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The spatial diffusion of protests during the June Journeys and the politics of identity

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Abstract

Brazil experienced, in June of 2013, the largest popular demonstrations in its recent history —an event that has been called the *June Journeys*. In this paper, we briefly address briefly the processes of spatial diffusion and dispersion observed during these journeys. We then reflect on how these processes relate to a politics of identity, and the strategies used by protesters to differentiate themselves from other groups, and by the State to classify the protesters in order to guide the use of police repression. Identity can, therefore, group individuals around a common struggle using as reference the location of the demonstration as 'spaces of identity reference', but can also play an important role in the reproduction of dominant power relations by creating mechanisms with which to legitimate punitive action. The 'vandal' is, then, understood as the identity constructed to allow the transition from an indirect regulation to a mode of violent intervention. We conclude the paper by emphasising how both of these processes highlight the role of the politics of identity on this recent series of demonstrations in Brazil.

Keywords: Brazil; June Journeys; Social movements; politics of identity

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Brief outlines and the Brazilian context until June 2013

Brazil has gained a prominent position in the global political and economic scenarios during the last decade. This position has consolidated its role as a Latin American regional power, and also strengthened its sub-imperialist economic practices (Bernardo, 2011a, 2011b). According to the Uruguayan journalist and intellectual Raúl Zibechi:

> the expansion and strengthening of the ruling elites, the adoption of a strategy to make the country a global power, the strong partnership between the internationalized Brazilian bourgeoisie and the state apparatus (including the armed forces and state managers), and the maturity of capital accumulation in Brazil make its ruling elites able to take advantage of the relative decline of the United States in order to occupy spaces that deepen their hegemony in the country and the region. (Zibechi, 2012, p. 18)

During these past twelve years, the country has been governed by the Worker's Party (PT - *Partido dos Trabalhadores*). The election of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva —honorary president of the party— in 2002, produced a 'widespread sentiment among large sectors of the left that finally a political constellation committed to substantial changes (including land and urban reform) would come to State power'. Indeed, some of the widely advertised social goals were achieved. Among them we can highlight the reduction of social inequalities, the increasing of purchasing power (although based on a wide indebtedness), the expansion of the still precarious public health and educational systems, and even an initial review of the dictatorial past of the country. In fact, these new conditions increased social mobility, substantially changing the life quality of many Brazilians that were previously in extreme poverty.

All these achievements were accompanied by the co-optation of some of the most expressive social movements and labour unions by the State´s participation and negoti-ation apparatus. An important part of this process was the wide set of social policies that brought significant daily changes in terms of basic life conditions. These combined factors helped to mitigate social conflicts at the same time as they increased bonds of dependence of the movements towards the State, a process that is also seen in other countries of the continent with popular governments during this last decade, such as Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Venezuela (Zibechi, 2011).

However, although large and institutionalised national movements have received more attention from the government, other political organizations continued their struggle without state support. 2013 began with the continuation of a series of struggles rooted in the previous years. Besides the pressing housing issue in the largest cities of Brazil —mainly exemplified by occupations of the *sem-teto* movement (squatting) and the resistance against evictions— various agendas were coming to the fore. Two of them

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deserve our attention because they played a crucial role in the demonstrations that led millions of people to the streets of Brazilian cities, a series of protests that are publicly known as the 'June Journeys.' The first one refers to the mega-events: the FIFA World Cup 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. The other focuses on the urban mobility agenda, especially motivated by the wide rejection of the increase of the public transport fares. None of these two could be clearly characterized *a priori* as 'leftist' or 'right -wing' claims. Indeed, its importance lies precisely in the fact that they were aggregating agendas, capable of bringing together groups with very different political positions —sometimes even antagonistic ones.

Since the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) declared in 2007 that Brazil would host the World Cup, the preparations have been criticized by different political sectors of the society. Some the criticism include the lack of efficiency and transparency in the management of public resources, the neoliberal models of space production, and the adverse impacts of these events on local populations. Since the beginning of the preparation, several reports have disclosed the violations of human and labour rights, illegal evictions and forced removals of thousands of families,[1] lack of information and participation in the decision making process; the denial and restriction of access to basic public services (such as electricity, basic sanitation, health centres, etc.) as a tactic to force eviction, as well as the restriction of guaranteed rights, such as free legal support; the criminalization of social movements; environmental impacts and crimes, among others. The criticisms are based mainly on the delay and overpricing of the public works concerning the renovation of the infrastructure (highways, airports etc.) and the construction of Stadiums, as well as on the lack of transparency of the bidding procedures. These issues motivated different kinds of campaigns[2], including those organised by social movements and leftist parties under the 'World Cup Popular Committees'. Present in all the twelve host cities, these Committees stood out especially because of their systematic denunciation of the illegalities perpetrated in the name of these preparations against the interest of local residents.

Mobilizations against the raise of public transport fares were also on the agenda since the beginning of 2013. The main organisation addressing this issue is the Free Pass Movement (MPL – *Movimento Passe Livre*). Its origins date back to the popular uprisings occurred in Salvador ('Revolta do Buzú' / 2003) and Florianópolis ('*Revoltas da Catraca*' / 2004 and 2005) (Vinicius, 2004, 2005; MPL/SP, 2013). MPL became a national organisation in

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[1] See ANCOP (2012) and; Comitê Popular da Copa e das Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro (2014)

[2] For instance, the campaign driven by Amnesty International against forced evictions in 2013. See Amnesty International (2013).

