CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN BRAZIL: THE EVOLUTION OF THE PUBLIC
DEMONSTRATIONS FROM JUNE 2013 TO AUGUST 2015

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INTRODUCTION

It is August 25th in 1992 and São Paulo, the largest city of Brazil, is taken over by more than 350,000 students with their faces painted in green and yellow, the colors of the Brazilian flag. The protest is the culmination of a student youth mobilization that started on May 29th of that same year, and aimed for the impeachment of Fernando Collor de Mello, the first democratically elected president of Brazil after the military dictatorship. Collor de Mello was elected in 1989 and came to power in January of 1990. In December 29th, 1992, he stepped down of the office, hours before being accused of the political crimes that the students were denouncing months earlier.

Fast forward to August 16th, 2015. On that same protest location which broke the record for number of participants twenty-one years before, more than 130,0001 people gathered to protest against corruption and a shrinking economy. Once more the crowds were wearing green and yellow, and Brazilian flags were being waved all over. Only this time the protests were not organized by the student union. Recently formed groups that called for the impeachment of president Dilma Roussef had instead organized themselves through social media.

Despite the apparently same goal of presidential impeachment and roughly similar causes—corruption scandals and the bad performance of the economy, both protests had very diverse structures, leadreships, mechanisms and resource-mobilization strategies.

The protest of August 16th 2015 unfolded from previous movements started in May 2013. However, unlike the protests of 1992 that were systematically organized by the same group and kept a consistent set of claims, the evolution of the protests from May 2013 to August 2015 passed through surprising changes in leadership, ideology and alleged goals.

1 Both numbers of protesters are estimates by the Military Police of the State of São Paulo, the entity is responsible for guaranteeing order during protests and to reporting the official governmental numbers.
In May 2013 a group called *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL or Free Pass Movement) organized the protests. The group was created in 2005 and fought for free fares in public transport. In May 2013, with the announcement of the rise in São Paulo’s bus fares by R$ 0,20 (roughly $0,05 US Dollars), the group took to the streets in four small protest actions. Violent repression by the state police (the state government is responsible for security issues in Brazil) played the most important role in this story and served to mobilize even larger numbers of people on the next protest actions. Sympathy for the protesters and rage against violent repression by the government motivated more than 65,000 people to take part in the “fifth act against the rise in the fare,” in June 2013.

From June 2013 through August 2015, tens of protests were organized, with a few of them mobilizing an average of 500,000 people in different state capitals around the country. Most local governments agreed to maintain the fare prices at that time, but protests continued, this time clamoring for different things, including LGBT rights and a better quality of public services.

**TABLE 1: Largest protests in Brazil in Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protest</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diretas Já</td>
<td>04/16/1984</td>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caras Pintadas</td>
<td>08/25/1992</td>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcha dos 100 mil</td>
<td>08/26/1999</td>
<td>Brasília</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Passe Livre</td>
<td>06/20/2013</td>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Brasil Livre</td>
<td>08/16/2015</td>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Brasil Livre</td>
<td>03/13/2016</td>
<td>São Paulo</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data Folha, Polícia Militar de São Paulo, Jornal do Brasil

The appearance of more violent groups, who attacked public property and anyone associated with the leftist parties that tried to coopt the protests’ endorsement, influenced the *Movimento Passe Livre* to withdraw their leadership of new protests that occurred 2014. The leadership gap lasted until March 2014, when the group *Movimento Brasil Livre* (MBL or
Free Brazil Movement) started to take over the mobilization process. Unlike the MPL, MBL has right-wing leanings and a mentality based on the main principles of economic liberalism. While the left-wing group protested against the right-wing state government of the PSDB (Party of Brazilian Social-Democracy, in the Portuguese acronym), their right-wing counterpart has clear goals of fighting against the power of the leftist Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT or Workers Party) in the federal government.

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the evolution of urban civil-society mobilization in Brazil after the end of the military dictatorship, in order to understand the just described and astounding changes in the main features of mass protests from May 2013 until August 2015. This analysis will also help us to comprehend the current critical political situation the country is going through and will result in the picturing of potential outcomes to the structure of political civil society actors in the country.

*Concepts and Literature Review*

In order to better grasp those changing protests, I look here to the vast social-science literature on social movements. Theorists have conceptualized revolutions and protests, their motivations, how civil society groups mobilize resources and their organizational structure. The field of sociology has richly analyzed crowds, their composition, motivations, and manipulability. Even so, this work will not draw upon the theories of crowd behavior, despite the apparent relevance of the subject. Instead, my main focus will be on the analysis of the leadership and the structure of movements and their transitions. In order to make sense of the protests from 2013 to 2015 in Brazil, I will approach my analysis through both the sociological lenses and the political economy one. I will draw selectively upon several theories: political contention, resource mobilization, and Tilly’s WUNC approach. I will then integrate them with the analysis of Brazilian political and economic policies, along with the
changes they effected. This multi-pronged analysis will permit us to understand the nature of the shift in the social movements’ leaderships and their potential impacts on the structure of civil-society mobilization in Brazil.

For the purpose of this thesis, social movements are viewed in accord with Goodwin and Jasper’s definition: “a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices” (Goodwin and Jasper 2013, 4). It is also important to differentiate a social movement from a specifically revolutionary movement, one that aims to overthrow the government in power. For this analysis, the movements in question will not be considered revolutionary, despite their aims of impeachment, since even impeachment proceedings operate within existing Brazilian politico-legal structures.

Social movements will be understood as reactions to certain government’s policies or set of policies implemented in that period of time, as well as engagements enabled by a certain political and economic context. Since the analysis will deal with social movements’ direct relation with governments- whose claims are aimed at the government and at the same time are enabled by it, it will be possible to classify the case analyzed as what McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) called “Contentious Politics.”

**Contentious Politics**

Contentious politics can be defined as

“(…) episodic, public, and collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims; (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.” (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, 6)
According to the authors’ seminal work, *Dynamics of Contention*, the definition above marks the occurrence of a collective political struggle that has roots in deeper and not often seen cases of institutional content. This definition is crucial for the purposes of this work as it implies the existence of institutional variables that influence public content. Those variables will be brought up to the discussion in the form of the policies and measures that have not only incited reaction by the population, but also allowed these reactions to take place in a democratic and participatory environment.

The institutional variables are just one part of a set of factors that compose an agenda that the same authors called “the classical social movement agenda.” They highlight five features that help to trigger and shape social movements: 1) *social change processes* in the political, cultural and economic fields; 2) *political opportunities and constraints*, meaning the features of the political environment that allow or prevent movements from happening (this particular factor played an important role in the case of Brazil with the participatory initiatives led by the PT and will be further discussed in this work); 3) *forms of organization* necessary to generate protest when the opportunity comes; 4) *framing* of collective grievances that might be rampant at the time and that are crucial for the creation of a collective identity –this factor will also be given special attention as one of the most important achievements of the movements under study in this work was the correct framing of the grievances that allowed the second social movement to take leadership in the protests in 2014; and finally, 5) the *repertoires of contention*, which are the means with which the movements are able to express and communicate their collective grievance. (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 41)

To this agenda, a remarkably copious and yet detailed one, I will add features of other theories in order to compose a framework that is more compatible with the case under analysis. This framework will cover both a macro view of the political and economic scenario
of Brazil and a focused study of the structure of the movements. The macro view will give a perspective on the institutional changes and opportunities that allowed the social movement scene in Brazil to flourish. The study of the movements focused on the leaderships and structures will show how the development of such groups played out and their evolution from May 2013 to August 2014.

**Resource Mobilization**

After an understanding of the current situation of contentious politics in Brazil, the study will then focus on the social movements’ organization and structure. To McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s abovementioned factor concerning repertoires, I will add features of the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), since resources are essential to the development of the repertoires. For the case studied in this thesis, I will argue that an increasing influx of resources played a critical role in the changes undergoing the social movements from 2013 to 2015. Thus, the influence resources played in such civil society organizations needs to be scrutinized, especially from the repertoires perspective.

The RMT was a new approach adopted by sociologists in Europe and the United States during the 1970’s. In 1977, McCarthy and Zald published what would become the classic theory of resource mobilization. Despite the heavy focus on North American society, the authors’ partial theory of resource mobilization can be transferred to the contemporary Brazilian context – and to many other different ones. Their theory of resource mobilization implies a structural analysis prior to the understanding of social movements’ own evolution. As a collective endeavor, social movements develop not only based on collective grievances, but also on the availability of a series of resources that can, structurally, allow the movement to develop on a smaller or larger scale, stronger or weaker, or even not happen at all. (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1216)
There are four main mechanisms of accessing the different types of resources that are important to social movements: self-production, aggregation, cooptation and patronage. As will be noted further in this text, after the first protests in 2013 there was a significant increase and diversification in the access to resources. At first using mainly self-production as a mechanism in 2013 (with Movimento Passe Livre), the new movements (Movimento Brasil Livre) started to also count on large donations (aggregation) and to appropriate the crowd mobilizations started by the first group. (Edwards and Guillham 2013)

Nevertheless, material assets are just one of five types of resources that a social movement can mobilize. Resources can also be cultural, social organizational, moral and human (Edwards and Guillham 2013). This work will analyze how both referred movements mobilize each of those types and how that influenced the change in the aspects of the civil society protests in Brazil.

