

6. Coexisting Forms Within A Specific Formation

Nelson Werneck Sodré (1911-1999) published *Formação Histórica do Brasil* (Historical Formation of Brazil, henceforth FHB) in 1962 as a result of the course he gave in 1956 at the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies), known as ISEB, and of the subsequent revisions of his own conceptions (see FHB, p.ix).²¹⁷ At the very beginning, he stresses the link between the text and the historical moment in which it came out. Following his words, we read that the text

[e]vidently corresponds to the phase we are living in our Country. It should come as no surprise that a phase of profound modifications has implications to all domains, demanding also a historical revision. Such revision is not so much linked to events and figures as it is to the process, approached from new methods of interpretation; this revision does not derive from an academic interest, but from the necessity to know, from an objective point of view, the antecedents that, in their development, have led the Country [*sic*] to the situation in which it finds itself now. It is not, therefore, a book of mere speculation: it derives from a political position (FHB, p.ix).

This opening remark contains in a nutshell almost everything at stake in FHB. Firstly, it posits that the immediate situation of the Brazil - in a "phase of profound modifications" - implies the necessity of a historical study; secondly, it highlights the importance of assessing the past - the "antecedents" - through different methods of interpretation; thirdly, it establishes the association between the past and the present condition where the country finds itself; finally, it makes explicit that FHB comes from a "political position". In few words, FHB exposes specific political implications in its study of the formation of contemporary Brazil.

²¹⁷ In 2004, FHB received its 14th edition.

But, before discussing FHB itself, let me say few words on ISEB, since it helps grasping what is at stake in the text, mainly in terms of the relation between Nelson Werneck Sodré's interpretation of Brazil and the political position it exposes.²¹⁸ According to Helio Jaguaribe (2009 [2004]), the beginning of ISEB can be traced back to the end of 1940s, when young intellectuals have been given a space to create, under Helio's direction, a cultural page ("page 5") on the periodical *Jornal do Comércio* which would then be the starting point for further contacts between them and for promoting discussions of the relation between Brazilian reality and a general notion of universal culture (see Jaguaribe, 2009 [2004], pp.431-2; 2009 [2006], pp.733-4). Since 1952, a study group begun to meet on a regular basis at the *Parque Nacional de Itatiaia* (Itatiaia National Park), gathering diverse intellectuals such as Helio Jaguaribe himself (the major figure of this group), Guerreiro Ramos, Rômulo de Almeida, Cândido Mendes de Almeida, Ignácio Rangel, Evaldo Correia Lima, among others (Nelson Werneck Sodré accompanied the group, but not very actively). In 1953, this group - known as *Grupo de Itatiaia* (Itatiaia Group) - created the *Instituto Brasileiro de Economia, Sociologia e Política* (Brazilian Institute of Economics, Sociology and Politics, IBESP), editing the journal *Cadernos do Nosso Tempo* (Notebooks of Our Time). Nelson Werneck Sodré's first contact with the members of IBESP, specifically with Guerreiro Ramos, happened in 1954; in this incipient moment of the Institute, that would later become ISEB, Nelson noted that most of the intellectuals involved with IBESP were linked to Getúlio Vargas' government, almost of all of them belonging to the state apparatus (see Sodré, 2010 [1990], pp.204-9).²¹⁹ By that time, Nelson was already a member of the Brazilian Army and had joined in the previous decade the *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Communist Party of Brazil, PCB).²²⁰

²¹⁸ It should be clear that I am not claiming that FHB represents ISEB's interpretation of Brazil, neither that it represents Nelson's oeuvre as a whole. What I do suggest next is that FHB exposes a certain interpretation of Brazil that is linked to the importance ascribed to the notion of national-developmentalism during the 1950s in Brazil - a notion that is intrinsically related to ISEB.

²¹⁹ ISEB and IBESP coexisted for a short period of time, and *Cadernos do Nosso Tempo* had some volumes even after ISEB was created (see Ianni, 2004e, p.254; Hollanda, 2012, p.609; and Ioris, 2014, ch.4). For a closer study on this periodical, see Hollanda (2012).

²²⁰ Although I have decided to stress Nelson's engagement with ISEB, his military career is no less relevant for his interpretation of Brazil and political position. Although, after the military dictatorship in Brazil, it is common in the public debate to conceive the Armed Forces as necessarily conservative and closer to what is generally considered a right-wing political position, this is not always the case. Internal divisions have constantly marked the Armed Forces, which included a wide range of theoretical and political positions (including Marxists, communists, democrats, liberals, authoritarians, not to mention nationalists and non-nationalists) with different weights depending on

Two years later, in 1955, the members of IBESP decided to create ISEB, inspired by the model of *College de France* and *Colégio de México* (see Oliveira, 2006, pp.491-2).²²¹ The Institute was created after a decree of Café Filho's government (1954-1955), who had assumed the presidency after Getúlio Vargas suicide in 1954; its head office was inaugurated in 1956, by president Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961).²²² ISEB was subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Culture (the minister was Cândido da Mota Filho) and received public funding, but had "administrative autonomy and full freedom of research, opinion and teaching", following Article 1 of the decree (see also Sodré, 2010, pp.15-7).²²³ Nelson has been a participant at ISEB as professor and researcher since 1955, but the Institute did not have the sympathy of conservative military. This was the moment in which, in his own words, he "got involved in the political struggle that was shaking Brazil" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.211).²²⁴

Olga Sodré points out that ISEB gathered nationalists, socialists, progressive liberals and even anti-nationalists (see Sodré, 2010, p.16; see also Jaguaribe, 2009 [2004]). It was considerably heterogeneous both in terms of the topics approached, as it was composed of thinkers interested in economics, sociology, history, culture and politics, and in terms of perspectives advanced. Nelson even states that it was obviously impossible to gather all these perspectives

each historical moment. In this sense, Nelson Werneck Sodré can be included in a long term continuity that João Quartim de Moraes described as follows: "despite the evident differences of intellectual formation, doctrinaire formulation, form of action and programmatic perspective, it seems clear the continuity of the ethico-political inspiration of young abolitionists and republican officials [in the second half of the XIX century], of the 'tenentes' [a class of army junior officer] in the 1920s, of the anti-imperialist military in the 1950s, of the anti-coup [military] of the 1960s. This continuity suffered a rupture following the wide purges that those defending the 1964 coup promoted in the personnel of the Armed Forces" (João Quartim de Moraes [2005] *apud* Cunha, 2014, p.82). Nelson himself has constantly reminded his readers of the democratic character of the Armed Forces (more precisely, of the Army), as Paulo Ribeiro da Cunha points out (Cunha, 2014, p.85).

