

The Peronist festival: pathways and appropriations between photography, ephemeral architecture and political power

Abstract

The aim of this paper is analyzing some of the scenarios, photos, and posters used by the Peronist administration and explain their incidence in wine festivals and their imaginary construction after World War II. This proposal examines the relation between photography and ephemeral architecture mediated by political power, as a part of the strategies developed by the Peronist propaganda apparatus to feed the imaginary surrounding the 'New Argentina.' At this particular historical moment, the graphic and photographic records taken into account are a gateway to analyze the ephemeral phenomena that cannot be resumed otherwise. The methodological strategy used is qualitative and exploratory, and its design has a flexible nature. Although these testimonies, reflected in the sources described, do not give us back the possibility of being in direct contact to these experiences, they do allow us to access the set of desires, tensions, frustrations, expectations, debates, the achievements and failures, through which the scenic architecture projects were formulated and developed.

Keywords: Photographic Archives; Ephemeral Architecture; Harvest Festival; Power Relationships; Peronism.

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A festa peronista: caminhos e apropriações entre fotografia, arquitetura efêmera e poder político

Resumo

O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar alguns dos cenários, das fotografias e dos cartazes utilizados pelo governo peronista e explicar sua incidência nas festas da uva e sua construção imaginária após a Segunda Guerra Mundial. Esta proposta analisa a relação entre a fotografia e a arquitetura efêmera mediada pelo poder político, como parte das estratégias desenvolvidas pelo aparato de propaganda peronista para alimentar o imaginário acerca da “Nova Argentina”. Nesse momento histórico específico, os registros gráficos e fotográficos considerados são uma porta de entrada para a análise dos fenômenos efêmeros que não podem ser recuperados de outra forma. A estratégia metodológica utilizada é qualitativa e exploratória, com desenho de natureza flexível. Embora esses testemunhos, refletidos nas fontes descritas, não tragam de volta a possibilidade de estar em contato direto com essas experiências, proporcionam acesso ao conjunto de desejos, tensões, frustrações, expectativas, debates, os sucessos e os fracassos, por meio do qual os projetos de arquitetura cênica e propaganda política foram formulados e desenvolvidos.

Palavras-chave: Arquivos Fotográficos; Arquitetura Efêmera; Festa da Vendimia; Relações de Poder; Peronismo.

La fiesta peronista: recorridos y apropiaciones entre fotografía, arquitectura efímera y poder político

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar la relación entre algunos de los escenarios, fotografías y afiches utilizados como parte de las estrategias de propaganda desarrolladas por el aparato de administración peronista y explicar su incidencia en la Fiesta de la Vendimia y su construcción imaginaria en torno de la “nueva Argentina” después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. En este momento histórico particular, los registros gráficos y fotográficos considerados son una puerta de entrada para el análisis de los fenómenos efímeros que no pueden ser recuperados de otro modo. La estrategia metodológica utilizada es cualitativa y de tipo exploratorio, con un diseño de carácter flexible. Si bien estos testimonios, reflejados en las fuentes descritas, no nos devuelven la posibilidad de estar en contacto directo con esas experiencias, sino que nos permiten acceder al conjunto de deseos, tensiones, frustraciones, expectativas, debates, los éxitos y los fracasos mediante los cuales se formularon y desarrollaron los proyectos de arquitectura escénica y propaganda política.

Palabras clave: Archivos fotográficos; Arquitectura Efímera; Fiesta de la Vendimia; Relaciones de Poder; Peronismo.

Archives of power, power of archives

Usually, historians have preferred to reconstruct the past on the basis of texts and written documents, political, economic, social, and statistical data. They have also used, in some cases, oral testimonies. But how could we tell the history of fascism, Stalinism or -specifically of Peronism- without knowing the images used by their propaganda apparatus?

So, it is a huge challenge to think through the place of image in the scientific literature in the social sciences and analyze its use as a privileged tool of knowledge; and it is particularly important to address this challenge in Latin American contexts. Herein, we are interested in tracing its forms and languages and recognizing the theoretical and methodological attitudes on which their uses are based. We also aim to analyze the relation between image and message as a means of expression and preservation, dissemination and use of personal, social, and political memoirs.

All of us agree that both memory and history have their roots in archives. Moreover, we may also claim that these roots are observed in images. Without these testimonies, memory would be incomplete, long-gone events ignored, pride of a common past dissipated. The records taken into account in this paper are intended to compensate these imbalances and, to do this, we regard photography as a means and appropriate and accurate instrument for such a resumption, because we believe this is particularly relevant in the contemporary world.

In recent years, the concept of 'archive' has undergone a resurgence -beyond its popular connotation associated with dark and dusty basements or wet and yellowed papers- mainly in cultural studies. Cultural theorists, especially Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, see the archive as a metaphorical construct that nest perspectives on human knowledge, memory, power relations, and the pursuit of justice (Schwartz and Cook 2002).

Thus, archives take the task of privileging or marginalizing different ways of seeing -regarding the latter concept as a knowledge way. They can become a hegemonic instrument or a tool of resistance. In both cases, they reflect and establish different power relations. According to Schwartz and Cook's view, they are the foundation and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, grounding the political accounts, reports that provide cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies. So, archives are powerful instruments to control what the future is going to know about the past. Consequently, we must be prepared to meet the challenges posed by the contemporary world and preserve their existence and use.

Addressing the repertoire of images, photos, posters, and scenarios visited through this proposal, which we name as *the Peronist festival*, encouraged us to observe the exercise of power by the various actors involved in the design of what was

symbolically represented as ‘a new country.’ A political project developed by means of an overwhelming dynamics between 1943 and the abrupt end of the second constitutional term of Juan Domingo Perón, in 1955.

To fully grasp the relation archive-power, considering its scale and intensity in the historical context of Peronism, there is a need to notice those who fed and supported this relation. Raúl Apold¹ was the man in charge of communications during the Peronist regime in Argentina between 1946 and 1955. Perhaps, this low-profile official was the most powerful person of the regime after Juan and Eva Perón. “Apold is the best kept secret in Peronism,” claims Mercado, S. D. (p. 11). Historical records point out Apold as the man responsible to convince Perón to rename his organization as Partido Peronista in late 1946 (pp. 101-103). It is also argued that this official built within the State the imaginary of classical Peronism as we know it until today (Debord, G., 1967 and 1995; Hosbawm, E. , 1983; Marchionni, F., 2012a; 2012b; Mercado, S. D., 2013; Pérez-Liñán, A., 2013).

