

Fighting in Brazil: Three Years of Revolt, Repression, and Reaction

A Thorough Account and Analysis, 2013–2015

Facção Fictícia

June 12, 2017

Contents

Introduction	3
I. From June 2013 to the FIFA World Cup in 2014	4
Confederations Cup Protests and Repression	6
The Specter of Anarchism and Other Images of the Future	7
II. Mega-Events as a Capitalist Means of Transforming Society	8
A Brief History of the World Cup	9
The Party of Lula and the World Cup	11
UPPs: War against the Poor Black Population	14
III. Presidential Elections: Democracy Still “Represents” Many People	17
What Happened to the “Crisis of Representation”?	18
Dilma Re-elected: The “Strategy” of Those Who Do Not Know Where to Go	19
2015: Fighting the Increase in a New Terrain, with a New Right in the Streets	20
The New Right	21
V. The Life Cycles of Mobilizations	25
VI. Departing from Where We Are to Where We Want to Go	26
Strategic Gaps: The Spaces We Don’t Occupy	27
What If We Don’t Demand Anything?	29
The Black Bloc Inquiry: In Praise of an (Almost) Perfect Crime	31
Fighting Will Be a Crime	34

In 2013, Brazil made headlines around the world as a powerful autonomous movement triggered by the rising cost of public transportation brought millions into the streets. Heartened by success, some imagined that such movements could pursue a strategy of linear growth, moving from one demand to the next. But history rarely moves in a straight line. The ensuing years brought new waves of repression, followed by a right-wing reaction that ultimately toppled the government. In the United States, we have seen a similar arc in the trajectory from Occupy Wall Street to Donald Trump's Presidency.

Today, Brazil is in the news again as a fresh round of disturbances threatens the right-wing administration. To understand the context of these conflicts, gain perspective on parallel developments in the US and Europe, and learn how social movements can act effectively in today's ever-changing terrain, we have to look back at the road that took us here.

Adapted from a text published by Fação Fictícia in Portuguese under the title *Lutando no Brasil*, the following analysis explores the lessons of three years of struggle. Two years in the making, it is the closest thing we can offer to a comprehensive overview of the situation in Brazil.

Introduction

“Many anarchists depend on a triumphalist narrative in which we have to go from victory to victory to have anything to talk about. But movements, too, have natural life cycles. They inevitably peak and die down. If our strategies are premised on endless growth, we are setting ourselves up for inevitable failure. That goes double for the narratives that determine our morale.”

-After the Crest, CrimethInc., 2013

The wave of protests that emerged in Brazil in 2013 against the increase in the cost of public transit defied the order and mournful ambience of the cities. These demonstrations drew an entire generation to the streets, promoting encounters and alliances that influenced other struggles and will influence the next wave of unrest. These events resounded all over the planet, exchanging influence with upheavals on other continents.

However, the victory that prevented the fare hike in several cities did not ultimately lead to the abolition of transit fares, as some hoped it might; it did not even go beyond the question of establishing “access to the city” in a radical way. Many groups tried to divert the protests to other issues, but almost all of them stuck to the reforms contained in the agenda of elites or suggested by the bourgeois media. In 2015, several cities faced even greater increases in transportation fees than in 2013. Despite weeks of street protests, none of those were revoked.

After a period of economic growth, which brought millions of people from dire poverty up to the consumption levels of a poor version of “middle class,” Brazil entered a phase of recession, with austerity policies and cuts in social benefits—an emerging country with the symptoms of a rich country's disease. The big difference between Brazil and, for example, most European nations is that the proportion of the population in dire poverty and the gap between rich and poor is vast. In addition to this financial crisis, dry rivers and a shortfall of water in reservoirs pushed much of southeastern Brazil into perhaps the biggest water crisis in its history.

In 2013, the state was compelled to study and contain an array of new forms of struggle, especially radical tactics such as the Black Blocs that emerged in many cities. The following year, the World Cup provided the pretext for a complete re-articulation of the methods for suppressing and criminalizing protest. To curb the organizations and the protesters who denounced fraud, police violence, evictions, and the emergency laws necessary for conducting the world's largest mega-event, the gates were officially opened for a state of permanent exception in which the biggest enemy in Brazil is its own population. Facing the specter of both financial crisis and dwindling water resources, the state and its military openly discussed how to contain the population in a scenario of widespread riots. Military commanders and security officers organized panel discussions about how to contain civil unrest in the face of looming threats of mass unemployment, forced migration, epidemic disease, and lack of access to water and food.

Other peak moments of social struggle came before, and many more are still come. The victories of 2013 created a new political moment in which many people felt empowered to take sides and get organized. At the same time, the state created a new terrain with an increasing focus on counterinsurgency.

No single uprising will bring down all systems of oppression. Likewise, merely showing the contradictions and violence of this society in a theoretical and didactic way will not suffice to draw people to our side of the barricades. We need to build things more durable than barricades if we want to disseminate forms of resistance and organization that can survive these times of crisis. We need to practice, demonstrate, and spread anarchist solutions to the problems that will arise in the coming years. We need radical anarchist approaches that meet our immediate needs while building towards our long-term goals, approaches that protect us from the eyes of the police but are accessible to all who need to get organized.

It is from this perspective that we present "Fighting in Brazil." This text was produced in São Paulo. It is not the definitive view of these events, but a contribution analyzing the whole from a particular perspective. We invite people and groups from different states of the country to share their own experiences, concerns, and solutions relating to anti-capitalist struggles today and the ones to come.

Enjoy reading—and see you on the streets!

I. From June 2013 to the FIFA World Cup in 2014

The new resistance and the future of repression

In recent years, we saw two moments of great political mobilization across Brazil: the fight against the increase in the cost of public transit in June 2013, and the organizing and protests against the FIFA World Cup in 2014. The first was completely unexpected and successful, while the second produced expectations that were not met and demands that were not won. But each left legacies and lessons that will impact resistance and anti-capitalist organizing in Brazil for years to come.

The wave of protest against the transit fare increases that began in 2013 reached a peak at the end of June, when nearly 3 million people protested simultaneously in more than 100 cities. The massive protests achieved the cancellation of the increase nearly everywhere, and even decreased fares in cities that hadn't faced increases. These victories affected 70% of the country's urban population. Although resistance was instigated by autonomous movements and strengthened

by the participation of many autonomous radicals and unaffiliated groups, these mobilizations brought together a wide diversity of people. Surveys indicate that somewhere between 4% and 6% of the adult population of Brazil joined the demonstrations in some way—an astonishingly high rate of participation, especially in a country without a significant tradition of mass street protest as a means of applying political pressure.

At the same time, these events showed that such a plural and fragmented society could not occupy the streets in such massive numbers without bringing along their antagonisms and internal conflicts. When the liberal middle class joined the demonstrations, as well as conservatives and patriots opposed to the Workers Party administrations of Presidents Lula and Dilma, rowdy divergences emerged within the protesting crowds. On the day that the crowds celebrated victory against the fare increase in São Paulo, both formal and informal nationalist groups and skinheads attacked anarchist protesters and activists from political parties. They used the general opposition to parties expressed by the autonomous movements as a pretext to attack the ruling Workers Party and promote fascism. Meanwhile, pacifists and defenders of property in the demonstrations acted as police themselves, beating protesters and turning them over to the authorities. All of this was a stark reminder that those who take the streets in protest don't necessarily have anti-authoritarian or anti-capitalist values.

By the end of the year, it seemed that a new inclination to street protest had taken hold throughout the country. New demonstrations brought together thousands of people, paralyzed sections of cities, precipitated open conflict with police, and destroyed state and corporate property. Protests erupted in the suburbs outside of urban centers, closing down roads and bringing attention to diverse agendas. The emergence of other issues as focal points of protest resulted in part from the general dissatisfaction of the people impacted by many forms of oppression. In some cases, it also reflected an attempt by conservative groups and sections of the middle class to insert generic demands in order to create photo ops for social media.

Yet for a while, poor and marginal communities that had previously been a minority within large marches took center stage, calling the shots and attracting more attention. These mobilizations revealed the inanity of the slogan uttered by middle-class protestors in the June demonstrations that “the [Brazilian] giant woke up,” showing that anyone who had just “woken up” in 2013 had been out of touch with the reality of Brazilian suburbs, where people never had the luxury to be “asleep.”

Among the movements that unfolded in the following months, we saw protests for the demarcation of indigenous lands; against legislative bills that would further restrict access to legal abortion by upgrading the legal status of the unborn fetus, or that promoted a “cure” for homosexuality; against the Confederations Cup and mega-events in general; struggles for housing and against evictions; teacher strikes; protests against media monopolies; and uprisings in popular neighborhoods in response to the widespread murder of black and other marginalized youth. From June onwards, there always seemed to be groups of people in rebellion, determined to sustain the revolt from the most intense days of fighting the fare increase.

In September 2013, we saw a historic wave of actions targeting the patriotic Independence Day parades in many cities of the country. In October, the strike by public school teachers that began in Rio de Janeiro coordinated with simultaneous protests organized by public education professionals taking place in São Paulo. During the strike in Rio de Janeiro, striking teachers famously passed a resolution officially declaring their “unconditional support for the youth using Black Bloc tactics.” Also in October, the animal liberation movements initiated a new form of

action at a vivisection laboratory that carried out experiments on dogs in São Paulo: about 200 animals were openly rescued while a Black Bloc confronted police, burned cars, and trashed the lab. It was the first time a direct action of this kind happened in the country; within months, the lab had shut down permanently.

