

# “Yes, nós temos bananas”? An analysis of Brazilian stereotypes revisited at cultural and sports events in Brazil

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## Introduction

This article aims to evaluate how stereotypes about Brazil circulate in the international media, and how they were revisited in major events that occurred recently in Brazil, specifically the 2014 Fifa World Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It also seeks to discuss how the nation’s stereotypes represent a vision that contains historicity and have been built since the colonization era, being reinforced internally and externally as elements of the Brazilian culture and society. Through an analysis of how these representations about the country have changed in the last ten years, reinforced by a political movement involved in a “soft power” policy, it is proposed that the Brazilian stereotypes have been broadly criticized and debated in the last decade, either by reformulating the country’s image for commercial purposes or by reformulating the country’s role in the international political arena.

Due to the fragile political moment that Brazil has been experiencing over the last two years, several debates about Brazilian “institutional weakness” have echoed in the media. The term “banana republic” is still associated with the country and it is reinforced especially in websites, blogs and international newspapers. In a recent political article of the conservative magazine *National Review*, signed by Kevin D. Williamson (2017), Brazil becomes a clear reference to the investigations related to the accusation of Donald Trump campaign probe due to the alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 elections in the United States. The author emphasizes how the nation would be an example of political misconduct:

Congratulations, America: you have at least, after all these years, transform yourself into Brazil. Nobody outside of Latin America cares very much about the prospects of Brazil’s President Michel Temer being impeached, though his situation at the moment does bear more than a few

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parallels to that of the American president. The Brazilian president before him, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached, too. That sort of thing happens in countries such as Brazil, which achieve short-lived periods of stability and prosperity and suddenly turn astray for no obvious reason. But the United States is not that kind of country. Or at least it was not until the day before yesterday (WILLIAMSON, 2017).

In another well-known United States question and answer website called *Quora*, consulted in May of 2017, it was possible to observe the following comment:

Can Brazil be considered the biggest banana republic?

In 90 years, only 5 democratically elected presidents in Brazil were able to complete their respective mandates. Moreover, they are in their second impeachment process in less than 24 years. This demonstrates how unstable their democracy is. Is there any other banana republic larger than Brazil? (CAN BRAZIL..., 2017).

This question was considered offensive by two foreign commentators on the website, and relativized by two Brazilian commentators, in an attempt to deconstruct the stereotype considered offensive in Brazil and other Latin American countries (CAN BRAZIL..., 2017). However, it is noticeable that these stereotypes of political instability and institutional disorganization remains as a representation of the nation, and can be seen in hegemonic discourses of the media and in discussions about different perceptions of Brazil. It is possible to see that the Brazilian stereotypes linked to permissiveness, the association in being a “paradise without laws”, the constant festivity and lack of interest in politics by the population, despite its deep social and political problems, as its association with the nature surrounding the urban areas – although the country’s historical migration flows to urban areas – are still current in the social imaginary of different international communities. These stereotypes are being reformulated in the last decade from the very construction of a Brazilian image linked to authentic cultural references, in a movement seeking to build a new discourse and interpretation of its culture and institutions, changing its previous representation in media. This attempt also seeks to uplift its image, previously linked to political and economic backwardness, changing stereotypes forged back in time.

### **The stereotypes of the nation**

The term “banana republic” has a strong political connotation and it refers to a long-standing association of Latin American political weakness compared to its North American neighbor, the United States. The term was coined in 1904 by the American chronicler O. Henry, who wrote a short story called *The Admiral*, in which he describes a small fictional town called Anchuria, whose inspiration

would be Honduras (WHERE..., 2013). Referring to it as “Republic of Bananas”, he describes the city as a poor region, largely dependent on the United States fruit companies and with dysfunctional political institutions. From this work, the term “Republic of Bananas” has become a common term usually related to all countries of Latin America. This Latin American stereotype of backwardness is present until today in speeches by foreign politicians, the media and in the popular culture globally. It is also often adopted in political discourses related to corruption, institution dysfunction, political crimes, and the inability of Latin American countries to organize themselves politically, compared to the prevailing view of organization, efficiency and order from the United States. As a cultural reference, the expression still holds a strong pejorative sense, despite its more than a hundred years.