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2005 during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, establishing itself as working under a federalist principle since 2006. After that, its activities spread to several cities through specific local political processes. During these more than ten years, the MPL has been focused on debates in schools and unions, on the organisation of public seminars and on demonstrations, widening the scope of the debate in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The fact is that the problems of urban mobility in Brazil are real and experienced daily by the vast majority of the population, especially in the larger cities. The MPL activities were oriented to the politicization of this experience, and the year of 2013 began with several protests related to this agenda (Judensnaider et al, 2013).

In this paper, we briefly address the processes of spatial diffusion and dispersion observed during the peak period of the 'June Journeys.' We also aim to reflect upon how these spatial dynamics can relate to the strategies used during the protests —both by the leftist social movements involved in the demonstrations and by the State attempting to govern the protests. We organised and analysed a preliminary chronological systematization of the events during this series of protests, considering mainly its location, magnitude, and agendas (when identifiable). The data was gathered from handouts (distributed during the demonstrations), published materials in news papers, websites linked to social movements and printed and digital information broadcasted by the so called 'alternative media' (such as Midia Ninja, Jornal A Nova Democracia, Passa Palavra etc.), as well as recent publications about these events (See Judensnaider *et al* (2013), Maricato *et al* (2013)). Our reflections are mainly based on participant observation research methods, supported by our attendance to the almost-daily demonstrations that took place in Rio de Janeiro, June and July, and endorsed by our participation in several social movements in the city during the last nine years approximately (especially in the *sem-teto* movement of Rio de Janeiro). We also took advantage of a network of activists spread across the country to have access to reports about demonstrations occurred in other cities – São Paulo, Recife, and Florianópolis for instance. The gathered information was systematically organised through research notes about the waves of protests, providing the data used in this paper.

The next pages will be organised as follows. In the first section, we describe the emergence of the demonstrations, focusing on its locational aspects. We intend to highlight the initial spatial concentration of protests in the main cities, which was followed by two processes of spatial diffusion: one that showed a spread of protests from the main state capitals towards other secondary capitals; and the other, expressed by the eruption of protests in several small and mid-size cities. In the second section we focus on the intra-urban scale (the inner city) to reflect on the process of spatial dispersion of protests featured by some activist groups and social movements. We argue that this intra-urban process can be better understood as a tactical return to their 'spaces of identity reference' (Haesbaert, 1996; Souza, 2008), that mainly occurred after the reduction of public transportation

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fares achieved by popular mobilisation and the multiplication of agendas that predominated on the larger street marches after that. The third section addresses the construction of a political subject that became crucial since then: the 'vandal' (understood as an 'alter version' of the movement's identity). The idea here is to describe and analyse how the construction of the 'vandal' by the mainstream media and the State allowed the de-subjectivation of a parcel of the protesters through the typification of their socio-spatial practices and its consequent classification as non-citizens. We consider this process as part of the subtle tactics of the State to govern the massive street protests, both ensuring the social legitimation and the legal basis that enabled the use of violent police repression against popular demonstrations without breaching the rule of law. Finally, we conclude the paper by emphasising how both processes – the 'vandalisation' of the protests by the State and the search for 'spaces of identity reference' by some social movements – highlight the role of the politics of identity on this recent Brazilian series of demonstrations.

The emergence of the protests and its capillary spatial diffusion

June began with demonstrations in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. A few hundred people gathered on the 3rd of June. However, the demonstrations gained in magnitude on day six. Protests in other state capitals, such as Goiânia and Natal, also erupted against the increase of the public transportation fares. In São Paulo's city centre, for instance, more than five thousand people attended a demonstration summoned by MPL, calling for the reduction of the transport fares. This demand was shared by the diverse protesting groups, and the organisation of the protests was highly decentralized —even the marching routes were often decided during the demonstrations. Despite the fairness and clarity of the demands, municipal, state and federal authorities were intransigent and refused to establish dialogue with the protesters. Instead, the State's response came only through the use of police force, causing depredations, arrests and panic. Until the 12th of June, every demonstration that took place in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo was responded to with police repression and several arrests.

The week between the 12th and the 19th of June was decisive for the massification of the protests. On the night of the 12th, the political commentator Arnaldo Jabor used his time in '*Jornal da Globo*' – a popular evening TV news broadcasted by the largest media conglomerate of South America, Globo Organisations— to raise questions about the reasons that justified the actions of the protesters that he defined as a 'violent act of hate against the city'. After stating that it could not be because of the twenty cents raise in transport fares, he concluded: 'The cause must certainly be the absence of causes. Nobody knows what to fight for. Honestly, these middle-class rioters are not worth 20 cents' (Jornal da Globo, 2013). This statement echoed both in social media networks and on the streets. Jarbor's question expressed the incomprehension of the Brazilian elites and the political parties of the sudden increase of the demonstrations. In response, a wide range of reasons

began to be emphasized by demonstrators, affirming that the protests were 'not only for twenty cents', causing demonstrators to come up with new and diverse reasons to protest. It was the spark needed for the proliferation of agendas.

