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The Revolution Will Be Organized:
Power and Protest in Brazil's New Republic, 1988-2018

By

Elizabeth Carole McKenna

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Summer 2020

The Revolution Will Be Organized:
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Abstract

The Revolution Will Be Organized: Power and Protest in Brazil's New Republic, 1988-2018

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Elizabeth Carole McKenna

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Mara Loveman, Chair

Why does authoritarianism sometimes prevail against the backdrop of a seemingly robust civil society? What are the organizational conditions under which collective action translates into political influence? In this dissertation, I use a prospective study of contemporary politics in Brazil to investigate these two questions. Individual chapters address related but more specific puzzles about how political parties, fractions of capital, social movements, and civil society organizations across the ideological spectrum wield (or attempt to wield) political power in times of rupture.

I conducted the research over a five-year period, two years of which were spent in the field, and employed a sequential mixed methods design. I draw on 221 interviews and secondary survey data to situate the study in historical perspective, and longitudinal network analysis to track the strategic interactions of 40 civil society groups as they attempted to build power in the face of a high-stakes presidential election and welfare state retrenchment.

I found that the political dominance of plutocrats, right-wing protesters, and Pentecostals in this historical moment in Brazil was intimately linked to a concomitant trend of atomization and depoliticization—or anti-politics—in progressive civic spaces. Well before Jair Bolsonaro came to power in 2019, the organizational sinews that once characterized Brazil's leftist, member-led, self-governing civil society groups had atrophied.

From these findings, I elaborate a theoretical model that helps explain civil society groups' differential ability to advance their interests via the state—that is, to act politically. I argue that their variable levels of influence can be understood as a function of three factors: 1) Their *source of power*, whether control over economic, judicial-bureaucratic, cultural, or civic resources; and 2) their *organizational capacity*, which I analyze by developing a general typology of atomized, corporatist, networked, and hierarchical structural forms. I argue that these two features subsequently influenced the 3) *range of strategies* to which different groups have access when responding to unexpected events—both setbacks and openings—as the political terrain shifts. The strong version of this claim is that structure generates strategy: whether, how, and the extent to which key civil society groups are organized helps explain the degree and kind of power that they wield, and therefore, the type of political regime that prevails in a nation-state.

The major implications of the study are twofold. First, I show that the organization and articulation processes that happen in the wake of critical events can be more consequential to the political balance of power than the events themselves. Organizing strategies (and lack thereof) critically affect the conditions that give rise to or protect against authoritarian politics. Second, I argue that although the case is coincident with a global right-wing tilt, political transformations like the transition from *lulismo* to *bolsonarismo* in Brazil are neither inexorable nor are they structurally determined. Instead, strategic actors—their contingency plans and their failures to contingency plan—must be central to any account of dramatic movements in the political terrain.

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The Revolution Will Be Organized

There was no plan B.

This straightforward fact revealed itself as Brazilians prepared to vote for president for the eighth time since the country re-democratized in 1988. It was an overcast Saturday in August, and the Workers' Party (PT) had gathered for its national convention at the House of Portugal, a five-floor neocolonial building in downtown São Paulo. Founded in 1935, the stately structure sits on the busy Avenida da Liberdade, a historic thoroughfare in one of the most populous cities in the world. PT party members bifurcated into two lines outside of the entrance. To the right stood the old guard—union men—wearing bright red clothing. “*Lula livre*” (free Lula), several of them said to each other, somberly but sternly, as they greeted their long-time comrades. To the left of the entrance, a younger and more diverse crowd snaked down the block. “*Olê olê olê olá*,” they sang, “LU-LA, LU-LA!”

Street vendors peddled a rainbow of buttons, flags, stickers, and magnets with iconography of the party's beloved leader and two-time former president Lula. Colorful t-shirts hung on display on a green wrought iron fence. A bright purple one read, “The big house freaks out when the slave quarters learns to read,”¹ a reference to the social transformations that took place during the party's thirteen-year reign. While the PT was in power, 48 million Brazilians exited poverty, college enrollment trebled, and illiteracy rates fell to the single digits. Hunger was all but eradicated.²

Once inside, convention attendees were jubilant. “A party in every sense of the word,” I wrote in my field notes.³ Staff and volunteers handed out cardstock cut-outs of Lula's face. His likeness was everywhere, but Lula himself was not. It was the first time in 38

1. “*A casa-grande surta quando a senzala aprende a ler*. The phrase also invokes a foundational text related to Brazilian national identity, Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande e Senzala*.

2. Lula left office in 2010 with an unprecedented 87 percent approval rating. Armed with this track record, the PT's *marqueteiros* (campaign marketers) crafted the following slogan for the 2018 campaign: “Brazil, happy again.” The narrative largely ignored the causes and effects of Brazil's deepest recession on record, which began in 2014 just after Lula's hand-picked successor, Dilma Rousseff, was re-elected to a second term. During this economic crisis, the unemployment rate doubled, leaving some 12 million Brazilians without work at the time of the election.

3. This account of the PT's national convention is based on my field notes from August 4, 2018.

years that he was absent from a national meeting. Instead, Luiz Inácio da Silva—known universally by his nickname Lula—was on his 120th consecutive day in prison on corruption charges. Even though speaking to the press is a right regularly conceded to the incarcerated in Brazil, Lula was being held under a gag order. The night that he was transported from the union hall (where he began his political career) to the penitentiary (where he began serving a 12-year jail sentence), an audio recording of the flight log reveals an unidentified male voice telling the pilot to “throw that garbage out the bottom window [of the helicopter]” (Stochero and Médici 2018). Many observers recognized the threat as a reference to the Argentine dictatorship’s *vuelos de la muerte*, or death flights, in which agents of that murderous regime threw thousands of victims—sedated but alive—first into the Río de la Plata and then into the Atlantic Ocean when the bodies started to wash ashore (Alonso, Jurado, and Riobó 1999; Abregú 2000).⁴

“*Não tem plano B!*” These four words—there is no plan B—became the PT’s primary refrain at the convention. Supporters chanted it. Speakers repeated it. Vagner Freitas, president of the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), the largest union confederation in Latin America, said that in Lula’s next term—his third, if elected—“We must confront the businessmen through class struggle,” a tacit admission of what did not happen during his first two mandates. Congressional party leader Paulo Pimenta said that Brazil “has never needed Lula more. . . there is no plan B, no plan C. It’s free Lula, [our] candidate and president.” João Pedro Stédile, a founder of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (MST), Brazil’s famed landless movement, got up to the letter G: “[No] plan F, no plan G. Our movement believes that Lula is the only way to get out of this economic crisis.” Stédile then called on all party *militantes* to attend a protest march to be held ten days later, when party leaders would formally deliver Lula’s filing paperwork to the elections court.⁵

If PT loyalists didn’t dare speak of Lula’s ineligibility at the convention—even though the courts had ruled against him at every turn—none even whispered about the specter of a Bolsonaro win. There were 63 days left until the election.

4. In 1995, a retired Argentine navy commander, Adolfo Francisco Scilingo, revealed in chilling detail that “the navy conducted the flights every Wednesday for two years, 1977 and 1978, and that 1,500 to 2,000 people were killed,” in what they were told by the church hierarchy was “a Christian form of death” (Sims 1995). Scilingo said that in one of the death flights in which he participated, he personally threw 17 people out of the airplane.

5. Under the *Lei da Ficha Limpa* (clean slate) law, Lula was ineligible to run for office. PT insiders told me that the decision to file for his candidacy despite the near-certain outcome that he would not be allowed to run was based on the expectation that he would be able to more readily transfer all of his votes to his eventual stand-in candidate. His substitute, former Education Minister, Mayor of São Paulo, and university professor Fernando Haddad had lost his mayoral reelection bid two years prior. In 2016, running as an incumbent, Haddad had received fewer votes than ballots that were cast blank and null, resulting in the first-round election of businessmen and TV showman, João Doria. In the lead-up to the 2018 election, Haddad was the only candidate of the front-runners to lose to Bolsonaro in the second round in polling simulations. However, because surveys still showed that roughly a third of the population remained loyal to Lula, keeping him at the top of the ticket was expected to help down-ballot PT candidates running on the PT party ticket, in addition to Haddad.

Two weeks earlier, a crowd more than twice this size gathered in Rio de Janeiro to formally nominate their own candidate, military captain-turned-career politician Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Leaders of the then-insignificant Social Liberal Party (PSL)—a party that had elected only one congressman in 2014 and which Bolsonaro had joined at the last possible moment—gathered at a convention center located 300 meters from where a high-profile political assassination had taken place just four months prior. Blocks from where Bolsonaro’s most avid supporters gathered, Marielle Franco—a black, gay, socialist city councilwoman—and her driver, Anderson Gomes, were murdered in cold blood on March 14, 2018. PSL candidates used Marielle’s death to whip up crowds at rallies, at one point defiling a street sign that paid homage to her.⁶ These campaign tactics were consistent with the fascist persona Bolsonaro had cultivated over the three decades he spent in Congress as a little-known gadfly. He was known for praising dictators and torture chambers, arguing that police should be given *carte blanche* to shoot to kill, encouraging illegal loggers to burn the Amazon, and spending most of his political career denigrating black people, gay people, and women.

“Are you from the monarchy?” an elderly white woman asked the man in a cowboy hat standing in front of me at the PSL convention. “I’m looking to buy a monarchy flag,” she said. Of the ten people ahead of me and the 15 people behind me in line, 22 were men. The exception was a gaggle of women in their early twenties. Two of them had draped Brazil’s green and yellow flag over their shoulders. “Oh my god! Is that André from YouTube? He speaks so well!” one exclaimed. “Yes! Only big fish here!” said another. A man approached and asked if I was a member of the WhatsApp group called *Movimento Endireita Brasil* (Move Right Brazil).⁷ For a moment I was startled—as part of my fieldwork, I had joined nearly two dozen pro-Bolsonaro messaging groups—but told him, truthfully, that I wasn’t. An older man who walked with a slight limp leafleted down the line. “Good morning, young lady,” he said to me as he handed me a flier. “Did you know that communism killed 120 million people in twentieth century alone?” The convention center where PSL would formally nominate Bolsonaro held a capacity of 2,500 people. By 10 A.M. that Sunday morning, it was standing room only.

Authoritarian democracy

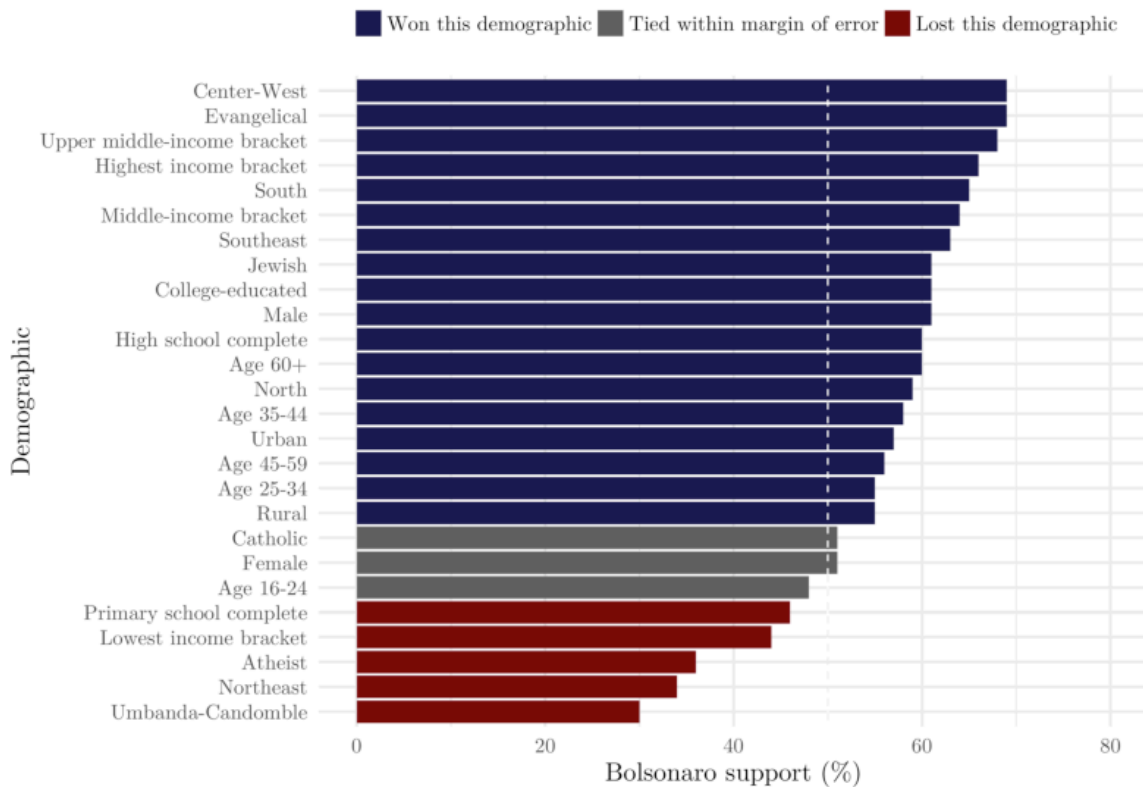
Despite—or perhaps because of—Bolsonaro’s authoritarian appeal, he came to power democratically. It is difficult to overstate the extent to which the far right emerged victo-

6. Bolsonaro did not condemn their actions, rather, he repeatedly advocated for the extermination of his political opponents, even after he was the victim of a near-fatal stabbing while on the campaign trail. A week before the runoff vote, on October 21, 2018, Bolsonaro told the masses gathered at a campaign rally that, once elected, he would “sweep the red bandits off the map. . . they will be banished from our fatherland,” he said. “[PT criminals], you’ll all go to beachhead,” a reference to a coastal naval base in Rio de Janeiro where dissidents were summarily executed during the dictatorship (Klein et al. 2018; Rolim 2018).

7. The leader and originator of *Endireita Brasil*, Ricardo Salles, was named Bolsonaro’s Minister of the Environment in early 2019, even though he had never even visited Brazil’s Amazon. In his losing bid for a congressional seat, Salles’ official campaign materials implied that landless peasants should be shot (Figure F.3).

rious in Brazil’s 2018 election. They did so not by way of a coup d’état, as they had in the past, but rather through procedural democracy. In the first round of the presidential election and with 12 other candidates on the ballot, nearly fifty million Brazilians—one in three eligible voters—cast their votes for Bolsonaro. Although his support spanned class, race, gender, and geographic categories, it was most pronounced among the country’s most affluent populations. If the electorate were restricted to only Brazil’s rich, white, and college educated, Bolsonaro would have won in the first round of voting in a landslide. As shown in Figure 1.1, the same is true for other key demographic groups: evangelicals—one of the most important political forces in the country—men, and voters who live in the comparatively wealthy south and southeastern regions of the country all overwhelmingly supported him by the time of the run-off.

Figure 1.1: Jair Bolsonaro’s Electoral Support Levels by Demographic Group



Source: *Datafolha* public opinion poll, October 26, 2018

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to suggest that Bolsonaro’s support was only the product of the reactionary tendencies of Brazil’s elite. As is also clear in survey results and election returns, young adults, those with only a high school degree, and voters who live in cities, peri-urban areas, and the countryside also favored Bolsonaro. When I spoke to the group of young women wearing Brazil flags at the PSL convention, for ex-

ample, I learned that they were from a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Rio, a peripheral urban region that voted for Bolsonaro (and against the PT) by a historically wide margin (McKenna and Richmond 2019).

Left-wing informants described the transition from *lulismo* to *bolsonarismo* as a move from a politics of inclusion to a politics of reaction. Right-wing informants describe their win as a replacement of the PT’s “corrupt,” “incompetent,” and “totalitarian” governments—which many earnestly told me very narrowly went the way of Venezuela—to a politics that values faith, family, and the rule of law. In the early days of the Bolsonaro Administration, few things signaled the symbolic shift more than the change in the government’s official logos. Lula’s multicolored insignia bore the tagline, “Brazil, a country for everyone.” His successor Dilma Rousseff’s read, “A rich country is one without poverty.” Bolsonaro’s, by contrast, took a line from the national anthem: “Beloved fatherland, Brazil.” As the first bars of the song played at his party convention, everyone in the room stood with their hands on their hearts and belted out every word. Many held the flag aloft. The man next to me had tears in his eyes as he sang. At no point in the ten other party conventions that I attended did I observe anything close to the PSL’s militaristic appeal to the imagined community of the Brazilian nation.⁸

Prior research on political transitions

This dramatic political shift is not unique to the Brazilian context nor to our time. We can look to many other instances of political rupture to glean insights on what happened in Brazil. Karl Polanyi ([1944] 2001)’s theory of double movement is one of the most influential attempts to explain political economic movements and counter-movements.⁹ That Reaganism and Thatcherism followed the long progressive protest wave of the 1960s has posed a puzzle for scholars seeking to explain the rise of that particular brand of neoliberal conservatism (Hall [1987] 2017). In 2008, the United States elected its first black president. He was succeeded by a white supremacist backed by “plutocrats with pitchforks” (Hacker and Pierson 2018). Perhaps the most infamous political pendulum swing of the twentieth century, however, was the fall of Germany’s Weimar Republic. As with Bolsonaro, the transition was legitimated at the ballot box. “The question of how this could happen,” wrote Benjamin Carter Hett, “takes on a special, agonizing force against the background out of which Hitler and Nazism grew: the Germany of Weimar.” He continued:

Here, surely, was some kind of apex of human civilization. The 1919 constitution of the Weimar Republic created a state-of-the-art modern democracy, with a scrupulously just proportional electoral system and protection for individual

8. Based on field notes from July 22, 2018.

9. Polanyi’s thesis is that economic liberalism became a “secular religion” in the late 19th century, whereas welfare state interventionism signaled its relative death. He argues that social legislation (e.g. safety standards, worker’s compensation, and protections against child labor) were reactions to the deadliness of unregulated markets. Paradoxically, according to Polanyi, it is this double movement that allows laissez-faire liberalism to survive.

rights and freedoms, expressly including the equality of men and women. Social and political activists fought, with considerable success, for even more. Germany had the world's most prominent gay rights movement. It was home to an active feminist movement that, having just won the vote, was moving on to abortion rights. . . At the beginning of the Republic, workers had won the eight-hour day with full pay. Jews from Poland and Russia were drawn to Germany's tolerance and openness. (Hett 2018:7)

As Hett goes on to explain, however, Germany's nationalist movement remained alive and well—albeit submerged—during Weimar. Numerous scholars similarly predicted that Brazil's "slow, gradual, and secure" political opening—which was brokered by the armed forces and the country's political elite—amounted to a democratic "birth defect" (Karl 1990:8).¹⁰ Brazil's peculiar transition from dictatorship to democracy preserved many of the military's institutional powers and ensured that some vestiges of the dictatorship would persist throughout the New Republic.¹¹

The embers of Germany's nationalist movement, an unraveling economy, and a weak government are among the constellation of factors that scholars point to as explanatory of Hitler's rise. Another literature, however, draws attention to the quality of civil society in Weimar. Sheri Berman (1997), for example, argues that although associational life during Germany's interwar period was vibrant, many of its constituent organizations operated outside of the public-political realm and were based more on bonding than on bridging social ties. An understanding of the precise nature of civil society and its relationship to institutional politics, she argues, helps explain how "the twentieth century's most crucial democratic experiment" later "succumbed to totalitarianism" (424).

10. Guillermo O'Donnell (1988), for example, wrote, "Unless such a [consolidated democratic] regime becomes an accepted fact of a country's political, economic, social, and cultural life, the country is in danger of backsliding into authoritarianism, either through the 'quick death' of a conventional military coup or through the 'slow death' of a gradual erosion of democratic practice" (281).

11. Some examples of these vestiges include the still-valid 1979 *Lei da Anistia* (amnesty law), which grants immunity to human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship, the continued existence of the military police, which is present in all of Brazil's 27 states and numbers approximately half a million troops, and military officers' longstanding and expanding presence in the country's various parliamentary bodies. Between 2014 and 2018, the number of ex-military officials elected to legislatures at all levels of government quadrupled (Gelape, Moreno, and Caesar 2018).

What happened to Brazil’s “golden decade?”

Some accounts of civil society in Weimar Germany are not unlike descriptions of Lula’s Brazil.¹² Using language similar to Hett’s to describe what the World Bank referred to as Brazil’s “golden decade,” both popular and scholarly accounts described the country’s politics as “a testament to the possibilities of social-movement-driven change” (Baiocchi, Braathen, and Teixeira 2013:217). The authors summarized the large body of scholarship on civil society in Brazil in the early 21st century:

... [New] trade unionism, the urban movement, the health movement, the feminist movement, the black and student movements. . . [In] addition to imagining new democratic practices and institutions to challenge Brazil’s deeply rooted social authoritarianism, these movements would largely find expression in the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), or the Workers’ Party. (2013:217)

Indeed, a large literature showed that indigenous peoples (Bicalho 2010), informal workers (Rosaldo, Evans, and Tilly 2012; Rosaldo 2018), women (Costa 2013), black movements (Paschel 2016a), *quilombolas* (Leite 2008),¹³ peasants (Pahnke, Tarlau, and Wolford 2015; Tarlau 2019), queer movements (Facchini 2009), and people at the intersection of these groups conquered state power and political subjecthood (Paschel 2016b). This body of scholarship carefully documented the improbable gains of these movements. Additionally, Brazil served as a laboratory for new forms of local and transnational governance through innovations like participatory budgeting, popular councils (*conselhos*), and international mobilizations inspired by spaces like the World Social Forum (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011). After its halting transition to democracy in the late 1980s, Brazilian civil society was often referenced as one of the paradigmatic cases of the “global associational revolution” (Salamon, Sokolowski, and Anheier 2000). The casual observer could be forgiven for thinking that contemporary Brazil was a bastion of democratic life.

Yet long before Bolsonaro was elected, even Brazilian activists who were highly sym-

12. The definition of civil society I use throughout this dissertation is Gramscian: the array of mediating structures such as trade unions, political parties, churches, the media, schools, and other organizations that link citizens to one another and to the state. For Gramsci ([1971] 2012), the capitalist state is made up of political society (which rules by force) and civil society (which rules by consent). Gramsci argues that civil society is what distinguishes advanced capitalism from more primitive economic systems: in modern western democracies, workers participate in and actively uphold establishment ideas and institutions. Participation in the sphere of civil society is seemingly voluntary but ultimately forces compliance. It is the arena in which parties, unions, and other challenger groups gain concessions from the capitalist state but also where the media, religious institutions, and the education system reproduce bourgeois hegemony (Heywood 1994:100-1). For these reasons, Gramsci’s view of civil society contrasts with the associational view often used today, which defines civil society as limited to an assemblage of NGOs, nonprofits, and other voluntary and philanthropic organizations. In Brazil, this latter set of organizations are referred to as the *terceiro setor*, or third sector.

13. *Quilombos* are communities, typically rural, formed by the descendants of escaped slaves. The United Nations Development Program estimates the number of *quilombolas* (members of *quilombo* communities) in Brazil to exceed 2 million people across some 2,500 communities (Penna-Firme and Brondizio 2007). In 1988, the Brazilian Constitution guaranteed *quilombolas* government titles conferring land rights to these historic territories (French 2006).

pathetic to the PT's project warned against overstating the extent of the party and civil society's progressive advances, many of which mirrored redistributive gains observed throughout the rest of Latin America during the same period. In 2010, for example, Gilmar Mauro, another national leader of the MST, said that the PT largely failed in its attempt to implement its *pinça*, or tweezer project, wherein one prong of the strategy sought to occupy institutions while the other arm built a socialist movement of the masses. "The idea was that you compete in the institutional realm with the goal of strengthening the social movements. That didn't happen. The institutional dispute and space became the strong arm, and the social movements were the weak arm," Gilmar said (Fernandes and Levy [2010] 2017).¹⁴ Seven years later, in an interview at party headquarters in Brasília, Gilberto Carvalho, former PT minister and Chief of Staff to both Lula and Dilma elaborated this critical point:

Gilberto: Now, Liz, we also can't forget something: We committed an unforgivable error, a structural one, which was to coexist and—more than that—to assimilate the traditional mode of doing politics [which was to] depend on the private sector. This is *unforgivable* on our part.

We could say, 'Well, if we had not done this, we wouldn't have even come to power, we wouldn't have done *Bolsa Família*, *parará-parará* [etc.], all of the good things that we did. This may be true and I accept the contradiction. Now, at least after 2005, the year that we had problems with the *mensalão* [vote-buying scandal] and we could see a certain internal rotting, we needed to have made political reform our fundamental priority for which we would fight, despite difficulties. . . because there was so much resistance from our allies, even, to implement a political reform that would change the rules of the game.

EM: And why didn't you?

Gilberto: We didn't do it for lack of vision. We didn't do it because we were so involved in the government, and we didn't do it because everything was going so well that it didn't seem like a grave problem for us. We also had, and I can't deny it, a certain complex that we were untouchable.¹⁵

Although much of the research on contemporary Brazilian politics highlights the undeniable advances to which Gilberto referred, such as the conditional cash transfer program *Bolsa Família*, democracy never came close to being fully realized during the PT's terms in power. In early 2019, newly elected congresswoman Talíria Soares underscored this fact. Brazil's young democracy, she said, "never fully consolidated its institutions. In the short periods of time [in which we had] a democracy, we were not able to deepen it. It

14. In accordance with study's IRB protocol (UC Berkeley Committee for Protection of Human Subjects Protocol ID:2014-03-6077), I use pseudonyms for the majority of my interview subjects throughout this dissertation. However, I interviewed a number of experts or otherwise public figures who gave me permission to use their real names. For these respondents and other high-profile individuals, my convention will be to use the name by which they are most commonly known e.g., "Dilma" (her first name), "Bolsonaro" (his last name), and "Lula" (his nickname).

15. Interview on July 26, 2017.

never arrived in the *favelas* and peripheries,” she said.¹⁶ In 2017, a year before Bolsonaro’s election, one progressive civil society leader, Nathalie Beghin, similarly reflected that the participatory vehicles that made Brazil the subject of widespread study and praise,

...[are] not sufficient to even brush up against the steam roller coming through, passing the labor reform, the pension reform, loosening all of the environmental laws. Every day, we’re monitoring what is happening in Congress and yet we still aren’t even able to evaluate the depth of the daily disaster.¹⁷

1.1 Research questions

One lesson we can extract from research on the history and preconditions of political pendulum swings, as well as Gilmar, Gilberto, Talíria, and Nathalie’s insights above, is that careful study of the configurations of power at baseline often attenuates just how sudden and dramatic political ruptures actually are. Even taking these historical caveats into account, however, the transition from *lulismo* to *bolsonarismo* was dramatic and raises a number of theoretical and empirical questions that have a long lineage in the sociological literature: First, why and how does authoritarian politics sometimes prevail against the backdrop of a seemingly robust civil society? Second, what are the organizational conditions under which collective action translates into political influence—especially in times of rupture? These two questions anchor the dissertation, while individual chapters address related but more specific questions about how political parties, fractions of capital, social movements, and civil society organizations across the ideological spectrum wield (or attempt to wield) political power through collective action over the short and long run.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Politics, hegemony, and civil society

A large body of research addresses the role that social movements, civic associations, churches, and the media play in determining the rise and fall of democratic regimes. To summarize a broad literature, there is, on the one hand, what is often referred to as the neo-Tocquevillian school, which views civil society as the setting in which “great free schools of democracy” can flourish (Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson 2000; M. E. Warren 2001; Fung 2003; Lorentzen 2013; Ishkanian 2008). This view holds that when citizens are socialized into politics to be more participatory and other regarding, they have the potential to serve as buffers against despotic rule. Others argue, by contrast, that associational activity

16. Panel on January 28, 2019 at UC Berkeley, *The Feminist Resistance to the Radical Right in Brazil*. In Brazil, *favela* is the politicized term used to refer to low-income urban communities characterized by informal housing structures, high population density, insecure property rights, and state neglect. I use the word because it was the term used most consistently by movement activists and interview subjects. For more on the history and usage of the word, see Oliveira and Marcier (1998) and Catalytic Communities (2012).

17. Interview on July 17, 2017.

is not an unalloyed good (Huntington 1968; Armony 2004; Mamdani 2001; Jamal 2007). Rather, these and other scholars observe that a high degree of citizen mobilization and well-developed voluntary associations can also act as vessels of fascist and illiberal politics of the sort represented by *bolsonarismo*.

Perhaps the most prominent contemporary application of the neo-Tocquevillian thesis is represented in Robert Putnam’s work. He argues that declines in social capital lead to declines in the health of the polity, and by extension, a robust civil society is necessary to “make democracy work” (Putnam 1993, 2001; Sander and Putnam 2010). Similarly, in Latin America and many other parts of the Global South, a rich literature describes the role that civil society organizations and movements played in overthrowing the military dictatorships that ruled through much of the second half of the 20th century (Diamond 1994; Peeler 2009; Linz and Stepan 1996; Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005). More recent research, although not explicitly Tocquevillian, has addressed how social movements and civil society has blossomed in the Internet Age. Scholarship in this vein suggests that the kind of horizontal, leaderless, and participatory civic activity that digital media enables has helped, in Manuel Castells’ (2013) words, “reinvent democracy” for the modern era, enabling ever higher levels of citizen participation even in the context of authoritarian regimes (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Hsu 2010; Cavatorta 2013).

Not all scholars are so convinced. As noted above, in her analysis of the fall of the Weimar Republic, Berman (1997) argued that Germany’s dense associational networks did not prevent Hitler’s rise; rather, they accelerated it. She makes the case that the promise of civil society rests in its ability to create transformative, bridge-building collectives that depends on the larger political and institutional context within which those organizations are embedded. Dylan Riley (2010) also showed that fascist regimes can easily grow out of periods of rapid associational development. He writes, “In certain respects, the reason that Italy, Spain, and Romania became fascist regimes, rather than mass democracies, was closely connected not with the weakness of popular forces but their strength” (21). It was thus the “coincidence” of robust civil society and the absence of “hegemonic politics,” Riley argues, that explains how the seeds of fascism were sown during Europe’s interwar period.

What civil society proponents and skeptics have in common, however, is their emphasis on the interaction between the political context and the nature (or quality) of civil society. Most scholars view the two as mutually constitutive. Thus, one way of placing these literatures in comparative perspective is shown in the two-dimensional table in Figure 1.2. Based on existing theoretical frameworks, we might predict that when low levels of political institutionalization coincide with an atomized or weak civil society we would expect an increased risk of totalitarianism. These conditions were perhaps most famously articulated by Hannah Arendt (1951) in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in which she argues that it was the absence, atomization, and fragmentation of civil society that lent itself to totalitarian outcomes.

If that same demobilized and depoliticized civil society, however, existed in the context of a high degree of hegemony and political institutionalization, then the most likely outcome might be something like a neoliberal or welfare state technocracy. Here we can

Figure 1.2: Existing Theoretical Frameworks: Civil Society and Political Institutionalization

		Degree of political institutionalization (<i>hegemonic consolidation</i>)	
		Low	High
Nature of civil society	Atomized/weak	Risk of totalitarianism	Neoliberal (or welfare state) technocracy
	Dense/robust	Risk of fascism (authoritarian democracy)	Liberal democracy

think of a government that is considered procedurally legitimate but which is left to elites and technocrats who require little or no input from an engaged civil society. But if, as Riley in particular argues, civil society is dense and mobilized but hegemony is in dispute and regular politics are delegitimized, then we would expect to see an increase in the risk of fascism.¹⁸

Finally, if both conditions are satisfied—politics are hegemonic and institutionalized, and civil society is dense and organized—then and only then might we expect the neo-Tocquevillian or Putnamian outcome of liberal democracy. Situated firmly in this quadrant, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2019) argue that “for liberty to emerge and flourish, both state and society must be strong” (xv). Acemoglu and Robinson describe the relationship between state and society in democratic societies as one of contestation and cooperation. They liken this reciprocal dependence to Lewis Carroll’s Red Queen race: both state and civil society must run at the same pace if they are to maintain a demo-

18. Critically, Riley defines fascism as authoritarian democracy. He notes that “fascists dismantled parliaments, elections, and civil rights but embraced fully the modern state’s claim to represent the people or nation” (4). Fascism, in this view, is qualitatively distinct from totalitarianism, whose defining characteristic is the single party monopoly that eliminates or subverts all other competing organizations and institutions (Linz 2000). Arendt (1951)’s definition of totalitarianism goes further, as that regime type which “uses the state administration for its long-range goal of world conquest and for the direction of the branches of the movement; it establishes the secret police as the executors and guardians of its domestic experiment in constantly transforming reality into fiction; and finally erects concentration camps as special laboratories to carry through its experiment in total domination” (392).

cratic equilibrium.

Attempting to apply these general theoretical frameworks about civil society’s democracy-enhancing or democracy-inhibiting potential leaves several key questions unanswered. First, what is the empirical basis for describing the entirety of a nation’s civil society categorically as, for example, Gramsci ([1971] 2012) does when he calls Russian civil society “primordial and gelatinous” and Western Europe’s as composed of civic “fortresses and earthworks” (238)? What does it mean for civil society to be robust, strong, fragmented, or weak? For most nations in most moments in history, it is possible to marshal evidence that makes the case for pockets of civil society that are politicized and highly mobilized, and other large swaths that could be characterized as weak, atomized, and depoliticized. A second analytic challenge these literatures present is that they tend to underspecify tipping points. Political institutionalization and hegemony are not steady-state conditions but can shift—sometimes quite rapidly and unexpectedly as happened in the Brazilian case.

1.2.2 Social movements and political change

Because it takes into account variation in levels of civil society mobilization and organization at the subnational level and is fundamentally about studying change over time, the social movement literature helps orient some of the missing pieces of the puzzle. Despite early and influential debates about the extent to which social movement organizations (SMOs) dilute, professionalize, or have no discernable impact on movement outcomes (Goldstone 1980; Piven and Cloward 1977), other studies have demonstrated that variation in organizational factors like leadership (Andrews et al. 2010; Morris 1984; Morris and Staggenborg 2004), strategy (Ganz 2000; McCammon 2012), tactical diversity (Olzak and Ryo 2007), and the level and persistence of mobilization events (J. D. McCarthy and M. N. Zald 2001; McCarthy 2005) mediate the political influence of civil society groups. In a strict test of this otherwise largely qualitative body of research, Michael Biggs and Kenneth Andrews (2015) demonstrate that the differential strength of the NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 334 cities across the U.S. South explained variation in the rate of desegregation of lunch counters. These findings contradicted previous research that suggested that SMO-sponsored protests have no direct effects on targets (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005; Burstein and Freudenburg 1978; Giugni 2007).

One question that follows is: if organizational capacity helps explain movement efficacy—and therefore levels of political influence—how then do we identify and differentiate across the internal characteristics of civil society groups?¹⁹ Despite growing interest in cross-pollinating research findings from organization theory and social movement scholarship (Soule 2013; Clemens and Minkoff 2004; Fligstein and McAdam 2012a; Caniglia and Carmin 2005), many studies use only blunt measures to examine the heterogeneity

19. William Gamson (1975)’s seminal study of 53 protest movements was one of the first studies to break ground in answering this question, but only differentiated among movement organizations that were more or less bureaucratic.

of organizational forms that constitute civil society in a nation-state, such as fundraising figures (Madestam et al. 2013), volunteer hours (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996), frequency counts of mobilization events (Mackin 2016; McVeigh 2009; Vasi et al. 2015), co-presence at protest events (Wang and Soule 2012), or counts of entities operating in a given issue area or geographic region (Best 2012; Ward 2017).²⁰ While there is a consensus in the foregoing literature that organization matters for explaining movement outcomes, we are left with few frameworks for differentiating among civil society groups whose political goals, strategies, tactics, leadership practices, and constituency bases vary (sometimes wildly, as was the case in this study) both in relation to each other and in relation to the always-unpredictable political and economic contexts in which movements unfold.

A second preoccupation of the social movement literature well-suited to helping address the central questions of this dissertation concerns the dimension of time. Most research in the subfield casts movement-led social and political change along one of three temporal dimensions. The first, as depicted in Table 1.1, is event-centric; it takes as its focus particular repertoires of contestation (like a protest), critical junctures, or moments of political realignment. A second genre, which I have characterized as the “emergence and outcomes” school, helps explain the precursors of major shifts and assess the political consequences, as Edward Amenta and colleagues do (1999; 2006, 2014). A third temporal category in the social movement literature, most famously associated with Sidney Tarrow (Tarrow 1993), is the protest cycle, which looks at long waves of political mobilization, from beginning to end, often over the course of many years.

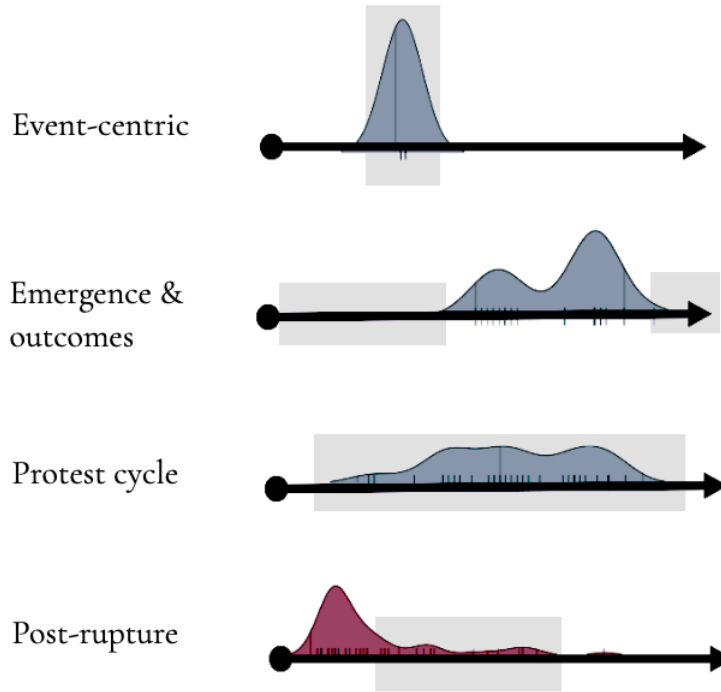
Table 1.1: The Temporal Dimensions of Social Movement Theory

	<i>Analytic focus</i>	<i>Representative literature</i>
<i>Event-centric</i>	Elementary collective behavior Micromobilization processes	Turner and Killian (1987) Wang and Soule (2012) Snow and Moss (2014)
<i>Emergence/outcomes</i>	Political process theory Resource mobilization Movement impacts	McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly (2001) McCarthy and Zald (1977) Amenta et al. (2010)
<i>Protest cycle</i>	Collective action cycles	Tarrow (1994)
<i>Post-rupture</i>	Political articulation	De Leon et al. (2015) Sewell (1996)

A fourth possibility, which follows from my reading of William Sewell’s (1996) analysis of the French Revolution, is that in certain conditions, the most critical period for explaining political realignment is in the immediate post-rupture period. Sewell argues that the revolutionaries “invented revolution” after (rather than during) the storming of the Bastille,

20. In labor union research, typical methods for assessing organizational characteristics include membership counts (or rates of change), revenue from dues, and activity surrounding internal union elections as ways of comparing different locals to one another (Ferguson, Dudley, and Soule 2017; Wilmers 2017).

Figure 1.3: The Temporal Dimensions of Social Movement Theory



distinguishing themselves from a “violent, angry mob.” Thus, the cadence of protest cycles and the mechanisms that link the peaks to the troughs means that what happens after and between the “moments of madness—when all is possible” (Tarrow 1993:281) may be as important as the ruptures themselves. A major takeaway from the social movements literature, then, is that temporally-sensitive analyses are fundamental to understanding whether and how the nature and activity of civil society groups helps explain political shifts or stasis.²¹

1.3 Analytic approach

Incorporating insights from these literatures and in an attempt to address some of their limitations, this dissertation is based on a prospective five-year study that uses a sequential mixed methods research design. The study was prospective in the sense that the

21. Despite these insights on the temporality of social change, McAdam and Sewell (2001) lament the fact that just two temporal rhythms have dominated in the study of social movements and revolutions: long-term processural change and the protest cycle. They argue for an increased focus on a third: “the precise sequencing of actions over the course of a few hours or days... [which] may have structuring effects over a very long run” (ibid: 102). At the same time, as Weber observed, “Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards” (Weber [1921] 1946:128). As I outline in my argument below, I take the position that while what happens “over the course of a few hours or days” can indeed be key to understanding conjunctural dynamics, a focus on open political conflict alone tends to elide the more durable organizational networks and institutional relationships that also help “structure effects over a very long run.”

primary outcome of interest—the configuration of political power after a period considerable instability—was unknown at the start of the study. It was sequential in the sense that it proceeded in several phases, first with three periods of extended fieldwork and in-depth interviews followed by the systematic selection and then tracking of 40 civil society groups over time. And finally, it is a mixed methods study because it integrates a variety of data sources and analytic approaches: longitudinal network analysis, observational quantitative data, interviews, and organizational ethnography.

In total, I conducted 221 interviews, directly observed 62 organizational events (protests, party nominating conventions, and other convenings), and collected relational data from newspapers, social media, and government records. Most of this data was collected during two years of field research, which I conducted between 2013 and 2018, and during which time I also accumulated more than 7,000 pages of primary and secondary documents and 850 pages of typed and handwritten field notes, which I organized in Evernote, inventoried in spreadsheets, and coded using the qualitative software NVivo. My ethnographic research took me to political meetings in which dictatorship-era torturers were venerated, but also ones in which different factions of one socialist party hurled insults and chairs at each other in an argument about why Trotsky was photoshopped out of a magazine cover commemorating 100 years since the Russian Revolution. I supplemented this largely qualitative body of research with microdata from Brazil’s *Tribunal Superior Electoral* (Supreme Elections Court) on political party affiliates (14.9 million rows), candidate data (20-30,000 rows per election cycle), and tracking polls from Brazil’s two most prominent research institutes, *Datafolha* and *Ibope*.

Systematically studying the relationship between civil society and political transformation required correcting for several well-known biases commonly critiqued in political sociology and social movement studies. The first is a progressive bias: the tendency for researchers to conduct movement-centric analyses of groups with which they share political affinities. For example, for every dissertation related to a conservative, reactionary, or regressive transnational social movement, five more are written on causes more closely associated with left politics (Bringel and McKenna 2020). Contemporary politics in Brazil offered a context in which to study ideologically opposed movements simultaneously. Both left and right-wing groups mobilized *en masse* in Brazil between 2013 and 2016, with more people taking to the streets during this period than in the rest of the world combined (P. Anderson 2016).

The second and third well-documented bias are known as success and survivor biases, meaning in selecting cases retrospectively, we run the risk of censoring from view failed and extinct movements, counterfactuals, and settings that are at risk of civil society mobilization, making it difficult to identify antecedent conditions that explain ultimate outcomes. The advantage of the research design—which I describe further in Chapter 2—is that I was able to observe *ex ante* different groups’ internal organizational practices and trace how their strategies evolved (or not) in relation to one another and in relation to larger shifts in the political environment. In so doing, I was able to examine how (and the extent to which) a diverse set of civil society groups translated their collective interests into political power.

1.4 Preview of the central argument

[A] basic challenge is to discover how to organize our strength in to economic and political power. . . Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.

Martin Luther King (1967)

The overarching argument I advance in this dissertation is that the distribution of political power in a nation-state is largely the product of concrete struggles among meso-level actors. My findings show that these actors’ differential ability to advance their interests via the state over the short and long-term—that is, to act politically—was a function of three factors: 1) Their *source of power*, whether control over economic, judicial-bureaucratic, cultural, or civic resources; and 2) their *organizational capacity*, which I analyze by developing a general typology of atomized, corporatist, networked, and hierarchical structural forms. I argue that these two features subsequently influenced the 3) *range of strategies* to which different groups had access when responding to unexpected events—both setbacks and openings—as the political terrain shifted. Importantly, the data show that even over the relatively short period of time in which I was observing them, none of these features were fixed and could change as a result of strategic action or inaction. The strong version of this claim is that structure generates strategy: whether, how, and the extent to which key civil society groups are organized helps explain the degree and kind of power that they wield—and therefore, the type of political regime that prevails in a nation-state.

1.4.1 Sources of power

The first part of the argument is straightforward and builds on a rich tradition in political and historical sociology that identifies social actors’ sources of power or, as Martin Luther King put it, the “strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change” (e.g. Mann 1984, [1986] 2002, 2008). Power operates in ways that are relational, dynamic, and often invisible (Gaventa [1980] 1982; Pierson 2015). Power so theorized is not a thing one possesses—a static resource that can be possessed and transacted—but rather a degree of influence created at the intersection of what one has and what one needs (Ganz 2009).²²

Different organizational actors derive their power from different sources. Financial

22. As Marshall Ganz’s research shows, understanding why seemingly less well-resourced challenger groups sometimes win requires thinking about power as an unstable relation—one that is not only influenced by traditional forms of capital but also other resources like the strategic capacity, and the quality and diffusion of movement leadership (Ganz 2000; Ganz and McKenna 2018).

institutions, for example, exercise political influence primarily (but not entirely) through their control over economic resources. One banking executive I interviewed put it bluntly: “Whoever has economic power is the boss. . . Banks have political power because [we] carry the public debt, almost entirely.”²³ Other civil society groups, like the evangelical networks I examine in Chapter 6, derive their power from multiple sources that often overlap: ideological, cultural, and, as the ecclesiastical leadership amasses ever larger personal fortunes, economic as well. Moreover, the composition of an organization’s power is not static. In the first decades of its existence, for example, the PT sourced their power primarily from a distributed base of organized partisans, unions, and allied social movements. Once the party leadership won control over the machinery of the state, they gained access to new, bureaucratic sources of power. Pedro Ribeiro (2008) memorably described this transition as the PT’s turn to becoming an “amphibious” party: “Although the PT is still able to swim in civil society,” he wrote, “it is increasingly adjusting itself to the solid terrain of the state” (173).

1.4.2 Organizational capacity

Yet even civil society groups that relied on the same source of power had varied levels of influence depending on the nature of their organizational capacity. Table 1.2 places some analytic scaffolding around this piece of the argument. In this two-dimensional typology, I categorize each of the meso-level cases in the rows by whether they draw their power primarily from access to state, capital, or civic resources. In the columns, I classify them by their internal organizational form, whether *atomized*—individual participants or smaller subgroups are not linked through any formal organizational structures; *corporatist* trade, occupational, or other bounded interest groups that vie for control of the state; *networked* formations, such as several evangelical church denominations that are characterized by a capillary national presence and distributed leadership structures; and *hierarchical*, to refer to the command-and-control structure typically associated with the military and the traditional Catholic parish model.



While all taxonomies are necessarily reductive, this classification scheme helps signal some key analytic fault lines. It speaks to the fact that civil society is not a monolith. As the results I present from the network analysis in Chapter 3 will show, civil society groups that adopted networked leadership structure wielded the most flexible forms of power, whereas atomized structures hardly registered as influential players in the political arena at all. In fact, many of the groups classified as atomized rejected politics as

23. Interview on July 14, 2017.

Table 1.2: A Typology of Political Organizing in Contemporary Brazil

	Atomized	Corporatist	Networked	Hierarchy
State	<i>Partidos nanicos</i> (minor parties)	<i>Conselhos</i> ; Federal police; Public prosecutors (MPF)	<i>Centrão</i> parties like the MDB	Military; PT 2.0 (2003- present)
Capital	Finance capital (traders)	Business associations (e.g. <i>Sinduscon</i> , a construction syndicate)	Agribusiness (regional and industry-specific)	<i>Milicia</i> ; Finance capital executives (five largest banks)
Civic	<i>Junho 2013</i> and <i>EleNão</i> (mass protests); WhatsApp groups	Traditional labor unions (<i>sindicatos</i>)	Evangelical churches; Catholic base communities (CEBs); PT (1980-1999)	Catholic Church parishes; <i>Igreja Universal</i> (neo-Pentecostal megachurch)

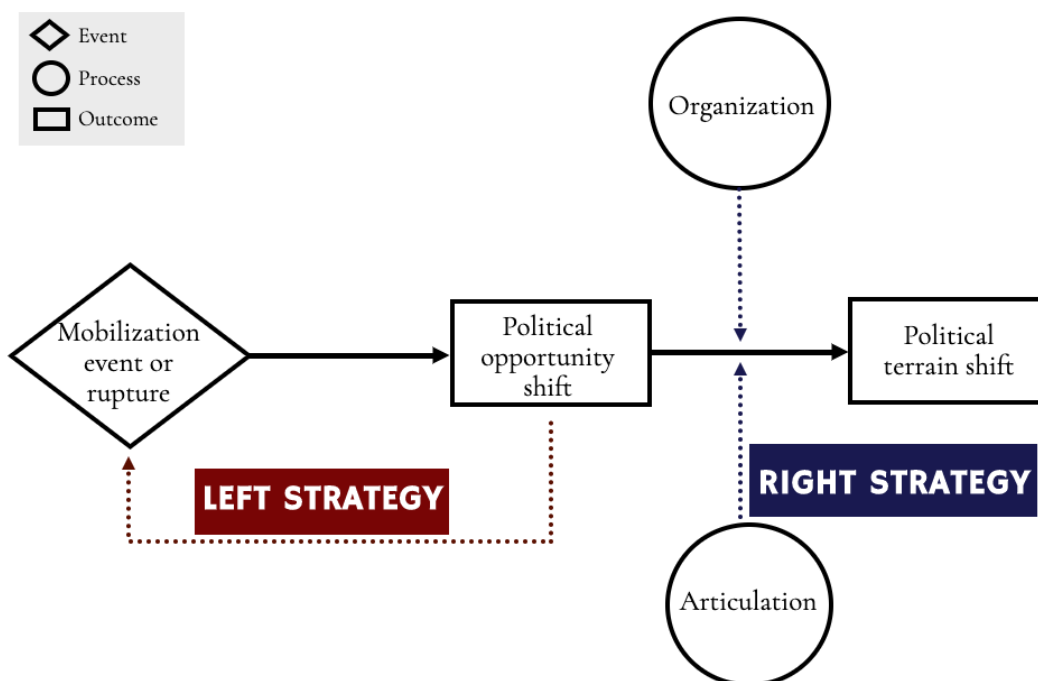
such, creating a civic vacuum that more organized actors—plutocrats (Chapter 4), new right-wing movements (Chapter 5), and neo-Pentecostal church networks (Chapter 6)—exploited. Identifying how meso-level actors source and structure their power over time thus helps us understand how groups that were formerly allied with the PT were in a position to rapidly reconfigure themselves to form the winning Bolsonaro coalition in 2018.

1.4.3 Strategic response to contingency

The final step of the argument places this otherwise static taxonomy in motion, taking into account the strategic choices that organizational actors make in response to contingent events. I found that different meso-actors were more or less able to articulate critical events after the fact, and thereby influence consequential political outcomes.

This study was riddled with contingent events: the country’s worst-ever economic recession, a parliamentary coup, mass protests, Lula’s imprisonment, Bolsonaro’s near-fatal stabbing, and so on. These events, I argue, created destabilizing shifts in the wider political environment. In their wake, some of the civil society groups I tracked engaged in strategic organization, signification, and articulation processes. The ways in which different groups responded to these contingencies was a function of their organizational capacity and determinative of how much political power they would ultimately wield relative to other players in the field. As a result, I argue that the organization and articulation processes that happen in the wake of critical events can sometimes be more consequential for understanding the political balance of power than the events themselves. This pattern is summarized in the theoretical model shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: A Theoretical Model: Strategic Action and Shifting Political Terrain



As depicted in the figure, what I observed in the study was that after any given rupture, the largely atomized and corporatist left-leaning groups pursued a strategy of repeated mobilization, making call after call for supporters to repeat one tactic—the street protest—in furtherance of their objectives.²⁴ Over time, these protests dwindled. In some cases, what were intended to be mass strikes against welfare state retrenchment policies were called off at the last minute. The year before Dilma’s impeachment in 2016, one of the four main internal “currents” or “tendencies” of the PT wrote that the party’s “first job is to reoccupy the streets...If the Right wins the battle to occupy the streets there will be neither space nor time for a counter-offensive on the part of the Left” (PT 2015:3). Mobilizing supporters to take part in street protests was a near-consensus position among left-leaning civil society groups in this study. “We must develop new methodologies, new apps, Internet technologies,” a National Union of Students (UNE) leader and World Social Forum organizer told me. “We have to continue occupying social media to bring people to the streets, and the streets need to be reproduced on social networks,” he said.²⁵ Socialist party candidate Guilherme Boulos, echoed this sentiment:

We must insist on the streets. There is no space for a truly democratic national project without reverting these setbacks. And they will not be reversed without widespread popular mobilization. The cries from the streets have not yet resonated in the way that we would like, but, as Freud says, it’s all we’ve

24. For most of the electoral period, this call to action centered on the *Lula Livre*, or free Lula, campaign.

25. Interview on April 19, 2017.

got. (Boulos 2017)

Even though this repeated mobilization approach was “not... resonat[ing]” in the way they had hoped, there was—as the speakers at the PT convention proudly proclaimed—“no plan B.”

Some right-wing movement groups also took to the streets in this period, but they adapted their strategy as circumstances changed. Kim Katiguirí, a co-founder of the *Movimento Brasil Livre* (MBL, or Free Brazil Group), which took credit for the mass impeachment marches that helped oust Dilma, and one of the most-voted congressmen in 2018, told me:

After the massive protest, it was time to flip the Congressmen. So we spoke with leaders of the opposition, we sat down with the evangelical caucus, the agribusiness caucus, the two primary ones that were articulating against the PT. We were able to unite the evangelical and the agribusiness caucuses in a bloc that was, shall we say, supra-partisan, with our movement and with business associations, to pressure the congressmen who were on the fence [about whether or not they would vote for Dilma’s impeachment].²⁶

The contrast in these approaches shows that meso-level variables, like degree and kind of organization and strategic capacity, predispose political actors to be more or less prepared to signify and make use of the kinds of contingencies that inevitably arise. Even where no organizational capacity exists prior to the watershed event (which is signified as watershed only after the fact), groups like MBL that invested in building an infrastructure and alignment coalitions emerged victorious, whereas those that relied on reactive protest, leaderless, and horizontal mobilizations alone did not (Chapter 5).

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

This set of arguments unfolds in six chapters. Individual chapters address more narrow methodological considerations as appropriate, but Chapter 2 (and supporting appendixes) describe the overall research design of the dissertation in detail. The remaining narrative structure of the dissertation is based loosely on the imagery of an iceberg. Part I, the tip of the iceberg, asks: what happened? Here, I provide some historical perspective about the distribution of power at baseline and report the descriptive results of the longitudinal network analysis. The purpose of Chapter 3 is to describe the major outcomes of interest—that is, the shifting configurations of political power in Brazil—that I then go on to explore and explain in the remaining chapters.

Below the waterline, in Part II of the dissertation, I draw on sociology’s middle-range tradition (Merton [1949] 1968) to analyze what continues to happen—that is, how meso-level political actors organize themselves and engage in contentious politics over longer stretches of time. Chapters 4 through 6 thus constitute the three core empirical chapters of the dissertation.

26. Interview on June 1, 2017.

Chapter 4 looks at how actors representing three key capital fractions—agribusiness, industrial, and finance capital—occupy political institutions in what I call the sociology of state capture. This analysis draws primarily on elite interviews and fieldwork observations of these three sectors to develop a mechanism-based explanation for why capitalists continue to enjoy nearly uncontested hegemony in the political arena. I argue that elite resilience is not reducible to their control of economic resources alone, however, as Table 1.2 might suggest when read in isolation. Instead, the data I present in this chapter uncover some of the recurrent social and organizational processes that enable these three capital fractions to first instantiate and then maintain Brazil’s perennial plutocracy.

Chapter 5 turns from these elite-dominated spaces to the streets. I draw on quantitative and qualitative data from the beginning of the cycle of protest that began in 2013 to help explain several other outcomes reported in Chapter 3: left-wing fragmentation, an energized conservative base, welfare state retrenchment, and right-wing electoral gains at all levels of government. By systematically comparing atomized (primarily online-to-offline) protest forms with their more formally constituted counterparts, I show first, how and why organization still matters in the digital age, and second, that mobilization can beget political opportunities—making the post-rupture articulation argument outlined above more explicit.

Finally, Chapter 6 analyzes the political ascendance of evangelicals in Brazil. Drawing on a comparative historical study of Pentecostalism—which I argue is the most powerful (albeit heterogeneous) social movement in contemporary Brazil—this chapter demonstrates that there is nothing essential about the political valence of civic organizations, even those—like Pentecostal ones—whose politics are assumed. That is, the evangelical exodus from *lulismo* to *bolsonarismo* was not preordained. Instead, I show that the networked organizational actors that make up the ever-growing evangelical population in Brazil were actively articulated to *bolsonarismo* at the very end of the election cycle, giving him much of the margin that he needed to win. In lieu of a definitive conclusion, and in keeping with analytic perspectives that see politics as highly dynamic and subject to change, I conclude with reflections on how the strategic choices that organizational actors make influence consequential political outcomes.

Comparative dimensions of the analysis

The protagonists in each of the empirical chapters are all conservative organizational actors that ultimately supported Bolsonaro. This is because they were among the nodes that wielded the most influence relative to other meso-level actors as measured in the network analysis. But the political dominance of plutocrats, (right-wing) protesters, and neo-Pentecostals in this historical moment was also, I argue, intimately linked to a concomitant trend of depoliticization—or anti-politics—that characterized many progressive civic spaces in contemporary Brazil as well. Well before Bolsonaro came to power, the organizational sinews that Brazil’s militant leftist, member-led, self-governing organizations had once developed had atrophied.

To make this case, I weave comparisons to the protagonists’ progressive counterparts

into the three main empirical chapters. I show that by their own admission, the leadership of Brazil's primary left-leaning party, the PT, virtually abandoned leadership development and base-building work (*nucleação*) when it came to power, leaving a civic vacuum in which authoritarian appeals and the prosperity gospel of Pentecostal churches thrived. An otherwise depoliticized and disorganized civic terrain thus helped create the conditions in which the demagogic appeals of *bolsonarismo* found purchase.

In the concluding chapter, I synthesize all of these arguments. While all political terrain shifts are multicausal and the role of the judiciary, capital fractions, and macroeconomic volatility also matter, I conclude that organization and articulation strategies (and lack thereof) of meso-level actors critically affect the conditions that give rise to or protect against authoritarian politics.

The revolution will be organized?

The title of the dissertation thus stems from my claim that political actors that treat organization and structure as problematic—as was the case in many born-online protest movements like Brazil's June Days (Chapter 5)—are easily overpowered by their better organized counterparts (Chapters 4 and 6). A cautionary note on my use of the word “revolution,” however, is in order. The word has a long and controversial meaning in many parts of the world, and in Brazil in particular. I deliberately chose the term because it is ideologically ambiguous. Revolutions can be democratic or they can be authoritarian. They can be top-down or they can be bottom-up, passive or active. Although the term is more often popularly associated with the radical Left—*viva la revolución*—it the bourgeoisie that is, “to this day, the most revolutionary force in history” (Fourcade 2018:92).

A keyword search of my interview transcripts and the qualitative data I collected over the course of the study reveals that the word *revolução* was used as often by left-leaning as by right-leaning organizational actors. Its use in the context of the Russian Revolution and proletariat uprisings was, as expected, commonplace in leftist circles. But the word “revolution” was not only the provenance of the Left. For example, responding to an evening prayer session held in one municipal legislature, one *crente* (evangelical believer) exclaimed, “May God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ come to this place [the legislative chamber] and transform it, lead a revolution of power, and let it be known that the Lord is our God!”²⁷ Several right-wing informants described Dilma's ouster as a “revolution.”²⁸ And perhaps most relevant to the Brazilian setting, revolution was the term that the military dictatorship used to describe the 1964 overthrow of the democratically elected government of João Goulart. For the military and other far right actors—Bolsonaro among them—that critical historical event is cast not as a coup but a “revolution.” The title is thus intended to draw attention to the organizational foundations of political transformation, whether revolutionary action from the far right, the far left, workers, or the bourgeoisie.

27. Field note from September 30, 2018.

28. Interviews on June 1, 2017 and April 18, 2018.

1.6 Global implications

Although this dissertation is about the nature and distribution of political power in Brazil, it carries some implications that might help us understand the rising tide of right-wing politics worldwide. The year is 2019, and four of the world’s seven largest democracies—Brazil, India, the Philippines, and the United States—are experiencing a resurgence of authoritarian politics. The argument I summarized in this introductory chapter suggests that looking at the precise nature of how civil society is organized in each of these countries, and how different meso-level actors penetrate the political field, might help us understand why this is happening, and how these trends might be reversed.

The lessons also extend beyond the present moment. As Charles Kurzman’s (2005) analysis of the Iranian Revolution shows, for example, the mass mobilizations that began in 1977 weakened an otherwise invulnerable Shah. But it wasn’t the Marxist revolutionaries who emerged victorious after the Shah’s ouster, rather, it was the far better organized clerical groups that subsequently constituted the Islamic republic and have remained in power since. More recently, after the 2011 Egyptian revolution and Hosni Mubarak’s ouster—which, like Brazil’s June Days began with protests against police brutality and economic distress—it was the far better organized Muslim Brotherhood that consolidated power after the uprising, rather than the democracy-promoting protesters who sparked the protests to begin with (Tuğal 2013). And finally, lest we think that it is only conservative or reactionary forces who stand to gain from post-rupture organizational and articulation work, the case of *Podemos* in Spain serves as a notable exception. That party, now one of the largest and most influential in the country, emerged as a result of the previously atomized *indignados* movement that resembled Occupy Wall Street (which has itself partially reconstituted in parts of the Bernie Sanders presidential campaigns) in both form and content.

The global cycle of protest, to which both Brazil and these latter cases belong, began in the late 2000s but continues apace. Demonstrators are not only responding to political opportunity structures, they are creating ones that didn’t exist before. If the findings I present in the following chapters are any indication, it’s the organizational prowess (or lack thereof) of competing meso-level actors that will help explain which groups—and which narratives—ultimately emerge victorious.

The implication of all of the arguments I advance here is that democracy does not stand a chance against an inherently reactionary and anti-democratic elite if groups of ordinary people lack the collective capacities needed to contest state and economic power. This is why Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that “knowledge of how to combine” is the “mother of all forms of knowledge.” It is to this body of knowledge that this dissertation aims to contribute.

A Method of Fields

Phenomena intersect. To see but one is to see nothing.

Victor Hugo ([1866] 2000:363)

When police arrested Rio de Janeiro's former health secretary Sérgio Côrtes on corruption charges, he was almost certainly in his pajamas. Just after dawn on April 11, 2017, federal agents descended on his home in Lagoa, a neighborhood whose development indexes are comparable to those of Belgium. En route to the airport for an early morning flight, my taxi happened to stop at a traffic light near the scene of the surprise arrest. News helicopters circled overhead like vultures stalking a carcass. A squadron of police officers in black fatigues loitered in the foyer. One of Côrtes' neighbors opened her window and assumed a cartoonish pose, hand on chin, to watch this state spectacular from her sill.

I pulled out my phone to read about the charges—easy to find, because coverage of the arrest was being live-streamed on all of Brazil's major news outlets. In a plea bargain released that morning, one of Côrtes' staffers testified that his boss had overcharged hospitals for medical supplies to the tune of \$100 million dollars per year. Proceeds went to co-conspirators, the governor's re-election coffers, and hush money—including payouts to the official whose sole responsibility it was to detect fraud of this kind. As I read, I remembered a conversation I had just had with a physician friend who works at a public hospital less than a mile from Côrtes' house. She told me that she often has to re-use bloodied gauze when treating patients who suffer bullet wounds because the hospital at which she works, like so many public institutions in the country, is woefully under-resourced. In a recent public opinion survey, Brazilians identified the health care system as their top concern, a dubious distinction given the long list of maladies from which respondents could choose.

Unperturbed by the commotion, my taxi driver turned up the air conditioning. It was nearly 80 degrees and not yet 7 a.m. Côrtes' was just one more in a now-banal string of high-profile arrests that revealed the ubiquity of public-private collusion in Brazil. Nothing to see here. The taxi lurched forward and we were soon whizzing through the Rebouças tunnel, a concrete artery that links the north and south zones of the city. In the

rainforest above the tunnel sits Eike Batista's mansion, empty of its owner who was, at the time, detained in a maximum-security prison on the outskirts of the city. Batista, a mining magnate known for losing the largest sum of money (USD\$34.5 billion) in the shortest amount of time (one year), was arrested in early 2017 for his involvement in a massive money-laundering scheme.

As we emerge from the tunnel, Rio's downtown skyline comes into focus. Two of the city's tallest buildings belong to Petrobras, the national oil company at the center of yet another corruption scheme—this one the largest known in both scope and scale. It is early enough in the morning that we preempt the inevitable bumper-to-bumper traffic on the highway that skirts the Petrobras buildings. During Brazil's economic boom of the late-aughts, then-President Lula remarked that he wanted all Brazilians to be able to buy a car but opt to take public transit. The first of Lula's wishes gained ground: cheap credit helped nearly double car ownership between 2004 and 2014. Still, a third of commuters—many of whom live on the peripheries of Brazil's metropolises and spend several hours a day in traffic—take public transit on clogged roadways to and from work.

These figures help explain why grievances surrounding urban mobility were at the root of a 1.4 million-person march that swept Brazil in 2013. The June 20, 2013 protest, which I analyze in Chapter 5, was the peak action in a series of mobilizations that marked the beginning of a cycle of unrest that polarized and fragmented in subsequent years. In March 2015, two million protesters, mostly white, wealthy, and well-educated took to the streets to call for the end of the Worker's Party (PT) government, headed by Lula's hand-picked successor, Dilma Rousseff. A litmus test of your political leanings in the aftermath of Dilma's downfall was whether you referred to her ouster as "the coup" or "the impeachment."

To the right of the highway, Guanabara Bay makes itself known, less for its good looks and more for its stomach-churning scent. In the lead-up to the 2016 Olympics, Guanabara was the subject of extensive international news coverage lamenting the conditions that swimmers, sailors, and triathletes would face when they competed in its infected waters. Little mention was made of the source of the raw sewage that continues to pour into the Bay: years of state neglect led *favela* residents to build makeshift, open-air sanitation systems that have nowhere to drain but Guanabara. In 2011, the municipal government promised a sewage overhaul to residents in this part of the city. Instead, the mayor delivered a gondola that quickly went defunct and later turned into a headquarters for the Pacifying Police, a unit whose record of inflicting violence makes its moniker worthy of Orwell.

The taxi pulled up to Galeão, Rio's international airport. Recently privatized, renovated, and promptly bankrupted by the construction giant Odebrecht, the airport was stripped and sold for parts to Chinese investors. After passing through security, I realize that I am on the escalator next to Attorney General, Rodrigo Janot, who was flanked by three alarmingly apathetic bodyguards. An hour later, the Supreme Court would release the names of eight ministers, three governors, 24 senators, and 39 members of Congress (including the speakers of both houses), who joined the growing ranks of politicians indicted for corruption. Janot's list, on which these charges were based, quite literally went

on.

Studying a political field in motion

Such was the state of affairs when I began my longest stint in the field for research for this dissertation. The dangers of attempting to conduct systematic social research in a moment as chaotic and scandal-ridden as this are obvious. On the other hand, earthquakes can expose fault lines. Social scientists have long been interested in ruptures because they can shed light on the mechanisms, processes, and conditions that are otherwise difficult to observe (Harding, Fox, and Mehta 2002:176). At the same time, political dynamics are often far more patterned than the daily newsreel would have us believe, even in the most unsettled of times.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the middle-range approach I developed to study a political field in motion. I first operationalize strategic action field theory (Fligstein and McAdam 2012b) in a way that takes into account some of the unobservable ways in which political power is negotiated in a field that is undergoing transformation. Although the design permits exploration of the mechanisms by which actors field positions change, this chapter is focused more on explicating the method. The next chapter reports the major outcomes of interest, and subsequent chapters delve more deeply into explanatory mechanisms.

Sources of bias in social movement research

With important cross-national variation in how it manifests, the ascendance of white supremacist, reactionary, and plutocratic populism (Pierson 2017), across disparate geographical contexts has intensified the call for social scientists to address the progressive bias of social movement scholarship. At the same time, the danger that the field overcorrects to focus on rightest movements as they become more salient would reinforce the well-documented success and survivor biases of social movement studies (Rojas 2016). The trifecta of biases for which social movement research is known—progressive, success, and survivor—has resulted in a scarcity of research that examines counterfactuals, countermovements, failed movements, cases outside of the U.S. and Western Europe, and communities at risk of mobilization (McAdam and Boudet 2012). Synthetic theoretical frameworks accompanied by well-specified methodologies are needed if scholars are to better understand the upstream conditions that explain the dynamics of contentious politics.

My research design addresses some of these biases by adopting the ontological perspective that Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam develop in *A Theory of Fields*. A series of critical events—Brazil’s 2018 presidential election, the cycle of protest leading up to it, and the institutional power configurations that resulted from it—served as events with mutually recognized stakes in which actors’ relative field positions were certain to change. It thus provided a useful empirical setting in which to operationalize strategic action theory (Minkoff 2014) and to evaluate existing theories of how contentious political events unfold.

I begin in this chapter by situating the study in sociology’s meso-level theoretical tradition and providing a brief summary of three theories of political action and their rel-

evance to the Brazilian case. I then describe the historical, institutional, and conjunctural features of Brazil’s political field that made it useful empirical testing ground. The second section describes the research design in detail, including inclusion and exclusion rules for the movements and organizational actors I tracked longitudinally. The third section discusses theoretical priors written before the outcomes of interest were known. I ask: before we knew that a far right coalition would win in 2018, what did existing literature have to say about whether and how that could happen?

2.1 Field theory and social movements

Elizabeth Armstrong and Mary Bernstein (2008) and Andrew Walder (2009) argue that many of the blind spots and biases in social movement research discussed in Chapter 1 can be attributed to analysts’ “state-centric” or “movement-centric” approaches to the study of social and political change.¹ Because Fligstein and McAdam’s theory of strategic action fields brings into focus how social actors create stability or change in circumscribed arenas through their interactions with one another, it represents a promising alternative to these single or dual-actor models. Rejecting purely structuralist accounts of the ways in which economic and cultural forces constrain human agency, the theory presupposes an analysis of institutional conditions but draws attention to the ways in which strategic actors can achieve unexpected outcomes against sometimes long odds. As the authors point out, field theory has existed at least since the 1970s, but scholars have made limited progress in systematizing it (189).

The strength of the theory—its ambitious integration of state-market-society relations—is also one of its weaknesses. It is rarely clear where one field ends and another one begins. Fligstein and McAdam write, “fields are nested hierarchically in each other, in a system that resembles Russian dolls” (2012:58). As Brayden King (2015) points out, the authors provide little in the way of analytic tools to “dig deeper into the mechanisms of field positions” (6), let alone know how to approach overlapping fields from a methodological standpoint. The authors themselves note that field theory has high data requirements, including “deep knowledge of the historically and culturally contingent meanings that inform the actions and views” of relevant actors (194). Identifying the players that constitute a field (i.e. all of the actors who view themselves as members of it) and tracking their relationships, evolving positions, and field stability or instability over time presents a major challenge for the researcher.

One of the contributions of this dissertation is to take up this challenge and develop a method for generating a descriptive and analytic account of a political field. To do so, I follow the middle-range tradition in sociology, taking political collectivities as the central objects of analysis (Boudon 1991; Merton [1949] 1968). More concretely, the units are Brazil’s major political parties and the civil society groups (labor associations, interest

1. Existing movement research that focuses on these organization-level dynamics also sometimes does so at the expense of politics, that is, with little attention to the distribution of power outside the bounds of the micro-processes of mobilization. See Walder (2009) and (2013) for thorough critiques of this trend.

groups representing major capital fractions, and social movements) in their orbit. Remaining agonistic about organizational form in the sampling procedures facilitates theory building across states, social movements, policy domains, and voluntary civil society groups that often inhabit separate scholarly literatures (Hicks, Janoski, and Schwartz 2005). The choice to focus on meso-level organizational processes is also an attempt to avoid what are often criticized as macro frameworks that are too capacious to be explanatory, or excessively psychological explanations that draw from the field’s irrationalist origins in mass society theory and symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1957; Turner and Killian [1957, 1972] 1987) or the hyper-rationalist accounts of the free-rider (Olson 1965) and median voter (e.g., Meltzer and Richard 1981). This study therefore joins the growing body of research on the ways in which interlocking networks of parties, associations, and sectors of capital explain long-term shifts in political power configurations (Clemens 1997; Davis, McAdam, and Scott 2005; De Leon, Desai, and Tugal 2015; Schlozman 2015; Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016).

The reason field theory is particularly well suited for political movement research is that it is difficult to understand, for example, the movement for racial integration without the dogged defense of segregation (Luders 2010), the push for democracy without the pull of authoritarianism, or pro-poor movements in the absence of elite countermovements. Despite these mutually constitutive dynamics, the literatures on how egalitarian movements strengthen democracies while reactionary counter-movements weaken them remain siloed. We know too little about how rival political movements—like *lulismo* and *bolosnarismo*—respond, react, and strategize around one another when hegemony is in dispute.

2.2 Three theories of collective political action

Although prospectively studying a strategic action field in motion is, to the best of my knowledge, uncharted methodological territory, vast literatures address the ways in which groups of people with different resources exercise political power. Here, I review three theories that were developed to explain how and why political terrain shifts. I selected them because preliminary analysis of the case found evidence in partial support of each one. None presume to be law-like models with clear predictions about the way political struggles unfold, nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive. All would agree that movement and electoral politics (and the power distributions that result) are complex and multicausal phenomena that are not subject to probabilistic divination. However different actors figure most prominently in each explanatory framework—movements, political parties, and investor blocs, respectively—and they propose distinct mechanisms to account for the kinds of political shifts we have observe in an increasing number of cases around the globe.

2.2.1 Political process and social movement theory

The political process model—which evolved into the “dynamics of contention” school, led by Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam, elaborates three types of mechanisms: environmental, cognitive, and relational to explain patterns of contentious politics. The authors self-

consciously acknowledge the move from the classical social movement research agenda (which they helped found) and its “checklist of variables—opportunity, threat, mobilizing structures, repertoires, framing” to a specification of different combinations and sequences of mechanisms that “recur widely but produce different aggregate outcomes depending on the initial conditions, combinations, and sequences in which they occur” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001:22, 23). The result is a compilation of over twenty such mechanisms, including brokerage, identity shift, scale shift, attribution of threat and opportunity, and escalation that, they argue, produce the same immediate effects everywhere (120). For example, the theory posits that movement actors frequently *appropriate* preexisting social spaces, as American civil rights movement organizers did when they activated black churches in service of their cause (McAdam [1982] 1999) and that such appropriation contributes centrally to successful political mobilization. Similarly, they argue that the mechanism of repression has predictable effects in the context of political contention: it generally stiffens the resolve of communities under threat but discourages mobilization by not-yet-activated parties.

A decade after the publication of the volume, McAdam and Tarrow (2010) noted that the lack of specification of the relationship between election campaigns and social movements was a “serious lacuna” in the book, “as it is in the entire broad field of contentious politics.” They continue:

Few studies have examined the impact that citizens’ protest behavior has on electoral outcomes. . . our concern is that the relations between social movements and elections have seldom been specified in a systematic way that could set us on the road to predicting how movements affect elections and vice versa (McAdam and Tarrow 2010:532).

This study is an opportunity to address this “serious lacuna” by extending, verifying, or refuting some of the movement-based mechanisms that the theory offers into the arena of electoral politics. Unlike studies of contentious politics in Europe and the United States, which emphasize a fundamental antagonism between movements and the state (Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008), the study of social movements in Latin America in general and Brazil in particular implies an analysis of institutional politics (Abers and Keck 2009; Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Wampler 2007; Alvarez, Baiocchi, Laó-Montes, et al. 2017b; Tarlau 2019). “In Brazil,” write Alvarez and colleagues, “the state figure[s] centrally both as a target and as a political horizon” (2017:7). Avritzer (2009) describes this as “political interdependence,” a reference to the creative and often ambiguous ways in which extra-institutional claimants penetrate, reclaim, or are neutralized by the Brazilian state. That movement-state interactions are the theoretical nexus of a vibrant literature on social movements in the region makes it a useful case with which to develop and test theories about how social movements influence and are influenced by formal politics, when and why movements join electoral coalitions or even “anchor parties” (Schlozman 2015), and what effect, if any, protest movements have on observable political outcomes.

2.2.2 Political articulation theory and the role of the party

Political articulation theorists identify with the neo-Gramscian current in political sociology (Riley 2015). The central claim of this growing field of research is that political parties with certain features “suture” together different constituencies who theretofore did not share the same political identity. In contrast to the social movement approach, which tends to study extra-institutional actors as the primary drivers of political identity shifts—and therefore of electoral alignments and realignments—political articulation theory emphasizes the role of the party in making certain cleavages and political identities more or less salient. Rather than merely reflecting preexisting structural divisions—ethnic, religious, economic, gender—as most conventional analysis suggest, this school of thought holds that parties organize target constituents such that they identify, say, “as workers and therefore socialist, as Muslims and therefore Islamist, or as ethnic Russians and therefore nationalist” (De Leon, Desai, and Tugal 2015:3). The major claim of the theory is that political parties are the often-overlooked agent that structures the relationship between states and civil society.

Political articulation has been used to explain ruptures and stasis in the U.S., India, and Turkey (De Leon, Desai, and Tugal 2009, 2015) the lack of a worker’s party in the United States (Eidlin 2016), how Podemos upended the two-party system in Spain (Sola and Rendueles 2017), and the puzzling resistance to secessionism in antebellum Alabama (De Leon 2017). It alerts us to what McCall and Orloff (2017) call the “supply side” of politics. How the party system is configured and the systematic role of the parties in constructing political projects and electoral formations is paramount. As I describe below, Brazil’s political system—with 35 parties that possess wildly different capacities for such articulation—provides a useful empirical variation with which to assess the extent to which party practices naturalize certain identities, stitch them into coherent sociopolitical blocs, and build or fail to build electoral majorities.

2.2.3 The investment theory of party politics

Third, and finally, the investment theory of party politics argues that the interests and actions of well-organized blocs of business, finance, and industry executives best explain electoral and policy outcomes (Ferguson 1995). Succinctly put by John Dewey in his famous assertion that “Politics is the shadow cast on society by big business,” the theory of the economic-elite domination of politics differs markedly from both political articulation and the social movement theories outlined above. For example, in contrast to Ferguson’s view of the New Deal reforms (as driven by, and ultimately beneficially to, the multi-nationally oriented capitalists who reinvented the Democratic Party), the social movement perspective regards the period from 1932-1968 as one of clear progressive hegemony. Ferguson made a similar observation about 19th-century Populism: “The largest, best-organized, and most cohesive mass political movement in American history could not compete with even a part of the business community” (78). The investment theory instead explains political outcomes with reference to struggles among investing units—which, depending on the historical period can take the form “individuals, partnerships, firms, foundations, financial groups, or, in cases where the fortunes of particular families or individ-

uals are centrally invested and controlled” (40). Corporate power, in this view, effectively controls the political system.

The investment theory of politics has received substantial empirical support. Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page (2014) found that organized business groups have significant independent influence on U.S. policy, whereas grassroots and other interest groups have little or none. William Domhoff’s (1990) landmark study on corporate power documented the ways in which elites, operating through foundations, think tanks, lobbyists, and campaign finance, shape the terrain of political struggle. Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez’s (Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016) research on the Koch network produced similar findings, but added to the literature by examining these investor blocs in relation to top-down astroturf organizations like Americans for Prosperity and bottom-up grassroots groups like the Tea Party.

The shared assumption of these three theories—that strategic actors bear significant responsibility political outcomes—makes them suitable for comparison using the field theoretic framework. All reject the assumptions of rational choice theory, which Ferguson described as an “[approach] to analyzing electoral systems [that] produced not rigor but mortis” (9). Instead, they all address organization-level dynamics and, like all useful theories, generate new predictions and lend themselves to verification or falsification (Harris 1997:126).

2.3 Empirical context

Brazil was a productive case with which to examine a political field in transformation. Prior to embarking on my research, there were structural, institutional, and conjunctural factors that coalesced to produce something of a natural experiment:

Structural dislocation. Brazil has experienced a high degree of variation with respect to its political, economic, and social opportunity structures in the past three decades following the country’s democratic opening in the 1980s. More recently, the country saw millions of protesters take to the street, a presidential impeachment, the nation’s worst recession on record, the jailing of the country’s most popular politician, and a candidate who openly defended fascism was elected by a margin of 10 million votes. While previous research has used static classificatory schema to assess the relationship between country-level factors (e.g. liberal democracy, authoritarian regime) and the level and form of social movement activity (e.g., Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001), we know less about whether and how non-state organizations modify their strategies as a consequence of structural shifts within a single country over a relatively short period of time.

At the socioeconomic level, Latin America has long held the dubious distinction of being one of the most unequal regions in the world. In the first decade of the 2000s, however, a surprising trend took hold. Inequality—as measured by income distribution and the percent of the population in extreme poverty—declined in 16 of 17 countries (Osório 2015). In Brazil, 40 million people were lifted out of poverty (Neri 2011), social policies like the conditional cash transfer Programa Bolsa Família (PBF) were deemed so success-

ful that they were exported to other countries (Santos and Oliveira 2014), and the Gini coefficient declined by ten percent in as many years. In an era when global inequality trends marched stubbornly in the opposite direction, Brazil—with the PT at the helm—was the subject of euphoric praise for the successes of its pro-poor development projects.

Yet recent developments have made clear that there are—and perhaps always were—“cracks in the empire” of the Latin American Left (Webber and Carr 2012). Research has shown that the substantial improvements on certain inequality indexes did not, on the whole, correspond with deeper democratic engagement of the subaltern masses nor the durable hegemony of progressive governments (Brooks 2014; Encarnación 2003). As with the reactionary resurgence worldwide, recent political developments across the region suggest that the right wing seems to have been lurking just around the corner from Latin America’s much-heralded left turn (Levitsky and Roberts 2011).

Institutional features. Several features of the Brazilian case make it generalizable to other large democracies in which constellations of parties, segments of capital, labor unions, and social movements jockey for political power, while others set it apart. Brazil is a federated republic in an emerging market economy that, like other nations, continues to grapple with its brutal and protracted history of slavery, colonial domination, and military rule. The most recent Polity IV data series, however, classifies the country as a near-full democracy, with a score of 8 out of 10.² Of the 163 countries ranked, Brazil scored one point above the median and shared an identical score with 12 other countries including Belgium, Ghana, Mexico, the Philippines, South Korea, and the United States. Many policies originate in the capital city Brasília, but local governments retain significant autonomy over certain transportation, urban planning, culture, and education initiatives.

Brazil joins most other countries in holding its elections on a Sunday, and is one of 22 in which voting is compulsory.³ State and national elections take place once every four years, while local elections are staggered every two. A simple majority elects the president, governors of Brazil’s 26 states and federal district, and mayors. Brazil’s 81 senators, three per state, are similarly elected by plurality of the vote in a first-past-the-post system. The 513 legislative seats in the lower house (as well as Brazil’s 1,024 state-level deputies and 56,810 city council members), however, are allocated by a complicated open list proportional representation system. For federal deputies, voters cast their ballot for a candidate or party at an electronic ballot box, but votes total at the level of the party or electoral coalition with which the candidate is affiliated.⁴ After the polls close, the elections court calculates an “electoral quotient” at the state level, which specifies the number of votes needed to win a congressional mandate, by dividing all valid votes by the number of seats

2. Developed and maintained by the Political Instability Task Force, the index calculates a “polity score” for each year and country based on electoral competitiveness and openness, the nature of political participation, and the extent of checks on executive authority. It ranges from -10 to +10, with scores of 6 to 10 corresponding to democracies, -5 to 5 anocracies, and -6 to -10 autocracies.

3. Voting is mandatory for all citizens age 18-70, and optional 16 and 17 year-olds (as well as those over age 70).

4. In Brazil, roughly 90 percent of the votes are cast for the candidate rather than the party.

to be allocated. Seats are then proportionally allocated to party-coalitions, and the absolute number of votes every candidate receives determines the ranking. This makes Brazil's one of the most open list systems in the world.⁵

The system generates strange bedfellow coalitions and sometimes-bizarre results. For example, in 2014, Tiririca, a professional clown running a satire campaign, earned more than a million votes in his run for a congressional seat in São Paulo for the Party of the Republic (PR). His vote share was well above that year's electoral quotient of just under 300,000, so his 700,000 excess votes were transferred to his next most-voted party compatriots: a military captain and a little-known city councilman who had earned 47,000 and 32,000 votes, respectively, well below the threshold. As of 2016, only 36 of Brazil's federal deputies were elected of their own accord, while the remaining 477 came to power thanks to *puxadores de votos*, or vote-pullers like Tiririca, in their party or coalition (Benites 2016).