**WUNC**

To the understanding of the resource mobilization and how the leaderships dealt with it, I will apply Charles Tilly’s WUNC theory to investigate the first major protest in June 2013 and the last one in the time frame proposed, in August 2015. WUNC is an acronym created by the author that stands for four characteristics that are indispensable for a social movement or demonstration to succeed: Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment. According to Tilly, a movement that combines all those four factors is very likely to have a significant impact in society (or government or institution they might be fighting against) (Tilly 2004). Using the WUNC factors to analyze the movements in 2013 with those of 2015 will add to the comparison of both cases and help in reaching a conclusion on the process of change that happened to their leadership and structure.
Furthermore, the WUNC analysis also relies on four factors that, according to the author, allow the social movements to rise. However, in his analysis Tilly points to a reality that is not consistent with the Brazilian one. Thus, in order to make it applicable to the case in question, the political economy analysis that I will present below is of extreme importance to help tailoring a more suitable theory.

Tilly hinges the rise of social movements on public overspending to finance wars; to a shift to parliamentarization, which allowed people to be closer to their representatives; the capitalization of previously excluded classes; and the proletarianization that allowed workers to be more independent. Drawing from among these factors, I will analyze the ones that are more applicable to our case: heavy public overspending relying on a growing economy and favorable commodity prices (instead of war); the increase in the participation channels created by the government that allowed people to be closer to their representatives; the income growth among people that once were once below the poverty line and; the entrance of a significant percentage of the population to the middle class (a contemporary way of seeing the concept of proletarianization) (Tilly 2004).

**Political Economy**

As noted before, it is critical to place the case and theories into the context of Brazil- the macro view. In order to do so, this analysis will account for Brazil’s general political economy background of the past 25 years. Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley have emphasized the importance of political economy and political sociology in analyzing social movements in Latin America. According to them:

“In the field of political economy, we argue that political and economic forces (from the global to the local) shape people’s lives in structured ways. Those forces affect inequities and injustices in people’s life experiences, perceptions of them, and responses to them,
Thus, the political and economic background has a direct influence in shaping people’s dissatisfactions, which then will be potentially transformed into collective grievances that can result in mobilization.

According to the same authors, political economy influences social movements through the political and economic conditions they set up both locally and nationally. The organization of government, the processes and channels through which people can deal with their representatives, and the situation of the economy itself can weight heavily on the people’s ability and will to demonstrate dissatisfaction on the streets. That, combined with economic grievances rooted in the structure designed by the state and on established social classes set up, can be a strong influence on the movements’ development within civil society (Wickham-Crowley and Eckstein 2015).

Brazil has changed vastly since re-democratization in 1989. Political participation became part of the agenda, the country suffered economic crises and recoveries and, especially, a significant reduction in inequality. Social policies that started to be implemented in the early 2000’s reduced the number of people below the poverty line and introduced a new group of people to the political scenario. That implied changes in the dynamics of political relations and gave greater room for mobilization. An analysis of those changes, centering on the rights of demonstration and political participation as result of a growing economy, will create the setting for a closer analysis of the social movements themselves.

It is important to separate the significance of political economy to the present case into two different elements: one concerns how changes in politics and improvements in the economy can shape the likelihood of social movements emerging (described in the previous topic as an increase in the channels between government and population); the other is the
influence of the economy on making class conflicts more pressing (described before as the rise of the middle classes and the exit of people from below the poverty line). The latter will be drawn from the Weberian theory of class and conflict, later used by Norbert Wiley (1967) to explain class politics as the main promoters of the opposition to the main political institutions, something that became recurrent in the Brazilian protests from 2014 on.

The analysis of those two perspectives will be possible by drawing from the historical background of political contention and of the evolution of political economy in Brazil that I will present on the next chapter. In sum, this work will bring together ideas of previous theorists of social movements in Latin America as an attempt to build a suitable conceptual framework for the Brazilian case in question. This conceptual framework will be, then, integrated to the political economy analysis of the country, permitting us to achieve the main goal of this thesis: the understanding of the changes in the main features of mass protests from May 2013 until August 2015.

1. Recent History of Political Content in Brazil

The military dictatorship that lasted twenty-one years in Brazil was a suppressor of citizen’s basic democratic rights. However, during this period a number of organized civil society resistance movements (from guerrilla groups to the catholic church) attempted to end the autocratic rule and bring back democracy and human rights to the country. Notwithstanding the importance and complexity of such groups, this paper will have its starting point with the movements that rose in the context of the decay of the military rule and pressed for direct democratic elections.

Similarly to the previously mentioned importance of the political economy context for the contemporary social movements to arise, changes in the way the military conducted their politics and a rampant economic crisis played an important role in allowing the social
movements that influenced the return to the democratic rule. Skidmore affirms, “The initiative for politic change, surprisingly enough, came from the military itself” (Skidmore 2010, 175-179). According to him, a set of behind the scene maneuvers made possible the loosening of the dictatorship ties, such as a decreasing censorship and police surveillance, allowing space for the social movements to grow.

1.1 Diretas Já

In 1974 General Ernesto Geisel came to power in Brazil and stayed until 1979. He was a moderate military taking over the presidency in the verge of the Debt Crisis. The fact that Geisel had moderate inclinations and the economic crisis that was about to happen are two crucial pieces of information to understand the changes that followed. If it weren’t for the moderate years of Geisel in power, the social movements fighting for democracy would never have had the dimensions and impact they had in changing the political system. In turn, the military “softening” by no means reduced the importance that the social movements had in pressing for democracy. This just helps evidence the role that institutional factors play in social movements, by allowing them to happen without violent repression and death, as were so common during the military rule (Skidmore 2010).

Similarly to what was discussed in the introduction, the political economy played an important role in fomenting the protests to the scale they gained. When Geisel was in Power, Brazil was about to enter what it is often called the “lost decade” of the economy, when numbers were collapsing, unemployment was rampant, and inflation was skyrocketing. This helped spreading the dissatisfaction with the military rule, decreasing the support they had and pushing more people to support the movement against it.

The only legal political opposition to the military rule at the time organized the protests and the Diretas Já (Direct Elections Now) movement: the PMDB (Partido do Movimento
Democrático Brasileiro, or Brazilian Democratic Movement’s Party). Today a right-leaning party, PMDB was then able to joint forces with dissident political leaders. Despite divergent political inclinations and aspirations, the movement was able to channelize the collective discontent with the military and to create a strong voice to press for changes.

What is also important to analyze is the presence of different mechanisms for pressuring the government in order to achieve the goal. Playing with few available resources, Diretas Já had to work within the borders of what was legal in order not to be shut down by the military. In that sense, one institutional factor played to the movement’s advantage: Brazil, unlike Chile and Argentina, never closed down its congress, which was still composed of elected officials, and that also allowed the soft-line military to slowly transition to democracy. That permitted congressman Dante de Oliveira (from the PMDB) to push forward an amendment proposal to the Constitution that would reestablish the direct presidential elections. The voting on the amendment was transmitted on television, which mobilized more people to the cause, resulting in a larger participation to the protests that would happen almost one year later (Skidmore, 1998).

Even though the amendment ended up not being approved by Congress, it played an important role in mobilizing people. The protests were allowed by the institutional changes that were going on inside the military regime, fostered by the economic crisis and escalated by smaller moves that were made previously, like the amendment. The adhesion of over 1.5 millions of people was the final catalyst to push the claims of the movement forward and to bring back the direct democratic elections to Brazil.

1.2 “Caras pintadas” and Collor’s Impeachment

Not long after the Diretas Já victory in 1984, Brazil was once again the stage to popular protests. The direct elections that the movement claimed feverously in the late 80’s finally
happened in 1989, when in a runoff the candidate Fernando Collor de Mello beat the union leader Lula da Silva, and became the first president elected by the people after the military dictatorship. His election came with high expectations of the renewal of democracy, only to become another disappointment. According to Teotônio dos Santos (1993), his short two-year rule showed how the oligarchy still dominated politics in Brazil and managed to stay intact and immune to justice.

Coming from a long line of conservative politicians from Alagoas, in the Northeast of Brazil, Collor de Mello was a member of three different parties until joining the National Reconstruction Party (PRN- Partido da Reconstrução Nacional), a small conservative party. He lived his two years in the presidency swimming through corruption scandals, bribes and poorly managed domestic economy. Later investigations found that his chief legal advisor acquired almost 2 billion reais in illegal transactions, and distributed other millions more in bribes to ministers and congressmen (Santos 1993).

The role the economy played in his impeachment was crucial. Poorly management of the country’s finances went beyond budgetary and macroeconomic policies. The economic package used to stabilized rampant inflation was, not only radical stabilization measures such as the implementation of a new currency with parity rates or the indexation of taxes, but also maneuvers that affected the population more directly: increasing the price of public utilities, freezing of wages and, most importantly, the blockage of financial assets liquidity (through the freezing of 80% of the private assets). Even though the freezing of the assets would be temporary (18 months), such an invasive interference of the public administration in the people’s private assets sparked a sentiment of distrust among the population (Carvalho 2006).

In the first moment, his popularity remained high despite the corruption accusations and bad economic policies. It was only with the announcement of the freezing of the assets and the exhaustive campaign by the media and the opposition on television that the sentiment of
discontent started to spread. Once again, the leaders of three diverse parties steered the opposition: Lula, from the Workers Party; Tasso Jereissati, from the Social Democratic Party; and Orestes Quercia, from the PMDB. Like the Diretas Já movement, organized almost a decade before, opposing politicians came together to fight for a common goal – that of impeaching the president.

Interestingly enough, the massive protests that followed were called by the president himself, and backfired. Relying on the popular support he had on his first year as a president, Collor de Mello went on TV to call people to support him on a public demonstration. He asked the population to take to the streets wearing the colors of the Brazilian flag but, instead, a wave of thousands of people got together in a “mourning” demonstration against the president, all dressed in black. This first protest unchained a series of demonstrations that became popularized as “Movimento dos Caras Pintadas” (Movement of the Painted Faces), in reference to the yellow and green paint that protesters used in their faces.