On the next day, June 13th, it was already possible to observe the presence of posters responding the statements of the commentator affirming numerous other reasons to protest (such as the housing deficit, corruption, police violence, poor education and health services etc.). At the same time, two of the most influential mainstream media newspapers demanded more rigor and intensity in the police action against protesters. On the same day, a demonstration with over twenty thousand people in São Paulo's city centre was targeted by one of the most violent police actions against protests in Brazilian recent history. In addition to more than 230 arrests, at least six journalists from the traditional mainstream and other media vehicles suffered direct violence from the police (Carta Capital, 2013). Two of them were hit by rubber bullets in their eyes and became partially blind. Like dozens of other people, one of the journalists from *'Carta Capital'* (a leftist pro-government magazine) was arrested for possessing vinegar, a liquid used to alleviate the effects of the tear gas. The police argued that the liquid could be used as a potential explosive material. Because of it, the events of that day in São Paulo became known as *'Revolta do Vinagre'* (The Vinegar Revolt).

On the following days, police repression was strongly criticized in the social media networks. People shared abundant audio-visual materials and news, information that traditional media refused to broadcast. But the fact that professional journalists and many middle-class people of São Paulo had been directly affected by police violence drove even the more traditional mainstream media vehicles to report and criticize the excessive use of force by the police. On the 14th of June, the Mayor of São Paulo recognized that the police behaviour on the previous day 'was not good for the police' (G1, 2013a). By that time three more state capitals in the southeast of Brazil (Porto Alegre, Curitiba and Belo Horizonte) had also adhered to the demonstrations taking thousands of people to the streets in support for the protests in São Paulo and to demand a reduction of their own local public transport fares. In total, there were protests in 6 of the 27 state capitals of Brazil. Under pressure and with the strong possibility of new protests, the governor of São Paulo stated that the use of rubber bullets by military police force would be prohibited. Nonetheless, by then, police violence had already played its mobilizing role.

The 17th of June was marked by demonstrations in 12 of the 27 state capitals and over thirty cities across the country (Figures 1 and 2). According to conservative estimates, almost three hundred thousand people went to the streets to protest that day (G1, 2013b). Only in São Paulo, over sixty thousand people circulated through different streets of the centre and the south zone, occupying city symbols such as the *'Ponte Estaiada'* (Estaiada

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Bridge). In many cities, protesters carried posters expressing the multiplicity of agendas that became one of the main characteristics of the June Journeys. In Rio de Janeiro, more than a hundred thousand people went to the city centre to join a demonstration that ended with strong clashes with police outside the Legislative State Assembly (ALERJ). Cars were torched, barricades were built, and police officers were cornered by protesters. That night became known as the *'Batalha da ALERJ'* (Battle of ALERJ) (Figure 3). The demonstration on the 17th was at that time the largest in Brazilian recent history.

On that day, apart from the cities that were already mobilized, the demonstrations spread to other state capitals such as Belém (Pará)[3], Fortaleza (Ceará), Maceió (Alagoas), Recife (Pernambuco), Salvador (Bahia), Vitória (Espírito Santo) and Brazil's national capital Brasília (Distrito Federal). However, this diffusion and expansion of the protests did not remain restrained to state capitals and began to spread to other mid-size cities such as Ribeirão das Neves, Viçosa, Poços de Caldas and Juiz de Fora (all in the state of Minas Gerais); Foz do Iguaçu, Londrina, Maringá and Ponta Grossa (Paraná); Campo dos Goytacazes and Três Rios (Rio de Janeiro); Guarujá, Santos, Pindamonhangaba, Itapetininga, Bauru and Votuporanga (São Paulo); and Novo Hamburgo (Rio Grande do Sul). The demonstrations had spread beyond the state capitals and numerous conflicts between protesters and the police were registered in different parts of the country.

Figure 1. Demonstrators occupy the National Congress in Brasília on the 17th of June. (© 2013, Valter Campanato | Agência Brasil – Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil. Used with permission.)

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[3] The words in brackets refer to the names of the states of the Brazilian federation.

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Figure 2. Demonstration at Cinelândia Square, Rio de Janeiro's city centre, on the 17th of June. This day ended with violent clashes in the Legislative State Assebly (ALERJ) between the police and protesters. (© 2013, Tomaz Silva | Agência Brasil – Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil. Used with permission.) permission.)

Figures 3. Protesters' attempt to occupy and set the Legislative State Assembly (ALERJ) on fire, at Rio de Janeiro's city centre, on the 17th of June. This day became known among the demonstrators as 'Batalha da ALERJ' (Battle of ALERJ). (© 2013, Tomaz Silva | Agência Brasil – Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil. Used with permission.)

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On the 18th of June, more than thirty Brazilian cities registered large protests in 15 states. São Paulo had more than fifty thousand people on the streets, which surrounded and attacked the city council and some mainstream media cars. The State responded, on the same day, by declaring the reduction of the public transport fares in four state capitals – Cuiabá, Porto Alegre, Recife, and João Pessoa. On the next day, more demonstrations took place in more than thirty cities and 13 states. Afraid of this scenario, the state governors and mayors of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro decided, on the 19th of June, to revoke the increase of the transport fares.