Party system. Most of Brazil's 35 political parties are not stable agents that cohere around a clear ideology and organizational logic. Six were founded in the past six years (PMB, NOVO, REDE, SD, PROS and PEN), and five renamed themselves as part of re-branding efforts in the eighteen months leading up to the 2018 election (PSDC became DC, PTdoB became AVANTE, PTN became PODE, PEN became PATRI, and PMDB became MDB). Three of Brazil's leading presidential candidates in 2018—Marina Silva, Ciro Gomes, and Jair Bolsonaro—had switched parties five, seven, and nine times, respectively. In the previous congress, elected in 2014, Brazil's ten largest parties occupied 90 percent of the senate seats and 74 percent of the lower house seats. Calculated as a percentage of elected office at all levels of government, the remaining 25 parties had fewer than five percent of seats. For this reason, many of Brazil's miniature political parties are often described as *nanicos* (meaning both tiny and insignificant) or *legendas de aluguel* (labels for rent).

This variation at the level of the party is useful for theory-testing. Political articulation theorists would distinguish between those that merely act as the political equivalent of a shell company, and the integral parties that maintain ideological links with their base. Political scientists have had to be creative about how they measure the ideological content of Brazil's parties (see Appendix A). Canonical measures of party ideology include legislators' voting records and party discipline (Figueiredo and Limongi 1999), public opinion surveys (Singer 1999), surveys of legislators (Power and Zucco 2009), content analysis of party platforms (Tarouco and Madeira 2013), and expert surveys (Tarouco and Madeira 2015).

In order to govern, the executive branch attempts (and usually succeeds) in building a majority coalition in both houses of the legislature. This institutional arrangement has been termed presidential coalitionism (Abranches 1988). Despite having one of the most

5. This arithmetic does not always result in whole numbers. *Sobras*, or leftover seats, are allocated according to the "greatest average" rule: party vote share is divided by the number of seats allocated in the first round, plus one. Remaining seats are allocated in order to the parties with the greatest averages (Nicolau and Stadler 2016).

fragmented party systems in the world, party discipline is surprisingly high. As Figureido and Limongi (2000) observe, in Brazil, “Presidents form governments, and the parties included in the governmental coalition provide political support for the president,” (151) much like other semi-presidential and presidential-parliamentary systems. Moreover, despite Brazil’s mosaic of parties, for twenty years—between 1994 and 2014—all elected presidents came from either the PT or the PSDB in a power oscillation one informant referred to as *PTucanismo*, a blend of the Worker’s Party initials and the PSDB’s party mascot, a toucan.

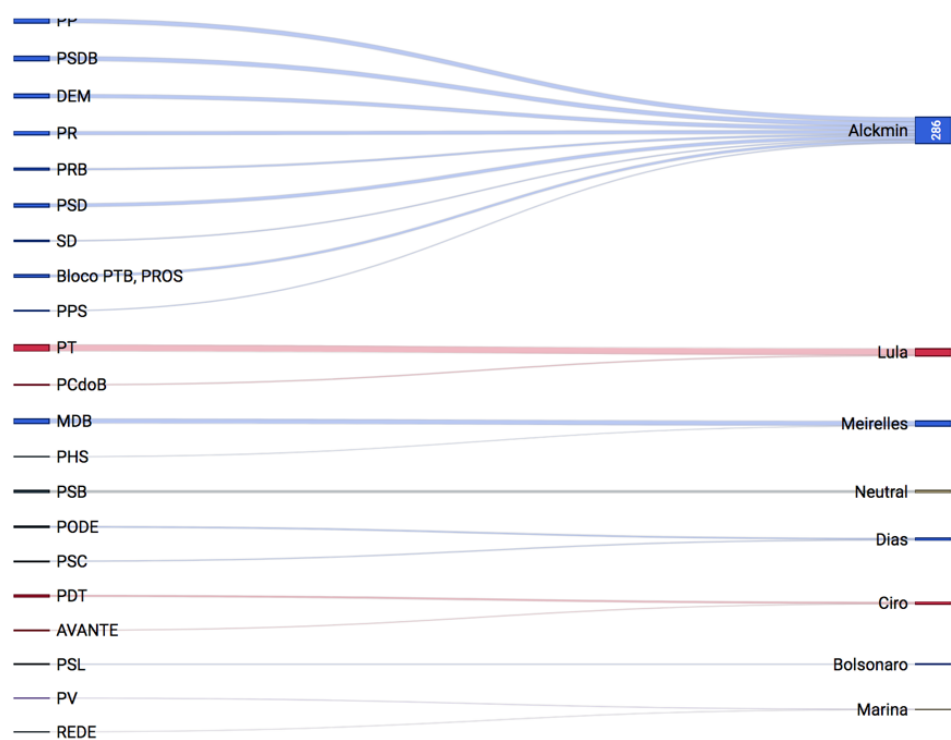
One of the advantages of a case that produces recognizable long-term trends (such as the electoral hegemony of two major parties) but contains unique institutional features (such as the hybrid winner-take-all and proportional representational system described above) is that it makes some fault lines clearer. Political fissures and favor trading are easier to observe when parties must leave a paper trail, as compared to systems in which mass parties subsume all internal dissent. As I discuss at length in Chapter 4, this system still does not solve a major challenge in the study of political transformation, which is that many power negotiations are rarely made public. Still, micro-parties’ negotiations with each other—and with larger, more institutionalized parties—take place at the inter rather than intra-party level and were thus easier to observe. The most salient evidence of less-visible-power-struggles-made-visible is the coalition building that takes place in the months leading up to presidential elections.

Party resources. In 2017, electoral reforms established a public fund to finance campaigns as an alternative to the private sector donations that dominated previous cycles. Amounts were allocated to parties primarily as a function of the number of votes and the size of the party caucus. While the turn to public funding was an attempt to ameliorate the anti-democratic properties of politics-as-business (Sheingate 2016)—which, in Brazil, is the source of the major corruption scandals that roil the country—the law was written in such a way that it reinforced the field position of incumbent politicians and large parties (McKenna 2017). Additionally, Brazilian law establishes the so-called *horário eleitoral gratuito* (free electoral hour), which provides parties and their candidates with free public advertising on radio and television. The number of seconds each party receives is a function of the size of their party or electoral coalition. These valuable electoral resources incentivize party leaders to pool resources and trade favors, but they must formally register these negotiations with the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, or elections court.

As depicted in Figure 2.1, PSDB candidate Geraldo Alckmin forged the largest party coalition in advance of the October 2018 election. Nodes on the left represent Brazil’s parties, and the nodes on the right are the candidates who party delegates voted to formally endorse. The sizes of the flows represent the party’s congressional caucus (the largest two being PP and PSDB, with 49 representatives each, and the smallest shown here being Marina Silva’s party, REDE, with two).

As a result of his large party coalition, Alckmin was privy to 365 thirty-second TV spots, whereas most of the remaining 12 candidates got 15 or fewer. During each of the five nightly 12-minute blocks, Alckmin secured five and a half minutes (44 percent) of television time, whereas seven candidates will get fewer than 15 seconds to campaign on the

Figure 2.1: Political Party Endorsements of Brazil’s 2018 Presidential Candidates



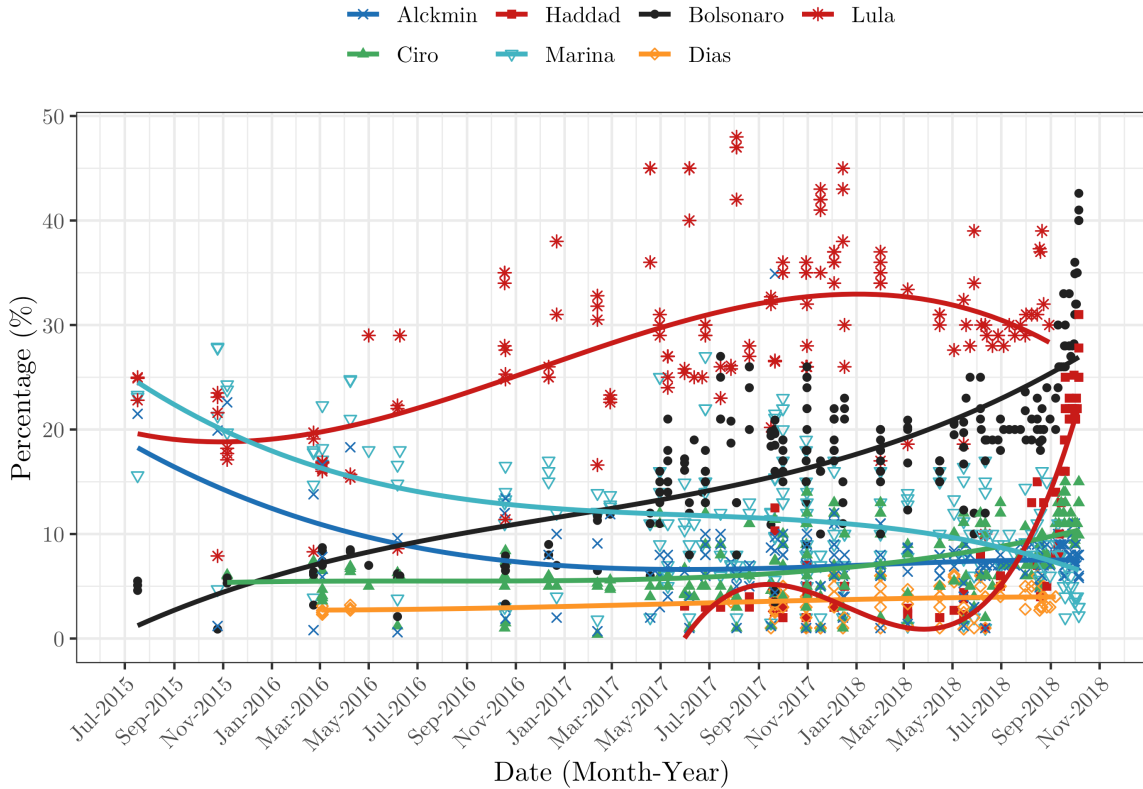
airwaves. Additional television and radio advertising is prohibited, but candidates inundated social media channels to make up for TV and radio time deficits. Bolsonaro had the largest online following, though some analyses suggest that roughly a third of presidential candidates’ social media followers are bots (F. Martins 2018).

When institutional conditions provide for as much maneuvering as does Brazil’s unstable political field, we would expect political actors to behave more strategically (Clemens and Minkoff 2004; McCammon 2012). Heterogeneity in the parties’ approaches to power-building, internal organizational logics, degrees of institutionalization, ideology, and proximity to social movements and other organized interest groups permits systematic comparison across these dimensions.

Brazil’s age of protest. Third, and finally, Brazil was in the midst of a cycle of collective action when I began this study. That both right-wing and left-wing groups were mobilized—albeit in different orders of magnitude and with varying frequency—meant that it was ripe for within-case comparison on the ideology, social location, and strategic behavior not only of parties but of protesters. In the first four years of data collection, the country went from a mass protest cycle, to a contested impeachment, to what would turn out to be a critical (or realignment) election. For most of the run-up to the election, popular support was split among Lula, Bolsonaro, and a range of candidates who endorsed political projects ranging from neo-developmentalism to pro-market fundamentalism (Figure 2.2).

Most observers viewed the 2018 presidential election as a referendum on the polit-

Figure 2.2: Aggregated Presidential Tracking Polls, 2015-2018



Graph includes polling data from from eight research institutes: BTG, CNT, Datafolha, Ibope, Paraná Pesquisas, Poder360, Vox, and XP/Ipesp. I'm grateful for research assistance from Paula Barcelos for help in compiling these data.

ical, social, and economic regime that would close out the thirty-year period historians refer to as Brazil's New Republic. Macro-structural instability meant that history was truly up for grabs (Seguin 2016). With one month until the election, polls showed that anywhere between 15 and 30 percent of the electorate had not yet decided how they would vote. So long as we could imagine plausibly different paths out of the crisis—with both left and right-leaning alternatives emerging victorious—then Brazil's political conjuncture represented something of a crucial test case of how movements, party, and capital fractions interact and build power in times of interregnum.

2.3.1 Operationalizing outcomes

Steven Lukes ([1974] 2005) theorized three faces of power, the first of which is the easiest to observe because it manifests as a visible win or loss, such as when one side wins a roll call vote, referendum, or election. It is comparable to what political scientist and labor organizer Jane McAlevey (2016) designates a structure test, the “do-or-die hard as-

assessment of whether or not . . . [organizers] have succeeded in winning a majority” (15). Although voting is a lower-risk activity than participating in a workplace strike, an election is similar to a structure test in that it is an assessment of the extent to which leaders have a relevant number of committed followers, as well as the organization’s capacity to translate their interests to formal political-institutional arenas. From the perspective of field theory, elections are an outcome with mutually recognized stakes around which strategic actors are often vying to be a part of the winning coalition.

In addition to the results of the election, I identified three additional sets of outcomes on what Lukes referred to as the second and third faces of power: durable policy arrangements, agenda control, and what Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez (2016) call the organizational universes that structure long-term political shifts (see also Schattschneider 1960).

Electoral outcomes. Each field-level actor included in the meso-level case selection described below overtly or tacitly campaigned for one or more candidate in the 2018 election. For many, the most consequential outcome was the presidential race. Although the organizations under investigation were fragmented in their support of 13 candidates, I expected them to—and they did—take sides in the likely event of a run-off election on October 28, 2018. In addition to the presidential race, each political party ticket registered hundreds if not thousands of candidates at the national and state levels (president, vice president, senate, federal deputy, governor, vice governor, and state deputy). The range demonstrates to the parties’ varied electoral strategies, internal coherence, and degree of coordination. For example, Bolsonaro’s party, the PSL, ran 1,416 candidates, including 80 congressional hopefuls in the Minas Gerais (even though the state is only allotted 53 seats in total). PSOL, the similarly-sized socialist party—whose political platform is diametrically opposed to that of the PSL—ran 1,224 candidates, 84 of whom are running for one of São Paulo’s 74 congressional seats. Because votes total at the level of the coalition, this may have been a cunning strategy for the party (which would benefit from the sum of votes cast for the slate) but not for the candidates themselves, whose electorates could be spread thin.

Welfare state retrenchment policies. Intimately linked to each groups’ electoral endorsements are their stances on three pieces of proposed or extant legislation. First, in mid-2017, labor protections that had existed since 1943 were rewritten under the guise of workforce modernization. The workday limit increased from 8 to 12 hours, obligatory union contributions (called a “tax” by opponents) were abolished, and bargaining rights were transferred from collective bargaining units to individual workers and their bosses. All of the leftist presidential candidates condemned the labor reforms and indicated that, if elected, they would work to repeal them. Rightist candidates vowed to preserve them. In addition, pension reform (which was shelved after Temer was secretly recorded condoning hush money payments) was up for debate.⁶ Throughout 2017, capital markets traded in accordance with the likelihood that the pension reforms would pass, whereas

6. On July 10, 2019, just over six months after Bolsonaro’s inauguration, Brazil’s lower house passed pension reform by a wide margin: 379 to 131 votes. Three months later, on October 22, 2019, the senate passed the overhaul, again with about three quarters of the votes (60-19).

labor groups staged strikes and marches in opposition to them. Finally, in 2016, Brazil's Congress passed a constitutional amendment that froze social spending for 20 years. That these laws passed or remain up for debate despite exceedingly low levels of popular support speaks to nature and strength of pressure that different groups exert on Brazil's legislative branch. The shape that these policies take in the coming years will therefore serve as a window into the power that actors and networks in the sample wield on the second face in the political-institutional arena.

Political appointments. The composition of the future president's economic team—namely, the posts of Minister of Finance, Minister of Planning, Budget, and Management, and Head of the Central Bank—will be an important signal of the political economic regime that will prevail during the upcoming four-year mandate. For example, in 2010, Dilma Rousseff kept sociologist Guido Mantega as her Finance Minister, a vocal supporter and architect of the neo-developmental policy matrix she then pursued in her first term (Chapter 4). After her narrow re-election in 2014, she did the opposite, appointing Chicago-trained economist Joaquim Levy to implement extreme austerity measures in a move widely seen as a capitulation to finance capital.

Longitudinal changes in the field-level network map. Finally, how the field-level network maps shift during the height of the election, prior to the president's inauguration, and into their first term are outcomes of interest in themselves. Which alliances are formed or severed (and when), which previously isolated nodes become bridging ties, and changes in the structure of sub-communities will provide insight how field positions—and therefore political terrain—is altered.

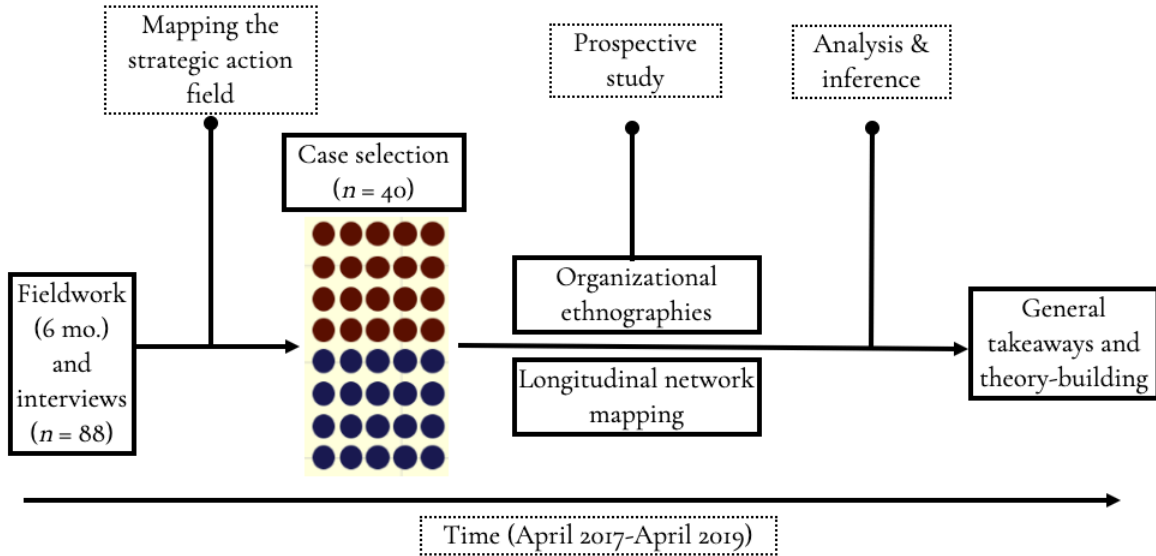
2.3.2 Bounding a strategic action field

Given the chaotic context and complex institutional dynamics described above, delimiting a sampling frame from which to select field-level actors required nearly a year of iterative and immersive research. My approach to begin bounding the field was to identify the sectors of capital, social movements, and organized constituency groups that make up different political blocs in contemporary Brazil. Appendix A elaborates each of the steps shown below in Figure 2.3 depicting the general framework of the research design.

Theory-Specific Accounts of the Case

Given this empirical operationalization of the field, how would different analysts theorize the Brazilian case—before they knew what would happen? What values the outcomes of interest would take was not yet known, but it is possible to conceive of how different theorists will answer the question of why events unfolded in the way that they did. This section specifies how scholars in the different theoretical traditions discussed above might explain not-yet-observed patterns as a function of the theoretical prisms through which they would examine the case. This is not an exercise in hypothesis testing with the goal of causal inference. Most of the data cannot be subject to statistical tests and many variables cannot be controlled (or even observed). It is also not an attempt at wholesale

Figure 2.3: General Framework of the Research Design



validation or rejection of a particular theory, not least because some of the claims overlap and all have already shed light on important dynamics of the case.

However, all of the theories outlined above have prior expectations about the way the political world works, the factors that are likely to have more or less explanatory potential for the case, and the way in which the mechanisms they propose combine or interact with structural conditions. For these reasons, what doesn't match up with the pre-written accounts will be as valuable as will a convincing explanation for what does. This exercise of specifying theoretical priors and patterns of confirmatory or disconfirmatory evidence allows for what Schaprf (1997) called the "disciplining" of our search for explanations. He wrote:

In a world that is exceedingly complex and in which we will often be studying unique cases, we must have a good idea of what to look for if we wish to discover anything worthwhile. Since a single data point can be 'explained' by any number of regression lines, post hoc explanations are too easy to invent and usually (unless invented with the trained skill of the master historian) totally useless. The implication is that our search for explanations must be disciplined by strong prior expectations and that we must take the disconfirmation of such expectations as a welcome pointer to the development of more valid explanations. (1997:29)

To the extent that the observed outcomes do not conform to some of the frameworks' propositions, it will be important to specify which elements of the Brazilian case differ from those previously explained by them. The next section provides narrative accounts of the case written from each theory's vantage point.

Account 1: The Social Movements Perspective

It is difficult to imagine a more propitious time for social movements than in the period leading up to Brazil's 2018 election. As noted in Chapter 1, after its halting transition to democracy in the late 1980s, Brazil's so-called third (or civil society) sector was held up as a model for participatory government "from below." Baiocchi (2017) writes:

The undeniable successes of participatory democracy in achieving governance goals had the effect of propelling participation to a range of institutions. Participation was decidedly mainstreamed, now as a tool for good governance. (41)

Even as participatory governance was "mainstreamed," Baiocchi points out that the interdependence of movements and states has a long history in the region:

Civil society in Brazil, as in much of Latin America, has always aimed at the state with its claims and imaginations of what is possible. Unlike, perhaps, civil society organizations in liberal societies that have a stronger claim at "separateness" if not "autonomy," civil society in Brazil has often had ties with the state, if not direct origins in the state itself. (42-43)

The growth of what is called "governance from below" is thus a widely acknowledged phenomenon that spanned multiple institutions and segments of Brazil's porous state (e.g., Gonçalves 2014) and generated praise, critique, and attempts to resurrect the idea of "participatory utopias" (Souto and Paz 2012). Several left-leaning activists I interviewed interpreted the mass mobilizations of June 2013 in this light, that is, as evidence of Brazil's mature civil society. One said: "[June] was about: well, we've already conquered so much, we want more! Which is why so many of the protest signs were about rights." This interviewee was quick to note, however, that:

For the first time, in 2013, the Right also discovered the streets, the right had never engaged in political disputes in the streets [before]... and it discovered and appropriated this space—and appropriated it with great efficiency.⁷

Social movement scholars would have taken note of the fact that prior to the election, segments of society—both left and right—were therefore both equipped and mobilized to continue to intervene in the political sphere. These factors suggest that movements that learned how to strategically engage with and extract concessions from the state will continue to do so even in the face of formidable ideological headwinds.

Political access. During this same period, ordinary citizens gained unprecedented access to the formal political arena. Between 1989 and 2014, Brazil's electorate increased by 115 percent (compared to a population increase of 39 percent), from 66 million voters casting ballots the year the dictatorship ended to 142 million in 2014. Ordinary citizens demanded—and were granted access to—the highest level of policymaking in Brasília through venues like the popular *conselhos*, which had diffused to 97 percent of Brazilian

7. Interview on July 12, 2017.

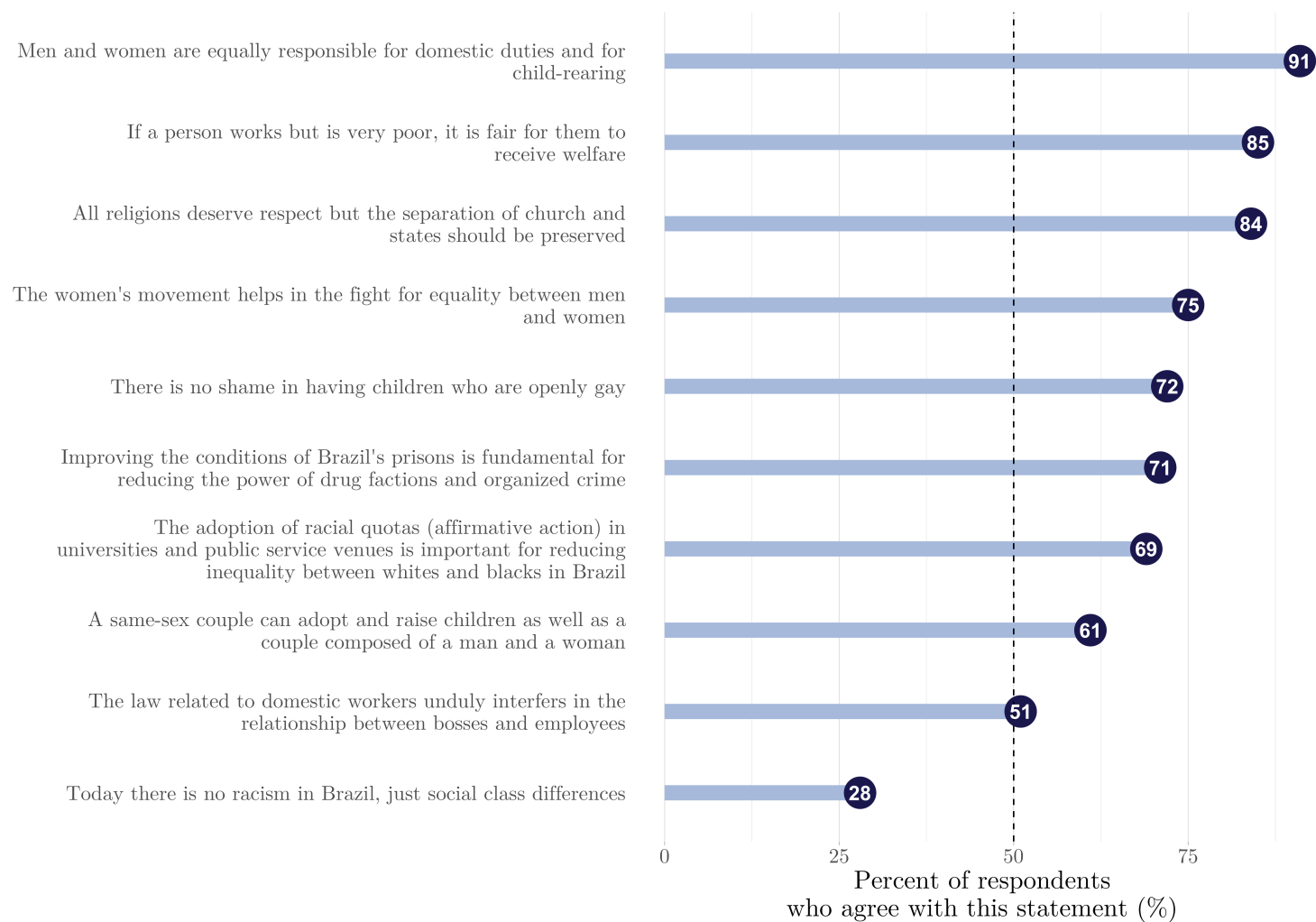
municipalities by the beginning of Dilma's first mandate (Avelino 2012). Culturally resonant frames, such as the PT Left's "the master's house freaks out when the slave quarters learns to read" and the reactionary Right's pious-patriotic slogan "Brazil above all, God above everyone" were ubiquitous. Moreover, in the years leading up to the election, Internet-enabled activism was widespread among groups of all political stripes, a potential sign that online media has democratized "the social space where power is decided" (Castells 2007:238).

Cultural and social advances. On one hand, it has become commonplace in Brazil to assert that the redistributive policies of the PT governments generated social and culture backlash among the country's elites. As Green (2019) puts it:

This line of reasoning has almost become a standard trope of the left in arguing that the underlying causes for discontent with the PT were that Afro-Brazilians had achieved new opportunities for affirmative action programs and that airports theretofore reserved for the upper and middle classes had turned into bus stations. (3)

Yet one 2017 survey found considerable public support for the social and human rights typically associated with the progressive causes thought to be on the decline. Setting aside the important issue of social desirability bias (Krumpal 2011), the causes for which these movements fought received fairly widespread support (Figure 2.4), making it difficult to explain the Left's losses with sole reference to a cultural counter-movement or backlash.

Figure 2.4: Support for Social and Human Rights in Brazil in 2017



Data source: *Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública* (Filho et al. 2018)

Divided elites. Fortunately for grassroots movement groups, too, elites were divided. One need only walk down São Paulo's main avenue six months before the election to find evidence of internal conflict among the barons of Brazil. FIESP, the powerful industrial lobby group whose building towers over Avenida Paulista, released dozens of gargantuan inflatable frogs for their *quem vai engolir o sapo?* (who is going to swallow the frog?) campaign. The media stunt was designed to provoke the bankers on Faria Lima, São Paulo's Wall Street, for their aberrationally high interest rates. The early lack of coordination and rivalry among conservative megachurch leaders and their candidates, the increasingly organized wealthy libertarian networks—who defined themselves in opposition to the segments of capital that receive handsome subsidies from the state—, and elites' (initial) inability to decide as a bloc whether to back far right Bolsonaro, dull centrist Alckmin, enigmatic Marina, or the moonshot candidacy of millionaire libertarian Amoêdo, serve as further evidence of the deep divisions within Brazil's political-economic establishment in the lead-up to the election.

Threats and opportunities. Perhaps most significant from the perspective of social movement theory, however, was the existence of the two cognate enabling conditions of movement success: threat to long-standing left-wing organizations and opportunity for right-wing upstart groups. The slashing of the welfare state (which was thought to have institutionalized so many progressive movements' gains), Dilma's dubious impeachment, the rollback of social and human rights under the Temer government, and the judicial branch's politically motivated jailing of Lula are emblematic of the clear threats the Left faced before this pivotal election. By contrast, new right-wing movements that proliferated after Dilma's downfall and older groups like those supported by the Brazilian military and neo-conservative clergy were emboldened by their dramatic takedown of the PT after losing four successive national elections to them. They saw the 2018 elections as a golden opportunity with which to consolidate their power in both the executive and legislative branches of government, preserving the labor reforms and PEC 55 and pressing for pension reform shortly after the inauguration. Given these factors, it would be difficult to explain low levels of movement influence on the outcomes of interest by pointing to an enervated civil society, with little formal access to the political arena, operating in an inhospitable opportunity structure.

Account 2: The Political Articulation Perspective

Political articulation theorists would likely view Brazil's 2018 election as a clash between transformational and transactional politics. Amid deep economic recession and revelations of corruption scandals that implicated members of nearly all parties, the political field was in crisis. Pre-election public opinion surveys showed that nine in ten Brazilians had no faith that politicians will represent their interests (Chade 2016) and the country found itself at the very bottom of the World Bank's 2018 ranking of citizen trust in public institutions (133 of 137 countries). For the first time since redemocratization, the relatively stable alternation between the PT and PSDB seemed to have disintegrated, opening up the possibility for radical candidates and wildly variant party strategies. Because there is no direct and necessary link between the pre-political identities of a population and the

resultant distribution of power, what Gramsci called “a crisis of the State” put the outcomes of interest at the mercy of party agents.

The largest parties on the left, the PT and PDT, attempted to politicize certain cleavages, especially class identity, and mobilize new and existing socio-political blocs. Because the most salient element of the PT campaign was Lula’s role in the concrete cultural and material gains of Brazil’s underclass throughout the 2010s—including expanding access to higher education by 64 percent, reducing the percentage of the population in extreme poverty from 10.5 to 4 percent, and increasing the real minimum wage by 72 percent—the party was surprisingly resilient. This was particularly the case in the poorest regions of the northeast, where, since 2006, Lula’s redistributive policies have garnered him the support of nearly 60 percent of the electorate. Many popular accounts credit Lula himself, a lathe operator turned president, with creating the imaginary of Brazil’s new middle class. That he was thrown in jail while leading in the polls in his run for a third term speaks to the extent to which he is viewed as a transformational leader of this integral party.

The other most viable alternative on the Left was the PDT, which sought to suture slightly different socio-political blocs, also on the basis of class identity. Whereas the PT never confronted the basic structure of the economy—indeed, Lula’s pick for the Central Bank and would-be pick for Dilma’s Minister of Finance was billionaire banker Henrique Meirelles, who also ran for president in 2018 as one of the most hardline austerity candidates in the field—Ciro’s campaign targeted the rentier capitalism of the five Brazilian banks that control 85 percent of the country’s financial operations. Political theorist Roberto Mangabeira Unger (2018) (often referred to as the “ideological guru” of the PDT) described the primordial social bases of Lula’s PT as the comparatively well-off and well-organized workers of the industrial southeast. Once in power, Unger and others observed (Singer 2012), the PT shifted to attend to those living in extreme poverty, primarily in the country’s impoverished northeast, through assistentialist policies and the stimulation of consumption, rather than through structural reforms. By contrast, Leonel Brizola (and now Ciro)’s PDT sought to concentrate their political articulation efforts on the mostly *unorganized* masses of laborers and small business owners, the organization of production, and supply-side political economic policy.

Parties that maintained ideologically coherent links with their base, like the PSOL (made up of vanguard socialists rooted in large social movements like the MTST), PSC, PRB, PROS (the parties run by neo-Pentecostal megachurch leaders of the Assembly of God and Universal Church), and NOVO (backed by fervent libertarians) while still small, likely solidified their electoral support through constituent organizing. PSOL, PSC, PRB, and PROS’ attempts to articulate their voter blocs relied primarily on cultural and organizational forms of hegemony, as compared to the PT, PDT, and NOVO’s material-economic appeals. Given their narrow constituencies, institutional constraints, and purist approach to politics, however, these *partidos nanicos* chances of growing into mass-based parties are remote. What power they have will come from alliances they forge during the next presidential mandate.

Meanwhile, cartel politics dominated the conservative-moderate parties on the map.

To explain their electoral and policy performance, we need only look to the way in which Brazil’s disarticulated parties’ “inactions and missteps” led to the fragmentation of the polity and “elitist struggles among opportunistic factions” (Slater 2015:123). Alckmin’s PSDB, Dias’ PODE, and the ten parties that made up their respective coalitions transacted their party resources for electoral spoils. Not even the ideological coherence we would expect during an election was present in these party coalitions. For example, Solidariedade, run by a party boss who got his start as a union leader, allied with Alckmin, who supports the labor reforms that Solidariedade’s constituents vehemently oppose. To the extent that these cartel parties lost political power despite having the most robust party coalition, it was probably because they became “mummified and anachronistic” (Gramsci [1971] 2012:452), the portrait of the *velha política* (old-fashioned politics) Brazilians were eager to leave behind. We can only explain any of this lackluster establishment’s gains from this perspective by pointing to an overall weak and disarticulated party system (Desai 2015:152).

Finally, the rise of Brazil’s so-called tropical Trump, these theorists would posit, is a historically specific case of what Gramsci referred to as Caesarism. The concept is similar to Marx’s characterization of Bonapartism, used to describe the emergence of “grotesque mediocrity[ies]” like Napoleon III who had to represent the small peasants who could not represent themselves (Marx [1852] 1977). For Gramsci, Caesarism can be described as:

When the progressive force A struggles with the reactionary force B, not only may A defeat B or B defeat A, but it may happen that neither A nor B defeats the other—that they bleed each other mutually and then a third force C intervenes from outside, subjugating what is left of both A and B. (Gramsci [1971] 2012:463)

In the case of Brazil, the progressive force A, led by the welfare state expansionist PT, was counterposed to the conservative politics of the establishment Right under Temer’s MDB government, which counted on the support of a panoply of right and center-right parties. One interpretation, then, is that “mutual bleeding” exhausted both sides, opening the pathway for neo-fascist Bolsonaro. In the Gramscian view, it is “during periods of political crisis when political movements with contending visions of the state arise, politics becomes more a matter of force, and democracy must recede” (Riley 2015:182), a plausible account of Bolsonaro’s startling traction.⁸

8. The outcome that would have been most difficult to explain from the perspective of political articulation theory would be the triumph of Marina Silva. Marina, as she is known, founded and is running on one of Brazil’s smallest and most insignificant party tickets, REDE. Her political profile confuses the electorate. She is an Afro-Brazilian evangelical-environmental leader who threw her support behind PT nemesis Aécio Neves in the previous election. Yet, she consistently polled second or third in advance of the election, evidently retaining a socially heterogeneous base of support even in the absence of either a strong party or political personality intelligible to different social blocs. Her success would present a puzzle for this theoretical framework.

Account 3: The Investment Theory of Politics Perspective

The smart money was right—as usual, these theorists would say. Prior to the election, most investors confidently took the position that judicial proceduralism—which the Left argues was shamelessly used by the Right as a political weapon—would bar Lula’s candidacy. Moreover, regardless of who took office, they would predict, the longstanding tradition of placing an orthodox team of economists at the helm of the Finance Ministry and the Central Bank would continue.

At first glance, Brazil’s 2014 presidential election—in which Dilma was re-elected despite near-unanimous opposition by all major investor groups—runs counter to what the theory would predict. Less than two years later, however, her ouster was orchestrated by other means. After 18 separate attempts to impeach her on corruption charges for which her opponents could not muster sufficient evidence, Brazil’s most conservative congress since the 1964 military coup d’état voted to remove her on dubious charges of fiscal mismanagement. Both charges, one related to credit lines from the national development bank and the other the yearly farm bill, were later shelved by independent investigators from the Public Prosecutor’s Office, which determined that no crime was committed. All of this is in keeping with what the investment theory of politics would predict.

Scholars in this tradition would also remind us that it was only on Lula’s fourth run for the presidency that he won. In each of the first three presidential elections after Brazil’s transition to democracy—1989, 1994, and 1998—all capital fractions united against Lula and he finished second. According to even the most sympathetic historiography, Lula told the national leadership of his party that he would only run a fourth time if he would be permitted to form alliances with bankers, business leaders, and conservative politicians that the PT had theretofore eschewed (Branford, Kucinski, and Wainwright 2003:5). To this end, he named José Alencar, a multimillionaire textile manufacturer with strong conservative-evangelical ties as his vice president. At the height of the 2002 campaign, he circulated his famous “Letter to the Brazilian people,” which left-wing critics say might as well have been a “letter to the Brazilian bankers,” because it affirmed that, if elected, a Lula Administration would not renege on debt repayments and would mostly continue the neoliberal political economic project of his predecessor. A 2002 news article reported that during the campaign, Lula had friendly meetings with FIESP (São Paulo’s industry lobby) and FEBRABAN (the banking lobby) for the first time. An appearance at the former went into one of his TV spots, and he was introduced—to applause—as the future president of Brazil at a stock market meeting a month before the vote (Friedlander, Sanches, and Camarotti 2002). This situation is inconceivable in the context of the 2018 election.

It was Lula’s successor Dilma, by contrast, who chose to “poke the leopards with a short stick” (Singer 2015) with her New Economic Matrix (Chapter 4), giving temporary tax breaks to industry and consumers, and implemented inflation control measures like fuel subsidies. Facing the fallout from the global financial crisis and the end of Brazil’s commodity bonanza, Dilma was unable to conciliate class interests as well as Lula had during his two mandates while pursuing these neo-developmental (and finance capital-

unfriendly) policies. Although she was reelected in 2014 against the wishes of a unified front of capitalists, the investment theorists would argue that they—acting in concert with political elites who could not tolerate her willingness to let the corruption crackdown continue unabated—eventually saw to her demise. Her fate is now well known.

Despite capitalists' ability to ensure that the PT governments served their economic interests for the eleven of the thirteen years they were in power, a leftist comeback in 2018 would have been, as Bloomberg reporters put it, investors' "worst nightmare" (Oyamada and Andrade 2018). While industrial capital may have confronted finance capital lightly—manifest in FIESP's inflatable frog campaign—this theory would predict that the economic elite would inevitably circle the wagons when the specter of a leftist government returned for the fifth time in a row. Among their many concerns was that a Lula/Haddad or Ciro win would reverse what most investors saw as great strides made possible by Temer: the constitutional amendment that froze public spending, dramatic budget cuts to social programs, the labor reforms, a massive sell off of Brazil's natural resources to multinationals, and advanced discussions to privatize the state electric company Eletrobras. Most important, a 2018 win for business and finance capital would mean that the pension reform, a consensus policy among the economic elite, could move forward.

Before the election, no one was certain as to what would happen to the roughly 45 million votes committed to Lula when he was ruled ineligible to run. Before he was formally removed from the ticket, many investors were bearish on Brazil in the lead up to the election. Each time a poll was released showing that Lula remained the clear front-runner, the stock market dropped and the Brazilian real devalued relative to the dollar. In fact, in this period, the *real* reached its third lowest value since the inflation-controlling *Plano Real* was implemented in 1994 for fear of a left-wing resurgence. Legacy Capital's initially contrarian position—that PT would not advance to the second round—was considered newsworthy by investor bulletins. Before the campaign officially began, one of the hedge fund's partners noted that of the five most viable presidential candidates, three are contending for the left-leaning electorate and only two the right. "This fragmentation [on the Left] could bring us to a second round between Alckmin and Bolsonaro, which would be the best scenario for the markets," he said (Viri and Samor 2018).

From the perspective of finance capital, one of the least palatable scenarios would be a Ciro Gomes win. Ciro's governing program suggested that, if elected, he would aggressively confront the bank's interest margins and referred to the labor reforms as "pure savagery." In a 2017 television interview, Ciro reflected on his 2002 electoral losses to Lula. He attributed it, in part, to his naiveté but also to the São Paulo elite's concerted effort to defuse his candidacy that, according to his insider reports, began with a dinner between then-president Fernando Henrique and the high command of Faria Lima (Trajano 2017). During that campaign, the ex-president of Brazil's largest bank had invited Ciro and Mangabeira Unger to lunch. As they said their goodbyes, Ciro recalled, the banker said, "Look, go ahead and say whatever you want to win the election, but if you win come back here so we can get on the same page—otherwise we'll destroy you" (ibid). Perhaps because he knew he was reviled among rentier capitalists, Ciro appointed agribusiness darling Katia Abreu as his vice president in an attempt to appeal to what his supporters described as

the productive sectors of Brazil’s economy.

Bolsonaro did as well as he did, this school of thought would predict, because he played by the rules of the capitalist class even as he stoked the fears of the masses. Contrary to what observers might presume to be an interventionist stance (given his military background), the Bolsonaro campaign put investor blocs at ease. During a pre-election meeting with the bank BTG Pactual, General Mourão (Bolsonaro’s vice president) told the markets everything they wanted to hear, including that the pension reform would happen even before their inauguration. Mourão went further, saying that a Bolsonaro Administration would consider privatizing not only Eletrobras but also segments of the state oil company Petrobras, while passing tax breaks, pursuing a deregulatory agenda, and furthering Temer’s fiscal austerity policies (Raatz 2018).

2.4 Limitations of the research design

Among the shortcomings of this approach to bounding the political field in Brazil are: overemphasizing the urban players in the country’s metropolises at the expense of rural actors, sidelining of the judicial branch, and failing to include organizational actors that more clearly reveal the extent to which international dynamics influence the strategic set of choices available to all of the meso-level actors under study.

To the first point, Brazil is larger in size than the 48 contiguous United States, making it impossible to conduct deep ethnographic research in a more representative array of the country’s 5,570 municipalities. However, I was surprised by the geographic diversity of the people with who I interacted during my time spent in Brasília. In addition to being located in the bulls-eye center of the country—Juscelino Kubitschek idealized the Niemeyer-designed city to be equidistant from the country’s terrestrial extremes—it also draws activists and party affiliates of all ideological stripes who go to the capital city to make their demands heard. As one local resident described to me as we passed a smattering of demonstrators from the state of Amazonas one Wednesday afternoon, “Protests are part of the folklore of Brasília. . . though I’ve never seen them amount to much,” he said.⁹ In addition, I collected quantitative data on the geographic distribution of party affiliates and qualitative data from six newspapers that cover the country’s five major sub-regions in an attempt to help correct for the clear urban bias of my fieldwork.

Excluding the courts, the *Ministério Público* (MPF the Public Prosecutor’s Office, often referred to as Brazil’s Fourth Branch), and the organized actors pulling the levers of the *Lava Jato* investigation is also potentially problematic.¹⁰ In just two of the dozens of plea bargain agreements brokered on behalf of Brazil’s business elite, more than 1,800 politicians from well over half of the country’s political parties were implicated. The “judicialization of politics” and “lawfare” were two phrases widely used by interviewees and

9. Field note from Brasília, November 29, 2017.

10. *Lava Jato* is the massive corruption investigation inspired by Italy’s Mani Pulite operation of the 1990s, which most analysts believe facilitated the rise of Silvio Berlusconi.

political commentators to describe how the PT's opponents (both domestic and foreign) have weaponized the judicial system for political purposes. Indeed, Lula's fate—and that of his presidential candidacy—depended on the machinations of the courts. Thus, even though *Lava Jato* and its fallout are not the centerpiece of the study, the judicial branch is incorporated into the analysis as a salient “overlapping field.” It contributed to precisely the kinds of shifts and ruptures in the political terrain to which civil society organizations responded differently during the course of this study.

Third, and perhaps most seriously, the absence of an explicit international or global dimension in the final set of cases I tracked longitudinally is stark, and was concerning to several of my most-trusted Brazilian interlocutors. As was my habit during fieldwork, I often brought early versions of my movement-party map to interviews and even informal social settings to solicit feedback. One of the harshest—but eminently valid—critiques I received was from a group of leftist activists (and Gramsci aficionados). As I unfurled the diagram, Dilermando, a math professor with an encyclopedic knowledge of Brazil's political history, looked it over. He nodded, mostly, and then asked for my pen. “You're missing something crucial in your map,” he said. U-S-A, he scrawled in large block letters. I stammered something about Fligstein and McAdam's description of hierarchical fields (I remember using the term *bonecas russas*, or Russian dolls) but he did not buy it. Dilermando lives in a different state but we spoke often over WhatsApp, and two months later, when I showed him a different document that attempted to trace the major ideological fault lines in Brazil, he redoubled his critique. He wrote:

Your schema has another important hole, which I had already pointed out to you that day in São Paulo: USA. Imperialist interests and their connections, and confluences, with the interests of the Latin American elite are what permit the asymmetry of forces that we see today.¹¹

My response to Dilermando's critique is that, as with the judicial branch, the international forces to which he refers enter into the analysis, but do so by way of the domestic meso-level actors that I tracked rather than as a separate field I scrutinized. If he's right, then these undercurrents should appear inductively.

Conclusion

The rise of anti-democratic and authoritarian regimes worldwide—and scholars' relative inability to account for their resurgence—makes the technical questions we have about how to study political power more urgent. This chapter offered one way of doing so by operationalizing strategic action field theory with a prospective case study of a high-stakes political event in Brazil. Although Fligstein and McAdam differentiate positivist from realist approaches to field theory, the method described here attempts to combine the two by deductively testing theoretical propositions against the case, while relying on inductive, qualitative research that permitted insight into the mechanisms and processes that help explain changing field positions. Identifying the variation that preceded the outcomes of

11. WhatsApp exchange from November 17, 2017.

interest (Gamson 1975), specifying theoretical propositions in advance (Denzin 2009), and accounting for oppositional forces (Jenkins and Form 2005) permits more valid inferences about how political struggles unfold.

The method described in this chapter and in Appendix A is only one of many possible approaches to a meso-level analysis of a political field in motion. It is, however, one that takes seriously several known biases of social movement studies, including the tendency to select cases based on success or duration, a neglect of the study of counter-movements, and the tendency to examine movements with which the researcher shares political affinities. The field-theoretic perspective permits insights “between pure description and storytelling on the one hand, and grand theorizing and universal laws on the other” (Hedström and Swedberg 1998), with the ultimate goal of helping explain how power was negotiated, wielded, and transformed during this crucial juncture in Brazil’s political history.

The Conjecture Unrolls: Politics at Interregnum

The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.

Gramsci ([1971] 2012:276)

On a cloudless Saturday in April, a group of skinheads wearing black ski masks gathered for a protest at MASP.¹ A brutalist architectural monument, and one of the most important art museums in the southern hemisphere, the building is an elevated glass structure supported by cherry-red lateral beams. Beneath the floating box is the *vão livre*, an open span of exposed concrete that serves as ground zero for protest activity in this 14-million person city. That particular Saturday, both the skinheads and a rival group of demonstrators converged on the space. Stone-faced policemen stood in a line to separate the groups. On one side was a mix of young people with ties to leftist and anarchist political organizations. “Nationalism is racism!” they yelled in percussive unison. “Racists! Fascists! Will not pass [get through]!”²

On the opposite side of the police line were the skinheads, many of whom wore black clothes and army fatigues, and most of whom had shaved heads. Two of them held protest sign that read, “Defamatory CQC supports the destruction of the the family!” The protest sign was in reference to a popular TV program that had recently aired in which Bolsonaro, whom the announcers introduced as the most controversial politician in Brazil, answered questions from viewers. Some of these questions and Bolsonaro’s responses were:

Viewer: What would you do if your son was gay?

Bolsonaro: That doesn’t even cross my mind; they were well-raised with a

1. MASP stands for *Museu de Arte de São Paulo*, the first Brazilian museum to focus on post World War II art. The structure was built in 1968 and sits in the middle of Avenida Paulista, the main artery linking the cultural and financial centers of the city.

2. In Portuguese, these chants (or *palavras de ordem*) were: “*Nacionalismo é racismo!*” And “*Racistas! Fascistas! Não passarão!*”

present dad, so I don't run this risk.

Viewer: Why are you against racial *cotas* [affirmative action]?

Bolsonaro: Because we are all equal under the law. I would not board a plane piloted by a *cotista*. Nor would I accept being operated on by a doctor *cotista*.

Preta Gil³: If your son fell in love with a black woman, what would you do?

Bolsonaro: *Ô*, Preta, I'm not going to discuss promiscuity. I don't run this risk because my sons were very well-raised.

The public outcry following the CQC interview prompted these skinheads, most of whom appeared to be non-white, to stage the protest in defense of Bolsonaro's bigotry. One wore shiny combat boots and black cargo pants. He grabbed a bullhorn and advanced in the direction of the counter-protest: "You don't know even know what a *subúrbio* is!" he yelled.⁴ He then turned around to show the text on his screenprint shirt, which read "skinheads of the suburbs." He continued:

You all are a bunch of *playboys* [rich kids]. We wake up at 5 a.m. to work, we get home at midnight from the classes we're taking to better ourselves, to help our country and honor our family. You all are a bunch of *playboys*! You play around while we're studying. . . you vermin. Here, we are workers, we're *care-cas*, we're skinheads [English]. We don't use drugs. We work, we pay taxes, we study, many of us come from the army. . . Out with the druggies, long live the workers, long live the Brazilian people!

"Bolsonaro is a dictator!" the counter-protesters yelled in response. "Long live Bolsonaro!" the skinheads bellowed in return.

Contemporary as this scene was at the time of this writing, this protest did not take place in 2018 or even 2017 but in 2011—more than seven years before Bolsonaro would win the presidency and reconfigure the political power map in Brazil.⁵ It speaks to two

3. Preta Gil is a well-known singer and actress. She is the daughter of Gilberto Gil, the former Minister of Culture under Lula and world-renowned bossa nova artist and activist.

4. In Brazilian Portuguese, *subúrbio* has a different meaning from its literal English translation, suburb. It is a word used to refer to poor and working class neighborhoods located far from the city center that often lack basic infrastructure and have higher crime rates (Ramos and Lemgruber 2004).

5. I thank journalist Raphael Tsavkko Garcia for sharing his video footage of the April 9, 2011 protest at MASP, on which this account is based. He also generously shared these reflections in email correspondence seven years after the protest: "I have said since [that protest] that Bolsonaro was someone to be feared. I admit that even during the [2018] election I didn't think the average Brazilian would be capable of electing him, but I knew of the danger that he represented (so much so that even though I am declaredly an anti-PT leftist, I campaigned for Haddad in the second round. We let slip something obvious: the rise of a dangerous Right while we were looking elsewhere. . . I was already aware of the Skinheads, *Ultradefesa* [another one of the groups who staged the protest, meaning Ultra-Defense], and [Kombat] RAC [a neo-Nazi group], etc. before that protest, but I had never seen so many in the same place, together, for the same cause, and worse, defending a politician. From that point on I kept an eye on Bolsonaro and imagined that we couldn't ignore him—not that he would be president. I think his victory surprised everyone (including me)," Raphael wrote to me via email on March 31, 2019.

political facts that were hiding in plain sight: First, this was one of several episodes in which far right nationalists, neo-Nazis, and skinheads were emboldened enough to protest in the most public of places in the most populous of Brazil's cities and at the height of the PT's popularity. Second, it is a testament to the fact that Bolsonaro has long used racist, homophobic, and chauvinistic tropes that resonate with certain segments of the population, making it difficult to explain his rise from the perspective of his rhetoric, framing strategies, or persona alone.

During the 2018 campaign, journalists went to great lengths to try to catalogue the long list of Bolsonaro's outrageous statements. Lupa (2018) published 110 of them. In 1998, for example, he told reporters that "Pinochet should have killed more people." In 2003, and then again in 2014, he told a fellow congresswoman that she "does not deserve to be raped" because she is "too ugly." "I would be incapable of loving a homosexual son," Bolsonaro told *Playboy* magazine in 2011. "I would rather my son die in an accident than turn up with a mustachioed man. To me, he would be dead." In 2017, he said that he had recently visited a *quilombo* where "the lightest Afro-descendent there weighed seven *arrobos*," a unit of mass that Portuguese slavers used to weigh cattle and swine. "They don't do anything! I don't even think they are useful for procreation anymore!" he said to laughter and applause at the Hebrew Club of Rio de Janeiro a year before he would be elected to the presidency.

Bolsonaro's hate speech was thus a constant, rather than a variable, over the 27 years he served in Congress. It alone would be insufficient to explain how and why he came to power in 2018 and not before—and not for a lack of ambition: as recently as 2017, Bolsonaro received only four votes, coming in last place, in his attempt to win the House speakership. In Brasília, Bolsonaro was, as multiple interviewees told me, of the *baixíssimo clero*—the lowest strata of Brasília's political order, whom few of his fellow politicians took seriously until it was too late. Moreover, although he had die-hard followers like those gathered at MASP in 2011, he was not a hegemonic figure within Brazil's conservative circles—or even within his home base of the armed forces—until early 2018.

Bolsonaro was not the only name in whom conservative and far right activists took an interest. Paulo Batista, an evangelical deacon turned congressional candidate who rose to fame for an amateurish commercial that depicted him as a "privatization" superhero, spoke to this contested political terrain on the right.⁶ In our September 2017 interview, Batista said that he was appealing to young conservatives because he was "a[n evangelical] church man, who didn't have political aspirations, who had liberal ideas, and wanted political change."⁷ He counterposed himself to Bolsonaro:

Paulo: [T]hese young people wanted so much more than [that] video. They wanted a superhero. For many people, Paulo Batista was a guy who... who almost had superpowers. They wanted a guy who would go to battle with the

6. The commercial, which can be viewed [at this hyperlink](#), begins with the sentence: "Communists are everywhere but our hero, Paulo Batista, is not going to give up."

7. Interview with Paulo Batista. This interview was conducted jointly with USP doctoral candidate and political scientist Camila Rocha on September 21, 2017.

Left... these guys wanted a name. And there was a name at the time [in 2014], and that name was Jair Bolsonaro. Only Bolsonaro had a different posture. A posture that sometimes would be confused for the Left.

I'm somewhat friendly with the Bolsonaro family, I like them, I respect him—Jair, but I don't know if he understands exactly the difference between Left and Right. I don't know, ok?

... So why did we create the image of the Batista *mito* (legend)? Because the right had a myth, and the liberals, at the time, didn't have a myth.

CR: You're saying... the myth was what, Bolsonaro?

Paulo: The Right had Bolsonaro. The liberals didn't have anyone. And we needed to show that there was someone willing to fight. And I, at a certain point, took on this role. I assumed it, without knowing the consequences or the weight that this [responsibility] brings. It's very heavy. It's very heavy.

Batista was pointing to a skepticism I heard repeatedly among conservative informants prior to the election: they were concerned that Bolsonaro's supposed conversion to free-market liberalism was a farce—that he was, and always had been, a statist. Indeed, as the newspaper *Folha* reported (2017), he had voted in line with PT political economic policy throughout both Fernando Henrique Cardoso (PSDB)'s second term (1999-2002) both Lula Administrations (2003-2010). In late 2017, however, he changed his strategy. He recruited right-wing, libertarian, and liberal economists, including his first “super minister” of the economy, Paulo Guedes, who was trained at the University of Chicago and taught economics in Pinochet's Chile. On November 28, 2017, media confirmed Bolsonaro's “liberal lurch” and noted that it stood in stark contrast to his “political trajectory until now, which was marked by national developmentalism and the defense of a strong state [presence] in the economy” (Fucs 2017). Earlier that month, Bolsonaro found another one of his economic “gurus” in Adolfo Sachsida, a self-declared liberal economist and now his secretary of political economy. At the time, Sachsida said, “From what I understand, he [Bolsonaro] is proposing a liberal political economic [plan], along the lines of Reagan and Thatcher” (Tavares 2017).

Yet, as I observed while attending a thousand-person Students for Liberty conference two years in a row, young libertarians—many of whom have massive social media followings—remained skeptical of Bolsonaro's supposed liberal conversion. In mid-2017 in one four-hour interview with the leaders of MBL—the SMO that takes credit for organizing the largest political protest in Brazil's history in favor of Dilma's impeachment—they didn't so much as mention Bolsonaro as someone the movement considered supporting in 2018.⁸ Instead, they would first endorse businessman Flávio Rocha, with MBL's titular leader writing in an May 2018 *Folha* editorial:

I am proud to affirm: Flávio Rocha, the only presidential candidate who combines the fight against political correctness with fiscal responsibility and serious

8. Interview notes from June 1, 2017.

proposals for public security is the candidate of the Free Brasil Movement for the presidency of the Republic.

But Rocha's campaign never got off the ground, which speaks to the limits of MBL's influence when acting in isolation. When it became clear that Bolsonaro was the clear-frontrunner to beat the PT, MBL endorsed Bolsonaro, as they put it, "with reservations."

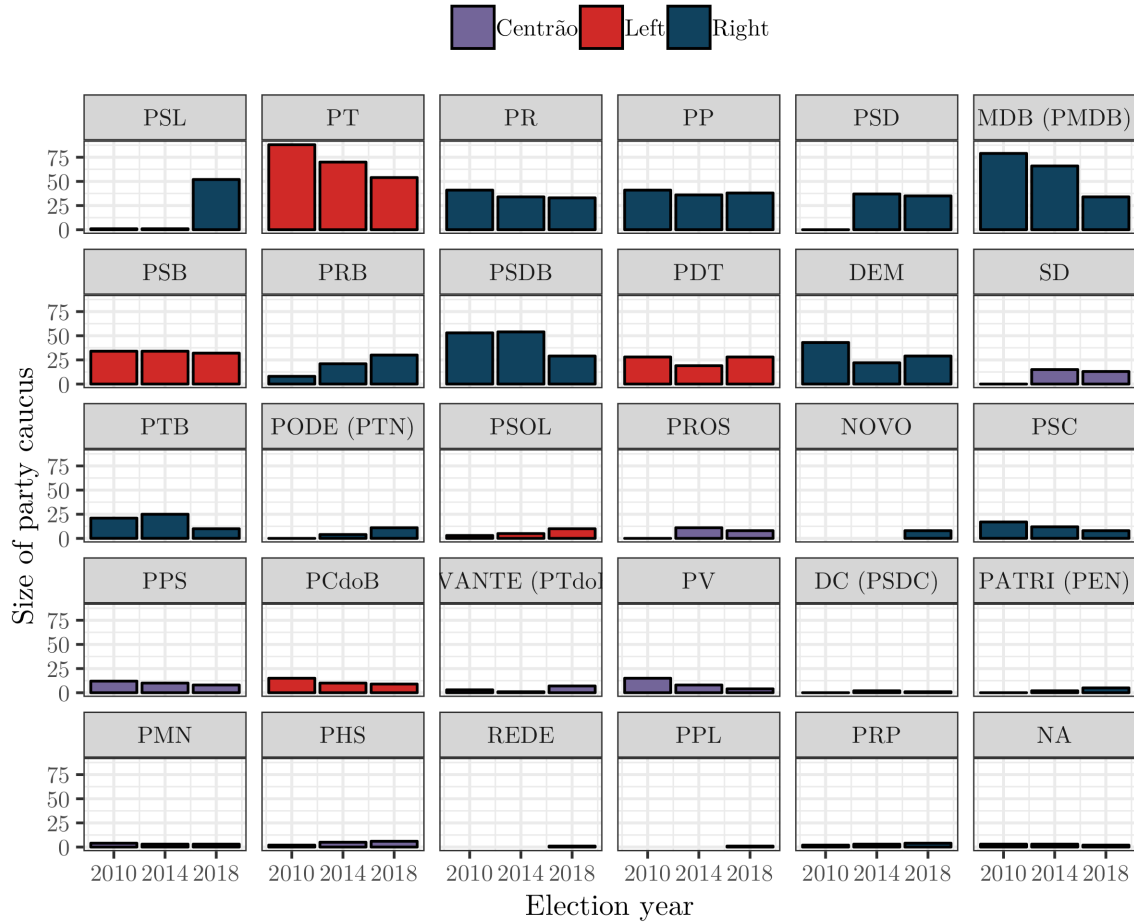
Given that Bolsonaro could hardly be considered the hegemonic rightist candidate prior to the campaign, even among neo-conservative political groups, how can we account for his astonishing success at the polls in 2018? Some of the PSL representatives became the most voted lawmakers in Brazilian history: one of Bolsonaro's sons, Eduardo, received the most votes for a federal deputy ever (1.8 million, after receiving only 82,224 in his run for the same office in 2014). Figure 3.1 reports the absolute shift in party representation in Congress from 2010-2018, and Figure 3.2 does so proportionate to 2014.⁹

The field-theoretic perspective I set out in the previous chapter helps us explain these results. It forces us to look beyond the obvious set of *bolsominions*—like the skin-heads at MASP and Bolsonaro's very active social media following. It also requires that we make clear-eyed assessments of his headline-grabbing framing tactics, which changed little over his thirty years in the public eye. If we look to the less obvious, meso-level actors who modified their strategies in the year leading up to the election, we will have a better understanding of how and why the political terrain shifted in the ways that it did.

At the same time, we must look at the inverse dynamic, that is, what articulation strategies the Left employed and failed to employ in this same period. The data show that even if *bolsonarismo* had not swept the executive and legislative branches as it did, these organized actors would still wield far more power than do progressive forces in Brazil, albeit largely invisibly as they did throughout the PT administrations (Chapter 4). Before reporting the results of the longitudinal network mapping, I first provide some brief historical analysis to help contextualize the main findings. In the second half of the chapter, I draw on my qualitative and quantitative data to describe the terrain shift that I then explore in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

9. The latter figure does not show the percent change in PSL's party caucus because its inclusion would make the graph unreadable (it went from having one deputy to 52 overnight, an increase of more than 5,000 percent).

Figure 3.1: Absolute Change in Party Caucus Size, 2010 to 2018



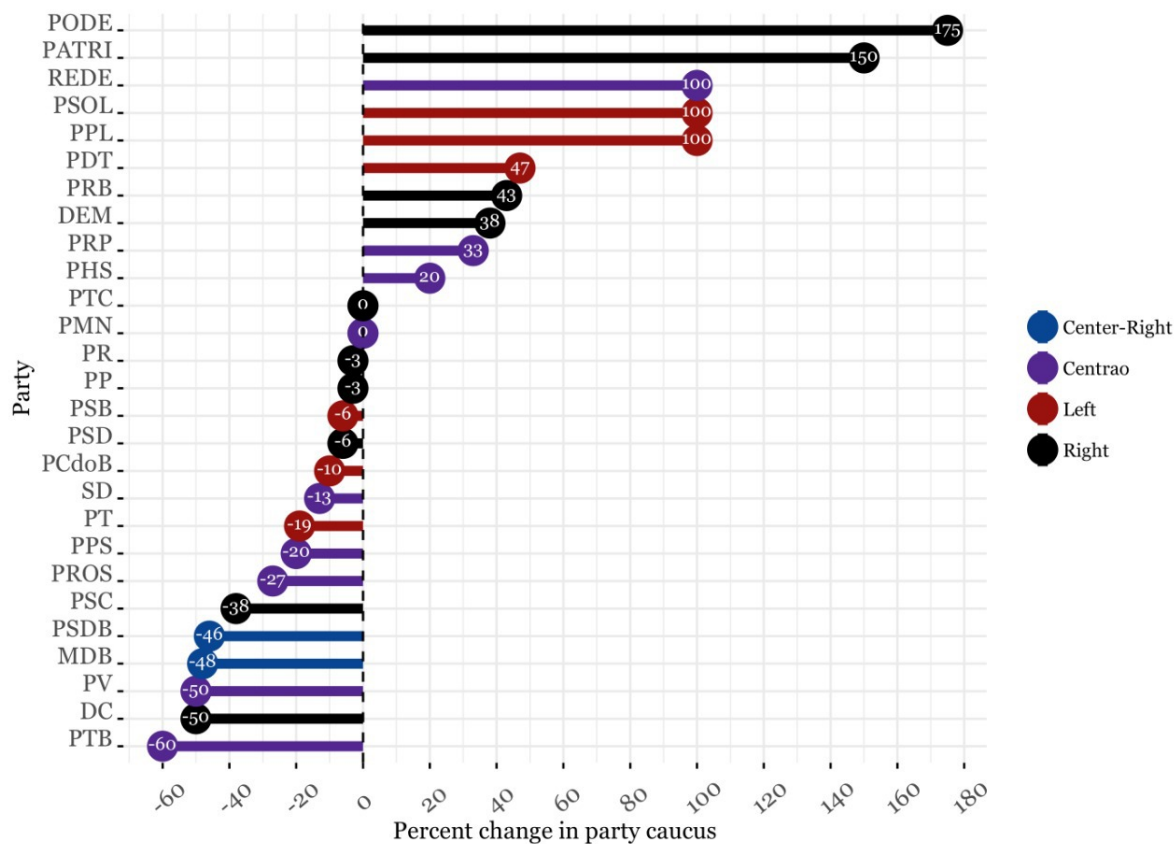
For an explanation of how I classified Brazil’s 35 parties as left, right, or centrist, please see Appendix A. In 2014, there were 332 deputies representing right-wing parties, 138 from left-leaning parties, and 53 legislators whose parties I classified as centrist. In 2019, these numbers were: 331, 133, and 48.

3.1 Past as prologue

We aspired to democracy, we moved towards it, we spoke its name, we wanted to see its face, we voted for it, but we did not translate it into political economy, into government programs, into institutionality, and principally into social and cultural practice. The democratic promise in Brazil is still an inspiring phrase, but one without content.

Herbert de Souza (“Betinho”)

Figure 3.2: Percent Change in Party Caucus Size, 2014 to 2018



Not shown are NOVO, which went from having zero deputies to electing eight, and PSL, which increased their caucus size by 5,100 percent—from one to 52 representatives in the 2018 election.

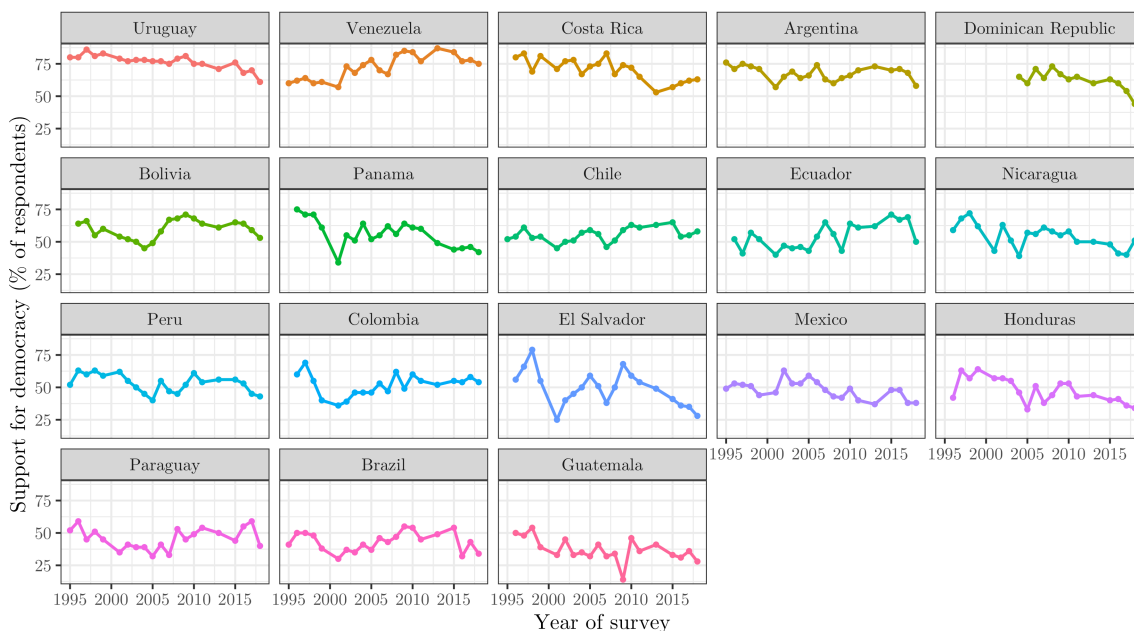
Some of the roots of *bolsonarismo* seem trivial to identify, especially in retrospect. Early on in my research, I was surprised to find that left-wing activists with whom I spoke seemed indifferent about polling research that showed that, on a scale of 0 to 10, Brazilians average 8.1 in their predilection for authoritarian behavior (Lima and Moura 2017). A year before Bolsonaro was elected, researchers found that large majorities of the population agreed with statements like, “Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn” (81 percent) and “Most of our social problems would be solved if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked, and perverted people” (60 percent). Support for these phrases, which were derived from Adorno’s ([1950] 2019) F-scale, was highest among the poorest strata in Brazil.¹⁰

Meanwhile, in this barely thirty-year-old republic, famous for its progressive-left social movements, for hosting the first World Social Forum, and for inventing participatory

10. One of the co-authors of this study wrote, “When we did the study, we were shocked by the results. We had a sense that the next steps Brazil would take would not be positive, because it was primarily [respondents in] the lowest strata who supported authoritarian positions most intensely.” Email exchange on March 28, 2019.

budgeting, support for democracy was falling from its already low levels. In 2016, the year of Dilma’s impeachment, Latinobarómetro (2018) reported that only 32 percent of Brazilians agreed with the statement, “Democracy has its problems, but is preferable to all other forms of government”—down from 54 percent and the lowest in all of Latin America for that year with the exception of Guatemala. As shown in Figure 3.3, Brazil also ranked second-to-last for all Latin American countries in Latinobarómetro’s 23-year time series.

Figure 3.3: Support for Democracy in Latin America, 1995-2018

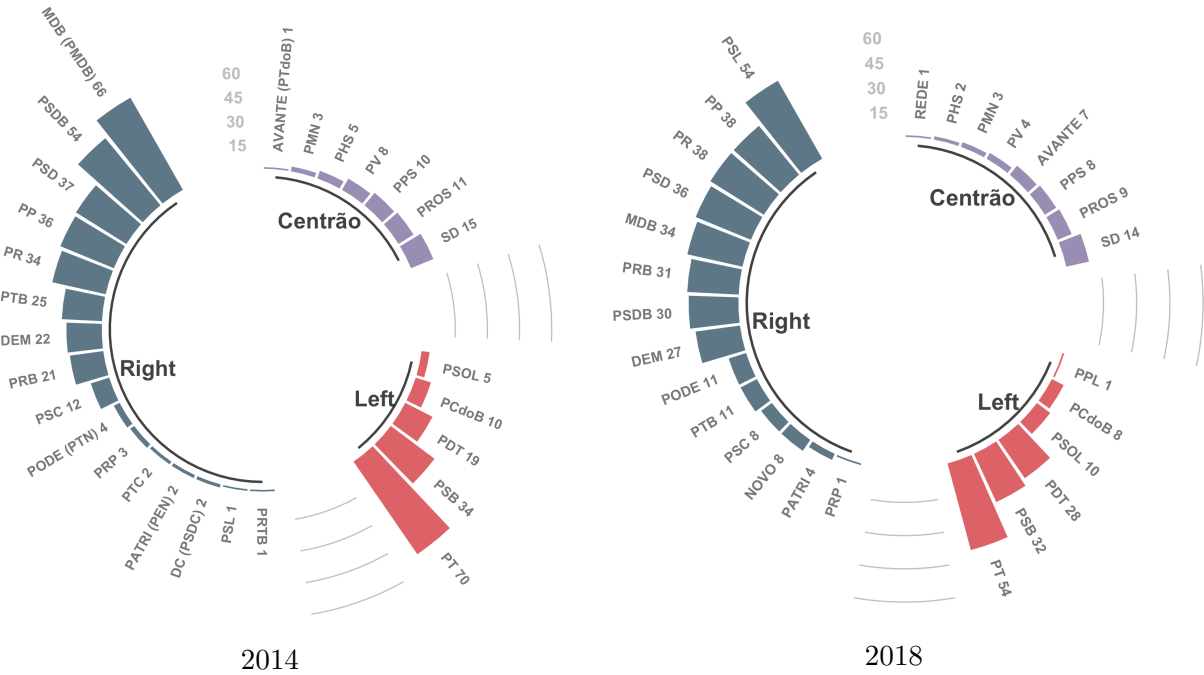


Based on data downloaded from the *Corporación Latinobarómetro* (2018). Countries are ordered based on their time series average: Uruguay (76.5), Venezuela (72.5), Costa Rica (70.5), Argentina (67.8), Dominican Republic (62.2), Bolivia (59.65), Panama (55.9), Chile (55.6), Ecuador (54.3), Nicaragua (54.1), Peru (53.1), Colombia (51.8), El Salvador (49.2), Mexico (48), Honduras (47.5), Paraguay (45.7), Brazil (43.2), Guatemala (37).

As numerous Brazilian scholars have pointed out (e.g., L. C. Almeida 2004; Lazarini 2011; Singer 2012), the power configuration of the country’s highest legislative bodies has also always heavily favored plutocratic and ultraconservative interest groups. This is a fact that much of the literature on Latin America’s so-called Left Turn, or Pink Tide, minimized. For example, in Levitsky and Roberts (2011)’s edited volume, *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*, the domestic balance of formal political power is rarely mentioned; instead the analyses focus on public opinion, economic factors, the linkages left party groups formed with their base, and participatory governance from below. Yet, at least in the case of Brazil, Congress has always been dominated by right-wing parties (Figure), several of the largest of which descended directly from ARENA, the official party of the 1964-1985 military dictatorship (Nicolau 1996).

As shown in Figure 3.4 even after 2018—popularly cast as a right-wing wave election—the ideological configuration of congress barely changed. This helps explain why

Figure 3.4: Congressional Party Caucuses in Brazil, 2014 vs. 2018



Dilma’s parliamentary ouster, was possible almost immediately after her reelection to a second term in 2014.¹¹

In a December 2017 interview, the 86 year-old standard-bearer of one of these powerful parties descendent from ARENA, the ironically named Progressive Party (PP), proudly recast Brazil’s twenty-one years of authoritarian rule as something other than what they were. Paulo Maluf—the former mayor and governor of São Paulo, and the military’s presidential candidate in the country’s first indirect election before the democratic opening—objected to my line of questions that characterized the period as one of military rule. “You have to understand, it wasn’t a dictatorship. We just had a succession of presidents who happened to be from the military,” he said.¹² Just as the Prussian military establishment—which lost legal standing after World War I but which was never dismantled during Weimar (Gerschenkron [1943]1989)—the Brazilian military apparatus receded from the public view in 1988 but took on new institutional forms. The military thus continued to serve as a breeding ground for the authoritarian politics on full display in Bolsonaro’s Brazil.

11. Although Dilma reached record approval ratings in her first mandate, the 2014 election was decided by the narrowest margin since Brazil’s re-democratization. Both Lula and FHC were elected by large margins—over 20 percentage points each time—whereas Dilma beat Aécio by only 3.3 percentage points in 2014. Still, her 3.5 million vote margin over Aécio was non-negligible by most electoral standards.

12. Interview on December 20, 2017. In a bizarre turn of events, right after I got home after conducting this interview, I got a push notification that the Supreme Court had ruled on an appeal, ordering that Maluf be jailed that very afternoon for decades-old money-laundering charges. He spent the next three months in a federal prison before being released on humanitarian grounds for his age and health status.

Taking this historical context into account, Frei Betto, a Dominican friar who was imprisoned for four years during the military dictatorship for helping dissidents find exile (and who remains a close confidant of Lula's as one of his spiritual advisors) said that this is one of the things he finds most peculiar about Brazil's New Right:

My thesis is this: the structure of Brazil is so far right that a right-wing movement is not needed. In creating the movement, [they] call attention to something that people have not noticed: that we have an archaic elitist structure.¹³

Asked to elaborate, he listed the reasons:

Frei Betto: We are a country that was the last, in the three Americas, to decree the abolition of slavery.

EM: 1888.

Frei Betto: Yes. 350 years of slavery and to this day we have strong legacies in our social structure of this period. Brazil is a structurally conservative country.

EM: How is this manifest? *Coronelismo*?¹⁴

Frei Betto: Yes. You can call it any *-ismo*: *coronelismo*, *clientelismo*...

EM: *Caciquismo*?¹⁵

Frei Betto: *Caciquismo*. What does it result in? In the election of this Congress we have there. If you go into the rural countryside of Brazil, in other cities, you know? The vote is the vote of the black person, the vote of the doormat, the vote to lower his head, the vote to please the boss. You know, it's difficult...and the controlling media. You see, how many newspapers are there in the United States?

EM: More than *Globo*, *Folha*, and *Estadão*...

Frei Betto: [We have] three. How many banks are there in the United States, do you know? I know.

EM: I don't know.

Frei Betto: There are 6,400 banks.

13. Interview on September 21, 2017.

14. *Coronelismo* refers to the political system that characterized Brazil's Old Republic (1889-1930), the period immediately following abolition. It describes the centralization of power in the hands of a local oligarch, known as *coronel*, who would operate a patronage system in exchange for loyalty.

15. Another word for concentrated power in the hands of a local oligarch. *Caciquismo* comes from the word *cacique*, which is the word for chieftain, or the leader of an indigenous group. The word is often used to refer to party bosses who come from powerful political dynasties: José Sarney (the first president of the military's transition government, from 1985-1989), whose family has held power in Maranhão for six decades, ACM (Antônio Carlos Magalhães) and his progeny in Bahia, including the current mayor of Salvador, ACM Neto, and Renan Calheiros and his son, Renan Filho, currently governor of Alagoas.

EM: Here there are what, four, five?

Frei Betto: Here there is *Itaú*, *Bradesco*, *Banco do Brasil*, *Caixa Economica*, and *Santander*. Period. Banks with agencies on the street. The rest are investment banks and such. In the United States there are 6,400 banks with street agencies, where you go to the ATM and take out money. Here there are five.

Frei Betto was making the case that the economic elite ceded almost no power in the period known as the New Republic. Instead, what he described as the “archaic elitist structure” remained well-entrenched, and many banks some of their most profitable years under center-left governments. In an interview with the head of government affairs for one of these five banks, I was barely able to finish my question about the relationship between the banks and the Lula Administration before he answered:

EM: What was the relationship like between Lula and the banks?

Afonso: Great! Great. Lula used to say this: the more the banks earn, the more they’ll pay taxes and the more I’ll be able to [implement] public policy.

Political economic policy in Brazil, one of the most stratified nations in the world, is perhaps the clearest evidence of the latent power structures in Brazil that preceded Bolsonaro’s ascent. The fused nature of state and capital—which Fernand Braudel (1977) termed political capitalism —has persisted, albeit in different guises, since Brazil’s founding as a slave economy (J. Souza 2017; Massuela 2017). A recent slashing of the welfare state—which began under Dilma right after her 2014 election with the appointment of Chicago-trained economist Joaquim Levy (named to head BNDES, the development bank, at the start of Bolsonaro’s term)—included austerity measures and then, under her successor Michel Temer, the elimination of worker protections that had been enshrined since 1943. In December 2016, Congress passed a constitutional amendment known as the New Fiscal Regime (PEC 55), which froze social spending for 20 years. Healthcare, education, infrastructure, and defense spending is now pegged to inflation.¹⁶ PEC 55 is part of a larger political economic regime that systematically favors the wealthy. To take another example, the Finance Ministry’s longstanding debt forgiveness policies incentivize large business owners to evade taxes. In 2017, the federal government forgave some 400 billion *reais* (USD \$121B) in private sector debts, more than was spent on health and education combined. Meanwhile Brazil has one of the most regressive tax systems in the world, with high consumption taxes on basic essentials and—unique to most OECD countries—the complete tax exemption of shareholder dividends (Gobetti and Orair 2017).

Finally, even though it is home to one of the most powerful peasant movements in the world, land ownership remains concentrated in the hands of very few (B. M. Fernandes 2006). José Filho and Rosa Fontes (2009) calculated a Gini coefficient to measure land concentration in Brazil, and found that it has changed little over the past three decades,

16. As economist Pedro Paulo Bastos observed, the only other two countries in the world that have “hard-wired” cuts into their constitutions in this way are Singapore and Georgia—and even then not for as long or in a way that is detached from GDP growth (Watts 2016). Even before Bolsonaro’s election, Bastos estimated that education spending per child would fall by a third.

measuring .83 in 1992, .84 in 1998, and .82 in 2003. This extraordinarily high level of land inequality has increased in the years since due to a global land grab for Latin American farmland as it becomes increasingly attractive to foreign investors (Wilkinson, Reydon, and Di Sabbato 2012). Members of Brazil’s landed upper class—historically known as *latifundistas* but perhaps better described today as corporate farmers—were among Bolsonaro’s most ardent supporters. Absent serious agrarian reform, then, the domestic faction that has always—across countries and epochs—been “democracy’s most consistent opponent” (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992) remained alive and well throughout the post-democratization period.

This context suggests that many of the actors in the mosaic of actors subsumed under the term “Brazilian Right” did not resurge in 2018. Instead, many of them remained latent and powerful—and exercised this power in often invisible ways— even throughout a period of relatively progressive government and when the most modern and inclusive of constitutions was in effect. When these factors are taken into account, it becomes clear that Bolsonaro is a symptom and not a cause of longer-run trends.

3.2 Time 1: Political chaos, or, politics-as-usual

One morning in late March 2018—two weeks after the assassination of socialist city councilwoman Marielle Franco and six months before the first round of the election—I woke up to several hundred WhatsApp messages pinging on an old cell phone.¹⁷ One pro-Bolsonaro group was particularly active that morning: “The *MITO*¹⁸ is winning in the polls in Minas!!! [sic]” one supporter messaged the group, linking to a right-wing news outlet that reported that Bolsonaro was indeed polling first in Brazil’s bellwether state (see Figure D.1 and Table D.1).

A week later, Lula was arrested in an electrifying standoff between PT loyalists and the federal police at a union hall in São Bernardo, Lula’s political home base. Shortly after that, a *Datafolha* poll showed that Bolsonaro had gained five points since January, whereas Lula had lost six. But as the eigenvector values in the T1 network graph show (reported in table form in C.1), the nodes with the highest scores at the time were still the traditional political brokers—MDB, PSD, and PP—alongside agribusiness (CNA) and the industrial capital interest group (CNI). The PT ranked sixth on this measure, followed by PSDB and then PSL—the party that hitched its fate to that of Bolsonaro, losing the libertarian SMO group Livres, which had joined the party en masse only a year prior. This egress speaks to some libertarians’ continued skepticism of Bolsonaro, as Paulo Batista mentioned in the interview quotes above.

At Time 1, in other words, the network configuration is largely similar to that of the

17. Throughout my fieldwork, I joined more than two dozen WhatsApp groups associated with the organizations selected for this study, either by invitation from group administrators or using a publicly accessible join link.

18. *Mito* means myth, or legend—one of the nicknames most often used by Bolsonaro’s fan base, as Batista noted above.