Corruption should not be considered the only cause of the social unrest that led to the major protests of 1992 (like the one detailed on the opening of this thesis). Social, economic and political factors are also to be accounted for. The Brazilian authors Sallum and Casarões (2011) point out the changes that the transition period promoted on the years prior to Collor. Aside from the severe economic crisis that demanded fundamental reforms, the political structure was also in a changing period, still adapting from the legacy of the military rule. Adding to this equation, a significant growth of urbanization brought a new number of people to participate in politics, which contributed to create social tension and unrest (Sallum and Casarões 2011, 187). Civil society participation was also allowed and fostered by the newly signed Constitution of 1988, which included expressly the rights of association and the requirement of civic participation in a few areas of public politics (Avritzer 2006). The president’s inability to establish a responsive dialogue with these growing new civil society
helped to fund the dissatisfaction with his persona and government, leading to the mass participation in the support of his impeachment.

The protests of the “caras pintadas”, then, had their peak in August 1992, with the demonstration in São Paulo. It was a movement organized by student unions and an opposition that united to fight for the president’s ousting. Despite using a relatively vast repertoire, the main push for the impeachment was the pressure from the protests, and the mobilization of leaders from different civil society groups and political groups. With no social media and a weak system of communications that relied mainly on open television and land telephone lines, the role of the student unions and parties was crucial for organizing the available resources and mobilizing such a great number of people on the streets. The support of television also weighed significantly, as it reached those parts of the population not yet engaged in politics. Right before the Senate declared his impeachment, Collor de Melo stepped down the presidency representing a victory for the movements and public political participation.

1.3 The March of the One Hundred Thousand

With Collor’s impeachment, his vice-president Itamar Franco assumed power for the next two years. Then, with the calling of new elections in 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) was elected. He had become famous for restoring the Brazilian economy during Franco’s rule. As a minister of economy, he implemented the Plano Real and got Brazil out of the hyperinflation wave that had destroyed the country’s economy. His first term was marked by a turn toward neoliberal policies, including the privatization of state-owned enterprises, such as Telebrás, a telecom giant. His first term was one of reforms and also the globalization of the Brazilian economy, which led to a rise in unemployment and social
unrest. Union strikes and “Landless Movement” (*Movimento dos Sem Terra*) invasions were commonplace.

It was also a period of openness to foreign markets and international dialogue (mainly with the signing of non-proliferation treaties and environmental pacts). Such style of governing in accord with the international order gave him the reputation of being a puppet of the IMF and International Banks, as well as a market-oriented politician with disregard for the less privileged population. In addition to that, he was targeted for corruption scandals related to the privatizations that were conducted during his presidency, and which contributed to a wave of dissatisfaction with his government. In the beginning of his second term, his approval rates lowered to an average of 30%, and the leaders of the leftist parties started to organize themselves to protest against him.

The “March of the One Hundred Thousand” (*Marcha dos Cem Mil*) was the first and largest demonstration to happen during FHC’s time as a president. Organized by the leaders of the PT (such as soon-to-be president Lula da Silva and presidential candidate Marina Silva), the march took place in the country’s capital, Brasilia, on August 26th 1999. The main claims included the corruption scandals with privatization, the dissatisfaction with the shrinking economy, and even the demands for the president’s impeachment. Besides the march, this protest was also marked by the handing of a petition to the president of Congress, asking for the investigation of the president for the privatization of *Telebrás*. The repertoire of the movement named “*Fora FHC*” (Out with FHC) included legal documents, demonstrations (*Marcha dos Cem Mil*), and petitions, proving the leadership to be well organized and skillful with mobilizing the available resources.

The protests also came in the context of an economy on the verge of a crisis. After FHC’s successful stabilization plan, it was necessary to implement a new economic plan in order to maintain growth and promote the social policies the country needed. However, his
administration stuck with the stabilization’s orthodox policies and that had a negative impact in regular people’s lives, making him unpopular among the lower social strata (Skidmore 2010).

Cardoso’s social policies included assertive racial measures to tackle discrimination, the creation of small Conditional Cash Transfer Programs and the breaking of the patents for HIV drugs. This counterbalanced the president’s unpopularity on his second term and, allied with the derailment of his corruption accusations, protected him from the bigger impact that the social movements could have caused. Ultimately, the March of the Hundred Thousand marked a slow beginning of the PT’s ascension to power.

1.4 The Peaceful Phase during Lula’s Government

The inauguration of president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) in 2003 marked a new beginning for thousands of underprivileged families in Brazil. Over 70,000² people made their way to the state capital to celebrate their new representative, the first to come from a poor background and make his way to the highest political position in the country. This manifest was one of the largest demonstrations of Lula’s two mandates – a president who was able to maintain his popularity through eight years in power, and leave the seat as the most popular president in the history of Brazil.

Despite the leftist ideology of his Workers Party, Lula maintained a moderate economic policy, and carefully chose his ministers to build a positive link with important political and business groups. The more extremist leaders of his party later heavily attacked his affinity for an orthodox economic style and for benefiting businesses, but that maneuver guaranteed him enough support to govern with ease and prosperity. This strategy avoided major disruptions against him or his policies (Skidmore 2010).

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² Estimates made by the Military Police of Distrito Federal (PMDF)
During his two terms, Lula was also able to build strong channels of civil-society participation in relation to his government. After the success of participatory budgeting that the PT implemented at the state and municipal levels, Lula decided to expand them when he came to the federal power in 2002. He, then, created the Advisory Councils (*Conselhos Participativos*). Leaders of business, unions and civil society groups, appointed by the president himself, formed these councils. The idea was to engage the citizens in the governments through their leader’s direct participation in the decision-making process, in an effort that challenged the alleged elitism of the representative democracy system by making participation more universal, and not only through elected leaders (Goertzel 2011, 95-98).

Despite several criticisms from the opposition, this model of engaging civil society served as a good channel of communications between people and their governments. In addition to a scenario of accelerated economic growth and prosperity and good relations with different sectors of the economy, that reduced drastically the occurrences of major protests and demonstrations. Lula’s two terms in the presidency were, thus, peaceful concerning social unrest, despite the major accusations of his vote-buying schemes in Congress, the *Mensalão*, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

Lula’s popularity allowed him to influence the next elections by supporting Dilma Roussef, his successor in the PT. Dilma’s campaign and fame drew upon Lula’s legacy and wide approval among the Brazilian population. However, in the beginning of her second term, Dilma started to face a heavy opposition from the population, and massive protests started to take place in 2013.

2 The Political Economy Context

If Dilma finishes her second term, the Workers’ Party will set the record for being in presidency for the longest time in Brazil’s democratic history. Her predecessor, Lula, stayed
in power for two mandates, and if not impeached, Dilma will follow his steps, totaling sixteen consecutive years of rule by the PT. In those sixteen years the country changed tremendously: partially because of the fact that Brazil was still in the process of democratization after almost twenty years of military rule, and partly because the left democratically became the establishment for the first time.

The changes were various, embracing social, economical and political realms. Socially, the most famous achievement was the Conditional Cash Transfer Program *Bolsa Família* that helped reduce the number of people below the poverty line. In addition, the expansion of social rights and policies favoring the less privileged were also commonplace. Concerning the economy, Brazil lived through a period of progress during Lula’s years. Riding on a wave of favorable commodity prices and subsidies, the government was able to promote hundreds of thousand into the middle classes, fostering greater consumption and heating up the economy. The situation, however, changed during Dilma’s first term, affecting mainly the same people that benefited from the economic policies years before. Finally, politically speaking, Brazil moved itself from what Guillermo O’Donnell (1994) called a “delegative democracy” to a more participatory democracy.

When popular participation in the decision-making process was fostered by numerous mechanisms, such as participatory budgeting and local civil society committees directly responsible to their local population, the PT challenged O’Donnell’s characterization of Latin American post-dictatorship democracies. With increasing channels of participation from which the population could hold representatives accountable, democracy moved from being a mere system of people voting to elect “delegates” of the public interest (O’Donnell 1994).

Changes in the three categories described above allowed, and at times even promoted, the flourishing of protests and civil-society movements. Therefore it is of extreme importance to analyze them in detail, in order to set the background for the protest acts of 2013 and 2014.
2.1 Expansion of Social Rights

Brazil has a welfare history that dates back to Getúlio Vargas in the 1930’s. Since then, the left and the right have both implemented policies aimed at relieving poverty in the country. But it was only after the return to democracy in the early 1990’s that cash transfer benefits started to spread as important social policies of the government.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso kick-started such social assistance through Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), drawing on a law approved in 1993. The Organic Law of Social Assistance (Lei Orgânica da Assistência Social – LOAS) determined social assistance to be a right of the citizen and a duty of the state (Planalto 1993). When in office, then, FHC developed a series of small conditional cash transfers that were ultimately the base for Lula’s implementation of *Bolsa Família*, the largest CCT in the world.

*Bolsa Família* changed the lives of millions of families by providing the basic income that would result in immediate poverty alleviation through transfer of money to targeted, beneficiary households. It also drove human-capital development through incentivizing school attendance and facilitating childhood vaccinations. The mitigation of extreme poverty had indirect impacts on politics: it increased the number of people directly benefiting from a government’s policy, which pushed them closer to an involvement with politics.

This involvement appeared mainly through elections. However, a few episodes show that no longer bound by the daily concern of having food to eat, people became more civically engaged. One such episode happened, coincidently, one month before the first protests of June. In May 2013 more than 900,000 people mobilized following a rumor that *Bolsa Família* would be eliminated in order to cut government overspending. It is important to note that *Bolsa Família* still has the trait of being a social program, not a right, which generates uncertainty among families relying on the government’s help. Thus, with a single rumor,
hundreds of thousands took to the streets to protest without any social media organization or strong leadership (Morton 2014).