²²¹ In the following years, however, the direct engagement with national problems (including a logic of problem-solving) and with the official policy-making made ISEB distant from the models of both institutions that had inspired its creation in the first place (see Oliveira, 2006, p.492).

²²² It was the decree n.37.608, from July 14, 1955, that created ISEB. Article 2 stipulates that "ISEB aims at the study, teaching and propagation of social sciences, mainly sociology, history, economics and politics, especially with the goal of applying the categories and the data from these sciences to the analysis and critical comprehension of Brazilian reality, aiming at the elaboration of theoretical instruments that allow the incentive and the promotion of national development". The decree is available at <<http://www2.camara.gov.br/legin/fed/decret/1950-1959/decreto-37608-14-julho-1955-336008-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html>>. Last access on December 03, 2014.

²²³ Nelson Werneck Sodré mentions most of the names that have some relation with ISEB in Sodré (2010 [1990], pp.221-2; see also Weffort, 2006, pp.302-3; and Ioris, 2014, pp.116-25).

²²⁴ Before that moment, besides his military activities, Nelson had already published many texts on literature and culture (see Sodré, 2010 [1990], pp.195-218).

under "a shared economic, political and social formulation" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.221). In an retrospective assessment of 1990, he points out that this heterogeneity had the ambition to mobilize "Brazilian *intelligentsia*, or what it was supposed to be so, in order to formulate, under the direction of the Institute, a political thinking that was called, for the lack of a better term, the 'ideology of development'" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.222). This ideology would be known as "national-developmentalism", which is an expression that seems to gather the only two things that can be said to be shared by all the main members of ISEB: the central concern with development and the self-ascribed task of building an authentic nation in Brazil.

In 1955, most of ISEB's members joined Juscelino Kubtschek's presidential campaign and some of them even became his advisors: "[t]he policy... of development was formulated by these advisors, and, among them, ISEB's economists were noteworthy, almost all of them sympathetic to the theses of CEPAL, [and] confessing themselves to be convinced *cepalinos*" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.219).²²⁵ ISEB represented, indeed, a central site of theoretical formulation of this national-developmentalism. This does not mean, however, that its members would unconditionally and homogenously endorse JK's developmental plan to Brazil, in particular Nelson Werneck Sodré himself.²²⁶ Nor does it mean that ISEB's proposals were directly applied by the president.

It is worth remembering that Juscelino's victory in the elections of October 03, 1955, triggered a movement from part of the military that wanted to prevent him from assuming the presidency; this attempt was responded by another military group that, lead by General Henrique Teixeira Lott, promoted a preventive military intervention to assure that Juscelino would assume the position, something that actually happened on January 31, 1956 (see Fausto, 2013, p.115). Nelson joined this preventive military intervention, but he stated that he was not completely

²²⁵ *Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe* (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; or Cepal) was created in 1948 by the United Nations with the main purpose of promoting the development of the region. According to Helio Jaguaribe, "[t]he initial group that comprised ISEB fully shared the ideas of CEPAL... This consisted of making a planned effort to bring about industrialization and a guided effort to achieve Latin American integration. It was decided not to wait for this integration in order to start industrialization, but on the contrary, it was felt that the basis of a well-directed national effort would facilitate and stimulate this integration. Integration was seen as an objective and not as an initial condition." (Jaguaribe, 2009 [2006], pp.735-6).

²²⁶ Cristina Buarque de Hollanda (2012) notes that this "national-developmental" project had already been outlined by IBESP, through the periodical *Cadernos do Nosso Tempo*.

attuned to his colleagues from ISEB, since he did not have any enthusiasm for Juscelino or for the political forces he represented. Moreover, he did not see JK as his colleagues did, that is, as "a great political opportunity to the group and to each member separately" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.226).

The year Juscelino assumed the presidency was also the year Nelson gave the course that would later become FHB. Juscelino's government would confirm Nelson's resistance towards the political forces in power. Let me quote his words, since they bring to the fore many of the elements that are exposed in FHB and that I will discuss below:

[Juscelino's government] was showing what it truly represented, and what the *Programa de Metas*²²⁷ concretely defined: accelerate the path of economic growth without changing the structure, in such a way that certain levels, taken as quantitative goals, could be reached, mainly through the inflow of foreign capitals... it was a matter of accelerating the growth of Brazilian economy through the generalization and deepening of capitalist relations, following a previous project, reconciling this acceleration with imperialist interests, preserving the agrarian structure (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.228)

The disputes around the conception of development got more intense after Juscelino began to put in practice his developmental plan. According to Nelson, "on one side, there were those that defended development associated with imperialism; on the other side, there were those that defended development on a nationalist basis. This schism would necessarily impact upon ISEB" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.229).²²⁸ The epicenter of the controversies was about the suitability of

²²⁷ "*Programa*" or "*Plano de Metas*" ("Targets Plan") refers to an industrializing and modernizing program centered on infrastructure, energy and transportation, comprising secondarily social and agricultural issues (see Abreu, 2013, pp.214-6; Ioris, 2014, ch.3).

²²⁸ Nelson argues that ISEB had to cope with "internal reactionary forces" who wanted, at first, "to isolate the nationalism component and smash it" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.229); he adds that these forces attacked ISEB as a way of attacking Juscelino's government: in their eyes, ISEB "began to disturb. [It] occupied a place. It was necessary to destroy it" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.232). The controversy around the concept of development was framed by Guerreiro Ramos, in 1959, as one between "nationalists" and "*entreguistas*" ("surrenderists"). The "coherent nationalist", the best variation of nationalist in his point of view, was one who believed in the people as the "main driver of Brazilian process"; who defends that Brazil can solve its problems with "internal resources", once

foreign capital to the development of Brazil. In 1995, reflecting upon his own engagement at the Institute, Nelson Werneck Sodré highlighted that, in very simple terms, there were two currents of thought within ISEB: one defended that Brazilian development should "rely on the massive and protected inflow of foreign capitals; the other defended that development should rely on national capitals and that these ones should be protected" (Sodré, 2010 [1995], p.91). According to Nelson, "[a]s everyone that lived that stormy phase of Brazilian life knows, the thesis that triumphed was the one of those who defended that development should be conducted relying on national capitals" (Sodré, 2010 [1995], p.92). The dispute had been increasing since 1958, and this victory caused some of its members to leave ISEB and generated "an ideological homogenization of the Institute", as Olga Sodré puts (2010, p.16). To Francisco Weffort (2006), this was a moment in which ISEB inclined towards a more leftist position, something that would be interrupted only with the 1964 coup (see Weffort, 2006, pp.300-1).