The music “Yes, nós temos bananas” (Yes, we have bananas), from the Brazilian composer Carlos Alberto Ferreira Braga, known as Braguinha, released in 1938, already criticized the Latin American stereotypes presented internationally (MACIEL, 2013). At a time where the cultural relations between Brazil and the United States were rapidly changing, representations of Latin America in the media, literature and radio in the country were still linked to economic backwardness and institutional weakness. Braguinha criticizes these representations, referring to the term of “republic of bananas”, making an allusion to the stereotyped view of Latin America, often seen as a homogeneous continent, despite its distinct cultural differences.

It is important to reinforce that the clichés and stereotypes about Brazil also had resonance in the very construction of the Brazilian cultural identity. From a “vision of the other” based on its strong political dependence as a colonized region, a cultural representation was built, associated with the chaotic political situation. The view of permissiveness in the social and political spheres were also reinforced in narratives of the colony and independent country, as the exoticism and the “natural” relationship of the people with the wildlife, as the low association of the country with large urban centers. This view enhances the idea of Latin America opposed to the United States, in a clear definition of inefficiency compared to this country in the western hemisphere. It also carries the idea of political and economic inferiority, many times seen in the past related to its social organization and culture.

In the field of analysis of stereotypes, it is necessary to discuss how the set of signs of stereotypes, which can be interpreted as confused, exaggerated, simplified or misleading representations of one people, social group or culture, were reproduced in history, producing clichés of the nation, and reinforced by different types of narratives, visual or written.

In the colonial times, it is possible to see representations of Brazil in literature associated with the native population. The “wild nature” of its population and the sense of lack of political organization and coercion instruments resulted in a vi-

sion of a land “without laws” and religious beliefs, in which everything was permitted. In a period where there was no cultural relativism and with a past of violence and domination, the view of the other was still restricted to an analysis that did not take into account differences and considered the native population as inferior compared to the European colonizers. François Hartog (1999) discusses that it led to a distorted view of the colonized land, associated with narratives of the exoticism of the native population. Therefore, it is possible to say that the narratives of colonization established classifications, comparisons and differences of the European with the Native American without taking into account the cultural differences.

The narratives of the period of colonization are important resources to analyze the vision of the country in Europe and the United States, such as the reports of Pero Vaz Caminha, Dutch travelers in the 18th century and the French Artistic Mission of 1815, among other accounts of travelers that went to Brazil to conduct scientific researches or business activities between the 18th century and the present day. In these narratives, it is common to associate the native population as being savage and primitive, and native women idealization as “pure” and free. As example of artists that depicted similar representations are Jean Baptiste-Debret, Johan Moritz Rugendas, Hans Staden, Carl Von Martius and François-Auguste Biard. This vision followed a similar vision of Latin America colonies at the time, not only in the idealization of exotic elements of the new continent, which included its population. It also carries an idea of the other that depicted the life in the new land as free from social bonds and religious conduct – despite one of the main reasons of Latin American colonization was the dissemination of the Catholic faith and the establishment of churches and religious orders in the new land (SALLAS, 2010, p. 426-427).

In the 20th century, these representations gained new visual and written narratives, especially with the advent of the cinema, television and the internet. With the idea of the “crystallization of the gaze”, Tunico Amancio (2000) retakes Pero Vaz Caminha’s letter to analyze how the Brazil’s representation in cinema created a “directed look” in cinematographic production. The images produced for television and film, due to their specificity of driving the viewer’s gaze to build a narrative through images – reflects a false premise of an “inverted mirror”, in which reality is actually built through an outsider’s point of view. The construction of narratives of representations in the cinema translates the complexity of one’s culture in a simplified way, translating to the viewer the idea that one wishes to pass from a nation or its people. Confusions about elements of national culture, expressions, ways of talking, dressing, scenarios, elements of nature and the city, from a simplified point of view, also reinforced historical stereotypes of the nation.

The representation of the country in literature, cinema, television, press media and social media also affects how Brazilians see themselves and bring out the stigmas of colonization until today. It could also bolster crystalized stereotypes and

clichés of the nation, that usually do not express the authenticity and the identity of a nation. Discussing the importance of the study of representations in narratives, Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (2007) analyze Imagology and the importance of studies of preconceptions about a nation, from common characteristics to simplified values and patterns. These representations have been among literary narratives since modern ages, but gained a definite corpus of analysis in the 19th century. To understand these preconceptions it is necessary to analyze the cultural context, the discursive practice and its textual and intertextual references. It is important to understand national identities in a broad context, but representations conceived in narratives, whether in media, TV shows or major televised events, are hard to analyze, being necessary an interpretation of these narratives through multiple angles.

