

The Maison du Brésil at the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris: a project towards national development and internationalism¹

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Abstract: This article analyzes the development and early years of the *Maison du Brésil* project at the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris*, founded in 1959. The study builds on the assumptions that the project, envisioned by Itamaraty since the 1920s, was only able to proceed due to national development policies of the 1950s from the Brazilian government; at the time, the country sought to strengthen cultural diplomatic relations with France and also encourage international diplomacy between universities. Amidst the authoritarian context arising from the civil-military coup of 1964, this plan faced obstacles. The article uses a wide range of primary and secondary sources from Brazilian and French archives.

Keywords: *Maison du Brésil*; academic diplomacy; cultural diplomacy.

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1. Introduction

In the early 1920s, France was the most attractive country in the world in terms of universities,² which renewed an idea from before the Great War: creating a university

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² One of the indications is the number of foreign students enrolled in some countries, according to historian Guillaume Tronchet: «In 1925, France ranked first. It never lost this position. With almost 15,000 foreigners enrolled in its universities in 1928 – a figure that peaked in 1931 with more than

town. In this article, I analyze the bill that led to the creation of *Maison du Brésil* at the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris* (CIUP) and its first years of operation. By performing a cross-analysis of the history of the *Cité* and the *Maison* (as they are known), I pinpoint the first attempts from scholars and Brazilian governments to create a house for Brazilian students in Paris in the 1920s. I assess why the bill advanced only in the 1950s, during the second phase in the history of the CIUP. To achieve this, I show how the bill was reintroduced to the Chamber of Deputies in 1950 and highlight the actions of major agents and mediators that culminated in the inauguration of the building in 1959. Later, I analyze the first years of operation of the *Maison* until the beginning of the military dictatorship, when the government breached statutes (including those of the CIUP) in order to monitor its residents and finally let go of its legal liabilities with the *Maison*.

This article results from extensive ongoing research based on primary and secondary sources in France and Brazil. It is part of the following projects: ANR – «A Global Youth in the Making: the 200,000 Residents of the Cité Internationale Universitaire in 20th-Century Paris» and CNPq/Faperj – «A Casa do Brasil na França: espaço transnacional de circulação sociocultural (1959-1979)». The documents and their respective archives will be listed when cited. Theoretically, this work is part of a study tradition that investigates international cultural relations (Frank, 2012) and sociocultural history (Charle, 2018). This sociocultural history is in line with an intellectual history that is no longer understood solely as a «history of ideas», although it states that the ideas that form national cultural identities circulate internationally (Thiesse, 1999). These ideas are implemented through networks; thus, understanding the agents/operators and their activities is of utmost importance.

2. The origins of the *Cité Universitaire* and the Brazilian project

Solving the student housing problem was not the only goal of creating a university town in Paris. It had previously been part of the French academic diplomacy strategy (and its imperialist project), which enjoyed fully autonomous international relations: the goal was to create a place that supported the «influence of French culture» and «not let the recruitment of its elite dry up». «intellectual» (Tronchet, 2014, vol II, p. 51). In 1921, after legislative and patronage processes, former Minister of Education André Honnorat was appointed president-founder of the *Cité Universitaire de Paris*. Embodying the dominant transnational power norms of the time, Honnorat employed in his discourse the notion of the International Mind³ from American philanthropic

17,000 foreigners –, France ranked far above universities in the USA (which had about 9,000 foreign students), Germany (between 4,000 and 6,500 foreign students if we consider the high estimates of student at the *Technische Hochschulen*), Great Britain (5,000 foreigners) or Austria (5,200 foreigners)» (Tronchet, 2014, vol II, p. 27).

³ This concept was developed in 1912 by Nicholas Butler, dean of Columbia University and closely related to the Republican Party at the time. It is worth reflecting on the interdependence of «civilized nations», i.e., a global conscience geared towards organizing multilateral relations supported by friendly and egalitarian cooperation in trade and the industry (especially the American one) in order to and advance civilization. Consequently, this could only be ensured by each nation's education.

networks he was a member of. Those networks helped build the first pavilions of the *Cité*. The first pavilion, *Fondation Emile e Louise Deutsch de la Meurthe* was erected in 1925. Donations for this building came from wealthy oil industry industrialist Henri Salomon Deutsch de la Meurthe. Subsequently, they erected *Maison du Canada*; the *Fondation Biermans-Lapôtre*, for Belgian students; and the *Fondation Argentine*, funded with state revenue and a donation from a major Argentinean industrialist with German heritage, Otto S. Bemberg.

From the end of the 18th century to the present day, cultural relations between Brazil and France (including scientific ones) were intense and highly developed. In fact, France was a «mirror» for all of Latin America, especially before the Great War. Two examples to illustrate this: a Pasteur Institute was founded in São Paulo in 1903 based on the actions and participation of benefactors of its French counterpart⁴ The numerous trips, conferences, and publications organized by philosopher, physician, Psychology specialist, teacher of the *Université de Paris*, and member of the *Académie Française de Médecine*, Georges Dumas⁵, resulted in the creation, of the French-Brazilian Institute of Higher Culture (*Instituto Franco-Brasileiro de Alta Cultura*) in Rio de Janeiro in 1923.

It is not by chance that, after administering several lectures at Sorbonne and the Salpêtrière university hospital, the physician, member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and Federal Deputy at the time, Antônio Austragésilo, was honored⁶ and visited the *Cité* in 1926. Upon his return to Brazil, he promptly introduced a bill to the Chamber of Deputies on July 13th of that year to create the House of the Brazilian Student in Paris.⁷ In 1928, Ambassador Luis Martins de Souza Dantas met André Honorat at the *Cité Universitaire* itself to ask him to set aside part of the land for Brazil on «Montsouris Hill». He was accompanied by Paulo Carneiro, at the time a Ph.D. candidate in Chemistry at Sorbonne who had a scholarship from the Brazilian government in Paris; later, Carneiro would become a researcher at the *Institut Pasteur* and a Permanent Delegate of Brazil to Unesco (Salim, 2009). On January 5th, 1929, decree 5612 was published in the Brazilian Federal Register and signed by President Washington Luís, thereby creating the House of the Brazilian Student in Paris to «facilitate the material life of patrician students in the French capital».⁸

⁴ <https://www.saude.sp.gov.br/instituto-pasteur/quem-somos/historico>

⁵ <https://arimep.org/index.php/2016/03/02/dumas-georges/> For more information regarding the work of Dumas in Brazil, see: Suppo, 2000; Dumont, 2013.

