Street movements as media vehicles of the Brazilian New Right

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Abstract

English:
The right-wing movements that dominated the streets in São Paulo, Brazil, from 2014 to 2018 are often viewed through a political lens. This thesis, which primarily focuses on *Movimento Brasil Livre*, *VemPraRua* and *NasRuas* ('the movements'), takes a different approach and examines them from a media perspective. It exposes how the movements' online discourses helped to form publics of the New Right through the popular sharing of their Facebook posts among their followers. These online discourses and publics have shown to have influenced the election of far-right president Jair Bolsonaro.

By analysing the movements' 2017 Facebook posts, interviewing their leaders and carrying out ethnographic fieldwork at street protests and other political events during the 2018 electoral period, this thesis reveals how the movements play a vital role in producing political commentary and constructing right-wing narratives, all which help to shape political debate in the public sphere. Through their usage of social media and production of online content, the movements act as media and propaganda vehicles of the New Right.

Following an analysis of the movements' Facebook posts, three broad discourses are identified including issues relating to corruption, economic arguments, and social and cultural debates, which make up the chapters of the thesis. The popular sharing of the movements' Facebook posts among their followers signifies the formation of publics in line with the rhetoric they employ, including anti-corruption, neoliberal, punitive, conservative and anti-elite publics. However, detailed examination of the posts and ethnographic data reveal how these discourses are used strategically to engage in power struggles and cultural conflicts. Indeed, the movements are at once media, corruption accountability, cultural, as well as political institutions. This view of the movements, which focuses on their use of social media, increases understanding about them, their influence on public political debate and the formation of right-wing publics in Brazil.

Portuguese:
Os movimentos de direita que dominaram as ruas de São Paulo, Brasil, entre 2014 e 2018 são frequentemente vistos através de lentes políticas. Esta tese, que se concentra principalmente no Movimento Brasil Livre, VemPraRua e NasRuas ('os movimentos'), tem uma abordagem diferente e os examina a partir de uma perspectiva midiática. Ela expõe como os discursos online dos movimentos ajudaram a formar públicos da Nova Direita por meio do compartilhamento de suas postagens mais populares no Facebook entre seus seguidores. Esses discursos e públicos online mostraram ter influenciado a eleição do presidente de extrema direita Jair Bolsonaro.

Ao analisar as postagens dos movimentos no Facebook em 2017, entrevistar seus líderes e realizar um trabalho de campo etnográfico em protestos de rua e outros eventos políticos durante o período pré-eleitoral de 2018, esta tese revela como os movimentos desempenham um papel vital na produção de comentários políticos e na

construção de narrativas de direita, ajudando a moldar o debate político na esfera pública. Por meio do uso das mídias sociais e da produção de conteúdo online, os movimentos atuaram como veículos de mídia e propaganda da Nova Direita.

Após uma análise das postagens no Facebook, três narrativas se sobressaem: questões relacionadas à corrupção, questionamentos econômicos e debates sociais e culturais. E por isso esses temas se tornaram capítulos da tese. O compartilhamento das postagens dos movimentos no Facebook, pelos seus seguidores, resultou na formação de públicos alinhados com a retórica que empregam, incluindo públicos anticorrupção, neoliberais, punitivos, conservadores e anti-elite. No entanto, o exame detalhado dos posts e dados etnográficos revelam como esses discursos são usados estrategicamente para criar engajamento em lutas de poder e conflitos culturais. Na verdade, os movimentos são, ao mesmo tempo, mídia, organizações de combate à corrupção, instituições culturais e também políticas. Essa visão dos movimentos, que foca no uso das mídias sociais, aumenta o entendimento sobre eles, e sobre sua influência no debate político público e na formação de públicos de direita no Brasil.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

1. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,
2. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used, and
3. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

_____

Nicole McLean, February 2021

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To any curious world citizen

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Introduction
Exploring Street Movements as Media Vehicles

Paulista Avenue, São Paulo
21st October 2018

The sun is beginning to set behind the city buildings, casting shadows over Paulista Avenue. A stray beam of light reflects off one of the long glass windows of the MASP museum to my right, blinding me for a split second, before I regain sight of what is in front of me. Standing on the protest truck overlooking thousands of people that fill the street, I film with my iPhone the cheering supporters who resemble a sea of bright green and yellow – the national colours of Brazil. These colours have come to represent the New Right and are a stark difference from the red that is symbolic of the socialist Workers' Party, locally known as the PT.

It is almost the end of the *#PTNuncaMais* (#PTNeverAgain) protest, one week out from the final election round. A block away in the distance, I can see the huge inflatable Lula, one of the PT's founders and former president of Brazil, in prison attire towering over an adjacent protest truck. Hundreds of Brazilian flags are being waved in the air and numerous smart phones are held up high, all recording glimpses of this historic moment going live to thousands of social media accounts. They had become nodules in the network of online media sources. The crowd is eagerly attentive to every word being said, despite the blasting sound of horns carrying across the masses of people and occasional fire crackers going off in the surrounds. The fierce sensation in the atmosphere, balancing between excitement and apprehension, is palpable. Change is in progress.

I have been invited to the protest by *Movimento Brasil Livre* (Free Brazil Movement), or MBL for short, one of the main movements that led the pro-impeachment demonstrations against former PT president Dilma Rousseff. Some of the other main movements, including *VemPraRua* (Come To The Street) and *NasRuas* (In The Streets), are also present, their trucks stationed a block apart from each other in a line down Paulista Avenue.

MBL's truck is the only one that is low to the ground with a stage protruding out into the jam-packed crowd, much like a portable urban theatre ready to showcase the latest political act. One of the few female MBL members sits in front of me, filming the events live to the group's Facebook page. MBL is undoubtedly the most theatrical out of all the movements and is gifted at combining politics with pop culture. Their media characteristics and emphasis on the latest online trends certainly plays a significant part in the success of MBL as the most well-known, right-wing movement in Brazil.

The three hours of public speeches has come to an end and it is now time to rev up the crowd one last time to finish the protest on a high. One of the MBL members starts yelling a popular chant into the microphone:

Olé, oléee
Olé, oléee
Tamos na rua pra derrubar o PT (We are in the streets to oust the PT)
Olé, oléee
Olé, oléee
Tamos na rua pra derrubar o PT (We are in the streets to oust the PT)

Chora petista, bolivariano, a roubalheira do PT tá acabando (Cry Boliviarian petista, the robbery of the PT is over)
Sua conduta é imoral, velhos princípios da CF nacional (Your behaviour is immoral, old principles of the national federal constitution)

The thousands of *militantes* crammed in front of the MBL truck like sardines are chanting in unison, not missing a word. Renan Santos, the political mastermind behind MBL, takes to the microphone for the final time. "*Quem não pula é comunista! Quem não pula é comunista!*" (Whoever doesn't jump is a communist! Whoever doesn't jump is a communist!), he shouts as he and a bunch of other MBL young men begin to jump up and down on the stage. The crowd roars, everyone throws their fists in the air and jumps around like festivals-goers in one huge mosh pit.

It is as if I have scored VIP tickets to a popular rock concert and am looking out at the screaming fans from backstage. I stare in awe, with mixed feelings of shock and amazement. How have these everyday *Paulistanos* (people from the city of São Paulo) become so engaged in politics? How have they acquired complete disgust for Lula and the PT? How has corruption become so intolerable in a society that has, since its colonisation by the Portuguese, had its foundations rooted in fraudulent practices and impunity? And what role did social media play in all this?

On board the MBL truck at the *#PTNuncaMais* (#PTNeverAgain) protest
in front of MASP on Paulista Avenue
21st October 2018

After completing the first year of my joint-PhD at The University of Melbourne, in early 2018 I set off to undertake the next two years at the University of São Paulo (USP). It was my intention from the outset of my PhD to live in São Paulo and carry out ethnographic fieldwork during the 2018 electoral period. I figured that going to study at Brazil's oldest and most prestigious law faculty, USP's *Faculdade de Direito do Largo de São Francisco,* locally known simply as San Fran, was the best way to access local scholars and, with any luck, the movements that led the pro-impeachment protests.

Throughout my two years living and researching in Brazil, I participated in several mass street protests of both the Left and Right side of politics. I interviewed key members of prominent street movements of the New Right – a term which the movements use to identify themselves and which I explain in a couple of paragraphs – (from here on referred to as 'the movements'), employees of large companies involved in the Car Wash investigations, as well as specialists in the fields of Brazilian politics, media, law and anti-corruption. I also analysed three of the main movements' Facebook posts, including those of MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas, to reveal which issues circulated the most among their publics, all with the aim of illuminating the media dimensions of the movements. More specifically, this thesis investigates the formation of different right-wing publics through the circulation of popular discourses online, namely anti-corruption, neoliberal, punitive, conservative and anti-elite discourses, on the movements' Facebook pages in 2017.

Brazil is one of the top countries for Facebook users in the world with 125.14 million people using the platform in 2017 (Statista 2020), that is, in comparison with their total population size of 207.8 million for that year (Worldometers 2019), approximately 60% of the Brazilian population use Facebook. Why do I focus on the year 2017 you may ask? Well, most previous studies on the movements focus on their role during the lead-up to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016, whereas I am interested in their role forming right-wing publics and constructing candidates prior to the 2018 elections. After the impeachment, I view the *modus operandi* of the movements to be grounded in the production of political propaganda on social media aimed at influencing public political debate and voting behaviour. To this end, I study the reaction of the New Right to political and cultural phenomena.

Before I go any further, it is worth explaining what the term 'New Right' means in the Brazilian context. I adopt Chaloub and Perlatto's (2016) interpretation of New Right actors in Brazil as holding common characteristics including "criticism of the role of the State in the regulation of the free market, in the promotion of income redistribution and in the execution of affirmative policies aimed at the inclusion of 'minorities', as well as strong objection to the Left, in general, and to the PT, in particular" (Chaloub & Perlatto 2016: 39). Deregulation, tax reduction, privatisation and strong conservative morals are some of the principal values the New Right upholds. I develop the concept of the New Right further in Historical Context section below.

Furthermore, I understand the phenomenon of the New Right in Brazil to have gained in strength over the last decade because, "although the presence of right-wing intellectuals is not a new phenomenon in the history of Brazil, the protagonist position they hold in public debate is a novelty" (ibid., 39). Recently, right-wing narratives and debates, including socially conservative world views and liberal economic ideals, have moved to the centre of public political debate. Throughout this thesis, I employ the terms New Right and right-wing interchangeably to refer to such political actors.

Regarding liberal economic debates, the term liberalism, or liberal, is used in Brazil to refer to economic freedoms such as reduction of the size of the state and tax cuts. This is different to the liberalism in the US, which takes the form of social freedom and refers to progressivism, human rights and the like. To avoid any confusion, I have chosen to employ the term neoliberalism, or neoliberal, to refer to liberalism in the Brazilian sense.

Today, there is much criticism of Facebook with academics and the mainstream press often referring to the *dangers* of social media, the rise of *fake news* and infiltration of *polarisation* among citizens – the latter having reached a critical level in Brazil during the 2016 impeachment and 2018 elections which persists to this day. While this thesis does not intend (or have the space) to engage in lengthy debates on fake news and polarisation, I do seek to highlight some of these issues in my short diary entries throughout the thesis and acknowledge that these phenomena are considered to impact public political debate, and therefore merit further in-depth research. Instead, this thesis takes a different stance and looks at Facebook through a more optimistic lens in terms of its ability to increase the reputational risk of corrupt actors and voice widespread dissent with both the political and cultural establishment. Part of the novelty of these right-wing protagonists is their usage of social media and mass protests in an almost theatrical way as stages to promote their political views and demean opponents.

For reasons of space, this thesis does not look at mainstream media *per se*, but it investigates the movements' role as media vehicles redistributing news items already in circulation in the mainstream press and as entities that are critical of mainstream media companies, such as Globo, as we shall see in Chapter 6.

I confess that my opinion throughout the thesis is pulled to the Left and the Right of the political divide, demonstrating my central stance on the political spectrum. Whilst carrying out my interviews with the movement leaders, I frequently felt myself according with their worldview to an extent. To balance this out, I was fortunate enough to be invited to participate in a research group at USP known as *Monitor do Debate Político no Meio Digital* (Monitor of Online Political Debate), or simply Monitor, which seeks to understand political phenomena from a progressive perspective. This was a controversial move by me as the most central movement in this thesis, MBL, was a frequent target of Monitor. I often felt like a spy interviewing and observing the founders of the movements, while simultaneously attending meetings at Monitor. However, I always remained within the professional limits of a doctoral researcher. I explain my involvement in Monitor further in Chapter 1.

The rest of this chapter is comprised of five sections. Firstly, I explain my personal connection to the topic and Brazil in general. Then, I place the thesis in the recent historical context, which aids understanding of current tensions in Brazilian politics and society as well as the rise of the New Right. Next, I provide short descriptions of each of the right-wing movements under scrutiny and put forward my research questions and hypothesis. Finally, I detail chapter by chapter the thesis ahead.

ABC connection

Two key events in my life have brought me to write this thesis. My school exchange to Belgium in 2005 and volunteering at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. When telling people about this research project, one of the first questions that I am asked is: '*Why are you interested in corruption in Brazil?'.* This is a fair question. The connection between an Australian, Brazil and Corruption is not an obvious one, and the context that sparked my intrigue is even more asymmetric.

A scholarship to go on exchange to Belgium as a 16-year-old changed my perspective of the world and sent me on my current path. Surprisingly, the majority of

exchange students were from Latin America. One afternoon, whilst in a park lazing on the grass dappled with sunlight and shade from golden-green oak trees, a young Venezuelan girl with long dark hair and hazel-coloured eyes stood reciting incidents of corruption that plagued her country. Emotional, with tears rolling down her plump cheeks, she detailed personal experiences of confrontations with government and armed forces. Other Latino students began expressing their solidarity. Next, this wave of despair came over her face as she acknowledged the impossibility of ever being able to do anything about the corruption in her country. She was helpless, powerless.

To keep in touch during our stays with different host families in Belgium, this group of Latino students introduced me to a new social networking platform, which had only been created in the US the year prior. That platform was Facebook. Over the next decade, the number of users on the platform grew to be in the billions and it became an important tool used in various political uprisings worldwide. Could Facebook be the answer to the Venezuelan girl's cries? Had social media platforms given power to the people to ensure corrupt officials are held responsible for their crimes, or had it succumbed to letting radical and destructive voices into the public sphere?

Uncertain of how to act upon this newly-acquired intrigue for corruption in Latin America, I continued my studies in French. In early 2014, I was back living in Europe, this time the Mediterranean city of Marseille, and coincidently I had just started taking Brazilian Portuguese classes when a certain corruption scandal came to light. I recall former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff regularly on TV, muffled by press microphones, as the number of corruption allegations at Petrobras, the state-controlled oil company, grew. Eager to improve my Portuguese and visit the *cidade maravilhosa,* I applied to volunteer at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games – my application was successful.

By mid-2016, I found myself on-board a crammed *carioca* train, heading away from the city centre and into the outer suburb of Deodoro where I worked as a volunteer at the Olympic Equestrian. Fortunately for this thesis, my trip to Brazil coincided with the impeachment trial of Dilma Rousseff amidst sprawling corruption allegations and heavy media and public criticism of her administration. Reflecting upon my own motivations for undertaking this doctoral thesis, it was for similar reasons to the public criticism at the time – total outrage that government officials had engaged in such high degrees of malfeasance and misuse of public funds. I confess it is bizarre to hold such strong feelings for a country that is not my own. I can only imagine how I would have felt if I were Brazilian. I would have been mad. Coming from my middle-class upbringing, I would have been mad staring out of the cramped train window, condensation trickling down the glass from the suffocating amount of human breath inside, at the poverty in the favelas on my way to the world-class equestrian competition. I would have been mad knowing that billions of *reais* had been used to construct the world's largest sporting event, despite the city being surrounded by impoverished slums. As I shall show by the end of this thesis, outrage is a key ingredient to political activism.

Then, on the 31st of August 2016, with only one month of my stay in Brazil left, the final vote on Dilma's impeachment in the Senate took place. I recall sitting at the kitchen table in my Brazilian host family's house, located in the coastal suburb of Recreio dos Bandeirantes, watching the televised voting session on TV. In a theatrical performance, senators preached to punish corrupt wrongdoers, waving their fingers high in the air along with the occasional Brazilian flag. They knew how to make a media

spectacle. The Senate formally removed Dilma from office for fiscal pedalling prior to her re-election in 2014, although spared her political rights.

Later that night, my host brother Gustavo was going to meet some of his friends at a local bar, *bar da Zefa*, to celebrate and he invited me along. As we approached the street lined with *boteco* bars, Gustavo warned me to keep alert because things could get out of hand and turn violent quickly. The street was crammed with young people, buzzing with a mixture of joy and relief, all with plastic cups filled with beer in their hands. Every couple of minutes someone would yell, '*fora Dilma!'* (Oust Dilma!) or '*fora PT!'* (Oust the PT!). A couple of young men sped past on motorbikes, showing off doing wheelies amid green smoke from flairs that slowly wafted through the air. This was more than an average night at the local bar, it felt more like a carnival *bloco* party in the street.

I was shocked at how everyone was so cheerful and happy. How could these Brazilians celebrate such a traumatic political event? Why were they so pleased that the PT was no longer in power? Was public dissent purely linked to the corruption probe or was it more complex than that? And what role did social media play in this novel and decentralised media scenario? It was at that moment when I realised I had to come back to Brazil.

To comprehend the present-day tensions in Brazilian society, one must understand the historical context of the country's past.

Historical context

In this section, I depict the recent historical context in which the current tensions in Brazilian society arose. The suppression of right-wing ideology following the military dictatorship, election of the PT and rise of *petismo* and *lulismo*, quick succession of progressive measures, rampant government spending and sprawling corruption allegations are all important factors that fed into the growth of support for the New Right.

Brazil endured almost a 20-year-long military regime from 1964 to 1985, which was notoriously oppressive and violent. The government of the regime and its supporters are now referred to as the Old Right (Codato, Bolognesi & Roeder 2015: 117). In the immediate period following the fall of the regime, left-wing ideology was the dominant political force in Brazil. In an interview with Christian Lohbauer, professor of political science at USP, he explains that the traumatic experience of living under authoritarian rule influenced the following generations of intellectuals who were subsequently educated from a social democratic perspective.

> During the dictatorship, all professors, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists were anti-regime. They all got together against the military. Therefore, the following generations of intellectuals in Brazil were trained with left-wing logic… they were all socialists… no one from my generation [people in their 50's] understands that democracy can be neoliberal (Christian Lohbauer, interview, 5th February 2019).

All over Latin America, in the wake of the various military dictatorships, the Left was viewed as the resistance and always associated with democracy. Consequently, the generations afterwards were frequently hostile to anything right-wing and this was reflected in the formation of new political parties.

One of the political parties that was founded towards the end of the regime was the Workers' Party (the PT) in 1980. It became known for its 'PT way of governing', or *petismo,* including popular mobilisation and participation, socio-economic redistribution and alliances with trade unions and left-leaning social movements (Baiocchi, Braathen & Teixeira 2012: 18). In October of 2002, former trade unionist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) was elected president of Brazil.

During his first mandate, Lula became known world-wide for the implementation of the successful conditional cash transfer program, *Bolsa-Família*. It is aimed at improving the lives of the country's poorest population (Singer 2009: 91), which gives financial support to disadvantaged families under the condition that their children attend school and receive vaccinations. Furthermore, when Lula was in power, the minimum wage increased, unemployment dropped by over 2% (ibid., 93-94) and the Brazilian economy experienced great economic growth due to the commodities boom of the early 2000's, which saw Brazil became a global leading producer of mineral, agricultural and other primary products (Kingstone 2012). These various economic factors are credited for lifting some 40 million people out of extreme poverty by 2013 (Watts 2013) and contributing to the expansion of Brazil's middle class.

Amidst the boom, a large corruption scandal known as *Mensalão* (big monthly payment) was revealed in 2005 and involved a vote-buying scheme, which implicated dozens of politicians. Despite his government being tainted with corruption allegations, Lula was re-elected in 2006. The re-election of Lula, winning by around 20 million votes for the second time in a row, confirmed that the political phenomenon known as *lulismo* had emerged (Singer 2009: 83). *Lulismo* refers to the politics of President Lula and specific economic policy changes during his mandates, such as the minimum wage increase, *Bolsa-Família* (ibid., 93) and increased accessibility to credit cards even to the poorest sections of society (Baiocchi, Braathen & Teixeira 2012: 20). The main social base of *lulismo* is made up of the new lower-middle class known as the "C class" and the lower class (Singer 2009: 86).

As such, Lula left office in 2010 with the highest approval rating on record in Brazil, and arguably the world, with 87% of the population in favour of him and 80% in favour of the PT (Bonin 2010). Lula's high approval rating paved the way for his successor Dilma Rousseff, who was a former member of the board of directors of Petrobras, to be elected the first female president of Brazil in 2010. Unfortunately for Dilma, the halting commodities boom that resulted in economic stagnation and rising concerns around her ability to govern the country – which would eventually bring about her downfall – meant her time in office was not as glorified as Lula's, economically-speaking. But, it was marked with a series of progressive measures.

According to postdoctoral fellow in Brazilian politics, Camila Rocha (2020), several progressive measures happened in the early 2010's and were a shock to conservatives. These included the Federal Supreme Court's recognition of marriage of same-sex couples as a family entity (Santos 2011), the legalisation of abortion in cases of anencephaly (Santos 2012), and the Quotas Law that saw Brazilian federal institutions reserve 50% of vacancies for students from public schools, and black and indigenous students (Mendes 2012).

It was in this context that Brazil saw the rise of the New Right. Taking a global outlook of the New Right in Latin America, it can be summarised as follows:

> In short, the New Right in Latin America is a political stance that preserves elements of the Old Right: capitalism as an economic model and traditional moral principles; however, this ideologically renewed Right recognises and accepts the political advantages of social policies implemented by the Left in the region, while seeking to detach itself from the memory of military dictatorial regimes supported by the parties of the Old Right (Codato, Bolognesi & Roeder 2015: 121).

The New Right acknowledges the Left as part of the political system and is happy to benefit from some of its social measures, while decrying the Left in general. In Brazil, as I have already pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, characteristics of the New Right also include fierce disapproval and criticism of Lula and the PT in phenomena that have become known as *antilulismo* (anti-Lula sentiment) and *antipetismo* (anti-PT sentiment). Such sentiments were bolstered by mainstream media during the *Mensalão* corruption scandal in 2005-2006 when the words '*petista'* and '*mensaleiro'* became swearwords synonymous for 'communist' or 'terrorist' (Lima 2015). The 2006 electoral period also saw the creation of an anti-Lula community on Orkut – then the most popular social networking platform in the country (Rovai 2018: 297) – called "Out with Lula 2006" (ibid., 298), which can be considered an early marker of online activism promoting anti-Lula rhetoric.

Furthermore, in the decade of the 2010's Brazil hosted three of the world's biggest sporting events: the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup, 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Some of the stadiums constructed for these events would result in other corruption scandals further down the line, such as those concerning the Car Wash investigations that I describe soon. The rampant government spending on the construction of sporting stadiums and other related infrastructure projects caused further tensions to rise among Brazilians who would have rather seen the public funds spent on improving education, security and the health system, among other public services.

By June 2013, a massive and unprecedented wave of street protests broke out throughout the entire country. The initial trigger for the protests was the bus fare increase of R$0.20 cents, or about 6.7 percent, which the then-Mayor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad of the PT, implemented in June of that year. One key turning point was when news reporter Giuliana Vallone was shot in the eye with a rubber bullet by police and subsequently hospitalised on the 13th June (UOL 2013). Thousands of frustrated people from varying ages and ideologies came to the streets to demonstrate their dissent. What started out as anger over the price hike had quickly snowballed to incorporate several other issues including police brutality, corruption, deteriorating public services, insufficient infrastructure and growing concerns over Dilma's and the PT's incompetency in running the country. As a consequence, Dilma's approval rating plummeted (Datafolha 2013).

In a continuing downward spiral, the largest corruption scandal in the history of Brazil, *Petrolão* (big oil)*,* was revealed to the public in March 2014. What started out as a routine investigation into money laundering at a petrol station and car wash in Brasília, the nation's capital, led to the revelation of a complex multinational corruption scheme. *Petrolão* revealed a decade-long international corruption cartel whereby top executives at the oil company Petrobras granted overpriced contracts to key construction firms, namely Odebrecht, and then siphoned off the illicit benefits among themselves and dozens of politicians to finance political parties and electoral campaigns. The

investigations into the money-laundering cartel were given the code name *Operação Lava Jato* (Operation Car Wash), which is a play on words that simultaneously refers to the location where the scheme was uncovered and the type of corruption used. The Car Wash investigations led to the arrest of several high-profile political and business figures and dozens more have either been prosecuted or are awaiting trial. Such punishment of elite figures was a welcomed novelty to the Brazilian judicial system.

However, *Petrolão* left a large majority of Brazilians feeling a sense of indignation and shame of their political class, so much so that it overshadowed positive achievements during Dilma's reign such as the removal of Brazil from the UN World Hunger Map in 2014 (MDS 2014). According to professor of international relations at the Federal University of São Paulo, Esther Solano, whose research interests also focus on social movements and urban conflicts, right-wing groups saw an opportunity to seize public frustration for the political class, which stemmed from the June 2013 protests, and turned it into anti-PT sentiment by the 2014 elections.

> There was a general dissatisfaction with politicians, anti-politics sentiment, and they captured this dissatisfaction and transformed it into *antipetismo* (anti-PT). This was when the polarisation started. So, anti-establishment became anti-PT. Because in 2013, public discontent was more over corruption, education, the public health system, generic social issues and against the traditional political parties. In 2014, the right-wing groups, VemPraRua, MBL and Revoltados Online, captured this discontent and transformed it into anti-PT, pro-impeachment and, above all, anti-corruption sentiment (Esther Solano, interview, 8th September 2018).

In terms of the polarisation in Brazil, professor of public policy at USP, Pablo Ortellado, who closely monitors polarisation in the country, explains that 2014 was the year when the Right became unified contributing to the polarisation phenomenon.

> When we mapped political debate on Facebook in 2013, we didn't see any alignment. For example, there were thousands of people interacting with feminist pages and anti-corruption pages at the same time, they were close on the social media map because they were close fields and then they became the heart of the two poles. Today, there isn't any more anti-corruption feminists… This alignment was established in April 2014… and is a gradual process. It started in June 2013 and by April 2014 it was already possible to see a polarised structure. It has been polarized ever since (Pablo Ortellado, interview, 6th December 2019).

In 2014, amid the sprawling corruption allegations and beginning of the theatrical media coverage of Operation Car Wash, the Right began to dominate anti-corruption discourse, so much so that it got associated with being right-wing. Subsequently, within the polarised structure of Facebook pages, anti-corruption pages became the centre of polarisation on the Right, whilst feminist pages became the equivalent on the Left. Almost overnight, the Right became the protagonists of the public political debate at the time, which was consumed by anti-corruption rhetoric. Immediately after Dilma's close and contested win in October of that year, social unrest increased on the streets. The largest mass protest since the impeachment of former president Fernando Collor in 1992 occurred on 15th March 2015 and was led by the newly-formed right-wing movements – MBL, VemPraRua,

Revoltados Online (Outraged Online) and NasRuas – who called for the impeachment of Dilma.

Also in 2015, the country slipped into its worst recession (up until then) that would last until the end of 2016. In a highly controversial debate that divided the country, Dilma's impeachment petition was accepted by the then-Speaker of the House, Eduardo Cunha, in December 2015. An important fact to note is that Cunha was also being investigated for corruption and his own impeachment process was approved days before Dilma's. As the PT did nothing to save Cunha, it is commonly assumed that this drove him to accept Dilma's impeachment process. Again, the movements led huge mass protests, this time on 13th March 2016, calling for the ousting of the PT leader. In April of that same year, Dilma was impeached for administrative misconduct of the federal budget and violation of the Fiscal Responsibility Law and formally removed from office in August 2016. Her vice president, Michel Temer, became the unpopular interim president during Dilma's impeachment process and assumed power until the end of the mandate.

Throughout 2017, the Car Wash investigations continued to gain momentum and started to reach other political parties aside from the PT, causing a growth in anti-politics sentiment, as Esther Solano explains.

> In 2017, a really interesting thing happened and that was the advance of the Car Wash investigations, which started reaching people from the PMDB and we saw the first denunciations of the PSDB. VemPraRua organised an important protest in São Paulo that year and they changed the slogan of it from "Oust the PT" to "Oust Everyone" and "Imprison All". So, we saw again here this revival of anti-politics sentiment. The focus was still anti-PT, because it is very strong, but it also became anti-politics because Car Wash reached the three traditional parties: the PT, PSDB and PMDB (Esther Solano, interview, 8th September 2018).

Prior to the 2018 elections, the three biggest and most influential political parties in Brazil were the PT, PSDB and PMDB, all of which had ties to Car Wash with corruption allegations tainting their names. These parties dominated Brazilian politics until Jair Bolsonaro and the miraculous resurrection of PSL (previously an insignificant political party) with the election of almost 60 deputies in the 2018 elections. Although, the protests did not stop once the Right had been voted in. They continued on both sides of politics after Bolsonaro's election, throughout 2019 and even to this day. As professor Pablo Ortellado once described to me: it is as if June 2013 never ended.

The following section provides an overview of the key movements of the Brazilian New Right under investigation in this thesis.

The movements

This thesis focuses on the largest and most well-known, right-wing movements that occupied the streets and online political discourse during the 2016 impeachment and in the lead-up to the 2018 elections. They are MBL, VemPraRua, Revoltados Online and NasRuas. More specifically, I investigate their role as media vehicles in 2017 in the lead-up to the 2018 elections. Similar movements also exist on the Left side of politics in Brazil, such as *Mídia NINJA,* however due to space restrictions this thesis focuses purely on the principal right-wing movements.

All the movements are from the city of São Paulo and therefore the regional scope of the thesis is confined to São Paulo. Importantly, São Paulo is the centre of political debate in Brazil, as professor Pablo Ortellado explains: "The anti-corruption movement is entirely from São Paulo. MBL is from here, VemPraRua and Revoltados Online as well. They are all from here. The protests that mattered happened here. The protests that had local effects were big here. The political game is being played here" (Pablo Ortellado, interview, 6th December 2019). It is also the most significant voting region, with an electorate potential of 33,028,916 people in October 2018 (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral 2020). In that same year, the city's population reached over 12 million people, which was double that of the next biggest city, Rio de Janeiro, that had just over 6.5 million people (Silveira 2018).

It is for all these above reasons that this thesis is tailored to focus exclusively on the movements from São Paulo, although I do draw some wider conclusions at the end of the thesis that suggest how the findings might apply to Brazil more generally. Below are the four main right-wing movements that form the centrepiece of this thesis, accompanied by their logos and short descriptions for each movement.

MBL is the largest (in terms of online followers) and most well-known movement of the New Right. It is for this reason that I devote more space to the analysis of MBL in this thesis. As the name suggests, MBL advocate liberal economic ideals, as well as strong anti-PT sentiment and, initially, an anti-corruption drive. Their Facebook page was created in June 2013, amid the mass protests, by the liberal and pro-market group *Estudantes Pela Liberdade* (Students For Liberty, which is not associated with the US organisation holding the same name). However, it was abandoned once the protests ended and in mid-November 2014 taken over by its current leaders, a group of predominately young men in their early twenties to mid-thirties, namely Renan Santos and Kim Kataguiri.

MBL, together with other movements, principally Revoltados Online and VemPraRua, drove the resistance against Dilma, Lula and the PT, organising various protests including the first mass pro-impeachment protest on Paulista Avenue on 15th March 2015. MBL was particularly instrumental in the second mass pro-impeachment protest on 13th March 2016, which gave it enough limelight to elect its first city councillor of São Paulo, Fernando Holiday, in October of that same year. However, in early 2021, Holiday left MBL.

Following the impeachment, in June 2016, MBL partnered up with Arthur do Val, sole founder of the YouTube channel *Mamãe Falei* (Mummy I Said), whose videos started to go viral when he attended left-wing protests and questioned protesters in such a way that sought to ridicule them as much as possible. MBL and Arthur agreed to publish each other's content via their online channels, both sides benefitting from the extra publicity and number of followers.

By 2017 MBL learned to embrace cultural conflicts from a socially conservative stance. In July 2018, just months out from the federal elections, Facebook pages of some of MBL's leaders were removed by the platform, as well as a network of hyper-

partisan sites that the movement frequently published on their page, all of which allegedly circulated disinformation (Salgado & Grillo 2018). This action by Facebook demonstrates the influence MBL had over online political debate. However, this did not batter the group and by September 2018 the movement had 2.8 million followers on its Facebook page.

In 2017 as well as throughout the 2018 electoral period, MBL supported the political figures João Doria (PSDB), Jair Bolsonaro (then-PSL) and João Amoêdo (NOVO), and convincingly elected two of their own members in the elections – Kim Kataguiri as federal deputy and Arthur do Val as state deputy of São Paulo, both elected to the Democrats (DEM) party.

By mid-2019, MBL changed its tone and was heavily critical of the Bolsonaro government, which caused them to lose vast support from their *Bolsonarista* (pro-Bolsonaro) fan base, and a significant number of followers on social media, particularly YouTube.

VemPraRua is comprised of a small group of middle-aged *Paulistanos*, a lot of whom are businessmen or business owners, whose philosophy is based on anti-corruption rhetoric, liberal economic views and political renovation. The movement was founded in October 2014 in response to their disapproval of Dilma Rousseff's re-election. Alongside MBL and Revoltados Online, VemPraRua were one of the movements to call and participate in the mass protests on 15th March 2015 and 13th March 2016, however they were late to embrace the pro-impeachment stance compared to the other movements.

The movement's online activism is marked by their creation of various online political mapping platforms, including the Impeachment Map that monitored and recorded the way deputies and senators voted in the impeachment of Dilma. Such maps aim at bringing more transparency on the way politicians perform during their mandates to the general public. VemPraRua claim to be apolitical and so they do not openly support political candidates or parties. However, they use their online maps in such a way that criticises politicians who do not align with the movement's ideology. In this sense, they promote political renovation.

The movement's protagonist role gave one of their former members, Janaína Lima, the trajectory to get elected as the first city councillor of São Paulo for the NOVO party in the 2016 municipal elections. In the 2018 election, the movement's spokesperson, Rogério Chequer, left the movement to run as candidate for Governor of São Paulo, again for the NOVO party, however he was unsuccessful at the polls. By September 2018, VemPraRua had 2.1 million followers on Facebook and along with MBL, it become a strong opponent of the Bolsonaro government in 2019.

Revoltados Online was founded in 2010 by Marcelo Reis, who is middle-aged, and it initially sought to hunt down paedophiles. By the end of 2010, the movement had become political engaged, defending military intervention and supporting then-federal deputy Jair Bolsonaro. In 2012, it changed from promoting the military to supporting an anti-corruption stance and in favour of the impeachment of Dilma. Along with MBL and VemPraRua, Revoltados Online was also one of the protagonist movements in the 15th March 2015 and 13th March 2016 mass protests. Unlike MBL and VemPraRua, Marcelo would attend left-wing demonstrations and provoke angry protesters, a tactic which Arthur do Val via his YouTube channel *Mamãe Falei* would later adopt. His aggressive style caused Facebook to remove Revoltados Online's page in mid-2016. According to Marcelo, Revoltado Online had 1.8 million follows on Facebook before the page was taken down. Its removal from Facebook means I am unable to perform an in-depth analysis on the movement's Facebook posts, however I do provide data taken from interviews with some of the movement's members.

From its outset, Revoltados Online promoted socially conservative views. Marcelo himself was a candidate in the 2018 elections and the movement provided a stage in the street at pro-Bolsonaro protests during the election period for Marcelo and other PSL candidates to promote their candidacy. However, unlike many of the other spokespersons of the movements, Marcelo was unsuccessful at the ballot box.

NasRuas is a smaller anti-corruption movement, founded in August 2011 by middle-aged activist Carla Zambelli. Inspired by Revoltados Online – Carla was dating Marcelo Reis when she founded NasRuas – and with the goal of fighting impunity of politicians, the movement has participated in various political acts since its outset. Such acts include erecting gigantic inflatable political figures, namely Lula, Dilma and Supreme Court judges, in criminal attire that are frequently present at political demonstrations. Since the beginning of Car Wash, the movement avidly supported the investigations and the lead judge assigned the case, Sérgio Moro, who became a key anti-corruption figure in Brazil.

NasRuas also overtly promoted the candidate Jair Bolsonaro in the lead-up to the 2018 elections, as well as provided a stage for other candidates from the PSL party to gain visibility at street protests. By September 2018, NasRuas had 760,000 followers on Facebook and Carla managed to get herself elected as federal deputy of the PSL party in the 2018 elections.

All these groups drove the pro-impeachment marches and subsequent anti-PT protests in the lead-up to the 2018 elections. There was, however, another anti-corruption

Facebook page, *Movimento Contra Corrupção* (Against Corruption Movement), or simply MCC for short, created in 2010, which converted into a pro-Bolsonaro page and had a huge online following of 3.6 million by September 2018. As I shall detail in Chapter 4, the construction company Odebrecht, which was heavily implicated in the Car Wash investigations, admits the MCC page was very critical of the company and responsible for the circulation of negative publicity about Odebrecht among its large network of associated pages. However, like Revoltados Online, the MCC page was removed by Facebook during the 2018 elections for violating its misrepresentation and spam policies (Facebook 2018). It is for this reason that I am unable to analyse any of MCC's Facebook posts and I was unsuccessful at interviewing any of its founders. Although I am unable to provide an in-depth analysis of Revoltados Online and MCC, I chose to include them here to note their apparent role in shaping public opinion and debate.

I should also point out that throughout the thesis I draw on interview data of founders of other smaller, right-wing movements to support the findings, including: *Acorda Brasil* (Wake Up Brazil)*, República de Curitiba* (Republic of Curitiba) and *Aliança Nacional dos Movimentos Democráticos* (Alliance of the National Democratic Movements).

Unlike most other scholarly works that view these groups of activists as political movements, I argue that, particularly following the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, the movements have also become important media vehicles of the New Right. Through the movements' large online followings and ability to disseminate political propaganda to the masses, they are central to the promotion of right-wing ideology, conservative views and political figures. This suggests a new relationship between political science and media exists, whereby political movements more and more so have media capacities.

Street movements as media vehicles

The movements started out by organising street protests, which is why they are referred to as 'street movements'. When the movements publish videos and photos of thousands of people in the street in front of their protest trucks, this undoubtedly legitimises them. However, their success at organising mass protests attracted millions of followers to their Facebook pages, reaching far greater publics than those in the street. This caused the movements' Facebook pages to turn into virtual public squares and places of protest. Essentially, the movements transformed into online media vehicles that play an important role in distributing right-wing narratives to as many listeners as possible.

One point of difference in this thesis to other studies on the movements is the ethnographic aspect of my research. I perform case studies on the movements and therefore my research question revolves around what these groups are actually doing in Brazil – I argue, in part being media vehicles. In my quest to demonstrate how the movements operate as media vehicles, I pose the following three research questions:

1. How do the movements act as media vehicles of the New Right?
2. In what ways do the movements increase corruption awareness?
3. What were the most popular discourses shared by the movements' followers on Facebook in 2017 to help form publics of the New Right?

My working hypothesis is that the movements increased corruption awareness and reputational risk of politicians and big business involved in corruption scandals, by acting as media vehicles and, in effect, what could be called a dialect of the mainstream press. That is, they act as a derivative of mainstream media when they redistribute news items already in circulation, however they do not adhere to formal journalistic practices and instead choose to employ more informal, critical language prominent on social media including ridiculing and demeaning opponents. I also hypothesise that through the production and circulation of political content on Facebook, the movements have helped create various right-wing publics. In this sense, they have become media, corruption accountability, cultural, as well as political institutions.

By providing some answers to these questions, this thesis is relevant to different disciplines. It adds value to literature in the fields of Brazilian politics as it explores the development of publics of the New Right, social media and its performance as a dialect of mainstream media, and finally anti-corruption through the movements' use of Facebook to increase awareness of corruption and reputational risk of wrongdoers.

Thesis ahead

This thesis is divided into eight chapters: the Introduction (which you are currently reading), Research Context, Methodology, Political Marketeers, Anti-Corruption or *Antilulismo?,* Neoliberalism or *Jogo Político?,* Brazilian Culture Wars, and finally, the Conclusion. Below is a summary of each of the chapters that comprise the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 1, *Research Context,* examines the academic works that influenced my theoretical approach and analysis of the data, all aimed at highlighting the movements' media characteristics. Firstly, works on the public sphere and counterpublics (Habermas 1991; Fraser 1992; Warner 2005) assist my interpretation of the groups of people that share certain types of discourses published by the movements.

Central to right-wing insurgence is popular discontent with progressive cultural and social issues. Some scholars that investigate the phenomenon known as 'culture wars' (Hunter 1995; Hunter 2006; Hartman 2015; Lakoff 2016; Caldwell 2020), shape my understanding of conservative resurgence and how it became widespread. Different to this literature that takes a historical perspective of the roots of cultural debates, I identify a process of attention-jealousy-revenge when explaining engagement in cultural conflict. This is coupled with theory on the perception of individual status in society (Weber 1978), a feeling of social marginalisation (Gidron & Hall 2020), and power tactics to demean opponents and incite outrage (Alinsky 1971; Crockett 2017), to help explain the way the movements attack targets and engage with audiences online.

Finally, literature on social media, including the spreadability of online content (Dawkins 1989; Shifman 2013; Marwick 2018) and use of Facebook as a political marketing tool (Andrews 2019; Moore 2018; Benkler, Faris & Roberts 2018), helps to contextualise the efficient proliferation of partisan views online to form publics. This is supported by the idea of social relations being constructed via images (Debord 1973), which has seen a revival since the advent of social media and its use as a tool for socio-political ends (Kellner 2017).

Chapter 2, *Methodology,* outlines the methodological approaches used throughout the thesis, which aims to obtain a rich dataset that exposes both internal motives and processes of the movements, as well as the influence of the movements' Facebook posts on audiences. To this end, I primarily draw on a three-part approach. Firstly, interviews with key members of the movements undertaken in 2018 and 2019, whereby I ask them open-ended questions about their involvement in the movements, usage of social media and opinions about what they view as the main causes of the political and social turmoil. I also draw on data about interviewees posted online by third parties to aid understanding of interviewees' viewpoints, particularly on issues that were not raised during the formal interview process. In this section, I seek to reveal the motives of members and social media practices used to engage with audiences. The frequent motive being economic mismanagement and impunity, while the most common communication practices are ridiculing, condescending and other attacks that provoke audience outrage.

Secondly, detailed analysis of Facebook posts from 2017 exposes each of the movements' communication and marketing strategies and popular discourses that circulated among their audiences. This involves discourse analysis of written and audio-visual content, as well as identification of popular social media post formats and emotional content. The purpose of this part of the analysis is to determine what type of discourse, post format and emotional content was most successful. I identify what stimulates the audiences of the movements to engage in political action by sharing content on Facebook, making them agents that contribute to the spread of anti-corruption and anti-politics sentiment, punitive measures, socially conservative views and liberal economic ideals. The success of the movements as media vehicles is determined by their ability to make ideas go viral.

Finally, participant observation, whereby I observe members of the movements in their natural setting and, where possible, engage in their activities, provides me with an intimate angle of analysis. Activities that I partake in are primarily protests, political conferences and media interviews with movement members that occurred in 2018 and 2019. During this phase of the data collection, I receive a glimpse of what it is like to be an insider of the movements, which provides new insights into members' motives, reasons for employing certain discourses and reactions of audiences to popular debates.

I also draw on some naturally-occurring data when considering light shows on the FIESP building, common songs and chants at protests, and books written by the movements to support the findings. Additionally, I adopt discursive psychology techniques when formulating my research questions and use quantitative data from the movements' Facebook posts to refine my selection of posts for detailed qualitative analysis.

Chapter 3, *Political Marketeers,* exposes the movements' media characteristics and contends that their role in circulating certain discourses among society is characteristic of the media and helps to form publics of the New Right (Warner 2005). Analysis of the movements' Facebook posts in 2017 exposes the most popular types of discourse, format and emotional content that circulated among online audiences. The three broad discourses which cause audiences to engage in political action by sharing content on Facebook are corruption, economic and social issues. These make up the framework of the rest of the thesis chapters. Regarding format, the most popular type for MBL – the

most successful movement – is video format. However, for VemPraRua and NasRuas it is memes. One possible explanation for MBL's success could be their usage of video content. Across all three movements, content that enrages audiences is shared the most, which is in line with Crockett's (2017) thesis.

Next, arguments are put forward that support the view of the movements as media and propaganda vehicles of the New Right. These include some of the groups referring to themselves as alternative media providers. The nightly political commentary segment, MBL News, and talk show program, *Teste do Sofá* (Sofa Test), are the clearest examples of this. Positive publicity of right-wing figures, including Governor of São Paulo João Doria and President of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro, make up some of the movements' political propaganda. Through the organisation of political protests and conferences, the movements provide a stage to promote politicians with whom they have a close relationship, including those that presented at MBL's National Conferences such as João Doria when he was the Mayor of São Paulo and former Interim President Michel Temer.

Evidence is put forward that details the movements' daily media production processes. This is backed by arguments that demonstrate how MBL's YouTube channel became a prominent political commentary source during the 2018 electoral period.

Finally, exploration of communication and marketing techniques reveals the movements' success in breaking some of the dogmas about the Right, most notably achieved through framing the Left as violent. By ridiculing and publicly shaming their opponents, the movements successfully attack the Left, and its sympathises, whilst simultaneously enhancing their political status.

Through studying popular discourses that circulated on Facebook, I use them as a proxy for public opinion. Although I view these discourses to signify the formation of different publics, upon further investigation some discourses can be viewed as strategic measures to promote anti-Lula rhetoric and engage in political power tug-of-wars respectively.

Chapter 4, *Anti-Corruption or Antilulismo?,* contends that, in the movements' capacities as media vehicles, they have helped to increase corruption awareness and damage the reputations of actors involved in corruption scandals. The movements use their media power to influence public approval or disapproval of key companies and politicians named in scandals. Close examination of the sharp decline in the reputation of the Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht reveals that video content has the most impact on reputation.

However, criticism of the company is linked to its ties to Lula, and thus is politically-motivated, instead of being driven by the need to combat corruption across the board. This is couple with the movements' lack of focus on the bid rigging schemes that involved companies such as Odebrecht. However, during an interview with Odebrecht's communication team, the company highlighted that the most aggressive Facebook page to constantly attack Odebrecht was *Movimento Contra Corrupção* (MCC), which was taken down by Facebook during the 2018 elections. This practice of permanently removing Facebook pages is condemned in this thesis because it impedes online media vehicles to perform their watchdog role of increasing reputational risk of corrupt actors.

Once again, Lula and the PT are common targets, particularly of MBL, for their alleged involvement and knowledge of corruption schemes. Through constant attacks

on the PT, who used illicit funds to finance political campaigns, the movements succeed in assimilating anti-corruption to anti-PT and anti-Lula sentiment – a strategic tactic considering Lula was the early forecast to win the 2018 elections. The popular circulation of posts containing anti-corruption, anti-Lula and anti-PT rhetoric suggests the formation of publics in line with each of these sentiments.

Towards the end of the chapter, interview data with some of the movements' leaders exposes their desire to oust the PT and, in the case of MBL, shows that anti-corruption discourse is more convenient than genuine. All of this suggests a political power game is at play.

Chapter 5, *Neoliberalism or Jogo Político?,* highlights that along with neoliberal motives, revenge, political influence and historical status also drive some of the movements' leaders. All the movements claim to have neoliberal aspirations, however despite the popularity of some economic-related posts that criticise the electoral fund and labour reform, further investigation suggests that such critiques are in part implemented strategically to diminish political power of traditional parties. This indicates the formation of publics against the political elite.

In a second instance, the chapter draws on data from interviews and ethnographic fieldwork to contend that there are multiple other motives driving MBL in particular. In a bid to obtain a political protagonist position, MBL co-founder, Renan Santos, demonstrates that revenge also plays an important motivational role. Some of his actions suggest that ideology is secondary to his quest for political influence. By becoming social media fames, the movements' spokespersons maximise their public visibility and enhance their success rate in municipal, state or federal elections. In this sense, the movements act as platforms to catapult candidates into politics. Whether publicising neoliberal views or themselves, the movements behave like political propaganda vehicles seeking to further their political projects and acquire a spot in Brazilian political history.

As posts related to economic issues circulate the least among the movements' publics, my findings suggest that the movements succeed more so at forming culturally punitive and conservative publics than neoliberal publics.

Chapter 6, *Brazilian Culture Wars,* highlights the movements' cultural influence when they engage in debates that promote punitive measures, conservative values and ideas opposing the cultural elite. The different social and cultural debates operate within the fields of law, politics, family, education, media and arts, and seek to redefine national identity and what is morally acceptable in Brazilian society.

Popular posts concerning law and politics include attacks on the Supreme Court, criticism of impunity of politicians and businessmen, support for stricter law enforcement and, in the case of NasRuas, promotion of anti-migration sentiment. The common sharing of these arguments by the movements' followers indicates that punitive and conservative publics, who are against the judicial elite, have formed.

As for issues related to the family, education, and media and arts, threats to the traditional family structure, through the promotion of LGBT rights and attacks on mainstream media cause significant outcry among the movements' followers. Key incidents in 2017 include the Queer Museum and Museum of Modern Art (MAM) affairs, which ignited fierce debate among society over the appropriateness of exposing young

children to interactive progressive artworks centred on sexuality and nudity. One specific post of MBL in relation to the MAM affair received the most amount of angry reactions out of all the movement's history of Facebook posts between 2014 and 2018. This suggests that issues threating traditional family values cause the most outrage among conservatives. The popular circulation of such debates, as well as criticism of mainstream media outlets promoting progressive measures, indicates that particularly MBL and NasRuas helped to form conservative publics that are also against the media elite.

Promotion of these punitive and conservative views is considered characteristic of right-wing media, a role which I view the movements to fulfil. Although, this is not to say that the Left do not fight back and promote their own narratives and versions of reality. A good example of this is the impeachment of Dilma, also frequently referred to in Brazil as 'the 2016 coup', which I discovered during a controversial class at USP.

Butantã, São Paulo
21st March 2018

Pedro, one of my classmates, and I arrive right on time for the start of the controversial lecture *'O Golpe de 2016 e o Futuro da Democracia no Brasil'* (The 2016 Coup and The Future of Democracy in Brazil) at USP's main campus in the suburb of Butantã. The large lecture theatre is already overflowing with students so people have started sitting in the stairways of the amphitheatre and on the floor in front of the podium where five professors are seated. We push past the mass of people standing in the doorway and find a spare step to sit on halfway up one of the stairways.

The crowd at the entrance door continues to grow, so much so that people begin to sit behind the podium of professors just to be able to listen to what is said, even if they can only see the backs of the professors' heads. There is a fierce atmosphere that circulates around the room. The tension is so tight that you can almost feel it brush past your skin.

Each of the professors takes to the microphone to voice their outrage at the 'coup' that occurred in 2016. With passion in their raised voices, all of them strongly advocate that Dilma and the PT had been undemocratically ousted, Lula is a victim of political persecution and that now it is time to tell the whole world about the staged coup. Each speech lasts 20 minutes or more. The tone of the professors' voices starts off laboured and articulate, gaining momentum and higher-pitched decibels along the way. There is a final peak in intensity as each speech comes to an end. Most professors have risen to their feet by this stage and shout words of encouragement to 'regain Brazilian democracy!'. I can't help but feel as though I am at an indoor political demonstration rather than a university lecture that is meant to be based on academic and theoretical discussions.

One thing is certain, public opinion about the political turmoil depends largely on your ideology. In 2016, there was either a legal impeachment or an illegal coup d'état, and both sides of the political divide use all means of communication, news channels and educational institutions possible to disseminate their version of events and persuade public belief. This is symbolic of polarization, which is characterised by extreme conflict between two sides whereby whatever one side affirms, the other side negates (Ortellado 2018: 169), and provides an explanation for the dispute of narratives over the political turmoil in 2016.

As I have previously stated, this thesis focuses on the Right's version of events and what popular right-wing narratives circulated on Facebook in 2017. However, as I have demonstrated here, I also seek to highlight the Left's polarising views with those of the Right in my anecdotal diary entries. I frequently juxtapose a diary entry at the beginning of each chapter with a conflicting viewpoint in another diary entry later in the same chapter. By settling out the chapters in this way, I continuously remind the reader that although right-wing ideas have come to the centre of political debate in Brazil, they seldom are the sole voices in the public sphere.