In response to this proliferation of rebellious activity, police prepared desperate counterinsurgency operations, including using the National Security Act¹ to dampen the spreading mood of insurgency. Two people who were taking photos at the teacher's demonstration in São Paulo in October were arrested and charged according to this law, absurdly accused of being "leaders" of the Black Blocs. It was clear that the state intended to use every tool in its power to put a stop these revolts.

Confederations Cup Protests and Repression

A rehearsal for the 2014 World Cup

Also in June 2013, protests against the fare increase spilled over into other mass protests against the impact of mega-events in the six host cities of the 2013 Confederations Cup. This event, also organized by FIFA, the international governing body of soccer, always precedes the World Cup. It offered a preview of what resistance to the World Cup might look like the following year, but also for the repression that was sure to come.

About 800,000 people protested against the Confederations Cup in all of the host cities, including 300,000 in Rio de Janeiro alone, 60,000 in Belo Horizonte, and 100,000 in Fortaleza. These protests highlighted a number of common themes, including the impact of the mega-events on the people evicted to make way for the them and on those living under military occupation in the favelas, as well as informal workers and street workers who were forced out to open space for the monopoly of the sponsoring companies.

Demonstrators drew attention to the model exemplified by these mega-events, which orients urban development towards the priorities of the global capitalist market at the expense of policies that prioritize resources for health, quality of life, and education. The cities were transformed with public money channeled towards the profits of private businesses. As a result, associations of workers and residents affected by the mega-events joined with the World Cup Popular Committees that formed in various cities, together raising the question: "Whose Cup?" They also denounced the outrageous anti-"terrorism" and other laws that criminalize social movements, strikes, and protests. One of these laws went so far as to threaten anyone who blocked roads leading to the games with 30 years in prison.

Even under heavy police repression, the marches brought together a diverse range of movements and people, all dissatisfied with the impact of FIFA's biggest event. This was a significant gesture in a country that proclaims itself to be soccer's #1 fan. But when the marches headed towards the perimeters of the restricted zones imposed by FIFA about 2 miles around each of the stadiums, they were brutally suppressed by an integrated police force of more than 54,000 officers from across the six host cities, including members of the Federal Police, Federal Highway Police, National Force, Military Police, Civil Police, Fire Brigade, Civil Defenses, and Municipal Guards. This massive coordination of repressive forces, along with a fierce media backlash against

¹ A law written in 1983 to respond to "terrorist attacks" during the years of the military dictatorship (1964–1985). This law had not been used for decades.

the threat of any protest, warned us about what was in store for us during the World Cup the following year.

The Specter of Anarchism and Other Images of the Future

In the wake of the massive protests of 2013, state authorities and the media scrambled to understand where such resistance could have come from. Repressive forces worked to develop more sophisticated strategies and tried to identify “leaders,” “ideologies,” or “organizations” behind the demonstrations. Particularly baffling were those pesky anarchists: who were they, what did they want, and where did this idea of Black Blocs come from? The media developed a discourse to distinguish between protests that were “legitimate” (i.e., harmless) and “illegitimate” (those that reacted to police repression and targeted the physical structures of the state and capital). Security forces created new laws against “vandalism” and “terrorism” to use against protestors, while unifying police forces with the Army and making large investments in training, intelligence, and new equipment to control protests and “civil unrest.”

In the aftermath of the 2013 protests, the High Command, consisting of commanders of the eight Brazilian military regions, met to assess the threat posed by the June uprising. They were afraid that the wave of protests would not diminish and discussed the difficulty of infiltrating these movements due to their lack of formal leadership. Uninterrupted monitoring of potential rebels was instituted on the Internet and social networks. The generals were not talking about strengthening borders against external enemies, nor using the old discourse of a “war on drugs.” Their goal was to organize a counter-insurgency campaign in their own territory.

By the end of 2013, more calls were emerging for new demonstrations against the FIFA World Cup, which held the potential to trigger a new wave of protests around the country in June 2014. Faced with this threat, police set a menacing tone with serious violence against the first protests of the new year. On the first demonstration against the World Cup, held in São Paulo on January 25, 2014, police besieged a downtown hotel in which demonstrators tried to take refuge from repression. Many were beaten and tortured after being arrested inside the building, some losing teeth and suffering serious injuries. One young man approached in a street near the end of the action was shot in the chest and groin.

The Popular Committee of the World Cup organized a protest for March 15, 2014. This group had begun organizing since 2011 alongside other social movements. This demonstration was brutally attacked by police as soon as it emerged from the rally, where a crowd of about 10,000 had gathered.

But the initial violence against demonstrations was not enough to quell popular outrage against the government spending billions on useless buildings, escalating police repression, subsidies for sponsors, and extensive corruption involving contractors. Workers organized strikes and pickets across the country, with or without the support of their unions. Popular Committees collaborated to publish information and organized horizontally among informal workers and residents affected by the evictions and the new laws surrounding the games. Teachers, bank workers, subway and bus drivers, and even police went on strike. Public transportation workers in São Paulo and military police in Recife strengthened their demands for better conditions by threatening not operate during the month of the Cup.

The most symbolic strike was carried out by garbage collectors in Rio de Janeiro in March. They stopped work for eight days, demanding better conditions and a 37% wage increase. Groups

of workers were organized horizontally and outside the unions, as the unions had their own interests distinct from those of the workers they supposedly represented. These workers put tremendous pressure on the city by making the population stumble through their own filth during the week of Carnival, when the city was packed with tourists from around the world and subject to international visibility. Mountains of garbage piled up in the streets of posh neighborhoods and tourist districts made an unforgettable image and a distinct threat to the forces invested in a photogenic, smoothly running World Cup. Some of the most frightening scenes took place during the strike of the Military Police in Recife, when the army was called to quell looting at shops and supermarkets, filling the streets with tanks and using high-caliber lethal ammunition to disperse crowds and make arrests.

This climate of tension built through the first six months of 2014, until the opening match of the World Cup in São Paulo on June 12, 2014, when protests were brutally suppressed on their way to the stadium on the east side of the city. In the first week of the World Cup, twenty protests took place across the country. On June 23, a protest on Paulista Avenue against the World Cup took place without any major incidents; however, two young men were randomly arrested for no apparent reason and with no explanation. Neither carried weapons or explosives, nor even wore black or any type of mask or cloth to cover their faces. Yet the secretary of the security forces made a point of saying he was satisfied with the “investigations” that ended with the arrest of two “members of the Black Bloc.”

This episode showed the police’s efforts to make visible that they were already investigating and seeking people to arrest, forging evidence in order to intimidate other groups out of participating. The two arrestees were only released two weeks after the end of the World Cup, having spent 45 days in prison. On the eve of the last match, 23 people were pre-emptively arrested in their homes in Rio de Janeiro during the night and the morning of July 12. They were released weeks later, but faced charges of terrorism and conspiracy, also based on groundless accusations and false evidence. This showed how the police feel empowered to target struggles are going into decline, when they have less popular support.

II. Mega-Events as a Capitalist Means of Transforming Society

“There is no world government; what there is instead is a worldwide network of local apparatuses of government, that is, a global, reticular, counterinsurgency machinery. (...) What is tried out on faraway peoples will be the fate that is in store for one’s own people. The troops that massacred the Parisian proletariat in June of 1848 had honed their skills in the “street war,” with its torchings called *enfumades*, in Algeria during colonization. The Italian mountain infantry battalions, recently returned from Afghanistan, were redeployed in the Susa Valley. In the West, using the armed forces on national territory in cases of major disorder is no longer even a taboo, it’s a standard scenario. From health crisis to imminent terrorist attack, their minds have been methodically prepared for it. They train everywhere for urban battles, for “pacification,” for “post-conflict” stabilization. They maintain their readiness for the coming insurrections.”

-“To Our Friends,” The Invisible Committee, 2014

In an increasingly urban and globalized neoliberal economy, cities are the main sites of capital accumulation. To attract foreign capital, governments must transform their cities to become promising for investment. This means securing wide pool of cheap labor, a voracious consumer market responsive to similar advertising languages as the rest of the world, and the infrastructure to be globally competitive: industrial centers, research parks, international airports, luxury hotels, convention centers, port complexes, shopping centers, and so on. Any country that wants to compete for investment and a prominent position in the world economy must use its cities as instruments for such competition.

Visibility is crucial in this process. The World Cup matches are broadcast to over a billion people throughout 200 countries, paving the way for images and advertising to circulate globally. This degree of exposure offers opportunities for the massive profits that large corporations and governments covet. Together, they work to develop urban infrastructure in order to concentrate more power and capital.

This dynamic is part of a new post-colonial process unfolding around the world: the unification and standardization of urban spaces and economies for the benefit of the rich. In Brazil, this new concentration of resources is masked under the discourse of “the legacy of mega-events,” as if such projects were for the use and benefit of the population as a whole. On the contrary, leading up to the World Cup, we saw the expansion of infrastructure dedicated to private vehicles and further privatization of public space, rather than improvements in public transport or policies to increase mobility and access to the city. We saw the expansion of a “financialized” and speculative housing market and policies that increase the concentration of urban and rural land in the hands of a small elite rather than guaranteeing decent housing for all. In importing an elite model of urbanization into cities already ravaged by massive social inequality, these policies also necessitate expanded police and legal repression to deal with the instability and conflicts they provoke.

