THE WORLD AS IMAGINED COMMUNITY: FLÁVIO DAMM'S AND SEBASTIÃO SALGADO'S PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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According to the concept of the English historian, Benedict Anderson¹, the capitalist press plays an important role in the development of the nation as imagined community of modernity. Expanding this idea in the contemporary world necessarily means understanding the axes of the links between local and global, between nation and territory.

The world as imagined community is a project which, addressed in a dichotomous way, can both lead either into a humanist romantic utopia, or the perverse logic of advanced capitalism. Defining the subjects’ place of dialogue and the notion of social engagement in the media necessarily implies overcoming the dichotomy of the traditional analyses of mass culture and investing in the possibility of projects which seek to explain a complex and diverse world.

In this way, Flávio Damm and Sebastião Salgado can be seen as mediators between the world of events and the world of its images, the result of which is an original synthesis, filtered by the photographer’s know-how. Their photographs reveal a narrative of contemporary world history, the central mark of which is cultural diversity.

However, when looking at the narrative history constructed by photojournalism, the historian cannot adopt the position of a mere spectator of past facts, taking these images as windows which open onto events. On the contrary, a critical position must be taken in relation to the conceptual and practical operations which involve the production, circulation, consumption and administration of photographs by the people involved in those operations; photographers, editors, journalists, the public, etc. In the end, by taking these photographs as ‘monument-images’ and ‘document-images’, the historiographical analysis confronts the memories constructed of the events, dismantling them, disnaturaling them, pointing to their character of construction, commitment and subjectivity.².

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Photography and cultural mediation, some basic notes.

Photography as part of the world of ‘image engines’ must, according to Philippe Dubois\(^3\), integrate the visual regimes of each epoch, following the principle which defines it as technical image, in other words, the result of know-how, which implies an education in the means of production. For the author, “it is obvious that all images, even the most archaic, require technology, at least that of production and in certain cases that of reception, as it presupposes management of the manufacture of artefacts which require instruments, rules and conditions of effectiveness, as well as knowledge. Originally, the technology is simply, and literally, \textit{um savoir-faire}\(^4\)

In this way, photography, or the different modalities of photography, is defined historically in social circuits, in which photographers participate as privileged cultural mediators. The practice of 19th century photography has been well-defined by the expression, \textit{the eye of history}, coined by Mathew Brady, head of the photographic team responsible for covering the North American Civil War, when referring to the photographic camera. The photographs produced on the battlefields were considered to be true eye witness testimonies of history as the images showed the hard reality of war in a far different way from the written reports. Photographic images, according to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century concept, were assimilated based on the belief that photographs were strictly windows which opened onto the world outside, showing it in as faithful a way as possible. Therefore, everything that was seen was represented as such. Historical reports thus gained the corroborative force of \textit{photographic truth}.

At this time, the photographic field was defined in terms of some noteworthy criteria which varied according to each location. In general lines, photographers of the 19th century were distinguished by four basic characteristics, strictly associated with the notion of know-how: a) being up to date in relation to technological innovations associated with the technical art of producing images; b) access to purchasing material of the latest generation; c) proximity to political power and, finally, d) artistic background in the academic arts. These characteristics oriented the production of

\(^4\) Idem, p.65.
photographic images which were basically divided into portraits and landscapes (even war photographs followed the visual canon of landscape painting).\(^5\)

In the 20th century, the division of the photographic act into photographic categories already demonstrated a change in the area of visuality and the uses and functions of photography in the new century. The magazine *Photograma*, the monthly publication of the Brazilian photographic club, responsible for the diffusion of amateur photography in Rio de Janeiro, taught photographic theory and practice, dividing photography into three types: anecdotal, documentary and artistic or pictorial photography. They explained this distinction in the following way:

“Anecdotal photography is that which deals solely with creating records of facts, people or things(...) It is the easiest of the three divisions, and what “amateurs”, in fact, practice. Thus a group of friends, the corner of a garden, a child’s entertainment, etc., are anecdotal photographs only of interest to those who know the fact, person or things. Documentary photography is that which aims to stay as close as possible to the truth, to record facts, people or things, such as reporting photography, topography, microphotography, identification, etc. Artistic or pictorial photography is that which translates sentimentality or the state of the soul experimented by the artist in contemplating an aim (...) in pictorial photography, in general, the same rules of composition and perspective as drawing and painting are applied (...) The pictorialist must, before all else, be an able operator and technician, knowledgeable in all of the processes, from the “exposure” to the printing of the photogram, without which it would not be possible to obtain that mark of individuality that is fundamental and irreplaceable in any work of art.”\(^6\)

The categories of photographers were divided into the snappers, the amateurs and the professional photographers, each one using the camera according to the cultural interpositions imposed by their social conditions. The photographic education of each also varied. The snappers had the publicity material of the manufacturers of films and cameras, which included with their products, taught how to use them in the correct way, developing the pedagogy of looking at the illustrated weeklies. Lovers of photography had the privilege of belonging to exclusive photography clubs, reserved for those with a background in the pictorial arts. The professional photographer category was however more complex, demonstrating the tensions between seeing and representing belonging to the information circuit of the contemporary press and its contacts with the visual experimentations of the artistic vanguards of the 20th century in Brazil, notably with concretism. In any way, photojournalistic language was defining itself within the

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contemporary visual regime, based on relations of analogy and formal experimentation with the subject, organizing into different dimensions of sociability the spaces of their learning.

Therefore, throughout the 20th century, the inheritance from the 19th century was updated through social documentation photography, in the beginning associated with government agencies and, from the 1930s, with the technical modernization of the press, the international agencies, to the point that we can tell the history of the 20th century through its images. These photographs compose a catalogue, from which arises a history redefined by the technical statute of the representation device: the photographic camera. In this other type of written history, the site of its production (the agencies of image production: the family, the State and the press) and the subject of the narrative (the photographs) share with the historical institutes and literary academies the task of imagining the nation and instituting the places of its memory.