In 1947, Apold had been promoted to deputy secretary of information, exerting his enormous influence. Then, he became responsible for implementing the official strategy to control the media: confiscation of newsprint, acquisition of radio stations with reserve funds, nationalization of the daily newspaper *La Prensa* and internal exile of artists and writers. Such was the power exercised by Apold through the Dirección de Asuntos Especiales that, resorting to correspondents throughout the country, worked as an intelligence network to inform the president about the loyalty of his officials (Luna, F., 1984, 1985; Mercado, S. D., 2013).

Knowing the profile of Apold, in this context, provides a window to observe broader historical processes: Perón’s rise and fall, the less democratic facets of his regime and, fundamentally, the historical control mechanisms of the press, communication, broadcasting, film, television, radio, and of course photography, which contributed to this imaginary construction of Peronism. His powerful action within the political movement created almost seven decades ago has, along with its rather

¹ Raúl Apold’s career before 1946 was divided into different roles: dandy, journalist with political contacts, representative of movie artists, and lobbyist for the studios Argentina Sono Film. His stealthy but confident rise within the power structure initially took place as director of the daily newspaper *Democracia* (subordinate to Eva Perón), and director of newsreels, as articulator of the ALEA, the media conglomerate which was partially owned by Juan Perón, and later on as managing director of Broadcasting between 1947 and 1949. (Cf.: Mercado, S., 2013: 96-97, 106-107).

authoritarian history, a powerful tradition that challenges the cultural verticality and the hegemonic intent of any discourse constructed from the State (Ballent, A., 2005; Gené, M., 2005; Lobato, M., 2005; Luna, F., 1984; Marchionni, F., 2008; 2012a;2012b; Mercado, S. D., 2013; Pérez-Liñán, A., 2013).

Through the analysis of images and slogans used by the Peronist propaganda apparatus, we attempted to recreate the look that showed the Peronist deliberate action to feed the imaginary surrounding the 'New Argentina,' an image also replicated in the context of regional festivals within the country (Marchionni, F., 2012b; 2013). In this regard, this paper not only has a rigorous historical study, but it attempts to recognize the way how Peronism appropriated and resignified the wine festival through a reading of the ephemeral heritage embodied in the graphic and photographic official backgrounds.

The approach to this work is grounded in the consideration of photography as a documentary source for historical research and it is addressed by adopting the categories developed by S. Moscovici, D. Jodelet, A. Silva, and B. Baczko on the concept of social representation. This concept is defined as the cognitive production mode corresponding to a person and group in a given socio-historical context. We assume that the photos, looks from the historical discipline, are valuable documents that contribute to historical knowledge and they may work as evidence of the temporal evolution of societies. However -in order to make them useful as testimonies of a long-gone era- photos must be linked, especially in our case, to social and political coordinates to achieve a complete reading of this particular image. Nevertheless, we should emphasize that this issue does not fall within registration, but interpretation and explanation of the Festival as a cultural product. Thus, the spatial and artistic dimension becomes significant by working as a conveyor of plausible messages to be examined.

Strategy and positioning

The methodological strategy used is qualitative and exploratory, and its design has a flexible nature (Vallés 2000). We assume that the repertoire of images, photos, posters, and scenarios addressed through history are valuable documents that condense explanatory messages of their own genesis and socio-historical context. The

combination of these sources with the analysis of propaganda discourses contained in the Peronist account (Ballent, A., 2005; Gené, M., 2005; Lobato, M., 2005; Luna, F., 1984, 1985 and 1986; Marchionni, F., 2008; 2012a; 2012b; 2013) and reading and thinking through the relevant literature allowed us to define the historical analysis of the graphic and photographic repertoire selected. The focus, according to information available in each case, lies on the relation between the formal aspects adopted for the purpose of these propaganda devices and the constitutive process of social imaginary significations consolidated through political discourses, social practices, and current values in a society within the period concerned. The key to work on the analysis of photos of scenarios of parties and festivals, ads and illustrations, is precisely the idea of analyzing and thinking through the images of ephemeral events and objects (posters). The differential position of this proposal is grounded in taking into account situations designed from inception to cause a certain effect, but not to be assessed from the material perspective, since it is not a condition inherent to the devices under analysis. That is the challenge we face and also the brightest tint of this study.

By means of an effective positioning statement and this methodology, we aim to chronicle the events addressed, assuming that photos as graphic elements -understood as technical phenomena- are conditioned in a social and political way and they are still subordinate to a particular power discourse. This ideology -related to power structures and those with a camera in their hands- is subsumed in the images at stake, so that, faced with this situation, our purpose was to decipher the cultural information contained in these documents.²

Discussion

Based on the agreement that involves thinking of memory as a selective activity, we may ask what selection the images and shapes operate to construct the imaginary surrounding the 'New Argentina?' What relations may be read through the material

² The contribution by the Argentines when covering a broader time period condenses a huge amount of photographic accounts related to the Fiesta Nacional de la Vendimia. Perhaps it is one of the most important works to date due to the quantity and quality of testimonies collected, which are related to photography on the festival in Mendoza. Cf.: Sevilla Sevilla, Ariel y Fabián. 2006. *La Vendimia para Ver. 70 años de fiesta en 850 imágenes*. Mendoza: Ministerio de Turismo y Cultura-Gobierno de Mendoza

transformation processes and their representations at the symbolic level? The questions proposed clearly indicate that the allegorical universe contained both in the graphic elements used by Peronist political propaganda and in regional festival throughout the country cannot be addressed without simultaneously understanding them in the material and symbolic dimensions (Lobato, M: 2005). So, we seek to grasp this double nature -social representations and material transformation processes- embodied in the graphic elements as well as in the ephemeral architecture, especially during the first Peronist term.

The analysis proposed through the approach of this paper resumes the idea of memory as a selective activity by taking into account six key works as a basis: Amaral, S. and Botalla, H.: 2010; Gené, M.: 2005; Gutiérrez, R. et Al.: 2009; Indij, G.: 2006; Marchionni, F.: 2012 and Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián: 2006. All these studies share photography, image, and ephemeral phenomena as a means to establish the historical analysis of the Peronist imaginary. They condense valuable photographic evidence of this particular historical period in Argentina and play the role of watchmen and guardians of this wonderful heritage that suggests the ephemeral dimensions mediated by photography, addressed in this article.

An aspect emerging in the analysis of this documentary compendium is constituted by the concept of *social representations*; it is understood as a reflection on the emerging visual elements with a symbolic dimension that appear all over the wine festival history. Given the above, we agree with Moscovici (1979) when this author defines *representations* as symbolic structures responsible to assign meaning to reality, as well as define and guide behavior. He states that representations are:

[...] a particular mode of knowledge, whose function is improving the individuals' behavior and communication [...] Representation is an organized corpus of knowledge and one of its psychic activities, through which men make physical and social reality intelligible, join a group or an everyday relation of exchange, release the power of their imagination (17-18).