After that, new protests were called for the next day through the social media networks. On the 20th of June millions of people went to the streets of more than one hundred and thirty cities and 26 of the 27 Brazilian states to celebrate the recent popular victory. This was the peak of the demonstrations during the 'June Journeys.' In São Paulo, more than one hundred thousand people went to the main avenue of the city, the Paulista Avenue (Figure 4). Nonetheless, despite the police estimate that registered three hundred thousand people in Rio de Janeiro's demonstration, the protest became known as *'Marcha do Milhão'* (The Million's March). If we take as reference the capitals of the Brazilian states, until the 13th, only the city of Manaus had reduced the rate of transport fares. Between the 13th and the 20th of June, nevertheless, at least ten other state capitals decreased its transport ticket

Figure 4. Demonstration on Paulista Avenue, São Paulo's city centre, on the 20th of June, one day after the announcement of revocation of public transportation fares increase by the local and state government. (© 2013, Marcelo Camargo | Agência Brasil – Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil. Used with permission.)

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prices: Goiânia on the 13th; Cuiabá, João Pessoa, Porto Alegre, and Recife on the 18th; Aracaju, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo on the 19th; Curitiba and Campina Grande on the 20th. These reductions were a direct result of the pressure made by the population, and expressed the magnitude and vigour of the demonstrations that took place in these cities. We see this as a first process of spatial diffusion of the demonstrations that spread quickly to other state capitals.

During the first week of June the demonstrations were concentrated in large urban centres and the protests focused predominantly on the issue of public transport. Even though the protests had also taken place in cities like Natal (3rd of June) and Goiânia (6th of June), they were concentrated in the two main cities of the country: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. After the delegitimizing statements that questioned the demonstrations held on the 12th of June, arguing in favour of a supposed lack of clear reasons for the protests and after full disclosure of police brutality of the demonstrations held on the 13th in São Paulo, the agenda of the protests began to diversify. By then it was clear that what had began as a series of demonstrations organized by the Free Pass Movement (MPL) was far beyond their control as several new demands were expressed during the protests.

Handwritten posters became the main vehicle to express the protesters' diverse agendas. The agendas included demands for better education and health services, housing for the poor and the demilitarization of the police; they also expressed opposition to specific laws and to practices of corruption; and some demanded the renunciation of mayors, state governors and even the president. Other posters exalted the protests themselves and their massification, summoning more people to the streets and appealing to ideas such as 'the people's power', 'the power of the streets', or even to nationalistic symbols and quotes of parts of the national anthem. There were also posters that demanded the end of police violence in the slums. The messages were also directed to different interlocutors — such as municipal, state and federal authorities, or even the citizens in general.

Concomitant to the diversification of demands after June 13th, and the intensification of the process of spatial diffusion, demonstrations started to take place also in small and mid-size cities, some located even outside the metropolitan regions. For instance, among the demonstrations of the 17th of June, 12 of the 29 cities that joined the protests were state capitals —so approximately 41%. Three days later, only 25 of 136 cities were state capitals —about 18% of the total. This shows that the protests not only reached almost all the 26 state capitals, but they were spreading fast to mid-size and small cities across the country, thus, no longer restricted to the larger cities. That is what we understand as the second process of spatial diffusion of these protests concerning the Brazilian urban network: the capillarization of the protests in the national territory. The diversification of agendas helped to fuel demonstrations in smaller cities that were not hosting mega-events and did not

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share with larger cities the same problems related to public transport. At the same time, in metropolitan areas of different magnitudes (such as Florianópolis and São Paulo) this situation raised a dispute over agendas.

Some leftist parties, such as the *'Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado'* (United Socialist Workers' Party – PSTU), who opposed the PT government, understood the demonstrations as something symptomatic of the deterioration of PT's leadership in the country. Other electoral parties included in the governing coalition, highlighted the danger of a 'turn to the right' and even a possible Coup against the established government. Meanwhile, the powerful media conglomerate Globo changed its discourse. The same commentator who had first questioned the motivations of protesters apologized on national television and manifested his support for the demonstrations claiming that there were, indeed, many reasons to protest, listing some of them. The claims expressed by the commentator were, however, clearly linked to the demands of the right-wing neoliberal parties, and corroborated with the criticism against the PT's government.

The fact is that until then, the demonstrations had not yet been directed to the federal government, as they focused on transport fares, a responsibility of state and municipal authorities. With the change in media discourse, the claims presented were all related to the federal government, such as the vague demand for less corruption, a problem that is structurally embedded in Brazilian political history – and intrinsic to the binomial capitalism-representative democracy – but has been portrayed by the mainstream media (insistently) as a specific feature of the Worker's Party. On the 18th of June, the newspapers *'O Globo' and 'Folha de São Paulo'* – the two most read newspapers in the country – showed the reduction of the transport fares as just one more of the many claims that were present in the demonstrations.

