

Title: Transnational institutions and ethnic entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This paper proposes to analyze the roles of two transnational institutions (a Pentecostal church and a government agency for foreign relations) in ethnic enterprise. The studied group is made up of Brazilian immigrants who set up in business with money saved as workers in the American state of Massachusetts in informal economy niches. The institutions that help understand this process, which the paper addresses, are the Church of the Assembly of God (“Igreja Assembléia de Deus”), which is structured in Brazil but operates in Boston without formal ties with the North American Church of the Assembly of God, and the Brazilian Consulate in Boston.

Introduction

In a survey we carried out in 2002 with importers who provide Brazilian products to Brazilian firms in Massachusetts, we found there were around 500 enterprises in that state that belonged to Brazilian immigrants (*). In 2003, according to an estimate by the Brazilian Consulate in Boston, 650 small Brazilian firms were counted in the New England area. These are small establishments that, until the fateful events of September Eleven, boasted large Brazilian flags in their windows. After the terrorist act, some of these flags were removed, replaced with smaller ones, or displayed side-by-side with American flags.

These stores sell items of all sorts, from female underwear to CDs, food products, etc. Their potential customers are the 350 thousand Brazilians who migrated to Massachusetts from the 1980s onwards. The estimated sales volume of these Brazilian firms is 250 to 500 thousand dollars per year (Martes, 2002). Most of them sell Brazilian products or products made in the United States with imported Brazilian inputs. Ethnic Brazilian restaurants import part of their raw materials. Products range from candy – particularly the *Garoto* and *Sonho de Valsa* brands –, to video-taped Brazilian TV shows, particularly soap-operas. Video rental, however, is a declining activity, as Brazilian TV network Rede Globo’s programs are already broadcast in some American cities, including Boston.

Immigrant groups generate their own consumer demand, but the speed and manner according to which each national group organizes to respond to this demand varies. In general, American bibliography emphasizes a greater proneness to self employment and enterprise in certain immigrant groups as compared to others, whose performance in the same areas is insignificant. The many national groups that make up the “Hispanic” category sport less enterprise and propensity to self employment. This phenomenon is explained alternatively by the group’s cultural background, by its schooling level, and by certain social capital-generating skills (Light, 1972; Portes, 1987; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Putnam, 1993).

The inclusion of Brazilians into the “Hispanic” category is debated, and the Brazilian businessmen we interviewed in Cambridge and East Boston (Greater Boston) tend not to categorize either themselves or the Brazilian population in general

as Hispanic / Latino (see Martes, 2002a). There certainly is great diversity in these two categories and the level of propensity to enterprise might be one of many differences among the groups that make them up. In fact, among Brazilians in the past five years, the number of firms established in Boston rose by approximately 62% (Martes, 2002). Although the general scenario for expansion of small firms in Boston may seem promising, Brazilian immigrants still face many challenges to set up in business. In the first survey with Brazilian businessmen (*), one important conclusion we drew concerned the need for better articulation among them. While we carried out the second stage of the field survey, we witnessed the establishment of the Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce of New England. The Brazilian Consulate in Boston played a relevant role in this process, worthy of more detailed analysis.

Would Brazilian businesspersons be willing to associate themselves with the Latino / Hispanic groups to promote common interests? The answer would require an investigation on the ethnic identity of these small businesspersons.

North Americans tend to regard all Central and South Americans as “Hispanics” (HOLLINGER, 2000). Brazilians, in general, tend to be categorized as such by the host society (MARGOLIS, 2002). However, as shown in another paper (*) Brazilian immigrants living in Boston tend to reject this categorization. From the perspective of associative and political life, this position may have important consequences, as the Latin population representative associations and entities are growing at a staggering rate. Brazilian might become members if they chose to. But this seems not to be the path of choice, at least so far.

As a result, I went into the field again in 2002 and 2003, and interviewed 16 Brazilian businesspersons in East Boston and Cambridge, asking them how they categorized themselves ethnically when asked. Most of them (40%) categorized themselves as “White”. Two of them justified their choice as follows: “Because I am white”, one offered no justification and the others stated: “Because I am white – fair skin and blue eyes” and “because it is my natural color. I always fill in “white” – not Hispanic. But 13% refer to themselves as Hispanics, with the following justifications: “I identify with them and, for the Americans, all South Americans are Hispanic, so I check the ‘Hispanic’ box.” The remaining 20% put themselves into a different category than those available in the form: “I am Brazilian and like to identify myself as such. I believe that this sets me apart from the Hispanics and I am American, since I like the country in which I live”; “I’m Brazilian, but would proudly stand for the colors of America. I love both countries” ; “I love Brazil and I love America.” Three interviewees had never had to categorize themselves and one businessperson refused to answer the item because the option “*morena*” (“brown”) was not available.

