazilians in various parts of Lisbon. The Casa do Brasil seems to concentrate a sociability that is much more limited to its members and a more or less fluctuating number of acquaintances and curious people. It is not a place for Brazilian bohemianism, perhaps because this is not what it set out to be, but it has established a role for itself when the issue of Brazilian immigration comes to the fore.

It is through the political actions of the CBL and the creation of a system of visibility that the street becomes a "special place." Various members of associations, or people more or less directly linked to them, spoke of the importance of "occupying" the city, of making the immigrant "visible" through public demonstrations, marches, protests in squares, and pamphleteering in streets near the metro station. The street emerges as an emblem for the political activity of immigrants, illegal or otherwise.

We cannot, however, refrain from noting the differences implied in these two situations. The vulnerability of the immigrant is stressed at demonstrations or the occupation of public spaces geared towards political ends, since police presence is a very real possibility and illegal immigrants, therefore, perceive themselves to be at risk. The statement of a member and director of an association makes this clear:

"Many Brazilians were afraid to show their faces on the street after the burglary [refers to the burglary and kidnapping perpetrated by Brazilians in a bank in 2008]... People thought they could be arrested if they went to the demonstration [referring to the demonstration against the Diretiva do Retorno], which is why we do not have all that many Brazilians here today." (interview with the director of an association of Brazilian immigrants)

In general, certain parts of Lisbon, such as the central region of the city (Comércio Square, Martim Moniz, Largo da Ginjinha, Restauradores), came to be constituted as places for demonstrations, particularly related to immigration. I was able to follow some of these protests during 2008, as well as street activities of the associations, particularly the CBL. In the distribution of pamphlets, which is a very common practice of the associations as a means to reach different social segments, and which must account for the

costs and requires flexibility due to the volunteer nature of the work, I saw how the immigrants "in action" interacted with passers-by and how some knowledge of the map of the city was essential to the success of the endeavour. In this way, some metro stations and bus stops were chosen at the expense of others, since those involved had a clear notion of the public that passes through these places and their (possible or purported) receptivity.

Another fact worthy of note is that this "knowledge" of the streets and their public is also taken into account when considering the time of the activity and what to do. In some places, music can be played and small skits enacted, while at others this would be frowned upon or, perhaps, generate conflict.

In this way, the members of the association and the people they were able to mobilize promoted a sort of mediation, simultaneously cultural and political, since they implied cultural mannerisms and practices as much as organized political actions.[11] Success in these activities accrued symbolic capital to the association, which could be converted into a widening of their margins of negotiation with the government, access to the media through reports on the association and its activities, access to politicians and people of note in Portugal, and even in Brazil, and so on.

Final Remarks

Migratory experience involves transnational displacements and insertion in another territory: the host country, the chosen city, the neighbourhood. The distribution of immigrants through urban spaces therefore corresponds both to ties that predate their arrival (acquaintances that already reside in the host country, legal or illegal employment networks, networks of solidarity and aid to immigrants, etc.) and processes of inclusion and exclusion specific to the new system that the foreigner comes to integrate. Adaptation to the new urban dynamic is not always easy, not only because of the cultural differences between Brazil and Portugal, but also because individuals must

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11   The concept of mediation has been used by researchers from many different areas. The intensification of its use stems from an association between the possibilities for regulation and social intervention, and, at the same time, forces us to reflect upon and revaluate the concept. When we refer to mediation and, specifically, to the expansion in its use, it is impossible to free it from urban questions, and those concerning political life more generally. We use it here to refer to a type of activity that privileges a social relation that operates through approximation, participation and negotiation.

deal with the variety of local codes and specificities found in their cities of origin and destination.

In their daily affairs, Brazilian immigrants in Portugal create means for maintaining ties to their place of origin and to Brazil; ranging from phone calls to family members who have remained in Brazil, letters, postcards, e-mails and money transfers to the constitution of networks of solidarity and integration that are more or less formal and more or less legal. The experience of displacement to another nation does not erase the indexes of prior belonging and often marks limits to interactions in the new place. This belonging is reallocated in the new national context through the adoption of more or less specific marks, such as the ostentation of ethnic and national symbols, clothing, commemoration of important dates from the country of origin, the simple fact of serving a "typical" meal to a guest, or the creation of associations as a process of making the unfamiliar familiar (not only space, but culture as well).