⁶ *Le Figaro*, 08/12/1926.

⁷ *Diário do Congresso Nacional*, July 13th, 1926. [Translator's note: This project was known in France as «Maison de l'Étudiant Brésilien» and in Brazil as «Casa do Estudante Brasileiro»; in order to avoid any confusion with the project that would later result in the creation of the *Maison* as it is known today, the name of this specific project has been translated into English.]

⁸ The decree is dated December 26th, 1928. At the current stage of the research, it was not possible to find documents that prove the decision or the reasons for not building the House at that time. However, there were negative reactions to the bill in the newspaper *O Imparcial* between 1926 and 1928. Newspaper *O Imparcial* was critical of the First Republic governments. It was founded by journalist José Eduardo de Macedo Soares, who was also a deputy (PRF, 1915-23) who sided with Aliança Liberal, the party that opposed incumbent Washington Luís. In parallel and due to the criticisms against it, the bill for the House of the Brazilian Student took off. The House was founded

It should be remembered that, at that time, Brazil did not officially have a university. The country had a late start on its university tradition, even compared to its South American neighbors. The first Brazilian universities were founded in the 1930s and 1940s⁹. The French influence was visible in the expeditions of professors who had a significant role during the creation of the National College of Philosophy of the University of Brazil (*Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia da Universidade do Brasil*)¹⁰ in Rio de Janeiro and the constitution of the University of São Paulo (*Universidade de São Paulo*, USP).¹¹ Regarding the context at the time, historian Juliette Dumont points out that Brazilian governments did not pay much attention to university exchange programs (Dumont, 2013, pp. 636-37). A new project came from civil society via the House of the Brazilian Student, spearheaded by Ana Amélia Queiroz Carneiro de Mendonça, who was close to President Getúlio Vargas.¹² She sent a project to the Division of Intellectual Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) to set up two or three «student embassies», showing how it was not only a university exchange program but also a cultural mission: «offering students from Brazilian universities the opportunity to be represented abroad in a truly meaningful way» (Dumont, 2013, p. 638). Thus, although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs already showed it considered the initiative beneficial for international cooperation, granted it served Brazilian diplomatic and economic ambitions (Dumont, 2013, p. 637), the bill in favor of the House of the Brazilian Student was halted.

3. The creation of *Maison du Brésil* in France

In the early 1950s, Getúlio Vargas (once a dictator) was democratically elected to return to the highest post in the Brazilian government. There are several economic and political interpretations regarding his government¹³. I side with those who consider that the period saw a long-term project centered around accelerating the industrialization and modernization of the primary sector – the so-called National-Developmentalism (Fonseca, 2010). The project foresaw the expansion and maturation of science in Brazil and considered it one of the elements of national development.¹⁴ That was when universities began to expand, and higher-education

in 1929 by Ana Amélia Queiroz Carneiro de Mendonça and later financed by the Vargas government during the 1930s.

⁹ Universidade de São Paulo, 1934. Universidade do Distrito Federal, 1935. Medical Schools and Isolated Colleges were also established late in the country and date back to the 19th century.

¹⁰ For more information about the French missions to Rio, see: Ferreira, 2013, p. 85-102.

¹¹ For more information on this topic, see: Suppo, 2000.

¹² Regarding the role of the House of the Brazilian Student in the 1930s and its conflicts with the National Student Union (*União Nacional dos Estudantes*, UNE), see the following Master's thesis: Müller, 2005.

¹³ For an overview of the various interpretations surrounding the Second Vargas government, see Fonseca, 2010.

¹⁴ «Thinking on national terms», considering science as a condition to enable the country's sovereignty and development was a common trait in the Brazilian scientific discourse after the Second World War. This is what Antônio Augusto Videira states, emphasizing that Brazilian physicists «publicly argued that, after 1945, science became the fundamental element any nation needed in

regulating institutes and agencies were established.¹⁵ The situation was favorable to reintroduce the bill for building a house for Brazilian students in France. In July 1950, Deputy Antônio Correia (UDN-PI) presented a bill (PL 590/1950) on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Health¹⁶ (*Ministério da Educação e Saúde*, MES) to allocate five million *cruzeiros* to build the house for Brazilian students in Paris. The bill's second article highlighted the goals of the development project: «The house of the Brazilian student shall be the residence for Brazilian students in the French capital and will also be a cultural center to study and spread Brazilian affairs». The emphasis on it not being merely a «dormitory» but effectively a place to strengthen the cultural diplomatic bonds between Brazil and France is reinforced in the third article: «It will necessarily have a library and conference rooms for Brazilian affairs and Brazilian art and culture exhibitions»¹⁷.

It is interesting to note that the justification for the project raises a concern regarding the changes that resulted from the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War: «the French-Brazilian cultural scientific exchange, which suffered a lot during the last war, is now as intense and invigorated as in the olden days, and the French government has been trying to encourage this exchange by granting scholarships to graduate students from Brazilian universities...»¹⁸ After the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, France lost much of its cultural prestige. However, French academic diplomacy still held influence over Brazilian universities, that from the 1950s onwards, were starting to be developed on a national level, largely due to public education policies. The dual nature of the project, both national and international, became evident: investing in the international arena to strengthen the nation's power and, at the same time, assert the nation's notoriety to make itself heard internationally (Tronchet, 2011, p. 289).

In fact, the phenomenon was not restricted to these two countries. As historian Daniel Ramos (2019, p. 24) recalls, in developed countries (especially on the European continent), the university system was expanded and reformulated over two decades of economic growth and social transformation. That happened even in countries with authoritarian regimes, such as Spain. Tatiane De Freitas Ermel

order to develop. These physicists stated that science was essential for Brazil to reach the level of development akin to nations such as the USA, France, pre-war Germany, England, and even the former USSR» (Roque and Jan-Mar, 2018, p. 27).