When asked about the reasons that led them to reject the “Hispanic” category, the businesspersons responded as follows: “I don’t see Hispanic as a race, but rather as a kind of ‘language’ they came up with here”; “I don’t even speak Spanish”; “I don’t see myself as Hispanic. For the Americans, all Latinos are Hispanic, unfortunately this is out of ignorance, but I do not

fit into the category”; “because I am white”; “My country was colonized by the Portuguese, I don’t speak Spanish”; “I don’t speak the same language as the Hispanics”; “Because I am not Hispanic”; “Spanish is not my native language”; “fir him race doesn’t mean much. We are all human beings”; “everyone has a race and mine is not Hispanic”; “doesn’t consider himself Hispanic because he doesn’t speak Spanish”; “I am Brazilian, not Hispanic”; and “I am not Hispanic, I don’t speak Spanish.” These data reaffirm the general trend among the Brazilian population in MA: affirmation of national identity as th group’s priority and rejection of the “Hispanic/Latino” label (Martes, 2002). From the business perspective, however, it might be interesting for them to build ties with Latin associations and with interest groups organized around Latin American firms in Massachusetts. But no significant steps were taken in this direction, except by the Brazilian Consulate in Boston, which promoted come meetings between Brazilians and representatives of other Latin groups in the state. The emerging choice is not the building of closer ties with Hispanics, but the strengthening of connections with the Portuguese community in Massachusetts, specially through the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS), as we will see ahead.

In the survey, the role played by the Consulate – a Brazilian Government agency – was observed to be relevant to the formation of the community and to ethnic identity. This has to do, mostly, with the accumulation of social capital for the group that comprises Brazilian immigrants, particularly small businesspersons.

But there is another rather relevant factor to understanding ethnic enterprise in the Brazilian case: religious affiliation. In Boston, the number of small Brazilian businesses grows as much as the number of Brazilian Evangelical churches. This put before us another topic for research: what is the role of churches, particularly Evangelical ones, in business expansion? One of the main difficulties faced by entrepreneurs was the internal articulation of the Brazilian community. In this sense, the Brazilian Consulate in Boston played a (non-exclusive) leadership role in the associative process, which resulted in the establishment of the Brazil-New England Chamber of Foreign Commerce, in 2003. In the case of Evangelical Churches, since pastors were not directly involved in the establishment of this association, what role do they play in the business world? We operated on the assumption that this had to be an important role, given the number of Evangelical businessowners, as we will see ahead, but in what way were the churches involved in the process?

According to the data gathered, there are close to 600 Brazilian businesses in Massachusetts (Martes & Rodrigues, 2003). There are 67 of them in Somerville and Allston (*), and 26 in Cambridge and East Boston (all of them in the Greater Boston). (*). In Somerville Allston, only 38% of the owners of Brazilian firms are Catholics, 28% are Evangelicals, 18% are not religious, 14% did nor respond, and 2% are ecumenical.¹ These data, compared to the remainder of the Brazilian population with residence in MA (around 60% of all Brazilians in MA are Catholics, Martes, 2000) clearly indicate the drop in the share

¹ Among the Evangelicals, special note is due to the Assembly of God, the denomination that covers more than half of those that professed themselves Evangelical, the remainder being Baptist (3), Presbyterian (3), and Maranata (1).

of Catholics among business owners. The difference, however, is still greater in comparison to the population in Brazil, where 75% of all citizens are Catholics (PIERUCCI & PRANDI, 1995).

Trying to explain why the number of Evangelicals is so significant is not easy task. There are, in fact, several factors that encourage joining Evangelical churches, particularly factors that have to do with the sociability standards they provide (see Martes, 2000). Among Brazilian businesspersons specifically, joining Evangelical churches can be explained by three other factors. First, Evangelical preaching encourages social mobility and, since Brazilians do not emigrate as professionals, self-employment is a path that allows them to move towards this end.

The second factor that favors becoming Evangelical is forming a customer base. The following excerpt from the interview illustrates: “Being a church member helped me in the spiritual sense, including as regards retaining customers and dealing with them. It is difficult to deal with all kinds of people. When you know the word of God, it is easier to understand other people and control yourself. I always pray before entering the store. Part of the money I make is dedicated to the Lord. God gives you strength to stand. The pastor always comes around to pray with us. I ask God to teach me how to best use the money I make here.” (Martes, 2001).

In the survey carried out in Somerville and Allston, out of the 19 business owners that stated that a large share of their customers belongs to the same church as they, **only three are Catholic**. All others are Evangelical (except for 2 that stated no religious affiliation). Therefore, religious communities are a kind of “captive market”. This means that business owners affiliated to Evangelical churches stand a better chance of drawing customers from their respective religious communities. The same cannot be said of Catholic business owners. Among these, the great majority of customers has their roots in the same Brazilian cities and lives in the neighborhoods where the firm is set up in Boston. It’s different among Evangelicals. Once a business is set up, churchgoers tend to become patrons of establishments whose owners are Evangelical, too.

The third factor has to do with the fact that Evangelical pastors tend to play a more active role in the life of the Brazilian business community in Boston: they attend meetings and gatherings; they take part in the establishment of networks, such as the Brazilian Boston Network. The Assembly of God has plans to become a Credit Union in the second semester of gg.