Finally, the last chapter of this thesis, the *Conclusion,* brings together all the research findings from each of the chapters, collates some reflections on the work and puts forwards avenues for future research. There are several key lessons to take from this thesis. Firstly, the movements have extensive media qualities and as such have become media vehicles of the New Right, providing platforms to promote political propaganda and candidates. Analysis of the movements' Facebook posts reveals that social issues circulate the most, followed by anti-corruption and finally economic issues. This suggests that economic issues have the least impact on public debate and that the movements are more successful at forming publics in line with their culturally conservative and punitive agendas. Content provoking outrage is most likely to go viral, as well as video content and memes.

Secondly, in their capacity as media vehicles, the movements act as dialects of mainstream media disseminating corruption denunciations and fostering an anti-corruption public. However, such coverage of corruption investigations is frequently politically motivated and succumbs to partisan practices, suggesting reputational risk is greater for politicians more so than companies involved in corruption scandals.

Thirdly, the movements all display neoliberal characteristics and help to establish a neoliberal public, which is not a new revelation. However, what I do reveal is the strategic implementation of neoliberal arguments to restrict political power of the traditional political parties and the movements' role in forming publics against the political elite. Revenge, political influence and historical status are shown to be contributing motives to some of the movement leaders' engagement in political action.

Finally, the movements also operate in the field of culture, engaging in cultural conflict, and are key to circulating cultural debates, which assist the formation of punitive, socially conservative and anti-elite publics.

My time living in São Paulo and observing *Paulistano* social, cultural and political phenomena was most influential to this thesis. Even though I was based in USP's law faculty and undertook two elective classes at the university's main campus in Butantã, it was my experience being part of a research group at *USP-Leste* (a campus in the eastern outer suburbs of the city) that had more impact on my knowledge and understanding of the Brazilian political climate, as the next chapter illustrates.

Chapter 1
Research Context

Pinheiros, São Paulo
29th January 2019

My train ride to USP-Leste, located out near Guarulhos International Airport, has become one of the highlights of my week. It is the only time I leave the city centre and venture out into São Paulo's outer suburbs and economically disadvantaged regions known as *favelas*.

I get on the city's only private line, the yellow line, at Fradique Coutinho metro station in the rich suburb of Pinheiros. The raising hairs on my arms immediately indicate that the air conditioner is slightly below the comfortable room temperature, leaving me noticeably chilled. The carriages at Fradique Coutinho in the early afternoon are frequently quite empty. A few men of European heritage in suits are scattered throughout the carriage, casually holding the above railing with one hand whilst flicking through their smartphones with the other. To my left, a small group of women are seated together chatting, with shopping bags from expensive fashion stores surrounding their high-heeled feet.

I change to the red line at República. The train is only underground for a couple of stops when the line surfaces before crossing the Tamanduateí River. I look out the window at my favourite high-rise, the Banespa Bank Building – a former bank of the State of São Paulo. The iconic white skyscraper, whose structure was inspired by the Empire State Building, flies the black and white stripped flag of São Paulo on its rooftop. It is a towering symbol of wealth and for a moment I forget that the disadvantaged *Paulistano* outskirts are merely a few stops away.

Arriving at Tatuapé metro station, I hurry up the escalator and change to the over ground train line. Running down the stairs leading to the platform of the sapphire train line, I am cautious of the 15-minute wait between train services if I am late. I let out a sigh of relief when I see the train arriving from a distance and send a message to Monitor via our WhatsApp group notifying everyone that I will be only 15 minutes late – which is considered on-time in Brazil.

As the train draws to a halt, masses of people congregate at each door, bursting into the carriages before any of the departing passengers can disembark. Boarding the train, I head directly for one of the closed doors on the opposite side and lean my backpack up against it to ensure I am not pickpocketed. It is a rarity to find a spare seat on this line. As the train jolts forward, pulling out of the station, I plant my feet in a wide stance and brace the door with one hand to keep my balance. The air is dense and stuffy in the carriage, and a can feel the palms of my hands begin to sweat. After a few moments, a young Afro-Brazilian man wearing a black t-shirt, worn jeans and backpack gets everyone's attention. "Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen", he says politely in a loud tone. "I have a great deal for you today! For only $10 *reais* you can buy a brand-new set of headphones for your cell phone!", he continues as he walks up and down the carriage showing packets of headphones to passengers that glance his way.

As we start to pick up speed, I turn my head to look out the scratched glass window. For kilometres, poorly-built orange brick homes with their tin roofs and blue-plastic water tanks on top, run alongside the railway line. Sheets, clothes and cleaning rags can be seen hanging to dry from rope tied from one side of rooftop

> balconies to the other. As we pass by a street, the powerline arrangement catches my eye. Dozens of black powerlines, all intertwined, link to one wooden power post. The post tilts under the weight of the various powerline connections, a few of which are broken and dangling down to the ground in a structure that looks most unsafe. In the distance, I can see what appears to be high-rise apartments in a well-secured, walled-in condominium. It is the juxtaposed inequality in this city that shocks me the most.
>
> I value my trips to USP-Leste because they are a stark reminder of the dramatic imbalance of power that exists in Brazil. It is easy to stay in the ritzy inner suburbs and forget that the majority of the population endures economic hardship. The extreme divide in society undoubtedly yields opposing social and economic desires. This environment provides a fertile breeding ground for the political polarisation that began to manifest in 2014 – polarisation that the movements used to their advantage, feeding off public outrage to drive moral and political debates.

This chapter has two objectives. It presents in simple terms some of the works that influenced my theoretical, as well as sometimes methodological, approaches to this thesis and analysis of the movements – namely MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas. It also provides some historical political context in Brazil. The main academic areas that informed my critical thinking and analysis are works from the fields of the public sphere, culture wars, status and social media. An underlying theme in all these debates is the struggle for power in society, which is frequently taking shape in moral debates on social media. As such, the chapter is divided into three sections: (1) the public sphere; (2) moral debates, status and power; and (3) social media politics.

Credit must be given to the research group at USP-Leste that I was part of during my time in Brazil, *Monitor do Debate Político no Meio Digital* (Monitor of Online Political Debate), or simply 'Monitor' for short, which is run by two professors, Pablo Ortellado and Márcio Moretto Ribeiro, for its influence over the literature and my theoretical approach.

I was introduced to Márcio through another researcher two weeks before the first election round in 2018, as we share similar research interests. Following our initial encounter, he invited me to be a part of Monitor and attend weekly meetings, which I did up until I left Brazil in December 2019. Pablo, who is known in Brazil as 'the guy investigating the impact that social media is having on Brazilian politics', had long been on my list of people to interview for this thesis and so I jumped at the chance to collaborate with him.

Aside from monitoring online political discussions, Monitor also carries out large-scale public surveys in various regions of São Paulo and at street protests, with the goal of ascertaining different publics in Brazilian society. In 2019, Monitor was one of the academic groups to be selected by Facebook to have access to its dataset for researchers to study the social network's effect on elections (Monitor do debate político no meio digital 2019a). On top of this, the group reads and debates various theoretical works relative to the fields of social media, the public sphere, polarisation, populism, the radical right and culture wars, just to name a few. These theoretical insights have without a doubt shaped my critical thinking and understanding of the Brazilian political climate, to which I – and this thesis – will be forever grateful.

I recognise that a lot of the authors I cite in this chapter are from the US, which may raise questions about my choice of using mainly US theories to analyse a non-US

society. However, most these works I read at Monitor, where they were suggested by the two professors, demonstrating that Brazilians themselves look to this type of scholarship to explain such cultural and political phenomena in Brazil.

Additionally, two of the founding members of MBL claim to have been influenced by US theory and political movements. Head marketer of MBL, Pedro D'Eyrot, cites the work of US community activist and political theorist, Saul Alinsky, as well as US marketer, Ryan Holiday, when describing MBL's communication and marketing techniques. Similarly, MBL co-founder, Renan Santos, explains that the Tea Party movement in the US was his inspiration for creating a political movement in Brazil: "I was trying to imitate the Tea Party structure, I studied what the Tea Party was doing and I started to create cells, political cells in small towns defending libertarian ideas" (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018). MBL admits to being influenced by and attempting to replicate US political phenomena, which further justifies my use of US-based theory to analyse social, cultural and political contexts concerning the movements.

Although Monitor had a profound impact on my understanding of the political environment in Brazil, there were times when I disagreed with some of their view points. The most notable being our discussion over whether MBL was considered 'extreme right'. Pablo was under the assumption, at the time, that the group fell within the scope of extreme right activism, though I opposed this vision. MBL is radical in its speech, but its actions remain democratic. In the weeks following this discussion, two things occurred. Firstly, at Monitor, we started reading a few scholarly works on the 'radical right', a milder classification on the right-wing spectrum, and secondly, I sought the opinion of professor of political science and former candidate for the vice-presidency of the NOVO party in the 2018 elections, Christian Lohbaur.

In an interview, Christian agreed with my view, stating that "the movements are not extreme right… MBL is not [extreme right]… we don't have extreme right or left, however a virulent discourse exists on both sides that is superficial… and ignorant" (Christian Lohbauer, interview, 5th February 2019). The idea of superficial virulent discourses leads me to reflect upon their, potentially, intentional implementation and steers me further towards the view of the movements as, in part, purposefully *provocative* right-wing media outlets.

Before I place this thesis within the theoretical fields noted above, I develop my argument that demonstrates how the movements, particularly MBL, can be classified as provocative right-wing media vehicles. My objective here is not to undermine the political aspects of the movements – they are undeniably political – but more so to highlight their media characteristics, which I suggest have largely been overlooked.

Analysis of political and social movements is varied. Some works approach radical right groups as social movement organisations and investigate their cognitive framing, repertoires of actions and networking capabilities (Caiani & della Porta 2018). Others analyse such social movements through diagnostics, prognostic and motivational framing processes, to ascertain how they construct their realities (Benford & Snow 2000). Different again are studies that focus on the populist aspects of such groups, that is, their division between the people, elite and general will (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017), or explanation for their electoral support in terms of 'demand' (socioeconomic developments) and 'supply' (messages that reach voters) dimensions (Eatwell 2017).

Despite works such as Eatwell (2017) touching on the issue of mediatisation of the extreme right, which argues that the media's agenda-setting function, focus on personality and growth of private television channels have indirectly supported right-wing groups, analysis tends to investigate media effects on the radical right, including the press' role in providing importance, visibility and legitimacy to such groups (Ellinas 2018). My analysis goes further and looks to the right-wing movements in this thesis as quasi-media organisations themselves. As such, this thesis argues that through the movements' large online followings and ability to disseminate political propaganda to the masses, they help advance conservative agendas and promote political figures.

The popular circulation of overtly politically motivated content can be explained as part of the politicisation of society. I contend that this is complimented by the purposeful engagement in political action that is the basis of content spread online. By producing their own media content, albeit frequently based on mainstream media news items, the movements have become partisan news sources, by-passing traditional media distribution channels and opposing elite opinions to transmit information directly to audiences – a process arising as part of the mediatisation of politics (Garland, Tambini & Couldry 2017).

However, different to literature on mediatisation that claims media processes have been internalised by government departments, my findings from the Brazilian example suggest that external, online political and social movements have taken up this role and are functioning as political news vehicles of the New Right. Each of the movements under investigation in this thesis can therefore be understood as representing different right-wing public spheres of thought.

I. The Public Sphere

Above all, this thesis investigates material that circulated in the public domain in the year 2017, leading up to the 2018 elections in Brazil. Literature on the public sphere, counterpublics and coexistence of a multiplicity of publics contextualises popular discourses produced by the movements and conceives their popular sharing online to form publics of the New Right.

A dominant public sphere

The concept of the public sphere is generally sourced to the German scholar Jürgen Habermas, who in 1962 described the development of a single public sphere of thought that occurred in 18th century Europe. By 'public', Habermas means any event or phenomenon that is "open to all" (Habermas 1991: 1) and, in that writing, he views the public sphere as one entity.

Habermas notes the transition from feudalism to capitalism through the "traffic in news that developed alongside the traffic in commodities" (ibid., 16), which began in the context of trade markets in Antwerp, Belgium, in the 14th century. The Bourgeois forced the state to abandon total domination, they transformed the state to be more market-driven. Merchants began to write about their products and trading prices in newsletters, leading to political discussions about economy. As such, liberalism, the

laissez-faire attitude and ideological view of the importance of autonomy of the individual, was born at the same time as the concept of the public sphere. By the middle of the 17th century, the first newsletters and political journals were produced and published information about the diets of imperials, taxes, harvests, wars, transportation costs of produce and foreign trade, producing a reciprocal dominant relationship between news journals and merchants (ibid., 20). It was in these commercial relations that news became a sought-after product, "[f]or the traffic in news developed not only in connection with the needs of commerce; the news itself became a commodity" (ibid., 21).

In this context, the press began to serve the interests of elite groups and the state, which led to the formation of the new stratum of bourgeois that included scholars (jurists, professors, doctors, pastors) and capitalists (bankers, merchants, manufacturers, entrepreneurs). These people formed a reading public and the combination of discussion and critique they produced together in a public manner led to the emergence of the "*public sphere of civil society*" (ibid., 23). To Habermas, the public sphere was occupied by bourgeois, well-educated intellectuals who met in coffee houses and salons where they "sought agreement and enlightenment through the rational-critical public debate of private persons" (ibid., 43). This rational-critical public debate, along with the newsletters and political journals, evolved as a critique of the State. Thus, the early press became a "critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate" (ibid., 60).

In reference to this thesis, the movements and their usage of social media are considered the modern-day 'coffee houses' (social media platforms) and journals (social media pages and posts) that produce rational – and sometime irrational – critical political debate. Different to the view that elites dominate the discourses in the public sphere, this thesis demonstrates how any social media page, particularly those with large followings, can influence critical political debate in the public sphere.

Importantly for this thesis, Habermas also highlights the existence of a "staged or manipulatively manufactured public sphere of the election campaign" (ibid., 214). The idea of a "temporarily manufactured political public sphere" (ibid., 216) emphasises that different types of discourses are implemented purely to win votes and elections. One example of this is MBL's support – albeit reluctant – for Bolsonaro in the lead-up to the 2018 elections, yet swift change to oppose his government by mid-2019. The view of having a short-lived public sphere, solely to elect candidates, suggests the public sphere is situational and a constantly changing arena of power struggles whereby discourses are implemented strategically and driven by political interests.

While these ideas about the initial concept of the public sphere can be developed much further, such as access to the public sphere being dependent on economic status, for my purposes this is enough to bring out my concerns in this thesis. I am primarily interested in the role the movements played, in their capacity as media vehicles, in publishing and circulating critical political debate in the lead-up to the 2018 elections and the formation of different public spheres within the New Right in Brazil. Such alternative publics can be referred to as counterpublics.

Counterpublics

There have been many critiques of Habermas' initial concept of the bourgeois public sphere, and Habermas incorporated some of the critiques in his later work. One that is pertinent to this thesis is that of Nancy Fraser (1992), who contends that whilst there is a dominant public sphere, there are also many subordinate public spheres made up of counterpublics. According to Fraser, Habermas fails to examine other competing publics, such as non-liberal, non-bourgeois, plebeian and women's publics, that enter into confrontation with the dominant bourgeois public: "Virtually from the beginning, counterpublics contested the exclusionary norms of the Bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behaviour and alternative norms of public speech" (Fraser 1992: 116). Although Habermas claims that the public sphere has open access to all, the word 'bourgeois' in itself denotes that this arena is merely accessible to people who fit into that particular upper class. Societal inequality thus prevents subordinate sectors of society from inclusion in primary public debate (ibid.).

In reference to the members of these alternative social groups, including females, blacks, gays and lesbian, Fraser coins the term *subaltern counterpublics* to emphasise the existence of "parallel discursive arenas" (ibid., 123) where these members formulate "counterdiscourses" (ibid., 123). These counterdiscourses represent their interests and identities, as well as juxtapose those of the dominant public. Fraser gives the example of feminist women, who are left out of Habermas' initial view of the public sphere, and who have created terms for phenomena that are common to their reality including 'sexism' and 'sexual harassment'. In later works, Habermas welcomes the idea of a pluralised public sphere, acknowledging that "the growing feminist literature has sensitized our awareness to the patriarchal character of the public sphere" (Habermas 1992: 427). He confirms the existence of a "devalued counterculture… [where] people were forced to move and express themselves in a universe that was different and *other*" (ibid., 429, emphasis in original).

The concept of counterpublics and counterdiscourses enriches my understanding of the different right-wing movements under scrutiny in this thesis and their audiences. The idea that a multiplicity of publics exists in society, all with different worldviews and life experiences, assists my comprehension of the conflicts at play in the Brazilian context between the established progressive culture of the Left and that of the rising conservative New Right. It is from this view that I understand the clash of cultures, the counter colliding with the mainstream, to have little interest in deliberation and instead thrive off confrontation.

As stated in the Introduction of this thesis, the PT governments, particularly that of Dilma, were marked by a series of progressive measures. The notion of counterpublics, which according to Fraser arose because of exclusion and suppression from dominant mainstream ideology, offers an interesting way to understand the recent surge in right-wing movements and provides sympathetic relief to the largely critical literature on insurgents of the New Right. Viewing the movements as social groups that go against the dominant ideology of the PT provides insight into the aggressive marketing and communication techniques they employ, as I shall describe in Chapter 3, in a bid to make their voices heard among a sea of multiple publics.

A multiplicity of publics

Another scholar whose critique of Habermas' public sphere is relevant to this thesis is that of Michael Warner (2005), who also asserts there are various public spheres and that people are part of different publics simultaneously. To Warner, publics are different from other classifications of people such as class, identity groups and nations because publics only exist when a certain discourse circulates amongst a group of people. That is, he is interested in publics that are formed by the circulation of texts, including media texts. "A public is a space of discourse organised by nothing other than discourse itself… it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, websites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced" (Warner 2005: 67). At the core of a public is its discourse; that is what brings people together and is the shared common ground. Therefore, "[p]ublics do not exist apart from the discourse that addresses them" (ibid., 72), which reflects the way that specific groups of people see and understand the world. Furthermore, "a public is understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse" (ibid., 90) and therefore an idea must be widely shared and accepted for it to linger among a specific public. When people keep producing a certain discourse, or in the case of this thesis sharing online content via social media, this means a public has formed.

In relation to the movements I am examining, I view their primary activity as the production of online discourses, which they publish in the form of memes, videos and links to articles. The popular sharing of the movements' online content by their followers suggests that the movements play a key role in constructing some of the publics of the New Right in Brazil. My interest, thus, is centred on investigating how the movements create, target and segment certain publics by using specific discourses, be that anti-corruption, economic, or social and cultural discourses. Enquiry into these discourses make up the last three main body chapters in this thesis.

Furthermore, as stated by Warner: "Anything that addresses a public is meant to undergo circulation. This helps us to understand why print, and the organization of markets for print, were historically so central in the development of the public sphere" (ibid., 91). Any idea, opinion or news item published is intended to circulate and gain sympathisers in the form of a specific public. Additionally, the participation in publics is voluntary (ibid., 89) and determined by whether attention is given to the specific discourse the public is built on or not. "Publics… commence with the moment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to exist when attention is no longer predicated" (ibid., 88). People engage with discourses they deem important and, in contrast, give little to no attention to discourses they consider unimportant.

These features, which are key to the printed press, have followed through into online and social media, where information circulates because attention is paid to that specific idea creating certain publics. It is in this way that pages on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube create their publics by addressing certain topics. This relationship, between online platforms and their discourses, is reciprocal because the existence of a public depends both on the discourse and the vehicle by which that discourse is circulated. In the context of this thesis, the analysis of Facebook posts is done in such a way that it investigates the circulation of discourses among different publics of the

movements. This has the end goal of revealing the discourses that are most likely to form different publics, or factions, of Brazil's New Right.

To complement the work of Nancy Fraser, Warner's idea of a counterpublic "is a scene where a dominated group aspires to re-create itself as a public and in doing so finds itself in conflict not only with the dominant social group but with the norms that constitute the dominant culture as a public" (ibid., 112). For Warner, "[c]ounterpublics are publics, too" (ibid., 113) and counterculture does not necessarily mean that the specific group of people is not from the elite or philosophical class, but instead that the group goes against the prevailing dominant culture in the ways that it speaks and acts. One example might be the use of impolite speech acts by a counterpublic, which can cause a shift in societal norms. This rings true in the Brazilian context, as I shall demonstrate in this thesis, whereby outrage is the most frequent type of emotion to circulate among the movements' publics and can be considered a norm for their political discourse.

In regard to who comprises publics, it is not people you know but strangers that make up publics and, therefore, a public is a relationship between strangers (ibid., 85). Warner's focus then turns to the use of language to unify strangers and create a common identity. Language is how people participate in groups, by speech acts, written text, and also the language of images, signs and symbols. Publics make up their own language and people who use this language are accepted into that specific public (ibid., 108). Language is like a prerequisite for acceptance into a public and publics use language as a sort of identity marker. Throughout my analysis of the data, I seek to highlight the specific language or common methods of attack the movements employ that can be considered identity markers of the New Right. One obvious example is the frequent use of ridicule to demean opponents, which I explain in Chapter 3 and refer to throughout the thesis.

Another academic debate on which I have drawn in this thesis is that of culture wars, which are essentially derived from debates over moral norms, status and power.

II. Moral Debates, Status & Power

In this section of the chapter, I examine different ways of approaching moral debates in society that have influenced how I understand some of the social, cultural and political tensions in Brazil today. Culture wars, opposing systems of morality, the virality of outrage online and other power tactics all impact status and the struggle for power in society. These ideas have provided the basis of my analysis of the findings in Chapter 6 on Brazilian culture wars.

There are different theories about why political systems embrace specific moral and cultural debates. There is a national explanation, derived from each country's own national history and, in the case of Brazil, this views the June 2013 protests as the trigger that started the process of political polarisation and rise in right-wing populism. Then, there is an international explanation, focusing on experiences in the US and Europe, which looks to austerity as a possible motive. Rising debt and welfare-state maturation result in restricted government expenditure and increased privatisation of state institutions, causing greater lack of political difference and influence (Schäfer & Streeck

2013). In such a scenario, there is less political choice as policies from either side of the political divide inevitably begin to resemble each other. To differentiate Left from Right, the political system thus embraces cultural debates, as leader of Monitor, professor Pablo Ortellado, explains.

> I think that Brazil has a national explanation. This national explanation starts with the protests in June 2013… [which] served as a trigger for the process of mobilisation that polarised society, mobilised society and let's say, created an environment for the rise of a populist right-wing force, which is our current president Bolsonaro… The international explanation for similar processes happening in the US and Europe is, as I understand, due to diminishing political forces… meaning that, the Left and Right become indifferent because they have neither the funds nor the political force to be different. This has caused society to hyper-differentiate politically, through the process of culture wars, in which moral issues hyper-differentiate the population (Pablo Ortellado, interview, 6th December 2019).

When there are limited funds for the Left and Right to do politics differently – ultimately, when the Left does not have the money to be Left – and there is growing autonomy of state institutions, such as the *Ministério Público* (Public Prosecutor's Office) in Brazil, crippling power in the hands of politicians, the political system embraces cultural and moral debates. This is because it is here, in the field of moral values, where conservatives and progressives differ. In Bolsonaro's 2018 election campaign, he "exploited this situation… and, intuitively or not, constructed a campaign entirely based on moral values… He said absolutely nothing about economic issues or social policy… He basically criticised the feminist and LGBT movements on one side, and the political system and media on the other. That was his campaign" (Pablo Ortellado, interview, 6th December 2019). Bolsonaro's election campaign was illustrative of the political system embracing, with open arms, the phenomenon of culture wars.

Culture wars

When discussing culture, I take up the definition of James Davison Hunter (2006), who views culture as "the sum total of attitudes, values, and opinions of the individuals making up a society" (Hunter 2006: 18). Therefore, I understand cultural conflict to be over "the power to name things, to define reality, to create and shape worlds of meaning" (ibid., 33).

In his book, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Hunter (1991) documents how previously dissimilar social, moral and political issues in the US are linked in a phenomenon he terms *culture wars.* In this phenomenon, which Hunter first noted in the late 1980's, "*cultural conflict is ultimately the struggle for domination*" (Hunter 1991: 52, emphasis in original) in various sectors of public life.

To Hunter, the previous ideological divide between Left and Right has been superseded: "The axis of tension that the terms left and right originally described was just not as salient in making sense of political conflict and social change as it once was" (Hunter 2006: 13). Instead, he describes "political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding" (Hunter 1991: 42), which are based on beliefs that form people's identity, purpose, unity and view of their country. Culture wars can thus be understood as "a struggle over national identity" (ibid., 50), that is, what it means to

be a citizen of a given country, how they view their past and how they imagine their future. For Hunter, ultimately this "cultural conflict is about power – a struggle to achieve or maintain the power to define reality" (ibid., 52) and the way things *are* in society.

The notion that some ideas in society can be understood as a threat to a country's specific traditions, customs and ultimately national identity has shaped the way that I interpret debates concerning migration and the representation of the LGBT community in Chapter 6. Conservative dissent, although perhaps implemented by the movements' leaders for political motives, taps into the moral fabric of the more traditional segments of society that may be experiencing some sort of identity crisis. As such, I view the movements, in their capacity as media vehicles, to seek to realign societal norms to a more conservative position.

But where do these debates take place exactly? Hunter makes the distinction between the two "spheres of symbolic activity" (ibid., 53), private culture and public culture, emphasising that it is the latter domain where culture war debates occur. To Hunter, private culture is comprised of the "symbols and meanings that order experience within the realm of personal experience" (ibid., 53) and guide our understanding of ourselves and relationships with others. On the other hand, public culture is debated in the public sphere and consists of "symbols and meanings that order the life of the community or region or nation as a whole" (ibid., 54). Put simply, public culture is the realm where culture war debates are fought because it is the communal space that deals with national identity.

This perspective adds another layer of understanding to the concept of publics and public spheres explored in Section I of this chapter, as it pinpoints public spheres of thought as the battle ground where narratives of identity, be that national or regional, play out. This brings to my attention the locality of the key right-wing movements in this thesis. The movements, and the anti-corruption movement in general in Brazil, all started in São Paulo. The city is where all the major mass protests occurred, from the pro-impeachment marches to the pre-election rallies. Therefore, I approach this thesis from the perspective of a primarily *Paulistano* phenomenon and the struggles endured by some of the city's citizens.

Further to this, Hunter notes that cultural conflict surpasses previous class struggles such as those described by Karl Marx, as well as religious battles: "Whether one is a Protestant, Catholic, or Jew simply does not mean very much when attempting to explain variations in people's attitudes or values" (ibid., 105). Instead, Hunter delineates two distinct visions of the world and at the centre of this moral divide is how each group defines freedom and justice. He contrasts an orthodox vision, where conservatives tend to define freedom economically and justice socially, and a progressive vision that tends to define freedom socially and justice economically (ibid., 115). This provides a useful framework for comprehending how the movements view freedom in Chapter 5, which deals with economic debates, and divergences in different systems of moral acceptability.

> The central dynamic of the cultural realignment is not merely that different public philosophies create diverse public opinions. These alliances, rather, reflect the *institutionalisation and politicization of two fundamentally different cultural systems.* Each side operates from within its own constellation of values, interests, and assumptions. At the center of each are two distinct conceptions of moral authority –

> two different ways of apprehending reality, of ordering experience, of making moral judgements. Each side of the cultural divide, then, speaks with a different moral vocabulary. Each side operates out of a different mode of debate and persuasion. Each side represents the tendencies of a separate and competing moral galaxy. They are, indeed, "worlds apart" (ibid., 128, emphasis in original).

Culture wars thus refers to political debate in the public sphere about moral systems. Understanding cultural conflict in terms of different cultural systems that enter into confrontation over how they perceive reality and judge what is morally acceptable has provided a useful basis for analysing the data in Chapter 6. As well as conceiving political conflict ideologically, as Left and Right, I also understand it morally, as the core values of progressives and conservatives coming into conflict.

Another scholar who contends that politics can increasingly be regarded as competing systems of moral understanding is George Lakoff (2016). In his book, *Moral politics: how liberals and conservatives think,* Lakoff approaches political conflict from a cognitive linguistics perspective and argues that progressives and conservatives have conflicting visions of the world in their conceptualisation and moral reasoning. He takes up a slightly different approach to that of Hunter and believes that these conflicting views stem from family upbringing. Lakoff suggests society could be thought of in terms of a family, where the parent is government and the children are citizens. This view ultimately entices reflection over the different ways in which to 'raise children', that is, to run society. While this may sound slightly strange, there are some useful points that come out of his work for my purposes.

Lakoff claims two models of the family based on two distinct systems of morality exist: Strict Father and Nurturant Parent (Lakoff 2016: 65, 108). The former relating to the conservative world view and the latter to the progressive perspective. To Lakoff, the Strict Father model is based on punishment, obedience, respect, authority, self-disciple and self-reliance. It holds the assumption that rules need to be enforced and if people do not obey, then punishment must be applied. It is in this way that children become obedient. Respect for authority, self-discipline and autonomy are the desired qualities that are considered fruits of this system, while reliance on others is unwelcome.

On the other hand, the Nurturant Parent model values empathy, compassion, caring, happiness and community spirit. It views that "[c]hildren become responsible, self-disciplined and self-reliant through being cared for and respected, and through caring for others" (Lakoff 2016: 108). In terms of adhering to authority, "obedience of children comes out of their love and respect for their parents, not out of the fear of punishment" (Lakoff 2016: 109).

In the context of this thesis, understanding society in terms of two systems of morality, broadly speaking one focused on punishment whilst the other on empathy, gives insight into how the movements construct conservative narratives. It is the Strict Father system of morality that is the most relevant to my analysis because it provides an explanation and framework for understanding the more punitive factions of Brazilian society. I understand conservative morality to align with strict rules, punishment and traditional societal norms, which are detailed in the arguments put forward in Chapter 6 on law and politics. For people who believe in a punishment model of how society should be run, the penalty for misbehaviour is higher than those with a more lenient and understanding perspective.

In taking up this notion of opposing moral systems, I view political conflict between conservatives and progressives as being grounded in different world views of what is morally acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This viewpoint provides one explanation as to why each side of the political divide is incapable of understanding the other, of engaging in meaningful deliberation, because both sides find the other illogical and ultimately immoral.

However, who is driving these moral debates? In relation to the idea of cultural realignment, Hunter understands it to be "institutionalized chiefly through special interest organizations, denominations, political parties, foundations, competing media outlets, professional associations, and the elites whose ideals, interests, and actions give all of these organizations direction and leadership" (Hunter 2006: 21). While I agree that it is institutions, and elites that guide these institutions, who hold the most power to manipulate culture, I argue it is no longer *only* the realm of elites that enjoys this authority but also the average person (or group of people) where they can exploit social media. Social media has enabled new characters, in some ways everyday people, to acquire positions of prestige in the expanded media sector. Some of the most prominent new, conservative voices in Brazil are those of amateurs who have risen to fame via social media in the form of activists affiliated to social and political movements. Their success online, I argue, has helped to strengthen conservative views in the public sphere in Brazil.

Now to examine the sectors in which these moral conflicts transpire. Hunter (1991), identifies five symbolic fields in which culture wars debates operate in the US, including family, education, media and arts, law, and politics, which are applicable to the Brazilian context. In relation to the family, Hunter outlines that "disputes over the nature and structure of authority, the moral obligations of parenting and marital commitment, the natural and legitimate boundaries of sexual experience, and so on, are all part of the struggle to define the family in its totality" (Hunter 1991: 194). This symbolic field includes debates on topics such as abortion, childcare and homosexuality. In the education sector, tensions are usually over what should get taught in schools. Debates over curriculum, sex education and public funding for schools that appear to be in line with certain ideological beliefs are motives for conflict. Though, it is the area of the media and arts that frequently causes commotion.

Considered "reality-defining institutions" (Hunter 1991: 303), art exhibitions, theatre productions, music, films, books and television are all common battle fields to define reality. "In the very act of *selecting* the stories to cover, the books to publish and review, the film and music to air, and the art to exhibit, these institutions effectively define which topics are important and which issues are relevant – worthy of public consideration" (Hunter 1991: 225, emphasis in original). The selection of these cultural items for promotion in the public arena is often thought to be based on ideological grounding, which in turn triggers dissent.

Furthermore, the symbolic field of law also brings about fierce debate in society. Hunter suggests violence or the threat of violence is the "ultimate foundation of any social order" (Hunter 1991: 174), and therefore laws are required to keep society in order. However, whose laws and interpretations of laws are implemented regularly leads to disagreements. Other factors like the political appointment of supreme court judges by presidents are also impetus for dissent, as I shall show in arguments concerning the Brazilian judiciary in Chapter 6.

Finally, the realm of politics also comes under fire in cultural conflicts as political candidates "run principally on the basis of the symbols of collective life with which they identify in campaign rhetoric… In this light, elections can be seen as rituals regularly enacted through which ordinary people select the ideals of their life together" (Hunter 1991: 272-273). Ultimately, the election process provides society with an opportunity to decide what a given country should, or should not, be through a set a policy proposals.

These five symbolic fields that Hunter outlines have sensitised me to such moral debates and form the basis of my classification of social issues in my analysis of the movements' Facebook posts in Chapter 3. The most important of these issues, including debates over Supreme Court rulings, impunity of politicians and businessmen, proposal of the new migration law, the representation of homosexuality and LGBT persons, funding of art exhibitions, and the media, make up the subsections of Chapter 6 on Brazilian culture wars.

Both Hunter and Lakoff described how moral issues have taken the protagonist position over economic and social class debates in politics, although how did this occur? Andrew Hartman (2015), in his book, *A History of the Culture Wars: A War for the Soul of America*, provides one explanation. Again, there are lessons to take for my purposes from the US-focused work. Hartman suggests the recent rise in conservative culture in the US is in fact a reaction to the 60's, which became famous for its liberation movement and rebellion against the establishment.

To Hartman, the 60's were unusual as they were filled with "erratic behaviour" (Hartman 2015: 9). The decade was a turning point in US history, as it was for many other countries around the world, because it marked the departure from traditional, normative culture and simultaneously the acceptance of progressive agendas. "The sixties were a watershed decade due in large part to the role played by the New Left, a loose configuration of movements that included the anti-war, Black Power, feminist, and gay liberation movements, among others" (ibid., 10). As Hartman notes, the New Left was made up of predominantly young, white US college students, who were stimulated by the civil rights movement and revolting against the Vietnam War by dedicating themselves to left-wing activism (ibid., 11). The identity-based, anti-establishment movement of the 60's quickly became understood as the emergence of a counterculture (ibid., 14), which came to dominate the US and infiltrate across countries worldwide.

In the Brazilian context, I take up this notion and apply it to the New Right. I interpret the right-wing movements in question in this thesis to have been inspired by the libertarian movement and radicalised by the progressive measures and sprawling corruption allegations linked to the PT governments. MBL's, VemPraRuas' and NasRuas' strong anti-PT and anti-establishment stance forms part of their identity, which they promote through radical speech acts via their various online social networks, all with the intention of gaining followers and influencing public political debate and opinion.

Furthermore, Hartman notes that the progressive movement of the 60's was consolidated in US culture by mainstream institutions, such as television programs and the music industry (ibid., 16-18). Despite claiming that the "sixties liberation movements helped tilt the arc of the moral universe toward justice" (ibid., 289), Hartman also highlights that it gave way to leftist radicalism, including radical forms of feminism (ibid., 30). As the New Left radicalised, Hartman argues that this radicalisation paved the way for the Right to react, creating a conflict – a cultural conflict.

I take up Hartman's view and understand the recent rise of right-wing activism in Brazil to be a reaction to the progress, and in some cases radicalisation, of the movements of the New Left (as pointed out in Graph 3, *Political Identity Spectrum,* in Chapter 6). One specific focus of Chapter 6 is progressive art exhibitions, which can be classified as radicalised art forms, and appear to be too confronting for conservative members of Brazilian society.

Throughout the 60's, neoconservatives resisted the New Left and instead remained faithful to traditional US culture and institutions (ibid., 38). The countercultural movements of the New Left, particularly the radicalised variants, were interpreted "as both hostile to traditional American values and dangerously anticapitalist" (ibid., 66). However, that did not stop the cultural revolution from taking shape. Transformations to society led the US down the path of progressive reform. Developments in Black Power initiatives, feminism, LGBT rights and educational curriculum advanced, becoming the battle grounds on which the current-day culture wars rage. Conflicting views between conservatives and progressives on these issues led to further fracturing of national culture (ibid., 290) and the political tensions that persist today.

To concur with Angela Nagle (2017), the online culture wars of the alt-lite, a right-wing political movement also known as the New Right, succeeded in changing culture by altering the Overton Window – the variation of ideas that are accepted in public discourse ranging from unthinkable, radical, acceptable, sensible, popular and political. They have done so by popularising subcultural, right-wing memes, bringing them from the fringes of counterculture closer to the mainstream, which has shaped public debate and the political scene (Nagle 2017). It is from this perspective that I view the movements in question in this thesis as important reality-defining mechanisms in their capacity as media vehicles that are responsible for the production and circulation of countercultural memes, which amplify cultural tensions.

In my analysis, I focus on the tensions and reactions of the New Right to the attention and public promotion of some of the movements of the New Left in Brazil. Consequently, I consider the conservative reaction a counterattack to attention given to New Left movements, in the form of aggressive posts that enrage audiences and demean opponents. This idea of attention, enraging and demeaning is central to present-day tensions in Brazilian society and something that aids my understanding of cultural, social and political conflict. For example, one group of people, or a public, receives positive attention of some sort. Following this attention, counterpublics experience some form of jealousy or hostility to that attention. As a result, counterpublics seek revenge and attack the attention that was initially given. Attacks by counterpublics can therefore be understood as a process of attention-jealousy-revenge. I argue that social media has increased opportunities for attention, jealousy and revenge, and I apply this process to the findings throughout this thesis. More specifically, my focus is on the revenge component of this process, which, in some cases, I view as taking the shape of purposefully provocative counterattacks that use outrage to demean opponents.

I now turn to look at how recent changes in cultural frameworks such as the success of progressive measures have resulted in traditional segments of society experiencing a shift in personal status and power.

Status & power

As suggested above in the literature on culture wars, the 20th century saw significant shifts in status and power in society. Minority groups such as women, blacks and LGBT persons gained important milestones in their quest for respect and equality. The promotion of minorities and modern-day identity politics, on the Left or Right side of the political spectrum, is about recognition, dignity and respect (Fukuyama 2018). For example, women's flight for equal salaries to that of men can be considered to have not only to do with the monetary benefit but also the desire for equal recognition of dignity and status (ibid., 81-82). As for democratic elites, some have suggested they are rebelling and doing things for monetary reasons such as marrying people with the same salary for social status reasons, which is in turn creating a wider gap between the status of the elite and lower classes causing further inequality (Lasch 1996: 25-49).

According to German sociologist Max Weber (1978), 'status' means "an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges" (Weber 1978: 305) and is based on three broad elements: life experiences, education, and hereditary or occupational prestige (ibid., 305-306). It is typically expressed through marriage, social groups and assets or possessions (ibid.).

Furthermore, Weber asserts that a 'status group' refers to multiple people within a larger group that claim special social esteem and potentially have status monopolies over other groups (ibid., 306). To him, status groups are formed through life experiences, particularly occupation (occupational status groups), family heritage (hereditary status groups), and political or hierocratic power (political or hierocratic status groups) (ibid.). In the context of this thesis, I am interested in the latter, the movements' concern with political status, which feeds into historical status as well. That is, through their political successes, the movements also acquire a place in history and thus achieve historical recognition – arguments that I elaborate on in Chapter 5.

In terms of social conflict, changes to status through lack of recognition and social integration is considered a primary problem. Noam Gidron and Peter Hall (2019) contend that support for radical parties, be that Right or Left of the political divide, is a problem of social integration and particularly the result of social marginalisation. In their study, they found that recent economic developments and cultural shifts have caused large segments of society to feel socially-marginalised (Gidron & Hall 2019: 27). While changes to cultural frameworks have been "advantageous for women, ethnic minorities and people with diverse gender identities… these steps toward inclusion have been double-sided: people who hold more traditional values no longer see those values reflected in elite discourse, and this gap can lead individuals to feel marginalized vis-à-vis mainstream society" (ibid., 7). This idea is particularly pertinent to my analysis of the conservative reaction to progressive art exhibitions and their promotion in mainstream media discussed in Chapter 6. Conservatives feel misrepresented by such public progressive artworks.

Part of this social marginalisation can be caused by a loss of social status. Gidron and Hall emphasise the importance of subjective social status when judging how individuals rank themselves in society. People's subjective social status is where they believe they stand relative to others in society (ibid., 5). One example of this could be someone who views speaking multiple languages as a marker of status, as opposed to someone else who views being good at sport to be a marker of status. This is different

to more objective social status that refers to "the rank a person enjoys within the hierarchy of prestige characteristics of all societies" (ibid.). Here, prestige characteristics refers to classic socioeconomic markers of status, including education, income and wealth (Hall 2020).

These concepts of how people judge their own social and political status in society have made me reflect upon what I perceive as the movements' markers of status. The movements primarily get their political power from the number of followers they have on social media and the amount of coverage they receive in the mainstream press, which ultimately lead to historical status. This is their marker of political power. The larger their online following and the more recognition from mainstream media, the more fame the movements acquire and the more likely they are to influence public debate, opinion of politics and subsequently voting behaviour – with obvious emphasis placed on getting members from their own movement elected as well as political allies. The movements' markers of status are therefore political as they strive to influence political reforms and processes as well as public opinion about politics.

Cultural conflict can also be viewed as a reaction to loss of social status (ibid.). Segments of the population view society to be moving in the wrong direction by forces beyond their control. People feel alienated when the media promotes a set of values that are very different to their own set of values and they start to feel marginalised by society (ibid.). Social and cultural changes affect people's sense of belonging and inclusion in a society, some positively whilst other negatively, and these changes bring about alterations to national narratives. These national narratives join the nation's past to its present and tell people whether they belong or not (ibid.). Ultimately, they impact people's identity.

In my analysis, I focus on what happens during these conflicts, which I propose operate in an attention-jealousy-revenge process, and examine some of the tactics used by the movements to engage in and proliferate online conflicts.

In online social networks, content with greater moral emotion is key to the spread of political ideas in a process that can be called "moral contagion" (Brady et al. 2017). In the same vein, moral outrage is understood to be the dominant emotion that circulates on digital media (Crockett 2017). To Molly Crockett (2017), digital media has modified the stimuli that trigger moral outrage by producing an abundance of "outrageous 'clickbait'" (Crockett 2017: 769) that she claims operates within a stimulus-response-outcome framework. She argues that "immoral acts encountered online incite stronger moral outrage than immoral acts encountered in person or via traditional forms of media" (Crockett 2017: 769).

The notion that content which enrages audiences is most likely to go viral online has shaped my methodological approach to analysing part of the data in this thesis. The analysis of the movements' 2017 Facebook posts in Chapter 3, thus, is comprised of a section that focuses on exposing the virality of posts that generate anger.

Although often frequently regarded in a pessimistic manner, the spread of moral outrage can also "benefit society by holding bad actors accountable and sending a message to others that such behaviour is socially unacceptable" (Crockett 2017: 770). This could be particularly beneficial to societies that have high perceived corruption indexes such as Brazil (Transparency International 2018) because it might increase the reputational risk of corrupt actors – an argument which I uphold in Chapter 4 on anti-corruption discourses. This idea coincides with the understanding that the power

governments worldwide once enjoyed is decaying, whilst small organisations are increasingly gaining power via digital and online media tools (Naím 2013: 76-106).

Prior to the recent political turmoil in Brazil, the PT were at the top of the political hierarchical ladder. In order to combat them at the voting polls, the movements in this thesis engaged in ridiculing attacks on anything remotely related to the PT – be that socialist policy or political allies – and other aggressive tactics that sought to bring down the party's status. These aggressive techniques are thought to be a response to progressive social and cultural changes achieved during the PT governments. They make up part of the revenge tactics used in the attention-jealousy-revenge logic I employ to explain such online conflicts and are essentially mechanisms for engaging in status and power struggles.

One scholar who delineates how to attain and use power is American community organiser, Saul Alinsky, in his famous 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals.* In it, Alinsky outlines methods for the Have-Nots (disadvantaged people) in society to bring about change and gain more power. He describes a set of 13 power tactics to engage in successful political action, as listed below.

1. Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.
2. Never go outside the experience of your people.
3. Whenever possible go outside the experience of the enemy.
4. Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.
5. Ridicule is man's most potent weapon.
6. A good tactic is one your people enjoy.
7. A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.
8. Keep the pressure on.
9. The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.
10. The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition.
11. If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.
12. The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.
13. Pick the target, freeze it, personalise it, and polarise it.

Employed simultaneously, these tactics make the perfect arsenal to engage in what Alinsky calls "mass political jujitsu" (Alinsky 1971: 152) against the Haves (rich and powerful), whereby their weaknesses are constantly attacked. In a speech at the 2018 MBL National Conference, Pedro D'Eyrot explained that MBL's communication strategy is based on these tactics. As such, I use these power tactics to analyse the movements' posts, particularly those that ridicule (tactic number 5) and polarise with a specific target (tactic number 13), and understand MBL's marketing strategy to be primarily concerned with power struggles – more so than furthering neoliberal ideas.

The movements have succeeded in elevating their political and social status through various power struggles, whereby they feed avid followers outrageous content filled with aggressive language via their social media posts.

III. Social Media Politics

This section is comprised of multiple schools of thought, all relating to social media and its use for political ends. These include literature on memes, the spreadability of online content and concept of the spectacle to explain how social relations take place in digital environments where social media has taken over the role of mainstream media.

In Brazil, studies that emerged after the June 2013 protests show that the communication universe is greater than traditional media and that social media, as well as being vital to the mobilisation of masses of people, also operates as an alternative media source (Peruzzo 2013). The New Right capitalised on this. "The right-wing growth is therefore, on the one hand, an Internet based phenomenon but, on the other, it is also the result of a complex articulation between street and social network based politics" (Kalil 2018: 8). This dynamic of street and social network politics first catapulted onto the Brazilian political scene in the June 2013 protests, which were characterised as a "spontaneous, horizontal and leaderless movement, [that] expressed the frustration of 'ordinary' Brazilians" (Jiménez-Martínez 2020: 92).

By the 2018 elections, the migration of political debate to social media had strengthened, with social media and WhatsApp overtaking mainstream media to assume the protagonist position of public political debate. In an interview during the electoral period with professor of media and communication studies at USP, Maria Cristina Castilho Costa, she asserts that "all the political debate is taking place on social media… because the press is very lost, mainstream media is *very* lost and the discussions that are being had there seem as if you are reading a supermarket catalogue" (Maria Cristina Castilho Costa, interview, 19th September 2018). As I shall show throughout the thesis, but particularly in Chapters 3 and 6, with a lack of critical political debate on mainstream media, social media pages such as those of the movements in this thesis filled the void and produced partisan political commentary that was lapped up by their various publics.

The increasing power social media has on the political stage is undeniable. To German-American political scientist, Yascha Mounk (2018), "[o]ver the past quarter century… the rise of the Internet, and particularly of social media, has rapidly shifted the power balance between political insiders and political outsiders" (ibid., 16), allowing anyone with an Internet connection and social media account to have influence over masses of people worldwide. By "empowering outsiders, digital technology destabilizes governing elites all over the world and speeds up the pace of change" (ibid., 149). Change, which whilst being positive in some cases such as the Black Lives Matter Movement, is also claimed by some to compress the time democracy needs to function properly, by orienting towards rapid political action (Hassan 2012). This rapidity is in large part put down to the velocity in which online content, such as memes, spreads.

Memes and their spreadability

In his 1976 work, *The Selfish Gene,* Richard Dawkins applied evolutionary theory to cultural change and coined the term 'meme', derived from the Greek word *mimema* meaning 'something which is imitated', to describe units of culture that act like infectious genes with their ubiquitous diffusion from person to person. To him, memes

are "a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation"* (Dawkins 1989: 249) and include things such as ideas, songs, language, jokes, traditions and fashions. With the advent of the Internet, the term was quickly adopted to refer to Internet memes. Today, the velocity in which memes spread, or are imitated, online and their various derivatives makes the popular circulation of any other culture artefact appear glacial.

In the current-day context of digital media, Shifman (2013) defines Internet memes as "units of popular culture that are circulated, imitated, and transformed by individual Internet users, creating a shared cultural experience in the process" (Shifman 2013: 367). She understands memes to diffuse at the micro level from individual to individual, yet mould the macro structure of society that shapes digital culture. In the context of this thesis, I am interested in the macro effects of the diffusion of memes to form online publics. Based on Shifman's three-dimensional typology for analysing Internet memes, which focuses on their features that can be imitated including content, form and stance (ibid., 367), I primarily examine their content (the issues or ideas conveyed) and form (meme, video, link, status update), and additionally analyse the emotion being expressed. These categories make up Table 1 on the analysis of movements' 2017 Facebook posts in Chapter 3.

In terms of the virality of memes, many scholars have theorised about how they spread (Moore 2018; Giesea 2016; Dawkins 1989; Chielens & Heylighen 2005; Jenkins, Li, Krauskopf & Green 2009). Instead of emphasising the replicability of memes, Jenkins, Li, Krauskopf & Green (2009) propose an alternative model centred on the idea of spreadable media, which views the repurposing and transformation of memetic content to add value and is essential for such media content to be localised to different contexts. This type of participatory culture, whereby consumer publics are also media producers (Jenkins 2006: 3), is central to the popular diffusion of the movements' social media posts by their followers.

The popularity of conservative social media pages, through the sharing of their content online, suggests the work of Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld (2006), originally published in 1955, which discovered that people form opinions in groups meaning that opinions are influenced by interpersonal relations with peers, is still relevant. Opinion leaders, which in the context of this thesis can be understood as the founders of the movements and their Facebook pages, intervene in the communication process between mass media and the public. Katz and Lazarsfeld describe a two-step flow of communication whereby ideas from mainstream media are taken up by 'opinion leaders' and then passed down to other segments of society. This point I demonstrate in Chapter 3 when revealing the way MBL monitors key issues discussed by mainstream media and influencers on Twitter to know what issues it itself needs to address. Katz and Lazarsfeld reaffirm the central role of social networks and opinion formers in shaping political opinions, which is ever more relevant today with the sharing function on social media.

In terms of the purposeful transmission of certain ideas to publics by opinion leaders, classic media studies texts such as Gustave Le Bon's 1896 work, *The Crowd,* provide effective persuasion techniques for leaders that remain applicable today. Three principle expedients leaders can use to imbue the mind of crowds, or, in the case of this thesis, online followers, with ideas and beliefs are: affirmation, repetition and contagion (Le Bon 2001: 72). Repeated statements become embedded in the depths of our unconsciousness where, over time, they motivate our actions. This is what gives

advertisements their astonishing power. “When an affirmation has been sufficiently repeated… what is called a current of opinion is formed and the powerful mechanism of contagion intervenes. Ideas, sentiments, emotions, and beliefs possess in crowds a contagious power” (ibid., 73). Today, contagion is frequently felt online through the sharing of social media content, as well as at street protests, that helps to circulate news and ideas. The movements’ constant criticism of the PT, socialism, corruption and progressive culture gives way to the proliferation of online outrage, which is made possible through the sharing function.

With the many different affordances of social media, it is easy to understand how platforms such as Facebook are at once tech companies, publishers, media companies and advertising platforms (Andrews 2019: 57-73). This gives them considerable power to manipulate political discourse in the public sphere. Martin Moore (2018), in his book, *Democracy Hacked: Political Turmoil and Information Warfare in the Digital Age,* describes how the engagement functions, rapid spread of news, and ability of political marketers to target users and transmit messages with trust, all make for a destructive concoction that transformed digital media platforms into networks of political propaganda.

Initially used to keep in contact with friends and upload photos, Facebook changed in May 2012 when the company transformed “the platform into the most powerful behavioural advertising system the world has ever known” (ibid., 119). It proved its market value to investors by monetising users’ attention and giving businesses intimate access to its billions of online users and their networks of friends and family. Facebook enables propagandists to target their audiences with direct messages delivered with trust in personalised News Feeds via their personal social networks. Trust in online content comes not from its author but from whoever shared the content (The Media Insight Project 2017). Therefore, opinions of friends in social networks are trusted more so than media outlets. What this means is that through leveraging the power of friendships, Facebook hacks Katz and Lazarsfeld’s two-step flow of communication (Moore 2018: 125). Opinion leaders, or influencers with large online followings such as the movements in this thesis, become political propagandists when they share politically-motivated messages to their publics. It is in this way that Facebook, and its many subsidiaries including WhatsApp, Instagram and Messenger, is “the most powerful platform for influencing elections in the history of modern democracy” (ibid., 135).