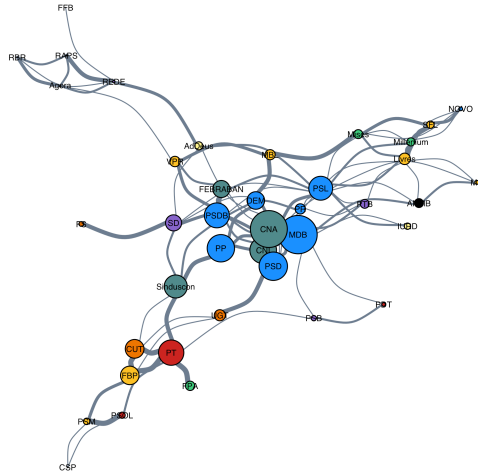
baseline map, with a cluster of right-leaning parties tethered together as a formal bloc in congress, a sub community of right-wing and libertarian think tanks coalescing around the “new” right-libertarian party, NOVO, a centrist sub-community of SMOs linked to Marina Silva’s party, REDE, and the traditional leftist groups anchored by the PT, the PSOL, and their respective SMO and labor groups.

But change was afoot. At one investment banking conference in January 2018, audience members were asked who they thought would be elected eight months later. Nearly 60 percent responded that Alckmin would win, followed by TV presenter Luciano Huck (who did not run), and Bolsonaro, whom only ten percent of conference attendees predicted would win. Yet it was at this same conference—at which finance capital luminaries such as Finance Minister Henrique Meirelles, Central Bank Chairman Ilan Goldfajn, and Michael Bloomberg gave speeches—that the only person to be interrupted by applause from the thousand-person crowd of investors was libertarian Paulo Guedes, whom Bolsonaro had just announced would lead his economic team.¹⁹ This favorable reception to Bolsonaro and his newfound liberalism in market circles was hardly an isolated incident, and many observers took note (Landim 2018; Istoé 2018; Gielow 2018b). This reception from bankers was also consonant with polls from as far back as 2016, which showed Bolsonaro was the favored candidate among Brazil’s elite. Meanwhile, among Faria Lima respondents at the January conference, Lula trailed with one percent and Ciro with zero among the traders, analysts, and other finance capital professionals when the poll was taken.²⁰

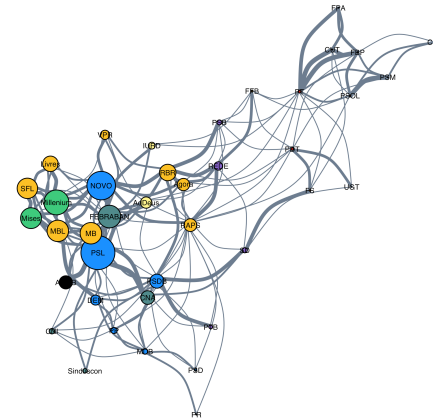
19. Field notes from January 30-31, 2018.

20. Field note from January 30, 2018.

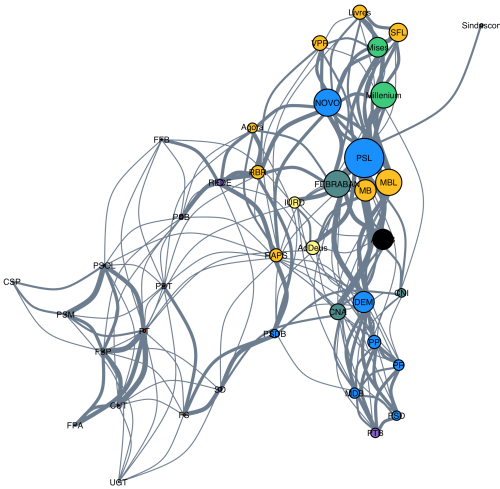
Figure 3.5: Brazil's Political Field in Transformation, T1-T3



T1: March 2018



T2: Aug.-Sept. 2018



T3: Jan.-Feb. 2019

- Left-leaning party
 - Right-leaning party
 - Centrist party
 - Capital
 - SMO
- Labor
 - Think tank
 - Religious
 - Internal tendency
 - Military

For larger versions of these network graphs (as well as their unweighted versions) see Appendix C: Figures C.2, C.3, C.4.

3.3 Time 2: De jure alliances and de facto alliances

A compelling argument could be made—and was made—that the ample party resources Alckmin (PSDB) had accrued by T2 guaranteed that he would advance to the second round. If he could pass that threshold, the polls showed, Alckmin would beat Bolsonaro in a run-off. Indeed, the only candidate to lose to Bolsonaro in some second-round polling simulations was the PT’s Haddad. But many Lula loyalists were undaunted.

One evening in early August, exactly two months before the election, I went to CUT (the largest labor confederation in Latin America, founded by and with direct links to Lula and the PT) headquarters to meet two American friends and colleagues who were in town for a conference organized by an international network of universities, trade unions, and SMOs. At the event, at which speakers spent most of their timing calling for an international solidarity campaign to free Lula, a political prisoner, I was told in a mid-session hallway chats that “everyone here [at CUT] is really confident Haddad will win”²¹ The PT campaign strategy revolved around a mass marketing campaign featuring Lula: his name was mentioned more often in TV commercials than Haddad’s and most campaign materials read “Haddad is Lula.” At T2, my data indicate that the PT did not articulate alliances with other key actors in the field map in the way that Bolsonaro and Alckmin did, as reflected in the significant drop in the party’s eigenvector score (from sixth to 28th in a field of 40 actors). Moreover, the party did not directly campaign against Bolsonaro until the second round.

At the same time, political blocs that Alckmin believed he had captured began to lose faith in his viability. His lackluster performance in the polls throughout T2—even after securing nearly half of all TV time allotted for the candidates—dimmed their confidence. “Our commitment was to make a deal with him at the national level to give him TV time,” said one PP congressman, the large right-wing party in which Bolsonaro spent the majority of his long congressional career but which was technically a part of Alckmin’s coalition. The PP had even secured the vice presidential nomination for one of their own, conservative southern senator Ana Amélia Lemos, whom the newspaper *El País* (2018) described as the “amulet” Alckmin hoped to use to attract *bolsonaristas*, in part because she was seen as an important defender of the interests of the agribusiness caucus. Yet in an embarrassing (for Alckmin) turn of events, even the PP in Ana Amélia’s renegade home state chose to formally endorse Bolsonaro.

Many of Alckmin’s on paper and “national level” alliances were thus of little substance. The so-called Bolsodoria vote—a combination of Bolsonaro and Alckmin’s intra-party nemesis Doria, who was running for governor of São Paulo in 2018—meant that some members even within his own party were allied with him in name only (see Figure F.6).²² Key capital fractions also abandoned Alckmin for Bolsonaro. By early 2018, the powerful agribusiness parliamentary front (FPA) was mobilized behind Bolsonaro. “He

21. Field note from August 8, 2018.

22. Both Bolsonaro and Doria won by large margins in São Paulo, the state that Alckmin had governed for two terms.

[Bolsonaro] says what our people want to hear,” said the president of FPA and member of Alckmin’s party, the PSDB, in February. That same month, Alckmin’s special advisor on the agribusiness and president of the Rural Society of Brasil (SRB), Frederico D’Avila, left Alckmin to join Bolsonaro’s campaign. “Today, agro is 95 percent Bolsonaro,” D’Ávila told a *Folha* reporter nine months before the election. “Geraldo [Alckmin] is a 747 pilot, but we’re flying over Syria. Bolsonaro is an F-16 pilot,” D’Ávila reasoned (Gielow 2018a).²³ A raffle at an agribusiness conference the week of the election asked participants to select which candidate they believed would win (Figure 3.6). Bolsonaro was the overwhelming favorite and not a single attendee cast their vote for Alckmin.

Figure 3.6: Agribusiness Abandons Alckmin and Ana Amélia



Photo from October 4, 2018.

3.3.1 A “bullsonaro” market

The Brazilian stock market rallied in accordance with Bolsonaro’s surging polling figures throughout Time 2 of this study (Figure 3.7). Asked what their “main concern was with the domestic scenario,” in early 2018, 68 percent of finance capital professionals in attendance at a Credit Suisse conference said “the election,” followed by 20 percent who answered “non-approval of social security reform.”²⁴ Investors were thus, as one Bloomberg article put it, “downright giddy” when Lula was deemed ineligible and when Bolsonaro steadily gained ground in the polls. “[This giddiness] was on full display,” the reporters observed, “during a sit-down with a market analyst last week, who, upon walking into the

23. D’Avila became the PSL’s agribusiness coordinator during the campaign, and then ran for office (and was elected) state deputy on the PSL party ticket.

24. Field notes from January 30-31, 2018.

room, extended his right hand, beamed a broad smile and declared ‘I’m bullish’” (Cancel, Andrade, and Oyamada 2018).

Figure 3.7: BM&F Bovespa Index Time Series, 2018



In finance capital WhatsApp groups, too, traders talked about what they called a “bullsonaro” market. One image I received showed a series of exchange rate bids posted at market close before the second round: the trader(s) had worked in Bolsonaro’s party’s numeric identifier 17—the number voters would punch at electronic voting machines two days later—into the bid, bid size, ask, and ask size (Figure 3.8). The night that Bolsonaro was elected, one group message with an investment bank’s financial bulletin attached read, “Let’s talk about what matters. How to earn \$ with the election.”²⁵

For traders, the market rally around Bolsonaro was a welcome contrast to the bearish slowdown driven by, among other factors, falling commodity prices, capital flight, and the economic recession. Multiple informants were particularly enamored of Bolsonaro’s vice presidential pick General Mourão, who explained Brazil’s recession as the consequence of the PT’s misdeeds—which, he said, were only prevented from turning into *chavismo*

25. Field note from October 28, 2018. The WhatsApp message was accompanied by a post-election report from a major Brazilian investment bank, which was undeniably optimistic: “Paulo Guedes, the [likely] future Minister of Finance for Bolsonaro, emphasizes liberal proposals with a reformist bias...We believe that the market will give the benefit of the doubt to Bolsonaro, for now.” And later, “We see the stock market as the best place to benefit from the improved sentiment...we hope that [Ibovespa] will reach 90-100 thousand points before the end of the year,” the report said, “possibly reaching 125 thousand points by the end of 2019.” But pension reform was (and remains) finance capital’s obsession: “Pension reform is priority one, two, and three of the next government,” the report projected.

Figure 3.8: A “Bullsonaro” Market Bid, October 26, 2018



because the army wasn’t “coopted” as it was in Venezuela—and another favorite market explanation for a sluggish economy: taxes.

We are hugely dependent on primary [commodity] exports that have little aggregate value. There enters the horrible question of taxes. I was reading about the hydroelectric [dam] of Tucuruí in Pará so that we could extract the bauxite [ore] so that in Maranhão we could make aluminum. Then the government of Maranhão increased the ICMS [inter-state commerce tax] *boçalmente*,²⁶ the aluminum industries left, the bauxite is now extracted and sent in its pure state abroad, and we buy the aluminum back. That is the *custo Brasil*.²⁷

Copious research demonstrates that trading behavior is often a self-fulfilling prophecy (e.g., Cherian and Jarrow 1998; Wan and Yang 2018)—which means that the pre-election bull market was a reflection of finance capital’s aspirations for their candidate and expectation for the political economic regime he would implement, rather than an indicator of the underlying health of the publicly traded companies on the stock exchange. Further evidence of this shown in Table 3.1: of the five days in which Bovespa had the highest percentage increase relative to the prior day’s close, four were related to the PT’s downfall and the consolidation of support behind Bolsonaro and his neoliberal-authoritarian

26. *Boçalmente* comes from the world *boçal*, which the Michaelis dictionary defines as “a slave recently arrived from Africa who did not yet speak Portuguese” with the synonym *negro-novo* (new-black). A second definition is “lacking culture, rude, ignorant;” a third “lacking intelligence our sensibility, beast, mole.”

27. Field note from August 23, 2018.

Table 3.1: Ibovespa’s Five Biggest % Increases (Relative to Previous Close) in 2018

Date	Ibovespa	% Change from Previous Close	Event
10/8/18	86,083	4.57%	Monday after Bolsonaro almost wins in the first round
10/2/18	81,593	3.78%	New poll released reflecting Bolsonaro momentum; Haddad stagnates
1/24/18	83,680	3.72%	The day Lula was sentenced to 12 years in jail
10/30/18	86,885	3.69%	The Tuesday following Bolsonaro’s second-round win
2/14/18	83,542	3.27%	Post-Carnaval rebound and an S&P rally

project. As the results of the longitudinal network mapping show, *bolsonarismo* is not a phenomenon that can solely be explained by the investment theory of politics. Movement withing a crucial social bloc—the evangelical electorate—would prove decisive.

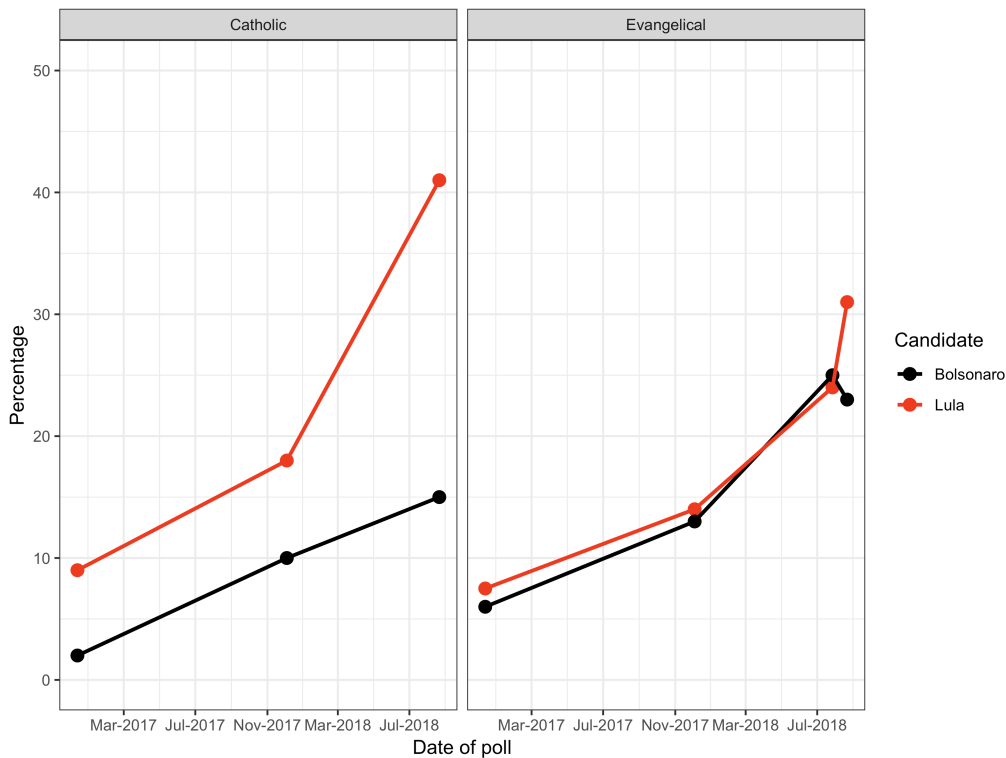
3.3.2 The evangelical vote

Içara, population 52,000, is a seaside municipality in the southeastern Brazilian state of Santa Catarina. Named for the abundant palm species that dots its nearby coastline, it is also situated in the heart of Brazil’s coal basin. There are 35 *Assembleia de Deus* (Assembly of God, or AD) evangelical churches in the small city, or roughly one congregation for every 1,500 residents.²⁸ Içara is also among Brazil’s wealthiest and whitest towns, making it unsurprising that Bolsonaro won by one of his largest margins there, with 82.6 percent of the vote. Nearly 3,000 miles away, however, in the second poorest state in Brazil, Bolsonaro won by a nearly identical margin (82.7) in Acre’s capital, Rio Branco. The city ranks 101st (out of the 5,565 municipalities in the 2010 census) in its proportion of evangelical residents (39.7 percent, putting it in the 98th percentile). The similar levels of support for Bolsonaro in these otherwise disparate cities can be explained, in part, by their religious profile: After the election, José Alves (2018) calculated that the evangelical population in each of Brazil’s 27 states explained 52 percent of the variance in the Bolsonaro vote.

28. The AD communications staffer who told me this in a December 2016 interview noted that in addition to the “central temple, which is the biggest, there are the congregations spread out through the neighborhoods of the city; there are 35 of these.” My rough calculation of congregations-per-resident therefore does not include churches from any of the other evangelical denominations also present in the region, so is an underestimate.

Evangelicals' overwhelming support for Bolsonaro, however, was not inevitable. In five national polls conducted in the year and a half before the election by the two major scientific polling institutes in Brazil (and which religious affiliation was included in the questionnaire), it was Lula, not Bolsonaro, who came in first among evangelicals (Figure 3.9).²⁹ Lula was the top choice candidate among an average of 21.7 percent of evangelicals polled as compared to Bolsonaro's average of 17.6 across the same five polls. In September, after Lula was removed from the ballot and Bolsonaro was stabbed, the latter's support among evangelicals steadily climbed: from 33 percent at the end of the month to 48 percent in the first week of October, when the second-largest TV network in Brazil, TV Record, owned and operated by bishop Edir Macedo (the leader of the *Igreja Universal*) gave Bolsonaro thirty minutes of free propaganda while the other seven candidates faced off in a nationally televised debate on Record's rival channel, Globo. Finally, Bolsonaro's support among evangelicals reached 68 percent just before the runoff vote, when voters only had two choices. By the end of the election, the evangelicals became the demographic group in which Bolsonaro enjoyed his widest margin of support (Figure 1.1).

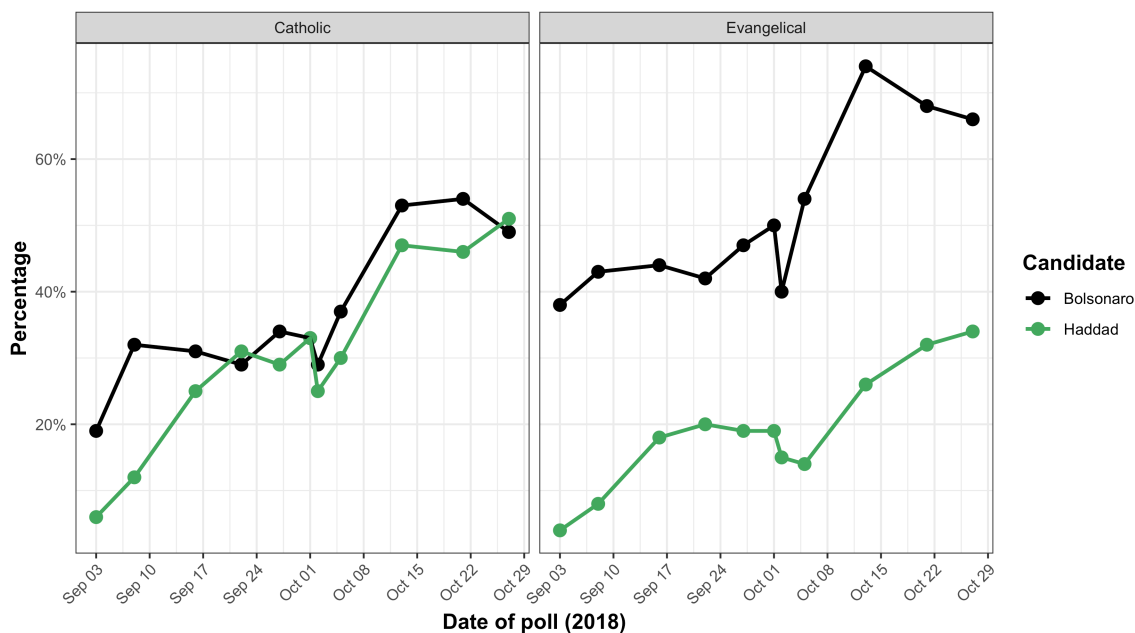
Figure 3.9: Presidential Election Polls by Religion (Lula vs. Bolsonaro), 2018



As I describe in Chapter 6, Bolsonaro forged a relationship with the high clergy of Brazil's largest evangelical denominations as part of his political strategy, just as Lula and Dilma had done in their respective presidential campaigns throughout the 2000s. The

29. Although Datafolha and Ibope conducted more than a dozen polls in the lead-up to the 2018 election, they did not report respondents' religious affiliation on many of them, which is why the values in Figure 3.9 are sparse.

Figure 3.10: Presidential Election Polls by Religion (Haddad vs. Bolsonaro), 2018



Source for both figures: IBOPE (2018); blank, null, and don't know responses (i.e. invalid votes) are removed from the denominator.

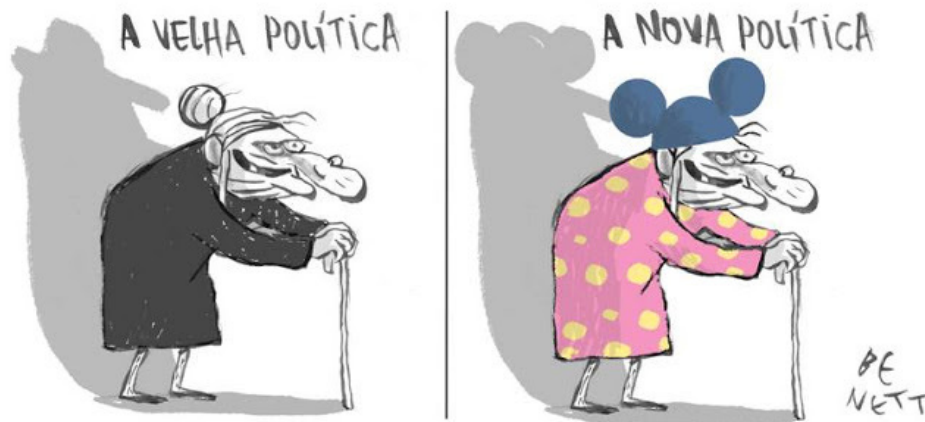
key point for this part of the exposition, however, is to note that it wasn't until T2—very late in the election cycle—that the evangelical vote consolidated behind Bolsonaro. Although high-profile pastors like Silas Malafaia endorsed Bolsonaro early on, survey respondents who identified as evangelicals did not immediately follow suit. This is further evidence that the PT's loss cannot be cast as a just-so story, structurally determined and beyond their control. As the polling data shows, up until late August, Bolsonaro was polling on par with Lula among self-declared evangelicals. In other words, although the candidate whose slogan was “Brazil above all, God above everyone” would eventually win overwhelmingly among evangelicals, the process by which Bolsonaro captured this important electorate required organization and strategic articulation rather than the simple activation of preprogrammed affinities (Chapter 6).

3.4 Time 3: The more things change

For most people, politics and elections are usually mere “sideshows in the circus of life” (Dahl 1961:305). Yet even as the spotlight faded on the circus of the 2018 presidential election, the data show that the field position of the meso-level actors continued to shift. That the groups I tracked changed field positions as much as they did in three short months is an indicator that *bolsonarismo* can hardly be considered to have introduced a new consolidated hegemony, and that Brazil's political field is still undergoing transformation. Although the actors representing Brazil's New Right—PSL, Instituto Millenium, NOVO, MBL—retained the highest eigenvalues (Table C.1), it did not take long

for the Old Right to take advantage of the chaotic early days the Administration—a situation sardonically depicted in the newspaper cartoon shown in Figure 3.11. The five actors in this study that increased their eigenvector (influence) score the most between T2 and T3 included the military (ANMB) and four Old Right parties: DEM (successor party to ARENA, the official party of the military dictatorship from 1964-1985), PP (the party with the largest number of deputies indicted for corruption), PR (the product of a merger between the evangelical-influenced PL and the now-defunct nationalist party PRONA), and PSD, founded by Gilberto Kassab, who was recently charged in a multi-million dollar corruption scandal and claims to reject all ideological labels.³⁰

Figure 3.11: “Old Politics” Masquerades as “New Politics”



Source: *Folha*, April 25, 2019 (Benett 2019)

The network data from T3 thus support a classic diagnosis of the Brazilian political system: most of the country’s 35 parties are structurally frail, serve mostly as vehicles for patronage, and have almost no legitimate links between their social bases and leadership (Krause 2018). They are, in other words, the political equivalent of shell companies. The neo-Gramscian school of thought would therefore be correct in its classification of the system as “disarticulated,” making room for the “mutual bleeding” that gave rise to Caesarism. However, as the T3 data showed, the disarticulated party system is hardly dead: in a few short months, the vestiges of the oldest of Brazil’s conservative forces are shown to have retained their influence, much as they have always done.

30. In one interview, Kassab said, “We are neither a right-wing party nor a left-wing nor a centrist party” (Estadão 2011).

3.5 Alternative explanations

When a conjuncture unrolls, there is no ‘going back’. History shifts gears. The terrain changes. You are in a new moment. You have to attend, ‘violently’, with all the ‘pessimism of the intellect’ at your command, to the ‘discipline of the conjuncture.’

Stuart Hall ([1987] 2017)

The thread running through this integrated market-state-civil society account of the shifting political terrain in Brazil tells an organizational story. Observers of the case could, however, credibly make the opposite argument. That is, they might note that organizational strategy and infrastructure (and lack thereof) gives us little to no leverage to explain the observed outcomes. In fact, from one standpoint, the results are *disconfirmatory* of the power of organization. After all, the PT had all of the trappings of what political articulation theorists would call an “integral” party, a long list of redistributive and social democratic gains to its name, and more than one million loyal party affiliates. So famous is Brazil’s PT that more than 431,000 books and articles have been written on party in English alone.³¹

Throughout the period of this study, however, there was reason to be skeptical of the PT’s supposedly vaunted status as a party formation. First, some observers are surprised to learn that the PT is not the largest party in Brazil in terms of membership: the MDB has a million more people formally registered in their name. Figure 3.12 shows the number of party affiliates associated with Brazil’s seven largest parties, coded by political ideology, between 2002-2018.³² It shows that the PT was hardly the only nor even the most significant party actor in Brazil over the past decade, and one of only two left-leaning large parties in the field.³³

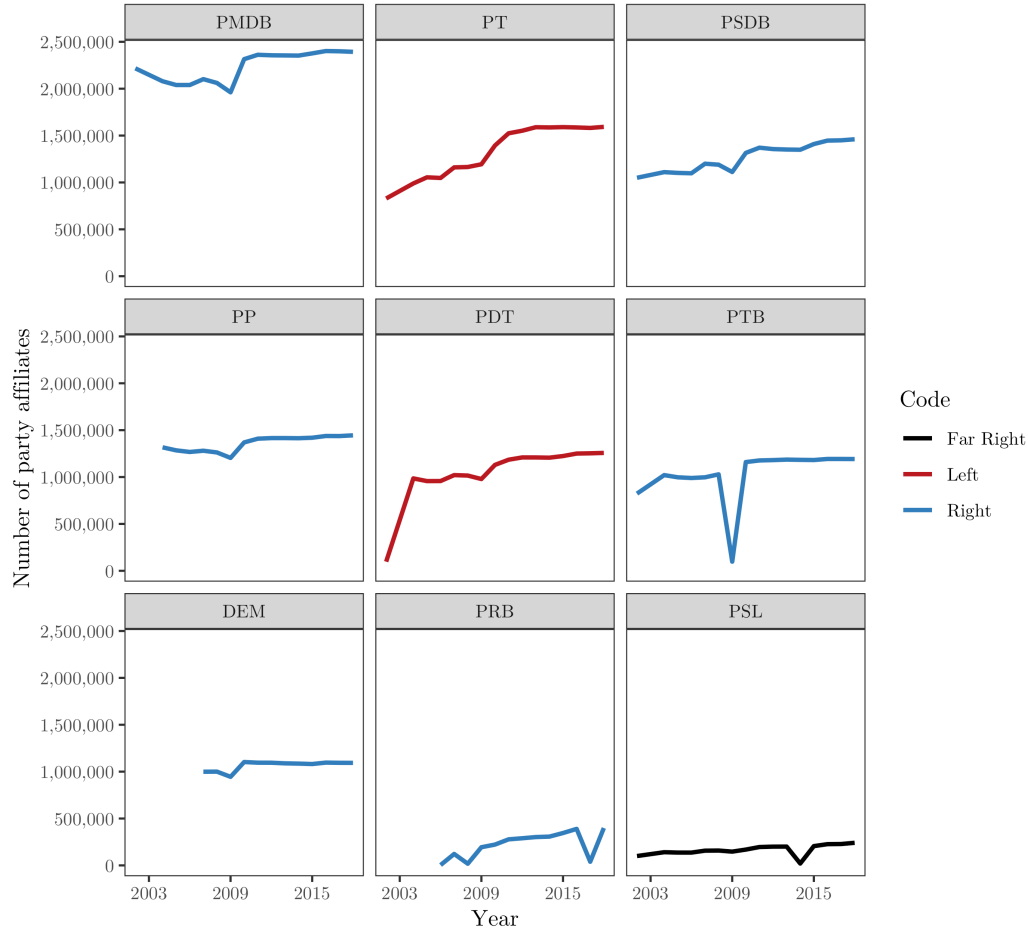
Perhaps more telling, however, is an analysis of 1) where decision-making power within the PT rests, and 2) the relationship between the national party and the state-

31. As Oswaldo Amaral and Timothy Power (2015) document, there are roughly four periods into which the massive body of scholarship on the PT can be classified: (1) the party’s founding, which traces the PT’s roots in social movement unionism, intellectuals, and Catholic liberation theology currents; (2) experiences in sub-national government; (3) moderation and transformation; and (4) experiences in national government, all of which were associated with variance in the party’s political, ideological, and base-building practices.

32. It is likely, however, that most of these affiliates for most of these parties are members in name only, as I learned while attending party conventions at which these supposedly large party bases were almost non-existent.

33. I added PRB (one of the evangelical parties) and PSL (Bolsonaro’s party) for comparison. Brazil’s additional 26 parties are not shown. I thank Gabriel Nascimento for research assistance in compiling the data shown in this figure.

Figure 3.12: Evolution of Party Affiliates, 2002-2018



level entities. To the first, few disagree with the observation that the entire strategy for the campaign was devised by or at the behest of one person: Lula. One informant, who had multiple one-on-one conversations with Dilma after she was impeached, told me that Dilma told him about the meeting in which Lula unilaterally decided who would be his stand-in candidate should the Supreme Court bar his candidacy, which most expected it would. “He banged his fist on the table and pointed at Jaques [Wagner] and said, ‘Jacques is my candidate, no discussion.’”³⁴ This was similar to the process by which observers describe how Dilma, who had never before held elected office, was chosen as Lula’s successor in 2012, which is to say: without the input of the party’s base. It is for this reason that I classify PT “2.0” as a hierarchical organization in the typology introduced in Chapter 1 (Table 1.2).

34. Interviewees’ accounts varied as to why Wagner decided not to run in Lula’s stead; some say it is because he too is being pursued by *Lava Jateiros* and did not want to face the scrutiny that would attend a presidential campaign; others because his senate reelection was a sure bet. When he declined, however, it was Lula who again choose Haddad as his substitute without consulting the PT base, even in a pro forma way.

Despite questions like these that could be raised about the PT's supposed organizational superiority, after switching parties nine times in his long political career, Bolsonaro ultimately joined one of the smallest and least consequential of Brazil's 35 parties, the PSL. This meant that he had the flimsiest of party resources, the least money to spend, and only seven seconds of allotted for daily television time during the campaign.³⁵ This is why political analyst José Roberto de Toledo said Bolsonaro “surfed... the [right-wing] tsunami on a piece of Styrofoam.”³⁶ From a party-centric standpoint, Bolsonaro had zero formal political infrastructure behind him. In response, I argue that what we gain from the strategic action field perspective is an appreciation of the many other non-party organized actors (such as the plutocrats and Pentecostals, the subject of subsequent chapters) that formed a winning coalition behind Bolsonaro—and had, in elections passed, done the same thing for Lula and Dilma before him.

Finally, observers unconvinced by an organizational account might further argue that structural and macroeconomic factors are more compelling explanations for political terrain shifts than are the strategic choices of organized actors in a shared field of struggle. Indeed, the country's recent economic boom and bust—and many of the associated social gains and setbacks—are demonstrably linked to factors largely exogenous to domestic governing choices. As Mourão correctly noted, Brazil has an export portfolio dominated by primary commodities like crude oil and soy (Figure G.2), meaning large sectors of the Brazilian economy are held hostage by the fluctuations of global markets. A decade-long commodity supercycle and increased financial liquidity—linked to plummeting real interest rates following the 2008 financial and Eurozone crises—drove dramatic swings in the Brazilian economy (Figure G.3). By this logic, economic instability may be a better explanation of domestic political outcomes than any meso-level or organizational account.

Several factors complicate these purely structural accounts. First, it is not obvious who (or which political actors) should have benefited and suffered from Brazil's macroeconomic volatility. Brazil's boom years unequivocally took place under the Lula Administrations, and the PT had been out of power for two years by the time voters went to the polls, theoretically allowing the left-leaning coalition time to distance themselves from the circumstances surrounding the recession, whose negative effects were amplified by austerity policies implemented under the Temer government.

Comparisons to other countries also make it difficult to draw a straight line between structural factors and the kinds of political outcomes I examined in this chapter. A year after Bolsonaro's election, for example, neighboring Argentina—which has a similarly stratified, commodity-dependent economy—found itself in comparable circumstances: a conservative Macri government implemented neoliberal reforms similar to Temer's, and the country was also in the midst of a deep economic recession. But voters rebuffed Macri's austerity reforms in 2019 and leftist candidates won by a wide margin. A key difference between the two cases is that unlike Lula, Christina Kirchner, who was president of Argentina from 2007 to 2015 and was leading in the polls (but also had high unfavorable ratings, as did

35. For comparison, Alckmin had 39 times that amount of TV time.

36. “*Bolsonaro surfou esse tsunami num isopor.*” Field note from October 7, 2018.

Lula), opted to run as vice president instead of on the top of the ticket. Some analysts suggest that this was a strategic choice she made to place *kirchnerismo* and its political baggage on a secondary plane.³⁷ As Ana Grondona and Pablo Pryluka (2019) write,

[Kirchner’s] choice to run as vice president alongside Alberto Fernández, an on-again-off-again political comrade and rival, was thus a bold message and a masterstroke of political strategy: a clear statement of intent to form the most competitive political alternative to Macri in the face of the impending economic crisis.

This is just one of a number of possible examples in which comparable macroeconomic circumstances coincided with disparate—sometimes orthogonal—domestic political outcomes.

Third, attention to subnational variation makes it less clear just how the global economy influenced the seemingly contradictory class vote in Brazil. Whereas the PT retains significant support in the poorer Northeast region of the country, Haddad lost by considerable margins in many urban areas, even among very low-income segments of the population that were once loyal to the PT. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, the PT lost over half of its support in the city’s poorest electoral zones (Figure 3.13).³⁸

Finally, it is worth noting that scholars and observers who insist on the primacy of macroeconomic explanations for Bolsonaro’s rise were not so confident in this position before the election—when all of these exogenous dynamics were known—and in theory, could have been used to predict the outcome. The temptation to selectively highlight variables that fit a purely economic account of political dynamics after the fact runs the risk of succumbing to what Jeffery Webber (2019) called the “dead weight of structure.” He writes:

There is strong evidence that various Left administrations made crucial strategic and political errors that cannot be reduced to structural constraints—not least in terms of the center-Left and Left’s responses to the delayed reverberation of the global capitalist crisis onto the shores of South America by 2012, or the Maduro governments’ administration of Venezuela’s economy. Most important, perhaps, was leftist administrations’ tendency to absorb and demobilize independent social movements and trade union activists, and in so doing to depoliticize their social bases.

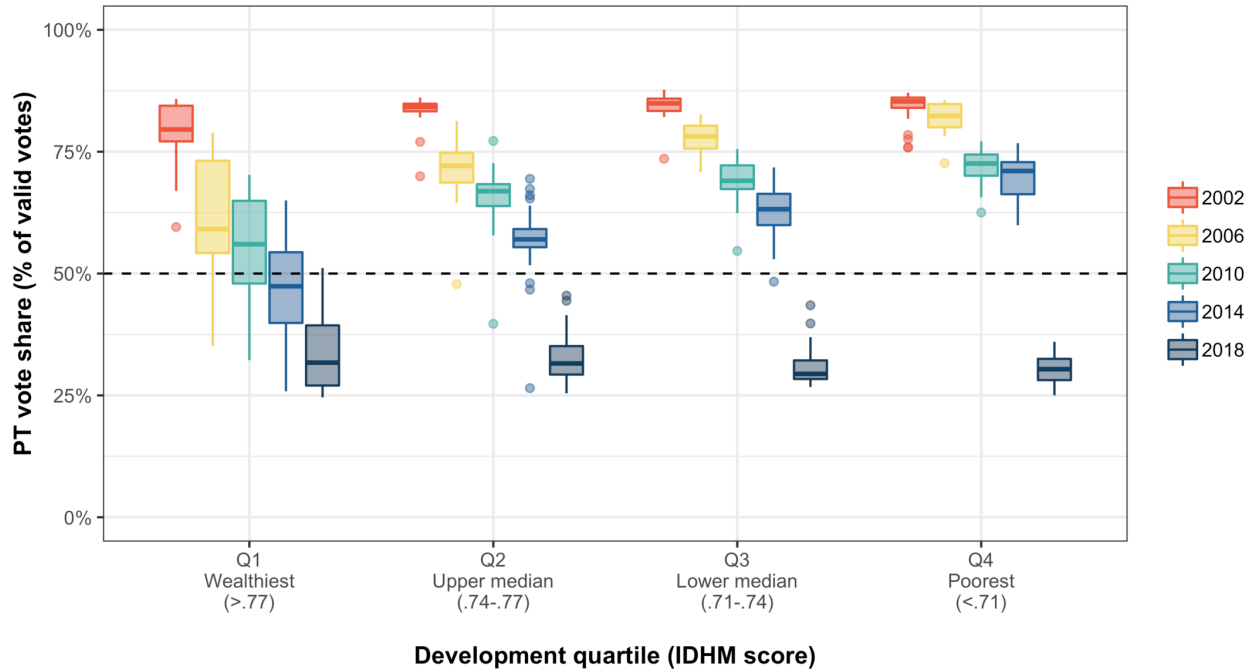
Gilberto Carvalho, a member of what is known as the PT *cúpula*, or high command, admitted to the party’s tendency to “depoliticize their social bases”:

We can’t deny this process of cooptation...I forgot to make one more very im-

37. See Figure F.9 for one meme that circulated among Ciro Gomes supporters contrasting the two candidates’ strategies.

38. This “revolt of the peripheries” (McKenna and Richmond 2019) was not limited to Rio and is consistent with voting patterns in Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, and São Paulo as well. We argue that longitudinal changes in the PT vote share in these metro regions reflect the more general phenomenon of poor urban voters (such as the skinheads from the *subúrbio* mentioned at the outset of the chapter), turning away from the PT after 2006.

Figure 3.13: PT Vote Share in Rio de Janeiro by Socioeconomic Quartile, 2002-2018



Data sources: *Tribunal Superior Eleitoral* and the *Atlas do Desenvolvimento Humano no Brasil*

portant critical point, which is the following: It’s true that there was inclusion, it’s true that there was the beginning of participation, but it is also true that we did not take care of the political and ideological inclusion of people. Let me explain: we made it so that these people could have access to the market, to a job, to a house, a refrigerator, etc. but we did not make these people citizens with a new outlook on the cultural questions, and in the relationship to the [democratic] project.³⁹

Webber and Gilberto’s critiques suggest that had the PT maintained strong links to a base, politicized and organized its supporters, and invested in political education during its years in power, they would have had many more strategic options—a plan B, C, D, and so on—and would have been less likely to find themselves the collateral victims of the vicissitudes of commodity prices and capital flows. As one of my interviewees put it, “Politics takes place in tough economic frameworks, but contingencies continue to exist. And the decision and actions that political actors make alter the results of every conjuncture, no matter how bad it [the conjuncture] may be.”⁴⁰ It remains to be seen whether the Brazilian Left(s) will reinvest in the “political and ideological inclusion” project that Gilberto said that the PT abandoned to mount an opposition to *bolsonarismo* (or right-wing forces in general) in the years to come.

39. Interview on July 21, 2017.

40. Interview on April 30, 2019.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a dynamic cartography of political power relations in contemporary Brazil. The shifts in the network graphs and each node's associated influence scores suggest that social movement theorists and political sociologists would benefit from a more explicit field-theoretic perspective. To fully appreciate how political terrain shifts happen, we have to look at how elite actors articulate civil society actors that were not exclusively parties but which were nonetheless an integral part of the political field. If we only observe the dynamics of parties, we would miss the locus of the formation of a New Right, the constellation of libertarian think tanks and social media organizations that consolidated after the 2013 mass protests (Chapter 5). We would also underestimate the Old Right, a term I use to refer to the military and associations representing capital fractions, specifically industry (FIESP), finance (FEBRABAN), and agribusiness (CNA)—the subject of the next chapter. The findings show that these actors' changing field positions reflected the overall distribution of political power in Brazil.

The findings I presented in this chapter further show that the transformation of the political field in Brazil during the period I studied looked much more like contestation among multiple organized actors with different degrees and kinds of political power than a process directed, designed, and controlled by any one actor or set of actors. Does the fact that the nodes shift—and their influence scores vary—therefore support the Dahlsian (or pluralist) view that political power is seen as widely diffuse across a variety of groups?

Based on the results presented in this chapter, my answer to this question is a qualified no. On the one hand, the data clearly show that there are multiple power centers in the network maps. While FEBRABAN (the banking lobby) ranked as one of the most influential nodes in the network at all three points in time, adjacent capital sectors like agribusiness (CNA) and other organized actors drawing primarily on non-economic sources of power—like Bolsonaro's erstwhile party (PSL), the party controlled by the speaker of the house (DEM), the military (ANMB), the evangelical caucus (AdDeús and IURD), and right-wing think tanks and movements like MBL, Millennium, and Students for Liberty also occupied influential field positions and were not always (or were only temporarily) ideologically aligned with, for example, finance capital. The results show that the only organizational actors with roots in a mass base and that currently wield significant political power, however, are the evangelical church networks. The longitudinal network graphs indicate that power relations can and do shift—sometimes quite dramatically even over relatively short periods of time—making clear that meso-level political struggles are often more dynamic and contingent than purely structural or static accounts of interlocked elite networks allow.

At the same time—and, most unfortunately for those who support conceptions of democracy as government of, by, and for the people—the descriptive results make it impossible to deny that organizations with more material resources have “decisive political advantages” (Pierson 2015:4). With the singular exception of 2014, in which Dilma was re-elected by the narrowest margin since re-democratization and then quickly overthrown, no president in Brazil's modern history has *not* had the backing of finance capital, industry,

and agribusiness. It is significant that of both Lula and Bolsonaro's many bids for political power, the only ones that were successful were those that were backed by the major interest groups representing these three capital fractions. Explaining how these organizations' economic advantages continue to translate into political ones is the subject of the next chapter.

Perennial Plutocracy: The Sociology of State Capture

How things happen is why they happen.

Charles Tilly (2006a:410)

The guests arrived at the wedding reception by the vanful. We were coming from the ceremony at a nearby church, which had been festooned with fifty-thousand white tulips and smelled like honey. Not far from the reception hall—where attendants checked guests in on iPads—was *Cracolândia* (Crackland), an open-air drug market that has been the target of the city’s repeated “social hygiene” removal efforts (Vicentin et al. 2018). As São Paulo’s aristocracy filed into a gilded ball room to celebrate the newlyweds—the groom an heir to Brazil’s largest bank—they studiously ignored the homeless people huddled together around makeshift fires just meters from the entrance. Once inside, guests lingered in the foyer to admire the three story-high walls covered in maroon magnolias. About 30 cocktail waitresses styled to look like Audrey Hepburn served sparkling sangria. Another bespoke beverage on offer featured what looked like insects encrusted in gold filigree. “Are these... ants?” I asked the bartender. “Yes, they’re edible. They’ve only been fed lemongrass for their whole lives, so that’s what you will taste.”¹ It was the winter of 2017, the nadir of Brazil’s longest and deepest economic recession on record.

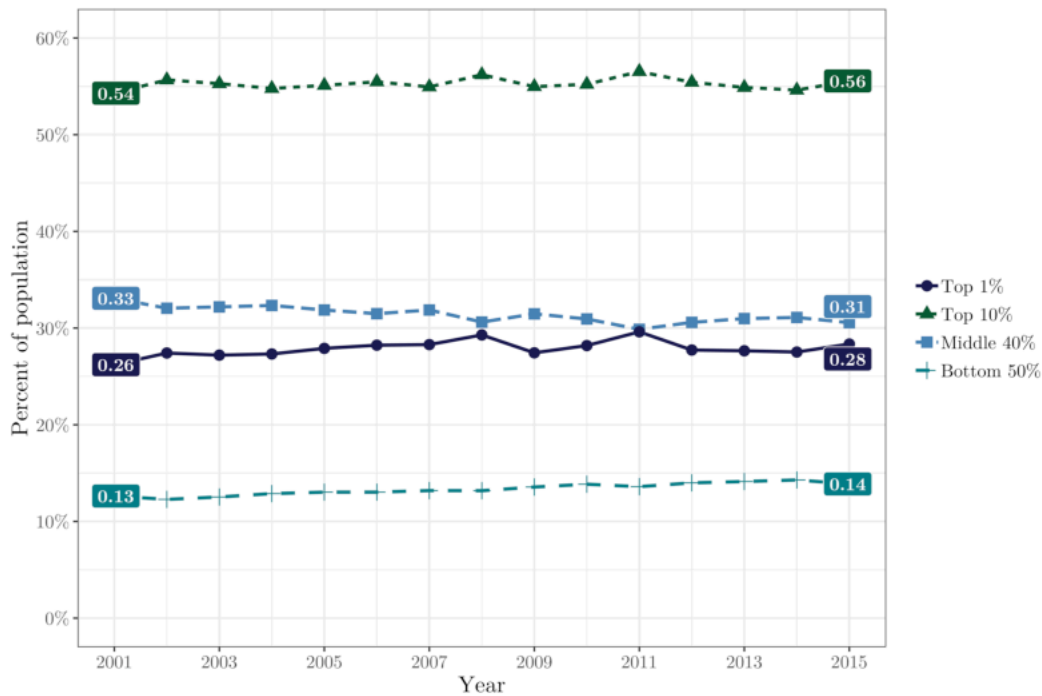
For all of the fanfare about Brazil’s redistributive gains, the most recent survey data suggest that the vast socioeconomic disparities on display in the scene just described are persistent and generalizable. In 2018, the difference in life expectancy between one of São Paulo’s richest and one of its poorest neighborhoods was 24 years (Abrahão 2019). New data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) show that between 2010-2019, Brazilian families on the whole got poorer (Pamplona 2019). As the 2010s came to a close, half of the population was living on BRL\$413 *reais* (just under USD\$100 in 2019 dollars) each month, the equivalent of about half of one monthly minimum wage. In 2018, five percent of the population—10.4 million people—lived on just 51 *reais* (USD\$12) each month, according to PNAD. One of the ways in which the degree of immiseration in Brazil has become most visible is in the rising levels of precarious work (Braga 2012). The number of

1. Field note from August 10, 2017.

informal street vendors increased by 510 percent between 2015 and 2019 (Mendonça 2019).

Even looking at pre-recession statistics, however, new evidence suggests that inequality levels in Brazil remained stable or increased over the decade in which they were thought to have attenuated. According to the World Inequality Database (WID), Brazil joins the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa in “set[ting] the world’s inequality frontier” (Alvaredo et al. 2018:6, see also Appendix Figure G.4). As shown in Figure 4.1, income concentration among Brazil’s richest strata—to which the ant-eating wedding guests belong—increased. These data revise earlier claims that inequality decreased markedly in Brazil throughout the 2000s (Ferreira de Souza 2019). The difference in measurement is a function of the data source: studies that relied on surveys showed a clear decline in inequality throughout the 2000s, whereas the WID, which incorporates tax declarations, show elasticity.²

Figure 4.1: Share of Total National Income by Earnings Strata in Brazil, 2001-2015



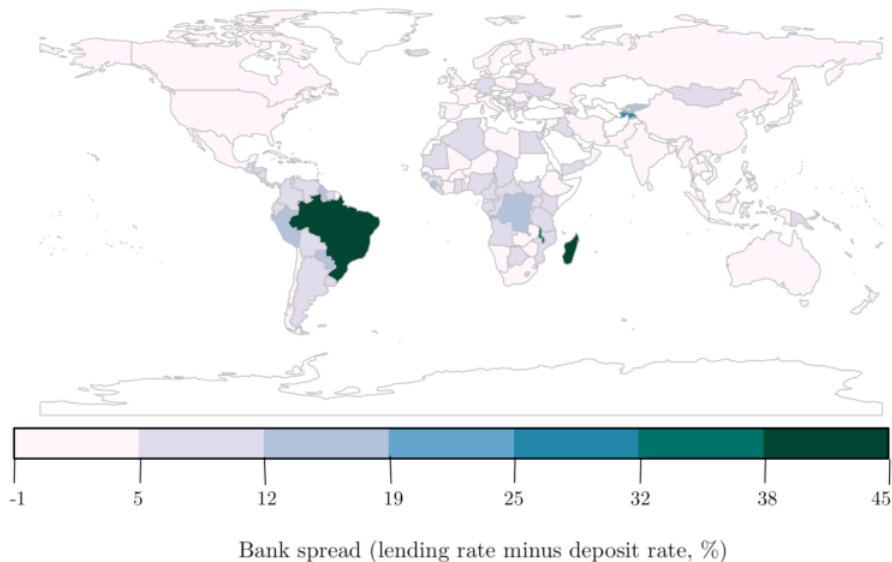
Data source: World Inequality Database (Alvaredo et al. 2017)

To the many widely accepted (and interrelated) explanations for how and why this

2. As Morgan (2017) emphasizes, however, *labor income* inequality registered a clear decline as a the result of a rising real minimum wage over this period and the income of poorer Brazilians grew faster than that of the middle class over this same period. Nevertheless, he notes, “it was insufficient to mitigate the extreme inequality of capital resources and reverse the growing concentration of national income among elite groups” (2).

extreme inequality endures in Brazil—four-hundred years of settler colonialism and chattel slavery, one of the world’s most regressive tax structures, inordinately high levels of land concentration, and low levels of education (over half of Brazilian adults have not completed primary school)—scholars looking at the new evidence from the WID have added another. As has happened the world over (Piketty and Saez 2006; Piketty 2014), elites increasingly rely on inheritance and returns to their accumulated capital rather than returns to their labor. As these studies show both over time and across countries, the rate of return on wealth far exceeds that of wage growth. Although reliable data on wealth distribution in Brazil does not yet exist, Piketty’s capital-income ratio is likely very large, given that 1) shareholder dividends are tax exempt, 2) industrial activity, once a main source of wage growth, is at historic lows, and 3) interest rates are among the highest in the world. As shown in Figure 4.2, the difference between what banks in Brazil charged lenders in 2017 versus what they paid depositors was nearly 40 percent, comparable to only Madagascar and Malawi. This helps explain, in part, the wide profit margins of the country’s five largest banks which, as of 2018, concentrate 85 percent of all credit operations and 84 percent of all deposits Brazil (up from 60 percent in 2006) (BC 2018:144).

Figure 4.2: Global Interest Rate Spreads, 2017



Based on data downloaded from the International Monetary Fund.

The glossy pages of *Forbes* show how these macro trends translate to the level of individuals. According to the magazine’s 2019 ranking of the country’s billionaires, 200 Brazilians have wealth equivalent to fourteen percent of Brazil’s entire GDP. Put another way, the country’s six richest individuals possess the same wealth as the bottom 100 million (Mellis 2017). A quarter of the 1.2 trillion *reais* amassed by the 200 wealthiest indi-

viduals came from the financial sector (Teixeira and Ertel 2019:111). This number is an underestimate because billionaires like Jorge Paulo Lemann (who has occupied the top spot on the annual billionaire ranking since 2013) are classified as having derived their wealth from the food and beverage industry, when in fact many of his assets come from 3G Capital, the investment fund he shares with Marcel Telles and Carlos Sicupira (who themselves occupied the third and fifth slots on the 2019 ranking). Just by reclassifying the first five billionaires on the list who derive a substantial portion of their fortunes from financial instruments (rather than productive sectors), the percent of the total wealth concentrated among the richest .0001 percent of the population that can be traced to finance capital comes closer to 50 percent.

The puzzle and preview of the argument

“It’s a crisis of civilization,” said Dominican friar and liberation theologian Frei Betto, speaking before a crowd of 1,500 gathered for the 2017 National Conference on Social Welfare in Brasília. “The world is dominated by the financialization of the economy. A small group of transnational corporations has more power than states do. Everything is conceived of in terms of capital accumulation; the preservation of nature is seen as an obstacle to progress,” he said.³ Frei Betto’s was an analysis I heard repeatedly from leaders of left-leaning social movement groups and one that is echoed in the social science literature: because capitalists and corporations can have “more power than states,” they are considered omniscient and insurmountable, especially when it comes to politics. Finance capital in particular often stands in as the *deus ex-machina* whose maneuvering explains the configuration of power in a nation-state and beyond.

This poses a puzzle. On a world-historical time scale, democracies have consolidated. There are now more people living under democratic political regimes than at any other time in history (Roser 2019). Yet small groups of monied elites continue to effectively rule the many. How do economic inequalities continue to translate into political inequalities? The aim of this chapter is to provide a more sociological answer to this question. I argue that access to material resources are only part of the story: there are also organizational and relational mechanisms that help explain how perennial plutocracies like Brazil’s are made possible. I term the more subtle ways in which organized economic interests penetrate politics the sociology of state capture. Rather than posit a kind of steady-state capitalist hegemony, however, I find that organized elites use several techniques to constantly reconfigure their relationships to each other and to state agents, often in strategic response to sometimes dramatic changes in the larger environment. The findings thus reveal how economic elites render their political power less visible, helping them evade direct challenges from their intra and inter-class rivals, from social movement challengers, and from a newly empowered judiciary.

3. Field note from December 5, 2017.

4.1 Studying capital fractions

To better understand these processes, this chapter draws on elite interviews and two years of fieldwork, including direct observations of the activity of interest groups representing Brazil’s agribusiness, banking, and industrial sectors—the three capital fractions with the highest eigenvalue (influence) measures in the longitudinal network maps presented in Chapter 3. One of my aims in conducting interviews with elites in key positions in (or recently retired from) these organizations was to gather what Leo Van Audenhove (2006) terms “explanatory knowledge” and “process knowledge.”

Explanatory knowledge refers to interviewees’ subjective interpretation of events at a given point in time, offers some insight into their professed ideology (which is helpful for identifying any inconsistencies between their expressed and revealed preferences), and speaks to the image they hope to convey to outside observers. Process knowledge, on the other hand, seeks to elicit the interviewee’s practical insider knowledge of specific routines and interactions in which they frequently participate. For my research purposes, the semi-structured interview questions varied somewhat according to the interviewees’ roles and expertise but were primarily designed to uncover information about how capitalist fractions organize themselves and interact with different state agents, from parliamentarians and ministers to regulators and party officials. To avoid pure abstraction, I asked them to draw on their first-hand experience for examples of how the organization(s) that represent their class interests influenced legislative, business, and lobbying activity at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

One of the advantages of using elites as an interview respondent group is that they have direct knowledge of difficult-to-observe routines and processes (Hertz and Imber 1995; Koker 2017). Particularly in trying to understand organizational activity that is usually deliberately shielded from view (both because such information can be exploited either by the authorities or by their competitors), there are few other sources of data other than interviews that allow researchers to investigate how elite actors make strategic decisions, short of relying on leaked audio tapes and documents.⁴ To supplement the data from these approximately hour-long interviews, I also drew on my fieldwork and observations at summits, meetings, conferences, and legislative hearings at which these elite interest groups were present. I also joined public WhatsApp groups or was invited to private ones whose members are employed in one of the three capital sectors under investigation, which allowed me to observe group-level reactions from a non-probabilistically sampled set of informants as new political developments unfolded. My field notes and these chat logs thus allowed me a window into the more “microscopic . . . foundations of political institutions and their attendant set of practices” (Auyero 2006:258), one of the goals of political ethnography (Baiocchi and Connor 2008). In addition, I created newspaper alerts for media mentions of each interest group, downloaded their publicly available organizational documents,

4. Throughout the course of this study, a number of in-person, phone, and chat messaging conversations were indeed leaked—in some cases as part of plea bargain deals and in other cases through interceptions. These data were widely reported on in the media and were useful for confirming or disconfirming some of the points informants made in interviews.

including the legal proceedings of a number of plea bargain deals in which business elites detailed (with supporting documentation) how they coopted state agents, and subscribed to a daily digest of investment bulletins.

To analyze the data, I first printed and closely read all of the interview transcripts to open code them for broad (usually descriptive) themes. Next, I used NVivo to code sections of the transcript where interviewees discussed how they interact with (or observe their elite peers interact with) state agents. I also read through my chat logs and field notes, deductively coding them with the themes that surfaced in the interview transcripts and adding new ones. Major codes are reported in Table 4.1.

Once I had the results of the longitudinal analysis reported in Chapter 3, I began writing theoretical memos based on the data from these elite interviews and pertinent field notes, looking for any recurrent social processes that might help explain the shifts observed in the network maps. Consistent with established procedures for inductive qualitative research, I engaged in these various analytic strategies simultaneously rather than sequentially (Mason 2018). Unless otherwise noted, the quotations reported in this chapter are illustrative of themes and codes present across multiple interviews.

Table 4.1: Summary of Data Structure and Codes for Elite Interviews

Theme	Codes	Description	Illustration
Views on the role of the state	Intervention, <i>laissez-faire</i> , “bloated”	This set of codes was used for passages where the data spoke to the role that the state should play (generally a normative assertion)	“The bloated state I’m referring is that which interferes in the economy and creates a shit ton of state-owned companies.”
Fissures and contradictions	Expressed vs. revealed preferences; material vs. ideological interests	Respondent spoke to intra-class antagonisms (i.e. contradictions within elites, which often took the form of mutual rivalry), and/or disjuncture between organization or respondents’ professed ideologies and action	“On the day of the [impeachment] vote, I saw over in the corner Bolsonaro and the ex-president of the agribusiness caucus hugging... the irony is that during Dilma’s government agribusiness got more than 600 billion <i>reais</i> from her government; that sector really should have nothing to complain about.”

Continued on next page

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Theme	Codes	Description	Illustration
Political capitalism	Campaign finance, bribes, revolving door	Data that describes the ways in which capital fractions (and the organizations that represent them) are interdependent, or mutually reliant, on the state	“When it’s a project that involves five million <i>reais</i> , the people at BNDES would ask me for ten percent of that figure to approve it. And if you didn’t pay, your financing request would go to the pile, you’d have to produce more analyses and justifications, and they would start creating obstacles, saying: ‘but there’s this, and also this.’ So you go about fixing things and they would win through sheer exhaustion, because there’s no other way, and it still took months [to approve] you know?”
Mechanisms	Orchestrated obfuscation	<i>Bastidores</i> (behind-the-scenes) behavior that elites used to organize themselves in relation to the state	“We will try to do a meeting beforehand between you and the government (technical analysts from Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Economy, the Central Bank, the Chief of Staff) for better harmonization. It will probably be at 9 A.M. at a place to be determined.”
	Personnel as policy	Descriptions of the ways in which elite actors recruited previously socialized (or acculturated) individuals to staff the state	“[T]heir aim was to . . . understand the dominant jurisprudence of the court that was recruiting [that year], align [their answers] with the doctrine of the selection committee.”

Continued on next page

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Theme	Codes	Description	Illustration
	Misdirection	This code identified inconsistencies between elites’ rhetoric and practice, usually with the effect of distracting from a central contradiction	“AMBEV sold the company to the Belgians. The camouflage is that it’s a Belgian-Brazilian joint venture, but in reality it’s totally Belgian, to make it look better, to not sell out the government that approved of all these fusions: ‘I concentrate the whole market for you and you go and sell it to foreigners?’”

The pitfalls of relying primarily on elite interviews (and interviews in general) as a data collection method are well documented (Lamont and Swidler 2014). Among the drawbacks are the danger that interview responses can serve as merely illustrative “anecdota” (Rice 2014), as researchers cannot make claims as to the extent to which individuals’ self-reported experiences are generalizable to some larger category of people. Elites have a particular interest in misrepresenting their role in unsavory or questionably legal interactions with the state, and are at least (if not more) susceptible to social desirability bias, given their concerns for their own and their firms’ reputations (Odendahl and Shaw 2001; Vasi and King 2012). Certain features of the interview (for example, the fact that I audio recorded the interviews for later transcription and analysis) could have rendered the interviewees more cautious than they otherwise would have been. Thus, I treated the information gathered in these interviews as potentially plausible information about elites’ organizational behavior, but not irrefutable evidence of it.

I used three strategies to try to mitigate some of these biases. First, whenever possible, I sought to triangulate what interviewees told me with other sources of data (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). Some claims were readily falsifiable (or at least possible to contextualize) by simply searching contemporaneous news accounts or archival documents, as in the case of the businessman who told me that his large factory had to declare bankruptcy because he refused to participate in a corruption deal that would grant him a large Petrobras contract in exchange for illicit kickbacks to the PT. In fact, this company had been in bankruptcy proceedings since 1997, five years before the PT came to power.⁵ As part of this triangulation strategy, I also interviewed six journalists who had cultivated sources in the highest echelons of power in Brasília and who were, at least in theory, disinterested in arbitrating questions of how capitalists wield political power. For example, one reporter

5. Still, I did not take this as evidence that the businessman had not *also* been propositioned to participate in a corruption scheme he described—he cited specific details about where this meeting took place and with whom—but rather as evidence of his own political commitments and interest in casting aspersions on the PT.

related what the ex-Minister of Justice told him about illegal campaign contributions:

Joaquim: I asked the minister: ‘So do private companies donate to *caixa dois* [undeclared campaign funds, the U.S. equivalent of “dark money”], as is rumored?’ And he said, ‘Here’s the thing, you can do the following accounting: for every dollar that goes into *caixa um* [a legitimate campaign donation], five go into *caixa dois*.’

EM: And how did he know that?

Joaquim: He knew it. He wasn’t doing political theory. He was telling me about the knowledge that he had personally acquired, because he was a lawyer for politicians and a lawyer for companies, including the [major] companies that finance the campaigns.

EM: And was it considered a problem that a lawyer for [those clients] became the Minister of Justice?

Joaquim: He was a lawyer his whole life. And then, at one point, he was nominated to be the Minister of Justice, up to there—no problem, because it’s his area of expertise, right? He was a friend of the president [cites name on background] and is now deceased so he can’t defend himself. When he got to the government, he had 45 years of experience as an attorney. He represented all of the major businessmen. So he knew: for every one real in *caixa um*, five go in *caixa dois*.⁶

A second way I sought to address some of the sources of biases mentioned above was to speak with people who no longer held positions of power, such as the former head of the Central Bank, the ex-chair of primary anti-trust body in Brazil, and lobbyists who once did but no longer represent agribusiness, banking, or industrial interest groups. In theory, these informants were in a position to speak more openly about how economic actors attempt to influence political outcomes. I was surprised by the degree to which many interviewees, even those still currently serving in these roles, were forthcoming—though they sometimes oscillated between revealing perhaps more than they expected to and quick retreat. In one example, I asked a lobbyist for Brazil’s largest industrial business organization to elaborate on comments he made about the *Lava Jato* corruption investigation.

EM: Were you surprised by the magnitude of the *Lava Jato* revelations?

Guilherme: They’re very small compared to actions I have participated in.

EM: Can you elaborate?

Guilherme: I participated in some actions involving. . . the companies I worked for and you know, friends I have, I won’t be able to name names, but JBS [a meat-processing company involved in several high-profile corruption cases], for example, I could cite for you at least fifteen more companies that received the same kind of resources [from the state] in an illicit, privileged way.

6. Interview on July 17, 2017.

EM: [And earlier] said that you've personally seen situations that demonstrate culpability in the banking sector. Can you give me an example?

Guilherme: I can't say anything in relation to that, no.⁷

More so than any other respondent group in this study, elites were comfortable simply not answering questions or asking me to turn off my voice recorder when they would tell me something that they preferred not to have registered in that way, as this interviewee then did.

Third, and finally, in my codes and presentation of the interview excerpts, I include relevant dialogue to increase transparency about my role in eliciting the responses. In most of my interviews, the researched had more power than the researcher, which may have worked in my favor if interviewees viewed me as “perfectly harmless” (Gewirtz and Ozga 1994). But it is also the case that question type influences the kinds of impression management tactics described above (Ellis et al. 2002) and that follow-up questions and a conversational tone tends to increase both the quality of elite interviews (Kakabadse and Louchart 2012:299) and the interviewer's credibility in the eyes of interviewees (Hochschild 2009). For these reasons, I have erred on the side of including unscheduled probes in my presentation of the data.

4.2 Mechanisms and machinations

In the following sections, I present the findings organized around three recurrent themes: orchestrated obfuscation, personnel-as-policy, and misdirection. In illustrating how these mechanisms operate, I attempt to locate what Hedstrom (1998), paraphrasing Robert Merton, called the “middle ground between social laws and description” (6). All three mechanisms were prevalent enough in the data to constitute definite empirical patterns but not so invariant as to be causal or deterministic. My goal in locating this theoretical “middle ground” is therefore to better understand how a complex phenomenon—the continued political dominance of economic elites—works as a social process. As with other chapters in the dissertation, the analytic presentation is comparative: in each section I describe how political actors across the ideological spectrum made use of the mechanism being described (or not).

4.2.1 Orchestrated obfuscation

That elites deliberately disguise their dealings, loyalties, strategies, and true affinities seems an observation almost too banal as to not merit further discussion. To borrow Erving Goffman (1959)'s dramaturgical metaphor, there is a frontstage and a backstage in all social interactions, and performative behavior is likely to be even more strategic when political power is at stake. Idioms like “behind closed doors” accompanied by imagery of plutocrats and elected officials in smoke-filled “back rooms” are pervasive in literary and popular accounts of how political deals are struck. Backroom deal-making occurs in all

7. Interview on June 26, 2017.

regime types (e.g. Cheng 1990; Redlawsk and McCann 2005), but scholarly emphasis on the phenomenon tends to focus more on the outcome (who benefits, who is punished) than on the orchestration of the meetings themselves (who organizes them, who sits at the table, who decides, and how). Yet, as Albert Hunter (1995) writes, “although the public front stage may reflect the power of. . . elites, it is the back stages where the power itself is most often wielded” (154).

In my research, the term *bastidores* (meaning, behind the scenes) was one of the phrases interviewees used most often used to stress how consequential political decisions are made in Brazil. Asked about the mechanics of how party and political coalitions are formed, Vera Chaia, a professor and specialist in Brazilian politics and elections told me:

It’s a *bastidores* thing. It’s the famous *toma lá-dá-cá* (give and take). You don’t get access to this type of data. We know that there are political agreements that are hidden from the voter, from the Brazilian citizen. Political agreements with money involved, right? Money enters and parties and politicians are bought. We know this happens.⁸

Despite Chaia’s affirmation that secret deal-making and dark money are the currency of politics, she also noted that researchers “don’t get access” to the kind of data that proves it, at least not systematic evidence. Her observation resonates with Polsby (1980) and Wolfinger (1971)’s pluralist critique that “you can’t study what you can’t see” (Pierson 2015:9). At several points during fieldwork, however, I found myself in such hidden (although technically not illegal) deliberations that provided some clues about the less visible social machinery of elite political influence.

In one case, I accompanied Lucien, a French businessman, to nine meetings he had scheduled with party leaders, candidates, and pollsters who were interested in contracting with his company, which sells voter targeting software to political campaigns.⁹ Since it was well before the election, most candidates wanted their meetings with Lucien to fly below the radar and took sometimes convoluted measures to keep the encounters secret.

In one of these meetings, I accompanied Lucien on what we found out shortly beforehand was a meeting with Geraldo Alckmin, then governor of São Paulo, Brazil’s most populous state, and the presumptive presidential nominee for what was then the main center-right party ticket (PSDB). Although Lucien had told Alckmin’s handlers that we were capable of finding our way to the Palácio dos Bandeirantes (governor’s mansion) ourselves, they insisted on sending us a car. Lucien said that that wouldn’t be necessary—it might reveal where he was having his previous meeting. At this, Alckmin’s handlers told us to instead meet his close ally José Anibal the PSDB’s think tank in a different part of the city, where we were treated to a one-hour lecture poking fun at the “*mise-en-scène*

8. Interview on December 4, 2017.

9. In these meetings, I was introduced as a researcher who was conducting a study on contemporary Brazilian politics. I told the people present about my research and gave them my business card that includes my full contact information and affiliation and took detailed notes throughout the meetings (in addition to translating when necessary).

formidable” of Alckmin’s theretofore chief internal rival, upstart mayor João Doria, who now holds the governorship Alckmin vacated in his run for president.¹⁰

After the rendezvous at the think tank, Aníbal, Lucien, another party official and I were shepherded to a black bulletproof SUV headed for the Palácio. When we reached the gate, the guard nodded knowingly to the driver and waved us through, not taking down any of our names. This means that our presence was not registered on Alckmin’s public schedule that day. We waited for about 45 minutes to be called in to his office. In this time, I watched as people, some of whom I recognized (like the governor of the neighboring state of Paraná) and most of whom also did not appear on the governor’s published schedule that day, cycled through the wood-paneled waiting room, into the corner office, and back out again. At one point there were fourteen besuited white men waiting to speak to Alckmin. When a female staffer offered us coffee, she apologized for the wait and said that that afternoon was “busier than most” because scores of people were coming through to wish the governor a happy birthday.

During our hour-long meeting with Alckmin—in which he shared with us both his thoughts about Brazilian electoral strategy and his birthday pudding—he and his staffers pressed Lucien on how they might replicate Emmanuel Macron’s message in Brazil. At one point, Alckmin’s cell phone rang and he passed it off to one of his staffers without looking at the screen. Moments later, she rushed back in and said, “Sorry, but you have to take this one, it’s the president.” On the call, Alckmin—casually referring to Temer by his first name—thanked him for his birthday wishes and made references to Plato’s cave and the “wisdom” one acquires only after reaching a more advanced age.

Alckmin and Temer’s friendly tone in the phone call belied the contemporaneous press coverage that painted the two politicians as mortally at odds with one another: months earlier Alckmin had “snubbed” the president and pressed his allies in Congress to vote in favor of impeachment proceedings against Temer (Roxo 2017). Weeks later Temer canceled a breakfast meeting he had scheduled with evangelical groups and Alckmin (Laguna and Venceslau 2017). And, at the time of the phone call, former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the PSDB was finalizing the “terms of the divorce” from the shotgun wedding that had taken place between Alckmin and Temer’s parties during Dilma’s impeachment a year earlier (Benites 2017).

The banality of secrecy

What struck me most about incidents like this during fieldwork was not the disjuncture between surface appearances and backroom niceties, but rather how naturally all parties—from the governor and his consigliere to the business executives, the parking guard, and the coffee attendant—treated the choreographed obfuscation of even relatively low-level political strategizing. In fact, my distinct impression during two years of fieldwork in spaces like this was that the *bastidores* were the rule—that is, where most strategizing and

10. Field notes from November 7, 2017. Aníbal is a former senator, congressman, and most controversially (because of corruption allegations made public during his tenure in the role), former energy secretary for the state of São Paulo.

negotiation took place—while open conflict in public arenas was the exception. Although there were certainly still elements of frontstage behavior in these kinds of meetings (in the case above, this was likely especially true given that Luicen and I were unknown quantities to the governor and his allies), the nature of deliberations plainly changed when they happened in private.

Ongoing investigations into corruption scandals have unearthed more evidence of the role that backchannel communications play in political struggles. One of the most notable examples of this was revealed to the public in May 2017, when the billionaire owner of the world’s largest meat-processing company mentioned in the interview above, JBS, Joesley Batista, wore a wire to a covert meeting with Temer in the basement of vice presidential palace. Joesley secretly recorded then president Temer condoning JBS’ continued hush money payments to purchase the silence of Eduardo Cunha, the former Speaker of the House and Temer’s party co-religionary. A testament to how the balance of political power usually matters more than the letter of the law, even this irrefutable evidence against Temer was not enough to unseat him—a stark contrast to the flimsy charges of budgetary mismanagement that served as a pretext to impeach Dilma the year before.

“I never go alone”

While palace intrigue like Joesley’s secret recording grabs headlines, interviewees more often described the mundane ways in which they interfaced with political agents both openly and behind the scenes. Representatives of different capital fractions described to me how they used interest groups as buffers, shielding themselves and their companies from scrutiny and possible retaliation. Nelson, one industrial capitalist who had traversed sectors as diverse as chemical production and pipe manufacturing told me the following:

EM: So you talked about the regulations, taxes, compliance rules and such that the government holds you accountable for. How do you represent the interests of [the company] relative to these demands?

Nelson: I take action through the employers’ associations, so if it’s a chemical [related question] then you have ABQUIM, which is the Brazilian Chemical Industry Association. . . because if you [negotiate with public power] through your company, you run the risk of being sanctioned [by the government] later.

EM: So you don’t go to Brasília as Nelson, you go there as—

Nelson: Exactly, as part of an association that is representing and defending the interests of the sector. So that is what I was doing here in Guarulhos, I would go to the director of FIESP [the largest group representing industrial interests in Brazil] and say, ‘Look, I’m having trouble with this inspector. . . this guy is creating a problem.’ So *I* wasn’t going directly to the [relevant state agency], but the president of the association would send a request and we would go defend the interests of the company, understand?

EM: So you and the president of FIESP would set up a meeting with the relevant state agency and. . . that’s it?

Nelson: Yes, you identify, in this case it was with health surveillance, so we even involved Dirceu Raposo who was the superintendent of health inspection [ANVISA] in Brasília.¹¹

Language like “defending the interest of the sector” was mirrored by representatives of other capital fractions as well. “FEBRABAN,” said the director of government relations for one large bank, “is the banking industry federation, that’s where we come up with the strategy of the sector.” It’s in that setting, he said, “where I can say, ‘look, this law bothers us, we need to have a law for this, we need to have legislation for that, we need regulation related to this, and CNF [the National Confederation of Financial Institutions] takes action.”¹² Similar to how the industrial businessman described setting up a meeting with the health inspector, a banking lobbyist told me that “we have a way of acting, a way of talking to [political] leaders. We show them that [a law] is unconstitutional, show how it increases costs.” This interviewee was quick to add, however, that “nothing I did was ever under the table... and I never go alone,” he said.

Different from industry and finance, the primary organizational expression of the agribusiness sector is its congressional caucus, the *Frente Parlamentar Agropecuária* (also called the *bancada ruralista*, ruralist bench, or *bancada do boi*, cow caucus). Four other collectives representing the interests of corporate farmers and large landowners in Brazil—the Democratic Union of Ruralists (UDR), the National Society of Agriculture (SNA), the Rural Society of Brazil (SRB), and the National Confederation of Agriculture (CNA)—have a porous relationship with the FPA. For example, the vice president of CNA is also a congressman and leader of the FPA. Silvío Cascione, a researcher who studies Brazil’s formal and informal parliamentary fronts, described the FPA as “more organized than most [political] parties,” with weekly meetings, press secretaries, distributed leadership, and associated NGOs, think tanks, and institutes that receive money from donors who have an interest in the caucus’ legislative agenda.¹³ In 2019, 243 members of Congress were formally affiliated with FPA, or 47 percent of lower chamber, and 39 senators, accounting for 48 percent of the upper chamber.

Barons of the agribusiness sector also run for (and are often elected) to office and appointed to ministries, also unlike their counterparts in industry and finance. Owner of the world’s largest soybean group, Blairo Maggi, known as the *rei da soja* (soy king), is a prime example of this, having served as governor of the state of Mato Grosso from 2003-2010, then senator for the state from 2011-2016, and most recently, Minister of Agriculture under Temer from 2016-2019. While governor, however, Maggi supported Lula in both elections and was public about why he did so: in exchange for endorsing the PT candidate, Lula promised Maggi that he could name his allies to the “government organs that most affect our lives [in Mato Grosso]”—including in INCRA, the government’s land reform agency—and given assurance that the Lula Administration would forgive large amounts of Maggi’s grower constituents’ debts (Reuters 2006).

11. Interview on June 25, 2017.

12. Interview on September 12, 2017.

13. Interview on July 25, 2017.

As shown in Figure 4.3 agribusiness interests are thus vastly overrepresented in the formal political arena. Only 0.6 percent of the population identifies as the landed owner of a commercial agricultural establishment.¹⁴ Business owners and evangelicals also have large parliamentary caucuses relative to the true size of their constituencies. Labor union interests, by contrast, are underrepresented in Congress by about half, relative to the number of Brazilians who identify as union members.

Figure 4.3: Constituency Size and Congressional Representation, 2019

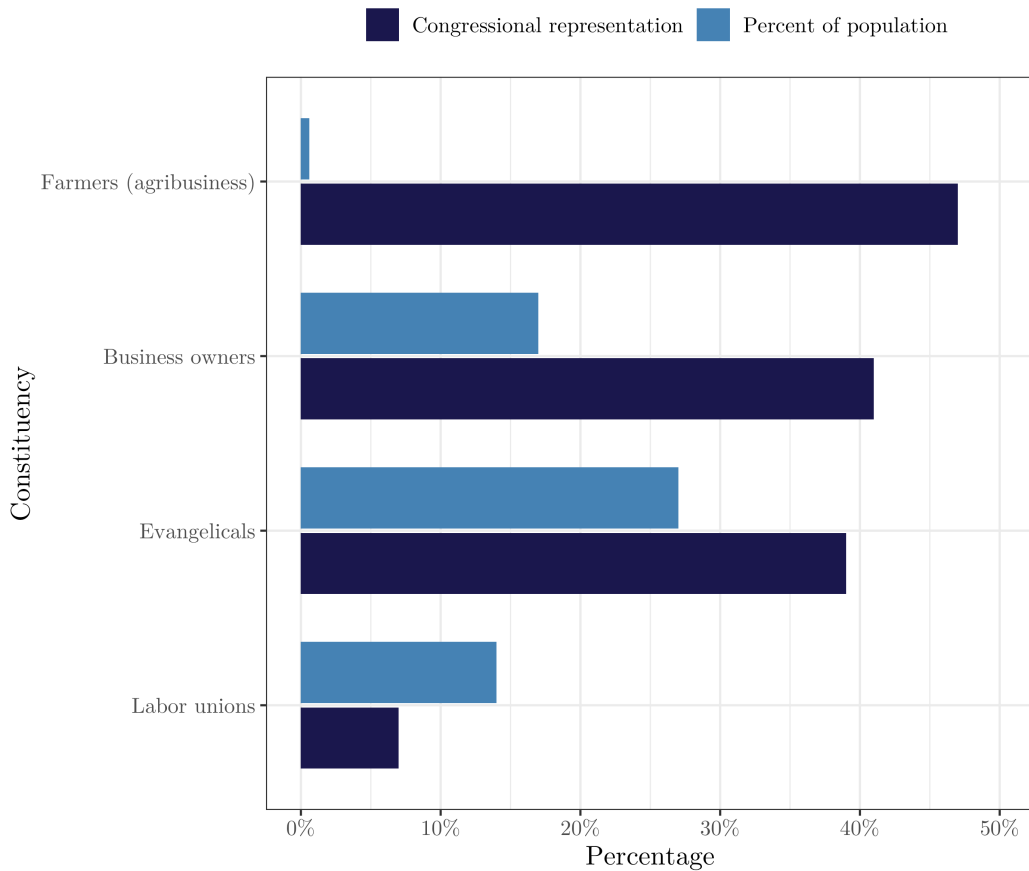


Chart sorted in descending order of the size of the difference between the two percentages. Data sources: *IBGE* Agriculture Census, World Religion Database, National Household Sample Survey (textitPNAD), Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, the Inter-Union Parliamentary Advisory (textitDIAP), *Brasil 200*, and www.camara.leg.br.

14. Non-commercial family and sustainable farmers are not included in this number; including them would bring the total to two percent of the population. Over 40 percent of Brazil’s land is now classified as farmed or arable, with the average commercial farmer owning 69 hectares and family farmer owning 23 hectares (Guimarães 2019), though monoculture farms are usually much larger. The racial breakdown of Brazil’s rural producers is also stark: in farms over 10,000 hectares, 88 percent of owners are white, whereas in small farms under one hectare, nearly three quarters of owners identify as black or brown. Scholars and historians explain this disparity as another manifestation of Brazil’s “incomplete abolition” and the modern legacy of the hereditary captainships that characterized the colonial era (Fonseca and Pina 2019).

At the start of Bolsonaro's term, the FPA's policy priorities included the right to nominate the Minister of Agriculture, refinancing and remission of growers' mandatory pension contributions to farmworkers, deregulation of the use of agrotoxins, stricter limits on lands that could be protected as indigenous reservations, and laxer gun laws for rural landowners. Only eleven months into Bolsonaro's term, new legislation or executive orders on each of these policy questions had moved forward or had already been enacted in the FPA's favor, a clear demonstration of the agribusiness sector's outsized political influence.

Despite these highly visible indicators of their power, the way the agribusiness sector operates to influence the government remains opaque. Every Tuesday, members of the FPA meet at noon for lunch in a mansion a few kilometers from the capitol to determine their legislative strategy. The mansion, located on the shores of the Paranoá Lake in a posh gated community of Lago Sul (I heard several people refer to this part of the neighborhood as "Agro Sul"), is widely referred to as the ag "bunker." A "lunch menu" is distributed in advance of these weekly strategy meetings detailing what policies will be discussed. One read:

Three appetizing dishes: as a starter, an audience with [the] Minister [of the Environment] Izabella Teixeira to talk about the Forest Code [which regulates areas protected from deforestation]; soon after the indigestible dish of the Anti-Slave Labor Law [which would increase the penalties for employers holding workers in slave-like conditions]. The main course [is] Gilberto Carvalho [chief of staff to both Lula and Dilma]. (Éboli 2013)

Journalists from some press outlets are invited to attend select Tuesday meetings; those considered hostile to the FPA's agenda are barred entry. "[This is not] public, it's my house, you are not invited," said João Henrique Hummel Vieira, a private lobbyist and the self-described "executive director" of the FPA, to a journalist who asked critical questions of the caucuses' leaders (Castilho 2016). The Instituto Pensar Agropecuária (IPA), of which Vieira is president, is funded by 39 agribusiness entities which, in turn, pay for all expenses related to the FPA bunker's expenses.¹⁵

"The [parliamentary] Front is strong because of its legitimacy within the [agribusiness] sector," said Márcio Freitas. "*Sindicalismo* [unionism] will give us the *garra* [claws; meaning courage or determination in this context] we need to confront this difficult moment," said João Martins da Silva Junior, the newly elected president of the National Confederation of Agriculture (CNA), upon his election to a four-year term in 2017. "Now more than ever we need a strong, organized, and prepared CNA," da Silva said.¹⁶

CNA and allied interest groups become "strong, organized, and prepared" outside of the public eye. One informant shared with me an email chain, initiated by Bolsonaro's

15. In an interview, Vieira said that IPA only accepts funds from Brazilian "entities," but admitted that these associations could be funded by giant multinationals. "Is there money from Cargill? Yes. [Cargill] gives money to the [Brazilian] associations, and those associations pay us [IPA]. I'm not ashamed to say this." (Quadros 2018).

16. Field note from September 19, 2017.

Adjunct Secretary of Agricultural Policy, the subject of which referred to a specific executive order (*medida provisória*, or MP) under discussion. The email was addressed to 68 recipients. Email addresses indicated that eight were lawyers, six worked at multinational agribusiness companies, and 11 were from domestic agribusiness interest groups, including a representative from Sindiveg, the employer’s union that represents 34 pesticide companies (97 percent of the market), Abiove, and Aprosoja, the associations representing soy, vegetable oil, and corn producers. Also included in the thread were 43 recipients associated with financial institutions—12 from securities and credit agencies, and 31 from all of Brazil’s five major banks. In the email thread, the author referred to the recipient list as the *grupo* (big group) and the executive order as “our MP.” Attached to the email was a 1,158-row spreadsheet that listed the text of the executive order, line-by-line, with specific congressman, their likely votes, and intended amendments to the text of the decree. The spreadsheet was also color-coded: black for the original text of the law being modified, red for the text of the executive order, green for amendments, and orange for text to be proposed by the FPA’s rapporteur in Congress.

Two hours after sending this email, the Adjunct Secretary replied-all to let recipients know that he had spoken with the office of the congressman who would be carrying the MP to confirm the date of the “public audience” about it, noting that “we will try to do a meeting beforehand between you and the government (technical analysts from Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Economy, the Central Bank, the Chief of Staff) for better harmonization. It will probably be at 9 A.M. at a place to be determined,” he wrote. “Good winds blow!” he signed off. “We must take advantage of them!”¹⁷ As this email chain attests, the organized “harmonization” of various capital collectives in off-the-record communications and meetings grants them consistent power over—and even the time and enthusiastic support of, in this case—state agents.

