



## **THE RADICALNESS OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: PROTESTS AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY BRAZIL**

A radicalidade da solidariedade social: protestos e mudança política no Brasil contemporâneo

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## ABSTRACT

Since 2013, Brazil has faced a process of political, institutional, and social upheaval, translated into outbreaks of political scandals and major street mobilizations that evoke a certain social radicalism. Between May and June 2020, amid the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrations by organized social movements and civil society took to the streets of cities in the country “for democracy and life”, guided by an agenda characterized as antifascist. These mobilizations seemed to indicate that something would happen quickly, especially from the impoverished social strata – those most affected by the political scenario and the pandemic – but they cooled off at the same speed as they started. What has happened since then? The article examines this question, analyzing the protests through the category of social solidarity. We investigate their role in building social cohesion in Brazil during the last year (2021), both in mobilizing sectors of the population and in the very corrosion and reversal of our society’s social fabric bases.

## KEYWORDS

Social solidarity. Social movements. Radicality.

## RESUMO

Desde 2013, o Brasil enfrenta um processo de convulsão política, institucional e social, traduzido em eclosão de escândalos políticos e grandes mobilizações de rua que evocam certo radicalismo social. Entre maio e junho de 2020, em meio ao período inicial da pandemia da COVID-19, manifestações de movimentos sociais organizados e da sociedade civil tomaram as ruas de cidades do país “pela democracia e pela vida”, pautadas por uma agenda caracterizada como antifascista. Essas mobilizações pareciam indicar que algo aconteceria rapidamente, em especial através das camadas sociais empobrecidas – as mais afetadas pelo cenário político e pela pandemia –, mas esfriaram na mesma velocidade em que começaram. O que aconteceu desde então? O artigo examina essa questão, analisando os protestos por meio da categoria de solidariedade social. Investigamos seu papel na construção da coesão social no Brasil durante o último ano (2021), tanto na mobilização de setores da população quanto na própria corrosão e reversão das bases do tecido social de nossa sociedade.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Solidariedade social. Movimentos sociais. Radicalidade.



**B**etween May and June of 2020, amid the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrations by organized social movements and sector of the Brazilian civil society took to the streets of cities in the country demanding "democracy and life," guided by an agenda that was characterized as antifascist but with a central demand for President Jair Messias Bolsonaro's impeachment.

These mobilizations seemed to indicate that something would happen quickly, emerging especially from the impoverished social strata – those most affected by the political scenario and the pandemic – but they cooled off and demobilized at the same speed that they started. What has happened since then? This article seeks to analyze some of the new patterns of social dissent and grievances in social protests between 2019 and 2020 in Brazil, focusing on social solidarity as a political category that allows us to identify these protests as a form of activism connected to social and cultural interests among heterogeneous groups of workers, galvanized by the fast depreciation of living conditions in the country during the past couple of years.

We do not intend to exhaust the debate, offering a definitive thesis on these events and their motives. Our objective is to map such manifestations and point out paths of analysis that allow the integration of this debate in future research. The notion of social solidarity was chosen because it can be perceived as a diffuse category among workers. We anchor the debate in this category along the lines of its debate, especially between the 1980s and 1990s in Brazil. In this period, this category represented the potential of joint and community action to construct popular and collective society projects (TELLES, 2013; GOHN, 1997; 2014), forwarding the agenda of social movements. We know that the cooling-off of demonstrations in 2020 cannot be analyzed from simple answers. It involves a range of complex social phenomena, which are jointly characterized by the dismantling of the State by the government of Jair Bolsonaro.

Although, it has become almost commonplace to establish the myriad of complex social-cultural protests in June of 2013 as the inflection point for several, already ongoing, changes regarding the understanding of social rights and the types of struggles for recognition that translate different forms of effectuation of political demands. Between 2015 and 2016, the political scenario in Brazil changed drastically with the impeachment of President Dilma Vanna Rousseff, followed by the end of almost two decades of left-wing governments.

Social rights were profoundly affected in this context of institutional crises, and the country witnessed a fast-growing political polarization led by conservative parties and their civil supporters. At the same time, transformations in social networking, dynamics of belonging, and identity formation and affirmation have shaped new forms of political culture that seem to lead to new forms of solidarity between workers. This process, in tandem with the new patterns of consumption, the extension of the formal public education offer, and the increase of inclusion and income transfer programs, moved the political scenario in Brazil to a boiling point.