One important point among those noted by authors who developed the concept of ethnic economy pertains to the connections between religion and economic life (see, specially, Bonacich & Model, 1980). It is common knowledge that the basic Weberian hypothesis (WEBER, 1982) us that Protestantism is more favorable to Capitalism, or to entrepreneurial activities, because of the kind of religious doctrine it stands for. The number of Evangelicals among Brazilian business owners is much higher than their share of the Brazilian population in Massachusetts. Might we use Max Weber to explain why it is that among Brazilian business owners the ratio of Evangelicals is greater than in the total migrant Brazilian population?

The survey we present ahead attempts to answer the questions rose in this introduction.

Research Design

This article builds on field research I did between 1994 and 1996 in the Greater Boston area. In 2002 and 2003 I returned to the field to research the growth of Brazilian businesses in the same areas, as well as to update my data on Brazilian churches.

In both periods I made use of various research methods. to update the data presented here.

Survey: I 1996 I interviewed 300 Brazilian immigrants, fifty each in Cambridge, Somerville, Marlborough, Framingham, Allston-Brighton, and East Boston, the communities in which most Brazilians in Massachusetts live. I interviewed Brazilian immigrants in Brazilian shops, Brazilian restaurants, and places where Brazilians work. Since many Brazilian immigrants are not here legally, and since those here legally are not recorded in official sources by country of origin, the purpose of this survey was to obtain a basic demographic profile of Brazilian immigrants in Boston, by age, gender, place of origin, profession before emigrating, and profession in the US.

In-Depth Interviews: Also in this first period (between 1994 and 1996) I interviewed forty Brazilians about their immigration experience and their life in the United States. These open-ended interviews lasted about two hours each. The persons in this sample were located with a “snowball” sampling technique (see Cornelius, 1982). Given the risk of interviewees belonging to the same social networks, I tried to maximize the range of types of Brazilians I interviewed by starting from a variety of places of initial contact.

Interviews with Key Informants: In addition, I interviewed 43 Brazilian about the immigrant community. This sample included community leaders, professionals, and religious leaders and the Brazilian Consul. These informants helped me understand the Brazilian immigrant community: the dynamics, religious life, and relations between Brazilian immigrants and other groups, both immigrant and non-immigrant. These interviews did not follow a fixed script—rather, the information was obtained in accordance with the expertise of the individual interviewees.

Participant Observation: Between 1994 and 1996, I also tried to observe, follow, and participate in group activities promoted by the Brazilians in Massachusetts. I attended weddings, birthday parties, group meetings, and visited places where Brazilian immigrants work and do business. This combination of methods allowed me to get a broad understanding of the immigrant experience. Observation of social behavior and organization allowed for a better understanding than mere survey data.

In teh second period, 2002, I researched Brazilian businesspersons and religious leaders in the same areas, but with special attention to the cities of Somerville and Allston, where greater numbers of Brazilian firms and churches concentrated. In 2003 I returned to the field, incorporating Cambridge and East Boston into the survey. In this second period, in interviewed a total 66 Brazilian businessowners, using a questionnaire concerning their social and demographic traits (religious affiliation) and their firms. In parallel, I also interviewed two pastors, the Brazilian Consul General to Boston, and the Adjunct Consult.

The growth of firms and churches

Brazilian enterprises in Massachusetts operate in different areas, although beauty salons, variety stores and money-remittance offices do prevail. In such establishments, physical structure is medium, and 38% of them have areas between 51sq.m and 100 sq.m. The firms are family businesses in most case. In general, if the wife works with the husband, she is a listed partner. The division of labor is done in such a manner that women are responsible for service (in restaurants and bars, kitchen duties also befall women), while men are responsible for accounting, banking contacts and other financial and managerial duties. These traits correspond to the pattern in other small immigrant-owned firms in the state of Massachusetts (Halter, 1994). The startup equity capital in most firms is no more than U\$50 thousand. We observed that most of them were founded between 1995 and 2000. Also, in the majority if cases, customers live in the same neighborhood where the establishment operates.

All of these factors, in addition to businessowner characteristics, make Brazilian firms very similar to one another based on a comparison of the answers to the questionnaire applied to Brazilian businesspersons in Cambridge, Somerville, Allston and East Boston. But a major difference exists: the support churches give to businesses (at different levels, as we will se in the next item). That is, unlike the previous survey in Somerville and Allston (Martes, 2002), religious leaders and churches were not named as having contributed or given relevant support to businesspersons in East Boston and Cambridge.

This is a surprising datum, as were operated under the assumption that, as in the prior survey, involving the cities of Allston and Somerville, belonging to a given church was important to attract customers. In the two later cities, 20% of the businesspersons we interviewed stated that their customers came from the same church the or she attended. But in both East Boston and Cambridge, the religious factor shows no impact on customer base formation, that is, only 3% of a firm's customers attended the same church as the businessowner.

As for religious affiliation, the data collected confirm the same trend that applies to the remainder of the Brazilian population in Massachusetts, which is also predominantly Catholic. There is, however, a greater share of Evangelicals among businesspersons than among the remainder of the Brazilian population in the state. In the survey conducted in Somerville and Allston, this trait reinforces the connection between businesspersons and the Protestant religion (see Martes, 2002).