That said, Francisco Weffort's formulation, according to which "ISEB was the institution with the major ideological presence in the historical moment opened up by [Juscelino] Kubitscheck's government" (Weffort, 2006, p.300; see also Ianni, 2004e, p.253), deserves an important qualification. As Rafael Ioris (2014) claims, there were "sharp distinctions" between ISEB's nationalist proposition and "the most important policies and goals structuring the Targets Plan" (Ioris, 2014, p.115). According to him, the JK administration conducted market-oriented policies that fomented an intensification in the political polarization during the period and, more specifically, the relations the executive branch of the federal administration conducted with ISEB were at least contradictory (see Ioris, 2014, pp.129-40).

In 1961, after Jânio Quadros renounced the presidency of Brazil and Nelson supported the accession of João Goulart, who was then the vice-president and the legal successor of Jânio, Nelson suffered some retaliation from part of the military officials: the support to João Goulart was opposed by high-level military, and Nelson was arrested for ten days. Unsatisfied, he joined the military reserve as a General in 1962, the year FHB was first published. After that, he intensified his

it "adopts a regime of popular basis"; who does not think that the future of Brazil is "invariably attached to any hegemonic power"; who engages, in practice, in favor of "national emancipation". The *entreguista* is exactly the opposite (with the specificity that he believes the future of Brazil to be attached to the United States). For Guerreiro Ramos' characterization of both positions, see Ramos (1960 [1959], especially pp.252-3).

activities at ISEB, becoming the head of the Department of History. As Virgilio Roma de Oliveira Filho (2000) notes, however, Nelson's relation with ISEB has never involved a submission to an institutional position or to governmental interests, even if the "ideology of development" (or "developmentalism") has been highly influential in the political and economic scene during the 1950s and the first years of the 1960s (see Oliveira Filho, 2000, p.23). With the 1964 military coup, however, ISEB was closed and those that had won the previous disputes around the developmental plan in Brazil were now defeated, some of them being arrested, exiled and/or prohibited from teaching (see Sodré, 2010 [1995], p.92).²²⁹ The notion of development that prevailed after the 1964 coup in Brazil was one that defended, in Nelson's terms, the association with imperialism, against a nationalist development.²³⁰

Although I will not advance the discussion here, I want at least to note in passing that ISEB, located in Rio de Janeiro, exposes, in all its heterogeneity, a relation between knowledge and political orientation that is generally contrasted with the notion Florestan Fernandes, among others, was developing in the consolidation of a scientific method to Sociology in the intellectual environment of São Paulo. The close relations between the production of knowledge at ISEB and governmental decisions has been a source of a fierce controversy mainly in the 1950s, not only among ISEB members and thinkers such as Florestan, but also

²²⁹ According to Edson Rezende de Souza (2010), in the days that immediately followed the 1964 coup, the library, the archives and the furniture of ISEB head office in Rio de Janeiro were destroyed by people linked to the military (see Souza, 2010, p.164).

²³⁰ Helio Jaguaribe, another protagonist of those disputes, has another version of the story, emphasizing that the internal disputes at ISEB derived from a "regrettable episode" provoked by Guerreiro Ramos, who "made an intellectual mistake and did something ethically unacceptable" (see Jaguaribe, 2009 [2004], pp.435-6; and 2009 [2006], pp.739-744). Helio also has an alternative view in respect to the phases ISEB went through. To him, there were three phases. The first, until the end of 1958, occurred under his guidance and is described by him as a "problem-setting" phase, "an attempt to identify and solve Brazilian problems, taking into account the development of ideas and socio-political advances in Western Europe" (Jaguaribe, 2009 [2004], p.434); in this phase, Nelson Werneck Sodré, in Helio's words, represented "a point of mediation between ISEB's nationalism and that [nationalism] of the military" (pp.434-5). The second phase begins in 1959, after Helio had left ISEB as a consequence of internal disputes mainly in the year before; in his words, this is "an intermediate stage", when the Institute has supposedly been used by Roland Corbusier, its main leader at that time, as a "propaganda instrument" for his candidate to be the Deputy for the state of Guanabara (currently state of Rio de Janeiro). Finally, the third phase runs from 1962 to 1964, the year it was shut down by the military; in this phase, under the leadership of Álvaro Vieira Pinto, ISEB "became a mouthpiece for the more radical demands of the [João] Goulart government. There is no doubt ISEB by then shared a large number of positions with the Communist Party (PC) of the time, although not everyone in the Institute belonged to the PC and vice versa" (Jaguaribe, 2009 [2004], p.437). For a recent summary of this institutional crisis, see Oliveira (2006, pp.494-5) and Souza (2010, pp.161-4)

among ISEB members themselves. ISEB had also been criticized by military sectors, mainly from the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (Higher War College), linked to the doctrine of National Security; this critique was not directed against the conception of knowledge, as it was in the previous case, but against the political position held by most of ISEB members. It is worth quoting Helio Jaguaribe's summary of these institutional and political disputes:

ISEB thinking had its counterpart during its historical period in the thinking of the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (Higher War College) which presents itself as being anti-ISEB. At that time, the idea of National Security predominated in everything that sustained the military governments after the *coup* [in 1964]. In Rio [de Janeiro], which was still the nation's capital, anti-ISEB thinking was a defense of the principles of the right maintained by a certain part of Rio's elite. On the other hand, in a different way, with no right-wing connotations but with different positions, there was the thinking of the University of São Paulo (USP) containing ideas of academic sociology of French origin which ran counter to the sociological thinking of engagement in the service of national projects. In other words, USP maintained that the sociology of engagement was ideological and lacked scientific seriousness. This academic attitude implied an anti-ISEB position, not in terms of orientation, but in terms of the intellectual work which had supposedly be conducted at the academic level. The great source of influence on USP thinking was French, while the great source of thinking at ISEB was the [culturalist] German thinking of the 1920s (Jaguaribe, 2009 [2006], p.746).

This location of ISEB and of Nelson's interpretation of Brazil within a wider intellectual and political condition will now lead me back to FHB, in order to go into the details of how this is exposed in the text.²³¹

First of all, it is important to have in mind that the task of interpretation, in Nelson Werneck Sodré's view, ascribes both Political Economy and History a fundamental role: the former "explains how, in a certain phase, a new mode of production is originated from the ruins of the feudal order that remain during the mercantilist development", while the latter "shows the successive traces that this transformation leaves in the life of people" (FHB, p.140).²³² The Marxist inspiration of FHB is not the replication of a universal theory to a particular case; in fact, avoiding that is one of the key aspects in Nelson's perspective, one that links interpretation and political position.