While the mass demonstrations initially began with a shared demand (to cut down the cost of transport fares), the protests continued to integrate new actors and agendas, giving rise to new demands and needs. In this sense, the shared interest that gathered the protesters and underlain their collective identity began to dismantle. The mainstream media and right-wing groups saw an opportunity to contest the set of characteristics by which the demonstrations were recognisable, i.e. their identity. Instead of assuming an investigative approach by discussing the nature and the characteristics of the protests in all its complexity, the mainstream media began to disseminate numerous newspaper and television news reports that intended to 'inform' the public about the motives behind the protests, in favour of an agenda linked to right-wing neoliberal parties. Thus, by redefining the characteristics associated to the protests, they sought to redefine the identity of the protests from the outside. This raises important issues about the relations between collective identities and the action of protesting.

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The question often asked by researchers is whether or not collective identity is formed in and through protest rather than preceding it (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). In their review of the literature on collective identity and social movements, Polletta and Jasper (2001) understand collective identity as a basis for collective action (See also Holland et al (2008), including choices among strategies, tactics, targets, organizational forms and deliberative styles (even though they emphasize aspects of belonging and connection). Mellucci (1996), for instance, argues that collective identity is the 'process of constructing an action system' (1996, p. 70). According to him, identity allows social actors to operate as unified subjects and to be in control of their own actions. The protests, however, are recognized as one of multiple sites where collective identity can be formed (Holland et al., 2008). Therefore, protests are often seen either as a means of constructing identity or as an action that results from a pre-constituted collective identity. In a way or another, the collective identity of a group is always expressed more or less directly by the characteristics that define the demonstrations. In this sense, the collective identity of the group that organise the protest corresponds to the identity of the protest itself (i.e. the set of characteristics by which the demonstrations are recognisable).

Nevertheless, the June Journeys in Brazil is a good example on how the identity of the protest is not simply an extension of the collective identity of the activists that first organised the demonstration but can also be an object of contestation. The main demands of the protests began to be disputed by different groups as soon as the demonstrations became massified. There was a momentum that did not depend or was controlled by any group, and people continued to go to the streets to demonstrate even though the public transport fares had been revoked. In a context where the corporate media tried insistently to dictate the focus of the protests, new strategies had to be created in order to divert attention away from the media imposed agenda and back to specific demands of social movements —and, therefore, reclaim the capacity of these movements to define the identity of the protests.

The intra-urban diffusion and the search for spaces of identity reference

Within the more densely populated cities of the country, there was a change in the spatial practices and strategies of the protesters. The diversification of demands led to modifications in the content, spatial practices, and location of the demonstrations. Instead of a concentration of various demands in a single massive protest, there was a scattering of the demonstrations within the cities in order to emphasize their specific demands. The attitude of MPL can exemplify this process. On the 21st of June, after criticising the attacks led by rightwing protesters (some of them associated to fascist groups) against members of leftist political parties and of social movements (that had happened on the day before), the MPL stated that it would no longer summon new demonstrations since it had achieved its main goal: the suspension of the fare increase. However, that did not mean that the group would

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stay away from the streets. In their opinion, it was time to re-evaluate what had passed and to focus on new agendas. Two days later, the MPL organised a protest in the periphery of São Paulo in conjunction with two other social movements: *'Periferia Ativa'* (Active Periphery) and the *'Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem-Teto'* (*Sem-teto* Workers Movement – MTST).

The MPL converged with the view of other leftist groups that understood that it was time to 'go back to the basis', as a reference to the 'social basis' with which each organisation develops its activities. Nevertheless, on the night of the 21st, more than twenty protests were registered in the metropolitan area of São Paulo, even though not necessarily linked to any formal political organisation. In the south zone of the city, a wave of dozens of spontaneous new urban land occupations (housing squatters) began in July and continued all through September. In Rio's metropolitan area, there were protests in several cities, such as Niterói, Duque de Caxias, São Gonçalo, Itaguaí, São João de Meriti, Nova Iguaçu, and others. In the city of Rio de Janeiro itself, demonstrations happened at the same time in the city centre, in districts of the west zone – Barra da Tijuca and Campo Grande –, and in the south zone – Leblon. The demonstrations in the city centre were, however, significantly reduced in size, although remaining larger than they were before the beginning of June. From the 21st of June onwards, the enormous demonstrations that took place in the city centre began to disperse in an 'explosion' of smaller protests in different places of the city. This trend of decentralised protests continued along the following weeks. Rather than ceasing or being reorganised around a new agenda, the protests spread to the city expressing multiple claims that were directly related to the locations where the demonstrations were held.

In Rio de Janeiro demonstrations occurred in the periphery of the city, in slums located at the city centre, and even in the richest areas of Rio. The protests against Governor Sérgio Cabral (organized partly by leftist oppositional political parties, such as PSOL [Socialism and Liberty Party]) moved from the city centre to the doorsteps of his residence, located in the most valued neighbourhood of the city (Leblon) (Figure 5). Movements that traditionally called for the end of police violence in the slums went to the slums to protest. Movements such as the World Popular Committees and other several thousand people organised demonstrations in front of the stadiums during the games of the Confederations Cup in order to protest against the World Cup. On the 25th of August, the slums of Rocinha and Vidigal held a demonstration to demand the use of 1.6 billion reais (approximately 525.000 euros) in sanitation and health, instead of 'wasting it' with the mayor's plan of building a cable car in the community. On that same day, after a protest in Avenida Brasil (one of the main avenues of Rio), the dreaded *'Batalhão de Operações Especiais'* (Special Operations Battalion of the Military Police – BOPE) conducted a search for criminals in the slum of Maré that resulted in the death of one police officer and twelve

residents. A week later, the slum dwellers and other various organisations and social movements closed the same avenue demanding the end of police violence in the slums (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Demonstration held on the 17th of July against Rio de Janeiro's Governor Sérgio Cabral on the doorsteps of his residence, located in the rich neighbourhood of Leblon, in the south zone of the city. It ended with violent clashes between protesters and police officers. (© 2013, Fernando Frazão| Agência Brasil – Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil. Used with permission.)