The greater percentage of evangelicals among businesspersons can be explained by several factors, note being due, however, to the sociability standards that Evangelical Churches foster (Martes, 2000). The data gathered in this survey provide little sampling room, but analyses made in other cities in Metropolitan Boston corroborate the assumption that Evangelical discourse and preaching, as incentives to social mobility, are better aligned with Brazilian immigrants' aspirations. Furthermore, Evangelical businesspersons benefit from the construction of customer base from their fellow church-goers. This is not the case in East Boston and Cambridge, but it is in Somerville and Allston, where the results suggest the creation of an *ethos* typical of Evangelicals, more appropriate

and encouraging as regards business activities. This can possibly explain, at least in part, why these cities sport a greater number of Brazilian firms than Allston and Cambridge. But this is just a hypothesis to be tested in the future. Interesting data in this sense can be obtained from Brazilian evangelical journals published in the United States, such as GOSPEL NEW for example, published in Boston, Massachusetts, in July 2000. The publication's editorial stresses the importance of the Evangelical community to Brazilian professionals' associations in the United States. It mentions a story in which only three guards were responsible for an institution that housed one hundred and fifty madmen. When asked as to the possibility of a riot, the hospital director states that it was not an issue, because madmen do not unite. The tale introduces the editorial and proceeds as follows: "The key to the success of any enterprise be it social, economic or professional, lies in union. (...) We than all those that have believed in and supported this ministry, the Lord, His people, and the community in general. In union lies strength and that is why we advance. Remember at all times: Only madmen do not unite!". See, also, *Linha Aberta com Jesus* – The Brazilian Gospel Magazine in the U.S., in Boca Raton, Florida – an Evangelical publication. We point out the absence of any similar Catholic publications.

The role of the Evangelical Church

An alert observer does not fail to notice the rapid growth of Brazilian churches in Massachusetts, especially the Evangelicals. We would easily be inclined to deduce that the number of Protestant converts from Catholicism among Brazilian immigrants was highly significant. In fact, the number of Brazilian Catholics in Massachusetts (60%) is relatively greater than in Brazil (75%). However, two types of considerations must to be made.

The first consideration refers to the fact that among Evangelicals creating new churches and extending already-existing ones follows a completely different process from that applied by the Catholics. On the one hand, a small group of lay people, with assistance from a pastor, can start a church. On the other hand, in contrast with the Catholics, the Evangelicals do not consider unity among themselves as a high priority. Put another way, they divide easily and, because of this, it is impossible to correlate the number of Evangelical churches with the number of Evangelicals. This explains why the number of Evangelical churches is so much greater although the number of Catholics is larger.

The second consideration refers to the greater visibility the Evangelicals obtain because of their penetration of the communications media. The services, meetings and preachers in Portuguese or "Portunhol" (a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish) can easily be accessed on cable TV channels in Boston. In the programs, the high excitement with which reports of curative processes are reported draws attention, as does the emotional testimony on grace received, and the pastors' eloquence when referring to the church's miracles, especially cures. In this regard, one can state that there is no difference between the behavior and visibility strategies the Evangelicals use in Massachusetts and in Brazil. As Fernandes (1996) points out "the Evangelicals (in Brazil) do not hide. They prefer highly visible locations for their temples, speak without embarrassment

about Christ to those around them and to strangers, preach conversion in public thoroughfares and sports stadiums, and invest heavily in communications media.” It is no different in Massachusetts. But this visibility also relates to the fact that Evangelicals are seen as being “different” by the rest of the Brazilian immigrants in that state. Being different is, on the one hand, presenting an alternative religion in the midst of a traditionally Catholic population. On the other hand, the life style, behavior, and way of dressing all easily draw attention. In this sense, the Evangelicals themselves encourage (and desire) the perception of difference.

Brazilian Evangelicals in that state are greater than found in Brazil (13%). The presence of Evangelical churches among the Brazilians is, in fact, one of the most visible features of the migratory movement. From the total interviewed in the survey, 20% arrived in Massachusetts already converted to Evangelism. The cases in which Catholics converted to Evangelism after emigrating accounted for a mere 5% of the 300 Brazilians interviewed. It is true that throughout Brazil, the Catholic Church has been losing members to the Evangelicals over the last decade. According to Pierucci and Prandi (1995), Catholics represent 75% of the Brazilian population. As a point of comparison, in the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan area, which is the region with the densest Evangelical population in Brazil, 28% of the population was converted over the last three years (Fernandes, 1996).

Over the last 20 years, Brazil has been held up as one of the most outstanding examples in the world of Evangelism’s expansion. Some authors have raised the hypothesis that this country, as indeed the rest of the whole of Latin America, is relinquishing Catholicism in favor of becoming Protestant (Stoll, 1990; Martin, 1990). In fact, according to the 1991 Evangelical Institutional Census, every two days a new Evangelical church opens in the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan area. Fernandes estimates the number of Evangelicals in this region at around 1.5 million people (Fernandes, 1996). The Evangelical churches, especially the Pentecostals, have grown fast, particularly among the lower middle-class (Fernandes, 1996), the class to which the Brazilian immigrants belong (Martes, 2000).