Despite being viewed as confusion and not a political protest, the single fact that the prospect of not being able to count on the cash transfers mobilized so many people shows the sense of empowerment that the social programs fostered among the poorest segments of the Brazilian society. Once marginalized by extreme poverty, these families now have better lives and better prospects, which contribute to turning them into citizens and participating more in the political field.

2.2 Economic growth

One of the most important factors in the political economy context of Brazil in the 2000’s is the significant economic growth in that period. Brazil’s GDP and other important indicators rose exponentially during the Lula years, only to be broken down a few years later, with Dilma now in power.

![FIGURE 1: Brazil’s GDP since the 1960’s (World Bank 2013)](image)

The economic growth can be associated with a set of internal and external factors that contributed to improve Brazil’s indicators. On the domestic side, macroeconomic policies
that aimed at heating up the consumer markets were in place, following what is usually called the Central Bank’s “tripod”: clear inflation targets, a floating exchange-rate regime, and exact targets for the primary budget surplus. On the external side, a rise on capital inflows and the export and commodity booms helped to maintain the financial health of the country (Serrano and Suma 2011).

Along with the economic growth came social improvement. The social programs described in the previous section helped remove over 25 million from below the poverty line. According to a World Bank analysis, the country went from having 46 million poor in 2003 (those with a daily income below $3.10), to 18 million in 2013 -- a record improvement for the most unequal region in the world (World Bank 2013).

In addition to the reduction of the number of people below the poverty line, Brazil experienced a substantial growth in its middle class\(^3\). Analysts and authors called it the “new middle class” that came as a result of the positive economic scenario that the country was going through.

Between 2003 and 2011 around 39.6 millions of people entered the middle class (Neri 2013). The 2000’s represented, in general, a period of social ascension of the Brazilian society. The numbers on the table below express the tendency of “moving up” of the Brazilian social classes, showing how many people left (minus sign) and how many entered (plus sign) each social stratum:

\(^3\) In the present case, middle class is an economic concept based on the various economic strata of the society. It does not represent the Marxian concept of social class.
Aside from representing new consumer markets, the new middle class also implies an increase in the expectations for the future. Thomas Friedman explains how the middle class’ individual optimism to improve in the future is the main booster of the wealth of the nations (Friedman 2005). Understanding that a growing middle class represents growing expectations is crucial to link the political economy context of Brazil to the social unrest that started in 2013.

Once millions of people entered the middle class, they started to heat up the consumer market and their perception of life became more positive. With an improved perception of life, the new middle class tended to economically behave expecting an improvement in the future, and that includes more spending, investment and entrepreneurship, which also imply more risk (Neri 2013). When the economy started to shrink, the optimism gave place to frustration, debt and closing of small businesses. Even the people who were able to maintain their economic status, had to give up on future aspirations that were no longer viable given the new economic context.

The rising inflation and devaluation of the currency caused a rise in the prices of basic goods, which resulted in higher vulnerability of the recently conquered status. Norbert Wiley explains how the equivalent to the Weberian theory of class conflict nowadays is actually the economic relations between vulnerable classes and dominant classes. In this case, rather than
the focus of the social unrest being the value of wages, it gravitates around the prices of the consumer goods. Once vulnerable classes are faced with economic pressures that threaten their recently acquired status, they tend to turn against the main power that “caused” this to happen (Wiley 1967).

In the case of Brazil this relation is clear. The broad and vulnerable new middle class that only a few years ago joined this group, started to feel the pressures from an economy that was managed irresponsibly by the party in power. The government overspending, excessive subsidies and reliance on the favorable external market that once helped heating the country’s economy started to generate losses that were directly perceived by the new middle class. Once the chance to join a movement that fought against such irresponsible government appeared in the beginning of 2014, their tendency was to engage in the protests, turning against the power that caused it.

### 2.2.1 The Internet Revolution

The economic growth in Brazil also coincided with the dissemination of Internet and cellphones. Along with the economy’s prosperity, the “mobile revolution” reached Brazil in the 2000’s, getting to a point in which the youth in rural and poorer areas also had access to the world web and social media.

Brazil was, in 2013, the country with the fifth highest rate of Internet users in the world. Estimates are that by 2016 the country will pass Japan and move up to 4th place (Kantar Ibope 2013). As of 2013, more than 105 millions of Brazilians had Internet access. This represents an average of 48% of the total population – a number that grew significantly from the 27% it was in 2007 (Fecomercio-RJ 2011). It is also estimated that 78% of Generation Y (20-34 years old) have access to the Internet (Ibope Inteligência 2013).
The growth of Internet access was a result of both the increase in the purchasing power enabled by the fast growing economy of the Lula years, and of the evolution of technology that made cellphones with broadband Internet and access to social media more affordable.

An increase in the Internet access is a crucial piece to understand the puzzle of the social movements that erupted in Brazil, as they were almost entirely promoted on Facebook events and groups. Brazil is the largest user of social media after the US, and as of 2013 over 65 million Brazilians were on Facebook. In addition to this number, Brazilians are also the nationality that has the largest increase in time spent on social media (Chao 2013). With such a substantial online engagement, it is understandable that the rise of the three main groups that took over the leadership of the protests in 2014 happened using Facebook as a platform. Thus, it is undisputable the role of the growth in Internet access to create a favorable background for the rising of the protests.

2.3 Politics

Brazil is a presidential democracy that once flirted with parliamentarism in the early 1990’s. This explains the weight of the two houses of Congress (Chamber of Deputies and Senate) in Brazil’s politics. With thirty-three political parties currently registered in the Supreme Electoral Court and more than 20 of them represented in Congress, governability is nothing short of a real challenge. This situation has inspired the coalition system, in which the dominant party makes partnerships with smaller ones in order to assure a majority of support.

In such fragmented party system, it is common that politicians jump from one party to another, in order to take advantage of the proportional system, in which only a pre-given number of candidates from a coalition or party can be elected. It is safe to say that politics in Brazil’s recent democratic history has relied on a very personalistic appeal of the candidates,
and a weak ideological structure for guiding voters during elections. Mainwaring and Scully, and Lamounier have argued about Brazil’s “inchoate” party system in the 90’s, and how there was no apparent perspective of building such a structured system that would allow the country’s democracy to improve (Lamounier 1989; Mainwaring and Scully 1999).

The importance of the party system lies on the fact that political participation in Brazil is still heavily represented by the vote. With mandatory universal elections, participation rate is not a concern of politicians. Given the heavy reliance on participation through vote, the main focus of the analysis should be that the options from where people can chose from are not based in institutionalized and structured parties, which contribute negatively to the outcomes of the elections.

2.3.1 Political Participation

The population’s engagement in politics has traditionally been done through the vote. The Federal Constitution defines elections, plebiscites and referendums as mandatory civic rights for people over eighteen years old, as the expression of democracy and the people sovereignty in the country. The constitution also protects the citizen’s right to association and public demonstration, implemented in 1988 with the new Constitution adopted after the fall of the military dictatorship. This has allowed civil society groups to flourish in Brazil since the re-democratization period, in the late 1980’s.

Recently the number of people involved in civil society groups (such as Non Governmental Organizations, unions, political movements, etc.), and the number of new groups advocating for a wide variety of issues have both grown immensely. There is an expanding notion of a need for greater citizen engagement in the public sphere, in order to expand transparency and weaken the widespread corruption in the country. However, there is

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4 Art. 14, Constituição Federal de 1988
a lack of organization that makes it harder to channel the issues to the local and federal governments. Furthermore, there is also a lack of dialogue between groups, regardless of their orientation or claims. This happens mainly because the growth in political activism has outrun any solid organizational structure supporting it.

The main reason why civic engagement is low in Brazil dates back to the colonization, when the structures of political organization were developed in an elitist way that excluded the majority of the population (illiterate and poor) from any sort of participation in government (Conniff, 1989). This has resulted in a low level of association-drive and a small number of channels from which to interact with the government. Both problems have been slowly addressed since the period of re-democratization. People have started to manifest their discontent through protests, and the issue of the lack of channels has been slowly improved through government initiatives that give voice to the population.

Those initiatives are being mainly developed by local governments and a number of them have been internationally praised. One of them is the case of participatory budgeting implemented in the city of Porto Alegre in 1989, already presented in previous topics. Another one is the growing number of Non Governmental Organizations created to promote transparency and accountability and, finally, the new social movements that have rose from the recent protests.

Aside from those examples, Brazil has also seen growth in race, gender, and sexual orientation movements, which have contributed immensely to the flourishing of civil society engagement. They advocate for their groups’ interests, pressing for changes in the laws that relate to their rights. By the end of 2014 Brazil counted 303,000 civil society groups, at which 2% were non-profit institutes, 8% religious institutions, and the remainder general non-profit groups (Vargas 2014).
However, the growth of civil society groups tackles only one side of the problem, the one that refers to association. In the matter of government channels, despite the attempts of the PT government to create dialogue with the people through participatory budgeting and Conselhos Participativos, the recurrent number of protests that have erupted since 2013 show how there is still a growing discontent with politics in general, and how the political system needs to adapt to the people’s claim for more participation.

2.3.2 Corruption Scandals

Brazil’s recent democratic history has been permeated with corruption scandals, from Collor in the 1990’s to the gigantic Petrobrás scandal currently under investigation, incriminating big names in business and politics -- including the president herself. Although corruption is not the single force when it comes to mobilizing mass protests to advocate for impeachment, it is definitely a catalyst. Even if corruption is not taken as the main motivator of the protests, the main chants over the past years have been against the rampant corruption that has typified Brazil since the colonial period. Thus, understanding the context of the major corruption scandals can be beneficial to the study of the social movements, as they engender deep dissatisfaction with the political system.