In the 20th century, stereotypes of the country could be seen in different media outlets, especially in film and television. Brazil’s most internationally televised event was the Special Group Samba Schools’ parade of Rio de Janeiro’s carnival. The event exists since the beginning of the 20th century and still is an important element of affirmation of the popular culture of Rio de Janeiro. It has also become a prominent element to show Brazil’s popular culture abroad, however, it changed through time and today it has a powerful commercial approach. Its origin is linked to different festivities that took place in neighborhoods in the city, whose music tradition dates back to colonial times. By that time, the parade became a competition between neighborhoods whose different communities organized carnival festivities with samba music, costumes, dances and “marchinhas”. In 1929, at an event organized in Praça Onze, at Rio de Janeiro’s city centre, the organization of parades in one only place institutionalized the festivity and in 1942, it changed its venue to the prominent and recently renovated Avenida Getúlio Vargas, one of the main thoroughfares of the city. It was only in 1989 that it was seen on Marquês de Sapucaí Street, whose “sambódromo” venue works were only completed in 1984 (VISCARDI; SOTTANI; SILVA, 2013).

It is important to observe that in the “Estado Novo” authoritarian period (1937-1945), samba was taken by the State as an important political-ideological instrument, as Getúlio Vargas’ regime sought a new image of the country associated with the idea of “modernity” and took popular cultural elements to reinforce the national identity discourse. Samba gained a status of a “national product” in the 1930s, a symbol of nationality and identity, however, with lyrics exalting the State and the country, creating tensions between the “sambistas” and the government (PARANHOS, 2003, p. 107-108). The new venue and representation of the Brazilian carnival was, therefore, instituted with a strong censorship and a propaganda apparatus from the State. As also stated by Lisa Shaw (1998), the Vargas’ Estado Novo regime sponsored a new kind of sub-genre of samba, the “samba-exaltação”, that endorsed Vargas’ construction of populist mythology (SHAW, 1998, p. 163). Renato Ortiz (1988) also remarks that popular culture is discussed when it comes to studies of identity and politics because of its powerful ability to translate pop-

ular trends and desire for change and second because of its political power, as an instrument to build a national image and identity.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the Dictatorship governments (1964-1985) also used the samba schools' parades as an instrument of political power and exaltation of nationalism. The organization of the samba schools parade in Rio de Janeiro from the 1960s onwards is also linked to a commercialization of the carnival through a process of professionalization of the event, with huge public and private investments, bringing a new sense to the once popular and small event. It became deeply connected with the tourism industry and has shifted from a local parade to a spectacular and internationally televised event. To this day it is the event with one of the largest participation of foreigners in the country, with large profits coming through this touristic commercialization. The dissemination of the Brazilian Carnival in association with systematic tourism promotion campaigns by Embratur, the national tourism agency created in 1966, became a landmark strategy of tourism in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the focus of Embratur when it was conceived and in the following decades was linked to a stereotyped view of the country, without a reflection on the country's image abroad – and reinforcing clichés about the country and its population. While proposing to publicize the image of Brazil abroad, also disseminated stereotyped images of the country, associated with beaches, outstanding nature, football, carnival, parties and female sensuality (KAJIHARA, 2010, p. 5-6). Embratur's strategy to develop tourism involved a nation-wide stereotyped image of the country, in search for a financial return.

The samba schools parades thus reinforced various stereotypes of the nation that still remain portrayed and televised internationally today. Moreover, it is important to discuss the carnival associated with a “national branding” movement, in which are forged commercial strategies to establish an image of the nation as a product to be consumed. It is possible to identify in this movement a government effort to work reputation, image and identity of a nation in order to make it attractive to other countries and publics, with potential focus on the tourism industry (BUARQUE, 2015, p. 1302-1304).

From the theoretical references presented, we intend to briefly discuss how the nation's stereotypes have changed or persisted over time, being repeated or repealed in narratives about the country in the media. The focus is to analyze the reception of two events internationally televised, the opening ceremonies of the 2014 Fifa World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games that took place in Brazil. Understanding that this vision has changed, with an increasing awareness of the negativity of stereotypes in the strengthening of the vision of the country in a globalized world, it is also recognized that although it is difficult to build a new image in a scenery already populated with different clichés, enhanced throughout centuries, a new and strong image of the country has been built in the last ten years, along with a discourse of social, political and economic changes since the beginning of the 21st century. The organization of such events and the pressure for

a change of this image by the population, the government and the press produced a different vision of the nation. Therefore, the development of new narratives of the country in those events can be seen as a strategy to strengthen the country’s image in a new international political scenario, although stereotypes still persisted in these ceremonies.