Nevertheless, representations, as Jodelet (1984) says, are not a mere reproduction of something, but rather a reconstruction or recreation mediated by the life experience of a subject in a certain cultural context where individual or social imaginary also participate. Inquiry on these visual forces has allowed us -within the

temporal period proposed- to identify what are the popular images the audience from that time recognizes and assumes as its own and which are *not mentioned* in this dispute resulting from the invention of the New Argentina in the Peronist period.

This inquiry, according to the proposal of this article, requires mediation of the technique, understood as an ephemeral graphics | architecture. That is, in order to investigate the relations between social representations and visual forces with a symbolic dimension, built and supported by means of these imaginary elements, there was a need to resort to, in addition to photography and graphics, consideration and analysis of scenography -understood as an ephemeral architecture³.

Through this outline, we agree with Gastón Breyer, when he expresses -referring to scenario as a primary object of the ephemeral architecture: “scenario supports re-inscriptions” (2005:18). From this perspective, spatiality and social representations constitute two distinct looks but linked to the same object, wine festival settings. By proposing the issue this way, the relations between this binomial and the festival are mediated by technique. Thus, the link between technical and social representations becomes the axis allowing us to address broad thematic fields -areas whose analysis this article does not exhaust, but it provides an approach to key aspects-, selecting objects within them and classifying them according to certain analytical parameters (Ballent, A., 2005; Gené, M., 2005; Lobato, M., 2005; Marchionni, F., 2008; 2012a; 2012b; Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián, 2006; Gutiérrez, R. et Al, 2009). In other words, this outline allowed us to work on the themes as research problems.

The other notion that allowed us to think about the role of the various social sectors was the idea of imagined communities (Anderson, B.: 1991) underlying the general discourse of President Perón. This concept assumes that throughout history, societies are devoted to a permanent invention of their own global representations, among many other ideas-images through which they seek an identity, notice their divisions, legitimize their power, and devise founding models for its citizens (Baczko, 1991:9). They are those which have demonstrated the significant role of fictions -in our

³ The analysis proposed by the approach of this paper is based on the consideration of six key works: Amaral, S. and Botalla, H.: 2010; Gené, M.: 2005; Gutiérrez, R. et Al.: 2009; Indij, G.: 2006; Marchionni, F.: 2012 and Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián: 2006. All these studies share photography, image, and ephemeral phenomena as a means to establish the historical analysis of the Peronist imaginary.

case under analysis embodied by the Festival-, collective imaginaries, in the formation of identities. This kind of approach has consequences for building cultural citizenship, because this citizenship is not organized only through political principles, according to real participation in legal or social structures, but also by means of a culture emerging from the documents and interactions of everyday life, as well as the imaginary projection of these acts on mental maps of the urban life (Marchionni, 2012: 34).

According to this positioning, some doubts helped us in structuring the rationale with which this study was proposed and conducted. Initially, and taking the graphic resources involved into account, some issues helped us in structuring the rationale with which the second part of this study was proposed and conducted. Thus, we agreed to think through the relation between political propaganda and State by asking: What is the relation established between the State and these graphic expressions? How were these communication tools used in relation to the economic, productive, and cultural policies of the State? (Hovarth, L., 1993; Indij, G., 2006; Gené, M., 2005).

Next, we agreed to think through the relation between festival and State by asking: What is the relation established between the State and these ephemeral architectural phenomena? How were these devices used in relation to the economic, productive, and cultural policies of the State? How were the changes in the political imaginary and their consequent visual representation expressed in the wine festival scenography? (Hovarth, L., Gutiérrez, R. et Al., 2009; Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián, 2006).

Notions, concepts, and projects...

During the first term of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1952), he along with José Figuerola -General Secretary of the Postwar National Council-, started drafting a general industrialization plan which included measures to intensify agricultural production, promote mining, protect some manufacturing industries, promote research, foster economic stability, and revive industry after the war. In this scenario, the industrial sector in Argentina had found in such an incipient global opening a particular opportunity for growth.



Fig. 01: Commemorative posters for the first year of the presidential administration Perón-Quijano democratically elected on June 4, 1946 | Commemorative posters of June 4th 1946 | Cartazes comemorativas do primeiro ano do mandato presidencial Perón-Quijano democráticamente eleito 04 de junho de 1946. (Graphic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive of the Juan Domingo Perón National Institute for Historical, Social, and Political Study and Research).

The poster on the left represents the ‘dawn of the New Argentina,’ where the scale on the image becomes sidereal, cosmic, universal. The center is occupied by a representation of continental and insular Argentina and its Antarctic area. As a counterpoint, a huge Argentine cockade appears in the background -as a Sun of May shaped like the Rising Sun, the Southern Cross, a constellation visible only from the south hemisphere- and the scales of justice, whose pointer is covered by a Phrygian cap. The composition has also two legends: at the top ‘Freedom and Justice’ and at the bottom ‘June 4: The Dawn of a New Argentina,’ first anniversary of the presidential administration Perón-Quijano, democratically elected on June 4, 1946.

The composition on the right, rather than contemplation, resorts to action. The figure of the man at the center of the compositional field is virile, dynamic, and vigorous. Dressed as a worker, either rural or urban, it divides the frame pointing at the left and the background -silos and fireplaces- and on the right there is a bunch of wheat

tied with nationalist ribbon. The composition also consists of a hand plow over the legend ‘The nation is underway.’

Both compositions are eloquently highlighted by color use, compositional dynamics, and message power. They refer to different historical moments: the preliminary moments, then the current moments, where it is possible to emphasize the benefits of government work just after its first year of democratic power.



Fig. 02: Promotional posters of the María Eva Duarte de Perón Foundation | Promotional Posters Fundación María Eva Duarte de Perón | Cartazes promocionais de Maria Eva Duarte de Perón Foundation. (Graphic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive of the Juan Domingo Perón National Institute for Historical, Social, and Political Study and Research).