A Brief History of the World Cup

To understand an apparatus or institution, it is necessary look back to its origin, to identify what ends it was created to serve. In our efforts to understand the World Cup, we look back to 1930, when the first Cup was held in Uruguay. That small country, which celebrated 100 years of nationhood that year, did everything it could to host the World Cup, and to use it as a tool to consolidate a national identity.

These efforts included building new roads, urban structures, and the largest stadium in the world, as well as paying the travel expenses and accommodation of all the teams that would compete—something that never again occurred to any host country. Through a scheme of fraud and threats, Uruguay was awarded the world championship and reaped the desired reward of a renewed nationalist spirit. Within three years, the president staged a coup d'état backed by police, the army, and the nationalist political party.

Four years later, the second championship happened in none other than Mussolini's Italy. With fascist salutes before matches and the threat of death looming over the whole Italian team, the championship was once again awarded to the host country. The convenience of being both host and champion during a dictatorship, when the nationalist clamor is always welcome, could be seen in 1978 when Argentina hosted and won the Cup during the height of a bloody dictatorship that “disappeared” some 30,000 people. It also marked the first time that the events were broad-

cast from Argentina to televisions around the world, highlighting the link between World Cups, dictatorships (whether with or without elections), advertising, and improvements in business and consumer infrastructure. Over time, it became unnecessary for host countries to buy their victories, as they figured out how to stoke nationalist emotions and exert sufficient control over flows of wealth and new markets for local and multinational elites regardless of the outcome of the games themselves.

Later in the 1980s, both the World Cup and the Olympic Games came to serve as driving forces for the expansion of global neoliberalism. International sporting events began to reflect the presence and influence of multinational corporations who wanted their brands viewed by billions of people and sold around the world.

There is also a more direct relationship with urban transformation in the discourse that justifies the construction of a structure to be left as an “urban legacy,” as a way to join the global list of cities able to attract investment, tourism, and advertising in an increasingly globalized economy. This coincides with a decrease in the state’s role in the management of urban demands and the emergence of an international financial surplus seeking new terrain in which to materialize as commercial expansion.

Housing policies lose ground to a speculation market in which roads, architectural complexes, shopping centers, ports, and airports are funded with public money, but only in order that contractors, real estate companies, and other cartels can rake in profits. Consequently, the rents and financial value of properties skyrocket, forcing the residents of entire neighborhoods to move—if they have not already been displaced by forced evictions, which can take the form of bona fide military operations when the residents are occupying without proper legal status.

In Brazil, as in most underdeveloped or developing countries, gentrification and urban renewal policies take a particularly violent form because they target regions and populations in precarious situations below the minimum standards of living found in rich countries. These neighborhoods and favelas usually comprise the greater parts of suburban areas in big cities, growing without state infrastructure or urban planning as people build their houses however they can—without basic resources such as water or sewer services, and in soil vulnerable to rain, flooding, and landslides. The only state institutions that are always present are police and military forces.

When a mega-event approaches, these favelas, autonomously occupied buildings, or unproductive land occupied by rural movements will be cleared by any means necessary. In Rio de Janeiro, the doors of buildings to be evicted were painted with an identification number by city officials, just like Nazis did to victims of the Holocaust; the residents were given a deadline to leave their homes, and they could not make use of legal means to seek fair compensation.

This is how Brazil systematically violated international laws regarding housing rights, to which it is a signatory, denying the affected communities the opportunity to discuss the projects that displaced them. If a mega-event like the World Cup brings gains to a country, the question is who will benefit. Certainly it will not be poor and disenfranchised populations. João Havelange, a former Brazilian president of FIFA (1974–1998), claimed to “sell a product called football,” arguing that “politics and football do not mix.” We know there is a lot of politics and power behind this “product.”

The Party of Lula and the World Cup

A mega-event does not occur in a vacuum. Since its origins, the World Cup has been used as an excuse to implement new policies and changes in the urban terrain, to accelerate and optimize the process of economic globalization, and to renew and integrate a global policing protocol and militarization. The fact that Brazil has become a candidate to host the planet's three largest mega-events in less than a decade alerts us that there is something behind such ambition.

The country received the World Cup in 2014, hosted the Olympics in 2016, and was a strong candidate to host the Expo 2020, losing to Dubai: the first, second, and the third largest events in the world, respectively. What is the goal of such worldwide exposure?

FIFA and the IOC (International Olympic Committee) have long realized that their events have the potential to attract high-profile investments from all over the world. So they focus on the greed of local officials who want a pretext to use massive public funds to “modernize” cities and property markets.

Brazil was selected to host the 2014 World Cup in 2007, at the beginning of the second term of President Lula and the Workers Party (PT). From the outset, his administration intended to establish Brazil as a world power in both economic and military terms. In 2004, for example, responding to requests from France and the United States, Lula sent 1200 Brazilian soldiers to Haiti in an intervention intended to “stabilize” the country, which had been in crisis since the fall of President Aristide. It was the first time that the Brazilian military had led an international military intervention. In return, Lula expected to get support from France and the USA for its application for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. To date, this seat hasn't been granted, but Brazil currently plays a military role in nine of the sixteen UN “peacekeeping” operations taking place around the world.

The PT government took its mission in Haiti to the limit, organizing a friendly match between the Brazilian and Haitian national soccer teams in Port au Prince known as the “Game of Peace.” Intended to celebrate the “success” of the occupation, the match initiated a campaign for the population to voluntarily disarm themselves. The event included a parade of Brazilian players riding in tanks past a cheering crowd.

In his ambition and megalomania, Lula announced that the World Cup would be primarily funded by private capital. As it turned out, it was heavily supplemented by public funds. The most expensive tournament of all time, the 2014 World Cup cost more than the previous three Cups combined—a staggering \$40 billion, while the Cups in Japan and South Korea (2002), Germany (2006), and South Africa (2010) cumulatively cost \$30 billion. The upgrading of seven large stadiums and the construction of at least five new ones that would not be used after the tournament (in Brasilia, Cuiaba, Manaus, Natal, and Recife) were paid for almost entirely with public funds. Twelve stages were available, when FIFA itself required only eight; delay and overpricing of construction and infrastructure, which cost several times the predicted value, raised questions and provoked anger.

The plans of Lula and the Workers Party were too grandiose to fit in just two terms. We saw its projects still unfolding in Dilma Rousseff's second term, the fourth presidential term for the PT. She served as minister during the eight years that Lula was president: first as Minister of Mines and Energy, and then Governance. Dilma also founded the PAC (Growth Acceleration Program), which offered urban planning as a commodity to the financial market and reopened

the development projects of the military government. Then, Dilma's government needed to deal with the tremendous debt left over from the World Cup.

For the 2014 World Cup alone, FIFA negotiated more than 900 commercial agreements with partner companies and sponsors that have monopolies on tournament-related product sales around stadiums and Fan Fests, as well as food, beverages, and services. Still, the Brazilian government exempted FIFA from paying over one billion US dollars in taxes. This made for the most expensive World Cup in history, but also the most profitable: despite claiming to have no profit motive, FIFA raised nine billion dollars.

The rulers linked to the realization of mega-events chiefly reap political benefits. For FIFA and its corporate cronies (not coincidentally, the same companies that financed the electoral campaigns of the PT), the benefits were financial: profits stretching into the billions, underwritten by public resources and guaranteed by police repression. The PT could not have done this alone. It was the party that received the largest total of private donations in recent years—\$79 million in 2013—while other parties, like the PSDB (the Social Democratic party) and PMDB (Party of Democratic Movement, the biggest and oldest party in Brazil, mostly center-right and conservative politicians) only managed \$46 million altogether. In 2014, the year of Dilma Rousseff's reelection, the PT received 47 million dollars from contractors facing lawsuits and investigations, while PMDB got 38 million and PSDB 28 million. This demonstrates the symbiosis between the Workers Party and those who control the flow of capital in the country—a connective tissue of economic and political power.

The real legacy of the World Cup: a state of emergency to maintain social inequality.

The real legacy of the World Cup was confirmed long before the first game was played. Over 250,000 people were made homeless by infrastructure projects, who still have not been relocated properly; numerous buildings that were to be underutilized after the event were constructed using billions in public funds diverted from health, housing and education.

At least ten workers died during construction. Their families remain without proper compensation; in some cases, in Osasco city, the government pays a monthly stipend of 450 reais (around 100 dollars). Other consequences unfolded in the weeks leading up to the event. Street workers forbidden to work during the World Cup in the regions close to the FIFA exclusion zones had their licenses cancelled indefinitely. Women, trans people, and children faced increased sexual exploitation. And those who organized or participated in protests faced intense repression—for none of these measures could have been implemented without police force.

In 2012, the Federal Government and FIFA signed the General Law of the World Cup (n. 12,663 / 2012) to ensure that the country would uphold "FIFA standards" of organization during the 2013 Confederations Cup in 2013 and the 2014 World Cup. This agreement constituted an enormous legal offensive against the Brazilian people, entailing the suspension of many constitutional rights and norms that were already precarious for most. For example, a court was established to rule within 48 hours on strikes that occurred during the World Cup. Workers lost the right to strike or fight for improvements, while FIFA avoided paying taxes on business within the Brazilian territory.