Throughout the 20th century, the field of photography was redefined according to a dual movement related to the production of social and historical representations: on one side the desire to appear and on the other the desire to document.

The rules of production concerning appearances in the photographic field were defined by the establishing of an aesthetic which included portrait photographers seeking the most harmonious features of their clients, landscape photographers looking for clarity of image and wide planes and artistic amateur photographers, generally connected to one of the photography clubs, which stood for photography as an artistic expression, based on the same canons as painting (meaning that the photographic image was not spared from direct intervention through the use of filters and retouching, among other techniques.) Also included in these rules was the production of family images generally associated with the scraps of memorable daily events, trips, rites of passage, family holidays, etc. A catalogue of images compiled to give the appearance of social belonging.

In terms of documentary production, there stand out both the professionalization of the job of photographic reporter, an emblematic figure in the construction of the idea of eyewitness to history, and the defense of engaged photojournalism, such as the use of photography for scientific research. Of note here is the investment in anthropological expeditions (Levi Strauss, Castro Farias, Pierre Verger, among others); scientific expeditions and the recognition of territory (expeditions by the Instituto Oswaldo Cruz
and the Rondon Commission among others). In all cases, photography served both to inform and to conform to a certain image of history, in its space and temporalities.

Photojournalism in perspective.

Photography first appeared in daily newspapers in 1904, with the publication of a photograph in the English newspaper, *The Daily Mirror*. This represented a delay of more than twenty years in relation to illustrated magazines, which had been publishing photographs since the 1880s. Nevertheless, the introduction of photography to daily newspapers brought a significant change in the way the public related to the information due to the value given to things which are seen. The increase in the demand for images led to the establishing of the sought after profession of press photographer, so that Collier’s magazine in 1913 stated: “it is the photographer that writes history these days. The journalist only labels the characters”.

The statement is an obvious exaggeration, bearing in mind the fact that the concept of photo-reporting was only really fully developed from the 1930s onwards. In the first decades of the century, photographs were used in magazines to translate a fact into images, without much editing. In general, all photographs were published the same size, with wide angles and central framing, making a dynamic reading impossible, as well as not establishing a hierarchy of visual information.

It was only in the context of the cultural ebullience in Germany in the 1920s, that illustrated publications, principally magazines, would gain a new profile, marked both by the strict relationship between words and image in the construction of the narrative of events and by the positioning of the photographer as unseen witness of events. Eric Salomon (1928-1933), was the pioneer in the conquest of the ideal of an eyewitness who takes photographs without being seen. In the preface to his book – *Contemporary Celebrities Photographed in Unexpected Moments*, published in 1931, he stated the qualities that the photojournalist should have:

“The activity of a press photographer who wants to be more than an artisan is the continuous struggle for the image. In the same way that the hunter is obsessed by his passion for the hunt, the photographer is also obsessed with the single photography he wants to get [...] It is necessary to fight against the administration, the police, the
servants [...] you need to get them (the people) at the precise moment that they are not moving. Afterwards, you need to fight against time, as each newspaper has a deadline you need to beat. Above all, a photographic reporter must have infinite patience, and never get annoyed; he must be up to date with current events and know the time and place where they will unfold. If necessary we must make use of all manner of cunning, even if it is not always successful". ⁹

Salomon was responsible for founding the first photographic agency, in 1930, in Dephot, concerned about guaranteeing the authorship and rights to the images produced. This issue has carried on in press photography until today. In all cases it was through independent initiatives like this that the profession of press photographer gained autonomy and recognition. Those associated with Salomon in his agency included Felix H. Man, as well as André Kertesz and Brassai.

Narrative through images came to be valued following the rise of picture editors. The figure of the editor came into being in the 1930s, originating from the process of specialization of functions in the press. The editor was responsible for giving meaning to the picture, connecting words and images appropriately, through titles, captions and brief texts which accompanied the photographs. The narrative teleology of photographic reporting primarily aimed to capture the attention of the reader at the same time as instructing on the best way to read the image. Stefan Lorant, who had already worked on various German magazines, was the pioneer in the development of the concept of photo-reporting. ¹⁰

Lorant rejected the staged photograph. In place of this, he created in-depth photo-reporting on a single theme. In these stories, which were generally presented over various pages, detail photographs were grouped around a central photograph. This was intended to synthesize the elements of the story which Lorant asked the photojournalists to tell in images. According to this idea, a photo-story must have a beginning and an end, defined by place, time and action. ¹¹

With the rise of Nazism, many photographers left Germany, Salomon himself died in Auschwitz. Some of those who left, among them the Hungarian, Andrei Friemann, who adopted the pseudonym Capa, went to France, where in 1947 they founded the Magnum agency. Others, including Lorant, went into exile in England.

⁹ Cited by FREUND, op.cit., p. 117 and SOUZA, op.cit., p.78.
¹¹ SOUZA, op.cit., p.80.
assuming the direction of important magazines such as the *Weekly Illustrated*. Later, with the intensification of the conflict, they went on to the USA, working together on the magazines *Life*, *Look* and *Time* (FOUNDED 1922).

The period between the wars was also a time of growth for North-American photojournalism. Within this context, the appearance of the great variety magazines like *Life* (1936) and *Look* (1937) stands out. The first edition of *Life* magazine came out on 11th November 1936, with a print run of 466,000 and a business structure which gathered together in 17 sections renowned journalists and photographers of the sensitivity of Eugene Smith.