Pudding, poire, and pizza

The FPA lunches are the only covert (but institutionalized) political strategy gatherings of their kind. Beginning in the late 1980s, Ulysses Guimarães, chair of the 1987-88 Constitutional Assembly and Brazil’s first Speaker of the House after democratization, famously convened a group of power brokers linked to his party, the MDB, for weekly dinners. Guimarães’ petit comité discussed resistance to the military regime, played a leadership role in *Diretas Já* (the nationwide campaign for direct elections), helped plan the impeachment of Fernando Collor, and dominated congressional politics in Brasília for over thirty years (Tahan and Michael 2010; Wells 2014; Maciel 2014). Invariably, this small group, or *turma*, would finish their meals with condensed milk pudding topped with caramel syrup and pear liqueur, earning them the nickname *turma do pudim* (or, alternately, *turma do poire*). The tradition continued. When he ran for Speaker of the House in 2016, Rodrigo Maia invited a “small but eclectic [meaning, multi-party] group of parliamentarians” and their families to his mansion in Brasília every Sunday for pizza or a barbeque (Duailibi and Gaspar 2017). They became known as the *turma da pizza*, part of which morphed into the *turma do cafézinho*, or coffee club, which began to meet weekly

17. Field notes from October and November 2019.

in 2019 at evangelical deputy Marcos Pereira’s mansion in Brasília. As Thais Bilenky reported (2019), “The caffeine-based routine stimulates the parliamentary articulation that since the beginning of the year has enabled the pragmatic group. . . to be an effective counterpoint to the presidential palace and impose successive defeats to the Bolsonaro government in Congress.”¹⁸

“I attend to the president”

Interviewees also described hidden structures within (and not just across) parties and firms whose express purpose is to influence relevant government agents and agencies. Testimony from 77 former employees of Odebrecht, the construction firm at the center of one of the largest (revealed) corruption scandals in history, painted a picture of the company’s “Department of Structured Operations,” which answered directly to Odebrecht’s president and whose mandate was to help the company win contracts for dams, power plants, airports, and refineries throughout Latin America and Africa.¹⁹ The department, which consisted of three rooms on the 16th floor of the company’s headquarters in São Paulo and had existed in various forms since 1990, was jokingly referred to as “DePro,” short for *Departamento de Propina*, or Bribe Division, by several interviewees who pointed to it as an example of how businesses create formal roles within their companies to organize their often illicit relationships with the government.

Banks also have organized divisions called “Government Relations” or “Institutional Relations,” which rarely appear organizational charts but are staffed by employees who receive special training in the intricacies of political process. The coordinator of one of these divisions enumerated the training certificates he had received from FEBRABAN in both basic and advanced concepts in the legislative process; he had also completed a course in public administration in a course run by the Brazilian legislature itself. In these departments, the bank’s employees monitor up to “five thousand pieces of legislation in state assemblies, and 3,600 in Congress and the Senate,” one told me.²⁰

Asked about his day-to-day work with political representatives, Afonso, the head of one bank’s Institutional Relations division told me, “I attend to [*eu atendo*, as in, see to or take care of] the president, I attend to ministers, I attend to the Speaker of the House, the senate, congressmen, in general, speakers of [state] assemblies. Governors, mayors, in all of Brazil.” As a follow up question, I asked:

18. After Bolsonaro’s election, scholars and pundits I spoke with prematurely declared the collapse of what was considered Brazil’s center and center-right political forces, pointing to what they described as the “decimation” and “collapse” of traditional parties like the MDB and PSDB. Together, however, the two parties captured 63 seats in 2018, as compared to the PT’s 56. More significant, however, is the fact that this so-called *centrão* group appears to have simply reincarnated in functionally equivalent parties (like DEM) and figures (like Maia).

19. Odebrecht admitted in court that they distributed approximately USD\$788 million in bribes in Brazil and 11 other countries, which, it was alleged, helped them secure more than 100 government contracts that generated USD\$3.3 billion dollars in returns to the company.

20. Interview on July 20, 2017.

EM: And what kinds of things do they ask you for? What is the nature of this relationship?

Afonso: Normally, what there is... it's two things... when you're talking to the executive [branch], normally they have... they have a request... some things are public policies, you know, that they need. Sponsorships, donations... that kind of a thing. Some are public policies, others are simply donations, parties, that sort of thing. We almost never do it. The sponsorships we provide have to have a link to one of the causes of the bank, mobility, education, right? But sometimes we do something [for them], because we have a... commercial relationship with them.²¹

And the legislative branch, basically, what they ask for, also, is this—that you do something for their electoral base so that they can get elected. If it's in agreement with the public policies and it is relevant for us, we take care of them, we spend \$500 million *reais* each year on all these causes.

At one point during this interview, Afonso's phone rang. He told me it was Celso Russomano, an evangelical politician, São Paulo mayoral candidate, and the most voted congressman in the country in 2014. “We don't donate to him,” the bank executive said, silencing the ringer. “He keeps calling me and asking for things. We don't donate because he is badly seen in the media.”²² Two other reasons he cited to explain why the bank doesn't “attend to” every politician like Russomano making a request for “something for their electoral base” is if it's not “meritorious” and because of the limited bargaining power a single deputy has in Congress. “If renovating the school is important, or something, we'll do it independent of what the deputy wants because, Liz, one congressman doesn't have all that much power... there are 513 representatives in Congress. It's about the caucuses, so it requires articulation,” he said, underlining the organizational dimension of the bank's relationship to the legislature.

“The merciless yoke of... a hidden microphone”

Finally, interviewees described a range of methods politicians and business elites used to keep their machinations out of public view. The system that Odebrecht and its Department of Structured Operations used to suborn presidents, state agents, and businessmen was among the most rationalized and technologically sophisticated, leading one prosecutor to call it a “thing of criminal beauty” (Shiel and Chavkin 2019). During legal proceedings, cooperating witnesses submitted spreadsheets containing the more than two-thousand aliases executives had invented to refer to elected officials and state agents—Dwarf, Ugly All-Around, Fisherman, Barbie were among them—so that “*baixo clero* [low clergy]” employees who had access to it wouldn't know to which politicians the money was directed

21. This bank has exclusive contracts with the government to administer payroll operations for a large portion of Brazil's approximately 22 million (including state-owned companies) federal, state, and municipal employees.

22. Interview on September 14, 2017.

(Macedo 2019). So extensive was Odebrecht’s kickback operation that the company created a proprietary communication platform, Drousys, and accounting software, MyWeb-Day, to control these illicit transactions.

Other methods of obfuscation were much more low-tech. One informant told me that many businessmen only take “sensitive” meetings in places like the sauna, where they know their interlocutor cannot surreptitiously record them. “A phone call is only useful for setting up meetings, and even then to set it up in the wrong place,” was another catchphrase I heard often, this one attributed to Tancredo Neves, the first indirectly elected president following Brazil’s democratization. After secret recordings were made public as part of a plea bargain by one high-profile Lava Jato defendant, a reporter observed that Brasília, “the city of collusion par excellence” was experiencing a self-imposed “law of silence” due to the “merciless yoke of a [potential] microphone hidden in a suit jacket pocket” (Schaffner 2016). “To escape the wire,” one investigator said to this reporter, the only option is to “do what ex-senator ACM [Antonio Carlos Magalhães] did. When he had to have an improper conversation, he invited someone for a dip in the ocean. No recording device can withstand waist-high seawater,” the forensic expert said (ibid).²³

Contrary to the perception that a small cabal of elites pull strings behind the scenes while the rest of the political process unfolds in public, what these data reveal is that obfuscation is a mode of interaction so pervasive as to be a social fact. Interviewees described the organizational vehicles and rules of engagement that dictate how representatives of capital fractions interact with state agents in ways that transcend any handful of conspiratorial individuals (even though, as Maia’s pizza parties and the Tancredo Neves and ACM lore suggests, such individuals may operate as central nodes in this social process).

The fact that consequential political decisions are made in secret was a secret to no one, including people who have spent their lives fighting for more transparent modes of political participation. Sounding somewhat defeated, one such interviewee, Rosângela, told me:

These organizations, like CNI [National Industry Confederation] have their direct lines to Itamaraty [the State Department]; they go there and because Itamaraty doesn’t have money, they come with all of their studies showing how a

23. *Bastidores* politics are not limited to businessmen and the executive and legislative branches. As revealed in *The Intercept Brasil*’s series of 2019 exposés, judges and prosecutors colluded over the messaging app Telegram for years with the express purpose of sending Lula to jail during the election year. A former auditor at the Ministry of Transparency told me that because the associations of magistrates and persecutors (ANAMATRA and AJAUFÉ, among others), “have unrestricted access to the senators and congressmen, they use their leverage as the judges of politicians’ [on trial, or who could be tried] to further their own legislative agendas. This of course implies a conflict of interest and, many times, involves *bastidor* alliances with political parties and some social movements,” he told me in an interview on July 18, 2017. The “unrestricted access” judges’ associations have to politicians has paid off handsomely. One study found that for federal judges, the average “individual [pension] deficit”—the difference between what they contribute in taxes and what they receive in benefits—is BRL\$4.7 million (Fernandes, Tomazeli, and Rodrigues 2019).

free trade agreement is much better for Brazil. . . and we. . . we don't even know they did that, and when we find out, the negotiation is already in process.

As William Domhoff (1990) notes, “any private group seeking to influence central decision-makers in the White House and State Department must know who is making decisions, when secret decisions are likely to be discussed and made, and what kinds of arguments and information are being utilized in making these decisions” (115). Rosângela cited CNI as one such group that knew who was making decisions, when those decisions would be discussed, and what types of argumentation was likely to be persuasive to Itamaraty officials, which “doesn't have money” to produce their own reports internally. “If that had happened in a public arena,” she continued,

[We] could of course still lose because the correlation of forces remains unequal, but at least we would know what was happening. . . but because Itamaraty is a very closed institution, like the Ministry of Finance, they don't open any kind of public venue, like a *conselho* [participatory council], they don't accept that idea. They say, ‘The role of the state is to decide,’ and we say: ‘Not really, because you meet with people in private who can just hop on a plane every day to come talk to you.’²⁴

Rosângela was describing two Brasília's. One channel of politics takes place in exclusive Tuesday lunches at the ag bunker, undisclosed phone calls, divisions disappeared from organizational charts, dips in the ocean, and private meetings at Itamaraty. Another is performed in visible governance venues like the participatory councils, about which politicians “*fizeram muito auê* [made a lot of noise],” Rosângela said. “Businessmen have no interest in spaces like the *conselhos*, they don't dispute those spaces” she said, “because they know they will lose.” Instead, “they set up meetings, but all in private.” As evidenced by the correspondence between the agribusiness caucus' lunch “menus” and legislative activity, the first mode of politics occurs with little “*auê*” and considerable policy results, whereas the latter unfolds with a great deal of “*auê*” and far fewer concrete political wins.²⁵

Even many of the most active participants in these institutionalized participatory venues regard them with ambivalence. For example, José Antônio Moroni (2019) of the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG), wrote a scathing op-ed denouncing a Bolsonaro decree that dissolved all *conselhos*. But before Bolsonaro's election, José Antônio reflected on the ways in which “social participation was treated like an instrument” during the PT years, “evidenced by the creation of multiple *conselhos* that were just ‘consultative’ and not ‘deliberative,’ and in many cases the civil society representatives who sat on the councils were chosen by the government.” He went on, “Participation was seen much more

24. Interview on July 18, 2017.

25. Unlike *bastidores* politics, *conselhos* have been the subject of extensive activist energy, news coverage, and academic interest. According to Google Scholar, there are more than 10,000 scholarly books and articles written on in English on Brazil's *conselhos* and 21,000 written on the topic in Portuguese (see C. Almeida 2015: for a recent review of some of this literature). By 2010, there were 71 participatory councils at the national level, and thousands more at the state and municipal levels. Few of the people I interviewed described them as spaces where political power is effectively wielded.

as an instrument of governability and a certain control and cooptation of movements, and much less a propeller of social transformation.” Isadora, another interviewee who had served on several participatory councils, was similarly skeptical:

When you go see what the government actually did with the deliberations that came from the conferences and the *conselhos*—this is the heart of the question—we deliberate, make proposals, and in theory they should be implemented but they are not. So it’s there’s lots of movement and energy—which is a good thing because it’s a way for people to come into contact with the logic of public policy—but in terms of implementation, [the councils] left a lot to be desired.²⁶

These interviewees were highlighting the mismatch between the theory and the practice of the “logic of public policy.” Acknowledging the difference between *de jure* and *de facto* politics is necessary but not sufficient. These data also suggest that there are indirect (but nonetheless organized) methods elites use to obfuscate their political activity, particularly in contrast to repertoires like *conselhos* and street protests, the subject of the next chapter, that can be more performative than they are powerful.

4.2.2 Personnel-as-policy

“I think [Jorge Paulo] Lemann’s power is underestimated,” Bruno told me when we met for lunch at a buffet restaurant in the Three Powers Plaza in Brasília. “Underestimated or overestimated?” I asked to make sure I heard him correctly—*subestimado* and *sobreestimado* sounding similar in Portuguese, and curious as to how the richest man in Brazil—the 37th richest in the world—could have even more power than his vast fortune implies. “Underestimated,” he said emphatically.²⁷ Bruno is a former government employee, political scientist, and one of hundreds of scholarship recipients who received funding from the Lemann Foundation to study in the United States at “the most distinguished universities in the world” (Lemann 2018:11). Each year, more than 500 young people participate in one of the Lemann Foundation’s five leadership programs: the Lemann Fellowship, Education Talents, Public Policy Leaders, Health Leaders, and Nonprofit Sector Leaders. “More than 1.5 million people are impacted by initiatives conducted or supported by [the] Lemann Foundation and its partners,” the foundation’s 2018 annual report read (25).

A large literature on the sociology of elites has documented the ways in which wealthy individuals like Lemann build parastate institutions—philanthropic foundations, exclusive clubs, and private schools, for example—to reinforce networks and provide a common socialization for people who will hold positions of power in government and in business. Shamus Khan (2011), for example, writes that these institutions provide “the cultural resources that future institutions will then select upon and reward” (80). Lauren Rivera (2012) showed how this phenomenon extends into the workplace: job candidates who are

26. Interview on July 18, 2017.

27. Field note from July 19, 2017.

seen as “cultural matches” at elite companies are more likely to get hired (Rivera and Tilcsik 2016:see also). What Bruno described to me was the softer power Lemann cultivated through his foundation by selecting, socializing, and attempting to politicize thousands of extremely talented and ambitious scholarship recipients. Eight months after our lunch in Brasília, he wrote to me over WhatsApp to make this point more explicit:

I can’t remember if I told you this, but I went to the [Lemann] Foundation’s annual meeting (at a fancy ass five-star resort between São Paulo and Minas Gerais) and I was struck by the clarity that he [Jorge Paulo Lemann] has about turning at least some of the fellowship recipients into politicians. There are at least five, six ‘political renovation’ networks that orbit the foundation, beyond the local organizations that reproduce the liberal agenda that they are advancing in education policy (*Todos Pela Educação* is probably the main player in the area, umbilically linked to the Foundation).

The Lemann Foundation and its fellows are “umbilically” connected to billionaire-funded organizations like RAPS, RenovaBR, and Vetor which first rigorously select and then provide training and sometimes financial support to aspiring politicians and public servants. These political connections are manifest at the Foundation’s annual meeting, which convenes current and former scholarship recipients as well as Lemann-backed education startup founders, mayors, education secretaries from various political parties. In 2017, Renato Janine Ribeiro, Dilma Rousseff’s former education minister, Alessandro Molon, a left-leaning politician and the opposition leader in Congress during Bolsonaro’s first term, and “believe it or not,” wrote Bruno, Rodrigo Maia, the Speaker of the House from the right-wing party DEM, were all present. “This was on a Saturday. The Wednesday prior was the [Temer] impeachment vote because of the Friboi scandal [a reference to JBS’ secret recording of Temer, described above]. In other words, we were there with the ‘almost’ President of the Republic” he wrote.²⁸

Bruno then went on to describe one of the events at the annual meeting that took the format of an Ask Me Anything forum. After taking questions, Lemann turned to the audience and said:

‘Who here likes politics?’ And then about 90 percent of the more than 300 fellows raised their hands. Then he asked, ‘Who already has, or plans to, run for office, whether in the legislative or the executive branch?’ About 30 people raised their hands. Then, he asked, ‘Who here wants to be President of the Republic?’ About five people raised their hands. And then he said, ‘Ok, then each one of you now have one minute to defend your presidential platform.’

Each of the five fellows who had raised their hand “defended their priorities,” as Bruno put it, after which Lemann said: “I want a President of the Republic to come out of this room. You are the most brilliant minds in this country, you’re in the best universi-

28. Temer had assumed office as Dilma’s vice president after her impeachment in 2016. Had Congress voted him out of office, too—which they very nearly did that week, by a vote of 251 to 233—Maia would have taken office by virtue of being second in line to the presidency.

ties in the world. We need a democratic centrist, a Brazilian Macron,” he concluded.²⁹

Through interconnected programs, organizations, research centers, and summits, Lemann cultivates a more subtle form of political power than that which is expressed in cruder forms of influence, such as the *caixa dois* campaign donations the Minister of Justice described. This kind of elite-driven assimilation can be likened to a war of position, underwritten by culture rather than physical force. Robert Cox (1993) summarizes this Gramscian concept as a process that “slowly builds up the strength of the social foundations of a new state” by “creating alternative institutions and alternative intellectual resources within existing society” (53). It is in these settings that elites transmit the customs, views, and forms of argumentation that are congruent with their interests, for example, the need for a “Brazilian Macron.”

It is unlikely that Bolsonaro was who Lemann had in mind when he told the audience in 2017 about the need for a “democratic centrist,” a testament to the limits of conceiving of politics as solely a function of rule by the richest. However, as Figure 3.5 shows, it was Maia’s party DEM, friendly with the financial markets and friendly enough with Jorge Paulo to attend his foundation’s annual summit, that saw the greatest relative change in its influence score after Bolsonaro was elected (between Time 2 and Time 3). In other words, while capitalist fractions may lack the power to mobilize the masses around their preferred candidate—in the year leading up to the election, Geraldo Alckmin, Luciano Huck, and Henrique Meirelles were the candidates whose names came up most often at investment banker summits and interviews—once the electoral dust settles, they continue to wield considerable influence in the state machinery.³⁰ One of the ways this influence endures in spite of electoral vicissitudes is made explicit in Lemann’s exhortation that “a President of the Republic” come out of his carefully culled crop of fellows. In the organizational theory literature, this approach to coopting institutions by selection and appointment of previously socialized individuals is well-known (Enz 1988; Martin 1992; Tolbert and Hall 2016).

Staffing the state

During the dictatorship (1964-1985), the Brazilian state was staffed largely by military confidants (J. M. Carvalho 2019).³¹ As the country transitioned to democracy under the influence of the Washington Consensus, however, key government posts increasingly went to a highly educated bureaucratic elite. “Reforming the state” in this period, wrote Julio Cezar de Lara and colleagues (2014), “became a technical and administrative discussion without political connotations, and, consequently without the participation of orga-

29. WhatsApp communication, March 4, 2018.

30. As former Finance Minister and political economist Luiz Bresser-Pereira (2013) wrote, “Social democratic governments cannot be against the bourgeoisie; they can get elected without their support, but they have no other alternative but to govern with them.”

31. The authoritarian government also placed so-called *interventores*, or intervenors, to director positions in more than five-hundred labor unions that they suspected of being “enemies of the state” (Villa 2001; Correa 2014).

nized civil society” (504). The *concurros públicos*, highly competitive written and sometimes oral exams, are one of the primary mechanisms by which the New Republic thus rationalized.³² In middle and upper middle-class social circles, it is not uncommon to meet *concurseiros*—or people who spend many of their post-college years in the library studying for tests that promise remunerative government positions with job security and good benefits. This *concurseiro* culture is particularly common in the legal profession. One study reported the results of a survey of law graduates:

[The students were asked] about their professional status, because for years, many did nothing but study full-time for *concursus públicos*. Most self-described as *concurсандos*, young jurists aspiring to their ‘dream career’—not necessarily the magistrate—to realize their ‘vocation.’ In opposition to good pre-professional practices, they indicated that their aim was to memorize ‘the letter of the law,’ understand the dominant jurisprudence of the court that was recruiting [that year], align [their answers] with the doctrine of the selection committee, and follow the career path that selected them first.(Fontainha et al. 2014:14).

“*Concurros*,” the lead author of this study elaborated an interview, “serve to select for those who prepare most for the test. . . [they are] are a machine of social exclusion, not inclusion. They are oriented toward those who have time and money to pay for a good *cursinho*,” Fonainha said, referring to the multi-million dollar test prep industry (Luna 2015). Similarly, in his dissertation on the topic, Ribeiro (2010) referred to the lucky law graduates who do make it to one of these coveted positions as the “toga-wearing nobility.” He notes that they tend to come from the same universities, express a similar habitus, and have an interest in preserving the institutional arrangements that guaranteed their ascent. Similar to the “inequality by design” sorting function played by standardized tests in the U.S. (Fischer et al. 1996) and the *vestibular* college entrance exams in Brazil, the functional effect of the *concurso* is that state agents almost always come from elite backgrounds and have been socialized in ways that are measured and rewarded by the exams.

Ironically, it was the PT Administrations that tried to “take politics out of the judiciary,” as one interviewee told me, by increasing the number of *concurros*. As Gilberto Carvalho told me, that seemingly virtuous administrative decision had the functional effect of paving the way for more elites to infiltrate and staff the judiciary:

Gilberto: *Lava Jato* didn’t happen fifteen, twenty years ago because there weren’t instruments for it to happen. There used to be a completely different relationship between the executive branch, the judiciary branch, and [the] oversight organs. When Lula came to power, he arrived inspired by the current that fueled us, [which was] the current of transparency. So we created the CGU [*Controladoria-Geral da União*]. . .

EM: The Ministry of Transparency?

32. A close equivalent in the U.S. is the Foreign Service exam. In Brazil, however, there are *concurros* for nearly all government positions at the federal, state and local levels, from military police officer to IT analyst, university professor to judge.

Gilberto: Exactly, it's called the Ministry of Transparency today, but before it was the CGU, which supervised very strictly the organizations of the state, the state-owned companies and such. We gave freedom and strong investigative instruments to the Federal Police. And another important organ, the Attorney General's office, to which we not only gave autonomy and instruments, like *concurso*—from a republican point of view this is perfect, but it brought with it some problems for us. Because we didn't realize the class stratification that these institutions have in the sense that... the people who pass these exams are the elite. Who scores well on the *concurso* for the Federal Police? It's the sons of families that read *Veja*, watch *Globo* [two notoriously anti-PT news outlets]—it's the upper middle classes.

EM: Those who are in a financial position to not work and instead study for years?

Gilberto: Exactly. So our mistake was not to realize that the state is not neutral. That... so this was one the thing: we needed to do this. But we should have included important measures in term of quotas for positions, in terms of correcting for [these kind of] unintended consequences.³³

Gilberto was describing how the left-leaning government's well-intentioned move to increase the autonomy of the Public Prosecutors Office and open more *concurso* ended up creating "some problems" for the PT. Key state agencies were increasingly staffed by the sons and daughters of the "families that read *Veja* [and] watch *Globo*," bringing with them their "not neutral" acculturation. Because these positions are semi-permanent—it is almost impossible to fire public servants in Brazil—the effects of the rise of the *concurseiro* culture are likely to endure for decades to come.

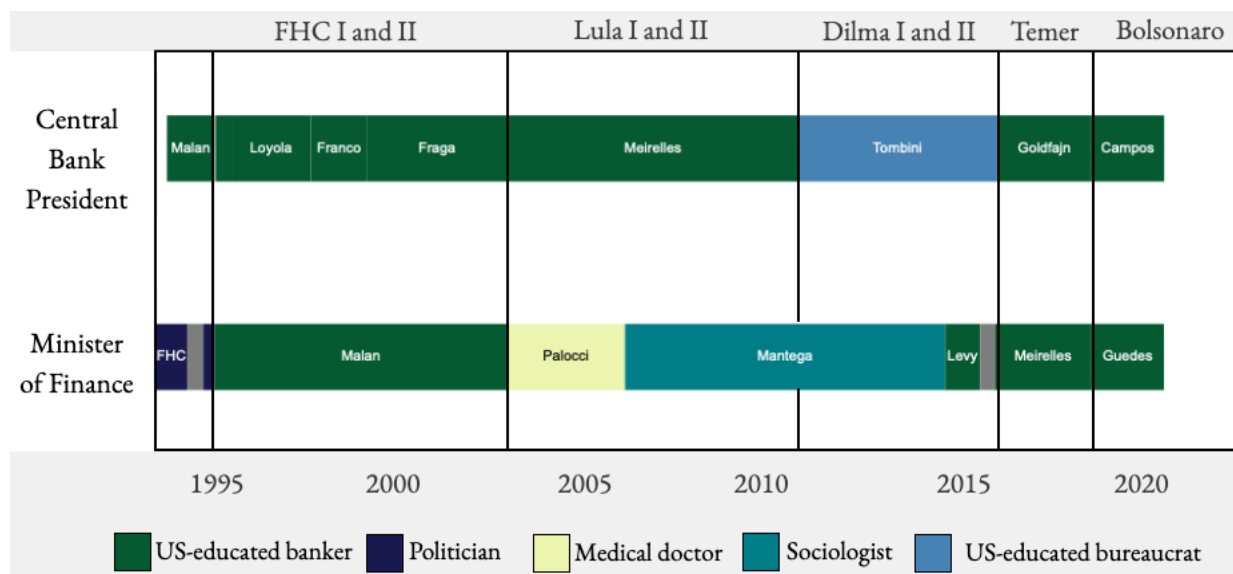
The highest reaches of government are also staffed by elites fluent in the language and argumentation of what André Singer (2019) calls "rentier thinking." Of the 33 men and one woman who have presided over the Central Bank or served as Minister of Finance—the two positions with the most influence over the government's economic policy—since democratization in Brazil, 22 (65 percent) received postgraduate education at elite universities in the United States, and 53, 35, and 12 percent of them, respectively, spent the majority of the rest of their careers in the private sector, government, and academia.³⁴ Considering only those who served after of the implementation of the *Plano Real* in 1994, that proportion becomes 75 percent, with 12 of 16 obtaining their education credentials—typically

33. Interview on July 21, 2017. In further irony, it was the two presidents who followed Lula and Dilma, including Bolsonaro—who campaigned on an anti-corruption platform—who reneged on the formal and informal rules that the PT had created to ensure judicial independence. Typically the *Ministério Público*, the body of independent public prosecutors at both the federal and state level, internally elects candidates for the Attorney General, and the president nominates whomever they select, as both Lula and Dilma did. Both Temer and Bolsonaro refused to do so—Temer choosing the MP's second choice, Raquel Dodge, and Bolsonaro choosing Augusto Aras, who was not even on the MP's list of internal candidates.

34. Five people either served two non-consecutive terms in one of these roles or served as both Head of the Central Bank and Finance Minister: Francisco Gros, Gustavo Loyola, Pedro Malan, Guido Mantega, and Henrique Meirelles. I did not double count them in the figures reported in this paragraph.

from economics departments—at institutions like Berkeley, Chicago, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, and UCLA.³⁵ Diplomat Rubens Ricpuero, who also served as ambassador to the United States, banker and consultant Gustavo Loyola, and PT ministers Antônio Palocci (a medical doctor) and Guido Mantega (a sociologist with a PhD from the University of São Paulo) were the four outliers in this regard (Figure 4.4). In addition, ten of Brazil’s 15 most recent Central Bank presidents and Finance Ministers, or two-thirds of them, had parallel careers at the following private banks and investment funds: Banco Opportunity, BankBoston (acquired by Bank of America), Bradesco, BTG, Garantia, Gávea, Itaú, Rio Bravo, and Santander.³⁶

Figure 4.4: Professional and Educational Background of Brazil’s Central Bank President and Finance Ministers, 1995-2019



35. The Plano Real refers to the set measures the state took to stabilize the Brazilian economy during the hyperinflation crisis of the early 1990s. It is often referred to as a *divisor de águas*—or watershed moment—because it is considered one of the most significant political economic events in Brazil’s recent history.

36. As in the U.S., where the phenomenon is called the revolving door, elite transit between the public and private sector is a two-way street. In my interview with Antônio Britto, the former governor of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (1995-1999) and a cabinet minister in charge of public pensions in the Itamar Franco Administration, he did not explain how his prior career trajectory prepared him for his current position as president of a pharmaceutical association (interview on October 17, 2017). Prior to representing the pharmaceutical industry, Britto took a job as a shoe store chain executive, and before that, as a consultant for the Banco Opportunity, the asset management firm created in 1993 to take advantage of the wave of privatizations of state-owned companies that took place during the FHC Administration. It was this highly lucrative latter role—in a bank that would later come under scrutiny for money laundering, racketeering, and embezzlement of public pension funds—which Britto took immediately after losing his reelection for governor in 1998. This career switch led to suspicions that he had illegally favored the Spanish-owned telecom giant Telefónica in its successful takeover of *Companhia Riograndense de Telecomunicações*, the state-owned telephone company that was privatized during Britto’s governorship in 1997.

“*Heterodox witchery*”

A brief period during Dilma’s first government provides a telling exception to the rentier staffing rule. As depicted in Figure 4.4, upon her election in 2010, Dilma broke with the precedent of naming a US-educated private banker to the helm of one or both the top two economic policy posts in government. An economist with a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, a long-time bureaucrat, and one of the architects of Brazil’s inflation targeting regime, Alexandre Tombini was hardly a radical choice for the Central Bank.³⁷ Nevertheless, Tombini was the only official in a 20-year period who did not also have a parallel career as a private banker. Mantega, whom Lula had appointed to replace Palocci in 2006 after a corruption scandal, was the USP-educated sociologist who would remain Finance Minister for the duration of Dilma’s first term. To understand why replacing Meirelles with Tombini and keeping Mantega as Finance Minister would create the conditions for policy rupture, some historical and structural context is needed.

Beginning in 1987, Brazil began to de-industrialize. At its peak at the end of the dictatorship, manufacturing represented 27.3 percent of Brazil’s GDP. By 2019, that figure reached a historic low, accounting for just 10.4 percent of GDP (Morceiro 2019). Under Lula, a former metalworker, the economy grew but did so primarily as a function of an expanded credit, the dynamics of the primary commodity market, and internal consumption linked to a rising real minimum wage (L. Carvalho 2018). When Dilma—an economist trained at what is considered one of Brazil’s only heterodox economics departments—“she and Mantega decided it was time to reindustrialize because it wasn’t going to be possible to sustain growth by exclusively relying on services and consumption,” said Luiz Roque, an expert on the history of political economic policy in Brazil.³⁸ At the beginning of her first mandate, then, Dilma and Mantega implemented what would become known as the New Economic Matrix (NEM), a collection of policy measures that included lower interest rates, a devaluation of the *real*, capital controls, protectionist measures for national products, infrastructure investments, reindustrialization through subsidies and *desonerações* (tax breaks), intensive use of BNDES (the state development bank), and electrical energy reforms (Singer 2015). Some of these policies were holdovers from Lula’s presidency, but, as Singer (2019) notes,

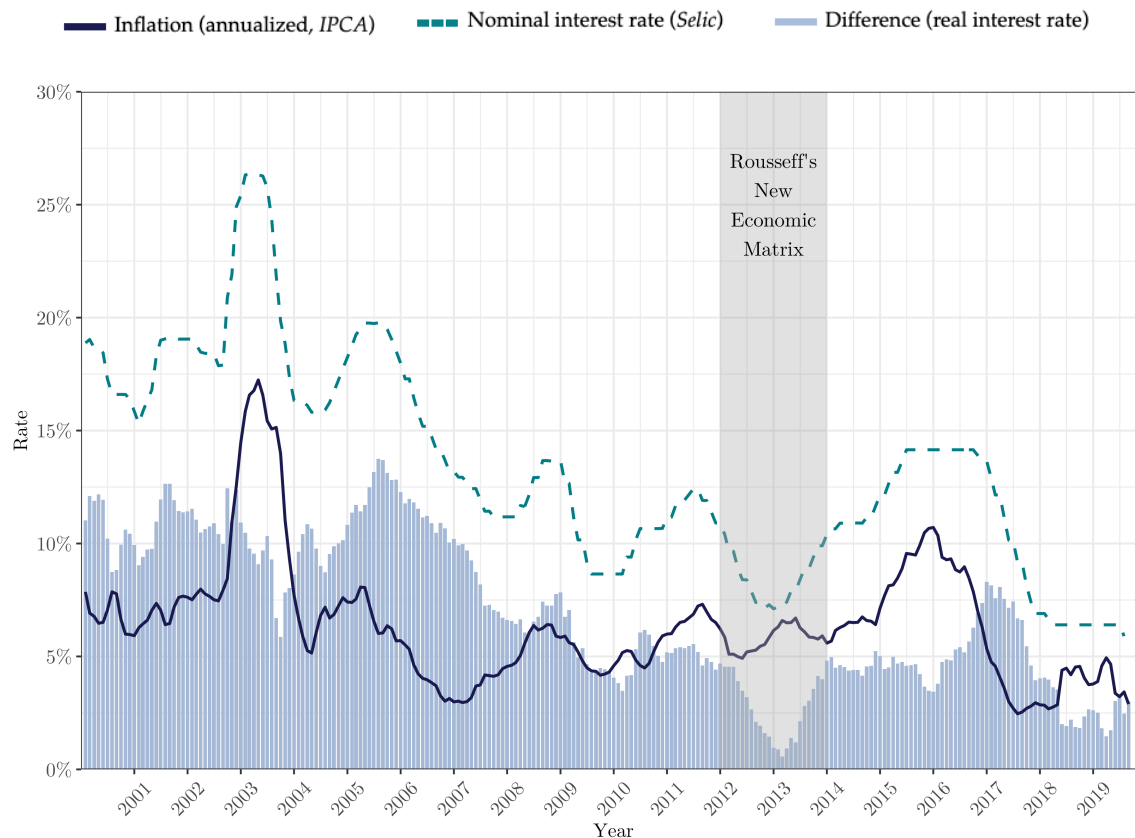
[F]rom the political point of view, there was an inflection. Lula always operated on the margins, avoiding confrontation. Rousseff, in contrast, entered into combat. By reducing interest rates and forcing down spreads, she broke the détente with rentierism. (2019:4)

The Keynesian macroeconomic measures that Dilma’s economic team implemented

37. Inflation targeting—a central banking policy premised on the belief that price stability via inflation control is the best way to ensure long-term economic growth—is one of the three prongs of the *tripé macroeconômico*, or macroeconomic tripod, that refers to a set of policies enacted in 1999 under FHC. A floating exchange rate and primary surplus are the other two pillars of this now-institutionalized orthodox economic policy regime that the PT largely maintained, with the exception of the 2011-2014 period described in this section.

38. Interview on October 19, 2017.

Figure 4.5: Inflation and Real and Nominal Interest Rates in Brazil, 2000-2019



Data sources: IBGE and B3 (stock market; *Brasil, Bolsa, Balcão*)

represented what one mainstream economist called “heterodox witchery” (Samor 2018). From the perspective of finance capital, “forcing down the spreads” as inflation crept up was policy madness. One of the central tenants of the macroeconomic tripod introduced under FHC and preserved under Lula was that every time inflation goes up, so too must interest rates in order to cool down the economy and maintain price stability. This was a spoken rule that had not changed in the fifteen years since it was first adopted in the late 1990s. As shown in Figure 4.5, the parallel trendlines (with a slight lag) between Brazil’s inflation rate (IPCA) and the Central Bank-determined Selic reflect this policy commitment. The most striking takeaway from Figure 4.5, then, is that in adjusting the Selic to what was its lowest level since the dictatorship, Dilma’s economic team slashed the real interest rate to close to zero. This means that rentier sectors could no longer count on the guaranteed high yields—upwards of seven percent and in excess of ten percent during large portions of both FHC and Lula’s terms—on their safest investment of all: govern-

ment bonds.³⁹

“[She] forgot to clear it with the Russians”

Dilma’s interest rate reversal was thus a clear affront to finance capital. But why did the industrialists fail to support this decision, instead aligning with the rentier bloc to oppose the NEM? Unraveling this “mystery,” Singer (2019:6) writes, consists in understanding the true motivations and fears of Brazil’s productive sectors, which would have, in theory, benefited from lower interest rates, government subsidies, and tax breaks. The failure of the new model, according to Singer and several of my interviewees, can be attributed in large part to the fact that Dilma’s team did not understand how fragile the initial coalition of industrialists was at the outset. In the context of full employment, rising strike rates, stagnant growth, and, above all, Dilma and Mantega’s interventionist approach, economic elites were united in their opposition to this “loss of control over economic policy. . . a power over which they feared losing control and one that [could] favor their class opponents (workers)” (Singer 2019: 11). In other words, personnel changes in Brasília led to policy changes that disrupted economic elites’ hegemonic control over relevant policy measures. Moreover, by the mid-2000s, Brazil’s manufacturing elite already represented a much smaller slice of the economy. They too had been “financialized,” Luiz observed.

Luiz: The FIESP guys, the main bigwigs there, they don’t invest their money in building factories anymore, they buy government bonds. That’s where Dilma went wrong when she tried to lower interest rates unilaterally. She thought they were going to take her side. But they had all their money invested in public debt, meanwhile she thought she was doing them a service. So she forgot to clear [the plan] with the Russians.

EM: What does that mean, ‘clear it with the Russians’?

Luiz: It’s an expression meaning to clear it with the other team. It comes from soccer, it’s a way of making fun of a coach who has lots of unconventional ideas: ‘First we do this, then you do that,’ some really complex game plan. So the joke is, ‘Sounds like a great plan, you just forgot to clear it with the Russians [the opposing team].’ As in, it won’t work out.⁴⁰

It was only in retrospect that Dilma and her advisors came to realize that the industrial “bigwigs” were more aligned with finance capital than they originally thought (Rousseff 2018). “It’s not like there was a cabal that sat around a table,” said her Chief of

39. As shown in the figure, the nominal interest rate has since fallen even further, making debt instruments less attractive to investors. Seeking out higher returns through securities, more investors have flocked to Bovespa: the number of individuals holding stock rose considerably between 2017 and 2019, to 858,000 total investors (an increase of 38 percent). Still, the number of Brazilians invested in the stock market is relatively small; it is roughly equivalent to the size of the country’s incarcerated population (Amorim, Costa, and Bianchi 2017).

40. Interview on October 19, 2017.

Staff Gilberto, “but there are very well-aligned interests between the finance and business sectors.”

EM: How so?

Gilberto: Because with the financialization of the economy, large segments of domestic businessmen are at once producers and investors. Companies that have as big of an interest in production—whether agriculture or manufacturing—also have an interest in speculation. They operate both systems. For them it’s important that interest rates remain high even though it hurts their companies, because they are gaining on the other end. That’s why they were silent [when it came to defending Dilma and Mantega’s heterodox policies].⁴¹

Thus, the 2011-2014 policy matrix ran counter to most economic elites’ main interests, including those of the industrialists. That the NEM was politically possible is a testament to the power of personnel: *who* occupies key government posts is an important indicator of the balance of forces. Aware of this dynamic, economic elites can and do use their influence to determine key appointments. “Dilma’s economic team had zero credibility,” said *Globo* reporter Gerson Camarotti at an investment banking conference. “And when she tried to change [the team], it was already too late.”⁴² The change Camarotti was referring to was Dilma’s decision to appoint University of Chicago-trained banker Joaquim Levy at the start of her second term, a return to neoliberal orthodoxy that attended to the demands of finance capital but reversed her reelection campaign promise to avoid austerity measures that accelerated the economic and political crises that contributed to her overthrow in 2016 (Bastos 2015; Antunes, Santana, and Praun 2018).

Disciplining the rank-and-file elite

As evidenced by Camarotti’s presence and pronouncements at an exclusive investment conference, economic elites and the staff of major media outlets are also imbricated. At nearly every finance capital conference I attended, many of Brazil’s most well-known journalists and TV anchors were paid to speak to the audience of investors. Camarotti was present at several of these and often exhorted “the market” to put pressure on politicians and the public to pass their preferred policies. “To pass pension reform, the market must play a key role. You all play a key role. You are influencers [*formadores de opinião*]. If there is not a reality shock in Brasília, it won’t move forward,” showing which side of the pension reform debate he was on.⁴³ Yet even progressive journalists described editorial pressures they faced as a result of the extent to which newspapers and media outlets rely on private sector funding. One journalist I interviewed who had voted for leftist candidates his entire adult life told me that while he worked at one right-leaning newspaper, he “didn’t do solid journalism” because he knew he had to follow the anti-PT editorial line.

41. Interview on July 21, 2017.

42. Field note from Latin American Investment Conference, January 30, 2018.

43. Field note from January 30, 2018.

I remember very clearly the day of Dilma’s inauguration, her second mandate, on the first of January 2015. A colleague from the culture section [of the paper] sat down with me so that we could consolidate the copy from various reporters who had gone to the streets to interview people in Brasília. And she had started the article like, ‘Tens of thousands of people went to the Esplanade to celebrate the return of Dilma Rousseff to the presidential palace, a festival of democracy.’ And I said, ‘Wow, you really don’t know where you work do you? We can’t submit the article like this.’

So I rewrote it—and this will shock you: ‘Paid militants from the labor unions... no official count... at one point about 300 Brazilians, this really happened, protested wearing black, in mourning because the most corrupt government in history was reelected.’ It was almost like I was writing for *Veja*. ‘The red horde advanced on the demonstrators who were there to protest corruption, causing injuries,’ that kind of thing. And she [the culture reporter] looked at me and said, ‘I’m not going to turn this in.’ And I said to her, ‘But this is your newspaper, this is what it is. Where do you think you work?’⁴⁴

According to this reporter, describing Dilma’s second inauguration a “festival of democracy” would have been a fireable offense at this newspaper.⁴⁵

For people like this reporter, who are not previously socialized to support the interests of certain capital fractions before they took on a role in government or media that might affect the interests of elites, interviewees described more straightforward material forms of cooptation. “Have you ever been in a private jet?” an investigative reporter for *The Intercept*, Lucas, asked me in an interview. “No,” I replied. He went on to explain this potent luxury good:

It’s really nice, you understand? It’s really *really* nice. Because you don’t have to do check-in, you arrive at the airport five minutes before the airplane takes off. It’s delightful! It’s the most delightful thing in the world! And sometimes you arrive at the airport by private jet and you just hop on a helicopter to go where you need to go next. São Paulo is chaotic. If you arrive in Congonhas

44. Interview on July 27, 2017. What Elizabeth Anderson (2017) refers to as the “sweeping authoritarian power” that companies—which she terms private government—have over employees’ lives seemed to be operative in this and other cases that came up in my research. As Anderson writes, employers like this journalist’s privately funded editorial board, have the power to surveil and terminate employees who do not conform.

45. In another example of neutralizing recalcitrant employees, Odebrecht executives testified that anyone who questioned the propriety of the company’s bribe department was summarily dismissed. Hilberto Mascarenhas, the director of Structured Operations, said that he fired “a guy who was looking for trouble.” His videotaped confession describes the incident: “I got on an elevator with Fernando and Luiz [other employees in the bribery division] and this clown, in front of other people, asked Fernando, ‘Aren’t you ashamed of giving money to these people?’... The behavior of this person, who was overseeing [one of our] project[s] in Angola, did not fit. Even more so in an elevator with eight, ten other people. I called his boss and asked for his head. This kind of behavior is inexcusable, especially because he was one of the people who, at some point, as the director of a project, could ask for [a bribe].” (Affonso et al. 2017).

[the downtown airport], you get a helicopter, let's say it's a Friday, three o'clock in the afternoon, raining. . . you are going to save *hours*. It's really wonderful, you understand? It's wonderful!

Lucas' description of how "delightful" and "wonderful" the experience of traveling by private jet is helps explain, he said both in our interview and his book about the Lula government's first major corruption scandal (*mensalão*), how "hard cores leftists" who came to work in the PT Administration "*se aburguesaram* [become bourgeois].

Lucas: I went to work as a journalist in Brasília during the Itamar Administration [1992-1995]. And this is an ugly side of the [PT] history. . . I had so many sources from the PT. And leftists in general. And when the Lula government came to power, these people also took power. At all levels, legislative, executive judiciary.

EM: Your sources, were they from the party or unions or somewhere else?

Lucas: Both, absolutely. They were leftists. They were the representatives of left politics. So you had, for example, that guy from Banco do Brasil who was a former union boss who was arrested in Italy [Henrique Pizzolato, the former president of CUT in Paraná], you had another leftist professor who became a congressman. The number of people! Another was an ex-guerrilla, people from the most diverse origins, but all leftists.

When the Lula government came to power, I saw these people *se aburguesando*, you understand? For example, they started talking about wine, expensive wine. 'Ah, because I had a Chateau something-or-other,' or 'I went to a thoroughbred horse farm this weekend.' And I knew these people! And I knew what their reality was just before [they came to power].

Private jets, fine wine, and thoroughbred horse farms were more ostentatious versions, Lucas said, of the "petit bourgeoisie" conveniences that the "haute bourgeois" used to indirectly coopt state agents. Lucas described a scene in which a private driver was sent to pick up PT treasurer Delúbio Soares at the airport, the simplicity of the two main corruption cases against Lula, and the widespread practice of businessmen helping politicians' children get lucrative jobs in the private sector. In his book, Lucas provided the chronology of how businessman Marcos Valério, the "operator" of the *mensalão* corruption scandal, suborned PT congressman João Paulo Cunha, a former metalworker, social movement leader, and organizer in the Catholic liberation theology tradition in ways big and small. Valério first helped elect Cunha Speaker of the House, a position he held for the first two years of Lula's first term, and subsequently purchased economy class plane tickets for Cunha's secretary and gifted him a Mount Blanc pen for his birthday.

"Of course it wasn't only the PT," Lucas said, but a "generalized practice." He pointed to the apartment in Paris that former president Fernando Henrique (FHC) made us of after he left office. But the "PT also really fell into this trap," he said. Meanwhile, "the businessmen and bankers, they've always been in command, you understand?" Yet, while Pizzolato, Cunha, and Lula went to jail for these trespasses, "the country's major

economic agenda remained unchanged,” he observed.⁴⁶

4.2.3 Misdirection

Elites congregate. At least twice a month in the year leading up to the 2018 election, politicians, financiers, businessmen, and journalists would come together, often in hotel ballrooms or plush auditoriums, to discuss broad topics like “scenarios for 2018” or “how to rebuild Brazil.” Tickets were often invitation-only and tended to cost upwards of \$200 *reais*. The price of admission rarely included lunch, though attendees could usually expect crustless tea sandwiches and strong coffee during breaks. FHC was a regular on this conference circuit. At one of these events, convened by the newspaper *Estadão*, he wore clear prescription glasses that framed his always well-coiffed puff of white hair and a gold watch that glinted under the stage lights.

FHC began by thanking the organizers for the invitation to speak. “It’s always nice to be interviewed while surrounded by women,” he said to uncomfortable laughter, referring to the two journalists seated on either side of him. Then, sounding like the sociology professor he once was, FHC diagnosed the ways in which the “relations of production have transformed” making the institutions that classically organized the state—unions and parties in particular— “incompatible with this new social, cultural, and economic reality.” He then repeated a talking point that came up in nearly every elite interview I conducted: “Everyone knows that the Brazilian state is bloated. Of course there needs to be a state, but ours is greasy; the fat must be cut.”⁴⁷

A “bloated” state

The PSDB, FHC’s party, used similar language in the political platform they released at the end of 2017. “In the three decades since . . . the 1988 Constitution [was ratified], the Brazilian state did not transform itself to become less expensive, [less] bloated, and [less] inefficient. Instead of serving as a vector for citizenship, it became an even heavier burden to be borne by the population” (PSDB 2017:9). In one right-wing chat group I observed, participants used the phrase *estado inchado* (bloated state) 21 times over a four-week period leading up to the election.⁴⁸ Bernardo, one of the coordinators of Partido NOVO, a party founded in 2015 by the former vice president and board member of Brazil’s largest bank, told me that “NOVO defends a smaller state, because the Brazilian state is extremely bloated.” He continued:

NOVO believes in spontaneous exchanges between people: if you want to buy, and I want to sell, the conditions are negotiated and through this understanding we believe that services rendered in this spontaneous way are much better

46. Interview on April 16, 2017.

47. Field note from February 28, 2018.

48. WhatsApp chat log, August 11 to September 9, 2018.

than services offered by the state.⁴⁹

The position that FHC, the PSDB, the right-wing chat group, NOVO, and others were staking out was that the “bloated” Brazilian state is one of the primary sources, if not the primary source, of the country’s political and economic woes. Attacking the “inefficient state” was one of the stated priorities of the early Bolsonaro Administration, too. In late 2018, Bolsonaro unveiled his “plan for government,” a crude but colorful Power-Point presentation that quoted scripture and made ample use of exclamation points and caps-lock. “More Brazil, less Brasília,” the document read, critical of the “pernicious and corrupt way of doing politics in decades past, characterized by selling off the state, the popular *toma lá-dá-cá* (give and take)” (PDG 2018:17).

By making vague references to a “bloated,” “inefficient,” “pernicious,” and “corrupt” state, these actors channeled public attention away from all of the ways in which agribusiness, banks, and industry remain deeply dependent on it. Drawing on Fernand Braudel, Giovanni Arrighi (2009) described this interdependence between “the commanding heights” of the economy and the state as political capitalism. In contrast to the NOVO coordinator’s description of “spontaneous exchanges,” political capitalism operates in the realm of what Arrighi calls the “anti-market” (10-11), where bribes, collusion, and subtle manipulation of tax law matter more for determining the ultimate distribution of political and economic power than do free and fair exchanges in a competitive market.

By publicly rejecting the state but privately relying on it to do business, I found that elites used a technique that magicians refer to as misdirection: a way of managing the audience’s attention to distract from the central trick, or in this case, the central contradiction. Nevil Maskelyne, an influential British writer and performer, wrote that misdirection “does not consist in telling lies, with the object of deceiving the spectator’s intelligence.” Instead, he wrote, it consists in “misleading the spectator’s senses, in order to screen from detection certain details for which secrecy is required” (Maskelyne 1911:189). When elites draw attention to, for example, Lula’s transgressions while at the same time downplaying the role that the state plays in helping already large companies turn into global monopolies, these and other “anti-market” sleights of hand go relatively unnoticed.

“That company needed the state a lot”

“What’s the first big company that comes to your head?” asked João, a lobbyist based in Brasília, preparing to make a point about how the state aids big business in Brazil. “Brazilian or a multinational?” I responded.

João: Brazilian.

EM: State-run or private?

João: No, no, private.

EM: AMBEV.

49. Interview on July 26, 2017.

João: *Pronto!* AMBEV. Do you know the story of AMBEV?

EM: No, just that Jorge Paulo bought Antartica...

João: Exactly. So, he saw that in South America, the three richest people were beer manufacturers. And he said, ‘Why isn’t that the case here?’ So when I use the phrase ‘crony capitalism,’ I’m talking about the way that AMBEV... you see, they had Brama, and then they bought Antartica and Skol, I think. And that corresponded to, I could be wrong about the exact figure, but something like 90 percent of the beer market. Which was the big twist... how did they get this approved by CADE [the anti-trust agency] at the time? They redefined the scope of what they called the ‘relevant market,’ which wasn’t beer but was all beverages. So you include—

EM: Coca-Cola, water, juice...

João: Tea! *Pronto.* When you put *water* in the relevant market, and soda, well that’s how the index of concentration falls because they, indeed, they really didn’t own the whole soda market. I think the soda market is basically all Coca-Cola. And water is other companies... it’s funny because this mechanism here, AMBEV’s, is *very similar*, very similar to that used by JBS.⁵⁰

João was drawing a parallel between the way state agents at CADE reinterpreted regulations to permit AMBEV’s acquisition of its competitors, and the way in which JBS took over the country’s beef, pork, and chicken industries. “If you eat meat, you probably buy products made by one Brazilian company,” began one investigative report that described how JBS deforests protected land in the Amazon, paid an estimated one billion *reais* in bribes to politicians and regulators, and received four billion *reais* in subsidized loans from the state development bank, BNDES, to build a meat-processing empire that slaughters 13.8 million animals each day (Wasley et al. 2019).⁵¹ “Shortly after,” CADE permitted these mergers, João continued:

AMBEV sold the company to the Belgians. The camouflage is that it’s a Belgian-Brazilian joint venture, but in reality it’s totally Belgian, to make it look better, to not sell out the government that approved of all these mergers: ‘I concentrate the whole market for you and you go and sell it to foreigners?’ Same thing with JBS, moving to Ireland. A double Irish with a Dutch sandwich.⁵² I

50. Interview on July 10, 2017.

51. See Musacchio and Lazzarini (2014) for an analysis of how BNDES subsidies enabled JBS to acquire two of its largest global competitors, the American companies Swift and Pilgrim’s Pride. The authors describe how this case is emblematic of a “new form of state capitalism,” defined as “the widespread influence of the government in the economy, either by owning majority or minority equity positions in companies or by providing subsidized credit and/or other privileges to private companies.” The JBS case, Musacchio and Lazzarini argue, is a “manifestation of the Leviathan as a minority investor model” (2).

52. This is a reference to a tax avoidance technique that large corporations use. It involves using Irish and Dutch subsidiaries to transfer profits to jurisdictions with lower or no taxes (see Duhigg and Kocieniewski 2012).

respect Jorge Paulo a lot, I think he is a brilliant person. I just question a lot when they say that they didn't need the state. That company needed the state *a lot*.

"I don't think the Left understands this," said Gustavo, one investment banker I interviewed, referring to tax avoidance schemes like the Irish-Dutch one João was referencing in the interview excerpt above. "They know that there's inequality in the tax code but they don't know the details; it's a huge information asymmetry," he said. He listed three. "If you just recategorize all of your personal expenses inside a company, you substantially reduce your tax base. Instead of paying personal income taxes, you pay corporate taxes, which are way lower," Gustavo said. He went on:

I'll give you another simple example. There are two ways to invest savings in Brazil, open funds and closed funds. If you're middle, lower middle class, you have to invest in an open fund. If you have a lot of money, I think it's over ten or 15 million, you can invest in a closed fund. Open funds are taxed every six months. Closed funds, you only pay taxes when you draw down the money. So you can go for years without paying any taxes. It's really skewed.

At one point, the question of whether this tax transfer to the wealthy via closed funds should be abolished made it to legislative hearing in Brasília. "All the private banks went crazy at the suggestion; I have never seen something disappear so quickly from the congressional agenda," Gustavo remembered. He added one more:

Here's a third example. There are two types of bond, the *Certificados de Recebíveis Imobiliários* [Real Estate Receivable Certificates] and the *Certificados de Recebíveis de Agricultura* [Agricultural Receivable Certificates]. They're both tax exempt. You don't pay any taxes on them; they exist to benefit two sectors that, globally, the government creates incentives for, because real estate generates jobs and agriculture, because it helps sustain industry. In Brazil, to buy a CRI, you need more than BRL\$300,000 *reais*. You can't, as an investor with any less money than this, buy a CRI. . . so whoever is on the base of the pyramid can't invest, and the whole tax benefit accrues to whoever happens to have BRL\$300,000 *reais* or more in liquid assets.⁵³

All of the tax avoidance mechanisms that João and Gustavo were describing are legal. If the "information asymmetry" Gustavo was referencing were to be corrected, it is unclear whether there would be repercussions because even when illegal private sector activity is exposed, it is often muted through misdirection. For example, when JBS' systemic corruption came to light in 2017, its two owners faced few consequences. Knowing their share prices would drop as soon as the news broke, Joesley and Wesley sold more than a billion dollars' worth of their company shares just before the revelations were made public. Two years later, Joesley and Wesley ranked eighth on Forbes' 2019 billionaires list, each with an estimated 14.8 billion *real* fortune. "I see very little punishment being directed toward them," said João. I don't see the government saying they can no longer own

53. Interview on December 14, 2018.

a public company, I don't see the government saying, 'Look, if you want to maintain the empire, you have to choose birds and beef and leave pork aside. . . these leniency agreements are quite curious,' he said. Meanwhile, media attention remained transfixed on a BRL\$2.2 million (USD\$520,000) beachfront apartment and an estimated BRL\$1 million (USD\$240,000) in renovations to a country home—benefits Lula is alleged to have received from two private companies in exchange for Petrobras contracts.

Misdirection of this kind, as Maskelyne notes, does not necessarily involve fabrication. Numerous interviewees rattled off statistics about the Brazilian state's inefficiencies and incontrovertible evidence of corruption that took place during the PT governments. "Nearly a seventh of what our country produces, of our GDP, goes to pay for salaries, benefits, and other obligations of the [state] machine," Felix, an analyst working for Paulo Guedes in the Bolsonaro Administration, told me. "And that number has grown at a fast pace since 2012 and is far greater than [that same number in] developed countries like the UK and Canada and comparable developing countries like Mexico and Colombia," he wrote to me over WhatsApp. Meanwhile, he said, "our public services are in critical condition." To prove it, he forwarded me a graph showing Brazil's total tax burden (32 percent) side-by-side with the country's relatively high infant mortality, unemployment, homicide rate, and low international ranking (65th of 70 countries) on the OECD's PISA math exam. The result of this higher-than-average tax burden and lower-than-average quality of public services, Felix said, means that "our democracy suffers," referencing the *Latino-barómetro* data that shows Brazil's second-to-last ranking in support for democracy (Figure 3.3). These figures are all accurate (although the causal relationship among them remains unspecified). Felix was not, as Maskelyne wrote, "telling lies." But in making the story about particular parts of the state ("an increase of 227 percent in the amount we spend on public administration over the past ten years!" he wrote), the status quo of political capitalism receded to the background.⁵⁴

"Ten percent was normal"

"What we have today is very similar to how it's always been," said *Globo* reporter Joaquim, describing how the state and private sector are mutually reliant. "How did it used to work? Paulo Cesar Farias⁵⁵ had influence over various areas of the of government, and over the president. So from there, decisions were made," the journalist said, using the passive voice, "that favored certain companies. Decisions about auctions [for government contracts], taxes, bidding. . . public and private have *always* been bound together, even if these businessmen hate to admit it."⁵⁶

Many elites I interviewed indeed avoided acknowledging this dependence; instead they highlighted the way in which the state "*atrapalha*" (hinders) their growth by demand-

54. WhatsApp conversations, June and July 2019.

55. PC Farias was the treasurer of Fernando Collor de Mello's political party. Collor was the first directly elected president after Brazil's transition to democracy, in 1989. PC was at the center of the corruption scandal that led to Collor's impeachment in 1992.

56. Interview on July 17, 2017.

ing bribes and imposing regulations on their companies. Nelson (of FIESP) described the typical “toll” that state agents extract whenever the companies he worked for applied for a BNDES loan or needed regulatory approvals.

I’ve been involved in actions involving... some of the companies I worked for and friends I have, I won’t be able to cite any names, but JBS, for example, which I can name, and at least fifteen other companies that received resources from the state just like JBS did in an irregular, privileged way. For example, in [company name], the firm I worked for 14 years, we put in about 150 requests for financing from BNDES each year, and I was the one in charge of them. I would go to Rio de Janeiro, do all of the processes related to financing, equipment, and infrastructure for industrial production—it was terribly difficult to get these resources. We had to fulfil a different ritual, I mean, terrible, because we did it in the proper way.

Nelson gave the example of a cookie factory that planned to double its output and was eligible for the state development bank’s attractive loans. “We itemized everything that could be financed by BNDES, we put together the project, and I went to Rio to present it, together with the supplier, my client. This process took *months* to approve.” He said that in his 14 years at this company, there were projects that sometimes took BNDES years to approve, “whereas JBS got projects approved in less than 30 days, projects that involved millions, sometimes billions of *reais*,” Nelson said, referring to timelines that were later confirmed as part of Joesley and Wesley’s plea bargain deals. I posed a follow up question asking about the percentage of projects that tended to be fast-tracked versus those that operated on what he described as the slower “licit” timeline. My muddled phrasing made him misunderstand the question as an inquiry about the average percentage government officials expected as a bribe:

EM: So to gain approval in a reasonable time, what was the percentage [of companies that succeeded in doing so]?

Nelson: Ten percent was normal.

EM: Ten percent of companies had reasonable approval times, and the other 90 percent took longer?

Nelson: No, no, no I thought you were asking—I’m talking about the percentage of the project, for example, when it’s a project that involves five million *reais*, the people at BNDES would ask me for ten percent of that figure to approve it. And if you didn’t pay, your financing request would go to the pile, you’d have to produce more analyses and justifications, and they would start creating obstacles, saying: ‘but there’s this, and also this.’ So you go about fixing things and they would win through sheer exhaustion, because there’s no other way, and it still took months [to approve] you know?⁵⁷

The examples finance capital executives gave to highlight “state interference” in

57. Interview on June 25, 2017.

their business often referenced taxes and regulation. “Here’s the bank,” said Afonso, pointing to one side of the table where we were sitting, “and here’s civil society, NGOs, unions,” he said, gesturing to the opposite side. “Then you have the government, the prosecutors and such,” he said, lifting up his hands. “They operate on top of, over the bank, right?”

EM: But how do they act on you—what do they do to the banks?

Afonso: Regulation.

EM: Can you give me an example of a recent piece of regulation?

Afonso: Oh, they can increase taxes. Got it? So that affects me. And if they say, for example, that I have to install a bathroom in every one of our branches, I have 4,000 branches, then that’s 4,000 construction projects. If they demand we put in chairs, and you have to put in 50 chairs, that’s 20,000 chairs across Brazil.⁵⁸

Representatives from the agribusiness sector were similarly quick to criticize bureaucratic machinery but loath to acknowledge how the state helps subsidize their profit margins. The journalist who described re-writing the scene from Dilma’s inauguration remembers, “an especially emblematic scene” that spoke to this contradiction.

On the day of the floor vote for [Dilma’s] impeachment in Congress. . . I looked over, and there in the corner was Heinze, the president of the agribusiness caucus [FPA], Bolsonaro, Alceu Moreira [of MDB, the party that had been allied with the PT since Lula’s first term]. It was curious because, Dilma’s government alone, BRL\$600 billion *reais* went to agribusiness. That sector has nothing to complain about, really nothing.⁵⁹

In public settings like the *Estadão* conference where FHC spoke, then, elites trained attention to the “bloated” state. When prompted to describe their own interactions with this same “greasy” state, however, they chalked it up to democracy. Asked what the purpose of the *Instituto Pensar Agropecuária* (the think tank that funds the agribusiness caucus’ Agro Sul mansion and Tuesday lunches) is, its president responded, “To strengthen democracy, which only works when society is organized and goes to debate in the right place, which is Congress, in a transparent and direct way” (Quadros 2018). Dissembling in a similar way, a finance capital executive described how he allocated the bank’s campaign spending before the Supreme Court outlawed private donations of this kind:

Rogério: We would donate a maximum of 2.5 percent of the candidate’s total budget. So no one could ever say we played a defining role, or that we bought off a deputy. If his campaign budget was five million, I would give 100,000. There were limits depending on the office. Federal deputies, a maximum of 200,000; if the campaign budget surpassed 8 million, I still stopped at 200,000.

58. Interview on September 14, 2017.

59. Interview on July 27, 2017.

EM: Got it. So if you were not “buying off” the deputy as you put it, what was your incentive to donate to the campaign?

Rogério: Democracy. We thought that good candidates—because I never donated to *ficha suja* [politicians indicted on corruption charges]. So I had a very rigid process for finding good candidates. It’s the opposite of what the Supreme Court thought. I would say, ‘Look, I don’t just want to give to the PMDB, to the PSDB, I want to give to the good candidates, whether from the PT or whatever.’ And the Supreme Court said, ‘Look how strange this is, they give to all parties.’ And we did that because we wanted to make sure all candidates had access to some income. Even if the party had no chance of being elected. . . I would donate to them but in very different proportions. For example, I helped the Green Party because I thought they had a good plan. But I gave a million to Dilma and 50,000 to them, because their chances of winning were really different.

These data implicate the same elites and capital fractions that, in public, decry the lumbering Leviathan. Meanwhile, they made rhetorical gestures to “democracy” while practicing its opposite. “It’s really hard to identify the origin of corruption,” said Joaquim, the *Globo* reporter who has covered politics in Brasília since the Collor scandal. “Is it the businessman who wants the project at any cost, or the politician who wants campaign financing or to line his own pockets? Who controls whom?”⁶⁰ Joaquim’s observation speaks to the ways in which the social processes that enable corruption are not always the product of conscious strategic behavior. Indeed, misdirection in the elite circles I studied was pervasive at social, organizational, and individual levels.

Berenice, an elderly woman I interviewed outside of a Gucci store at a luxury shopping center in Rio, illustrates how misdirection is also manifest in the stories that some elite actors tell themselves about their own social position. At the beginning of the interview, she proudly described to me her aristocratic lineage:

Berenice: My mother was Brazilian but has Swiss blood. . . [Her] ancestors lived in France. One was the mayor of a little city. But with the fall of the Bastille, they were persecuted. . . and with the persecution of the nobility, this relative of mine moved to Switzerland, and then one branch of the family came here! To Brazil.

EM: Wow, so you have this whole history documented back to the French Revolution?

Berenice: Yes. So one relative came here and married a Brazilian. My mother’s signature was still [Swiss-German last name]. But one part of her family still lived in Paris. . . and my great-grandfather was a Supreme Court justice [in Brazil]. An important man. He was also governor of a *comarca*, it wasn’t even

60. Interview on July 17, 2017.

the state yet—of Mato Grosso.⁶¹

Berenice then proudly described her British descent on her father's side. "His parents lived in Yorkshire. My *avô*, my grandfather," she said, switching into English to refer to this relative, "was a pharmacist with a city named after him. My grandma, his wife, had a lot of money, she was rich." Berenice's father moved to Brazil, she said, because of the demand for foreigners with technical skills during the country's "industrial revolution," and because he was asthmatic. "So he wanted to move to a tropical country with an amenable climate," she said.

Asked about her political orientation, Berenice referenced her class position. "The middle class, my class, bears a huge burden (*é extremamente prejudicada*). Because we pay all kinds of taxes. And poor people, even if they don't have money, they have *Bolsa Família*, and all kinds of other government handouts (*bolsa não-sei-o-quê*)... So we are sacrificed."⁶² She too went on to complain about how the "bloated state" and the "huge tax burden" used to "subsidize... the poors (*os pobres*)." Describing her own socioeconomic status (for the third time) as "middle class, or a little bit above average," she said, "I can't complain because I have my [late] husband's pension and my retirement [from her former career as a *concursada* public servant in the Justice Department], but life is expensive!" At the end of this interview, as part of the protocol I was using, I then asked her to identify her income bracket from a range of choices.

EM: And according to the ranges listed below, what is your monthly income?

Berenice: Ah, that's... it's very confidential isn't it? Veery confidential. Is this in dollars or *reais*?

EM: *Reais*. The first category is up to one minimum wage, which is \$724 *reais*—Berenice pointed to the top range on the interview protocol, tapping three times. "Twelve and up," she said.⁶³ Assuming she was on the lowest end of this range, at BRL\$12,000 *reais* per month, this means that Berenice has a higher monthly income than 98 percent of Brazilians (NEXO 2018), income she told me came entirely from state-funded retirement pensions. Berenice spent much of the interview criticizing her tax burden and "government handouts" for "the poors," and in so doing diverting attention from the fact that her family's financial dependence on the state dates back to the colonial era.

61. In Brazil, *comarca*, or district, is a term derived from the country's Portuguese colonial history. It designates the jurisdiction of a magistrate. For the time period in which Berenice's grandfather would have been active, he would have formed part of what Thomas Flory (1974) called the "judicial oligarchy" of 19th-century Brazil, when the entire national territory was divided into just 114 *comarcas* and district judges played the powerful role of the "fulcrum" between "Brazil's local socioeconomic elite on the one hand, and central government or political party on the other" (668-9).

62. In 2019, the per-person value of the government's conditional cash transfer program, *Bolsa Família*, was BRL\$89, or about USD\$21 per month. In 2014 when I conducted this interview, it was BRL\$77 *reais*).

63. Interview on July 25, 2014.

4.3 Sources of fragility

Since the era in which people like Berenice’s great grandfather controlled *comarcas*, Brazil’s economic elite have always had more influence than any other set of actors in the political field. But what progressive politicians and movement activists often imprecisely referred to in interviews as “*grande capital*,” or big capital, is neither a monolith nor is it all powerful. In the contemporary context, although agribusiness was the first capital fraction to informally endorse Bolsonaro, the other two major blocs did not coalesce around his coalition until the final month of the campaign. Similarly, even though Dilma lacked the support of all three major capital fractions in 2014, she still won reelection—this after she and her heterodox economic team “poked the leopards” (Singer 2015) by with her New Economic Matrix in 2012. In this final section of the chapter, I explore three sources of capitalist fragility that were also evident in the data.

4.3.1 Fissures across, fissures within

The organizational vehicles with which elites occupy the state are characterized by considerable heterogeneity, internal fissures, and rivalries. I was surprised to find that the most specific critiques of these the dominant capital fractions in Brazil did not come from opponents and outsiders but most often from other insider elites, as exemplified, for example, in João and Gustavo’s interviews cited above. Far from a unified front, I spoke with financiers who supported strong capital controls and investors whose portfolio of trading positions made them more sympathetic to the demands of international finance. Currency valuation was another clear fault line: economic elites whose business model relied on imports were predisposed to support a strong *real*, whereas exporters advocated for a weaker one. Monopoly and non-monopoly capital were also, naturally, at odds with one another. Domestic factions of Brazil’s bourgeoisie fear the seemingly unstoppable growth of multinationals. And, although finance capital appears to have all but absorbed what is left of Brazil’s industrial elites, as evidenced by the united bourgeois front they formed in opposition to Dilma’s “heterodox witchery,” the political loyalties of the agribusiness sector are still contested. Luiz provided his explanation for why:

Agribusiness never profited as much as it did during the Lula era. But I think there is a mistaken critique of agribusiness from the Left, because agribusiness was what helped sustain the consumption boom. Now, of course there has to be a better way of dealing with the agribusiness caucus... it’s exactly what we were talking about with respect to hegemony: are you going to lead around your political project, or the political project of those guys?

That was the PT’s problem, they gave up the project, the project wasn’t theirs, it was that of finance capital. The strides they made were subordinate to that. I think it has to be the opposite: you have to make your allies submit to your political economic project... For example, I think that even though agribusiness may not have an immediate interest in industrialization, they also do not

have an immediate interest in the rentier capitalism that currently dominates.⁶⁴

Luiz was making the strategic case for leftist political organizations to treat different capital fractions differently, without subverting a primary “political project.” He was drawing attention to the fact that elites are stratified within themselves and their interests are not fixed (in fact, as noted above, they often contradictory).⁶⁵

Elite internal divisions also cut along ideological lines. At LibertyCon, the annual gathering of hundreds of young libertarians organized by the Atlas Network’s Students for Liberty group, event participants were offered the choice of wearing a “gradualist” or “brutalist” adhesive on their name badges upon registration. The most spirited session of the conference was a debate between Fábio Ostermann, who was elected to the state house in 2018 and helped found MBL (a right-wing libertarian movement discussed at length in the next chapter), and Paulo Kogos, a YouTuber and self-described “Catholic, militarist, conservative anti-politician.”

LibertyCon was held on a rainy Saturday afternoon at the four-star hotel Maksoud Plaza in downtown São Paulo. The conference space was filled to capacity. The audience consisted of mostly white men who shouted at the panelists throughout the debate as though cheering on a soccer team. At different points, the crowd yelled, “*Tréplica* (third rebuttal, or rejoinder)!” “Glory to God!” and “Solve this debate with a bullet!” In his opening statement, Kogos criticized Ostermann for his “assistentialist” approach to political change:

I read your platform, [it’s] all about expansion of welfare programs for families, health care. Please.

[Audience laughter.]

Your strategy impedes competition with other political strategies, the most important of which is agorism.⁶⁶ But we have multiple strategies. Brutalism defends the guy who’s going to infiltrate the state to dismantle it. Brutalism defends the agorist smuggler. Defends the muzzled intellectuals. So we have a lot of strategies, he doesn’t. He *automatically* undermines anything illegal, anything that is against the system. And yet he says we need liberty! Pragmatic

64. Interview on October 17, 2017.

65. The historical evidence for the progressive potential of the agrarian elite, however, is thin. However, as Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) note, agricultural barons’ opposition to democratic projects is typically related to the nature of their country’s export economy. Landowners resisted democratization as a function of the extent to which the agricultural industry relied on “wage labor and semi-bound labor,” (175) conditions that certainly still exist in Brazil but which are increasingly overshadowed by more mechanized forms of production.

66. Agorism refers to the “counter-economic” philosophy proposed by Samuel Edward Konkin III, a hero among adherents of the brutalist approach to political revolution. Konkin (2008)’s theory of resistance to the state eschews politics and centers on illegal market activity and voluntary exchange that takes place outside the dominant framework and coercive structures of the state. “Agorists,” wrote libertarian blogger David D’Amato (2018), “are engaged in an attempt to change society without resorting to political action, which agorism regards as capitulating to the existing power structure.”

gradualism never ends.

Ostermann, representing the “pragmatic gradualists” Kogos criticized, was then asked what he would do if given the choice to “simply eliminate the state apparatus, for example by privatizing the entire education system,” or to implement a gradualist project, “like school vouchers.” “That’s easy,” Ostermann replied.

Obviously I would choose to privatize the whole education system. But we’re not dealing with hypotheticals. It’s like the question of rape. Is the right thing to do to come up with a public policy the disincentives rape? Or shoot the rapist in the head? We don’t even have a gun with which to shoot the rapist in the head. We literally don’t even have access to guns.

If afforded the opportunity to abolish the state in one fell swoop and shoot rapists on the spot, Ostermann was in favor of both. But given that existing regulations preclude access to the real and hypothetical guns that would make both of those moves possible, he preferred to address these problems with conservative legislation. If Ostermann was the moderate in the room, groups like LIVRES—which came to LibertyCon with purple t-shirts, passed out adhesives that read, “all forms of love are valid” (in support of LGBT rights), and disaffiliated from the Social Liberal Party (PSL) en masse when Bolsonaro choose it as his *legenda de aluguel* (party ticket for rent)—were considered radical leftists by the *brutalistas* in attendance.⁶⁷

The LibertyCon debates exemplify some of the significant fissures within what at first appear to be coherent sub-communities in the network maps presented in Chapter 3. At a higher resolution, their heterogeneity is apparent. Easier to detect were ideological fissures *across* elite subgroups, including those who were vehemently opposed to the increasingly influential authoritarian-libertarian currents on the Brazilian Right. André Lara Resende, a prominent MIT-educated economist and former director of the Central Bank and president of BNDES, described the “stupid” and “reactionary” tendencies of far-right groups that describe themselves as “liberal.”

André Lara: I have a piece about this, the idea that it’s important to have a conservative current, that defends true conservatism, because if you don’t you start to have—

EM: Something like Bolsonaro?

André Lara: Exactly, and this is the risk we run today in Brazil, this *stupid* Right. Liz, a year ago I was invited to have a dinner with young people, all 25 to 35 years old. All were competent professionals, it was something linked to the [think tank] Instituto Liberal. It’s a specific group, I forgot the name right now. So they invited me to talk, a dinner, there were probably 40 young people there, all economists, especially economists lawyers, everyone worked in the financial markets. Liz, I was horrified with their reactionary right-wing radicalism. It’s not a joke, it’s frightening, it’s unreal. . . it’s lazy thinking, they

67. The above section is based on field notes from October 12 and 13, 2018.

just want to know the bottom line: are you A or B? I already know that I'm A, so if you're B then I'm against you.

André Lara was lamenting what he saw as the “lazy thinking” that goes into dividing the political field into brutalists and gradualists, leftists and rightists. He went on to critique the “naïve” notion that it's possible to “do politics without politics,” as in “let's occupy the state and just administer it.”

André Lara: This is what businessmen think, they don't understand politics, and this is the problem with NOVO [the self-described libertarian party founded in 2015 to which Ostermann belongs]. I don't think NOVO is at its origin radically right-wing, but it carries this risk, and it will attract reactionaries, which it is already doing.⁶⁸

Indeed, Bernardo, one NOVO's (now former) state coordinators—the same one who described to me the party philosophy as one that “spontaneous exchanges”—included me on his WhatsApp broadcast list after I interviewed him in 2017. When NOVO's “ethics committee” voted to temporarily suspend party affiliate Ricardo Salles, Bolsonaro's Minister of the Environment, for “taking stances that diverge from NOVO's environmental platform,” Bernardo wrote: “The Marxist Democratic Centralism of the NOVO party is in full force. With an ethics committee like this, who needs a KGB, a coherent mind must ask.”⁶⁹ Two of the mechanisms described above—orchestrated obfuscation and misdirection—help submerge these very real material and ideological disputes, making elites appear more united than they actually are.

4.3.2 A missing mass base

A second source of fragility I observed is self-evident: economic elites lack a mass base. The leftist groups I studied, however, did not appear to realize the strategic implications of this disconnect. Different from the evangelical church leaders, which I examine in Chapter 6, the economic elites I observed and interviewed were out of touch with the electorate and poor at prognostication. At one investment banking conference I attended, a speaker asked the audience to take out their smartphones and respond to the question, “Who will be elected president of Brazil in 2018?” on the conference app. As noted in Chapter 3, the winner of this poll—taken eight months before the election—was Alckmin by a landslide (58 percent). In second place was Luciano Huck (16 percent), a *Globo* TV presenter who hinted at a presidential run but ultimately decided not to run in 2018. Only ten percent of the thousand conference attendees predicted that Bolsonaro would win the election. Camarotti, who was present, also spoke before this crowd. He was introduced as an expert: “[He] has a post-grad degree in political science from the University of Brasília, has worked at all of the major media agencies, *Veja*, *Época*, *Estadão*, and now *Globo*, and is certainly one of the most renowned journalists in the Brazilian press, known especially

68. Interview on March 7, 2017.

69. WhatsApp message from October 31, 2019.

for his political analysis.” When it was time to take questions, one of the audience members posed a question about Bolsonaro’s chances. Camarotti responded:

Bolsonaro is going to die by the hands of the media. He hasn’t yet been exposed to the population; the moment he is *exposed* to the population [his support is going to] dry up in a significant way. . . from 20 points to closer to 10, 12; it’s unsustainable. Yesterday I was talking to someone who has access to a poll that said [Bolsonaro] has 38 percent of the vote in Santa Catarina. It’s a conservative part of the country, but I was still shocked. Clearly he’s just occupying space because of a lack of other candidates. But when the people of Santa Catarina discover who Bolsonaro really is, they’re conservative—but they don’t accept anything. . . the other day he told a journalist that he used his congressional stipend to—I’ll use a euphemism here—to sleep around.

[Audience laughter]

See? The things he says are so vulgar, he shocks the conservative segments of the country.⁷⁰

Nine months later, Bolsonaro won outright in the first round in the state of Santa Catarina with 66 percent of the vote, and 76 percent in the second round. But elites’ underestimation of Bolsonaro went beyond the punditry. An executive at one of Brazil’s largest banks was similarly unimpressed by Bolsonaro’s chances when I interviewed him a year before the election:

Marcelo: I don’t think Bolsonaro has a very good chance [of winning], because he represents. . . he’s reactionary. He’s more like Trump.

EM: But Trump won.

Marcelo: Trump won because the people were suffering, the American people were suffering a lot.

EM: And the Brazilian people?

Marcelo: Yeah, but the people, if you go look at it, the people are eating. There are 14 million people who are unemployed, but Brazilians are used to informality. [Someone who is unemployed] goes to the street, he sells coffee, he sells baked goods, that kind of a thing.⁷¹

Other elites I interviewed thought that the fact that the *voto obrigatório*, or mandatory vote, would keep Bolsonaro out of the presidential palace. A high-ranking staffer for

70. Transcribed field audio from the Latin American Investment Conference, January 30, 2018. Some of his other predictions, however, were correct. He noted that there was movement for the center and center-right parties to consolidate around Geraldo Alckmin. For readings of the political field that required less contact with a mass base or the population—and instead personal inroads with leaders of small parties like those making up the *Centrão* parties that ended up backing Alckmin—it was easier for elites like Camarotti to arrive at what proved to be a more accurate reading of the political terrain.

71. Interview on September 14, 2017.

an international tech giant also said that Bolsonaro “would not survive the campaign,” citing the candidate’s declaration that his fellow member of congress “did not deserve to be raped [by him] because she was too ugly.” The interviewee went on to note that “half of the population is female” and when pollsters say, ‘Did you know that he [Bolsonaro] said this?’ then voters respond, ‘Oh well, in that case I wouldn’t vote for him, no.’” This interviewee’s assessment was that “within two or three days of the campaign, with people repeating his comments about rape,” Bolsonaro would not advance.⁷² These and many other elites I interviewed turned out to be incorrect—both about the depth of Bolsonaro’s popular support and in their diagnoses about what factors (media exposure, conservative sentiment, material satisfaction, feminist outrage) would move votes. Elites’ limited ability to perceive and understand the preferences and sentiments of the public is thus a potential threat to their dominance, given that hegemony by definition involves mass consent to the ruling ideology.

4.3.3 The changing rules of the game

Related to elites’ distance from the lived reality of the vast majority of Brazilians is a third source of fragility: uncertainty about the new rules of the game that will govern how political struggles will unfold. In 2015, the Supreme Court outlawed private sector donations to candidates and parties. Whereas in prior elections, companies like JBS could legally donate more than half a billion *reais* to campaigns, the new law holds that only individuals can now donate. The upper limit, however, is proportional rather than nominal: the new campaign finance rules state that individuals can legally donate up to ten percent of their annual income. This means that if the half of the population that earns BRL\$413 each month were able to spare any of their meager earnings to donate to a candidate, they would only be permitted to give BRL\$496 *reais* in total (the equivalent of just under USD\$120 in 2019 dollars). In 2018, by contrast, one wealthy businessman gave BRL\$5.4 million *reais* to 40 candidates, approximately the same amount his company had donated to parties and candidates in 2010 (Rebello and Martins 2018).

At the same time that campaign finance law changed, political scientist Sílvio Cascioni told me optimistically, “the cost of *caixa dois* increased, to the point of making it in-viable,” because of the fallout from *Lava Jato*. “Elites can’t finance campaigns in the same way anymore because the risk [of getting caught and facing consequences] has gone up.”⁷³ The former president of Odebrecht, several interviewees noted, served 30 months behind bars between 2015 and 2017 for fraud, conspiracy, money-laundering, and corruption. (He is, however, expected to serve the remaining seven years of his sentence on house arrest in his luxury home in São Paulo.) Another example of elite punishment that several interviewees cited was the arrest of banker André Esteves of BTG Pactual, who was indicted for attempts to obstruct *Lava Jato* investigations. Esteves spent 23 days in jail in late 2015 but has since rebounded: he appeared on *Forbes*’ billionaire ranking every year between 2011 and 2019. Esteves also attended Paulo Guedes’ swearing in as Bolsonaro’s “Super-

72. Interview on July 10, 2017.

73. Interview on July 25, 2017.

minister” of the Economy, paying homage to Guedes—who was Esteves’ former boss at BTG—while sitting in the VIP section in Brasília (Goulart 2019). Throughout my fieldwork, I heard traders gleefully refer to the bank’s initials B-T-G—once called “a shadow of a former empire” by Bloomberg in 2016 (Lucchesi, Brice, and Dezem 2016)—as short for “Back to the Game” and “Back to Growth.” In 2019, BTG reported its most lucrative year since its IPO in 2012 (Mandl 2019).

Speaking to elite resilience in spite of institutional ruptures, Paulo Estivallet, Brazil’s ambassador to China, noted that increased scrutiny means that the country’s political and economic elite will simply develop new forms of influence:

Of course, as prosecutors discover certain methods [of illicit activity], they’ll develop a methodology for detecting it. But whoever wants to defraud the system will also develop a new methodology. The market adapts. When there is a stimulus, the market finds a way to meet its needs.⁷⁴

Political terrain shifts can thus pose a challenge—albeit by no means an insurmountable one—to elites who need to develop “a new methodology” to “meet [the market’s] needs,” as Estivallet put it. As Marion Fourcade (2018) notes, “instability in market societies is nothing new” which means that “capitalists can never rest” (92). In response to systemic shocks, “like living organism, bourgeois capitalism grows and expands by destroying its old shells, leaving behind the chrysalises of antiquated structures, technologies, and ideas” (ibid). It remains to be seen whether and how Brazil’s dominant capital fractions will destroy their old shells and antiquated structures, but the revolutionary imperative—their need to constantly adapt to the new order in order to survive—is clear.

