

Research Project

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Title: *Mapping Modernities: modernism, cartography and the making of the map of Mato Grosso*

In broad terms, this research project explores how national imaginaries were forged in the first decades of the twentieth century in Brazil. Juxtaposing urban modernist aesthetics, cartographical endeavors and exploratory expeditions into the hinterlands of the nation, the project discusses the conflation and distinctions between cosmopolitanism, nationalism, positivism and nation building. In specific terms, at the core of this research endeavor is a particular and singular case study: the making of the map of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. I am interested in focusing on the cultural contexts surrounding the making of the map of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso undertaken as part of Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon's famous journeys of exploration into the hinterlands of Brazil in the first decades of the twentieth century. From 1910 to 1952, this map – of what was an enormous and largely uncharted expanse of backlands Brazil – was minutely designed and researched by the military geographer Francisco Jaguaribe Gomes de Mattos (1881-1974), who was the head and chief of the geography division of the Rondon Commission. Aside from Maria Gabriela Bernardino's (2010) pioneering research, Francisco Jaguaribe's map has been largely neglected. Yet Jaguaribe's map of Mato Grosso was a crucial document in the constitution of the modern geography of Brazil and it became one of the most important propaganda pieces of the Rondon commission itself. In this project, I seek to follow Jaguaribe's trajectory from his initial engagement with the Rondon Commission to his perfecting of the map in Paris from 1924 until 1930.

While in Paris, Jaguaribe was sheltered in the offices of the Service Géographique de L'Armée. He had scarce contact with the dynamic art world of Paris in the 1920s or with the Brazilian modernist artists that flitted in and out of the city at the time. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the extent to which his lengthy stay in Paris altered some of his previous conceptual paradigms and offered new challenges to the mapmaking process itself. As has already been extensively studied by several scholars, a number of the Brazilian modernist artists who went to Paris in the 1920s discovered their Brazilian roots through their contact with the international avant-garde's re-appraisal of African and Indigenous art. Their diverse experiences in Paris also led them to assert their status as Brazilian artists in relation to the local Parisian culture. The painter Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973), the writer Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) and the composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), just to mention the most obvious Brazilian exponents of the modernist movement, had their perception of the need to fashion a mode of Brazilian art that reworked ethnic popular elements heightened during their sojourn in the French capital. Conversely, the French composer Darius Milhaud composed "Le boeuf su le toit" directly influenced by his reading of the popular music of Rio de Janeiro. Upon returning to Brazil in 1924, Villa-Lobos wrote musical compositions inspired by the indigenous chants recorded by Roquette Pinto during the Rondon Commission expedition of 1908.

Jaguaribe worked within the ambiance of the Service Géographique de L'Armée but kept close contact with Brazil through his communication with Rondon who periodically furnished him with new data for the map. If the map had initially been planned by the governor of Mato Grosso and Rondon as a form of publicity for the state

and the Commission, by the time of the Paris venture it had become testament to a much larger project. Empirical data and spatial location ascertained that the republican project was in the making but the actual precariousness of the telegraph lines and the many difficulties of settlement and exploration suggest that the map was fundamentally a map of aspiration. It was a blueprint of a greater national and political project. Locating rivers and resources, renaming sites and “discovering” Indian tribes, the map traced the existing and the formative as it simultaneously beckoned with the potential of the territory. Formerly blank expanses of the national terrain were now claimed as integrated because of their potential to be fully domesticated through agriculture, mineral extraction and navigation.

By the time of Jaguaribe’s stay in Paris from 1924 until 1931, the vogue of International Fairs had already waned. But the famous Art Decó Fair of 1925 was widely attended and in May of 1931, the International Colonial Exposition was inaugurated with great fanfare. Jaguaribe had already returned to Brazil in January of 1931 because Vargas’ revolutionary coup of 1930 had dramatically altered the political context of the nation. The Rondon Commission’s efforts to pacify and acculturate of the Indian tribes of Mato Grosso were part of a national effort to build a modern, positivist, humanist, republican Brazil. But despite welcoming the Indians as future citizens, the actual mode of tutelage deprived them of political rights and the acculturation policy albeit nonviolent was ethnocentrically authoritarian and it posited a deep divide between what was deemed to be a superior and an inferior evolutionary stage. Instead of facing the dilemmas of a European empire clinging to its colonies, the Brazilian republic, now under the rule of Getúlio Vargas, sought to accelerate strategies of nation building in the midst of the many contradictions of a radically unequal society and highly diverse country. Both Rondon and Jaguaribe were members of the old military establishment. Jaguaribe opposed Vargas and was driven into exile in Portugal in 1932. Yet in its dire need to provide Brazil with a credible pantheon of national heroes, the Vargas regime of the Estado Novo (1937-45) endorsed the hagiography of Rondon but did not necessarily fully support his projects. Simultaneously under the auspices of the minister of Health and Education, Gustavo Capanema, key figures of the modernist intelligentsia exerted a decisive influence in shaping the aesthetic vocabularies of art, the tenets of the new educational projects and the legacies of the past.