### **Stereotypes of Brazil in televised cultural and sports events**

The announcement of Brazil as the venue for world mega-events as the World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, in 2007 and 2009 respectively, was object of criticism and celebration from governmental agencies, the media outlets and the Brazilian population through social media (CORRÊA, 2009), (SCARPINI, 2009). Seen as a landmark moment for the tourism industry, it also raised a new discussion about costs and corruption in the economic scenario, and of the Brazilian new “branding” of its image abroad. The World Cup was hosted in several cities of the country and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, already the most popular international touristic destination of the country (SÃO PAULO..., 2017). It should bring a new vision of the country, with a greater reinforcement of Brazilian cultural diversity, the nation’s strategic role in the international political scenario and the denial of stereotypes historically conceived. The mega-events have raised a series of political discussions on social media channels, in addition to several journalistic segments about Brazilian representability in politics. In an article written to the National Public Radio (2009), a North American news outlet, it is possible to perceive the political outcome of the Olympic and Paralympic Games being held in the country:

International sports tend to mirror politics. Friday’s decision will reveal, yet again, that Brazil is an emerging power, and that it has the talent, infrastructural capacity, and political commitment needed to play competitively in global political (and athletic) games. Such an endorsement will only boost Lula’s ability to shape international discussions and forge closer ties with other foreign leaders. Perhaps since Lula visited Beijing in 2008 and publicly supported the government’s efforts, the president of China will return the favor in 2016 (NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, 2009).

One of the major elements of debate and concern of the Brazilian government and organization of the events were its opening and closing ceremonies — cultural events that aimed to bring new narratives to a large international audience. Because it is televised live and attracts attention of millions of viewers around the world, it was necessary to think about the authenticity of the country’s representation in this new political scenario. Not only governments, but also the Brazilian media and the organization of the events have criticized certain stereotypes of the country, trying to shape a new image of it and seeking elements of the Brazilian multicultural identity as the basis of events.

As an element of “soft power” strategy (NYE, 2004), the image of the country strengthened during the 2000s and 2010s. This growth was strongly associated with the presidential terms of Presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), during which the country was chosen to host the World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It is believed that the need to show the country as a true global actor in the international political arena was one of the main reasons to choosing the country as host of the mega-events. They would have a strong impact in the country’s image, bolstered by events of this magnitude. The push for a changing image of Brazil, politically and economically, reinforced by a new international image, was clear at that time. However, with the political and economic crisis established in the country in 2014 and especially 2015, the events started to be harshly criticized (CIFUENTES, 2015). The budget difficulties, the corruption accusations involving companies’ biddings for the construction of the venues of the event, the country’s involvement in spending in a time of recession and the purely economic interests linked to them were the chore of most of those criticism – along with a strong movement repelling the Brazilian Worker’s Party in congress. The country was in crisis, and the events reinforced a vision of peace, unity and stability that no longer existed.

Therefore, the opening and closing ceremonies of the World Cup and Olympic Games, televised in dozens of countries, became a major concern of the organization. There could be no flaws, and a new message to unite the country was important. The songs, floats, choreographies, costumes and themes of the event were constant concern of the organization of the events and the media outlets (RANGEL, 2016). There were also expectations from the Brazilian audiences to see a different representation of the country, more linked to the cultural diversity, geographical accuracy and sports potentiality.

It is also believed that especially the Olympic Games organization tried to bring a more elaborate view of the country in the opening ceremony of the event, with cultural references recognized by the Brazilian population. There was a greater concern not to reinforce or emphasize historical stereotyped representations of the nation in a visible move to display a stronger image of the country compared to its peers. However, the search for this new image does not dissociate itself from its historicity – it also could be seen stereotypes and clichés present at the social imaginary of the country. The commercial interests behind the events are also important in defining this image, in which stereotypes remain as important sales instruments. The events were had numerous popular music artists, football players and internationally renowned models. The construction of this new image should show the interests of the government to showcase a politically an institutionally strong country, through its potentials and cultural diversity. However, they showed historical stereotypes, present in previous decades.