4.4 Implications and future research

In this chapter, I illustrated three ways in which elites acquire and preserve their political power that are not reducible to their economic capital alone. The proposed mechanisms—orchestrated obfuscation, personnel as policy, and misdirection—are preliminary sketches that could provide the basis for further research on the sociology of state capture. As with all social mechanisms, they are not lawlike and must be understood in their particular empirical context. Nevertheless, the interview data and fieldwork show that they are widely operating and recurrent social processes that help explain the resilience of organized groups of economic elites. Taken together, they shed light on a key regularity observable both over time and across places, namely, the seemingly unshakeable hegemony of economic elites in the political arena.

One implication of these findings is that elites use difficult-to-observe techniques to render their malfeasance invisible. The widespread practice of covert political maneuvering well into the 21st century runs counter to one strand of the democratic transition literature. One of the primary claims of this body of scholarship is that, as states modernize, they are increasingly governed more by formal, impersonal, and bureaucratic rules and

74. Interview on July 28, 2017.

less by unwritten ones (even if the constitutional order still disproportionality privileges elites) (Rostow 1971; Guliyev 2011; Fukuyama 2014).⁷⁵ The existence of formally democratic venues like *conselhos*, as interviewees noted in this chapter, are not always or even often covalent with the substantive political participation of subaltern groups. By contrast, elites were far more likely to pursue organized political action in private venues.

Second, and relatedly, the organizational significance of secrecy is a relatively new research agenda and remains comparatively underdeveloped in political science and political sociology. Yet, as management scholars Jane Costas and Christopher Grey (2016) argue, “secrecy can be understood not just as something that organizations do, but something that is constitutive of organizations themselves,” culminating in a theory they describe as the “hidden architecture of organizational life” (46). As I have argued in this chapter, understanding the social and organizational contexts in which elites conceal their political activity—which often occurs in ritualized and often highly orchestrated ways—should therefore be central to any inquiry into institutional stasis or change.

Third, these findings build on and extend the literature on state capture, which has heretofore remained almost exclusively within the disciplinary boundaries of political science. This body of research has shed light on politics as “organized combat” (Hacker and Pierson 2010), highlighting what Alexander Hertel-Fernandez (2019) shows to be the “outsized role of organized interests” in the political arena (245). By institutionalizing their advantages in legal frameworks, public policy, decrees, and regulation, elites create the institutional shields that allow them to withstand the environmental turbulence that might otherwise threaten their dominance (Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann 2000). Yet, as I suggested in this chapter, elites’ ability to instantiate their political power goes beyond rent extraction via material transactions—it is also a pervasive social dynamic that requires constant interaction and intervention. Elite influence involves meetings over pizza, pudding, and pear liqueur, private jets and Mount Blanc pens, but also the acculturation of what I called rank-and-file elites—the well-paid journalists, *concurseiros*, and, if Jorge Paulo Lemann gets his wish, the future President of the Republic. Thus, elites cannot simply rig the rules and retreat. They are always at war with other capital fractions and, as the interviewees themselves made clear, their business models and the state are co-constitutive. A sociology of state capture therefore conceives of elite penetration of the state as set of dynamic and recurring social processes that reinforce and help maintain more traditional forms of state capture.

Future research could explore the institutional settings in which these social mechanisms become effective and fail to operate. Because the state is many-faced, many-handed, and unevenly efficacious (McDonnell 2020), it is worth exploring how the dispersed nature of Brazilian bureaucracy may present the ideal conditions in which these practices thrive. Comparative analysis of older and more consolidated democracies may reveal them to be endemic and generalizable or instead a particular feature of younger and less consolidated regimes. Sérgio Cascioni, for example, spoke to the idiosyncratic nature of Brazil’s

75. As Ralph Schroeder (1998) writes in *Max Weber, Democracy, and Modernization*, “modern law is enacted to the extent that it is enacted, calculable, and systematic” (32).

presidential coalitionism: “The greater the fragmentation [among political parties], the higher the cost of governability,” a clear advantage for actors with more financial resources at their disposal.

Many of our parties are not parties, they are agglomerations of people who buy and sell votes or blackmail their supposed allies. Brazil’s presidential coalition [model] is expensive and stable only insofar as the president and governing coalition have access to the resources they need to sustain these fragile alliances.⁷⁶

What Sílvio termed the “permanent crisis” of governability linked to Brazil’s weakly institutionalized 35-party system makes the type of capital that elites have the greatest control over—economic—more valuable. It also provides a steady supply of public sector mismanagement and corruption scandals that overshadow private actors’ extralegal activity. Yet, as I have argued, there are deeper social microdynamics and strategic behaviors—beyond just the manipulation of the rules of the game—that help explain what makes some plutocracies perennial.

Conclusion

Thus far in the dissertation, I have established the key outcomes of interest and sought to explain one of the main findings, namely, that despite seemingly significant shifts in the balance of power, economic elites preserved their influence (as they almost always do). A natural question that follows is: who—or which groups—are on the side of the subaltern? What is the nature of the opposition to Brazil’s perennial plutocracy? As Peter Evans (1996) has persuasively argued, state-society synergies, characterized by high levels of social mobilization and “mutually reinforcing” government action, can reduce the chances that the modern state becomes and remains the mere handmaiden of powerful private interests. Tempering this more optimistic position, however, Evans (2010) later warned that “the skills and organizational capacities required for synergistic state-society relations are much more complex and difficult to build because they are more political than technocratic, unlike in the 20th century developmental state” (49). What are the “skills and organizational capacities” on which non-elite civil society actors draw in the struggle for state power? To answer this question, I next turn to the cycle of mass protests that began in 2013 with what at first appeared to be an unremarkable demonstration against a bus fare hike. Seemingly overnight, however, the protests exploded into a million-person, country-wide march that would mark—in retrospect—the beginning of the end of Brazil’s New Republic.

76. Interview on July 25, 2017.

From Mobilization to Organization

What keeps people together after the fleeting moment of action has passed (what we today call ‘organization’) and what, at the same time, they keep alive through remaining together is power.

Hannah Arendt ([1958] 1998:201)

“It’s a beautiful thing, huh?” Heitor whispered as we watched two thousand college-aged students march to one of Rio de Janeiro’s downtown plazas at dusk. Viral messages had circulated on social media instructing protesters to wear white clothing to designate the march a peaceful one. Adding color to the crowd were rainbow flags, a block-wide yellow banner with the message, “It’s not for pennies, it’s for rights,” and countless other posters with aphorisms like “Love has begun;” “It’s by stealing ten cents after ten cents that you rob us of \$25 billion each year;” and, “The World Cup AI-5.”¹ Earlier that month, police violently repressed protesters from the Free Fare Movement (MPL) who had gathered to challenge a ten-cent bus fare increase in São Paulo. Images of the police brutality went viral on social media and the protest doubled in size overnight. One interviewee described this process:

Police violence was the fuel. . . the repression, the violence created a level of solidarity among [us], right? We all felt that perhaps that was the first time that [Brazil’s] middle class youth experienced violence in a more blunt way, even though it was rubber bullets, whereas in the periphery, the bullets are real, you know?²

What began as unbridled praise for the demonstration turned into more nuanced critique from Heitor, revealing the contradictions for which Brazil is famous. “Life for poor people in Rio is a joke; we work hard and yet are assaulted by the daily cost of-living.

1. Field notes from June 17, 2013. AI-5 refers to the Fifth Institutional Act of 1968, which gave Brazil’s military dictatorship the power to dissolve the legislature, strip any citizen of his or her political rights, suspend habeas corpus, and censor the press (Mezarobba 2010; D’Araujo 2015).

2. Interview on April 9, 2017.

Meanwhile the government only concerns itself only with building a new port for the tourists and the rich.”³ Heitor has worked for a government entity for forty-three of his sixty years: first in a cafeteria, next as a custodian, and now, a grandfather of three, as an administrative assistant. Afro-Brazilian, he lives in a poor neighborhood adjacent to the Sambódromo, the iconic concrete structure that is home to Rio’s annual Carnival parade. “It would be great if this protest expands beyond this crowd [of college students] to include the residents of the favelas, the people in the periphery...this isn’t everything, but it’s something,” Heitor reflected as the students marched toward what would become the country’s largest demonstrations since the fall of the dictatorship nearly 30 years prior.

The crowds swelled. Three days later, an estimated 1.4 million people took to the streets in over 350 cities. At first, 89 percent of the population supported the protests (Datafolha 2013b). Protesters poured into the streets to make heterogeneous—and often contradictory—demands. Demonstrators demanding a military intervention marched beside students wearing red Che Guevara t-shirts who were themselves flanked by white collar professionals wrapped in the Brazilian flag.⁴ Demonstrators who identified as “apartisan” shouted down and then violently expelled members of a union with strong ties to the PT. A year later, I interviewed two members of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), who told me they had been shoved and punched at the June protests.⁵ Asked about their experience, they said:

P1: There was a call put out over the internet. So, lots of people came and were not conscious of what they were doing. They came more for the *oba-oba*.⁶

P2: And then groups of organized right-wing fascists tried to use the protest as a protest against the government.

EM: What did they do? You were there with your PCB flags and—

P1: They screamed at us. They yelled, “*Sem partido!*” They came to the streets and they then physically assaulted us.⁷

Surveys showed that this anti-party sentiment was pervasive in the mass protests. The Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion found that 84 percent of June protest participants did not claim affinity for any political party (IBOPE 2013).

Five days after the largest of these demonstrations, roughly 1,600 people attended a general assembly in downtown Rio to discuss the protesters’ next steps. In the absence

3. Interview on June 17, 2013. Unless otherwise noted, all names are pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality in accordance with this study’s IRB protocol.

4. Field note from June 17, 2013. See also Figure E.3.

5. Interview on July 30, 2014.

6. *Oba-oba* is a colloquial term that means a mix of meaningless fun, chaos, and revelry in this context.

7. In this and subsequent block quotes, I use ‘P’ and a numeric code to denote interview responses from participants at protest events, ‘F’ and a numeric code to refer to quotes and comments from my digital ethnography.

of any facilitators, the meeting began two hours late, and then only because a radical left-wing union lent their sound system to the structureless gathering of mostly college-aged students seated on the asphalt, waiting expectantly. At one point, I heard one attendee turn to another and ask, “Hey Rodrigo, didn’t you make this event on Facebook? What’s going on?” to which Rodrigo shrugged.⁸

Observers described Brazil’s 2013 protests in language physicists use to describe particle showers: fueled by generalized indignation, mass media, and rapid-fire communication technology, a leaderless network cascaded to life on the streets. Two ubiquitous phrases on protest placards read: “We are the social network!” and, “We left the internet to come to the streets!” Data from polling firms corroborate the central role of digital technology in the protest wave. Of Datafolha (2013a) respondents (N = 766, MOE ± 4 ; São Paulo), 93 percent indicated that social media was the primary way in which they learned of the protests. The numbers were similar in the IBOPE (2013) sample (N = 2,002, MOE ± 2 ; seven states), with 77 percent of respondents citing Facebook as the method by which they were mobilized. Only three percent of protesters in the IBOPE survey responded that they learned of the protests through a formal SMO, and 86 percent—similar to the number who claimed no party affiliation—did not identify with any union, student group, or other formal civic organization.

Despite the chaotic—and at times violent—nature of the mass protests, there seemed to be power in numbers. On June 24, 2013, state officials suspended the 6.5 percent bus fare hike. Some states offered or expanded transit voucher programs for college students, which one MPL activist told me was a government ploy to “to give up the rings to keep the fingers” because their demand was free or affordable bus fare for everyone, not only the small fraction of the population enrolled in university.⁹ Six months later, however, the fare increase was reinstated. Since then, bus fares have increased year-on-year well in excess of inflation.

The ostensible leaderlessness and multivocality of the June protests was thrown into sharp relief when I visited the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST) occupation in São Paulo on an intolerably hot Sunday afternoon a year later. Organizers had scheduled a meeting in Vila Praia, a favela that abuts the wealthy neighborhood of Morumbi. Approximately 400 movement members were present. The local branch of MTST leadership—a half a dozen internally elected representatives—had called the meeting to explain to their members their housing rights. At the assembly, the families listened attentively and asked questions about how and when to register for the program would help them qualify for low-income housing. It was a punctual and high-energy meeting.¹⁰ Guilherme Simões, one of the movement’s state coordinators described how the movement organized these occupations:

EM: How does the occupation function, in detail? Who chooses the location,

8. Field note from June 25, 2013.

9. Interview on July 13, 2014.

10. Field note from August 3, 2014.

defines the strategy, and who constructs the tents, for example?

Guilherme: The people construct their own shelter. But on the day of the occupation, we have a strict logistical process so that its not done in a way that is chaotic or that allows the state security forces to catch us. We work with the several hundred families who begin the encampment so that they are aware of the process. We dialogue with the communities around the encampment so that they come and pitch the tents with us.

EM: How do you determine who these several hundred families are?

Guilherme: They are families from the region around the occupation. We organize them before through grassroots meetings (*reuniões de base*).

EM: How do you initiate these meetings?

Guilherme: We build a relationship with a community leader, or person who has stature in the community in question, and bring together people who are interested in discussing housing rights. And we propose occupation as a form of achieving this right.¹¹

Ana Paula Perles, another leader in the movement, described how this process worked when the MTST decided to occupy the 200 square-meter lot in Vila Praia: “The movement chose the location because 144 families in the area had been forced out of their homes due to real estate speculation,” she said.¹² The lot—which had been allocated for public housing in the city’s urban planning documents—had been abandoned for more than thirty years. As the first families arrived and pitched their tents, Ana Paula made an announcement on the microphone: “Let’s set up breakfast for everyone and put together the structure for all those who are going to stay here,” she said at the occupation’s first formal assembly. At one point, more than 800 homeless workers joined the encampment.¹³

The process that Ana Paula put in place exemplifies social movement absorptive capacity, a concept organization scholars use to refer to private sector firms ability to recognize and assimilate new information and resources (Cohen and Levinthal 1990:128). For movements like the MTST, the ability to absorb new adherents to grow the movement required the kind of strategy, forethought, and internal structures that Simões and Perles described. Absorptive capacity in movements is therefore a function of strategic leadership.

The June Days and MTST illustrate two competing protest logics. Using digital platforms, the June protests generated massive crowds and international media attention. Through formal organization, entities like the MTST hardly registered on mainstream outlets—or received primarily negative coverage—but generated sustained bargaining power.

11. Interview on June 21, 2014.

12. Interview on August 3, 2014.

13. Field notes from July and August, 2014. See also Correio do Brasil (2014) and coverage in Folha (Geraque and Tomé 2014).

In this chapter, I argue that the disparate outcomes of Brazil’s wildfire-like June Days and the formally organized MTST protests are indicative of distinct organizational methods, strategies, and the potential power of each protest form. This chapter analyzes these two logics and their relevance to explaining recent political transformation (and lack thereof) in Brazil.

5.1 Protest in the digital age

Mass demonstrations around the globe have raised questions about the dynamics of digitally enabled protest. In an increasing number of cases, crowds and claims-making preceded the emergence of identifiable leaders and organizations. Contrary to social movement research that describes the causal antecedence of indigenous mobilizing structures (McAdam [1982] 1999), strategic capacity (Ganz 2000; McCammon 2012), and agentic leadership (Morris and Staggenborg 2004), challengers appeared to have no need for formal association at the time of movement emergence. As a result, this family of cases has revived a longstanding debate about whether and how formal organization influences the power of protest (Gamson 1975; Piven and Cloward 1977; Goldstone 1980; Snow and Moss 2014; Piven and Shefner 2014).

Despite decades of scholarship bearing on the influential thesis that social movement organizations (SMOs) tend to normalize—and therefore dilute the power of—collective action, we lack comparative assessments in the digital age. As more movements are born online, scholars have observed that challengers are increasingly likely to take the form of “organizers without organizations” (Earl and Kimport 2011:157). McCarthy and Zald (2001) observe, however, that a strict test of whether formal organization helps or hinders protest movements would require “evidence of variable protest intensity, assessments of the extent to which protests are staged by SMOs, and movement or adherent organizational capacity either over time or across communities” (554). This five-year case study of a recent cycle of protest in Brazil aims to fill this gap by exploiting within-case variation on these dimensions. I first operationalize and then compare: (1) online-to-offline protests that eschew formal organization; and (2) protests that are convoked by traditional SMOs. Drawing on an original database of 420 protests and 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork, I then theorize the relationship between mobilization and political terrain shifts.

The findings substantiate Piven and Cloward (1995)’s contention that formal mobilizing structures are not a prerequisite for mass, significant, and disruptive protest. Across most of the 87 digitally enabled demonstrations observed in this study, Tilly (1978)’s classic formulation that organization precedes mobilization did not hold. Instead, the Brazilian case demonstrates how mobilization without organization can beget new political opportunities and threats—rather than the reverse, as the dominant theory predicts (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

The second finding complicates the first. Even as born-online mobilizations can generate new political opportunities, the data show that when unsuccessful online-to-offline protests are considered, social technology failed to solve collective action problems as ex-

pected. I empirically demonstrate the phenomenon of digital decoupling: of the 50 cases examined in which both an online hub and the protest headcount were available, in-person attendance represented, on average, 12.8 percent of the number of users who had confirmed their attendance online prior to the event. My ethnographic research shows that this substantial attrition rate had a demotivating effect on protesters who did overcome barriers and participate. Moreover, protests that were over-reliant on digital tools tended to lack normative and strategic coherence. This made them ill-equipped to respond to both unexpected outpourings of support as well as repression, cooptation, and other setbacks. By contrast, organized protests with identifiable leaders and clear constituencies were better able to draw on a range of tactics, respond to challenges, and sustain themselves over time as compared to protests whose primary expression was diffuse, leaderless, and online. These findings run counter to predictions that a radically reduced cost of mobilization lends itself to larger, more disruptive, and more adaptive protest forms.

The third argument I develop in this chapter follows from the implications of these findings: organized vehicles with identifiable leaders and committed constituencies are necessary preconditions for collective action to become strategic. In Brazil, I argue that it was the ambiguous, anti-political, and structureless nature of the networked protests that began in June 2013 that made them vulnerable to cooptation by their more organized—and, in this case, far more politically conservative—counterparts. The case thus illustrates how the political articulation work that takes place (or fails to take place) in the wake of contingent events requires formal organization. The chapter concludes with a discussion of future research agendas that would further enrich our understanding of the dynamics of political protest in the digital age.

5.1.1 Social media and social movements

In theory, a protest movement's degree of reliance on digital platforms and the extent to which it has disciplined leaders and formal organization can vary independently. Research on the 2009-2013 global cycle of protest, however, suggests that two are inversely related. Studies of Occupy Wall Street describe it as a post-bureaucratic social movement that relied extensively on social media to recruit adherents, mobilize participants to encampments, and frame grievances (Costanza-Chock 2012; Gamson and Sifry 2013; Agarwal et al. 2014). Castells (2013) attributed the emergence and spread of Spain's indignados movement to anonymous and decentralized digital networks. He illustrates the role of "autonomous digital nodes" with quotes from people like Javier Toret, one of the founders of the *Democracia Real Ya!* forum:

The campaign was anonymous, *Democracia Real Ya!* was nothing. It was a conglomeration of blogs, different groups. . . [it] was a brand that did not have anyone behind it, there were no people behind it. (Castells 2013: 111)

A growing literature argues that political power may soon be contested in the digital public sphere more so than anywhere else (Zuckerman 2013; Gainous and Wagner 2014; Trottier and Fuchs 2014). Goban-Klas (2014) argued that horizontalist Web 2.0 tools stoked and sustained the Euromaidan protests that ousted Ukraine's Viktor Yanukovich.

Research on the alterglobalization movement (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002), Egypt’s Tahrir Square (Van de Sande 2013), Turkey’s Gezi Park (Tufekci 2017), and the Tunisian uprising that catalyzed the Arab Spring reveal similar findings about the ways in which social technology became the primary mobilizing method of these protest movements. This body of research shows that these digitally enabled protests thrived on loose networks, a rejection of authority structures and traditional organization, and drew a sense of meaning from “the energy of the protest itself” (Bamyeh 2012:18). In these cases, the communication networks themselves become the coordinating logic of the protest, thus “replacing hierarchical structures and professional leaders” (B. G. King 2014:970).

Scholars have proposed several explanations for the elective affinity between digitally enabled protests and anti-hierarchical, informal methods of organization. Earl and Kimport (2011) argue that digital technology obviates the need for organization-building, co-presence, and shared collective identities. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) similarly posit that mobilization without organization is the protest mode of the future (see also Klander-mans et al. 2014). Although these studies do not offer comparative assessments of movement efficacy, they introduce theoretical tools—such as the concept of affordances—which provide a helpful framework for assessing the qualitative and quantitative ways in which digital tools now shape modern protest movements (McInerney 2011, 2016). In recent years, the literature has converged on three such affordances that distinguish networked protests from their more formally organized counterparts: inclusivity, information sharing, and adaptive resilience:

Inclusivity. Research suggests that social media can increase the breadth of participation in both routine and contentious politics by widening the pool of people at risk of taking political action. Early research found a positive association between Internet use and participation in voluntary organizations and politics (Wellman et al. 2001). A decade later, a randomized control trial of 61 million Facebook users found that online messages increased offline political mobilization in a congressional election (Bond et al. 2012), establishing a causal link between virtual recruitment and in-person political action.¹⁴ While much was made of the digital divide in the early days of the internet (DiMaggio et al. 2001), some evidence suggests that individuals who were previously more likely to be excluded from protest activity—including citizens of autocratic regimes, women, disabled, elderly, rural, and migrant populations—increasingly partake in contentious political action thanks to social media (Tufekci and Wilson 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2016).

Information-sharing. Second, networked protest provides an alternative channel for resistance in the context of repressive political regimes. When mass media is censored and the civic sphere highly regulated, social media can erode the state’s monopoly on information (Khondker 2011; Lynch 2011). In Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement, for example, participants “selectively engage[d] in digital media activities to construct their own distinctive forms of participation in the movement” (Lee and Chan 2016:19). Howard and Hussein (2011) made this same observation in their study of the Arab Spring:

14. The authors validated this study in a follow-up experiment conducted during the 2012 presidential election (Jones et al. 2017)

Thanks to [the internet, mobile phones, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter], virtual networks materialized in the streets. Digital media became the tool that allowed social movements to reach once-unachievable goals, even as authoritarian forces moved with a dismaying speed of their own to devise both high-and low-tech countermeasures. (2011, 35-6)

Adaptation and resilience. Third, scholars argue that the minimal coordination effort that the internet affords helps enable flexible, resilient, and adaptive mobilizing forms. These features allow networked protest movements to act like a weather vane, changing direction as public opinion or the political winds change. “Unlike conventional organizations and coalitions that may suffer setbacks and be difficult to rebuild,” Bennett and Segerberg write, “people in connective networks are relatively easy to reactivate and refocus on new causes or adding new issues to old ones” (2013:192). For this reason, Bennett et al. (2014:234-5) and Argarwal et al. (2014) contend that digitally enabled protests may be superior to conventional SMOs in their ability to mobilize resources, respond to contingencies, and engage in long-term adaptation strategies. Snow and Moss (2014)’s research on non-hierarchical “flash mob” protests initiated on social media bolstered this claim. They note that “scholars of protest and movements have held to an ‘overly organized’ conception of these phenomena over the past several decades” (1139), instead arguing that organization-less protests are fertile ground for the spontaneous discovery of new tactics, unexpected coalitions, and agile maneuvering against targets.

5.1.2 The spadework of face-to-face organizing

In contrast to the ethos of informality and spontaneity associated with these digitally enabled protests, a well-developed strand of the social movement literature highlights what civil rights leader Ella Baker called the “spadework” of organizing. Whereas some view the digital turn as evidence that “the locus of power is becoming virtual” (Rolfe 2005), other scholars see power as still brokered through formal institutions (Paschel 2016a), community organizations (M. R. Warren 2001), and face-to-face preparatory work of the kind Baker described (Han 2014; McAlevey 2016).

Research on the ways in which formal organizations enable collective action is plentiful (Buechler 2000; Clemens and Minkoff 2004; Corrigall-Brown 2012; Biggs and Andrews 2015). These and other studies have demonstrated a link between internal organizational capacities and the efficacy of social and protest movements (Ganz 2000; Andrews et al. 2010; Kriesi 1996), especially the ways in which leadership plays a central role in shaping strategy (Ganz 2009; McCammon 2012). Further research found that organizational characteristics help explain many outcomes of interest, including the depth, breadth, and quality of participation (Baggetta, Han, and Andrews 2013), response to setbacks (Voss 1998), and protesters’ ability to incorporate new repertoires and collaborate with like-minded protesters (Wang and Soule 2012). A cognate literature examines how these and other organizational variables influence labor-led protest movements (Shorter and Tilly 1974; McAlevey 2015). Despite this robust literature on the relationship between SMOs and protest dynamics, many of the cases on which they are based predate the digital turn.

Even as this body of scholarship cast doubt on Piven and Cloward’s skepticism of organization and the determinisms of Michels’ iron law, the risk that actors concentrate power in rigid hierarchies has not disappeared.¹⁵ Seminal studies supported Michel’s conclusion that “who says organization says oligarchy,” ([1915] 1968:365), finding that operational goals tend to supplant revolutionary ones when authority figures are no longer accountable to their constituencies (Selznick 1948; Messinger 1955; Schmidt 1973). This and more recent research (Briscoe and Safford 2011; Hertel-Fernandez 2016) has demonstrated that organizations can indeed be wielded as tools for elite actors to pursue their individual goals, subverting the original aims of the organization, depoliticizing members, and imitating the anti-democratic practices of the institutions they claim to challenge (Walker and Rea 2014).

Table 5.1: Summary of the Literature and Empirical Puzzle

	Protest characteristics	
	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Digitally enabled</i>	Unity	Inclusivity/numbers
	Tactical diversity	Spontaneity
	Strategic capacity	Adaptive resilience
<i>SMO enabled</i>	Inclusivity/numbers	Unity
	Spontaneity	Tactical diversity
	Adaptive resilience	Strategic capacity

Despite a burgeoning body of research on the affordances of digitally networked protest and volumes of work the organizational characteristics of social movements, scant research investigates the two through a comparative lens (Table 5.1). Whether and how the two methods are analytically distinct has yet to be systematically investigated in the digital age, when the tools that can enable mobilization are cheap and strategic protests are rare. As Eggert and Pavan (2014) observe, “We have only begun to explore the complex ways in which technology-enabled, online dynamics affect, implement, or supplement more traditionally studied offline, organizationally based forms of action” (2014:365).

Data and methods

To understand whether and how networked protests differ from their more formally organized counterparts and the political consequences of each one, I employed a sequential mixed methods design. First, I selected a case that provided a unique opportunity to compare mobilization methods in the digital age. Between 2013 and 2016, Brazil saw more

15. Schram (2003) argues that Piven and Cloward’s views on institutional politics are often mischaracterized by critics. Schram notes that the authors’ case study of the welfare movement in particular illustrates the ways in which disruptive protest and conventional politics can become interdependent power repertoires. Nonetheless, this study interrogates Piven and Cloward’s thesis that a politics of organization-free disruption is always “the best political resource that the otherwise politically powerless have” (2003, 718).

protesters take to the streets than in the rest of the world combined (P. Anderson 2016). What began in June 2013 as the urban uprising in São Paulo against a ten-cent bus fare increase described above morphed into a massive and politically ambiguous mobilization against a welter of state and market actors.

Prior to this protest cycle, Brazil was the subject of euphoric praise for the successes of its pro-poor development project. As with most systemic cycles of capital accumulation (Arrighi 2009), however, the commodity supercycle that facilitated a period of significant social gains did not last. Pegged to petroleum and cheap credit, Brazil's economy entered its worst recession on record in 2014. Unemployment doubled and corruption scandals implicated all of the country's major political parties. In 2014, Dilma was reelected by the narrowest margin since the country's re-democratization in 1988, and, less than two years later, she was ousted by Brazil's most conservative congress since the 1964 military coup (Souza and Caram 2014). In 2018, as described in the preceding chapters, Brazilians overwhelmingly elected a far right former army paratrooper to the presidency. Once the largest social democracy in the Americas, Brazil is now led by a cabinet made up of far right ideologues and former military officials. As this brief but eventful timeline demonstrates, Brazil experienced considerable political and economic dislocation over a relatively short period of time, making it a useful case with which to study the relationship between political change and the organizational dynamics of contemporary protest cycles.

In addition, Brazil presents an analytically useful degree of within-case variation at the level of mobilization forms. Between 2005 and 2014, the country went from from having the tenth largest population of internet users to the fourth (BBC 2014). More striking are data on the amount of time Brazilians spend online. One study showed that Brazil ranks third worldwide on this metric, with the average web user spending on average nine hours and 14 minutes connected to the internet each day (Globo 2018). The combination of widespread social media use and a turbulent political conjuncture meant that the protest variants under examination were well represented in a case in which the population was at risk of protest (McAdam and Boudet 2012), offering a rich site for this comparative investigation.

Newspaper data

To examine whether observations from my fieldwork were indicative of larger patterns, I constructed a database of 420 protest events. In anticipation of mass demonstrations, one of Brazil's largest newspapers, *Folha de São Paulo*, assigned journalists to track protest activity on a daily basis in ten cities throughout the country.¹⁶ Newspaper data has been widely used by social scientists in attempts to track protests and social movements (Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008; Wang and Soule 2012; McAdam and Scott 2005). However, researchers have raised serious concerns about the bias and validity inherent in this kind of data collection (Ortiz et al. 2005). Previous research has shown that

16. Personal communication with Cristina Camargo, lead editor for *Folha's* Protestômetro project. According to Brazil's National Association of Newspaper (ANJ), *Folha* had the largest digital and print circulation in 2014, the year in which newspaper data were collected.

only 32 percent of actually occurring protest events are covered, even by local newspapers (Oliver and Meyer 1999). Moreover, as Smith et al. (2001) note, the “motivations, routines, and professional interests” of media gatekeepers “tend to support the status quo” rather than the interests of the protesters (1401). Several features of the database built for this study mitigate the selection and description biases inherent in newspaper data collection.

First, I relied on the considerable human capital expended by *Folha* to cover as many protest events as possible in the period under study. Unlike previous research, which tends to rely on protest coverage that is size or repertoire-dependent, retroactive, or ancillary to their main beat, reporters at *Folha* were preemptively assigned to document protests in Brazil’s most populous cities. There is reason to believe that the universe of protests included in the database somewhat attenuates the underreporting problem. The *Folha* reporting strategy yielded an average of 24.6 protest events per week. This number is reassuringly high compared to comparable protest datasets that rely on retroactive coverage and much broader definitions of collective action. For example, the Dynamics of Collective Action (DOCA) database contains 19.87 events per week in 1965, the year in which the highest number of collective action events was recorded. For all 35 years included in the database, an average of 13.58 collective action events per week were reported (Walker, Martin, and McCarthy 2008:67).

The resulting database also yielded some qualitative indicators of robustness. Event coverage included protests with head counts of just fifteen people and into the tens of thousands. Issues spanned high-profile causes like the anti-World Cup demonstrations to pothole protests on the outskirts of major metropolitan regions. This variation is encouraging because movement scholars have shown that the news media pay more attention to protests that are larger, more disruptive, have more resonant frames, and have the potential for greater policy influence (Amenta et al. 2010). As such, the dataset permits analysis of both positive and negative cases, that is, protests that were large, successful, and went on to influence political developments, as well as failed, sporadic, or short-lived mobilization attempts. To increase description validity (Franzosi 1987), I built a secondary corpus of articles drawing on an additional 27 media outlets that reported on the same events. To match descriptions, I used Google News to systematically search by date, location, and key words.

A final desirable feature of this dataset is that it holds constant one important known causal influence: the political opportunity structure in which the collective action events took place. As noted above, an important strand of the social movement literature demonstrates the role of broader political contexts in enabling or inhibiting mobilization. While longitudinal data spanning decades is preferable for many reasons, the protests in the database were subject to comparable social, political, and economic conditions at the country-level, meaning that variation in protest efficacy would be difficult to explain with reference to national crises or exogenous shocks, as was the case in Goldstone’s (1980) critique of Gamson’s (1975) analysis of 53 protests that took place over a 145-year period.

Ethnographic research

To supplement the broad but thin protest data contained in newspaper databases, I conducted extended fieldwork, which consisted of direct observation at 35 protest events in four cities: Brasília, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.¹⁷ Locations were chosen by a combination of prior knowledge about the geography of social movement activity in Brazil and the distribution of events observed in the database.

During this time, I also attended mass planning assemblies, plenaries, political party conventions, labor union conventions, and monitored protest events' social media presence at daily and sometimes hourly intervals. I conducted 48 field interviews at protest events and 20 semi-structured interviews with an ideologically diverse set of social movement participants active in this protest cycle. These interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed in NVivo through an iterative mix of open and closed coding elaborated below. At protest events, when real-time note-taking was often impossible, I recorded voice memos and sent WhatsApp messages to myself to capture my perceptions of the event size, the profile of the participants, banners, evidence of leadership (or its absence), as well as existing and emergent group structure.

Content analysis and validation procedures

To code the protest events by mobilization type, I utilized a constant comparative method, drawing on relevant research literature and my direct observation at protests (Hesse-Biber 2010). I began by open coding key features of each protest event as I read through the newspaper articles. I did so iteratively, that is, I refined the codes and attributes in accordance with the more textured understanding I was gaining from on-the-ground observation. I observed that several attributes co-occurred: (1) the degree to which protesters relied on social media (a feature that reporters often noted in the newspaper coverage, and which I ascertained by asking people how they learned of the event or systematically searching social media platforms) coincided with the absence of titular leaders; and (2) the presence of formal movement, labor, or political organizations (ascertained by the extent to which protest participants or reporters cited a bounded SMO and the extent to which protest placards, chants, and attire were coordinated by that SMO) were associated with clearly bounded constituencies, e.g. homeless urban workers, landless peasants, indigenous populations, teachers, and so forth.

In order to operationalize these attributes and assess whether or not they mapped on to a larger set of cases, I then constructed a binary set of indicators with which to code the entire corpus of newspaper articles (Table 5.2). All but the fourth indicator in the table—frames—yielded analytically useful variation in the coded dataset. Throughout this process, I repeatedly returning to my field notes, audio files, and interview transcripts in order to assess construct validity (Eisenhardt 1989:536).

17. Fieldwork for this component of the dissertation was conducted over five periods: May-July 2013 (3 months); June-August 2014 (3 months); August 2015 (15 days); August 2016 (15 days); April-June 2017 (3 months) and July-October 2018 (4 months).

Table 5.2: Coding Rules Used to Operationalize Protest Variants

SMO enabled protest		
<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Relevant literature</i>
Coordinating vehicle	Named organization or group that existed for at least one year before (or survived for at least one year after) the protest event cited as convoking group	McCarthy and Zald (2001), Andrews (2004)
Leadership	Individual leaders are identified or identifiable	Morris and Staggenborg (2004), Ganz and McKenna (2018)
Constituency	Coordinating group identifies a constituency, members are distinct from non-members	Edwards and McCarthy (2004), Tschirhart (2006)
Frames	Communication content centers on shared stories or collective action frames	Snow et al. (1992), Benford and Snow (2000)
Digitally enabled protest		
<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Relevant literature</i>
Coordinating vehicle	Social technology (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) cited as convoking source OR public online organizing hub (e.g. event page) is readily identifiable	Bennett and Segerberg (2012:741-2)
Leadership	Anonymous: individual leaders are unidentified and unidentifiable from news report or online platform	Howard and Hussain (2011)
Constituency	Mass-mediated; no guidelines distinguish members from non-members	Castells (2013)
Frames	Communication content centers on personalized stories and travels by way of individually appropriated online memes	Bennett and Segerberg (2013:37-9)

After reading and coding the corpus of articles using these decision rules, it was then possible to sort the database by different variable attributes in order to identify which cases clustered together. There were 40 cases (9.5 percent of the dataset) that scored zeros on all indicators and bore similarities to Piven and Cloward's (1977) conceptualization of "spontaneous... lower-class disruptions" (1977:26), such as unplanned uprisings against

police violence, or groups of residents with no formal affiliation to one another taking action against local authorities with demands about lack of water and sanitation services in their neighborhood. Street protests convoked by trade unions (or other groups of organized workers) accounted for fully half of all events (212 cases) in the database, while those associated a formal movement organizations with identifiable leaders and clear distinctions between members and non-members accounted for 13.8 percent (58 cases). Finally, I classified 20.7 percent (87 cases) of the protest actions as born online, or digitally enabled, because they were associated with a readily accessible social media platform or hashtag rather than with a formally incorporated SMO. Nearly all of the events in this category kept its leaders anonymous and had no clear definition of a constituency.¹⁸

To estimate inter-rater reliability, I trained two additional coders, both Brazilian doctoral candidates familiar with the country’s political and social movement landscape. After an approximately one-hour training, they were asked to independently code a random subsample of 90 articles describing 45 protest events. I assessed inter-rater reliability using Fleiss’ Kappa, which was .845 ($p < .001$). As an additional test, I asked the raters to code protest coverage of events that I had personally attended, and at which I had interviewed respondents about mobilizing methods. In all but two cases, the predictions of the coders based on the newspaper coverage aligned with respondents’ answers to interview questions about the degree to which the protester had been mobilized primarily via digital networks or via a formal SMO. In both outlier cases, respondents at the protest were peripherally involved; one was a tag-along at a SMO-backed event and told me he was accompanying a “crush [he] was trying to win over” and the other had spontaneously decided to join the protest while on his work break and could therefore not speak to the antecedent mobilizing methods.¹⁹

In addition to identifying most of the protests’ mobilizing mechanisms, I was able to identify protest head counts for 35.9 percent of events by triangulating police reports, newspaper data, and my own observations from fieldwork. Of the 151 protests with reported participation counts, 32 included multiple estimates. Most were consonant with one another, but where they were discrepant I calculated a simple average of the two to estimate the size of the protest. Despite these precautions, the resulting repository—as with all newspaper datasets—is neither a full census nor a random sample of all protest events. I discuss the limitations inherent in this research design further below.

5.2 Organizational dynamics of a modern protest cycle

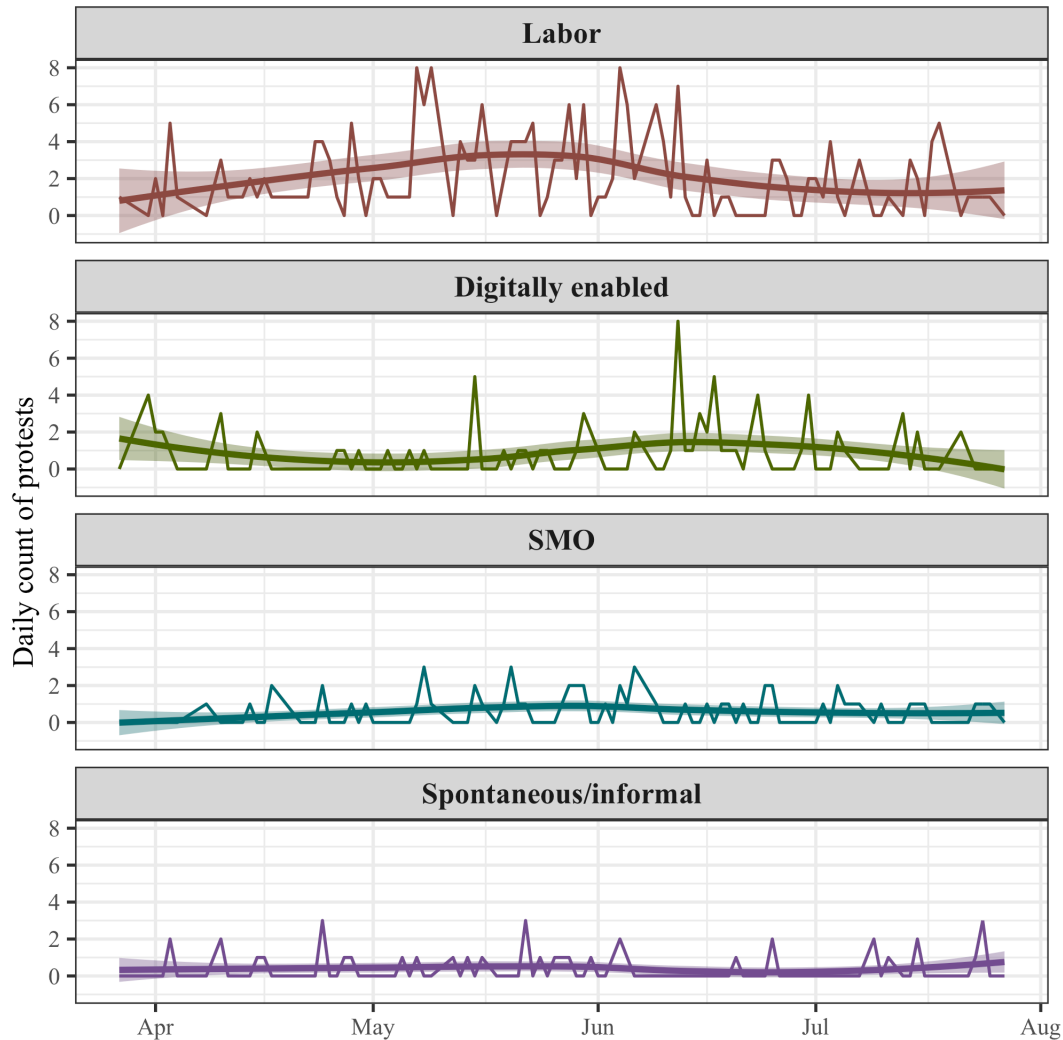
Four trends are worth noting in the coded output of the newspaper database. First, as shown in Figure 5.1, the modal event was organized by a formal entity with clear membership criteria and with named or identifiable leaders. This casts some doubt on recent scholarship that has sounded the death-knell of formal organizations owing to “the infor-

18. There were 23 protests (5.4 percent of cases) without sufficient information to classify using this coding scheme, so I dropped them from the analysis at this stage.

19. Interviews on June 12 and June 18, 2014.

mation technology revolution” (Castells 2010:28). In the year after the mass protests, it was SMOs and unions that took up the mantle of protesters’ myriad demands for improvements in education, transportation, health, housing, safety, and sanitation infrastructures.

Figure 5.1: Daily Count of Protest Events in Brazil, April-July, 2014



Organization-enabled protests led by unions lent continuity to the most prominent demands made at the mass protests one year prior. One protest sign from June 2013 read, “Is your child sick? Take him to the [soccer] stadium!” in reference to country’s dilapidated public health care infrastructure. A year later, public sector physicians took to the streets to pressure the mayor to increase the number of slots available for doctors on state entrance exams to meet patient needs. When their demands were not met, they entered into a 15-day strike. In Belo Horizonte, after multiple street mobilizations and months of negotiation—including 11 meetings with the mayor’s office—the teachers union won a 6.8 percent salary increase, a ten percent food stamp increase, and a modest orthodontics plan. In Rio de Janeiro, “light industry” construction workers made the tactical decision to be reassigned to the “heavy industry” category—a reallocation that would yield both a

wage increase and bring their remuneration closer in line with the dangers and time pressure of building the 2016 Olympic Village (Neto and Lo-Bianco 2014).

Many of these labor-led actions were unglamorous and went unremarked, but were ultimately successful in achieving their immediate material aims. Even as the anti-World Cup protests garnered the most media attention, by far the most numerous of the protest types were those that were formally organized with socioeconomic claims, most often labor-led street protests. Not all of these actions, however, were limited to redistributive claims that would only benefit union members directly (Ahlquist and Levi 2013). A public school teacher I interviewed made this point explicit:

EM: When did the teachers strike start?

P3: In May of this year

EM: What was the chronology? What happened during this time?

P3: Our strike was declared illegal. The said it's a breach of constitutional principles. [But] there are professors who are not being paid, who are being fired, discounted, who lost their school licenses, and teachers on the periphery who haven't been paid at all! This is all within the bounds of the law, it's permitted that they do this!

EM: So what are the specific demands and grievances of the strike? Salary, in the main?

P3: No. The primary issue is not a salary increase. Our struggle is for quality public education.

Second, as shown in Figure 5.1, the number of cases coded as digitally-enabled spiked during the World Cup, reaching a peak on the opening day of the tournament. Meanwhile, coverage of offline-organized events declined. Three features characterized these events: attention as a measure of efficacy, reaction to an externally generated opportunity, and diverse demands.

Attention as efficacy. In interviews conducted at digitally enabled protests in this period, respondents told me that they measured their success by media attention and virality. In one exchange, I asked:

EM: Do you think these protests are effective in putting pressure on the government?

P4: Yes. Very effective. Because it's a FIFA event, you know? Our cause is getting out to the whole world. I think its extremely effective.

Another protester disagreed that the anti-Cup protests were effective, but also used publicity as a barometer of success. "Effective—no, but doing nothing doesn't help at all either. At least [these protests] are being publicized."²⁰ Many of the protests' Facebook

20. Interview on July 13, 2014.

pages gave users instructions for how to invite “all of your friends. . . it only takes 30 seconds. . . Lets make FIFA tremble!” an online event description read. Participants at these events tended to prioritize sharing and disseminating information about the protests and told me that they expected little in the way of material concessions.

Diverse demands. While the external trigger for many of the digitally enabled events shown in Figure 5.2 was World Cup spending, protesters levied a series of seemingly discontinuous demands. Both the newspaper coverage and ethnographic data reveal protesters’ indignation directed at an array of targets. Most of my field recordings feature a cacophony of chants in the background that expressed what Bringel (2013) termed a “politics of outrage.” At one protest, demonstrators chants ranged from indicting the media for biased coverage to denouncing violence in the Gaza Strip:

Globo! Fascist! You are the terrorist!

Youth of Iraq, Palestine! Your struggle continues!

Don’t get it wrong! Rio de Janeiro will not host the [World Cup] final!

One female protester enumerated an array of demands:

P5: Here, teachers are badly played. There’s fascism. There are issue of race, and also gay, lesbian, transgender rights and such. Issues related to work, the health question, which is precarious. The issue of housing and evictions. Evictions, evictions, evictions.

A respondent at a different protest that had also been coordinated by an anonymously-run Facebook page was setting up what he told me was a “trampoline for democracy.” When asked to describe who was going to jump where and for what, he said:

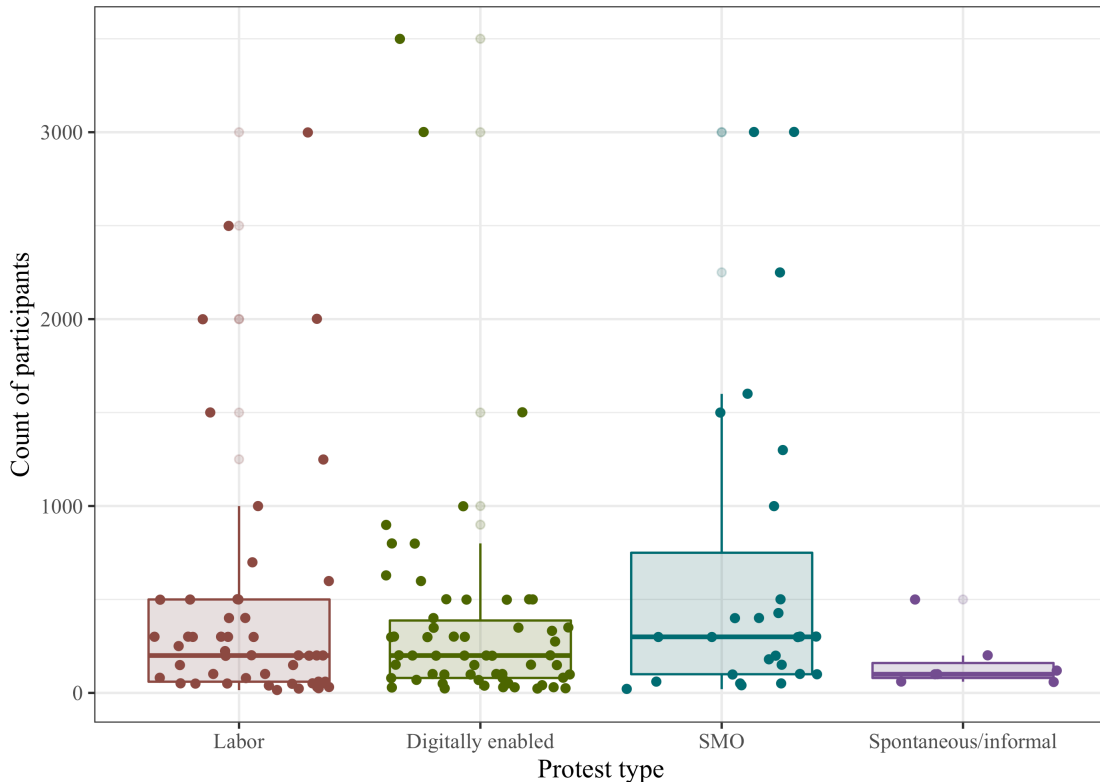
P6: The idea is to jump toward democracy, you know? It’s to make the trampoline a . . . a lucid demonstration, you see? A lucid way to criticize the state of exception.

The claims were multivocal at the level of the protest event as well as at the level of the individual. I encountered one protester—who always wore the national soccer team’s green and yellow jersey—at three different protest events. At one protest, he held a sign that said, “Where are the steel beams?” a reference to twenty tons of steel that mysteriously went missing from a municipal construction site. At the second, his sign read #OccupyEstelita, a reference to a protest occupation in the northeastern state of Pernambuco (Table 5.4). At the third, his sign asked, this time in English for the benefit of foreign observers: “Where are Amarildo’s bones?” in reference a bricklayer from of the city’s largest favela who had gone missing while in police custody. Twelve police officers were later charged with Amarildo’s torture, death, and disappearance.²¹ The list of grievances at these events was long, but exogenous triggers around which to mobilize—such as a critical election or a megaevent that draws international attention—are not. This mismatch speaks to a limitations of reducing a protest movement’s strategy to the singular tactic

21. Field notes from June and July, 2014.

of reactive protest, as also happened at the alter-globalization protests in Seattle (Levi 2006; Smith 2001). When the high-profile event to which protesters were reacting was over, demonstrators’ motivation and urgency subsided.

Figure 5.2: Count of Participants Disaggregated by Protest Type



Third, of the five events with the largest headcount in the protest database, two were organized by SMOs and two by unions. After removing these five outlier cases (described in Table 5.4), I plotted the remaining 146 cases that had reported headcount. SMO enabled events had the highest variance (Figure 5.2). The average number of participants was considerably larger ($N=2,403$) compared to that of labor ($N=766$) and online-to-offline events ($N=841$), which suggest that the latter is not necessarily superior method for generating large crowds as the literature predicts. The median number of protesters at each of labor, online-to-offline, and SMO backed events was, however, identical ($N=200$).²²

5.2.1 Counting protesters, or making protest count?

More revealing than protest size were qualitative experiences of the people who attended the events. Cross-referencing news reports with event pages, it was possible to quantify attrition, a metric organizers often refer to as the “flake rate” (Issenberg 2012).

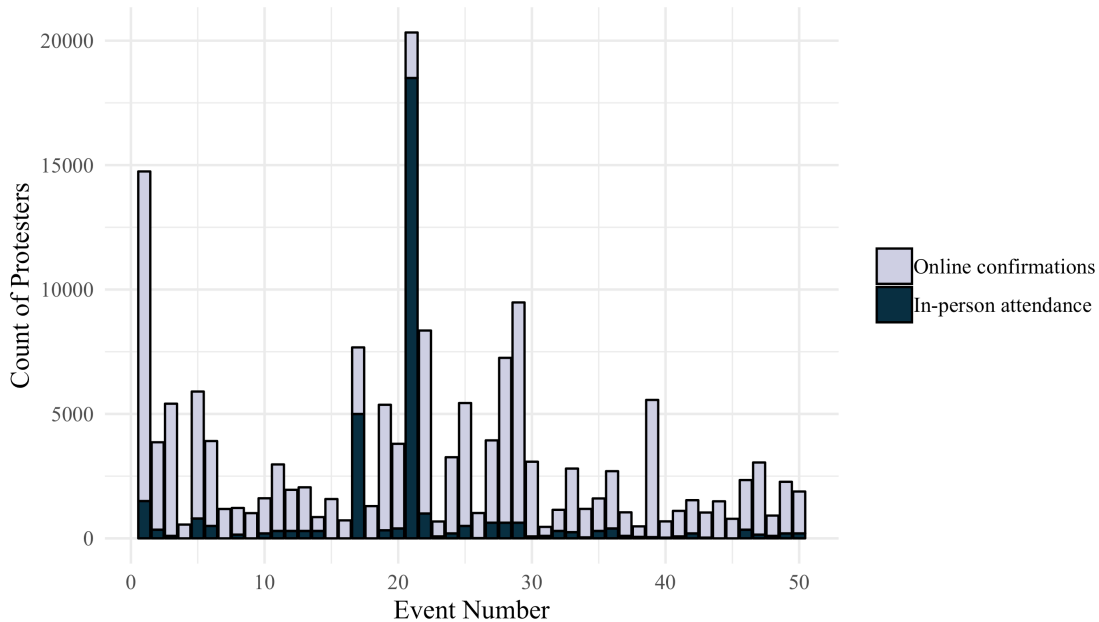
²² Informal and spontaneous protests had an average reported headcount of 164 and a median of 100 participants at each event.

Table 5.3: Protests With 5,000+ Participants

Protest type	Size	Short case description
SMO enabled	18,500	The MTST organized a mass protest to demand public housing on land it had occupied in São Paulo near the Itaquerao soccer stadium, contributing to 156 kilometers of traffic congestion in the city. Ten times as many people attended the march as had confirmed their attendance on the movement's Facebook page. A year later, Dilma's government approved BRL\$ 33M in funds from a federal housing program for the MTST to purchase the Itaquerao land and build 2,650 housing units.
SMO enabled	12,500	The MTST and the Urban Resistance Front marched six kilometers in the rain, shutting down two major thoroughfares in São Paulo. Protesters demanded better housing and health care and compensation for the workers who had been killed during the construction of World Cup soccer stadiums. Fewer than 3,000 Facebook users had confirmed their attendance for the march.
Labor protest	9,000	The Unified Workers Central (CUT) led a sun-drenched three-kilometer march in the central region of São Paulo. They demanded, among other things, wage parity for men and women and criticized legislation that would facilitate worker outsourcing. The law was approved by Congress in 2015 and went into effect in 2017.
Labor protest	8,000	A municipal teachers union (SINPEEM) held a public meeting to vote to maintain the strike it had begun three weeks prior, after which they staged a protest march on city hall. Demands included a wage campaign, class size reduction, and school safety, among others. The mayor conceded to a 15 percent salary increase, but SINPEEM disagreed with the terms and continued to strike.
Digitally enabled	5,000	A protest movement known as #ocupeestelita and inspired by Occupy Wall Street mobilized thousands of people opposed to the construction of 13 residential towers in a historic area of Recife. The occupation-protest received widespread national and international news coverage during the World Cup and gained strength after videos of a police crackdown went viral online. After five years of protracted legal battles, luxury apartments are now for sale on the waterfront lots, though developers made several concessions to #ocupeestelita, including reducing the maximum height of the buildings, and preserving some historical landmarks.

Figure 5.3 reports the difference between the number of people who confirmed their attendance online as compared to the estimated number of people who showed up at that same event.²³ On average, the number of people who turned out represented about one-eighth of the number of people who had confirmed their attendance online. This, I argue, is a evidence of digital decoupling in social movements, a phenomenon that helps explain the gulf between online action and offline collective residue.

Figure 5.3: Online Confirmations vs. In-person Attendance at Protests



5.2.2 Digital decoupling

The outliers in Figure 5.3, events 17 and 21, were two cases that were protests organized by the MTST in São Paulo that also had online event pages. In the first, the movement had posted the planned action on their Facebook page and received 2,674 confirmations for a protest at which an estimated 5,000 people participated, and 1,829 confirmations for a second act—the largest in the database—at which an estimated 18,500 people attended. The effect of the average 87 per attrition rate at the rest of the protests was palpable. A foreign correspondent told me:

I remember noticing that the turnout numbers were usually about 10-20 percent of the ‘RSVP-ed’ numbers on the Facebook events, which at first really misled us reporters. . . until we figured out the pattern. I was translating for [another] journalist at a protest and I remember him saying, ‘You know it’s a bad sign when there are more journalists at a protest than protesters.’

23. Only 50 cases are reported, in chronological order, because not all of the digitally enabled events in the database had an estimated head count. A number of events had multiple online event pages. I only used the one with the most confirmations, which means that the difference between the number of people who RSVP’d yes online and the number of people who participated offline is likely underestimated.

In most of the digitally enabled protests observed in this dataset, there was rarely a quorum of even casual participants.²⁴

“Militants on Facebook alone”

Facebook event pages became holograms of offline protest activity. They served as a way for social media users to passively indicate support for the events without needing to overcome the barriers to attend in person. This pattern demotivated those who did. One protester in Recife posted the following message after finding herself one of only a dozen people who attended a protest. She wrote in the passive voice to refer to how the event had been coordinated:

F1: I'm am ashamed of what happened today!!!! Pô, it was through this group that it was agreed that the protest would happen today, and that was publicized on this [Facebook] page. I arrived there, myself and another person, at 10h20min. And there was no one! I posted 'Anybody here?' One person said he was there, then he arrived, then another eight people, and finally another two, and I asked others where the organizers themselves were. Why do 1,500 confirm their presence when only 12 people show up? I deplore the lack of honesty that you guys showed today, for confirming that you would be there when in fact you weren't. THERE IS NO reason for you to have lied.

Most of the online event pages featured similar diatribes written by disappointed protesters. In Belo Horizonte, one Facebook user asked, “Where were these 7,600 people hiding on the 12th? You come here, you say you're going to come, and you think everything is resolved.” For one protest in Fortaleza, 17,957 people were invited, 1,008 confirmed attendance, and only 30 showed up. “The giant has hibernated, all of these protests are complete fiascos,” wrote one person on the event page.

A third comment on the same page—which garnered 53 likes—read: “We've known since 2007 that Brazil would host the Cup in 2014. And yet, 30 people turned out. This type of protest shows, once again, just how disorganized we are.” Another user asked “Why do [people] perform this ridiculous charade and confirm attendance at an event they don't go to? Why do they want to be militants on Facebook alone?” There were nearly identical conversations on other cities' protest event pages.

Roughly 50 people came to one protest I attended in Rio de Janeiro for which more than 5,000 Facebook users had indicated online that they would attend. The more than 200 policemen in riot gear—who protest participants disparagingly called RoboCops in reference to their military-style fatigues and combat helmets—far outnumbered the protesters.

24. Because social movement scholarship tends to select cases retrospectively on the dependent variable of success (Rojas 2016), we lack numeric data that would provide analytic leverage to compare this finding to a set of traditionally organized events. Klandermans and Oegema (1987)'s study of the Dutch peace movement represents one such study, however. In it, they were able to estimate the gap between the intent to participate and turnout. Although nearly three quarters of the population agreed with the movement's goals, only ten percent said they intended to participate and four percent actually participated in the mass protest (524).

When police arrested two demonstrators suspected of carrying Molotov cocktails, a twenty-one year old female protester I was interviewing burst into tears and said:

P7: It's all over. Last year we thought this could turn into something, but it's nothing, a disgrace. Everyone went on Facebook and said they would come but they didn't. This is my last protest.²⁵

Digital decoupling helps explain protesters' unwillingness to participate in future actions. Early critics of the internet's effects on collective action warned that the low barrier for entry that social media affords results in an abundance of casual participants, rather than the kind of committed leaders movements need to sustain themselves (Dahlberg 2001). As these data show, in addition to lacking the enforcement capacity to negotiate with adversaries, the born-online protests I studied lacked enforcement capacity among their own supporters. Inflated expectations followed by dismal turnout at the events had a demobilizing effect on would-be movement participants.

5.2.3 The tyranny of structurelessness revisited

In anticipation of what was expected to be a large and highly disruptive protest during the final match of the World Cup (see Figures E.1 and E.2), police conducted a sting operation and arrested 23 activists. Investigators claimed that activists had formed an armed gang that planned to detonate homemade bombs. The operation was based on a 2,000-page police report in which one of the potential suspects was listed as someone named "Bakunin." According to the report, investigators did not know that Bakunin was a Russian revolutionary who died in 1876, not the code name for a protest leader (Brisolla and Vettorazzo 2014).²⁶ In other words, a group of people claiming to be Bakunin-inspired anarchists constituted a small group making covert decisions about the direct action they planned to take at the protests.²⁷

5.2.4 Reactive dispersal

In spite of the arrests, the protest still took place just blocks away from Maracanã, the largest soccer stadium in Brazil. More than 2,500 people had confirmed attendance at the protest online; roughly 150 people turned out. These scheduled demonstrations were convoked on anonymous online organizing hubs by two anti-party and anarchist group.

25. Interview on June 20, 2014.

26. The report included intercepted messages in which defendants argued about whether or not political party activists should be allowed to participate in protest events. "Bakunin would be ashamed of you," one activist wrote to another, who believed that party activists should be allowed, during the disagreement. Later, police interrogated a witness about Bakunin and listed him as a "potential suspect" (Fórum 2014)

27. Not all members of the group agreed with the plan. One activist, whose calls were wiretapped before the arrests, was recorded expressing his objections. "There are many people who are being tricked," he said in the intercepted phone conversation. "They'll go to Saens Peña and get beat up. Is this right? It's not right... it's not right," he said in the recording (Globo 2014).

The protest ended less than thirty minutes after it began after half a dozen demonstrators charged a police line. The police, clad in black tactical gear, responded by throwing tear gas, detonating concussion grenades, and firing rubber bullets into the crowd. Dozens fled to the nearest metro station, into which police threw tear gas canisters that released bright blue clouds of smoke that billowed into the train cars. Police then kettled the protesters who hadn't been as lucky to escape.²⁸

Reactive dispersal of this kind was common at protests that relied on digital tools as their primary mobilizing method. Multiple interviewees and media reports attributed the dissolution of the protests to “the Black Bloc,” or what one informant referred to as the “breakey busters” and another the “black blocs.” Black bloc is not an organization but a protest tactic associated with anarchism, in which participants wear black clothes and face-concealing items in order to protect their anonymity during protest events (Igarapé 2013). In the Brazilian demonstrations, protesters who adopted this tactic occasionally engaged in acts of vandalism or direct confrontation with the police. In Belo Horizonte, Facebook users wrote with dismay about a protest that similarly ended in tumult:

F4: I always come [to this Facebook page] to comment with my support of the demonstrations, but honestly, smashing UEMG [the state university] and the Fine Arts [a movie theater]? I didn't see any organization, I only saw people thinking it was a party and that they should break EVERYTHING! Who do you guys want to reach?... Do you think they're going to take our grievance seriously this way? We are dealing with organized groups (PM) [military police] that use combat tactics!

In response, a user wrote: “It's difficult to be organized when you're getting beat up,” to which a third person wrote: “I think it's the organizers jobs to think about it, after all their wrongheaded decisions put people at risk,” he said. Another user argued that the central question being overlooked was one of strategy:

F5: This is making me angry. First of all, because this unruly aggression, left to itself, never leads to anything except shit. And second, for a strategic question, which is: it's impossible that a protest that wants to attract and mobilize the population tolerate attitudes that arouse the most conservative tendencies and accentuate the inertia of the population. I don't want to protest alongside the group, because it expels, drives away, causes fear in people when what we really need to do is invite them to be in the streets with us.

Similar comments were posted on other Facebook pages, like this exchange in Fortaleza. Users speculated that the masked protesters wearing black were infiltrators:

F6: Guys, my sincere account of yesterday's protest is that it was a failure... we have to invest more in assemblies and awareness-raising than in street protests.

F7: There are people who are infiltrated... some really must be being paid.

F8: I noticed this in the latest protests and I went and gave a heads up. If [the

28. Field notes from July 13, 2014.

vandalism] demotivates people who are at the protests, imagine those who are not [at the protests]!

F9: I am completely ashamed and we urgently need a strategy. We need to apologize to the public and make clear that that *oba-oba* does not represent us.

F10: ... [I am] ashamed of today's protest. It was the worst of them all. Truth be told.

F11: I'm outta this group, this organization is an embarrassment.

In addition to alienating supporters, the structural vacuum at the protests left the demonstrators vulnerable to cooptation by far more organized adversaries: law enforcement, the media, and proliferating New Right social movements. The activists' lawyers, however, used the protesters' lack of organization and titular leaders to refute the legal charges brought against them:

[They] cannot be considered an organized gang. There is nothing more disorganized than these protests. They don't have leadership, they are not part of a [political] party, and there's no negotiation among them. . . [the prosecutors] are trying to invent an organization where there is nothing. (Barón 2014)

5.2.5 Signification by adversaries

As with Castells' (2013) description of movements that have "no people behind [them]" (111), this anti-authority approach appeals to what some have described as the Left's longstanding fear of structure and authority (Samelson 1986; Dixon 2012), which Freeman (1972) described as the tyranny of structurelessness. Organizational vacuums, she warned, are quickly filled by individuals with the money, know-how, and interest to take advantage of them because accountability and anonymity are negatively correlated. She observed a similar dynamic among what she called women's liberation movement, "stars":

[B]ecause there are no official spokespeople nor any decision-making body that the press can query when it wants to know the movements position on a subject, these women ['stars'] are perceived as the spokespeople. Thus, whether they want to or not, whether the movement likes it or not, women of public note are put in the role of spokespeople by default. . . As long as the movement does not select its own spokeswomen, such women will be placed in that role by the press and the public, regardless of their own desires. (238)

It was not only the police who built a case that a core group of people were behind the leaderless protests convoked online. The media, too, wanted to put a face to the tactic, which they found in a 28-year old woman named Elisa Quadros. One journalist critical of the dominant media narrative wrote,

To the delight of the tabloids, the face of the black blocs is a petite brunette, pretty, close-cropped hair [and], as if that weren't enough, her collaborators-in-chaos gave her the nickname Tinker Bell. Known until the other day only by her Facebook followers, Elisa Quadros was profiled in the newspaper *Zero*

Hora, was the subject of a long article in *Globo*, and glory of all glories, was the cover of *Veja*'s Sunday magazine. (L. M. Almeida 2014)

By contrast, the organizational structure of the MTST legitimated the movement's national coordinator, Guilherme Boulos, whose photo also came to be splashed across the cover of news outlets. In one interview, he explained:

There is no such thing as a social movement that doesn't dialogue with public power. But there are different ways to engage in this dialogue. You can do so on your knees or standing up. Dialoguing on your knees means you are dependent on exchanging favors, electoral support, and the like. This is not what we [MTST] does. We dialogue standing up. Our dialogue is based on the mobilization of thousands of families throughout Brazil. This is how you maintain a sustained and legitimate dialogue. (E. Carvalho 2014)

As with the other MTST leaders I interviewed, Boulos distinguished power concentrated in organizational leadership that is legitimated by the movement's social base ("thousands of families throughout Brazil") as opposed to legitimated by the movement's opposition in exchange for support at the ballot box ("exchanging favors, electoral support, and the like"). Four years later, Boulos went on to win the presidential nomination of Brazil's most well-established socialist party, PSOL. He was one of seven candidates to appear in a nationally televised debate on the eve of the election, and the only one to spend the majority of his airtime forcefully denouncing the rise of authoritarian politics in Brazil.²⁹

Because of their organizational vacuum, many of the digitally-enabled protests were unable to project a similar shared and "worthy" narrative (Tilly 2006b). The task instead that then fell to the police, the media, and reactionary counter-movements. Four years after the 23 activists were arrested, a judge sentenced them to between five and seven years in prison (Cruz 2018). Sympathizers launched a solidarity campaign; roughly 100 people attended the kickoff event (Freire 2018).

5.2.6 Post-protest articulation processes

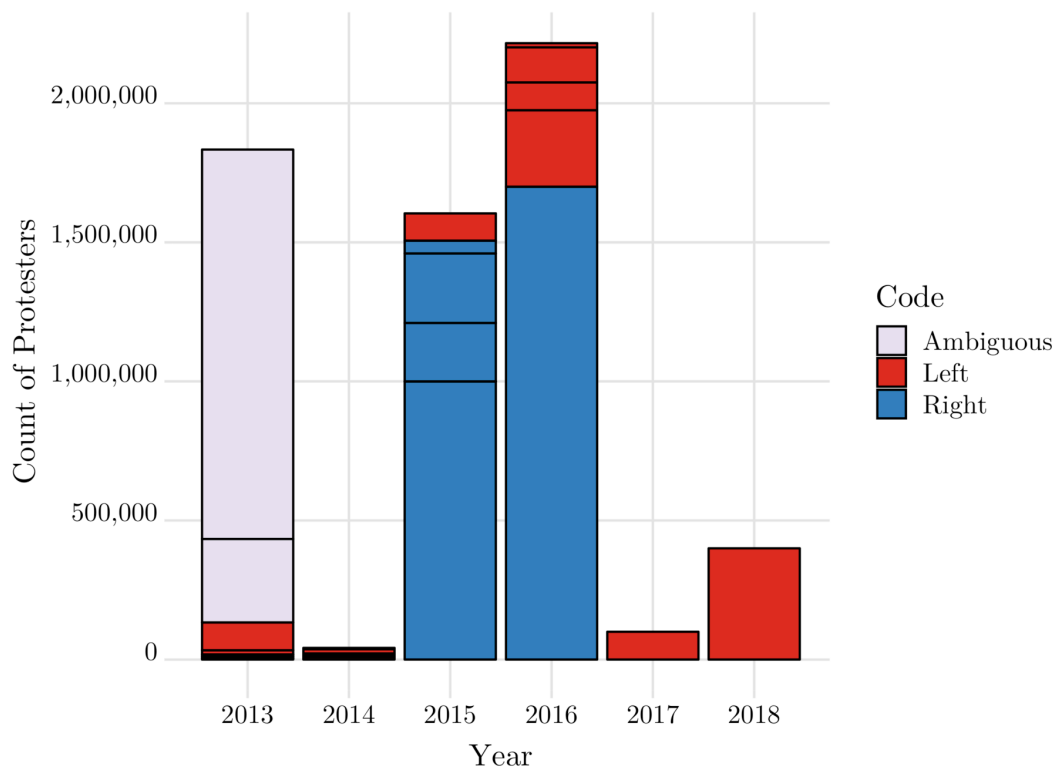
The June Days were not the last—or even the biggest—protests in Brazil's most recent cycle of collective action. On March 15, 2015, somewhere between 210,100 (according to *Datafolha*) and one million (according to the military police) people marched in São Paulo, calling for the impeachment of PT president Dilma Rousseff. A year later, on March 13, 2016—the zenith of the pro-impeachment protests in Figure 5.4—an estimated 3.6 million people took to the streets nationwide (Globo 2016).³⁰ It was the largest political demonstration in Brazil's history (Rossi 2016). The claims and composition of the people who were mobilized for these protests differed markedly from those of 2013. Using a real-time random sampling technique, *Datafolha* (2016a) reported that 77 percent

29. Field note from October 5, 2018.

30. *Datafolha* estimated 500,000 demonstrators in the São Paulo protest (Folha 2016) and the military police 1.4 million.

of protesters self-identified as white, two-thirds belonged to Brazil’s top income strata (classes A or B), and nearly 80 percent had college degrees.

Figure 5.4: Right-Wing Mobilizations in the Wake of June 2013



The shift in claims—from free transportation in June 2013 to the ouster of the left-leaning government—was marked. As one account of “the Brazilian Spring that never arrived” put it:

[T]he shift from June 2013 to today is jarring, even painful to recall. Time seemed to slow down during those heady days, which for progressives might have led to a brighter future in one of the world’s most unequal countries. Instead, they opened a path for right-wing groups to reinforce, rather than challenge, establishment politicians, leaving the left in ruins. (Bevins 2018)

Between 2013 and 2018, right wing groups sprung up and consolidated. It only took a few weeks for adversaries of the leftist MPL movement to attempt to coopt the June protests. No fewer than seven Facebook pages cloned the MPL’s online hub, replacing their radical demand for free transit with diametrically opposed claims (Onofre 2013). The two largest conservative groups to emerge in this period adopted names and slogans that were direct allusions to the June Days. One of them, *Vem Pra Rua*, turned into a formal SMO, taking its name from one of the most common chants of 2013. Their primary causes were listed as “political ethics,” an “unbloated” (*desinchado*) state, and the unseating of the PT government.

Another, the Free Brazil Movement (MBL) took over a dormant Facebook page named in response to the MPL (the movement that had instigated the bus fare protests). In 2017, I visited the MBL headquarters in São Paulo to better understand their origins, internal structure, and protest strategies. When I arrived, I was greeted by two intimidating dogs and questioned about Berkeley's left-leaning politics. After building rapport, I was allowed to interview the titular leaders of the movement. One—who was elected to Congress in 2018 as the fourth highest vote-getter in São Paulo—told me how MBL immediately leveraged the impeachment protests to pressure politicians:

Kim: So there was the [mass protest on March] 13th [2016] and then we started to work more in Brasília, because it was time to flip the congressmen. So we spoke with leaders of the opposition, we talked to congressional leaders to understand which were the key votes that we needed to flip in order to get the impeachment. So we sat down with the evangelical caucus and the ruralist [agribusiness] caucus, the two primary ones that were against the government, who were articulating. . . And we were able to unite the evangelical caucus and the agribusiness caucus in a bloc that was, shall we say, supra-partisan, with our movement and with business associations and such to pressure congressmen who were on the fence. So, throughout the country, we put billboards in the cities where these congressmen had been elected [saying], 'Hey! This congressman is on the fence! He's against the country!' and such. . . [in one case] in front of the school where [the congressman's] son studied.

EM: At this point, did you have local leadership?

Kim: Yes.

EM: What was the infrastructure? How did you coordinate them?

Kim: Throughout this whole process, people were sending messages to our Facebook page, so we created WhatsApp groups with the people who were from the same city. So if there wasn't an MBL nucleus in that city, the first one who got in touch and proved that they could organize became the local leader. . . We also had [a WhatsApp group] with the coordinators. We have that still today, a group with all of the coordinators at the state and city levels, both for protests and other types of actions.³¹

In this way, the MBL leaders, unlike Elisa Quadros, sought out and were accepted by the mass media as the pro-impeachment protests' spokespersons, gaining narrative control of a moment and a movement. These data show how the strategic articulation processes that happen in the wake of unexpected events can be more important than the events themselves.

31. Interview on June 1, 2017.

Discussion

Using a longitudinal mixed methods design, this study characterized, differentiated, and traced the political implications of different forms of protest in the digital age. In so doing, this chapter makes three contributions to the study of contentious politics. The first is theoretical and methodological. Even though a rich literature has demonstrated that grassroots strength and strategic capacity mediate the political, economic, and cultural impacts of movements, the meso-level dynamics of protest events are rarely specified, let alone treated as sites of variation worth explaining on their own terms. Instead of treating the protest events as organizational black boxes, the iterative research design used here allowed me develop a conceptual typology that permits systematic assessment of the features of protest events in the digital age (Table 5.2).

Second, I offered an empirical illustration of five mechanisms that help explain the medium-term outcomes of different protest variants: absorptive capacity, digital decoupling, reactive dispersal, signification by adversaries, and post-protest articulation. This family of mechanisms builds on a longstanding tradition in the social movement literature that addresses the relationship between formal organization, protest movements, and movement outcomes (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). At the same time, it offers a corrective to several widely held premises about how both political opportunity structures and digital networks enable or enfeeble collective action. I review each of these correctives in turn.

When mobilization creates opportunities

The findings uphold Piven and Cloward (1977, 1995)'s contention that mass mobilization can precede the emergence of leaders or an organization. In traditional social movements, the two parts tend to be temporally reversed (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald [1996] 2008:13). In contrast to the predictions of political process theory, this research showed how mobilization can beget political opportunities in addition to the other way around. This finding refutes the expectation that "group organization is argued to be the major determinant of mobilization potential" (Jenkins 1983:527).

This reformulation of protest in the digital age is consistent with Kurzman (1996)'s study of the Iranian Revolution. As with the structural position of the Shah prior the the revolution, the ruling party in Brazil was in an advantageous position before the mass protests.³² Kurzman therefore argued that the emergence of the revolution can not always be explained by the state's structural vulnerabilities (164). What remains unaccounted for in Kurzman's insightful revision to the classical theory is why it was that Iran's clerical leaders, rather than the anti-imperialist and Marxist revolutionaries whose oral histories Kurzman draws on in his study, emerged victorious in the post-revolutionary period. Similar questions remain for more contemporary cases, such as the military-judicial seizure of power in Egypt that followed protesters' ouster of Mubarak (Tugal 2013), and, on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, the rise of Spain's *Podemos* party in the aftermath

32. Rouseff had a 79 percent approval rating three months before the protests' outbreak (Campanerut 2013).

of the indignados protests (Errejon and Mouffe 2016). This set of cases bolsters one of the central arguments in this dissertation, namely that the articulation processes that happen in the wake of mass uprisings should not be censored from studies of political change, are a function of strategic organization, and may be more explanatory than the ruptures themselves.

In Brazil, the June protests became a political Rorschach test. Absent vehicles with which to articulate constituencies in the post-protest phase, the amorphous demonstrations were easily coopted by the protesters' more strategic and organized counterparts like the MBL. Thus, even as evidence mounts that organizational deficits do not nullify the possibility of political mobilization, this research builds on an equally compelling body of evidence suggests that such deficits can hamstring protesters' efficacy after the protest wave is over (Tufekci 2017).

Digital tools and the collective action problem

Second, the data show that digital tools may exacerbate rather than solve collective action problems. This finding runs counter to the literature that suggests that large-scale virtual networks attenuate the challenges inherent in mass mobilization. Low and unpredictable levels of turnout at protest marches are hardly new phenomena. As Klandermans (1984) wrote when social movement literature was in its infancy, "*Persons will have to decide to participate at a point where they do not know whether others will participate*" (585, emphasis in original). Some scholars of social movements in the contemporary era, however, believed that this problem receded with the introduction of digital tools. Social media were thought to have lowered the costs (in terms of time and money) of sharing information and signaling commitment. Hanna (2017) summarizes one view:

Digital tools are often able to solve the collective action problem—we can avoid the problem of pluralistic ignorance and preference falsification under authoritarian regimes because we have semi-public guarantees that a sufficient number of people will attend a protest. This avoids the social costs of being the only one who shows up and the political and embodied costs of encountering state repression and violence.

This study showed, however, that some measures of accountability beyond "semi-public guarantee[s]" in the form of online RSVPs are needed to compel members to act in ways that are aligned with their expressed preferences online. Virtual confirmations were virtually meaningless. Anonymous online mobilizing lacks the social pressure mechanisms that more traditionally organized groups can use to apply to non-contributing actors (Ostrom 1990). These social sanctioning mechanisms were not operative in the atomized, digitally-enabled protests studied in this case. The evidence thus corroborates Han's (2014) finding that the ongoing practice of relational organizing—as opposed to sporadic mobilizing alone—is a necessary but insufficient condition for movement power.

A second expectation of the literature on born-online social movements held that social media-fueled protests have hydra-like qualities (Farah 2014), which enable them to be more agile and resilient than conventional SMOs. In his review of Bennett and Segerberg

(2013), King writes that “If there is a big takeaway from [the authors’] empirical chapters, it is that crowds are more inclusive, flexible, and adaptive than organizations, and this is reflected in online networks” (B. G. King 2014:970). The evidence from Brazil shows the opposite, namely, that protests with these characteristics were less able to adapt in the absence of the leaders and organizational resources necessary for shaping the strategic and tactical orientation of the movement. Instead, I found that the the velocity and volume of online activity that left little offline residue proved to be vulnerability. In short-circuiting the work of crafting, executing, and evaluating a longer-term strategy, the protests lacked what Tufekci (2107) called “network internalities,” resulting in short-lived, maladaptive, and episodic mass mobilizations.

Spontaneity and political strategy

The third contribution of this chapter is to provide a partial explanation of the substantive puzzle of how the political terrain in contemporary Brazil shifted so dramatically and so decisively over the five-year period under study. Consistent with what Wolfson (2014) describes as the new “Cyber Left,” I document how many of the progressive actors who took to the streets in this period had non-existent collective decision-making structures, weak links to a base to which they were accountable, and limited strategic capacity (Ganz 2000). Many of the challengers who made claims on the state “dismissed, a priori, centralized power and structures of accountability and leadership of any kind” (Wolfson 2014:24).³³ Gramsci foresaw the dangers of eschewing structure and leadership in favor of spontaneous uprisings of this kind. Writing from his prison cell in fascist Italy, he warned that failing to give “so-called spontaneous movements” like June “conscious leadership” and “[insert] them into politics” can have “extremely serious consequences,” including inciting and making room for reactionary counterrevolutions (Gramsci [1971] 2012:199), as happened in Brazil.

5.3 Alternative explanations and future research

Classification. Future research is needed to address some of the limitations of this study. First, the coding scheme described above relies on crude indicators of the extent to which protest events were organized by a formal SMO. Digitally enabled and SMO-enabled are not pure or objective forms, but rather theoretical constructs. Although classification is a necessary step toward systematic comparison and pattern detection, the meta-codes used in this study should not be treated as overly static. In other words, a protest movement that began as a digital cascade of indignation could, in theory, develop mechanisms of internal accountability, define coherent norms and identify, forge deep relationships with its constituents, and thereby garner greater strategic capacity as described in the case of the right-wing movements that emerged after the June Days.

33. Marielle Franco, who was assassinated on March 14, 2018, was a notable outlier in this regard. Upon news of her murder, mass protests erupted. In interviews with her mourners, I was told that her “transformational” leadership was an exception to what many described as the Brazilian Left’s political leadership vacuum.

Violence. Some scholars have suggested that police repression and the criminalization of the protesters accounts for the demobilization that followed the June protests (Bringel and Pleyers 2015). Yet attributing the protests' denouement to violence is internally inconsistent with the Brazilian case: the large uptick in protest participants in early June immediately followed the state's police crackdown. Moreover, a rich literature documents instances in which violence and repression do not necessarily doom protests, but rather strengthen within-movement solidarity, resolve, and inspire new and more creative tactics (Jenkins and Form 2005). Escobar (1993)'s study of Los Angeles Police Department's violent repression of the Chicano movement in the late 1960s is one such example. Other cases include the murder of three Freedom Summer activists (McAdam [1982] 1999; Umoja 2003), the death of the first farm worker in the United Farm Workers movement (Jensen, Burkholder, and Hammerback 2003), and in Brazil, the mobilizations inspired by the *Eldorado dos Carajás* massacre of 19 landless movement (MST) activists (Hammond 2009; Amaral Júnior 1998).³⁴

Racialized stratification. Finally, the demographic profile of protest participants was largely bracketed out of the analysis in this chapter, a shortcoming given that Brazil remains one of the most racially and socioeconomically stratified countries in the world (Assouad, Chancel, and Morgan 2018) with a long history of denying racism (Loveman 2014; Paschel 2016a). According to polling (IBOPE 2013), June protesters earned on average more than two times the minimum wage and were relatively well-educated and media-savvy. In São Paulo, over 77 percent of the 2013 demonstrators had attained some education beyond high school, and in Rio de Janeiro nearly 90 percent had received either a high school or a university diploma. These percentages are well above both local and national averages and are suggestive of the race and class composition of the mobilizations. Further research is needed to understand how these variables intersect with the dynamics of modern protest movements in Brazil.

Conclusion

Leaderless crowds gathered in protest are hardly unique to Brazil, much less the digital age. Fortresses have been stormed, dictators have been toppled, and millions of people have mobilized without the aid of the internet. But mass mobilization does not a movement make. Careful study of these cases have shown that protests have the potential to build long-term capacity by enabling leaders, spanning class, racial, and ethnic positions, and engaging bystanders who may not have protested before. Recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Portugal, Greece, the U.S., Turkey, Brazil, Venezuela, and Hong Kong demonstrate that digital tools can facilitate mobilization at a scale of hundreds of thousands of people. Yet, as this study showed, durable infrastructure that allows groups to respond to contingency in purposeful ways—rather than abruptly dispersing and demobilizing—is needed. Countering traditional sources of political power with associational strength therefore requires treating protests as peak actions in longer strategic campaigns,

34. Elsewhere in Latin America, Franklin (2015) studied the effect of repression on movement persistence in Latin America countries and similarly found that protest demobilization depended less on the magnitude of repression and more on the challenger groups' degree of organization (77).

much like Brazil's increasingly powerful Pentecostal movement, to which I turn next in the final empirical chapter.