Society, to FHB, has been arranged in history in terms of its regimes of production: primitive community, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism. The "historical process of Brazilian society", since the colonial encounter, exposes not only the successive introduction of "each of those forms", except the last one (socialism), but also their coexistence:

the *contemporaneity of the non-coeval* is one of the specific characteristics of the Brazilian case, but not exclusive to it.

In Brazil, different regimes of production coexist, in such a way that they generate sometimes profound antagonisms

²³¹ Virgilio Roma de Oliveira Filho (2000) claims that Nelson's engagement with ISEB can be divided into two phases: in the 1950s, aligned to the method advanced at ISEB, he allegedly followed the logic of successive stages - from the colonial phase until Brazilian revolution, in a linear replacement of previous stages by the following one - to interpret Brazilian problems; the second phase would come with FHB, when he introduced the concept of "mode of production", abandoned the logic of successive stages and got inclined towards a Marxist approach (see Oliveira Filho, 2000, p.13). According to Paulo Ribeiro da Cunha (2014), FHB exposes a political position already marked by Nelson's Marxist inspiration, which does not exclude the influence he received from his military formation. Let me reiterate that it is not my claim that FHB represents any institutional way of thinking about development that was supposedly diffused by ISEB. It is clear from the above that ISEB members were united more because of their shared concerns with Brazilian development, than because of any specific interpretation of Brazil shared by all of them. Moreover, as it is not my scope here to approach Nelson Werneck Sodré's entire oeuvre, I advance no case in relation to possible modifications he submitted his own perspective to. I just want to note that, despite the possibly important differences between the phases of Nelson's engagement with ISEB, both these phases were united, as Virgilio himself admits, by the interpretation that, in Brazil, there has been a coexistence of old and new formations - the "contemporaneity of the non-coeval", as I will discuss below.

²³² The major theoretical reference in FHB is Karl Marx; it is not my purpose, however, to discuss Nelson's reading of Marx, but its implications to his interpretation of Brazil. Another constant reference throughout the text is Celso Furtado, most often quoted in the endnotes to each chapter.

among regions of the Country. Whoever travels our territory from the coast to the interior goes, in time, from the present to the past, and knows, in sequence, capitalism forms of production and feudal or semi-feudal forms, and can even know the primitive community where the indigenous people preserve the same peculiar kind of society that the colonizers met in the XVI century (FHB, p.4, italics added).

From the above, one can see that, in FHB, the formation of Brazil does not follow a linear historical development; instead, the formative process exposes a specific, but not exclusive, coexistence between past and present, which also conditions - as I will show below - future possibilities and impossibilities. Moreover, these coexisting "forms" within the "historical formation of Brazil" implies the inequality among regions, more specifically among the coast and the interior of the country.

After characterizing the successive historical emergence of each form of production *in Europe* (see FHB, pp.4-21), Nelson Werneck Sodré claims that the "age of discoveries" was marked by commercial capital, different from capitalism that would emerge only afterwards. In other words, capitalism as a mode of production had not yet been formed when Brazil was "discovered" by Portugal, so "there is no reason to assume the existence of capitalism" by that time (FHB, p.26). And, still in relation to Portugal, Nelson argues that, with the decline of feudalism, the country had been unified under a monarchic regime; as a consequence, neither capitalism nor the modern state had been formed in the XVI century. The conceptual chain at stake here runs as follows: "in Portugal, there was no capitalist mode of production and, as a consequence, there was no bourgeoisie as the ruling class" (FHB, p.27). According to him, capitalism, modern state and bourgeoisie are mutually constitutive; and Portuguese colonizers did not know any of these when they arrived in Brazil.

Nelson is here positioning himself against the thesis that Portugal has never been feudalist and that it brought to Brazil an already capitalist mode of production.²³³ This historical revision has a profound consequence in terms of how

²³³ For example: "[t]he thesis that, rigorously speaking, Portugal has not had feudalism... has been defended since [Alexandre] Herculano [de Carvalho e Araújo (1810-1877)] and [Henrique da] Gama

FHB conceives the formation of contemporary Brazil, since it implies that Brazil has not been integrated from the beginning in a capitalist world economy and has not been colonized by a modern patrimonial state. If, on the one hand, the characterization of Portugal leads to certain conditionings in terms of how the colonization could have developed, on the other hand, the previous characteristics of the colony (before the Portuguese arrived) also condition the process of colonization. In this sense, Nelson compares the Portuguese colonization of the Orient with the one in America. In the former, "population is dense and fixed", "civilization is advanced", there is also a huge production of surplus, a "traditional commerce", "a slave or feudal mode of production"; in the latter, "population is sparse and nomadic", "indigenous people live in the Old Stone age", production is for an exclusively local consumption, there is a complete absence of commerce, and a primitive community (see FHB, p.60). This almost mirror image between the Oriental and the Occidental Portuguese colonies works in FHB as a way to interpret the formative process of colonization in Brazil, since it puts into relief the obstacles to the enterprise, even if, as mitigating aspects, the colony also provided large lands available for appropriation and the slave traffic was already an option (in fact, as Nelson puts, it became the "natural solution" in face of local conditions and Portuguese capacities) (see FHB, pp.61-2).²³⁴

The main problem, as FHB puts, is related to the problem of labor. The feudal mode of production that characterized the colonizer's place of origin (Portugal) has proved incompatible with the regime of primitive community and with the local conditions in general. As a consequence, "the colonizer... regresses to the mode of production based on slavery" (FHB, p.70), in a way that, in the Portuguese America, "colonial exploitation and slave labor are synonyms, inseparable parts of the same process" (FHB, p.70).²³⁵ Hence, the process of colonization is doubly conditioned, by the local and previous conditions of the place to be colonized and by the capacities of the colonizers. This notion of "regression"

Barros [1833-1925], including many authors of our time, such as Sérgio Bagú and Azevedo Amaral... The thesis, invalid in my point of view, is intimately linked to the thesis that defends the existence of a bourgeois rule and, therefore, also a bourgeois revolution already in the XIV century, which is also an invalid thesis in my point of view" (FHB, p.52, n.23; see also pp.80-1).

²³⁴ In 1990, Nelson said that, without slavery, "there would be no Brazil", since it represented the only way colonization could have overcome the initial obstacles in the new-found territory (see Sodré, 2010, [1990], p.32).