A Special Secretariat of Public Security for Great Events was created, breaking the laws stipulating that justice may not have special sponsors or clients who demand priority. The privatization of public space was legitimized by the creation of "exclusive streets" for FIFA and its partners,

in which even local businesses were required to keep their doors closed within the exclusion zone around the stadium. The law allowed FIFA to intervene directly in the market without the oversight of the state; FIFA was able to stipulate the price to charge for tickets, suspending the usual half-price for students and any application of the Consumer Protection Code.

In addition, more than 20,000 people were allowed to work as unregulated “volunteers” during the World Cup. These volunteers did not receive the protection of basic labor rights and operated outside of constitutional norms, in situations analogous to slavery. According to Brazilian law, these exceptions to labor and safety laws are supposed to be limited to volunteer workers for non-profit institutions that have “civic, cultural, educational, recreational, or social assistance” purposes—which hardly describes FIFA. The state even overlooked the use of child labor in activities related to games, such as the role of ball boy, which has been banned in Brazil since 2004.

Global Policing

World mega-events that forge passions in the heat of spectacle offer an opportunity to experiment with pushing state and corporate control into a permanent state of exception, when the laws and the Constitution can be broken in the name of more security, even when it violates the rights of the citizens they claim to be protecting.

The state assembled a broad legal apparatus to criminalize social movements that was guided by entirely subjective definitions. Social movements were characterized as “opposing forces”; protests were defined as something that would “cause panic” or “provoke or instigate radical and violent actions.” Against these, the government authorized the operation of the armed forces. The state also established special courts to deal with World Cup-related cases, and passed new regulations allowing the courts to respond to protest actions, such as road blockades, with especially harsh anti-terrorism laws. In addition, the Brazilian government spent billions of dollars on tanks with water cannons, drones and other distance-controlled robots, and “less-lethal” weapons—still capable of crippling and killing their targets—to contain so-called “civil unrest” and protect against “terrorism.” It spent \$70 million alone buying US “safety equipment” from Israel and Germany. While missiles streaked the sky in Gaza, after Israeli gunfire and bombs had killed two thousand people during the offensive into Palestinian territory of 2014, drones sold by Israel monitored the World Cup stadiums in Brazil.

On July 13, 1500 police officers surrounded a protest near the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, attacking it with bombs and rubber bullets; they arrested 30 demonstrators. Tanks surrounded the slums. Army trucks were parked near the stadiums and the FIFA Fan Fests, providing a climate of overt repression. It is clear that the Brazilian state sees its poor people and social movements as its own Palestinians or Haitians; the slums are its Gaza Strip or Port au Prince.

However, one could see posters in support of the Palestinian resistance displayed together with posters condemning the 2014 World Cup. This communicated that solidarity, as well as repression, is “as global as capital.”

During the Gezi Park revolt in Turkey, we saw images of people exhibiting tear gas cartridges and rubber bullets marked with the Brazilian flag. We speculate that these were manufactured by the Condor company, one of the largest global producers of less-lethal weapons, located in the state of Rio de Janeiro. In 2014, we saw 34 German tanks employed as security for the World Cup. These shielded tanks, with artillery capable of shooting down aircraft, cost Brazil 40 million

dollars. Meanwhile, the Austrian firearms company Glock reached an exclusive agreement to provide the police of Rio de Janeiro with firearms for the 2016 Olympics. According to newspapers reports,² the company itself funded one Brazilian police trip to Vienna. FIFA served as a military advisor to the Brazilian armed forces, determining which equipment and weapons should be purchased; it was FIFA who recommended the purchase of armed vehicles.

International Security and Defense Systems (ISDS) also supplied equipment for surveillance and defense during the Olympics. ISDS is an Israeli company established in 1982; it has extensive experience massacring and repressing Palestinians. Several reports and documents also point to ISDS involvement in the coups and dictatorships in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Its activities in Brazil in 2016 Olympics served as a showcase for its products and services, as well as a testing ground for new technologies and procedures for security around mega-events. In the words of the ISDS vice president, the Olympics in Brazil would be “an incubator for Israeli technologies in these areas.”

The use of the National Security Act (created by the past dictatorship), the possible introduction of anti-terrorism laws, the Law and Order Decree, and the intensification of other laws show how mega-events serve to strengthen the techniques of state control. By imposing these rules, corporations are enabled to profit more and more freely. All this can be understood as another offensive of the neoliberal project, focused in a major city but with global implications. It serves as a means of managing the production, consumption, and circulation of goods and labor required for its realization.

When the government of Dilma Rousseff inherited Lula’s project, they prepared the ground for a militarized and integrated policing that would ensure the World Cup’s success. The Integrated Command and Control Centers (CICC), for example, oversee 1700 officers: federal, military, civilian, and road police, in addition to traffic and rescue workers, working out of fourteen centers around the twelve host cities of the games. Dilma’s Ministry of Justice invested about \$100 million in technology to operate these centers; they monitor airports, internships, subway stations, and other strategic points in real time, and send out reinforcements and necessary support every eight minutes. The action plan defines a specific response to each type of action; the military police respond to the black bloc, the federal police respond to incidents at the airport, and so on. The skills training for the armed forces was provided by the FBI.

The law enforcement and military technology created for this event will remain in place as the permanent legacy of these mega-events. Brazil, already militarized and pervaded by endless conflict, has now become still more sophisticated in its ability to conduct internal war. The security exchange between countries has been instrumental in solidifying Brazil’s role in the global economy, bringing in training, equipment, and strategies from the most violent police and military forces in the world. In addition to the Israeli police and military, these included the French police, the FBI, and also private contractors like Blackwater. The Brazil-Israel partnership continues to work together against “terrorism” and drug trafficking. Above all, however, they focus on the primary enemy of globalized economies and governments: their own people.

UPPs: War against the Poor Black Population

Pacifying Police Units, or UPPs, are the most visible aspect of the new Brazilian city management project. Currently installed in the city of Rio de Janeiro, they are a prime example of the

² According to the Popular Committee of World Cup Dossier page 52.

cooperation of state and capital in their war against the black population of the favelas. This pacification project was planned and financed by the private sector as a way to reclaim territory inside the country from the people who live there. With the use of UPPs, companies and the government can capitalize on those in Rio favelas and other communities who provide informal or illegal services and products. This capitalization is disguised as a new tactic in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime.

In 2008, the year after Brazil was selected to host the 2014 World Cup, Lula's Ministry of Defense drafted the "National Defense Plan," which proposed a restructuring and unification of the armed forces as well as a technological upgrade. One of their goals was for the military and police to collaborate in occupying the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. More than half of the soldiers involved had participated in the Haitian occupation. Brazil used its involvement in that occupation as a means of developing its capacity to occupy its own territory. These are areas that did not previously interest the State, from which it was almost entirely absent; now, the situation amounts to a civil war for control over urban areas.

What changed? When a mega-event approaches, it becomes strategically important for the state to establish control over the areas traditionally controlled by traffickers and militias.³ However, this is also an opportunity to prevent popular uprisings and mobilizations, and to "integrate communities into the city"—that is, to formalize control of water, electricity, television, internet, telephone service, and other infrastructures that have been organized informally by the initiative of residents. This is why private companies finance peacekeeping operations like the UPP: to regulate the informal market in order to profit on it.

Communities experience intense daily repression from the police once UPPs have been installed. Like in Haiti, they are a manifestation of *permanent control strategy*. For example, the UPPs banned funk parties under the pretext that they are organized by trade leaders; residents had to ask permission even to have a birthday party. A 2007 legal settlement gave the military police the power to prohibit any event within or outside the community without need of concrete justification. This resolution was only overturned in 2013, after a great deal of public pressure. Today, there are 38 communities under the supervision of the UPPs—more than 400,000 people altogether—and the Public Security Bureau project intends to further "strengthen the ties of the UPPs with the community," giving them the power to monitor children's school attendance. While the Federal Government began the withdrawal of 3300 soldiers from the Maré slums complex in April 2014, almost a year later than expected, the military police are now back in charge with the UPPs.

Occupied communities strongly reject the UPPs for a variety of interrelated reasons including the systematic criminalization of all slum dwellers, the summary killings carried out by police, and the retaliation of criminal factions. Many UPPs were attacked with grenades and heavy weapons in early 2014. In response, the governor of Rio, Sérgio Cabral, formally asked the federal government and President Dilma to authorize a military occupation, and his request was approved. This occupation was supposed to last until the end of July 2014, after the World Cup. During of the games, especially in the final week, tanks blocked all the exits of Maré communities; residents could only leave by walking, as no non-military vehicles were in the area. In the

³ These militias (*milicianos* in portuguese) are organized crime comprised of cops and ex-cops who sell security. Eventually, they take over the business of the drug cartels and monopolize public transportation, cable TV, electricity, and other services.

end, the occupation lasted until February 2015, and ended only because of community outrage at soldiers' constant acts of violence and abuse.

In a single week in February, the soldiers had strafed a car containing five people, leaving one in serious condition, then attacked a construction worker, who eventually died. The next day, February 21, they strafed a van, seriously injuring five people. On February 23, hundreds of residents took to the streets of the region to protest against these attacks, but the protest ended when police and the army attacked the protesters with tear gas, then shoot at them with lethal ammunition. The crowd scattered but resisted the attack, countering with stones, bottles, and fireworks until the police ran out of ammunition and were forced to withdraw. At least one resident was hit with lethal ammunition, yet corporate media ignored the story; it received no more than a footnote on mainstream media websites.

All of these legal and military maneuvers initiated in 2008 were intended to make it possible to impose the new global city model through mega-events. If the Maré Slum Complex was strategic for the state, as it was located near the access roads to the international airport Tom Jobim, it was also strategic for people to develop the ability to close the streets and protest.