The Eva Perón Foundation was an institution created by Eva Duarte during the presidential administration of Juan Domingo Perón, with the purpose of providing social work. It was active from 1946 to 1955. Initially, its name was ‘María Eva Duarte de Perón Foundation’ and in 1950 it became the ‘Eva Perón Foundation.’ This organization was funded by entrepreneurs and workers’ donations coming from their wages. Dependent

on the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, the Foundation distributed books, food, clothing, sewing machines, and toys to families belonging to the most vulnerable social sectors. While she lived, the founder personally dealt with its many aspects and even talked for hours to people who came from all over the country asking for help. The Foundation promoted the construction of polyclinics, schools, a Nursery Town, rest homes, homes for unwed mothers and young people coming from the various provinces to Buenos Aires to keep studying or work. During the festivals, people were also given cider, sweet bread, and other gifts, she helped those in need and organized children and youth sports tournaments. The other bastion and perhaps the main axis of her popularity was the environment consisting of trade unionists linked to the CGT and her ease and charisma to connect to the working masses, which she called her 'greasers' or 'shirtless' ones.

The image analyzed in this case resorts to two strong aspects observed in social groups of that era: children and family. On the left there is a happy child, whose arms are full of gifts and he is looking 'to the top.' Framed within a light cone surrounding him, there is also the sentence 'a dream came true.' That is, the device effectively achieves one of the goals of the María Eva Duarte de Perón Foundation, fulfilling the dreams of the most disadvantaged individuals. The image on the right in the compositional mosaic, calls for the defense of the rights -in this case peasants. The composition is dominated by a traditional family -man, woman, and child. The father is at the center of the image holding in his arms a little boy looking forward. The written message is powerful. It refers to a past -experienced by the adults depicted in the composition- of injustice and exploitation and highlights the possibilities the nation offered to its inhabitants at that time: "Do not allow your child to be exploited" + "buy him the land he farms" + "the state will 'give' everything you need"... An underlying detail in the design of these posters is undoubtedly color. The proposal is organized into black and white, what allows us to infer that the government aimed to spread this kind of State-driven message-propaganda on a broader distribution scale than others.



Fig. 03: Commemorative posters of the May Day Festival | Posters commemorating Labour Day | Cartazes comemorativos do Dia do Trabalho. (Graphic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive of the Juan Domingo Perón National Institute for Historical, Social, and Political Study and Research).

Since Juan Domingo Perón rose to power, in 1946, workers' claims started coming true and they gained public space, appropriating the symbols and meanings linked to May Day. 1946 was the first year that national authorities -Juan Domingo Perón, María Eva Duarte, and the Secretary of Labor and Welfare-, led the parade. That was the first time that President Perón associated the date with the emerging Peronist movement and the General Labor Confederation emphasized that it was a “day of healthy joy and true rest for the muscles.” The pamphlet, “May Day yesterday and today,” published in 1949, clearly expressed a break with the past:

[...] May Day is no longer a date conducive to pain and misfortune, but to joy. The Labor Festival, joyfully held by those who work to build the homeland. (Perón s/d).

From May 1, 1947, the characteristics substantially varied, because it was the first celebration under the Peronist administration. The celebration program was more or less similar during those years: it started with a speech by the Secretary General of the CGT, another one was delivered by Evita, and it culminated with Perón's words. Then,

artistic shows took place, with the participation of popular figures (Hugo del Carril, Antonio Tormo, Hermanos Ábalos), and after a great line-up of carriages the Labor Queen was elected. Opponents (socialists and communists, among them) should celebrate the date in previous days and demonstrations were allowed only outside the central focus (Marchionni, F.:2012).

In this third composite mosaic, a resignified May Day is conveyed in the New Argentina. There are appeals to urban work along with rural work in a ‘festive’ context. Now, May Day ‘is’ a festival. In the same direction and in a simple and direct way -in the image of the right-wing- there is a reference to a past of oppression a present which is happy and claimed by ‘dignity’ is exalted... there is also a play with colors, in this case gray/dark colors assigned to the past, contrasting with the profusion of vivid colors mainly concentrated in the representation of today’s workers, confident, hopeful, and committed to the enterprise involved in the ‘New Argentina.’

Argentina in March, 1951

In the same vein and with the explicit desire to make visible the work and legacy of Peronism, various exhibitions, festivals, and parties were systematically held across the country showing an ephemeral nature. The exhibition Argentina in March consisted in organizing an ephemeral urban installation over much of Florida Street, in the image below, the sketch of the entrance, from the author’s hand -Sabaté- and a specific sketch of the proposal.



Fig. 4: Sketch of the project and photograph of the National Exhibition “Argentina in March” | Projec sketh and photograph of The Argentina National on going | Esboço do projeto e fotografia da Amostra Nacional “Argentina em marcha” (Graphic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive of the CEDODAL and the Institute of Historical Research Eva Perón. Editing and image correction: Augusto Marchionni).

The International Film Festival in Mar del Plata, 1954

In 1954, the first edition of the festival took place, organized at the initiative of then Deputy Secretary of Information and Press, Raúl Alejandro Apold. Held between March 8 and 14, this edition was not a contest, but an exhibition in which film was highlighted as a spectacle in order to provide the national film industry with a strong support and bring world film closer to the Argentine audience. The host city was selected due to the fact this is a tourist destination par excellence, and there were 18 countries represented by the 52 long and 49 short films shown. President Juan Domingo Perón was responsible for the opening of the so-called International Film Festival that, having the Venice festival as a model, sought to bring the great stars of that time closer to the Argentine audience.

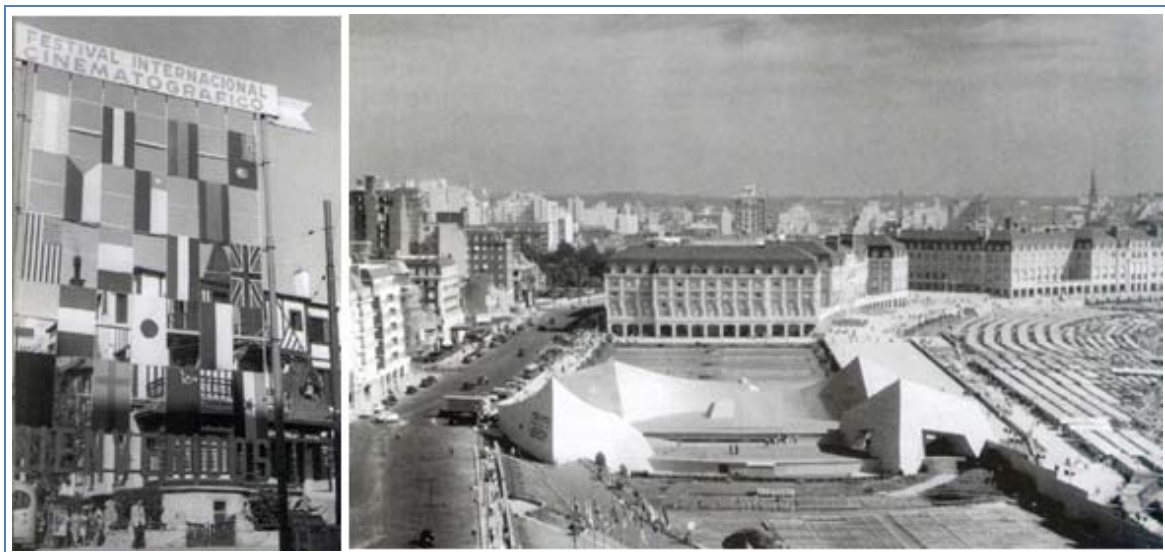


Fig. 5a: Photos of the scenography for The International Film Festival in Mar del Plata, 1954 | Photographs of the stage sets for The International Film Festival of Mar del Plata, 1954 | Fotografias do cenário para o Festival Internacional de Cinema de Mar del Plata, 1954 (Graphic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive of the CEDODAL and the Institute of Historical Research Eva Perón. Editing and image correction: Augusto Marchionni).