The 2014 Fifa World Cup had a smaller opening ceremony compared to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, hosted in São Paulo’s Corinthians stadium in June 2014. With the theme “Treasures of Brazil: its people, its nature and its football”, it is possible to see that it continued presenting several stereotypes of the country. Those same themes, already known as Brazilian historical representations, were televised to international audiences, having also Latin American artists, such as Jennifer Lopez and the artist Pitbull (Americans from Puerto Rican and Cuban origins), which led to criticism from Brazilian audiences. Exalting Brazil in its different qualities, the opening ceremony had four acts, divided in exaltation of the nature, of the Brazilian cultural diversity, especially to the indigenous population, of the football and of the sporting spirit (VEJA..., 2014). Even though it did not seek to bring negative narratives of Brazil, the opening ceremony was criticized by the press, which remarked how much it still was connected to a narrative with an old view of the country, especially linked to the reinforcement of natural exuberance and, consequently, of the indigenous population. Directed by a Belgian artist, Daphne Cornez, the Brazilian press stressed how open it was to international viewers, rather than focusing on the national audience.

The June 12, 2014 report by Mauricio Stycer and Fernando Duarte (2014), entitled “In the light of the day”,<sup>1</sup> suggests that the opening party repeated clichés and had a poor “visual impact”. It also reinforces that the vision of the country and population aimed at commercial benefits and tourism, repeating already known clichés of Brazil and the Brazilians:

Destined to pay tribute to the “treasures of Brazil”, the opening ceremony of the 2014 World Cup, which cost \$ 18 million to the Local Organizing Committee, failed to escape the obvious. A creation of the Belgian artist Daphne Cornez, the party was a parade of native icons, nature and culture, certainly with the aim of seducing the foreign audience. [...] Globo broadcast reminded the samba school’s parade in Carnival. Galvão Bueno gave a didactic commentary of the events, in a school tone. “Music, dance and presentation of nature, in the conception of a Belgian artist”, said Patricia Poeta. The Brazilian party has not compromised, but it will not be remembered either. [...] World Cup opening ceremonies are always the same, they do not serve much more than a warm-up for the opening match for nothing special (STYCER; DUARTE, 2017).

The international press has also perceived the ceremony with positive and negative features. Some newspapers, with international correspondents, like *The Guardian*, made critical reports to the event for not even trying to leave the stereotyped view of the nation. The fact that the opening ceremony of the Cup has no tradition of being long or visually inventive was also remembered:

<sup>1</sup> The citations of articles of Brazilian magazines and newspapers were freely translated by the author. The original texts are available at the websites referred at the end of this article.

This song (We Are One) has been widely criticized for, on the one hand, being too Brazilian and, on the other, not being Brazilian enough. In regards to the former, critics say the music video relies too heavily on national stereotypes and old-fashioned rhythms. But to complain about an overuse of national stereotypes in international sport, let alone a Jennifer Lopez video, feels distinctly like reaching a little too hard for outrage (and let's hope these people didn't watch the opening ceremony with its recreation of the Amazon rainforest to capoeira dance moves). The latter criticism refers to the fact that Lopez and Pitbull are not, in fact, Brazilian, unless you take the attitude of all Hollywood movies and say, simply, "Meh, aren't all Spanish people the same?" Again, hard to take this too seriously seeing as the much-beloved song from the last World Cup was performed by the distinctly un-South African Shakira. (...)And then, back down into the flower she went with Pitbull, leaving the pitch to the Amazonian dancers, the raindrops, trees and footballs, who humbly marched off. After all, once you've seen Pitbull, who needs the Amazon? So did the opening ceremony fluff São Paulo? Well, it certainly made everyone in the auditorium desperate — perhaps more desperate than they'd been in years — for the football to start. So on those terms, it was a roaring success (THE GUARDIAN, 2017).

On the other hand, the opening ceremony of the 2016 Olympic Games, in Maracanã stadium in Rio de Janeiro, had a very different conception and reception from the media. With a theme related to environmental problems and climate changing, there was an even greater concern to showcase the country without stereotypes, which was appraised by the Brazilian and international press. Without focusing on clichés, it highlighted the country's cultural diversity with authentic and recognized Brazilian cultural references from different regions of the country. In an interview at *Isto É* magazine, in June 2016, the Rio 2016 Committee organizer, Leonardo Caetano, outlined the importance of getting out of the so-called "commonplaces" of Brazil:

The only way to thrill the world is to thrill the Brazilian. And the only way to thrill the Brazilian is to be real. The challenge is to contextualize, because the stereotype only shows when there is no context (RIBEIRO, 2017).