Mensalão

One of the largest corruption scandals up to early 2000’s was the Mensalão. The word refers to the monthly (mensal) allowance that Congressmen received from the federal government in order to improve the presidential system’s governability. Twenty-five politicians and congressmen went on trial and were convicted, and yet almost all of them found a way to reduce their penalties or escape punishment. Some of the Congressmen are still in Congress (Gall 2005).
As with every major political scandal in Brazil, Mensalão came to surface because of a leak and a whistleblower. After the video of a contractor paying a bribe to a Post Office Commissioner hit the Internet and implicated a congressman (Roberto Jefferson), he decided to tell about the entire scheme of “allowances” that the Workers’ Party was promoting in exchange for votes in Congress. One of the fastest tools for political accountability in Brazil’s Congress is a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (popularly known as CPI), and at the moment the scandal surfaced, a CPI begun:

“When a major story about corruption appears in the press, the opposition often demands a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry. A Parliamentary Commission had led to President Fernando Collor’s resignation under threat of impeachment, and the Workers’ Party repeatedly demanded such commissions during Cardoso’s presidency. Now that the tables were reversed, the Workers’ Party desperately fought to prevent the appointment of a Parliamentary Comission.” (Goertzel 2011, 55)

Despite the PT’s resistance, the CPI was established and Jefferson’s whistle blowing incriminated major leaders of the Workers’ Party - including José Dirceu, one of its biggest names since its foundation; Delúbio Soares, the Party’s treasurer; and Jose Genuíno, the Party’s president. Lula himself was not cited as being directly involved in the scheme.

There was talk of impeachment among the opposition, but that soon vanished because of the strong popular support Lula still held despite the scandal. Former President FHC publicly advised Lula not to run for a second term, in respect for the Brazilian people, but Lula did so and won another four years in the presidential seat.

*Lava Jato*

According to Brazil’s Federal Prosecutor’s Office, *Operação Lava Jato* (translated as Operation Car Wash) is the largest corruption investigation to ever take place in the history of Brazil. The office responsible for controlling and managing the investigations and
prosecutions has already opened more than one thousand procedures that have resulted in over six hundred search and arrest warrants (MPF 2016).

The name of the operation refers to the gas stations and car washes owned by the criminal organization that was first investigated for money laundering, in early 2014. The investigations were unchained by the arrest of money exchanger Alberto Youssef, in March 2014. The investigations and his subsequent whistle-blowing led to the discovery of one of the largest corruption schemes Brazil has ever seen, involving the largest Brazilian construction multinational companies, the state-owned oil giant Petrobrás, and a number of smaller businessmen and politicians. Later phases of the investigations have counted with whistle blowers citing big names of the country’s government.

The operation has been conducted openly, under wide coverage by the media and scrutiny of the people. This has resulted in a widespread involvement of the regular population in the processes, and has added to the public discontentment with the current government in particular, and the political class in general.

3 The Protests

The 2013-2015 protests to be analyzed in this study are directly related to the political and economic context presented above. The new Constitution granted civil rights of association for the population; a growing economy inserted new people in the political scenario; the leftist government opened new channels of participation; the expansion of Internet access allowed more participation in the virtual forum and; the emergence of corruption scandals catalyzed the mobilization.
3.1 Movimento Passe Livre

Officially created in 2005 deriving from independent groups that advocated for zero transport tariffs, MPL is a “horizontal, autonomous, independent and non-partisan movement” that does not preach anti-partisanship. They describe themselves as the means to reach the end of obtaining free tariffs for public transportation, which they believe to be a fundamental right and the first step toward a more egalitarian and fair society. The movement also claims to have no relations with NGOs, religious groups or financial institutions. Their stated strategy of action is trough the people, without using congressional forms of achieving goals (MPL 2016).

The organization of the movement is horizontal. There is no figure of a leader, as they try to act according to their Only Front Principle “Frente Única”, in which the interests of the movement come before any personal ideology of the members. Even though there might be spokespersons that represent the movement in interviews or in the organization of protests in different regions, the manifest of the movement states that every member has “the same decision power, the same voice and the same role of leadership” (MPL, 2016). Administrative responsibilities rotate among members. The group does not accept resources from private entities or institutions. They are entirely funded by donations and the selling of regalia.

3.1.1 The Background of the June Journeys

Popularly known in the media as The June Journeys (Jornadas de Junho), the major protests that put Brazil into international headlines had their first stimuli in April 2013. From April to July of that same year, what started as small protest acts with a few hundred people fighting against the rise in São Paulo’s bus fares, escalated to a national mobilization.
In late March and early April, announcements of readjustments in the bus fares of the main capital cities in Brazil sparked small protests organized by regional chapters of the MPL. Porto Alegre, Manaus and Gioânia were the first cities to stage protests that counted with an average of two hundred participants in each of them. In May 17, 2013, Mayor Fernando Haddad, and the governor of São Paulo, Geraldo Alkmin, announced the rise in the bus fares in the city for the 1st of June. At that moment, the amount to be increased was not yet defined (G1 2013).

Since 1995 the transport system in the city of São Paulo has been unified and is managed by an independent body, SP Trans (a short for São Paulo Transporte). Although the municipal government is responsible for the buses, and the state government for the trains and Metro, SP Trans deals with the administrative process of integrating all the modes of transportation. They are also responsible for hiring the private companies that operate the fleet lines, including the buses (SP Trans 2014).

It is common for the transportation companies to adjust their fares in the beginning of each year in accordance with the Consumer Price Index. However, at the end of 2013 Finance Minister Guido Mantega made an agreement with both the governor and the mayor to hold off the rise until the federal government was able to control inflation. The local governments then implemented subsidies to the price of the fares until the situation became unsustainable and they agreed to allow the rise (G1 2013).
One week after the announcement of the rise in May 17, a municipal decree authorized the addition of R$0.20 to the bus fare. That decree unfolded three important actions led by the MPL: a meeting with the mayor Fernando Haddad to discuss the rise; a vigil against the rise; and leafleting distribution in the periphery of São Paulo. These actions show the repertoire the MPL uses, but it also points to the style of the mechanisms that the group adopts. According to Tilly, protests, demonstrations, vigils and leafleting distributions consist on traditional social movements mechanisms that have been used since the 18th century.

Those three actions, however, were still small and counted mainly on the participation of long-term supporters of the movement. It was at this point that social media started to play an important role in disseminating the call for further action. The use of Facebook events and groups to organize and invite people to join the protests was able to mobilize people who were not directly engaged with the movement’s leadership, but who shared the same ideals of the MPL. At this point, the main composition of protesters was students with ideals similar to the MPL, who also believed that no charges for public transportation are a fundamental right for building a more equal society.
On June 3 there was another protest that would likely be similar to the previous one. Nevertheless, given the location of the protest – an important road that links São Paulo to a highly populated periphery – the police was called to disperse the movement so that traffic could flow again. The police encountered resistance from the demonstrators and reacted violently (G1 2013). On that same day, protests started to spark in Rio de Janeiro, another important city with high media visibility.

After this protest, the MPL used the violence by the police to appeal for more supporters in their next scheduled act. The result was a protest with over five thousand people in São Paulo on June 6. Their location, this time, were the surroundings of Avenida Paulista, the most famous avenue of the city and home of a number of businesses where hundreds of thousands of people circulate daily. The protest, however, got out of hand once the policemen escorting the demonstrators started to fire gas bombs and rubber bullets when the protesters allegedly changed the course of their march without previous notice. Protesters reacted to the police violence and the conflict escalated, resulting in property destruction and people wounded (G1 2013).

The media tried to portray the protesters as vandals, but independent media and social media played a crucial role in publicizing videos, photos and statements made by protesters themselves. That happened also in the two following protests, in June 11 and June 13, and the spreading of police violence toward the protesters (mainly without their provocation) started to spark rage in the population leading to the first major protest of June 17.

3.1.2 The June Journeys

June 17 marked the beginning of the large protests at the same time that the rise in the bus fares started to lose its force as the main grievance of the protesters. Over 250,000 people
took to the streets (65,000 of them in São Paulo) mainly sparked by the empathy awakened by the police violence in the previous protests.

The joining of such a large number of new people to the protests also brought new views and ideologies to the streets. Rather than strong supporters of the Free Pass Movement, the people engaging in the mobilizations had wider claims, which was shown in the signs they held during the demonstration. A larger movement with wider claims consequently led to more media coverage and social media sharing. The result was the largest movement of the June Journeys: the protests of June 20. The table below presents estimated numbers of the main protests, allowing the understanding of the fast growth of support to the movements.

![Figure 3: Evolution in the size of MPL’s June protests in São Paulo (Estimates based on numbers from the local media and the military police)](image)

The protest of June 20 was completely different from the one that happened on June 3. Rather than a unified movement, centered on the leadership of MPL’s principle of transport as a fundamental right, people used the commotion and the momentum of the protests to voice their other discontents. This time the protest in São Paulo gathered an average of
100,000 people, and simultaneous protests took place in other capitals of the country, totaling more than 1.5 million people mobilized nationwide\(^5\).

After the major apex of the protests in June 20, many other demonstrations continued on a smaller scale throughout the country (as it can be seen in the graphic above). The protests went on until mid-July but, at that point, many of them were not associated with MPL, and had different goals.

3.1.3 The Governmental Responses

The first government response that can be identified in this thread of actions is one of dialogue. The mayor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad, called representatives of the MPL to talk about the options and their proposals concerning transport in São Paulo. That was a direct response to the late-May actions organized by the group such as the leafleting distribution in the periphery.