Do Brazilians who are connected with the Evangelical churches receive differentiated incentives to emigrate to the United States? According to data collected in the survey, the Evangelicals show a greater propensity to take the nucleus of their family to the US. While 20% of Brazilian Catholics who emigrated to the US left their families in Brazil, only 11% of the Evangelicals did so. This could indicate that they also make an effort to attract their fellow church members. Further, the Evangelical tenets give value to and provide incentives for church members to move upward socially, which could result in a sort of symbolic incentive for emigration.

In spite of the growth in the number of Evangelicals, the majority of Brazilian immigrants in Massachusetts are Catholics. However, they are not all members of the Church. Among the Catholics interviewed, 35% are classed as “not practicing.” This is justified by “don’t have time,” “too much work,” or “that’s the way it has always been.” But as Pierucci and Prandi

(1996) noted, “non-practicing Catholics” is one of the component features of Catholicism itself. As in Brazil, the women tend to be more involved in religious organizations. But what draws one’s attention is the fact that, when the numbers of those who declared that they were not religious and did not go to any church at all (including non-practicing Catholics) are added up, one arrives at the conclusion that the majority of immigrants or 58% of the total interviewed are members of some religious organization. In fact, the Brazilian churches are, together with the network of family, friends and associative organizations, the principal means of support for Brazilians in Massachusetts.

The largest Evangelical Church in Boston is the Assembly of God, com 4,500 members. The leading pastor plays the typical role of a father for his community. But not just any father. An angry father, whose severity is legitimate because he is fair and is always willing to show the path to God in his speeches and lectures. To reinforce this role, he represents himself as a generous person dedicated to the divine task of guiding his flock. The father-figure impersonation is certainly no different from any other minister or priest. How is he different, then? The pastor tries to look “cool”, “communicative”, TV-like, both in his dress and in how he establishes relationships (informally, friendly). Showing himself as a friend, allows him to approach people as such. But the opposite is certainly not true.

In the interview, I asked the pastor: “a large share of Brazilian businesspersons I have surveyed belong to the Assembly of God. Why? Does the church offer some kind of support in this sense?” He answered: “The church offers spiritual support. We encourage faith so that miracles can happen. We change people’s character. They don’t spend money on bars, lust, addictions and useless things, and they come to God. This protects the, their lives change to the better, including their family and economic lives”. He spoke for over fifteen minutes on the Church’s spiritual work, “everything else comes as a consequence”.

His preaching at cult encourages victory and personal success an ends up inducing the faithful to setting up shop, which can contribute to their social mobility. Also, watching as the church grows physically, performs renovations, etc., the faithful may be encouraged to regard the growth of the church as a shared work and wish the same for themselves. However, according to the pastor, “the Assembly of God has 4,500 members and is present in 12 American states. There are firms here that gross over 200 thousand dollars a month. These firms belong to Evangelicals. But this happens naturally, we don’t do anything directly to make it happen, it’s God’s blessing, a consequence of surrendering one’s life to Him. We are now featured in a TV show in Brazil and on the radio, too. A miracle in one’s financial life is the consequence of this, of a spiritual attitude”.

I asked him whether a Church member who opens a business stands a greater chance of attracting his fellow churchgoers, that is, for example, whether the church hires its own members for renovation work. He answered: “The Church expanded its entire building; it grew by more than 200% from ‘96. But what matters to me is professionalism, not whether or not one is a believer. What I care about is price and professionalism”.

According to the pastor, the Church has experienced significant growth since its establishment: “We performed the conversion baptism on 500 people last year. Between 10 and 15 people every Sunday. Even in Brazil it’s like this. Today, Evangelical groups are challenging the hegemony of the group that always bossed the country around: Roberto Marinho. We have our Theology College (he is an Anthropology professor) with 22 graduates, already. It operates under a covenant with the University of Oklahoma, which is accredited by the U.S. government. We have a newspaper and a radio station in Brazil, under a partnership agreement (in fact, I have heard of his show in a São Paulo Evangelical radio station – speaking directly from Boston., U.S....). We have a TV studio here. Here we heal diseases, addictions, homosexuality... here’s where these miracles happen”.

The church already has branches in Massachusetts and all of the pastors under him are “completely trustworthy”. The church is growing and branching out, under this pastor’s strict rule². The room where cult is held has doubled in size. In the background, big-scrree TVs and a stage much larger than the one I saw in 1996. Across the room, a special space for the members of the orchestra that church members have recently established. In the back of the building, more rooms in construction, some of which already taken by children that rehearsed their parts in the orchestra. Rooms for the recently founded newspaper. The pastor could sure invest: the Assembly of God appears to be the Brazilian company that grows the most in Massachusetts. According to himself, his is an entrepreneurial profile. In Brazil, he used to own a mechanic shop with 12 employees. He mentioned this as if he had been forced to give up a comfortable life to answer the call of God Deus, follow his calling as a pastor.

The Brazil-American Chamber of Commerce of New England – The role of the Consulate

The Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce of New England - BACCNE was founded in March 2003. To better understand the process that led to its creation, it is important to put it within the context of deeper changes that the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has undergone since the 1990s.