The text is structured in the following manner: In the first section, we map the protests and the mobilized groups, emphasizing the circumstances in which they took the streets. In the second section, we link those protests with a perspective that stresses the sense of solidarity as an impulse to mobilization. Finally, we conclude by advancing some remarks regarding how the Brazilian political landscape is fruitful for reflecting on current uses of social solidarity, both as a progressive or as a regressive force.

## PROTESTS AND THE RIGHT TO TAKE THE STREETS: A PANORAMIC VIEW ON BRAZILIAN POLITICAL SCENARIO (2013-2020)

During the second decade of the twenty-first century, as more progressive narratives gained space in the public arena, being developed and advanced by a myriad of minority groups in web-based social media platforms (such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), as well as mainstream vehicles, changes in both the public discourse regarding justice and fairness in Brazil and the engagement of new audiences in political protests in the country became increasingly evident.

According to Gohn (2017, p. 24), “new technologies [...] are, indeed, producing more ways to impulse civil society mobilizations, creating new forms of sociability far from institutional structures”.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, activists gather information and interpret it concerning their opinions and social demands.

Indeed, we observe a sort of immanent potentiality – in a sociological/historical understanding – or power – in a political sense – in these new protesters who gathered aspects of diversity, individuality, and the capacity to act in collective terms. Such forms of political action and organization should yield new interpretations of historical patterns of political culture and how it is appropriated by and reinterpreted by these new actors.

On the one hand, it is well established that such social changes in Brazil led to more consistent ways of political participation, extending the democratic instruments to the population of the country in general (ANDERSON, 2019; GOHN, 2017; SINGER, 2012; ROCHA, 2013; TATAGIBA; GALVÃO, 2019; BRAGA, 2012). On the other hand, as Tilly (2007, p. 151) highlights:

a recurring set of changes in the configurations of power, both inside and outside the state, produces changes in the relations between states, citizens, and public political processes, promoting democratization. Setbacks at any point in the causal sequence encourage democratization.

In this sense, we can link those reflections to the expansion of human rights and the right to protest in Brazil that has taken place in the last three decades, since the redemocratization process, because, as Tilly (2007, p. 151) argues, more organic participation in such a process is related to an increased perception and development of notions of equality and democratic accountability (VARGAS MAIA; PONTIN, 2019).

Since 2013, as Gohn (2017) argues, the classic form of protests led by social movements has suffered a setback, opening space to new forms of dissent and political demonstrations in public arenas in Brazil. Therefore, we cannot disregard the changes that our social and political contexts have gone through, and a focus in this time frame is essential to understanding the recent wave of protests in Brazil. The selection of this period also defines and highlights the four thematic areas of protests that highlight the political-cultural shift for the public scene in the context of a conservative and authoritarian government.

In June of 2013, the traditional forms of protests, such as marches, occupations, and leafleting, aligned with an increased sense of citizenship, shaped protests that were carried out mainly by young activists organized in "Movimento Passe Livre" (MPL) [Free Fare Movement], acting in capitals throughout the country against the raises in public transportation fares (ARTICLE 19, 2013). The Free Fare Movement, already heavily repressed by the Military police, lost space in the public arena when opposition groups started to instigate violence against protesters (ROMERO, 2013). This change sparked new

<sup>1</sup> All the citations were translated by the authors.

protests, and a diffuse range of revindications marked these demonstrations. Such a tense environment caused an escalation of police violence against protesters and the attacks on the freedom of the press, with several arrest cases of journalists from mainstream and independent media.

The perspectives about the right to protest suffered a significant change in 2013 because the repression led by government forces provoked a shift in the Brazilian civil society's understanding of the fairness of protests, as the justification of repression to contain protesters under the banner of "restoring order" resonated throughout mainstream media and several social groups. The mainstream media conducted this resignification of both the right of protest and the fairness of repression, thus creating a new culture of identifying legitimacy or not around protests.

Considering this context, we highlight four agendas and groups that allow us to map recent protests in a panoramic view contributing to an understanding of 2020 protests:

1) Between 2015 and 2016, protests led by high school students emerged in many cities throughout the country and showed more clearly these new forms of protests pointed by Gohn (2017). High School students created a movement of occupations in schools, starting in São Paulo, and spreading across other cities in Brazil. With direct political action, they opened a new field of possibilities within the Brazilian political experience, forming temporary spaces of autonomy, solidarity, and freedom that highlighted new forms of political protest and social mobilization. In this sense, students have reorganized and recast practices that unions, political parties historically carried out, and social movements, appropriating these methods and using them to guide their political actions, rejecting the intervention of what they considered "old" forms of political protesting with hierarchical structures of power (DE SORDI; MORAIS, 2016).