And the Cup Goes On

We expected to achieve a peak of activity and mobilization during the 2014 World Cup comparable to what we had achieved in 2013. But we discovered that expectations do not count much in the course of history. Although many chanted "There won't be a World Cup!" and organized to occupy the streets with all the people impacted by it, the Cup took place without major inconvenience to those who benefitted from it.

We know that laws, legal rights, and the constitution only meet our needs when that produces even greater gains for the government and the bosses. We understand that national sovereignty as the management of laws and the security of a country concentrates a monopoly on decision-making that affects all of us in the hands of the powerful. In addition, we learned that even this democratic theater that promises human rights and labor rights to the precarious is a fraud: almost everything they say is inalienable is subject to arbitrary suspension at any time. And with this suspension, we enter the states of emergency and preventive war, often ruled by transnational institutions that are not democratic at all—like FIFA, whose leaders were not elected.

It's not just those arrested for being at a protest or allegedly organizing demonstrations; the entire population will suffer the consequences of an increasingly permanent state of exception. Black and peripheral populations, as well as poor, rural, and homeless, will feel the brunt of these changes.

FIFA came out with the largest profit in its history. In 2018, it is headed to Russia, one of today's most repressive countries in terms of freedom of speech and civil rights. In 2022, the Cup goes to Qatar, known for utilizing the slave labor of immigrants, 1200 of whom have died; it is forecasted that over 4000 will have died by the opening. Since the last decade, when the 2002 World Cup took place in Japan and South Korea, we have seen FIFA shift its attention to emerging countries, recent democracies (if they are democracies at all) characterized by deep corruption in their governments and willing to bow to external pressures to pass emergency laws.

If the legal and constitutional means we have to defend ourselves against our own politicians are already so inefficient, our power to defend against institutions that are not even in our terri-

tory is even more tenuous. In this situation, only radical, uncompromising action can offer any hope of leverage.

III. Presidential Elections: Democracy Still “Represents” Many People

In October 2014, three months after the end of the World Cup, Brazil held elections for the presidency, the state government, the Senate, and Parliament. These were the first elections after the 2013 protests that revealed growing popular distrust in political institutions, the political class, and civil society organizations such as parties, trade unions, and traditional social movements. Many of the marches of 2013 went directly to the headquarters of the executive and legislative powers, where crowds tried to seize the buildings and clashed with agents of repression. In some cases, they surrounded police and politicians in their offices; there were attacks on the Congress, the Senate, and the Itamaraty Palace in Brasilia, on the Legislative Assembly invasion of Rio de Janeiro, and on the Bandeirantes Palace, the seat of government of Sao Paulo. In Porto Alegre, protesters occupied the City Council and held horizontal popular assemblies there.

Not all of the crowds on the streets shared this rejection of representative politics; it was just one position among many in a diverse and divided society. You could see black flags in the protests, but also flags of many other colors. There were posters featuring phrases taken from social media, starting with hashtags, or displayed as Facebook or Twitter posts—displaying all the elements of individual expression and isolation that characterize this era. Among these, it was common to see the phrase “Don’t represent me.” The political class tried to pretend that they were listening, with Congress approving in record time projects and measures that were demanded in the streets.

President Dilma declared on TV that the protests of June were a “healthy and democratic expression” when they were “non-violent,” and presented five “pacts” with measures that promised to improve health, education, and lead to “political reform.” All this suggested that this disillusionment with representative democracy would have an impact on the upcoming elections. The parliamentarians themselves joined many experts in warning of a breakdown of democratic institutions as the general population lost faith in them.

In 2013, social networks contributed to people going to the streets and acting politically. In October 2014, electoral politics kept the spotlight on social networks and webpages where the protests were getting space. The internet became the biggest stage for discussion; the candidates themselves entered these disputes in pursuit of votes. Not since Lula first ran for president in 1989 had we seen so much polarization and so much support for his PT, as if it really were an “alternative” distinct from the other neoliberal parties ruling Brazil. Meanwhile, the biggest right-wing party, the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party), saw a considerable increase in support. At the same time, the right wing and the middle class blamed the PT and its electoral base for all the country’s problems—setting the stage for a new wave of racism and attacks on the poorer classes and immigrants. Newspapers reported on the avalanche of discussions and content sharing in social networks linked to the electoral contest, especially the Manichean struggle between PT and PSDB.

An urgent desire to prevent Aécio Neves of PSDB from coming to power became confused with defending the Workers Party. The PT ceased to be seen as the lesser evil; once again, it

was called the “real populist alternative.” Many people with the idea of preventing Aécio from becoming president began to call uncritically for the re-election of Dilma. Only a few groups stood against this simplistic polarization, arguing that it did not matter who was in power, the interests of minority classes would continue to be crushed as they had been throughout the Lula era.

Among those groups were black and peripheral movements such as *Reaja ou Será Morta/o* (React or You’ll be Killed) and the *Movimento Mães de Maio* (the Mothers of May Movement), which declared their respect for those recommending abstention. They stated explicitly that

Throughout these 12 years of PT’s government at the federal level, the genocide against the Black poor and peripheral people persisted with increasing levels of daily torture, imprisonment (today are more than 550,000 people arrested), and executions (around 60,000 people killed each year in the country), with the central role of violence played by the criminal state. The PT governments did not try to effectively change this situation, as they should have and as they preach about today: on the contrary, with ministers like Mr. José Eduardo Cardozo, they added gas to the fire—money for more prisons and guns to the police—this fire always burning the same meat (black, poor, and peripheral).

The Mothers of May knew that the currently unfolding genocide of black people in Brazil, the mass incarcerations and prison policies, and the militarization of police were completely off the agenda of politicians and election debates, because they are not of interest to any side of the dispute over who will manage a white and patriarchal state erected on the shoulders of the black and indigenous.

What Happened to the “Crisis of Representation”?

Until the first round of elections, many people wondered what had happened to the disillusionment with the political class and its electoral and institutional processes. What happened to the millions of people who chose to take to the streets to shout and surround the palaces rather than waiting for elected representatives to take some initiative for them? Of the 142.8 million people who vote in Brazil, 27.7 million simply did not go to the polls on October 26, while another 6.5 million voted null and 4.5 million blank. That is to say, a total of 38.7 million people did not want to choose a candidate for president. This number was higher than the 34.8 million votes that defeated candidate Aécio Neves received in the second round against Dilma Rousseff. In Rio de Janeiro, abstentions, blank ballots, and null votes were even greater than the number of votes received by the governor who won the election. These were the largest abstention rates Brazil had seen in two decades.

This explains what happened to all those who proclaimed their disbelief in political representation. To the Mothers of May, as well as for all people who struggle for autonomy, justice, and freedom, the fight will not happen at the polls, but in the streets, in organization, and in daily endurance.

Dilma Re-elected: The “Strategy” of Those Who Do Not Know Where to Go

The term “strategic voting” was widely used in social networks by those who wanted to prevent Aécio Neves from coming to power. However, many people and movements used this expression, missing the opportunity to speak critically about the vote itself as an instrument that relegates power to an elite. A progressive middle class used to the corridors of universities and elite schools, the least affected by the police state, promoted this mysterious “strategy” on the grounds that bringing the left to power would obtain real gains and that it would be “selfish” not take sides in this dispute. Yet this approach was not just useless—it wasn’t even strategic.

It was not clear what the strategy was in foregoing a radical policy in favor of an electoral campaign for a particular candidate. If voting is strategic, it ought to be clear what the next step is in the strategy. When people talk rhetorically about the importance of having a strategy in the process of political disputes, this is often coded language for participating in the strategy of an organization or politician. Those who devoted themselves to squabbling in social networks to promote politicians played right into the hands of the ones directing their campaigns.

All this “strategy” produced a disappointing result when Dilma Rousseff proved that her policies could be just as right-wing as those of her opponents. Even before the inauguration ceremony, Dilma appointed Senator Katia Abreu, representative of agribusiness, enemy of rural and indigenous people, to the Ministry of Agriculture. She approved a cut of 18 billion Reais in employee benefits, announced cuts of seven billion reais for education (which she had treated as a government priority during the campaign), raised taxes on gasoline, and increased energy tariffs by more than 40%. Meanwhile, the southeast of the country was sinking into a water crisis, with whole neighborhoods and towns going without water for most of each day and rumors spreading about impending blackouts and electricity rationing.

Most of these measures angered the working class, trade unions, and social movements that supported Dilma in the election, but they gave momentum to the revolt of the middle class and the elites who did not accept defeat at the polls. Dilma’s loss of popularity was already visible before the end of the year; at the beginning of 2015, the president avoided speaking in public or to journalists for more than a month, communicating only by official notes. The political actions of her administration were increasingly controlled by the governing coalition, especially Michel Temer, the vice president affiliated with the PMDB—also the party of the presidents of the House and Senate.

So the first election year after the 2013 riots did not see a broad campaign for a politics beyond voting. We finished 2013 feeling that only popular struggle influences politics and that a crisis of representation was in the air, but ended 2014 realizing that many people are still mired in the logic of representative democracy. Groups that waged campaigns against the electoral farce were overshadowed by the intensity with which other groups took sides in the dispute between PT and PSDB. Again, social movements—including anarchists—joined the chorus of those who took to the streets to defend the victory of the PT, losing the opportunity to catalyze another campaign away from the ballot. The gap between the generation of anarchists who learned their lesson when Lula competed in the 1989 election and the generations that grew up under Lula after 2002 may have contributed to this scenario. The “contamination effect” generated by the victories of June 2013, which had drawn thousands of people to the streets for a number of other causes, was transformed into a compulsion to take sides in the election. Thanks to a lack of critical depth, many people saw pursuing Dilma’s re-election as a way to remain active in political processes.