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Foreign Relations made some changes to its Consular Assistance Policy. Chief among these are: 1) Expanding the career diplomats network; 2) Creating the Citizens’ Council; 3) Preparing Consular Manual; 4) Offering legal support to Brazilian citizens in need; 5) Organizing itinerant consulates; 6) Consular ombudsman; 7) Reviewing service to Brazilian citizens overseas (professionalism and courtesy) and creating consular enrollment; 8) Support in emergencies, including legal support to Brazilian citizens overseas. At the same time, the Itamaraty has been undergoing a series of changes not only to its internal structure, but also to its administrative culture.

² Despite its name, the Church is completely autonomous from the American Assembly of God Church (see Martes, 2000).

One of the most significant changes was the creation of the Citizens' Council. Twenty-six of these have been set up since 1996, with the purpose of "establishing a bridge between Government and Society". The Council is defined as a "channel for communication, cooperation and interaction between the government and the society overseas". They are counseling services at consulates and embassies that help promote "better adaptation of Brazilian citizens to the country's circumstances, act as social binding element, as a channel for consular information and for gathering suggestions. They operate in the areas of health insurance, psychological counseling, community events organization, and assistance to needy Brazilian citizens". Brazilian citizens with residence in the Consulate's jurisdiction and Consular employees can be members. (Ministry of Foreign Relations, Report, 1997).

Although these measures represent changes to both the organizational culture and the strategic objectives at the Itamaraty, the effective support offered to Brazilian migrants that became entrepreneurs overseas is still little and is limited, basically, to the establishment of representative bodies for the segment.

The Brazilian overseas population, estimated at around 1.5 million spatially concentrated individuals, is a respectable consumer market. But, with certain exceptions, Brazilian businesspersons have shown little interest in the potentialities of the market that migrant citizens can become. In certain cities like New York and Miami, Brazilian businesspersons have set up Chambers of Commerce. According to Counselor José Mauro Couto, General Adjunct Consul to Miami and a scholar of Brazilian migration into Florida, the *Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce of Florida* (BACCF) alone, with main offices in Orlando and Tampa, has over 450 member companies from different areas of activity, including companies such as ATT, UNO Remittance Inc., UNIX Trade, Varig, Odebrecht Contractors Inc., Settle Consulting, Noronha Advogados, Hi-Seven Fright Forwarders, Gazeta Mercantil USA, Banco do Brasil, Unibanco, Banco do Estado de São Paulo, Banco Real, Flick Mortgage Inc., and Embraer, among many others.

The latest Overseas Chamber of Commerce was founded in Boston, in 2003, as we mentioned before. We note, however, that these business organizations are still in their early days and are very few. Furthermore, participation of businesspersons in such organizations is still restricted to highly institutionalized businesses, leaving aside Brazilian citizens that migrated as menial workers and were able to set up small businesses to serve the consumer needs of Brazilians overseas. The only exception is Boston, which also includes some small businesses as members.

It is a notorious fact, however, that migrant populations generate their own consumer demands and, as a consequence, the neighborhoods they occupy tend to sprout small establishments intended to meet this demand (Halter, 1994). Such establishments give access to a variety of domestic brands. Among these: 1) food products (cheese buns, snacks, condensed milk, *guaraná*, etc.); 2) garments (string-bikinis, halter-tops, tight pants, Brazilian designer labels such as "Fórum",

“Zoomp”, etc.); 3) air tickets; 4) pharmaceuticals and beauty products (“Phebo”, “Natura”, “Boticário”, “Leite de Rosas”), etc. (*)

These small enterprises have a special interest in projecting a positive image of Brazil, in order to add value to their own products. The Boston case deserves more careful analysis. I believe that Brazilian firms attempt to recreate, in that city, a “piece of Brazil” capable of offering the things that the community tends to appreciate most in its home country: food, clothing, music, etc. By offering these products, they play a strategic role, lending visibility to Brazilian migrants and promoting an image of Brazil, supporting and disseminating activities such as Brazilian musical performances, carnival balls, Seventh of September celebrations, etc. These firms offer a positive view of Brazil because they specialize in the Brazilian consumer market. In this case, market segmentation is defined by ethnicity and supported, in a broader sense, by national origin. We note that Brazilian firms do not offer comparatively cheaper products or services. Their chief attraction is not in the price, but in the nature of products. Brazilians consume the products offered in Brazilian stores because those are the only places where they will find what they wish to consume: products from Brazil.

There is, therefore, a cultural – rather than merely economic – aspect involved in the consumption of these products. I illustrate with the following excerpt from an interview with the owner of a Brazilian store in *Brookline* (Boston): “I have many customers who want to buy Brazilian designer-clothes. They’re expensive. One of them told me: ‘back home, the mayor’s daughter used to wear clothes from *Fórum*, and I couldn’t afford them. Here, since I can, I buy them’”. This statement reveals that these customers’ consumer aspirations still revolve around Brazilian value and consumption patterns. Brazilian stores offer the opportunity to purchase goods with great symbolic value for the migrants across the globe.