Created in the environment of the New Deal, *Life* was designed to give signs of hope to the consumer, generally dealing with subjects of interest to ordinary people. It aimed to be a family magazine which avoided shocking issues, identifying itself ideologically with: Christian ethics, paternalistic democracy, the hope for a better future through the efforts of the population, rewards for hard work and talent and defense of science, exoticism, sensationalism and emotiveness tempered by a false humanism.\(^{12}\)

According to its founder Henry Luce, the purpose of the magazine would be:

“*[Life arose] To see life; to see the world, to be an eyewitness to great events, to observe the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things – machines, armies, crowds, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see the work of man – his paintings, towers [buildings] and discoveries; to see things from thousands of kilometers, things hidden behind walls and inside rooms, things which are dangerous to get close to: women that men love and lots of children; to see and have pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed*.\(^{13}\)

Based on this objective, photography was given a significant space, fully developing in this publication the precepts of photo-reporting defended by Stephan Lorant who came to work there during the war years. Photo-reporting marked an era in the illustrated press responding to the demands of the time. A time when culture became more international and history accelerated its rhythm in the disorder caused by wars and social conflicts. In step with the image narratives, events recovered their representational force, to the point where contemporary history could be told through these images.

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\(^{12}\) Luiz Espada, cited by SOUZA, op.cit., p.107.

\(^{13}\) Idem, p.108.
The generation of photographers who appeared in the 1930s acted at a period when the printed press was the principal media giving access to the world and its events. The images of this generation of photographers exercised a strong influence on the way history came to be told. Concerned photography, photographs with a strong social appeal, produced from close contact with social diversity, shaped the genre also known as social documentary.

Projects bearing the mark of social documentary are extremely varied, but in general, they were associated with an institutional proposal, whether official or not. Two significant examples in the history of concerned photography are:

**Farm Security Administration:** The Great Depression in North-America which came in the wake of the stock market crash in New York, 1929, resulted in two million unemployed and a mass of migrants living in subhuman conditions. Terrible living conditions, associated with the displacement of populations from the interior of the country, marked this period with a constant fear of outbreaks of social conflict, requiring the constant attention of the authorities.

A large number of photographers concerned about the situation responded favorably to the official request. Under the auspices of what was known as the FSA (Farm Security Administration), a government founded organization directed by Roy Stryker, rural and urban life was recorded (and exposed) by the renowned photographers of the period: Dorothea Lange, Margaret Bourke-White, Russel-Lee, Walker Evans, etc.

Many of these responses were read as examples of photojournalism. Therefore their images were given importance both as a permanent record of the epoch and, at the same time, were seen as having a place inside the context in which they were produced. In this way, the aim of these photographers was not only to record and inform, but to move and mobilize public opinion towards positive action. To this end, they did not spare any resources, making full use of “dramatic language”. 14

**Magnum Agency:** the constant increase in the search for images led to the multiplication of press agencies in all countries. They employed photographers or established contracts with independent photographers. In general, the agencies kept the major part from the sales of the photographs, with the photographer responsible for all the risks not having the means to control the sales of the work.

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For these reasons, in 1947, Robert Capa, together with other photographers, founded the Magnum agency. Among the founders were: in addition to Capa, David Seymour, Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger, Willian Vandivert and Maria Eisner. In 1949 Werner Bishop, Ernst Haas and Gisèle Freund joined the group. Between 1951 and 1959 the agency grew with the addition of another group of collaborators: Eve Arnold, Erich Hartmann, Erich Lessing, Denis Stock and Cornell Capa, among others.

For this group of photographers, photography was not just a way of making money. They aspired to express their own feelings and ideas about their time through their images. They rejected montage and favored pictures of “the moment” and the effect of reality produced by non-posed images, as the distinguishing mark of their photographic style. In general, members of the agency used leicas, a small camera which could dispense with flash, thus valorizing the effect of reality.

In both the examples, what can be seen is the construction of a community of images around determined themes, events, people or places, as well as cross-over between these categories. In the case of the FSA Project, their images corroborate, to a large extent, the process of constructing racial, political and ethnic identities within the United States of America, from the viewpoint of the Social Welfare State. Following this logic, the North-American community would survive in adversity through its social diversity, amalgamated as symbols of an ideal life, by the government project. The issue which arose between the photographers and the manager of the project, Roy Stryker, concerned the rights to the negatives, as these belonged to the contracting State in spite of protests from photographers like Dorothea Lange or Walker Evans.

It is worthwhile pointing out that it was only at the Berne-Brussels convention in the 1950s, in article six, paragraph one, that the photographer’s rights as author of the work were formally recognized, establishing that the photograph should not be deformed, mutilated or suffer any other modification which might affect the honor of the photographer.

The fight for copyright and for autonomy of creation was a fundamental element in defining the standard of visuality created by Magnum. The death of the Spanish militiaman, by Robert Capa, or even, the woman holding a flower in the march for peace, against the Vietnam war, in 1967, by Marc Riboud, are classic examples of how

15 Idem.
17 SOUSA, op.cit., p.126.
Magnum photographs project the events of the time, composing an imagery of the history of the 20th century.

The long existence of the agency has been marked by conflicts common to a group of photographic stars, although none have been so significant as to put at risk its survival as the icon of “concerned photography”. At one of their annual meetings, Henry Cartier-Bresson (1908-2005), one of its founding fathers, defined it thus: “Magnum is a community of thought, which shares a human quality; curiosity about what is happening in the world, respect for what is happening and the desire to transcribe all of this visually. For this reason, the group has survived. It is exactly this that has kept us together”.18

In parallel with more concerned work, mass media photojournalism gained force through the speed at which events could be relayed to the public. The investment in technology to capture and reproduce images, in a shorter and shorter time, permitted photographs to assume the role of disseminators of information. The scoop also came to be defined by the best photograph of the event. This competition had already given rise to the news agencies in the 1930s.