²³⁵ In other terms, "[c]olonization and modern slavery belong... to the same system, in which they are integrated" (FHB, p.100, n.12).

has a temporal implication in FHB, since it means a "revival of slave labor in a historical phase in which it seemed definitively surpassed and relegated to oblivion" (FHB, p.75). This resulted in misjudgment on what has taken place in Brazil, to the extent that the linear and progressivist conception of history has not been reproduced in the American colony. On the contrary, what this regression exposes is that a slave-based regime was established by colonizers that, in their metropolitan place of origin, lived "a more advanced stage of production, the feudal" (FHB, p.76).

According to Nelson Werneck Sodré, the legislation imposed during the first moments of colonization was characteristically feudal - "it could not have been otherwise, since the ruling class in Portugal at that time was composed of feudal lords" (FHB, p.81). But colonial reality was different: neither feudal nor capitalist. Hence, "despite the fact that it contributed to the transformation that led to the rise of the capitalist mode of production" (FHB, p.82), colonization in the Portuguese America was based from the start on the slave mode of production and on the commercial capital. What distinguishes this kind of capital is that it is interested in purchasing goods, and not in producing them (see FHB, p.84). And, in the case of Brazil, it is worth remembering, there was in place the colonial monopoly, dictating that the only legal circulation of goods should be directed to Portugal. This configured a situation in which, internally, there was no internal market to make goods circulate, while, externally, there was only one possibility of commercial relations; needless to say, it derives from that that the income is consistently transferred from the area where the goods are produced (the colonies) to where they circulate (Portugal and the countries with which it negotiates).

The separation between production and circulation is associated to a separation of the competencies in the first century of colonization. The Portuguese Crown was in charge of circulation, while the land lords (*senhores de engenho*) were in charge of production. It is worth mentioning that this dynamic refers to the sugar production in Brazil, therefore to the Northern part of the country. By that time the Southern part was, in Nelson's words, "relegated to the secondary position of a mere settler colonization" (FHB, p.88). Within this arrangement, it is observed, on the one hand, the absence of competition and public order in the colony, where land lords were free - "there is only private order. The civil, political, economic relations gravitate around the private orbit, expressing the insurmountable power of

the owner of lands and slaves" (FHB, p.86) -; and, on the other hand, the presence of competition in the circulation area, where the Crown was free.²³⁶

This secondary position remained during all the "I century" (Nelson is referring to the XVI century), which is an evidence of the impact of commercial capital and, intrinsic to this capital, the exportation of goods to the European market.²³⁷ In the following centuries, different parts of the colony would witness different processes of colonization, such as the expeditions towards the interior (the West of the territory) or, in the XVIII century, the exploitation of gold mines. These processes reinforce the regional differentiation in the formation of Brazil in such a way that "Brazil was divided into areas that were almost isolated from each other" (FHB, p.165), incapable to challenging the metropolitan prevalence. In this narrative, the first three centuries of colonization were marked by an apparent "serenity" that concealed "everything that announces the transformations of the IV century [XIX century]" (FHB, p.161). The historical development brought to the fore increasing tensions between colony and metropole, which can be summarized in a "progressive weakening" of the association between the interests of the colonial ruling class (in the production area) and the metropolitan ruling class (in the circulation area) (see FHB, pp.162-5).

It should be clear by now that the circulation area and the production area were inseparable right from the beginning of colonization. To put it differently, the formation of Brazil takes place inside and outside the territory of the colony, which means that Brazil is formed also in Europe (or across Europe, one may say). This is a process that would permeate all its historical formation. After the colonial encounter of the XVI century, another major encounter happened with the "Industrial Revolution" - "[t]he relative position between the metropolitan areas and the colonial areas, and the very ties of subordination of the latter to the former,

²³⁶ Nelson highlights that the situation of the circulation area changed in 1580, when Portugal was subjugated to Spain, since, whereas Portugal and Netherlands (the other major player in this circulation area) had associated interests, Spain and Netherlands were competitors. In the production area, nothing changed significantly (see FHB, p.87). It is not relevant to me here the detailed discussion of these relations between Portugal and Spain; my point, however, is to show the different logics operating in the circulation and in the production areas in the first moments of colonization.

²³⁷ By indentifying the centuries interchangeably as I, II, III, IV... and XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX..., Nelson exposes an interpretation of the formation of Brazil that almost erases what he calls "primitive community" from his frame. As he states in 1990: "Brazil arises to history, begins its historical existence, with the so-called 'discovery'" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.28).

could not be immune from the effects of the Industrial Revolution" (FHB, p.168).²³⁸ The internal and external pressures to the end of the metropolitan monopoly on commerce mounted: internally, the land lords wanted "free trade", but also the preservation of "slave labor"; externally, the English capitalist expansion wanted both "free trade" and "free labor" (see FHB, pp.172-4).

I have said above that there is a conceptual chain, formed by capitalism, bourgeoisie and modern state, that permeates FHB's interpretation of Brazil. This is reinforced when, taking into account the revolutions that took place in Europe (more precisely, in England and in France) and in the United States, Nelson warns that "revolutions cannot be transplanted, but their ideologies can" (FHB, p.180); that is to say, the impact of these revolutions upon Brazil should not lead to the conclusion that the stages of history would simply be reproduced. To keep with his words, one reads that "[t]he fact of being included, integrated, in the bourgeois revolution does not mean, however, that the process of independence in the colonial areas is a bourgeois revolution" (FHB, p.180).²³⁹ Here comes into play a double comparison: one with the United States, the other one with Spanish colonies.

The inclusion of the United States in this picture is very telling, and the comparative interpretation runs as follows: in the case of the United States, independence partially assumes the character of the bourgeois revolution (expressed in the contradiction between the manufacturing North and the agrarian and slave-based South); but, in the areas of Iberian domination no conditions apply for a bourgeois revolution (see FHB, pp.180-1). Nelson goes even further than that when he says that these conditions do not apply because in these areas there has been a colonial past, while in the United States "rigorously speaking, there has not

²³⁸ Nelson even adds that "[t]he Revolution of Independence, in the United States, and the French Revolution stimulate the aspirations towards colonial liberation. The ideology that drives these movements have impacted upon Brazil" (FHB, p.171). Once more, one has the sense that the formation of Brazil unfolds through a series of encounters between the internal and the external.