I seek to trace whether the Parisian ambiance altered Jaguaribe’s cartographical endeavor and uncover the responses of the positivist republican mentors vis-à-vis the new political and aesthetic agendas of the modernist intelligentsia. In 1924, Oswald de Andrade publishes his *Manifesto Pau Brasil* and in 1928, the *Manifesto Antropófago*. In both of his manifestos, he articulates the case for a rebellion against the staid conventions of a conservative assimilation of European culture. In the *Manifesto Antropófago*, the cannibal trope is activated as a form of recasting the origins of Brazil in order to underpin a future utopia. The satirical barbs of the cannibal arrow were aimed at the dusty rhetoric of ornate academic discourse and also against the positivist faith in progress and order. As has been often stated, the celebration of the devouring cannibal was a mythical construction that rendered positive the very element that had previously cast the Indians of Brazil as barbaric. As a cultural strategy, modernist cannibalism was soon appropriated as an inventive response to Eurocentric cultural impositions and norms. But the irony of the circumstances is that while Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral, among others, were engaged with the cannibal as a metaphor influenced by the cosmopolitan ambiance of the Parisian avant-garde, Rondon

and his Commission were actively mapping the hinterlands of Brazil and in the process encountering very real Indian tribes.

While tracing Jaguaribe's trajectory, I wish to provide an original research contribution by correlating distinct themes that have not been comparatively studied through the making of the map of Mato Grosso. Firstly, I seek to narrate the untold and singular saga of the making of the map of Mato Grosso itself; an endeavor that consumed Jaguaribe for decades and earned him acclaim both as a major cartographer and also as a relevant contributor towards nation building in the first decades of the twentieth century. Secondly, in the context of the map making process, I desire to analyze how members of the lettered elite, who were contemporaries, espoused such disparate visions of a desired Brazilian modernity. I will argue that it was through their usage of the figure of the Indian and the Indian trope that sectors of the lettered intelligentsia highlighted their different strategies towards cherished or challenged notions of nation building. Finally, as an afterward to the project, I desire to examine what remains of the legacies of the Rondon Commission in what is now Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. I seek to discuss whether the Rondon Commission's contradictory map of aspirations that included economic exploration and also problematic protectionist policies towards the Indian population were actually fulfilled or have been debunked. The outcome of this project is envisioned as a richly illustrated academic book geared towards both specialized and non-specialized readers.

Francisco Jaguaribe was my paternal grandfather. I have access to maps, documents and letters that are not available to the public. During my stay in Paris, I would research the archives that reveal the particular trajectory of this map making process in the context of the French cartographical tradition and also in the light of the new modernist inventions that were being staged in the city.

Course Proposals

My course proposals are not grounded in my proposed research project. They draw instead upon my previous research endeavors and seek to cater to a wide range of both graduate and undergraduate students who are interested in Latin American literature, film, photography, and urban culture.

Imagined Latin American Cities: literature and photography

This course explores how specific cities, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, México D.F, Havana, and Lima were imagined in modern and contemporary photography and literature. Through theoretical analysis, the exploration of thematic issues and case studies, the course will consider how different aesthetic registers construct urban imaginaries, shape the experiences of the city and concretely engender urban realities. We will examine the subjective, collective and political aspects of public photography, art photography and several literary genres. Thematically, we will be addressing the narration of the street, the experience of the crowd, the fabrication of new forms of subjectivity, and the creation of new forms of hybrid visual and literary art. We will be reading works by João do Rio, Rubem Fonseca, Clarice Lispector, Roberto Arlt, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, José Juan Tablada, José Emílio Pacheco, Carlos Monsiváis, Cabrera Infante, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, Antonio José Ponte, Mario Vargas Llosa and Santiago Roncagliolo. We will be viewing photographs by Augusto Malta, José Medeiros, Miguel Rio Branco, Horacio Coppola, Grete Stern, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Korda, Martín Chambi, Carlos and Miguel Vargas, among others.

Topics:

1. Narrating the Streets in Images and Chronicles
2. Images of the Urban Crowd.
3. Photographic Memory and Narratives of the City
4. Aesthetics of Estrangement and the City
5. Inventions of the Urban Self in Images and Narratives

Urban Imaginaries: art, spectacle, branding

Through theoretical perspectives and specific case studies, this course examines how contemporary cities are being imagined, spectacularized and branded as part of the endeavor to gain supremacy and competitiveness in the global market. Focusing on remodeling plans, artistic inventions and touristic circuits, the course explores how images of cities are produced in the overlap between the artistic imagination, technical

and urban interventions, lived experiences and propaganda efforts. While engaging in these themes, we will discuss specific case studies with particular emphasis being given to Brazilian cities such as Rio de Janeiro.

Topics

1. Urban Imaginaries: contexts and contents
2. The City as spectacle
3. Branding strategies
4. Non-places, fantasy cities, and re-invented historical centers
5. Local practices and global imaginaries