The use of photographic images, not only to illustrate, but fundamentally as information support, had redefined the graphic standard of the newspapers and magazines since the beginning of the 1920s, as explained by Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone: “Although larger photos appeared in the 1920s, the contrast between small and large shots increased over the period. The shots were mostly long and medium range at first. Closer shots (or cropping) got more frequent in the 1920s, and longer shots declined after 1936’s. These shifts were consonant with the emergence of modern photojournalism, which valued events and emotive detail”.19

The growing demand for photographs produced in the heat of the moment, led to the development of technological resources which permit their transmission in the shortest time possible. Among the principal resources, the wire machine stands out. It was first introduced at the Associated Press in 1935 and a year later at Soundphoto of the Hearst Group, which supplied images to the New York Times, and at Scripps-Howard’s NEA – Acme wire machine.

19 Cited by SOUSA, op.cit. p. 103.
The wire services led to the standardization of photographs in the main newspapers and magazines. In the forties, the news agencies were already the principal suppliers of photographic images for the daily and weekly press. In general, the clients of the news agencies’ photographic services required, above all, one clear picture per subject. The issues most sought after were crimes, conflicts, disasters, accidents, the acts of public figures and sporting events.\textsuperscript{20} Valorizing the first impact on its reception or photo shock. According to the Galician researcher, Margarida Leda Andión, the world of representation of this type of image “covers all the iconography of the abnormal, of “live” violence resulting from a common or individual catastrophe. Photo-shock is increasingly routine in the information policy of the mass media, a routine practice which is not only derived from the criteria of newsworthiness practiced, but also, from the sources which control the supply of the news – institutions and agencies”\textsuperscript{21}

The international news agencies were primarily responsible for the homogenization which occurred in the media after the Second World War. Intense competition among news agencies offering photographic services began in the 1950s. United Press International (UPI), for example, emerged as a serious competitor to Associated Press, incorporating Hearst’s International News Service and ACME Photo Agency. The North-American hegemony, which began in the thirties with the founding of the Black Star photographic agency, would only encounter competitors with the same level of efficiency and speed in the transmission of images in the 1980s when Reuters and France Presse appeared as strong rivals.\textsuperscript{22}

In terms of the technical resources, since the end of the 1920s, photojournalists have had a mounting collection of equipment which has facilitated photographic work, giving it greater agility and speed. As the Portuguese historian, Jorge Pedro de Sousa, explains “in 1929 Rolleiflex brought out the twin-lens reflex system; in 1933, the single-lens reflex system appeared which until today is the most commonly used in photojournalism. The direct reflex system permitted more precise framing, facilitated focusing and gave the photographer greater concentration on the subject. In 1936, Agfa succeeded in making a film of 100 ASA (21DIN) sensitivity”\textsuperscript{23} The discovery of more

\textsuperscript{20} IDEM, p.102.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Foto-xoc e xornalismo de crise}, Idem, p.152.
\textsuperscript{22} Idem p.161.
\textsuperscript{23} Idem, p.83.
sensitive films and faster cameras permitted the news agencies to develop a narrative ever more faithful and closer to the events.

**In Brazil**

The Brazilian editorial market, although incipient, had been in existence since the 19th century including diverse publications. In 1900, the Revista da Semana was launched, the first periodical illustrated with photographs. From that time on, the number of titles multiplied as did the investment in this type of publication. An example of this was the appearance in 1928 of the magazine, O Cruzeiro, a milestone in the history of illustrated publications.

Beginning in the 1940s, O Cruzeiro changed the technical and aesthetic standard of illustrated magazines becoming large format with better print definition, international reports prepared with contacts with press agencies abroad and, in strictly technical terms, the introduction of rotogravure, permitting a closer association between text and image. All of this modernization was funded by Diários Associados, a company belonging to Assis Chateaubriand, who started to invest heavily in the expansion of the editorial market of periodical publications.

The new trend established by O Cruzeiro, initiated a general reform in the existing publications, forcing them to modernize the aesthetic of their media. Traditional publications like Fon-Fon, Careta and Revista da Semana adapted themselves to the new standards of presentation which combined text and images in the development of a new way of photographing, photojournalism.

Under the strong influence of Life magazine, the photojournalism of O Cruzeiro assumed an international profile, in this way creating a school which had among its basic principles the concept of the role of photographer as “eyewitness”. This perspective was associated with the idea that the photographic image possesses a narrativity, in other words, that it can relate an event, tell a story, or even develop a narrative on the facts. However, when the events did not serve, it produced History.

The written text accompanied the image as support, a parallel narrative which often amplified the ideological character of the photographic message. In this way, the reports were always made by a journalist, responsible for the written text, and by a

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photographic reporter, responsible for the images, working together in synchrony. However, it was only from the 1940s that the photographer’s credit began to appear regularly in the pages of the magazines and newspapers. One pair in particular helped to consolidate the style of photo-reporting in Brazil: David Nasser and Jean Manzon, the first team in Brazilian photojournalism and protagonists of stories which staged History itself.\textsuperscript{26}

In addition to Manzon, other photographers contributed to the consolidation of the photographic memory of contemporary Brazil, including: José Medeiros, Flávio Damm, Luiz Pinto, Eugenio Silva, Indalécio Wanderley, Erno Schneider, Alberto Jacob, Evandro Teixeira among others who defined a generation of Brazilian photojournalism. They were photographers with different profiles who operated in the major Brazilian media, experiencing both the “golden years” and the “years of lead” of the press. It is also worth remembering that some of them also provided services for the international agencies such as Black Star and AP. The trajectory of these professionals points the way contemporary Brazilian photography established itself as a means of documentary and artistic expression. A dichotomy which, in general, has been overcome by the overflowing of styles from one field into the other. The trajectory of Flávio Damm can be seen in this context, as shall be examined later on.