The Long March for Jesus

The March for Jesus is the march of Christ’s love for Brazil, for Brazilians, for the foreigners who live among us, but above all, especially for those who weep and need to be comforted; those who are sick and imprisoned, those who live with their children in the improvised, cold, and dark shacks in the alleyways of the *favelas*, a hideous monument to our shameful social inequality, leading a sub-life in a sub-world of deprivation and shame. It is for those who are forgotten in the far-off towns of the hinterland of Brazil who groan in distress and suffer from anguish. Yes, we march for them, too.

Marcelo Crivella, *Igreja Universal* bishop, nephew of Edir Macedo, and mayor of Rio de Janeiro (elected 2016)

By 9:30 A.M. on June 20, 2019, tens of thousands of evangelical Christians—called *fiés* (faithful) or *crentes* (believers) in Brazil—had gathered at the historic Luz train station in São Paulo. The occasion was the annual March for Jesus, now in its twenty-seventh year. The size of the March has varied over the years, but since 1993, the best estimates suggest that between 350,00 and three million people take part annually, with an average attendance of 1.8 million.¹ Evangelical news outlets consistently describe Brazil’s March for Jesus as the “world’s largest Christian event,” (Zaimov 2016) with thousands of *crente* caravans making the journey to São Paulo each year to participate (Figueiredo 2019).

The 2019 March for Jesus fell on a crisp and sunny day at the end of autumn, coinciding with the public holiday of Corpus Christi. As they had in previous years, *fiés* walked three and a half kilometers from Luz station up the Avenida Tiradentes, across both the Tamanduateí and Tietê Rivers, and ended up at the Praça Heróis, a plaza built in homage to Brazil’s World War II veterans. There, sixteen gospel bands played until the event ended at 1 A.M. On the soles of their feet, *crentes* stuck adhesives with their prayers for the coming year: one young girl wished for her new tooth to grow in; a middle-aged

1. Attendance numbers are based on a compilation of estimates from the military police, organizers, and coverage of the March by *Folha* and *Globo*.

woman gave thanks to God that her kitchen renovation moved forward (*destravou*). The Rescuer, the event's 2019 theme, was stamped on the back of the sea of identical white, green, and yellow t-shirts designed for the March.

Apostle Estevam Hernandes, co-founder of the neo-Pentecostal church *Renascer em Cristo* (Reborn in Christ, henceforth *Renascer*), led the opening prayer. "We cry out for Brazil, for the families, for the end of corruption," he declared. "Our country belongs to Jesus Christ, [and] happy is the nation whose God is the Lord." At noon, sun blazing, right-wing São Paulo governor João Doria climbed on top of one of the sound cars. Hair meticulously gelled and wearing what appeared to be a knock-off March for Jesus t-shirt with a Lacoste logo, Doria clapped offbeat to the electronic gospel music. While on the sound car, he tweeted a selfie with the caption, "Thrilling to see nearly three million people moved by [their] faith. May God bless São Paulo and Brazil!" At 4 P.M., the event reached a crescendo. For the first time in the March's history, the president was in attendance. Estevam's wife, Bishop Sônia Hernandes, welcomed Bolsonaro to the stage:

Our president, Jair Messias Bolsonaro of Brazil. On behalf of all the families, of all the women, I want to praise God for your life. And I want to praise God because for the first time in the presidency of Brazil, God's name was heard above all [a reference to part of Bolsonaro's campaign slogan: *Deús acima de todos*, or God above all].²

"Everybody knows that our country has extremely serious ethical, moral, and economic problems," Bolsonaro bellowed into the microphone, his bulletproof vest bulging underneath his own commemorative March for Jesus t-shirt. At one point, he told the crowd: "You were decisive in changing the destiny of this country."³

Back-of-the-napkin calculations lend support to the widely held claim that the evangelical vote swung the election to Bolsonaro in 2018. The World Religion Database (Johnson and Grim 2018) reports that Brazil was home to 56.1 million evangelicals in 2015, a figure in line with growth projections following the 2010 census (in which 42.3 million Brazilians identified as evangelical). Assuming the country-wide average voting abstention rate of 20.3 percent, and further removing the national average of 9.5 percent of spoiled (blank and null) ballots, this means that approximately 40.6 million evangelicals cast valid votes in the 2018 election. Polls from just before the runoff indicate that 70 percent of evangelicals supported Bolsonaro over his opponent Haddad, meaning that Bolsonaro netted approximately 28.4 million evangelical votes in the 2018 election (well over his true

2. The Hernandeses made headlines in 2007, when they were arrested at the Miami airport for attempting to smuggle \$56,000 of undeclared cash into the United States, \$9,000 of which was concealed in a Bible. Reporting on the incident, the New York Times' Brazil correspondent wrote, "In their heyday, Estevam and Sônia Hernandes were the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker of Brazil [American televangelists associated with the Assembly of God], on television preaching a gospel of material success and living a life to match" (Rohter 2007). Twelve years later, if their close alliance with Bolsonaro and the continued success of the March for Jesus (which they founded) are any indication, the Hernandeses have buried their legal troubles and are having a second heyday, an apt coincidence given the name of their church (which means 'born again,' in English).

3. This account of the March for Jesus is based on my field notes from June 20, 2019.

win margin of 10.7 million votes).

Had evangelical voters instead supported Bolsonaro by the same margin as the rest of the electorate (55.13 percent), he would have received 22.4 million votes from this demographic. This means his total vote share would have dropped from 57.7 million to 51.7 million, which would have been an insufficient 49.2 percent of all valid votes cast, or 666,080 ballots shy of the needed win number. *Ceteris paribus*, then, Bolsonaro needed evangelicals to favor him slightly more than the general population in order to win. His actual support levels among *fiés* far surpassed this figure, however, and it was evident in their warm reception of Bolsonaro at the March.

Much was made of the fact that Bolsonaro was the first president—sitting or otherwise—to attend the March for Jesus.⁴ But ten years prior, it was Lula who made the event part of the state’s official calendar. Wearing a tan suit, one of his trademark bold red ties, and a Brazil flag pin, Lula signed the law that officialized the National Day of the March for Jesus, scheduled to occur each year sixty days after Easter (J. Ribeiro 2009). Pictured in the background in a photo of the bill signing were two ghosts of Christmas future: then speaker of the house Michel Temer (who would assume the presidency after Dilma’s ouster in 2016) and then senator Marcelo Crivella (who was elected mayor of Rio by a 20-point margin, also in 2016). At the signing, Crivella—of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (or *Igreja Universal*, henceforth IURD or *Universal*)—delivered speech that was a far cry from the fundamentalism for which evangelicals are known. In one section, he sounded positively Marxist when decrying the “unbridled exploitation” of “soulless capital”:

Capitalism itself without Christian ethics is the merciless crisis that plagues the world under the empire of oppression of the strongest. It is the unbridled exploitation of the weak with the financial mechanisms of soulless capital which lends itself as docile vassal to the insatiable greed of the men of fortune.⁵

Sanctioning the March for Jesus was not Lula’s first overture to Brazilian Pentecostals. In both 2002 and 2006, he chose José Alencar of the Partido Liberal (PL), which had the highest number of evangelical representatives in congress, as his running mate. As with Bolsonaro, Alencar identified as Catholic but maintained strong ties to evangelicals,

4. Although it was the first time Brazil’s president had attended the March for Jesus, it was not the first time Bolsonaro had participated in it. In 2018, he went on stage alongside evangelical pastor, gospel singer, and then senator Magno Malta. “The people will pray for us,” Malta said, “but first [Bolsonaro] wants to say just three sentences.” These were: “May God bless and protect our families. We love Israel. Brazil above everything, and God above all,” Bolsonaro intoned, as though a school child reciting a homework assignment. Field notes from May 31, 2018.

5. The full text of the speech, which begins by addressing “His Excellencies” Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and then Vice President José Alencar, “Her Excellency” Dilma Rousseff, along with his “brother bishops, reverends, pastors, masters, evangelists, and apostles” is available on a blog linked to Crivella’s church (Universo 2009).

spending his political career in the parties dominated by Pentecostal preachers.⁶ Right after his first election, Lula appointed two evangelical women to his cabinet: former Rio governor and the country's first black female senator Benedita da Silva—who describes herself as *PTcostal* [a portmanteau combining PT and Pentecostal]—to Social Welfare and *assembleiana* Marina Silva to the Ministry of the Environment.⁷

Lula's successor Dilma followed a similar strategy, trying to cobble together the support of evangelical deputies in Congress even as her coalition frayed. She had some success: pastors stumped for her up in both of her presidential campaigns. In one recording, pastor Osvaldo Silva de Oliveira of the *Assembléia de Deus* (henceforth AD, the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world; its members are referred to as *assembleiano/as*), said, “We are supporting Dilma because she brought, concretely, everything that the pastors and evangelical churches desired for many years. . . we ask all of the evangelicals of Brazil to vote for Dilma,” Oliveira said in a video posted on the campaign's social media accounts. Billionaire bishop Edir Macedo, founder of IURD and owner of the second largest media broadcasting company in Brazil, issued full-throated defenses of Dilma in both elections. In what many viewed as a quid pro quo arrangement, Crivella—who also happens to be Macedo's nephew—was appointed to a cabinet ministry position in her government as partial recompense (Balloussier 2018).

Thus, despite many *crentes'* references to Bolsonaro as a messianic figure and allusions to him as “The Rescuer of the fatherland” at the 2019 March for Jesus, the evangelicals' articulation with the far right in contemporary Brazil was neither foreordained nor is it a historical constant. That there is no direct and necessary relationship between *fiés* and neo-fascism is all the more interesting and important in light of the fact that by 2030, a majority of Brazilians are expected to identify as Pentecostal—a stunning transition for

6. The PL split in 2005 after a major corruption scandal in which its deputies were involved (*mensalão*), with one faction becoming the PRB. While the PL was already considered the party of the IURD (Freston notes that the church's leaders decided to take it over when they saw that it lacked strong leadership and was already present throughout the country), the PRB was, from the very start, the party of IURD. When the split from PL happened, vice president Alencar stayed loyal his neo-Pentecostal brethren, reaffiliating with PRB until his death in 2011.

7. For comparison, Bolsonaro appointed the same number of openly evangelical ministers at the outset of his term, pastor Damares Alves to Human Rights and Marcelo Antônio to Tourism. Bolsonaro initially asked the evangelical caucus to suggest a candidate for the Minister of Cities position; he did not offer the role to any of the three possibilities they suggested. The evangelical legislative caucus did, however, succeed in barring a proposed member of the cabinet, would-be Education Minister Mozart Ramos, whom they thought insufficiently conservative. The similarities between Bolsonaro's first cabinet and that of Lula's, however, stop there. See Appendix A for Frei Betto's reflections on the historic nature of the composition of PT's first government and its strong ties to the Catholic tradition of liberation theology.

a country that was once 95 percent Catholic (Alves et al. 2018).⁸

Two empirical puzzles and preview of the argument

These trends pose two empirical puzzles. First: how and why did Pentecostalism proliferate so rapidly (and so thoroughly) in Brazil, the world’s most Catholic country? Perhaps more puzzlingly, given the seemingly obvious affinities between conservative politics and born-again believers, why were Brazilian Pentecostals articulated not with the far right, but rather with the center-left for thirteen years?

In this chapter, I argue that the answers to these two empirical puzzles are related, and that working them out requires reconceptualizing Pentecostalism not as a religious revival, but rather as the most powerful social, political, and cultural movement in Brazil. By analyzing its tens of thousands of clerical leaders as strategic actors whose primary source of power is an intensely committed (but otherwise heterogeneous) base, it becomes clear that the significance of the movement comes not from the simple aggregation of *crentes*—if that were the case, the power of the still more numerous Catholics should far outstrip that of evangelicals—but rather their organization, capillarity, and political articulation strategies. Because Brazilian evangelicals have varied and sometimes conflicting interests (and therefore should not be considered an ossified voting bloc, as they are often portrayed), politicians can engage in “call and response” articulation processes with them (De Leon, Desai, and Tugal 2015)—or not, to their peril.

When Pentecostalism is understood in this way, the March for Jesus becomes more than a mass gathering of *crentes* out for a stroll on a public holiday. Observers writing about the relative size of street actions in Brazil almost always exclude religious demonstrations like the March for Jesus from their analysis. For example, all of Brazil’s major newspapers covered the 2015 and 2016 impeachment protests as “the largest agglomeration [of people] in a political act measured since *Diretas-Já*” (Datafolha 2015, 2016b).⁹ Two years earlier, the June 2013 demonstrations received the same treatment from both journalists and academics, with the additional observation that they represented the largest leaderless movement in the country’s history (Globo 2013). Often miscast as only a religious event, albeit an enormous one, the March for Jesus is instead a literal manifesta-

8. As Ronaldo Almeida (2004) notes, the census asks a single question related to faith: “What is your religion?” The design thus makes it impossible to assess the commitment levels of people identifying with different religions and denominations. Several people pointed me to the existence of the term “IBGE Catholic,” which in essence means non-practicing Catholic, i.e. Catholic only when asked by a census surveyor. Almeida conducted an original survey which found that less than half of declared Catholics maintain a continuous link to a parish or its rituals. By contrast, Simone Bohn (2004) found that 82.6 percent of evangelicals attend a *culto* (evangelical service) once or more each week (as compared to 35.7 percent of Catholics). This attendance figure was fairly robust to denomination, ranging from 80 percent among *assembleianos* and Baptists and up to 92.3 percent of IURD followers who said they attend services once or more each week. The implication of these studies is that the number of practicing Pentecostals most likely already outnumbers that of practicing Catholics.

9. *Diretas-Já* refers to the movement to overthrow the military dictatorship, active from 1983 to 1984. Protesters called for *diretas já* (direct presidential elections now). On April 16, 1984, an estimated 400,000 people demonstrated in Vale do Anhangabaú, São Paulo’s historic center.

tion of what German New Leftist Rudi Dutschke called “the long march through the institutions”—a phrase popularized by (and often attributed to) Antonio Gramsci. According to Herbert Marcuse, the phrase means “working against the established institutions while working in them” (Marcuse 1972:55). The March for Jesus’ non-political qualifier no longer applies, if it ever did.

But if there is nothing intrinsic about the political ideology of evangelicals, why did they swing so dramatically to help elect Bolsonaro in 2018? Reducing evangelicals to a cohesive voting bloc driven by a strict interpretation of the Bible does not explain their non-existent patterns of party identification and ideological positions that mirror those of other religious groups. It also does not explain why Pentecostals’ parliamentary representatives and the movement’s major televangelists coexisted in relative harmony with the PT’s governing coalition for more than a decade. And finally, a homogenized view of this social bloc also does not explain why polls showed that evangelicals were split in their support for Bolsonaro and Lula up until six weeks before the first round of voting, as shown in Chapter 3.

What follows in this chapter is an analytical narrative of the political articulation of Pentecostals in Brazil. I argue that the ascendance of evangelicals in Brazil’s political life paralleled the eclipse of member-led, self-governing, civic organizations such as labor unions social movements, and the PT’s federated party structure, contributing to an overall state of democratic atrophy. A depoliticized “Sahara of civic life” (Werneck Vianna 2011) in many of Brazil’s poor urban peripheries and rural municipalities created the conditions under which the prosperity gospel of Pentecostalism thrived. Yet, as I also argue throughout, there was never any guarantee that the most conservative evangelical leadership bloc—the Estevams and Crivellas—would win out over the more progressive Beneditas and Marinas. It was only at the last minute that the Bolsonaro coalition secured the support of the majority of evangelicals, now one of the most important blocs in his governing coalition.

Drawing on neo-Gramscian theories of political articulation, I make the case that treating Pentecostals as a reified social group is both analytically and strategically flawed (Brubaker 1992, 2006). Instead, I argue that their political expression in contemporary Brazil is the product of longstanding political struggles—the relational push away from *petismo*¹⁰ and the concomitant pull toward the more regressive instantiations of *pentecostalismo*—rather than the result of an essential politics. To these post-constructivist theories, which highlight the creative role of political actors in group-making, I add a focus on the meso-level organizational dimensions that these same theorists sometimes elide.

10. *Petismo* refers to politics associated with the PT. For supporters, this usually carries the positive valance of the party’s nonrevolutionary effort to make Brazil more socially just and its democracy more participatory. It is often used disparagingly by the Right, however, to mean what they view as the PT’s corrupt, hypocritical, or immoral mode of politics.

6.1 Getting religion

To study civil society in Brazil without reference to the church is to miss the modal way in which Brazilians engage in associational life. As Andrew Chesnut (1997) wrote: “Declaring oneself an atheist on the urban periphery [in Brazil] is tantamount to revealing oneself to be a Pentecostal at a café in the Latin Quarter of Paris” (67). Yet key scholarly literatures are largely silent on the topic.¹¹ Pentecostals are nowhere to be found in several landmark edited volumes about civil society and social movements in the region. To take two examples, in the 25-chapter *Handbook of Social Movements Across Latin America* (C. Almeida 2015), evangelicals or Pentecostals are mentioned just six times in passing. The *Marcha Para Jesus* is described as a “traditional march of religious groups” and given as much attention as the *Marcha da Maconha*, a march in favor of the marijuana legalization (Gohn 2015:367), whereas nearly 1,500 words are devoted to the June 2013 protests in the same chapter. Similarly, in *Beyond Civil Society: Activism, Participation, and Protest in Latin America* (Alvarez, Baiocchi, Laó-Montes, et al. 2017a), a 400-page volume called a “comprehensive and ambitious... ‘anthology’ of a field” (Escobar 2017:iv) the word “evangelical” and the word “Pentecostal” are each mentioned once, also in passing.¹² The relative silence on Pentecostalism is all the more puzzling given the Gramscian orientation of the volume, as well as Avritzer (2017)’s argument in an early chapter that the changing position of the Catholic Church was at the “root of the reorganization” of Brazilian civil society.

“Beating The Holy Bible and Das Kapital in a Blender”

Despite this scholarly inattention, Pentecostalism is present in three of the most significant progressive movements in Brazil: the landless movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*, or MST), black and anti-racist movements (*movimento negro*), and

11. Despite its relative absence from the social movement canon, Latin America’s Pentecostal phenomenon has been widely studied among scholars of religion, anthropologists, and some political scientists since the 1990s. I draw heavily on these literatures throughout this chapter.

12. The mention of Pentecostalism in the volume comes in Jeffrey Rubin (2017) chapter on the *Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais*, or MMTR (Movement of Rural Women Workers). He does so in the context of account of a research trip in which Marilda, a grassroots leader in his study, tries to sell him Herbalife, a nutritional cocktail invented in Los Angeles that spreads by way of multi-level marketing. Marilda’s religious affiliation is not mentioned, but the Herbalife example is likened to other “individualist strategies for social change” such as “Pentecostal promotion of entrepreneurship” (232). Similarly, the only occurrence of evangelicals in the volume is found in Benjamin Junge (2017) chapter on civic initiatives in Porto Alegre, the home of the first World Social Forum and birthplace of participatory budgeting. In the opening vignette, he notes that his interlocutor is a “seasoned veteran of local grassroots politics, who also hosts a daily show on an evangelical radio station” (81), a curious detail that underlines the far from straightforward relationship between Pentecostalism and political behavior. Even while researchers analyze seemingly separate (leftist) social movements, the evangelical phenomenon nonetheless permeated their research.

the homeless workers' movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto*, or MTST).¹³ In 1997, Brazil's largest newspaper published an article on the MST with the headline, "Evangelicals Threaten Catholic Hegemony," referring to the growing number of MST activists who identify as Pentecostal (Credendio and Zanetti 1997). According to the article, movement leaders in Pontal de Paranapanema—home to the highest concentration of MST settlements in the region—estimated that a third of the movements militants had converted to Pentecostalism, which would have been about double the conversion rate of both the local population and the national average at the time.¹⁴ A thirty year-old member of the Santa Rita MST settlement, Antonio Garcia, is quoted as saying that he joined an evangelical church because he felt "abandoned" by the Catholic Church.¹⁵ Two other MST leaders and *assembleianos*, one of whom goes by the nickname Pastor and the other Paulinho Crente, led one of the landless movement's occupations of the Maturi farm. The article concludes with a quote from Valmir Rodrigues Chaves, alias Bill, who said he "beat [*The Bible* and *Das Kapital*] in a blender," and found that "the result of the mix is that you can do both" (ibid).

Mysticism, faith, rites, symbols, and what Michael Löwy (2001) described as the "socio-religious utopia" of Catholicism's liberation theology (also sometimes called Christian socialism) are cited as some of sources that make the MST's goals feel plausible to its members, despite the profound struggle they require (Coelho 2014; Nascimento and Martins 2008). Because the MST's original and primary religious alliance had little to do with baptism in the Holy Spirit and instead the radical critique of capitalism outlined in liberation theology teachings, the rise of *crentes* in the movement—in some places at a much faster pace than the national average—is worthy of attention. In one of the few studies of Pentecostalism in the landless movement, José Dinizz Júnior (2007) describes the conversions he witnessed during his two years of fieldwork, and the ways in which MST *militantes* were syncretic in their participation in *cultos*. Members often went to multiple services, "from the more traditional branches like Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran and Methodist [denominations] to Pentecostal branches like *Deus é Amor*, *Congregação Cristã*, *Assembleia de Deus*, and neo-Pentecostal [churches] like IURD" (6). Dinizz Júnior concludes "there is no way to dissociate the landless—whether a member, a militant, or national coordinator—from the religious culture within which they are embedded (even if they don't want to be)" (46).

13. As Tianna Paschel (2016a) notes, the term *movimento negro* (black movement) obscures a great deal of heterogeneity within. In particular, she notes that many activists linked to the black Brazilian movement (broadly defined) distinguish themselves, for example, from organizations in the movement that tend to be male-dominated (59). As with most mass movements, the black movement's composite organizations differ along other dimensions, too, including geography, political strategy, and internal structure.

14. According to IBGE, in 1991, the municipality of Paranapanema was 12.9 percent evangelical while the national average was 9.1. In 2000, Paranapanema was 15.3 evangelical, about the same as the country-wide average of 15.4 percent.

15. The article notes that the Catholic Church was *assustada* (frightened or shocked) with these developments and planned to train *doutrinadores* (educators, or proselytizers in this context) to work in the MST settlements.

“Racists aren’t allowed in the Kingdom of Heaven”

Accounts of Pentecostalism and the *movimento negro* (black movement) paint a similarly nuanced picture. In 2014, Douglas Belchior, a São Paulo teacher, UNEAFRO leader, and socialist congressional candidate who received 46,000 votes in 2018 remembers:

A few years ago, I participated in one of the innumerable and interminable meetings in preparation for the November 20th Black Consciousness March, when a black man, tall, bearded, and with a *vozeirão potente* (booming voice) asked to speak about the importance of, in a space largely dominated by representations of African-born religions, there [also being] room for evangelicals.

It was amazing! Pentecostal evangelicals in the midst of the Brazilian black movement? But aren’t Pentecostals reactionary and some even racist in their religious practices? No! In fact, I learned this from him [evangelical Pastor Marco David, author of the book, *The Blackest Religion in Brazil*], neo-Pentecostal breeders of reactionary, sexist, homophobic, and racist values are noisy minorities. (Belchior 2014)

Pastor Marco David, to whom the phrase “racists are not allowed in the Kingdom of Heaven” is attributed, is one of the leaders of the *Aliança de Negras e Negros Evangélicos do Brasil* (the Alliance of Black Evangelical Women and Men in Brazil), which has made efforts to organize around racial reconciliation, negritude, and Pentecostalism. Research suggests that ANNEB is indicative of an overlap between anti-racism and Pentecostalism. A survey administered in the early 2000s in Bahia found that evangelicals and non-evangelicals were equally critical of racism (Burdick 2013:178).¹⁶ Similarly, André Cicalo (2012)’s study of affirmative action (*cotas*) found that the majority of the *cotistas* in his study “had some involvement with Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches” (45), leading him to characterize a “reciprocal positive interaction between idealized moral precepts [of the evangelical church], dreams of moving up, and faith” (49). Cicalo’s informants highlighted the salutary social role of the church in their communities, a point echoed by Guilherme Boulos, the leader of the MTST and 2018 socialist presidential candidate.

“Never in her life had anyone remembered her birthday”

The homeless workers movement (MTST) shot to international fame in 2014 when it organized a mass march and occupation during the opening match of the World Cup. It too has a strong evangelical presence. At an event at the University of São Paulo in September 2017, Boulos said that “The largest part of our base, of the MTST, is by far, [made up of] Pentecostal evangelicals.”¹⁷ He told a story to begin to explain why:

16. John Burdick has written extensively about the relationship between evangelical theology and anti-racism in Brazil (2005, 2013, 2016), including theorizing black gospel singers as organic intellectuals of the movement. He argues that “any effort to understand and bring about change in Brazilian attitudes and practices about race cannot afford to ignore the *evangélicos*. Yet systematic research on what Brazil’s *evangélicos* have to say about blackness, black identity, race, and racism is still embryonic” (2013: 9).

17. Quotes from Boulos here and throughout this chapter are based on my field notes and a transcript of field audio from September 14, 2017.

There's a *companheira*, who is a *militante* in the MTST, *evangélica*. She was telling me one day about why she joined the church. She's an elderly woman, 70 or so years. She joined and she stayed. Why? Because never in her life had anyone remembered her birthday. Nobody had ever thrown her a birthday party. And in her church, there's a group that takes care of the birthday parties, calling the *aniversariante* to the front [the pulpit], giving them a birthday cake.

Boulos, who belongs to the same political party as Belchior, went on to argue that “It’s wrong to think that all neo-Pentecostals are conservative. To judge all evangelicals—millions of Brazilian evangelicals—by the Malafaia ruler is wrong.”¹⁸ He concluded: “The phenomenon underneath,” Boulos said, “is much more complex.”

6.2 The evangelical phenomenon

In both the United States and Brazil, about a third of the population now identifies as evangelical (Eskridge 2012). However, the Pew Research Center found that in the U.S., between 2007 and 2014, the evangelical population grew at a negative rate (-0.9 percent), a stark reversal after growing by nearly 300 percent between 1990 and 2008 (Kosmin and Keysar 2009; Pew 2015). This relative decline in North American born-again believers is one reason for which several *crentes* told me that they see the U.S. as “mission territory” as they evangelized me.¹⁹

Although it is on par with the U.S. in terms of the size of its Pentecostal population, Brazil is an outlier compared to the rest of the region. It has by far the largest evangelical population in South America, both in absolute and relative terms—with the exception of Chile, which is the only other close second on the latter measure (Figure 6.1).²⁰ With about 65 percent of Brazil’s 211 million residents still identifying as Catholic, however, the

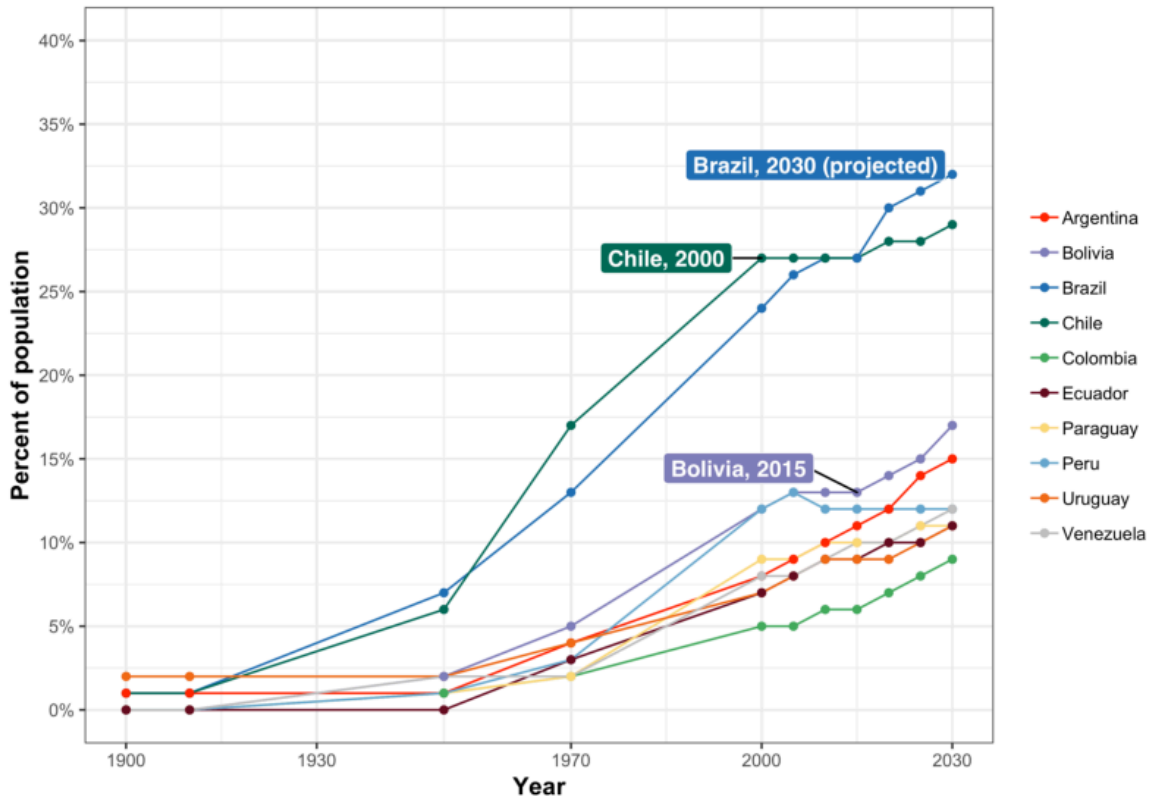
18. Silas Malafaia is a televangelist pastor and leader of *Vitória em Cristo*, a spinoff denomination of the Assembly of God. He is (in)famous for his virulent homophobia (Pinheiro 2011). In 2013, he officiated Bolsonaro’s wedding to his third wife, Michelle Bolsonaro, herself a devout Pentecostal. Curiously, however, in the country’s first direct elections for president in 1989, Malafaia supported leftist candidate Leonel Brizola in the first round, and Lula in the runoff.

19. According to the IURD’s English-language website, as of 2019 there were 66 *Universal* churches spread across 22 states in the U.S., with the largest concentrations in New York (19), Texas (11), and Florida (9). The Pew Research Center’s study of religion in Latin America—a representative survey (N=30,000) using face-to-face interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014—sheds light on the inverse relationship: only 12 percent of Brazilian respondents said that their church maintains ties with churches in the U.S. (52 percent answered no to this question and 26 percent said that they didn’t know—the remaining ten percent were NAs, i.e., the unchurched). For comparison, respondents in Puerto Rico (36.5 percent), Panama (28.3 percent), and the Dominican Republic (27.5 percent), were the most likely to affirm bilateral church ties with the U.S., whereas Chile (5 percent), Argentina (5 percent), and Uruguay (6.5 percent) had the lowest percentage of respondents answering yes to this question.

20. See Appendix H for further comparative analysis of the evangelical phenomenon in Latin America, as well as data on the socio-demographic characteristics and political affinities of the evangelical population in Brazil.

country also holds the distinction of being home to the largest Catholic population in the world. In 2013, a study by Brazil’s tax planning institute (IBPT) found that twelve new churches are opened each day, or one every two hours (D. Martins 2013). In subsequent years, the number of new religious organizations founded daily more than doubled to 25, or about one an hour (Grillo 2017). According to the IBPT, there are more registered religious organizations in Brazil than shops, clinics, restaurants, and pharmacies.

Figure 6.1: Relative Growth of Evangelicals in South America, 1900-2030



Data source: World Religion Database (Johnson and Grim 2018). Plotted values for 2030 are WRD estimates based on growth rates.

In the 2010 census, of the 42.3 million evangelicals in Brazil, 7.7 million identified as Adventist, Baptist, Congregationist, Lutheran, Methodist, or Presbyterian (these all belonged to a category the census identified as *evangelicás de missão*), representing four percent of the population and eighteen percent of all evangelicals. The remaining 82 percent of evangelicals identified with Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, or “undetermined” evangeli-

cal denominations.²¹ Notably, however, within the broad ‘evangelical’ category, all of these lines are blurred: many of the mainline (or historical Protestant) denominations’ worship services look and act like their Pentecostal counterparts, with *cultos* and practices that are revivalist in tone. Moreover, as Dinizz Júnior observed in his study of the MST, many Brazilians attend worship services across many denominations, including across Catholic, evangelical, and Afro-Brazilian traditions (Almeida and Monteiro 2001) and the *pentecostalização* (pentecostalization) of traditional Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church, is also evident. There is thus considerable heterogeneity contained within the term ‘evangelical’ in Brazil, which, I argue in this chapter, carries implications for the different ways they are articulated (or not) to different political projects.

6.2.1 Pentecostalism comes to Brazil

Né gerarchia e ne anarchia (Neither hierarchy nor anarchy).

Luigi Francescon, founder of *Congregação Cristã*, Brazil’s first Pentecostal church

In 1907, Luigi Francescon, a mosaic artisan from Italy, received a divine revelation. He was called to evangelize the Italian diaspora, wherever in the world that might take him. Himself an immigrant, Francescon was baptized in the Holy Spirit in Chicago in the newly-formed Pentecostal church of William Durham, a preacher who had taken part in William J. Seymour’s Azusa Street revival fire (Palma 2017).²² By 1909, there was a Pentecostal presence in every region of the United States and missionaries were spreading the gospel worldwide.

Francescon’s first mission to Latin America took him to Buenos Aires. Next, he traveled to São Paulo, where he founded what would become Brazil’s first Pentecostal church, the *Congregação Cristã no Brasil* (CCB), in March 1910. On Francescon’s first of ten visits to Brazil, he recruited eleven followers. By 1940, the CCB had 305 houses of worship; by 1950, there were 815 (Bongiovanni 1971). One hundred years after its found-

21. As Alexandre Fonseca (2008) notes: “All Protestants are usually known in Brazil as *evangélicos*” (163). In Brazil, for example, there is no Protestant category on the census; the two primary religion codes are “Roman Catholic” and “Evangelical,” under which a growing list of denominations are subsumed. More recent national polling data from IBOPE showed that the proportion of evangelicals identifying with traditional evangelical denominations has decreased since the 2010 census: in 2018, twelve percent of evangelical respondents identified as Adventist, Baptist, or Methodist; the remaining 88 percent identified with Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal churches.

22. Born in Louisiana in 1870 as the son of emancipated slaves, it was Seymour who sparked the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906, which, in turn, unleashed the modern-day global movement of Pentecostalism. From the start, Seymour preached racial egalitarianism and the revival was considered, at its origin, “a movement of the poor” (Freston 1998:335). For more on the extent to which followers of the Azusa Street Revival practiced what Seymour preached (i.e. the subversion racial and gender hierarchies) see (Lovett 1975; Creech 1996).

ing, CCB is the second largest Pentecostal denomination in Brazil with 2.3 million members and 18,580 houses of worship (IBGE 2010).

Six months after Francescon's first mission to Brazil, two Swedish Baptist missionaries, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren—both of whom also worshipped at Durham's church in Chicago—received a prophecy of their own. Vingren wrote in his diary of the “strong weight. . . of the power of God” that would visit during the prayer circles he led in South Bend, Indiana in the summer of 1910. “[It was so strong] that many times we couldn't even sit at the table to eat. We fell to the floor, knees bent, and praised the Lord in loud voices.” During one of these prayer circles, Vingren wrote:

One brother, Adolfo Uldin, received wonderful and mysterious revelation about my future through the words of the Holy Spirit. Among other things, the Holy Spirit spoke through this brother that I should go to Pará. It was revealed to us that the people to whom I would testify of Jesus were of a very simple social status. I should teach them the rudiments of the doctrine of the Lord. On that occasion we had the immense privilege to hear through the Holy Spirit the tongue of those people, the language of Portuguese. (Vingren 1973:27)

Uldin's testimony revealed various other details, including the name of Vingren's future wife. “The only thing we didn't know,” wrote Vingren, “is where Pará was located” (27). The next day, he and Uldin visited the local library to consult an atlas. They found out that in the North of Brazil there was a state called Pará. “Glory to Jesus!” Vingren wrote upon this discovery.

On November 5, 1910, eight months after Francescon found his first converts in São Paulo, Vingren and Berg departed New York City on the steamship *Clement* in steerage, all but penniless. Two weeks later, they arrived in Belém, the capital of Pará and the gateway to the Amazon. Wearing wool suits and speaking no Portuguese, they sat on a bench in a central square and ate mangos, praying to God for guidance on what to do next. With the help of English-speaking strangers, they found lodging for two dollars a day in a Baptist preacher's basement. “In that tropical heat everything was extremely warm and unbearable. Especially in that basement. The mosquitos buzzed monotonously and the lizards ran up and down the walls. In spite of it all, we felt enthusiastic and happy,” Vingren penned in his diary (37).

Berg and Vingren spent the first six months of their mission holding small prayer circles in secret. To support themselves financially, Berg took a job as a metalworker in a foundry while Vingren studied Portuguese during the day, teaching Berg what he had learned at night. One of their newfound followers, Celina Albuquerque, had an “incurable illness of the lips,” but when the missionaries told her to stop taking the medicine she was prescribed and instead pray, the “Lord Jesus cured her completely” (40). In June of 1911, Albuquerque stayed up late praying and spoke in tongues for two hours. According to Vingren, “It was the first baptism in the Holy Spirit by Lord Jesus on Brazilian soil” (41). Thus was born the *Missão da Fé Apostólica*, renamed *Assembléia de Deus* in 1914, now

the largest Pentecostal denomination in both Brazil and the world.²³

6.2.2 Brazilian Pentecostalism in four waves

The gospel's arrival by way of Francescon's CCB and Berg and Vingren's AD in the 1910s ushered in the first of what has been characterized as four waves of Pentecostal growth in Brazil (Freston 1995; Pew 2006). As shown in Figure 6.2 the first period has so far been the longest and was driven by CCB and AD. These denominations focused especially on faith healing and the conversion experience. Organizationally, Francescon's mantra for CCB houses of worship was "neither hierarchy nor anarchy," meaning that churches were relatively autonomous and could self-organize, so long as they strictly adhered to the liturgical practices set forth by the clergy. More than a century later, CCB is known for its more ascetic and hierarchical practices having won out over any anarchic ones there might have been. "In stressing ardour, however, they did not abandon order," writes Enrico Cumbo (2000). "Accordingly, each congregation developed as an independent entity in fellowship with other congregations, but self-governing and autonomous" (46).²⁴

In contrast to the CCB's more traditionalist-authoritarian model, Berg and Vingren began ordaining Brazilian pastors as early as 1912, transferring power to local leadership at the first General Convention of the Assemblies of God in Brazil in 1930 (CGADB). A year later, after meeting with clergy in Rio, Vingren commented on the AD's organizational philosophy:

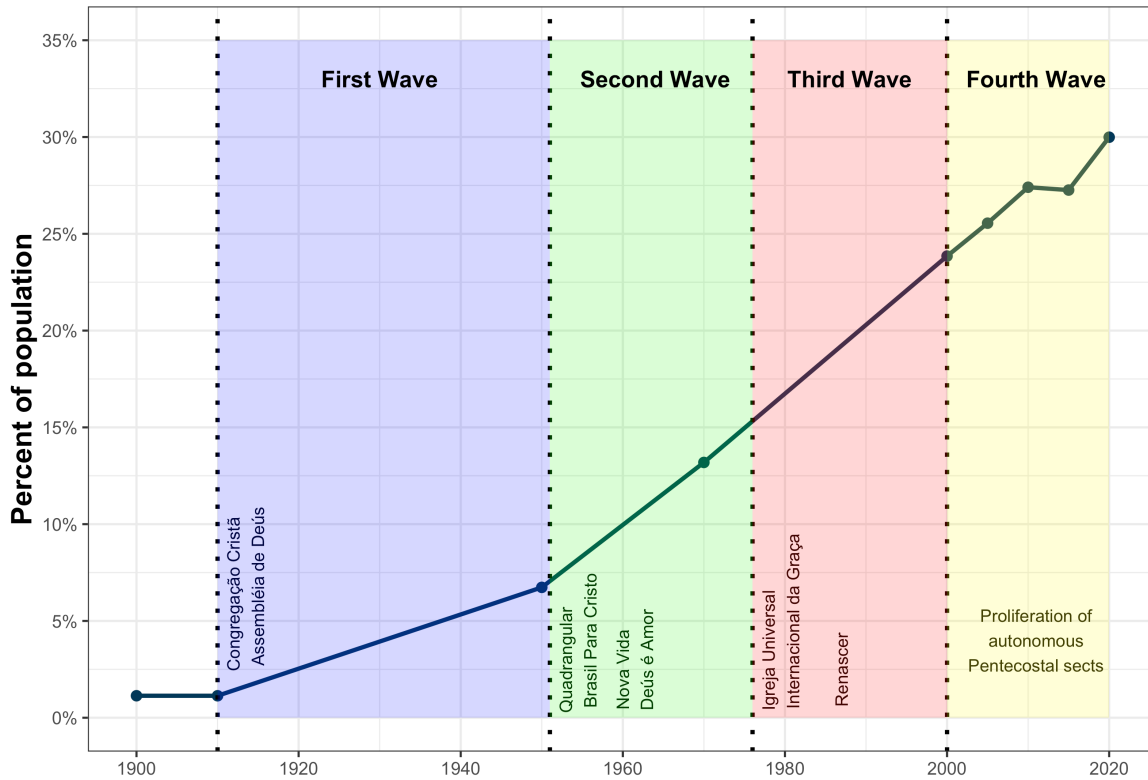
It was decided that from here on out, the churches should feel more local responsibility for the increase and progress of the work and edification in faith. They would also be responsible in the sense that the offerings raised would be used exclusively for the maintenance of the evangelists of local churches. All of the churches in the state of Rio are independent....One cannot order around another, but all should walk together united in the Holy Spirit, having the same faith and preaching the same salvation, helping themselves mutually and edifying themselves by the grace of God. (Vingren [1973] 2018:219)

The hyperlocal and autonomous model Vingren described in 1931 has continued to the present day. As of the 2010 census, AD had 12.3 million *crentes* in Brazil, making it more than five times as large as the second biggest denomination (CCB, with 2.3 million

23. This sequence of events shows that what would become AD in Brazil emerged four years before its counterpart in the U.S. would open its first houses of worship. Allan Anderson (2013) notes that it is often "erroneously presumed" that Pentecostalism was a U.S. import: "The birth of Latin American Pentecostalism took place at a time when North American Pentecostal denominations were still forming. The movement in the South therefore is quite different from that in the North, and we should not regard it as a North American creation" (2013:172). A century after Albuquerque's conversion experience in Belém, AD in Brazil had six times as many members as the Assemblies of God in the U.S.

24. Rubia Valente (2015)'s study examining why the CCB is the only major Pentecostal denomination in Brazil to have lost members in the 2000s suggests that the decline may be due to its unwillingness to assimilate new social and cultural mores.

Figure 6.2: Brazilian Pentecostalism in Four Waves, 1900-2020



Periodization is based on a synthesis of Anderson (2013), Freston (1995), the Pew Research Center’s Spirit and Power report (Pew 2006), and personal narratives conducted in 2017 and 2018.

adherents). In the 1980s, the church ramified into two major ministries—one identifying with Belém (CGADB) and the other Madureira (CONAMAD), the AD’s headquarters in Rio.²⁵ The church is omnipresent. A Google search turns up five AD houses of worship within five minutes of my apartment in a hipster neighborhood in São Paulo; there are an estimated 100,000 such houses of worship spread throughout Brazil—or about eighteen for each of Brazil’s 5,570 municipalities (Cavallera 2011).

Forty years after the Swedish missionaries landed in Belém, Brazil’s evangelical pop-

25. A third major scission happened in 2017, when Pastor Samuel Câmara founded CADB after a long-standing feud with the Bezerra family for their nearly 40-year reign at the helm of CGADB and refusal to ordain female clergy. These internal schisms are hardly unique to AD. One of the most high-profile battles among evangelical denominations in present-day Brazil is taking place between a former head pastor of IURD, Valdemiro Santiago, who left the church after a fight with Macedo and founded a rival denomination, the *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus*. The struggle between the two has mostly taken the form of a fight over *fiés* and TV station airtime (Feltrin 2015). Both televangelists courted and been courted by Bolsonaro.

ulation had grown nearly twenty times. The second wave, which began in the 1950s, has been classified as the “classical” Pentecostal period with the arrival of Amy McPherson’s Foursquare church. Coinciding with period of rapid industrialization and urbanization, churches that emerged in this phase—like *Brasil Para Cristo* (BPC, founded in 1955) and *Igreja Pentecostal Deus é Amor* (IDEA, founded in 1962)—recruited worshippers by the thousands over radio airwaves and through mass tent revivals.²⁶ By the end of the second wave, *crentes* represented fifteen percent of the population.²⁷

“The largest spiritual ER in Brazil”

The third wave brought what were perhaps the most significant qualitative and quantitative shifts in Brazil’s evangelical landscape. In 1977, a beady-eyed pastor named Edir Macedo opened the first *Universal* church in what was formerly a funeral parlor in Abolição, a neighborhood in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Macedo, who is now one of Brazil’s approximately 50 billionaires (A. Antunes 2013) started working for the state lottery of Rio de Janeiro (LOTERJ) at age 17. Two years later, he converted to Pentecostalism at the behest of his elder sister, Elcyr. Born to an impoverished migrant family, Macedo was one of seven surviving children—26 of his siblings were either aborted or did not survive infancy (Torres and Rossetti 2013). Macedo studied mathematics and did coursework at the *Escola Nacional de Ciência Estatística*, the school of statistics linked to the national census bureau. At age 25, while still working for LOTERJ, he helped administer the 1970 census. Five years later, Macedo formally registered the religious entity that would eventually become IURD. Between 1991 and 2000, it was the fastest-growing denomination in Brazil, increasing its membership by 26 percent year-on-year (Oro, Corten, and Dozon 2003). By 2010, the census recorded 1.8 million *iurdianos*, making it the third largest Pentecostal denomination in Brazil, behind AD and CCB, both of which had a 67-year head start. On the church’s thirtieth anniversary, Macedo boasted that *Universal* had become “the largest spiritual ER in Brazil” (Pich 2009).

My first visit to IURD’s world headquarters was unplanned. I was nearby conducting interviews at CUT, Brazil’s largest national trade union confederation, which is located in the same neighborhood as Universal’s gargantuan *Templo de Salomão* (Figure 6.3). Designed to be an exact replica of Jewish biblical King Solomon’s lavish temple in Jerusalem, the structure towers over the working class Brás neighborhood at 180 feet tall on a plot of land the size of five full-length soccer fields. Macedo spared no cost (or customs fees) in its construction: the exterior is made of white limestone imported from Is-

26. In addition to being the first major Pentecostal denomination with a Brazilian founder, BPC signaled evangelicals’ first significant involvement in politics (Chesnut 1997). After his ordainment as a Foursquare minister in the United States, BPC’s founder Manoel de Mello returned to Brazil and started a wildly popular radio program, *Voz do Brasil Para Cristo*. Mello criticized creeping authoritarianism in Brazil and, according to his autobiography, was detained 27 times, at first on charges of charlatanism and later for criticizing the military dictatorship. Fortunately for Mello, BPC had helped elect his assistant Levy Tavares to the state legislature. On multiple occasions, Tavares helped secure Mello’s release. But state officials’ persecution of Mello ran counter to the larger trend that unified Pentecostal churches in a “tacit alliance” with the military regime due to their common enemy: the Catholic Church (40).

27. For more on the theology and praxis of Pentecostalism, see [Appendix H](#).

rael, the grove of hundred year-old trees in the Temple’s imitation Mount of Olives were transported from Uruguay, and the sanctuary’s 10,000 plush red seats “befitting the White House” are from Spain (Figueras 2014). The altar features a gilded replica of the Ark of the Covenant, behind which a conveyor belt was installed to transport tithes to a safe room (B. Souza 2014). According to church leadership, the *Templo de Salomão*’s USD\$182 million-dollar cost was paid for by donations from *fiés*. At the megachurch’s inauguration ceremony in 2014, then president Dilma Rousseff, then São Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin, and then São Paulo mayor Fernando Haddad all sat in the front pew, flanking Macedo and his family.

Figure 6.3: IURD’s *Templo de Salomão* (Solomon Temple) in Brás, São Paulo



Photo credit: *Divulgação/Veja SP* (2018)

Anyone is allowed inside the Temple, but security is tight. When I arrived, I asked a guard if I could go inside. “Of course. The meeting (*reunião*) just started,” he said. I was instructed to enter through a cavernous underground parking structure where I was told to check all of my belongings using their locker system. “Don’t forget your water bottle!” an attendant said to me, which I thought was kind but odd. (I learned that the pastor would bless worshippers’ water bottles during the service; the holy water was then intended to be used sparingly at home during prayer, a ritual I only understood after I had drunk the contents of mine.) As I passed through the metal detectors, I was almost turned away because I had forgotten my digital voice recorder in my jeans pocket. The church strictly prohibits any devices in the sanctuary that might be used to leak information about what goes on inside. The *reunião* was a liturgical bricolage of the Old and New Testament, complete with a LED light show that turned the sanctuary red when satanic tropes were invoked and white when the redemptive work of God or Jesus was mentioned. The pastor was ceaseless in his exhortations for tithes, which can be paid in cash or on handheld credit card machines. One exchange during the service went like this:

Pastor: If you have ten *reais*, how much do you give?

Congregation: One *real*!

Pastor: And if God blesses you and you earn 100 *reais*, how much do you give?

Congregation: Ten *reais*!

Pastor: And when you receive your salary, if it is 1,000 *reais*, what is your offering?

Congregation: One hundred *reais*!

At one point, the pastor said that anyone who could give fifty *reais* right then in an envelope that *obreiros* (attendants) were passing through the aisles, he would personally bless them. If not, we were instructed to take the envelope home and bring it back on our next visit with seventy *reais* inside. So many faithful filed toward the pulpit with cash-filled envelopes that an electronic gospel song played on loop three times before each of these one second-long transactions—give money, be blessed—were complete.²⁸

IURD is exemplary of the evangelical variant known as *neo*-Pentecostalism (Mariano 1999; Oro and Semán 2000). It is distinct from its predecessors for 1) its emphasis on prosperity theology (known in the U.S. as the health and wealth gospel); 2) its significant investment in mass media;²⁹ 3) its use of foils in its spiritual warfare—exorcisms and divine cures at IURD *cultos* usually involve the “purging” of the “demonic” spirits associated with Afro-Brazilian religions;³⁰ and 4) its direct involvement in politics. Despite the fact that AD has almost seven times as many members, IURD’s media empire, centralized operations, and penetration of the state from the outset—as compared to the AD’s much more decentralized structure and initial aversion to formal politics—make it one of the most powerful political and cultural forces in contemporary Brazil.

28. Field notes from April 18, 2017.

29. Macedo bought *Rede Record* in 1990, which is now the second largest media conglomerate in Brazil. IURD also produces and distributes—for free—*Folha Universal*, a newspaper with 3.5 million copies circulated each week, or about 42 percent of the total daily circulation of newspapers in Brazil (Rothberg and Dias 2012). As Refkalefsky et al. (2006) note, IURD’s media strategy is to bring people to the temples, whereas the preferred strategy of other neo-Pentecostal churches like the *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (founded by Macedo’s brother-in-law R.R. Soares, who also helped co-found IURD before they had a falling out), which announce book and video sales on their television programs, as well as bank account information for direct transfer of tithes from at-home viewers. According to the Superior Institute of Religious Studies (ISER), 80 percent of the people who attend *Universal*’s services do so after watching one of their TV programs (Mansur and Vicária 2003: 56). In this way, as Brandão (1986) notes, neo-Pentecostals created an evangelical culture industry that follows the crentes into their homes and offers an alternative to the still dominant (and secular) media conglomerate *Rede Globo*.

30. One of the more than dozens of best-selling books authored by Macedo, which sold more than three million copies, is a direct attack on Afro-Brazilian religions and practices (*Orixás, Caboclos, e Guias: Deuses ou Demônios?*). In 2005, a judge ordered that the book’s sales be suspended for promoting religious intolerance. Although IURD pastors tend to denounce Afro-Brazilian religions as sacrilege, they also draw on some of these traditions; their ritual exorcism of *orixás* relies on the same syncretism they denounce.

6.3 Pentecostals penetrate politics

The Macedo family's political ambitions have never been a secret, and long predate the church's support of Bolsonaro. In 1986, Edir's brother Eraldo was elected to the first of what would be four terms as state deputy in Rio. Edir's brother Celso was elected to the Rio city council and Edna, another Macedo sibling, represented the state of São Paulo in Congress before being reelected to the state's legislature on the PRB ticket in 2018. In 1990, IURD helped elect three congressmen; four years later, six. By 1998, IURD had elected 26 of their own to the state legislature in 18 different states, as well sent 14 congressmen to Brasília (Fonseca 2008). In 2002, Edir's nephew Crivella was elected senator, beating Leonel Brizola, the only Brazilian politician to have served as governor of two states, with nearly three times as many votes. IURD's political ambitions are so widely known that Macedo literally wrote a book on it, with the unambiguous title: *Plan for Power: God, Christians, and Politics* (2008). As the IURD's trajectory illustrates, the political articulation of evangelicals in Brazil did not happen by chance. It was a project.

But much of IURD's political work is more subtle. On one of my return visits to the Temple on a Sunday morning, the service was led by Renato Cardoso, Macedo's son-in-law, who is expected to take over the leadership of IURD when Macedo steps down. Toward the end of the two-hour service, Cardoso introduced the bishop who would be giving the closing blessing. Bishop Marcos, Cardoso said, was born an orphan, given away by his biological mother, a domestic worker, who—in the pastor's words—*ficou gravida do patrão* (was impregnated by her employer). The couple that adopted Bishop Marcos divorced when he was still a child, leaving him to be raised by his paternal grandmother. At age 19, he married his wife, who helped him find Jesus. Bishop Marcos was there that Sunday to bless the faithful and offer a course to *crentes* about entrepreneurship—after all, Cardoso boasted, Bishop Marcos had “represented Brazil's commercial interests in more than 18 countries around the world.”³¹

It wasn't until I saw campaign commercials a few weeks later that I realized who the bishop was, and why he had negotiated Brazil's business interest abroad. I immediately recognized him when he came on TV (as I suspect the other *iurdianos* present that day would have as well): Marcos Pereira is the president of IURD's political party, the PRB, had served as trade minister in the Temer administration (before being forced to step down after becoming embroiled in the Car Wash investigations), and was running for a congressional seat in São Paulo. Pereira won his election, became a key articulator of the 2019 pension reform on behalf of the evangelical caucus, is a vocal supporter of Bolsonaro, and, seven months into the administration's first term, found himself on the short list for a soon-to-be vacant Supreme Court seat.

The processes by which the church mobilizes supporters electorally on behalf of politicians like Pereira, much like the articulation strategies of capital fractions described in Chapter 4, are oblique. When I asked one AD church leader how this worked, he said:

The church itself doesn't campaign for any candidate, that is a fact. What

31. Field notes from September 1, 2018.

happens? The local pastor, the presidential pastor, who is responsible for the city, he opens up the congregations to receive visits from the church's candidates for them to go to the congregations and talk about how they plan to defend the church. So the space is opened [for them], but the church itself doesn't distribute *santinhos* [electoral fliers]. The campaign—it's the candidate who does it; the church just opens the space for him to campaign.³²

By their own admission, then, only allied candidates who will “defend the church” in the legislature are given access to prime-time space in the pulpit.

Although some classical Pentecostal leaders had dabbled in politics before the 1980s, the church-state nexus was never as pronounced as it became with the arrival of IURD. In fact, CCB, AD, and Foursquare faithful were known for propagating the mantra *crente não se mete em política* (believers do not mess with politics).³³ By the 1980s, however, the slogan became *irmão vota em irmão* (brother votes for brother) (Sylvestre 1986). In 1986, the year of the first parliamentary elections since Brazil returned to civilian rule a year before, 32 of the 559 senators and congressmen elected to the assembly that would craft Brazil's new constitution were evangelical (Fonseca 2008:17).

Because the military dictatorship had outlawed everything but rubber stamp parties since 1964, the Constituent Assembly was the route by which other interest groups and movements inserted themselves into formal politics for the first time in post-authoritarian Brazil. But unlike the labor, human rights, and feminist caucuses that helped make Brazil's one of the most progressive-on-paper constitutions in the world (Ziegler et al. 2011), which have since waned, the evangelical caucus has only expanded.³⁴ By 2005, IURD—already a quasi-party on its own— had collected enough signatures from its followers to form their own political party, what became the PRB. Evangelical deputies now make up one of the largest and most active congressional caucuses in Brasília, the *Frente Parlamentar Evangélica*, or FPE (see Figure 4.3), which was founded the year Lula was inaugurated in 2003. As of 2019, 195 of Brazil's 513 congressmen (38 percent) were members of FPE, the so-called *bancada da bíblia*.

32. Interview on December 5, 2016.

33. To be sure, this did not mean that evangelicals were unconcerned with politics before the Constituent Assembly. Three years before his death in 1933, Vingren's personal papers include reflections on Getúlio Vargas' ascension to power and its implications for AD's work: “If it's possible to speak of a spiritual revolution that year [1930], we also can't leave aside the revolution and war that took place in the country that same year, the so-called ‘Revolution of ‘30’. . . It was the *gaucho* Getúlio Vargas, one of the greatest men in Brazil, who rebelled against the existing government.” Describing Vargas' relationship with the church, Vingren wrote: “Everything continued favorably, because Getúlio always maintained good relations with the Pentecostals, and helped the movement in all ways possible. Several relatives of the president are Pentecostal crentes, and one of them preaches the gospel in Rio Grande do Sul” (173).

34. While a well-developed literature has documented the demobilization of leftist causes under the PT government, some scholars argue that progressive setbacks were evident before Lula took office in 2003. As Gilberto Maringoni (2011) wrote, “If the 1980s signaled important democratic advances, the 1990s represented a reversal of this tendency. Throughout those years, there was an accelerated privatization process, a reduction in the social welfare role of the state, and deregulation that would result in economic deceleration and an exponential increase in unemployment.”

The AD's political strategy changed during the *abertura* (democratic opening) as well, electing the largest number of evangelical representatives to the Constituent Assembly. An AD leader described the "link" between the church and its parliamentary representation as "easy":

We count on two state legislators and one congressman who are members of our church, so they are people who already know the vision of our church. They know what we defend in our statutes, our regiments, and they know they were put there by members of the church—because it's the votes of the members of the church that put them there, right? So the link is very easy. As soon as we see a problem, we take it up with our representatives in Congress and they defend us on the national stage.³⁵

Finally, the most recent wave of Pentecostalism in Brazil was described to me by interviewees as "hyper-Pentecostalism." As the census and more recent surveys indicate, autonomous Pentecostal sects with no formal linkages to any of the major churches are increasing unabated in this fourth period of growth. As Boulos put it in 2017: "You won't find two blocks in any peripheral community that doesn't have an evangelical church." He clarified: "Not a giant temple—a backyard church. The guy who takes his car out of the garage on Sundays, puts out some plastic chairs, and leads the *culto*."

It would be inaccurate to characterize evangelicals' political involvement during all four of these waves as the work of uniformly reactionary social bloc. Until the mid-2000s, the scholarly consensus was that it would be inappropriate to speak of a coherent evangelical political project at all (Burity and Machado 2006), even though individual denominations like IURD had begun founding their own political parties. In 1993, John Burdick, a scholar of black evangelism in Brazil, concluded that "*crentes* hold a good deal more promise for Brazilian progressive politics than they are usually given credit for" (1993:16). This began to shift toward the end of Lula's first term, as the FPE grew increasingly organized and mobilized around cultural questions like gay marriage, abortion, and LGBT rights.³⁶ Yet even then evangelicals' reputation for taking fundamentalist stances on these questions had not yet been cemented in the popular imaginary. As late as 2007, Edir Macedo proclaimed his support for abortion, among other social justice and equity-oriented issues: "I am in favor of the woman's right to choose," a quote cited in his official biography reads. "I am in favor of abortion, yes. The Bible is too" (Tavolaro and Lemos 2007:175). In another example, a few years later, a well-known Pentecostal pastor and gospel singer publicly condemned homophobia on one of Brazil's most-watched Sunday television shows (Trinidade 2010). And evangelicals' ties to the PT remained strong up through the 2014 election. For example, Dilma attended AD president José Wellington Bezerra's birthday services as Lula's pre-candidate for the 2010 presidential election. Citing John the Evangelist in her speech, Dilma called on the congregation to pray for Lula,

35. Interview on December 5, 2016.

36. Some scholars note that an organizational turning point for the FPE was the 2006 "leech mafia" scandal, in which 28 evangelical deputies were indicted for their involvement in a fraudulent scheme related to the Ministry of Health's ambulance purchases (Vital and Lopes 2013).

“in whose government the holy energy flows stronger” (AE 2009).³⁷

“*Nao tem como competir*” (There is no way to compete)

It was in this fourth wave, then, that the major Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal denominations, acting like quasi-parties, occupied the physical, spiritual, and political spaces progressive civic organizations left empty. While the Brazilian Left became more pulverized, sectarian, and entwined with the state throughout the 2000s (S. Fernandes 2017), the fourth-wave Pentecostal churches did base-building work, constructing the spaces of *acolhimento* that, for example, remembered and celebrated congregants’ birthdays as Boulos described. Speaking to this dynamic, a blog post that circulated widely in leftist circles in Brazil read: “The hungry, the unemployed, the sick, the homeless: all of them, in some way, found comfort through their brothers-in-faith. Meanwhile, the Left had a beautiful (and legitimate) obsession: ‘Out with ALCA!’” (Pavarini 2012).³⁸

Beyond offering “spiritual ERs” and training proselytizers, the *evangelicalização* of the nation throughout the 2000s also entailed creating multi-functional community centers that operate in ways and in places that the state does not. For example, the Pentecostal church that the Bolsonaro family frequents in Barra da Tijuca brings together up to 8,000 worshippers each week, but it also offers an array of educational and medical services (Metropoles 2018). According to municipal legislation passed in December 2018, which authorized the church to build a new five-story temple on a main thoroughfare in Barra, some of these services including language classes, college prep tests, couples therapy, legal advice, psychiatry, nutrition and drug treatment services, recreational sports for young people and senior citizens, and a *balção de empregos*—a jobs counter—for the unemployed.³⁹

In addition to providing much-needed leisure space and material support to congregants, evangelical pastors are often didactic in their teachings about the rationalization of household finances, economic planning, and support for dealing with drug and addiction habits. The local leadership, moreover, is drawn from the community and the more “valuable” of the megapastors’ crew are often remunerated handsomely (Dezan 2012). Frei Betto contrasts this leadership approach to that of the Catholic Church:

The CEB was forced to return to the parish [model], in which the priest is king, is God, everything revolves around the priest. So [a regular person prefers]

37. Evangelical ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro, Anthony Garotinho, is quoted in this article saying that he expected evangelicals to support Dilma for president in the following year’s elections. For Garotinho, “evangelicals’ approval of the [then] minister [Dilma] has its origins in the care and affinity they feel for Lula” (ibid).

38. ALCA (*Área de Livre Comércio das Américas*) was a proposed agreement that would reduce or eliminate trade tariffs throughout the Americas, an extension of NAFTA.

39. The three city councilmen who authored this piece of legislation, which amounts to a building permit for Michelle Bolsonaro’s church, are Inaldo Silva (PRB, Crivella’s party), Felipe Michel (PSDB), and Marcello Siciliano (PHS). Siciliano, linked to paramilitary groups in Rio, was one of the earliest suspects in the investigation into the assassination of socialist city councilwoman Marielle Franco.

to feed their faith in an evangelical church, where he, in the Catholic Church would never become a pastor, in six months he becomes one [in the evangelical church]. He is a laborer, he is a peasant, he is a valet parking attendant, he is a stevedore who spends the whole week carrying cargo in the harbor, but on the weekend, he puts on a suit and tie, sticks the Bible under his arm and feels very human (*se sente muito gente*), you know, leading the *culto* at his church. In other words, the Catholic Church, which demands that its pastors spend four years studying philosophy, four years of theology, and the heroic virtue of celibacy, cannot compete.

Many Pentecostal preachers thus come from their congregation and look and sound like their congregants. This is true in the rest of Latin America as well, though, in places where Pentecostals' political relevance is not as significant as it is in Brazil. Chesnut (2014) notes that "In Guatemala, many preachers are Mayan, and in Brazil they are Afro-Brazilian. By contrast, in the Catholic Church, most priests are part of the elite. They are either white or mestizo and many are actually from Europe."

While the evangelical church's approach to recruiting local leaders helps explain the spread of Pentecostalism—especially as compared to the more elitist Catholic strain and sectarian approach of leftist movement organizations—it does not explain how this vast and diverse patchwork of congregations is translated into the formal political realm. To analyze that process, I now return to evangelicals' late embrace of *bolsonarismo* during the 2018 presidential election.

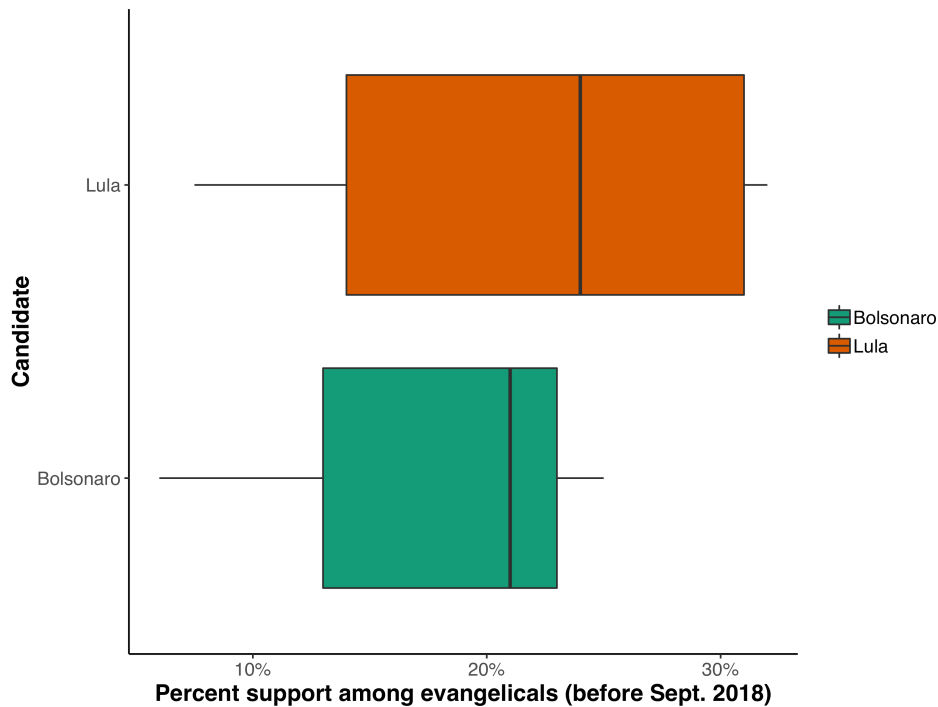
6.4 Evangelical electoral articulation in 2018

Church leaders, embedded in organized networks of congregations, were attuned to the political balance of forces because of their strong links to a mass base. In this way, *fiés* exerted influence over their leadership just as much as the clergy politicized their congregants. As Thiago Prado (2018) wrote, "Contrary to what common sense preaches, pastors do not treat those who attend their churches as a manageable herd," which they are not. Rather, he continues, the leaders' "gift is in sniffing out where the compass of power points among their followers." A plausible hypothesis, then, for why it took so long for the megapastors to formally endorse Bolsonaro in 2018, is because the evangelical electorate was genuinely split—as the polls up through September showed—until the final weeks of the campaign (Figure 3.9 and 6.4). Frei Betto offered one reason for which Lula retained such loyalty: "The [Brazilian] state does not offer social protection to poor people. The Lula Government was a great success because it offered a little. And that little counted for a lot, which is why Lula is still first in the polls."⁴⁰

Evangelical megapastors were able to read the political terrain with such precision because they maintained close ties to a loyal and organized base of congregants. Unfortunately for the PT, as the gulf in support between Haddad and Bolsonaro among evangelicals in Figure 3.10 shows, Haddad had little appeal among Pentecostals from the outset.

40. Interview on September 21, 2017.

Figure 6.4: Evangelicals' Split Support for Lula and Bolsonaro



Data source: compilation of 2018 Datafolha and Ibope polls that included a religious affiliation measure.

In addition to having limited national name recognition, Haddad had a negative reputation among many evangelicals well before he would become Lula's surrogate. In his first run for mayor of São Paulo in 2012, evangelical leaders and news outlets criticized Haddad for what would become one of the most extreme and unsubstantiated rumors to spread during the 2018 campaign. Conservative evangelical leaders dubbed school materials produced when Haddad was Education Minister that taught tolerance of gay and lesbian relationships a so-called "gay kit." Bishop Marcos Pereira (of the IURD, which was running its own candidate for mayor in 2012, Celso Russomano) said Haddad was the "father and intellectual mentor" of it (Vizeu 2012). At the time, all of Brazil's major newspapers reported that the "gay kit" had alienated Haddad from evangelical voters and in turn, Haddad decided "not to invest" in the evangelical vote (Carranca and Lupion 2012).

Despite many evangelicals' initial aversion to Haddad and the two year-old rupture with the PT during Dilma's impeachment, it still took until the very last week of the 2018 campaign for many of the major church leaders to publicly back Bolsonaro. Once they did, they campaigned for him using all means available. When Macedo formally endorsed Bolsonaro on September 29, 2018, one week before the election, the IBOPE data shows that Haddad's support among *iurdianos* fell by 16 points (as compared to a decrease of seven percentage points among *assembleianos* polled in the same four-day period), represented

by the marked dip in Figure 3.10) in the days before the first round.⁴¹

Although Bolsonaro had secured the support of the leadership of the major denominations in early October, the polls suggest that Haddad made up ground among evangelicals during the runoff campaign as he came to be understood as Lula's candidate. The pace of this increase leveled off in mid-October, when, fifteen days before the runoff vote, Haddad attacked Macedo by quoting a Latin phrase in a press conference:

You know what Bolsonaro is? He is the marriage of a soulless neoliberalism, represented by Paulo Guedes, who cuts labor and social rights, with the charlatan fundamentalism of Edir Macedo. Do you know what is behind this alliance? In Latin it is [the phrase] *auri sacra fames*, hunger for money. They only think of money. (Roxo 2018)

Macedo sued Haddad for defamation.⁴² More consequential to the campaign however, was the immediate outcry from other evangelical leaders. Two days after the press convergence, in an "unprecedented" gesture of solidarity, 147 religious leaders from various denominations denounced Haddad's critique of Macedo. Bishop Robson Rodvalho of the evangelical denomination *Sara Nossa Terra* said, "It is regrettable that the PT, once again, discriminates against evangelicals." Pastor Galdino Júnior of AD Santo Amaro, a network of more than 800 churches, said "The PT candidate's statement is inadmissible, because he not only disrespected one of the principal evangelical leaders in this country, but he also clearly shows his foolishness in attacking all of the evangelical institutions that for many years have been doing the social work that should be the responsibility of the government," the church leader said. Edson Rebastini, president of the Pastor Advisory Board of São Paulo, said, "It is a shame that Fernando Haddad, candidate for the presidency of the republic, would use offenses and lies against Bishop Edir Macedo. . . Catholics and evangelicals are united in favor of the family and against the corruption machine that the PT created to finance their power project."⁴³

At this crucial moment in the final weeks of the campaign, the political wedge between the PT and its evangelical base of support had hardened. Meanwhile, Bolsonaro, who identifies as Catholic, activated the ties he had cultivated with evangelical megachurch leaders over many years. In 2013 he was married by Pentecostal Pastor Silas Malafia; in 2016 he and three of his sons were baptized in the Jordan River in Israel by Pastor Everaldo of the AD. He also leveraged his preexisting connections with politician-pastors in

41. In addition to formally endorsing him, Macedo's TV network, the second largest in Brazil, produced a puff piece interview with Bolsonaro, which aired at the same time as the final debate before the first round of the election on October 4, which Bolsonaro refused to attend. As it had done for the PT in elections past, the IURD used its soft power in support of Bolsonaro's candidacy when it mattered the most.

42. Eight months later, a judge ruled in Macedo's favor, ordering Haddad to indemnify Macedo BRL\$79,128 *reais*, which the bishop said he plans to donate to a charity for children with Downs, autism, and cerebral palsy (Bergamo 2018).

43. All quotes in this paragraph come from an R7 news article (Unicom 2018), which also reports the names and denominational affiliations of the religious leaders who signed the petition condemning Haddad for his criticism of Macedo.

the evangelical party he was affiliated with from 2016-2018 (PSC) to court the rest of the CGADB leadership's support. In one video that circulated widely in pro-Bolsonaro and Pentecostal church WhatsApp groups during the last week of the campaign, Bolsonaro appeared on a large screen in one of the AD megachurches to wish long-time CGADB leader José Wellington Bezerra a happy 84th birthday—the same José Wellington whose 75th birthday services Dilma had attended in 2009. Speaking through the live video feed, Bolsonaro said to the *assembleianos* gathered for the *culto* and celebration:

The work that you execute through the work of Paulo Freire⁴⁴ in Congress is priceless. In the defense of the family, respect for children, the fight against abortion. Against drugs. Wonderful work. The care for others, the compassion, the forgiveness. Today, during this AD family reunion, I want to wish happiness and congratulations [to you all], may God keep illuminating us for the good of Brazil. I don't have words to express the gratitude I have for your trust in me during this difficult moment I am going through in my life. Together we will realize the vision of this great fatherland of Brazil. Brazil above everyone, and God above all!

The video then shows Bolsonaro receiving a standing ovation from the congregation—six days before the election. Bezerra then told his congregants: “Of all of the candidates, the only one who speaks the language of evangelicals is Bolsonaro. We can't let the Left come back to power.”⁴⁵

At this point in the electoral cycle, all of Brazil's most high-profile mega-pastors—Bezerra (AD), Estevam (Renacer), Everaldo (AD), Macedo (IURD), Magno Malta (Baptist), Manoel Ferreira (AD), Malafaia (VEC, AD), R.R Soares (IIGD), and Robson Rodovalho (SNT)—all of whom had, at some point in the past, supported the PT, were stumping for Bolsonaro. In so doing, however, they highlighted a very different set of issues than they had when they were articulated with the PT governments. As *Folha* reported on the eve of the 2002 election, evangelical leaders gathered for a campaign barbecue in Rio to formally endorse Lula. Pastor Everaldo—the same one who baptized Bolsonaro and his sons in 2016—said that the “evangelical leadership was depositing a vote of confidence in the PT administration,” and that that evangelicals want “a commitment from the Lula government to reduce interest rates [and invest in] income policies, job-creation, education, and [grant] freedom for evangelical churches” to continue to organize (Dos Santos 2002). Similarly, the “Manifesto of the Evangelicals,” signed by 31 prominent evangelical leaders, declared support for Lula “because we recognize that many of his policy proposals align with the prophetic vocation of the church of Jesus Christ” (Severo 2006).

Thus, while the PT was in power, evangelical clergy rallied their base around their chosen candidates by emphasizing certain issues of importance to them, such as pro-poor policies like *Bolsa Família*, the government cash transfer program that some anthropol-

44. Bolsonaro was referring to evangelical congressman Paulo Roberto Freire da Costa, son of José Wellington—not to be confused with renowned philosopher-educator Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the foundational text of the critical pedagogy movement.

45. Field notes from October 1, 2018.

ogists have shown helped funnel more tithes to the evangelical churches (J. K. R. Silva 2012). Bolsonaro’s campaign rhetoric, by contrast, gave them the opportunity to engage their electorate on a very different set of issues which were encapsulated in viral memes that circulated throughout the campaign.

6.4.1 The Memes of Production⁴⁶

By the time they endorsed Bolsonaro in the press and in the pulpit, religious memes, many of which, like the “gay kit,” containing patently false allegations, had been spreading in WhatsApp groups for months. The images below show four representative memes that circulated widely in the more than two dozen messaging groups I observed throughout the campaign:



The hand of God intervening on behalf of Bolsonaro in his tug-of-war with leftist leaders Lula, Dilma, and Jean Wyllys (former congressman for the socialist party PSOL).

The content of these memes were then reinforced in *cultos* in person. One *crente* recounted:

I noticed that the pastor’s discourse was totally right-wing, even though he didn’t cite the name of any candidate. He spoke of the “gay kit,” of how it is important to support the family who defends the family and stop Marxism from invading the schools, which is happening. (Stabile 2018)

Ronaldo Almeida (2019) argued that “Bolsonaro represents a sense of order and authority that appeals to parts of the evangelical population, even more so in the context of economic and moral recession.” Indeed, when asked about their support for gay marriage and abortion in moral terms, which the 2014 Pew Research study did, the overwhelming majority of the Brazilian population responded that abortion and homosexuality are “morally wrong,” with evangelicals surpassing all other categories on both questions, especially the latter (Figures 6.9 and 6.10). Reflecting these trends, the evangelical respondents I interviewed around election time associated Bolsonaro as the candidate who would “defend the

46. Thanks to Stephanie Reist for this clever phrasing.



A photoshopped image of PT vice presidential candidate Manuela D'Ávila (of the Communist Party of Brazil, PCdoB) wearing a shirt that reads “Jesus is a transvestite.” The commentary says: “Attention Catholics, attention evangelicals: Christians don’t vote for the PT.”

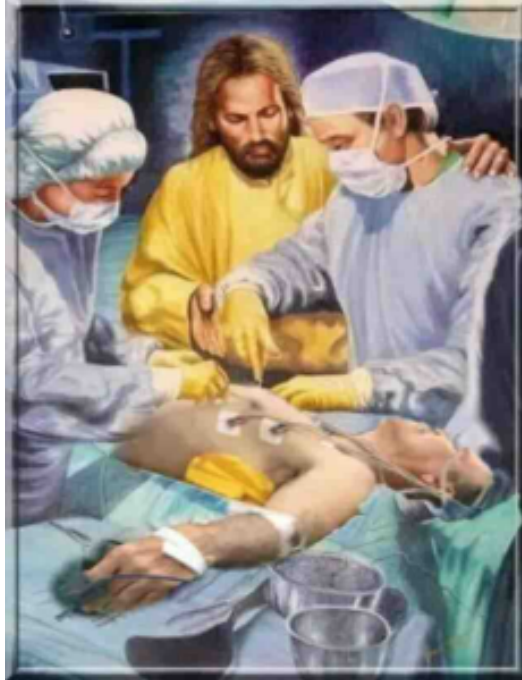


A meme contrasting “that which unites the Left: the end of *Lava Jato*, gender ideology, feminism, corruption, racist *cotas*, drugs, abortion, invasions, terrorism, immorality impunity” and “that which unites Brazil: honesty, justice, support for *Lava Jato*, democracy, family, respect, order, ethics, law-following,” with a picture of Bolsonaro.

family and the Bible,” as one put it. Meanwhile, many *crentes* told me that the Leftist candidates were communists and atheists: the memes had come to life.

A demographic that (still) contains multitudes

Secular political elites and academics can no longer afford to ignore the Pentecostal phenomenon, which has reshaped the political and cultural landscape of Brazil. But *pen-*



After Bolsonaro was stabbed during the campaign, this image of Jesus accompanying the surgeons performing a life-saving operation was one of the most widely circulated memes in the evangelical pro-Bolsonaro WhatsApp groups I observed.

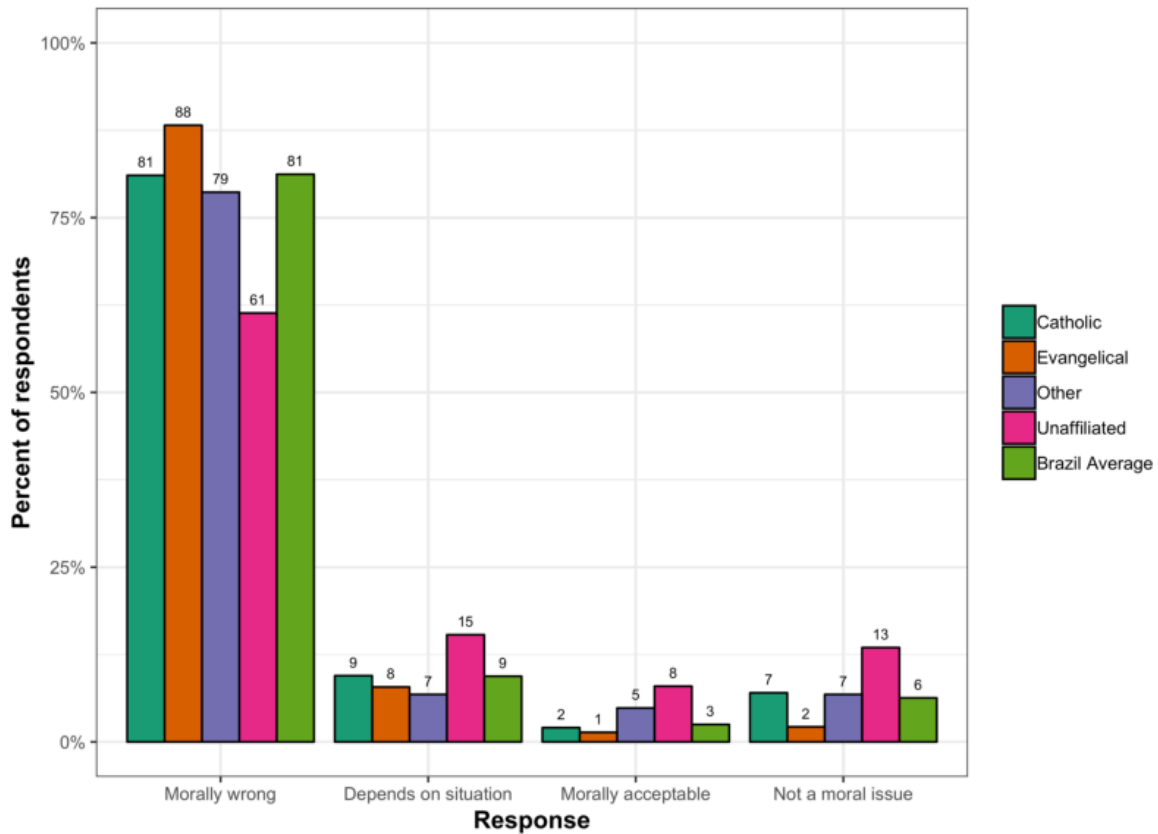
tecostalismo, like most social movements, is heterogenous, plural, and dynamic. Although the preponderance of evangelicals had shifted to Bolsonaro by the first round of the election, Haddad made several last-minute attempts to court them. He circulated a “Letter to the Evangelical People” just a few weeks before the runoff, around which the PT organized a campaign event with evangelical leaders, mostly from mainline evangelical denominations, with Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist leaders present.⁴⁷ While his support among evangelicals did improve in the latter half of October, it appears that it was too little too late.