The three axes proposed -the historical/political, the social/supportive, and the artistic/cultural- condense seemingly different issues, but they include a number of phenomena, all linked to the maintenance of the regime and the construction of its imaginary, which was pointed out later in the context of the Wine Festival. It is worth noticing -through specific reflection on the hard government work during the first term-

the power and effectiveness condensed in the official propaganda by resorting to the press and pro-government ads and illustrations. This outstanding effervescence observed in the first presidential term also had -as we will see later- its impact on scenographic resolutions during the Peronist administration, but it had the particular feature of lacking automaticity, being rather delayed in time. That is, the profusion of events and images constructed during the first presidential term will meet its material counterpart few years later in the wine festival.

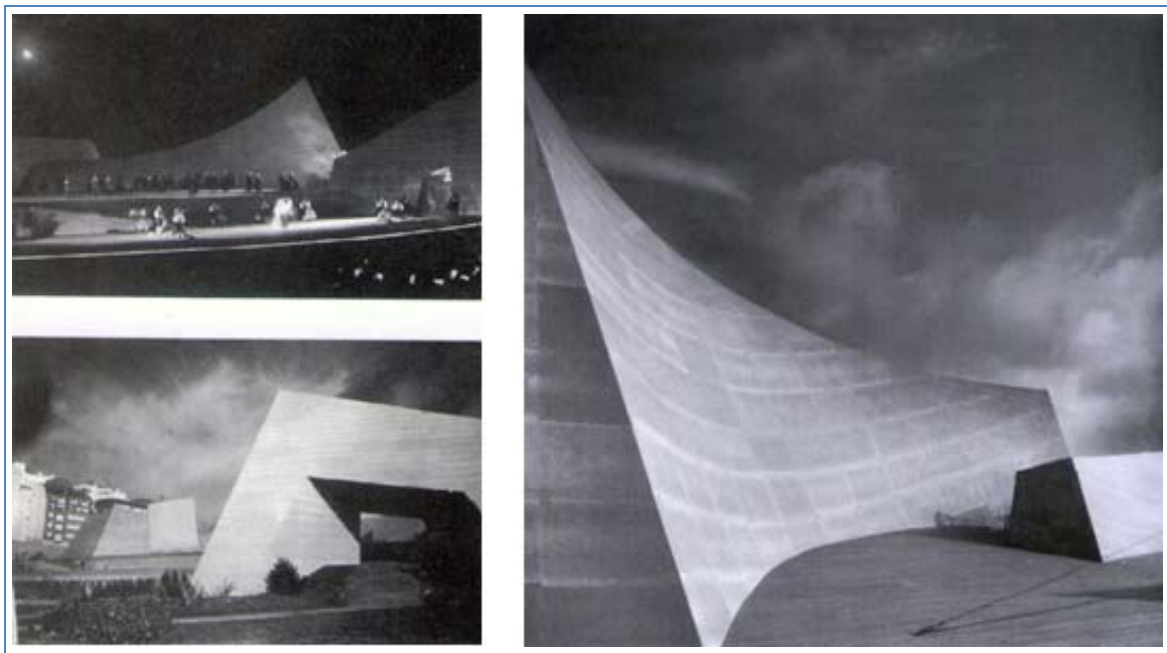


Fig. 5b: Photos of the scenography for The International Film Festival in Mar del Plata, 1954 | Photographs of the stage sets for The International Film Festival of Mar del Plata, 1954| Fotografias do cenário para o Festival Internacional de Cinema de Mar del Plata, 1954 (Graphic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive of the CEDODAL and the Institute of Historical Research Eva Perón. Editing and image correction: Augusto Marchionni).

The festivals of regional economies

In some cases, the expansion of the agroindustrial activity produced in the late 19th century, driven by increased consumption and State protection -such as the wine industry in Mendoza- came along with these festivals to respond through the architectural and scenographic domains to this political will that also sought to legitimize festive and popular contexts.

In the case of the Wine Festival, women's beauty became a contest in the festivals held in various towns and cities associated with some productive activity. A pretty woman was crowned during wine festivals of wine harvest, sugar harvest, tobacco, blossom (Lobato, M: 2005). The streets and squares around the country became different scenarios of festivals associated with popular participation and entertainment.

Festivals celebrating the wine-making work driven by rural and industrial producers, traders, and local governments -above all in the political context of Peronism- promoted and encouraged an extensive development of products from the region. These festivals were promoted within a policy of creation, dissemination, and internalization of commemorative symbols and dates that used a wide variety of meaningful materials like objects, slogans, exhibitions of regional products in each area of the country, publications, films, and news bulletins (Marchionni, F., 2008; 2012a; 2012b; 2013 y Sevilla, Ariel y Fabián, 2006).

Although not taking into account, in principle, the technical difficulties that had to be solved regarding the theme of creation, there was an emphasis on defining what issues were addressed by the scenographic-spatial solutions adopted within the period. More accurately, this concerns thinking through the social and spatial representations that emerged from the set of projects that both artists and technicians of official institutions put together during this period and their degree of correspondence in relation to the context of production.

The national social and political conditions within the period allowed us to think of the Wine Festival in the national context along with other regional and political festivals -October 17 and May 1- promoted and widely used by the Peronist administration.

The first aspect addressed in this second section -the regional festivals- refers to the link to our interest -technique and social representations. This is intended to address both the symbolic dimension and the material dimension. Next, it is worth explaining from the viewpoint of the history of wine-making scenarios that Peronism was presented as a radical break, as the administration triggering and promoting the so-

called ‘Monster Stages,’ although there is a need to resort to historical examination of the 1936-1945 period to refine and clarify this claim. Finally, in the same way, but changing the perspective to the history of the technique, we may infer that the inertia generated by architects across the nation, who insisted on the need for State intervention in mass housing, could be reflected in their effective participation in the materialization of scenography in the 1950s; from this viewpoint, Peronism in power granted a new creative space to technicians, and thus it managed to perpetuate in the history of the Festival by promoting a technical imaginary that survived until today (cf.: Marchionni, F. : 2012b).