Taking a critical perspective to study the history of western photojournalism, the Portuguese historian, Jorge Pedro de Sousa adapts the concept of interpretative community used by Barbie Zelier. This concept permits an understanding of how photojournalists relate collectively to the technological changes in photography, so as to create interpretative grids and common meanings on the events. The interpretative community of photojournalists has in its picture agencies, its best frame.

It was through the photographic agencies, created in the 1930s, that define a narrative form for media events. According to Barnhurst, “the narrative teaches that the world is not safe, that when things go wrong, what is needed is a hero to intervene and set them right. And a need for a hero presumes a victim, someone who waits passively for rescue”.\textsuperscript{27}

In fact, this means that, in a defined historical-cultural context, the conventional narratives in (photo) journalism contribute to giving social meaning to specific events in

\textsuperscript{26} COSTA, H. “Palco de uma história desejada: o retrato do Brasil por Jean Manzon”, IN: Revista do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico, IPHAN, nº 27, 1998, pp. 139-159 e CARVALHO, Luiz Maklouf. 

\textsuperscript{27} Citado por SOUZA, op.cit. p. 22.
detriment to others, in consequence promoting certain events and not others, in terms of news, competing to give an appearance of order to the chaos which is the random eruption of events, making real events intelligible, due to their classification into specific categories.

Adriano Duarte Rodrigues places emphasis on the role of the media in the development of events in modern society, in which myths have been substituted by media narratives as the way to organize the random social experiences of life into a rationalized whole. The photojournalist does not only report the news but creates it: the (photo) news is an artifact constructed by the force of personal, social (including economic), ideological, historical, cultural and technological mechanisms.28

The notion of the visuality of the narrative of events is dependent on the conditions of existence of events which are dictated by the current media of the world. Pierre Nora coined the notion of monstrous event to characterize the role of the media in the promotion of the immediate to the historical: ‘the fact of having happened does not make it historical, for there to be an event, it is necessary that this is known through the rules of spectacle[...]. The mass media has made history an aggression and has made the monstrous event. Not because it, by definition, goes out of the ordinary, but because the intrinsic redundancy of the system tends to produce the sensational, permanently makes the new, feeds a hunger for events”. 29.

In his considerations on the metamorphoses of the event, Nora affirms that in democratic societies, the event assumes the role of ‘the marvelous’ in the imagery of the masses, imitating the themes of ‘the traditional fantastic’ through the effect of over-multiplication of the performances of the technocratic society. The facts which marked the daily life of the last decades of the 20th century bore the mark of the spectacular, created by the possibility of direct transmission, where modern events themselves are immediately in the public arena.

At the same time, the media’s development of the event spectacle also needs a community of readers/spectators. The existence of this community presupposes that they share the same values, which the media uses to construct the interpretation of the events. In his reflections on the role of the magazine O Cruzeiro, in Brazilian social imagery, the French historian André Seguin des Hons, highlights:

28 Idem
“The combination of information with sensation and adventure has a meaning for the historian which goes beyond the magazine’s simple recipe for success. It is inscribed in the sensibility of the moment and it is possible that this reader-magazine identification translates the exaltation of a period in which Brazil frequently appears in the eyes of the middle classes as a country of the future [...] the magazine attended both a popular public and the privileged classes [...] more than a simple reflection of the ideological movement, O Cruzeiro was one of its disseminators”.30

Therefore, press photographers, in spite of belonging to one group, manage to go beyond the social definitions by developing a professional trajectory which enables them to enhance their cultural competence and abilities through new contacts and varied information. In this way, the photographer becomes a mediator between the historical process, social demands and their development through photography, recreating in the pages of the magazines and newspapers a complex historical narrative of the facts and events, and, at the same time, making concrete the collective expectations.

**Photography and cultural diversity, notes for reflection.**

In Social Science literature in Brazil, the notion of cultural diversity is unfailingly associated with the different approaches to national identity, which since the middle of the 19th century, has punctuated approaches to the constitution of Brazilian culture

The reflections of Renato Ortiz31 provide precise definitions of the marks which have regulated the debate on cultural diversity in Brazil. Among the ideas of race, peoples, and class, approaches based on folklore, the mixing of races and class struggle have been developed, each in its own way examining the relationship of Brazil with its Others.

“The subject of Brazilian culture and national identity is an old debate which was developed in Brazil. [...] The different authors who have examined the question agree that we are different to other peoples or countries, whether European or North-American. In this sense, the critique that the intellectuals of the 19th century made “copies” of the ideas from the metropolis is still valid for the 1960s, when one seeks to diagnose the existence of an alienated culture, imported from central countries. All identity is defined in relation to something which is outside, that is the difference. We can think of the ‘why’ of this insistence in seeking an identity which is opposed to the

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foreign. I believe that the response can be found in the fact that we are a country of the so-called third world, which means that the question is a structural imposition which is placed from the dominated position in which we find ourselves in the international system.\textsuperscript{32}

Following the author’s reasoning, at different moments the notion of a cultural mosaic has been appropriated by different discourses on the definition of being national. Thus, for the romantics and folklorists, cultural diversity was the base to project a plural national identity, strongly marked by the myth of the good savage incorporated into the indigenous imagery. In this world, the Negro was excluded by the mark of slavery. Post-abolition and the advent of the crowd in the republican public scene would redefine the debate on the constitution of the Brazilian “people”, in a myriad of approaches in which not even the notion of people was a consensus.

According to the left-wing approach, based on traditional Marxism, cultural diversity would be an ideological denial to dissimulate the impact of the class struggle in the formation of the worker’s consciousness. On the other side of the political spectrum, according to liberal functionalist approaches, cultural diversity would be a perspective of projecting a Brazil in which the harmony between the races has created the illusion of a country without prejudice, a true racial democracy.