The way in which content is shared online through networks of trust means that “virtually every story is augmented with someone’s opinion” (Marwick 2018: 504). What’s more, “people are not necessarily looking to inform others: they share stories (and pictures, and videos) to express themselves and broadcast their identity, affiliations, values, and norms” (ibid., 505). The idea that people publish and consume online content that fortifies their identity is fundamental to consumption of partisan news, which is “oriented more toward offering identity-confirming information to partisan audiences while objective media strive for accuracy and aspire to neutrality” (Benkler, Faris & Roberts 2018: 77). This concept of identity-confirming partisan news is relevant to explaining the popularity of the movements’ posts among their follows to help form publics of the New Right. When people do not approve of corrupt actions or progressive measures, they share online content that supports their hostility towards

these issues which confirms them in their worldview. This provides an insight into how the previous counterculture of the New Right morphed into the mainstream in Brazil.

Yet, social media critics warned of the dangers of letting individuals (or algorithms) select their news feeds, claiming that this risked causing "echo chambers or information cocoons" (Sunstein 2007: 44), whereby users only consume material that pleases them and not which they detest. Such an environment provides a breeding ground for intolerance to diverse ideas and opinions. In the absence of physical interaction and oral dialogue, digital social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, mainly permit social relations to occur via images – or spectacles.

The spectacle

'The spectacle is both the result and project of the existing mode of production… it is not a collection of images, but a social relation among persons mediated by images. In all its particular forms, information, propaganda, advertising or direct consumption of entertainment, the spectacle constitutes the present model of socially dominant life.' These were the words of Guy Debord in his 1973 film, Society of the Spectacle. Here, Debord critiques contemporary consumer culture and mass marketing for their role in manipulating social relations via images, and since the advent of social media, Debord's work has seen a revival.

To Douglas Kellner (2017), the modern-day media spectacle consists of "media constructs that present events which disrupt ordinary and habitual flows of information. These become popular stories which capture the attention of the media and the public, and circulate through broadcasting networks, the Internet, social networking, smart phones, and other new media and communication technologies… [they become] tools of socio-political transformation" (Kellner 2017: 2). In contemporary US politics, the successful election of Donald Trump has been accredited to perfectly orchestrated political spectacles. With his outrageous comments causing media frenzies and consuming the Twitter-sphere, Trump "is a master of media spectacle" (ibid., 2). He has conquered the task of transforming politics into entertainment. Just as Trump creates "daily spectacles of political attack, insulting and negatively defining opponents" (ibid., 1), so too do the movements in this thesis and President Bolsonaro.

At the 2018 MBL National Conference, Pedro D'Eyrot gave a presentation about the theoretical thoughts that influenced the movement's communication and marketing strategy, as explained previously in this chapter. He described how he understands the current political reality to be one of political spectacles and cited the work of Debord:

> After mass communication, after industrialisation, interpersonal relations are made via images… with the emergence of industrialisation joint with capitalism, people start to become cultural products of the entertainment industry. Then they start to build interpersonal relations via images… This turned people into spectators as well as political actors and it is from this perspective that we engage in political action at MBL (Pedro D'Eyrot, personal filmed video of speech, 23rd November 2018).

Pedro emphasises the impact of images on interpersonal relations. Through engagement on Facebook, by sharing images in the form of memes or video content, audiences are viewed as political actors that help to spread MBL's message. The fact

that Pedro references Debord's work suggests that MBL perceives a large portion of its activities to fall within the scope of mass marketing and communication. Throughout the thesis, I note how the movements help to create online spectacles though their production and dissemination of a nimiety of posts. Posts, which are frequently aimed at grabbing the attention of Brazil's middle-class, such as those addressing corruption as Brazilian lawyer Modesto Carvalhosa explains. "The fight against corruption was a fight of the middle-class… The people against corruption were well-educated with a salary sufficient enough to not have to worry about survival" (Modesto Carvalhosa, interview, 27th September 2018). These debates, therefore, exclude large sections of Brazilian society that live below the poverty line. This was most clearly illustrated to me one evening on my way back to my apartment, located behind Paulista Avenue, from my weekly meeting with Monitor.

Paulista Avenue
29th January 2019

For a concrete city, São Paulo can be quite colourful. The principal street, Paulista Avenue, lights up at night transforming the towering landscape into a luminescent show. A few tall buildings are decorated with 'mini Eiffel Towers', some sort of antenna perched on their rooftops, each glowing bright yellow in the evening sky. Some other buildings also display an array of multi-coloured flashing lights that are reminiscent of the Christmas season.

The most impressive light display belongs to the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP). The FIESP building is pyramid in shape and when lit up, its front façade appears like a blanket of lights with alternating images and patterns. During peak political moments, be that local or international, it often displays the national flag of countries in show of support. FIESP, as its name suggests, undoubtedly upholds the interests of the elite business class. A *Paulistano* friend of mine who worked in collaboration with FIESP once described its senior executives as 'artefacts from the 19th century' – all old, white men with archaic political ideas and interests.

As I get out at Trianon-MASP metro station, opposite the FIESP building, I take a side street leading down to my apartment two blocks away. On my descent, I pass by a man, lying on his side in the middle of the footpath. With grey ripped trousers and dirt covering his bare feet, he is wrapped in a large poster that would usually be displayed on a newspaper stand. The poster is of the front cover of *Veja,* a renowned weekly news magazine, with a picture of former Interim president Michel Temer, frowning, alongside the words: 'Tightening the Siege on Temer'.

Temer's short presidency was plagued with corruption allegations and stiflingly low popularity due to his reformist agenda, which disfavoured the working classes. The irony of the homeless man wrapped in such a poster, the only thing he appears to possess to keep him warm, sends a shock to my heart. Poverty, even in Brazil's wealthiest state, is not restricted to the city's outskirts. It is present everywhere, even one street away from São Paulo's principal avenue. And, even though people may be located in the city centre, that does not mean that they have access to and participate in public political debate.

View from my apartment window of Paulista Avenue night skyline
24th March 2018

Man sleeping in street behind Paulista Avenue wrapped in Temer poster
2nd April 2018

Although this thesis's scope is not centred on debates concerning class, I do recognise that class interests have their part to play. São Paulo is the business capital of Brazil and therefore business interests frequently take precedence. Yet, it is also a place where extreme inequality is inescapable. Such inequality affects who has the right and means to enter public spheres of political debate – particularly those that are taking place on novel social media platforms. While some people possess the tools required to alter power structures in society, others do not. There are economic and educational constraints that impede entrance into debates circulating in the public sphere and awareness of cultural conflicts.

Conclusions

Throughout the different literature and studies examined in this chapter, there is one overriding theme in all: power. Today, power is not so much in the Left-Right divide, as it is in technological advances in the media and communication sector. Power is no longer only influenced by an elite ruling class, but driven by young people and emerging movements on social media that are using online platforms as instruments to fulfil their political goals. Gone are the days when politicians and media professionals primarily manipulated political debates in the public sphere. These debates are now being led by social media 'influencers' – that is, anyone with a large online following posting politically-motivated content. It is no longer a prerequisite to have formal training in either politics or journalism to be able to influence political debate in the public sphere.

The movements, in their capacities as media vehicles, not only contribute to the circulation of texts that help to form right-wing publics, but the popularity of their online content also disrupts traditional power structures in Brazilian society. Decentralised power structures, enhanced by citizens' ability to disseminate news and events via social media, are replacing traditional frameworks of media dominance and political power.

The battle ground for these power struggles is no longer centred in economic debates, but it is taking place in moral debates within the fields of the family, education, media and arts, law and politics. These debates ultimately seek to alter people's status

in society through improved recognition and representation, which influence individual and national identity. Power tactics are used to attack opponents and provoke outrage, which is most likely to go viral.

The sharing function of social media enables platforms to become political marketing tools to manipulate public debate, strengthen partisan identities and ultimately build online publics. These social relations are being driven by the circulation of images online. All the theoretical works outlined in this chapter have shaped my critical thinking and provided a framework for analysing the movement's Facebook and interview data.

However, one question remains and that is how I came to interview all the movements. I was fortunate enough to have a well-connected and respected key contact at San Fran law school, professor Fernando Menezes, who arranged an interview with me and a fellow law professor of his. Which professor? None other than one of the authors of Dilma's impeachment petition – Janaína Paschoal. The next chapter recites my encounter with Janaína and how she connected me with the movements.

Chapter 2
Methodology

Faculdade de Direito do Largo de São Francisco, São Paulo
8th June 2018

The Friday afternoon that I interview Janaína Paschoal is like any other in São Paulo – slow moving tides of red rear car lights in bumper to bumper traffic, regular horn honks and occasional shouts from overly frustrated drivers. Whilst anxiously seated in my Uber, it occurs to me that I have underestimated the 5pm-traffic and the risk of running late to my first ever interview is quite high. Stressed, with still three blocks until we reach San Fran law school, I get out of the Uber and run the rest of the way. I manage to arrive at the Department of Criminal Law on level 10 only three minutes past our agreed meeting time. Panting, I walk up to the reception desk. "Janaína hasn't arrived yet but you can wait for her in the waiting room", the receptionist informs.

I am nervous to meet Janaína. Having seen the YouTube videos of her speech in front of San Fran during the impeachment process, ferociously swinging the Brazilian flag around her head like a lasso about to tame a wild beast, I am cautious not to hold a biased opinion of her before our interview. I achieve this due to my anti-corruption stance, but also because I am a foreigner, which I feel works in my favour throughout my PhD for two reasons. Firstly, I was not living in Brazil during the years leading up to the impeachment, therefore I was not exposed to the building tensions in society and critical media framing, from both the Left and Right, of the political turmoil and key figures. I have thus resisted falling into the polarisation trap and can be critical of both sides of politics. Secondly, one thing I note throughout all my interviews with the activists is their willingness to collaborate with me and grant me access to their movements because I am an Australian researcher. They appear to be attuned to the fact that PhD theses about them from non-Brazilians will, even if only in some small way, shape how they and the political turmoil in Brazil are interpreted internationally.

When Janaína arrives, I immediately feel a sense of gratitude and warmth from her as she reaches out to greet me with open arms – a stark contrast to the flag-swinging Janaína I had seen online previously. Walking into the boardroom opposite, I thank her for agreeing to an interview, knowing she must have a very tight schedule if the rumours of her running for a position in Jair Bolsonaro's party are true. As time has told, Janaína became the deputy to receive the most votes – over 2 million – in the country's history.

Janaína begins by saying how important and relevant my research topic is to society in general and to the anti-corruption movement in Brazil more specifically. Our discussion is centred on the numerous fake social media accounts created in Janaína's name, her subsequent creation of official social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook, mainstream media coverage of corruption and the effect of the Criminal Organisation Law 12.850, which introduced the use of plea-bargaining, on corruption investigations. However, it is my conversation with Janaína following our formal interview that has the greatest impact on this thesis.

Janaína is well-respected among the Right and has a good relationship with the pro-impeachment movements. She puts me in contact with the spokespersons from two of the key movements under investigation in this thesis: Kim Kataguiri

> from MBL and Carla Zambelli from NasRuas. The success of my meeting with Janaína profoundly shapes my research methodology. Through her, I gained credibility and am given access to the movements, allowing me to perform interviews and other ethnographic practices, which I shall now go on to detail in this chapter.

When considering what methodological approaches best suit this thesis, qualitative techniques including content analysis and interviews are an obvious choice, given I am investigating media characteristics of political movements. However, this chapter explores the work of scholars that have broadened my perspective on other possible ways to approach this thesis. There are endless methods but because of my multi-method approach, I will just talk about a select few in this chapter. By living in São Paulo over a 2-year period, I have the opportunity to undertake anthropological fieldwork. I draw on methods that overlap into ethnography and ethnomethodology, discursive psychology and other strategies centred on the examination of naturalistic material. As well as these qualitative techniques, I also draw on quantitative methods when analysing the movements' Facebook posts and the repercussions they had among the movements' followers.

This chapter is comprised of two sections. Section I, *Qualitative Research Practices*, has six sub-sections on content and discourse analysis, interview processes, interview validation techniques, naturally-occurring data, ethnography and ethnomethodology, and discursive psychology. Section II, *Quantitative Research Practices*, has only one sub-section on quantitative techniques, which briefly explains how quantitative data is used to complement the qualitative data in the thesis.

I. Qualitative Research Practices

Throughout the thesis, I adapt an approach to qualitative analysis that blends collecting and analysing text, video and audio data. My goal is to investigate the way the movements act and react to social, cultural and political phenomena, as well as examine how they construct their symbolic worlds and apply meaning to things. I begin by exploring one of the most common qualitative practices, content and discourse analysis.

Content & discourse analysis

Rodney Benson (2006) defines content analysis as a research method that describes, analyses and maps patterns of visual or textual meaning and outlines three key questions to be asked during this process: Who is being quoted? What are the main topics? What are the main ideas? These questions are useful when identifying patterns across the movements' Facebook posts including common targets, reoccurring imagery and communication techniques such as ridiculing. Asking these questions when analysing the posts helps me classify them into sub-categories, including corruption, economic, and social and cultural issues, which form the main body chapters of this thesis.

In the words of Benson, content analysis tries to bring some form of order to the chaos we often find in the media. It can employ an interpretive method that attempts

to uncover hidden and underlying meaning of text, or it can employ a method that deals with the surface meaning of texts (2006). He suggests this latter method is the most frequently used in qualitative analysis because it is replicable and represents the most accurate account of the experience of the large majority of readers. Therefore, content analysis is primarily about looking for patterns in the surface meaning of texts whilst using minimal interpretation of textual features.

As well as applying this method of analysis to the Facebook posts, the idea of looking for patterns in text has influenced how I extract meaning from the interview process as well and, as such, I draw on this approach when analysing the interview transcriptions. However, I also perform a more in-depth analysis of the Facebook posts and interview transcriptions by seeking to reveal underlying meaning of imagery and ideas.

There are many ways in which discourse analyses can be performed and one study that influences my approach is the work of Myra Marx Ferree, William Anthony Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards and Dieter Rucht (2004). The scholars put forward a four-part coding system to categorise newspaper articles including by article, utterance, speaker and idea element. The methodology is a thorough approach to conducting media content analysis and provides a logical way of demonstrating results in numerical format. However, given I am the sole researcher of my project, I believe it would be too challenging to complete such a detailed content analysis.

Nevertheless, the study by Ferree and her colleagues is insightful and influences my selection of the ideas and speakers from the movements that I focus on in this thesis. I interview the leaders of the movements, under the assumption that they have the most influence over the movements' stance and actions, and give preference to texts that are rich in content. Instead of coding each utterance for idea elements, I prefer to take a more holistic approach. After categorising content into the broad categories corruption, economic, and social and cultural issues as stated above, I further divide each issue into sub-categories of different discourses that build the basis of each chapter and focus on how these discourses helped to form publics of the New Right.

Interview processes

Turning now to the interviews, I employ purposive sampling to select interview participants. The participants I choose to interview are either the spokespersons, and therefore faces, of the movements or key founding members that work in the areas of media production, communication and marketing, and social media account management. The purpose of selecting people from these roles for an interview is to expose behind-the-scenes media characteristics and processes of the movements.

One scholar whose work has influenced my methodological approach and analysis of the interview data is Tim Rapley (2007) and his ideas on interview data being a product of the local interaction of speakers, radical voices bringing alternative viewpoints, influence of the interviewer, voice recording and off-tape talk, construction of versions of reality, and finally previous literature moulding interviewee or interviewer views.

Rapley contends that "interview talk, and hence the 'interview data' that emerges from this, is the product of the local interaction of speakers" (Rapley 2007: 16). Taking on board this view, I reflect upon how I interact with interviewees and, where

possible, include this information when reporting the results. Furthermore, Rapley emphasises that researchers should analyse exactly what happens during the course of the whole interview process, that is, how previous knowledge and conversations influence interview discussions, how the interviewer's "interaction produced the trajectory of talk, how specific versions of reality are co-constructed, how specific identities, discourses and narratives are produced" (ibid.). This idea of reporting not only interviewees' responses, but all influences that led to the interview taking place and my contribution to discussions, reveals how the interviewer plays a vital role in manufacturing interview data.

Throughout my interviews with the movements, I am sensitive to my own personal influence over interviewee responses. Thus, I seek to maintain a neutral stance on issues discussed and where possible agree with what interviewees are saying, even if my honest opinions are conflicting. My aim here is to avoid alienating interviewees and instead make them feel as comfortable as possible and willing to express their true sentiments.

Rapley's thoughts on the recruitment of interviewees have also brought my attention to the potential impact of differing viewpoints. As he notes:

> It is important to try and get a range of views on the topic of your research, as those few interviewees who produce 'radically different' or contrasting talk can often be central to modifying your theories. Above all, it is vital to take note about the recruitment process and to offer it in reports of the research as questions of access and recruitment can be central to understanding the 'outcomes' of the research (ibid., 17).

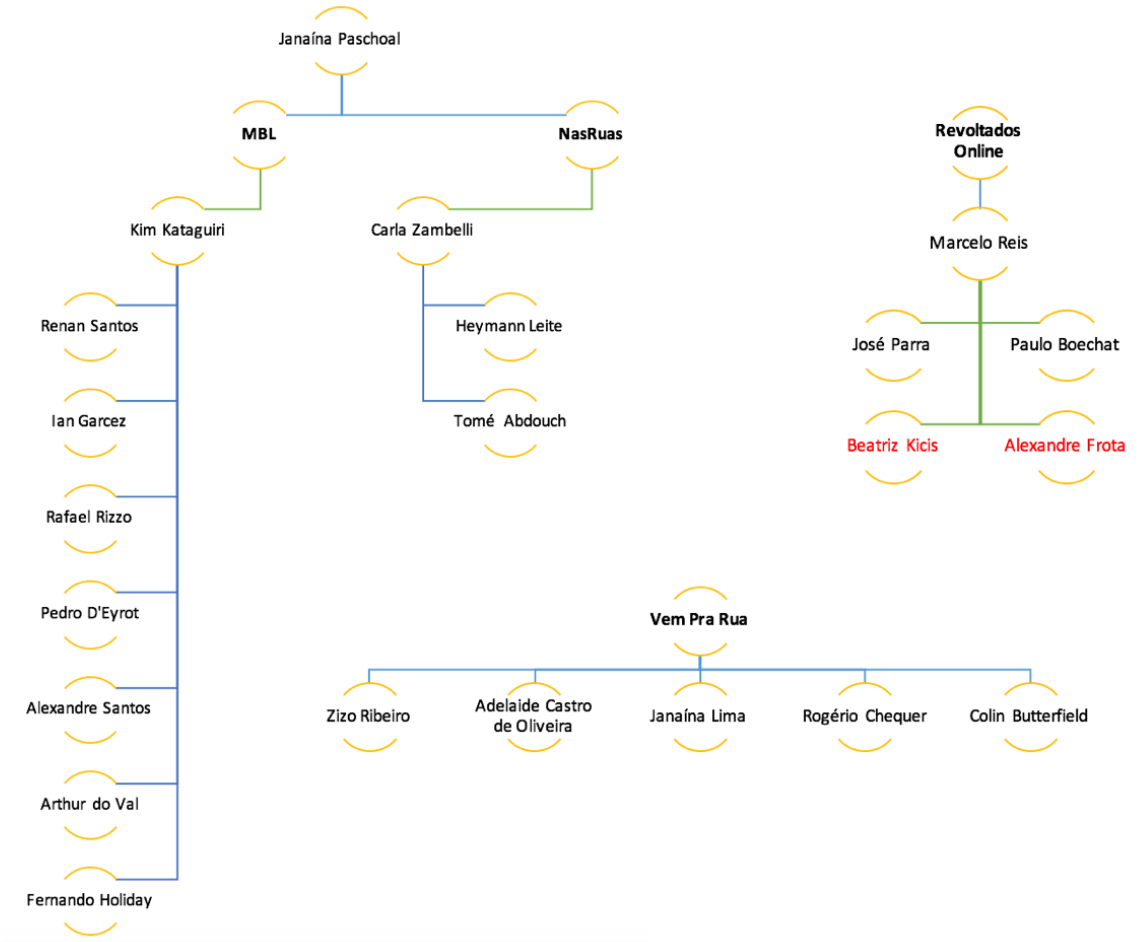
This acknowledgement of the importance of having a variety of opinions about a research topic, including radically different views, leads me to expand the interview process to other smaller movements and an array of specialists in relevant fields, with the aim of unveiling new avenues of thought. Also, it emphasises the importance of reporting who I was able to get in contact with to interview and who I was not – depicted in the diagram below – which could lead to potential limitations of my research.

Additionally, Rapley discusses possible influences on the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. In reference to the interviewer, he notes such key factors as "your recruitment conversation, the physical space, your introduction, your status, your gender... your questions, your answers, your comments, your gestures" (ibid., 19) all impact the interaction with interviewees. Upon taking this into consideration, I view my recruitment process in a different light. As noted in the introductory diary entry of this chapter, I understand my purposive sampling approach, which started with Janaína Paschoal, to have influenced interviewees opinions of me as the researcher and impacted their decision to agree to an interview.

Furthermore, there is the potential for vast external factors, some out of my control, to impact not only my recruitment process but also the data and outcomes of my research. With this in mind, I revise how I depict my recruitment process when reporting the findings to identify key influential factors. To display my recruitment process in a simple way, I produce a hierarchical diagram (see below) of the purposive sampling process used to recruit interviewees from the movements, starting from the initial interviewee and continuing down through the chain of interviewees. The diagram also includes interview candidates that either declined an interview or were

unreachable. These are marked in red font. This clearly demonstrates some key external influences and highlights certain limitations to my research findings and methodology.

Purposive Sampling Hierarchies of Interviews with the Movements



The hierarchical diagram beginning in the top left depicts the first of my interviews with Professor Janaína Paschoal, whom I was put in contact with by my key contact at USP and fellow colleague of Janaína, Professor Fernando Menezes. I note that the seniority of Professor Menezes in the Law Faculty and any pre-existing relations with Janaína were crucial to her acceptance of an interview with me. My connection with Janaína through Professor Menezes, that is, my connection through a friend of a friend, supports the notion of the cohesive power of weak ties in social networks (Granovetter 1973).

From my successful interview with Janaína, she connected me with Kim Kataguiri from MBL and Carla Zambelli from NasRuas. Undoubtedly, Janaína's authority as co-author of Dilma Rousseff's successful impeachment petition would have influenced both Kim and Carla to accept my interview. From these positive interviews, the two spokespersons put me in contact with various other members of their movements including: from MBL, Renan Santos, Ian Garcez, Rafael Rizzo, Pedro D'Eyrot, Alexandre Santos, Arthur do Val and Fernando Holiday; and from NasRuas, Heymann Leite and Tomé Abdouch.

The smaller hierarchical diagram to the top right displays my successful and failed attempts at interviewing participants of the movement Revoltados Online. I first encountered the founder of the movement, Marcelo Reis, filming a live streaming of himself on Paulista Avenue at a small #*ForçaBolsonaro* (#StrengthBolsonaro) protest on the 9th September 2018, three days after Bolsonaro was stabbed at a rally in Minas Gerais. Although, it wasn't until mid-2019 that I managed to meet up with Marcelo again when he invited me to accompany himself and many others on his Revoltados Online truck at the #*ForaCentrão* (#OutWithTheCentre) protest. It was at that protest where I met José Parra and arranged an interview with him the following week. I finally managed to interview Marcelo a few weeks after that protest, where I also met his friend and former Revoltados Online member, Paulo Boechat. During Paulo's interview, he informed me that both Beatriz Kicis and Alexandre Frota were part of Revoltados Online and so I sought their contact details from Marcelo. I successfully obtained that of Beatriz's, however she did not respond to my request. As for Alexandre Frota, Marcelo was reluctant to pass on his contact details and so I was unable to reach out to him for an interview. My inability to obtain interviews with Beatriz Kicis and Alexandre Frota can be considered limitations to my research.

The final, horizontal diagram represents the members of VemPraRua, who I came into contact with separately either via third party contacts or introducing myself to them at street protests, all of whom accepted an interview with me. They include Zizo Ribeiro, Adelaide Castro de Oliveira, Janaína Lima, Rogério Chequer and Colin Butterfield. It is noted that Colin was the only one that I had to interview via email, as he lives in Boston, and thus the data I obtained from his responses is not as robust as the in-person interview data from the other VemPraRua members.

It is worth noting again here that, throughout all the above-mentioned interviews, I sought the contact details of the founders of the movement MCC, which I briefly described in the Introduction chapter. Oddly, all the interviewees either claimed to have never heard of MCC or were unable to provide any details on the movement. I was therefore unable to interview members from MCC, which can be considered another limiting factor to this thesis.

On top of the main movements and activists listed above, I also managed to interview some individual activists from other movements including spokesperson of the movement *Aliança Nacional dos Movimentos Democráticos,* Henriette Krutman, founder of the anti-corruption and pro-Car Wash Facebook page *República de Curitiba,* Paulo Generoso, and founder of the anti-corruption movement *Acorda Brasil*, Luiz Philippe De Orleans e Bragança.

Furthermore, I expand the interview process to specialists in relevant fields such as politics, law, media and anti-corruption, to obtain their views on the political turmoil, impact of social media and the movements. The specialists are as follows:

- Associate Professor of Political Science, Matthew Taylor
- Associate Professor of International Relations, Esther Solano
- Director of Reputation Institute Brazil, Ana Luisa Almeida
- Former Journalist at Bloomberg São Paulo, Alex Cuadros
- Former law student at USP and colleague of Renan Santos from MBL, Paulo Henrique Pereira
- Lawyer, Modesto Carvalhosa

- Professor of Law, Fernando Menezes
- Professor of Political Science, Christian Lohbauer
- Professor of Public Policy, Pablo Ortellado
- Professor of Media and Communication, Maria Cristina Castilho Costa
- Professor of Media Studies, Carolina Matos
- Journalist and Professor, Eugênio Bucci
- Journalist and Director of Content at *Jovem Pan News* radio station, Carlos Aros
- Research Coordinator at Transparency International Brazil, Guilherme France

Finally, I interviewed employees of some of the large companies involved in the Car Wash investigations. One employee from a company that wishes to remain anonymous and three employees of the communication department at Odebrecht including, Director of Press Relations, Shirley Dutra, Manager of Internal Communication and Marketing, Domitila Costa, and Manager of Digital Marketing, Leandro Pinto.

In total, I interviewed 40 activists and relevant specialists during almost a 2-year period from March 2018 to December 2019. Interviews range between 20 to 163 minutes, with an average of approximately 40 minutes. All interviews combined total 2,234 minutes. To record the interviews, I used the app Voice Recorder and whilst conducting each interview I took notes on my laptop of any key points to be able to pinpoint specific areas of interest when revising the interviews later. I then transcribed each interview to use the transcriptions throughout the thesis to support the findings.

Furthermore, during the interview process I note an impact on the interaction of interviewees when I conduct the voice recordings. Rapley highlights some of the influences of voice recording devices on interview discussions and asserts that "sometimes different and contrasting talk is produced off-tape" (ibid.). He explains that off-tape talk "documents that the prior talk was the product of a specific interactional context (and a specific identity) and that now the context (and identity) has shifted again" (ibid.). Changes in 'talk' and 'identify' is something that I notice in discussions with interviewees post-formal interview recording. I observe divergences in the way interviewees present themselves and the topics discussed following the conclusion of the formal interview and voice recording. I draw on both formal interview responses and informal conversations I have with interviewees when reporting the findings to build a more complete picture of the person, their motives and how they constructed their version of reality.

The concept of 'the real' and 'versions of reality' constructed by individuals are things that Rapley frequently references. He points out that people can only offer versions of their experiences to others and explains that these versions of reality are constructed with language, signs, gestures and other devices. Indeed, we create our own truths, our own version of the world, by choosing what we want to believe or not. This personalised perception of reality is shaped by our previous experiences, knowledge, education, encounters and interaction with other people and things.

The topic of constructing versions of reality is one that resonates with conflicting debates in Brazilian society. When analysing interviewee responses, I focus on each interviewees' role in establishing certain realities and I also consider my personal influences including, my own ideological standing, previous experiences, literature I have read, conversations I have participated in and how all these impact my understanding and interpretation of issues and events.

In reference to academic and non-academic literature, Rapley explains that, "[t]hese sources of knowledge often become analytic themes that [researchers] explore with interviewees in interviews" (ibid., 26). With this in mind, I revise my interview questions and ask interviewees about literary works and any other external factors that may have influenced the trajectory of the movements, their marketing and communication strategies and popularity.

Another scholar who has influenced my methodological approach to interviews is David Silverman (2013), who emphasises that when analysing responses to interview questions, one must always remain critical. He references professor of sociology, Clive Seale, from personal correspondence when stating that interviews should be treated as an "observational site" (Silverman 2013: 37) and researchers should not simply succumb to "'buying' the respondent's version…[because] participants produce their accounts differently for different audiences" (ibid., 38). The idea of refraining from buying interviewees' responses leads me to reflect upon the integrity of interviewees and scrutinise every claim that they make. I am thus sensitive to the specific points and versions of reality each interviewee wants to get across, that is why they agreed to an interview in the first place, and record these in my interview notes.

Further to this, one of the main problems with interviews, according to Silverman, is that "many research reports offer journalistic 'commentaries' or merely reproduce what respondents say rather than provide detailed data analysis" (ibid.). Silverman's statements have reasserted my need to perform a detailed, critical analysis of interviewee responses and not simply reiterate what each interviewee recounts. After all, they are only presenting to me the narrative that they want to sell.

Finally, Silverman highlights the issue of manipulating interviewees' thoughts by asking them questions. He gives an example used by Harvey Sacks (1992) of somebody saying, "Remember that car you had?" Even though the person was not thinking about the car, they now are and in this respect the interviewer has controlled the interviewee's mind to think in a certain way. This is an issue that is innate to any interview scenario. In an attempt to overcome this, I generally use open-ended questions and end interviews by asking participants if they would like to add anything that was not raised, which gives insight into topics previously overlooked.

Interview validation techniques

There are a variety of interview validation techniques to justify research findings. Clive Seale (1999) discusses criteria for judging the quality of research including awareness of consequences to methodological decisions, internal validity and trustworthiness of a research study.

Seale emphasises the need for qualitative researchers to be exposed to and aware of a variety of methodological approaches and their various consequences: "Qualitative researchers need to demonstrate an educated awareness of the consequences of particular methodological decisions during a research study, whether they relate to the production of data or the choice of writing style" (Seale 1999: 33). Here, Seale asserts that there are always consequences to how we produce data and communicate to participants during data collection. This has made me reflect upon, not

only my own research methods but, potential consequences of my chosen approaches, particularly phrasing of interview questions that could lead to limitations in my research.

On the topic of internal validity, Seale considers to what degree causal propositions are supported in a research study and how researchers are required to overcome 'threats' to these propositions.

> Internal validity concerns the extent to which causal propositions are supported in a study of a particular setting. The researcher's task is to consider and try to overcome a variety of 'threats' to these propositions. For example, in trying to show that X had caused Y to vary, could the researcher be sure that some other factor had not intervened? (ibid., 38).

To overcome any issues surrounding causal propositions, I cite other studies carried out in Brazil on similar topics to that of this thesis to support the findings. Such studies include those performed by Monitor over the 3-year period from 2016 to 2019. Furthermore, my multi-method approach and interviews with a range of specialists in relevant fields also attempt to overcome any threats to the integrity of the findings.

With respect to building trust in a study, Seale references the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) when he emphasises that trustworthiness of a research study typically is centred on validity and reliability. Seale references the authors' concept of 'truth value', that is, "[h]ow can one establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?" (Seale 1999: 43). This point is particularly relevant in Brazilian society and has caused me to reflect upon the selection of my interviewees and who Brazilians are likely to believe or trust. For example, people on the Left may not trust figures from the Right. As Seale put it, "trustworthiness is always negotiable and open ended, not being a matter of final proof whereby readers are compelled to accept an account" (ibid., 45). To increase trustworthiness, I incorporate opinions of specialists from both the Left and Right side of politics in an effort to improve credibility of the findings.

In sum, the work of Clive Seale has brought to my attention the need to validate my causal propositions that I put forward in the thesis and keep re-evaluating and improving my methodology to prioritise trustworthiness and thus credibility.

Naturally-occurring data

In recent years, there has been a shift towards the favouring of naturally-occurring data in qualitative research. Silverman puts into question the method of interviewing participants and highlights the phenomenon of manufactured data. He questions the usage of manufactured data, whereby researchers entice certain responses, compared with observational methods of the world and claims that asking questions to respondents produces mental blinkers on the researcher because interview questions are limited to certain categories.

As such, Silverman presents arguments that favour the use of naturally-occurring data, that is, material which arises without researcher intervention. He suggests studying the abundance of naturally-occurring data on the Internet and cites Robert Kozinets (2010): "'The analysis of existing online community conversations and

other Internet discourse combines options that are both naturalistic and unobtrusive – a powerful combination that sets netnography apart from focus groups, depth interviews, surveys, experiments and on-person ethnographies (2010: 56)" (Silverman 2013: 33). Taking into consideration these arguments, I give preference to analysis of Facebook posts and expand the scope of my analysis to include other naturally-occurring data such as books written by the movements and speeches at street protests that I film and transcribe to use as supporting evidence. In doing so, I have a mix of data that is naturally-occurring and manufactured, which attempts to lessen negative effects of the latter.

Silverman continues by emphasising the "impressive range of social facts available on the Internet" (ibid., 34), including text and images posted on online platforms, accounts linked to certain online communities and number of comments posts receive. These types of social facts, principally the amount of shares the movements' Facebook posts receive, I draw on to identify the most popular discourses that circulated on Facebook in 2017 to help form different publics.

Furthermore, Silverman stresses some of the hazards to qualitative research that asks questions of respondents. According to him, respondents often rewrite the history books because "they will document their past in a way which fits it, highlighting certain features and downplaying others" (ibid.). He views two major problems with this. Firstly, if respondents know the researcher's interests this can affect their answers. Secondly, it entices lazy research whereby researchers simply relay what respondents said instead of partaking in detailed data analysis. Silverman demonstrates that in posing questions to respondents in the first place, the researcher is in fact producing manufactured data and is exposing themselves to the risks of being blinkered to other potentially pertinent phenomena. My multi-part approach to my research, including interviews, content analysis and ethnographic techniques, strives to overcome these difficulties.

People were once at the heart of qualitative research, however nowadays there is a common move towards expanding this focus to incorporate various sorts of phenomena. Silverman describes how qualitative research is often centred around people, such as when performing interviews and surveys. He cites Clive Seale when stating that "one always wants to sample 'people' (rather than, say, documents)…[however] all kinds of phenomena can be studied for social research purposes (e.g. building design, music lyrics, websites, small ads etc.)" (ibid., 38). Seale's comments lead me to draw on other types of phenomena to support my research findings, such as including analysis of light shows on the FIESP building on Paulista Avenue and common chants and songs at street protests. References to these naturally-occurring data throughout the thesis add further value and creditability to the content analysis and interview data, which is, in essence, manufactured.

Ethnography and ethnomethodology

As my research project evolves, and I am given considerable access to the movements, ethnography becomes a central part of this thesis. Ethnography can be described as "participant observation done during fieldwork" (Delamont 2007: 206). I draw on this, as well as other ethnographic practices such as observation and interviews, to examine how the movements understand themselves, what motivates them, how they make

meaning and interpret their worlds. More specifically, I seek to expose meaning given to signs, symbols and activities of the activists' everyday lives.

The fieldwork is undertaken with the movements at protests, political debates and events, media interviews, the movement's studio in the case of MBL and out pamphleting during election campaigns. To record the data, I spend long periods watching the activists, filming their speeches, taking photos of the activities and writing down field notes in my iPhone. I choose to write down notes in my iPhone, over say a notepad, to avoid making the activists feel as though they are being studied – because they are all aware that I am conducting research on them – which may cause changes in their natural behaviour. My goal is to appear as much like a member of the group as possible.

The notes are of any relevant comments made, informal conversations with activists, sequence of events and strangeness of the phenomenon at hand. I also note down any preliminary analysis of the speeches and events taking place. After each observational session with the movements, I write detailed diary entries of the experience. I describe not only the activists' actions but their interactions with each other and, when at protests, the crowd's reactions to the speeches being made. I constantly reflect upon the events that take place during the fieldwork and update my analysis accordingly. During the write-up stage, I glean the field notes, video footage and photos for data that either supports or expands on the findings of the Facebook post analysis and interviews.

There are also a couple of obstacles that I am aware of whilst conducting the fieldwork. Sara Delamont (2007) asserts that researchers must be cautious of "'going native': abandoning the researcher perspective and adopting the views of the actors in the setting" (ibid., 212). I experience this to some extent when interviewing the activists and find myself sympathising with their worldviews. To overcome this, my weekly meetings with the left-leaning research group Monitor balance this out. Another potential threat to the fieldwork is knowing when to leave the field site. As Delamont notes, "once the field site feels like home it is time to leave: fieldwork should be uncomfortable" (ibid., 214). I am reassured during the fieldwork that this does not have any significant impact my project because I always feel, even to some small extent, uncomfortable when in the presence of the activists. Whether at protests, of either the Right or the Left, or simply interviewing the movements at their localities, I experience a sense of awkwardness to some degree.

These first-hand experiences and intimate interactions with the movements provide me with inside knowledge on how they operate, what they believe, how they construct their versions of reality and what motivates their actions. Such ethnographic techniques offer further evidence to support the findings of the content analysis of Facebook posts.

In a similar vein, Paul ten Have (2007) proposes the use of a strategy whereby researchers "study their own sense-making work by putting themselves in some kind of extraordinary situation… where one is instructed by a setting's members to see the world in a way that is natural for them but not for oneself" (Ten Have 2007: 142). Ten Have quotes Mehan and Wood's (1979) expression "becoming the phenomenon" (ibid.) to describe this practice and explains that "by 'becoming a member', the researcher can gain a more intimate access to the intricacies of 'being a member' than by other investigative means" (ibid.). This strategy incited me to reflect upon my own

involvement in protests in Brazil. By participating in protests and posting political content on social media myself, I become part of the phenomenon. This gives my work increased credibility and allows me to report on issues and events on a first-hand basis, as well as reporting the views of the movements.

Furthermore, during the interviews with the movements, one of my aims is to build a positive relationship with interviewees by maintaining a neutral stance on the issues at hand. This strategy of befriending interviewees, even ones that have varying ideological views to my own, opens doors to further interaction with interviewees in informal settings. It is in these informal settings where I am given glimpses into their personal lives, opinions and natural speech habits. This allows me to view them as people, as colleagues, as friends, instead of only viewing them through the lenses of academia and mainstream or social media – both of which succumb to severe framing practices. I make reference to these anecdotal insights throughout the thesis in my diary entries.

Discursive psychology

Literature from another line of thinking that influences my methodological approach is the work of Alexa Hepburn and Jonathan Potter (2007), who point out a shift in discourse analysis towards discursive psychology that focuses on the way 'descriptions' are produced. They identify a recent change away from approaching a research topic from one singular starting point – a question – to a more holistic overview that considers the setting or set of practices. "This reflects a move from the traditional social science question of 'how does X influence Y?', to the question 'how is X done?'" (Hepburn and Potter 2007: 173).

This new approach that Hepburn and Potter relate is relevant and useful to the formulation of my primary research question. Instead of looking at my thesis through a cause-and-effect lens asking the question 'How does social media impact the fight against corruption and politics in Brazil?', I reformulate my primary research question in line with Hepburn and Potter's more holistic approach to ask 'How do the right-wing movements act as media vehicles?'. Through adopting Hepburn and Potter's ideas, I look at what the movements are actually doing in Brazil, to which I claim, in part they are being media and propaganda vehicles of the New Right.

This latter phrasing of my principle research question reinstates the focus of this thesis back to social media usage for political ends. This view of the movements as media vehicles challenges the common assumption in Brazil, which widely regards the movements as right-wing political movements, and not, or not also, right-wing media organisations.

Additionally, Hepburn and Potter highlight the importance of naturally-occurring data and identify three theoretical principles of discursive psychology that explain why work in this area has shifted towards acquiring naturalistic material, which attempts to nullify researcher intervention. Discursive psychology identifies three core features of discourse including: action orientation, which views actions not as isolated events but rooted in broader practices; situation, which claims that discourse is situated sequentially, institutionally and rhetorically; and construction, which asserts that discourse is simultaneously constructed (manufactured via multiple resources) and constructive (individual versions of the world, events, actions, phenomena are formed

and stabilised through speech acts) (Hepburn and Potter 2007). This concept of discursive psychology influences my analysis of the data. Instead of analysing the Facebook posts and interview data separately, I examine how speeches at street protests are linked to previously successful discourses that circulated on the movements' Facebook pages. I therefore take into consideration all the data sets and how they are linked, instead of analysing them individually.

In sum, the literature I have read on different methodological approaches to qualitative research has revealed avenues for undertaking my research, which steer away from only using content analysis and interviews, to target naturalistic material using ethnography and discursive psychology techniques.

II. Quantitative Research Practices

As well as qualitative research practices, I take up quantitative research techniques to collect numerical data from the movements' Facebook posts, which can be generalised to the wider population. This data is useful to find patterns in the behaviour of the movements' publics, particularly their sharing of Facebook posts and reactions to certain types of content.

Quantitative techniques

Although qualitative and quantitative research practices are often considered individually, this thesis takes up the perspective of Julia Brannen (2007) who views qualitative and quantitative data as complementary. She emphasises that "[w]hen researchers work with different types of data within the same research project, the way in which they use these datasets will vary according to the *phase* or *aspect* of the research in which the researcher brings the different datasets into play" (Brannan 2007: 284-285, emphasis in original).

The quantitative techniques that I employ are mainly related to the analysis of Facebook posts, as well as some YouTube videos, to assist my selection of data to perform detailed qualitative analysis. Therefore, I use a variety of quantitative data in my analysis as complementary aspects to this thesis. For Facebook posts, I consider the number of reactions (love, wow, haha, sad, angry) and shares, as well as the number of page likes each of the movements receive. As for YouTube videos, I take into consideration the number of views of videos and inscriptions of YouTube channels. This quantitative data pinpoints what issues, and therefore what discourses, the audiences of the movements consider important news items and also provides valuable information on how audiences feel towards these issues. From this data, I am able to refine the scope of content that I carry out in-depth and detailed analysis. These findings are presented in Table 1 in Chapter 3, as well as in written explanations of the data throughout the thesis.

To conclude this chapter, I revisit my interview with Janaína Paschoal and our conversation in her car when she dropped me off at my apartment.

Nove de Julho, São Paulo
8th June 2018

It is dark by the time Janaína and I finish our interview. Instead of walking a few blocks to the metro station, she offers to drop me off in her car at my apartment that is on her way home. Driving along the *Nove de Julho* freeway, the concrete walls that line the road bearing artistic designs of local graffiti artists, I notice a slight difference in how Janaína presents herself – the absence of a recording device has that effect on interviewees. She tells me of how she is frequently stopped by people in the supermarket who say to her, "You did all this and now you're not going to help us", referring to Janaína's role in the impeachment of Dilma and subsequent hesitation to enter politics herself. With emotion in her voice, she explains how she almost feels obligated to go into politics now, despite her family traditionally despising the political class. I can sense her dilemma of wanting to help her country, yet fear of being branded as 'opportunistic' if she enters politics.

Our conversation then turns to the impeachment. Janaína cites her role, alongside lawyers Hélio Bicudo and Miguel Reale Júnior, in the writing of the successful impeachment petition. She emphasises the importance of the movements and their role in bringing thousands of people together to protest in the streets. Then, whilst we are at a standstill in the evening traffic, Janaína looks me in the eyes and says: "Nicole, what has changed in Brazil recently is that the Right has started working together". This comment strikes a chord with me and I begin to envisage the movements and other right-wing political actors not as separate entities, but as one unit of force whose combine effect is greater than the sum of its individual parts. The synergy of the New Right. I explore this theme, of how the movements of the New Right work together, further in the chapters to come.

As outlined in this chapter, I combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches to my research methodology. The former is of primary importance as it is used to give meaning and comprehend the various datasets, while the latter helps with my selection of content for close examination and provides significant insight into how social media content is received by audiences. Therefore, the quantitative data has a direct impact on the qualitative component of the thesis. This multi-method approach is essential to interpreting the data and understanding possible influences on the findings.

The next chapter puts forward evidence supporting my primary claim of the movements as media vehicles of the New Right in their role as political marketeers.

Chapter 3
Political Marketeers

Vila Mariana, São Paulo
15th June 2018

It is a sunny afternoon when my Uber drops me off in front of the MBL office, a decked-out warehouse in a residential street in the suburb of Vila Mariana. Pulling up at the address, I first notice the brickwork on the exterior painted over in a navy-blue-grey colour. It contrasts nicely with the deep green of the vine that scales the front façade. Walking over to the door, I recite the interviewee's name aloud. "Kim Kataguiri, Ka-ta-gui-ri, KA-TA-GUI-RI", to be sure I am getting the intonation right. I ring the buzzer and wait patiently at the barred-door. A young guy dressed in jeans and a T-shirt opens the door halfway and asks who I am here to see. "Kim Kataguiri", I respond proudly knowing I have conquered the pronunciation. Obviously not well enough because the guy responds in English with a well-trained, North-American accent. "Oh, you're here to see Kim, come through, I'll go get him for you", he replies casually.

I follow him through to what appears to be a college common room turned into a co-working space. In it is a large wooden table where a few young adults sit working from their laptops. On the wall behind them hangs what looks like a Viking helmet, although on closer inspection I realise it is a wooden bull's head painted orange with black horns. To the corner is a tall, old, wooden video game machine. In the middle of the room, a couple of guys are sitting on a black leather couch glued to the widescreen TV – the World Cup is on. Behind them, a camera stand and studio shooting light are directed at a chair positioned beside a cactus ready to film Kim's next video. MBL's style of doing politics is to mix it with cool, trendy, cultural stuff and even its décor is in line with that logic.

To the back of the room there is a corridor entrance with framed newspaper articles of some of MBL's most memorable moments hanging on the wall. Featured is The New York Times article of Paulo Batista's 'Privatizing Ray' campaign, for which the founding members of MBL produced, with a quote in bold saying: "Ridiculous is memorable in campaign ads". This is accompanied by two other framed front-page articles, one from *Folha De S.Paulo* covering the 15th March 2015 mass protest, and the other from *Estadão* reporting the 13th March 2016 mass protest. Throughout my research on the movements, I notice their constant referral to mainstream media coverage of themselves. Such formal and public recognition they undoubtedly consider as validation of their own prestige, authority and legitimacy (Ellinas 2018).

The corridor leads to another three rooms. The first is frequently occupied by the *memeiros* (meme creators) and social media account managers. The second room is a recording studio for MBL News that is fitted out with sound-proof padding on the walls, studio lights staggered at varying heights, recording microphones and cameras strategically positioned to capture different angles. Finally, the editing room is where YouTube videos, short clips and the MBL documentary are being produced. Upon entering the building, I realise that it is far from a traditional office space and much more like a media production studio, filled with aspiring political marketeers.

In this chapter, I reveal how MBL, VemPraRua, Revoltados Online and NasRuas operate as media vehicles of the Brazilian New Right, when they help to circulate right-wing narratives and publicity of political figures. Out of the movements, MBL is the one with the most media characteristics and for this reason it is the centrepiece of discussions.

Different to works that view such groups through a social movement perspective and focus on the use of social networking sites during the different stages of mobilisations (della Porta & Mattoni 2015), my claim is that the movements have become media vehicles themselves through their use of social media to disseminate political commentary and opinions to the public.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section I details the results of the Facebook post analysis, which exposes the most common types of issues, post formats and emotional content shared by the movements' publics. Section II demonstrates how the movements act as media and propaganda vehicles of the New Right. Finally, Section III analyses some of the movements' communication and marketing techniques.

There is no question over the movements' political activism, which they most symbolically displayed in the lead-up to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff through street protests, lobbying and other political acts. However, the movements can be divided into two parts, politics and media, and this chapter seeks to highlight the latter aspect through the analysis of their Facebook posts.

I. Facebook Posts

Throughout the 2010s, Facebook became one of the central nodes in the news ecosystem (Benkler, Faris and Roberts 2018). To investigate the extent to which the movements' use Facebook to act as online politicised media vehicles, I perform an in-depth analysis of their 2017 Facebook posts. This analysis intends to reveal the communication techniques and issues that appeal most to each of the movements' audiences, helping to form publics of the New Right. To collect the movements' Facebook posts, I use Facebook's social media monitoring platform, Crowd Tangle.

I chose to focus on the year 2017 for a few reasons. Firstly, I wanted to inspect the role the movements played in circulating anti-corruption discourse about the construction firm Odebrecht, whose reputation was lowest in that year amid its involvement in the Car Wash investigations into systemic corruption. I investigate this further in the next chapter. Secondly, I sought to reveal the movements engagement in various cultural conflicts in 2017, namely the Queer Museum affair, which helped to proliferate conservative views and strengthen political figures who align with such views. Finally, in a quest to expose the movements political propaganda in preparation for the 2018 elections and who (if anyone) they promoted as political candidates for the presidency, it seemed logical to analyse the online discourses of the movements the year preceding the electoral period.

Before launching into the analysis, it is worth noting how many followers the movements gained on Facebook throughout the year 2017, which can also be an indication of successful marketing techniques. On 1st January 2017, MBL had 1,745,969 followers, VemPraRua 1,475,711 followers and NasRuas 375,351 followers. By 31st December that same year, MBL's following grew to 2,540,416, VemPraRua to 1,661,916

and NasRuas to 592,600. This equates to increases of 794,447 followers for MBL, 186,205 followers for VemPraRua and 217,249 followers for NasRuas. From this perspective, MBL is considered the most popular movement, which can, in part, be explained by their large production of social media content.

There is significant variation in the number of posts published by the movements in 2017. MBL posted a total of 16,939 Facebook posts, VemPraRua posted a total of 4,056 posts, and NasRuas posted a total of 5,259 posts. The fact that MBL posted approximately 76% more posts than VemPraRua and 69% more posts than NasRuas signifies two things. Firstly, the greater effort MBL exerts on the creation of social media content as opposed to the other movements, and secondly, the increased likelihood of its posts to impact public debate. It is from this evaluation that I understand MBL to be the most effective right-wing media vehicle out of the three movements.

To begin the analysis, the entirety of the movements' Facebook posts published in 2017 are considered. All posts are weighted by their number of shares and then 1,000 posts are randomly selected for close analysis for each movement – totalling 3,000 posts. In using this method, there is a 3% margin of error with a 95% confidence level. By weighting the posts by their number of shares, I aim to select the posts with the largest number of shares[1]. That is, I analyse what audiences read and share the most, and not what the movements say and publish the most. The sharing feature of digital platforms that enables the rapid spread of ideas and laundering of memes from one source to another is what gives memetic content its power (Moore 2018; Giesea 2016). As Jenkins, Li, Krauskopf & Green (2009) so aptly phrase it: *if it doesn't spread, it's dead*.

For a post to go viral, it must have a high degree of toxicity, meaning that a vast number of people accord with the view being put forward. In an information-overload environment, if a post has a high number of shares then this is indicative of the importance of that post's ideas. In line with Warner (2005), I understand the popular sharing of the movements' posts online to form publics of the New Right. The sharing habits of content on Facebook is considered a proxy for public opinion, intended to expose divergences in the movements' publics and what issues they identify with.

In my analysis, I group posts into three broad issues, including corruption, economic and social issues, as displayed in the column Issues in Table 1 below. This is regardless of whether posts positively or negatively refer to an issue because in any case they are still giving space to that particular issue. For posts to be classified as referring to social issues, I base my categorisation on James Davison Hunter's (1991) classification of social issues that make up what he terms *culture wars* in society. These include five broad areas of family, education, media and arts, law, and politics. Additionally, I add public security to this classification. The aim here is to identify what types of issues mostly cause audiences to engage in political action by sharing content online.

Furthermore, the column Formats in Table 1 below considers post format, so whether posts are videos, memes, links to another website, or simply status updates. It is noted that classification of videos includes both live streaming and native video formats. The objective in this section is to ascertain what formats appeal most to audiences, indicating which formats have most impact on public debate and opinion.

[1] I recognise that bots may have influenced the popularity of posts; however, I cannot be certain because this issue did not emerge as significant in my interviews with the movement leaders. Nevertheless, the consistency in my findings across the three movements' Facebook posts, where social issues were shared the most by the movements' publics, suggests that bots did not play a significant role in circulating the movements' posts.