São Paulo’s governor’s response, however, was more violent. As an institution answerable to the state government, calling on the Police in the protests in early June was a repressive measure that backfired and sparked an escalation of the protests. The orders for using rubber bullets and gas bombs were authorized by the government, since they have the ultimate call concerning police action, and were widely criticized by the population especially when the governor himself also called the protesters “rioters” and “vandals”. By mid-June, when the protests had already reached a larger portion of the population, the governor changed his tone and claimed he would investigate police abuse based on the

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\(^5\) It is important to make clear the researchers challenge in obtaining accurate data when it comes to protests. The military police of São Paulo always publish estimates of the headcount, as does a polling institute called Data Folha. However, both estimates have been challenged by the protesters, who claim that they are publishing smaller numbers to undermine the movement, or by the opposition, who says the numbers are inflated. The data in this work are an estimate based on the numbers by the Military Police, Data Folha, G1, and Estado de São Paulo.
smartphone footage that was being spread on social media. In June 17 the police released a statement in which officials were forbidden to use rubber bullets to disperse the protests.

While both the mayor and the governor tried to maintain their position’s in not reducing the fares, on June 19 they revoked the decree and the price for bus tickets went back to R$3.00. This announcement came at the moment that the protests were escalating not only in São Paulo, but also in other state capitals in major cities. The capital of the state of Goiás, Goiânia, for example, went back on its decision to rise the fares on the June 13, and two days later four other state capitals followed and also reduced their fares back to the old price.

The federal government itself stepped in on June 18, with a statement from the president Dilma Roussef. The statement characterized the protests as the voice of people who want change in the country, and who are tired of corruption and of not being represented by the politicians. She said she was proud of the protesters for their engagement and stated that the federal government was committed to being responsive to the clamor in the streets.

On June 24 she went further and invited the MPL to discuss issues at the presidential house, at the same time she made public what were called “five pacts for Brazil”. The pacts were a result of a meeting she summoned with the mayors of the state capitals and state governors to try to address the clamors being raised in the streets. The five pacts cluster around five major themes: 1) the economy, through fiscal adjustment and control of inflation; 2) in politics, she reinforced the proposal for calling a plebiscite to vote on political reform and promised to create an anti-corruption package; 3) improvement of the public health system; 4) calling for the support for her proposal that 100% of the royalties from oil-exploration in the country would be used to invest in education; and 5) improvement of transportation through federal government investment and tax relief.

The majority of the proposals in the pacts were not put into action. The plebiscite for political reform was considered unconstitutional and did not go further. The fiscal adjustment
to control inflation was not enough and the numbers went up in the next months, passing 9% in 2016. Amidst the political and economic crisis that followed, the presidency was also not able to implement its health and education plans as proposed. The only measure that was, in fact, applied, was the anti corruption package (partially).

3.1.4 Black Blocs

With origins in 1970’s Berlin, the Black Blocs are a group of people who use a different tactic and more violent mechanisms to protest. Their ideals are often associated with anarchism, but they usually appear in demonstrations organized by other groups, such as the Occupy movement in the USA, and the Egyptian protests against the Muslim Brotherhood.

In Brazil they started to make appearances during the June Journeys. They followed the usual black bloc tactic of wearing dark colors and hiding their faces with masks, glasses or scarves, in an attempt to avoid criminal prosecution for the violence and destruction of property they employ. According to their own participants, the black blocs are a leaderless movement that is not an organized group (Grillo 2014). Black bloc participants independently take the initiative to appear in movements organized by other movements adding violence and turmoil to it.

As a non-organized group whose only evident information is the tactics they use, the Black Blocs cannot be analyzed as a social movement in Brazil. Despite probably coming from civil society, black bloc claims are unclear, since they attack both the government and private organizations, making it look like a general “anti-system” movement (Grillo 2014).

In the case of Brazil, then, the black blocs can be seen as an unwanted or as a strengthening force to the movements. Just like the other recent movements in which the black blocs took part, protesters either love or hate them. Some see them as the ones that protect the protesters from the police, since they fearlessly fight back against any police
abuse. On the other hand, protesters have already manifested their dissatisfaction with the radicals as they hinge the demonstration’s legitimacy (Douglas-Bowers 2014).

3.1.5 Understanding the June Journeys

According to Charles Tilly’s WUNC theory, a movement is likely to be successful and have an impact in society when it has Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment. Through the June Journeys, the protests organized by the MPL evolved from having more Unity and Commitment to having more Worthiness and Numbers.

Worthiness

A movement is considered Worthy when its participants include members of the society who are considered respected, such as clergy and mothers with children. The beginning of the June Journeys, however, counted only upon young students related to the MPL. As the protests escalated in numbers, more people started to go to the streets and that included families, the elderly, and children, thus providing the movement with more worthiness. The big changes that allowed these people to join the movements were the protests of June 17. After news of police conflict and black bloc action, June 17 was a very peaceful protest that counted with a wider public and encouraged more people to join in the big protests of June 20. Despite hindering the worthiness of the protests because of the violence it promotes, the black blocs did not make an appearance on those larger protests, guaranteeing its positive image.

Unity

The unity of the protests was apparently maintained relatively stable throughout the June Journeys, but a closer analysis reveals that it diminished from the point of view of the MPL.
Unity refers to the general visual identity of the protest, which is a reflex of the harmony of the social movement itself. The early actions were smaller and partaken by engaged supporters of the Free Pass cause. Nevertheless, as the movements grew, people with different beliefs and claims started to take part in the protests, making it more heterogeneous.

Relevant to this part of the analysis are the attempts by political parties and other groups to claim the movements for themselves and try to take advantage of their strength. In the protests around June 11 and June 13, when the movements were starting to see an increase in participation, leftist parties such as the Socialist Party (PSOL), and the main Workers Union (CUT) sent representatives with flags and badges to the protests. Their attempt, however, failed badly. Not only the MPL (who likely share their beliefs and ideology) but also the protesters themselves rejected their participation. In fact, there was even conflict between protesters and the party members, who finally decided to flee the protests. From that moment on a feeling of anti-partisanship took over the movement, even though the MPL made it clear to be non-partisan, and not anti-partisan.

Even though peace was restored after the expulsion of the parties, the joining of people with different claims and who not necessarily shared the MPL’s principles, made the unity go down on the largest protests of June 17 and 20. Despite an apparent unity of people wearing the Brazilian flag and chants against the rise in the fare, the posters started to show claims for less corruption, better public health and more investment in education, showing the lack of unison among the protesters.

**Numbers**

A social movement would not have great impact without large numbers. Even though 200 people can make significant noise and government should respond to people’s grievances despite the number of people involved, numbers increase the likelihood of a movement to
actually effect a change in society. In the case of MPL, as the protests grew in size, so did the media attention and the urgency for governments to respond and take action.

However, as noted in the analysis of the other factors, numbers often come with heterogeneity, as it is extremely difficult to have millions of people committed to the same cause—especially when the cause is as specific as free fares for public transportation. As it will be seen in the next topic, however, the movements for impeachment were able to maintain unity despite growing numbers of participants because they maintained certain vagueness to their cause.

**Commitment**

As a solid and organized social movement based on clear principles, its supporters are committed to the cause and have shown this in the early stages of the protests. They faced adversities such as bad weather, travelling to far peripheries and the repression of the police, showing high levels of commitment. However, as the protests escalated, the new people joining it did so not necessarily in respect to the cause itself, but to use the momentum of the social instability the demonstrations created to voice their other grievances. Because of this lack of strong ties to the cause they were less prone to facing adversities in the name of the movement, making the commitment to the main cause lower as the June Journeys reached its peak.

**3.2 The Leadership-vacuum Period**

On January 25, 2014, small groups of protesters gathered in different capital cities to protest. Their claims, this time, differed from the unison chant against the rise in the bus tariffs since they were organized by smaller groups with more diverse claims. In São Paulo, once again they gathered in Avenida Paulista, only this time black blocs coexisted with small
leftist groups and middle-class families. The heterogeneity of the group and the lack of a clear leadership soon fostered confusion as black blocs set fire to objects and the protests were then portrayed on the media as vandalism - despite the fact that other groups were peacefully protesting (Locatelli and Martins 2014).

Despite the confusion in claims and the lack of leadership, the protests that took place on the first semester of 2014 were generally against the FIFA World Cup – that would happen in July of that same year. The announcement of the billions of dollars spent in building stadiums for the event, at the same time that other infrastructure projects were delayed and left neglected, infuriated the population. The World Cup became the escape goat of the frustration with the government and with corruption.

Small groups were formed as an attempt to lead the protests during this time, such as a collective called “Contra Copa 2014” (Against the 2014 World Cup), but they did not last long nor they were able to engage a number of people as significant as the previous MPL protests. Interestingly enough, the groups were well organized and some of them had clear goals with the protests. The “Popular World Cup Committee of São Paulo” mobilized to claim things such as the right for independent vendors to work around the stadiums, or against the tax exemption conceded to FIFA (Locatelli and Martins 2014).

The reasons why the World Cup protests did not manage to gather more than 1,200 people at once, nor did they affect the event as they intended to, can be summarized in two main points: the enthusiasm of the elites (middle classes included) for the event, which was sold out in the first hours of ticket sales; and the specificity of the small movements that tried to mobilize the protests, which only gathered people who shared the same precise concerns.

The World Cup ended up happening with no major issues, but protests did not stop after the games ended. The second half of 2014 was also permeated by small protests, only this
time three groups rose as the callers to action, using mainly Facebook as a tool to get supporters.

### 3.2.1 Movimento Brasil Livre

The Free Brazil Movement (*Movimento Brasil Livre*, MBL) was created in the midst of the social unrest in Brazil during 2014. After the June Journeys of 2013 and the leadership vacuum in early 2014, a new movement rose as the callers of the protests taking over the major cities in the country.