Directed by a group of renowned Brazilian cinema, theatre and dance directors, comprising Daniela Thomas, Andrucha Waddington, Fernando Meirelles and choreographer Deborah Colker, the event had the participation of several Brazilian artists and dancers. The ceremony called special attention to environmental and climate problems, but managed to translate into the event a series of non-stereotyped Brazilian cultural elements, recognized by the Brazilian public as authentic. In the Brazilian editorials after the event, not only was the creativity exalted, but the exaltation of cultural diversity based on references from each region of the country, from the selection of representative artists of Brazilian music, such

as Paulinho da Viola, Zeca Pagodinho and Jorge Benjor, to the choice of songs, dances, choreography, costumes and scenery quality. Only one episode was seen as a negative representation of the country, and it was cancelled during the rehearsal of the event. This scene, cancelled but reported on the news, would depict the Brazilian model Gisele Bündchen being robbed while walking in the middle of the Maracanã stadium, and it created a major concern of the public opinion and the press about which image of the country would be televised worldwide (CENA..., 2016). While praising the country's diminishing stereotypes of violence, some newspapers questioned that social problems could not be “masked”. An example of this was the portrait of a Brazilian favela, with the performance of several artists from *Grupo Corpo* dancing together in blocks that formed the vision of the community — a poetic vision, but seen as an attempt not to show the true image of the social conditions of the population of Rio de Janeiro, the city of the event (PÚBLICO..., 2016).

In addition, advertisements about Brazil's reinforcing clichés were criticized by the Brazilian press in a move that sought to strongly refute the Brazilian image associated with stereotypes. An example of this was the BBC's advertising video made for the Olympic Games, which showed wild animals becoming athletes, a true allusion to the diversity of Brazilian fauna — but inaccurate geographically, portraying animals and forests that are not present in Rio de Janeiro, that hosted the event (BBC É CRITICADA..., 2016).

It is important to emphasize that the country's political and economic situation by the time it hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Games was critical: the president Dilma Rousseff had just been removed from the Presidency in the process of Impeachment by the Congress, corruption scandals linked to the bidding of the event's venues were on course and the economic crisis and recession were shaking Brazil's political reputation. Thus, the event could become, in the view of the national and international media, a “redeemer” or catalyst of the crisis of the country. The opening ceremony of the event had a central political role by the time and ended up with a widespread view of redemption, since it sought to leave behind known cultural stereotypes of the country to show that it had the conditions to promote such event.

The appraisal of the event in the international and national media showed an unprecedented vision of the country's multicultural diversity for wide audiences, and created a debate on the importance of not reinforcing stereotypes and clichés of nations in televised events. In order to consolidate a new vision abroad (commercially and politically), it is necessary to reflect also about the country's creation of narratives sought in events of this proportion. Whether for the purpose of attracting tourists in a more conscious way in a globalized world, or with the proposal of reproducing the reality and daily life of the country, the image of the country needed a shift that was seen by the Brazilian audience and celebrated by the public opinion.

Although it brought a new image of Brazil's diversity and multicultural reality, the shift to this new image contained ancient and known stereotypes as well. The lack of discussion of Brazilian social problems, the "cordiality discourse" and the persistent image of "social democracy" were present in its representation — which shows that there were no interests in showing Brazil's social dilemmas, for example. The historian and anthropologist Lilian Moritz Schwarcz (2016), analyzed at an August 2016 column at *Nexo Jornal* that the commonly and erroneous association of the Brazilian population living peacefully in a social democracy land still could be seen in the opening ceremony:

Why is it that Brazil, in international events of this type, always shows only its most exotic side, and, above all, it shelters the image of a peaceful people that solves everything on the basis of "cordiality"? This is, in fact, the most chastened concept of our country literature [...]. We already presented ourselves "fraternally" in the universal exhibitions of the 19th century, when the Emperor Pedro II himself sat in front of the national booths together with plants, coffee cups, indigenous headdresses and local handicraft items. It was also portrayed in a similar way, when Brazil became a theme at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1994, when we defined the country from its wild nature, "mixture of ethnics" past, coffee and caipirinha. Nor was it very different at the opening ceremony of the 2014 World Cup, when we exposed a country "only for show". Either way, since then, we have changed and we have not changed. We are exhibiting a special nation, because here we combine the most accurate modernity with the absolute exaltation of the tropics "beautiful by nature" and "blessed by God", as the verses of the music of Jorge Ben Jor, which is almost becoming an anthem for the 2016 Olympic Games. We define ourselves, yesterday and today, as a country whose "difference" is exalted — for example in the speech of Regina Casé — but where the conflict continues to appear as a shadow or silent theme (SCHWARCZ, 2016).