Opposition groups named "desocupas" [de-occupy] cracked the protests by accusing students of being too immature to know how to do politics and being co-opted by traditional movements. It was in the context of such antagonization that the "Escola Sem Partido" [School without Party] grew as a social reference among conservatives, advancing a political project that proposes:

a reactionary agenda, in particular relating to issues of diversity and the persecution of leftist political parties. They focus specifically on the gender agenda, demonizing projects that seek to bring into schools the role of tolerance and diversity, and dismissing materials designed to fight off homophobia, transphobia, and lesbophobia as "LGBT propaganda" or as a "gay kit," creating, besides this, a narrative that teachers are "doctrinarians." [...] In general, they seek to control what is "transmitted" in schools and consider any knowledge that is not instrumental – in the capitalist sense of workforce formation – as merely a type of indoctrination (SEVERO; GONÇALVES; ESTRADA, 2019, p. 2).

2) In universities, "Escola Sem Partido" groups spread their influence and, since 2017, have instigated formal and informal persecutions against students and professors. The increase in frequency and intensity of such attacks, including online and offline defamation and, in extreme cases, doxing and personal attacks against intellectuals, as well as calls for dismissals of academics, has caused severe consequences regarding the constitutional right of academic freedom. The suicide of the President of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) in 2017 (SUICÍDIO DE REITOR..., 2018) is now understood as a direct consequence of such actions, as the aggressive lawfare conducted by the local chapter of the Carwash Operation against the Dean of the UFSC was motivated by false claims initiated by the "Escola sem Partido" group. Presently, persecutions

continue, and the fear of protest caused by formal prosecutions has increased among professors, students, and researchers in Brazilian universities.

3) Meanwhile, in the complex political scenario that framed the fall of former president Dilma Vanna Rousseff, in 2016, "within three months, huge demonstrations packed the streets of the country's major cities, at least two million strong, demanding her [Rousseff] ouster." (ANDERSON, 2019, p. 100). This dramatic escalation completed the stigmatization and repression against protesters in Brazil, initiated in the context of the 2013 protests. Indeed, in 2016 the Brazilian government approved the anti-terrorism bill, which "operates in dynamic of persecution and seal the popular demonstrations and represents a risk to the exercise democracy" (CAMBI; AMBROSIO, 2017, p. 17).

If, on the one hand, we see the criminalization of social movements through legislation like the anti-terrorism bill, on the other hand, the selectivity in the application of such legislation becomes increasingly evident. Left-wing-oriented protests were heavily repressed by police forces, while right-wing protesters took "selfies" with police during their demonstrations. The political right led most of the consequential demonstrations during Dilma Vanna Rousseff's second term.

In this context, it is essential to note the emergence of the anti-Bolsonaro "#EleNão" [#NotHim] protests in 2018 (PHILLIPS, 2018) as an expression of antagonistic political forces forged in a narrow timeframe, the political scenario in Brazil changed by generational tension and by pressures led by minority groups. With the "#EleNão" protests, feminists across Brazil took the streets against misogyny and sexist narratives supported and expressed by right-wing organizations, which were instrumental to Dilma Vanna Rousseff's impeachment and that grew in intensity in the aftermath of her fall.

Notwithstanding the symbolic and material force of the "#Elenão" movement, Jair Messias Bolsonaro's victory in 2018 has further reshaped the logic of social protests. As a matter of fact, since 2019, the freedom of protest and notions about human and civil rights have been twisted to support the conservative themes advanced by Jair Messias Bolsonaro's government.

4) Since Brazil emerged from the civilian-military dictatorship in the late 1980s, repression of social movements and civil society had progressively decreased, but, from 2013 on, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of occurrences and the confrontation between opposite political – and cultural – positions in society. The specialized literature regarding social movements in Latin America traditionally characterizes them as advancing long-term social projects and an extensive political agenda (GOHN, 2019; TILLY, 2010).