Figure 6. Demonstration at one of the entrances of the slum of Maré, Rio de Janeiro's north zone, held on the 2nd of July by support groups and dwellers. The protest had as its moto 'Estado que mata, nunca mais!' ('State that kills, no more!'), denouncing the police violence in the favelas. The main banner affirms that 'The police that repress on the avenue is the same that kills in the favela'. (© 2013, Tomaz Silva | Agência Brasil – Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Brazil. Used with permission.)

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This intra-urban spatial diffusion of the demonstrations exposes the effervescence of the symbolic dimension of space, emphasising once again the deep links between space, symbolism and politics. The city centre may be taken as a metonymy of the city: as a space 'of all people'. Protests in the city centre make use of a space that represents the entire city and, in that sense, the centre 'speaks' for the city as a whole. The 'where' of the practice is not an entirely arbitrary decision. There is a complex spatial selectivity that emerges from an assemblage of different locational attributes as a result of the practical imperatives of the inescapable socio-spatial differentiation (Corrêa, 2006, 2007).

The multiplication of meanings and claims seen during the second half of June disturbed this metonymic sense as the traditional agendas of social movements diluted in a multi-plicity of demands, rendering many of them invisible. The Centre, as both a territory and a symbolic space, was disputed by a multitude of groups that were often antagonistic. Without a common agenda, the symbolism of the centre became an obstacle to reaffirm the particularity of each set of demands. By changing the location of the demonstration, these groups established a difference between themselves and the heterogeneous masses that protested in the city centre. In that sense, the places selected for the protests were 'spaces of identity reference', i.e. the identity and collective subjectivity produced by an explicit spatial reference that establishes and constitutes the activism itself or, at least, gives it consistency and coherence (Souza, 2008). Therefore, the dispersion of the protests towards spaces that helped to identify the demands with specific agendas seems to have emerged as a spatial practice that attributed meaning to the demonstrations, and expressed and emphasized their specific collective identities.

The threat comes from within: classification, political action and the emergence of the 'vandal'

Besides the diversification of the strategies and agendas of the protesting groups, the events of the 17th of June also marked a change in discourse regarding the role of the police and the differences within the protesters. Holland et al. (2008), researching global justice activism during the G8 Summit in Scotland, argue that law enforcement agents address activists in such a way as to construct 'alter versions' of movement identity. They highlight the fact that official and popular discourse constructs a divide between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' protests by appealing to the public to help identify people involved in the demonstrations. According to them, the call for participation in police efforts would mobilize 'alter versions' of movement identity organized around this distinction, portraying global justice activists as 'dangerous outsiders'. The same strategy of division of protesters was employed in Brazil around the so called 'vandal'.

Until the 17th of June, clashes between police and protesters were reported as conse-quences of the demonstration itself, which was treated as a unified body. On the 14th

of June, the protest of the day before was reported by the special news website of Globo Organisation called 'G1' as follows: 'Demonstration leaves trail of destruction in Rio. Buildings were painted and bus stops vandalized' (G1, 2013c). However, the call of the June 17th protest was significantly different: 'Protest in Rio gathers 100 000, begins peaceful, but a *minority* causes disturbance: Some protesters invaded and threw bombs in the ALERJ building [Legislative State Assembly].' (G1, 2013d) (emphasis added) The same news report states that: 'The protest, which brought together a hundred thousand people, began peaceful, but a *small group* featured acts of vandalism, turning the city centre into a real war scenario.' (emphasis added).

In general, several media vehicles emphasized police violence as one of the main causes for the intensification of the protests. At first, they reinforced the legitimacy of demonstrations in general, but delegitimized the destruction of buses, banks and other symbols of discontent by the protesters. The protester as a social subject was, however, defined as all the participants of the demonstration. There was no differentiation among the protesters. In that sense, the repressive police action was considered legitimate only to the extent that the demonstration, considered as a whole, transgressed what was understood as 'normal', i.e. a peaceful protest. The police action, however, used a series of illegal tactics, such as arbitrary arrests without any proof or with fabricated evidence; the widespread and disproportionate use of violence, striking reporters and bystanders who did not participate in the protests; the use of lethal weapons against demonstrators etc.