Lastly, the column Emotions in Table 1 below shows what type of emotional content triggers sharing on Facebook. To this end, I classify posts according to the emotional reactions already provided by Facebook, including: Happiness (Love), Amazement (Wow), Humour (Haha), Sorrow (Sad), Outrage (Angry). When appointing posts with an emotion, each post is evaluated by its actual content, instead of purely the reactions it received on Facebook. To correctly classify emotional reactions to posts, I adopt a conservative, right-wing interpretation of content. The goal of this part of the analysis is to reveal what emotional content is most likely to go viral and also what issues cause the most outrage among the movements' audiences, which helps identity different publics.

Finally, it is noted that a very small number of posts could not be accessed due to Facebook's removal of some content. For these posts, it is sometimes possible to extract data via information provided by Crowd Tangle. However, posts whose issues and emotional content are unable to be determined are marked as 'N/A'. Table 1 below represents the results for the most frequently circulated issues, post formats and emotional content for the three movements.

Movements	**Issues**		**Formats**		**Emotions**	
MBL	Social	512	Video	398	Outrage	413
	Corruption	324	Link	365	Humour	331
	Economic	163	Meme	236	Happiness	232
	N/A	1	Status	1	Sorrow	14
					Amazement	9
					N/A	1
VemPraRua	Social	504	Video	98	Outrage	564
	Corruption	390	Link	249	Humour	105
	Economic	102	Meme	639	Happiness	316
	N/A	4	Status	14	Sorrow	6
					Amazement	6
					N/A	3
NasRuas	Social	619	Video	400	Outrage	540
	Corruption	351	Link	8	Humour	110
	Economic	29	Meme	591	Happiness	314
	N/A	1	Status	1	Sorrow	24
					Amazement	11
					N/A	1

Table 1: Analysis of movements' 2017 Facebook posts

Issues

The column Issues above lists the division of issues for each of the movements. As shown for MBL, social issues have the highest level of engagement with 512 posts (51.2% of posts), followed by corruption issues with 324 posts (32.4% of posts) and finally

economic issues have the lowest engagement level with 163 posts (16.3% of posts). Also, 1 post is classified as N/A (0.1% of posts).

Similarly, for VemPraRua, social issues equate to 504 posts (50.4% of posts), corruption issues to 390 posts (39% of posts) and economic issues to 102 posts (10.2% of posts). Lastly, 4 posts are classified as N/A (0.4% of posts).

Equally, for NasRuas, social issues circulate the most with 619 posts (61.9% of posts), then corruption issues with 351 posts (35.1% of posts) and finally economic issues with 29 posts (2.9% of posts). Only 1 post is classified N/A (0.1% of posts).

For all three of the movements, social issues circulate among audiences more so than corruption or economic issues, with the latter circulating the least. This is in line with the study carried out by Solano, Ortellado and Moretto (2017: 17), which, among other things, reveals that people from São Paulo who identify as right-wing or conservative do not agree with liberal economic policies. It also accords with the study of Galvão and Tatagiba (2019: 9), which demonstrates that the economy was on the rise when the mass protests broke out in June 2013, suggesting that the state of the economy was of less importance to the civil unrest.

My division of the three broad issues, into corruption, economic and social issues, make up the rest of the thesis chapters under the headings 'Anti-Corruption or *Antilulismo?*', 'Neoliberalism or *Jogo Político?*' and 'Brazilian Culture Wars', respectively. It is in these chapters that I examine the specific topics that circulated among each of the movements' audiences to uncover the impact the movements had on the reputations of political and business elite, the formation of right-wing publics and overall influence on public political debate.

To co-founder of MBL, Renan Santos, MBL's "principal role, even though the most emblematic was protests, was in fact participation in public debate through the creation of groups in more than 200 cities" (Linhares & Zanini 2019). The groups in hundreds of cities across Brazil are generally interpreted as nuclei that make up the movement. However, they can also be understood as media content producers and distributers that help to monitor political news and affairs in regional areas. For example, in one passage in the MBL book, *Como um grupo de desajustados derrubou a president: MBL, a origem* (How a group of misfits took down the president: MBL, the origin), Renan writes: "*Folha de S.Paulo* published a meme that was produced by the MBL Belo Horizonte nucleus and disseminated by the MBL National nucleus" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 181). In that example, MBL nuclei act as regional media branches that help to create social media content and influence public debate.

Formats

The column Formats displays the popularity of different formats of posts. For MBL, video posts circulate the most with 398 posts (39.8% of posts), followed by links to websites with 365 posts (36.5% of posts), then memes with 236 posts (23.6% of posts) and finally 1 written status post (0.1% of posts). These results indicate that video content has greater impact on MBL's audience than the other formats, which calls for increased monitoring of video content posted on social media.

Conversely, for VemPraRua, the format that circulates the most is memes with 639 posts (63.9% of posts), then links with 249 posts (24.9% of posts), next videos with 98 posts (9.8% of posts), and finally status updates with 14 posts (1.4% of posts).

Similarly, for NasRuas, the most popular format is memes with 591 posts (59.1% of posts), followed by videos with 400 posts (40% of posts), then links with 8 posts (0.8% of posts) and status updates with just 1 post (0.1% of posts).

Across the three movements, imagery and audio-visual content, including memes and videos, are the format types that are shared most on Facebook, which supports Debord's (1973) claim that social relations are formed via images. Memetics has been the focus of many scholars (Dawkins 1989; Chielens & Heylighen 2005; Shifman 2013; Jenkins, Li, Krauskopf & Green 2009) and these findings accord with those who have noted the power of memes (Giesea 2016; Marwick & Lewis 2017) and their role in turning subcultural ideas into mainstream culture (Nagel 2017; Moore 2018).

In terms of diffusion, Dawkins (1989) argues that the spread of memes depends on their longevity (survival rate), fecundity (reproduction rate) and copying-fidelity (retention rate). Chielens and Heylighen (2005) found that the novelty of memes, in the case of their study virus hoaxes, is the strongest indicator of success, followed by benefit, that is, their potential to propose a solution (ibid., 18). In the modern-day context, the sharing function of digital media enables Internet memes to have 100% copying-fidelity rate. My findings here suggest that it is memes that deal with social and culture issues, over corruption and economic issues, that have the highest replication rate.

Emotions

Emotion plays a key role in the sharing of online content, as depicted in the column Emotions above. For MBL, the emotional content most frequently circulated is outrage with 413 posts (41.3% of posts), followed by humour with 331 posts (33.1% of posts), then happiness with 232 posts (23.2% of posts), sorrow with 14 posts (1.4% of posts) and finally amazement with just 9 posts (0.9% of posts).

MBL is conscious that their "source of power is people's anger, and not political arrangements" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 268). Although, as the group is the most popular movement with the largest number of followers, these findings indicate that it is the balance between posts that produce a sense of outrage and humour that keep audiences interested and engaged. It is noted that a significant number of posts that receive Haha reactions do not use humorous language *per se,* but they obtain information on the misfortune of key politicians accused of corruption. Thus, MBL's audience find it humorous that seemingly untouchable, high-profile figures are targets of corruption allegations, that is, when society gets its revenge for grand acts of misconduct.

Likewise, VemPraRua's most popular emotion to circulate is also outrage with 564 posts (56.4% of posts), followed by happiness with 316 posts (31.6% of posts), humour with 105 posts (10.5% of posts), sorrow with 6 posts (0.6% of posts), and amazement with 6 posts (0.6% of posts). Finally, 3 posts were undetermined (0.3% of posts). Again, outrage is the most frequently circulated emotion and is considered essential in mobilising people to act, as former spokesperson of VemPraRua, Rogério Chequer, explains.

> To connect with your public, you need to use emotional factors. The two factors that mobilise people the most are indignation, which is a derivative of rage, and the second

> is hope. So, the entire time it is indignation, rage, rebellion against what is happening, but showing that there is a way out, giving hope that there is a way out. We were stuck in the rage stage, so there was only criticism, destruction, deconstruction, but there was not a way out. We drank from this indignation but now we are showing a way out (Rogério Chequer, interview, 3rd April 2019).

VemPraRua purposefully instil anger in their audience as a way of calling people to action, that is, sharing social media content or participating in street protests. This is performed whilst subsequently showing the 'way out', which to VemPraRua is through reforms and political renovation.

Finally, the analysis of NasRuas' posts further demonstrates that anger is the most popular emotion to circulate with 540 posts (54% of posts), followed by happiness with 314 posts (31.4% of posts), humour with 110 posts (11% of posts), sorrow with 24 posts (2.4% of posts) and amazement with 11 posts (1.1% of posts).

From across the three movements, my analysis of emotional content supports Crockett's (2017) hypothesis that outrage is the emotion that most frequently causes people to engage with online content and share it on social media. Facebook users who are made angry by a post they see on the platform are more likely to share that particular post (Andews 2019: 63). This tends to have a contagious effect whereby other users who see that same post and hold similar worldviews frequently share it as well. "Contagion is so powerful that it forces upon individuals not only certain opinions, but certain modes of feeling as well" (Le Bon 2001: 74). Feelings and emotions spread among people, particularly those in groups and crowds, the most common online being moral outrage.

Through the movements publication of a plethora of posts, their daily activities are grounded in the production and diffusion of online texts, all characteristics of media vehicles.

II. Media Vehicles

Following the 2016 UK Brexit referendum and US election of Donal Trump, Facebook's news distribution role came under scrutiny worldwide (Andrews 2019; Shearer & Matsa 2018; Moore 2018; Benkler, Faris & Roberts 2018). Like many other political actors, the movements in this thesis took advantage of Facebook's capacity to reach new publics to spread political propaganda and opinions. When asked whether MBL is a media vehicle or political movement, its head marketer, Pedro D'Eyrot, explains that both views hold true.

> It's both. They are the same. We could not dissect it into two, which is good and bad at the same time. There is a reason why it is separate normally, because the media must take some stances that are harmful politically to politicians and so there's a conflict there. We get beaten up a lot because of that. We have to cover stuff that the population does not like, but we must cover it (Pedro D'Eyrot, interview, 12th September 2019).

Pedro's confirmation that MBL is at once a political movement and a media vehicle reveals a new angle for analysing the group, as well as other movements from across the political spectrum, positioning them at the crossroad between politics and media. For example, Kim compares MBL to popular US, right-wing media sites, demonstrating that the group identifies itself as a political propaganda outlet.

> At first, we [MBL] mostly used Facebook because the reach that we could get was very big, it was impressive. Two of our references for reach were Breitbart from the United States and Donald Trump's pages because they were the biggest [right-wing sites] in the world. I'm very proud to say that on four occasions, within four weeks, during different periods, our reach was bigger than theirs (Kim Kataguiri, interview, 15th June 2018).

Whether MBL had a larger reach than Breitbart and Donald Trump's social media pages or not is less important here than the link being made. Kim, and therefore MBL, assimilate themselves to Breitbart News Network – the US far-right propaganda website.

Another movement to identify as a media vehicle is that of Carla Zambelli, who is the founder of NasRuas. In a self-filmed video posted on NasRuas Facebook page on 30th November 2017, Carla tries to interview a PT deputy in Congress. She is denied and told to go back to work, to which Carla proclaims: "I am working, for the popular press!". As well as being an anti-corruption association, NasRuas activities are considered by Carla to fall within the scope of political reporting, even though her activities are more in line with content production than journalism *per se*. Her selection of targets is overtly politically motivated, which is different to traditional media, yet she is none-the-less producing media content (albeit in the form of propaganda) that is intended to sell an idea, persuade the opinions of her audience and damage reputations of politicians, an issue which I expand on in Chapter 4.

Facebook itself can be understood as a news bulletin. Just as Mark Zuckerberg famously said in 2014, "[o]ur goal is to build the perfect personalised newspaper for every person in the world" (Kim 2014) and the News Feed feature of Facebook has enabled the platform to fulfil this goal. As for the movements, they use Facebook as a media service provider to distribute daily political opinion pieces of news items already in circulation in mainstream media. Former VemPraRua coordinator, now city councillor for the NOVO party in São Paulo, Janaína Lima, works from the logic that "social media transformed all citizens into one big service provider… [VemPraRua] started to use social media to disseminate content and decode, in a simple manner, all that was happening for the public" (Janaína Lima, interview, 30th November 2018). Here, Janaína is referring to the continual developments of the Car Wash investigations. VemPraRua sought to educate the public by publishing their views of the investigations. This educating and publishing role that Janaína claims VemPraRua to perform falls within the activities of those carried out by media vehicles and suggests that, with the advent of social media, a new form of social movement, which has at once an educational, informational and distributional role, is in operation.

MBL, NasRuas and VemPraRua understand part of their role in society as providing right-wing opinions about political news and events. Different to those that document the use of social media political campaigns during electoral periods (Baldwin-Philippi 2018), the movements use Facebook and YouTube as platforms to provide

political commentary 24/7 and the most obvious demonstration of this is MBL's political commentary programs.

Political commentary programs

Over the past decade and a half, digital platforms have become publishers and news distribution channels (Bell and Owen 2017). Out of all the movements of focus in this thesis, MBL has the strongest media traits and the two programs MBL News and *Teste do Sofá* (Sofa Test) are good examples of this, as depicted below.

MBL1: 8th Mar 2017
Kim Kataguiri, Pedro D'Eyrot

MBL2: 25th Aug 2017
Arthur do Val, João Doria, Kim Kataguiri

On 8th March 2017, MBL launched their first official MBL News segment, as depicted in the above video MBL1, streamed live on YouTube and Facebook. According to Alexandre Santos, head of media production, the group decided to start this segment following Facebook's reaction to the election of Donald Trump.

> At the beginning, we always used Facebook. However, after the election of Trump, we noticed that Facebook started to limit right-wing movements and we said to ourselves that we better start using YouTube because we didn't have a public on that platform. So, we had the idea of doing live segments there. We copied the set from the film Anchorman and created MBL News (Alexandre Santos, personal correspondence via WhatsApp, 9th April 2020).

The live stream is a replica of televised news, with the same introductory music and overhead voice introducing the segment by stating: "Directly from São Paulo, bringing you the daily national political news, MBL News is live!". The two anchors are Kim Kataguiri and Pedro D'Eyrot, who discuss various political news items, one of which caught my attention.

Out of the several political issues discussed, MBL defends Bolsonaro's freedom of speech. The group criticise the STF's condemnation of Jair Bolsonaro to pay R$10,000 in compensation for moral damages to Deputy Maria do Rosário, after having said to Maria, in 2014, that she does not deserve to be raped because she is "very ugly" (Agência Brasil 2017). Despite Pedro admitting during the segment that MBL does not agree with Bolsonaro on certain issues, the group still promotes Bolsonaro's profile by giving space to his arguments. As the saying goes: *any publicity, is good publicity*. It can be assumed that the group's partial support for Bolsonaro is motivated by the desire to

increase their fan base to include *Bolsonaristas.* Such audience-gaining tactics, style of MBL News and coverage of political issues are undoubtedly characteristic of a media organisation, albeit hyper-partisan.

Another of MBL's political commentary programs, shown in video MBL2, was the talk show *Teste do Sofá*, a play on words of the misogynistic Brazilian expression holding the same name meaning the demand of sexual favours in exchange of some benefit, such as sleeping with the boss of a company to get a job. Commencing in June 2017, Kim Kataguiri and Arthur do Val casually interviewed entrepreneurs and key figures from the New Right. The scene imitates that of other talk shows whereby interviewees are invited to have a casual chat on the couch in the MBL studio. As depicted above, Kim and Arthur talk with then-Mayor of São Paulo, João Doria, who went on to be elected Governor of São Paulo in the 2018 elections. Other right-wing figures interviewed on the program included journalist Joice Hasselmann (elected federal deputy in 2018), NOVO party president João Amoedo (candidate for the presidency in 2018), writer Rodrigo Constantino and businessman Luciano Hang, just to name a few. As well as giving each of these figures increased visibility, it also gave Kim and Arthur, and therefore MBL, the opportunity to attract new audiences and gain further credibility as political candidates themselves.

Both these programs exemplify how MBL, through their desire to influence public political debate, takes up activities that are profoundly based in the media sector. However, now that MBL is heavily critical of Jair Bolsonaro, João Doria and Joice Hasselmann, it appears that the speech acts produced in favour of these political figures were the product of a particular pre-electoral period of time and manufacture public sphere (Habermas 1991: 214). The programs also demonstrate the lengths the group goes to produce political propaganda of future candidates.

Political propaganda

To the 'father of public relations', Edward Bernays, "propaganda is simply the establishing of reciprocal understanding between an individual and a group" (Bernays 1928: 150). That is, the transmission of ideas and products through means of communication, initially via newspapers, radio and television. It is designed to manipulate the human mind into accepting a particular idea or commodity (ibid., 18). Fast forward to almost a century later with the continual development of social media in the mid 2010s and Facebook had "turned its platform into an active propaganda weapon that could be used for political campaigning by anyone" (Moore 2018: 131). Viewed as an effective vehicle to distribute political propaganda, groups like the movements in this thesis utilised such novel social networking technologies to produce media content promoting political allies, whilst simultaneously discrediting rivals.

MBL became a sought-after communication and marketing provider for the political class following the success of businessman Paulo Batista's comical 'Privatizing Ray' campaign for state deputy in 2014. According to Renan, the campaign, in which Batista is depicted as a superhero flying around the world privatising everything by shooting laser beams from his eyes, was the group's "first political campaign using social media" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 81). After the international recognition of Batista's campaign in the New York Times, the group was approached by none other than the presidential candidate, Aécio Neves, of the PSDB – one of the most powerful political

parties in the country – to assist with his campaign in the lead-up to the final round of the 2014 elections, as Renan Santos details.

> We were invited by Aécio Neves, by his campaign team, to help him but we didn't accept. We said no we won't be part of it, but we can help fuck Dilma. So, we became friends with Danilo Gentili, who has the biggest talk show on Brazilian TV. He liked our work, so we decided to make a video together, where we made fun of Dilma, two days before the elections. The video was a huge success but we lost the election (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018).

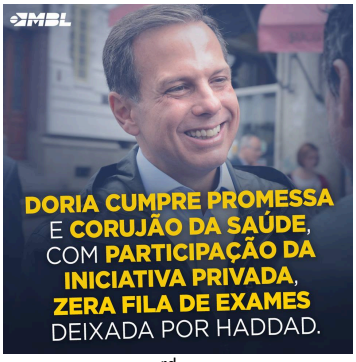
The video that Renan is referring to is called *Jornal do Futuro Danilo Gentili* (News from the Future, Danilo Gentili), in which talk show host Danilo Gentili portrays a journalist from the future in 2018 who comically relates the dystopia Brazil has turned into under another four years of the Dilma government. This plan to attack Dilma by making a video intended to go viral reinforces where MBL's talent lies – the production of political campaigns on social media. Another example is the positive publicity of the Temer Government and its proposed social welfare reform, which MBL openly admits to producing as Ian Garcez explains.

> We tried our best to make the reform look good, it was not that bad, it was necessary, but the communication of the Government was always a thousand times worse than ours. Serval political groups have contacted MBL to ask if we could help them with their communication… from the Government, to almost every political party in this country. Of course, we do not accept, we only work to have our reforms, the reforms that we see necessary for Brazil to advance… We do not sell our abilities in communication to anyone (Ian Garcez, interview, 8th November 2018).

While is it surprising that MBL, the poor movement that it claims to be, refused work from political parties, their strength is clearly their communication and marketing skills. Whether given incentives to do so or not, they produced communication in support of the Temer government and have a good relationship with Temer himself, most notably displayed in the former interim president's participation in the 2019 MBL National Conference.

Another right-wing figure that MBL offered exceedingly favourable coverage to in 2017 was João Doria. In both 2016 and 2017, Doria participated in MBL's national conferences where he gave keynote speeches. In an interview with Renan Santos, he describes MBL's role in bolstering the image of the former Mayor of São Paulo. "We were helping to construct the candidate João Doria for the presidency. Up until halfway through last year, everything was going to plan… João Doria would have been the 'reformist candidate', we would have won the elections making reforms (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018). Upon close analysis of MBL's Facebook posts in 2017, a substantial portion of posts showing Doria in a positive light and as achieving liberal economic goals were shared by the movement's public, as displayed below.

MBL3: 6th Feb 2017



MBL4: 3rd Apr 2017

MBL5: 6th Jan 2017

Video MBL3 states: "Example! João Doria donates first of the 48 salaries he will receive as Mayor". This snippet taken from a mainstream media interview portrays Doria as generous and caring when he donates his first month's salary to a medical and rehabilitation organisation.

Likewise, meme MBL4 displays a smiling Doria with the caption: "Doria fulfils promise and health program *Corujão da Saúde* using private sector initiative to cut hospital waiting lists left by Haddad". Here, Doria is again shown as a sort of medical saviour whose use of private enterprise has led to improved public health services, even if he did have to create a new hospital waiting list. Where possible, MBL emphasises the value of privatisation and failures of PT governance, including that of former Mayor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad.

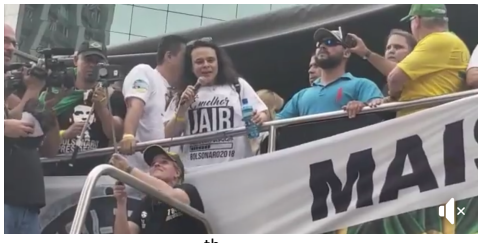
Finally, the video clip MBL5 has images of Doria accompanied by music and short phrases, with the title caption: "Learn some of João Doria's pledges in just 6 days of his mandate". It lists some of his initial achievements that "will generate savings of up to R$8 billion in taxes". Tax reduction is always at the forefront of MBL's actions, demonstrating the group's neoliberal stance.

By way of helping to construct Doria for the 2018 elections, MBL produced a considerable amount of propaganda in favour of the then-Mayor of São Paulo, which was readily shared by their public. The popular circulation of pro-Doria content demonstrates that part of MBL's audience connects with the tax-cutting, saviour image of Doria painted by the group. It also highlights how Facebook pages and posts have acquired the position of Habermas' (1991) journals, that is, they have become the vehicles that circulate political ideas for debate in the public sphere.

Another opportunity to promote political candidates is at street protests. Out of all the movements, VemPraRua is the only one that remains the most faithful to its ethos, which is based on the support of political ideas and not political figures. Therefore, either at protests or in their social media posts, VemPraRua does not overtly endorse any political candidate. This section thus examines only MBL, Revoltados Online and NasRuas and their usage of political events to publicise political figures, as shown below.

MBL6: 21st Oct 2018

RO1: 30th Sept 2018



JP1: 30th Sept 2018

In the above photo MBL6, which I took during the *#PTNuncaMais* protest on 21st October 2018 a week out from the final round of the 2018 elections, Doria made an appearance on MBL's stage protruding from their protest truck to promote his candidacy for Governor of São Paulo. Wearing a bright-yellow T-shirt with the hashtag *#BolsoDoria* written across the front of it, simultaneously endorsing Bolsonaro and himself, he received a warm welcome from MBL members Fernando Holiday, Renan Santos and the screaming crowd of supporters. Doria was elected Governor a week later.

Similarly, a few weeks prior, at the pro-Bolsonaro protest on 30th September 2018, Marcelo Reis had the opportunity to gather up supporters for Jair Bolsonaro and himself – who was a candidate for state deputy – through the truck that his movement, Revoltados Online, had stationed on Paulista as part of the demonstrations. With a giant-size inflatable Bolsonaro positioned to its side, as shown in photo RO1, the Revoltados Online truck provides a stage to showcase Bolsonaro and other PSL candidates. A promotional banner of Major Olímpio, PSL candidate for senator, can be seen stuck on the side of the truck. When asked if he knows Bolsonaro personally, Marcelo confirmed: "Yes, I know him. Before deciding to run for president or saying he would be a candidate, at all the protests in Rio from 2014 onwards, Bolsonaro would only come up on the Revoltados Online truck" (Marcelo Reis, interview, 7th August 2019). From as early as 2014, Revoltados Online was strengthening the image of Bolsonaro by providing him with more visibility and opportunities to speak to the public at protests. Unlike Marcelo who was unsuccessful at the ballot box, both Major Olímpio and Jair Bolsonaro won their tickets to Brasília in 2018.

Furthermore, PSL candidate for state deputy and co-author of Dilma's impeachment petition, Janaína Paschoal, had her turn on the microphone on top of the Revoltados Online's truck that same day, as displayed in video JP1 above posted on Janaína's Facebook page. Janaína, conscious of the importance of collaborative effort as described at the end of the last chapter, used her popularity as co-author of Dilma's impeachment to help promote other political candidates, including Marcelo Reis, Carla Zameblli, whose book launch Janaína gave a keynote speech at on 31st August 2018, and Jair Bolsonaro, whose name is written in large print across the front of Janaína's shirt.

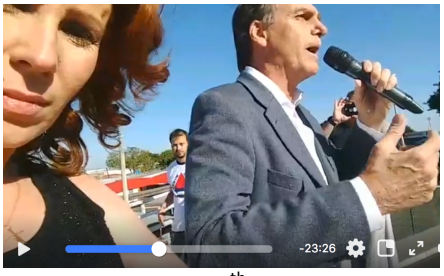
One thing is certain, through running protests, movements like MBL and Revoltados Online provide a public stage for political candidates to boost their profiles

in front of large crowds. It is in this way that they become promotional instruments for the aspiring political class of the New Right.

Now to turn to NasRuas and its avid support for Bolsonaro. In 2016, Carla Zambelli, founder and leader of NasRuas, had to leave the leadership position of *Aliança Nacional dos Movimentos Democráticos* (National Alliance of Democratic Movements, a group of 30 anti-corruption movements) due to a conflict of interests, as her successor, Henriette Krutman, explains.

> [In 2015] Carla Zambelli became Coordinator [of *Aliança*] but she had to leave the group because she had conflicting interests, and so I have been the Executive Coordinator since 2016. Carla has a large movement, which is NasRuas, and had a series of conflicting interests and that is because large movements try to impose their position on the other smaller groups… so there was a conflict of interest and Carla could not continue [in *Aliança*]... any member that wants to be affiliated with a political party or be a candidate in elections must leave *Aliança* (Henriette Krutman, interview, 1st October 2018).

As time has told, Carla's conflicting interests were the promotion of Jair Bolsonaro for the presidency and running for federal deputy in the PSL party herself. Carla, with her auburn locks and drawn-on beauty spot that moves from the left to right side of her upper lip, can be described as a faithful disciple of Bolsonaro. A true *Bolsonarista* that follows orders, is never critical of her master and bypasses mainstream media to distribute promotional material in favour of Bolsonaro to her followers, as depicted below.



NasRuas1: 19th Oct 2017

NasRuas2: 29th Nov 2017

NasRuas3: 21st Oct 2018

In the video NasRuas1, Carla films live to NasRuas' page from the top of a protest truck in Uberlandia where Bolsonaro is giving speech. Among other things, Bolsonaro speaks about public security, God, and he states: "Brazil needs an honest president, with a good heart and who is a patriot". His speech is not specifically corruption-related, it is pure political propaganda and, in this sense, is considered a pre-campaign event that NasRuas helps to distribute to the masses.

Similarly, in video NasRuas2, Carla with a small microphone in hand interviews Bolsonaro in Congress about the socialist conference of political parties, *Foro de São Paulo* (São Paulo Forum). Carla frequents Congress to interview politicians and film sessions in the House of Deputies, all with the aim of providing content for NasRuas' page. Such reporting of political news falls within the scope of activities carried out by the media, despite being overtly hyper-partisan.

Finally, video NasRuas3 is a live transmission of Bolsonaro speaking to a crowded Paulista Avenue at the *#PTNuncaMais* protest, a week before the final election round in October 2018. On the monstrous screen to the left side of the *Brasil Acima do Tudo* (Brazil Above All) – another smaller movement that bears the same name as Bolsonaro's 2018 campaign slogan – and NasRuas' protest truck, the logo of NasRuas is displayed on the bottom-left of the screen in green and yellow, as indicated by the red arrow in the above image. The use of NasRuas as a propaganda vehicle to promote Bolsonaro is undeniable. Not only does NasRuas endorse Bolsonaro as president, "the tone of speech of the first protest truck [that of NasRuas] was close to that of the official presidential campaign, with emphasis on Jair Bolsonaro, specifically trying to construct a more "politically correct" image of the candidate" (Monitor do debate político no meio digital 2018b). NasRuas thus attempts to override mainstream media narratives, which frequently criticise Bolsonaro for his rude and uneducated manner of speaking.

All the above examples of political propaganda produced by MBL, Revoltados Online and NasRuas have one thing in common, and that is their embrace of online participatory politics, whereby youth (and the middle-aged) are employing tactics including circulating information, encouraging dialogue, producing content, verifying news sources and mobilising others to act, that is reshaping the public sphere (Soep 2014).

The focus of the next section follows this line of thought and investigates the mechanics behind the movements' content production procedures.

Media machines

Numerous people make up the teams that create, edit and publish social media content so the movements can continually produce memes and videos for their growing audiences. As former spokesperson of VemPraRua, Rogério Chequer, explains, the production of content has the workings of a media production line:

> We had a production process of posts, it was a production line… we had a very well-structured process, carried out by various people in four steps: people who created the sentences, made the design, approved the posts and then published them… one of these people was a designer who was paid (Rogério Chequer, interview, 3rd April 2019).

Aside from emphasising the amount of work that goes into creating effective posts, the mention that the designer is a paid position highlights the value that is placed on the aesthetics of online political marketing campaigns. Such production line processes are emblematic of the media industry.

Similarly, MBL's content-making machine operates much like a branch of mainstream media, however it is dictated by trending topics. Rafael Rizzo is the principle *memeiro*, who moved to the city of São Paulo at the end of 2014 to work full-time at MBL as manager of the movement's social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. His job involves monitoring trending topics on Twitter, determining what stance MBL should take on topics, creating memes and finally posting them, often accompanied by a written status, to MBL's various social media accounts. He monitors the pages of influential figures on Twitter, such as journalists, famous TV show presenters, comedians, political activists from the various street movements, the

government and some key deputies. As Rizzo is the one who determines the main issue of the day, he acts as MBL's Chef Editor and creates anywhere from two to 20 memes per day.

Memes can be understood to "act like a funhouse mirror for culture and society, reflecting and refracting the anxieties and preoccupations of a variety of social groups" (Miltner 2018: 412-413). It is important to note that Rizzo classifies memes as any man-made post with imagery and written content, whether it be humours, informative, critical or the like. Below, Rizzo explains in detail how he produces MBL's memes.

> The 'machine' depends on likes and interactions with people. It depends on if people like and comment on a topic and it depends on the topics that are circulating among neoliberals and conservatives. However, sometimes I have to post something about a topic that isn't trending, such as the social welfare reform… Sometimes I will open Twitter and see that a particular tweet had 200 re-tweets in 10 minutes, that is a big number, so that will be the issue of the day… I test a lot of stuff on Twitter first because it is much faster than Facebook with its stupid algorithm. Depending on the comments, I take the post, change the format and post it on Facebook and Instagram. I also monitor news websites such as *O Antagonismo* and UOL [*Folha de S.Paulo's* online portal]… From the reactions to tweets, I see how to properly address issues, in accordance with our ideas (Rafael Rizzo, interview, 13th February 2019).

Aside from demonstrating the impact that social media affordances such as algorithmic visibility and social sharing have on the spread of information (Marwick 2018: 507), this passage confirms that Rizzo's primary job is to monitor online news and reproduce trending topics that he sees fit. Upon analysing this meme production process, two things that differentiate them from traditional media become overtly apparent. The first is that, in this instance, MBL is not a producer of news, but rather provides opinions on popular issues that are already circulating on Twitter and in mainstream media channels. MBL does not produce new investigative journalism but reiterates trending topics and it is in this way that they act as a branch, or dialect, of mainstream media.

The second is the crucial reliance on the interactive features of social media. Rizzo is dependent on the *like*, *retweet* and *comment* functions available on Twitter to know what topics are causing the most buzz among not only MBL's followers but the people MBL follows, and thus, what issues and stances should provoke a good response among the movement's audience. Rizzo's process for producing social media content demonstrates people forming opinions in groups and a two-step flow of communication, whereby ideas from mainstream media are taken up by 'opinion leaders', in this case MBL, and then passed down to the less politically-active segments of society (Katz and Lazarsfeld 2006).

This process is also demonstrative of the commercial way in which social media content is produced in accordance with whichever story 'sells' the best, that is, which news items receive the most engagement from audiences and cause the most debate online. All of this shows signs that a type of propaganda model (Chomsky and Herman 1988) is in place, whereby MBL feeds off trending topics and attention-grabbing headlines knowing that in return it will acquire a greater following, more page views and thus more revenue. They give preference to posting content that goes viral, sensational content that provokes a reaction from their audience. MBL thrive off big headlines, such

as the involvement of presidents and former presidents in corruption scandals. All of this is done with the aim of amassing likes, comments and followers on social media.

This echoes the work of Warner (2005), who asserts publics are formed through the circulation of text. As well as helping to form publics through publishing social media posts, MBL uses the different affordances of social media to discover what publics follow it, or what issues cause the most hysteria online, and then it produces content that is in line with those views. Their followers then share this content among their network of friends. Therefore, Facebook allows users to share political messages endorsed by people they know and trust in their social network of friends. To use the analogy of Moore (2018), Facebook is to political campaigners "like a linguist discovering the Rosetta Stone. Facebook gave campaigners the Stone, the translation and a how-to guide on Egyptian hieroglyphs" (ibid., 125) to reach audiences with trust. In this way, MBL acquires new publics that it may not have obtained purely by posting content about issues it wants to push. The more the movement's number of followers grows, the more the production of right-wing narratives earn them a higher rank as a prominent political propaganda and commentary channel.

YouTube – a right-wing commentary channel

YouTube is a conduit for generating political debate and is especially prone to driving right-wing traffic (Farsi 2019). Previous research has looked at how YouTube provides new methods for audiences, candidates and the media to interact during electoral periods (Ricke 2014: 86-117) and MBL makes use of this avenue to distribute its own political commentary.

Following Facebook's removal of several MBL members' accounts in mid-2018, the group started to direct and migrate its Facebook audience to its YouTube channel. Out of YouTube's two functions, one as a top-down platform that distributes popular culture and the other as a bottom-up platform for vernacular creativity and storytelling (Burgess and Green 2009: 24), this section focuses of the former function, that is, MBL's use of YouTube to disseminate conservative culture and liberal economic thought.

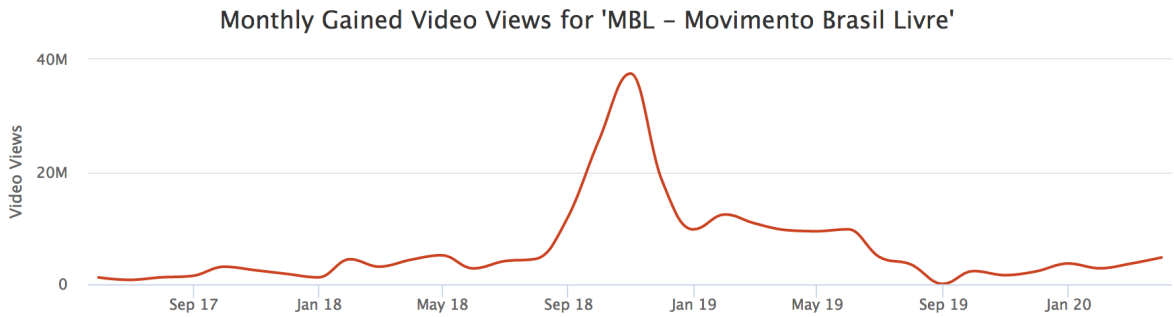
During the month leading up to the final election round, from 28th September to 28th October 2018, MBL published a total of 69 videos on YouTube, which equates to roughly 9.5 hours of video content. That is approximately two to three videos per day, that range anywhere between 2.5 minutes to half an hour long, with an average length of just over 8 minutes. The total number of views MBL's YouTube channel received during that period was 20.7 million views, with the average range between 100,000 and 400,000 views per video.

The videos are all opinion pieces that deal with specific political issues, and include criticism of the Left, promotion of the Right, economic debates, corruption and select cultural issues, notably those criticising feminism, the media and arts, and promoting the evangelical church. Even for those who have little interest in politics, MBL manages to make usually dry political content interesting to watch. Its videos are edited with great precision and skill, with the use of various special effects to keep audiences listening and engaged. In having the liberty to choose what topics fit its political needs, MBL produces targeted material that segments its right-leaning audience in accordance with conservative worldviews. As a result, MBL became a trusted political commentary

source that a staggering number of Brazilians sought for guidance on the selection of political candidates.

On two separate occasions, MBL's videos were viewed by over 1 million people on YouTube: 1) *Golpe de Estado: O plano de Haddad* (Coup d'état: Haddad's plan), published on 30th September 2018 that received 1.1 million views; and 2) *Os planos de governo de Haddad e Bolsonaro* (The government plans of Haddad and Bolsonaro), published on 9th October 2018 that received 1.6 million views. Both these videos critiqued the government plan of the PT candidate, Fernando Haddad, with the latter video also including a comparison with that of Jair Bolsonaro, which MBL portrays in a positive light. The combination of MBL's political and media talent formed an online political commentary alternative that succeeded in drawing the attention of millions of Brazilians.

However, Graph 1 below, retrieved from the social media statistics and analytics tracking website Social Blade, depicts a far larger number of views for the month of October 2018. The timeline of the Monthly Gained Video Views for MBL's YouTube channel, *MBL – Movimento Brasil Livre,* shows a steep peak in October 2018, with the total number of views MBL's YouTube channel received that month equating to 37.5 million video views – some 17 million more than previously calculated above.



Graph 1. Monthly Gained Video Views for '*MBL – Movimento Brasil Livre*'
Source: Social Blade

As depicted in the above graph, there was a steep increase in the number of gained video views for MBL's YouTube channel in October 2018. Although this enormous difference in views is confusing, MBL co-founder, Alexandre Santos, explained to me that the large difference is most likely from all the live MBL News segments that the group decided to delete from YouTube because they were interfering with the group's retention rating, given that viewers would rarely watch the entire MBL News segments. From this, it can be concluded that roughly half of MBL's views in October 2018 came from videos – the 20.7 million views first stated above – and the other half from the live MBL News segments that also remained online during that period. This makes up for the additional 17 million views to align with the Social Blade calculation of 37,502,708 video views and significantly increases the reach of MBL's political commentary.

As a point of reference, according to Social Blade, in October 2018 MBL's YouTube channel received more video views than the YouTube channel of Jair Bolsonaro (20,575,769 video views), prominent pro-Bolsonaro channel *Ficha Social* (2,396,881 video views) and popular right-leaning online radio show *Pânico* (37,350,907 video views). However, MBL's YouTube channel did fall short to reputed right-wing channel

Folha Política (50,930,343 video views) and the online radio station *Jovem Pan News* (65,328,806 video views), which is also right of centre on the political spectrum. Nevertheless, all these YouTube channels including MBL's were the focus of research on political channels on YouTube carried out by Monitor in 2019 (De Oliveira, Ribeiro and Ortellado 2019), which confirms MBL as a key right-wing political commentary source. It is also in line with other studies that have found the majority of urban citizens use social media as a news source in Brazil (Reuters Institute 2016).

According to Alexandre Santos, at its peak, MBL's YouTube channel reached 1.5 million inscriptions following the election of Bolsonaro. However, this was short lasted. By mid-2019, MBL became very critical of the Bolsonaro government and their number of inscriptions, and thus views, dropped significantly by mid-2019 to 1.1 million inscriptions. All the *Bolsonaristas* that they rapidly acquired as an audience at the end of 2018 ceased to follow them. Today, the group's YouTube channel is gradually regaining growth with 1.3 million inscriptions in early 2020.

Nevertheless, the production of multiple videos per day and huge number of video views during the 2018 election period suggests two things. Firstly, it highlights MBL's business-like features as the movement took advantage of the electoral hype to make money off people seeking political views on YouTube – remembering that the platform provides monetary profit to its content producers according to the number of video views. Secondly, it further emphasises the movement's media characteristics through their production of political opinion pieces, albeit in vlogging format, influence over public political debate and importance as a critical right-wing commentary channel. It is in this sense that YouTube, just like Facebook, has assumed the role of Habermas' (1991) coffee houses, where people engage in critical political debate. To achieve this status of key communication vehicle of the New Right, MBL, and the other movements, embarked on a polarising pathway of attention-grabbing communication techniques.

III. Communication Techniques

"Social media—and largely, the Internet as a whole—is an attention economy where the most valued content is that which is most likely to attract attention" (Marwick and Lewis 2017: 42). The movements, particularly MBL, work from this logic in their capacity as media vehicles of the New Right when they seek the attention of online publics. This section is intended to expose some of the motives behind the communication and marketing strategies of the movements, including deconstruction of dogmas about the Right, the concept of the spectacle and implementation of power tactics.

As proclaimed by Pedro D'Eyrot at the 2018 MBL National Conference, MBL's mission is "to deconstruct the false dogmas made by the Left and redeem truth through our transgressive identity, through our spectacles" (Pedro D'Eyrot, personal filmed video of speech, 23rd November 2018). This declaration confirms MBL's role as a hyper-partisan media vehicle that advocates the Right. In the words of Alinsky (1971), "[d]ogma is the enemy of human freedom. Dogma must be watched for and apprehended at every turn and twist of the revolutionary movement" (ibid., 4). Breaking pre-established dogmas is thus pivotal to the success of political action. Through peaceful street protests and the production of online content bolstering right-wing

figures, MBL redefines the image of the Right, which since the military dictatorship had been tainted with violence, suppression and authoritarianism. One of the ways in which they do so is by flipping this dogma on its head and portraying a violent and undemocratic Left.

Violent Left

Historically, the Right in Brazil has been associated with the military dictatorship and its violent regime (Velasco e Cruz 2015: 14), however the movements in this thesis manage to reverse this perception and frame the Left as being aggressive perpetrators, as shown in the images below.

MBL7: 25th May 2017

MBL8: 24th May 2017

MBL9: 15th Sept 2017

Both the memes MBL7 and MBL8 were published by MBL following a violent protest in Brasília in May 2017 against Interim President Michel Temer and his proposed labour reforms. In a comical comparison, meme MBL7 compares the image of a crowded Paulista Avenue at one of the peaceful, pro-impeachment mass protests, with an image from the violent, anti-Temer demonstrations. The captions read: "Tutorial about how to remove a president: do it like this [left-hand side], not like this [right-hand side]". These images side by side clearly seek to reassociate violent crimes from that of the Right of the political spectrum with that of the Left.

Tensions continued to soar when extremists partaking in black-bloc tactics, vandalised ministries and set them on fire (Frazão 2017). The destructive image of a protester smashing the glass windows of a ministry ablaze in meme MBL8 is companied by the caption: "Is this the 'peaceful protest' of the democratic Left?". Although the protest may have started out peaceful, attention is given to shocking images of the radical black-bloc tactics. Whenever MBL can emphasise disorder of the Left, they seize the opportunity in a marketing pitch which is built to construct the image of a violent left wing.

NasRuas also seeks to differentiate itself from violent protesters. In an interview with NasRuas founder, Carla Zambelli, she reiterates how during the June 2013 protests, "people performing black-bloc tactics appeared and started to turn the protest violent… they wanted to surpass the line of policemen and smash everything… they started to smash bus stops, set buses on fire, vandalise public property, and with my microphone I would ask them to please stop vandalising public property and buses" (Carla Zambelli, interview, 20th June 2018). Separating NasRuas' supporters from the violent actions of black-bloc tactics appears to be one of Carla's motives for participating in an interview

for this thesis. This distinction, between violent Left and peaceful Right, taints the image of the Left and helps to redefined the old image of the Right that is associated with authoritarianism, to a new image that abides by democratic rules.

Members from VemPraRua share the same line of thinking. "It is common for protests, particularly those of the PT, to have a lot of fights, violence and aggression. Ours didn't have even one pane of glass broken. We came with the proposal to construct a dialogue to create change. Through dialogue we believe we can change our country (Janaína Lima, interview, 30th November 2018). The Left are depicted as seeking change through violence and force, whereas the Right are viewed as taking the democratic route and seeking change through discourse and debate. The constant reference to glass being broken recalls the violence of the June 2013 protests, which shocked the nation and undoubtedly scared many citizens out of partaking in street demonstrations, as VemPraRua member, Zizo Ribeiro, explains.

> Like at any left-wing protest, there would be rubbish everywhere. Our events are respectful, clean, without violence. Throughout all our protests, not one window was broken. Not one, ever. We realised that the greatest fear people had about going to protest in the street was fear of retaliation. People remembered the black-bloc tactics and they feared hurting themselves or getting caught up in a fight. We needed to overcome that (Zizo Ribeiro, interview, 18th September 2018).

As well as making the division between a messy, violent Left and respectful, peaceful Right, Zizo also reveals the need for the movements to portray such a division to attract more people to the streets at their protests. If fear of violence is associated with left-wing protesters, then this should entice more people to attend right-wing protests. By framing the Left through a lens of violence, the movements manage to fracture the humanitarian image of socialist parties such as the PT.

Out of all the movements' leaders, the spokesperson to most successfully and consistently portray the Left as violent is Arthur do Val. Arthur found fame via his YouTube channel, *Mamãe Falei,* by posting self-filmed videos of himself at left-wing protests. He explains that when his YouTube channel started to grow, he received a call from Pedro who invited him to join MBL. "[W]e made a publication partnership. I would put the MBL logo on my YouTube videos and MBL would publish my videos on their Facebook page… [Pedro] saw me as a good tool to pass messages and I viewed MBL as a good distribution tool" (Arthur do Val, interview, 6th November 2019). Arthur's motive for joining MBL was because of the group's success in publishing and circulating online content – competencies of any media organisation.

According to Arthur, the idea behind his videos was to "expose by ridiculing those that think differently to me and in this way question them. I usually say that my videos are not just ridicule for ridicule, nor action for action. My videos want to pass a message" (Arthur do Val, interview, 6th November 2019). Although Arthur says his purpose is to question people who think differently to him, his marketing strategy suggests otherwise. Arthur attends events such as pro-Lula protests and meetings of left-wing groups with the intention of provoking violent responses from attendees when he insists on questioning and filming them and refuses to leave. In December 2019, he even aggravated a group of state deputies from the PT during an official parliamentary session in the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo, calling them *vagabundos* (lazy bum), to the point that a fistfight broke out between them. Numerous cover pictures of Arthur's

videos are of angry, frustrated left-wing activists, which suggests his videos have the hidden motive of making the Left appear violent and undemocratic, as shown in video MBL9 above.

In this snippet of one of Arthur's videos published on MBL's Facebook page, Arthur attends a left-wing protest supporting the Queer Museum exhibition – an issue which I elaborate on in Chapter 6 – and is forced to leave the event after receiving kicks and punches from angry protesters. The caption reads: "New images show all the Left's violence against *Mamãe Falei".* As depicted in the cover photo of the video, the objective is to demonstrate the Left as violent villains, turning the dogma that the Right are aggressive on its head. However, Arthur was not the first activist to use this technique. Marcelo Reis from the movement Revoltados Online also employed a similar tactic causing commotion at left-wing protests to increase popularity of his videos. Whether you find these stunts hysterical or outrageous, Arthur, MBL and Revoltados Online successfully create attention-grabbing media spectacles that frequently go viral, as Pedro explains.

> I had the honour of inviting Arthur to join MBL. When I first saw a video of his and saw that he got caught up in a protest, I thought this is magnificent. Just magnificent. Why? Because when Arthur gets surrounded by angry protesters, what is he creating? Empathy, he is generating views, he is creating a spectacle, he is capturing our attention. Let's remember that today we live in a world where political ideas compete with videos of cats. This is our reality… However, when you manage to create an image of Arthur getting punched in the face by a professor because of the School Without Political Ideology initiative, then you have a powerful tool, you have a powerful spectacle with the correct values (Pedro D'Eyrot, personal filmed video of speech, 23rd November 2018).

The narrative of a violent Left sells well among MBL's and Arthur's audiences. Moreover, the participation in left-wing protests gives Arthur another topic and filming opportunity for both himself and MBL. The more aggression Arthur manages to provoke from protesters the better, because this generates more views. As well as increasing the likelihood of videos going viral, this marketing strategy also causes radicalisation of society and diminishes intellectual debate of political issues. Instead of debating the conflicting opinions between progressives and conservatives, trying to comprehend each worldview, the focus is turned to violence and intolerance. Online content that goes viral of provocative actions, that victimise the Right and portray a violent Left, demonstrate how easy it is for controversial and countercultural ideas to gain force. Even if large segments of society do not support a controversial idea or the way it is executed, turning it into a media spectacle gives that particular idea more space in public debate and thus society at large.

Media spectacles

Guy Debord's 1967 concept of the *spectacle* has seen a revival and increase in scope with the advent of social media. Within the realm of politics, the election of Donald J. Trump has been credited to the "culmination of the politics of the spectacle" (Kellner 2017: 2). Different to Debord (1973), Pedro sees the positives of the spectacle, the construction of interpersonal relations via images, and explains how online political

movements take advantage of networks of followers and their capacity to act as media branches to disseminate images, and therefore messages, to the public.

> The online Right is organised in a capitalist way. There are various initiatives competing between themselves to see who can deliver to the public the best memes, the best videos, the best news. This is capitalism, plain and simple… By sharing memes, you all have become the hippies of our generation (Pedro D'Eyrot, personal filmed video of speech, 23rd November 2018).

Instead of wearing flared jeans, floral shits and oversized sunglasses – all markers of the 60's liberation movements of the New Left – the counterculture of today is spreading the message and identity of the Right via memes. Conservative and far-right memetic content migrated from online subcultures into mainstream culture (Nagle 2017). From this perspective, online movements such as those in this thesis are, in part, the New Right's digital propaganda vehicles and their audiences, with their capacity to share social media content, can be considered cultural products by contributing to the dissemination and circulation of politically-motivated content. Viewing the movements as part of a political propaganda machine, the question then turns to how the groups create and enhance media and political spectacles. In the case of MBL, attention-seeking tactics take precedence, as Pedro details.

> The efficiency of good political action depends as much on your principles as on your capacity to steal attention… not only our attention, that is the consumer public, but also attention of our opponents… the more it shocks your opponent, the more it provokes your opponent, the more it irritates the Left and makes them counter attack… when the Left attack, they enhance the spectacle because now you have a conflict… and when there is a conflict, there is polarisation, there is good and evil, there is a spectacle (Pedro D'Eyrot, personal filmed video of speech, 23rd November 2018).

Almost everything that MBL does is provocative. From Kim wearing a red Trump cap with 'Make America Great Again' written on it, to Arthur do Val, in his YouTube channel *Mamãe Falei*, dressing up as a vagina to attend a women-only university lecture, the group strives to make the Left despise them more and the Right admire them more. The perfect combination for political polarization. In a quest to make their voices heard, MBL makes attention-grabbing, provocative media spectacles, attacking and insulting opponents wherever possible. Importance is placed on creating conflicts, heroes and villains. Whether that be through radical speeches at protests, marching 33 days from São Paulo to Brasília to deliver Dilma's impeachment petition, camping out the front of Congress, the use of aggressive tones in YouTube videos or mockery in memes, MBL seeks to aggravate the Left through their spectacles. To achieve this, the group relies on a set of power tactics in their online communication.

Rules for radicals

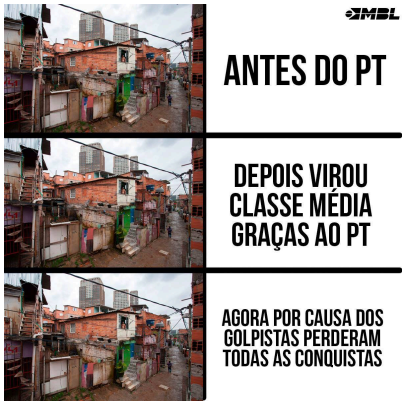
Politics is essentially a struggle for power. Influential figure to Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama, Saul Alinsky, holds the view that "[p]olitical realists see the world as it is: an arena of power politics moved primarily by perceived immediate self-interests" (Alinsky 1971: 12). Political action is thus a game of harnessing power wherever possible. At the

2018 MBL National Conference, Pedro gave a presentation on the group's communication emphasising the need to read theory that influences the thought of your opponent and urged MBL's supporters to take up Alinsky's 13 power tactics described in Chapter 1 to engage in successful action, in the same way that Breitbart advised right-wing insurgents in the US to do so (Hawkins 2012; Shapiro 2014).

Pedro lists each tactic and gives examples of how MBL implement them. What stands out the most is MBL's deliberate and calculated usage of these tactics in their online communication. For reasons of space, I shall just analyse two tactics that I perceive to have readily circulated online, tactics 5 ('Ridicule is man's most potent weapon') and 13 ('Pick the target, freeze it, personalise it, and polarise it'). These strategies persuade users to engage in political debate and are implemented to disrupt power structures by crippling the status and reputation of political opponents. The movements adopt Alinsky's tactics by using them in 'memetic warfare' to compete for control over narratives and ideas in the social-media battlefield (Giesea 2016: 70). Following are some examples of popular posts by MBL, as well as the other movements, that use these strategic power tactics.