Despite having being responsible for organizing the protests in March, April and August 2014, the movement was officially founded in December 2014. The date of foundation points to an extremely important characteristic of the movement: it was a byproduct of the context of discontent that has taken over Brazil since 2013. Unlike MPL, with solid roots since 2005, MBL originated “naturally” from inside the movements, and took advantage of the leadership gap that characterized the protests in 2014.

That social movement is funded on libertarian roots, following the ideology of Ludwig Von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. As such, their principles gravitate around those of classical liberalism, an ideology advocating private property, a free market economy, the rule of law and free trade. From this ideology they created the five principles that guide MBL’s actions: 1) free and independent press; 2) economic freedom; 3) separation of powers; 4) free and fair elections and; 5) the end of direct and indirect subsidies to dictatorships (MBL 2016).

Unlike the horizontal management system of the MPL, the MBL has a clear leaderships serving as the representatives of the movement and the leaders of the protests: Kim Kataguiri, Renan Santos and Fernando Holiday. Not only do they make appearances at the protests and give interviews, but they also star in YouTube videos in which they talk about general political topics- usually passionately criticizing a government policy or a corruption scandal.
In January 2016, Kataguiri became a columnist to one of the largest newspapers in Brazil, *Folha de São Paulo*.

The financing of the movement comes through donations and selling of regalia, but they also offer the option of filiation, in which case you select a “payment plan” and become a member of the movement. The filiation option gives the member the right to vote in open decisions of the movement, as well as including books and regalia that are distributed throughout the year (MBL 2016). The main difference between the financing of the MPL and the MBL is that the first states that it does not accept money from financial institutions and other NGOs, while the MBL’s only restriction is not receiving money from the government. This has caused the opposing groups to question who is funding the MBL and what would be their hidden agenda in advocating for Dilma’s impeachment.

### 3.2.2 *Vem pra Rua*

Just like MBL, another movement was born from the protests in 2014: *Vem pra Rua* (Come to the streets, in a literal translation from Portuguese). A more moderate group, *Vem pra Rua* did not initially advocate for the impeachment. By the time of their foundation in October 2014 their main claims were protesting for a more transparent and efficient government (Barnes 2015). Their main activities consisted on informing the population about protests going on in the country, as well as organizing them. Their claim is to fight for a “better country” through public demonstrations of dissatisfaction with corruption (*Vem pra Rua* 2015). However, just as the idea of impeaching the president started to materialize with support in congress and from important political groups, *Vem Pra Rua* became a big advocate for the cause.

*Vem pra Rua* does not promote a figure of leadership of the program, despite having its founder as the current spokesperson, Rogério Chequer. They do not disclaim their form of
organization nor their financing, but there has been media speculation about large donations coming from the main businessmen in Brazil, such as Jorge Paulo Lehman, the owner of AmBev (Senra 2015).

3.2.3 Revoltados OnLine

The movement called Online Rebels (Revoltados OnLine) also wants to see the president impeached. With a conservative background and a less institutionalized organization, the group has over one million followers on Facebook, its main platform of communications with its supporters (Facebook 2016). Their agenda is not clear but through interviews given by the group’s leader they defend an ultra-conservative state and were repeatedly called “fascist” by the supporters of the government (El País 2015).

The group was found and it’s led by Marcello Reis and is not an official movement like the two others. Other than having a registry with the public system and headquarters, Revoltados OnLine is centered on the figure of the founder and operates almost exclusively through Facebook. According to Reis, the funding of the group comes from donations made directly to his personal bank account and, mainly, via the selling of t-shirts and stickers with the famous images and phrases that go viral on his Facebook page. He does not, however, reveal the amounts or the sources of the money (Senra 2015).

FIGURE 4: Marcello Reis calling for a protest (Revoltados OnLine Facebook page 2016)
The fact that the three above-mentioned groups are leading the political protests in Brazil does not, by any means, mean that there is an ideological identification of the millions of Brazilians with their political agendas and their beliefs, nor that there is a complete synchrony among the groups’ ideologies. Despite being a traditional country that recently elected the most conservative Congress since democratization\textsuperscript{6}, Brazilians on the streets do not necessarily identify with the libertarian ideas of the MBL or the ultra-conservative, sometimes violent, Revoltados OnLine (Barnes 2015). But their power of mobilization lies on the ability to capture collective grievances in order to gather greater support. And that is done mainly through their heavy social media presence, as it can be seen on the graph below:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Number of Facebook likes in the mobilizers’ official pages (Facebook.com)}
\end{figure}

Once the groups were officially created, they had already been active on social media for a few months, therefore their presence was known to the young people in Brazil. MBL

\textsuperscript{6} For the first time since the transition to democracy, the congress has in its composition a significant number of members who represent conservative interests and groups such as the Pentecostals (evangelical), the agro-business men and the bullet caucus (Barnes 2015).
was the first of the movements to call for the president’s impeachment and became the most vocal advocate for this cause, but the other two groups also helped to organized a series of actions during 2015 and are doing so until the present time. Even though they operate separately, the groups usually advertise and promote each other’s actions.

### 3.2.4 March protests and ‘Panelaços’

The first records of anti-PT protests led by the three groups above date from March 2015. By the beginning of the month, photos with the images of Lula and Dilma started to circulate on Facebook calling for a protest on March 15. A few days before that, however, an almost impromptu action took place and became a symbol of the anti-government movement: a generalized beating of cooking pots every time the president would speak on national television - the “panelaços” in the Portuguese word that refers to a big cooking pot.

This form of protest became very popular in Latin America after it was first used in Chile in the 1970’s to protest against President Salvador Allende. After Chile, many other countries in other regions followed this new type of mechanism to demonstrate their disapproval against the government. Argentina became historically famous for using “panelaços” first to call the impeachment of President Fernando de la Rúa and afterwards for a number of times against President Cristina Kirchner. In Brazil, this mechanism was first used during the Diretas Já movement during the military dictatorship, and became famous once again in 2014 (Cmais 2015).

On March 9, incited by the three groups via the Internet, an uncountable number of people protested from their windows during Dilma’s official pronouncement in honor of Women’s Day. Although it is not viable to accurately count the number of participants, reports from the main cities in the country show that for around 10 minutes it was possible to hear the banging of cooking pots loudly everywhere. According to the organizers of the
movement, they decided to call for this first “panelaço” as a way of rousing the population to come to a protest they were organizing for the coming week (Senra 2015).

There was a series of reactions from the opponents of the impeachment as well as from the PT calling the “panelaços” an elitist mechanism of protest. Their claim is that the clamor could only be heard in upper class neighborhoods, and not in the periphery, showing how the calling for impeachment was a maneuver from the elites to take down the PT from the presidency (Agência PT 2015).

The protests of March were fostered by the fact that in the end of April an important orchestrator of Brazil’s largest corruption scheme was arrested and started to whistle-blow the entire organization of the corrupt structure. Operation Car Wash, analyzed earlier in this paper, started in March 2014, the same month when the relations of the PT with the scheme started to be revealed (MPF 2016). The anti-corruption feeling started to spread among the middle classes and the MBL, Vem pra Rua and Revoltados Online skillfully channeled this frustration through calling the protests.

Another important feature of the March 15 protest was that it took place on a Sunday. There is no rule as to a specific day in which protests have better impact, but they can usually affect government in two ways: through numbers, showing their importance given the number of people supporting the cause; or through disturbances, which can be effected by interrupting important events using violence. Because of that second principle, social movements in Brazil usually organize protests during the week, often blocking roads and causing traffic to be chaotic. This helps give the movement visibility, and it is a technique often used by the unions and student associations – i.e., ideologically leftist groups.

The organizers of the March 15 protest arranged for the demonstration to take place on Sunday so that it could be a “family event”. They made it clear through Facebook how they differ from the leftist groups since they did not intend to create chaos in the city, and since
they wanted more participation from the working middle-class. This strategy had a very positive effect with the targeted audience (middle-aged middle classes) who felt confidence to join the protests without the risk of being called “lazy” or “vandals”. At the same time, this strategy aimed at weakening the prestige of the leftist movements by claiming that they have a lot of free time in their hands to protest on week days, since they don’t like working and just want to live off governmental help (Verdénio 2015).

This mentality is very common among some people of the middle and upper classes in Brazil since the PT took power and since Lula implemented the Conditional Cash Transfer Programs. Instead of understanding the program as means of tackling inequality in the country, the program is often perceived as a vicious cycle of government dependency, which the PT created to maintain an electoral base among the poorest strata of the Brazilian society. Even though Bolsa Família was not a target on the protests, this embedded prejudice is one important factor on the anti-PT sentiment, since they are the party who signed the program.

The March 15 protest gathered around two hundred thousand people in Avenida Paulista, in São Paulo (Folha de São Paulo, 2015), and around one million people in the entire country. They were the first set of anti-corruption protests that unchained a series of demonstrations that soon became the pro-impeachment movement.

Another of MBL’s action to promote the calling for Dilma’s impeachment was a 33-day march from São Paulo to Brasília. A group of approximately 15 members and supporters of the group left São Paulo in mid-March and walked to Brasília (approximately 620 miles) to meet with Congressmen and try to collect support to file the impeachment accusation to Congress. Their meeting with members of the Pentecostal (Evangelical) caucus and other conservative and openly homophobic representatives received a lot of criticisms from the media and the opposing groups.
After the March mobilizations, the MBL also organized two other major protests in 2015: one in April 12 and, finally, the one on August 16 described in the introduction of this work. Those protests were both acclaimed and criticized by the media. They were acclaimed for the presence of families, for the nationalism and for people’s unity against corruption. A number of more extremist protesters, however, raised the concern among specialists and the media. Groups of people holding signs with aggressions to Dilma were common-place (calling her offensive names and wishing that she had been killed by the military when she was arrested during the dictatorship). Idolization of the police was also witnessed from people posing to take pictures with the squads responsible to escort the protests. And, finally, the groups calling for a new military coup raised concerns about which direction the mobilization would take from that point on.