With the change in the media discourse, a new delimitation of the field of police action was drawn and a new identity created. Now, the demonstrators would be divided between legitimate protesters and the so called 'vandals'. Consequently, a scission within the demonstration was accomplished, revealing a strategic action that seeks to reaffirm the protests as part of the social 'normalcy', but at the same time denies the right to demonstration to certain individuals, defining a limit beyond which the use of repressive force can be legitimately applied. The Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Eduardo Paes, who on the 16th had said that the police acted very well to suppress the protesters, changed his opinion completely on the 19th by stating that

the reduction of the transport fares is a way of showing respect to the people who went to the streets to protest. It is a right of the people to speak up and show their points of view. I emphasize that we have given a lot of attention to those who take part in the protests raising their demands in the way that they should be raised. We will never listen to anyone who makes use of legitimate claims to practice vandalism and acts of violence. These people do not know how to live in a democratic and respectful environment. (G1, 2013e)

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This differentiation has a strong political impact. The leftist political parties, very excited with the possibility of positive electoral outcomes, started to question the methods and legitimacy of more radical nonpartisan organisations. They claimed that 'vandalism' not only destroyed public property – an argument frequently used by the mainstream media – but also kept away people who became afraid to take part in the demonstrations because of the risks of violent outbreaks. Thus, the establishment of an opposition between the 'good', legitimate protesters and the 'bad', undemocratic and criminal 'vandals', helped to split the demonstrations internally by creating two identities through which people could define themselves and others. Meanwhile, the discourse of the corporate media and the public authorities maintained the focus on the same separation between protesters and 'vandals', pushing it to become increasingly aggressive and more specific in its characterization of the 'vandal'. This division created and enhanced tensions among the participants of the protests, reaching such a dimension that during a demonstration organized by the labour unions on the 11th of July, unionists and masked protesters clashed against each other.

The 'vandals' are not only considered a threat to the Law and order, but also to the same causes they claim to fight for. In addition, they are seen as a threat to the protesters themselves, as they would allegedly put in danger their safety and jeopardise the right to free expression. Now, the responsibility for the violent outbreaks, previously attributed to the police forces, were ascribed to the protesters themselves. In this sense, an exception is created through a rhetorical-discursive structure that allows the transition from an indirect regulation to a mode of violent intervention. In fact, the exception permits the State to use illiberal means to re-establish the 'liberal order' (Opitz, 2011). Without ever suspending the right to protest and the rule of law, an exception is created to enable the police to confront the 'vandal' with 'non-liberal' measures. Consequently, the law can be violated in the name of public order and security, and through this act, order and security can be re-established (Opitz, 2011). From this perspective, the individual that will be the main target of punitive intervention is constructed: the 'vandal' emerges as the 'dangerous individual' (Foucault, 2006). The status of citizen (and the political freedom that accompanies it) would, from now on, be ensured only to the individuals capable of acting 'reasonably', i.e. to the rational and disciplined individuals. Those who cannot be normalized and, therefore, represent a threat to democracy, to the State and to the protesters themselves should have their freedom revoked.

According to Opitz (2011), in classical political theory terms, the dangerous individual only has *phoné* (voice), not *logos* (language), since he/she has his/her status of discursive intelligibility denied. The rationality of the discourse and the actions of those who are classified as 'vandals' – which include the premises, objectives, and the selection of targets, such as banks, luxury shops, the city council and the Legislative Assembly buildings – are ignored and suppressed since he/she occupies a discursive 'non-position'. In other words,

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they suffer a process of *de-subjectivation* (Opitz, 2011). This position makes the individual a purely destructive, irrational, 'barbaric', and unintelligible agent and, as such, he/she cannot be governed by granting freedom (Opitz, 2011).

The target of the police would, then, no longer be the legitimate protester but the 'vandal'. However, anyone could be framed as a 'vandal', since it is the police who are responsible to define who should or should not be included in this category. As Benjamin (1995) states:

> The assertion that the ends of police violence are always identical or even connected to those of general law is entirely untrue. Rather, the "law" of the police really marks the point at which the state, whether from impotence or because of the immanent connections within any legal system, can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends that it desires at any price to attain. Therefore the police intervene "for security reasons" in countless cases where no clear legal situation exists, when they are not merely, without the slightest relation to legal ends (...) Unlike law, which acknowledges in the "decision" determined by place and time a metaphysical category that gives it a claim to critical evaluation, a consideration of the police institution encounters nothing essential at all. Its power is formless, like its nowhere tangible, all-pervasive, ghostly presence in the life of civilized states (Benjamin, 1995, p. 287).

Nevertheless, the emergence of this identity does not remain restricted to the discourse of the media and the politicians. In order to consolidate the exception it is necessary to legally institute it. From the 'June Journeys' until today, these 'small groups' that make up the exception have been undergoing a process of institutionalization and legal classification. The difficulty lies in finding or constructing legal prerogatives that not only allows the police to arrest the protesters identified as 'vandals', but that also permits to keep them in jail until the end of their criminal trial. After a demonstration that ended in clashes between the military police and the protesters in the elite neighbourhood of Leblon, on the 17th of July, Rio de Janeiro's Civil Chief of Police, Marta Rocha, expressed a concern regarding a situation also encountered by the police forces in other states. According to her,

> (…) the civil police did not stop working, but I have to follow what the law requires. Some vandals were arrested for conspiracy, but the crime is bailable. We identified sixteen people accused of inciting violence since the protests began, but no one can stay detained because of it. In addition, the crime of damage to property depends on representation, which means that the victims need to manifest themselves. The police is working, but there is a limit controlled by the law. I cannot work miracles.
> (O Globo, 2013)