The second aspect of the relation technique/social representations developed by this paper refers to the *architectural aesthetics*. Above all, we are interested in investigating the visual shapes and images that the Peronist administration used to identify itself. To do this, we inquired how a technical production can constitute an ‘aesthetics of politics.’⁴ In this way, our starting point is an observation by Manfredo Tafuri, i.e. the architecture promoted by the State cannot be understood as a derivation of politics, but it requires taking the latter into account as a link between political and technical proposals (1995:7); in other words, politics does not create forms, but it resignifies the existing forms.

Surveys and evidence

The Wine Festival worked -and still works today- as a great ‘negotiation’ space where people deploy strategies, conflicts, interests, as well as political, social, and cultural attitudes (cf.: Marchionni, F.: 2012b). Beyond the celebration of a production process, the Wine Festival is understood as a phenomenon capable of generating images, icons, beautiful patterns, myths, and operation modes that constitute the identity of Mendoza and it is likely to be reappropriated.

⁴ The term ‘aestheticization of politics’ was first used by Walter Benjamin referring to fascism in his *Theorien des deutschen Faschismus*. However, as evidenced by works such as that coordinated by Maurizio Vaudagna (*L'estetica della politica. Europa e America negli anni Trenta VII-XIV*), the emphasis on aestheticization of politics was not restricted to totalitarian governments, as evidenced by the U.S. production in the 1930s. A discussion on this theme is available in the Introduction. See also Sandro Searrocchia (“Mefisto o la arquitectura del totalitarismo” 54-63).

Before entering the analysis of scenarios in the 1946 and 1947 festivals, it is worth presenting the views expressed by *Le Corbusier* in his 1923 work *Vers une Architecture*, where he claims that:

“Architecture is beyond the utilitarian facts. Architecture is a visual fact. (...) Architecture is the wise, correct, magnificent play of volumes under the light. (...) Architecture is art in the highest sense, its meaning and task is not only devising the construction and absorbing a function, (...)” (1923:13).

Through these considerations we could add that architecture also implies the idea of representation; according to *Le Corbusier*, “this is the ‘function’ of architecture.”⁵ We regard as useful for the purposes of this paper the definitions proposed herein, which connect architecture to aesthetics, light, art, and the possibility to convey a meaning. Hence the relevance of its legacy to approach the study object, which implied an architectural and symbolic analysis based on observation and assessment of descriptive aspects. This work was undoubtedly supported by consideration of the historical framework and attention to the social, economic, and cultural context of the scenographic and architectural objects.

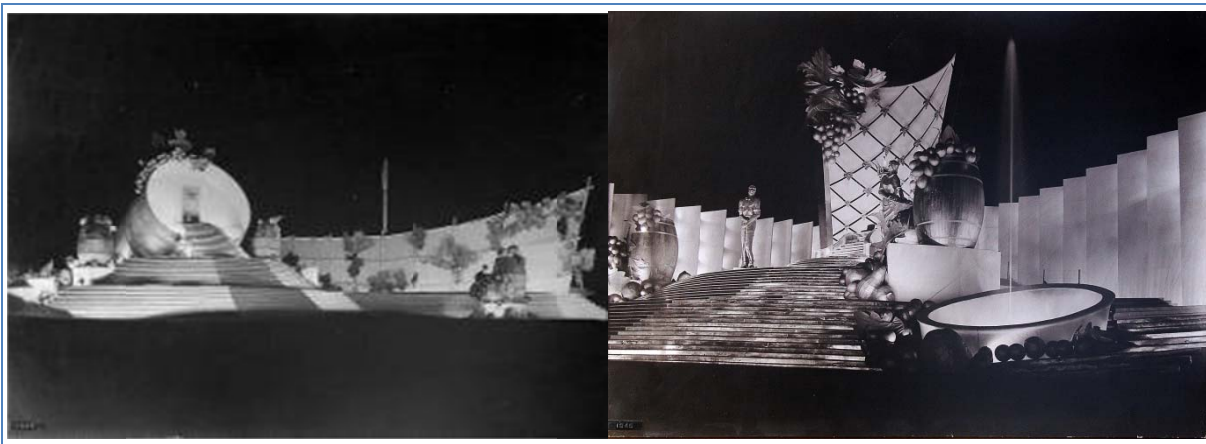


Fig. 6: Wine Festival, 1946 and 1947 Central Act | Harvest Festival Central Act 1946 and 1947 | Festa da Colheita evento principal 1946 e 1947. (Photographic mosaic prepared by the author. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive The Sportman Collection and the Graphic Archive Diario Los Andes. Taken from Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián. *La Vendimia para Ver. 70 años de fiesta en 850 imágenes*. Mendoza: Ministerio de Turismo y Cultura-Gobierno de Mendoza, 2006, p. 35-6).

⁵ The quotation marks belong to the author.

The scenarios considered in this historical period have a scale adjusted to the formal elements used for its physical-spatial resolution. In turn, they resort to a repertoire of traditional elements linked to the symbolic universe of the festival and work, such as: barrels, vineyards, grapes, water, men working, and the beauty of harvesters, which has a privileged place in the scenarios taken into account. Altogether, they resort to the use of a formal language supported by images, icons, and traditional attributes linked to the wine-making imaginary.

The scenario of the 1946 festival had as one of its main features the use of black light in the show. This resource of great scenic relevance provided the proposal with a unique characterization that still remains today. The scenario was oval-shaped and it had a large barrel in the background representing a throne (See Fig. 06 left).

Undoubtedly, 1947 is a special year in the temporal period taken into account in this paper for many reasons. Among the most significant it is worth mentioning the participation of María Eva Duarte de Perón -a controversial figure- who developed a comprehensive set of social, political, and strategic activities aligned with the interests of the regime.

The main event of the Wine Festival -the Central Act- took place in the Rotunda of General San Martín Park at night on April 10, 1947. The artistic direction of the show in the context of the festival was in charge of León Alberti and the proposal was entitled “Wine Harvest of Song and Work.” To do this, a huge scenario was staged, inspired by the story “The Thousand and One Nights,” which covered an area of 1,700 m², it had internal lifts for artists and the back of the throne rose 23 meters above the main platform (See Fig. 06 right).