4. Understanding the Rise of Anti-PT Protests

Unlike the MPL, the 2014 protests did not gravitate around one specific cause and were not organized by a single existing group. The transition from the MPL to the new Facebook-born groups happened during the leadership vacuum period of the World Cup protests. Given the lack of organized claims, or a unique channel to voice their discontent, people disengaged with the demonstrations. But it was during this same period that the corruption scandals exploded, and three Internet mobilizers started to gain space and attention on the web.

Their successes can be explained by jointly considering the political economy context, the resource mobilization theory, and Tilly’s WUNC theory. First of all, the political and economic context suffered a drastic change in the span of 10 years. After a period of prosperity during Lula’s rule, Dilma led the country through a spiral of poor macroeconomic choices that coincided with a bad time for the world’s economy and led to a severe economic
crisis. According to Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley, “macrocontextual features, including global ones” (pp. 7) are responsible for shaping protests and collective movements for change. In the case of Brazil, not only did the bad performance of the economy frustrate the aspirations of the new middle class, but corruption scandals hindered the trust in the political system, and the successful stories of the June Journeys helped sparking the popular participation through protests. These three factors created a favorable context that shaped people’s will for collective action.

With this favorable background and a lack of leadership, there was room for new groups to frame collective grievances through their movements, and that is what the MBL did using very good techniques of resource mobilization. In addition to not having any restrictions on receiving money from private entities (unlike the MPL), the MBL also does an important work in mobilizing human resources, cultural resources and social organizational resources – the three components that, along with capital resources, form the base of resource mobilization.

*Cultural resources* are tactical repertoires that help facilitating the recruitment and cooptation of new supporters. They include the ability to create musical or video productions and to spread them using the available tools (Edwards and Guillham 2013). As a movement born from social media, there is already an intrinsic ability in navigating and taking advantage of the Internet tools. Furthermore, the MBL and the other two groups draw heavily from images with a potential of becoming viral, as well as using keywords to encourage the dissemination of their productions. Kim Kataguiri and Fernando Holiday, the two most famous names of MBL, also use a lot of videos to explain in simple ways their beliefs and

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7 Despite the relevance of *Revoltados OnLine* and *Vem Pra Rua*, the analysis at this point will be centered on MBL. As they are the main caller to action and the more organized group that can be characterized as a social movement, the two other groups will be understood as facilitators and spreaders, rather than social movements per se.

8 Term used on the Internet for content that reach millions of people in a short amount of time.
discontents with current politics. On those videos they use unpretentious words and are very didactic, translating into a more palatable way the neoliberal ideologies their movement is based on.

One crucial feature of their productions is the ambiguity of their claims. Unlike the MPL that has clear goals of improving equity in society through providing free bus passes, the MBL embraces vaguer and more general prerogatives that give margin for a wider group of supporters to join their cause. Their one clear goal since their creation has been the impeachment of president Dilma; however, it is unlikely that the millions of people who take to the streets to protest against the government understand and share the teachings of Friedman and Hayek on market liberalization and reducing state intervention. That is made possible by using general slogans such as “Contra a Corrupção” (against corruption) and by the adoption of the world freedom, which has a different connotation for the neoliberal theory, but can be seen as mere liberty from the perspective of the people not directly related to the movement.

Their ability to mobilize cultural resources comes linked to human-resources mobilization. As a group using the Internet as a main platform, they were able to assemble people with a variety of skills that help them disclose their message, such as graphic designers and video makers. The wise use of visual identity promotes an appeal to more people and the likelihood of becoming viral and reaching more people.

The good use of resources to communicate a message with potential to frame a wide variety of collective grievances made the anti-government protests very effective and influential following Tilly’s WUNC tenets. While the protests organized by the MPL evolved from having more Unity and Commitment, to having more Worthiness and Numbers, the protests of 2014-2015 were born with Worthiness and Numbers, and developed better Unity and Commitment as the chants for impeachment started to gain more support and became a
reality when the first petition was filed in Congress in September 2015. The *worthiness* of the protests was fostered through the choice of organizing demonstrations on Sundays. This allowed complete families to participate, including children and the elderly, and also many more people to join, hence increasing *numbers* greatly.

The *unity* came, paradoxically, from the lack of clarity of the protesters’ claims. Initially without a clear goal in mind, people were able to voice their discontent, which was later skillfully framed under the corruption flag by the MBL. *Commitment* increased when the impeachment idea started to gain strong supporters and a petition was finally filed in Congress in September 2015.

In summary, it is possible to infer that the growing success of the MBL as the mobilizers of the population to impeach the president is given to the group’s ability to navigate in the technological and connected reality of the present times, and how they manage to skillfully frame the collective grievances under the scope of their vague claims.

The table below shows the main differences in the mobilization of resources by the two groups, and allows us to compare the tools and mechanisms they use to mobilize crowds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MPL</th>
<th>MBL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding/ Material Resources</strong></td>
<td>Only donations from members. No government funding, nor private institutions or other NGOs.</td>
<td>Donations from members (no restriction on companies). No government funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staffing/ Human Resources</strong></td>
<td>Horizontal organization. No hierarchy. Rotation of key administrative roles. People engaged with the movement share responsibilities.</td>
<td>Three main leaders. Volunteers and affiliated to the movement offer to help with specific skills such as video editing and graphic design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Resources</strong></td>
<td>Public meetings to debate their main topics, action with student movements.</td>
<td>Videos, images with visual identity on social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Media Presence/ Social Organizational Resources</strong></td>
<td>22k Facebook followers, no YouTube Channel, 250 followers on twitter.</td>
<td>900k followers on Facebook, Youtube Channel, 30k followers on twitter, Facebook pages of the main leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repertoire</strong></td>
<td>Protests, vigils, leaflet distribution</td>
<td>Protests, “panelaço”, march, relationship with Congressmen, support from famous people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3:** Resource Mobilization: MPL versus MBL (Movimento Brasil Livre, Movimento Passe Livre)
5. Conclusions: Perspectives on Contentious Politics in Brazil

More than a year has passed since the MBL started to lead the protests for the impeachment of president Dilma. The protests continued until the present time and 2016 started with real chances of the president losing her position soon, given that Congress has voted to approve the impeachment petition, that will now be voted in the Senate. During the past year, the higher the chances of impeachment became, the more support the movement got and new records were broken when the MBL was able to mobilize more than three million people in São Paulo in March 13 2016, becoming the largest demonstration in the history of the country.

The economy stagnated and people’s dissatisfaction only grew as indicators such as inflation and unemployment got worse in the past year. This fostered the strength of the movements that gained more numbers on the streets. But at the same time that impeachment became the word or order in Brazil, a counter-movement entitled Não vai ter golpe (“There won’t be a coup”) also rose with support from a significant part of society who discredit the impeachment because of the corrupt leaderships who are advocating for it in Congress. Just like the pro-impeachment movement at the time it was born, Não vai ter golpe is a leaderless movement formed by people with diverse ideologies and beliefs, that got united by the “common enemy” of the impeachment threat. The anti and pro-impeachment movements are based on and give force to an increasing polarization that has damaged the political debate in the country.

The movements count with an astounding number of supporters and have divided the population. However, once the main point of concern (impeachment) is achieved or avoided, what will be left of those movements and of the organized civil society in Brazil?

If the Arab Spring serves as an example, the lack of unity and heterogeneity of grievances can soon become a problem. If Brazil follows the Middle East’s steps, once Dilma gets
impeached the main question will be the ways in which the new government will address all the other collective grievances that were raised during the protests. Furthermore, the challenge of re-uniting an extremely polarized population will not be an easy one to overcome.

This thesis has presented an unprecedented descriptive analysis of the still ongoing civil society movements that gained momentum in 2013. As the largest country in Latin America, and an important player in the global economy, Brazil’s political stability deserves close scholarly attention. Civil society movements have shown to be one of the most important factors in shaking the political system and, at the same time it presents opportunities for the strengthening of the Brazilian democracy, it also represents a potential threat. Although citizens’ engagement and mobilization is often considered an important step for the maturing of a democracy, the case presented in this work shows how groups with very specific agendas can frame the grievances of the people and mobilize millions. Is it good for democracy, then, to have such a large mobilization, if the people mobilized are not aware of the entirety of the group’s agenda? Will the population continue to mobilize for the impeachment/repeal of other politician’s mandate- or will this movement prove itself to be a solely anti-PT attempt to bring back the old political elites to power?

What lies ahead of Brazil in terms of civil society movements and political stability is uncertain. The growth of social movements without proper institutionalization can damage the development of the democracy since the grievances will not be properly addressed by the government once the numbers of protesters start to diminish. With damages to the WUNC features, the impact of social movements will lose its force and, once again, Brazil will have to fight for the creation of more channels with the government from which civil society can direct their contention. Furthermore, despite representing an important step in increasing political participation in the country, the people risk going back to their merely electoral goal
once there is no clear goal and a leadership promoting the protests. I chose to be optimistic and believe that the polarization will be used as an accountability tool from one group to the other, and that the debate will go further than the impeachment issue, touching themes that are crucial for the improvement of the political system in Brazil. But the real outcomes of the civil society momentum started in 2013 will only materialize after the decision of the impeachment is done. Hopefully, 2013 was just the start for the contentious politics in Brazil to flourish.
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