However, since 2013, contemporary protests in Brazil have generally emerged from specific themes linked to the political processes and narratives that gathering groups (NOBRE, 2013) and reinterpreting instruments of protest, sometimes assuming opposite demands. This shift from the classic forms of protest and association to the recent modes of political mobilization also indicates an inflection on the practices of social solidarity in the country: they seem to indicate a transformation from traditional forms of social solidarity, usually rooted in and established along class lines to one that orbits and is grounded in social cleavages that were accentuated by specific vulnerabilities entrenched and reinforced during the most recent crisis that the country experienced, such as race and ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, and sexual orientation, among others.

In this sense, it is essential to understand that "old" and "new" perspectives about protests coexist in the Brazilian context and are constantly changing since classic social movements cannot be confused in their forms with these most recent protests. Collective political actions and individual protests that spread through online platforms and social media are constantly pressuring the social dynamics that characterize the recent democratic collapse in Brazil.

Since 2013 the streets as a public space for manifestations linked to democratic values were open to other groups that prioritize apolitical terms in their discourses and practices. However, despite pushing for apolitical agendas, they are not against party organizations, and they privilege anti-corruption demands and conservative moral values. In 2014, those groups gained strength and were later protagonists in the context of Dilma Vana Rousseff's impeachment in 2016 and the frontal attacks on professors, teachers, and students that followed suit.

Digital culture contributed to this shift in the public arena, transforming manifestations in an open and plural space that simultaneously holds antagonistic conjectural demands (both democratic and regressive appeals find space for expression in it) (GOHN, 2017), with a focus on the political subjects rather than on social policies from State.

In this context, after a pause on inrush of protests, in 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, protesters identified as "Antifas" (or antifascists), along with students, workers, and delivery men, took the streets of São Paulo and Porto Alegre protesting for "life and democracy." These protests were not predetermined, but they established an agenda of opposition to the government, claiming direct civil action beyond "panelaços."<sup>2</sup> These protests regained the public arena and were integrated into this dispute by public political values and social cohesion, but mostly stimulated the reopening of the protests in Brazil.

The protests of 2020 started as a response to anti-democratic acts from Jair Messias Bolsonaro and his supporters. They were organized through social media by the initiative of the supporters of Football Clubs such as Corinthians and Palmeiras, which were historically aligned with a staunch defense of democracy in Brazil (PIRES, 2020). The mobilizations of May and June of 2020 started as a response to the defense of democracy, guided by antiracism and in defense of material conditions and social policies to support measures of social isolation during the pandemic.

In a context of apparent demobilization of the progressist agenda, the protests were inflated by the repercussion of a series of acts lead by Jair Messias Bolsonaro around the "celebration" of the military coup of 1964, claimed by him, since March, as the "Revolution of 64" (GIELOW, 2020), which configures an offense to the democratic State, civil and human rights.

The first impression of most observers was that these protests were recasting the 2013 scenario and spreading through the country, but the protesters dissipated in the middle of June of 2020 without much national repercussion. The wave of manifestations started to be repressed by police forces and faced direct clashes with supporters of President Jair Messias Bolsonaro, configuring a literal street battle to the right of protest:

Both in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, there were reports of confusion between antifascist and pocket-spirit fans, followed by police repression. On Avenida Paulista, tension set in when the protests had already ended, after some protesters from the far-right displayed suspicious symbols of apology for Nazism as a form of provocation. The São Paulo Military Police sent images to the Public Ministry to investigate those responsible for starting the riot and determine whether the group's flags supporting Bolsonaro are related to neo-Nazi movements (PIRES, 2020).

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<sup>2</sup> *Panelaços* are a form of protest where pots, pans, frying pans, and other kitchen utensils are used to draw attention to the noise made when banging these utensils. It is a way to protest without leaving home, being initially used in the opposition protests to the Dilma Vanna Rousseff government, and later adopted in the protests against the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro.

The "people cannot live under the Bolsonaro government anymore" was a common slogan for newspapers and protest supporters (FINAL DE SEMANA..., 2020; PIRES, 2020; MOTA, 2020). Protesters waved banners with phrases like "democracy is us," "all for democracy," or "if there is no peace for the people, there is no peace for the government;" a member of the parliament stated to a journalist: "By using the reality of the pandemic to advance his authoritarian project, Bolsonaro puts Brazil on edge. The act of organized supporters in São Paulo resulted from this: the people cannot take it anymore" (PIRES, 2020).