²³⁹ In 1990, Nelson states that "[t]he Brazilian process [of bourgeois revolution] is entirely different from the model of the Occidental Europe, which is the classic model" (Sodré, 2010 [1900], p.47); in Brazil, the bourgeois revolution is "peculiar to a nation with a recent colonial past and a dependent economy. A difficult bourgeois revolution" (Sodré, 2010 [1900], p.48). I will not go into the details of what is at stake in this 1990 text, much less into a comparison of this text with FHB, but it is important to mention that, by that time, Nelson had already experienced the failures of "Brazilian revolution" following the 1964 military coup; in that sense, when he says in this text that bourgeoisie in Brazil is "timid", preferring "condescendence" over "struggle", being more afraid of the "proletarian pressure" than of "imperialism", it is imprecise to take these words as a mere repetition of the position held in FHB. Here, however, I will not resort to other texts, except when they help me clarifying the interpretation of Brazil exposed in FHB.

been... a colonial past" (FHB, p.181). In respect to the Spain colonies, the point made in FHB is that the civil war in this part of the American colonies has led to a political fragmentation that has not occurred in the Portuguese side: "[w]hat distinguishes the process of independence in that area from the aspects of the Portuguese area is essentially linked to the fact that a fierce struggle occurred in the former [the Spanish colonies], in which all social classes and layers in some cases took part..., whereas here it was a pacific transformation, operated from above, in which the social classes and layers that were not the ruling ones did not take part in an active way" (FHB, p.186). The preservation of unity in the territory is considered by Nelson an "internal task", ending in a "bitter victory" that, however costly in terms of suffering and political losses, corresponded to an achievement, when compared to the fragmentation of the other Iberian colonies. Nelson's overall sentiment towards this result is unambiguous: "unity is a step ahead in the history of our people" (FHC, p.228). In sum, the double comparative mobilization at play in FHB leads to a specification of the formation of Brazil in relation to both the United States and the former Spanish colonies.

In this scenario of internal and external pressures and of encounters with ideologies coming from other countries, a specific process of independence happened in a Brazil. This process was guided by the ruling class in the colony, which, then, on the one hand, acquired autonomy in face of the metropolitan ruling class, but "with minimum internal modifications", and, on the other hand, aligned with the European bourgeoisie.²⁴⁰ The "colonial structure of production" was transferred "from the previous to the subsequent phase" (see FHB, p.188, p.253), in such a way that, politically, the transition from a colonial/dependent to a national/independent situation was achieved, while, economically, the colonial/dependent condition remained.

²⁴⁰ This alignment would soon be complicated: after the independence in 1822, the pressures against slavery increased the tension between the colonial elite and the European bourgeoisie (see FHB, pp.193-4, p.263). In addition to that, internally, it is intensified the intra-elite divergences, mostly between the sugar producers and the emerging coffee producers - "coffee corresponds to the first great characteristically Brazilian effort to create wealth. In its development, it gradually introduces the new to the extent that it leaves behind the old. With coffee, Brazil finds possibilities to proceed with profound transformations that time will signalize" (FHB, p.201). Or, as he puts elsewhere, coffee farming is an "original, Brazilian creation" that, "taking advantage of the old in Brazil, produces the new" (FHB, p.226). These two dimensions confirm the persistent play of the internal and the external in the formation of Brazil.

This general picture of the country does not obliterate the persisting regional differentiations that have accompanied the formation of Brazil. If, in the first centuries of colonization, as I have said above, there was a disparity between the Northern part, producer of sugar, and the Southern, the rise of coffee and the independence rearranged, but not surpassed, it.²⁴¹ I have said above that the establishment of a slave-based mode of production in Brazil is considered by Nelson a "regression", not only because it revives a historical phase which seemed definitively surpassed, but also because it is established by a ruling class (the colonizers) that, in Portugal, already lived in a feudal, more advanced, stage of production (see FHB, pp.75-6). Another regression would take place in the second half of the XIX century, when the pressures against slave labor increased, generating two different tendencies: some areas saw the transition to free labor, while other areas witnessed the regression to a feudal serfdom, that is, a "feudal regression". In FHB's words: "[t]he slave-based mode of production is being eroded [during the second half of the XIX century] by both extremes... one is an advancement, the other one is backwardness, and both tend to increasingly distance from each other and lead to a clamorous regional inequality" (FHB, p.248). As Virgilio Roma de Oliveira Filho (2000) stresses, Nelson's interpretation of Brazil in FHB conceives the existence of feudalism in Brazil only as an outcome of the crisis of the mode of production based on slavery and on commercial capital (and not commercial capitalism, to follow Nelson's terms) (see Oliveira Filho, 2000, p.15).

It is plausible to say, then, that the historical formation of Brazil exposes two different regressions. The first one, in the XVI century, when an elite living in a feudal regime in Portugal colonizes part of the Americas and regresses here to a slave-based regime; in this sense, the transplantation of feudalism proved to be incompatible due to a colonial reality, requiring the regression to slavery. The second regression, in the XIX century, does not derive from the same incompatibility of transplantation; this regression is majorly internal, since it is conducted by an elite already placed in Brazil (by that time, already politically independent) and that, instead of promoting the progress towards free labor, leads

²⁴¹ It is important to have in mind, as I have already mentioned, that the internal inequality in Brazil is not exclusively in terms of regions, but also within regions, between "social classes and layers", as Nelson puts (see, for instance, FHB, p.269).

the regression to a kind of serfdom or semi-serfdom that is characteristically feudal (see FHB, pp.247-253). It is crucial to have in mind, however, that both regressions expose the play of internal and external tensions, since, in the first one, local conditions are intrinsic to the incompatibility with the imported regime, and the result - slavery - derives from this play of local reality and colonization; in the second regression, in turn, external forces perform a role in the alignments of local elites, oriented towards the external market, with the European bourgeoisie, importer of cheap raw-materials. This second regression widens the inequality between the Northern and the Southern parts of Brazil (the latter increasingly marked by free labor and capitalist relations of production) (see FHB, p.266).

If it is true that Nelson concedes to the colonial ruling class (the owners of slaves and lands) the victory of preserving the unity of Brazil in the midst of political fragmentation in the Iberian colonial area, he also sees that the formation of the Empire was an imposition that ceased to be satisfying throughout the XIX century. This ruling class leads the regression to old feudal relations, but begins to witness the rise of other social forces mainly in Southern regions of Brazil. By the end of the XIX century, Nelson claims, "Empire surely represented an old structure" and the Republic, another step ahead (as the preservation of unity had been), even if it did not have a popular support - most of all because "[i]n Brazil, in the old times, there was no people, in the rigorous sense of a political force" (FHB, p.291). Nevertheless, the innovation brought by the Republic should not lead to the conclusion that the past was gone: "in the modifications it introduces, [it] marks, neatly, the extraordinary effort of adaptation of internal conditions to external conditions" (FHB, p.294). Internally, the decades that followed 1889 witnessed the emergence of other forces in Brazil, increasingly challenging the oligarchic regime of the ruling classes; externally, imperialism started to move to the hands of the United States, mainly after the First World War (see FHB, p.314). The play of internal and external forces in Brazil led to a structural disconnection between economy and politics: "[t]he economic structure no longer had a correspondence in the political structure" (FHB, p.314). This process culminates in the "1930 Revolution", which is, in Nelson's definition, "the first example in Brazilian history of a revolutionary movement that comes from the periphery to the center" (FHB,

p.320).²⁴² By "periphery", Nelson by no means wants to say "people", but, instead, the association of part of the elite that was not placed in the central power with elements of an emerging middle class; in other words, a composition of traditional ruling classes and new political forces (see FHB, p.326).