¹⁵ Some examples: Brazilian Center for Physical Research (*Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Físicas*, CBPF), 1949; National Campaign for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Campanha Nacional de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*, Capes), 1951; National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (*Conselho Nacional de Pesquisas*, CNPq), 1951; Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (*Instituto de Matemática Pura e Aplicada*, Impa), 1952; Advanced Institute of Brazilian Studies (*Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros*, Iseb), 1955 (derived from the Itatiaia group, 1952). 13 universities were established during that decade. See: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/sesu/arquivos/pdf/linhatempo-ifes.pdf> (accessed on June 23rd, 2020).

¹⁶ Since its foundation in the 1930s, the ministry has been responsible for both health and education policies. It was only dismembered by Law No. 1920, of July 25th, 1953, when it was renamed the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ministério da Educação e Cultura*, MEC). Therefore, both names can be found in this article.

¹⁷ Diário do Congresso Nacional, July 22nd, 1950. PL 598.

¹⁸ Diário do Congresso Nacional, July 21st, 1950. PL 598. p

and Jon Igelmo Zaldívar (2022, p. 3) show that «from the 1950s onwards, the *colegios mayores* positioned themselves as educational spaces that conveyed the educational modernization impulses permeating the Franco regime». Not by chance, the 1950s also marked a new phase in the history of the CIUP, including changes in international geopolitical dynamics. According to French historians Dzovinar Kévonian and Guillaume Tronchet (2022, pp. 22-26), the second wave of expansion of the *Cité*, with sixteen new residences, was carried out taking into account this «bipolar» logic (given that no house of Eastern European countries was built). Unlike the first wave, the new buildings were more balanced regarding private donations (from the philanthropic network established since the 1920s) and state donations, which is precisely the case of *Maison du Brésil*.

Brazilians were concerned with their position in the international dealings and considered the country was behind other nations in the project, given that «numerous European and American countries, including Argentina», had already built their pavilions for the «residence of their fellow students».¹⁹ In the statements of the rapporteur of the June 24th proceedings, Leite Neto (PSD-SE), the subservient nature of this exchange with France is evident²⁰

France's cultural influence on Brazil has been remarkable and beneficial for centuries, both in terms of literary and artistic progress in general, as well as in philosophy and science. We owe much to the immortal France, which, for its magnificent cultural progress, has spearheaded the intellectual field in the Latin world.²¹

The bill introduced by Correia was undoubtedly based on the work started by the «Commission for building the Brazilian pavilion in the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris*». This Commission was created in the Brazilian Institute for Education, Science, and Culture (*Instituto Brasileiro de Educação, Ciência e Cultura*, IBECC)²², which in turn was presided over by Ambassador João Neves Fontoura, thus linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Commission was chaired by Ana Amélia de Queiroz Carneiro de Mendonça, who years before had directed

¹⁹ Diário do Congresso Nacional, July 21st, 1950. PL 598. p.2

²⁰ Gisèle Sapiro (2013, p. 77) points out the issue of unequal forces between central and peripheral countries and illustrates this precisely by presenting the case of immigrating elite in the sociocultural formation and borrowing of educational models in the first half of the 20th century.

²¹ Diário do Congresso Nacional, July 24th, 1950. Report of PL 598.

²² According to the Capes Newsletter of April 1953 (pp. 9-10), the first president of the IBECC was Dr. João Neves da Fontoura, who shortly afterwards became Minister of State, transferring his position in the Commission to Mrs. D. Anna Amélia de Queiroz Carneiro de Mendonça. The other members were Prof. Mário Barata, secretary, Mrs. Branca Fialho, Councilor Jayme de Barros, Judge Saboya Lima, Mr. Louis La Saigne and Dr. Eduardo Pederneiras. The IBECC «as the National Commission of UNESCO in Brazil was created shortly after the end of the Second World War with the goal of acting in education, science and culture projects. The initiative was based on an international context that increasingly highlighted the role of science in a nation's development. Moreover, when the São Paulo Commission of the IBECC was created, the city was the stage for a debate around the role of science as a tool to develop the nation». For more information, see the following thesis: Abrantes (2008).

the House of the Brazilian Student and had tried to establish the first student houses outside the country. That is a major sign not only of Ana Amélia's close relationship with educational projects in the Vargas governments but why the name «House of the Brazilian Student» was chosen initially: for its connection to her previous project. That would have gone unnoticed if not for the debate in the National Congress's plenary, which raised the need for a substitute project, presented on November 20th of the same year, when the name was changed to «Brazilian Pavillion in the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris*».²³

The justifications for this new proposal paint France's cultural role as not only important for Brazil or Latin America but even state that the cultural products of Enlightenment were essential for other European countries, starting with Germany, supposedly exemplified by the words of Goethe, upon receiving the French version of Faust, translated by Gérard de Nerval [1827]: «I have never understood myself so well as by reading you». Examples from Italy and Portugal followed to support the importance of French culture. In December 1950, the project was approved by the Commission for Education and Culture of the Chamber of Deputies, with a small headline on the cover of the *Correio da Manhã* on the 21st of the same month. The proposal written by Deputy Beni de Carvalho (UDN-CE) earns 5 million *cruzeiros* to meet the purpose of the law²⁴.

After 1952, the work started by the IBEC continued inside the newly created National Campaign for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Campanha Nacional de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior, CAPES*)²⁵, whose general secretary was Anísio Teixeira. In Paris, an entourage was installed that year to monitor the negotiation and construction of the House. That entourage was managed by the then Chief of Staff of the Minister of MES, Péricles Madureira de Pinho.