The opening of the political regime in the 1980s brought new social movements to the public arena, whose activities were associated with the politics of identities. These movements operated with the idea of cultural diversity as a platform of social projection. A principle which is defined, not in exclusion nor in social inclusion, but by the constitution of a feeling of belonging to a community of meanings and practices. This platform has as its corollary, the narrowing of relations between diversity and otherness.

Flávio Damm and Sebastião Salgado are photographers belonging to different generations and tendencies. The combination of both in the same analysis aims to valorize the diversity of the local eye on the world. This analysis takes photography as a visual expression based on its own language – the photographic language. Thus photography is the result of a game of expression and content which necessarily involves three components: the author, the text itself and the reader. Each of these three elements is part of the final result, to the extent that all of the cultural production involves a ‘locus’ of production and a producer, who manipulates techniques and

\textsuperscript{32} ORTIZ, Renato. \textit{Cultura Brasileira e identidade Nacional}, São Paulo: Brasiliense, 5\textsuperscript{a} ed.,1994, p.7
possesses knowledge specific to the activity; a reader or recipient, known as a trans-
individual subject, whose responses are directly linked to the social programming of the
behavior of the historical context in which it is inserted, and lastly a socially accepted
valid meaning, resulting from the work of the investment of sense.

We can add to this analysis the temporal perception which defines photography
as a work of memory. By fixing the image of human experience in different ways,
photographs are the material substrate of contemporary memories. In this instant and
uncertain world, rehabilitating the idea of time as duration allows us to attribute a
narrative dimension to the photographic act.33

The world as imagined community in the work of Flávio Damm.

Flávio Damm, who was born in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the south of
Brazil in 1928, started work at an early age as a laboratory assistant at Revista do
Globo, at 20 achieving his first scoop. In the 6th November, 1948 edition of the Revista
do Globo (Ano XIX, nº 470), in an article entitled “The Long Journey Back”, with text
written by the reporter Rubens Vidal, he published the first pictures of Getúlio on his
return to Catete. The reportage bore fruit, as in 1949 he went to Rio de Janeiro where he
got a job as a photographer at O Cruzeiro magazine, the main vehicle for
photojournalism at the time in Brazil. He worked at the magazine for 10 years and in
1959 left to begin a successive freelance career.

He has many memories of his ten years at O Cruzeiro. He has spoken much of
the importance of the magazine at this time, as well as the editorial routine and the
photographic language used. His memories of the years there include many
photographic stories, from the coronation of the Queen of England, to the last
photographs of Eva Perón to the Sacopã crime in the south zone of Rio de Janeiro. Each
story is recounted with technical details, emphasizing the side of adventure which
involves the imagery of the work of the contemporary photographer.

After leaving O Cruzeiro magazine, Flávio Damm developed various types of
work, all connected to photography, obviously. He opened a studio in an apartment
which he had in Flamengo, worked as a photographer for Petrobrás, the Brazilian oil
comppany, worked as a producer in graphic design, wrote books and participated in

33 For a reflection on the time category in the era of instant photography, see: LISSOVSKY, Mauricio. “O
Refúgio do tempo no tempo do instantâneo”. In: Lugar Comum (Rio de Janeiro) (8), 89-109, mai-
ago/1999
numerous exhibitions. In addition, he was one of the first Brazilian photographers to create a photographic agency, *Agência Jornalística Image ltda.*, in 1961.

A lover of black and white photographs he states that he is against the corruption that comes with the charms of digital photography and that he feels the need to photograph constantly as photography is the air that he breathes. Considered by his younger brother as a ‘pickpocket’ photographer because of his description of photographing what he calls the surrealism of daily life, Flávio Damm defends the idea of photography as an art form. For him, the great masters of photography, such as Cartier-Bresson, have left us moments of art through photography.\(^{34}\)

The photographs which form part of this article were chosen by the photographer in response to a request: “I need photographs showing the design of your vision on the world outside, the foreigner. They can be recent or from longer ago, choose from those you have digitalized to those you like the most.”\(^{35}\)

I aggregated photographs produced in Brazil to this selection, with the purpose of demonstrating an argument built on the cross-referencing of oral and visual sources. Damm’s work, in my opinion, belongs to the category of strolling photographer – ‘flaneur’. A Benjaminian figure who wanders through passages and roads, from the broadest avenues to the most sinuous paths, absorbing the modern city through his eyes. His visual narrative is constructed through pieces of daily life transformed into memory, instantly, by the act of photography. Capturing a perfect moment in tune with the visual culture which composes his vision – photojournalism developed by the time spent waiting for the event, which is not based on the logic of publicly memorable events but in tune with the steps of one who walks through the city alert to what is strangely familiar.

The series presented is composed of 17 photographs of moments in daily life, in which temporal duration is defined by the multiple existences of the photographer as citizen, passer-by, traveler, tourist, in all, an ordinary man. In Damm’s work as in Cartier-Bresson’s, “the instant results from *kairós* – occasion and opportunity, for him, the fleeting configuration established in the fraction of a second of a correspondence – presented in a temporal logic which is its own, on its occasion.”\(^{36}\).

\(^{34}\) Biographical sketch from three interviews with the photographer during 2003 (24/04/2003; 15/05/2003 and 7/10/2003), all placed with the LABHOI/UFF.

\(^{35}\) Correspondence by e-mail on 12/10/2206

1. Bahia, Xaréo, 1954

2. Bahia, 1954

3. New York City, 1957

5. Brasília, 1962

7. Orlando, 1989


13. Spain, 2001


16. Portugal, 2002

17. Lisbon, 2004
The series starts in 1954 with two photographs of Bahia. At this time, when he was still working at *O Cruzeiro* magazine, Damm traveled to the different states of Brazil, accompanying reporters, or with the task of writing about the subjects he photographed himself. He always took with him his pocket camera, which he used to “snatch” pieces of the reality which surrounded him. In the images in question: work and love.