Evangelical pastors who were not aligned with *bolsonarismo*, although much smaller in organizational clout, circulated political messages of their own. One viral WhatsApp message signed by Pastor Luiz Gustavo Silva of the progressive Christian Metropolitan Community Church in Rio read: “Evangelical leaders closed ranks with fascism, with the banality of evil. They forgot to close ranks with the gospel. They forgot to close ranks with Jesus,” he wrote. The message went on to cite scripture from the Gospels of Matthew, John, and Lucas that spoke to Jesus’ teachings related to non-violence and acceptance, as compared to the “antichrist that is out for blood. . . and who makes a pact with the religious leaders who sold out to fascism because of their love for money. Do you know of whom I speak?” Pastor Silva asked. “I cite the Malafaias, the Macedos, and so many other criminals who pretend to be ‘evangelical.’”⁴⁸

47. Field notes from October 17, 2018.

48. Field note from October 18, 2018.

Figure 6.9: Views on the ‘Morality’ of Abortion in Brazil

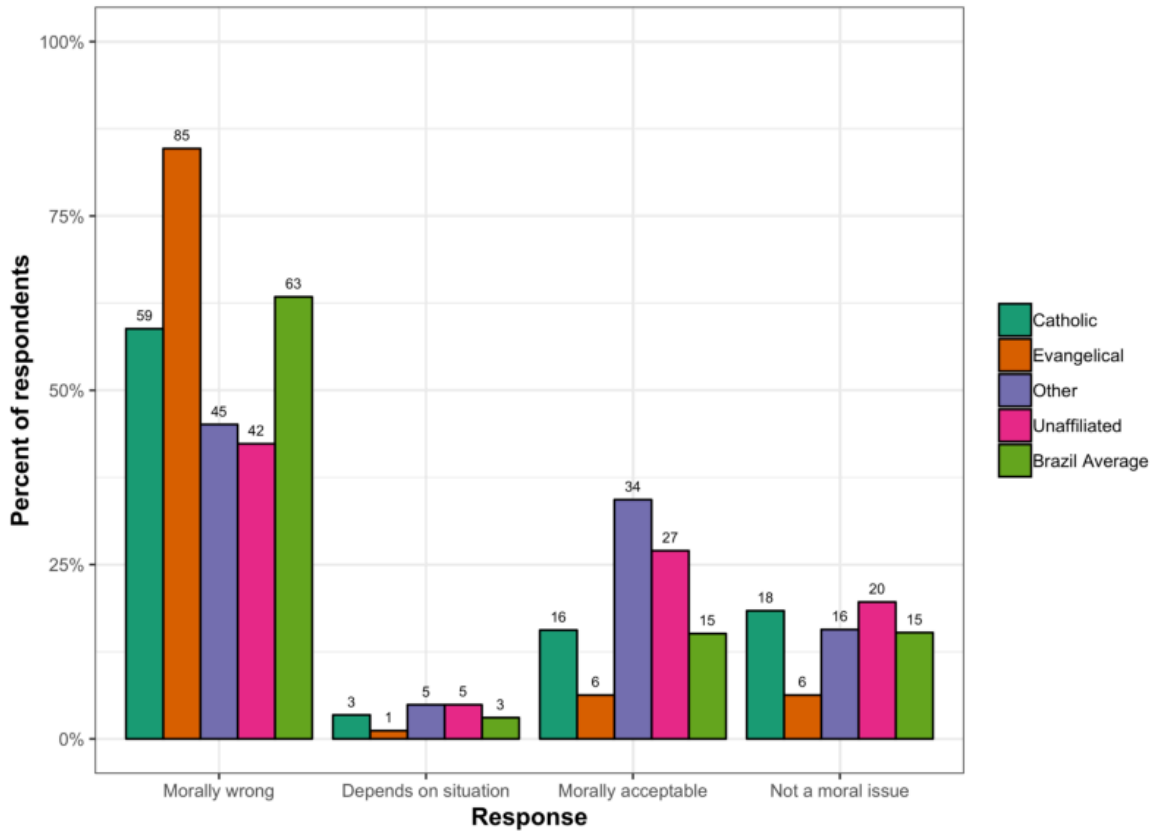


Data source: Pew Research (2014).

Throughout the election, anthropologist Jacqueline Moraes Teixeira followed activist groups of evangelical women like the Evangelical Women for Gender Equality (EIG) and the Evangelical Women for the Legalization of Abortion (ELA) who did not support Bolsonaro. On these feminist activists’ strong identification with their Pentecostal churches, Teixeira noted: “It is very common for these women to attribute their empowerment process to the church. . . it’s as if the civic initiation happens in the church, and not in the school” (Rossi 2019).⁴⁹ Teixeira remembered the Haddad press conference in which he criticized Macedo as a “crisis” in the [evangelical, anti-Bolsonaro] groups.” Fellow faithful were saying that “if the women did not vote for Bolsonaro they would be denying their own religious identity, affirming that Haddad would persecute *Universal*” (ibid).

49. Throughout her fieldwork, Teixeira noticed that *Universal*’s discourse surrounding abortion began changing as a consequence of their political ambitions. It used to be, she said, that *Universal* differentiated itself in its support of a woman’s right to choose, but this changed when Crivella ran for mayor of Rio. “*Universal* is a denomination historically known for not forging alliances with other evangelical churches. It is always very sectarian and very criticized. And then we saw that it was necessary for Crivella to position himself on some questions” important to the broader evangelical electorate, like abortion.

Figure 6.10: Views on the ‘Morality’ of Homosexuality in Brazil



Data source: Pew Research (2014).

As research like Teixeira’s on the evangelical Left in Brazil and elsewhere has shown (Burdick 2016; Mariano and Pierucci 1992), and as the volatility of vote preference leading up to the 2018 election further demonstrates, the Pentecostal electorate is still up for grabs—not in the sense that evangelicals can be manipulated and sold out to the highest bidder, but rather in the sense that *crentes*, like any other strategic and agentic members of a social movement, vote for politicians that acknowledge and represent their interests. A major strategic failure on the part of the Left, then, was to allow Brazilian Pentecostals to articulate this bloc around the “pro-family discourse.” Since their first foray into politics during the Constituent Assembly, the Pentecostal bloc was “no more inclined to the conservative than the average” representative; moreover, “the leaning of the Pentecostal electorate towards Collor de Mello [in 1989] was not inevitable: the opposition could have changed the situation or even won the Pentecostal ballots,” as Oro and Semán note (618). Having learned from this, Lula incorporated biblical tropes into his campaign speeches in his fourth run for the presidency in 2002, making room for evangelicals in the PT’s participatory project: “Never before in the history of the evangelical church have you been called to the responsibility to participate in the construction of this country in the way I will call

you,” said Lula in one of his campaign speeches that year (Dos Santos 2002).

Recognizing the growing importance of the evangelical electorate, Roberto Mangabeira Unger identified Pentecostals as “decisive” in the mid-2000s. Unger went so far as to say that Brazil’s evangelicals’ historical analogue could be the North American Protestant pioneers: The faithful are people who,

...[Go] to night school, struggle to open a business, to be an independent professional, who are building a new culture of self-help and initiative—they are in command of the national imaginary.

In 2005, Unger helped found the party that would become *Universal*’s PRB. “[We are talking about] are tens of millions of Brazilians who are organized,” he observed at the time (Pereira 2018).

As the opportunistic trajectories of many of the evangelical megapastors described in this chapter show, their power project is at once cynical and effective. The majoritarian evangelical bloc was never on the losing side of a presidential campaign in Brazil since re-democratization in 1988, having supported the eventual winner in every campaign from Collor to Bolsonaro (with the exception of 2014, when evangelical megapastors’ support was more mixed—though Dilma still enjoyed considerable support from AD and IURD). It is hard to discern, however, which way the causal arrow runs: these leaders both follow and are followed by a base, as is the case in most successful social movement organizations.

The spoils of clerical leaders’ consistent alignment with power-holders are significant: Beginning in the Lula administration, several evangelical leaders and their wives were awarded diplomatic passports, which eliminate the need for visas and give them access to exclusive immigration lines, facilitating their travel abroad aboard their private jets (Época 2013). There are also the obvious material interests of the megachurch leaders for the continued tax exemption of their churches and near non-existent scrutiny of their internal finances. Two weeks after his appearance at the 2019 March for Jesus, Bolsonaro made the rules related to the financial oversight of religious institutions even more lax (Mello and Prado 2019).

“They won,” Frei Betto said bluntly, referring to the conservative evangelical leadership bloc. Starting in the 1970s, they designed a strategy: “First occupy the legislative power, then the executive, and now they have their sights set on the judiciary.” Asked about who he planned to name to the Supreme Court when he gets the opportunity, Bolsonaro said he intended to nominate a judge who is “terribly evangelical” (Calgaro and Mazui 2019).

6.5 Future research and comparative directions

In this chapter, I showed that the growing influence of evangelicals in Brazil was linked to a political power project. One direction for future comparative research might extend this lesson to understand variation in evangelicals’ influence throughout Latin Amer-

ica. Perhaps the clearest counterfactual is Chile, whose evangelical population (which is heavily Methodist, in contrast to Brazil) will soon represent one-third of the total population as well, but *crentes'* political power is far more muted. Whereas the Brazilian evangelicals described in this chapter engaged intensively in the political sphere beginning in the early 1980s, electing their own to office and creating their own political parties, scholars of the Chilean case have found that the politicization of evangelicals only began earnest in Chile in 1999 (Mansilla, Urtubia, and Panotto 2019). These authors note that—just as other denominations followed IURD's lead into the legislature—Chilean evangelicals are now trying to build a “*bancada evangélica* similar to Brazil's” (181). The strategy may be paying off: conservative congressman José Antonio Kast, presidential candidate on the evangelical party ticket in 2017, was expected to get just four percent of the vote in the first round of the election but outperformed the polls by double.

As further evidence of how numeric inferiority is not equivalent to political weakness, scholars have pointed to the decisive role that evangelical churches played in defeating the FARC peace accord in Colombia in 2016, even though evangelicals represent less than ten percent of the population there, the lowest percentage in the region (Céspedes-Báez 2016; Ortega 2017). Meanwhile, Guatemala, has had three evangelical heads of state, including dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. Costa Rica's conservative evangelical National Restoration Party propelled gospel singer-politician Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz to the runoff in 2018. But in other countries in Latin America—as was the case in Brazil throughout the 2000s—evangelicals aligned with the left-leaning candidates, including Venezuela's Pentecostal political party *Organización Renovadora Auténtica*, which supports Maduro. In Mexico, the evangelical-backed party *Encuentro Social* endorsed center-leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the 2018 presidential elections. A second hypothesis to explore, then, is that the particularities of the evangelical phenomenon in Latin America described in this chapter—a syncretism exemplified by, for example, the MST *militante* who described successfully mixing *Das Kapital* and *The Holy Bible* “in a blender”—makes their political articulation potentially more plausible than among social blocs whose religious and political boundaries are more sedimented.

Summary and conclusion

Brazil's evangelicals gather in droves every year at the million-person *Marcha Para Jesus*. More consequentially, they have also marched through the country's political institutions, find their most salient political expression in the FPE, a powerful and conservative parliamentary front, and are currently articulated with a far-right authoritarian government. It does not have to be this way. The evangelical electorate is also concerned about wealth redistribution in one of the most unequal countries on earth, pro-poor social policies, and investments in the social safety net, all of which the Temer and Bolsonaro governments have ruthlessly cut. The Left can and must dispute this vast and growing voting bloc if they are to be a competitive actor in future political struggles.

These findings thus have direct strategic relevance to the Brazilian Left as it attempts to rebuild itself. The successes of liberation theology—its conception within the strictures of the Catholic Church and flourishing during the conservative papacy of Pope

John Paul II—can be a template for the political resignification of Pentecostalism in Brazil. Liberation theology was born as a counter-hegemonic movement in a religious order as conservative as many modern-day evangelical churches. So too can liberation theology's downfall be a lesson. As I have argued elsewhere in this dissertation, signification of mass phenomena often happens after the fact. Brazil's evangelicals' long march for Jesus shows that such signification is made possible by (and is most effective when) leaders are embedded in the social and civic life of an organized base. The implication for the political strategy of the Left is that progressive Pentecostal leaders can and must do the work of resignifying and rearticulating the base, contesting the consciousness, values, and interests of this large, plural, and growing social and political movement.

Conclusion

A little over a mile from the *Templo de Salomão* in the São Paulo neighborhood of Brás stands a block-wide building with a mirrored façade. For 23 years, it was the headquarters of CUT, once the largest labor confederation in Latin America and the fifth largest in the world. At one point, CUT represented an estimated seven million workers in Brazil. Lula was one of its co-founders and by far its most prominent member. In July 2018, however, CUT found itself on the brink of bankruptcy. To help fill the budget gap, the union's leadership began negotiating the sale of their headquarters at an asking price of BRL\$40 million *reais* (about USD\$11 million). One potential buyer is Valdemiro Santiago, former IURD pastor and founder of the evangelical megachurch *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus*. He made CUT an offer up front and in cash.¹

How could Brazil's once formidable labor movement suffer such a dramatic reversal of fortune? In the social sciences, we often turn to either macroeconomic secular trends (like deindustrialization and globalization) or to abrupt discontinuities (such as elections or recessions) to explain phenomena like the declining power of organized labor. One obvious proximate cause of the CUT's downfall was the draconian labor reform that passed in July 2017, a year before Valdemiro's offer to buy the union's headquarters was made public. That month, as Temer was roiled in his own impeachment proceedings, Brazil's Congress approved sweeping labor legislation under the guise of workforce modernization (*Projeto de Lei 38*). Among other changes, the law increased the allowable workday from eight to twelve hours, transferred bargaining rights from collective units to individual workers who are now expected to negotiate directly with their bosses, and abolished the obligatory union contributions that kept unions like CUT financially afloat (called a "tax" by opponents).

The effect of the law on organized labor in Brazil was devastating: in the year after the reform passed, union dues nationwide fell by an average of ninety percent. Once the one-day-of-pay per year dues were no longer automatically deducted from workers' paychecks, the once-formidable CUT lost 94 percent of their revenue practically overnight. In 2018, 70 percent of the unions affiliated with CUT were insolvent (Castanho 2018). By

1. To address the media attention regarding the sale of their headquarters to a neo-Pentecostal church, CUT issued a press release (Nobre and Severo 2018). Rather than deny the offer from Valdemiro, however, union leaders confirmed that they have been considering selling the building since 2010, the year in which Lula left office with a near 90 percent approval rating.

contrast, *Datafolha* found that 89 percent of Brazilian Pentecostals report contributing “regularly” via tithes to their church (Abbud 2018). The syndicates whose financial support diminished the least after PL 38 passed (when dues became voluntary) represent not workers but employers, particularly industrial entrepreneurs and retail owners (C. Silva 2018).

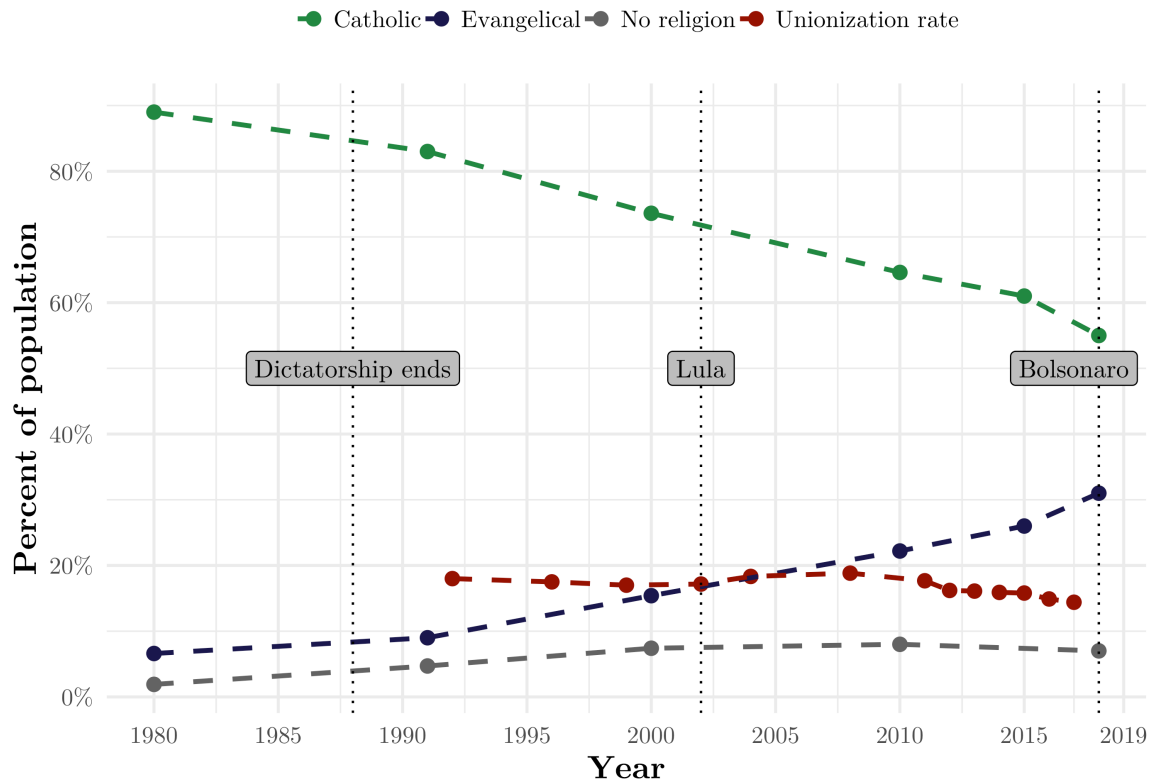
There can be no doubt the worldwide restructuring of the economy and exogenous shocks—like the sensational release of the JBS tapes which temporarily stalled both the business-friendly labor and pension reforms—matter for explaining these outcomes. At the same time, as I have argued in this dissertation, an appreciation of organizational variables—particularly the content, form, and strategy of civil society groups like CUT and Valdemiro’s megachurch—helps us better understand why severe welfare state retrenchment and *bolsonarismo* were politically possible so soon after the much-heralded heyday of *lulismo*. Viewed through this meso-level theoretical lens, then, one way of looking at this bizarre real estate deal in Brás is as a microcosm of Brazilian civil society since the country re-democratized in 1988.

Figure 7.1 shows the change in religious affiliation and unionization rates in Brazil since the 1980s. As I documented in the previous chapter, most surveys project that the country will be majority evangelical by 2030. At the same time, unionization rates have declined slowly but surely, reaching their lowest percentage in 2016 (14 percent) the last time the census bureau reported this statistic.

As the figure shows, the inflection point when the number of people identifying as evangelical began to surpass the number of Brazilians active in the labor movement was 2003-2004, Lula’s first years in power. Organized labor’s declining strength in Brazil came at a time when many theories would have predicted the opposite. Having a famed labor leader as president during a booming economy represent the political and material conditions under which collective bargaining power could be at its highest, leading us to expect labor militancy rather than its quiescence.² During Lula’s eight years in power, however, the national labor research institute DIEESE recorded 2,952 strikes, as compared to 5,191 during the Cardoso administration that preceded him, when unemployment was much higher and GDP per capita was stagnant. Explaining these apparently counterintuitive developments through a finer grained investigation of the heterogeneous units that make up civil society was one of the major aims of this dissertation.

2. Some of the mechanisms scholars have used to explain levels of labor militancy include 1) the presence of policymakers who are favorably disposed to correcting power asymmetries between employers and workers (Bivens and Shierholz 2018); 2) the degree of collective capacity and organization within and across unions (Tilly 1978); and 3) the size of the industrial reserve army—that is, the better the economy (and the lower the unemployment rate), the more relative power workers have to collectively challenge their bosses. Magdoff and Magdoff (2004) put it bluntly: “The fear of losing one’s job helps to create and maintain a docile workforce.” (14). All three of these factors, which should have predisposed labor to be more rather than less militant during the PT years, were (or should have been) present during Lula’s two terms.

Figure 7.1: Religious Affiliation and Unionization Rates, 1980-2018



Data source: World Religion Database (2018) and PNAD (2017)

7.1 Trench warfare in civil society

For a long time, far longer than just this electoral cycle, an old Left and a new Left—the ones that bifurcated in two lines outside the 2018 PT party convention—have been losing what Gramsci calls the “war of position,” which is the long-term struggle for hearts and minds that happens in the trenches of civil society. Meanwhile, as I documented in this dissertation, a new Right and an old Right asserted themselves on this terrain, in universities, in church pulpits, on television programs, in WhatsApp groups, and YouTube channels. The Right’s war of position in Brazil is manifest in the rise of movements like MBL, whose leaders are now among the most-voted members of municipal, state, and federal legislative bodies, the multi thousand-person Students for Liberty conferences I attended three years in a row (and whose attendance, resources, and sophistication grew each time), and the increasing influence of the libertarian think tanks, as reflected by their outsize influence in the longitudinal network data.

What my analysis indicates is that to understand political terrain shifts like those that occurred in twenty-first century Brazil, we must seek to understand the mechanisms

that operate at a lower level than the macro-economic conjuncture, and a higher level than the psyche of the individual. The nature and strategies of intermediary organizations—the ones that exist between private spaces and the presidential palace—can serve to inoculate against or hasten or deepen the spread of illiberal politics.

I based this argument on a five-year comparative and longitudinal analysis that documents how plutocratic and authoritarian forces decisively shifted the balance of power in Brazil at the end of a thirty-year period known as the New Republic (1988-2018). The research demonstrated how the strategic choices that civil society groups make—about where to source their power, how to organize it, and what to do in the wake of destabilizing events—have significant consequences for the configuration of political power in a nation-state. The evidence presented in this dissertation thus bolsters the claim of political articulation theorists that seemingly fixed attributes like socioeconomic status and religious affiliations have “no natural political valence that springs ‘spontaneously’ to our consciousness” (De Leon, Desai, and Tugal 2015:21). These “valences,” instead, must be organized and articulated through strategic “call-and-response” with a social base—as the plutocrats, anti-*petista* protest groups, and the Pentecostal preachers did, while the PT and other left-leaning actors did not.

The processes by which these right-wing civil society groups strategically articulated different blocs of voters at the same time that the Left distanced itself from them are not dissimilar to what Siddhartha Mukherjee, in his book *The Emperor of All Maladies*, describes as two simultaneous processes that explain how and why cancer spreads. The first, which he calls a “jammed accelerator,” describes how cellular mutations lead to runaway growth. Uncontrolled mitosis, however, is not enough to trigger the disease because our cells also have inhibitor genes. When they detect something is awry, they usually prevent malignant growth. Mukherjee argues that cancer is the result of a situation in which both the accelerator is jammed and there are no breaks, creating the conditions in which cancerous cells become immortal, create their own networks of blood vessels, and travel elsewhere.

What happened to civil society’s inhibitor cells—the ones that the neo-Tocquevillians believed could help prevent authoritarianism of the kind that Bolsonaro represents?³ Both the jammed accelerator and the lack of breaks were necessary, but not sufficient, to explain the return of authoritarian politics to Brazil just thirty years after Latin America’s second longest military dictatorship came to an end.⁴ The organizations and collective political practices that are designed to protect democracy at a cellular level were enervated.

To be clear, I am not using Mukherjee’s metaphor to suggest that movements like

3. To give just a few examples of how Bolsonaro’s authoritarian politics manifested once in power, there were record increases in the number of indigenous leaders murdered, police killings, and protected acres of rainforest burned during the first year of his mandate. He also intimidated the press and journalists he considered hostile to his agenda, flouted rules that govern the separation of powers, persecuted scientists, joked about torture, and gave the military dictatorship the score of a “perfect ten” (Menezes 2019).

4. Paraguay was under military rule for three and a half decades (1954-1989). Panama shares Brazil’s dubious distinction; its military dictatorship also lasted for 21 years (1968-1989).

Pentecostalism are metaphorical cancers. To the contrary, as I described in Chapter 6, there are elements of the phenomenon that are profoundly therapeutic and fill both the spiritual and material void left by the state and other civic institutions. Much of the literature I reviewed in the previous chapter, moreover, speaks to the radical and progressive potential of the gospel, as seen in the way it has penetrated parts of the landless, homeless, and black movements in Brazil. Rather, I'm deploying the process Mukherjee describes to shed light on the relational dynamics of how fascist pathologies that can contaminate the body politic in the absence of organized countervailing forces.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I showed that the jammed accelerator of the plutocrats, protesters, Pentecostalism—articulated in its most retrograde form—was coincident with *petismo*'s push away from militant base-building work they practiced throughout the 1980s, and to a lesser extent the 1990s. While I have so far made the case for these articulation processes on the Right, I have yet to fully explicate the other half of this relational dynamic, which I now turn to in this final empirical section of the dissertation.

7.2 The push away from *petismo*

The day that the PT forgets about the nucleação [a reference to the party's *Núcleos de Base*, or NB, the organized grassroots expression of the party] as the determining factor of its survival, it will cease to exist as a political party. The question of the NB is so important that if we don't take it very seriously, we lose our purpose as a party. That is to say: The PT cannot only discuss politics every four years around election time. That is what any [ordinary] party does.

Lula, quoted in Lemos (1986:11)

Twenty-eight years after Lula's assertion that the PT's *nucleação* would be the "determining factor of its survival"—and twelve years after the party came to power—a survey of PT party affiliates found that only eight percent of respondents reported participating in base-building work through the party's *Núcleos de Base* (Paludo 2017:116), organizational forms that were fundamental to the party's founding but which were stripped of their deliberative function in 1999. In my interviews and fieldwork, even PT militants and former government officials—in fact, especially these partisans, whom we would most expect to defend the party's strategic choices—told me that *lulismo* brought with it a disinvestment in the kind of meticulous base-building work practiced by the Pentecostal churches, a contrast reflected poetically (if tragically) in the Brás real estate transaction described above.

A radical leftist labor confederation, CSP-Conlutas, which splintered off from CUT after Lula introduced a pro-business pension reform bill in his first term, were merciless in

their critique of what they saw as the PT's straightforward cooptation and selling out of the working class. One union leader, Claudionor Brandão, boomed into the microphone at CSP-Conlutas' 2017 national congress that,

[The main union centrals like CUT] had the power to convoke their bases to a general strike [to stop the labor reforms]. *They didn't do it*, comrades. . . we have to tell it like it is: these union bureaucrats are handing over the working class with our hands tied behind our back at the feet of the executioner. Because the rights of the working class are now regressing to the nineteenth century.⁵

Another dissident labor leader at this same congress lamented the fact that CSP had not been able to undermine CUT's hegemony:

With all due respect to everyone here. I don't want to undercut everything that we've done. But we have to consider the fact that we were not able, in this first wave of resistance, to become a real, concrete, and objective alternative for Brazilian workers. It has nothing to do with our desire. We made a sincere effort, those of us who are here. It has to do with objective realities. What is. And CUT and the PT are still overwhelmingly the leaders of the Brazilian working class, even when they implement antidemocratic and traitor policies.

Even if, as this labor leader claimed, the CUT and PT were still the "overwhelming" leader of the working class in 2017, it is unclear what this really meant. The rise of the atomized precariat class and drastic levels of deindustrialization—which led to the shuttering of the factories where Brazil's social movement unionism was born—mean that the composition of the working class has changed. Moreover, the Brazilian Left has never been large. In fact, according to the survey data reported in H.9, it was half as big as the country's right-learning camp in 2014—this after the PT had been in power for more than ten years. Leftists' numeric and material inferiority meant that they would have had to be far more strategic than their rightist counterparts in order to "organizationally outflank" (Mann [1986] 2002) their opponents and win power (Ganz 2000).

The bigger tragedy, as many interviewees sympathetic to the party told me, is that the PT did not use its power during its 13 years in government to create a "new political culture." In each of my interviews in which a respondent highlighted the PT's missed opportunities, I asked what, in their view, party and labor leaders could have plausibly done but didn't. Antônio Querioz, director of the Inter-Union Parliamentary Advising Department, had this to say in response:

EM: What is an example of *formação política* [political education] that they [PT leadership] opted not to do?

Antônio: For example, it was very common in the period before Lula to have events every week in universities, led by the Left and attended by union mem-

5. Field note from October 12, 2017.

bers, to do an analysis of the conjuncture, to run political education courses, etc. This was completely discontinued in the PT period, to the point that there the labor movement has a grave problem of lack of leaders.

What happened instead? Instead of continuing in the social struggle, in the militancy, the most qualified people were incorporated into the government, and made responsible for taking care of the management of the state. Because [these union leaders] were trained, they could have trained others and multiplied themselves, but instead they went into the [state] machine. And there the priority is something else. . . and the government has to sometimes take unpopular measures. Instead of fomenting, leading, orienting the movement, he becomes the mediator between the state and the movements. It limits the demands of the movement instead of stimulating the movement to participate more.⁶

Multiple other interviewees describe ways in which PT governments channeled resources to the labor, social, and student movements on the one hand, and named them to government posts on the other, “making the movement a representative of the government to its base, rather than the movement leader a representative of the base inside the government,” one former PT cabinet official said. “You invert the direction. You understand?” He went on:

If I’m the government and you’re a social movement. Your job is to question me, to made demands, but if I create a series of *facilidades* [facilities, as in, benefits or shortcuts], creating government positions for people tied to you, then you stop questioning, protesting, and making demands. You become a representative of the government and not of your base. This is cooptation.⁷

Well before Bolsonaro’s rise, an extensive (mostly Brazilian) literature acknowledged these processes, arguing that the independent organizational power bases on which the PT relied were hollowed out during their years in power (R. Antunes 2011; Antunes, Santana, and Praun 2018; Cignachi 2012; Garcia 2015; Singer 2012; Vieira 2012). These scholars sounded the alarm about the neutralization of politicized and politicizing civic organizations of the Left in the mid-2000s. “The irony,” said Nathalie, the political economist and civil society leader quoted in the introductory chapter, said, “is that [during this period] you had the vibrant growth of Brazilian civil society—but the problem was its quality. Many of the 300,000 parastate organizations are either religious or are organizations that deliver services, [these grew] much more than those that have a more political dimension,” she said.⁸ A former high-ranking PT official provided a different view of the same process. “The people [from the movements] who came to the government were very good, they just started thinking like the government.”⁹ Frei Betto spoke of this demobilization process

6. Interview on July 27, 2017.

7. Interview on March 22, 2018.

8. Interview on July 17, 2017.

9. Interview on December 12, 2017.

with great regret:

Frei Betto: The PT coopted CUT and UNE (the national student union).

EM: How?

Frei Betto: I don't know, I didn't participate in this process.

EM: But you knew that it was happening?

Frei Betto: It was obvious. It was obvious.

EM: Because of what you said earlier about the leaders [naming them to positions in government]?

Frei Betto: Yes. And because of this, today, despite the fact that the whole nation is against the Temer Government, which has a higher unfavorable rating than Dilma did, there aren't street mobilizations.

EM: Because they were neutralized?

Frei Betto: Exactly. The social movements were neutralized by the PT, which is a paradox, a contradiction.

While Frei Betto could not or would not speak to the how of these processes—he left his cabinet position as Lula's special advisor on social mobilization as a result of what he perceived to be this policy of neutralization—leaders within CUT and UNE whom I interviewed were more forthcoming. Leandra, a labor leader who has worked for CUT's national headquarters for more than a decade, remembered Lula's election was a period of “euphoria.” There were “more or less ten years of this euphoria, but what we had was an ascendant middle class in all of Latin America, but with no political base-building. People only ascend speaking of meritocracy, as in, ‘I did it’ (*eu consegui*)” echoing the language of individualism that is politically expedient for elites. “This was a huge error,” she said. Asked for an example, Leandra said:

For example, in Brazil, the PT created ProUni.¹⁰ But for private for-profit universities! Beyond subsidizing private education, you create a mentality for the person, ‘Look, I got here by myself.’ That is not public policy.¹¹

10. In 2005, the PT—under the leadership of then Education Minister Fernando Haddad—implemented ProUni (*Programa de Universidade Para Todos*), a government program that provides partial or full subsidies to low-income college students. The policy contributed to two major shifts in Brazil throughout the 2000s: 1) the so-called “de-elitization” (*deselitização*) of the university—the number of Brazilians who matriculated in university increased by 62 percent between 2006 and 2016 and the university population became far more racially and socioeconomically diverse (Oliveira, Pochmann, and Rossi 2019); and 2) the so-called “mercantilization” (*mercantalização*) of education because the program effectively subsidized the for-profit college industry (C. H. Carvalho 2013). The number of for-profit higher education programs exploded during this period (Zanlorenssi and Almeida 2017). As of 2016, 82 percent of all college enrollment in Brazil is in private institutions (*Censo da Educação Superior* 2016), as compared to 26 percent private enrollment in the U.S (National Center for Education Statistics 2016).

11. Interview on September 1, 2017.

This all happened, Leandra remembered, during a period of exceedingly low unemployment rates.

Unemployment during Dilma's second election was at four percent. People were *turning down* job offers. There were jobs that Brazilians didn't want to do anymore, which is why Bolivian labor became very important in this period. People were able to leave their jobs to study, because there was education credit, because they got subsidies. It was a period of *so much abundance* but without basic political education.

Gabriel, a former student leader from UNE who was himself brought in as a youth advisor to Dilma's government, made similar points. When mass protests erupted in 2013, "I was working for the mayor's office [the Haddad Administration], seeing all of that from the institutional side, and at the same time wanting to be in the streets with the people! Looking out at the streets and thinking, 'Why am I on the side of the government?'"¹²

What these interviewees were emphasizing is that the kind of independent base-building work that accompanied the founding and rise of the PT (Keck 1992) did not continue into the 2000s. Interviewees sympathetic to the party remembered Lula's decision to uncouple party leadership from its base—that is, from the *nucleação* of which he spoke in 1986—most evident in his unilateral decision to make Dilma his successor.¹³ One sociologist and civic leader who held posts in the PT administration said that this hierarchical choice reveals why Dilma was unable to muster much of a response from the PT's once extensive grassroots base as her impeachment proceedings unfolded:

Dilma was a total outsider. Lula had a militant political base. Dilma was a bureaucrat, she was a minister, but she didn't have a political profile. She had never before been elected, never even been elected to city council, never fought in a Congressional hearing, she never dealt with that kind of thing. So it was a complicated choice. . . [and then] Dilma distanced herself even further from the PT base. She didn't get along either with Congress nor with the social movements.¹⁴

7.2.1 A leadership vacuum on the Left

With Lula imprisoned and ineligible to run for office after his judicial persecution, and with very little new or ascendant progressive political leadership, the Left under Bolsonaro is thus operating in a civic vacuum largely of its own creation. "The government is more corrupt than before and people are losing their rights at a frightening pace, and they don't know what to do. This is the product of political alienation. If there was political consciousness, it wouldn't have gotten this bad," Antônio said. To address this political

12. Interview on April 19, 2017.

13. Lula did this again in 2018, when he selected Haddad as the party's candidate without consulting what was left of the PT's organized base.

14. Interview on September 24, 2017.

alienation, Guilherme Boulos issued a different kind of call to action in 2017:

Our job is to take up base-building again. The evangelicals do this, they built a whole way of doing this based on *acolhimento* [reception and acceptance]. We have to make our spaces more receptive. Imagine bringing someone from the *povão* [as in, regular people] to a student assembly here at USP. I don't know how it is now, but for Heaven's sake if it's anything like it was when I studied here, they would never come back.¹⁵

Boulos was referring to the sectarian practices and exclusionary vocabulary of what is usually referred to as the radical Left in Brazil. Gabriel, the UNE student leader quoted above, said that this has to do, in part, with the top-down logic of student activism. "UNE's deliberations are top-down. The working groups do not influence the movement's politics. It could be a much more porous and participatory process than it is. The final resolutions are always products of the leadership."¹⁶

These insider assessments of three types of civil society actors—the unions, which are corporatist in structure and which the PT largely "neutralized," the more diverse evangelical churches, which rely on distributed leadership of pastors like the "peasant," the "valet parking attendant," and the "stevedore" whom Frei Betto contrasted with the traditional Catholic Church model, where "priest is king"—speak to each type of organizations' varied internal structure. These organizational choices, I have argued, had profound consequences for the level and type of political power that each wielded during this critical juncture in Brazil's political history.

The demobilizing effects of the Brazilian Left's transition from a distributed network of *núcleos* and CEBs to a hierarchical organizational forms were evident in the party's diminished capacity to turn people out to the streets, the relatively small anti-impeachment protests in 2015 and 2016, the enervated response to the 2017 labor reform that all but dismantled the unions,¹⁷ inexpressive attendance during Lula's caravan around the country and sentencing hearing in 2018, and the (as yet) small-scale challenges from the Left to the historically unpopular and scandal-ridden Temer and Bolsonaro governments. It was also increasingly clear in the party's declining electoral strength, both at the national level (where the party lost 39 percent of its congressional seats between 2010 and 2018), as well as at the local level (where the PT lost 60 percent of its mayorships between 2012 and 2016). Between 2012 and 2015, the PT also "hemorrhaged" partisans: the percent of the population identifying with the PT fell from a historic high of 27 percent to less than half that; meanwhile the percent of respondents with no party ID jumped from a little under 50 percent of respondents to fully three quarters percent of the population (Mainwaring, Power, and Bizzarro 2017:195).

15. Field notes from September 14, 2017.

16. Interview on April 19, 2017.

17. There were two exceptions: two demonstrations were sizable, but at least six more were planned and called off at the last minute for fear of low turnout.

7.2.2 Children of *lulismo*

What Lula did, the greatest legacy of the PT, is that the PT showed that it is possible for life to get better. To get out of the loop that to live is to suffer, to hope that you have enough money for tomorrow and pray that when you die you'll go to Heaven.

Vítor Vernille, PDT party *militante*

I interviewed Vítor, a 25-year-old PDT party *militante*, on a rainy Friday night one year before the 2018 election. Although he was campaigning for Ciro Gomes, Lula's main rival on the Left, he spent much of the interview telling me about what it means to be what he described as a "son of *lulismo*":

I was born and raised in Perus [a peripheral neighborhood of São Paulo]. Socially, I'm a son of *lulismo*, because my dad doesn't have a college degree, but [he] was able to get better jobs basically because of investments that Lula made. And because of that, I was able to go to college, learn English, get a good job. But it's clear—all of this is because of *lulismo*, none of that would have happened without Lula, you understand?¹⁸

Vítor enumerated what the PT years made possible: the chance to go to college, to take a plane to fly home to the Northeast once every three years, to go to the shopping mall on the weekend, to buy clothes, household durables, a car. "This completely changed the worldview of people living on the periphery. Where I live, in the 1990s, there was nothing—no *Casas Bahia* to buy furniture, a refrigerator. You had to come to the city center, two hours in and two hours back. There's no turning back, no way to go back to what it was before," Vítor said.

To tell the story of political terrain shifts in contemporary Brazil without acknowledging the profound socioeconomic transformations that Vítor was describing would be inaccurate and disingenuous. The critiques the interviewees quoted above leveled against their own party had little to do with the spirit and intent of many of the party's social programs, though some respondents had qualms with their individualistic ("*eu consigo*") and consumption and debt-fueling effects. Nor were these insider critics falling back on tropes about graft or corruption. Rather, the essence of their critique was that the PT oversaw a period in which the little national progressive infrastructure that existed (and the organizational inhibitor cells against authoritarianism) were decimated. Ironically, it was this very infrastructure that made the party's improbable bids for power possible in the first place.

Still, to tell the story as a function solely of the PT's strategic errors would be to discount the many anti-democratic countercurrents with which they contend. I have ded-

18. Interview on September 22, 2017.

icated much of the dissertation to analyzing these powerful reactionary forces, but three are worth acknowledging again. First, the Brazilian media environment is one of the most concentrated in the world, and a large body of evidence shows that the major outlets were hostile to the PT governments during much of its time in power and particularly during critical moments such as elections and Dilma’s impeachment proceedings (Mello, Berger, and Vaz 2016; Feres Júnior and Sassara 2016).¹⁹ Second, the claim that the parliamentary and judicial proceedings that led to Dilma and Lula’s respective downfalls were impartial strains credulity (Greenwald, Reed, and Demori 2019). Third, an institutional setting in which 35 parties wrestle for power over thousands of pieces of legislation makes governability without concession a near-impossibility. On this point, one interviewee told me:

The little Left that we did have *became* the government. The Left didn’t have the... what’s the word... the *density* it needed to govern. So what happened? Lula, the PT, had to compose itself of a variety of smaller interests. But as soon as you do that you become fragile.²⁰

The first major corruption scandal to tarnish the theretofore ethical image of the PT, was known as the *mensalão* (big monthly payoff). It refers to kickbacks to Congressman who agreed to vote with the PT—among them, many evangelical deputies—and was a strategy adopted in the name of “governability,” which Ivo Lesbaupin described in the following way:

To have a majority [in Congress] to be able to approve your projects, to carry forward your power project, to gain approval for your nominees, to elect those you nominate. In this process, ‘the ends justify the means,’ it’s all valid: the government forges the alliances that it deems necessary to reach its ends, the ethical character doesn’t matter. (Lesbaupin 2009)

Social blocs that were once loyal to the PT—especially the rising middle class—began to shift away from the party during the *mensalão* scandal (Singer 2012). “I think that the PT’s problem was that with *mensalão* all of their long-term projects and proposals died,” Vítor said, describing his own disillusionment with the PT. When I asked him why, he said that it was because “it put them on the defensive...Putting forth a progressive political project in Brazil is already difficult, and if you are on the defensive, it’s over,” he reflected. Increasingly reliant on the sources of power than come with control of the state machinery, the PT found other means of governing at the expense of the civic sources of power they had cultivated since the 1980s.

These conservative headwinds that any “progressive political project” faces are real—so real that they necessitate an unrelenting organizational strategy and political education project that engages a mass base in the work of political articulation. Absent these collective sinews, Brazilians experienced politics in other venues—hierarchical media echo chambers, atomized online spaces and WhatsApp chats, or their twice-weekly Pentecostal *cul-*

19. Other analyses of systematic biases in the country’s three major newspapers, however, were more mixed (Mundim 2018).

20. Interview on March 3, 2019.

tos. As I argued in Chapters 4 and 5, elites can and do easily take advantage of the Left's disorganization and fragmentation. At the same time, as I showed in Chapter 6, it took Brazil's evangelical movement over forty years to build the kind of political and organizational muscle it can now deploy in the political arena.

7.3 Post-scriptum

One of the apocryphal phrases that I heard repeatedly throughout my research was, "In Brazil, even the past is unpredictable."²¹ The aphorism is meant to capture the extreme uncertainty that characterizes the political field—and the historical revisionism that often comes with time.

In the months since I finished the data collection for this dissertation, the PSL imploded. Taking roughly half party's federal deputies with him after a dispute over campaign finances, Bolsonaro founded *Aliança Pelo Brasil* in late 2019, a new party whose name harkens back to the official party of the military, *Aliança Renovadora Nacional*, or ARENA, which ruled between 1966 and 1979. The constellation of actors that make up the Brazilian Right is thus still rife with internal contradictions and cannot yet be considered a historical power bloc. At the same time, a political alternative to *bolsonarismo* has yet to take root on the Left. On November 8, 2019, after 580 days in prison, Lula was released from jail. Although it appears unlikely that he will regain eligibility to run for political office, he continues to dominate the headlines, discussions, and what is left of the country's progressive organizational infrastructure. On the political economic front, Paulo Guedes' privatization agenda, a spike in foreign direct investment, and a bullish stock market helped ensure that Brazil's perennial plutocracy remained intact in the first year of Bolsonaro's presidency.

These and other political terrain shifts documented in this dissertation were coincident with a global right-wing tilt. The worldwide trend is marked. Yet, would it be accurate to characterize the Brazilian case as just one more in an authoritarian resurgence, part of an unavoidable trend that includes the Brexit vote, Trump in the United States, Orban in Hungary, Duterte in the Philippines, Modi in India, and Erdogan in Turkey, among others? In this dissertation, I argued that *bolsonarismo* and the successes of far right forces in contemporary global politics are hardly inexorable. The strategic action of civil society groups—their contingency plans and their failures to contingency plan—must be central to any account of political pendulum swings of any kind. History, in other words, is still up for grabs.

21. "No Brasil, até o passado é imprevisível [ou incerto]." The phrase is sometimes attributed to the former president of the Central Bank and FHC's Minister of Finance, Pedro Malan, when he and his staff tried to reconcile public accounts and debts accrued during the dictatorship.

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Methodological Appendix

This appendix consolidates and expands upon methodological discussions that appear in the text of the dissertation. Its purpose is to make the basis of key analytic decisions explicit. As noted in the introduction, individual chapters address more narrow methodological considerations as appropriate, and Chapter 2 describes the intuition behind the methodological approach of the dissertation. For readers interested in a self-contained description of the research design, however, I offer a discussion of the overarching method and analysis strategies here.

Overall design and methods

This dissertation is based on a five-year prospective study that used a sequential mixed methods design. The study was prospective in the sense that the primary outcome of interest—the configuration of political power after a critical election—was unknown at the outset. It was sequential in the sense that it proceeded in several phases, first with extended exploratory fieldwork that began in 2013, followed by the systematic selection and then tracking of 40 political and civil society organizations over time. This sequence is depicted in Figure 2.3. And finally, it is a mixed methods study in that it integrates a variety of data sources (observational quantitative data, interviews, ethnographic fieldwork) and analysis techniques (longitudinal network analysis, process tracing, and qualitative coding of interview transcripts and field notes). Below, I discuss how I used and why I chose these methodological techniques to help answer my research questions, and the tradeoffs I made in the process.

Meso-level case selection

Delimiting a sampling frame from which to select the 40 organizations I would observe over time required nearly a year of iterative and immersive research. Because there is no census of political organizations from which to probabilistically sample, my approach to begin bounding the field was to identify as many of the social movement organizations, labor unions, private sector lobbies, and other constituency groups that regularly interact with Brazil's 35 political parties.

To do so, I began by conducting 88 in-depth interviews with academics, elected of-

ficials, journalists, social movement and labor leaders, and political party staff between April 2017 and February 2018. The protocol used in these interviews is included below. Nine of these in-depth interviews were not recorded at the respondent's request; in these cases I took handwritten notes. The shortest of these interviews took 37 minutes and the longest just under four hours.¹

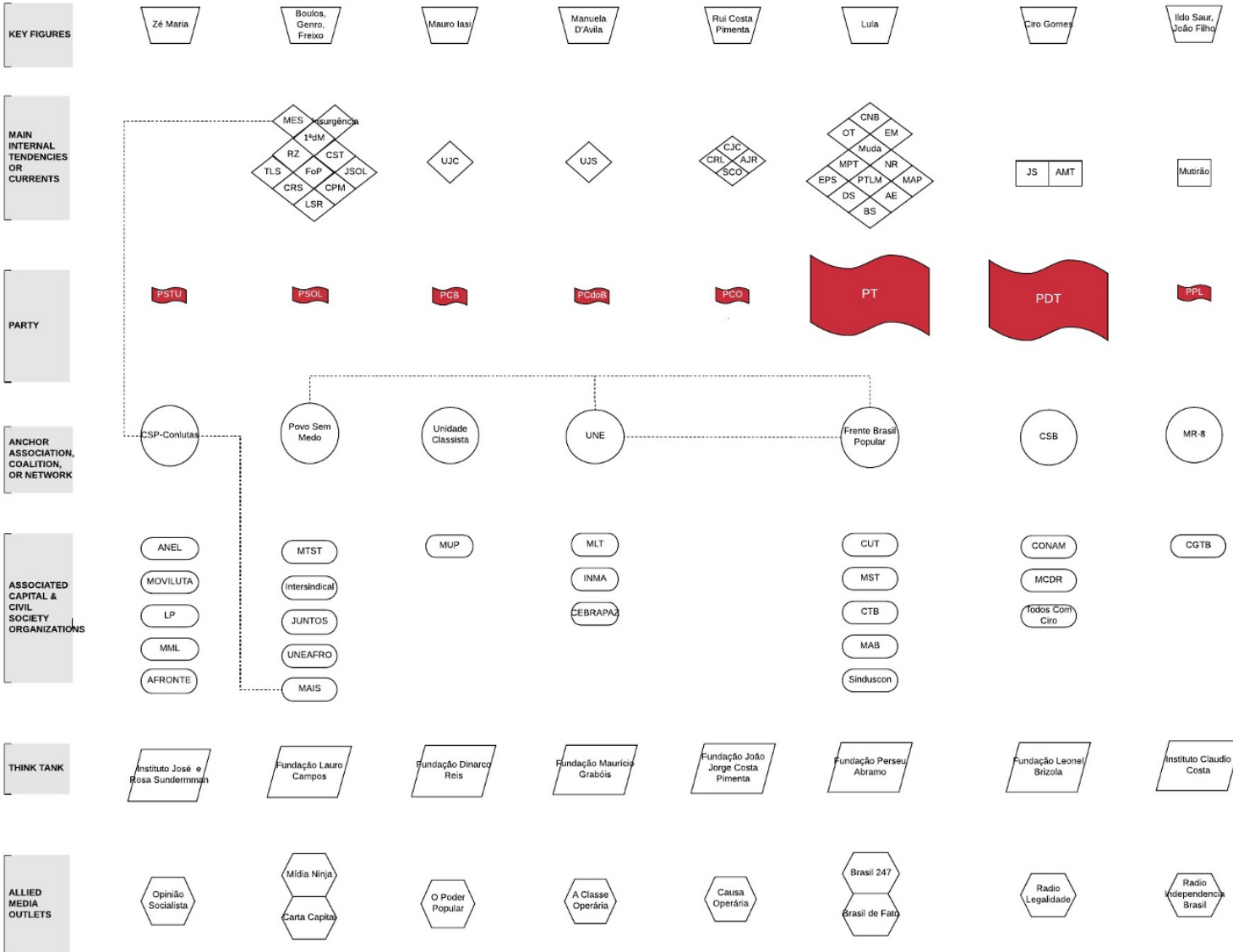
Because my goal in this step was to better understand important empirical context about the array of political organizations in Brazil and the bounds and composition of the political terrain (rather than central tendencies of action), I was not concerned with probabilistic sampling in this phase. I was, however, concerned with speaking to political leaders and experts from as varied a range of ideological positions as possible. My initial list of 45 respondents represented diverse political positions and roles, including the chief of staff to both former presidents Lula and Rousseff, officials in the PSDB's Cardoso administrations (1994-1998; 1998-2002), the former head of the Central Bank, three governors, evangelical pastors-turned-congressmen, the head of government affairs for Brazil's largest private bank, journalists, professors, and social movement leaders for both radical leftist and far right social movements. As these interviews progressed, I purposively identified interview respondents to make sure that I spoke with at least one person from each of Brazil's 35 political parties so as not to inadvertently censor any portion of the formal political map—or the organized interests with which they interact.

Next, I transcribed and open-coded these interviews for organizational actors and their relationships to develop the movement-party map shown below. This diagram (Figures A.1, A.2, A.3) includes all 35 formal parties, their salient internal “tendencies” (factions within the party; most have organized subgroups of women or youth arms), 21 anchor social movement organizations (SMOs), labor union centrals, or trade associations (representing different fractions of capital—agribusiness, finance, manufacturing, construction, mining, and arms industries), 59 additional, smaller SMOs, 40 think tanks, and 38 media outlets that surfaced in the interviews. After six months of fieldwork, I reached saturation, meaning that I was not subsequently surprised by an interview subject or media identification of a major political organization that was not already included in this stage of mapping.

1. Field interviews were shorter, used an abridged version of the protocol, and lasted an average of 17 minutes. These were generally unscheduled and took place at one of the 40 party convenings, political conferences, street protests, and multi-day movement conventions I attended during fieldwork. In addition, prior to this phase of research, I conducted an additional 48 interviews at protest events (Chapter 3) and 36 in-depth interviews with a class-stratified sample of residents in Rio de Janeiro. While these interviews were conducted with separate but related research questions in mind, they informed both the initial list of interview subjects for this phase, as well as questions and theory building throughout.

Figure A.1: Movement-Party Mapping

Left-Leaning Movement-Party Map



255

A higher-resolution version of this landscape map is available upon request.

Figure A.2: Movement-Party Mapping

Centrão Movement-Party Map

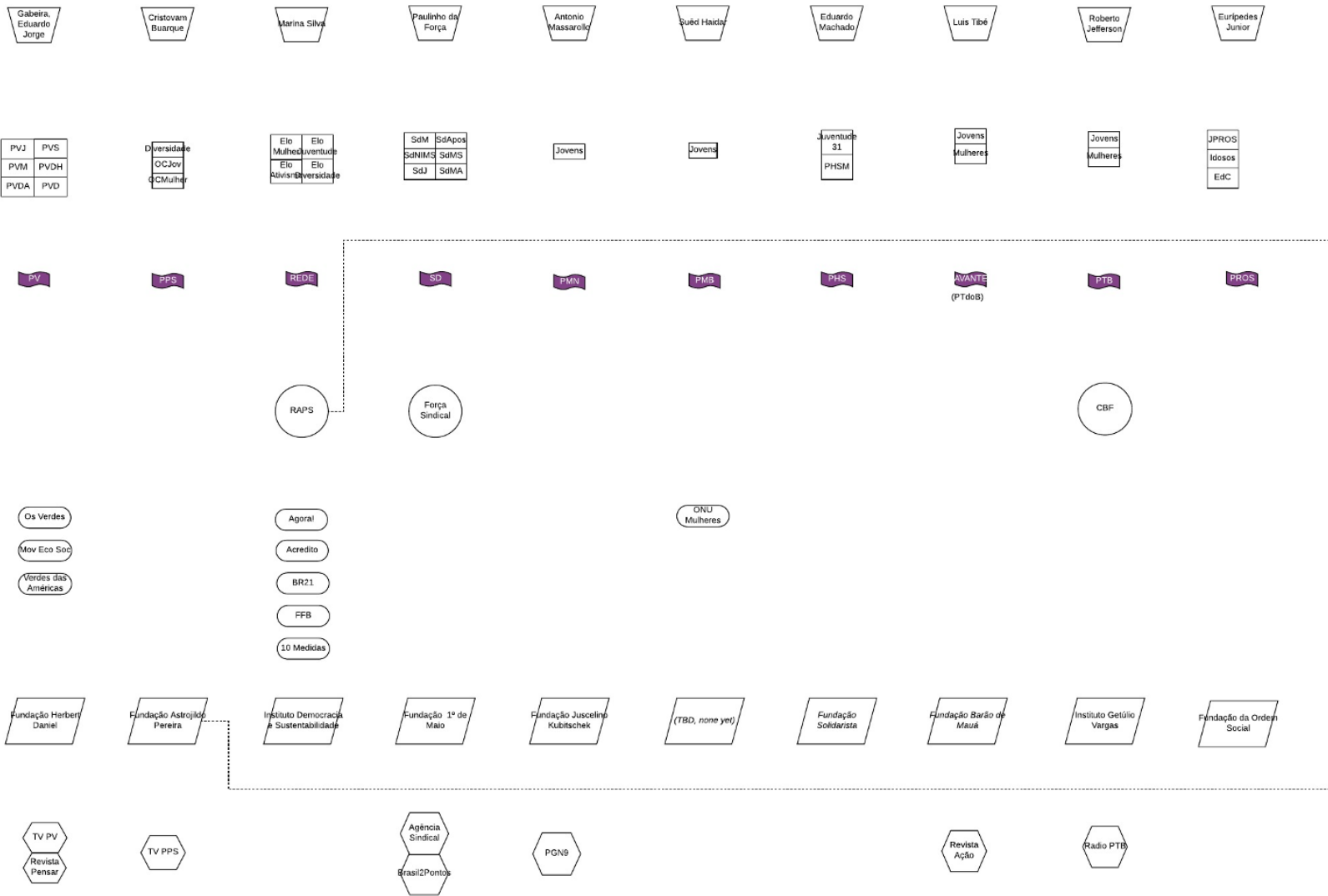


Figure A.3: Movement-Party Mapping



The main benefit of relying on expert interviews in the exploratory phase of research and in the absence of a population level census is that it allows researchers to “collect a wealth of (highly timely) information on all the relevant policy positions of all the main actors” (Dorussen, Lenz, and Blavoukos 2005:333). The primary drawback is that individuals representing organizations (even if in positions of leadership), or academics experts studying particular subjects, may not be aware of all of the interrelationships that constitute particular fields, resulting in a biased list of actors. To address this bias, I triangulated the interview data with observed and reported data on the political parties with which leaders self-report to be allied, co-occurrence in a newspaper articles, co-presence at events, formal political alignment, and social media signaling between all pairs in the sample (see Table A.5 below for further elaboration and a description of how I operationalized these ties.) I chose this approach because triangulated data helps mitigate some biases inherent in social network analysis (Uzzi 1996; Uzzi and Lancaster 2003).

Because the placement of actors in the movement-party map had more heuristic than analytic value, and because it relies in large part on data from a non-probabilistic sample of interviewees, I then engaged in an initial round of network analysis, coding ties based on observed and reported behavior. First, I collected and dummy coded the five nominal measures described in Table A.5 in order to 1) aid in the selection of a smaller number of cases of organizational actors so that I could follow them in greater depth over the period of the study; and 2) serve as a baseline snapshot of the configuration of the political terrain in Brazil prior to the election. In the resulting figures shown below, the Fruchterman–Reingold algorithm is used because it places nodes with stronger and/or more connections closer together.

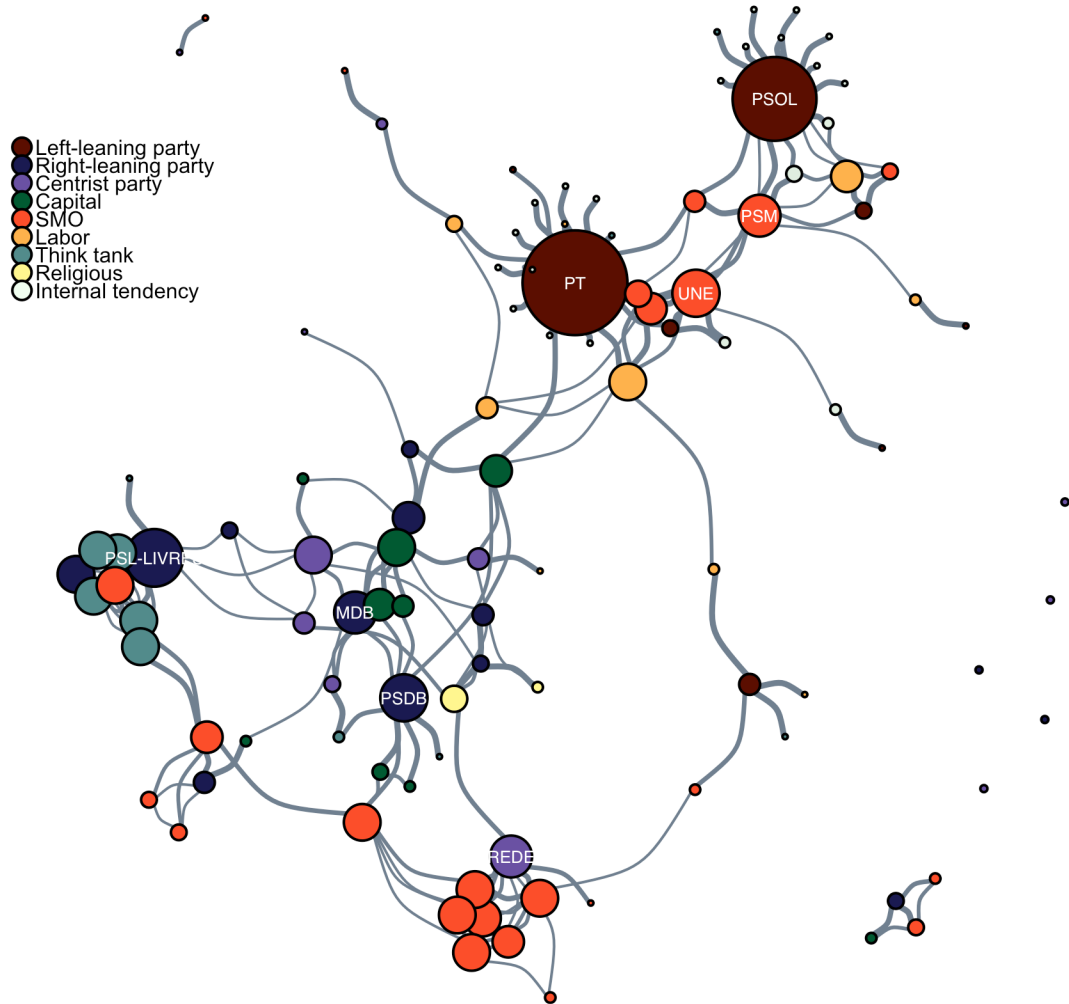
Figure A.4 is a weighted graph based on node degree centrality, meaning it emphasizes those parties with more ties (allies) but also those that organize themselves in a different—and often more fragmented—way. Parties that simply have more internal factions or more civil society groups associated with them—regardless of their capillarity or power—appear as hubs. For example, PSOL, the socialist party that had six seats in Congress when this data was collected, appears as a much larger node than other, larger political parties like PDT, PMDB, and PSDB. This is an artifact of their internal tendency tradition.²

Refining the design

After the initial mapping stage of the research, I circulated and received detailed feedback on the overall research design and set of possible entities to track from advisors and colleagues. Between December 2017 and June 2018, I presented and discussed my re-

2. As I learned while attending PSOL’s national conference in Goiás, the way that party affiliates express their allegiance to their internal tendency is akin to the fervor with which one supports their preferred soccer team in Brazil. At the conference, Sabrina Fernandes (2017) described to me the 20 main tendencies and additional 40 smaller splinter tendencies in PSOL. Most have their own unique banner, publication, chants, hazing rituals, and opinion of Trotsky. Each time she mentioned one tendency she cited an additional two or three that it had spawned since the party’s founding in 2004, PSOL itself having cleaved off from the PT. In other words, it’s tendencies all the way down.

Figure A.4: Baseline Network Map of Brazil's Political Organizational Universes



Network map generated on December 7, 2017 to aid in case selection and capture the baseline. This graph is weighted by degree centrality. See Figure C.1 for the unweighted version.

search in progress with the members of my dissertation committee, fellow doctoral students with subject area expertise, colleagues in the sociology department at the University of São Paulo, participants in the Networks and Organizations workshop at Stanford, and two academic conferences (the *Mobilization* Conference at San Diego State University and the annual *Latin American Studies Association* Conference in Barcelona). As a result of the feedback I received in these venues, I made two major modifications to the research design, described below.

Modification 1: Case selection based on alternative network centrality measures and theoretical corrections

Were I to choose organization-level actors to prospectively track from the list generated in the first stage of the research based on an arbitrarily set level of degree centrality (>3), the nine parties, eleven SMOs, five think tanks, two labor centrals, and three capital fractions shown in Table A.1 would be selected. However, given distortions like the one described above—both as a result of the non-probabilistic qualitative inquiry that generated the list of nodes and degree centrality being, at least in part, a product of parties’ idiosyncratic organizational structures—corrective measures were needed to select from the 108 possible cases.³ To aid in the selection of a smaller number, I calculated two other measures: eigenvector centrality, a measure of a node’s relative influence in a network (Bonacich 2007), and betweenness centrality a measure of the extent to which a given node serves as a bridging role, calculated as the shortest path between nodes (L. Freeman 1977).

Table A.1: Case Selection Based on Degree Centrality (>3)

	Party	SMO	Think Tank	Labor	Capital
Left-leaning	PSOL	PSM		CSP-Conlutas	
	PT	FBP UNE		CUT	Sinduscon
Center	REDE	RAPS Acredito/Agora BR21 RenovaBR BAtivista			
	PTB	VPR	Atlas		CNA
	PMDB	MBL	IEE		CNI
	PSDB		Millenium		
Right-leaning	PSD		Mises		
	PSL		Liberal		
	NOVO				

This analysis had the straightforward effect of justifying the inclusion of five of the country’s major parties that did not have high degree centrality in the initial map (PP, PSB, PDT, PR, and DEM). After ranking the cases by eigenvector and betweenness score, I then made nine theoretically motivated choices to correct for redundancies and omissions in the final set of cases. These choices are elaborated below (section A.1, and the resulting list of cases to track prospectively and longitudinally are reported in Table A.2).

3. As Owen-Smith and Powell (2004) note, degree centrality also does not take into account the importance of indirect pathways of brokerage and information flows.

Table A.2: Case Selection Based on Eigenvector and Betweenness Scores

	State	SMO	Think Tank	Labor	Capital
Left-leaning	PSOL	PSM		CSP-Conlutas	
	PT	FBP	FPA	CUT	Sinduscon
	PDT	FFB			
Center	PSB	RAPS		Força	
	REDE	Agora!			
	SD	RenovaBR			
Right-leaning	PTB	VPR	I.Mises	UGT	CNA
	PMDB	IURD	I.Millennium		CNI
	PSDB	CGDAB			FEBRABAN
	PSD	MBL			
	PSL	MB			
	NOVO	ATLAS/SFL			
	PR	Livres			
	PP				
	DEM				
	ANMB				

Modification 2: Advance specification of possible outcomes to account for alternative pathways

Because a requirement of a prospective study design is advance specification of possible outcomes and the theories that would support them prior to full analysis (Bitektine 2008), I wrote the methods chapter prior to collecting the rest of the data and before observing key outcomes of interest.⁴ My advisors and colleagues encouraged me to specify, in advance, how the three seminal theories of political action outlined in Chapter 2—(1) the social movement literature’s dynamic contention (political process) model; (2) neo-Gramscian theories of political articulation; and (3) a political economy perspective that emphasizes the determinative role of capitalist power and investor blocs—would analyze the case before knowing the outcomes of interest. These accounts are given in Chapter 2, subsection 2.3.2.

Analysis and inference

I analyzed the data in two ways. First, I used social network analysis to trace the evolution of the field because it permitted observation of how actors’ agentic behavior al-

4. Bitektine (2008: 164) specifies two major steps in carrying out a prospective case study. The first involves four procedures: (1) Formulation of the research question and theory selection; (2) Identification and justification of the case study and data collection procedures (with inclusion and exclusion criteria specified); (3) Preliminary analysis and formulation of the possible testable hypotheses/propositions and how they align with theoretical suppositions; (4) Formulation of outcome evaluation criteria. Step 2 involves a follow-up investigation at a previously specified future date.

tered structures in accordance with how much power they have and how much power they sought, while taking account of the institutional realities that govern the field in which they are embedded (Breiger 1974; Haynie 2001; Mahutga 2006). The method also allowed me to graphically document the interdependence of allies and adversaries in a dynamic political field (Healy and Moody 2014).

The results take the form of 39-alter organizational network maps produced at three different points in time before, during, and after the 2018 general election (see results reported in Chapter 3, Figure 3.5). I selected this method because overlapping tie types have been shown to explain mobilization capacity (Gould 1991; Simpson 2015) and multiplex networks enable observation of “finer gradations of tie strength than the simple binary presence or absence” (Hanneman and Riddle 2005:13). The intervals for collecting the data (and their justification for selection) were:

- March 1-31, 2018: to serve as a baseline before the deadline for party enrollment (April 2), before the deadline for those holding executive positions to resign in order to run for office (April 7), and before fundraising can begin (May 15).
- August 15-October 7, 2018: The period immediately after political conventions to determine party candidates and alliances occur and the formal campaign period.
- January 1-March 1, 2019: After the election results are known (in what I assumed was the likely event of a runoff on October 28), the period in which the winning candidate and their party will determine their political economic program for the beginning of the mandate, make key cabinet appointments, and solidify cross-party alliances in order to govern (inauguration day is January 1, 2019).

Second, I conducted within-case analysis on the body of data collected using the process tracing method (Beach and Pederson 2013; George and Bennett 2005). This approach to case study research emphasizes the importance of description and requires specification and analysis of pathways considered but not taken (Collier 2011). At the same time, it permits modification of the explanatory framework as new data reveal alternative possibilities (Levi 2004). While the longitudinal network analysis and quantitative data help uncover over-time trends, the interviews and ethnographic data I draw on primarily in Chapters 4 through 6 help explain why the shifts happened in the way that they did, providing insight into the dynamic relationships among individuals, collectives, and broader patterns of social change (Ryan and D’Angelo 2018).

Justification and tradeoffs of this research design

Systematically studying the relationship between civil society and political transformation required correcting for several well-known biases commonly critiqued in political sociology and social movement studies. The first is a progressive bias: the tendency for researchers to conduct movement-centric analyses of groups with which they share political affinities. For example, for every dissertation related to a conservative, reactionary, or regressive transnational social movement, five more are written on causes more closely associated with left politics (Bringel and McKenna 2020). Contemporary politics in Brazil

offered a case with which to study ideologically opposed movements simultaneously. Both left and right-wing groups mobilized *en masse* in Brazil between 2013 and 2016, with more people taking to the streets during this period than in the rest of the world combined (P. Anderson 2016).

The second and third well-documented bias are known as success and survivor biases, meaning in selecting cases retrospectively, we run the risk of censoring from view failed and extinct movements, counterfactuals, and settings that are at risk of civil society mobilization, making it difficult to identify antecedent conditions that explain ultimate outcomes. The advantage of the research design—which I describe further in Chapter 2—is that I was able to observe *ex ante* different groups’ internal organizational practices and trace how their strategies evolved (or not) in relation to one another and in relation to larger shifts in the political environment. In so doing, I was able to examine how (and the extent to which) a diverse set of civil society groups translated their collective interests into political power.

This research design inhibits the kind of exhaustive research that is expected of multi-year studies of single associations or movements. However, what the meso-level method sacrifices in its ability to painstakingly describe the internal workings of one organization, it intends to make up for by producing more generalizable findings about the dynamics of strategic organizational action in a shared political field. By choosing 40 political collectivities that are subject to the same structural conditions but vary with respect to their ideological content, strategy, degree and kind of organization, it was possible to partially account for how and why the actors’ field positions—and therefore the distribution of political power—changed or stayed the same.

Future iterations of this research approach to studying strategic action fields could design new ways to control for methodological artifacts that are a product of the ways in which I operationalized the networks ties. In this study, the nodes were connected to each other based on multiplex measures of mostly only the visible forms of power and signaling, and not the kind of difficult-to-observe ways in which political action unfolds (and which I discuss further in Chapter 4). Moreover, as I show in Chapter 5, online signals are often a weak indicator of what happens offline, and including that data in my analysis means that the network graphs may overstate the number and quality of ties held by groups that are extremely active on social media. In other words, the eigenvector ranking may exaggerates the importance of digitally-born civil society actors like MBL and underestimate the centrality of organizational actors like the political party DEM, whose strategic behavior is less easy to observe.

Final methodological clarifications

In the last section of this appendix, I address two final methodological points worth clarifying.

Why Brazil?

This dissertation is not a case study of Brazil any more than Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* was a case study of Northern Europe or Bourdieu’s *Distinction* was a case study of France. Rather, it is a study set in Brazil, a choice that was theoretically motivated for the reasons outlined in Chapter 2, with a research design intended to lend itself to the development of theoretical arguments about collective political behavior that cut across national settings. Therefore I approached this project with the foundational assumption that it was not necessary to justify Brazil as a “case” (as, for example, the majority of scholarship focused on social phenomena in the United States do not justify the selection of that particular national setting from a universe of 195 possibilities).

Classifying groups as ‘left’ and ‘right’

In 2012, I attended a summer school methods course at the University of São Paulo. As part of our final project, five Brazilian graduate students and I conducted a small-scale study on the extent to which the words “left” and “right” were meaningful political descriptors in contemporary Brazil. We spent several sweltering January afternoons on random walks in high foot-traffic areas in and around greater São Paulo. The questionnaire we administered asked respondents to place phrases like, “The government should provide free health care to all its citizens,” and “State-owned companies should be privatized,” and widely-used—if disturbing—colloquial phrases like *bandido bom é bandido morto* (the only good thug is a dead one) on a left-right continuum. We found no statistically significant patterns in how respondents placed the phrases, even controlling for education levels and other socioeconomic indicators. Through this exercise, I gained an appreciation for how fraught the terms “left” and “right” are.

In addition to debates about their usage and content—as Anthony Giddens notes, “from the beginning [left and right] has been a contested distinction” (1994:251)—the terms conceal a great deal of heterogeneity. Recent work on the profound fragmentation of the Brazilian Left (S. Fernandes 2017), the important analytical distinction between Latin America’s more moderate *esquerda permitida* as compared to the *esquerda radical* (Webber and Carr 2012), and a growing body of literature on right-wing forces both old and new (Middlebrook 2000; Casimiro 2016) speaks to the shortcomings of the typology. Moreover, *fisiologismo*—a Brazilian Portuguese word borrowed from Italian to signify a combination of syncretic and quid pro quo politics—is a well-documented phenomenon, meaning actors regularly take incoherent political stances in order to preserve their incumbency. This feature of all politics in general and Brazilian politics in particular makes it difficult to discern the underlying ideology—if there is one at all—of the country’s 35 formally registered political parties.

Despite the inadequacy of the terms, the risks associated with ignoring the contrasting politics of my objects of study outweighed the benefits of avoiding thorny classification issues. As a first step, I relied on existing scholarship, observational data, and interviews to plot the parties with respect to the left-center-right approximation specified in Table A.4. After triangulating this data, I still lacked political classifications for many

of the parties, and a number of expert classifications of party ideologies were discordant. I then made the theoretical and methodological choice to determine the classification of the parties based on practice rather than theory: that is, I classified each of the 35 parties based on the way the majority of congressional party members voted on three of the most salient political issues of the time: Dilma's impeachment, the 2016 welfare retrenchment measures, and the 2017 labor reforms. This classification strategy takes into account *fisiologisimo* and the fact that parties and politicians switch their loyalties "as often as they change underpants," as one exasperated political reporter told me. (I empathize.)

While this kind of reduction is necessary to engage in scholarly comparison, I make an effort throughout the research to assess the extent to which the measures used in the literature and my classifications align with the meaning of the terms in the network of relations under study (Becker 1998).

Table A.3: Left-Right Party Classifications

	Fernandes (1995)⁵	Coppedge (1997)⁶	Figueiredo and Limongi (1999)	Singer (1999)	Mainwaring et al. (2000)⁷
	<i>Voting in the Constituent ac- cording to other authors</i>	<i>Other experts evaluations</i>	<i>Voting records; party discipline</i>	<i>Public opinion survey</i>	<i>Voting records; interviews with parliamentari- ans</i>
AVANTE (PTdoB)					
DEM (PFL)	D	SR	Right	Right	D
NOVO					
PC do B	E	SL		Left	
PCB	E	SL		Left	
PCO					
PDT	E	SCL	Left	Left	
DC (PSDC)		SCR			CD
PATRI (PEN)					
PHS					
PMB			Center	Center	
PMDB	C	SC			
PMN	E	U			CD
PODE (PTN)			Right	Right	
PP (PDS, PST)	D	SR			D
PPL					
PPS					
PR (PL, PRONA)	D	SR			D

5. C = Center; D = Right; E = Left

6. XC = Christian Center Parties; SR = Secular Right Parties; SCR = Secular Center-Right Parties; SC = Secular Center Parties; SCL = Secular Center-Left Parties; SL = Secular Left Parties; P = Personalist Parties; O = Others; U = Unknown. E = Left; D = Right; C = Center

7. C = Center; D = Right; CD = Center-Right

PRB						
PROS						
PRP	D	U				
PRTB				Left		
PSB	E	SL				
PSC	D	XC				CD
PSD	D	SR	Center	Center		D
PSDB	C	SCL				
PSL						CD
PSOL						
PSTU						
PT	E	SL	Left	Left		
PTB	D	SCR	Right	Center		CD
PTC		P				D
PV	E	O				
REDE						
SD						

	Wiesehomeier and Benoit (2007)⁸ <i>Expert survey</i>	Power and Zucco (2011)⁹ <i>Interviews with parliamentari- ans</i>	Tarouco and Madeira (2012)¹⁰ <i>Expert survey</i>	Tarouco and Madeira (2011)¹¹ <i>Content anal- ysis of party platforms</i>	This study <i>Vote on im- peachment, aus- terity measures, and labor re- forms</i>
AVANTE (PTdoB)					Center
DEM (PFL)	17.33	7.8	6.2	6	Right
NOVO					Right
PC do B	4.96	2.6	2.3		Left
PCB	10.38	4.8	4		Left
PCO					Left
PDT	8.38	4	3.3	12	Left
DC (PSDC)					Right
PATRI (PEN)					Center
PHS					Center
PMB					Center
PMDB	11.5	5.9	4.2	1.2	Right
PMN					Center
PODE (PTN)					Right
PP (PDS, PST)	16.78	7.6	6	5.2	Right
PPL					Left
PPS					Right
PR (PL, PRONA)		6.9			Right

8. Scale of 1 (left) to 20 (right)

9. Scale of 1 (left) to 10 (right)

10. Scale of -100 (left) to +100 (right)

11. Scale of 1 (left) to 7 (right)

PRB					Right
PROS					Center
PRP					Right
PRTB					Right
PSB	7.5	3.7	3		Center
PSC	15.62		5.2		Right
PSD					Right
PSDB	13.46	5.8	4.6	6.5	Right
PSL					Right
PSOL	2.95	1.6	1.4		Left
PSTU					Left
PT	6.37	3.6	2.9	13.8	Left
PTB	13.6	6.5	5	20.2	Right
PTC					Right
PV	7.36	4.5	3.5		Right
REDE					Center
SD					Center

A.1 Meso-level case selection

Table A.5: Observed and Reported Data for Longitudinal Network Mapping

Type of Tie	Measurement	Data Collection	Example
Leader self-report	See interview protocol below (A.2)	Short follow-up interviews conducted at the pre-defined intervals with organization contacts and experts	In 11/7/17 interview, a SMO leader told me that she is in talks to form an alliance with the political party REDE
Newspaper co-occurrence (Reich 2017)	Narrative link made between two actors (as opposed to mere co-incidence in an article) indicating collaboration or alliance	Read the political section of six major news outlets on a daily basis (received in daily newsletter batches); clip those that mention an alliance between the cases by “read[ing] the text as they are embedded in a culture different from the one by which we create our ideal models as investigators” (Biernacki 2012:16)	On 11/22/17, NEXO reported, “Behind-the-scenes, reports indicate that there have been meetings between [possible candidate] Luciano Huck, [political party] PPS, and movements like Agora! and RenovaBR”
Event co-presence (Wang and Soule 2012)	Identification of groups co-presence at one or more protests, think tank seminars, political rallies, movement or party conventions, etc.	Sign up for all entities listservs, newsletters and WhatsApp groups for each entity in order to be alerted about upcoming events; monitor Facebook page; direct observation at events	Union centrals affiliated with FBP and PSM attended a general strike against labor reforms on 11/10/17

Formal political alignment	Candidate endorsement, formation of an electoral coalition, formal appointment (e.g. to a ministry), top five parties with the highest percent of their members on an organized interest group' caucus (Appendix G)	Interviews, direct observation, and as newspaper reporting (same method as described above)	Raul Jungmann (PPS) is a minister in the Temer Administration (PMDB); Marina Silva (PSB, now REDE)'s endorsed of Aécio Neves (PSDB) after she did not advance to the runoff in 2014
Social media and public declarations on institutional website (Powell, Horvath, and Brandtner 2016)	Social media signaling (likes, reposts, links) between organizational actors' social media platform	Facebook "pages liked by this page" or hyperlinks on websites (Simpson 2015)	PSOL likes MTST on Facebook (not reciprocated), MTST likes PSM on Facebook (not reciprocated); but PSM lists both PSOL and MTST as allies on website and internet fliers, so all would score 1

Theoretical corrections for final case selection

1. The National Student Union (UNE), Landless Workers Movement (MST), and Homeless Workers Movements (MTST) were treated as subnodes of the Frente Brasil Popular (FBP) and the People Without Fear (PSM) leftist social movement coalitions, which were both included in case selection.
2. Frente Favela Brasil (FFB) was added despite its low eigenvector score because it is the only formal political actor that emerged in this phase of research which aims to represent residents of urban peripheries, with an emphasis on organizing black political subjects (Paschel 2016b). Afro-Brazilians make up some 54 percent of Brazil's population and none of the other actors in the resulting set of cases shared this explicit aim.
3. BR21 and Bancada Ativista were removed because they had the lowest centrality scores in the REDE/RAPS sub-community. Because of the similarity of leader profiles, supporters, and strategy of this fairly closed sub-network, tracking all six would likely yield redundant information.

4. ANMB, the National Association of Military Officers, and MB, the Bolsonaro Movement, were added. Both were suppressed in the degree centrality analysis, likely due to Bolsonaro's diffuse online media strategy, but represent key networks in support of his candidacy.
5. Due to the growing political influence of organized evangelicals described above, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) was added for analysis alongside the National Confederation of the Churches of Assemblies of God (CGADB), which had the seventh highest betweenness score.
6. IEE, Instituto Millennium, and Instituto Liberal were removed because, like the REDE/RAPS sub-community, there is a high degree of overlap in these libertarian think tanks' orientations and strategies. I chose to keep Instituto Mises because it had the highest betweenness score and is the least well studied of the five. (In the course of fieldwork I met multiple Brazilian scholars writing dissertations about the think tanks in this sub-community that I chose to remove.) I collapsed Atlas and Students for Liberty for inclusion (the latter is an affiliate of the former).
7. UGT, the labor union linked to the conservative party PSD with high centrality measures, and Força Sindical, a splinter union from CUT that voted in favor of Rousseff's impeachment and is synonymous with the party SD, were added as a right-leaning matched pair to the two more left-leaning unions that remained, CSP-Conlutas and CUT.
8. Similarly, the PT's Fundação Perseu Abramo (FPA) was added as the left-leaning think tank with the highest eigenvector score to counterbalance the two right-leaning think tanks that remained.
9. FEBRABAN, the organized interest group representing finance capital was added.

A.2 Interview protocol (English)

Interviews were semi-structured to allow for probing and follow-up after each response.

1. To begin, could you please tell me a little bit about your background and how your professional trajectory to [position X] at [institute / university / political party / social movement Y].
2. I contacted you because I am specifically interested in [describe publication / leadership position / information that prompted outreach]. I'd like to ask you more about [].
3. The turbulent political landscape in Brazil has made both national and international news headlines recently, beginning with the massive street protests that began in June 2013. The series of events that led up to these protests, as well as the impeachment mobilizations that followed, and finally Rousseff's impeachment of course have much deeper historical roots. What, in your opinion, are the key historical junctures since democratization that help us understand the current moment?

4. What would you identify as the chief strengths and weaknesses of Brazil's political party and system of representation? (Probing and follow-up questions; esp: To what extent is government responsive to citizen demands, and when? Examples?)
5. What are the major organizations, coalitions, and social movements representing left-leaning interest groups that you see as most influential in Brazilian politics today? Why? (Probing questions as appropriate, ask to identify specific leaders and groups; ask what they think "left" or "left-leaning" means)
6. What are the major organizations, coalitions, and social movements representing right-leaning interest groups that you see as most influential in Brazilian politics today? Why? (Probing questions as appropriate, ask to identify specific leaders and groups; ask what they think "right" or "right-leaning" means)
7. Which movements, parties, or political organizations would you say are closely allied? (Which would you consider *your* closest allies?, if applicable)
8. Which movements, parties, or political organizations would you say are rivals (or adversaries)? (Which would you consider your greatest adversary?, if applicable)
9. Of course it is impossible to predict the political dynamics well over a year from now. That said, do you have any reflections on previous electoral cycles that might help you make sense of the dynamics of the upcoming presidential election? What will be the most important developments and loci of power to pay attention to as the campaigns unfold? What do you think will be the biggest distractions?

Ethnographic Research

B.1 Fieldwork in the twenty-first century

My 24 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Brazil represents the methodological thread that tied all parts of the research together. In this appendix, I sketch some reflections on my positionality as a researcher studying organizations with varied (often opposing) politics, how I believe I was perceived by informants, and the factors that likely influenced how I apprehended the data.

Over the past ten years, I have lived in Brazil for a total of three of them, initially for an undergraduate semester abroad at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Fieldwork for this dissertation took place over six periods: May-July 2013 (3 months); June-August 2014 (3 months); August 2015 (15 days); August 2016 (15 days); March 2017-April 2018 (13 months); August-November 2018 (4 months). During my longest consecutive stretch in the field, I spent most of my time in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, with occasional trips to other states where major movement, party, or campaign events took place. As one of the tools I employed, the ethnographic method allowed me to document taken-for-granted aspects of social life, conjecture about how patterns of behavior relate to larger social structures, and specify the sometimes gaping distance between “what they say” and “what they do” (Jerolmack and Khan 2014; Reyes 2017). Doing this well requires reflexivity throughout the research process and revisits (Burawoy 2003).

B.2 Reflexivity

I am a white female researcher affiliated with elite universities in the United States. Although it was the confluence of my identities that conditioned how I perceived others and how they perceived me, these ascriptive characteristics forced me to constantly reexamine my power and positionality in relation to the research. Even though meso-level power dynamics drive the theoretical interest of the research, micro-level dynamics of power were inescapable.

To use the term “white elites” in Brazil is to be redundant. Black and *pardo* (brown) Brazilians represent just 17.8 percent of the country’s richest one percent, despite account-

Figure B.1: Mementos from Fieldwork with Right-Wing Political Groups



ing for 54 percent of the Brazilian population. By contrast, the same racial groups represent 75 percent of the country’s poorest ten percent (IBGE 2016). These figures make clear why, as a white person, I did not stand out when I entered the upper echelons of the public and private sector—both of which are white-dominated spaces. In some cases, the right-wing informants I interviewed assumed that I shared their white supremacist views because I am also white. They told me things that ranged from the absurd:

The most persecuted population in Brazil is white men; we’re taught in school from a young age that we’re murderers and that the only history that matters is that of the *quilombolas*.