In September 1952, Rodrigo M. Franco de Andrade, director of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Service (*Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, SPHAN*), sent an invitation²⁶ at the request of the Minister of Education, Ernesto Simões Filho, a politician from the state of Bahia, to renowned architect Lúcio Costa (who, alongside Oscar Niemeyer, would later design the capital Brasília). Costa was hired to plan the pavilion that would house 100 students. There were several technical visits to understand how the pavilions were built and how modern Brazilian architecture would contribute to the *Cité*. This reflection is present, as shown by Costa, in the opening text of the dossier on Brazil published by the magazine *L'Architecture de aujourd'hui* of 1952. The Brazilian perspective reinforced Corbus's view of architecture as a plastic creation, transcending strictly utilitarian or constructive aspects. According to Corbus, architecture was a

²³ Diário do Congresso Nacional, November 20th, 1950. In Substitution of Bill 598/1950. p.1

²⁴ *Correio da Manhã* cover of issue 17709. December 21st, 1950.

²⁵ «CAPES' goal is to promote a campaign to improve higher education in the country and carry out measures that ensure enough technicians, scientists, and humanists to meet the needs of public and private undertakings geared towards the economic and cultural development of Brazil». In: CAPES. Newsletter 1, December 1952. p. 2.

²⁶ Arquivo Instituto Tom Jobim, acervo Casa de Lucio Costa, VI.A.02-02206L.

«construction conceived with a particular plastic intention and at a specific time, medium, technique, and program» (Puppi, 2008, p. 165).

Therefore, this would be something induced and desired, a sign of our greater skills in the artistic and development, as stated by Elsie Lessa in her column *Globe-trotter* in the newspaper *O Globo*²⁷ «Not to mention the opportunity to leave, in stone, concrete, marble glass, stable materials, a monument in the lands of France, which would be a sample of our strong, authentic, thriving architecture, some of the best things our people have been doing, spread far and beyond the name of our land [...]». It is not a coincidence that, from its inception, the *Maison* was conceived as a heritage site, a historical monument, as recognized by the city of Paris in 1985.²⁸

In January 1953, Madureira de Pinho wrote a long letter to the Minister of Education with his first impressions and challenges. He began by narrating that «a real calamity for the Brazilian Embassy in Paris is the helplessness of the Brazilian student in the French capital»²⁹ and how much trouble it caused. On the other hand, several Brazilians managed to find shelter in the houses of other countries, like Portugal, Spain, and Argentina, a statement to «the courtesy of our friends abroad» which, according to Péricles, was not beneficial for Brazil in university and academic circles. For this reason, Brazilian diplomats there, starting with the ambassador, emphasized that the «plan of building the *Maison du Brésil* was beyond a cultural project; it was now connected to the prestige of the country abroad».³⁰

Although they acknowledged the real problem of the lack of shelter for Brazilians in France, their discussions and arguments highlighted the issue of prestige and the broadening of the cultural relations between France and Brazil. Up to that point, the discussions were less concerned with the social, cultural, and economic importance of having a residence for Brazilian students. As the architect Juliana Costa Motta (2017, p. 31) reminds us, these residences contribute to the process of professional, cultural, social, and humanitarian development of students who, via a shared experience in the context of inhabiting a quality housing, experience the exchange of life experiences and contact with people with common academic goals. More than that, as stated by Marcos Hinterholz (2018, p. 142), student housing goes beyond the walls and the direct experience of being there; it leaves strong marks on its inhabitants. During these moments of study and research, students build their collaboration networks and find their place in the work landscape, especially those seeking a career in university. In this sense, the experience of an internship abroad and the experience of living in an international university residence undoubtedly contribute to the countries' cultural diplomatic relations and, above all, their academic diplomacy.

Back to the previous topic, several meetings took place between Madureira de Pinho, Paulo Carneiro, the dean of *Université de Paris*, and the president of the *Cité*. These included a lengthy discussion regarding the profile of the director of the *Maison*, which might not be a manager, and could be French or of the nationality of

²⁷ From July 2nd, 1954.

²⁸ <https://www.ciup.fr/presentation-de-la-maison-du-bresil/>

²⁹ Archives Nationales. AN Archives 20090014/1-343/22.

³⁰ Archives Nationales. AN Archives 20090014/1-343/22.

the house, although all had to follow the CIUP norms. Thus, in his referrals, the MES representative sent his opinion to the minister: «the *Maison du Brésil* shall always be occupied by someone with a university degree who is responsible for examining and monitoring the work of the students. Furthermore: they shall use the *Maison*'s facilities, especially the conference room, to be always in contact with renowned Brazilian people in Paris».³¹

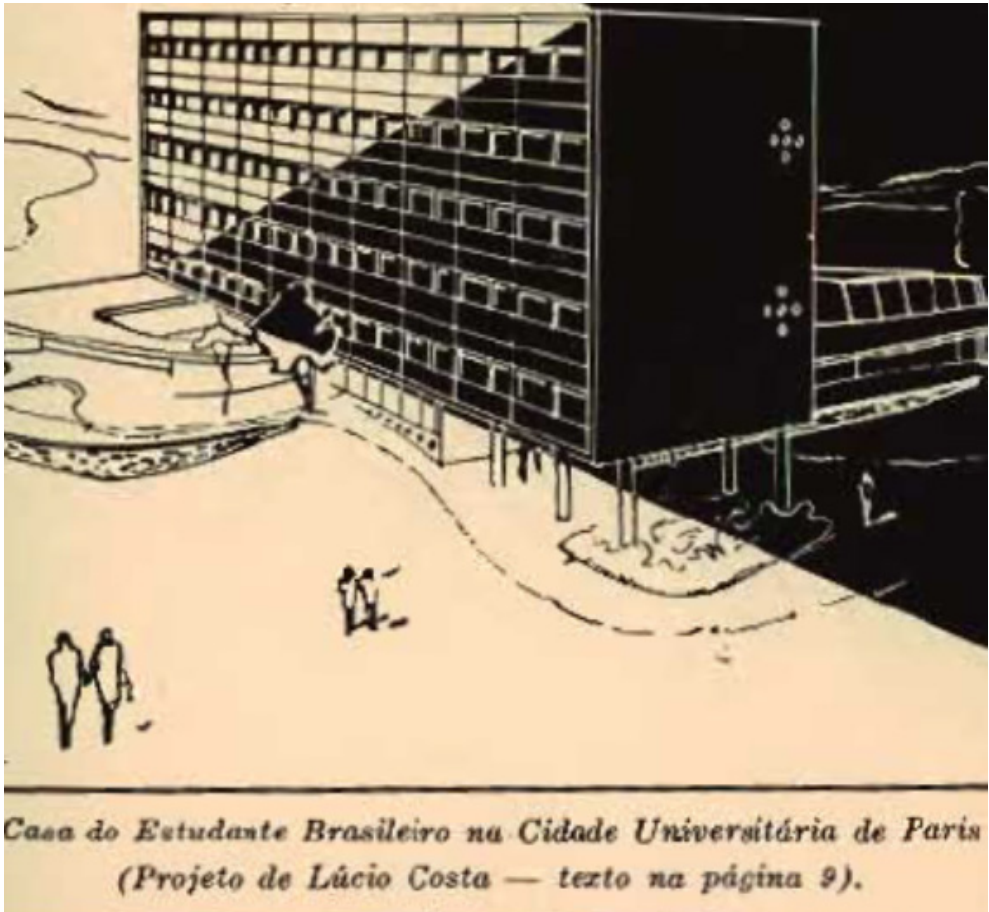
In February 1953, land negotiations and the first sketches by Lucio Costa were ready. In fact, the architect sent the preliminary project on January 15th alongside a long letter with sketches and other explanations, including the following:

I hereby send you, to be forwarded to our minister, the draft elaborated in Montana after the last UNESCO meeting when I made a commitment to Dr. Péricles to do whatever is within my reach to get things underway before I leave because, as he told me, one should not miss the opportunity, as he did so often, of finally building the house of the Brazilian student, or the *Maison du Brésil*, in Paris, because the pavilion seems not only unfriendly but also inappropriate. And I accidentally got confirmation of this need. At the metro station, on my way to the Dean's Office, I noticed two very modest-looking young women wearing inappropriate clothes for the weather, speaking our Portuguese. I asked if they lived there; they said there was no room, so they lived in a «hotel» – who knows how – and left in the cold afternoon towards the dreadful international building without knowing that I carried with me what might put their house at risk. They were from Minas Gerais.³²

³¹ Archives Nationales. AN Archives 20090014/1-343/22.

³² Initial research on this archive was carried out at the beginning of 2019, when it was digitally available at the Tom Jobim Institute. Upon resuming the research in 2022, I discovered that Lúcio Costa's family donated the archive to a Portuguese institution (see: <https://opartisan.org/contracultura/lucio-costa-fora-de-casa-notas-sobre-o-exilio-de-seu-acervo/>, accessed on September 9th, 2022). Thus, some details of the document, including that citation, were taken from Motta's master's thesis, 2017, pp. 48-49).

Project conceived by Lúcio Costa (1953). Source: Capes Newsletter 3, Feb. 1953.



The works were expected to begin shortly, as Minister of Education Simões Filho pointed out in a letter to Itamaraty. Regarding the budget estimate from the *Cité Universitaire de Paris* for building the house, Simões states CAPES allocated 10 million *crúzeiros*, so the 5 million *crúzeiros* that were left would be obtained via special credit. Simões also asked the Ministry to issue credentials to the ambassador in Paris so he could sign the preliminary contracts and authorize architect Lúcio Costa to prepare the project and monitor the construction, which could start within the next few months.³³ On March 13th, 1953, a telegram from Itamaraty³⁴ to the MES confirmed the Brazilian architect was authorized to develop and monitor the project.

³³ Itamaraty Historical Archive. Ministry of Education and Culture Archives received (1953) 94 47.

³⁴ Itamaraty Historical Archive. Ministry of Education and Culture Archives issued (1953-54) 95 13.

The project was held of such high importance for the development of Brazilian universities and the cultural relations between Brazil and France that one of the drawings by Costa became the cover of the CAPES Newsletter of February 1953. That issue also included an editorial that highlighted the

development period the country was in and how the government's duties expanded considerably, in the sense of guiding, supplying, and harmonizing this growth that, in a certain way, was spontaneous, but also appeared to be disproportionate, if not disordered. In order to live up to this progress, the nation has effectively doubled its educational structure and reinforced it even further by importing technicians and specialists while also having Brazilian professionals develop their skills abroad.³⁵

The article is titled «*Casa do estudante brasileiro na cidade universitária de Paris*» (House of the Brazilian student in the *Cité Universitaire de Paris*) and reinforces the idea that the project «was an old aspiration of young people in our country who every year seek the French capital for cultural improvement».³⁶ It also repeats the words found in the Madureira de Pinho's letter to the Minister of the MES from January 1953, suggesting that he authored the article, although there is no signature.

Despite Lúcio Costa's efforts to take control of the project's construction, the one responsible would have to be in Paris. According to Motta (2018, p. 51), following Madureira de Pinho's suggestion, Lúcio Costa decided to deliver his preliminary project to Le Corbusier's office based on his belief that the project should be in the hands of those who renewed Brazilian architecture. As described by the architect in a letter addressed to Rodrigo M.F. Andrade:

It is Dr. Péricles' opinion, which I agree with, that the only viable way to perform the construction in all its details, including structure and installations, is for it to be done right there, alongside close monitoring so that the project is followed correctly during the construction. Upon receiving his authorization to make a decision, I already made an initial agreement with Mr. Wogenscky from the Le Corbusier atelier, as it seems fair to me that the undertaking is to be handled by the old atelier at 35 Rue de Sèvres, where the ideas that gave new life to contemporary Brazilian architecture were born. I have impeccable recommendations regarding the character and correctness of Mr. Wogenscky, a French for many generations but of Polish descent.³⁷

That was how the office of the famous French architect Le Corbusier signed the contract with the Brazilian government to build the house; construction began the following year. There would be debates surrounding the authorship of the building: if it were Costa and Corbusier or only Corbusier, because the French architect made

³⁵ Capes Newsletter, Feb. 1953, p. 1

³⁶ Capes Newsletter, 1953, p. 9.