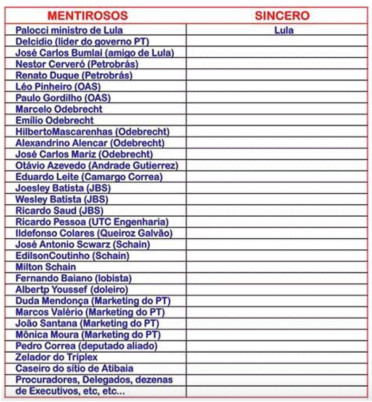
Tactic 5: Ridicule is man's most potent weapon

MBL is very effective at putting into practice their greatest weapon – ridiculing. A common type of meme that MBL employ are image macros, a photographic image with a witty caption superimposed, frequently intended to convey humour and political thought. "These images are strategically created as propaganda by alt-right users to spread elements of their ideology to normies" (Marwick and Lewis 2017: 36). By framing issues in a comical way, the movements belittle opponents and fend off left-wing advances with grace. Whether making fun of Lula, the PT or socialism in general, the young MBL *memeiros* demonstrate their comical flair time and time again through memetic ridicule, as depicted in the images below.



MBL10: 10th Jul 2017

MBL11: 13th Jun 2017



MENTIROSOS	SINCERO
Palocci ministro de Lula	Lula
Delcídio (líder do governo PT)	
José Carlos Bumlai (amigo de Lula)	
Nestor Cerveró (Petrobrás)	
Renato Duque (Petrobrás)	
Léo Pinheiro (OAS)	
Paulo Gordilho (OAS)	
Marcelo Odebrecht	
Emílio Odebrecht	
HilbertoMascarenhas (Odebrecht)	
Alexandrino Alencar (Odebrecht)	
José Carlos Mariz (Odebrecht)	
Otávio Azevedo (Andrade Gutierrez)	
Eduardo Leite (Camargo Correa)	
Joesley Batista (JBS)	
Wesley Batista (JBS)	
Ricardo Saud (JBS)	
Ricardo Pessoa (UTC Engenharia)	
Ildefonso Colares (Queiroz Galvão)	
José Antonio Scwarz (Schain)	
EdilsonCoutinho (Schain)	
Milton Schain	
Fernando Baiano (lobista)	
Albertp Youssef (doleiro)	
Duda Mendonça (Marketing do PT)	
Marcos Valério (Marketing do PT)	
João Santana (Marketing do PT)	
Mônica Moura (Marketing do PT)	
Pedro Correa (deputado aliado)	
Zelador do Triplex	
Caseiro do sítio de Atibaia	
Procuradores, Delegados, dezenas de Executivos, etc, etc...	

MBL12: 8th Sept 2017

In the three-part meme MBL10, the group repeat the same image of a favela yet with different descriptions alongside each. In chronological order, they include: "Before PT"; "After becoming middle class thanks to PT"; and "Now because of the coup they have lost all their accomplishments". This sarcastic representation is at once an attack on the PT's successes of pulling millions of Brazilians out of extreme poverty, thus enlarging the scale of the middle class, and a counterattack to refute the view of the impeachment as

a coup d'état. MBL successfully highlights that although the size of the middle class jumped during the PT years, a significant amount of the population still lives in impoverished favelas, including the newcomers to the middle class.

MBL demonstrates its creative skill again when they produce content such as meme MBL11. The image is of the balding Marxist Russian revolutionary, Vladimir Lenin, with the caption: "Man tattoos on his forehead a list of all the countries where communism has worked". Lenin's blank brow says it all. This witty meme is quick and effective at humorously discrediting communism as a system of government.

In the same vein, meme MBL12 simplistically ridicules Lula by listing all those who have accused him of corruption under the heading 'LIARS', and in parallel, only Lula's name under the heading 'HONEST'. Ridiculing, sarcasm and mockery are central to MBL's discourse and, although infuriating to the Left, this comical creativity is deserving of praise. Whether MBL itself created these memes or republished them from other sources, their demeaning nature has a crippling power. Used to discredit those in positions of authority, such "memes often reflect and invoke the rage of the subordinated" (Miltner 2018: 420). Rage which the movements channel towards one key political target – Lula.

Tactic 13: Pick the target, freeze it, personalise it, and polarise it

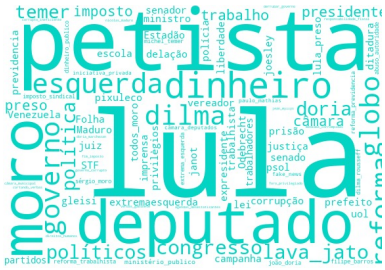
Targeting one individual and entering into conflict with them in a polarizing manner is exactly what the movements achieve when they pinpoint Lula as their public enemy number one. As widely acknowledged in Brazil, "Lula is an institution greater than the PT party itself" (Moura and Corbellini 2019: 36) and his left-wing institution is considered to stretch far beyond politics and into the foundations of society. It is for this reason, as well as the numerous corruption allegations against his and his party's name, that Lula is targeted by the movements, most perfectly depicted in the below image.

VemPraRua1: 22nd May 2017

All arrows point to Lula as head of the *Petrolão* corruption scheme. The meme VemPraRua1, inspired by a PowerPoint presentation given by lead prosecutor of Car Wash, Deltan Dallagnol, states: "Don't forget who the boss is! He must go to jail". This is the view which all the movements share, as displayed in the following word clouds below of the most frequently posted words and phrases on each of the movements'

Facebook pages in 2017. Just a reminder that the Facebook analyses are only of MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas because Revoltados Online's page was removed by the platform.

A total of 93 words and phrases are analysed for MBL, 139 for VemPraRua and 146 for NasRuas. Words with a greater number of mentions are larger in size and words with fewer mentions are smaller in size. The names of the activists linked to each movement, for example Kim Kataguiri, Rogério Chequer and Carla Zambelli, are removed to enable a more precise reading of the ideas the movements promote – other than themselves – and people they target. Furthermore, all prepositions are removed, and in MBL's case the word 'Brazil' because it appears in the name of the movement, which if left would cause ambiguity of its meaning.



MBL

VemPraRua

NasRuas

As one can clearly observe, the common target across all three of the movements is Lula. MBL cites the word Lula 1833 times, which is over 800 times more than any other word MBL cites in that year. VemPraRua cites Lula 680 times, over 300 times more than any other word cited. Finally, NasRuas cites Lula 702 times, a number that is slightly above the amount of times the word Brazil is cited.

Throughout all my interviews with the movements, the activists insist that the common ground among each of the movements is *antipetismo* – criticism of anything related to the PT party. However, the findings in this section suggest that their mutual target in 2017 is, more specifically, Lula and their blatant disapproval of his possible re-election in 2018. Through constant ridiculing and targeted attacks, the movements associated the image of Lula and the PT with evil. Such repetition works off "the doctrines of reaction psychology that a certain stimulus often repeated would create a habit, or that the mere reiteration of an idea would create a conviction" (Bernays 1928: 53). If repeated enough, people frequently succumb to the intention behind a propaganda message such as the PT being the most corrupt political party in the history of the country – an idea which all the movements in this thesis avidly endorse.

Aside from being politically-motived, there are other reasons as to why the movements choose to put Lula's face as their target, as Pedro exposes.

> Political battles must have faces. Us, as human beings, need to identify things. The battle against the PT is good, but the battle against Lula is even better. Lula arouses a lot more emotion in people than the PT… and if you chose Lula as your target, then he *is* your target, you cannot change… if you put a face on your enemy, then this face must remain. Once you put a face on your target, you need to polarise against it, that is, you must show why you are right and why they are wrong. This needs to be very clear. You need to construct this narrative very clearly around your target (Pedro D'Eyrot, personal filmed video of his speech, 23rd November 2018).

Lula is the target and number one enemy. However, what stands out the most in this paragraph is the word *emotion.* Tapping into people's emotional desires is the principle objective of any marketing strategy (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2003). It is emotions that dictate our behaviour. With the sharing feature on social media, understanding what drives people to engage with content by sharing posts becomes a crucial factor to the spread of ideological ideas and narratives. As shown in the analysis of the movements' 2017 Facebook posts above, outrage is the most frequent emotion to circulate among the movements' followers.

The following diary entry provides a real-life account of MBL acting as a media vehicle and political commentary channel, as well as implementing their communication strategy of striving to break pre-existing dogmas about the Right.

Bela Vista, São Paulo
6th September 2018

It is a Thursday afternoon about a month into the official electoral period and I have spent the last few hours reading the VemPraRua book in my room. I glance down at my iPhone, cautious not to give in to the temptation of procrastination, to see a multitude of WhatsApp messages from the group *Cidadão Alerta* (Alert Citizen) of one of the NasRuas members. I keep receiving message, after message, after message. With a sense of urgency in the air, I reach over and grab my phone to see the breaking news. Bolsonaro has been stabbed during a campaign rally in the street in the state of Minas Gerais. Someone in the group comments that MBL is reporting the tragic event, demonstrating that these right-wing supporters turn to MBL as a political news source.

I get onto Facebook straight away to watch Kim's live broadcast. Kim and fellow MBL member, Renato, are seated at the MBL News desk in Vila Mariana, São Paulo, providing their opinions on news reports of the incident in a serious tone. Renato reads out loud from his cell phone updates from mainstream media accounts, such as *Globo* and *Veja,* on Twitter, demonstrating that is it common practice at MBL to act as a branch of the press and redistribute news items already in circulation via MBL's online channels. After the one-jab stabbing in the stomach by Adélio Bispo de Oliveira, who was affiliated to the left-wing party PSOL for 7 years (Pedroso de Campos 2018), Bolsonaro suffered lesions to his intestines. Subsequently, Adélio is captured by people in the crowd and taken into custody by police.

At around the 9-minute mark of the live broadcast, Pedro enters the room to reinforce one of MBL's main missions: to deconstruct dogmas about the Right.

> [This incident] proves that the left-wing discourse, which claims the Right to be fascist and violent, is wrong. The guy stabbed Bolsonaro in the middle of a crowd of right-wing supporters and he got put in jail… imagine if this happened to Lula and someone went there with a pro-Bolsonaro T-shirt on and stabbed him. That guy would be dead. The right-wing supporters, yes, they were angry, but they handed the guy over to the police so that justice could be served… yet still we keep hearing: "the Right is fascist, the Right is violent, the Right uses hate speech". You can stick your hate speech! The people who were there in the crowd acted in the correct manner (Pedro D'Eyrot, live broadcast, 6th September 2018).

MBL, and the other movements, try to break the dogma that the Right is inherently violent, fascist, authoritarian and intolerant. Through their use of social media

> platforms, they have become communication vehicles that disseminate right-wing narratives and versions of events.

This anecdote, like the one at the beginning of this chapter, reinforces MBL's media characteristics and role as a media production studio. The movements in this thesis have increased the plurality of voices that engage in rational, and sometimes irrational, critical political debate, and in doing so they have assimilated to mass media outlet themselves.

Conclusions

Unlike social and political movements of the past that relied on mainstream media for coverage, the movements in this thesis have become media vehicles themselves. Through their use of social media, they produce political commentary, propaganda and opinion pieces in line with conservative and neoliberal ideals. It is in this way that they act as hyper-partisan media vehicles of the New Right, the modern-day virtual media vehicles that circulate political ideas for critical debate in the public sphere.

In their capacity as media vehicles, the movements' Facebook posts were frequently shared by their followers, revealing that the most popular issues to circulate online are social issues, most appealing formats are audio-visual and memetic content, and finally most contagious emotion to spread online is outrage.

MBL's media characteristics in particular are undeniable when it monitors and redistributes mainstream media news items and became a sought-after political commentary channel during the 2018 electoral period. One of their objectives is to redefine the image of Right whilst simultaneously cripple the status of the Left, especially Lula, through a tug-of-war of power tactics, including ridiculing, polarising with targets and depicting a violent Left.

The rest of the thesis is divided into three chapters based on corruption, economic and social issues that were shared by the movements followers, which demonstrate how the movements' posts helped to form different publics of the New Right. To begin with, the next chapter further investigates how the movements targeted Lula and assimilated anti-Lula rhetoric with that of anti-corruption discourse.

Chapter 4
Anti-Corruption or *Antilulismo?*

Curitiba, Paraná
7th April 2018

Curitiba is known as the coldest city in Brazil. The architecture resembles that of parts of Europe and the people there are often referred to as closed-minded. These characteristics did not put me off visiting the city where the whole Car Wash investigation began. I booked flights to visit a friend, Karlin, for her birthday party on Saturday 7th April 2018. By pure coincidence, my visit would coincide with the arrival of Lula in the city, following the Supreme Court's new interpretation to jail those condemned in a second instance court. Lula's sentence, of 12.5 years of prison for passive corruption and money laundering, would shortly commence.

The mood in Karlin's house on her birthday morning is awkwardly sombre. After getting dressed in the upstairs guestroom, I walk down the wooden staircase into the kitchen where I can hear the sound of gentle chopping. Karlin turns her head, freezes mid-chop and glares at me in shock as I pause in the doorway. "I should have told you not to wear red", she said softly with a slight quiver in her voice, her eyes fixed on my red and white floral shirt. Karlin is a strong supporter of the former PT president, but she is one of few in the city. Leaning against the kitchen bench, the sun breaming through the glass window melting the morning frost, Karlin explains how she must be careful about what she says in front of other people because most despise Lula. Despite being conscious of keeping her opinions to herself, Karlin is unable to fight back tears as news comes through that Lula is leaving the union building in São Bernardo, São Paulo, where his supporters had been blocking the entrance to prevent his arrest.

For days now, thousands of PT fans, faithful Lula lovers, security guards, police, new reporters, journalists, photographers and anyone wanting to witness history being made surround the union building. A constant stream of images make the daily headlines from the several TV helicopters circling above the building like hawks about to descend on their next prey. The Left had successfully turned the event into a political spectacle, in the hope of gaining supporters of the narrative that Lula is suffering political persecution.

As Karlin weeps to herself whilst resuming to prepare the salad for the evening *churrasco* at the local barbecue and picnic park, her sister-in-law, a vocal opponent of Lula, snarls: "You're not seriously crying over Lula? Just remember, he stole millions and you're here cutting tomatoes." With that, the sister-in-law picks up the plastic cutlery and napkins and briskly walks out of the room. Karlin comes up to me, leans in close to my ear and whispers: "She's far-right, totally persuaded, incapable of seeing any other point of view. Don't let her know your beliefs lean to the Left, she'll automatically classify you as pro-Lula and the PT." It feels as if I am living in a scene out of George Orwell's book, *1984*. Hide your ideological beliefs from the dominant Thought Police. No matter what side of the political divide you sit, the reputation of the once hailed most popular president of Brazil had been severely tainted by cascading corruption allegations.

To investigate the impact that MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas have on the reputation of corrupt actors, Section I of this chapter provides a case study on the reputational risk of the construction firm Odebrecht. Section II compares the data provided by Odebrecht with that of my findings from the Facebook posts analysis to develop the argument that the movements play an important role in increasing corruption awareness and delivering anti-corruption discourse to new publics, albeit for politically motivated reasons. Following on from this last point, Section III exposes how particularly MBL's anti-corruption drive is superficial and driven by political interests.

Political discourse that is centred on the division of 'the people' against a 'corrupt elite class' is often associated with populism (Müller 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). But what happens when this elite class has indeed been engaged in corrupt practices? I argue that social media pages which produce troves of memetic and video content criticising and ridiculing grand-scale corruption fulfil the role of a corruption accountability institution.

Different to those who are critical of the new speed of politics through novel information technologies (Hassan 2012), I view digital media as a positive development in the fight against corruption. A free press has been shown to be an effective external control on corruption (Brunetti & Weder 2002), with social media contributing to the decentralisation of such checks. This chapter seeks to place the movements, through their use of social media, within the scope of corruption accountability institutions in Brazil, as I now go on to explain.

Corruption accountability institutions

When talking about the Car Wash investigations, particularly Odebrecht's involvement, the type of corruption being referred to is 'grand corruption' (Ugaz 2017). My interpretation of grand corruption is taken from Transparency International's (a global anti-corruption body) definition of grand corruption as "the abuse of high-level power that benefits the few at the expense of the many. It typically has three main features: A systematic or well-organised plan of action involving high-level public officials that causes serious harm, such as gross human rights violations" (Transparency International 2021). In Brazil, there are a handful of institutions responsible for upholding corruption accountability. Scholars of Brazilian politics, Timothy Power and Matthew Taylor (2011), outline a 'Web of Accountability Institutions in Brazil', which identifies the five main sectors responsible for monitoring, investigating and sanctioning wrongdoers. These include the executive branch, judicial branch, legislative branch, *Ministério Público* (Public Prosecutor's Office), and the media.

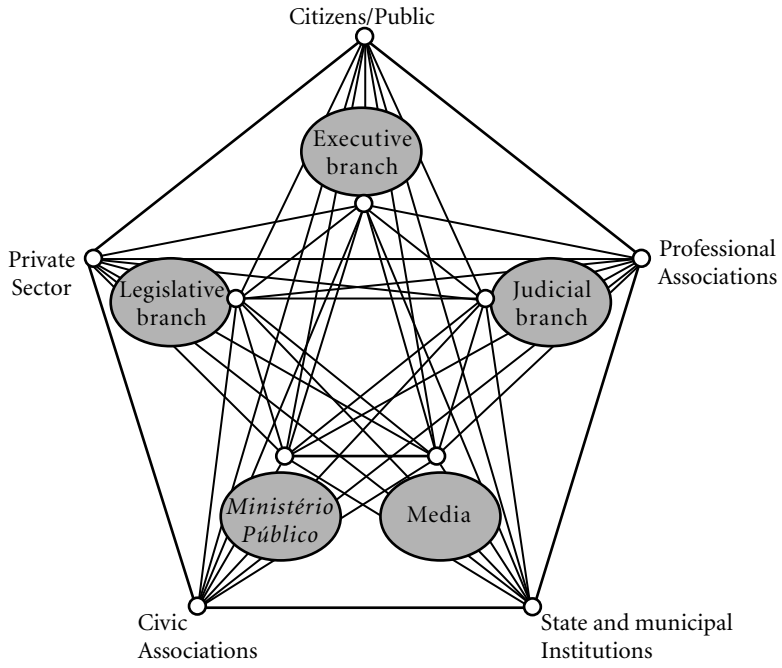


Figure 1. The Web of Accountability Institutions in Brazil (Power and Taylor 2011: 15)

This constellation delineates the interconnected relationships between the various accountability institutions and supports the common belief that the *Ministério Público* and the media act as fourth and fifth branches of government.

However, as claimed by scholar in Human Rights, Fiona Macaulay, all too often in Brazil there is "a tightly woven web of collusion between all branches of government and organised crime, leaving civil society as the only mechanism of accountability" (Macaulay 2011: 237). Following this analysis, the responsibility of corruption accountability then turns to the Brazilian public. Could the Brazilian public be better equipped now, with social media, to increase awareness, reputational risk and accountability of corruption? Social media has enabled ordinary citizens to perform as political actors (Spektor 2017), which is a significant change to the media industry. Can social media be considered a branch of mainstream media in the web of corruption accountability institutions in the way it is used to redistribute news items about corruption?

Regarding mainstream media, over the last 30 years, academics have noted a change in journalistic practices in Brazil from investigative journalism to journalism about investigations (Nascimento 2007), due to increased autonomy, independence and investigative powers of prosecutors of the *Ministério Público* under the 1988 Constitution (ibid., 184-5). This is the result of improved close association between the media and *Ministério Público* (Porto 2011: 118; Nascimento 2007). Despite these advancements in the independence of the media and *Ministério Público*, there is considerable risk that coverage of corruption scandals will be manipulated and politicised (Porto 2011). Does social media succumb to the same politicisation of scandals as mainstream media? Within the context of this thesis, the movements' use of social media to disseminate anti-corruption discourses and increase reputational risk of corrupt actors, therefore, merits thorough investigation.

I. Reputational Risk

The media plays a fundamental role in damaging the reputations of political and business elite involved in corruption scandals. In a country such as Brazil, where mainstream media has historically been controlled by an oligarchy of families and politicians (Media Ownership Monitor Brasil 2019), corruption accountability and reputational risk of high-profile wrongdoers was in the hands of an elite select few. Social media has brought about changes to this dynamic. Word-of-mouth has a significant effect on reputation and it is happening more and more by social media influencers who enter into promotional partnerships with brands (RepTrak 2020) or simply endorse ideas that foster a specific cause. Social media, or more specifically the political influences (the movements) of focus in this thesis, can therefore be considered to have democratised the media in Brazil, as Research Coordinator at Transparency International Brazil, Guilherme France, explains.

> The involvement of social media has caused a democratisation of communication channels. Before social media, people only had access to institutionalised communication channels, such as television, radio and newspapers. Today, the way in which information is distributed is much simpler. Any Facebook page with thousands of followers can produce and disseminate information… In a scenario where historically politicians themselves controlled the communication channels that reached most of the population, there were indeed limitations on the impact of negative news about a specific person. Since the democratization of these channels, negative information has more impact on the reputation of politicians and companies because it is more likely for information to modify or influence public opinion (Guilherme France, interview, 19th September 2019).

Social media has helped to decentralise mass communication. Where once only a handful of people owned the big media outlets in Brazil, vast groups of people now dominate social media platforms. Popular online accounts have thousands and even millions of followers and the information, opinions and ideas they publish shape public opinion and debate.

In terms of holding corrupt figures accountable for their engagement in fraudulent activities, online media vehicles assist the circulation of negative news. This happens in particular ways, as suggested by Ana Luísa de Castro Almeida, Vice President and Consulting Director of Reputation Institute in Brazil, which evaluates the perception of reputations of large corporations including Petrobras, JBS and Odebrecht. She contends that, although mainstream media has greater impact on reputation, social media has increased the life-span of scandals. “Social media has a flow-on effect as scandals last for a longer period of time… Social media focuses more on one situation, one question, and it reverberates that specific fact or testimony” (Ana Luísa de Castro Almeida, interview, 25th October 2019). It appears that actors on social media are successful at targeting certain actors in scandals.

In a quest to further explore the impact of social media on creating awareness of corruption and increasing reputational risk of big businesses involved in Car Wash, I sought an interview with one of the principle construction companies engaged in the malfeasance – Odebrecht.

Odebrecht

Odebrecht's involvement in the Car Wash investigations revolved primarily around their 'bribe department', which was responsible for illicit donations to political campaigns in exchange for being granted overpriced public contracts, regulations that favoured tax breaks and assistance with winning construction contracts both locally and internationally (Globo 2017). Indeed, the company is a powerful interest group that "found in the mid-2000s an environment conducive to the purchase of legislation through campaign donations, side payments, and bribes" (Mello & Spektor 2018: 120).

On 29th November 2018, Director of Press Relations, Shirley Dutra, Manager of Internal Communication and Marketing, Domitila Costa, and Manager of Digital Marketing, Leandro Pinto, welcomed me into Odebrecht's communication department. There, they presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the impact of traditional and social media on Odebrecht's reputation, which according to Domitila Costa, in 2017 was "one of the lowest in the world" (Domitila Costa, interview, 29th November 2018). This is undoubtedly the reason behind why the company rebranded its name to Novonor in late 2020. For consistency reasons, I retain the former name of Odebrecht when referring to the company throughout the thesis. However, why did the sharp decline in Odebrecht's reputation occur in 2017, instead of in 2015 when the company's former CEO, Marcelo Odebrecht, was imprisoned due to the revelations?

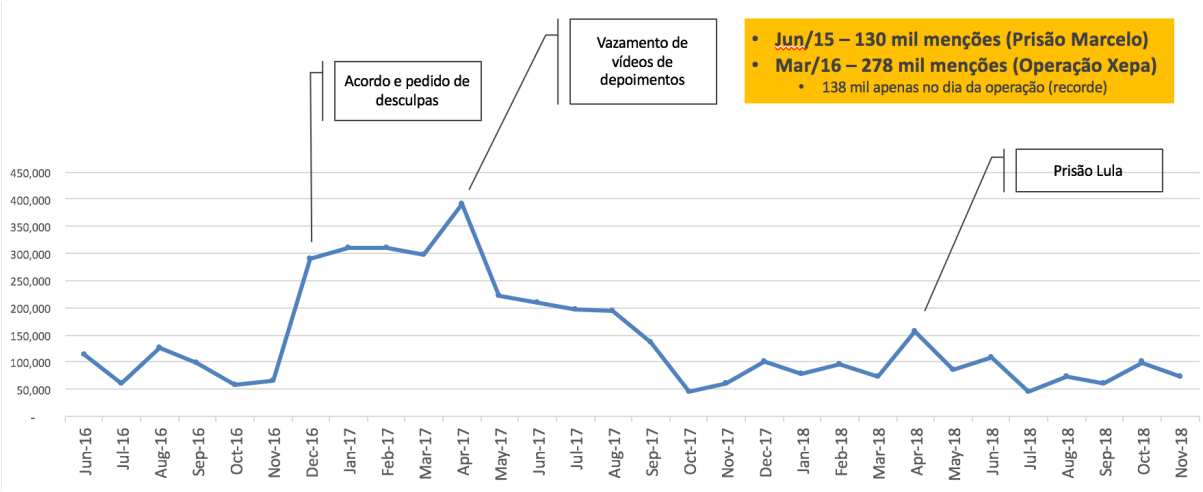
According to Shirley, the sharp decline in Odebrecht's reputation correlates with the release of the videos of the plea-bargain statements that Marcelo Odebrecht and other company employees had to provide as part of their cooperation agreement. In January 2017, the Supreme Court ratified Odebrecht's leniency agreement that was made in December 2016. However, Shirley explains that to ratify the agreements, the Supreme Court asked all 77 collaborators to record videos, whereby they begin by saying that they are speaking on their free will and pledge that the reports they provided to the Car Wash Task Force in Curitiba are correct. These videos were a type of obligation from the Supreme Court as part of the plea-bargain process that proved the collaborators agreed with their reports. After the Supreme Court approved the videos, they were leaked to the media, as Shirley details.

> One of the judges was about to make the recordings public, however *Estadão* had access to the material and put the videos up on their website first. This happened in the April [in 2017] and was what caused the peak [in mentions on social media]… TV Globo had a task force whereby they watched all the videos, a total of 900 hours of videos. They watched them to see the content and edited it for publication on their televised news segments. Though it wasn't only Globo that did this, all the media companies did this. During that time, they were investigating Lula… we were always cited in parts of the scandal that involved Lula… we were used a lot either to defend or attack Lula (Shirley Dutra, interview, 29th November 2018).

The inclusion of plea bargaining and the technique of recording videos of legal testimonies are both new practices to the Brazilian legal system (Brazil Institute 2017). According to Shirley, mainstream media was interested in publishing these videos because of their link with former president Lula. The videos were published in their edited formats and therefore "the denunciations were taken out of their original context

and became a media spectacle" (Leandro Pinto, interview, 29th November 2018). This is seemingly a deliberate tactic used by the Brazilian press, who "succumb at times to sensationalistic practices and *denuncismo* journalism [journalism of denunciations] to sell newspapers and feed avid readers" (Matos 2008: 4).

The publication of the videos on mainstream channels was devastating to Odebrecht's reputation and, as Shirley mentions above, this caused a ripple-effect with a peak number of mentions on social media. The below graph is a timeline of the key developments in Odebrecht's involvement in Car Wash and displays the frequency of discussions about the company on social media (mainly Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) from July 2016 until November 2018, which depicts the peak in April 2017.



Graph 2: Frequency of Discussions about Odebrecht on Social Media
Source: Odebrecht, 29th November 2018

The above graph illustrates the three main peaks in the number of mentions about Odebrecht on social media. The first occurred in December 2016, when Odebrecht made their leniency agreement and formally apologised. This received almost 300,000 mentions on social media. The second, and highest peak of mentions, was in April 2017 when the videos of Odebrecht's plea-bargain testimonies were leaked. This incident received almost 400,000 mentions on social media. Finally, the third peak was in April 2018 when Lula was imprisoned in Curitiba. Odebrecht received just over 150,000 mentions that month.

Further to this, the yellow box on the top right provides information on two key events in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Firstly, the imprisonment of Marcelo Odebrecht in June 2015, which received 130,000 mentions that month. Secondly, the launch of Operation *Xepa*, stage 26 of Car Wash, in March 2016 that revealed a slush fund scheme at Odebrecht to pay illegal kickbacks to third parties. Odebrecht received 278,000 mentions that month. On one day in particular, 26th March 2016, Odebrecht received 138,000 mentions on social media.

The impact of the release of the videos of testimonies to the public had greater negative repercussions for Odebrecht than any other development in the Car Wash investigations. This signals that audio-visual content has significant impact on public opinion and reputation.

Out of all social media, Odebrecht primarily monitors Facebook as discussions about the company are more prevalent and pessimistic there. "Facebook is where we

have the largest monitoring on social media and where we notice that discussions about Odebrecht are very negative" (Leandro Pinto, interview, 29th November 2018). Leandro informs that various Facebook pages were highly critical of Odebrecht during the impeachment process in 2016 and again when the videos were released in 2017, however two pages stood out the most.

> In our monitoring, MBL without a doubt appeared a lot. Recently they have stopped mentioning us but back in 2016 and 2017 they mentioned us a lot. There was another page that got taken down by Facebook, *Movimento Contra Corrupção*, that used to talk *a lot* about us. They were very critical of us and had a huge network of other pages linked to them (Leandro Pinto, interview, 29th November 2018).

Facebook pages, with their large followings and networks of associated pages, are important agents that drive negative discussions about Odebrecht online and contribute to damaging the company's reputation. This is one example of how media hype, such as that during corruption scandals, diffuses far quicker on social media than mainstream media precisely because of the sharing function on digital media platforms, which enables rapid diffusion of content to vast networks (Roese 2018). MBL is an obvious page that comes to mind, however what is most intriguing here is the fact that the page *Movimento Contra Corrupção* (MCC) was a focus of Odebrecht's monitoring. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter of this thesis, the MCC Facebook page, which was administered by the marketing group Raposo Fernandes Associados, was removed by Facebook for violating the platform's policies, along with a myriad of other pages associated to it, before the final election round in 2018. In a statement published on 22nd October 2018 in relation to the page's removal, Facebook said:

> Today, as part of our ongoing efforts to protect our community from this type of abuse, Facebook removed 68 Pages and 43 accounts associated with a Brazilian marketing group, Raposo Fernandes Associados (RFA), for violating our misrepresentation and spam policies… we have seen spammers increasingly using sensational political content — across the political spectrum — to build an audience and drive traffic to their websites, earning money for every visitor to the site. The RFA assets we removed were engaging in this type of elicit behaviour… the removal of these Pages is just one of the many steps we have taken to prevent bad actors from interfering with Brazil's elections on Facebook (Facebook 2018).

Although the violation of spam policies legitimates the removal of RFA's network of Facebook pages, for which MCC was part of, as we can see the underlying motive for the removal was political. If Facebook were to evaluate MCC's capacity to fight corruption by increasing reputational risk of corrupt actors, as in the case of Odebrecht, then perhaps the platform would reconsider the practice of permanently removing pages and implement other forms of punishment such as temporarily banning new publications, restricting shareability of posts, and the like.

Unfortunately for this thesis, MCC's removal from Facebook means I am unable to analyse their Facebook posts and so my investigation into the effectiveness of the page stops here. MCC's case highlights how the permanent removal of pages on Facebook can constrain the damages to reputations of corrupt actors and therefore, to

a certain extent, inhibit the fight against corruption. Although, is such anti-corruption rhetoric published on the movements' Facebook pages politically motivated?

Domitila Costa highlights that when Odebrecht is cited on social media, it is usually in conjunction with a politician and that the politician is in fact the focus of criticism more so than Odebrecht.

> One thing that we have noticed a lot is that usually, on social media, when Odebrecht is named in a scandal along with a politician, discussions are focused a lot more on the politician. The politician receives a lot more visibility and commentary than Odebrecht… politicians are targeted a lot more than Odebrecht (Domitila Costa, interview, 29th November 2018).

With politicians being the target of criticism on social media, this suggests that certain social media pages are being driven by political interests. Despite the movements' claim that they aim to combat corruption, their motives for citing actors in corruption scandals revolves around the pursuit of politicians – a topic I investigate in the following two sections.

Next, a detailed analysis of the movements' Facebook posts reveals how they act as a dialect of mainstream media promoting corruption awareness and forming anti-corruption publics through the movements' followers sharing their posts. It also investigates to what extent the data provided by Odebrecht about social media and the movements is correct, highlighting the latter's political motives.

II. Corruption Awareness Via Facebook

Even though Facebook has been widely criticised for its role in proliferating polarisation and disinformation on its platform (Benkler, Faris & Roberts 2018; Marwick 2018), the focus here is more optimistic and investigates how the platform can be used to increase awareness of corruption and help hold wrongdoers accountable for their crimes. One example of this is the Facebook page, *República de Curitiba,* whose founder, Paulo Generoso, claims that "the page was created to support the Car Wash operation to fight against corruption" (Paulo Generoso, interview, 22nd May 2019).

Media convergence, the transfer of content across multiple digital media platforms (Jenkins 2006: 2), has enabled the redistribution of mainstream media content to social media. In an interview with head manager of MBL's social media accounts, Rafael Rizzo, he showed me the performance ratings of several testimony videos and audio recordings of Marcelo Odebrecht, which were taken from mainstream media sources and redistributed via the group's Facebook page. These videos posted on MBL's Facebook page received significant reach. According to Rizzo, in the week of 10th April 2017 when the videos of Marcelo Odebrecht's testimonies were released to the public, MBL "had a peak reach of 9 million people in one day" (Rafael Rizzo, interview, 13th February 2019), which is significantly higher than their average peak in 2018 of 5.5 million following the changes to Facebook's algorithm.

The performance ratings of two posts, video MBL13 and video MBL14 (see Appendix 1), demonstrate the scope of MBL's influence in 2017. Both posts are of

Marcelo Odebrecht's testimonies. In video MBL13 published on 23rd March 2017, which is in fact a recording of a segment published by Globo's nightly news program *Jornal Nacional* that MBL republished on its Facebook page, Marcelo states that Dilma was aware of the slush fund that financed her 2014 re-election campaign. The 6-minute video, which is narrated by Globo with images of Marcelo's testimony reports, reached over 3.6 million people on MBL's page, was shared over 24,000 times, received 1,000 comments and almost 40,000 total likes. The penetration is high for this video, although the following video exceeds this reach.

In video MBL14 published on 13th April 2017, Marcelo details the corruption scheme behind the construction of Corinthians Arena. He explains the involvement of the federal, state and municipal governments in the construction of the arena for the Opening Ceremony of the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Key politicians listed are Former President Lula (PT) and Former President Dilma Rousseff (PT), Former Govenor of São Paulo Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) and Former Mayor of São Paulo Gilberto Kassab (DEM), among others. The 9-minute snippet that MBL published, which is another recording of a segment published by Globo News, reached 3.9 million people, was shared over 16,000 times, received 1,900 comments and over 30,000 total likes.

By republishing testimonies of wrongdoers from mainstream media, recorded as part of plea-bargain processes, movements like MBL fulfil part of the corruption accountability role of the media, contributing to the dissemination of reputation-damaging information to audiences in their millions. This demonstrates how news media is dependent on their relationship with online platforms such as Facebook to reach audiences (Andrews 2019: 57-58) and highlights the interdependence between media hype and news media, social media and online users (Roese 2018) who share content. The fact that these videos were frequently shared by MBL's followers signifies the formation of anti-corruption publics among their audience. However, much like mainstream media, further examination of video editing practices on the movements' Facebook pages suggests underlying political agendas exist.

Video editing

The modification of mainstream media content when published on social media is a common practice to engage audiences. "A good social media editor knows how to alter a headline in order to generate more reactions, shares, or organic reach – and thus, enhance the viral potential" (Roese 2018: 324). MBL is effective at recording and editing video testimonies, adding titles that highlight the involvement of high-profile figures from the PT, as displayed below.

MBL15: 13th April 2017

MBL16: 12th April 2017

MBL17: 12th April 2017

In video MBL15, MBL cuts a 20-second snippet of a Globo News segment of one of Marcelo's testimonies, whereby Marcelo states that PT senator Gleisi Hoffmann received illicit funds from Odebrecht. This is directly followed by a 16-second video of Gleisi taken from TVSenado during a session in Congress in August 2016, whereby Gleisi defends the then-president Dilma Rousseff stating: "No one here has the moral right to accuse or judge anyone. That's why we are saying it's a farce. What moral right does this senate have to judge the president? What moral right do senators have to say she is guilty? I want to know, what right do you all have!". At the end of Gleisi's speech, MBL comically writes in big letters across the video, "And now, Gleisi? Who has the right now?". MBL blend mainstream media reporting with online activism, cutting and editing videos, always striving to enhance the ridiculing effect of PT opponents whenever possible.

Similarly, in video MBL16, Marcelo reveals paying funds destined for João Santana, head campaign marketer of the PT, via a third party at the request of Lula following Haddad's successful election campaign for Mayor of São Paulo in 2012. The caption above the video reads: "Marcelo Odebrecht reveals slush fund for Haddad's campaign". Haddad's name is highlighted in yellow to further emphasis the former mayor's involvement in the corruption scheme.

Finally, in video MBL17, Marcelo relates how Lula and Dilma knew about the corruption scheme and that the latter also was aware that a large portion of Odebrecht's illicit campaign financing went to PT marketer João Santana. The caption on this video reads: "Marcelo Odebrecht exposes Lula and Dilma in testimony". Just as related by Odebrecht's communication department, the focus of MBL's posts involving Odebrecht is on politicians, particularly those from the PT, and not the construction company. When Facebook pages, like that of MBL, republish mainstream media news items about corruption investigations, they add online hype to the growing media spectacle.

Emerging right-wing music artists such as *La Banda Loka Liberal* took Marcelo's testimony statements, like when he said that Lula and Dilma knew everything, and turned them into songs that groups like MBL would play at street protests. The day before the Supreme Court voted against Lula's *habeas corpus,* there were anti-Lula protest throughout various cities in Brazil calling for Lula's imprisonment. It was a Tuesday, the same day that I have my jiu-jitsu training in Paraíso, a suburb on the other side of Paulista Avenue.

Paulista Avenue, São Paulo
3rd April 2018

As I walk up the hill to Paulista from my apartment, I can hear the roaring sound of someone yelling into a microphone and the thumping beat of music. It drowns out my already quite loud music playing in my headphones. As I turn onto Paulista, I see the first of the protest trucks, decorated in the national colours green and yellow, with banners that read, "*Corruptos Na Cadeia!*" (Corrupt in Jail!), "*Fora PT!*" (Oust The PT!), and *'Ato em Defesa da JUSTIÇA'* (Act in Defence of Justice). I am overwhelmed with the thousands of people that have taken to the streets to pressure the Supreme Court's final ruling on Lula's prison sentence the following day. I hesitate not knowing which side of the street to try and wade my way through. Not a patch of bitumen can be seen for blocks, only human bodies crammed in like sheep in a loading yard.

There are hundreds of people with mini blow-up merchandise figures of Lula in prison attire, known as *Pixuleco* (nickname given to Lula). The very existence of *Pixuleco,* initially a giant-size inflatable Lula in prison attire which is also produced in smaller form for sale as public merchandise at protests, exemplifies how actors of the New Right have taken processes from their political and legal settings and transferred them into cultural artefacts. Reproducing images of Lula in prison attire time and time again adds to the suspense-building effect leading into his eventual imprisonment. As one of Alinsky's (1971) power tactics proclaims: *the threat of something is greater than the thing itself.*

It amazes me how well-organised the event is. Street vendors have set up *churrasco* stands, selling grilled meat on sticks and cold drinks. People are calm, all gathering around the trucks that block the entire width of Paulista for at least 5 blocks. There is a general hum emanating from the crowd that peaks with shouts that echo the propaganda being blasted from the huge sound systems mounted on the trucks. *"Fora PT! Fora PT!",* they all repeat at high decibels, to the point where I have to block my ears as I struggle to push through the current of people.

Another unmistakable hum is that of the TV helicopter slowly hovering overhead. With each lap of Paulista it cuts, people glare up at it with piercing eyes in disgust and angrily yell, "*Fora Rede Globo!"* (Out with the Globo Network!). They are aware that Big Brother is watching, yet their lack of trust in Brazil's largest media corporation leaves them convinced it will misreport and play down the evening's events.

On my way back from jiu-jitsu training, the crowd has petered out due to the drizzling rain that has set in. Yet one truck persists – that of MBL. Some dedicated fans in ponchos are still dancing in the rain to a popular anti-PT song blaring out of the truck's speakers:

> *Lula sabia de tudo* (Lula knew everything)
> *A Dilma Rousseff também* (Dilma Rousseff as well)
> *Chora petista corrupto* (Cry corrupt *Petista*)
> *Que nunca enganou ninguém* (Who never deceived anyone)

It is at that moment that I realise the movements had achieved much more than publicise judicial decisions and processes, they have managed to help turn legal evidence into cultural phenomena.

Protest in favour of Lula's prison sentence on Paulista Avenue
3rd April 2018

MBL help to circulate mainstream media news items about new developments in corruption allegations. However, the way in which they edit testimony videos is in line with the movement's political agenda of preventing the PT from re-election and further pinpointing their primary target – Lula.

Corruption allegations against Lula

Amidst sprawling corruption allegations and a cacophony of online hate, Lula's once glorified image turned nefarious. How did the movements contribute to his damaged reputation? The short answer is severely, when they streamed live interrogations of Lula with Judge Moro and published posts ridiculing the former PT leader. The large quantities of people that viewed such online content reinforces the movements media capacities and role fostering anti-Lula publics.

According to Rizzo, the live stream of Lula's first testimony with Judge Sérgio Moro, on 10th May 2017, received the maximum number of people watching live in MBL's history.

> In terms of investigating corruption, there was this live post of Lula with Moro. The first testimony of Lula with Sérgio Moro on the 10th May 2017. As soon as it began to air, we did a live streaming of it that lasted hours. I have a program called OBS that allows me to take a broadcast signal from YouTube and post it on Facebook. So, that's what I did. As soon as I posted it, there were 50,000 people watching it via our page, with millions of reach. In that week, we had various posts go viral. Usually we have 2,000 to 3,000 people watching our lives, but this one had 50,000 (Rafael Rizzo, interview, 13th February 2019).

The video of Lula's testimony that Rizzo is referring to was posted on MBL's page with the written post: "URGENT: Justice system releases interrogation of Lula by Moro!". It lasted 1.5 hours and was the post that received the second largest amount of angry reactions in 2017 and throughout MBL's post history from beginning 2014 to end 2018. It goes without saying indignation among Brazilians was high. Much like mainstream media, the movements in their capacity as media vehicles contributed to the political

and media spectacle (Debord 1973; Kellner 2017; Briziarelli and Armano 2017) that Lula's corruption allegations and testimony were turned into.

From that live stream, MBL produced a small snippet (see Appendix 2) whereby Moro seemingly catches Lula contradicting himself. The 3.5-minute snippet was obviously made with the intention of going viral and has the caption: "Moro catches Lula lying in Car Wash interrogation". The post-performance data indicates that this snippet reached over 9.7 million people, was shared over 26,000 times, received 5,300 comments and more than 67,000 total likes. The excessive reach of this video was almost triple that of Marcelo Odebrecht's testimony videos shown earlier in this chapter, which further reinstates the ability of the group's media competencies to reach the masses. In this example, MBL reduces a 1.5-hour interrogation to just 3.5 minutes, with the aim of isolating and then accentuating Lula's worst moments, much like how Globo broadcast unfavourable coverage of Lula during his unsuccessful election campaign against Fernando Collor in 1989.

After dissecting the initial news item to target Lula, the phase of ridiculing begins, as depicted below.

NasRuas4: 11th May 2017

VpR2: 11th May 2017

MBL18: 15th Sept 2017

In the short snippet described above, Lula states that his late wife "Marisa Letícia did not like the beach". This phrase is the cause of ridiculing when images of what appears to be Lula and Marisa at the beach are turned into comical memes, as shown in meme NasRuas4. This post by NasRuas makes Lula live up to his own book of rules, another of Alinsky's (1971) power tactics, which seeks to expose hypocritical and contradictory behaviour.

Likewise, VemPraRua criticises Lula's answers to questions for being too short, such as his responses displayed in meme VpR2 that states: "It was 5 hours of 'No', 'I don't know', 'It was Marisa'". Lula is portrayed as being unwilling to participate in the interrogation and instead blaming everything on his late wife to avoid answering questions. The shade of red of this meme further adds a negative effect.

Similarly, the humorous three-step meme MBL18 re-enacts Lula's interrogation by Judge Moro. In a first instance, Lula is shown to say: "It is very difficult to have you constantly cite my late wife without her being here to defend herself". Then, Moro replies: "Who is responsible for buying the apartment?". To which Lula responds: "My wife". MBL's ridiculing, arguably the most effective of Alinsky's (1971) power tactics, of Lula is palpable as it flirts with the moral boundaries around the death of his late wife. Interestingly, this exact meme was replicated across the three movements, indicating that the image was most likely taken from a third-party site demonstrating how "memes

propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (Dawkins 1989: 249). No matter who the original author, what is important is the intentional use of ridiculing to attack Lula and the Left.

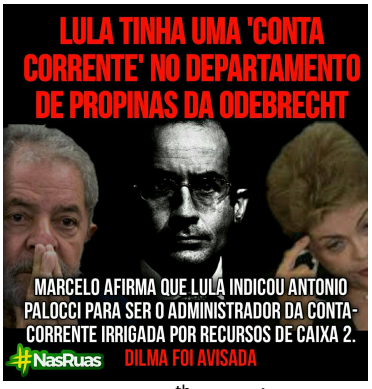
Time and time again, the movements employ a three-step process of publishing initial news items, republishing news items in dissected parts accentuating pivotal moments, and finally the period of ridiculing targets. It is in this sense that scandals last longer on social media. As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, this process can be understood as one of attention-jealousy-revenge, whereby once an opponent receives some form of public attention the movements experience resentment towards that attention and retaliate by producing reputation-shattering content against the opponent.

The circulation of these popular cultural items is indicative of memetic warfare, which seeks to dominate narratives in the digital media battlespace (Giesea 2016). This type of criticism of Lula is classified as a social issue in my analysis of the movements' Facebook posts as the underlying motive is political and endeavours to attack the image of Lula, crippling his political status. Above all, the movements achieve to take pieces of legal evidence from the judicial setting and reappropriate them to the cultural realm, via social media, as comical cultural artefacts, in a process that merges politics and entertainment (Kellner 2017).

Entertainment, in this case in the form of social media memes, helps us understand our lives and build social identity (Curran 2016: 24). Although usually viewed negatively, memetic content like this can be viewed as a form of "media entertainment [which] informs a debate about values, identities, understandings of society and norms that feed into the democratic process" (Curran 2011: 82). Through the circulation of memes, the movements offer images and interpretations of society, which helps construct their view of the unjust power dynamics in play. Memetic criticism is frequently centred on politicians involved in scandals, over companies, particularly in relation to illicit campaign financing.

Illicit campaign financing

In Brazil, the main causes for political corruption lie within the fabrics of the electoral and party systems (Barroso 2017; Cardoso 2017). Expensive campaign financing and the obligatory formation of coalition governments has caused politicians and big business to frequently engage in corrupt practices. Through the production and popular sharing of online content criticising such practices, the movements have increased awareness of corruption. However, in line with the views of Odebrecht's communication department, my findings suggest that criticism of illicit acts frequently falls on the heads of politicians more so than the businesses involved, as displayed below.



NasRuas5: 24th March 2017

MBL19: 18th May 2017

VpR3: 7th June 2017

Meme NasRuas5 highlights the PT's wrongdoing when it reads: "Lula had a 'bank account' in Odebrecht's bribery department. Marcelo confirms that Lula indicated Antonio Palocci as administrator of the bank account for slush fund payments. Dilma was advised". According to Marcelo, Antonio Palocci, the former Minister of Finance and former Chief of Staff of the Presidency during the PT governments, would pass on Odebrecht's slush fund payments to João Santana, the head campaign marketer of the PT, from as early as the 2008 municipal elections. Any detailing of Marcelo's personal gain and that of his company Odebrecht are excluded from this meme, which accentuates Lula and Dilma's awareness of the slush fund.

Similarly, MBL pinpoints Dilma's alleged request of campaign assistance in meme MBL19, which reads: "Dilma asked for R$30 million via slush fund payments for the campaign of Pimentel, according to JBS accusation". Fernando Pimentel, former Minister of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade in the Dilma government, was sentenced in 2019 to 10.5 years of prison for money laundering during his time as minister (IstoÉ 2019). Although Pimentel's wrongdoing is not the subject of this post, Dilma's is over that of meat-packing company, JBS.

In the same vein, VemPraRua single out Lula in the operation of the slush fund scheme, as shown in meme VpR3 that reads: "Emílio Odebrecht confirms Lula asked for money for campaigns and indicated Palocci to deal with this issue". Again, the focus is not on how the scheme benefitted Odebrecht, but on how the funds were used by the PT to ensure they remained in power.

Media attention and framing of issues plays a vital role in how political matters are depicted to the public. "By paying attention to some problems while ignoring others, and by framing problems in particular ways, media define the terms by which political judgments are rendered and political choices made" (Kinder 1998: 182). The movements, in their media capacities, emphasise the political side of the corruption equation, giving the impression that politicians are the sole beneficiaries. However, when asked whether corruption has more to do with politicians or big business, some of the activists confess the accountability of large corporations and acknowledge the collegiality of the problem, as co-founder and former spokesperson of VemPraRua, Rogério Chequer, explains.

> It is a combination, corruption is clearly systemic. It unites the public sector with the private sector, this is crystal clear. Now, in my opinion, and this is not consensual, the instigators of corruption are public officials. Public officials alone can prevent corruption

> from occurring, private actors sometimes cannot" (Rogério Chequer, interview, 3rd April 2019).

The relationship between politicians and companies is recognised as interdependent, despite being driving by the political establishment. According to other co-founder of VemPraRua, Colin Butterfield, corruption is therefore viewed as "a symbiosis between big business and politicians. Again, corruption only happens if the politicians are willing to steal and businesses are willing to give" (Colin Butterfield, interview, 21st November 2019). Without the cooperation of large corporations to participate in fraudulent practices, such as bribery and the overpricing of public contracts, the corruption equation does not add up. To concur with NasRuas leader, Tomé Abdouch, "responsibility [for corruption] can be divided into two: 50% the government and 50% big business. One without the other could not construct this corruption scheme. Without big business, it would not be possible" (Tomé Abdouch, interview, 28th March 2019). Publicly, the movements claim politicians are the ultimate wrongdoers, whereas privately they concede to the duel responsibility of big business. When probed, members from VemPraRua and NasRuas confess the essential role of big businesses in corruption schemes. Yet their social media content about scandals does not address the entrenched bid rigging system in place, which benefits a small number of elite construction companies.

According to one of my law professors at San Fran law school, Caio Farah Rodriguez, who is also the lawyer that negotiated Odebrecht's leniency agreement, the corruption scheme that tarnished the PT government was structural as it exposed how "Brazil operates under an oligarchical form of politics" (Farah Rodriguez 2017). In line with Caio's viewpoint, corruption was used as a legal weapon, whereas the real problem for companies is market competition and bid rigging. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides the following explanation of bid rigging:

> Bid rigging (or collusive tendering) occurs when businesses, that would otherwise be expected to compete, secretly conspire to raise prices or lower the quality of goods or services for purchasers who wish to acquire products or services through a bidding process… Bid rigging can be particularly harmful if it affects public procurement. Such conspiracies take resources from purchasers and taxpayers, diminish public confidence in the competitive process, and undermine the benefits of a competitive marketplace… Often, competitors agree in advance who will submit the winning bid on a contract to be awarded through a competitive bidding process. A common objective of a bid-rigging conspiracy is to increase the amount of the winning bid and thus the amount that the winning bidders will gain (OECD 2009: 1).

In the public construction sector in Brazil, an oligarchy exists whereby a small group of construction companies, which are eligible to be granted public construction contracts, strangles the rest of the market and operates under a bid rigging system. In accordance with the above definition of bid rigging, it can be concluded that, although the movements cite Odebrecht in their criticism of the scheme, there is little focus on the company's illicit procurement practices. The movements motives are therefore political and in their media capacities they help to construct anti-PT and anti-Lula publics through the popular sharing of posts containing such rhetoric. This is evidenced again in the revelations concerning Michel Temer and JBS.