Once again, we learned the hard way that a party raised to power by popular struggles and social movements cannot fulfill their programs and promises: for in order to come to power, they must make political alliances with the parties and politicians that defend the market and the interests of the ruling classes. This inevitably leads to a dampening of social and class struggles in the name of maintaining political stability for the ruling party, which always tends to promote neoliberal capitalism over social benefits. Not to mention the political debt successful candidates owe to the big conglomerates that finance most of the costs of election campaigns in hopes of a much higher return.

Money is more efficient at influencing the political direction of any party occupying the government than the any faction of the electorate can be. If we want to exert political influence over our reality, we must seek more ambitious ways than sharing the campaign of a candidate on Facebook. We lose twice when we choose to vote instead of acting directly in society. A real strategy would be to boycott the whole electoral farce in favor of autonomous direct action and libertarian political organization, in order to intervene against the policies that affect our lives. But for that to be possible, we need to know what we want and who else wants it.

2015: Fighting the Increase in a New Terrain, with a New Right in the Streets

The year 2015 began with indications that we were operating in new conditions, as social, environmental and political crises contributed to making things even more unstable. The governments in several Brazilian capitals increased the cost of public transport as early as January. This time, to avoid the results of June of 2013, companies and the government took advantage of the student vacation to impose the new prices. In some cases, as in São Paulo, the price increase was 50 cents (more than double the 20 cent increase of 2013) and was accompanied by a series of measures to dampen the revolt, such as a free pass for public school and university students.

Even with these measures, the first demonstration against the tariff brought together five thousand people at the center of São Paulo. Yet over the following days, the measures that the government had taken to dampen resistance proved to be effective: after seven great demonstrations in the city center and important neighborhoods, as well as a dozen other demonstrations, meetings, and other public events, the price increase was not revoked. The media covered the demonstrations without the fanfare that had become common in recent years, and police learned to control themselves for the cameras and “respect” the protests, not attacking the crowd at the first opportunity. But the crowd also offered in return a policy of “good behavior,” forgetting how to push those in power; at the fifth demonstration, the march was more like a parade escorted by police. When the demonstration arrived at the designated conclusion, members of the MPL (Free Pass Movement), the main coordinator of the fight against the cost increase in São Paulo and against the cost of public transportation itself, celebrated and commented about how rare it was to finish a demonstration. On the way home, participants carried out some *catracaços* (in which a crowd jumps over the turnstiles without paying) on some buses and subways, which sometimes ended in vandalism, arrests, and brief clashes with police. Yet the movement was largely pacified.

Coincidentally or not, without inflicting material losses on the rich, without sabotage, without proper response to police aggression, neither the city nor the state government felt pressured to engage with the media about the protests. In contrast to the events of 2013, the 2015 demonstrations in São Paulo drew less and less people and media coverage until they ceased altogether,

without even a note from the MPL announcing it was the end of the journey. The last demonstration brought together only 300 people in a heavy rain on February 6.

In 2013, we experienced a victory, however partial and ephemeral. In 2015, a loss in the first month of the year brought us back to a more complex reality. In 2013, when we blocked a 20-cent increase in bus fare, Brazil was experiencing a growing economy in which no one could foresee such social ferment. Then the economic downturn produced new government cuts and austerity measures, which should have created favorable conditions for the emergence of new conflicts.

Meanwhile, the water crisis affecting the country's southeast was beginning to spread to neighboring regions as experts warned of the end of the *cerrado*, the main biome involving the region. Predictions ranged from comparatively mild (such as unemployment and illness) to truly alarming (mass exodus, violent conflicts, epidemics). Everywhere we look today, we see new sparks of the kind of social unrest that could trigger a new wave of riots.

So far, these events have showed that we need to understand movements and popular struggles better in order to prepare for the new challenges ahead. Not only in order to avoid repeating our mistakes, but also so as not to cling to our past victories, even and especially the most recent ones.

On the one hand, the MPL introduced innovations the way it organized demonstrations and public events: for example, not deciding the path of protest in advance, but inviting the participants in the rally to an assembly at which the itinerary would be set; starting the day with a great demonstration in the city center, then organizing demonstrations, plenaries, and other actions in the suburbs before the next big demonstration; reversing the logic of the 2013 process, maintaining the strategy of performing decentralized demonstrations almost daily.

On the other hand, the MPL retained central organizational power, discouraging others from taking the initiative. They retained virtually the same approach they had used in 2013, when few people knew the movement and most people in the streets had never participated in a demonstration before. Considering that many new people were aware of the mobilizations and interested in organizing politically, it may have been a mistake to continue positioning themselves as the center two years later.

We should not credit this defeat only to a lack of direct action against the state and private property. The victory of 2013 was a victory of the people, not the MPL. The MPL just called for the movement, and the crowds responded with great strength and determination. Perhaps the people who did not respond the same way in 2015 simply did not feel invited and relevant a year and a half later.

The New Right

A political crisis was about to come to the fore in 2013, when the fight against the fare increase contaminated Brazilian society with the feeling that direct action could be an effective way to pressure governments. The ensuing "crisis of representation," combined with corruption scandals in the Workers' Party, already discredited as a political alternative, paved the way for the strengthening of organizations with autonomous, horizontal, and non-institutional character, such as the ones that had organized the protests of 2013. However, this situation also improved the prospects of a new emergent right wing composed of the middle and upper classes and drawing on the longstanding conservatism of the average Brazilian citizen. The members of these

groups proved rowdy. During the fight against the fare increase and over the months of protests that followed, they precipitated frequent physical conflicts with other protesters.

In the protest movements of 2013 and 2014, many people saw an opportunity to popularize anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist struggle itself. Meanwhile, the conservative sectors and the traditionally apolitical just saw an opportunity to reform society without compromising the institutions that guarantee their class, gender, and color privileges. Their approach, even if it was as yet undeveloped, mirrored the ends they wanted to achieve. If anarchists generally do not want a world controlled by money and police order, it is consistent that they attack banks and public and private property. With the massive influx of middle class participants into the protests, it became common to see conservative groups shouting “no vandalism” and defending the private property of the rich, or even delivering “vandals” to the authorities while shouting “no violence” at those who dared to resist their attacks.

This gave a “pacifist” tone to certain groups in the protests. However, there is a difference between leftist militants or anarchists who fall into the strategic error of making nonviolence a fundamental principle of political action and this new class of conservatives who joined the protests. The latter saw sabotage against the property of the rich as a threat to the order that they wanted to build. We were not sharing the actions on the streets with old pacifists, but with a right-wing tendency that identified itself with the institutions that the crowds were attacking.

As the collective Recife Resiste! put it:

Those whose main flag was pacifism did nothing but contribute to the end of the uprisings. They adopted a vague and dangerous nationalist behavior—clinging to the Brazilian flag and singing patriotic songs. And the worst: being peaceful and being on the streets does not mean being against violence, because they only are against when it comes to defending public property, concrete and glass structures. They do not care about the violence of arrests and the violence of the charges of capitalist impositions, whose bad and expensive transportation is one of the greatest expressions. They also do not care about the violence of property, which keeps a number of people homeless and landless. They are blind to the genocide that police commit every day in the suburbs. Pacifists constituted the conservative sector that, in the streets, shouted for the government to continue managing their lives while waiting for less taxes and new products from the supermarket shelves. There is something very violent in a society that needs a heavily armed corporation present in almost every area of our lives to keep functioning. There is no peace outside the radical transformation of society, because there is no peace for those who have always lived in a war.

“A luta é como um círculo. Pode começar em qualquer ponto, mas nunca termina.”

-Recife Resiste!, 2014

While those who participated in the demonstrations against fare hikes from the beginning were trying to stay focused on that goal, these patriotic groups promoted discourses and agendas propagated by the media and the right. The problem was not broadening the agenda beyond the issue of transport and access to the city. The effort to keep the focus of the struggle on revoking the fare increase was also a way to prevent the platform of the streets from serving to a nationalist agenda.

Many different groups—indeed, political and class enemies—were together on the streets protesting and facing each other up to the end of 2013. But after 2014, the conservative portion marched on alone, making the distinctions clear between the approaches of the different groups and the different reasons that drew people to the streets. Demonstrations in support of presidential candidate Aécio Neves drew a few hundred people in major cities on the eve of elections. Then, some thousands took to the streets of the capital against the electoral victory of Dilma and the PT. On November 15, at Avenida Paulista, between artists and other politicians, the far-right deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro was caught speaking with an automatic pistol at his waist, encouraging six thousand demonstrators to call for the return of the military dictatorship.

But on March 15, 2015 a new, much larger phenomenon took the scene. Until then, it had sounded like a joke, but now it became a frightening reality: bourgeois groups and online activists used social networks, especially Facebook and Whatsapp, to promote simultaneous demonstrations demanding the impeachment of the president. In response, about two million people went to the streets in over 160 cities. In its very first action, this new conservative campaign achieved figures comparable to the peak days of June 2013. In São Paulo, at least 300,000 people dressed in football shirts and wearing the national flag showed up to protest an alleged “communist threat” or “proletarian dictatorship” planned by PT.