Despite the lack of a discussion on social problems in the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, the press media did not give much attention to this specific question. The political discourse — though it was clear the political strategy in positioning the nation as a powerful country — was a concern at the core of the discussion of the opening ceremony of the event. Though it is necessary to understand that stereotypes are forged culturally and were persistently repeated through history, the difficult themes associated with Brazil's social inequality, corruption, crime rates, poverty, as much as the racial prejudice and inequality that have always been present in the country's history, were not topics to be discussed in this event.

## Final thoughts

Though many cultural and political aspects of the nation were not seen at the ceremonies analyzed in this paper, it is possible to say by the analysis of the media outlets articles that the Olympic Games opening was considered a success worldwide, showing a “new” image of the country compared to the previous decades images that circulated on media. It has been highlighted by the Brazilian and international press that it has pleased the Brazilian public and the international audiences, which was considered a huge achievement of the organization committee of the event, differently from the World Cup ceremony, seen with a lack of Brazilian cultural signs a mix of Latin American cultural signs.

The address to the social conflicts in both ceremonies could create a discomfort to the population and government, because it is still, as Schwarcz notes, a difficult and “silent” theme to discuss in the country itself. The same idea of the “cordiality” of the Brazilian population, present in Brazilian literature since the 19th century, is still seen at the events, showing that although there was an organized movement of not representing Brazil with historical stereotypes, the idea of the people living in a harmonious environment and the lack of discussions on social and racial inequalities in the country display that even with an attempt to change its image, the portrayal of the country in an event of this magnitude also fails in showing an authentic Brazilian identity because the country itself fails in discussing these issues.

Ultimately, in a movement of repelling the historical representation of disorganization and violence of Latin American countries, built since the 19th century on the arguments portrayed at the classic Domingo Faustino Sarmiento book *Fa-cundo: Civilization and Barbarism* (1999), the stigmas of violence and social problems should be avoided to be discussed as the reinvented image of the country should surpass the problems of the past — showing a path of stability and peace. It is also important to highlight that the country’s political situation was critical by the time of the event with the imminence of the president’s impeachment — that happened only ten days after the end of the Olympic Games.

One important episode that featured the importance of the change of this image could be seen at the debate at the media over the American swimmer Ryan Lochte police investigation during the Olympic Games, called by the American press “Lochtegate” (NICKALLS, 2016). The swimmer and two other colleagues from the American swimming team were accused of vandalizing the bathroom of a gas station in Rio de Janeiro during the games, and then accused of lying claiming that they had been robbed, bringing back “ghosts of the past” of the country. Their attitude was harshly criticized and reprimanded by the Brazilian federal police (MARTÍN, 2016). Afraid of the violent image of the city amid the events, the federal police investigation conducted a real “hunt” over the story behind the robbery. The stereotype related to the lack of laws or punishment would no longer be tol-

erated in that moment. In a fragile political moment, when the country tended to seek the success of an already criticized Olympic event, a true “national redemption” accompanied the development of the investigations. That led to a hard rebuke of the swimmer’s ethic internationally, and apologies from the international media and the United States Olympic Committee, that assumed instantly that the events depicted by the swimmer were true (NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, 2016).

The consensus about the representativeness of Brazil’s culture and history in the narratives of the country at the opening of the 2014 Fifa World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games hosted in Brazil, nevertheless, is far from being reached. There are still visible stereotypes and also discussions about the interests involved in the construction of this Brazilian image and the Brazilian cultural representativeness in televised cultural events. However, it is possible to visualize that from the decade of 2000 onwards, the reflection and debate about Brazilian clichés and stereotypes have increased, whether in the construction of visual narratives in cultural events or in the construction of articles in the national and international press that took into account the Brazilian political and cultural complexity.