Next come two pictures from the 1950s, both of New York, where Damm lived for six months as correspondent for the magazine. In both images, the detail concerns the action of children. In the first, a pretended kick to the statue’s head which seems to succumb to the blow; and in the second, oblivious to the mother’s hurry, the baby calmly drinks his bottle.

Next in the sequence comes a photograph from the 1960s. In Brasilia the recently inaugurated capital of Brazil, two nuns pass by inscribing themselves in the image as a complement to the geometry of the scene – points, planes, straight lines and curves.

Three photographs from 1989 taken in different places, Paris and Orlando and Rome follow, all centered round the reaction to a public scene. In the first picture, schoolchildren observe a couple uniting their bodies in a kiss; in the second, a young girl blocks her ears against the sound of the band; in the third, the monks pose is unexpectedly broken by the entrance of a child into the scene. Each scene shows a new outcome with the flavor of capturing the moment.

The following three pictures come from the 1990s: two from Italy and one from Marrakech. In the first a man takes advantage of a break to read a newspaper, lying down in a gondola, anchored to the quay. The alignment of the gondolas at the facades of the buildings bordering the canal, leads the reader of the images through the sinuous ways of Venice. Next, in both images, the people are submerged by the monumental quality of the buildings. Doors and passages delimit the paths open and closed to the strolling photographer, who, despite the extraordinariness of the vision, does not lose the visual synthesis; the music and the dove; the woman wearing the chador and the bicycle.

In the series of six photographs produced in 2000, the Iberian-American space is constructed as a mosaic of fragments of a dissonant daily life. The narrative is composed in the interval of the image; the surreal vision freezes unusual scenes. From
the surreal moment of the man in Lisbon with his umbrella, an image on an image, to the irreverence of Rio de Janeiro – a beggar poses, aligned with the model’s pose; next, men try to dress a dummy which gains unexpected human legs. The alert eye captures in an instant what is strangely common.

The other three are narratives of generation, images which translate into scenes a generational trajectory. The image of the old man and the child shows the two points of life; the couple and the cats, a parallel of existences; and the final sequence of brides, a cortege of expectation projected on the roads of the city. In each, a detail, a hint, an indication provides us with a narrative web which comments on the multiple histories of daily life.

Damm voluntarily claims his membership of the Cartier-Bresson tradition, uniting in the same goal, the head, the eye and the heart, following the lessons of the master and becoming a hunter of images. Lissovsky’s thoughts on this relationship give it an analytical density:

“The mysticism around photography makes him the Zen archer: because of his superior sense, he sees, with eyes shut, the instant, where the fortuitous finds its target [...] In making himself the lure for the image, the photographer polarizes space. In the short-circuit of this inner vision, the configuration becomes a suspension of time between two equilibriums which immediately before distinguish that which sees from that which is seen – and which will return, immediately after, to re-establish themselves”.

The event and its architecture is the synthesis of a visual plot. The result of the photographer’s wait to capture the fleeting meeting between the event and the geometry, “the photographic camera, says Cartier-Bresson, is the master of the moment, it questions and decides at the same time”.

Thus in the imagined world in Damm’s photographs, anonymous people are the protagonists, daily life is the rhythm and the cities are the space. In this world, cultural diversity is the substrate of its surreal mosaic. Known both as ‘identity-world’ and ‘otherness-world’, this diversity is revealed in relation to his experience as the possessor of a certain vision which projects the local dimension to the world. In this operation, Damm transforms the world into his town, his neighborhood.

_The world as imagined community, in Sebastião Salgado._

37 Idem, p.102.
38 Idem, p.96.
Sebastião Salgado can be included in the list of most important documentary photographers of modern times. His diverse work on some of the most distinct regions of the world is marked by his eye, integrating the local to the global, through themes which, in the opposite direction to globalization, join regions by feelings of despair, abandon, sadness and conflict. War, work in inhuman conditions, social conflicts and movement between frontiers are the basis for beautiful images with great impact which manage to mobilize and engender indignation. They are images/agents of a process of production of sense which stands in opposition to the official speeches.

The winner of various international prizes which demonstrate the wide circulation of his images, Sebastião Salgado is by many considered to be a citizen of the world. Born in 1944, in the town of Aimorés, in the interior of Minas Gerais state, Sebastião Salgado was part of a generation of migrants who came out of the interior to seek better working conditions and education in the cities which were expanding in the 1950s. In 1969, as a result of the political persecution by the military dictatorship in Brazil, Sebastião Salgado and his wife Lélia were forbidden to return to Brazil, their return only being liberated in the 1980s, with the law of amnesty. During the period of his exile, Salgado exchanged economics for photography, working in internationally renowned agencies such as Sigma, Gamma and Magnum, as well as for magazines of the same renown, among them Newsweek, Paris Match and Stern.

At several moments of his career, Sebastião Salgado has been asked to reflect on his photographic work, giving an insight on the way he thinks photographically:

“Perhaps my background as an economist has allowed me to concentrate on an area, to think, to analyze, to place myself in the historical current of what has happened at a specific time, to place myself in the photography, to connect my photo to this historical development and to travel there. For me there are no limits to work as I believe that the great barrier for photojournalists and documentary photographers is intellectual. If we try to understand society and link photography to this, there is no stopping point [...] the outstanding part of the work of most of the photographers in this genre is to remind those who are well and who live well that there is a large part of the population that does not live well. We can’t live sitting on top of a volcano or an atomic bomb. He knows that the function of the photographer and the writer is to work as a vector linking the two sides of the problem. Four fifths of the population of the country live badly and need to improve their lives. We must show the problem to the decision-makers, to those who are the dominant class,
to those who produce all the riches in the country, explaining that the only solution for us to live together is to share a little.”