Crowds stopped in front of occupations organized by movements fighting for housing to insult the people who were housed there, threatening to break in and attack them. Uniformed groups of nationalist skinheads armed with knives and fireworks were surrounded by other protesters and detained by police, but released the same day—a stark contrast with all the arbitrary arrests, fabricated evidence, and excessively heavy penalties levied against participants in the protests against the fare hike and the World Cup. Capitals like Vitoria, Campo Grande, and Rio de Janeiro saw gatherings of about 100,000 people each. The demonstrations were repeated on April 12, producing a slight reduction in the total number of demonstrators, with 224 cities accounting for 700,000 people altogether.

These demonstrations were fed by broad and biased coverage in virtually all the mainstream media. On the eve of the first protest, media outlets announced the demonstrations and invited people to the streets against the elected president in support of conservative agendas, especially the “fight against corruption.”

This is significant: a new generation of young people marching along the old political figures, adopting an ultra conservative and authoritarian discourse. They say they are in favor of democracy, yet they do not accept the electoral process that gave the victory to PT. They claim to promote freedom, equality, and free speech while calling for a military coup. They claim to be against “violence” but applaud and take photos with the Brazilian military police, one of the most lethal forces in the world. They say they are against corruption, but they only recognize it when it is associated with the PT.

In these elections, it became clear that the shadow of authoritarianism increases every day with the support of much of the population. Congressman Pastor Feliciano, the homophobic proponent of the bill of “gay cure,” was one of the top victors in São Paulo. In Rio Grande do Sul, Luiz Carlos Heinze was voted deputy even after he declared that “quilombolas, Indians, gays, and lesbians are all trash.” Before that, we saw a number of arrests and assaults made by ordinary people, even in poor communities, against persons accused of committing petty theft. This was applauded and encouraged by journalists who appeared on national television to defend the shackling and lynching of a young black man accused of theft. The spread of Brazilian fascism

throughout the country can be more difficult to diagnose because it is not based entirely on the ideals of racial purity in the way that European fascism is. However, it perpetuates a colonial tradition including slavery, updating the spirit of the slave bounty hunter to policing that defends bourgeois morality.

The motivations of this new right are based on a classist hatred rather than a critical analysis of the PT or the political situation in Brazil. When the presidential election brought Dilma back to power, a wave of racist abuse broke across the social networks. Even as the PT has increasingly oriented its policies towards neoliberalism and the interests of employers, right-wing sectors continued to spread a distorted and anachronistic analysis of a “red threat” left over from the Cold War. As if the president really had any intention to transform Brazil into a “new Cuba or China”! The shallowness of this analysis does not seem to matter to those groups. The idea of defending the country against a twenty-first century “proletarian dictatorship” by reintroducing a military dictatorship seems anachronistic in the current era of global capitalism, in which authoritarianism is usually masked behind institutions and processes that are strategically represented as “democratic.”

The leaders of the armed forces, the army and navy and air force, declared that they were “completely inserted into democracy” and announced that they would “rule out any possibility of interventions.” The leaders of the PSDB, including Aécio Neves and former President Fernando Henrique, stated that they lacked a basis for impeaching president Dilma—months before becoming the main backers of impeachment. Even at that time, the tension between the formal right wing and the organizers of the anti-PT protests offered little reassurance in a context in which it was common sense to consider the failures of the Workers Party across four presidential terms to discredit all solutions from the left. We were witnessing a burgeoning right wing movement that already had control of Brazil’s capital and political apparatus.

Just like the new autonomous movements that act independently of the institutional left and parties, far-right organizations and trends can pursue their goals apart from and even in defiance of ordinary conservative parties and political institutions. As we saw in these demonstrations of March and April 2015, neo-Nazi groups could even be arrested without facing further legal complications. In addition, the fact that hundreds of protesters threatened anarchist occupations in Porto Alegre and popular housing movements in São Paulo while a PT headquarters was set on fire in Jundiaí underscored the threat of physical confrontations with this new right momentum. As is routine in other countries with strong anarchists and autonomous movements, such as Chile and Greece, the conservative political parties often encouraged and covered up the violent actions of right-wing radicals against popular demonstrations or political spaces that defied the status-quo.

In crisis moments, people must choose between making a radical break with the existing order and increasing social control through authoritarian measures. Fascism thrives in the moments of crisis in which anti-authoritarian options fail, making way for the conservative right. Any popular libertarian struggle that emerges today in Brazil faces the growth of this new right as a complex obstacle. If we shared the streets for a moment in 2013, disagreeing on how to act and what the agenda should be, that division is now a fundamental break: an open conflict between parts of society about to clash.

We need to develop ways to fight and organize that do not concentrate power in the hands of a few people or institutions. But at the same time, we have to outline the direction we want to go and the values that motivate us, in order that others can understand what we are attempting

to achieve and join in pursuing these goals. Otherwise, a turn from conservatism to fascism will seem the best solution for more and more people. And in isolation, we will be easy prey for both the state and for fascists.

V. The Life Cycles of Mobilizations

Recognize Where We Are

It is important to understand the terrain we are acting on in each period, not to get distracted when the movement loses strength or when the protests and assemblies do not happen more; it is also important to be able to recognize when our narrative has failed. It is important that the concessions we achieve and the spaces we take are utilized in the next round of struggle to promote both our immediate demands and our long-term goals: the end of capitalism and all forms of oppression. In order for that to be possible, we must openly discuss what our long-term goals are.

In 2013, we achieved an unexpected victory on a wave of unrest that no one could have predicted, the result of coinciding complex and unpredictable factors that could not be yoked to the strategies or plans of a single movement. In 2014, the expectations with which we started the year were much higher than the reality we achieved in our resistance to the World Cup. Following the first weeks of 2015, when there were further increases in the cost of public transport, we saw our grassroots organizing outflanked by both police troops in the streets and measures taken within the halls of power. The terrain on which we had achieved the first major victory of the “autonomous movements” had changed considerably.

Brazil once had a growing economy; however, now it has joined the list of countries in economic turmoil. But unlike the developed countries that are currently experiencing crisis, its population has never enjoyed the benefit of an elite economy. Despite the considerable growth of the service sector, the country remains unstable, depending on international markets to maintain an economy based on the export of commodities. The Lula years saw an increase in the purchasing power of the lower classes due to new access to credit, new precarious jobs that did not pay more than minimum wage, and programs such as the Bolsa Familia, which took about 30 million people out of abject poverty. However, there is still a tremendous amount of poverty, and the gap between rich and poor is still widening. Nothing has changed significantly in terms of access to property and education. This situation worsened after the budget cuts that Dilma’s government carried out after her re-election, alongside the political and economic crisis that increased unemployment rises and abolished the precarious jobs that had recently appeared. Popular approval of the president dropped to 8%.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, we heard on the streets that “our resistance will be as global as capital.” Today, it seems that this prediction is true at specific times when we see undeniable parallels in the form, aesthetics, and tools of struggles in different countries, especially since the Arab Spring in 2011. But years before the protests in North Africa, the anti-globalization movement that peaked between 1999 and 2000 tried to answer the forced globalization of the economy by creating resistance networks on a global scale, trying to provide a counterpoint to authoritarianism and the centrality of classical left. These movements were based on libertarian and more flexible elements influenced by anarchist movements, the Zapatistas, and various countercultures. It was not a unified or homogeneous movement, but a network of movements

drawing on the same anti-capitalist principles. This presented horizontality and autonomy from institutions and the state as a serious approach to organizing.

The PGA (Peoples Global Action) network at the foundation of the anti-globalization movement stumbled in the absence of criticism of their own innovations. Opposing the authoritarian model of organization, “militant” experts opened space to spontaneity which came with the risk of a lack of commitment, or even a lack of structure, that could give rise to informal hierarchies. Overvaluing countercultural lifestyles prevented these practices from expanding beyond the circles that shared certain tastes, behavior, and conduct. While bringing younger generations into politics, these movements recreated an opposition between young and old, discrediting everything associated with older movements. All the same, they connected cultural, identity, gender, and personal issues with political action, while popularizing assemblies and horizontal decision-making methods.

Every wave of social struggles leaves some legacy to the next. The heritage of the anti-globalization movements is evident in today’s autonomous movements. Movements without leaders and without ties to institutions or governments, which are organized horizontally, problematize internal hierarchies such as machismo and homophobia. The Free Pass Movement itself (MPL) is heir to the PGA, the result of autonomous student organizing and more the combative and countercultural anarchist and anarcho-punk movements. Formed between 2004 and 2005, at the end of the anti-globalization mobilizations, the MPL is organized on the principles of horizontality, autonomy, independence, non-partisanship, and federalism. It is one of the bridges that connect the last global anti-capitalist social struggles of the late 1990s with the uprisings since 2013.

Maybe we are approaching a time when other models will take the place of those that brought us here. We are now in an era of waves of struggle that last weeks or months, often occupying streets in protest or pitching tents in squares, occupying buildings or entire territories with ways of living and relating that clash with the status quo. Each of these struggles emerges from its own context, but they all share similar messages. In our time, an uprising can start anytime, anywhere—in the center of a city or on the periphery, in a rich country or a developing economy.