It is important to emphasize that a strong image of the country abroad was built since Lula’s governments in a context of affirmation of the country as a regional force and a global player. The major sports events that took place in 2014 and 2016 in Brazil demonstrate those efforts in portraying the force of Brazil regionally and its importance, diplomatically and politically, in a global scenario. Although the reproduction of stereotyped representations of the country could be seen at some of these events media releases and at the opening ceremonies, the strategies produced not only a different image of the country, as an image that featured qualities of the same, in a “rebranding” movement, associated with economic and political interests. These strategies also reflect in the construction of cultural and educational partnerships worldwide and in alliances with European, African and Asian countries in economic agreements, positioning the country actively in the international political arena. As an important part of these strategies, the images of the country in the analyzed televised events played an important role in displaying this “new Brazil”, even though there was a political and economic unstable scenario by the time of the events.

The construction of an image of the country abroad still remains as an important subject of studies and a fundamental subject of discussion of Brazil’s *soft power* policy in the international political landscape.

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## Resumo/Abstract/Resumen

### “Yes, nós temos bananas”? Uma análise de estereótipos brasileiros revisitados em eventos culturais e esportivos no Brasil

**Fernanda Lima Rabelo**

A partir da referência da música de Braguinha, de 1937, esse artigo tem como objetivo realizar uma análise de estereótipos brasileiros reforçados nos séc. XX e XXI, revisitados nas apresentações de grandes eventos na história recente, através da análise de desfiles de escola de samba e aberturas dos eventos internacionais que o Brasil sediou em 2014 e 2016, a Copa do Mundo e as Olimpíadas e Paralimpíadas. A partir da discussão da imagem do Brasil na mídia internacional, e especialmente da valorização de uma imagem nacional mais fortalecida e menos dependente do governo brasileiro, pretende-se ainda entender como que estereótipos do Brasil foram reforçadas ou criticadas pela mídia internacional e organização dos eventos sediados no Brasil, em um movimento ambíguo de reforço e mudança da imagem do país televisionada internacionalmente. Na intenção de trazer uma análise do fortalecimento da imagem brasileira no exterior, busca-se discutir não apenas o papel de estereótipos e clichês na criação de uma imagem internacional do país,

mas também a construção de uma nova imagem em narrativas que buscam uma maior valorização da cultura brasileira.

**Palavras-chave:** representações, Brasil, grandes eventos, estereótipos.

### **“Yes, nós temos bananas”? An analysis of Brazilian stereotypes revisited at cultural and sports events in Brazil**

**Fernanda Lima Rabelo**

With reference to Braguinha’s music from 1937, this article aims to exam Brazilian stereotypes reinforced in the 20th century, revisited in the presentations of major events in recent history, such as samba school parades and the openings of international events that Brazil hosted in 2014 and 2016, the Fifa World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Discussing the image of Brazil in the international media, and especially the strengthening and less dependent image of the Brazilian government, it is also intended to understand how stereotypes of Brazil were reinforced or criticized by the international media and organization of events hosted in Brazil, in an ambiguous movement to reinforce and change the representation of the country televised internationally. In an attempt to bring an analysis of the Brazilian image strengthening abroad, it focus to discuss not only the role of stereotypes and clichés in the shaping of an international image of the country, but also the shaping of a new representation in narratives that promote greater appreciation of Brazilian culture.

**Keywords:** representations, Brazil, major events, stereotypes.

### **“Yes, nós temos bananas”? Un análisis de estereotipos brasileños revisitados en eventos culturales y deportivos en Brasil**

**Fernanda Lima Rabelo**

A partir de la referencia de la música de Braguinha, de 1937, este artículo tiene como objetivo realizar un análisis de estereotipos brasileños reforzados en los siglos XIX y XX. A partir de la discusión de la imagen de Brasil en los medios internacionales, y especialmente de la valorización de una imagen nacional más fortalecida y menos dependiente del gobierno brasileño, se pretende además entender cómo los estereotipos de Brasil fueron reforzados o criticados por los medios internacionales y por la organización de eventos con sede en Brasil, en un movimiento ambiguo de refuerzo y cambio de la imagen del país televisada internacionalmente. Con la intención de realizar un análisis del fortalecimiento de la imagen brasileña en el exterior, se busca discutir no solo el papel de los estereotipos y clichés en la creación de una imagen internacional del país, sino también el de la construcción

de una nueva imagen en narrativas que buscan una mayor valorización de la cultura brasileña.

**Palabras clave:** representaciones, Brasil, grandes eventos, estereotipos.