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Since June of 2013, the police forces tried many different legal instruments in order to optimise its repressive role. Some of them were already established by the current national Penal Code or by Law nº 7.170 of 1983 —known as the 'National Security Act', enacted during the Brazilian military dictatorship. However, there were other new legislative pieces that relied on the new prerogatives brought by the mega-events to be hosted in the country (FIFA 2014 World Cup and the Olympic Games in 2016). This is the case of at least two examples: the Law nº 12.850 enacted on the 2nd of August of 2013, also known as the 'Law of Criminal Organization;' and the federal bill nº 499, known as the 'Anti-Terrorism Act.' The first one provides a legal instrument that threatens any 'vandal' with three to eight years in prison, while the second opens a clear possibility of framing social movements under sentences that may vary from fifteen to thirty years of imprisonment.

In sum, identity plays an important role both in the reproduction of dominant power relations, as in the relations of insurgent power. Identity can therefore group individuals around a common struggle, but it can also strengthen privileged positions in the social structure by creating mechanisms with which to legitimate punitive action. Such mechanisms introduce a moment of aporia, of self-contradiction, in which the non-liberal intervention is understood as a lesser evil in the face of a danger that threatens the life and liberty of the population. As Opitz (2011, p. 99) puts it,

> (...) government intervention is necessary because the processes in which it must not intervene are permanently threatened. At the same time, intervention only intends to make non-intervention possible and feasible. According to governmental reason, intervention always already refers back to non-intervention and vice-versa.

Last words: politics of identity, updates and some additional questions

This paper addressed the spatial diffusion of the series of protests that took place in Brazil on June of 2013 and its relationship with the diversification of the protesters' agendas. We began by delineating some locational aspects of the first protests in order to describe the double process of spatial diffusion of the demonstrations within the Brazilian urban network. At first, under the predominance of the agendas related to the quality and costs of public transport, the demonstrations spread to other state capitals and subsequently (with the diversification of agendas) to other medium and small cities. The growth of the demonstrations and the increasing plurality of the new agendas resulted in a dispute over the political relevance and identity of the protests.

In that sense, a politics of identity played a major role in the further development of the events throughout the month of June: first, as we have seen, in the disputes that arose over the meaning of the demonstration and the collective desires of the protesters; and second, in the classification of the protesters for the selection of the measures to be taken

accordingly. In the first case, the very multiplicity of agendas became an obstacle which diluted existing demands and facilitated their manipulation by government agencies and the media. Thus, in addition to the spatial diffusion observed in Brazilian urban network, there was a round of dispersion in the inner city areas, associated with an attempt from certain groups to differentiate themselves from others and to give prominence to their specific demands. After achieving the revocation of the increase of public transport fares – and in a context of diversification of agendas and dispute over priorities – many groups of activists and leftist social movements started to concentrate their activities away from the city centre and managed to avoid the dilution of their agendas through a new 'locational policy' (Corrêa, 2007). The return to their 'spaces of identity reference' (Haesbaert, 1996; Souza, 2008) – taking protests against the governor to the footsteps of his house, protests against police violence to the slums and protests against the World Cup to the stadiums – constituted, then, that aimed to emphasize demands and assemble individuals and groups around a common struggle.

Nevertheless, identity also played an important role in the reproduction of heteronomous power relations and strengthened privileged positions in the social structure by creating mechanisms with which to legitimise punitive action, as in the emergence of the 'vandal' as a specific type of protester. An 'alter version' of the movement identity erupted as a mechanism of security that not only diverted the attention from police brutality towards the violence that emanated from the protesters themselves, but also, in so doing, allowed the transition from an indirect regulation to a mode of violent intervention without suspending the rule of law and the right to protest.

While the dispute over the city centre metonymic sense seems to have retreated one year after the 'June Journeys,' the conflicts over the normalisation of demonstrations —involving the identification and classification of non institutionalised political groups by the police— are still current in the Brazilian political context. Far from being restricted to the linguistic or symbolic realm, these identities rely on new legislative instruments, specialised institutions, integrated surveillance technologies and innovative repressive tactics in order to fulfil its political purpose. Since then, several organisations of social movements in Rio de Janeiro were investigated, persecuted and accused of conspiracy: a process that ended with more than thirty arrest warrants against activists one day before the World Cup final of 2014.

In spite of all this, since the 'June Journeys', there has been an increase on the number of street demonstrations (both spontaneous and organised by social movements), two significantly successful strikes (of the garbage collectors and the bus drivers), and the emergence of new activist groups. The squatter movement, for example, organised several demonstrations with thousands of people during the first half of 2014 that forced

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the federal government to negotiate the construction of new social housing units. The experience of massive and victorious mobilisations with significant achievements that had a direct impact on people's daily lives can resignify the street protests and relocate them in the horizon of possibilities of collective action. Although such 'rediscovery of the streets' (as it has been called) should not be seen as eminently progressive or conservative in its nature, the political relevance of this kind of collective shared experiences cannot be underestimated.

[c]lass eventuates as men and women *live* their productive relations, and as they *experience* their determinate situations, within 'the *ensemble* of the social relations', with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways. (emphasis on the original) (Thompson, 1978, p. 150).

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