Associations are thus spaces for sociability, and they play an important part in spreading cultural elements. Gadea Montesinos and Coral (2007), highlighting the associative strategies of Ecuadorians in the Murcia region of Spain, offer data that corroborate our argument

Associations also establish spaces for the re-creation of identity, which the members of the group (and those outside it) can define as religious, national, ethnic or cultural. More than identities are expressed within these entities, but identities as a process of social construction, the associations generate new spaces; the associations generate new spaces by negotiating and articulating the meanings of the identities in the migratory context. Music, dance, food, clothing, religious practices and language are thus converted into new or renovated references of identification, into forms of expression of a community that is not just imagined (p. 2)

In relation to Brazilians in Portugal, the CBL strengthens elements that are traditionally emphasized as markers of "Brazilian-ness," of the Brazilian identity[12], such as music, which is one of the more common expressive forms of this presentation and interaction, as well as dance, capoeira, food, all of which nonetheless occasionally corroborate to an "exoticisation" of Brazilians

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12   In this process, the recreation or reinvention of culture emerges as an important issue, both from the point of view of the experiences of immigrants and from that of the anthropological object. On this debate, see Roy Wagner (1975) and Adam Kuper (1999).

(Machado 2003). If, on one hand, this "exoticisation" masks relations of conflict with Portuguese society, on the other it brings to the foreground the metamorphic potential of individuals who, in an attempt to meet what they believe are the expectations of the Portuguese, create alternative roles and personalities to guarantee their access to the job market: the joker, the good-humoured guy, the loveable man or woman, the friend, the easy-going chap, among others. In the interplay of stereotypes, the manipulation of identities is not conscious, or at least not always. Not every Brazilian loves barbecues or is a samba musician, but in their initial relations with other inhabitants of the city, a pool of elements elected as being representative of Brazilian-ness is repeatedly affirmed, remembered and presented. The associations are also agents in this process. The Associação Brasília de Portugal, for example, re-invents and presents a Brazilian culture based on elements of the folklore of Pernambuco State, and other associations emerge from specific demands or from the dissolution of others.

At present, the Casa do Brasil appears to have converged toward a sociability more restricted to its members and to people in their circle, and is characterized by eminently political and institutional activities, which are signs of its weakening importance. This state of affairs can be understood in light of the fact that a considerable part of the migratory flux of Brazilians to Portugal, for whom, as mentioned previously, Lisbon is the main destination, is made up of working and middle class people in search of employment and, in many cases, they hold more than one job in the hope of achieving their aim of returning to Brazil in better financial conditions, with a sum of money that can help them get restarted in their home country or to support family members who have remained in Brazil. Lack of time is one of the main justifications for decreasing participation in the association's activities. In other instances, many Brazilians claim that a lack of resources and the need to save money restrict them to the peripheries of the city, in the wider metropolitan area or to the suburbs, due to the lower rent and cost of living than the Portuguese capital – a fact that makes journeys to the CBL difficult. However, some research suggests that informal networks of relatives and friends become the primary means of establishing contact with Portuguese society, with its norms and values, for newly arrived immigrants, sometimes even before their actual arrival (Padilla 2006). This may thus preclude more formal participation in an immigrant association, such as the Casa do Brasil.

The current economic situation in Portugal, and in other European countries such as Spain, Greece and others, also signals a shift in international migration, with the return of many Brazilians to their country of origin being one of the most visible symptoms.

Associations are important actors in the current scene and in the promotion of ways of acting and interacting among the different groups that inhabit the city. Urban spaces are used an re-signified by the actors, either collectively or individually, by political action, by networks of sociability and solidarity among immigrants, or by the many ways of creating extensions of their private spaces in public spaces. Conflict is not absent, of course. It is a constitutive part of human relations and of social life, being constantly reformulated by the processes of cultural and political mediation that immigrant communities undergo in the process of being inserted into and remaining in the host societies.

The street is not a unit that is defined *a priori*, as Cordeiro (2008) notes, and we may extend this observation to experiences in the city more widely, to processes of identification and to the interweaving of politics and culture that mark the trajectory of immigrants.

In the constitutive amalgamation of symbolically, and often physically, being there and here, the social roles of immigrants and their capacity to deal with codes (both old and new) present us with a range of strategies, ways of constituting a new "neighbourhood," of re-elaborating (national, regional and personal) identities. The "socialization" of the street is part of this process of coming to know a new "place." Being in the street, "knowing" the street, circulating, are all more subtle forms of appropriation, albeit as important as "staking a presence" in social neighbourhoods and ghettos. Not all immigrant communities constitute themselves via territorial identities, which does not mean that territory is unimportant in the configuration of differing degrees of identity. In the case of Brazilians, we can observe some concentration in certain areas, cities or regions, but Brazilians have not established ghettos and are more or less well distributed through the major Portuguese cities and throughout the Lisbon metropolitan region. Circulation and mobility among certain European countries is another characteristic of this migratory flux.

Mapping the interaction of groups, daily forms of action and the occupation of spaces is a way of coming to know and refiguring the city at the

same time as it challenges us to apprehend and present the multiplicity of points of view, symbolic universes and scientific analyses and traditions on the theme.

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