By observing the cases proposed, there is a central focus, as well as scenarios or side platforms that house the extras. This central focus gains in height and it condenses in all cases the throne of the queen. Stairways, as a relevant architectural element, play a leading role in shaping and framing the space.



Fig. 7: Wine Festival, 1954 Central Act | Harvest Festival Central Act 1954 | Festa da Colheita 1954 evento principal. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive CGPG (General Press Coordination of the Province Government) and the Graphic Archive The Sportsman. Taken from Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián. *La Vendimia para Ver. 70 años de fiesta en 850 imágenes*. Mendoza: Ministerio de Turismo y Cultura-Gobierno de Mendoza, 2006. p. 55.

The 1954 festival materialized particularly according to the lines of thought that had been instituted by the political power in several strategic aspects. So, that year the festival resumed the idea trumpeted by Peronism that saw Argentina not as a nationalism ‘in the box,’ in the President’s words, but people should think in ‘harmony’ with its Latin American neighbors. The show “Singing in Mendoza” was directed by Ivo Pelay and it proposed a historical reconstruction of a time period ranging from the conquest to the struggle for the independence of our country. For this purpose, it used a repertoire of dances and songs from the American continent.

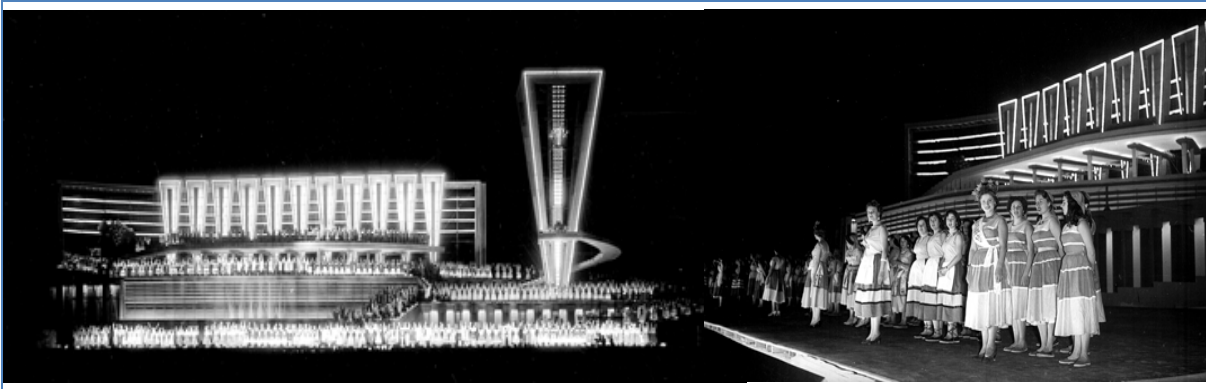


Fig. 8: Wine Festival, 1955 Central Act | Harvest Festival Central Act 1955 | Festa da Colheita 1955 evento principal. Courtesy of the Graphic Archive CGPG (General Press Coordination of the Province Government). Taken from Sevilla, Ariel and Fabián. *La Vendimia para Ver. 70 años de fiesta en 850 imágenes*. Mendoza: Ministerio de Turismo y Cultura-Gobierno de Mendoza, 2006. p. 56.

The main event of the Wine Festival -the Central Act- took place at the Racetrack of General San Martín Park at night on March 12, 1955. The art show was entitled “Homage to the wine harvest and grape vines,” where trade employees, students, and ballet dancers from the National University of Cuyo danced and the exhibition had stamps of wine-producing countries. There was no story line. To do this, a huge scenario was staged, with a modern architectural design and a particular and distinctive contrast between the formal and aesthetic language of the extras in the show and the ephemeral architectural framework (see Fig. 08).

The modernization reflected on these *Monumental Scenarios*, far from being a process that contributed to the extinction of native cultures, rather made it possible -in the context of the Wine Festival during the Peronist administration- and even promoted a constant restructuring and reworking of elements shaping culture for the people. It added new components that fed, renewed, and provided this culture with life, so that the cultural identity of people in ‘the new Argentina’ was reaffirmed and rebuilt in a process of reinvention of symbols and rituals within a mechanism aimed to generate consensus as a source of legitimacy and the strengthening both of Perón’s charismatic image and doctrine. The scenario of the Central Act of the 1955 Wine Festival was designed through a proposal that implied using a monumental scale. It was spatially organized from a main focus on the right of the stage materialized by a huge inverted pyramid and on the left the remaining elements in the composition served as a counterpoint. The scenographic proposal may be quickly analyzed by distinguishing five

components: the inverted pyramid containing the royal throne and crown, working as a focus of the composition; the repetition of eleven elements shaped as inverted triangles, the background frame marked with horizontal lines that support the previous elements; the horizontal plane sections of the platforms linked by ramps and stairs that extend it; and the large number of extras that reinforces the horizontal image as a counterpoint to the vertical focus (Marchionni, 2012: 260).

The distinguishing feature of this scenario lies, on the one hand on the monumentality expressed in the scale of elements in the scenario and its contrast with the mass of extras. On the other hand, on using the language of modern architecture with simple geometric elements completely unlinked to the allegorical repertoire adopted in the scenarios of the previous decade.

The scenography within the period 1954 and 1955, which condensed a particularly modern language, is known in the history of the festival as Monumental Scenarios due to the appreciation of its architectural scale and aesthetic value. Its meaning is linked to the architectural discipline and even today, over time, it preserves a particular sense. Such scenarios may also be read as a response or consequence according to the local architecture reproduced by the State power and ideology. The evolution of the Wine Festival and the scenography representing it bring several questions. Although it has been acquiring greater urban presence, its persistence as an artistic phenomenon and collective expression of social imaginary of each era is not always consistent with the urban/architectural space that contains it or the rural/wine-producing space that supports it. In parallel, it is worth emphasizing that beyond its representative intent as the Wine Festival, the scenography, just as the official architecture, may be read as a mode of conveying social and cultural values and, in turn, as a kind of collective expression. It may also serve to preserve memory as the basis of our identity. By proposing the scenographic issue this way, we may explain this staging of culture and the role it plays by show what 'people are.'