The "1930 Revolution" accelerated the process of industrialization in Brazil. Here as well, internal and external forces are at play. Externally, according to FHB, industrialization has been persistently impaired by the imperialist unfolding of the external investments. The claim is that "industrialization... is one of the forms to foment progress in colonial or dependent countries. In Brazil, as well as in other nations with identical economic structure, the influence of foreign investment has been negative in terms of industrialization" (FHB, p.348). The rationale here is that this kind of investment was directed to low-cost raw materials and was interested in cheap labor force, contributing, therefore, to the persistence of an economically colonial condition in the politically independent country. Internally, Brazil exposes a "dual" productive structure - and here another comparison is mobilized: in "developed countries" agriculture has the problem of overproduction; in Brazil, one sees a duality, since, on the one hand, the overproduction problem is observed in that part of the agricultural sector oriented to external market and, on the other hand, there is a problem of underproduction in the agricultural sector oriented to internal market (see FHB, p.350). The historical external orientation of agriculture led to a land concentration and, as a consequence, the production of inequality. This scenario, together with the excess of available labor force, define the situation of backwardness in the rural Brazil, according to FHB (see FHB, p.352, p.355). All that leads Nelson to characterize the situation in the following terms: "[s]mall property is overwhelmed by large property... In many recent cases, the owner of large land properties is the imperialist himself" (FHB, p.355).²⁴³

In sum, the historical formation of Brazil in Nelson's interpretation exposes a persistent play of internal and external forces that, in each period, gains different configurations, but remains structurally unchallenged. Let me quote how he formulates this point: "[o]ur entire history, and the modifications it expresses,

²⁴² In November 1930, a Provisional Government, under the rule of Getúlio Vargas, was established following increasing political instability and tensions among the elites concerning the asymmetric representation of regional interests in the conduction of national politics.

²⁴³ He adds: "[B]razilian economy... suffers from the double pressure: the external, from imperialism; and the internal, with the large land properties" (FHB, p.359).

marks the stages of an effort of adaptation: of the colonial production to the commercial capital; of the colonial production to capitalism; of the semi-colonial to imperialism" (FHB, p.294). To put it differently, it is plausible to say that the specificities of each historical period expose different arrangements under the general formative process of adaptation of the internal to the external that constitutes the relation of past, present and future in contemporary Brazil.

In Nelson Werneck Sodré's interpretation, until the XX century Brazilian people did not have consciousness of the characteristics of this formative process that FHB unveils. Consciousness operates, then, as a precondition for any possible rupture of "the contradiction between the nation and the imperialism, on the one hand, and the contradiction between the internal sectors of the large land property that is oriented towards exportation and the national capitalization [that is, the formation of capitalism in Brazil]" (FHB, p.371). The acquisition of consciousness of the formative process alters the process itself, to the extent that it triggers struggles and disputes for power between "the forces of progress and the forces of backwardness" (FHB, p.372). In this scenario, "planning and development" mean the path towards "capitalist relations and the political actions that derive from them" (FHB, p.375); that is to say, the rupture with both the external (linked to foreign investment) and the internal (linked to the prevalence of large land properties) imperialism, and the consequent consolidation of the nation.²⁴⁴

This frame of interpretation of Brazil becomes even clearer when Nelson discusses the perspectives on "Brazilian Revolution", the name given to "the set of transformations taking place in the current phase of our country" (FHB, p.392). The comparative move here places Brazil in relation to the past and the present changes of "countries with fully developed economies", where there has supposedly been an "eradication of old relations of production and their definitive replacement by capitalist relations" (FHB, p.392). This revolution took place in a period in which capitalism was rising and imperialism did not exist yet, and this historical formation conditions present changes and future possibilities and impossibilities.

In Brazil, as well as in other countries with colonial and dependent economies, however, the revolution is inserted in the imperialist phase of

²⁴⁴ For instance, wage claims gain resonance and strength, inflation becomes perceived as a question of inequality and equality, among other social disputes that arise or are fomented (see FHB, pp.371-4).

capitalism, which means that the internal is oriented towards the external (mainly to profits of external investors), and not to national consolidation. It persists, in sum, the "fundamental contradiction between nation and imperialism, including its internal agents" (FHB, p.398) - let me recall that this imperialism is double-faced, external (regarding foreign capital) and internal (regarding large land properties).²⁴⁵ The solution of Brazilian society contradictions is conditioned by the acquisition of consciousness of the play of internal and external forces in contemporary Brazil. This is the only possible path towards a revolution that brings capitalism, development and democracy together, overcoming, therefore, imperialism, dependence and colonialism. It is, after all, a struggle for the "emancipation" of the nation, that is, of "Brazilian people" (see FHB, pp.401-3).

As I have been stressing, past, present and future are related in a non-linear way in FHB, so that forces of backwardness linked to past regimes of production coexist, and struggle, with forces of progress linked to future possibilities. This tension between past and future, expressed in present power struggles, is interpreted from a certain political position on contemporary Brazil. In 1990, Nelson stated that he "found no reason until now to modify my theses [defended in FHB]" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.27). He, then, reiterates the main aspects underlying the "particularity of Brazilian case", and that were already developed in FHB. The first aspect is the unequal development, which is expressed in the fact that "Brazil arises to history, begins its historical existence, with the so-called 'discovery', when, in the Occidental Europe, feudalism declined... There is, beyond any doubt, a huge historical distance between areas dominated by feudalism and areas dominated by primitive community, this one being our case" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.28). This generates what Nelson calls in 1990 a "heterochrony" that will remain, in different ways, throughout Brazilian historical formation. The second aspect is "the existence of Brazilian territorial areas that live different stages", that is, the phenomenon of "the contemporaneity of the non-coeval" (Sodré, 2010, [1990], p.28) that is still present in Brazil, however attenuated over time. Finally, the third aspect is the one of "transplantation", which is the "transference to Brazil of the elements that here have laid the foundations to a society that is all diverse from the one the discoverers

²⁴⁵ Decades later, in 1990, Nelson states that "heterogeneity persists: the archaic Brazil surrounds us all over the place; the large land properties persist, resist - shaken, but surviving everything" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.48).

found" (Sodré, 2010, [1990], p.29). These aspects, taken together, defy any simple compatibility between the universal and the particular. More precisely, Brazilian particularity defies any historical interpretation that aims at proving the existence of a linear historical development within which all countries could supposedly be placed, even if in different stages.