³⁷ Tom Jobim Institute. Lucio Costa Archives – VI.A.03-01754.1-16 L, 1953.

significant changes to Costa's initial plans.³⁸ Bureaucratic proceedings advanced quickly, and in April 1954, the local Embassy dispatched the deed for the construction of the Brazilian pavilion in the *Cité Universitaire de Paris*³⁹. Negotiations with the architect's office advanced rapidly because Péricles wrote to Anísio Teixeira in May, reporting on the meeting with Corbusier. The conversation included, among other topics, the budget (requested in December) for developing Lúcio Costa's project. He also informed me that payment check No. 0762.302 was sent before the contract was signed formally. Thus, «having signed the deed with Sorbonne, we contacted Corbusier's office to advance the next signature in the contract. Only now, after the legal status of the land has been dealt with, can we enter the final phase of approval before the Prefecture of Paris». He also informed us that «Le Corbusier's office finished the price assessment that will be submitted to the contractors once the project receives final approval from the Prefecture of Paris. All our efforts are now focused on finalizing the formalities surrounding the land and the project so the works can start in July».⁴⁰

On June 11th, 1954, Caio de Mello Franco signed the donation of the building to the *Université de Paris*, responsible for the *Cité Universitaire*; the dean, Jean Sarrailh, was also present and signed the document. Some of the duties stated therein are important to understand the regulations that were to guide the operation of the *Maison*: registered as «*Université de Paris, Maison du Brésil*», it would be managed by the *Université de Paris*⁴¹ and a *Conseil d'Administration* of up to ten members⁴². The person in charge of managing the *Maison* would be appointed by the dean of the Paris Academy, as recommended by its Managing Council⁴³.

Madureira de Pinho and Paulo Carneiro were on the Council that would start in September, as reported by Pinho himself in a letter to Anísio Teixeira, where another detail jumps out. Faced with his apprehension surrounding the pace of the project under new manager Minister Edgar Santos, Pinho recalled that «Edgar represents a policy from Bahia, exactly the opposite of what he represented there». He also added that the House will always be «one of Simões' endeavors» and asked if this would be a problem given the budget of 10 million *contos*⁴⁴. Researcher Fernando Gouvêa (2009) argues that this sequence of ministers from Bahia enabled Anísio

³⁸ There are several documents and articles and dissertations on this topics, which will not be explored further in this article. The works of Puppi (2008) and Motta (2018) were used as references.

³⁹ Itamaraty Historical Archive. Ministry of Education and Culture Archives issued (1953-54) 95 1 3 (3).

⁴⁰ CPDOC file. Anísio Teixeira Archives – AT c 1954.07.02.

⁴¹ According to the Convention established for the national foundation on July 25th, 1925.

⁴² 1) the ambassador of Brazil in Paris, or his representative; 2) the dean of the Paris Academy; 3) the president of the CIUP; 4) the delegate general of the *Cité*; 5) four Brazilian people appointed by the ambassador to the dean of the Paris academy and 6) two French people appointed by the CIUP Managing Council to the dean of the Paris Academy.

⁴³ Brazilian Embassy Archives (AEB), no. 606/542.93 (85).

⁴⁴ CPDOC, Anísio Teixeira Archives – AT c 1949.00.00 (n°3). Edgar Rego Santos was appointed head of MEC after Antônio Balbino de Carvalho Filho (who left to run for governor of his state) and occupied that position for just two months during a time marked by complex politics that culminated in the suicide of Getúlio Vargas in 1954. Santos was also from Bahia.

to stay at Capes and develop his projects despite the political turmoil of the period, which culminated in the suicide of President Getúlio Vargas in August 1954. Amidst this, the president of the *Cité* officially questioned Pinho to understand the Brazilian situation and stressed that although «the latest events» have changed the political and administrative frameworks, they «did not change our work projects». However, Madureira de Pinho was skeptical, as shown in the letter sent to Teixeira on September 23th, 1954, after funding was suspended and they were waiting for approval from the Prefecture of Paris to build the construction. With that unstable situation and the difficulty of transferring funds, he stated: «reality can change everything».⁴⁵ However, Teixeira recommended following the bureaucratic procedure, given that the new minister was committed to carrying out the project.⁴⁶

In November of that year, Ambassador Caio de Mello Franco, alongside Paulo Carneiro and Péricles Madureira, signed the contract for building the *Maison du Brésil* during a meeting at the Rectory of the *Université de Paris*. In a note to Itamaraty and MEC, the ambassador wrote that the dean expressed France's deep gratitude for the Brazilian government's gesture and stated the *Université de Paris* planned to build a house for French students in Rio de Janeiro in the future. He also informed that he delivered a six million francs check to the reserve fund for building the *Maison du Brésil*.⁴⁷

In early 1959, the *Maison du Brésil* Foundation started operating. In February of the same year, Péricles Madureira de Pinho was appointed interim director and supervised the entire process, from design to construction. The first meeting of the Managing Council was held on the eve of the inauguration of the *Maison* on July 18th. During that meeting, the internal norms of the *Maison* were approved; years later, they would be considered «drastic measures»⁴⁸:

- the *Maison* would close at 1:30 AM (residents arriving after would have to present their resident card to the employee on duty, who would later inform the director);
- people were not allowed to stay in their rooms in the morning after 9 AM so that the staff would be able to clean them;
- from 5 PM onwards, the elevator could only be used by women to access the 4th and 5th floors (men and couples living on the floors below had to use the stairs);
- no posters would be allowed in the building without the director's permission, and visitors could only have access to the hall of the building, until 11 PM, among other rules⁴⁹

⁴⁵ CPDOC, Anísio Teixeira Archives – AT c 1949.00.00 (nº5).

⁴⁶ CPDOC, Anísio Teixeira Archives – AT c 1949.00.00 (nº6).

⁴⁷ Itamaraty Historical Archive. Paris Telegrams Archives received (1954-55) 39 3 8. In the current stage of the research, it was not possible to analyze the documents directly related to the construction of the building, so the focus of the article moves to the foundation of the *Maison*. The next section features the narrative in Müller, 2018 and 2022, as well as new information.