To the vile: “You know what the problem with Brazil is? We have too many black people.” My whiteness afforded me access to these comments and the spaces in which they are commonplace. Whether these sorts of statements reflect the respondents’ worldviews and subsequent actions is substantively more important, but the fact that they felt comfortable saying it to me is methodologically relevant. The inverse was also true. Race was often just below the surface of interviews I conducted with Afro-Brazilian, indigenous, and other non-white interviewees. People referred to me as *loirinha* (little blondie) so often that I rarely noticed it in the moment but made note of it as I did transcription work.

Figure B.2: Mementos from Fieldwork with Left-Wing Political Groups



Layered on top of my race is the fact that I am a cisgender woman. Of the first fifty in-depth interviews I conducted, 38 (76 percent) were with white men. This proportion is staggering but unsurprising, given that white men occupy most positions of power. Several episodes suggested to me that my femaleness meant that I was viewed as a fundamentally non-threatening element in the conversation, even though I always identified myself by my researcher credentials when conducting formal observation or obtaining consent for an interview.

An American Researcher

It is common for American researchers in Brazil to be asked if they work for the Central Intelligence Agency. This sometimes-joking, sometimes-serious question is the product of the well-documented material and symbolic support that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations provided in support of the 1964 coup that forcibly installed Castelo Branco, the “murderous dictator and anti-communist fanatic” as president (Mattei and Nader 2008:70). As Ann Mische, who conducted an extensive political ethnography in Brazil, writes, “The most difficult part of my fieldwork experience was fending off the barrage of jokingly voiced, back-slappingly delivered references to me as *nossa amiga da CIA* (our friend from the CIA)” (2008:11). I wholly identify with Mische’s description of the pitfalls “being a gringa in [an] anti-imperialist setting” (ibid) while conducting research on the Left, but it was precisely the fact that I hailed from Trump’s America that made it re-

markedly easy for me to gain access to right-wing groups. (At one point during fieldwork, an American Foreign Service officer actually did reach out to me to “talk politics,” having found an obscure blog I’d written about my research. At that point some friends were actually convinced that I was being recruited for the CIA.) An undersecretary in Itamaraty (Brazil’s equivalent of the State Department) concluded our interview by asking me, irony undetectable, “So who are you really working for?”

“From Berkeley”

Ethnographers Arlie Hochschild and Katherine Cramer, whose research also involved studying communities of people whose political views are very different from their own, employed what Cramer called a “method of listening” (2016: Chapter 2). “My job as a political ethnographer,” Cramer wrote, “is to describe what I observed in enough detail so that you, the reader, can judge my observations for yourself” (26). Doing so requires some thought as to how one presents oneself—not in the positivist sense of trying to eliminate the impact of our presence as observers (an impossibility)—but in an awareness of how others react to and categorize me. My Berkeley identity was rarely relevant in Brazil, but in situations where it became relevant, it was telling.

In my first interview with Kim Kataguirí, one of the leaders of the Free Brazil Movement (MBL), the right-wing group that credits itself with the million-person impeachment marches that helped defeat Dilma, I noticed that a different leader, Renan Santos, was eyeing us shiftilly from across the room. “What university did you say you were from again?” he interrupted as I posed a question to Kim. “Berkeley, in the U.S.” He cast a suspicious eye at my digital recorder. “That place is full of *esquerdopatas*!¹ Those hypocrites protested against Milo [Yiannopoulos]” he said. I explained that I was a doctoral student comparing both left and right-wing political organizing in Brazil and described my methodology. At some point, he warmed up and allowed the interview to continue, joined in, and spoke with me for the next two hours. It was clear that one of my most salient identities, to him, was my nationality. He continually referenced alt-right groups in the U.S. that he admired and planned to surpass. “You know what the secret to our [MBL’s] success is? We’re a combination of Breitbart *and* the Tea Party.”

Later, while MBL’s videographer shuttled us to a diner to grab a quick dinner, Renan asked, “By the way, who did you vote for in the 2016 election?” I tried to deflect, asking them how closely they had followed the horserace from Brazil and what their impressions of Trump are. They told me that they had indeed followed it very closely: MBL had held an internal debate that they live-streamed on their Facebook page, which has 2.53 million followers. In the debate, Renan advocated for Trump, and Fernando Holiday—another one of their core leaders who made headlines for being the first Black, openly gay city councilman ever elected in São Paulo—argued on behalf of Clinton. Still deflecting, I tried to steer the conversation toward the U.S.’ byzantine superdelegate and Elec-

1. *Esquerdopatas* is a neologism I heard often that combines the words leftist and psychopath. An informal online dictionary defines it as “a fanatic leftist who holds on to their sick views despite all evidence to the contrary.”

toral College rules. They called my bluff. “Who did you vote for in the primary, Liz?” someone asked pointedly. This was a clear example of the tension Raymond Gold (1958) describes as the need to balance self-integrity and self-expression in the role of sociological observer. I told the truth. “Bernie Sanders,” I said, bracing for their reaction. At that, the carful of male twentysomethings exploded in laughter. “No way!” “You can’t be serious!” “Hey, guys, her conversion is going to be more challenging than we thought!” they said.

B.3 Day-to-day data collection

The last methodological consideration worth raising is reflection on what it means to conduct extended political fieldwork in the digital age, and how it differs qualitatively from in situ research conducted in decades past. Every morning, I woke up to hundreds, sometimes thousands, of WhatsApp messages pinging on my burner phone—the majority from organizations that let me join in on their group chat as an observer. This is a minuscule quantity compared to the number of messages I have observed my informants exchange on a daily basis. At one group meeting, I glanced over at the screen of the phone of a *Frente Brasil Popular* organizer who had 1,385 unread messages from 285 distinct conversations pulled up on his WhatsApp. Although a number of researchers have successfully studied a similar number of meso-level cases as me (Katherine Blee 2012; Kathleen Blee 2013; McAdam and Boudet 2012), one of the only reasons that tracking 40 geographically dispersed organizations over time was possible is because I did so in an age when primary digital data abounds.

Longitudinal Network Graphs

Figure C.1: Baseline Network Map (Unweighted)

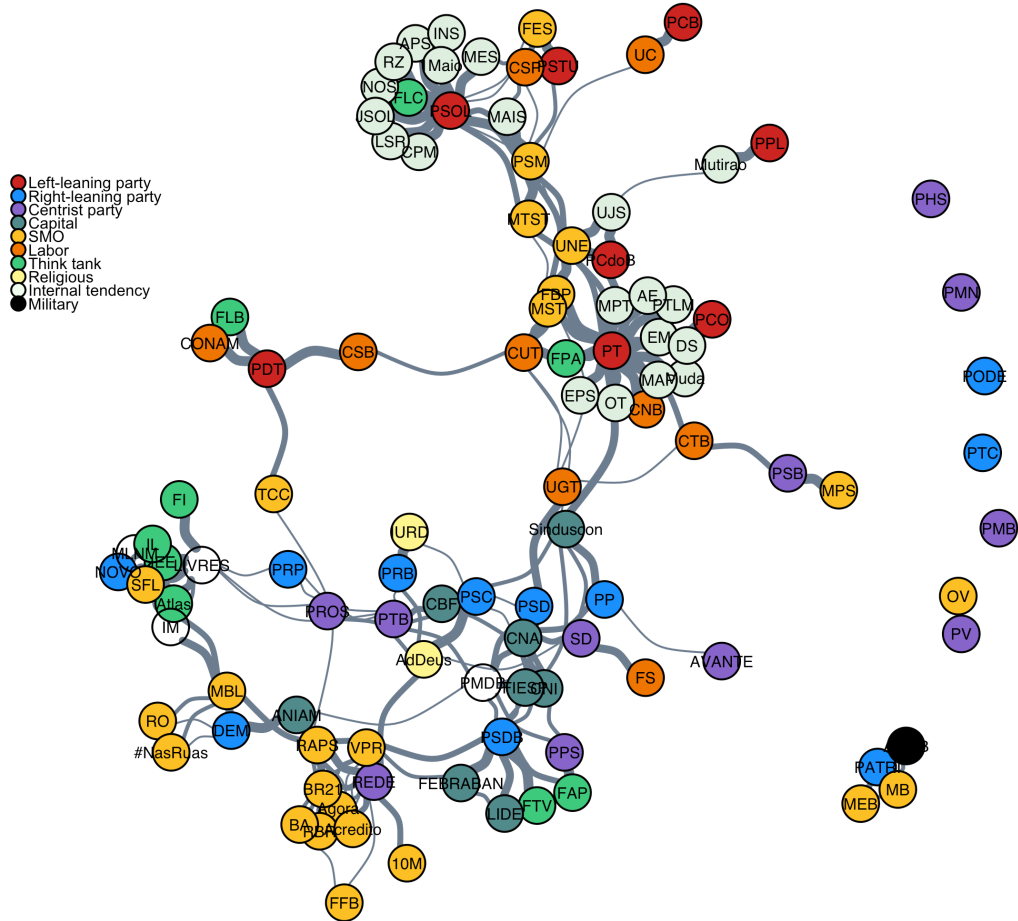


Figure C.2: Time 1: Before the Campaign (Unweighted)

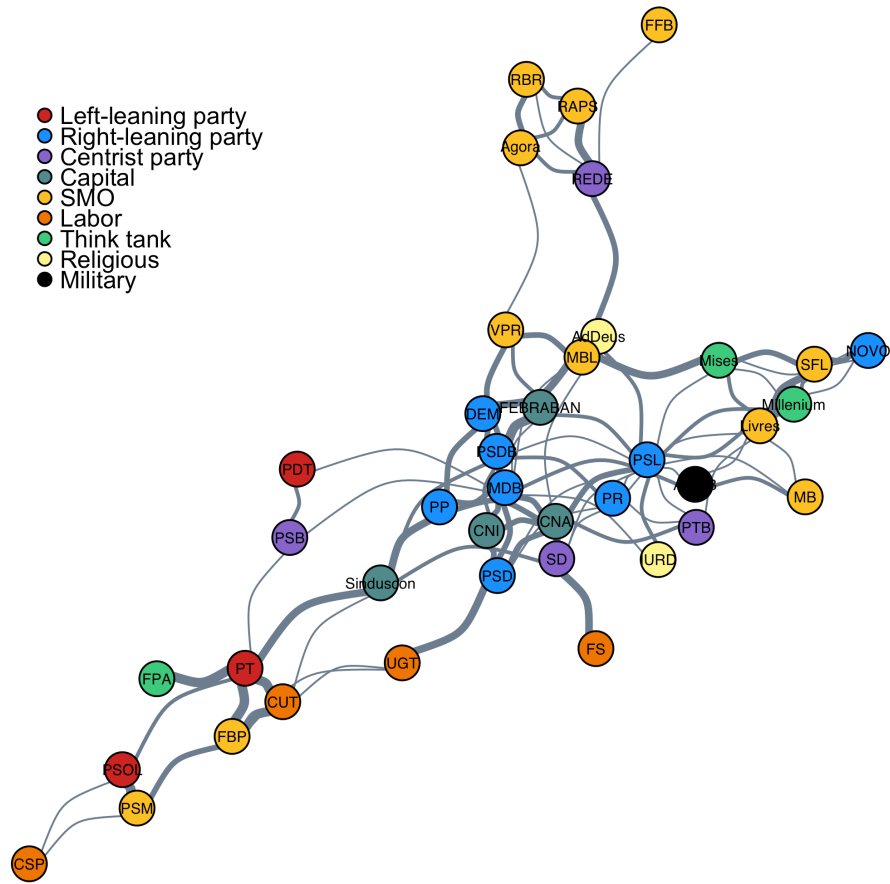


Figure C.3: Time 2: The Campaign (Unweighted)

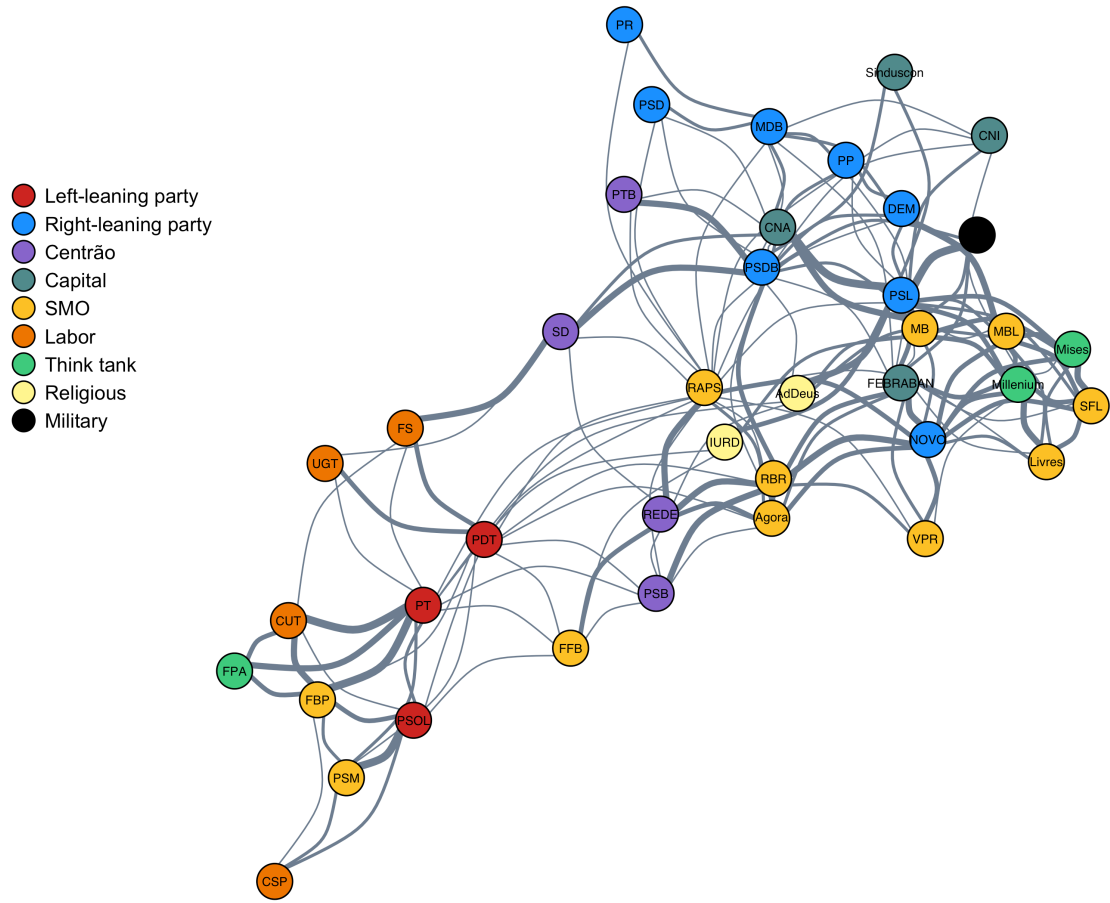


Figure C.4: Time 3: After the Election (Unweighted)

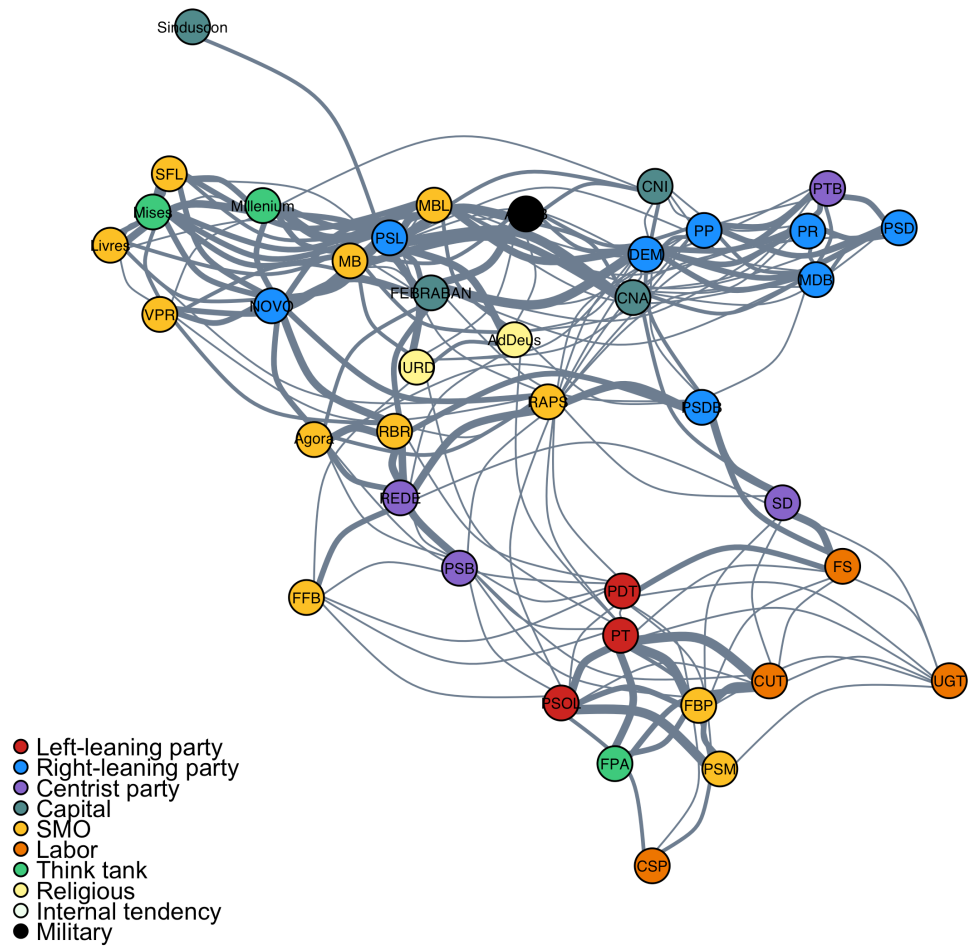


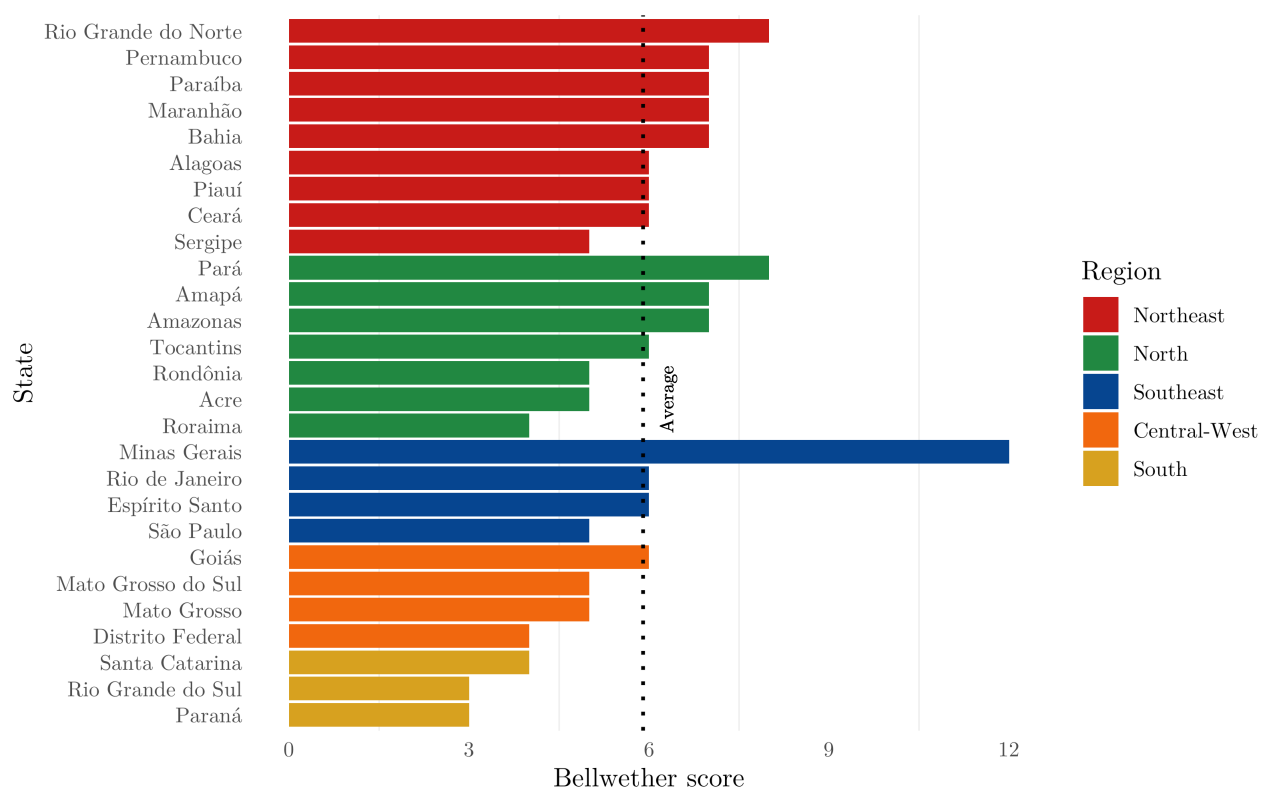
Table C.1: A Political Field in Transformation

	Eigen (T1)	Eigen (T2)	Eigen (T3)	T3-T1	T3-T2
PSL	0.62	1.00	1.00	0.38	0.00
NOVO	0.10	0.84	0.69	0.60	-0.15
FEBRABAN	0.45	0.67	0.68	0.23	0.01
MBL	0.26	0.63	0.67	0.40	0.04
Millenium	0.21	0.73	0.66	0.45	-0.07
MB	0.10	0.63	0.54	0.44	-0.09
DEM	0.46	0.29	0.54	0.08	0.24
ANMB	0.23	0.39	0.52	0.29	0.13
Mises	0.23	0.61	0.50	0.27	-0.11
SFL	0.19	0.60	0.47	0.27	-0.13
CNA	0.96	0.40	0.40	-0.56	0.00
VPR	0.27	0.27	0.37	0.10	0.10
Livres	0.30	0.46	0.36	0.06	-0.10
AdDeus	0.21	0.33	0.35	0.14	0.02
RBR	0.02	0.49	0.34	0.32	-0.15
PP	0.71	0.18	0.33	-0.38	0.15
RAPS	0.03	0.38	0.33	0.31	-0.04
IURD	0.17	0.20	0.29	0.12	0.09
PR	0.27	0.03	0.27	0.01	0.24
MDB	1.00	0.16	0.26	-0.74	0.10
Agora	0.04	0.36	0.25	0.21	-0.11
PSD	0.74	0.07	0.24	-0.50	0.17
PTB	0.23	0.11	0.24	0.01	0.13
CNI	0.70	0.16	0.22	-0.48	0.06
PSDB	0.65	0.41	0.21	-0.44	-0.20
REDE	0.06	0.25	0.16	0.10	-0.08
SD	0.42	0.15	0.10	-0.32	-0.05
PSB	0.14	0.14	0.10	-0.04	-0.05
Sinduscon	0.60	0.13	0.08	-0.52	-0.05
PT	0.66	0.08	0.08	-0.58	0.00
PDT	0.09	0.08	0.06	-0.04	-0.02
FS	0.12	0.04	0.05	-0.07	0.01
PSOL	0.16	0.04	0.04	-0.12	0.00
FBP	0.48	0.04	0.04	-0.44	0.00
FFB	0.00	0.06	0.04	0.04	-0.02
CUT	0.49	0.03	0.04	-0.45	0.00
PSM	0.17	0.02	0.02	-0.15	0.00
FPA	0.24	0.03	0.02	-0.22	0.00
UGT	0.29	0.02	0.02	-0.28	-0.01
CSP	0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.00

Highlighted cells indicate the five highest (green) and five lowest (red) eigenvector centrality values for each of three points in time. In the rightmost columns, red and green text indicate the greatest *change* over time (red for negative values, green for positive). The table is ranked by eigenvector value at Time 3 (January-March 2019).

Electoral Results

Figure D.1: Brazil's Bellwethers, 1989-2018



To make this figure, I created a bellwether index by summing the number of times the state's results aligned with the national results (based on data from the *Tribunal Superior Eleitoral*). I added an additional point any time that state voted for the winner by the margin that most closely aligned with the national results (see Table D.1). Minas Gerais scored 12: it is the only state to have favored the winner in all eight presidential election cycles post-democratization and, in half of all cases, to do so by the margin that most closely matched the national results.

Table D.1: Percentage Difference Between State and National Presidential Election Results, 1989-2018

	1989	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
	<i>PRN</i>	<i>PSDB*</i>	<i>PSDB*</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>PSL</i>
<i>National</i>	0.06	0.09	0.06	0.23	0.22	0.12	0.03	0.1
Minas Gerais	0.33	0.3	0.09	0.09	0.3	0.17	0.05	0.16
Amazonas	0.29	0.21	0.2	0.51	0.09	0.61	0.3	0.01
Bahia	0.03	0.05	0.33	0.31	0.56	0.42	0.4	-0.45
Maranhão	0.25	0.24	0.11	0.17	0.69	0.58	0.58	-0.47
Pará	0.45	0.09	0.1	0.05	0.2	0.06	0.15	-0.1
Paraíba	0.1	0.26	0.32	0.14	0.5	0.23	0.29	-0.3
Rio Grande do Norte	0.05	0.29	0.19	0.17	0.39	0.19	0.4	-0.27
Amapá	0.34	0.18	-0.01	0.4	0.41	0.25	0.23	0
Ceará	0.14	0.22	-0.05	0.44	0.65	0.55	0.54	-0.42
Espírito Santo	0.19	0.2	0.14	0.19	0.31	-0.02	-0.08	0.26
Goiás	0.37	0.35	0.46	0.14	0.1	-0.02	-0.14	0.31
Pernambuco	0.18	0.08	-0.04	0.22	0.57	0.51	0.4	-0.33
Piauí	0.35	0.03	-0.09	0.18	0.55	0.4	0.57	-0.54
Rio de Janeiro	-0.46	-0.06	0.33	0.58	0.39	0.21	0.1	0.36
Tocantins	0.57	0.36	-0.05	0.08	0.41	0.18	0.19	-0.02
Acre	0.38	0.08	0.14	0.2	0.05	-0.39	-0.27	0.54
Alagoas	0.52	0.52	-0.06	-0.13	0.23	0.07	0.24	-0.2
Mato Grosso	0.11	0.29	0.24	0.33	-0.01	-0.02	-0.09	0.33
Mato Grosso do Sul	0.46	0.27	0.02	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	-0.13	0.3
Rondônia	0.53	0.27	-0.19	0.31	0.11	-0.05	-0.1	0.44
São Paulo	0.32	0.11	0.23	0.15	-0.05	-0.08	-0.29	0.36
Sergipe	0.16	-0.05	-0.38	0.11	0.2	0.07	0.34	-0.35
Distrito Federal	-0.25	-0.23	-0.15	0.25	0.14	0.06	-0.24	0.4
Roraima	-0.37	0.43	0.3	0.12	-0.23	-0.33	-0.18	0.43
Santa Catarina	0.01	-0.34	0.02	0.28	-0.09	-0.13	-0.29	0.52
Paraná	-0.02	0.21	-0.03	0.14	-0.02	-0.11	-0.22	0.37
Rio Grande do Sul	0.27	-0.41	-0.19	0.11	-0.11	-0.02	-0.07	0.26

*Indicates that the party's candidate won in the first round of voting. All numbers in the table report the percentage difference between the winner and the loser in that state (or between the winner and the second-place candidate, in the case of 1994 and 1998 when FHC won in the first round). Negative scores indicate that the national winner lost in that state. Green cells indicate that year's bellwether: the state that favored the winner by the margin closest to the national results.

Digital Mobilization Materials

Figure E.1: 2014 Will Be Bigger Protest Flyer vs. 2014 Protest



Source: Facebook and personal photo. On the left, the meme that circulated in advance of the protests scheduled to coincide with the 2014 World Cup features an aerial photograph of downtown Rio de Janeiro on June 20, 2013, when an estimated 300,000 people took to the streets. The text reads, “Prepare your breath, there’s no letting up. 2014 will be bigger.” On the right, a photo I took of the June 20, 2014 protest that was scheduled as an homage to the prior year’s march. A protester wrapped in a Brazil flag stands solitary in the rain. There were roughly 50 other protesters present at the time who are not pictured.

Figure E.2: Imagine the [World] Cup Meme with Allusions to Global Protest Wave



Source: Facebook. The online flyer reads: “We are learning to get indignant like the Spanish people, occupy like the North Americans, not believe in the old media like the Mexican people, unite against police violence like the Turkish people, but there has yet to appear a people who kick a [tear] gas grenade as well as the Brazilian people. Now, imagine during the Cup!”

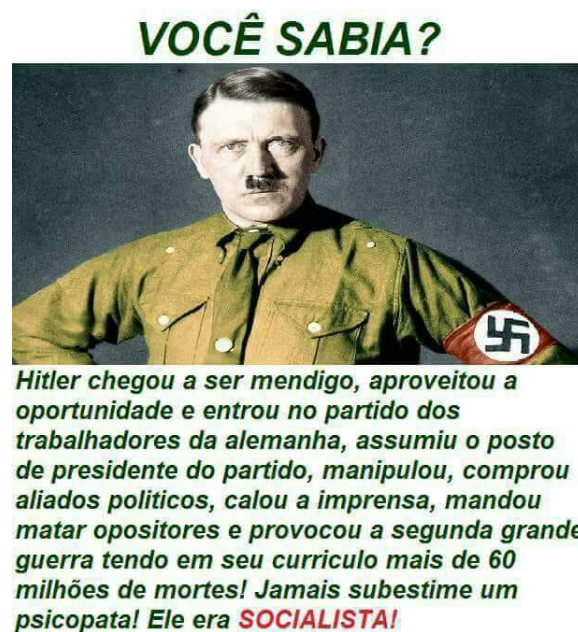
Figure E.3: Brazil's Military Associations Mobilize Supporters to June 2013 Protests



Source: Menezes and Tabak (2013). The Facebook flyer reads: “Join us on June 20, 2013 - 16:00 at Candelária - All [wearing] white for peace. For a better Brazil!”

Right-Wing Campaign Materials

Figure F.1: “Did You Know Hitler Was a Socialist?” Meme



The caption reads: “[At one point] Hitler was a beggar, he took advantage of opportunities and joined Germany’s workers party, rising to the post of president, [he] manipulated, bought off political allies, stifled the press, issued orders to kill opponents and provoked the second world war putting more than 60 million deaths on his resume! Never underestimate a psychopath! He was a SOCIALIST!” This is not merely an online meme. After visiting the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem in April 2019, Bolsonaro said he has “no doubt” that Nazism was a “leftist” movement, which is something his foreign chancellor, Ernesto Araújo, has repeatedly claimed (Froufe and Dias 2019).

Figure F.2: Bolsonaro vs. Haddad: Rural Interests



Source: Pro-Bolsonaro WhatsApp group.

Figure F.3: Ricardo Salles (NOVO)'s Campaign Chum

Segurança no campo
Ricardo Salles - Federal

VOTE .30-06 **TOBRANCA ZERO**

Contra a praga do javali
Contra a esquerda e o MST
Contra o roubo de trator, gado, insumos...
Contra a bandidagem no campo

(11) 99986-3006
fb.com/ricardosallesnovo
www.ricardosalles.com.br

@ricardosallesnovo
/ricardosalles
/sallesnovo

NOVO

Figure F.4: “Lula’s Supporters Don’t Know How to Read” Meme



Pro-Bolsonaro WhatsApp groups circulated virtual *santinos* (campaign materials) like this. The message reads, “Send this to [your] groups. Lula’s voters don’t know how to read. They’ll look at the number and confirm: 17 [Bolsonaro’s number].”

Figure F.5: PT Extinction Meme



The meme reads: The Brazil that I want: an extinct PT (criminal faction).

Figure F.6: The Bolsodoria Vote



Figure F.7: PT: Never Again



Figure F.8: “Victim of Heterophobia” Protesters



The sign reads: “I will not be a victim of Haddad, Jean Wyllys, and Globo Network’s Heterophobia. Bolsonaro 2018.”

Figure F.9: Lula vs. Cristina Kirchner Meme

LULA X CRISTINA KIRCHNER

		
ABRIU MÃO DE CABEÇA DE CHAPA		
PENSOU NO PAÍS ANTES DA HEGEMONIA		
TENTOU BARRAR PARTIDO ALIADO DE EXISTIR		
IMPÔS CANDIDATOS SEM EXPERIÊNCIA		
ILUDIU O POVO CANDIDATURA IMPOSSÍVEL		

The meme contrasts Lula and Kirchner's strategies on the following dimensions: "gave up being on the top of the ticket," "thought of the country before hegemony," "tried to eliminate an allied party," "imposed candidates with no experience," "deceived the people with an impossible candidacy."

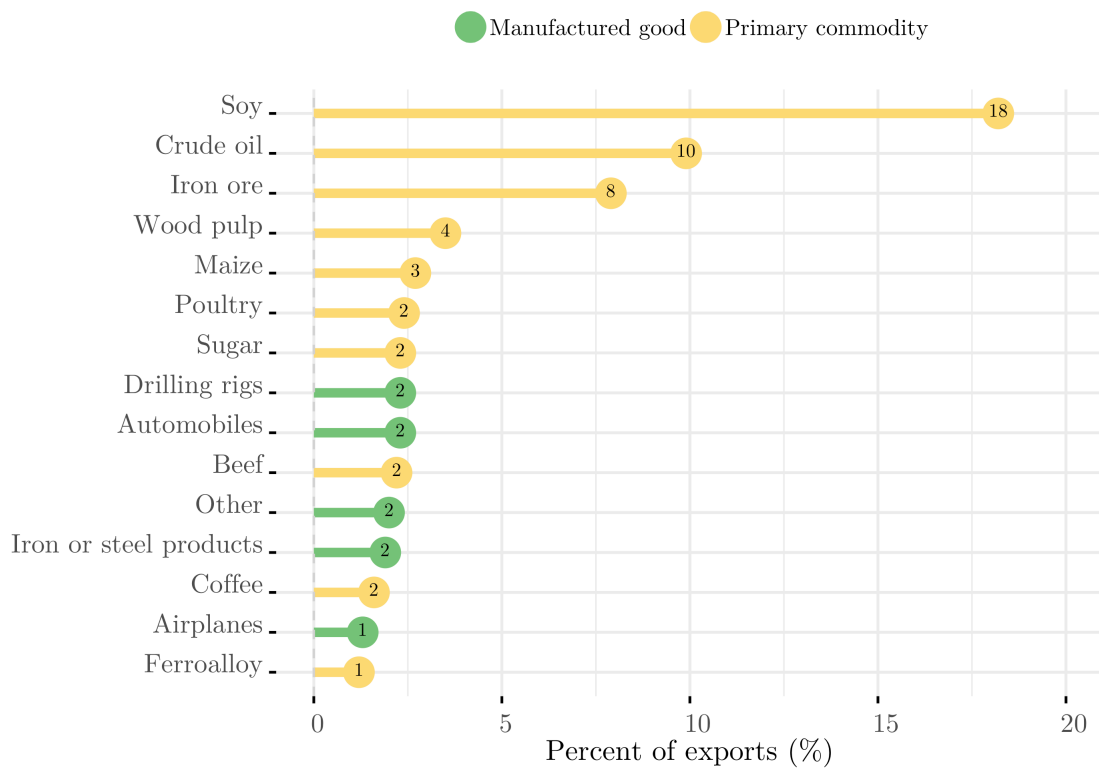
Political Economic Trends

Figure G.1: BM&F Bovespa Index Trends and Presidential Administrations, 1998-2018



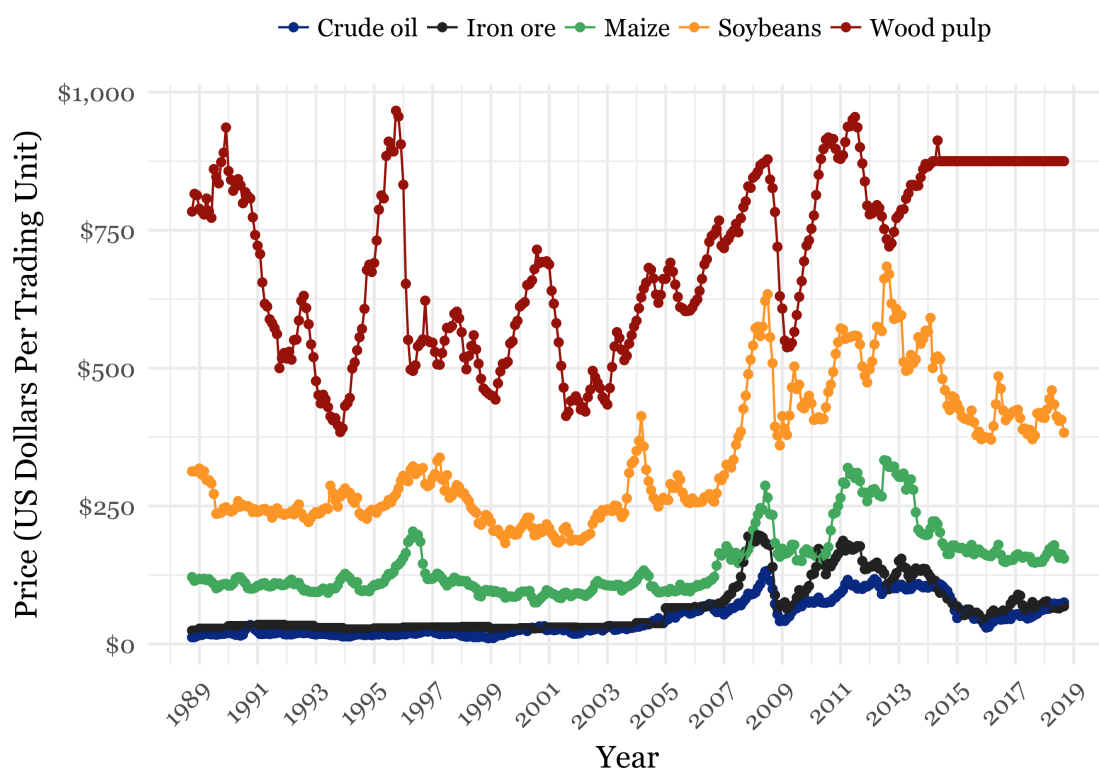
Data source: IBOVESPA and B3 (the Brazilian stock exchange)

Figure G.2: Brazil's Commodity Export Portfolio, 2018



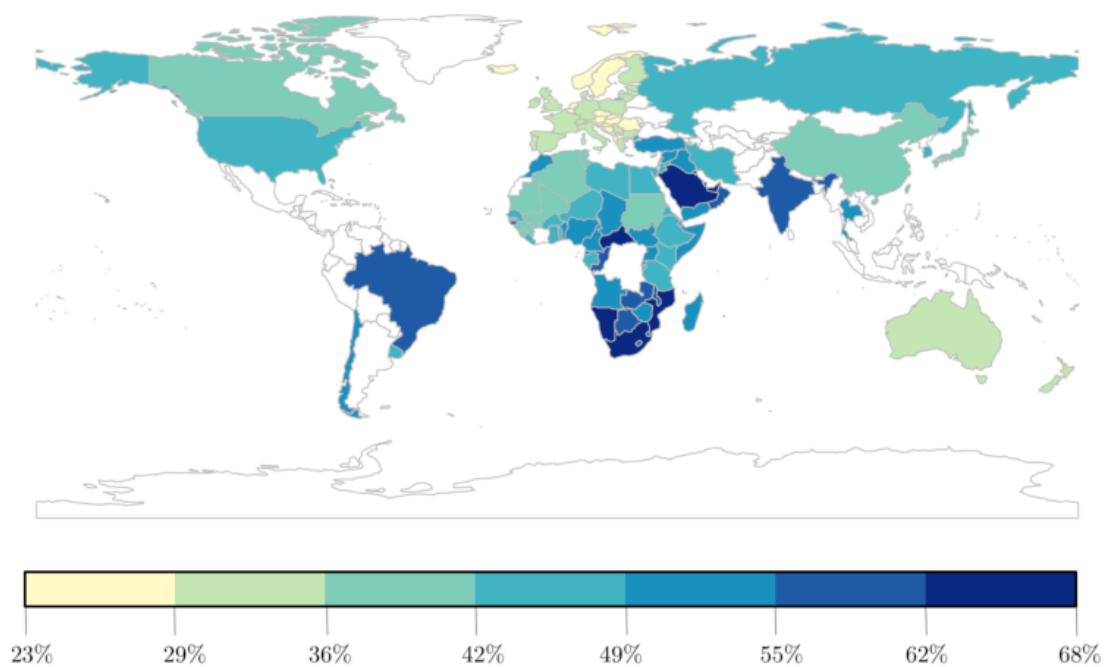
Data source: *Ministério da Indústria, Comércio Exterior, e Serviço* (Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade, and Service).

Figure G.3: Price of Brazil's Five Primary Exports, 1989-2019



Data source: *Ministério da Indústria, Comércio Exterior, e Serviço* (Ministry of Industry, Foreign Trade, and Service).

Figure G.4: Top 10 Percent of National Income Share, 2010-2017



Data source: World Inequality Database (Alvaredo et al. 2017). Latest available year used (date range: 2010-2017). Countries that are blank do not have data on this metric reported by the WID.

The Evangelical Phenomenon

While growth of Brazil's evangelical population has been geometric, longitudinal trends for all of Latin America are also striking. Figures H.1, H.2, and H.3 show the absolute and relative growth of evangelicals throughout the region since 1900.¹ Although Catholics are still by far the largest religious demographic, the number of evangelicals has steadily climbed since the 1970s, as has the number of people who do not identify with any religion. Figure 5.4 then compares the relative change in the two Christian faiths: throughout Latin America, Catholicism is on the decline and evangelicalism is on the rise. With the exception of Uruguay, Brazil is now the least Catholic country in the region (measured as a percent of the population). And by 2030, it will be surpassed only by El Salvador in the proportion of the population identifying as evangelical. Appendix A reports these trends (and change indexed to base year 1900) numerically.

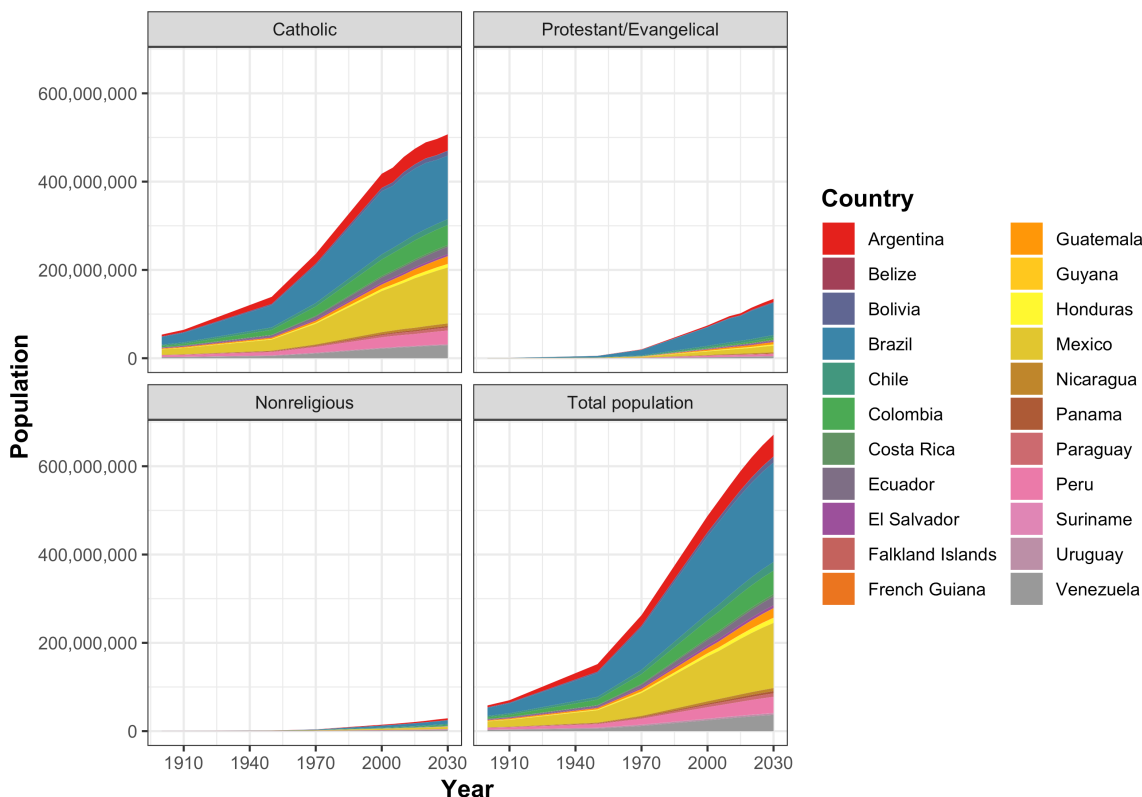
Finally, Figure H.4 shows the *pentecostalizacao* of Latin America geographically. Of the eight countries in Latin America where more than fifteen percent of the population is expected to identify as evangelical by 2020, six are in Central America, with figures from El Salvador and Nicaragua showing that about a third of the population has also converted. The key takeaway from all of this data emphasizes what scholars attuned to these dynamics have noted for decades: Pentecostalism in Latin America in general and Brazil in particular is a mass phenomenon. Its interpellation of culture, politics, and society can no longer be treated as a secondary category of analysis in the study of state-society relations.

H.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of Brazilian evangelicals

As the historical narrative I discussed in Chapter 6 shows, the *evangelizacao* of Brazil, now well into its eleventh decade, was a long and steady march. But what patterns, if

1. Belize, the Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, and Suriname, former British, French, and Dutch colonies (i.e. the only countries in the region not formerly colonized by Spain or Portugal) with proportionately larger mainline Protestant populations, are not shown in Figure 5.4 to improve graph readability. Together these countries' populations totaled 1.4 million people in 2015, or .002 percent of the population of Central and South America (of which Brazil represents 35 percent). See Appendix A for descriptive statistics for all countries in the region.

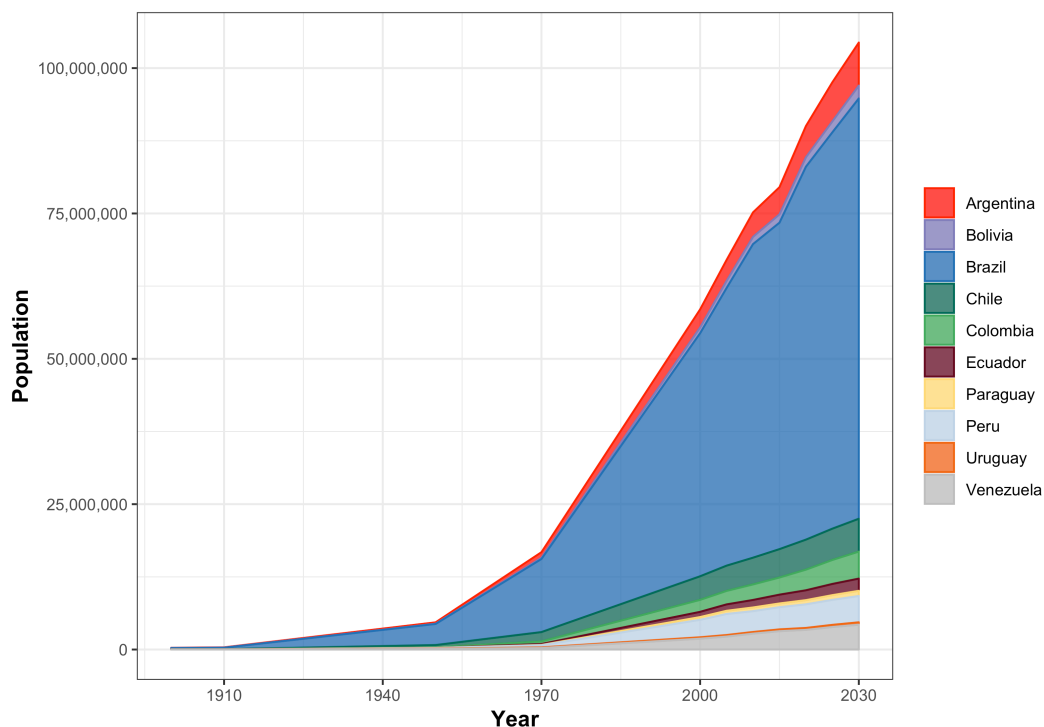
Figure H.1: Religious Identification in Latin America, 1900-2030



Data source for Figures H.1, H.2, and H.3: World Religion Database (Johnson and Grim 2018). Plotted values for 2030 are WRD estimates based on growth rates. Both the World Religion Database (2019) and the Pew Research Center’s Religion in Latin America (2014) study use the umbrella category “Protestant” to compare across countries. It is all but synonymous with evangelical in the Latin American context (Freston2008; Freston 1998). Freston (2004:225) writes: “Pentecostalism is Protestant. In Latin America, it is the popular (i.e., mass lower-class) version of Protestantism.”

any, can we discern about who converted? A generally accepted view in the literature and among the lay public is that *crentes* are more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged. Rubem Cesar Fernandes drew this demarcation clearly, distinguishing the Catholic Church as an “option *for* the poor” and Pentecostalism as an “option of the poor” (quoted in Freston 2004:231). But more recent data suggests that the socioeconomic profile of evangelicals does not differ much from their Catholic counterparts nor the Brazilian population in general. In 2004, Bohn found that Catholics, evangelicals, and adherents of the Afro-Brazilian religions Umbanda and Candomblé had almost the same income profile. “If there is an association between precarious economic conditions and affiliation with the evangelical religion, this association—contrary to what the literature suggests—is not exclusive to this faith” (2004:298).

Figure H.2: Evangelical Population in South America, 1900-2030



More recent data also shows that conversion is happening across all racial and income categories. Evangelicals look a lot like Brazil across racial and income categories according to data I analyzed from eleven nationally representative surveys (N=28,574) conducted between August and October 2018. Figures H.5, H.6, and H.7 report crosstabs from this analysis.

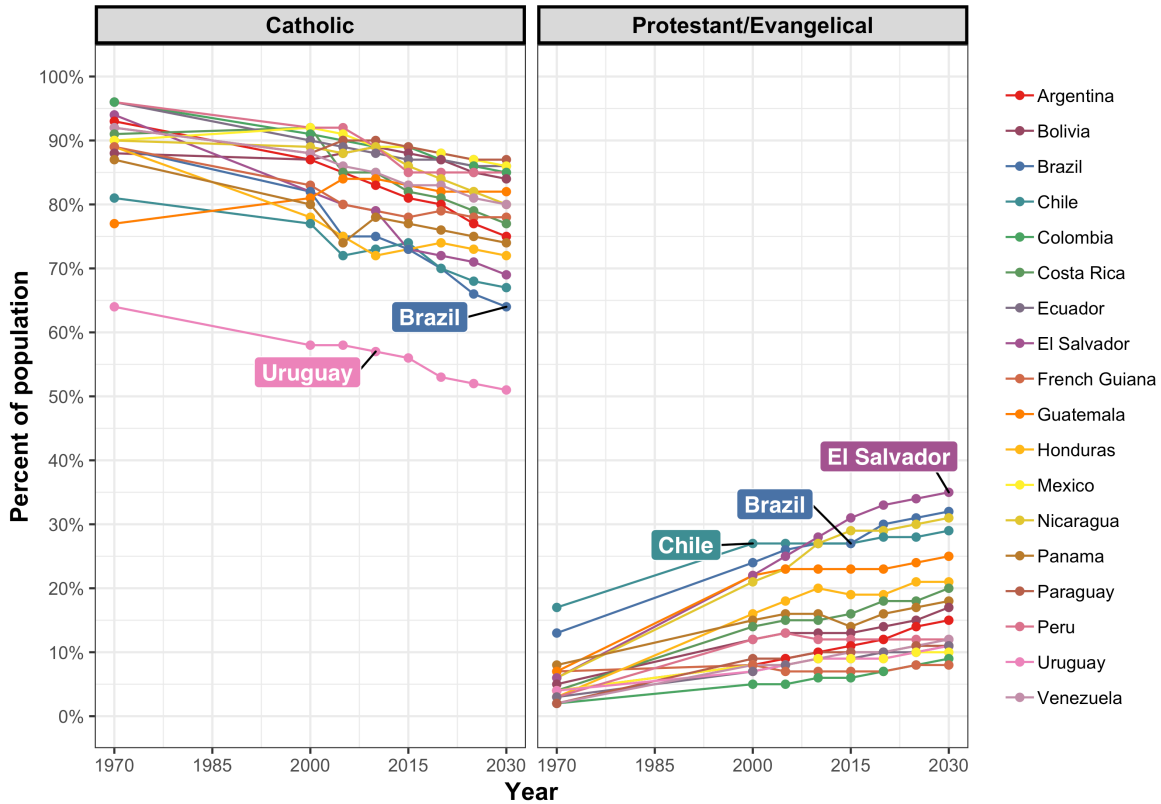
As shown in the figure above, the income profile of Catholics and evangelicals are nearly identical to each other and to Brazil as a whole (which is understandable, given that the two categories account for about 90 percent of the population's religious identification). Afro-Brazilian, Spiritists, and members of other religious denominations (Buddhist, Jewish, etc.) report higher levels of income than the general population.²

From Liberation Theology to the Prosperity Gospel

As Figure H.7 shows, the majority of Brazilians across all racial categories, still identify as Catholic (with the white-Catholic identification being the most pronounced). But which variant of Catholicism is it? In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Catholic

2. Despite literature from the 1990s and the 2000s which suggested that different Pentecostal denominations appealed to people from different socioeconomic strata, I did not find significant differences across them (with the exception of Renascer and IIGD, whose adherents reported slightly higher income overall). IURD and AD, however, looked very similar on this measure.

Figure H.3: Primary Religious Affiliation in Latin America, 1970-2030

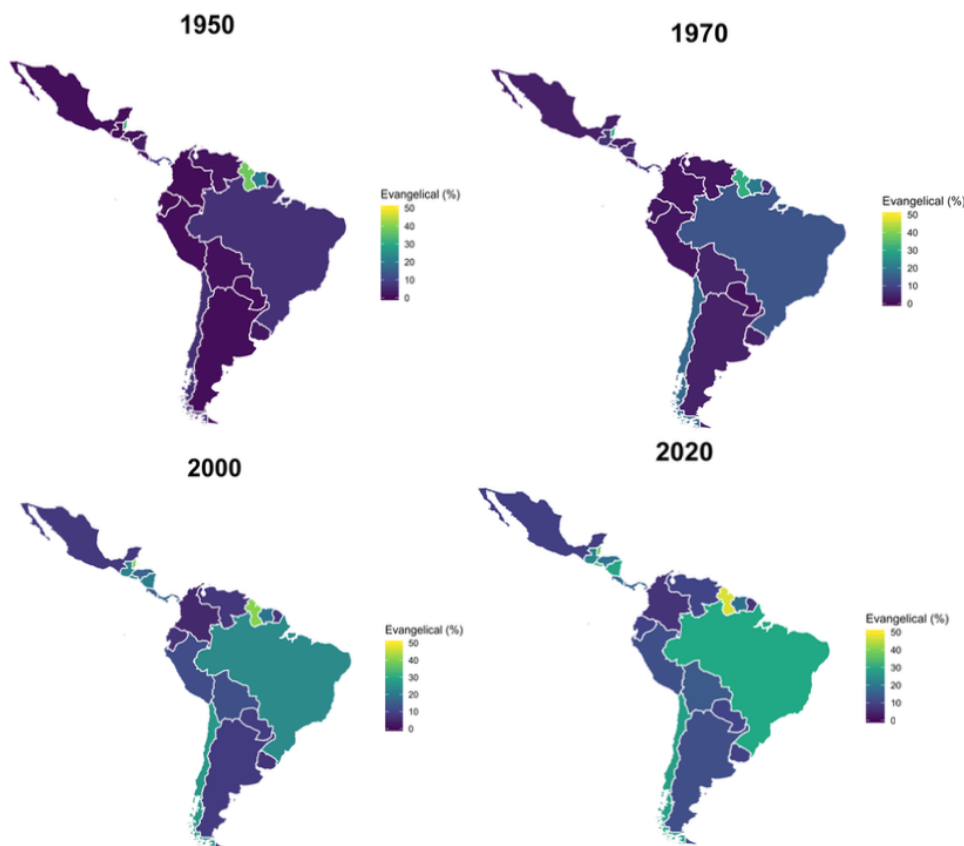


Church’s liberation theology was considered one of the most progressive forces in Latin America. It was not the first time the Church had placed a decisive role in the politics of state and nation-making in Brazil (Loveman 2005). For four centuries, Catholicism was the only religion permitted in the country. But it was the Church’s most progressive variant, spread through CEBs, of which there were an estimated 80,000 in Brazil in the 1980s, that quickly became the subject of worldwide academic and activist interest for their unexpected marriage of Marxist praxis and Christian theology. Yet, as Burdick (1993) observed, the scholarly attention presented something of a “numbers paradox”:

Even if we accept the most conservative national figures, and hold them constant for the early 1990s, they still indicate that Pentecostals and umbandistas outnumber active CEB participants on the order of at least two, and possibly as much as three or four to one. . . A growing number of observers in and outside of the Church have begun to recognize this. Daniel Levine has commented that, whatever the reason for the scholarly interest in CEBs, “[s]urely it is not for the numbers they attract” (4).

Liberation theologian, former PT cabinet official, and Dominican friar Frei Betto attributes the decline of CEBs in Brazil to the strategic failure of the Church’s leadership in

Figure H.4: Geographic Patterns in the Spread of Pentecostalism in Latin America, 1950-2020

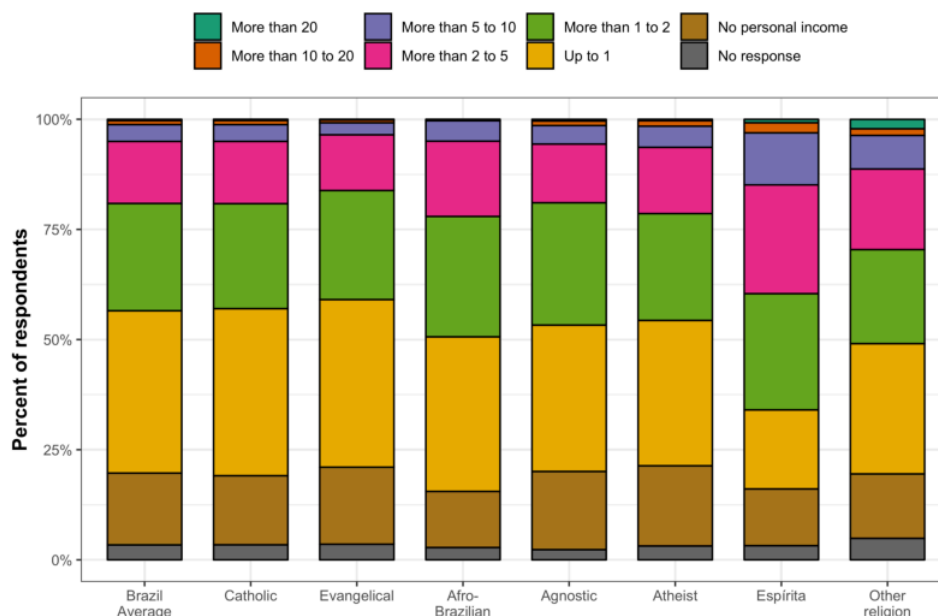


Rome: “The progressive Catholic Church lost. Not because of the evangelicals, but because of the conservative papacies of John Paul II and Bento XVI.” Antonio Menezes Neto (2007) agreed with this assessment: “The popular Catholic Church, under strong pressure from a centralizing and conservative policy of the Vatican, is in retreat” (338).³ Not content to merely repress the CEBs, Pope John Paul II inaugurated a new evangelization project within the Catholic Church focused on conservative “family values” that attack abortion, family planning, gay marriage, and divorce.

In practice, many of the so-called charismatic Catholics born of the Vatican’s New Evangelization project are indistinguishable from their evangelical counterparts. The *pen-*

3. Burdick (1993)’s explanation for why Brazilians turned away from CEBs toward Pentecostalism centers on four different factors: 1) the CEB model attracted relatively better off adherents, whereas Pentecostalism appeals to a broader range of socioeconomic categories; 2) women in particular were drawn to the supportive group atmosphere of the Pentecostal church (as opposed to the still-hierarchical Catholic model); 3) young people living in Brazil’s urban periphery were attracted to what seemed to be a “new” religion, permitting “a clear break with the past (which the CEBs did not)” (15); and 4) the failure of the CEBs to develop a “counter-discourse to racism” meant that more black Brazilians were drawn to the “inversions” made possible by spirit possession in Umbanda and Pentecostalism (ibid).

Figure H.5: Personal Income (Measured in Monthly Min. Wages) and Religions Identification in Brazil

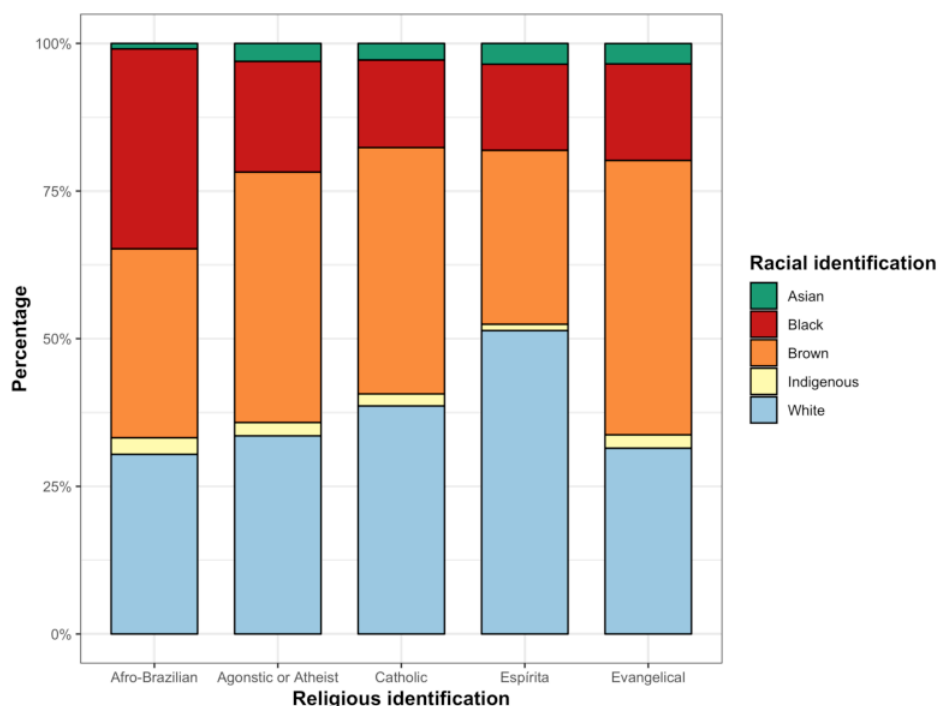


Data source: *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, IBOPE). Income categories refer to the number of minimum wage salaries respondents receive each month. In 2018, one minimum monthly wage was BRL\$954, or about USD\$270.

tecotalização of the Catholic Church in Brazil is now a well-documented phenomenon (e.g. Valle 2004). One Sunday afternoon I was walking through Largo da Batata, where many mass protests, including the *EleNão* anti-Bolsonaro demonstration, are staged in São Paulo, when I saw what I was certain was a large evangelical gathering. Hundreds of worshippers were gathered around a large pop-up stage singing what sounded exactly like the pop rock gospel music I heard so often in the Pentecostal cultos. In fact, however, it was Halleluya, billed as the largest Catholic festival in Latin America. “Imagine a festival like Rock in Rio or Lollapalooza, but with Catholic bands,” the marketing materials read (Shalom 2019). A group of about twenty young people performed synchronized choreography to trance music. Street vendors sold popcorn and non-alcoholic beverages on mobile carts. Three charismatic renewalists spent about an hour attempting to convert me, each telling me in exacting detail of the moment they were called to evangelize on behalf of the Church. One said:

I had a dream. I was scaling a cliff trying to escape something. But Jesus was at the top of the cliff. I dove into the water below, to the bottom of the ocean, but He was there too. Then I was on a jet ski, accelerating as fast as I could. But Jesus was with me. I knew then that I couldn’t escape it: I had been called.

Figure H.6: Racial Identification and Religious Identification in Brazil, 2018



Data source: *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, IBOPE).

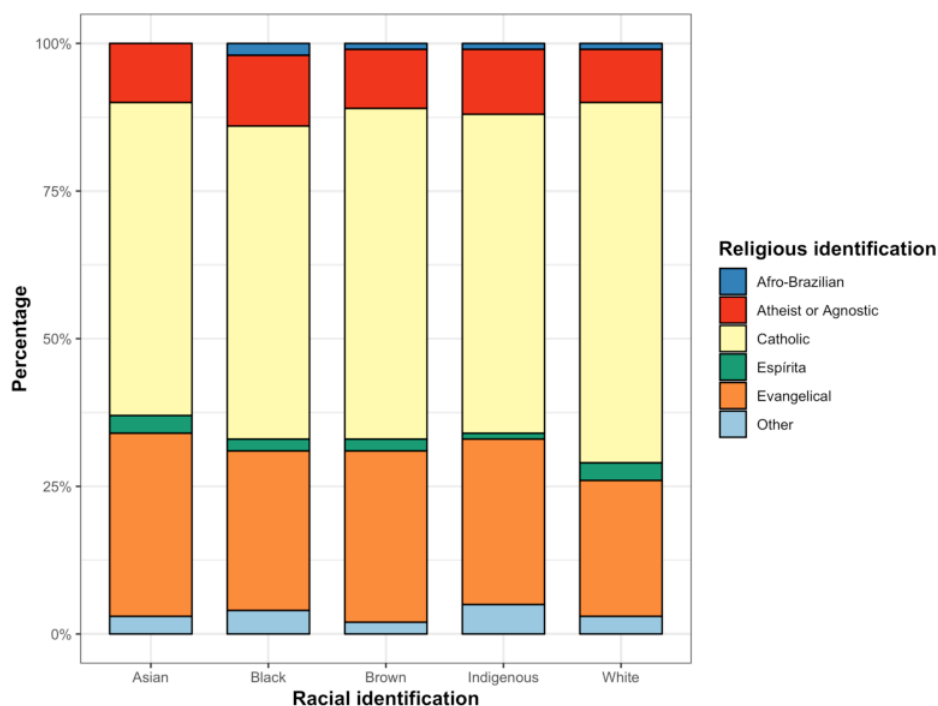
Her sister-in-faith overheard and took a different approach. “For me, the call was more gradual than sudden. For example... what do you do?” she asked, turning the focus of the conversation to me, which she did repeatedly. “I’m a sociologist,” I replied. “Wonderful! When were you called to be a sociologist?” she asked. “Was it sudden or gradual?” At the end of our conversion conversation, the women took my phone number, handed me a flier with directions to the nearest charismatic Catholic worship service, and have followed up with me over WhatsApp on multiple occasions since.⁴ Chesnut (2014) described the Catholic Church’s pivot in economic terms: “We’re talking here about a religious free market, and in such a market you have to offer people attractive options if you want to succeed. So these religious groups are offering up their own version of Pentecostalism because that’s what people want.” The evangelical aesthetic, in other words, is in high demand.

The political leanings of Brazilian evangelicals

If race and income are no more predictive of Pentecostalism than Catholicism, and if Catholics are starting to look and act like evangelicals, what (if any) differences are there in the political tendencies of affiliates of each religion? As alluded to at the outset of this

4. Field notes from June 23, 2019.

Figure H.7: Religious Identification and Racial Identification in Brazil, 2018



Data source: *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics, IBOPE).

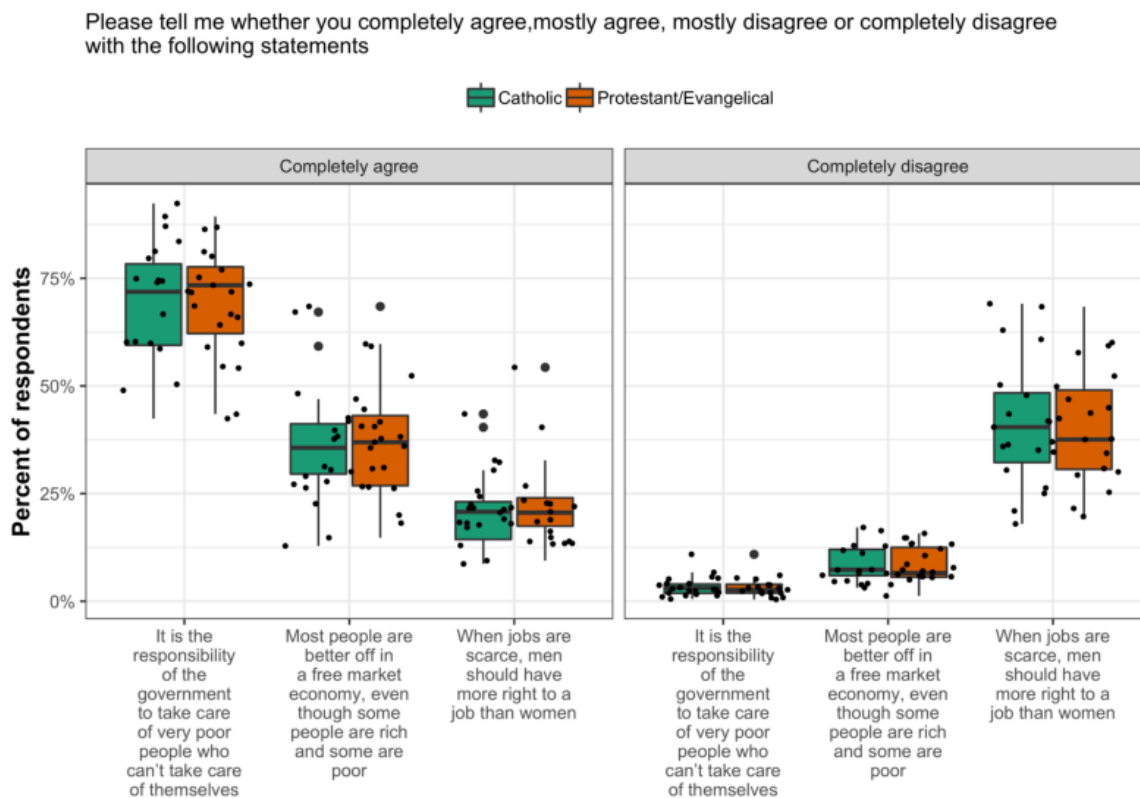
chapter, the political behavior of evangelicals in Brazil does not fit neatly into typical left-right categorizations. While reactionary Pentecostal clergy and their culture wars have received a great deal of mainstream media and scholarly attention (Smith 2019), the views and legislative behavior of the FPE do not necessarily reflect the political preferences of Brazil’s Pentecostal population, which is far more heterogeneous than most generalizations allow. As Ricardo Mariano and Antônio Pierucci (1992) noted well before the *evangelização* of Brazil’s parliament, the fact that an Evangelical left exists militates against such oversimplifications. On balance, write Avi Oro and Pablo Semán (2000) “although conservatism prevails, it is more the consequence of particular historical situations than a fossilized essence of the Pentecostal message” (618-9). An analysis of the Pew Research Center’s database supports this observation.

Figure reports difference between Catholic and Protestant respondents on three questions that help assess political views among the three major religious categories in Latin America.⁵ Points represent individual countries in Latin America.

The picture that emerges is clear: Catholics and Pentecostals in Latin America do

5. Across all countries in Latin America, the sum of the Catholic and Protestant categories accounted for between 81 and 97 percent of all responses, with the exception of Uruguay, where 37 percent of respondents indicated that they are not affiliated with any religion. For the rest of Latin America, averaged eight percent of the population identified as unaffiliated.

Figure H.8: Political Economy Views by Religion in Latin America, 2014



Data source: Pew Research Center (2014)

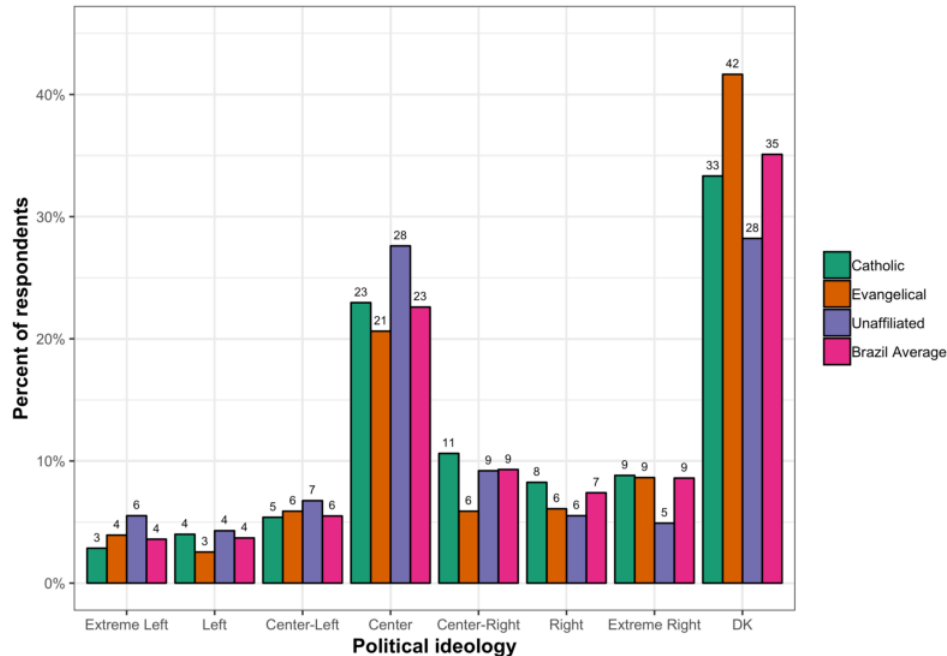
not meaningfully differ on key political economic positions.⁶ The data show that there is nothing intrinsic about the political-ideological identification of adherents of the two faiths. Moreover, the Pew survey shows that in Latin America, citizens on the whole are much more likely to ‘completely agree’ that the government should take care of the poor (very few respondents completely disagreed with this position), whereas views toward the ‘free market economy’ were more mixed.

Considering only the survey data for Brazil, the results are again counterintuitive in light of popular portrayals of Pentecostals’ uncompromising right-wing politics. Looking at questions related to political ideology and party identification across religions in Brazil, the data showed that evangelicals are as likely to identify as extreme left, left, or center left (12.38 percent) as are Catholics (12.25) percent, and seven points *less* likely to identify as extreme right, right, or center right (20.6 percent compared to the Catholics’ 27.7 percent, summing across categories). Considering the full sample, Brazilians were twice as likely to identify with one of the three right-leaning categories (25.3 percent) as com-

6. This pattern was consistent in the Brazil-specific responses to these survey questions.

pared to the left-leaning ones (12.8 percent)— five years before Bolsonaro came to power. Among those respondents who did select an ideology, the modal response was centrist across all religious categories.

Figure H.9: Political Ideology Identification by Religion in Brazil, 2014



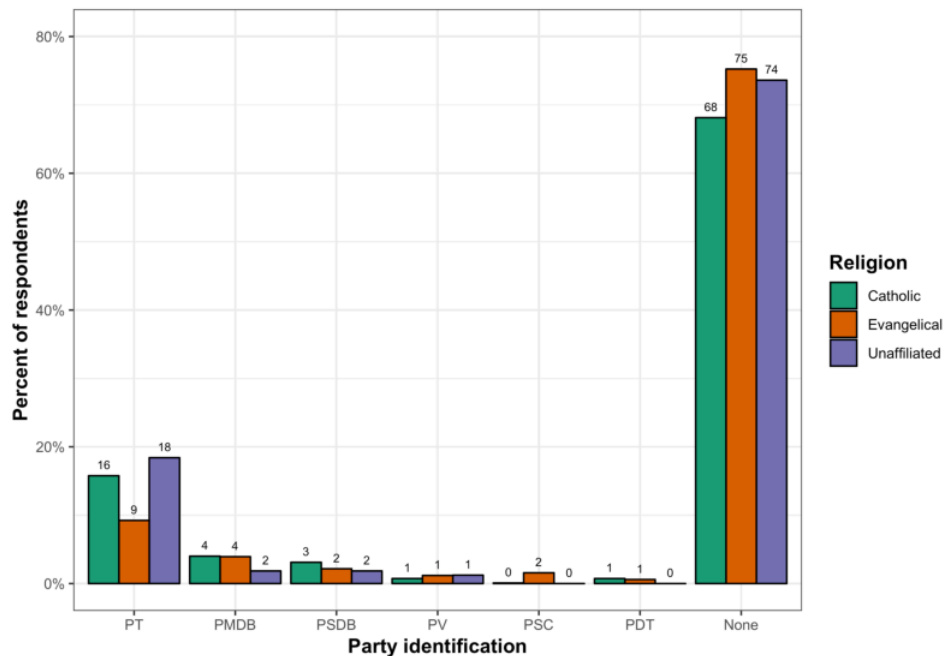
Data source: Pew Research Center (2014)

Where we can observe what might be vestiges of the PT’s historical alliance with the Catholic Church’s liberation theology current, however, is in party identification. As shown in Figure ??, 15.7 percent of Catholics identify with the PT, a percentage that is surpassed, however, by people who identify as unaffiliated with any religion. Evangelicals are less likely to identify with the PT than Catholics, though 9.2 percent do cite the PT as the party with which they identify. Moreover, party identification does not dictate vote choice in Brazil: most scholars agree that the link between parties and the electorate is weak (Zucco 2015).

Perhaps the most significant takeaway from both Figures H.9 and H.10 is not the variation in party identification and ideology by faith (and lack thereof), but rather that irrespective of religious orientation, more than two thirds of Brazilians do not identify with *any* party, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that there are 35 possibilities on offer. The majority of respondents, when surveyed in 2013 at the height of the PT’s popularity, selected *não sei* (don’t know) when asked to place their ideology on a left-right scale.⁷

7. Only those parties with more than one percent of responses are shown.

Figure H.10: Political Party ID by Religion in Brazil, 2014



Data source: Pew Research Center (2014)

H.2 The theology and praxis of Pentecostalism

Pentecost comes from the Greek word *pentēkostē*, meaning fiftieth. But its biblical origins come from the rabbinic tradition. The Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Fifty Days or the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot, from the Hebrew word for “[seven] weeks” is celebrated fifty days after Passover. Pentecostals thus take their name from one of Judaism’s most sacred and widely observed holidays. According to the Acts of the Apostles (2:1-4):

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Whether or not it is sacred or sacrilege to speak in tongues remains one of the distinguishing controversies surrounding Pentecostalism. One Adventist pastor describes the practice of speaking in tongues as an “utter perversion” of biblical teachings:

This world-wide Pentecostal tongue movement has reversed this God-given plan of salvation by emphasizing that we are saved by God’s works in us, through the speaking in tongues, and not by what He did for us. Pentecostalism teaches

the false concept that an individual is saved when he receives the baptism of speaking in tongues and this alone is proof of salvation. But this is a false assurance. You need not be concerned with love and obedience, in what Christ did for you, since you have absolute assurance of eternal life because of what God has done in you by giving you the gift of tongues. (Nelson 2002)

The word Pentecostalism is thus usually deployed to refer to the evangelical Christian movement that centers on baptism in the Holy Spirit through dramatic conversion events accompanied by glossolalia, divine healing, and other charismatic gifts, like that which occurred with the apostles in Acts. Its scriptural underpinnings center on what Pentecostals call the “four-fold” gospel, from whence the evangelical church Foursquare and its large Brazil offshoot *Quadrangular* get their name. According to Donald Dayton (1987), Foursquare’s founder, Aimee Semple McPherson, summarized the message of Pentecostalism as follows:

Jesus saves according to John 3:16; baptizes with the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4; heals bodily according to James 5:15; and is coming again to receive those who are saved according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. (Dayton 1987:21)

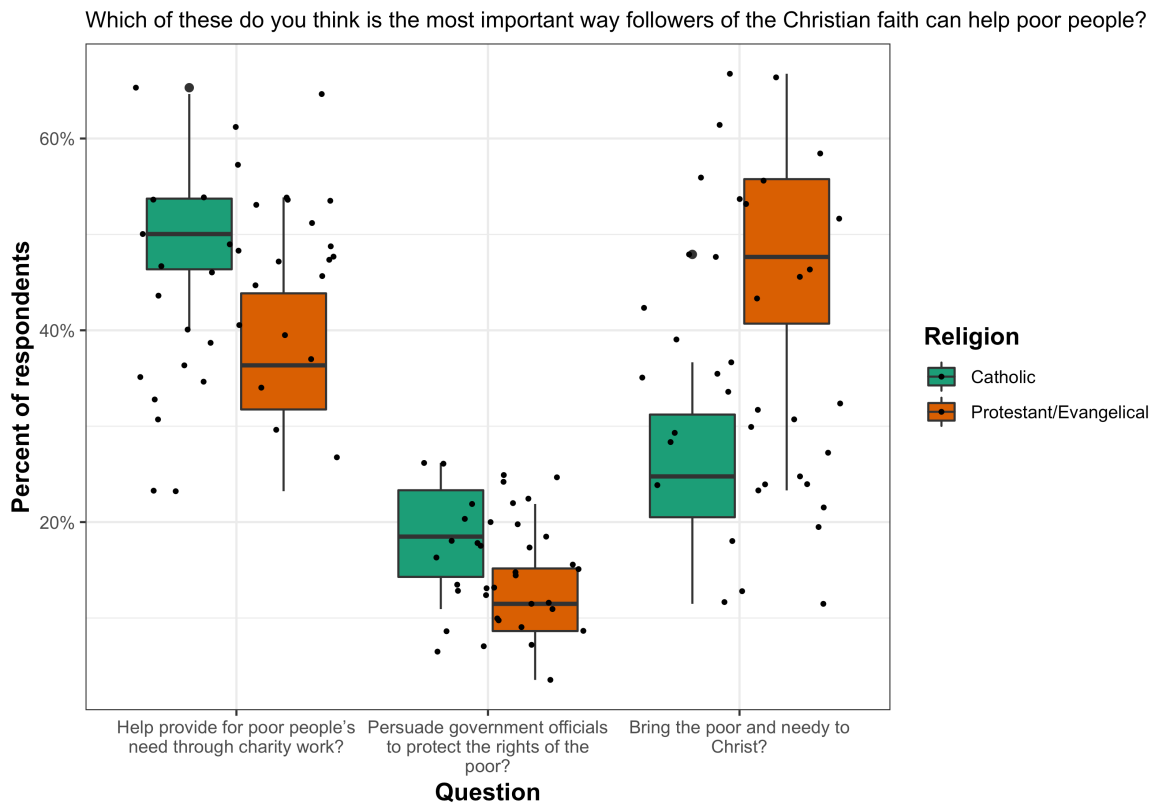
Together, these represent the four defining beliefs of Pentecostalism. But what is meant by the catch-all term ‘evangelical,’ of which Pentecostalism is a variant? Writing in the U.S. context, Jonathan Merritt (2015) observed that the content and contours of the word ‘evangelical’ are slippery:

Individual observers are left to decide how to define what makes someone or something *evangelical*. To the pollster, it is a sociological term. To the pastor, it is a denominational or doctrinal term. And to the politician, it is a synonym for a white Christian Republican.

Baptist lay preacher and historian David Bebbington (1989) developed what is perhaps the most influential definition. Called the Bebbington quadrilateral, his definition of evangelical Christianity centers on four primary characteristics: 1) *conversionism* (the belief that individuals must be converted, usually through transformative ‘born again’ experiences); 2) *activism* (the belief in living out the gospel through missions and social effort); 3) *biblicism* (the belief in the Bible as the ultimate authority), and 4) *crucicentrism* (an emphasis on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as having made possible the redemption of all humanity).

Survey data reflect some of the distinctive beliefs of evangelicals as compared to other Christian religions. In Figure H.11, plotted points represent individual countries in Latin America, disaggregated by the region’s two major religions. Respondents were asked which of the three options were the “most important way followers of the Christian faith can help poor people.” Both Catholics and evangelicals were *least* likely to say that “persuading government officials” was the most important way. However, Catholics were more likely to identify “charity work” and evangelicals “[bringing] the poor and needy to Christ” in their response, a reflection of the distinctive practices associated with each faith, and especially evangelicals’ expressed belief in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Figure H.11: Views on 'Helping the Poor' by Religion in Latin America



Data source: Pew Research Center (2014)