Temer & JBS

Following the impeachment of Dilma in 2016, it did not take long for corruption allegations to reach former Vice-President turned Interim President, Michel Temer. On the 17th May 2017, an audio between Michel Temer and former chairman of JBS, Joesley Batista, was leaked. In it, Temer tells Joesley to continue to make payments to former President of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, who is imprisoned for passive corruption and money laundering, in a bid to buy his silence. As well as reporting this new development in the Car Wash investigations, the movements relate it back to the PT, causing the assimilation of anti-PT rhetoric with anti-corruption discourse, as displayed below.

MBL20: 17th May 2017

NasRuas6: 9th August 2017

VpR4: 25th May 2017

In a clever marketing move, MBL manages to rope Dilma and Lula into this new development, despite there being no mention of either of their names in the audio recording, as shown in meme MBL20. The meme is of Dilma Rousseff's inauguration ceremony as President of Brazil in 2010. Dilma is pictured in the middle holding up the hands of former President Lula on the right and then Vice-President Michel Temer on the left. The comical caption says: "In this photo, only the photographer is not going to jail". Such social media user-generated content is often enriched with sarcasm (Maynard & Greenwood 2014: 4238). This constant association of Lula, Dilma and the PT to all incidents of corruption caused anti-PT rhetoric to be assimilated to anti-corruption discourse. This was MBL's most successful meme throughout all the movement's history from 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2018, receiving the highest number of shares – 322,196 to be exact. This was approximately 100,000 more shares than any other post published during that timeframe by MBL. However, one must also keep in mind that the parameters of Facebook's algorithms in 2017 allowed for pages to reach far greater publics than they do today, as Rizzo details.

> Back then, Facebook's algorithm was different so there was one day that we reached 25 million people, the 18th of May, it was the week that the audio between Temer and JBS got leaked. The audio was leaked on the 17th May, we reached almost 20 million people that day and then the following day, 18th May, we reached 25 million people on Facebook. This reach equates to one quarter of the Brazilian population that has Internet access (Rafael Rizzo, interview, 13th February 2019).

According to Rizzo, the day following this scandal outbreak, MBL's Facebook page reached a quarter of the country's online population. Upon learning this, I came to understand why Facebook's Chief Executive Officer, Mark Zuckerberg, would want to restrict the platforms algorithmic capacities. Despite MBL's efforts to drag the PT into this part of the scandal, the popularity of this meme indicates that MBL's audience support the punishment of any political figure or party involved in misconduct – whether they be from PT or PMDB respectively.

In a similar vein, NasRuas targets the roots of the corruption scheme when it comically relates in meme NasRuas6: "Isn't it strange how Joesley became a billionaire during the Lula government corrupting only the future vice president of Dilma?". Again, Joesley from JBS is only cited in reference to Lula and Dilma, not for his own malfeasance and personal gain.

VemPraRua also successfully link the JBS scandal back to the PT, as depicted in meme VpR4 that poses the question: "Do you know who gave R$13 billion to these two to buy companies overseas and create jobs internationally? The PT". Arguments to recover stolen money are secondary to the aim of holding the PT responsible for corruption and, in turn, dampening their political reputations and chances of re-election in 2018.

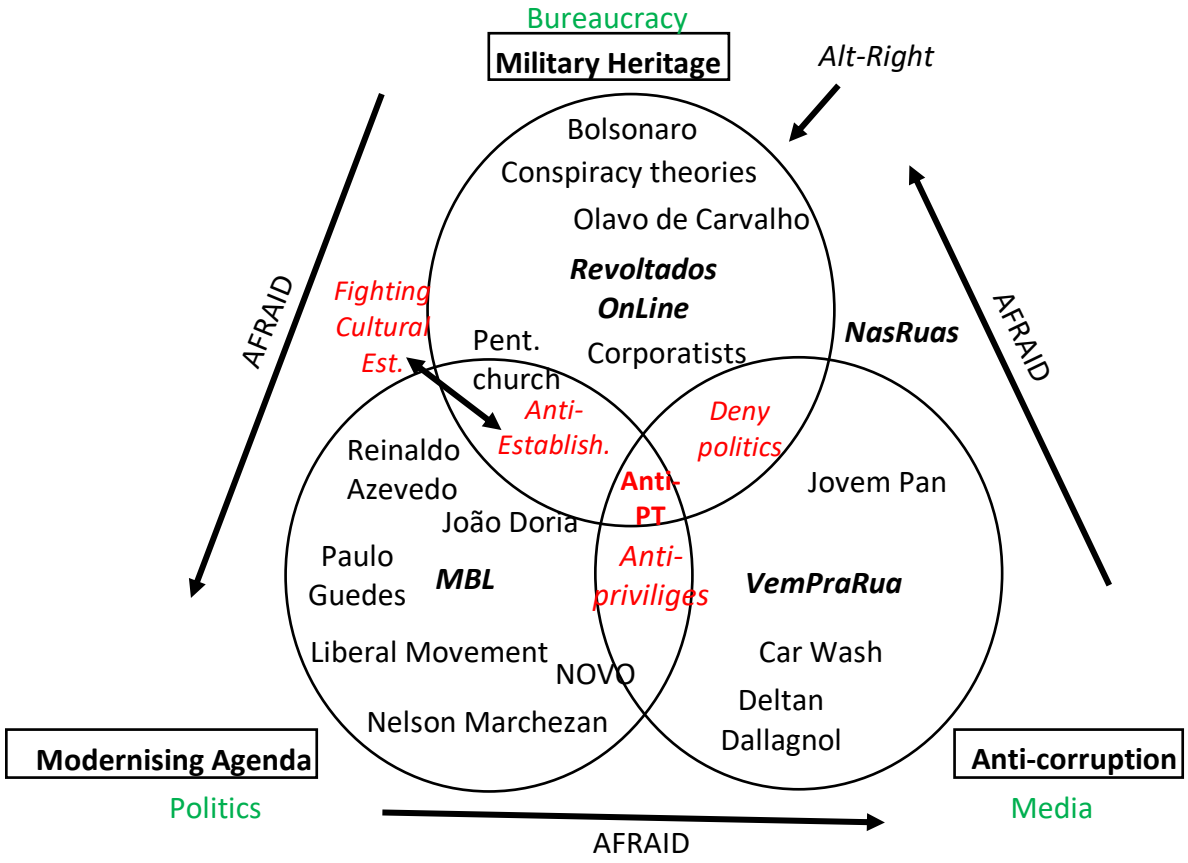
There are different ways of analysing vast sets of memes. Jenkins, Li, Krauskopf and Green (2009) question, what is the meme at the centre of all these different Internet memes? What is the idea that is being replicated? The answer I apply in this chapter is content: anti-Lula and anti-PT rhetoric. All the memes and videos examined in this chapter demonstrate how the movements constantly relate corruption allegations back to Lula and the PT and therefore assimilate anti-corruption sentiment with anti-Lula and anti-PT rhetoric. To the movements, the only way to fight corruption is to be against Lula, Dilma and the PT. In this way, they foster not only anti-corruption, but anti-PT and anti-Lula publics.

While the movements initially redistribute mainstream media news items about corruption, promoting corruption awareness and upholding accountability, their political activism takes over when they dissect news items to target and ridicule politicians. However, at times MBL in particular does not even try to hide the fact that although it flies the anti-corruption flag, it cares little about corruption and a lot about political influence.

III. Anti-Corruption Flag

There are many examples which demonstrate that MBL's anti-corruption stance is convenient more so than genuine and the most obvious one was provided to me during my interview with MBL's political mastermind, Renan Santos. One of my principle motives for the interview was to learn how Renan understands the interaction between the principle pro-impeachment movements and formation of the New Right in Brazil. The below diagram, which Renan drew for me during the interview and I reproduce here, depicts how he views the social, cultural and political phenomenon of the primary actors of the New Right from 2014 to 2018, which confirms that MBL's fight against corruption is insincere.

The Social, Cultural and Political Phenomenon:
Public Opinion of the Right according to Renan Santos (MBL)



Renan's diagram depicts three factions of the New Right including the military heritage, modernising agenda, and anti-corruption factions. These groups have a close relationship to bureaucracy, politics and the media, respectively. Out of the key street movements, Revoltados Online is associated with the military heritage, MBL with the modernising agenda and VemPraRua with the anti-corruption factions. NasRuas is considered to be "running around looking for space" (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018) and not an important player.

Furthermore, the dominate figures and organisations associated with each faction are cited. The military heritage faction is comprised of the President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, self-educated philosopher, Olavo de Carvalho, conspiracy theories, corporatists and the Pentecostal church. The modernising agenda faction includes then-Mayor of São Paulo João Doria, Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes, then-Mayor of Porto Alegre Nelson Marchezan, political journalist Reinaldo Azevedo, the NOVO party and the liberal movement. Finally, the anti-corruption faction is made up of Operation Car Wash, Lead Prosecutor of Car Wash Deltan Dallagnol, and Jovem Pan radio station.

The crossover sections of each of the factions (in red) highlight the common goals among the groups, according to Renan's viewpoint. The military heritage and modernising agenda faction support anti-establishment goals, primarily fighting the dominant cultural establishment of the Left. The modernising agenda and anti-

corruption factions jointly believe in an anti-privilege agenda, while the anti-corruption and military heritage factions openly deny politics. What brings all these three factions together is "the rage against the Workers' Party [PT]. The anti-PT sentiment. We are all against the Workers' Party" (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018), as displayed in the central crossover section.

During an interview with former VemPraRua member, now city councillor for the NOVO party, Janaína Lima, she also confirms that "during the impeachment, all the movements had one thing in common and that was fighting against corruption, obviously, but corruption lead by the PT. So, we had one very clear target: all of us were against the PT. After the common enemy had left the scene, each movement took a different path" (Janaína Lima, interview, 30th November 2018). Similarly, NasRuas' founder, Carla Zambelli, writes in her book, *Não Foi Golpe* (It Wasn't a Coup), that her movement, MBL and VemPraRua all had "one thing in common: to oust the Worker's Party (PT) from power" (Zambelli 2018: 111). This resembles what scholars have called swarming whereby a target is attacked by multiple forces in a joint operation (Wolfson 2014: 174).

To return to Renan's diagram, the phenomenon works in the following way:

> We [MBL] want to pass reforms, we talk to politicians. So, the political establishment kind of deals with us but they [politics] are afraid of those guys here [media]. The media accepts the guys that are anti-corruption, you are never going to see an attack from the media against VemPraRua. However, the media is afraid of those guys [bureaucracy]. The military have a very good connection with the bureaucracy, bureaucracy is not afraid of them. Actually, the bureaucracy is going to vote for them but the bureaucracy is afraid of… us [modernising agenda]! So, you understand that everyone here has a counter party somewhere in the establishment (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018).

The assumption that the media accepts the anti-corruption agendas is key to explaining why the face of the movements is 'combatting corruption'. Although, as depicted in Renan's diagram, he does not position MBL in the anti-corruption faction, which raises questions about the sincerity of the group's anti-corruption rhetoric. Their image of striving to combat corruption can thus be considered superficial and prompted by their desire to obtain support from mainstream media. Furthermore, when describing how each group views what needs to be done to 'save Brazil', Renan sates:

> This group here [military/Revoltados Online] thinks that you're going to save Brazil with order, true vales, true morals. This group [anti-corruption/VemPraRua] says you're gonna save Brazil through ending corruption, and this groups [modernising agenda/MBL] says you're gonna save Brazil through reforming the state. There are three groups with three different views (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018).

MBL is not concerned with combatting corruption. In fact, I would go as far as saying that the group do not view corruption as a dominant problem in Brazil. Since the Santos family acquired the MBL Facebook page at the end of 2014, the movement's primary goal was to oust Dilma and the PT from government, and not combat corruption, as Renan details.

> In the beginning, when we were anti-corruption, Facebook used to answer our calls and emails… when people didn't understand that we were more than that… we were anti-Workers' Party since the beginning. We are anti-corruption because corruption [Renan pauses my voice recorder here and says: "Corruption was the weapon"]. The anti-corruption agenda is necessary but it's boring. It's necessary, we need to do it because you don't change a country without it" (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018).

MBL's publication of video testimonies from the Car Wash interrogations and multitude of memes and articles attacking the PT for their institutionalisation of corruption, are therefore entirely politically motivated. From this new perspective of MBL, and therefore questioning the sincerity of the other movements as well, the groups are considered media and propaganda vehicles of the New Right.

Although I largely agree with Renan's division of the New Right, into authoritarian, neoliberal, and anti-corruption factions, my findings suggest that this is true for the movements' founders more so than the movements' publics. For example, although the movement leaders frequently made references to the state of the economy during my interviews with them, demonstrating their neoliberal stances, according to my findings from the Facebook post analysis in Table 1 in Chapter 3, economic issues circulated the least amongst all three of the movements' publics. This finding, thus, does not support the assumption that one faction of the New Right is predominately neoliberal and seeking economic reforms. In the following chapters, I develop these arguments further as I explore what economic and cultural debates typically go viral. For now, I return to the anecdotal story that I began this chapter with – my friend Karlin's birthday party and arrival of Lula in Curitiba.

Curitiba, Paraná
7th April 2018

With midnight approaching and the hearty taste of *coração de galinho* (chicken heart) – a common delicacy at any Brazilian barbecue – still lingering in my mouth, Karlin's birthday party comes to an end. Everyone is helping with the clean-up when the sound of crackers and fireworks can be heard going off in the distance – Lula has arrived. "I don't know how people can celebrate the imprisonment of a former president. No matter what side of politics you're on, it's terrible for a country to imprison one of its presidents", Karlin remarked bitterly.

The next morning, Karlin takes me to the *Polícia Federal* where Lula is being held. We park the car a few blocks away and walk up the hill, the sun beaming down through the partly clouded sky. Along the side of the road, empty fireworks boxes are discarded from last night's celebrations of Lula's arrival. As we approach where the police have blocked off the entrance to the federal police building, *petistas* are setting up their resistance marquees. I am surprised at how well-organised the protesters are. They have a line of public toilets set up down a side road and a few stalls selling hot food, cold soft-drinks and red *LulaLivre* (Free Lula) merchandise. There is an eerie sadness among the Lula supporters. People are sobbing, shaking their heads in disbelief. Lula was the Brazilian Left's version of Nelson Mandela going to prison.

Behind the yellow and black tap that barricades off the entrance to the federal police building, six police officers stand at a distance, all maintaining a sturdy stance in a row, their rifles in hand. A BandTV reporter rehearses his lines over and over until he gets them right and is ready to air live. One short, old man is dressed as a

clown, a common outfit choice at political events implying awareness of the deceptive tricks politicians play on citizens. If I had to describe the overall mood in one word it would be 'deflated'. Lula's imprisonment was such an anti-climax. As argued by Alinsky (1971), the threat of something really is greater than the things itself.

People from all ages have come to show their support for Lula. Karlin even brought along her 10-year old son, who is confronted and confused with what is taking place. Karlin softly brushes her hand through his ginger hair and whispers in his ear: "One day Brazilians will study this event in history classes at school and you will be able to say that you were there". The prospect of the socialist's imprisonment had been turned into a real-life political series, a media spectacle for both sides of politics, with each episode further decapitating the PT and paving the way for the resurrection of right-wing ideology in the Brazilian political landscape.

In front of the Federal Police in Curitiba the morning after Lula's arrival
8th April 2018

Conclusions

In a first instance, this chapter exemplified how the movements, particularly MBL, increase corruption awareness and reputational risk of corrupt actors by redistributing mainstream media news items and producing memetic content about corruption investigations and allegations. The movements' information cascades from mainstream media to social media often present themselves in waves, whereby news items are initially published, then dissected to align with political agendas and finally ridiculed. This process can be understood to function in an attention-jealousy-revenge logic.

However, in a second instance, this chapter exposed how these debates are frequently politically motivated and used strategically to engage online audiences and reach new publics. Reputational risk of politicians is greater than that of businesses because the latter is frequently mentioned only to target the former. The movements choose to highlight the political part of the corruption equation over that of big business, demonstrating their political interests. The constant linking of each new develop in the Car Wash investigations back to Lula, Dilma and the PT is demonstrative of how anti-corruption discourse became assimilated with anti-Lula and anti-PT rhetoric.

Nevertheless, the movements act as media vehicles producing hoards of online content that contains anti-corruption, anti-Lula and anti-PT discourses. They took

judicial process from their legal contexts and brought them into the cultural realm where they circulated among new publics. The frequent sharing of such content by the movements' followers signifies the formation of publics that align with these ideas.

In the next chapter, I explore some economic debates that were frequently shared among the movements' publics on Facebook and the idea that these debates were in fact implemented as part of the political game.

Chapter 5
Neoliberalism or *Jogo Político*?

Vila Mariana, São Paulo
29th August 2018

It is a Wednesday evening during the election period, I am sitting on the couch at the MBL studio while Vítor, the new videographer, is setting up a camera and lights to film Kim's nightly YouTube video. Kim is preparing his thoughts when one of the campaign organisers gives him some advice, to which Kim quickly negates snapping: "I am good at videos and you're good at organising, so you stay over there!". Kim's comment clarifies his role at MBL, which is restricted to being the speaker of the movement, the spokesperson, the political candidate with exceptional public speaking skills. After the video recording, the campaign organiser asks me if I want to help hand out pamphlets in front of *Universidade Cidade de São Paulo*. "Why not", I say hesitantly, thinking of all my pro-PT friends who would never speak to me again if they found out. I must avoid ending up on Kim's Instagram stories, I think to myself.

A group of six of us all pile into one of the MBL members' cars to head off pamphleting. The back seat is filled with boxes of small flyers with Kim and Arthur's faces printed on them, along with the numbers 2555 and 25555 – the candidate numbers of Kim and Arthur respectively. Crammed in like sardines, everyone chatters away as we play corners in the back seat until we come to a standstill alongside MASP. We are stuck in Friday night Paulista traffic, with gas from the car in front intoxicating us as we perch on the hill beside the iconic red pillars of the museum. Pushing our way into the herd of cars and buses on Paulista, we head towards the Eastern suburbs. Whilst crossing over one of São Paulo's many winding bridges, I spot the moon peeping out between the grey and graffiti-covered buildings. Full, yellow and very low in the skyline, the moon is so majestic and dazzling in this concrete jungle. I gaze at it completely mystified for a moment, before the buzzing city roads seize my attention again.

Arriving a few blocks away from the university, we pull into a side street littered with rubbish to park the car. As we get out, the guys warn me to keep alert because we are in a rough area of the city. Walking along the street crowded with university students, the smell of popcorn from street vendors wafts through the air. The sound of the night football match can be heard being played live in the *boteco* bars that line the street.

Kim and Arthur get right into it, they are naturals with no shame, handing out pamphlets and not caring at all if people reject them. "Do you want to pay less taxes, less taxes, less taxes", Arthur recites to every person he hands a flyer. Almost every third person recognises the guys and either scrunches up their face in despise or acts like a 10-year-old girl at a Spice Girls concert, fanatic about snapping a photo alongside their idol. Kim and Arthur appear more like movie stars than political candidates, both spending more time posing for selfies with fans than handing out flyers. However, between selfies, whilst hunting for his next target to hand a flyer, Kim quietly chants to himself: "Votes, votes, votes, votes". I get a glimpse into the politician within him, whose focus is to win as many votes as possible in this *jogo político* (political game), making him one step closer to gaining the political power he says he dreams of – that is, to be Speaker of the House of Deputies.

> This scene, which I am fortunate enough to witness firsthand, draws my attention to the fact that the movements are driven as much by ideology as they are political influence. From this viewpoint, I start to question how substantive their neoliberal claims are, such as those to pay less taxes, and begin to interpret some of their claims as a strategic method driven by their political ambition.

This chapter starts by demonstrating the neoliberal characteristics of MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas, as well as some of the smaller movements. However, in a second instance, it analyses Facebook posts related to economic issues of the movements, which suggests that some neoliberal arguments, such as the electoral fund and labour reform, are in fact used politically to prevent the traditional political parties from re-election. The circulation of such posts among the movements' followers suggests the formation of publics that, as well as appearing neoliberal, are against the traditional political elite. Finally, the third section of the chapter explores how other issues motivate political action, such as revenge, political influence and historical status.

Through their capacities as media vehicles to produce and circulate economic and political debates, the movements acquire a certain level of political influence, which is different to that of political power held by decision-making authority figures (Habermas 2006: 417). By publishing propaganda promoting economic liberal ideals, the movements demonstrate their media characteristics, as well as political and neoliberal attributes.

A neoliberal movement

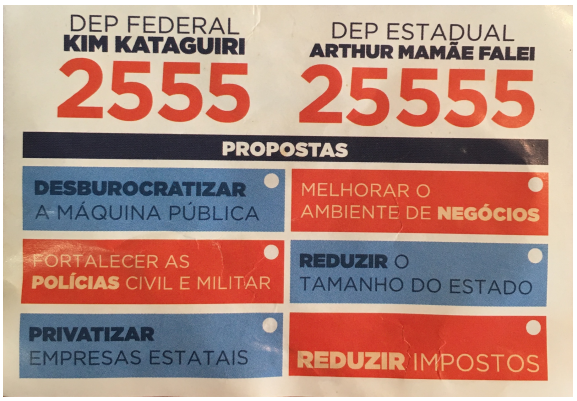
Freedom is generally viewed economically for people tilting towards the conservative end of the political spectrum (Hunter 1995: 115) and this is a common characteristic of the movements in this thesis, who openly admit to holding socially conservative and neoliberal views. In line with Norberto Bobbio's (1996) division of the Left and Right that is based on the premise of equality, whereby the Left seeks to overcome inequalities and the Right tends to accept inequalities, characteristics of the New Right in Brazil include arguments opposing income redistribution, criticism of affirmative social policies aimed at minorities, promoting a free-market economy and strong disapproval of anything *petista* – related to the PT (Chaloub & Perlatto 2016: 39). The phenomenon of the Brazilian New Right is predominantly from the south-eastern regions of the country (Codato, Bolognesi & Roeder 2015: 134) and is comprised of workers and new leaders (ibid., 139), such as those of the movements.

From VemPraRua, one of the founding members, Zizo Ribeiro, explains that "we are neoliberals, what we defend is democracy, we don't accept anything antidemocratic… we defend a smaller state, a state that is less expensive" (Zizo Ribeiro, interview, 18th September 2018). A smaller state where citizens pay less taxes is one of the characteristics of neoliberalism. The founder of NasRuas, Carla Zambelli, also identifies herself "as a person from the Right, a neoliberal, I think that we need a smaller state" (Carla Zambelli, interview, 20th June 2018). Another member of NasRuas, Heymann Leite, created a WhatsApp group called *Cidadão Alerta* (Alert Citizen) in 2014, which he classifies as "a right-wing, neoliberal group… liberal in economy and socially conservative" (Heymann Leite, interview, 1st November 2018). From Revoltados Online, José Parra, who was a director at Citibank, explains that "this is what we want to change

with neoliberalism, to decentralise power to the state and municipal governments" (José Parra, interview, 17th June 2019) – an opposing ideal to that of the socialist view. From the movement Acorda Brasil, the founder, who is also known by his nickname 'The Prince' as he is a descendent of the last royal family of Brazil, Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, describes the emergence of the political movement against the PT in 2014 as a "revival of conservative and neoliberal thought in Brazil" (Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, interview, 14th December 2019). All the movements identify themselves as either conservative, neoliberal or both.

Straightforward indicators of neoliberal ideology are demands for lower taxes, deregulation and privatisation (Mudde 2007: 128), all of which the movements' leaders openly endorse. MBL has from the outset promoted liberal economic views. This is perfectly depicted in Renan's diagram displayed in Chapter 4, where he places MBL in the 'economic modernisation agenda' faction of the New Right. Kim and Arthur's 2018 election campaigns were also based on neoliberal ideals, some of which they had printed on the back of campaign flyers as shown below.

Front



Back

On the back of the slightly crinkled flyer, two columns display some of the young men's neoliberal proposals: de-bureaucratise the public machine, strengthen civil and military police, privatise state companies, improve the business environment, reduce the size of the state, and lower taxes. Aside from the proposal to strengthen the police force, all the other measures clearly fall within the neoliberal category (and the role of the police may do so in practice). Despite the movements neoliberal nature, there is evidence that suggests such economic debates are used strategically to gain power in the tug-of-war that is the political game.

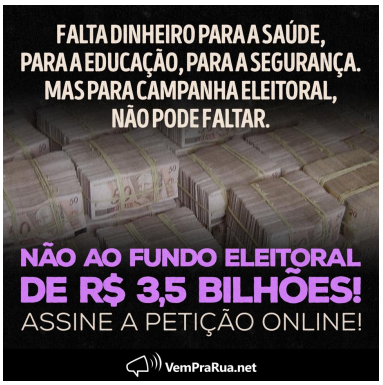
I. Jogo Político

Throughout my research on the movements, a few instances indicate that the *jogo político* (political game) was more at stake than efforts to implement neoliberal ideology. As my analysis of the movements' Facebook posts demonstrates, their approval or disapproval of new laws is often linked to whether the laws benefit traditional parties, which the movements see as rivals. Such laws include the electoral fund and labour reform, both passed in 2017. The popular sharing of posts containing

discourses that simultaneously promote neoliberal ideals and criticise the political elite is indicative of the formation of neoliberal and anti-elite publics respectively.

Electoral fund

From the outset, criticism of some laws appears to stem from neoliberal desires. Though, consequently, this can lead to increased anti-politics sentiment in society. Criticism of the electoral fund, which circulated well particularly among VemPraRua's audience, is a good example of this. It was approved by Congress in 2017 in response to the banning of private company donations to election campaigns (Globo 2019), in part to try to curb illicit campaign financing. Brazil has a multi-party system and the electoral fund is divided between the parties as follows: 2% divided equally between all parties, 35% divided between parties with at least one deputy, 48% divided proportionately according to the number of deputies each has, and 15% divided proportionately according to the number of senators each has (Globo 2019). In the lead-up to the law's approval in Congress, the movements were strong adversaries to it because it proposed costs to taxpayers in their billions, as shown below.



VpR5: 27th Jun 2017

NasRuas7: 5th Oct 2017

VpR6: 17th Mar 2017

Meme VpR5 complains: "Lack of money for healthcare, education and public security. But for electoral campaigns, there is ample. No to the electoral fund of R$3.5 billion! Sign the online petition!". The focus of VemPraRua, here, is on the amount of money, as shown in the background picture of wads of cash, and their view that this money should be better spent on improving public services than funding election campaigns.

Similarly, meme NasRuas7 protests: "BLOW. Deputies stab Brazilians in the back and approve billion-dollar fund with public money". This violent language is designed to enrage the public. The picture in this meme, displaying the Chamber of Deputies, gives the impression that all deputies and government are against the Brazilian people, fostering anti-politics sentiment.

In the same vein, meme VpR6 asserts: "R$3 BILLION. The country in crisis and politicians want to waste this money on their campaigns. If you also think this absurd, on the 26th March, come to the streets!". Again, the background picture is of inside Congress, which throws the entire political class under the spotlight, helping to build anti-politics attitudes in society.

The popular circulation among the movements followers of criticism of the electoral fund is suggestive of the existence of neoliberal publics. However, regarding

lower taxes, some contend that it "is not particularly convincing as an indicator of a neoliberal ideology, as the call for lower taxes is an almost universal political demand, especially among opposition parties" (Mudde 2007: 128). My findings concord with this line of thought and suggest that the movements are against the electoral fund because of the nature of its proportional division, meaning that large, traditional parties with greater numbers of deputies and senators receive more money to go towards their electoral campaigns than smaller parties. VemPraRua are particularly instrumental at broadening their tax-reduction rhetoric to anti-politics sentiment, as displayed below.

VpR7: 16th August 2017

VpR8: 8th August 2017

VpR9: 19th July 2017

The PT, PSDB and PMDB political parties are frequently the focus of attacks. Meme VpR7 reads: "Election-funding R$3.6 billion. See how much the three major parties will receive: PMDB R$434, PT R$404 and PSDB R$354 MILLION". This is accompanied by the logos of each of the parties. In the written post accompanying this meme, VemPraRua states that "with the election funding going towards the major parties, the chance of political renovation is ZERO". VemPraRua's problem was keeping these three parties, who have been tainted by corruption scandals, in power, instead of opening the way for new political parties, such as the NOVO party – for which some of the key VemPraRua members, including Rogério Chequer and Janaína Lima, became candidates. By attacking the three dominant political forces, VemPraRua promote opposition to traditional political parties, fostering publics in line with this vision.

VemPraRua again stress their disapproval of the electoral fund in meme VpR8, which states: "If the electoral fund gets approved, we will always be governed by the same foxes. Against the fund and for political renovation, come to the streets on 27/08". This is accompanied with four images of some key politicians, including (from left to right) former President of the Senate, Renan Calheiros (PMDB), President of the PT and Federal Deputy, Gleisi Hoffmann, Senator and former President of Brazil, who was impeached for corruption in 1992, Fernando Collor (PTC), and lastly Senator, Aécio Neves (PSDB), whose name is also tainted by his alleged involvement in corruption schemes. The proportional division of the electoral fund means that the traditional parties will receive more money, giving them an unfair advantage over rising political forces that claim to fight the corrupt workings of the traditional establishment. Targeting them, thus, encourages revolt against the traditional parties, leaving the door open for the approval of political outsiders such as Jair Bolsonaro. "Bolsonaro captured the logic of anti-politics, of honesty, of ethics. Now, the game has taken a turn, polarisation isn't *petismo* [pro-PT] against *antipetismo* [anti-PT]. It is *petismo* against

anti-politics, which Bolsonaro represents in the election" (Esther Solano Gallego, interview, 8th September 2018).

Likewise, meme VpR9 bolsters anti-political-elite sentiment and reads: "When the PT, PMDB and PSDB unite, it's a sign of danger! They are foxes circling the chicken coop. Don't listen to them. It won't work. It won't be good for Brazil. #NoToTheElectoralFund". This is accompanied by the three logos of each of the parties, however they have been mixed up. Instead of the PSDB, it is the PT written in blue alongside the iconic PSDB toucan bird. Next is the red PT star, however with PMDB written in its centre. Finally, the logo of the PMDB tricks the eye initially as it instead reads PSDB. This mash-up of the party logos symbolises that they all essentially have the same interests at heart – remaining the major political forces in Brazil.

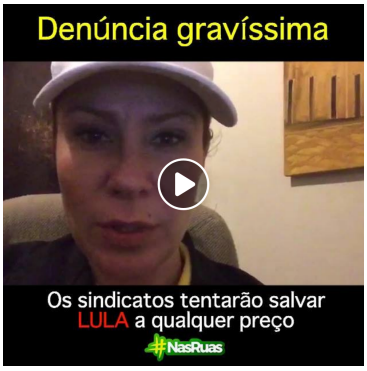
Out of these three examples, the discussion is centred on the major political parties receiving funding for election campaigns and not about saving taxpayers' money. It is for this reason that posts such as these were categorised as social issues in my analysis because they above all target politics. The popular sharing of posts like these help to form publics against the political elite. More specifically, it appears the underlying desire is to limit political power of the traditional parties, including PMDB, PT and PSDB, which would in turn, ideally, lead to political renovation. This is one of VemPraRua's three objectives, as former VemPraRua spokesperson, Adelaide Castro, explains: "We are against corruption, in favour of political renovation and the reduction and efficiency of the state. There are three pillars" (Adelaide Castro, interview, 7th September 2018). This suggests that such economic arguments, which from first glance appear to be neoliberal in nature, are a disguise to gain political influence and encourage political renovation. A similar interpretation can be made of the movements' push for the 2017 labour reform.

Labour reform

Another debate to circulate widely among the movements' publics was criticism of the *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (Single Central of Workers), or simply CUT for short, which is the main national trade union centre in Brazil. The CUT is notorious for its close ties with the PT and Lula, who was a former union leader in the 1980s before foundering the PT. Up until 2017, there was an obligatory syndicate tax that all workers had to pay with some 18,000 unions country-wide. The movements campaigned for an end to this obligatory syndicate tax, as well as other labour reforms, principally by showing how disruptive and fraudulent some of the unions are, as depicted below.

VpR10: 17th May 2017

MBL21: 28th Apr 2017



NasRuas8: 27th Mar 2017

The CUT was frequently targeted by the movements, as shown in meme VpR10 that reads: “Syndicates use taxpayers’ money to pay for 500 buses to go protest in Brasília. They want workers to continue to be forced to pay the syndicate tax. THIS IS ABSURD! END THE SYNDICATE TAX NOW!”. This is accompanied by a picture of CUT protesters sitting in front of Congress in Brasília. The focus is on the use of taxpayers’ money to protest for items that do not align with neoliberal views. The fact that the photo demonstrates the protesters sitting, appearing to do nothing, contradicts what they stand for which are working people.

Similarly, video MBL21 is of CUT protesters blocking off a road so that cars cannot drive down it. The caption reads: “Lazy people from the CUT prevent honest workers from going to work”. The CUT is again portrayed as partaking in counterproductive behaviour that contests workers. MBL is effective at finding videos, filmed by everyday Brazilians, of CUT protesters disrupting workers and posting them online to their large network of followers. A trait that has become common to social media, which, in this instance, increases accountability of people’s actions and brings into question traditional institutions and workings of the establishment.

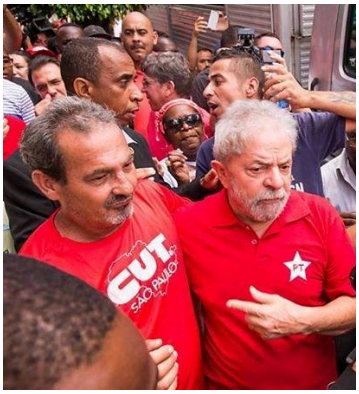
NasRuas’ post with the most shares in the movement’s history from 2014 to 2018, and the post with the third most angry reactions in that same timeframe, is video NasRuas8. The front image reads: “Major denouncement. Syndicates try to save Lula at any cost”. In the video, there are snippets of Rui Costa Pimenta, President of the National Workers’ Cause Party, giving a speech regarding Lula’s looming prison verdict, whereby he states that “the popular labour union movement cannot allow this to happen… we need to get 50, 60, 100 thousand security guards so that no one will be able to get even close to Lula”. Carla provides filmed commentary in a condescending tone throughout the short snippets, which end with her stating that “the Left defends thieves and the Right defends principles… and they want to use money from the unions, CUT, and all Brazilian workers that are obliged to pay the syndicate tax to defend thieves. We cannot let this happen”.

The primary concern for Carla is that the unions support Lula. The way that the snippets have been cut and assembled together gives the impression that the unions are in place solely to protect Lula and drive popular support for left-wing politicians in general. Edited videos like this are assembled in such a way to purposely arouse public outrage and feed beliefs that the unions exist purely for political ends. The common sharing of posts like the three mentioned above suggests that neoliberal, anti-union publics have formed among the movements’ followers.

At the end of 2017, the syndicate tax was formally abolished and, just as the movements showed the CUT to act politically, they too celebrated the end of the syndicate tax revealing their own political motives, as shown below.

NasRuas9: 29th Jun 2017

MBL22: 11th Jul 2017



VpR11: 11th Nov 2017

Meme NasRuas9 reads: "URGENT: End of the syndicate tax approved in the CCJ" – whereby CCJ stands for the Constitution, Justice and Citizenship Commission, a legislative commission in the Senate. The four images include the flags of the PT, UNE (National Union of Students), MST (Landless Workers' Movement) and CUT, all left-leaning organisations. This indicates that the end of the syndicate tax was not driven as much by neoliberal aspirations, as it was the desire to hinder the PT and other socialist organisations, which frequently support the PT and its leaders. Even though neoliberals are hardly pro-union, my point here is that the movements use anti-union rhetoric strategically for political ends to further cripple the PT and its allies.

In a similar style, MBL posted the *Jornalivre* article shown above in post MBL22 entitled, "TERRORISM: Pro-PT militia try to invade Senate against Labour Reform", with a picture of Dilma with CUT members alongside her. In the written post accompanying the article, MBL writes:

> The hitmen-come-syndicates of the left-wing parties, particularly the Criminal Workers' Party, the PT, tried to invade the auditorium where the labour reform will be voted in the Federal Senate. Another proof of moral defeat of these vandals supported by the obligatory syndicate tax to carry out party militancy for marginal politicians of the extreme Left, with your money and against your will.

The objective here is to make the CUT and other unions appear to be radical, extreme-left groups that are directed by the PT and funded through a criminal tax scheme. It appears that once again MBL drags the PT into any criticism of the functioning of the state. In an interview with MBL member Ian Garcez, he admits that one of the principal reasons MBL were against the syndicate tax was because the unions fortify the PT.

> In Brazil, every worker is obliged to be part of a workers' union and pay a tax. So, we wanted to finish with this tax because in Brazil the workers' unions were pro-government, they were used by the PT, they were instruments of the PT. And it's just wrong to oblige people to pay a tax to be part of a workers' union... So, it was very hard for us to make some of the reforms look good because they were necessary to Brazil otherwise the economy would be that piece of shit that it was during the Dilma government. We were very worried about trying to make the economy flow again, otherwise the impeachment would have worked for nothing and we are the main force behind the impeachment and we are recognised for that. And so, in a certain manner, if we didn't get the economy back in flow it would kind of be our fault because we put Temer there (Ian Garcez, interview, 8th November 2018).

MBL were primarily against the syndicate tax because the unions supported the PT government and made the PT a more powerful political institution. Although what stands out more to me in this segment is that, to MBL, the impeachment was more about how the economy was being run than large-scale corruption scandals that plagued the PT presidencies. Economic mismanagement is a key frustration that was shared by VemPraRua, who considers it to have been the driving force behind the economic downturn in 2015 and 2016 in Brazil.

> The country entered the economic crisis because of management. You had control of prices, politicised lack of control over inflation, inflation beyond control because of policies, excessive spending because of ideological interests… incompetent people who were in the main public management positions. Practically 100% of them for political motives (Rogério Chequer, interview, 3rd April 2019).

VemPraRua believe the PT governments carried out economic mismanagement on a large scale, due to incompetent officials who were given their positions for ideological motives only. Such ideological motives VemPraRua also understands to drive the CUT's connection with the PT, as shown in picture VpR11 above. It is widely believed that, on days when unions would go on strike, union protesters had their transport via bus and lunches payed for by the syndicate tax. That is why the above picture of Lula with a CUT member is accompanied by the following written post: "You know that bus, that salami sandwich, that protest paid for by the syndicate tax? Well, from today, it doesn't exist anymore! Now, unions that want to survive will have to work to benefit workers and not a political group". The end of the syndicate tax was celebrated with a picture of Lula and a CUT member demonstrating that VemPraRua's aim was not so much to reduce taxes, but instead hinder the PT from using their network of supportive unions to win over public opinion and in turn election results.

Ultimately, these economic debates are frequently geared towards being a mechanism for reconfiguring political power structures in society and it is for this reason that posts such as these were categorised as social issues in my analysis. The popular circulation of arguments opposing traditional political parties and unions that support the PT amongst the movements' followers indicates the formation of publics against the political elite, which were notably on display at a pro-Bolsonaro protest in late September 2018.

> **Paulista Avenue, São Paulo**
> **30th September 2018**
>
> It is the day after the #*Ele*Não (#NotHim) protest and some of the right-wing movements have organised a retaliation rally in support of their leading candidate, Jair Bolsonaro. I sit at my desk in my room, looking out over the traffic going into the Nove de Julho tunnel behind MASP, the sun beaming down through the humidity onto my face. As it approaches 2pm, I can hear the crowds of people flocking to Paulista. Then, the loud roar from the microphones starts welcoming the cheering supporters. My concentration on the readings for my law class goes straight out the window, amidst the sound of whistle-blows and cheers. I shut my laptop, quickly pull on my converse shoes, fling my backpack over my shoulders and run out the door.

Arriving at the top of the steep slope alongside MASP, I gasp in horror and awe at the gigantic inflatable military officer, the retired Army General Hamilton Mourão – Bolsonaro's Vice President to-be – towering over an adjacent protest truck in the middle of the avenue. I can't believe my eyes. I whip out my iPhone and take pictures of the monstrous militant. There are five protest trucks lined down the middle of Paulista. Interestingly, MBL is nowhere to be seen and the trucks of VemPraRua and the NOVO party have hardly anyone standing in front of them. It is only Revoltados Online and NasRuas that pull big crowds. The largest one, that of NasRuas, is stationed at the MASP-end with a sea of people in front all dressed in the national colours of Brazil – green, yellow and blue – shouting various chants, one after the other. The most common I hear is, "*Eu vim de graça! Eu vim de graça!*" (I came for free! I came for free!), intending to mock protests led by unions whereby participants' lunches are apparently paid for as well as their bus transport. Unlike those types of demonstrations, the protesters on Paulista today are anti-union, against traditional political parties and, instead, are in favour of figures that oppose the political elite – that is, Bolsonaro and General Mourão.

The participation of people who are against the political elite in the pro-Bolsonaro protest that day further supports the findings from my Facebook analysis, which suggest the existence of such publics.

Giant inflatable General Mourão at pro-Bolsonaro protest on Paulista Avenue
30th September 2018

In their capacities as media vehicles, the movements produce and circulate scores of online content promoting tax reduction, including criticising the electoral fund and syndicate tax, which helps to construct neoliberal publics. However, despite their neoliberal aspirations, the movements' motivation for the criticism of such laws is undoubtedly political, resulting in the development of publics hostile to the traditional political elite.

II. Political Motivation

In contrast to the idea that the movements form an ultraliberal counterpublic (Rocha 2019), this section argues that there are many other elements at play aside from purely

liberal economic endeavours. Revenge, political influence and historical status all play their part in MBL's political pursuits that began way back at university for the movement co-founder, Renan Santos.

Revenge: Renan vs. Resgate

Although MBL is generally understood to strive for neoliberal reforms, my findings through personal interviews and participant observation suggest the movement is not concerned as much with advancing a neoliberal agenda, as it is with gaining political influence and revenge. For example, when Renan Santos declares that the founding principle behind MBL was to impeach Dilma, or as he so gracefully put it, described in Chapter 3, to "help fuck Dilma" (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018). This suggests an absence of ideological drive, which is further demonstrated in MBL leader in Brasília, Ian Garcez's, below description of some of the key MBL members' political ideologies – or lack of.

> I helped the movement to find equilibrium between the conservative world view and the neoliberal world view. At the beginning, you had Kim who was from the neoliberal space, you had Renan who was from neither, Alexandre who was from neither, Pedro was concerned about very trendy and edgy cultural stuff, and I bring about a lot of conservative thought for the movement. I help to establish this balance of the values of the common people. Then, we started to strive for it (Ian Garcez, interview, 8th November 2018).

From this description, we can see that the majority of the co-founders are not dedicated to neoliberal ideology, in particularly the Santos brothers, Renan and Alexandre.

Renan's history in politics goes back to when he was a student in the San Fran law school at USP. In 2005, Renan was one of the founders of a new academic political party called *Movimento Resgate Arcadas* (Resgate for short), which has since elected multiple presidents of the *Centro Acadêmico XI de Agosto* in the Law Faculty. According to former treasurer and president of Resgate, Paulo Henrique Pereira, this new academic party promised to be "a new, more balanced party from the centre of the political spectrum and Renan was one of the main articulators and organiser [along with fellow student Caio Miranda Carneiro]… the two are from a more conservative spectrum of society, Renan very conservative and Caio less so… both were very important figures" (Paulo Henrique Pereira, interview, 27th November 2019).

This was at a time when the faculty's politics was divided between the PT and PSDB, and by 2005, it had "a very polluted environment in the dispute between Left and Right" (Paulo Henrique Pereira, interview, 27th November 2019), no doubt due to the *Mensalão* corruption scandal during the Lula government in the same year. This suggests that polarisation in Brazil thrived in institutions, such as universities, before exploding into the population in 2013, which concords with Hunter's (2006) view that polarisation begins in institutions responsible for shaping culture before entering into the population (ibid., 27-28).

Furthermore, Paulo, who considers himself from the Left, knew Renan quite well during university and worked closely with Renan on a few political projects over the years. In a conversation with Renan, he confirmed to me that he would happily call Paulo tomorrow to participate in a new political project. From this, I understand Renan's

actions to be driven by political success over ideology and trust that Paulo's below interpretation of Renan's behaviour and political outlook is reliable and accurate.

> Renan is a right-wing man. He is a very intelligent subject, very prepared, he has formidable articulation, obviously with MBL, and he is conservative, very conservative. He has a lot of political talent, he understands where things are going and he enters into the process. He is one of the guys that is always in the process (Paulo Henrique Pereira, interview, 27th November 2019).

This evaluation of Renan's political flair demonstrates that he has the ability to predict political trends and patterns and, in doing so, is one step ahead of political processes. This implies that Renan's political stance can be manufactured in both a superficial and artificial way. A man of propaganda, a true political opportunist seeking political power.

In 2005, Renan ran for president of Resgate but lost the internal election by a very small margin to Caio, who became the first president of Resgate. After Renan's loss, "he was really hurt. He understood this as a betrayal of Caio, an unjust measure taken by the group, that the group should not have voted for Caio because Renan himself was more deserving" (Paulo Henrique Pereira, interview, 27th November 2019). In the words of Renan that he wrote in the MBL book, "[i]n university politics, where I actually played a big role, I was betrayed by my friends and left the group that I created. I cried like a child" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 28). Renan's move to leave the party suggests the humiliation of losing was too much for him. According to Paulo, this resentment motivated Renan in the following year to participate in the campaign of another party's candidate, Gonzaga, which caused Resgate to lose the election that year.

> There was a lot of MBL in Gonzaga's campaign. Renan based the campaign on humorous videos, something which was not the norm in the faculty, it was very strange, it didn't exist, no one made videos. No one made humorous campaigns like that. Renan's involvement in Gonzaga's campaign was fundamental to the defeat of Resgate. It was quite contradictory because the candidate for Resgate that year was the person who supported Renan the most the year prior. Through Gonzaga's campaign, Renan completely disarticulated Resgate's campaign and we lost. To give you an idea, in the five years that I was at San Fran law school, Resgate won four elections. This was the only election that we lost, precisely because Renan split our base of supporters right down the middle, he was central to our defeat (Paulo Henrique Pereira, personal correspondence via WhatsApp, 7th January 2020).

The success of Gonzaga's campaign – Renan's first political campaign – mixing humour and YouTube videos, no doubt gave the Santos brothers the confidence to try it again years down the track. If Renan could not be the politician, then he was going to be the political mastermind behind a political movement. It also suggests that Renan foresaw the use of online media and YouTube videos as effective political marketing tools (Moore 2018; Ricke 2014). However, what stands out the most to me is this sense of revenge on the part of Renan. "Social action, which includes both failure to act and passive acquiescence may be oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others. Thus, it may be motivated by revenge for a past attack, defence against present, or measures of defence against future aggression" (Weber 1978: 220). In an interview with Alexandre, Renan's brother, he confirms that the YouTube video,

Vote Gonzaga 2, that the brothers made together for the campaign, was in fact an attempt to wreak vengeance on Renan's former fellow Resgate party members.

> This was the first time that Renan and I partnered up – politics and videos combined. Renan had already founded the greatest party in the history of the Law Faculty at USP, *Resgate Arcadas.* This guy, Gonzaga, was kind of a joke candidate but he was an actual candidate and he was Renan's revenge against his fellow party members. In the student elections, Gonzaga didn't win but he received enough votes so that Resgate didn't win the next year. This was what Renan wanted because he was pissed off that his fellow members betrayed him. So, this was the revenge that Renan wanted and it was quite effective. It was only about revenge (Alexandre Santos, interview, 5th December 2019).

As we can see, the attention-jealousy-revenge process is at play. When Renan fell short of receiving the political attention he thought he deserved, he became bitterly jealous, and it is this jealousy that drove his political action to seek revenge. Here, revenge is about status. Renan perceived his defeat in the internal elections as an attack on his political status, to which he sought revenge against those that voted against him. He sought to prove them wrong. He sought redemption. This builds on the argument made in Chapter 1, which contends that online attacks operate in an attention-jealousy-revenge process, and suggests that such vengeance is about subjective status – that is, where one believes one stands in relation to other in society (Gidron & Hall 2020: 5).

The party that came into power in 2007, due to Resgate's defeat, was *Fórum da Esquerda* (Forum of the Left) – an obviously left-leaning academic political party – suggesting that Renan was willing to risk having the Left win if it meant he got his own personal revenge. His sudden departure from Resgate after his defeat, and subsequent vengeance plan to prevent the party he had founded from winning in the next election, indicates that the driving force behind Renan's political interests is egoistic – his own personal political status – and not ideological. It shows that Renan wants total power and control and that his neoliberal and conservative values are secondary to getting his own revenge.

The fact that Renan makes multiple references in the MBL book to his involvement in university politics and failed attempt at becoming president of Resgate implies that he had something to prove with MBL. The success of the movement, not only its role in organising the pro-impeachment protests and circulating online content to help form various publics of the New Right, but also becoming the most well-known street movement through its provocative marketing strategy, is part of the revenge Renan sought. He has now verified his exceptional political flair and achieved his "old dream – of giving speeches in front of thousands of people in Paulista Avenue" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 43) – as he stated in the MBL book – gaining attention, visibility and political influence.

Political influence

It is no secret that the movements seek influence over Brazilian politics and MBL demonstrate that it will forgo ideological boundaries to achieve this. In the MBL book, Kim refers to a meeting the group had in the lead-up to the impeachment of Dilma with former president of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who has since turned into one of MBL's rivals. Kim justifies the encounter by saying that "we knew nothing would

happen if we didn't do real politics… Even though I don't agree with various opinions of the former president (Cardoso) – ultimately, he is from the Left – it cannot go unsaid that he is a civilised person who knows how to negotiate" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 204-205). In Brazil, there is a difference between ideological politics, which is driven by ideological beliefs, and *real* politics, whereby political actors engage in tactical manoeuvres with either the Left or Right just to gain political power. From Kim's above passage, it appears that MBL fall into the real-politics category, where ideology is secondary to their political project, which Renan declared during the evening of the first election round in October 2018.

Vila Mariana, São Paulo
7th October 2018

The night of the first election around is upon us and Kim has invited me to MBL for the vote polling. The festivities take place in the outside barbecue area behind the studio, where meat is cooking on the *churrasco* and kegs of beer are being rolled out. Dozens and dozens of young MBL members, predominately male, are crammed into the back courtyard. It starts to drizzle and there isn't enough room in the small undercover area for everyone to fit, but no one cares – MBL is about to elect their first federal and state deputies.

It must be somewhere around 7pm and Kim is standing at the top of the cobble stone stairs leading down to the barbecue area when the announcement comes through. It is dark by now but the dim of the outside lighting shines on his slightly damp face. "KIM KATAGUIRI 465,310 VOTES!", he screams with joy from the top of his lungs. An immense sense of relief, pure happiness and achievement fills the air as everyone screams and cheers. People line up to congratulate Kim with hugs and pats on the back, many crying tears of joy. The most beautiful moment is when Kim hugs his mum. This tiny, polite, Brazilian lady, he picks her up off the ground, their moist cheeks side by side, continually embracing her for several minutes. Kim has made his parents proud.

Curiously, Renan and Pedro are nowhere to be seen. Although after 20 minutes or so, Renan appears and summons everyone to gather around as he steps up onto a garden-bed ledge. Speaking in front of the courtyard full of people, all holding their smart phones up in the air recording this historic moment, Renan gives his congratulation speech:

> Kim and Arthur were always going to win and receive a lot of votes, we were expecting this, because gosh, they have been working towards this for a few years… We have a political project that started by taking down the PT and we did. We didn't imagine that the Right would take over as much as it did but the Right have swept the country… we have the state of São Paulo to get rid of the PT and PSDB… From here until 2020 we must construct candidates… we are going to elect at least 100 councillors in the state of São Paulo in the next elections. If there is one thing that we have to say here tonight, that is that we made a mistake in thinking small. In the next elections, we are going to think big, we are going to have candidates for mayor in all important cities… The work that we did was so good that no one believed it would work so well. The bench that Bolsonaro constructed is over 40 federal deputies – gigantic! The NOVO party elected a bench of around 7 people – ridiculous! The Right has taken over Brazil and in a good way, we are going to be able to make a lot of reforms. And so, what is MBL's role, as the largest right-wing communication vehicle in Brazil… You guys built them [referring to Kim and Arthur] and now they are going to build you and we are going to create a new right-

> wing wave, a neoliberal wave, to win over all and eliminate as many *tucanos* [politicians from the PSDB] as *petistas* [politicians from the PT] from São Paulo (Renan Santos, personal filmed video of speech, 7th October 2018).

The 2018 election result demonstrated that MBL was far more effective as a right-wing media organisation that helped shape public opinion, than a political organisation. Although Kim and Arthur both received an impressive number of votes, MBL did not come anywhere near the immense number of state and federal deputies that Bolsonaro managed to elect with his new party PSL. This was not because they were unsuccessful at the voting polls, but because the MBL leaders, namely Renan and Pedro, did not take the gamble on selecting more MBL members as candidates. I guess they learned the hard way from their timid selection in this political game.