⁴⁸ Brazilian Embassy Archives (AEB), no. 606/542.93 (85).

⁴⁹ Idem.

After settling on the norms, which were consistent with those of the *Cité*, the inauguration ceremony of the *Maison* was held on June 24th, 1959, in the presence of the Brazilian Minister of Education Clóvis Salgado and his French counterpart, André Bouloche. Other authorities from both countries were also present, including the French Minister of Culture, André Malraux, and the Brazilian First Lady, Sara Kubitschek (representing President Juscelino Kubitschek)⁵⁰, as a sign of its importance for French-Brazilian relations.

Photo of the building built by Le Corbusier, 1959. Source: Maison du Brésil website



On August 18th of that year, the official register of the Union included decree 46.683, signed by President Juscelino Kubitschek and the Minister of Education and Culture, about the «*Maison du Brésil* in the *Cité Universitaire de Paris*». Right in the first article, the *Maison* was described as part of an agreement with the *Université de Paris* [the donation mentioned above], in a clear connection to MEC; the second article differed from the content signed in the donation agreement since it stated that the *Maison* were to be directed «by a Managing Council chaired by the Brazilian ambassador in Paris and by a director appointed by the Brazilian ambassador in Paris, based on a recommendation by the Minister of Education and Culture».

That same decree discussed candidate selection and the maintenance of the *Maison*: the agency of the Ministry of Education, CAPES, would be responsible for

⁵⁰ Idem.

«selecting the Brazilian candidates that would reside there» and the director of the *Maison* would admit them. The fourth article also stated that MEC would include «the resources needed to operate and maintain the House» in the annual union budget. According to the donation agreement signed in 1954, MEC subsidized the *Maison* and organized the candidates; Itamaraty presided over the Council, and the *Cité* had the final say. Later, based on a decree from 1954, the ambassador would preside over the Council. That seemingly minor detail would be relevant years later, when Brazilian leaders tried to impose regulations that were not in line with the central management of the *Cité Universitaire*.

The detailed description of the laws and regulations of the *Maison* is important to understand the events that took place in 1968 and their consequences while also shedding light on how the main actors, including the *Cité* and the foundation, the Brazilian Embassy, and the military that held power over Brazil after the coup in 1964, would later use these rules to benefit their perspectives and justify their actions.

4. The early years of the *Maison*

In its first years of existence, the *Maison* played an important role in representing Brazil in Paris: «it thrived in its first years: all the authorities and national artists who traveled through Paris visited it, and that was how the *Maison* welcomed President Juscelino Kubitschek and held concerts by Vinícius de Moraes» (Salim, 2009). Several problems brewed inside, even within the building itself, given that some installations and furniture were yet to be completed at the time of inauguration. Prices rose more than expected, resulting in payment issues and making it difficult for MEC to transfer the amounts planned for the maintenance of the *Maison*.

At the Managing Council on February 2nd, 1960⁵¹, the first after the inauguration, Director Célia Neves Lazzarotto reported disciplinary problems with residents due to their «heterogeneous» nature. Thus, she proposed that the *Maison* should welcome postgraduate students (except for doctors and renowned artists) «whose maturity would make maintaining discipline easier». Most councilors found the proposal too radical and decided to approve a new rule to admit residents: all were to have a higher education diploma and a solid study plan. The Council also confirmed that the director did not have the autonomy to consider requests that CAPES did not send, whether from scholarship holders or not. Only after analyzing the dossiers would the director be able to apply the criteria established by the CIUP and make a decision; if necessary, the *Maison's* Managing Council could also be consulted.

In its first four years, the *Maison* had four directors⁵². In July 1963, a new director took office: Professor of History Luis Lisanti Filho, from the University of São Paulo, who had been a student of Fernand Braudel and was at the time a researcher in the VI section of the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*. French academic diplomacy came into play. French academic diplomacy was not only a project of cultural

⁵¹ Brazilian Embassy Archives (AEB), minutes of the Managing Council meeting at Maison du Brésil at the *Cité Universitaire de Paris* from February 2nd, 1960.

⁵² Professors Péricles Madureira de Pinho, Célia Neves Lazzarotto, Leônidas Sobrinho Porto, and Américo Jacobina Lacombe.

imperialism (Charle, 1994), driven by the competition with German universities for dominance over the international university market; it was also a tool to enable academic ambitions and strategies.

On April 1st, 1964, a *coup d'état* organized by civilians and the military overthrew President João Goulart (1961-1964) and started a military dictatorship that lasted 21 years. In the backdrop of the Cold War and due to the supposed «danger» imposed by the Cuban Revolution (1959), anti-communism, which had a long tradition in Brazil since the 1920s, grew stronger and was used as a reason (alongside corruption) to overthrow the government. That became one of the main focuses for the military: to neutralize and exterminate so-called communist opponents or those linked to «leftist» and «subversive» ideas. Historian Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta (2014, p. 23) stated that after unions and rural workers' organizations, universities were the most common targets of repressive actions. Estimates show that twenty and thirty thousand people were arrested in the first days after the coup, including several university professors and many students. Universities were invaded, deans were dismissed, professors were fired and retired, and many administrative investigations took place.

After the new government was installed, there were radical changes in the staff and discourse of the new Minister of Education, former dean of the Federal University of Paraná, Flávio Suplicy de Lacerda. His new goal was clear: to «clean up» MEC in order to «cleansing the institutions responsible for youth education of communism» (Motta, 2014, p. 33).