Brazilian migrants’ desire to continue consuming Brazilian products is beginning to lead to the appearance of a consumer market for Brazilian products overseas, which may imply in increased exports. But that is not all. The appearance of new consumer markets for Brazilian products creates an opening for these products to be consumed by “natives” and ethnic minorities as well.

The creation of the Chamber resulted from the transformation of a prior entity, the Brazilian Business Network (BBN – established in 1997), led by a small group of MA-resident Brazilians, among which were some small businesspersons, as well as people of other nationalities (Americans and Portuguese), who had an interest in supporting and promoting the Brazilian community in the area. BACCNE is at 1046 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts. This is the headquarters of an old NGO created by Portuguese immigrants, called Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (“MAPS”). The transformation of the BBN into the BACCNE took place by unanimous vote of all BBN members. It is a non-profit organization whose main goal is to facilitate the economic development of the Brazilian community in New England and to develop strategic actions between Brazil and enterprises in that area. The entity is incorporated in the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts. According to the entity's Business Plan, " BACCNE's mission is to facilitate economic development of the Brazilian community in New England and development of strategic relationships between Brazilian and American businesses in New England and Brazil. It intends to do so by fostering relationships among companies and business people who are located in New England and have ties to Brazil and by drawing on resources within the greater business and governmental communities. In order to accomplish these goals, BACCNE will develop activities, which are listed in Annex A, with a focus on the following core areas: understanding the nature of the Brazilian community and its economic and related needs; sponsoring seminars on topics relevant to the Brazilian community, such as financial information and skill development, awareness of available resources, and developing networks; identifying and providing resources and referrals for the Brazilian business community, such as business-to-business contacts, resources within the local community, state wide and the federal government (such as the Small Business Administration); hosting meetings among members of the Brazilian community to foster relationships and encourage participation in BACCNE's activities, including events to improve the visibility of the Brazilian community, showcase individuals, products and achievements and help business people create support networks; and linking American and Brazilian companies and individuals to improve mutual understanding, communication and business opportunities.

From the perspective of ethnic make-up, we point out the presence of two members from the Portuguese community and one from the American community. From the institutional viewpoint, we note the presence of a member of the Brazilian Consulate in Boston and of the Chairman of MAPS. After highlighting the role played by these two institutions, the president offered special thanks to the Brazilian Consulate in Boston: "personally and on behalf of the Board of the Brazilian American chamber of Commerce of New England, for the unrestricted and crucial support he offered, at the head of the Brazilian Consulate-General, for the process to proceed, leading to the important step we take today. In fact, his support allowed us to proceed with several important initiatives and obtain many victories, since September past. To illustrate this statement: the idea of establishing an agreement with MAPS arose from his initiative and, without this decision, we could not have possibly executed the partnership with the Fleet Bank. His work in the field of support to the Brazilian community, with the Consulate's limited, helped leverage our work as regards identifying opportunities and information for small businesspersons. The Consulate's preparation and distribution of the Small Businesspersons' Handbook was, in this sense, a historic landmark in the support to Brazilian micro-businesspersons in the area. To give you all an idea of how helpful the Handbook – available at the Consulate's Website – is, it has been used by other immigrant communities – like the Salvadoran – who are taking advantage of the Handbook's publicity and availability, something that will be very important for the work that the Chamber of Commerce will do. The ceremony ends with an invitation to the Consul to accept the position Honor Chairman

of the Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce of New England, as is the case in the other seven Chambers “where Brazilian Consul-Generals in different regions of the United States hold Honor Chairmanships”.

On May 13th, 2003, the Brazilian Consulate General in Boston sent the following message to the press: “The release of the Brazilian American Chamber of Commerce of New England (BACCNE) will provide the appropriate institutional framework for the contribution of Brazilian immigrants to the advance of local economies to be better guided and more recognized in the area”, said the Brazilian Consul-General to Boston, Maurício Cortes. (...) The “Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers” (MAPS), a non-profit social and health services association that serves the Portuguese-speaking community recently assisted the group in obtaining startup resources through Fleet Bank’s Technical Support Program. With these resources, the Chamber will soon hire a coordinator to help Brazilian small businesspersons to acquire and develop financial knowledge. (...) In addition, the Chamber’s goal is to attract resources to the Brazilian community to help firms achieve success by means of education, training, contacts, trade and technical support.

Conclusion

The results of the survey carried out in Somerville and Allston (*) indicated that religion was an important factor to explain the enterprising spirit of Brazilians – Evangelicals in particular – in Boston. We were operating on this assumption in the cases of Cambridge and East Boston, since there is, particularly in the latter, an active Catholic community. However, results in these to later locations indicate that, on the one hand, religious leaders and churches were not named as having provided any assistance or relevant support to businesspersons in East Boston and Cambridge. On the other hand, the association between an Evangelical customer base and businesses whose owners are Evangelicals themselves – which was encountered in the previous survey – was not found here.