The debate presented herein, tentative and provisional, points out the fundamental and crucial functionality that, at the methodological level, as an explanatory resource, representations and symbolic processes show in order to grasp

the development and structuring of any type of social organization. Our study proposes to go through one of the gateways that the social sciences have opened concerning the imaginary as a theme, the political rituals and the arts, where the representative processes play a distinctive role.⁶

Therefore, the role played both by the regional festivals and the political and politicized festivals in the cultural context of Peronism become clear, as well as who were the actors of such an original show. Mendoza's place in the national context, its prominent regional economy, its strategic position, and the availability of energy resources turned the province into an object of desire within Perón's political project. This political desire resorted to photography, posters, and the ephemeral architecture to represent and embody 'its' review of history and build a particular historical account. Given this descriptive framework, it is not wrong to think that the Wine Festival -then already consolidated- was a privileged scenario in order to promote political and social conquests, the reason why they were a focus of presidential interest. In our case study, we regard these cultural manifestations as a prominent part of the Peronist propaganda apparatus. So, the Wine Festival became a testimony of several values promoted by officialdom and it worked within a network -broad and complex- of cultural and power precepts. These scenarios worked within the political project, as producers of cultural meanings, settings of construction and dispute about them, and also as a crossroads of various local and national issues (Marchionni, 2012: 69-70 y 71).

Seeking some answers...

The general theory of imaginaries has nuances, folds, gaps that deserve to be revisited. The structures and methods to address these features should not be used as formulas, patterns, or strict categories when applied. In the approach to photography as a privileged archive, we seek to be rather proactive than authoritative. Faced with

⁶ In the case of social imaginaries, a primary reference is the book by Bronislaw Baczko, *Los imaginarios sociales. Memorias y esperanzas colectivas*. In the case of rituals and their relation to power and social structure, it is worth recalling herein the pathway derived from the anthropological tradition originated in the Max Gluckman's Manchester School, going forward with Victor Turner and even reaching the French advice provided by George Balandier and Marc Auge, who devoted their research efforts to grasp complex societies.

this postulate, we point out that the political, cultural, and productive forces identified from our perspective were able to build social and imaginary representations in an ephemeral key, mediated by political power based on a national project. They generated images, photos, scenarios, and synthesized ‘memories’ with the clear intent of capturing the present reality, long gone now, to promote the construction of the Peronist imaginary. We further notice that these ephemeral expressions -which circulated throughout the country, with different shapes and embodying a huge power to broadcast provided by the State apparatus- found in the modern architectural language a coherent means for communicating the political project involved in ‘the new Argentina.’ The mixture of national view forged by Peronism and the common imaginary reflected on the Wine Festival generates a synthesis that gives rise to new, creative, imaginative works that shed light on the reality of this historic moment through the scenographic creation inscribed in a supposedly Latin American modernism. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that both political propaganda posters and the ephemeral architectural phenomena identified and described in this article worked as a support for identity and political struggles. State influence in shaping these expressions was significant, but its action had to be supplemented in the play with other actors and other circumstances (Marchionni, 2012:321).

Proposing these nuances of the Peronist administration through the confrontation between discourse and facts is not only needed, but a crucial, stimulating, and enriching intellectual exercise, in order to critically explore the complex labyrinths of Argentina’s past and contribute to refine their explanations beyond the myths that, with an outstanding historical force, wrap and -sometimes- distort and standardize the interpretation of facts. Reconciling the factual and symbolic domains, distinguishing -in the light of critical assessment- between the mythical and actual aspects that collective memory tends to merge, confuse, or bias, is the contribution we aim at, always in a partial way, to resume the nonlinear, complex, and plural aspects of the options through which the Wine Festival was constituted within the Peronist decade.

This proposal comes to an end by seeking some answers about the questions raised in the beginning of this journey. In the analytical balance of this first approach - that implied taking into account some political, social, and cultural aspects related to

wine harvest between 1946 and 1955-, we agree that it is possible to refine Weber's classic definition, which regards the State as a compulsory political organization claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within its territory (Weber: 1969), along with the conceptualization provided by Bourdieu, who in turn characterizes the modern State as a symbolic achievement (Bourdieu, 1999:195). Combining both elements allows us to grasp why the historic struggles on the exercise of symbolic power were linked to the historic struggles for the legitimate exercise of military, political, and economic power. We are sure to claim that the scenario and context of the Wine Festival also provided a setting to such disputes. Traditional definitions of the modern State highlight the subtle relation between the aspects of political organization, territorial jurisdiction, and control over the exercise of coercion. Gorski notices that the "States are also pedagogical, they are ideological organizations" (2003:165).⁷ The national systems of elementary education, meanwhile, provide the students with more than a curriculum, a standardized knowledge set; schools also introduce and naturalize key opinion categories, the principles of vision and social organization that enable people to grasp society and their place within it (Bourdieu: 1999; Hobsbawm and Ranger: 1983). From this viewpoint, we claim that the Women's Vote Act, the First Five-Year Plan (1947-1951),⁸ and the enactment of the Law on Religious Education in Public Schools completed and contributed to build the developing State in Argentina. We further affirm -as the analysis proposed made clear- that these events had their impact on the wine harvest festive context.

The other key component, having a symbolic nature, is observed in the public broadcasting policy. The Secretary of Press and Broadcasting generated a support to

⁷ To cite only a few well-known examples that generate and accumulate symbolic energy, we may mention, among others, the following activities: conduct censuses, cartographic surveying and mapping, and build museums (Anderson: 1991). Similarly, the development of civil records, authoritative systems, surveys on land ownership, and other strategies involved in the distribution and allocation of resources, especially regulations on land use and interventions to promote or mobilize the establishment of population.

⁸ Introducing the planning function in an institutionalized and permanent way opens the door to new domains of the administrative activity -some of which registered a transient background or, anyway, not legitimized by the praxis- were recognized as legitimate State practices. Furthermore, it results in a new organizational setting. Thus, for instance, in order to configure the planning system, the National Statistical System is created, to meet the legal aspects of a strong execution dynamics, the State Attorney's Agency is created to meet the population's needs with a universalist approach, and a National Health Plan is prepared and applied to all the people across the Nation. This is the element having a Weberian nature (Weber: 1969).

adhere to the public policies that was unknown so far. After establishing countless administrative practices as routine, above all those framed within a macro plan of development and redistribution, the first Peronist term laid the foundation of the developing State in Argentina. This practice of symbolic nature -in the particular case of Mendoza- was further complemented and strengthened by the various acts that constitute the Wine Festival. From this perspective, a discussion of the consequences that the construction of the scenographic tradition of the Wine Festival, its management structure, and the correlative in the foundation of the social imaginaries linked to this phenomenon have had on the formation and significance of this period.

So, the archives and above all the graphics and photography of the period concerned constitute powerful instruments to control what the future is going to know about the past. They -as we managed to show in this paper- reflected the particular dynamics of the facts that allowed the Peronist administration to accumulate the symbolic energy that turned into a reinforcement of the National Identity, as we know it today (Hobsbawm and Ranger: 1983). Consequently, we must be prepared to provide a response to the challenges posed by the contemporary world and preserve their existence and usefulness.

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