On June 8th, 1964, the director of the *Maison* received a message from the Minister of Education appointing a professor of the Federal University of Ceará, Francisco Martins, as the new director of the *Maison*. Luís Lisanti did not seem pleased by these news, so he sought support to keep his position. The French side was also frustrated by the new nomination. Braudel intervened on behalf of his former student and even wrote to Castelo Branco, the new president of Brazil, asking him to extend Lisanti's term: «I make this plea with as much as confidence as the pleasure I had of meeting you in person in 1947 when I administered various lectures at the [Military School of] Praia Vermelha».⁵³

Robert Garric, Deputy General of the *Cité*, sought out the counselor of the Brazilian Embassy, Raul de Vicenzi, to learn more about Lisanti's dismissal and to ask for the professor to keep his position as director of the *Maison*, given the excellence of his work and the turmoil of the first years of the *Maison* and its five directors⁵⁴. If the «visit» was not enough, Garric also prepared a solid document for the Embassy. In it, the *délégué* of the *Cité* reminded the Brazilian authorities of some important points of the agreement concerning the management of the *Maison*, notably that only the dean of the *Université de Paris* (and president of the CIUP) could appoint the directors of the Houses since they were assets of the *Université* itself. He stated that it was under these circumstances that Lisanti was appointed dean, including a recommendation by the Managing Council of the *Maison*, and that it was not customary to dismiss a director who had not resigned of his own volition.

⁵³ Archive Braudel, Correspondance Braudel MS 8510 (72), Dossier LISANTI Filho Luis. Lettre 30, 19 mai 1964, de Fernand Braudel à Castelo Branco, Président du Brésil à propos de Lisanti.

⁵⁴ Brazilian Embassy Archives (AEB), 542.93 (85) of June 15th, 1964.

Under these conditions, it would be up to the Council to submit new names for the dean's approval. He also included a request: «the president of the CIUP would be honored to personally deal with all the problems that managing the *Maison du Brésil* could cause with the ambassador»⁵⁵.

Garric's document left no doubt about the power of command of the *Cité* over the *Maison*. Itamaraty was in charge of forwarding the document to MEC, which in turn was forced to dismiss the new director and keep Luis Lisanti as the director of the *Maison du Brésil*. The leaders of the Ministry understood that, despite providing the funds and choosing the residents, the *Maison* was not under the control of the Ministry nor the Brazilian government.

Lisanti kept his position as Director of the *Maison* until the end of the occupations that resulted from the turmoils of May 1968. In the meantime, Capes itself and Itamaraty were distrustful of the *Maison*, mainly due to the increasing protests against the Brazilian government. In view of this, surveillance agencies gathered more information about the *Maison* and the residents they considered «subversive»⁵⁶. That culminated in the occupation of the *Maison*. May 1968 can be considered an *événement porteur*, a groundbreaking event, given how it showed new horizons and possibilities for student movements (Müller, 2021, p. 5) worldwide. If, on the one hand, it points towards a new agenda for the ME, on the other hand, these are the final moments of the Brazilian dictatorial regime and the influence of the Brazilian government over the *Maison*. In 1971, After a few years of negotiations, the legal status of *Maison du Brésil* changed, and it was renamed *Maison Franco-Brésilienne*. The *Maison* now has French directors and only one Brazilian member in its Managing Council. Capes was kept in charge of selecting residents. Despite their diminished involvement, surveillance by the military lasted the entire decade.

5. Final notes

Born in the 1920s, building a house for Brazilian students in France became a reality amidst the implementation of a long-term policy centered around the country's development. The various intellectuals who played major roles beyond the governmental sphere were unanimous regarding the need to develop Brazilian higher education and its research and technology framework, focused on the independence and sovereignty of the country. As such, it was clear that academic exchanges and the search for knowledge abroad were fundamental in this process. Furthermore, that was the context of much of the West after the Second World War and, above all, France, which had lost much of its cultural and intellectual prestige. This environment was favorable to the project of building the *Maison du Brésil*, which was considered a way of expanding cultural diplomatic relations between Brazil and France. France also considered that beneficial, since French academic diplomacy was seeking to occupy new spaces and expand the *Cité*, entering a new phase with

⁵⁵ National Archive, BR_DFANBSB_AAJ_IPM_0236_d. Lettre de Robert Garric au Chargé des Affaires de l'AMBASSADE du BRESIL, the 17 juin 1964. p.33 to 35, translated by the author.

⁵⁶ For an in-depth look at this period and the occupation of the *Maison*, see Müller, 2018 and 2022.

a more direct relationship with governments compared to the philanthropy model of the 1920s. *Maison du Brésil* was born out of this national development project, which, like academic diplomacy, can also be considered an internationalist project given the *Cité Universitaire's* goal.

The challenge for the tumultuous years of the 1950s was building a house for Brazilian students to showcase Brazilian culture and value the in-vogue modern Brazilian architecture, which dialogued with and derived from modern French architecture. With the inauguration of the House in 1959, Brazil conquered a seat in the hall of nations that were part of the transnational academic and cultural knowledge exchange enabled by the *Cité*. And the *Maison*, in its initial years, fulfilled that role.

However, the civil-military coup changed this situation. The Brazilian political reality contrasted with the integrative ambition of the project of a *Maison* inside the *Cité*, intended to teach the future ruling elites of each nation to know and respect each other to ensure world peace (Kévonian and Tronchet, 2013, p. 21). The goal of creating a transnational network, which was at the origin of the project developed by the state in the 1950s, permeated these principles and signaled Brazil's willingness to dialog and be a player in the field of world science. Since 1964, the militaristic logic of the «internal enemy», propagated by the Brazilian National Security Doctrine, inspired by the French experience in Algeria, contrasted enormously with the aforementioned principles and free circulation of ideas that prevailed in the *Cité*, especially from 1968 onwards. For the military, maintaining a student building in French lands (governed by French laws that the Brazilian government could not control) that housed students and researchers who represented what they considered the «red peril» was seen as «negative propaganda». In this case, the authoritarian facet spoke louder and favored their conservative modernization project⁵⁷. Thus the somewhat logical outcome: the negation of internationalism.

6. Archives

Archives Nationales

Archives Braudel – Institut de France

Arquivo da Embaixada do Brasil em Paris

Arquivo Digital da CAPES

Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty – Rio de Janeiro

Arquivo do Instituto Tom Jobim

Arquivo Nacional

CPDOC/FGV

Diários do Congresso Nacional

⁵⁷ For a rich discussion on this, see Motta, 2014.

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