Even with the end of protests in June of 2020, delivery men (BRAGA, 2016) have continued to demonstrate against the prevailing situation, primarily through strikes and the open opposition against current mechanisms of coercion and repression, focusing their claims on work conditions and measures of protection against the current pandemic scenario.

## SOLIDARITY AND PROTESTS

Following Gohn (2017), we can characterize these waves of protests as something new but not necessarily as a "novelty" in the Brazilian political landscape (GOHN, 2017). Different protests and social identities have emerged far from the classic social movements in these political and cultural circumstances. However, this process is still not yet solidified.

The main issue seems to be that the structures of democratic erosion are still operating, even after the manifestations the country has witnessed. The social groups with specific demands and objectives are more engaged and pressured by specific material limitations. Even though these groups have assembled along the lines of common interests and demands galvanized during the crisis that ensued President Dilma Vanna Rousseff's impeachment aggravated by the pandemic, there is no sign of the development of long-lasting social-political forces, at least for now.

According to Tilly (2010), social movements link collective demands, characteristic political action and communication forms, and a symbology that identifies collective values. Thus, it is possible to point out that the recent protests are very much focused on the present time, given that the main agenda centers on the period of Jair Messias Bolsonaro elections and government. It seems, in a sense, that they are "fulfilled by the here-and-now [*Jetztzeit*]" (BENJAMIN, 2016), the "frozen time that precipitates in an instant, time condensed in images that contain past and present in a constellation that tears the horizon of the historicist continuum" (SPIGA, 2021). As we have mentioned before, there is an immanent potentiality, or power, expressed in these movements that are not yet fulfilled.

Nevertheless, a common point structures these specific political actions and social movements that could articulate and translate such potentiality/power: social solidarity. Social solidarity presents itself in this context as an organic political cohesion; any long-term social project demands solidarity since its beginning. On protests and mobilizations, organized mainly through social media, where there are no previously established ties, only general narratives around specific demands, solidarity must be forged through specific or circumstantial demands, the identity among protesters emerges from a place of agreement around some situation of exclusion or loss of rights.

Protests in 2020 evidence an opening on the structure of demonstrations that seem to deviate from their traditional mode of operation. These changes are not disconnected from the material conditions that sustain social relations and social solidarity (even in a more traditional perspective). As De Sordi (2021) argues, If changes in economic projects cannot be sustained without changes in the forms of social and cultural relations, then forms of intervention that focus only on sectoral characteristics of subjects' lives and certain forms of social relations are not intended to promote substantial transformations in material living



conditions. Therefore, they break possible ties of organization, identity, and solidarity to manage class inequalities and conflicts.

The scenario presents an ongoing tension between systemic and individual solidarity; both are linked to the macroeconomic changes, the demobilization of unions, social movements, and civil society organizations in a rough context of political, economic, cultural, and ideological changes cemented in Brazil by neoliberalism. These elements, connected amid the political crisis from recent years, push the life of workers to the limits, with informal jobs, low salaries, an increase in hunger, and a general worsening of living conditions. The corrosion of democratic institutions paves the way to social breakdown, forging individual solidarity, where individual and group demands become more urgent. There is no public space for representation to project revindications for more and better social rights. The neoliberal economic agenda progressively cuts out the ties around social and collective demands. Considering that this is a historical process under development since the 90s (TELLES, 2013), we can interpret the 2020 protests as the culmination of this trend, with glimpses of mobilization that heat and cool off without changing political and social structures in favor of democratic and progressive changes.

The systemic solidarity that could offer the articulation of social projects through the stewardship of democracy by the population has been progressively undermined. Access to health services, education, food programs, and formal income – topics widely covered during the pandemic – have been claimed from demands for access that accompany the removal of these same rights since 2015.

Even though the 2020 protests look specific, they should be observed as a part of social mobilizations in the public scenario since that place in 2013, and more so from 2015 on, considering their forms of organization and the changes provoked by cyberactivism (GINDRE, 2016). Understanding the historical depth of our present situation allows us to contextualize these protests, evidencing that if the individual solidarity is an insufficient response to such problems and that the systemic solidarity was undermined in its classical forms by neoliberal changes. These recent protests, in the Brazilian context, even if they have not still claimed long-term society projects, express the potentiality for social changes. Gathering groups and collectivities of workers seem to be a standard narrative that begs to establish itself according to political and material demands. The question here is whether the public arena will change as fast as those forms of protests allowing this narrative to penetrate institutional spaces.