The main problems faced by Brazilian businesspersons have to do with the lack of associative articulation among themselves and with the lack of startup capital, working capital, and credit. These, added to problems of a legal nature, cover most of the answers obtained. The establishment of the Chamber of Commerce was a tentative answer to the problem that counted with the Consulate’s decisive involvement. Indications are that the members of the BACCNE are sensitive to and interested in these issues, since, as can be seen from the entity’s Business Plan, the BACCNE proposes to offer input on the resources and information available on “financial and skill development, awareness of available resources, and developing networks” and to identify and provide resources “such as business-to-business contacts, resources within the local community, state wide and the federal government (such as the Small Business Administration)”.

Furthermore, the creation of this entity, should it be successful, may contribute to the increase of the volume and density of the social capital among Brazilians in Boston, but not in a manner limited to small businesspersons, as the entire community may benefit from the development of social and commercial networks. In order to accomplish this, we believe the Brazilian

Consulate General in Boston must maintain an active presence, as is the case in similar entities in other American cities and areas.

In a recent paper by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001), the authors draw attention to a point that has to do with the children of immigrants but which may, we believe, be transposed to the field of small businesses analyzed here. They state: “Our data suggest that children whose parents maintain the voice of authority and encourage their children to attain what we call “**bi-cultural competencies**” are in a better position to benefit from the opportunities available” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001:7).

Since these are acquired, or conquered, competencies, the idea can be extended beyond the generational issue. That is, these competencies may be even more relevant to entrepreneurs. Bi-cultural competencies mean, in this case, the ability to interconnect and “move” between the two countries, Brazil and the United States, and even between two cities/locations, setting up businesses both here and there. So far, the history of Brazilian exports has been unable to include small exporters or to address small businesses. We believe, however, that Brazilian migration, as discussed in an earlier work (*) is in and of itself a very diversified market for domestic goods and products, as we attempted to show in this research. The presence one and a half million Brazilian migrants over the planet may be turned into an advantage to promote products that boast our characteristics and particularities, products that embody our national traits, for whatever reason.

If Italian migration helps understand the success Italian cuisine has achieved, Brazilian migration may likewise contribute to disseminate our characteristics and cultural habits across the world and to collect sympathizers and adepts. Despite the lack of data available, I believe that the Brazilian record industry may be one of the beneficiaries of our migration. All one has to do is realize that the cities where internationally famous Brazilian singers have performed are also cities with significant numbers of Brazilian immigrants. This, however, is an issue for future research.

There is no indication that Brazilian migration may have come to an inflection point. The stabilized economy has not been a factor in containing migration flows, as the conditioning variables of this movement are structural in nature.

Although migration has not yet become the object of public policy *per se*, the Itamaraty’s consular assistance policy is being changed to adapt the services provided to “globalization”, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the rapid growth of Brazilian populations overseas. Some internal discussions in the Ministry of Foreign Relations point to the need of Brazilian Consulates, like those of other nations, to adopt a policy in support of small businesses, are it with measures to facilitate and provide guidance to exports, be it by organizing and supporting the establishment of business networks abroad. But this discussion is barely begun, and no concrete measures have been taken so far.

As part of this scenario, an increasingly large number of emigrants has been able to set up small business enterprises and offer services to the community. But few businesspersons in Brazil have realized the potential market our emigrants are

becoming. The Brazilian records industry is among those with greatest growth overseas. If our musicians are able to pack theaters and sell CDs in Rome, New York and Tokyo, this is largely due to the Brazilian citizens that live abroad. Other branches of our internal production might join this market, specially “typically Brazilian” products. Today, bagels are found in any coffee-shop in the U.S. They could be joined by our no-less-delicious cheese buns.

In sum, Brazilian exports could benefit from the opportunities created by the presence of a Brazilian population overseas. As noted by José Mauro Couto, the emigrant population can work as a kind of “bridge” between Brazilian exports and the foreign consumer market. To that end, the Itamaraty would have to play a more active role as mediator between the two.

Not only the Consulate, but also the churches, particularly Evangelical ones, have played an important role in the establishment and development of Small Brazilian-owned firms in Boston.

According to (BONACICH & MODEL, 1980) each religion stands for a system of social relations in which a peculiar economic shape develops. The crucial issue, therefore, is not to relate theological doctrine to the level of economic propensity, but to explain religious affiliation as a result of the social relationships that churches develop and foster. People are more likely to pursue social relationships than doctrines. This means that the people who go to church often stand a better chance of reinforcing their social ties expressed by religious affiliation itself.

As for Brazilian emigrants, both the Catholic and the Evangelical are perceived and appreciated by their members as institutions that offer a safe environment for reciprocity and solidarity relationships. In other words, Brazilians seek out churches because they want to socialize, because they lead to expanding one’s social capital, and because they feel safe about the social control mechanisms established therein as socialization mechanisms (Martes, 2000; Martes & RODRIGUES, 2003). We note that Evangelical business owners stand better chances (or better chances than their Catholic counterparts) of attracting fellow churchgoers. And more. Whereas pastors are interested and involved in the businesses developed by the members of their churches, priests and nuns stand aside from the process. Finally, Evangelicals create and *ethos* that is more propitious to enterprise and their pastors dedicate time and efforts to this end.

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