To Nelson, there is a difference between the universal and the particular that derives from "the unequal development, from the historical heterochrony" (Sodré, 2010, [1990], p.31). In this sense, the use of "feudalism", "slavery" or "capitalism" to define the modes of production in Brazil exposes at once a theoretical and a political position. Nelson in here re-engaging with the controversies surrounding the interpretations of Brazil associated with a leftist political position, something that has already been central to FHB. In 1990, he tackles the problem again in similar lines:

in the controversy in relation to whether Brazilian feudalism existed or not, there was a mixed motivation, scientific and political. It is interesting to remember that the political documents of the party of the Brazilian proletariat have always referred, until recently, to feudal or semi-feudal relations whose overcome would be necessary. Because they rejected the formulation, some members denied the existence of those feudal or semi-feudal relations here. They stressed this was non-sense. They affirmed, in a categorical way, that it was, in fact, a matter of capitalism, in an ostensible, clear and indisputable way (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.37).

The point stressed by Nelson is that the interpretation given to the mode of production in Brazil comes associated with a certain political orientation. If one assumes the present existence of feudal relations or reminiscences, then the bourgeois revolution is considered something that would have to be completed before socialism could be achieved. This thesis implied the necessity of a composition with the national bourgeoisie in the overcoming of these feudal relations or reminiscences; in other words, national bourgeoisie was neither capable to conducting the revolution by itself nor should it be disregarded in the

composition of forces towards "Brazilian revolution".²⁴⁶ By that time, this continued to be a source of intense struggles in intellectual and political debates, especially among interpreters associated to a leftist political position and that were dedicated to think (and sometimes promote) this "Brazilian revolution" (one can recall, for example, all the disputes around PCB and its many dissidences, a situation that would be even more intense after 1964, some of the dissident groups even opting for an armed struggle).²⁴⁷

In this crucial controversy, Nelson confesses to have had "an ostensive position" (see Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.37). His position explicitly denies the position that claims that feudalism did not and does not exist in Brazil, and that the colony has been capitalist right from the beginning of its history: "[t]o deny the existence of feudalism... is a more or less comfortable form of tergiversating the problem of transition, ignoring it" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.42).²⁴⁸ In this regard, FHB was clear enough: in Brazil, there was a slave-based regime, then feudalism, then capitalism; and this sequence does not mean that the previous mode of production is eliminated once a new one is established. Revolution, to Nelson, as Virgílio Roma de Oliveira Filho (2000) observes, comprises "on the one hand, the eradication of the power and hegemony of the class composed of large land owners and of imperialism... and the constitution of capitalism on national bases" (Oliveira Filho, 2000, p.31). As I have been stressing, it is a matter of dealing with the coexistence of forms, the

²⁴⁶ Nelson is here in dialogue with the official position held by PCB, that identified the persistence of feudal reminiscences in contemporary Brazil. Nevertheless, as Paulo Ribeiro da Cunha (2014) reminds, it would be wrong to say that the thesis of feudal reminiscences and of feudal regression that Nelson developed is simply derivative of his engagement in PCB, since this would obliterate the influence of his military formation that predated his Marxist inspiration and his affiliation to PCB (see Cunha, 2014, pp.84-6, p.97).

²⁴⁷ As Francisco Weffort reminds, the language of "revolution" was appropriated by the "left" as well as by the "right" of the political spectrum (see Weffort, 2006, p.305). Suffice to recall that the 1964 coup has been named a "revolution" by some (mostly to the "right"), while others (mostly to the "left") claim that it represented the final coup against "Brazilian revolution". It should also be noted that "democracy" did not have a consensual place in the political language of that time: the 1964 coup was justified in name of "democracy", while at least part of the so-called "left" privileged "revolution" over "democracy" for that moment, if only as a first step towards a certain kind of democracy.

²⁴⁸ I cannot develop further comparisons here, but I just want to mention that, by denying that either capitalism or feudalism was the first major mode of production established in Brazil, Nelson is disagreeing with Marxist interpreters of Brazil such as Caio Prado Jr., who stated that capitalist relations were present since the beginning of colonization in Brazil, and with interpreters that identified the major presence of feudalism right in the beginning of colonization, such as the official position of PCB. The thesis of "feudal regression" is not an application of a universal perspective to the particular case of Brazil, but, on the contrary, a way to show how the historical formation of Brazil escapes any universal linear logic of historical formation.

contemporaneity of the non-coeval. In this sense, when he claims that "[t]here are many Brazils, not only two, as the known thesis stipulates" (Sodré, 2010 [1990], p.45), he is saying that the specificity of Brazilian case exposes multiple forces in dispute, internally and externally articulated, and not a simple duality between a homogenous modern and a homogeneous archaic sector.

I have proposed in this text to interpret FHB from the relation it establishes between a certain interpretation of Brazil and a certain political position it exposes. In this vein, the concept of "formation" in FHB is constitutive of the background of political and intellectual disputes around national-developmentalism in Brazil. It seems plausible to stress five traces that constitute this interpretation of the historical formation of Brazil: (1) the project of a truly national condition permeates all the historical approach, conditioning the links identified between past, present and future; (2) the identification of the obstacles put to the formation of an authentic nation in Brazil leads to the position that there has been an incomplete transition from the colonial period to the national period, so that Brazil exposes the coexistence of old and new forms of production, which means that the country is both dependent and independent, colonial and national at the same time; (3) this coexistence, the contemporaneity of the non-coeval, is intrinsically related to an internal inequality in Brazil, where some regions, represented by forces of progress, are advanced in the formation of capitalist relations while others preserve feudal reminiscences, being represented by forces of backwardness; (4) the obstacles to development and progress in the formation of Brazil are interpreted not only from the intimate links they have with external (and internal) imperialism, but also from an external parameter that compares bourgeois revolution, as it has supposedly taken place in Occidental Europe and in the United States, with its difficulties in Brazil; and (5) the historical formation of Brazil brings to light specificities in Brazilian case that defy any linear logic of development.