Furthermore, Renan openly admits to having a political project, suggesting that the pro-impeachment protests and anti-PT rhetoric may have less to do with wanting to fight corruption than with the desire of gaining political power and prestige.

The movements have proven to be an efficient way to catapult people into politics by becoming street-protest and Facebook fames. After the successful impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, in the 2016 municipal elections, MBL and VemPraRua elected their first city councillors, Fernando Holiday for the DEM party and Janaína Lima for the NOVO party respectively. Two years later, in the 2018 federal and state elections, Carla Zambelli from NasRuas was elected federal deputy for PSL, Kim from MBL was elected federal deputy for DEM, Arthur from MBL was elected state deputy for DEM, Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança from Avança Brasil was elected federal deputy for PSL and two members from Revoltados Online, Bia Kicis and Alexandre Frota, were elected federal deputies for PSL. However, two of the movements' spokespersons where unsuccessful, Rogério Chequer from VemPraRua, who ran for Governor of São Paulo, and Marcelo Reis from Revoltados Online, who ran for federal deputy. As for Colin Butterfield from VemPraRua, MBL co-founder Alexandre confirms Colin "is a guy that showed he didn't have greater interests in politics" (Alexandre Santos, interview, 5th December 2019) because he did not run as candidate.

According to journalist and professor, Eugênio Bucci, the election of the majority of the movements' leaders "is a reflection of what is happening in the public sphere. Previously, we had a lot of people elected who were TV personalities or famous in mainstream media. So, it was natural that celebrities from social media were elected" (Eugênio Bucci, interview, 8th October 2018). The popularity of the movements' leaders, demonstrated by their election, shows that large portions of Brazilian society support the ideas put forward by the movements. It indicates that publics centred around these ideas – be that anti-corruption, anti-PT, anti-Lula, anti-politics, punitive and socially conservative (as I shall show by the end of the next chapter) – are in existence. The movements, through their media capacity, act as political propaganda vehicles when they popularise their leaders, giving them the opportunity to be elected into government themselves.

Looking to the future, Kim Kataguiri has his eye on a more prestigious position than federal deputy: "I wanna be Speaker of the House, in the legislative" (Kim Kataguiri, interview, 15th June 2018). Similarly, according to Renan, out of Holiday, Kim and Arthur, "who wants to be President of Brazil the most is Arthur" (Canal do Rica Perrone 2019).

The election of these former movement leaders into municipal, state and federal government not only benefits the candidates' careers, but also several administrative staff that fill their cabinets. During an interview with Alexandre Santos, in a deflated tone he shed light on the goals of most people who enter the movement.

> Politics sucks. For the majority of people, at least in my five years of experience, politics brings out the worst in them… Numerous people enter into the movement saying that they want to help change Brazil. But deep down they just want to get a job in cabinet and make some easy money. For the last five years, I have been witnessing this… A lot of people see the street protests that are happening as a career opportunity (Alexandre Santos, interview, 5th December 2019).

Government employees are considered to have cruisy jobs and comfortable salaries. As pointed out by Alexandre, multiple MBL members seek such positions in government, whether as administrative staff or elected councillors and deputies themselves. Meaning that, in their quest to elect an array of right-wing politicians to 'renovate' Congress ideologically speaking, there is always the underlying personal reward of being granted a job afterwards. In other words, motivation by monetary reward, employment opportunity and political prestige.

In the case of MBL, there are two examples that illustrate this. Firstly, Kim's foolishly ambitious candidature for Speaker of the House of Deputies, announced immediately after his election as federal deputy in 2018. Secondly, Arthur's extremely premature step forward, at the beginning of 2020, announcing his candidature for Mayor of São Paulo. Both are moves that only power-hungry individuals make. Power over people, power of "one actor within a social relationship [to] be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" (Weber 1978: 53), appears to be what the two newly-elected and inexperienced deputies seek. To concord with the founder of Revoltados Online, "[t]he reality is that the heads of MBL are not concerned about anyone else but themselves" (Marcelo Reis, interview, 7th August 2019)**.** Ideology aside, having ill-trained, power-hungry Facebookers/YouTubers disguised as ideologically driven activists-come-politicians, is not promising for ridding the establishment of incompetent people in high positions – as MBL and the other movements so famously claimed Dilma was. Instead, it only further indicates that ideological politics is less at play here than the quest for political influence and a spot in history.

Historical status

It is considered, by some, highly prestigious to hold a place in history. This can bring great satisfaction knowing that one's life has been meaningful and has served a purpose, being recognised by society as important enough to be remembered. The struggle for recognition has been noted as being central to many past political conflicts, particularly those involving identity, such as the French Revolution, Arab Spring, Ukrainian Uprising and Black Lives Matter movement (Fukuyama 2018). MBL are very proud of their role leading the pro-impeachment street protests, and there is some evidence that suggests this is not because of their defeat of the PT government, but because consequently they have been recognised as important enough to hold a place in Brazilian political history.

Responding to how he feels regarding his role during the impeachment, Ian Garcez's first response was that he feels "engraved into Brazilian history" (Ian Garcez, *O*

tapete vermelho do "Não Vai Ter Golpe", 10th September 2019). Ian is first and foremost proud that he was part of a historical moment, which perhaps explains why he, and many other MBL members, are quite open to having researchers study and interview them – they will partake in anything that will bring them more fame worldwide.

MBL desperately seeks to be recognised for the fall of Dilma, giving them a certain degree of political prestige. In the MBL documentary, there is footage of Kim during the pro-impeachment campaign saying: "It's going to be a historical moment that is going to have books written about it in the future" (*Não Vai Ter Golpe* 2019). The MBL book and documentary both recite the group's role in the impeachment, struggle to make themselves known and can ultimately be read as documents marking the group's historical territory.

The MBL book and documentary also seek to justify their political actions as legitimate, such as their march to Brasília, camp out in front of Congress and online lobbying campaign the group calls Operation Minerva. They focus on their symbolic political acts to try to boost their prestige as more than just an online political communication vehicle. They chose to neglect any detailed explanation into the economic reforms that occurred as a result of the impeachment. Only in the endnotes of the documentary does the group mention the successful economic reforms following the impeachment, including the government Expenditure Limit in 2016, Labour Reform in 2017 and Welfare Reform in 2019, even though such reforms are supposedly what drives the movement. MBL also merely mention the election of a right-wing president that followed in 2018, highlighting that above all the group endeavours to be remembered for the most dramatic event in recent Brazilian political history – the impeachment of Dilma – and not the subsequent election of far-right figure Jair Bolsonaro.

Furthermore, on a few separate occasions throughout my interview and personal observation processes, Renan demonstrates he holds the desire to be embedded into Brazilian history. History is a subject for which Renan expresses a keen interest. His dad taught him everything he knows about Greek, Roman and Medieval history (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 48). Renan has an obsession with tracing the roots of his Portuguese, Italian, Polish and French ancestors, and their links to half of European royal families, according to him. With Renan's interests in history in mind, it appears he welcomes any opportunity for MBL to make its mark in the historical timeline. My assumption is confirmed the evening that Kim is interviewed by Globo News, when, unexpectedly, Renan comes along to watch.

Vila Mariana, São Paulo
1st November 2018

It is the 4-year anniversary of MBL and Kim has invited me to his interview on the program *Diágolos* on the late-night Globo News segment. It is the first time that Globo has invited a member of MBL for a televised interview. I can tell Kim is nervous, he is texting me at 8:45pm asking where I am because the Globo car will be arriving in 15 minutes to chauffeur us to the studio. I am surprised to see him and his best friend, Rafael, dressed in suits – or adult armour as Kim calls it – when I arrive at MBL. I have only even seen Kim dressed so formally in photos of him in Congress during the impeachment vote. The plain white Globo car pulls up on time – a rarity in Brazil. Globo cars used to have the iconic TVGlobo symbol on the

outside, although that all changed after the June 2013 protests when the cars became targets of vandalism by angry protesters that accused the TV station of media manipulation.

Inside the Globo studio, the make-up stations in the dressing room are lit up like in the movies with several bright yellow lights lining the mirror. Kim sits in the chair with his hands crossed in his lap as a mask-up artist applies foundation to his face, covering the odd pimple. To my surprise, Renan walks into the room a little flustered yet relieved he has found us before the program starts. The Globo News host, Mario Sergio Conti, strolls into the room seconds later and politely shakes all our hands. He is tall with slicked back grey hair, a receding hairline and dressed in a suit and tie. He asks Kim a few casual questions in a very slow and articulate manner. Then, he turns to Renan, asking whether he is also part of the movement. Renan is quick to inform him that he too is a co-founder of MBL, as well as a former student of the Law Faculty at USP. He shows a sense of pride in his time spent in the country's most prestigious law school, San Fran, which is renowned for producing successful national political figures.

I find it odd to see Renan there, he rarely goes to any of Kim's interviews or debates. But, tonight is different. A televised interview on Globo is far from your standard media interview. Tonight, Kim – Renan's pride and joy – has been invited to an interview with the largest and most well-known media corporation in the entire country. The same media corporation that created the 'Collor Myth' in the 90's and then quickly deconstructed it leading to Collor's impeachment. MBL has been publicly recognised as a legitimate political and media force by the country's greatest media conglomerate.

Following the success of Kim's interview at Globo News, Renan is beaming with glee and suggests we go out for a celebratory drink in a classy area of town. Kim seems reluctant to go to the ritzy suburb, it is past 11pm, but Renan insists. Walking into a dark-lit restaurant, we make our way to a vacant table and take a seat in the black leather armchairs. The table is made from deep-coffee coloured wood and is awkwardly wide, so much so that it makes talking at a regular noise level difficult. Kim glances at the menu, says he isn't feeling hungry and just orders a Coke Zero, before resuming his game on his phone. Rafael scoffs at the high prices and orders a burger and soft drink. I opt for a salad and beer, and Renan some gluten-free option and a Bloody Mary. I get the impression Renan is trying to show off his culturedness with his choice of English cocktail, although the timing is totally out of place – every Anglophone knows the spicy tomato beverage is strictly reserved for a Sunday brunch hangover.

I have an interesting insight into what drives Renan during our evening conversation. He does most of the talking, incapable of containing his joy. "*Foi uma vitória hoje!*" (Today was a victory!), he boasts. Renan is especially pleased that the Globo host differentiated between Bolsonarism and MBL, which according to him makes MBL look good and like an innocent movement against far-right Bolsonaro. Renan's presence there tonight indicates that he idolises Globo and the power it has to write history, mould public opinion and legitimise or outlaw political figures as it sees fit.

Throughout the dinner, Renan goes off on various tangents, one being about democracy. In his eyes, democracy is one of the world's underlying problems, to which Renan's solution is religion and the important role the church plays in teaching people how to be civilised. This reinforces his conservative stance. When asked, Renan confirms that he wants MBL to become a political party, growing in force across the country and one day electing a president – Kim. This comes as no surprise

> to me. However, the remark that lingers in my mind the most is his following joyfully declaration: "Four years ago, I would not have died happy. Now I can die happy, because I am immortal". His reference to immortality strikes a chord with me and I recall his fascination with studying history and family links to royal bloodlines. I realise that Renan's desire to be immoral, hold a place in history and be remembered for generations to come is a large part of his pursuit of political influence.

In the MBL book, Kim and Renan make a few references that support my interpretation of their need to hold a place in history. When narrating the day of the successful impeachment vote in the House of Deputies, Kim asserts that "[g]enerations and generations to come will hear about the day of 17th of April 2016" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 349) and that "MBL will change, and for the better, the country's course of history" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 351). Renan recounts the day after the impeachment vote in a similar line of thinking. He describes waking up the next day with the following realisation:

> my existence was bound to history. When our individual existence is fused with historical fact – and our consciousness realises that, capturing that moment with our two hands – we release ourselves. Without pain. There, in that brief moment when a small life meets the grandeur of history, nothing else matters. Some compare this feeling to crossing eyes with a loved one. Others relate this to the sensation of coming close to death. All I know is that, in the future, I can die without the suffering of non-accomplishment. More than the pain of leaving this life, the pain of living without knowing why was always more agonising to me (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 353-354).

From this passage, I understand that, to Renan, ousting Dilma was more about his own life purpose, personal accomplishment and historical status as the leader of the street movement that led the pro-impeachment protests, forever engraved in history. In the words of evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins, "[w]e should not seek immortality in reproduction. But if you contribute to the world's culture… it may live on, intact, long after your genes have dissolved in the common pool" (Dawkins 1989: 258-9). Such immortality Renan and MBL have achieved by being the dominant street movement to lead the pro-impeachment protests and one of the many factors contributing to the redirection of Brazilian politics. As I came to this realisation, MBL's actions are viewed in a slightly different light. Their attention-grabbing communication style, albeit a strategy used to make their voices heard, can also be interpreted as a cry of help from he who is petrified of dying in vain, without being formally recognised by history. To MBL members, this historical recognition adds worth to their lives, gives them a sense of fulfilment and comfort knowing that they have achieved something in their short time on Earth. Ultimately, having historical as well as political power is a marker of status to the movement – status that they seek to obtain through partaking in the political game.

Conclusions

I draw three main conclusions from this chapter. Firstly, the movements claim to be neoliberal and conservative in so far as they view freedom economically. However, certain arguments that appear neoliberal in nature in fact are typical of any opposition party as they seek to deter the power of the PT and impede their performance in the

2018 elections. The fierce opposition of the electoral fund and criticism of the CUT and syndicate tax, although a neoliberal characteristic, can also be interpreted as simply a strategic political manoeuvre in the political power game. The movements successfully show the CUT and other unions to support the PT, which in turn feeds anti-politics sentiment in society. The common sharing of such posts among by the movements' followers indicates the existence of publics in line with this attitude, as well as neoliberal views. This growing anti-political-elite view gives way for political outsiders, such as Jair Bolsonaro, to win elections.

Furthermore, upon detailed investigation, findings from interview and participation observation processes with MBL, as well as analysis of other literary items such as the MBL book and documentary, reveal that neoliberal desires are not the only goals the movement holds. It is also interested in getting revenge and attaining political influence and historical status. MBL was concerned with ousting the PT because of the place in history it would acquire, recognition as a prominent political movement that led the pro-impeachment protests and, thus, fame to elect deputies in the years to come. This suggests that the prominent MBL members, including Renan, Kim and Arthur, are motived by personal political and historical status. Above all, this chapter highlights how ideological arguments can instead be viewed as political power struggles.

The next chapter explores some of the key culture wars debates that aggravated some Brazilians in 2017 and starts with a diary excerpt from the *#EleNão* protest that occurred the day before the pro-Bolsonaro and General Mourão demonstration described in the middle of this chapter.

Chapter 6
Brazilian Culture Wars

Largo de Batata, São Paulo
29th September 2018

The grey and overcast afternoon sky has set in as I sit in the back of my Uber, patiently staring out the window at the closed roller-doors of the shops, all covered in messy graffiti. The traffic has come to a stand-still, we must be getting close to Largo de Batata where the #*EleNão* (#NotHim) protest is taking place just one week out from the first election round. As we crawl along, I decide to get out and walk the last couple of blocks, following the sound of beating drums. Turning into the large public square, I am overwhelmed to see the amount of people swarming in. A sea of red and purple fills the entire area as far as I can see.

I step up onto a bench and start filming the masses of people in amazement. To the right of me is a group of protesters, each waving their iconic red flag with a white circle in the centre, map of Brazil and the words, Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST). As I pan across the monstrous crowd, colourful beach umbrellas pop up over heads, much like tall mushrooms in a field of grass. The hum of the horde makes it difficult to hear the exact wording of the various chants, although the cry of one man close by stands out: "*Ele Não! Ele Não!*".

I notice the strong presence of women, African Brazilians and people from the LGBT community. One young lady is holding up a sign on pink paper with a quote from Bolsonaro that reads: "Minorities have to bow down to the majority (Bolsonaro 2017)". Pushing past in front of her is a male couple, who have the LGBT flag draping down their backs like capes. Standing on another bench to my left is a row of five middle-aged, African-Brazilian women, wearing beaded-necklaces, one with a headscarf, all holding a black banner with large white writing that states: "Stop Killing Us! End Negro Genocide!". Although the scale of the protest is impressive, it seems to have been unsuccessful at attracting the 'fence-sitters' who may sway Bolsonaro's way.

I decide to take the plunge into the mosh pit of protesters and tag along the end of a line of people awaiting a break in the oncoming human traffic. We start to move slowly deeper into the crowd, one step at a time, the thudding of drums and chants intensifying all around. Cautious not to break the chain, I gently place my hand on the girl's shoulder in front, careful not to smudge the newly painted female gender symbol on her upper arm. We snake around a band of young women, dressed in purple, all with drums strapped to their waists beating to the chant of their leader who is yelling into a speakerphone. The desperation in their voices is palpable. A multi-coloured LGBT flag, with the symbolic white PT star superimposed on a red background in the centre, flies back and forth over their heads. It appears that the LGBT movement has politicised into the PT resistance.

An older woman hands me a flyer so I stop to chat with her for a few moments. She asks what I am doing in Brazil and when I tell her that part of my research investigates the role of social media in the anti-corruption movement, she looks at me disgusted and quickly snaps: "That was just to oust her from power!" – as if the largest corruption scandal in the country's history was irrelevant. I quickly realise that I need to reassess how I relate my research topic when conversing with people at this demonstration. One thing is sure, it appears that tolerance on both

sides of politics is low in this society that has embraced culture wars debates across the political spectrum.

Anti-Bolsonaro banner at *#EleNão* (#NotHim) protest
29th September 2018

In this chapter, I seek to expose how MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas engage in culture wars debates, with the goal of attaining power over culture, that is, the power to define reality and the way things are in society (Hunter 2006: 33). Drawing primarily on literature external to Brazil, I investigate how cultural conflicts relate to the Brazilian context and how the movements engage in such conflicts for political ends. As explained in Chapter 1, the choice to base my analysis on mainly US literature is backed by the fact that Monitor also bases its analysis on such works and MBL claims to have been influenced by US theories and political phenomena. In doing so, I ultimately argue that the movements have become imperative cultural instruments that help to define New Right interpretations of the world via their usage of social media.

The chapter is divided into two sections. Section I, on law and politics, examines key debates shared by the movements' publics that criticise the Supreme Court for acting politically, Supreme Court judges for allowing impunity of politicians to persist, perceived lack of law enforcement and the New Migration Law. The aim here is to expose where common dissent lies in each of these cultural fields. Section II, about family, education, media & arts, assesses conservative reactions to artistic exhibitions celebrating sexual diversity, including the Queer Museum scandal and MAM affair, as well as the anti-Globo campaigns that followed. The intention here is to try to comprehend these tensions from a conservative perspective and expose how the movements aim to override progressive symbols with conservative alternatives.

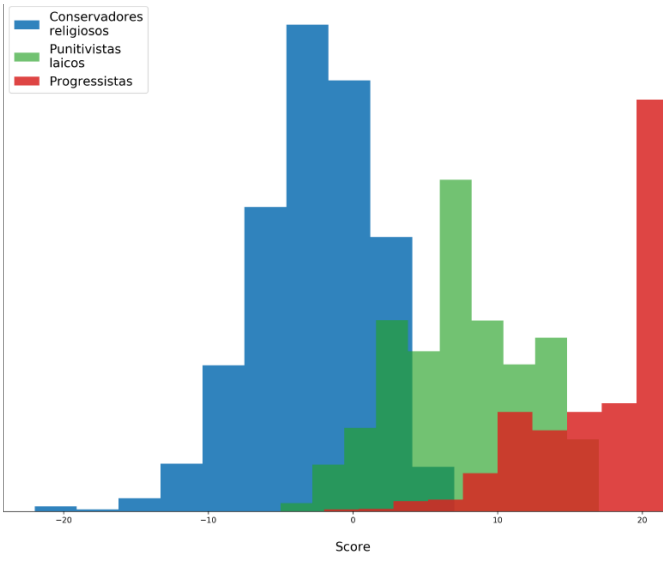
Through the popular circulation of these arguments among the movements' followers, memetic and audio-visual content are replicated through the action of imitation, which in digital media translates into the 'sharing' of online content. Memes and videos will only spread if they are well-adapted to the socio-cultural environment of hosts and their network of connections (Chielens & Heylighen 2005: 14), suggesting that the movements' followers have formed publics in line with the punitive, conservative and anti-elite ideas portrayed in their social media posts.

Before diving into the whirlpool of cultural conflict in contemporary Brazilian society, it is useful to consider the meaning of culture. To Raymond Williams, "culture is

ordinary" (Williams 2000: 32), meaning that culture is the everyday customs and life of people that differ from polity to polity. In terms of culture wars, at the heart of cultural conflict is the struggle for power (Hunter 1995: 52). Power to be able to determine what is morally acceptable, define reality and ultimately shape national identity. Culture wars can thus be understood as conflicting moral views between how conservatives and progressives interpret the world (Hunter 1995; Lakoff 2016). Conservatives opt for strict rules and punishment, whereas progressives tend to be more empathetic and nurturing in nature (Lakoff 2016: 65, 108). Though these different views have long been in conflict, what is novel about the phenomenon is that it has moved from occurring in private culture, that is, discussions between family members within the home, to public culture, where it is openly debated in the public sphere (Hunter 1995: 53-54).

To comprehend the Brazilian context, one must first understand where proportions of Brazilian society sit along a moral spectrum. I base my understanding of this societal division on one of the studies undertaken by the USP-based research group Monitor in 2019 during my time with them, which surveyed 1,144 people in various regions in the city of São Paulo on cultural debates including issues related to drugs, women, blacks, LGBT community, religion and punitive measures. Below are two figures that represent the results of the study.

Diagram 1: Culture Wars
Source: Monitor do debate político no meio digital (2019b)



Graph 3: Political Identity Spectrum
Source: Monitor do debate político no meio digital (2019b)

According to Monitor's (2019b) findings in Diagram 1, *Culture Wars,* Brazilian society can be divided into three distinct moral groups. Punitive non-religious persons (in green) make up 35% of the population and are pro-punishment, pro-abortion and do not have strong political identities. Religious conservatives (in blue) amount to the majority of the population with 44% and are pro-punishment, anti-abortion, identify as conservatives, frequently African-Brazilian and mixed race, older, under-educated, and catholic or

evangelic. Finally, progressives (in red) constitute 21% of the population and are ideologically coherent, younger, white, well-educated and without religion.

In Graph 3, *Political Identity Spectrum*, the three groups are plotted along an ideological spectrum ranging from -20 for conservative to +20 for progressive. Each of the three above-stated groups has a peak number of people according with that ideological stance, including -4 for conservatives, +6 for punitive non-religious persons and +20 for progressives (Monitor do debate político no meio digital 2019b). These findings indicate that while the majority of conservatives and punitive non-religious persons sit close to the middle of the spectrum, progressives for the most part sit on the extreme end of the spectrum. The accumulation of progressives, who are typically white and well-educated, that hold extreme viewpoints is representative of an elite group in Brazilian society (Ortellado 2020). Extreme-left viewpoints and the social integration of minority groups, particularly women, ethnic groups and the LGBT community, are considered to have left traditional segments of society feeling socially marginalised, leading to cultural conflict and support for radical political figures (Gidron and Hall 2019: 27-28).

Understanding this division of Brazilian society and the complexities associated with it is important when analysing cultural conflicts that the movements engage in. As depicted in Diagram 1, most of society is highly religious and conservative, suggesting that Brazil is not positioned for strong progressive agendas of elite groups, as I shall demonstrate by the end of this chapter.

This brings me to another central element of cultural conflict that Hunter (1995) points out, which is disrespect of elites. In a bid to challenge what is morally acceptable, the intellectual elite and reality-defining institutions become common targets, including politicians, law-makers, teachers, cultural institutions such as museums and mainstream media outlets. This disrespect is being driven by popular indignation and outrage, which, according to my findings, is the most common type of emotional content to circulate on Facebook.

Above all, the arguments put forward in this chapter show how the movements, in their role as media vehicles, have become culture-defining institutions that bring into question the very functioning of the establishment, particularly judicial and political processes.

I. Law & Politics

One of the most popular topics to circulate among the movements' audiences is the judiciary and the variances in its decisions and processes. According to Hunter (1995), law is a common battle field for culture wars debates as it plays a defining role in determining what is morally acceptable in society. My findings demonstrate that social media posts that monitor when supreme court judges act politically, incidents of impunity, law enforcement and controversial laws commonly go viral. These issues are examined in this section of the chapter. To start with, I examine some of the attacks on the most prestigious legal institution in Brazil – the Supreme Federal Court (STF).

STF

The Brazilian Supreme Federal Court is comprised of eleven judges, who are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate, and although there is no limit to their term length, there is a mandatory retirement age of 75 years (Constitution 2016: 47-50). Given the composition of the Court, when analysing supreme court decisions, it becomes clear that the legal body can act politically. Robert Dahl (1957) argues that the US Supreme Court, although categorised as a legal institution, is fundamentally a political establishment in the way that it selects decisions from various alternatives, interprets laws differently and is influenced by external forces. He contends that there are always different 'alternatives' to any ruling and that an "*effective* choice is a selection of the most preferable alternative accompanied by measures to ensure that the alternatives selected will be acted upon" (Dahl 1957: 279). The use of the term 'alternatives' in the literature highlights that any given ruling is indeed a political choice, as there is always more than one option to choose from. This chapter suggests that a similar analysis is warranted in Brazil and it is from this understanding that I view the movements to rebel against the STF.

Out of all VemPraRua's posts, highly popular ones pressured the STF, which indicates that their followers lack confidence in the court's capacity to judge and punish wrongdoers. This comes as no surprise from a country where, historically, impunity has been the norm for the political and elite classes, with many observers of Brazilian politics, prior to Car Wash, having long noted tolerance of corruption and misconduct by politicians (Power and Taylor 2011; Pereira, Rennó and Samuels 2011). A common assumption in Brazil is that "politicians generally do not fear accusations of corruption simply because few are caught, fewer are prosecuted, and even fewer are ultimately punished" (Pereira, Rennó and Samuels 2011: 81). Below are some examples that demonstrate monitoring of controversial STF decisions in relation to corruption charges against Senator Aécio Neves from the PSDB.

VpR12: 30th Jun 2017

VpR13: 2nd Jul 2017

VpR14: 12th Oct 2017

VemPraRua report when they view the court's judges are acting politically, as shown in meme VpR12 which reads: "SHAME! Judge Marco Aurélio rejects arrest warrant of Aécio and gives him back his position as senator". Aécio Neves was removed from the Senate by the court order of Judge Edson Fachin on 18th May 2017 amidst corruption revelations made by JBS (Brito 2017). However, within just 43 days Judge Marco Aurélio reversed the ruling, which was considered an unusually quick turnover.

In Brazil, the federal courts, and judiciary in general, are "delay ridden, formalistic and subject to constant appeal" (Taylor 2011: 170). Delayed accountability generally equates to less accountability. By the time a final verdict has been reached, defendants have often either left office, moved any fraudulent assets into safe havens, or died (Speck 2011: 145). However, instances such as the Aécio case demonstrate that the STF can push through decisions, making it appear that political manoeuvring is at play. One example of this is meme VpR13, which reads: "The STF doesn't have a time limit to judge politicians, but it is quick to free them! Is this justice?". Here, VemPraRua calls into question judicial processes. It takes them from the judicial realm and pulls them into the public sphere for debate amongst its followers, who often express their mutual discontent.

VemPraRua's post that received the greatest number of angry reactions in 2017 is meme VpR14, that reads: "With 6 against 5, the Supreme Court decides in favour of Aécio. SHAME!". This post, in which the STF is again the target, is in relation to the Court's interpretation of its power to remove deputies and senators from office, meaning that "the Judiciary can grant precautionary measures against congressmen, as long as they do not imply the removal of public functions or interfere in the fulfillment of that mandate" (Benites 2017). This interpretation is contradictory to that taken in May 2016 when the STF unanimously ruled for the first time in Brazilian history to suspend a deputy, the then-Speaker of the House of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha. However, the STF made that ruling in extraordinary circumstances, amid corruption allegations concerning Cunha and the looming prospect of Dilma's impeachment, meaning that Cunha would become first in line for the presidency if he remained in office when Michel Temer (former Vice-President) assumed the position of Interim President (Benites 2016). Nevertheless, it still shows the Court can act quickly and politically when required. The common outrage among VemPraRua's followers towards posts like this further suggests the movement helps to establish punitive publics through its production of online content.

Changing interpretations of laws not only suggests inconsistency in judicial decisions but it also fosters distrust in the legal system at large, particularly the political appointment system of judges. Within culture wars debates, the most likely legal tier to come under scrutiny in the US, which my findings indicate is also applicable to the Brazilian context, is the appointment of judges to the federal courts.

> The most conspicuous area over which the legal system is contested is in the composition of the bench itself – judges selected by the president as federal court appointments. This is no small affair, for as history makes clear, judges not only decree what the Constitution legally requires, but what it morally implies as well. The power of selection vested in the executive branch of the government, therefore, is nothing less than a temptation to prejudice the bench in favour of those judges and attorneys whose legal philosophy and opinions are most compatible with the current administration (Hunter 1995: 251).

These observations of the US environment help to contextualise my findings in the Brazilian setting. Undoubtedly, presidents select federal judges that hold moral views similar to their own, which can often spark tensions over the way that they make legal decisions. NasRuas seeks to oust STF judges linked to any of the major traditional

political parties when the movement founder, Carla Zameblli, declares in a video posted on 8th July 2017 that NasRuas' mission is to bring about the removal of all STF judges.

> NasRuas is not backing 'ForaTemer' [the Oust Temer protests] because we have other priorities, which are bringing down the STF and all its judges… all the STF minsters are corrupt, linked to the PT, PMDB, PSDB…The mission of NasRuas is to change the system of political appointment in the STF, STJ and TCU. That is our priority. Our other priority is to change the electronic voting system before 2018 because we believe that with a new senate we will take down the STF. With a new senate, we can impeach all the STF judges. If we keep the fraudulent electronic voting system, we will just elect another corrupt president… so our mission is to get rid of the electronic voting system so that we can elect a new senate in 2018 and get rid of all the judges that were politically appointed to the STF, STJ and TCU (Carla Zambelli, NasRuas Facebook post, 8th July 2017).

Two things stand out from Carla's declaration. Firstly, Carla and NasRuas play key roles in spreading conspiracy theories about the electronic voting system in place in Brazil, which they view as being rigged after Dilma Rousseff's tight win in the 2014 elections.

Secondly, and most importantly, I am shocked to hear Carla demand the removal of *all* Supreme Court judges and, effectively, the closing of the Court altogether. This is a deeply authoritarian plan and threat to the democratic functioning of the State. However, in light of the scandal that broke on 24th April 2020 involving Carla and ex-Minister of Justice, Sérgio Moro, who is also the former Car Wash judge, it became clear that both Carla's and NasRuas' demands are not necessarily a struggle for justice as they are for judicial power.

After Sérgio Moro resigned from his position as Minister of Justice, due to alleged political interference in the Federal Police carried out by President Bolsonaro, Moro released screenshots of WhatsApp messages between himself and Carla Zambelli, who is now a federal deputy in Bolsonaro's party. Among Carla's pleas for Moro to stay on as Minister, she states: "Accept Ramagem (Bolsonaro's proposed new Chief Commissioner of the Federal Police). And go in September to the STF. I promise to help make JB (Jair Bolsonaro) promise (to appoint you)" (BBC 2020). Carla's messages clearly contradict her previous opposition to the political appointment of judges to the STF, which discredits the work of NasRuas and confirms that the movement is primarily concerned with gaining political power instead of exposing injustice and impunity. This echoes MBL's insincere anti-corruption stance illustrated at the end of Chapter 4.

Impunity

The many corruption cases that plague Brazil highlight how the malpractice is a fundamental feature of the Brazilian democratic experience, along with its ugly stepsister – impunity. One STF judge who often appears lenient towards the political and business elite is Gilmar Mendes.

NasRuas and VemPraRua are both extremely critical of Gilmar and his decisions to exempt criminals from severe punishment. This is because the movements understand that "there is no way to stop corruption, but there is a way to stop impunity of corruption. People only steal if they are certain of impunity and here in Brazil you practically have this certainty" (Carla Zambelli, interview, 20th June 2018), the founder

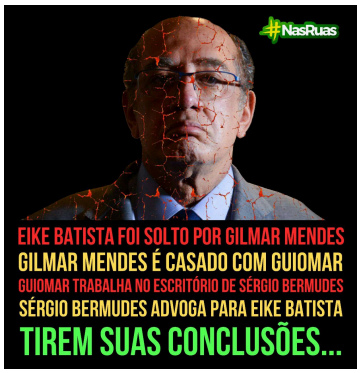
of NasRuas explains. From this belief that it is not possible to stop corruption, NasRuas focuses on pressuring for stricter implementation of laws. According to NasRuas leader, Tomé Abdouch, "[w]ith more rigid laws, you can prevent something really significant from happening and that is impunity. I think that impunity is what we need to fight to stop… it is impunity that makes Brazil such a corrupt country" (Tomé Abdouch, interview, 28th March 2017). Punishment, via strict adherence to the rule of law, is what the movements and their followers are beckoning for, as co-founder of VemPraRua, Colin Butterfield, explains.

> To combat corruption, there is only one way and that is punishment. There is no other way… So, for me it's very simple, the norms must be clear, there must be transparency, government and punishment. The only way that people stop stealing is if people know they are going to face some kind of punishment if they do so (Colin Butterfield, interview, 11th November 2019).

Punishment for participation in corruption is central to VemPraRua's endeavours. The popularity of posts shaming Gilmar Mendes for obstructing justice is only one example of how the publics of both VemPraRua and NasRuas are strongly in favour of stern punitive measures, as shown in the posts below.

VpR15: 19th Dec 2017

VpR16: 27th Oct 2017



NasRuas10: 29th Apr 2017

For VemPraRua, the short video clip VpR15 shown above is the post that received the most shares in 2017 – 198,089 shares to be exact – and has an image of Gilmar Mendes laughing as the cover image along with the sentence: "Gilmar Mendes embarrasses the Brazilian justice system". The video is comprised of images of politicians who had corruption allegations against their names and another who was being investigated for corruption. All the allegations were rejected and the investigation suspended by Gilmar Mendes.

The most emblematic case referred to in the video was that of Adriana Ancelmo, wife of ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral. Adriana, accused of money laundering and organised crime, was put into preventive detention in December 2016 (Ramalho 2017). However, a year later, on 18th December 2017, Gilmar Mendes substituted Adriana's preventive detention for house arrest, claiming that, among other things, a prison sentence was excessive punishment for a woman with a child under 12 years of age (Ramalho 2017). A year on from Gilmar Mendes' decision, over 690 other women with children under the age of 12 remain in prison in Rio (Boeckel & Berlinck 2019). It appears that inconsistency in legal decisions and acts considered impunity to

those convicted of white collar crimes generate significant debate among VemPraRua's audience.

Instability in the judiciary is amplified when arguments between judges go viral, as shown in meme VpR16 which reads: "'Don't transfer to me your leniency with white collar crime', Luis Roberto Barroso said to Gilmar Mendes during an argument in the Supreme Court". Judge Barroso is pictured pointing his finger, which further implies the aggressive tone in his speech. Barroso's accusation, which was reported by mainstream media outlets (Veja 2017), makes the court appear divided in its decision-making processes and intensifies distrust in its judges who they themselves do not trust. All this adds to the boiling anti-elite sentiment set to erupt at the ballot box in 2018.

In the same vein, meme NasRuas10, which was in the top 10 posts shared by NasRuas audience in 2017, emphasises the fractured functioning of the STF. Gilmar Mendes is depicted fracturing into pieces with the news of his suspected conflict of interests, explained in the sentences beneath the image of him which read: "Eike Batista was freed by Gilmar Mendes. Gilmar Mendes is married to Guiomar. Guiomar works in the office of Sérgio Bermundes. Sérgio Bermundes represents Eike Batista. Draw your own conclusions…". Judge Gilmar Mendes granted Eike Batista, former mining and oil mogul and once Brazil's richest man, his *habeas corpus* writ on 28th April 2017, freeing Eike from preventive detention where he was being detained after allegations he paid bribes to ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral, in exchange for state contracts (Ramalho & Sousa 2017). This decision received a lot of criticism, particularly when it was revealed that Gilmar's wife, Guiomar Mendes, is one of the associate lawyers at the law firm representing Eike, the firm Sérgio Bermundes – a clear conflict of interest. This meme was accompanied by the following written post: "Today, one of the biggest enemies of Car Wash is the STF. We need to stop Gilmar". Again, faith in the legal system is deterred when the greatest obstacle to the success of the Car Wash investigations into chronic corruption is shown to be the country's own Supreme Court.

Both VemPraRua's and NasRuas' audiences give priority to sharing posts that emphasise weaknesses in the country's legal institutions and highlight the need for an overhaul of the STF's functions and judicial processes. In this way, the movements have become instruments that question legal realities, labelling what they consider immoral and pressuring for adherence to the law, all of which helps to foster punitive publics.

In their capacity as media vehicles, the movements raise public awareness of the problems associated with the judiciary, who ultimately define the Brazilian legal reality. Even though attacks on the judiciary, particularly the STF, pinpoint flaws in judicial procedures, they also have the end goal of diminishing political influence of traditional parties and redirecting it towards new political forces that the movements approve and support. These political forces frequently promote increased employment of punitive measures and law enforcement.

Law enforcement

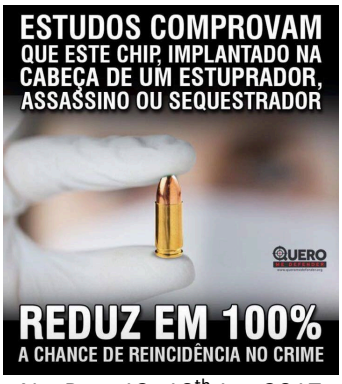
Punitive measures are supported by the majority of society in Brazil's main metropolis, São Paulo (Solano, Ortellado & Moretto 2017: 17). Yet, at the core of cultural conflict is the divide between two systems of morality that Lakoff (2016) terms Strict Father Morality and Nurturant Parent Morality (Lakoff 2016: 65, 108). The former is considered the conservative worldview and entails the implementation of authority, strict rules,

self-reliance, discipline and punishment. On the other hand, the latter is understood to be the progressive worldview that is based on empathy, compassion, understanding, love and care for others. Comprehending these conflicting views between conservatives and progressives in terms of differing moral systems helps to understand social media campaigns that promote tough punitive measures and law enforcement.

Both MBL and NasRuas strongly oppose compassion towards wrongdoers, or what they term as 'victimisation of criminals', and therefore promote gun ownership among citizens and police intervention, which their followers lap up as shown below.

MBL23: 6th Feb 2017

NasRuas11: 23rd Nov 2017



NasRuas12: 10th Jan 2017

A considerable amount of MBL's Facebook material in 2017 is designated to strengthening the image of armed forces, whether that be military, police or civilian. One example of this is meme MBL23, which has a photo of military officers forcing young men suspected as criminals to the ground accompanied by the sentences that read: "Images that bring peace to the heart. The army holding thieves to the ground". Punishment for crimes is approved by MBL's punitive public.

Likewise, on 17th May 2017, MBL published a short video of a segment from a TV talk show whereby the host interviews pro-gun activist Benedito Gomes Barbosa Junior. In the video, which is in MBL's top 10 most shared posts in 2017, Barbosa puts forwards arguments that citizens are safer if armed and explains that disarming society paves the way for authoritarian governments to arm their malicious forces, like what happened in Venezuela, leaving authoritarian regimes to have full control over society. The threat of Brazil 'turning into a Venezuela' is a reoccurring theme in political propaganda of the New Right in Brazil, which plays off Brazilians anxieties that their country may reach the same humanitarian-disaster fate as their northerly neighbours.

In a similar manner, NasRuas promotes discipline by means of punishment for crimes when publishing meme NasRuas11, which reads: "Committed a crime, 'killed' your rights! Enough of victimising criminals!". This meme, with a photo of three police officers forcefully arresting a young man, is accompanied by the following written post:

> WHAT IF WE WORRIED ABOUT THE VICTIMS? Enough of this "mimimimimi" attitude! Criminals belong (at least) in jail, and working to finance their stay and food!... DO YOU FIND THIS TOO "HARSH"? It's simple, just remember the over 100 dead police officers (fathers of families)!... Criminals are not victims!

The phrase "mimimimimi" is a common expression in Brazil that refers to a victimising attitude and it is frequently used by the movements to imply that people need to stop

proclaiming sections of society are victims. Instead of trying to understand why young males, who perhaps come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, commit crimes, NasRuas' audience endorses measures that neglect empathy and encourage strict punishment. One of NasRuas' leaders, Heymann Leite, taught me a phrase that describes how disobedience in society persists. "Soft ground, deep hole… Take a disrespectful boy. Why is he like that? Because his parents weren't hard enough on him, they were too lenient. So, soft ground, deep hole. If the boy robs and you don't do anything about it, he will rob again" (Heymann Leite, interview, 1st November 2018). The more lenient punishment is, the more likely perpetrators are to reoffend.

In a more violent provocation, NasRuas takes the pro-guns and law enforcement discourse to another level when it publishes content such as meme NasRuas12, which reads: "Study finds that this chip, implanted into the head of a rapist, murderer or kidnapper, reduces by 100% the chance of a second offence". It is accompanied by an image of a single bullet. The need to shock audiences to get noticed has been noted in academic works (Moore 2018: 13) and this post is yet another example of such an attention-seeking tactic. This ironic yet extreme post, which was not censored by Facebook, raises serious concerns over what type of content Facebook pages, as well as other social media platforms, can publish. Rigorous supervision of online influencers that encourage killing is the least that social media platforms could do to help prevent already heated political polarization from turning into rogue shooting rallies in streets. Nevertheless, NasRuas audience appears to be favourable to the death penalty, along with another pro-Bolsonaro movement, Acorda Brasil.

In an interview with Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, founder of Acorda Brasil and elected federal deputy in Bolsonaro's party, he explains that he is in favour of bringing back the death penalty. This is despite his great grandfather, Pedro II Emperor of Brazil, being the first person to ban capital punishment in the country.

> Justice comes from society, it doesn't come from a bureaucrat or a politician or anybody in the UN that is in the Human Rights Commission, it comes from society. And if society thinks that a person should not be living, that's what's just. If you maintain the person alive artificially through a law that is imposed by the UN, you're creating destabilisation. People start thinking that government and this system does not represent them. That is the beginning of the representation that we're suffering from with globalism and all these rights that are being imposed on countries by a foreign authority that is not part of the society and each individual sovereign state (Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, interview, 13th December 2019).

Conservatives such as Luiz Philippe not only disagree with some United Nations (UN) human rights policies, but they believe such policies to be forced upon countries around the world – countries that are dealing with different realities to other nation states. This is the first of many references that the movement leaders make to the UN and its human rights agenda that it promotes on a global scale. I consider this to be one of the principle causes for the movements' dissent, a claim which I expand on throughout the rest of this chapter.

Though what is alarming here is the radical opposition to the view that prohibits the practice of capital punishment. Although my findings of the Facebook analysis did not show any direct promotion of capital punishment by the three main movements

under scrutiny in this thesis, Luiz Philippe's opinion opens my eyes to the possibility that other conservative segments of Brazilian society support the death penalty.

Obedience by force from authoritative figures is a sentiment that circulates well among both MBL's and NasRuas' audiences. Through the movements' production of content promoting strict adherence to the law, they assist in representing the voices of their punitive publics. Whether on purpose or not, pro-gun discourses help to strengthen the image of presidential hopefuls like Jair Bolsonaro, whose trademark hand gesture of his 2018 election campaign was nothing less than finger guns – yes, you read correctly, both his hands making shapes of guns with his fingers. The popularity of discourses concerning fortified law enforcement paves the way for the election of leaders, such as Bolsonaro, who promise to reinstate order in society through strict police force, punishment of crimes and conservative interpretations of new laws.

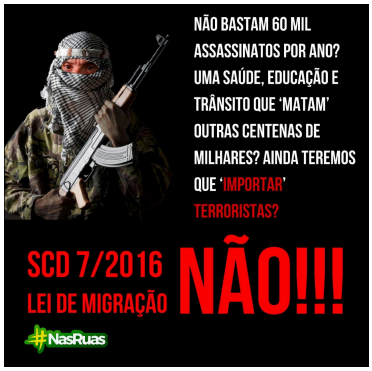
New Migration Law

Central to cultural conflict is the struggle to define national identities (Hunter 1995; Hartman 2015), which are often perceived by the Right to be under threat by immigration. The nation state has declined in the 20th century, in so far as national and local governments had to make way for continental or subcontinental structures, such as the European Union, and global agencies and forums, including the UN and G20 summits (Curran 2011: 76). However, this multilevel governance was not matched with a multilevel sense of citizenship, with local media focusing on national identity (ibid., 78). Online platforms such as Facebook and YouTube have given ordinary people the tools to foster national and local identities through the creation of their own online media pages and channels. They also provide a means for expressing dissent with policies viewed as an attack on national identity.

The players that have radical viewpoints within this debate are the more extreme echelons of society, be that Left or Right, with the latter showing evidence of firm anti-immigration rhetoric. Among the common posts circulated on the Facebook page of NasRuas' – the most far-right and pro-Bolsonaro of the movements – in 2017 was anti-immigration propaganda, as shown below. These findings are in line with those of Monitor do Debate Político no Meio Digital (2019c) that found an elevated presence of anti-immigration sentiment among Bolsonaro voters compared with non-Bolsonaro voters.

NasRuas13: 18th Apr 2017

NasRuas14: 11th Apr 2017



NasRuas15: 17th Apr 2017

The propaganda is in relation to the approval of the new Migration Law (SCD 7/2016), which was approved by the Brazilian Senate on 18th April 2017 (Baptista & Vilar 2017) and designed to facilitate the arrival of migrants to live and work in Brazil (Planalto 2017). The law was first proposed in 2016 amid the rising migrant crisis sweeping across Europe. In response to European countries' struggle to cope with the influx of migrants, predominately from war-torn Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, the UN General Assembly decided to develop a global agreement for safe, orderly and regular migration in September 2016 (UN 2018). Initial steps to create this global agreement began in April 2017 (UN 2018), with over 160 countries, including Brazil, signing the Global Compact for Migration on 10th December 2018 (Globo 2018). However, Brazil's approval of the agreement was short lasted, the Bolsonaro administration withdrawing Brazil from the agreement in early 2019 (Folly 2019).

Although intended to ensure that peace and human rights are upheld across the world, UN-inspired initiatives such as the Migration Law are interpreted quite differently by some conservatives. Meme NasRuas13 feeds off the fear of terrorist groups with its image of young Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) fighters marching in a line, accompanied by the caption: "Are you in favour of the new Migration Law that'll be voted today? Thanks to this ex-guerrilla fighter, these will be your new neighbours and government public servants". Next to the last sentence is an image of Brazil's then-Minister of External Relations', Aloysio Nunes, head with a red barred sign across the front. This meme brings the migration debate closer to home as it alludes to the far-fetched prospect that the military rebel group of the Colombian Communist Party will start working for the Brazilian government if the new Migration Law passes. The emphasis on violence is a stark contrast to the intended peaceful relocation effort of both the Migration Law and UN Global Compact for Migration agreement, and, as seen in Chapter 3, is yet another association between progressive initiatives and violence.

Furthermore, meme NasRuas14 is a direct attack on Germany's decision to keep its boarders open to migrants in 2015. It displays an image of German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and Aloysio Nunes with a crowd of German anti-migration protesters in the background. The captions read: "No Minister, No! We don't want our Brazil to become the male version of Angela Merkel. No to the new Migration Law #SCD7/2016No". As well as being a clear reference to the integration problems Germany faced after accepting large quantities of migrants into its country, this meme also declares that NasRuas is against following the direction of other countries and entities that impose the adoption of internationally-approved laws.

In the same vein, meme NasRuas15 displays a picture of a Muslim man holding a gun with the caption: "60,000 murders per year isn't enough? Health, education and traffic that 'kills' hundreds of thousands more? Yet we still have to 'import' terrorists? NO to Migration Law SCD 7/2016!!!". NasRuas plays off citizens fear of terrorists and gun violence in streets, completely turning a blind eye to the fact that refugees and migrants from the Middle East are themselves fleeing that exact reality. Take away the reference to violence in this meme and you are left with the reference to religion and cultural customs of Muslims who wear headscarves and burqas. NasRuas is at once trying to instil fear in people, as it is diverting them away from accepting new cultural customs into Brazilian society – a view that is shared by member of Revoltados Online, José Parra.

> Boarders no longer exist, everyone comes in and out. What did they do to Europe? They ruined Europe. Muslims invaded France, they invaded Germany. They are ruining everything. This is part of the Left's agenda. Who is doing this? The UN… Aloysio Nunes, who was our Minister of External Relations, signed an agreement with the UN opening our boarders. So, a guy from Venezuela can come here and has the right to work, meaning you can be employed anywhere in the country. You can go to the doctors and they will treat you. This is a United Nations thing. It means the beginning of the destruction of customs. So, you have a country with its customs and traditions, but as soon as you open the boarders and Muslims come infiltrating in, you destroy the country's social values. This is the great goal of globalism: destruction of social values, religion, customs and traditions. In 20 years, you lose everything. If you didn't already visit France, it's too late… countries lose their different music, social habits, education, customs and traditions (José Parra, interview, 17th June 2019).

Aside from displaying shockingly racist language, José illustrates one principal motive driving anti-immigration sentiment, which is the fight to maintain national identity. Some conservatives feel their country's traditional customs and values are under threat from globalist agendas, such as that of the UN and its human rights policies. Instead of viewing these international policies as a nurturing gesture that seeks to uphold the rights, respect and dignity of misplaced persons, far-right groups comprehend these policies to be an attempt to destroy national traditions and create one uniform global culture.

The above three posts demonstrate an expanding globalised public sphere, whereby international issues become local news items and are used for domestic ends. This usage of social media to endorse anti-immigration policies can be interpreted as succumbing to global nationalistic trends stemming from foreign social and cultural phenomena, such as the migrant crisis taking place in Europe. From this perspective, NasRuas, in its role as a media vehicle, is representative of far-right echelons of society when it seeks to mould national identity into a more patriotic form. This anti-migration sentiment is specific to NasRuas and its followers. No such sentiment was found in posts published by MBL and VemPraRua, and so anti-migration sentiment is not generalised to wider publics.

This domination of global culture by progressive influences is a view that MBL shares and actively seeks to overcome. With scarce formal media institutions of their political persuasion in Brazil, MBL set out to produce a communication channel that would discuss and promote free-market ideas, as shown in Chapter 3 and again below.

> The whole right-wing environment was boring… the Left made songs, they made movies, they did a lot of things that made their ideology bigger and greater, it was like a lifestyle… then we said why not create that for the Right? Why not create that for the ones who defend free-market society and republican values? So, at the beginning of MBL our goal was to create a means of communication in which messages would reach people in a simple way (Kim Kataguiri, interview, 15th June 2018).

MBL acknowledges the successes of the Left and the way that it embraces its ideological beliefs in all aspects of life. In order to do the same for the Right, MBL not only had to promote free-market values, but in its capacity as a media vehicle it also fought back progressive advances in society and promoted alternative narratives. This was achieved

through the field of culture, particularly relating to traditional family values, school curriculums, art exhibitions and the media.

II. Family, Education, Media & Arts

The year 2017 was particularly eventful in terms of cultural conflict in Brazil, particularly issues concerning the family, art exhibitions and the media. Out of the three primary movements of focus in this thesis, MBL was the one to take the protagonist position in opposition to progressive measures. By seeking to override progressive narratives with conservative alternatives, MBL is especially talented at engaging in culture wars debates that help to form conservative publics of the New Right in Brazil.

The view that the rise of the Right worldwide is a reaction to the advancement of progressive measures, stemming from the civil rights and 60's liberation movements, is one that is shared by many scholars (Caldwell 2020, Hartman 2015). In Brazil, "the New Right began looking for moral arguments against agendas recognising minorities to justify their attacks on the Left" (Chaloub and Perlatto 2016: 38). Such minority groups include the feminist, black and LGBT rights movements. Professor of public policy, Pablo Ortellado, contends that the resurrection of the Right in South America's largest economy is due to the progress of these progressive movements and the transformations they are bringing to society.