For now, this scenario suggests two paths for interpretation of the democratic protests in Brazil, especially in the ways it relates to the engagement of civil society in the public arena: 1) we may be witnessing an opening of the public arena itself, which will become increasingly more plural – both in terms of types of movements, forms of protests, and ideological expressions, detaching itself from the classic attachment to class organizations such as unions and more traditional social movements. In this scenario, we can observe the development of timely alliances – the strategic conjunction of different groups (some with a more established history of protest, others with a new and perhaps less matured political identity and history), but without their permanent junction.

Concurrently, 2) we can pessimistically anticipate that this opening may also weaken the public arena itself. A plurality of political expressions does not necessarily correlate with a robust public space – it can also weaken it by demobilizing and disarticulating significant conquests and pathways to political demand previously constructed by more traditional social movements. Either way, social solidarity seems to operate radically in this context: it provides a specific political grammar that allows for the articulation between different social groups and the creation of new ones. This new political grammar roots its terms of endearment not from the traditional and well-established practices of the twenty-century

political landscape but from the new dynamics of social communications, articulation of political demands, and themes that gain relevance in an arena that is wider and more diverse, but that also seems to struggle with issues of impermanence.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we advanced a critical reading of Brazil's current social and political scenario, characterized by an intense mobilization of different social groups through a specific strategy for expressing dissent or support for particular politicians or proposals for public policy: street protests. Since 2013, this form of political and social mobilization has become increasingly popular in Brazil, and diverse social groups have resorted to these forms of mobilization to achieve different ends, with contrasting degrees of success. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, these demonstrations seemed to reach an inflection point, implying a radicalization of Brazilian politics. However, these demonstrations cooled down very quickly, betraying the sense of urgency they seemed to carry. In our analysis, this disarticulation seems to rest in one potentiality that is not yet fully developed: a new sense or form of social solidarity, which stems from the same cleavages that were aggravated and exposed by the successive crises that the country has faced during the past few years. While this potentiality can also be seen and explored as a locus for radical change in the configuration of Brazilian society, it has not yet blossomed in a way that can uphold such shifts.

Nonetheless, we can also interpret the current political moment in the country as one of receptiveness: Brazil is in the thick of change, and the crux of this process seems to rest on the capacity of different social groups to go beyond their current stage of mobilization through the development of newer and stronger dynamics of social solidarity. From the analysis developed in this article, we can highlight that right now, two main projects seem to dispute the public arena: on the one hand, progressive groups that are still scattered are trying to mobilize the Brazilian political imagination to support plural and cosmopolitan projects. We have feminists, the Black Movement, and the Indigenous People movement rehearsing the public arena in defense of democracy since August of 2021. On the other hand, these progressive propositions are not left unchallenged. Right-wing groups, such as "Movimento Brasil Livre" and "Vem pra Rua" [Come to the Street] movement, the same ones that propelled and supported Jair Messias Bolsonaro's election in 2018, have performed a comeback in 2021. While trying to reposition themselves in a more favourable light, given the low approval rates of the current federal government, they still try to weave a narrative from Brazilian politics that is deeply regressive.

Both of these political poles rely on dynamics of social solidarity. These solidarities articulate deeply diverse contents but predicate the same issue: a generalized feeling of despondency. This perception has spread throughout the many strata of the Brazilian population during the second decade of the twentieth century, an awareness of projects of economic development and social progress gone awry (a process that is well translated in the now-famous sequence of covers of *The Economist* magazine, entitled "Brazil takes off," "Has Brazil Blown It?", and "The Betrayal of Brazil," published in 2009, 2013, and 2016, respectively) (TREVISAN; MELO, 2019). This shared ground for distinct projects of solidarity points out to a fundamental issue regarding the notion of social solidarity as a guiding thread for political projects in the country: the necessity to articulate projects that espouse some kind of hope, that design a horizon of constructive change, empowerment, and recognition (PINHEIRO-MACHADO; SCALCO, 2020).

In this sense, we chose to see this particular moment of Brazilian history as one that can also foster an optimistic outlook, as long as we, as a society, can foster social solidarity projects that are radically democratic. We observed historical practices of solidarity, as ways

to mobilize solidarity in its transforming potential, ways that lead to projects of society that move inside the demonstrations, signifying their political, social, and cultural content; strategies for managing social spaces, including those of public mobilization and protest, that can translate what, in general, appears as indignation.

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