Salgado’s statement reveals his particular conception of the photographic act. He does not create poses, avoiding the pre-fabricated *mise-en-scène*, and yet the image is not given naturally, it is the result of investment of meaning. Looking at history, evaluating its process, proposing interpretative keys, asking questions, adopting the position of agent of meaning, the photographer redevelops photographic language, assuming elements of texts which preceded it, through this achieving an expressiveness perfectly in line with the textuality of the time which is associated with the significant message. In this way the appreciation and consumption of the images is established in function of the polyphony on which it is based.

In seeking that his images provoke a reaction, Sebastião Salgado creates a situation where they only gain a full meaning in a dialogue and inter-subjective relationship between different social agents. In another statement, he endorses this perspective, valorizing the idea of photographic phenomenon:

“*My vision is an attempt not to think of decisive moments, but of photographic phenomena, in which the photographer participates until reaching the apex of this phenomenon. Then the photographer really has achieved the strongest photograph and is able to abandon the phenomenon and go on to another, living the phenomena and no longer avoiding the tangent.*”

In this way, the argument which is constructed to read Sebastião Salgado’s photographs involves the idea of photographer in exile. His experience of exile, of banishment, made him change the course of his life and led him to visual experiences anchored in a Marxist reading of the social sciences and economics of the 1960s.

His photographic development has occurred within the visual culture of engaged photojournalism, “concerned photography”, and is strongly committed to social transformation and independent production. In parallel, Salgado has developed a visual approach to social experiences marked by references to the imagery of neoclassical art, valorizing light, the tonalities of grey, the nuances of contrast between zones of light

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and shadow, artistic options inspired by religious iconography, full of biblical references to Exodus.

The notion of religiosity which orients Salgado’s visual production is mixed with the forms of expression of popular culture from different parts of the world which, even in limited situations, preserve their human condition, that which makes them part of the global imagined community.

The ideal search source to evaluate Salgado’s photographic production and its relationship with the Idea of the world as imagined community, according to the concept of cultural diversity shown above is the photographer’s official site: 
http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaosalgado/index.htm. It is composed of his photographic projects and a collection of information and reflections concerning his work and the themes explored.

The first page of the site opens with a photograph chosen from the collection of images on the site. This image varies and every time that the page is opened, we are presented with a new image. The initial page also allows the visitor to choose the language which will orient the reading. Having chosen the language, we enter a page in which two projects are shown as paths to navigate: Migration: Humanity in Transition, 1993-1999 and The Majority World, three photo essays, 1977-1992. The paths cover the trajectory of the photography from his beginning, showing his constant concern in projecting images of a world in transformation at the turn of the millennium.

The three essays which make up the path, The Majority World are entitled: Other Americas – 1977/1984 (19 photographs); Famine in Sahel – 1984/1985 (21 photographs); Workers – 1986/1992 (39 photographs). Together they make a total of 79 photographs. The geographical distribution is defined by their titles, with the exception of the third essay which includes a varied range of locations including industrialized countries.

The five essays which make up the path Migration: Humanity in Transition, covering the period between 1993 and 1999, are entitled: Refugees and migrants (20 photographs); Africa Adrift (17 photographs); Struggling for Land (21 photographs); Mega-cities (17 photographs); The Children (12 photographs). Together the essays total 87 photographs. As a whole, the site contains 166 photographs from more than twenty years of work.

Throughout this time, Sebastião Salgado has constructed a notion of region-world delimited by the notion of equality of the human condition in the diversity of
cultures. The map shown on his site supplies the clear scale of his photographic cartography.

Map 1: Megacities and populations on the move on the planet.

http://www.terra.com.br/sebastiaosalgado/images/maps/map01.jpg

However, the concept of equality in Salgado’s work is not that of enlightened reason, equality in the public arena, understood as a dispute for power and access to the world of liberalism or neo-liberalism. On the contrary, it is strongly anchored in the tradition of the left engaged in the struggles of the Third World, with the equality that is preached invested in the communitarian sense of social practices and in the capacity of culture, in its creative diversity, to seek its own autonomous paths.

If the photographic space is defined by the boundaries of regions of conflict, the time of the images is pluralized in the times of history. In this sense, the thoughts of Mauricio Lissosvky are enlightening:

“For Salgado, the instant – the need for its coming – is taken for granted. –. The wait for the photograph is the counterpart of the maturation of the instant. It nourishes it – grows and appears – from the expectation itself. Salgado’s composition and ‘classical’ framing are an indispensable part of this instant which is awaited by the photographer. The evolution of the shape does not happen by chance; it matures, converging to the akme (culmination), that the composition expresses. In this sense, ‘the approach curve’ put forward by Salgado is extremely precise. It marks a convergence which is in the last
instance, teleological: the inscription of ‘photographic phenomena’ in a sacred history”41

Time as duration is revealed both in the act of the photographer waiting for the photographic phenomenon and in the notion of a pilgrimage. Sebastião Salgado, while in exile, constructed a trajectory which became a life project, shared with communities who are exiled for different reasons. However, if the present time is characterized by uncertainty, the future is shown as a time of expectation revealed in the image-synthesis of the children; images which are linked to concrete situations but which are also symbols of hope.


Two images as a conclusion.


At the same place, at different times, the attentive eye of the photographer catches scenes in which the protagonists perform the same roles: mother and child. Nevertheless, they are diametrically different, even when we think of the range of interpretative possibilities. It is not a case of “uncovering” hidden meanings, or even seeking a hidden reality behind the images. Instead, it points to the capacity of the photographic image to narrate stories and to be one of the important bases of our collective memory. However, we must always remember that the images do not speak for themselves without our asking the questions that need to be asked.