> Who is pushing these transformations are the black, LGBT and feminist movements – feminism much more so than the other two – and as a result, conservatives, seeing these accelerated transformations, think we are living a moral apocalypse and start to react. This reaction is being led by the Catholic and Evangelic church… society is moving forward and conservatives are creating a kind of bunker of resistance… the older generation of conservatives was openly homophobic and racist, but the younger generation is not. They are against the victimisation discourse of these social movements. I think that is their way of adapting to the victory of progressives in the field of culture (Pablo Ortellado, interview, 6th December 2019).

Conservatives feel alienated by the advancement of progressive measures in society. The status of conservatives has been destabilised with the promotion of minorities and, as a result, groups like MBL seek to combat progressive narratives. One example is MBL's choice of spokespersons to represent the movement. Fernando Holiday's invitation from Renan Santos to be part of MBL can be read as a strategic move to further implement cultural debates and challenge common narratives. In the MBL book, Renan describes Holiday as "[a] *Trotskinho* [Trotsky-imitator], with his growing black power" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 277). This reference to the Russian revolutionary implies that MBL, or at least Renan, wants Holiday to be remembered as leading an army of supporters to bring down a government and that he was chosen for this role because of his ethnicity. The issue of racial quotas in universities, which Holiday strongly opposes, is a matter of considerable public debate in Brazil and according to Kim Kataguiri, "[t]he impact of having a black person criticising racial quotas and opposing the popular victim narrative was huge… to have one of the 'oppressed' negating the need and fairness of quotas was a stab in the Left's heart" (Kataguiri and Santos 2019: 126). As well as

possessing impeccable public speaking skills, through his African descent Holiday also has the authority to fend off pro-racial-quota rhetoric and enter into conflict with the progress of the Black Power movement. This undercuts any established dogmas that Afro-Brazilians should accord with progressive views. Furthermore, Holiday came out as being gay shortly after entering MBL. This gives him additional credibility to combat the promotion of the LGBT community in society.

Understanding MBL's actions as neoconservative in seeking to attack progressive measures, whilst simultaneously constructing narratives of the New Right, helps to comprehend the logic behind their marketing strategy and further confirms their role in proliferating cultural conflicts. However, in terms of the representation of LGBT persons in Brazilian society, heated cultural debates have circulated in the public sphere for at least the past decade, which are necessary to understand prior to investigating the conflicts involving art exhibitions such as the Queer Museum.

LGBT representation

Brazil is one of the leading countries for violence against the LGBT community and has the highest number of LGBT homicides in the world (Kalil 2018: 20). In an effort to combat violence and discrimination against the LGBT community, in 2004 the federal government, in cooperation with non-government organisations, launched the program Brazil Without Homophobia, which had the objective of promoting human rights for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals (Figueiredo 2018). Launched in 2011 as an auxiliary program to Brazil Without Homophobia, the program School Without Homophobia was aimed at providing educational material in publics schools on homosexuality (Globo 2011). The program, which was approved by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), received a lot of criticism, particularly from Evangelicals and the then-federal deputy Jair Bolsonaro, who referred to the program as the "Gay Kit". This became the focal point of his 2018 election campaign. The program comprised of educational material, including videos and books on transsexual and bisexual persons, intended to promote awareness of sexual diversity whilst simultaneously confronting prejudice (Globo 2011).

Instead of being interpreted as an educational and awareness-raising tool in schools, conservatives like Bolsonaro understood the program to promote homophobic relations among children and even paedophilia (Globo 2011). With the unpopularity of the proposed program, the Dilma government withdrew it in 2011. However, debates over new proposals for the program continued and evidence of disapproval of this is found during interviews undertaken as part of this thesis. Revoltados Online member, José Parra, explains who he views as being responsible for globalising such a progressive agenda.

> The global Left is the United Nations, it is the centre of the official Left. Who implements globalism around the world is the United Nations... gender ideology is one of their objectives... so is abortion… it becomes infiltrated [in society] and so people gradually destroy the family. Young people come into this debate, like LGBT people, they have always existed, it was a normal thing. But then they tried to turn it into a trend. So, the kid that says he isn't gay is the odd one out and so he decides to turn gay. It is a cultural thing, not a personal thing. It was instilled in people. And so, what happens? You destroy the family, destroy the family (José Parra, interview, 17th June 2019).

Again, the United Nations is considered to be implanting a worldwide progressive agenda with the aim of changing national culture, starting with youth, and consequently disrupting the traditional family model. The concept of 'gender ideology', "a term initially created to oppose women's and LGBT rights activism as well as the scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender and sexuality" (Paternotte & Kuhar 2017: 5), is considered by the Right as the ideology of the New Left that is used strategically to seize power (ibid., 6). Although such conservative notions may shock some people, Müller (2016) claims that ignoring these viewpoints in political debate can lead to disastrous consequences – like the election of far-right presidents, as Renan Santos explains.

> Gender ideology was in the Human Rights program in 2011 and they were trying to implicate it in cities and states. That's why Bolsonaro became known around then because he went to one of those meetings in Congress and there was very weird people from the gay movement talking about gender ideology for kids... and they are the face of the Left now, so the Left is losing and they don't know why. Why? Because they are complete freaks!... When you try to understand why Bolsonaro exists, it's because of people like that. This wave [Bolsonarism] only exists because the Left were opposing the normal moral of Brazilians (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018).

The prevailing moral values in Brazilian society are in line with religious conservative views, according to the study carried out by Monitor demonstrated in Diagram 1 at the beginning of this chapter. It is thus no surprise that the conservative Jair Bolsonaro managed to get elected president of Brazil. An overt rival of the School Without Homophobia program, in 2011 Bolsonaro instructed his advisers, when he was federal deputy, to distribute 'anti-gay' pamphlets throughout his home city of Rio de Janeiro (Globo 2011a). His argument is that such programs in schools will in fact entice homosexuality and turn children into easy prey for paedophiles (Globo 2011b). Whether you agree with Bolsonaro's views or not, these polemic opinions helped to shape conservative narratives about the program, which view it as an attempt to indoctrinate (instead of educate) children. This is how Ian Garcez understands the motive for the social unrest that led to the downfall of the Dilma government.

> Let's say that corruption speaks to the mind but the attack on values speaks to the heart. I think that that was the reaction of society because the normal citizen of course he feels offended if he knows his president has robbed a lot of money, but he feels even more offended when he starts to know that his government wants to indoctrinate sexual ideas in the mind of his young son (Ian Garcez, interview, 8th November 2018).

The proposition to include educational material on sexuality and gender in schools, as part of the School Without Homophobia initiative, is interpreted as brainwashing children with progressive ideals. Ian goes on to explain that MBL views itself as aligning with "classic liberalism with free-market values but not with the agenda of social destruction" (Ian Garcez, interview, 8th November 2018). This sentiment that the PT is socially destructive of Brazilian society was exacerbated with the proposal to install unisex toilets in schools and universities, as Marcelo Reis describes.

> There was a period when we talked a lot about gay entities. Not that we are against gays, we are against gay entities that want to implant 'gayism' into society… during this period the PT was trying to implement the third Human Rights Plan and this included issues on the LGBT community… imagine you go to the bathroom, I go to the bathroom with you and say that I am gay so that I can go into the girls' bathroom. But I am not gay, understand? (Marcelo Reis, interview, 7th August 2019).

What Marcelo is referring to is the Secretary of Human Rights' 2015 resolution to allow transgender students to choose whether they use the male or female toilets (Globo 2015). Although this resolution did not have any legal force, bills were put forward, such as that by city councilman David Miranda in Rio de Janeiro in 2017, which was intended to guarantee the use of toilet facilities in public institutions according to the gender people identify with (Câmara 2017). This measure intended on safeguarding the rights of transvestites, transsexuals and transgender people (Câmara 2017). Marcelo is above all against the promotion of homosexuality in schools.

However, his strong stance against this proposal undoubtedly stems from personal trauma when his daughter was sexually assaulted as a child. This incident led Marcelo to found his movement Revoltados Online, which was initially aimed at tracking down paedophiles. These life experiences Marcelo has lived through help to explain his objection to such proposals as the installation of unisex toilets in schools. Only by understanding motives for conservative dissent will society be able to construct a better dialogue between progressives and conservatives and begin to understand the reasons for the popularity of leaders such as Bolsonaro.

These debates over LGBT rights and gender ideology that occurred in the public sphere in Brazil are a prelude to the Queer Museum and Museum of Modern Art (MAM) affairs, as well as anti-Globo online campaigns, which I now go on to examine.

Queer Museum

The biggest culture wars issue that MBL engaged in was the dispute over the Queer Museum. In August 2017, the cultural centre of Santander Bank, called Santander Cultural, opened the Queer Museum exhibition entitled 'Cartographies of Difference in Brazilian Art', in Porto Alegre – a city in the country's south known for its conservative population. It was quick to receive criticism by conservatives over some of its artworks that were accused of promoting bestiality, blasphemy and paedophilia. These artworks caused a feeling of marginalisation among citizens and "the more marginal people feel to society, the more likely they are to feel alienated from its political system – providing a reservoir of support for radical parties" (Gidron and Hall 2019: 22) and political figures, like Bolsonaro.

At the centre of conservative outcry, were illegally filmed videos of the exhibition by two young men, Felipe Diehl and Rafinha Bk, who are affiliated with Bolsonaro's universe of supporters and criticised many of the artworks. The videos were edited, combined into one and published with the heading, 'Criminal Exhibition in Santander Cultural', on 9th September 2017 by the Facebook page *Terça Livre TV* – a far-right political analysis page that is dedicated to engaging in "cultural wars against Gramsci communism" (Terça Livre TV 2017a). It also claims to be inspired by self-proclaimed philosopher and adviser to Bolsonaro, Olavo de Carvalho. By 2020, Terça Livre became

one of the key pro-Bolsonaro online news platforms. The written post accompanying the video of the exhibition that went viral is as follows:

> DENOUNCEMENT: Paedophilia, bestiality, pornography and profanity being promoted by the Minister of Culture in front of the eyes of children! Rate Santander Cultural with 1 star, share this video and help to denounce these crimes. How ABSURD! Video filmed by Felipe Diehl-Direita Gaúcha and Rafinha Bk (Terça Livre TV 2017b).

Terça Livre actively promoted the boycott campaign when they instructed their followers to give Santander Cultural a 1-star rating. This action clearly falls within my attention-jealousy-revenge framework for explaining online attacks. Conservatives resented the promotion, or attention, given to progressive artworks and sought to publicly condemn them. The video, which received over 1 million views, displays several modern artworks such as that of Mary cradling a monkey, a reformed figure of Jesus Christ with 16 arms, a suitcase of plastic communion breads with the words 'tongue', 'fanny', 'arse', and 'vagina' written on them, a colonial painting depicting a man having sex with an animal and various other erotic images. The archdiocese of Porto Alegre published an official note on the 11th September 2017 affirming that some of the artworks disrespected religious symbols (Arquidiocese de Porto Alegre 2017). To make matters worse, the video also displayed the presence of young children in the exhibition. Social media has brought about an important change in society, which is the ability for videos to go viral and reach greater audiences.

Following public outcry by conservatives, Santander Bank decided to close the exhibition a month early on 10th September – that is, only one day after the video was posted by Terça Livre – apologising to those who were offended by any of the artworks (Santander Cultural 2017). Consequently, rumours spread that MBL was behind the filming and some groups of people started calling the closure of the exhibition censorship. According to various MBL members, no one from MBL ever went inside the Queer Museum, nor did they even know the exhibition existed until after the scandal broke out, as Renan Santos explains.

> When there was this fight against the Queer Museum, we actually never had this fight against the Queer Museum. We were not part of it. It was guys who belonged to [Bolsonaro's] universe. But the press said it was us because the press doesn't understand. The press is stupid and said, "Oh it was the Free Brazil Movement!". And we said, "Okay if you want, we were not part of it, but if you want now we are". So, we stole the protagonist position in this struggle against them and a lot of artists from the Left came to fight us (Renan Santos, interview, 30th August 2018).

However, as multiple local and even international media outlets bought the narrative that MBL was behind the conservative outcry (Phillips 2017a; Tiburi 2017) – demonstrating that it is not only social media that succumbs to disinformation – the group ran with it, because it gave them yet another chance to create a media spectacle of themselves.

MBL24: 9th Sept 2017

MBL25: 10th Sept 2017

MBL26: 11th Sept 2017

In relation to the scandal, MBL published few posts, the first being an article, which received just over 1,000 shares, by the partisan site *Jornalivre* on the 9th September 2017, as shown in image MBL24 above. The title of the article reads: "Santander Cultural promotes pornography and paedophilia via the Cultural Incentive Law". The cover image of the article is the artwork that Rafinha Bk claimed to encourage paedophilia in his video that went viral. This was a highly controversial interpretation of a boy wearing a fairy tutu that was later ruled inaccurate by prosecutor of the Children's Court of Porto Alegre, Julio Almeida, who visited the exhibition amidst the scandal (Tavares & Amorim 2017). Accompanying the article was a simple written post criticising the use of public funds by stating: "This happens in Porto Alegre and is funded by taxes payers' money. How does that make you feel?". MBL focuses on the use of public funding for such modern artwork.

Following the closure of the exhibition on the 10th September 2017, MBL posted a second article also by *Jornalivre* on that same day, which celebrated the victory of public pressure causing Santander to decide to close the exhibition. Then, later that day, MBL published their third post in relation to the affair. The written post, accompanied by the image shown in the above meme MBL25, received just over 2,700 shares and reads as follows:

> About the Santander Cultural affair, yes, MBL pressured the bank to stop [the exhibition]. One thing is to defend equal rights for all, independent of your sexual orientation, another is to use money from the ROUANET LAW to finance artworks for CHILDREN that are considered PEADOPHILIA and ZOOPHILIA. Shame on you, scoundrels!".

Although MBL does not refer to a boycott campaign in their sole post made prior to the closing of the bank, the group make no effort to contradict the narrative that they were driving an online boycott campaign. This indicates that the group welcomes any scandal that brings them further media attention, putting them in the spotlight of public political and cultural debates.

To evolve its criticism from one purely centred on the use of public funds, to one more in line with conservative values, MBL emphasises three elements of the scandal in capital letters: public funding via the ROUANT LAW, a law that provides funds for use in art and culture; CHILDREN participation; and PAEDOPHILIC and ZOOPHILIC content. The combination of these three elements suggests that, instead of focusing on neoliberal concerns over the amount of taxes going towards the exhibition, MBL learned that a conservative approach, which focuses on the impact such cultural artefacts might have on the ideology of children, causes more outcry. This is in line with Thomas Frank's

(2004) thesis that contends that, to win over voters, neoliberals must join forces with conservatives to govern.

In the same vein, MBL produced a short video clip on 11th September, shown in video MBL26 above, whereby it attempts to explain the scandal and emphasises the sexualisation of children. The video script is as follows:

> Society mobilised together and the boycott caused the bank to cancel the exhibition with paedophilic and zoophilic content. The Brazilian Left went crazy this weekend. This is because people are angry at Santander's exhibition, which **promoted bestiality, gender ideology and the sexualisation of our children**. One of its objectives was "**to strengthen ties with teachers and students", providing printed material to school students and teachers both public and private.** The Queer Museum exhibition relied on R$800,000 of funds from the Rouanet Law, which makes this even more scandalous. Thanks to popular pressure, Santander Cultural stopped the exhibition early, enraging *petistas.* Dishonest journalists and left-wing protesters started attacking MBL for our stance on the matter…What journalists and artists really want is that Brazilians finance their works and keep their mouths shut, whilst they try to **sexualise their children**. We will not allow it… (Italics and bold print are my own emphasis).

Content like this taps into conservative desires built on the notion of the family. After all what constitutes a family, as opposed to a couple, are children. Nurturing, protecting and caring for offspring are qualities at the centrepiece of the human race. Tapping into such human desires is central to successful propaganda (Bernays 1928: 52). The video, which is littered with imagery from the exhibition and online attacks on MBL, received over 30,000 shares and over 1.1 million views – far more than any other material published by the group about the scandal. This further supports the assumption that video content has greater impact on public opinion and debate. As I have emphasised in **bold** writing, what stands out the most is the narrative that the exhibition functions as an educational tool for students and teachers to indoctrinate children on gender ideology and, in turn, sexualise them. An interpretation which is polar-opposite to the intended celebration of sexual diversity.

With this narrative firmly established among conservatives, the motive for dissent can be understood to stem not so much from neoliberal monetary concerns, as it does from conflicting conservative views on culture. This issue then becomes one about cultural power in society and its role in shaping and defining a nation. The Rouanet Law is considered by conservatives to give extra monetary power to the Left when it funds progressive cultural projects, helping to fortify what they view as the Left's cultural agenda. The use of neoliberal discourse, claiming to be against such laws for economic reasons, can thus be considered a simple cover-up for real conservative dissatisfaction, which stems from the success of progressive culture that is promoted in the public sphere by public funding. In the words of Alinsky (1971), "[i]t is a world not of angels but of angles, where men speak of moral principles but act on power principles; a world where we are always moral and our enemies always immoral" (ibid., 13).

The popular sharing of content criticising these exhibitions indicates the existence of a conservative public that identifies with the hostile opinions being put forward. Weeks after the Queer Museum closing, another art exhibition added more fury to conservative outrage, this time involving the Museum of Modern Art (MAM).

MAM affair

Also in September 2017, a contemporary art performance known as *La Bête* (The Beast) took place at MAM in São Paulo, which involved sculpting a naked man's body into various positions by members of the public (Phillips 2017b). Again, the artwork was understood by large sections of society as inappropriate for minors and promoting paedophilia, particularly when young girls were filmed prodding and interacting with the naked man.

Amid this new scandal, on the 29th September 2017, MBL posted the below photo, MBL27, which received the most angry reactions – 32,785 to be exact – out of all MBL's Facebook posts in 2017 and its entire post history from 2014 to 2018.

MBL27: 29th Sept 2017

The original photo, which did not have the red blocks covering the young girls' faces, nor the blurred-out region of the man's groin, was removed by Facebook for displaying nudity, leaving only the sarcastic written post accompanying it: "art". The removal of this post is a stark reminder that such 'liberation technologies' as Facebook, initially seen to provide an uncensored forum for rational, critical debate that expanded the public sphere, are in fact restricted in their liberty in the sense that they are controlled and monitored by governments, third party organisations or the platforms themselves (Diamond 2010).

Nevertheless, this artistic performance sparked controversial debate in society over what classifies as modern art and the emphasis on the involvement of young children reinforces that issues concerning the family, particularly children, are a source of great outrage among conservatives. One example of this is the YouTube video Arthur do Val posted on his channel *Mamãe Falei,* which MBL shared on the movement's Facebook page, amid the MAM affair.

> If you wanna be a worthless artist, there in your corner, great, go be a piece of shit in your corner. If you wanna be a worthless artist, paid with my money, then you've already pissed me off. Now, if you wanna be a worthless artist, paid with my money, who encourages children to touch a naked body, then sorry mate, you have passed all levels of acceptability (Arthur do Val, video, 30th September 2017).

Like MBL, Arthur has tapped into what enrages conservatives and generates more views – the narrative that innocent children are being manipulated by progressive culture. Despite previously claiming in an interview with me that his own personal dissatisfaction

with the Queer Museum regarded neoliberal concerns, the YouTube version of Arthur, as *Mamãe Falei,* laps up the conservative narrative in the MAM affair.

Both the Queer Museum and MAM affairs demonstrate how such progressive artistic displays are picked up by online conservative media vehicles and amplified as representative of the Left as a whole. Facebook pages and YouTube channels, like those of Terça Livre, MBL and Arthur do Val, brought the modern progressive world into the hands of conservative publics – publics that may have not gone to such art exhibitions themselves. These digital platforms have at once increased access to information as they have the opportunity to gain attention, jealousy and revenge from new publics in the form of online attacks and demeaning campaigns.

These two affairs also fortify the idea that the "spectacle has come to colonize politics, culture, and everyday life" (Kellner 2017: 4). Anger among conservatives is transmitted through social media posts of photos and videos of the art exhibitions, reinforcing the notion that social relations are made via images (Debord 1973). This common outrage quickly circulates online to form angry conservative publics that are alienated by such modern artworks and instead seek media that confirms their hostile view of such artefacts.

On top of this, it is a common vision among scholars that social identity is driving political, social and cultural conflict (Faris 2019). "[M]embers of the public consume news because they want to know what is going on in the world and how their political leaders are doing, but also want to get information that confirms them in their worldview and identity" (Benkler, Faris and Roberts 2018: 76). Understanding the popular propagation of posts criticising progressive artworks as a marker of social identity further suggests the establishment of conservative publics.

Some may view the conservative reaction as holding up a barrier against the representation of homosexuality, and sexuality more broadly, in society. However, based on Monitor's (2019b) findings that 44% of the Brazilian population is made up of religious conservatives, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, I view these progressive artworks as being too confronting for Brazilian society. Although these art exhibitions drive cultural conflicts, what conservatives loath more is their promotion in Brazilian society by the country's largest media conglomerate – Globo.

Anti-Globo

Globo is the most powerful mainstream news outlet in Brazil. "TV is concentrated into one channel, Globo, which has more than half of TV audiences. Globo is bigger than all the other channels combined" (Pablo Ortellado, interview, 6th December 2019). Receiving R$6.2 billion for federal publicity during the PT governments from 2003 to 2014 (Lupion 2015), it is no secret that the media giant produced content favourable to the PT's agenda.

Aware of Globo's force and important role it plays in shaping culture and promoting political agendas, the movements seek to bring down the media magnate. They are given the perfect opportunity to do so when the news corporation adopted the narrative that the conservative outcry over the Queer Museum and MAM exhibitions were attempts to censor progressive art displays. As such, specifically MBL and NasRuas, partook in a 'boycott Globo' campaign, as depicted below.

MBL28: 8th Oct 2017

MBL29: 8th Oct 2017

NasRuas16: 29th Oct 2017

MBL constantly criticises Globo when it is convenient for them, as shown in meme MBL28 which reads: "Attention Globo Network! Leave our kids in peace!". This is accompanied with the circular Globo logo in the centre.

Similarly, meme MBL29 announces that MBL is ashamed of Globo's famous Sunday night program, *Fantastico*, when it declares: "Like this post if you feel ashamed of *Fantastico*". Again, the reference to shame is a clear indication that Globo, in this instance, does not represent the beliefs of MBL.

NasRuas also shares this line of thought in meme NasRuas16, which reads: "Boycott the Globo Network. Change the channel or turn off the TV". This meme was accompanied by the following written post, which further demonstrates the movement's estrangement:

> The Globo Network is losing millions and millions of spectators thanks to their programs which totally alienate the family values, education, morals and politics of Brazilians. The public has awoken and doesn't want to be manipulated anymore by this perverse broadcaster, that only degrades the society of our beloved country. OUT WITH GLOBO! NEVER AGAIN watch this channel!

As stated here and in the NasRuas' book, *Não Foi Golpe* (It Wasn't A Coup), conservatives are experiencing an "economic, political, social and moral crisis" (Zambelli 2018: 260) in Brazil. The dissent large sections of society are experiencing from some of Globo's programs fosters a fertile environment for growth in alternative media, such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp, whilst simultaneously decaying trust in the traditional press. This mistrust in mainstream media causes people to look to news sources delivered with trust such as those shared by personal social networks of friends and family on social media (Marwick 2018: 504).

Again, attacks on mainstream media can be understood in an attention-jealousy-revenge logic. When media outlets provide airtime to a cause they promote, the movements become aggravated by the attention being given to that cause and set out to discredit it. This helps to form publics who are against elite traditional media.

However, the movements' criticism of Globo is inconsistent. As displayed in Chapter 4, the movements frequently publish Globo, and other traditional news, reports when they denounce corruption allegations, particularly involving Lula and the PT. Also, important to recall is Renan Santos' proclamation in Chapter 5 that he can now "die happy" because he is "immortal" following Globo's interview with Kim Kataguiri and public recognition of MBL as a political and media force. Therefore, MBL, and NasRuas,

are only against the media company when it publishes cultural content that endorses progressive philosophies and goes against conservative beliefs. This is consistent with other online, right-leaning media outlets such as Breitbart in the US, which in the 2016 US elections "launched attacks targeted not only at Democrats and Trump's Republican rivals but also at media outlets that did not fully support Trump's candidacy" (Benkler, Faris and Roberts 2018: 57).

Nevertheless, MBL takes their opposition to Brazilian mainstream media seriously, particularly in their choice of leading spokesperson of the movement, Kim Kataguiri. In an interview with MBL's head marketer, Pedro D'eyrot, who found Kim online and recruited him to MBL, he informs that the underlying motive for recruiting Kim was in the hope of attracting international media attention.

> [In 2014,] there was this march going on in Hong Kong and Joshua Wong was the youth political leader of the uprising against the Chinese regime. He sort of looks like Kim and so I thought maybe the international media might like someone from Asian descent. Kim was also very smart and very capable. I wanted to get the attention of international media and not Brazilian media because I knew Brazilian media was too tainted by the PT (Pedro D'eyrot, interview, 12th September 2019).

Pedro consciously chose to have Kim as one of the faces of MBL in the hope that the international press would assimilate Kim with activist Joshua Wong, and therefore MBL's protests with that of the Umbrella Movement's, for which Wong was a leader. Like the attention-grabbing tactics MBL uses described in Chapter 3, the intention behind Pedro's selection is thus based on the logic of generating as much media attention as possible. To confront local media narratives, which are perceived as being favourable to the PT, MBL sought recognition from foreign media outlets.

Voters of radical right parties "are characterized by concerns about recognition – the feeling that they have been pushed to the margins of society by economic and cultural forces" (Gidron and Hall 2019: 28). With limited representation in mainstream media, such as Globo, conservatives sought it elsewhere, frequently on social media or at street protests like that of the *#PTNuncaMais* (#PTNeverAgain) demonstration that I described in the Introduction of this thesis and continue here.

> **Paulista Avenue, São Paulo**
> **21st October 2018**
>
> Standing on the MBL truck behind the stage protruding out into the sea of green and yellow supporters, one week out from the final election round, I notice a Jewish flag hanging overhead from the truck roof. I ask Pedro about its significance. He responds saying that it is a symbol of non-violence and respect for Jewish people, aimed at highlighting the difference between MBL and far-right groups such as the Nazi party. Again, this is an attempt to break the dogma that the Right are violent and oppressive.
>
> Out of the corner of my eye a couple of metres away, I spot Renan preparing to take to the stage for his second spiel of the day. I decide to take the back stairs down to ground level and walk around to the front of the truck to position myself alongside the stage for his speech. I want to see what it is like being an onlooker in the crowd. As Renan walks out onto the shoulder-height stage, a Brazilian flag being waved behind him by an eager supporter, I realise that MBL's setup is much more

theatrical than any of the other movements. MBL's truck is lower to the ground and the stage gives the effect that they embrace, and even are part of, the people. I pull out my iPhone to start filming as Renan begins his speech.

> To them, you guys don't have the right to have a voice, you don't have the right to express your opinion, because you all committed a crime, the crime of thinking differently. The crime of looking at this flag right here, the flag of Brazil, and being proud of it (Renan Santos, personal filmed video of speech, 21st October 2018).

At the heart of rage against the PT is the impact the party has had on the national identity of Brazil. Between the confronting progressive measures and sprawling Car Wash investigations, both locally and internationally, some citizens were left feeling ashamed of being Brazilian. Renan, with his index finger abruptly pointing from left to right much like a crazy wizard-like composer casting a spell across the crowd, continues his tirade of cultural criticism.

> If you are a man here today, you are being hunted because you can't defend your family. If you support your family, you are criminalised. If you make some oppressive act, you are a fascist. If you dropped a pick-up line, you are a rapist. You can't express your opinion anywhere… The men of Brazil are being hunted by the Left and persecuted as if they were the biggest monsters. Their crime is – loving their wives and caring for their families. So, put your hands together for our men! Because they are what people are ashamed of, they are what has become taboo. It seems like if you were born with a ball sack, then you are automatically a mother fucker. And that's not true! They literally want to castrate you! (Renan Santos, personal filmed video of speech, 21st October 2018).

Unpleasant imagery flashes into my mind, as I struggle to digest what is being said among the loud cheering from the crowd. Crowds are hypnotised by their fascination of leaders and their ideas. "All feelings and thoughts are bent in the direction determined by the hypnotiser" (Le Bon 2001: 18). Renan, the current hypnotiser, is primarily concerned with male identity and claims that the PT is pushing masculinity to extinction. Instead of greeting the progress of the feminist movement, which calls for equality and respect, with compassion, he views it as a sort of verbal restriction on what one can say and is frustrated with the constant obligation of political correctness. Thus, Renan understands the Left to be crusading against the male sex and turns his radical language up a notch.

> They want you to stay at home, hidden away, accepting all that they say. They want you to listen to Globo News, where they talk about the last fashion: "Men wearing skirts". How cool! This is the latest fashion: "My son dressing up as a fairy and I am going to as well because I am tolerant". FUCK OFF! What is this shit? What world is this that they want us to live in? (Renan Santos, personal filmed video of speech, 21st October 2018).

The young boys dressing up in fairy skirts is an obvious reference to the Queer Museum painting that was labelled paedophilic a year prior. Renan has learnt from MBL's biggest cultural scandal and is drawing on these debates in the last moments before the final election round. His attack on Brazil's most powerful culture-defining tool, Globo, reinforces resistance to the media elite. Again, he draws on the notion of national identity when he suggests that the PT imposes their version of the world on Brazilian society. Finally, Renan turns to the women present in the crowd.

> Now for the women here as well. I have a message for all the ladies here today. You were basically forced to be a part of the *#EleNão* protest. "Ah, if you don't go to *#EleNão* it's because you are an oppressed piece of shit"… and that's coming from women who, sorry but, don't know how to look after themselves, only speak shit and defend crap. Put your hands together for ladies who don't have hairy armpits!... if you are a woman who simply looks after your family…they say, "Ah no! You are oppressed, you are an imbecile!" (Renan Santos, personal filmed video of speech, 21st October 2018).

Amidst the profanities, Renan defends the traditional family model and role of the women in society. His conservative outlook on life clashes head on with the feminist movement, but more precisely with the political acquisition of the movement by the PT. To conclude, Renan defines the characteristics that he views should determine the national identity of Brazil.

> All you guys are Brazilians that are committing the biggest crime according to our press and intellectuals. Your crime is to think for yourselves, defend your family and defend your country. And all Brazilians that act like this will be persecuted and hunted by our elite (Renan Santos, personal filmed video of speech, 21st October 2018).

Libertarian, anti-elite and traditional family values are at the core of Renan's rhetoric. He describes how the crowd of people in front of him have experienced social marginalisation by the PT and traditional political establishment. Renan uses victimising language on his audience, making them feel as if some great injustice occurred during the years of the PT. Above all, he, and thus MBL, strives to be culturally, as well as economically, free from the PT.

The movements exploit anti-elite sentiment in society, that is, criticism of legal, political, cultural and media elites. They act as masters of online right-wing narratives and their crowds of supporters reply through sharing of the movements' social media posts to form publics. "A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master" (Le Bon 2001: 68). MBL, and the other movements, became that master, leading online punitive, conservative and anti-elite debates that were aimed at realigning Brazilian culture. "[P]olitics is, in large part, an expression of culture" (Hunter 1995: 57). Therefore, to change the politics of a country, one must first change the culture, which is what the movements in this thesis seek to achieve as I have demonstrated throughout this chapter.

Conclusions

"The gap between culture and politics is shrinking" (Soep 2014: 11). The cultural conflicts that the movements engage in are about cultural domination and the struggle to define Brazilian identity. Through the popular circulation of these arguments among the movements' publics, the movements gain a certain degree of cultural influence. Misrepresentation is felt by the movements and their publics, not just in politics, but across various aspects of public life, to which they seek to change. To this end, they attack the culture-defining institutions in society that fall within the fields of law, politics, family, education, and the media and arts. Thus, the movements can be considered media, political and cultural vehicles of the New Right.

What all these cultural debates have in common is their attack on cultural institutions. Be that judges who define and interpret laws, educational programs upholding human rights, or museums and media outlets promoting progressive measures, the movements are out to redefine the way things *are* and what they view as morally acceptable in Brazilian society. They have understood that mainstream cultural institutions frequently sit to the Left, so they are trying to pull them into the Right's camp by enraging their audiences to share content and influence public debate. Power, and therefore politics, is being dominated by the manipulation of emotions and constant instillation of outrage.

I provide a full summary of all the findings of this thesis in the next (and final) chapter, the Conclusion.

Conclusion

I began this thesis hoping to investigate MBL's, VemPraRua's and NasRuas' fight against corruption in Brazil. Along my journey, I discovered these movements that may have once appeared to be striving to combat corruption are in fact primarily politically motived. What began as street movements that led the pro-impeachment protests, transformed into political media vehicles and cultural institutions, which helped to form different publics of the Brazilian New Right. The movements all publish scores of social media content that is aimed at influencing political debate. To investigate these debates, this thesis has analysed the discourses that were frequently shared by the movements' publics in 2017, a year that was marked by political propaganda constructing candidates for the 2018 elections, advances in the Car Wash investigations, steep decline of Odebrecht's reputation and cultural conflict. I have interpreted these popular discourses as representing different publics of the Brazilian New Right and I understand them to have influenced the election of Jair Bolsonaro.

Significance of the thesis

This thesis has above all increased understanding of the movements. Their political qualities and recognition as ultraliberal counterpublics have previously been emphasised (Rocha 2019), however I have provided a different angle of analysis from a media perspective, which views them as propaganda vehicles operating in the media and cultural spheres.

Contradictory to the idea of the movements as ultraliberal counterpublics, my analysis has shown that economic debates circulate the least among the movements' followers, while social and cultural issues circulate the most. This suggests that the movements have more success forming publics related to social and cultural issues, such as punitive, conservative and anti-elite publics, more so than publics related to economic issues, including neoliberal or ultraliberal publics. Despite being motivated by neoliberal and political endeavours, MBL in particular also engage in political action for reasons of personal revenge, political influence and historical status.

Unlike works that approach right-wing groups through a social movement lens (Caiani and della Porta 2018) or investigate media effects on the radical right (Ellinas 2018), I view the right-wing movements in this thesis as quasi-media organisations themselves. They use digital platforms like Facebook as a media vehicle to by-pass the mainstream press, disseminate their political messages, increase corruption awareness, and promote conservative, punitive and anti-elite values, all of which help to form publics of the New Right. In the Introduction of this thesis, I posed the following three research questions aimed at revealing how the movements simultaneously act as media, corruption accountability, cultural, as well as political, institutions:

1. *How do the movements act as media vehicles of the New Right?*
2. *In what ways do the movements increase corruption awareness?*
3. *What were the most popular discourses shared by the movements' followers on Facebook in 2017 to help form publics of the New Right?*

What follows is a summary of each of the chapters, responding to these questions and highlighting the movements' media influence, corruption-awareness competencies and their role forming anti-corruption, neoliberal, punitive, conservative and anti-elite publics.

Chapter 3, *Political Marketeers*, depicted how it can be useful to understand the movements as politicised media vehicles of the New Right, instead of purely viewing them through a political or anti-corruption lens. Facebook, much like Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, has become Habermas' (1991) modern-day 'coffee house', and the movements' pages and posts the contemporary, digital, political news bulletins. Traditional newspaper cartoons are transformed into memes and journalistic reports reduced to partial posts and status updates, which are driving critical political debate in the public sphere.

Regarding the movements' followers, analysis of their sharing habits reveals that issues related to social matters appeal most to audiences, video content and memes are most likely to go viral and influence public debate, and content that enrages people is shared the most. In line with Warner (2005), who views the popular circulation of texts to represent different publics, I understand the discourses discussed in this thesis to represent multiple publics of the Brazilian New Right.

A significant portion of the movements' activities is centred on the production and distribution of social media content. The movements publish pre-existing news items from mainstream media sources, as well as produce their own opinion pieces on political affairs via their political commentary programs. It is through these activities that groups such as NasRuas, Revoltados Online and MBL act as propaganda instruments and go against mainstream views to produce favourable coverage of right-wing candidates such as Jair Bolsonaro and João Doria. In this sense, they perform the role of hyper-partisan news outlets.

One of the movements' main goals is to disseminate right-wing narratives to the masses. Online content is produced in a commercial way with the aim of going viral and reaching as many people as possible, all with the goal of influencing public political debate. Particularly in the case of MBL, its provocative and attention-seeking marketing strategies are implemented strategically and intended to overcome common dogmas about the Right, such as the belief that right-wing sympathisers are violent.

Selected news items for publication by the movements are frequently politically-motivated and aimed at damaging the reputations of opponents, particularly Lula, whilst simultaneously augmenting that of their own and political allies. The movements' marketing strategies, including ridiculing and polarising with targets, did more than just create some of the rhetoric that now defines the New Right, they helped to bring down the status of the previously dominant left-wing ideology and political parties. This is evidence that Alinsky's (1971) power tactics are being used just as readily by the Right as they have been in the past by the Left.

These marketing techniques are not new to political discourse, however what is new is the way in which the movements have adapted these processes to the online environment and industrialised the production of memes. In doing so, the movements helped to form part of the modern political lexicon in Brazil and have become key narrators and distributors of right-wing narratives.

With the velocity that memes spread online, publics can be formed at far quicker rates and across much wider territories than ever before. By producing content on specific issues, the movements create various anti-corruption, neoliberal, punitive, conservative and anti-elite publics, issues which were the focus of the rest of the thesis chapters.

As illustrated in Chapter 4, *Anti-Corruption or Antilulismo?,* the movements contributed to the formation of anti-corruption publics by using Facebook to redistribute mainstream media news items about corruption allegations. In doing so, they have demonstrated how Facebook is not only used for political marketing (Moore 2018), but also as a tool to uphold corruption accountability.

The movements act as dialects of mainstream media when they monitor news published by mainstream media channels and republish news items on their Facebook pages. They trust mainstream media sources that report corruption instead of undertaking investigative journalism themselves. When reproducing mainstream media reports, the movements select news that fulfils their political needs and provide their opinions on the issues. They frequently employ a three-step process whereby they: (1) report news items; (2) dissect news items in line with political agendas; and (3) ridicule targets. It is through this three-step process, particularly partaking in ridiculing, that scandals last for a longer period on social media than in the traditional press. This process can be understood as being motivated by an attention-jealousy-revenge logic, whereby an opponent receives some form of attention, to which the movements experience jealousy and seek vengeance via demeaning that opponent.

As reported by Odebrecht, the company is frequently mentioned in Facebook posts because of its link to Lula and the PT. This suggests two things. Firstly, reputational risk is greater for entities involved in corruption scandals when politicians, particularly presidents, are also implicated in the scandal. It is for this reason that I criticise the practice of permanently removing anti-corruption Facebook pages because, as in the case of *Movimento Contra Corrupção* (MCC), it counteracts efforts to increase reputational risk of corrupt actors. Facebook and the movements that use it increase the reputational risk of corrupt actors.

Secondly, the movements are militant in the way they publish news items that are in line with their political agendas. They give preference to criticism of the political side of the corruption equation over the business side and wherever possible constantly refer corruption allegations back to the former PT presidents, Lula and Dilma. It is in this way that anti-corruption sentiment was assimilated to anti-Lula and anti-PT rhetoric. Of the corruption issues the movements addressed, denunciations involving Lula and the PT circulate well among audiences, signifying the formation of anti-Lula, anti-PT, as well as anti-corruption, publics.

However, specifically in the case of MBL, anti-corruption rhetoric is found to be convenient, politically-speaking, more so than genuine. The group openly make the distinction between themselves as coming from the neoliberal faction of the New Right, compared with VemPraRua who they view coming from the anti-corruption faction. Although the anti-corruption drive plays an important role in the success of the movements, they are essentially compelled by political motives, rendering them hyper-partisan media vehicles of the New Right.

Chapter 5, *Neoliberalism or Jogo Político?,* concludes that there are many factors driving the movements other than neoliberal motives. All three of the movements undoubtedly hold neoliberal characteristics, which they openly publicise. However, the movements, particularly MBL, demonstrate that they are also driven by revenge, political influence and historical status.

Criticism of policies, such as the electoral fund and syndicate tax, at first glance appear to be driven by neoliberal ideals, helping to form publics in line with these views. However, upon further examination it becomes apparent that motives for disapproval also stem from the desire to reduce political power of traditional political parties. Neoliberal aspirations are used strategically to weaken traditional parties, primarily the PT, PSDB and PMDB. Popularity of such posts amounts to rising levels of distrust in the political elite, which paves the way for the election of political outsiders, and indicates the formation of anti-politics publics.

Renan Santos reveals that he is motived by revenge, rather than ideology, when he refuses to support the university political party he foundered and instead is central to the party's defeat. His actions highlight that an attention-jealousy-revenge process is applicable to understanding engagement in political action carried out by him, at least in this instance.

Influence over Brazilian politics is undeniably an underlying motive of the movements, illustrated by the election of many of their spokespersons in the 2016 municipal elections and 2018 state and federal elections. This reflects the popularity of their discourses in the public sphere and formation of publics that support their ideas.

As well as being driven by political power, members from MBL show that their actions are also influenced by historical status. They value being labelled as the movement that led the pro-impeachment marches and being recognised for this throughout history brings them great personal satisfaction and elevated subjective status. These are all part of their motivation to engage in political action.

Above all, there is evidence that suggests the movements are driven as much by neoliberal desires as they are status and power: power to determine the way things are and what is culturally acceptable in Brazil.

The issues discussed in Chapter 6, *Brazilian Culture Wars*, illustrate how the movements operate within the field of culture to help form publics of the New Right by seeking domination over debates concerning law, politics, family, education, the media and arts (Hunter 1991). These debates are ultimately over the struggle to define national identity (Hartman 2015) and what should be considered morally acceptable (Lakoff 2016) in Brazilian society.

The popular sharing of posts containing criticism of perceived lenient decisions by the STF, anti-impunity rhetoric, endorsement of rigorous law enforcement and pro-gun discourse suggests the formation of punitive publics among the movements' followers. National identity is most at stake when NasRuas' audience shares content criticising the new Migration Law SCD 7/2016 and some leaders of NasRuas, Revoltados Online and Acorda Brasil understand UN-backed initiatives like this new law to threaten local cultural customs. Anti-migration rhetoric places these movements toward the far-right end of the political spectrum and the common circulation of such posts is evidence of highly conservative publics among their specific followers.

Another issue which causes tensions to rise is the representation of LGBT persons in society. Educational programs aimed at safeguarding the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals are interpreted as attempts to indoctrinate children with gender ideology. These arguments are exacerbated when filmed footage of progressive art exhibitions goes viral, showing children in attendance, which further ignites outrage among conservatives. Groups like MBL and Terça Livre branded the controversial Queer Museum and MAM exhibitions as promoting bestiality and paedophilia, emphasising the sexualisation of children. This suggests that the symbol of the traditional family is valued most among conservatives. When that image of the family is broken, traditional values are perceived to come under attack and people begin to revolt. This revolt takes shape, once again, in a process of attention-jealousy-revenge, whereby the promotion of progressive measures is met with hostility from conservatives and as a result they seek to demean that initial promotion. This is reiterated in the anti-Globo campaigns that sought to undermine the media company for its support of the art exhibitions.

Above all, these cultural conflicts imply that Brazil is not configured for such progressive measures, given that society is largely made up of religious conservatives. These arguments equate to an overwhelmingly anti-elite sentiment – be that judicial, political, cultural or media elite – in Brazilian society. The popularity of the movements' posts in relation to these matters signifies that they hold a certain degree of cultural influence and that social media is a hub for cultural conflict.

Within the context of the Car Wash investigations into sprawling corruption allegations, the proliferation of anti-corruption, neoliberal, punitive, conservative and anti-elite discourses happened organically. As I shall now recount, the greatest representation of this New-Right movement was elected president of Brazil on the night of the final 2018 election round.

Sé, São Paulo
28th October 2018

Election evening is upon us and a colleague from Monitor, Tiago, has invited me to the *Porão* – the underground student space at San Fran law school. Walking down the cement stairs from the back-street entrance, the mood is deflated as 7pm approaches when the final election result will be announced. There is only a handful of students there, all hugging each other in condolence upon arrival. It feels as if I am at a funeral and everyone is trying to put on a brave face and force a smile.

Most students are dressed in red to match the colour of the PT flag that hangs from the barred window to the left of the TV screen. The room appears more like a jail cell, where the suppressed have been banished by the new dominant power. The result comes in and no one speaks. Everyone is dead silent: Bolsonaro 55% and Haddad 44%. Bolsonaro's victory was expected yet the disbelief is still palpable.

Tiago points out a plaque on the wall underneath the TV that reads: *TRIBUTE, to remember the students who, on 23rd June 1968, took this academy in the fight against the military dictatorship and the oppression of a lifelong cathedra.* Ironic, seeing as though Brazil just elected a far-right former military captain, whose vice president is a former military general, to run the country.

My stay at the *Porão* is short because I am keen to see the reaction of the Right on Paulista Avenue. A sense of guilt comes over me as I slip out the door and take the metro from *Praça Sé* back to the foot of the MASP museum. I feel as if I am

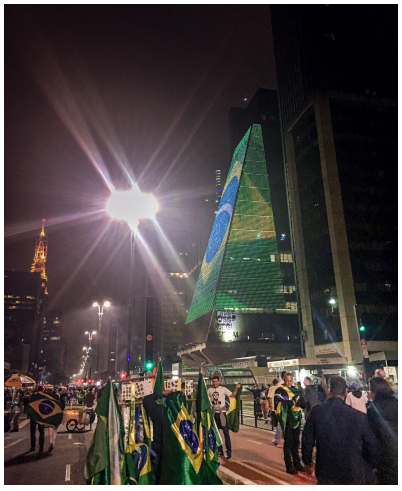
betraying all my friends in the name of research going to see of Right's celebrations. As the metro pulls into Trianon-MASP, herds of fanatical *Bolsonaristas* dressed in green and yellow cheer on the platform as they make their way up the cramped escalators. Squashed between shoulders going up the escalator, I look back down at the platform to see a young *petista* girl dressed all in red scurrying up the staircase next to me. A strong sense of danger quickly fills the air. Some completely polarised man calls out to her, "*Fora petista*!" (Get out *petista*!). Many other *Bolsonaristas* join in to publicly shame her. The girl bravely defends her beliefs as she pushes her way up the stairs and yells back, "*Vocês são lixos*!" (You are all scum!). Everyone starts booing and hissing at her as if a mob of feral cats is about to pounce on a lone mouse.

Walking out onto Paulista Avenue, I immediately notice the immense Brazilian flag that lights up the entirety of the FIESP building. People are taking photos of themselves on the bike path in the middle of the avenue, their large Brazilian flags blowing straight up in the warm air from the grated metro vents underneath. On the right-hand side of the road, one guy has a Trump mask on, while a couple of women pose for photos with motorbike police.

I turn towards MASP where the crowd intensifies. Green smoke from flairs fills the air. A sea of flags, both the Brazilian and *Paulistano*, bob up and down like white caps in a rough ocean. Parked in front of MASP is a small truck with the Revoltados Online banner lining its side. Oddly, it is the only truck on Paulista Avenue that night – MBL and VemPraRua are nowhere to be seen. As I manoeuvre myself closer, weaving through the street vendors and raucous supporters, most of whom are men, I notice NasRuas leader, Carla Zambelli, among the dozens on top of the truck. I have to constantly reposition myself to get a glimpse of who is up there through the many flags, mini inflatable Lula's in prison attire and sparking crackers blocking my vision.

Suddenly, everyone starts yelling, "*Chupa Rede Globo*!" (Suck Shit Globo!), and I look up to see a hand-made black banner with the hashtag #*chupaglobo* spray painted on it in large white writing. Globo has always been unfavourable to Bolsonaro and yet he won the election without its support and hardly any TV time. His popularity is entirely accredited to favourable campaigns on social media and WhatsApp. This is new to the Brazilian political reality, which traditionally has been defined by Globo. It goes without saying that the power dynamics within the media industry have officially been reconfigured, with social media striving far ahead, leaving mainstream media lagging behind.

Polarisation is, in large part, the result of politicisation of society, where opinions about politics are openly debated. Popular online discourses driven by the movements that were critical of the political, judicial, cultural and media elite helped influence public debate in Brazil to a profoundly anti-elite stance. These discourses laid down the foundations for the election of a president who appears to be a political outsider, have a clean record in terms of involvement in corruption schemes and whose moral values oppose those of Lula and the PT. Far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro was the only electoral proposition in 2018 whose profile aligned with the anti-elite demands of society.



FIESP building lit up with image of Brazilian flag following Bolsonaro's election
28th October 2018

Revoltados Online truck with *#ChupaGlobo* (#SuckShitGlobo) banner in front of MASP following Bolsonaro's election
28th Ocotber 2018

While I favour exposing and criticising corruption and impunity of politicians and big business, this can lead to further distrust in the political system and strengthen anti-elite sentiment in society, paving the way for political outsiders to be elected at all levels of government. We saw this in Chapter 5 with the election of most the movements' spokespersons into municipal, state and federal government, and again here with the election of Bolsonaro. How can society be critical of political and judicial processes without fracturing trust in politics and having such criticism lead to the election of populist extremists, be that of the far-right or far-left?

In terms of the cultural tensions in Brazilian society, as we saw in Chapter 6 in relation to the Queer Museum and MAM exhibition affairs, is it possible to promote progressive measures, such as equality and human rights, without alienating conservatives? In what ways can dialogue be improved between the two sides of the moral and ideological divide?

As this thesis has illustrated, particularly in the arguments put forward in Chapter 3 on political marketeers, social media has become a titanic power of the contemporary world with its influence over public political debate. It would be useful to see how these findings, which focus on right-wing movements, compare to movements from the Left and their role in diffusing progressive views.

In regard to holding political and business elites accountable for malfeasance, as examined in Chapter 4 on the scandals involving Odebrecht, Lula, Temer and JBS, Facebook can be used as a corruption accountability institution increasing awareness of wrongdoers. Looking beyond the media space, how can other novel technologies such as Blockchain be used to increase prevention and accountability of corruption? All these questions provide avenues for future research.

This thesis has attempted to capture the tensions that dominated Brazilian society in 2017 and 2018, conscious that they are specific to the pre-election period and often temporary political debates, but also suggestive of larger questions about the movements. MBL, VemPraRua and NasRuas, as well as other right-wing street movements, act as quasi-media organisations through their production of a nimiety of online content that is readily shared by their followers to form different publics of the

Brazilian New Right. One of the biggest recent changes to the Brazilian political landscape is the representation of the Right, which now has many online influencers and media vehicles spreading its narratives and vision of the world to new publics. By popularising anti-corruption, neoliberal, punitive, conservative and anti-elite discourses, the movements in this thesis are key marketing tools that communicate to society that it is no longer taboo to hold conservative views and identify as right-wing. The evidence presented in this thesis leads to the conclusion that these movements are more than just political; they are at once media, corruption accountability, cultural as well as political institutions.

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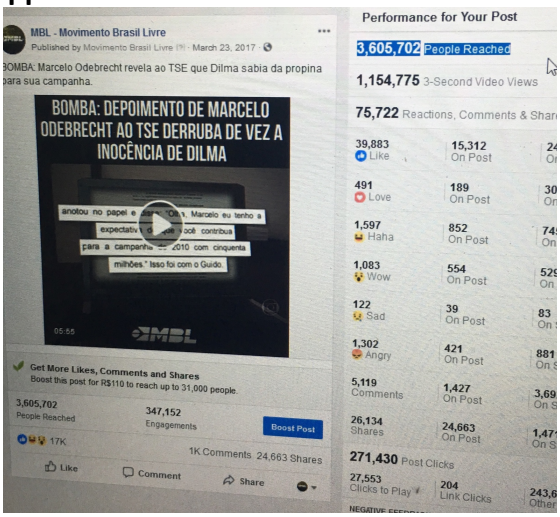
Appendices

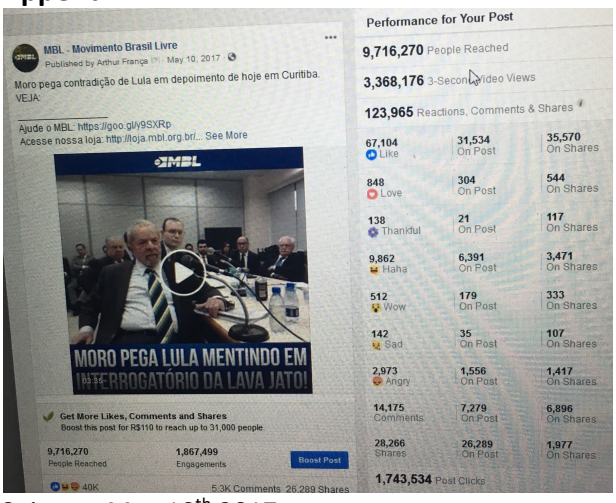
Appendix 1:



MBL13: 23rd March 2017

MBL14: 13th April 2017

Appendix 2:



Snippet: May 10th 2017