VI. Departing from Where We Are to Where We Want to Go

Anarchist solutions: Showing Today What We Want Tomorrow

To inspire people to take a stand and cooperate to free themselves from an unjust system, it is not enough just to make its consequences known. We need to demonstrate and spread forms of resistance and organization. Our practices show what sort of world we hope to build, what sort of world we are building now. Often, an open conflict between different parts of society can stimulate people to choose a side. This is what happened in 2013 when the police repression exposed through social networks and alternative media made more people join the protests, as well as promoting a more critical attitude towards the police, the media, and the state. Tactics and forms of organization practiced by people already involved with anarchism were appropriated by people who were participating in political mobilizations for the first time in their lives. This included the circulation of counter-information that exposed the lies in official and journalistic discourse, as well as improvised first-aid, the direct action practiced by Black Blocs comprised of small affinity groups, and the many horizontal popular assemblies that took place in open spaces

(such as the ones in Belo Horizonte and Fortaleza) or in occupied public buildings (such as the occupation in the municipal council of Porto Alegre).

June 2013 offered the experience of street action to a generation that grew up in the digital era, seeing Twitter mobilizations and Facebook campaigns as the maximum political action available. The goal of taking action in the real world was reported by many movements involved in the fight for free public transportation, as well as by collectives and libertarian spaces that saw more and more people searching for books and publications and taking part in events, workshops, and study groups. This was the already-cited “contamination effect” that inspired other protests for diverse causes in the student movement, in feminist and LGBTTTT groups, in various neighborhoods, in the periphery of cities, in universities, and elsewhere across Brazil.

People in collectives, in social movements, and even in an insurgency need to respond to immediate needs in a way that is compatible with their long-term objectives. Otherwise, they will end up maintaining a division of tasks and activities based on gender roles, obscuring and discouraging the participation of non-heterosexual and non-white people who don't live close to the urban centers or don't have access to privileged resources such as a formal education or even a job that enables them to meet their basic needs.

It is not enough to identify ourselves only as enemies of the state and the status quo. We are not the only ones who oppose this system. When you are involved in revolutionary or mass movements, even if you have your own strategy, you can be sure that you are also part of someone else's. Our opposition to all hierarchy and forms of domination should be clear in everything we say and do. Otherwise, we risk reinforcing reactionary and authoritarian opposition without being aware of it.

Strategic Gaps: The Spaces We Don't Occupy

When conflict erupts between the different elements of society, the opportunity appears for the libertarian initiatives that we have been developing to become a viable path for others. In a strike, this means assemblies and participatory horizontal decision-making processes; in an economic crisis, networks of cooperation and mutual aid; in a street protest, committees for organization, mutual aid, and first aid; in an offensive against the authorities, networks of legal support and solidarity. When the conflict is generated by internal hierarchies, we have the accumulated experience of people who work in conflict resolution and mediation, accountability, and other ways of dealing with sexism, racism, classism, and other forms of oppression that emerge from relations within the movements themselves. There is always an anarchist solution to be created, and we already have a lot of models to share.

The appropriation of anarchist tactics, methods of organization, and strategies by many of the people involved in the so-called “New Social Movements” gave rise to what has been called “Autonomism” in Brazil. Groups that share an anti-capitalist vision organize themselves in a horizontal and decentralized manner, preserving some autonomy from the state, institutional social movements, and private funding. Even the MPL and the “Blocos de Luta” that acted in many cities against the rise in tickets propagated this model. Yet this focus on the process itself contributed to the participation of people who were only interested in reforms that would preserve their bourgeois economic privileges. The lack of debate about long-term objectives made it possible for groups to benefit from this momentum that had agendas that were contrary to ours.

We need to be careful when sharing our tools and social critiques. If we don't debate with or get to know the people with whom we ally ourselves, we run the risk of seeing our struggle be taken in directions that we do not want, towards reforms that only optimize capitalism, or towards the coopting of social movements and causes by state institutions. In São Paulo, for example, we saw a curious new phenomenon: groups formed by members of the privileged classes attracting attention for achieving tasks that had traditionally been carried out by collectives or working groups coming out of the movements themselves. A group of lawyers appeared following the protests, offering legal support to protesters. These so-called "*Activist Lawyers*" took advantage of people in a vulnerable situation while they were detained, as a way to increase their clientele—charging extortionist prices for a job that groups from the social movements would do for free or through fundraising campaigns. We saw media collectives that were alternative but not radical or anti-capitalist at all, such as the *Mídia Ninja*, linked to the cartel of the *Fora do Eixo*, getting more exposure than the previously-known independent media groups.

It doesn't matter how well-intentioned these groups might be. When anarchists fail in creating new participatory, decentralized, and non-hierarchical ways of solving our problems, groups with the time, money, and other privileges necessary for doing this with technical efficiency will take the lead. Or is it a coincidence that young, white, middle- and high-class males make up the overwhelming majority within the aforementioned groups? In such organizations, it is more likely that they will carry out their organizing in a way that maintains their privileges and obstructs the participation and action of other people.

Groups like the *Activist Lawyers* do not even share an abolitionist vision of the penal system. They capitalize on the emotional fragility of detained people, acting as though they are the spokespersons of the protesters, the social movements, and even of all "citizens" targeted by the state, so they can acquire fame and an audience for their social profiles. Their prices are as high as those offered by any common lawyer, and there are reports of negligent acts such as not informing the people about their rights and refusing to relinquish the cases of people who do not want their services any longer. Likewise, groups such as *Fora do Eixo* are institutions that frequent the halls of government, receiving money from the cultural incentive program—which comes straight from the banks that they film burning during the protests. Their actions in the streets seek to appropriate the work done within the social struggle in order that they might obtain financial profits and institutional political influence.

The success of progressive social groups appropriating the discourse of the left is not due to a total absence of horizontal groups providing juridical support or covering the mobilizations. Many social movements had groups responsible for these tasks—they were just overloaded. Media collectives had organized to fulfill a role similar to that of the Independent Media Centers (IMC) during the anti-globalization movements, even if they lacked much visibility. Nevertheless, there is a lack of collectives, such as the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC), which support libertarian movements from an anti-prison and abolitionist perspectives. Some ABC groups appeared or were reactivated in different cities in the second half of 2013, though even then, they were reduced to small affinity groups.

The strategic importance of working groups and collectives that will play such roles in the struggle is in demonstrating how to organize in a way that is coherent with the goals we seek. If being wealthy and funded by large corporations and the state is seen as fundamental to having the capacity to act, we will alienate people and discourage their participation in our struggles just

as much as political parties, NGOs, and philanthropic organizations do. This is why we do not want groups of that sort to take up space in the fight for a world free from capitalist oppression.

If we accept the metaphor of the 99%, we can be sure that within this vast swath of the population there will be numerous parallel and intertwined ways of exercising and maintaining privileges. This does not mean that any privilege that we find there, be it economic or based on gender or race, should be a reason to block the participation of people. Nevertheless, we need to learn how to deal with people who seek to appropriate our struggles in order to maintain or increase their privileges. If spaces of struggle are dominated by people with enough money and time to be full-time activists (lawyers, cultural producers with government funding, white middle-class students, or freelance designers who find a new hobby in buying first aid equipment for protests), it is likely that they will be shaped to fit the agendas of those who need social change the least. In a time when fascism is once again attracting a new generation of citizens unsatisfied with the world we live in, it is necessary to connect our starting points, our goals, and the means which we will use to get there, lest we discover too late that we are marching beside our enemies in the wrong direction.

What If We Don't Demand Anything?

Within the autonomous movements, a narrative has been gaining ground: the idea that every movement must find its “20 cents,” its simple goal. That is, every movement should draw up a concrete agenda, a “clear and specific” demand to be achieved in the short term. This narrative is based on the experience of the fight against the fare increase in 2013; after the success of the movement, organizers argued that “politics is measured by results.”

However, declaring our “one demand” against the fare increase of 50 cents in 2015 failed to make the struggle more intense, to override the media blackout, or to force our rulers to engage with us. This major defeat just a year and a half after the biggest win of the movement compels us to ask whether finding a unique and possible demand is enough to ensure lasting achievements. How can we make sure our victories do not end up as reforms that only relieve stress and adapt capitalism to the new times, without fundamentally threatening it?

When we speak of social movements that deal with specific and urgent material issues such as housing, health, access to land, or environmental damage, perhaps the “20 cents” narrative is strategic as a way to stay focused. However, when we are talking about radical social transformation, a path we must pursue over the long-term, perhaps it is more useful to frame our struggle in other ways.

This system has created jobs to make sure that we do not work together. In schools, we do not get education. In hospitals, we are alienated from our own health and self-care. This system created the police, courts, and prisons so that we will not know how to resolve conflicts or learn from our mistakes. It created governments so that we do not take decisions for ourselves. Getting rid of all these bonds will be a generations-long process, lasting as long as the emergence of this system did. The bourgeois order of the modern world was not created overnight by a dozen revolutionaries.

If we aim to abolish the state and capitalism, we can hardly expect that politely making specific demands of our leaders will help us reach that goal. A struggle based on demands has immediate advantages, but also limits. Simply presenting specific and “possible” demands puts us in a dis-

advantageous position by reaffirming the state's power and legitimacy. In this context, change only becomes real when the state gives its go-ahead.

If we want something, we should learn how to organize ourselves to take it. When we confront a tyrannical and authoritarian system, we choose between *asking for its end* and *organizing its fall*.

Alongside struggles for urgent material needs, we can build relationships, spaces, tools, and knowledge that increase our collective power. We should not ask for legal permission to do this; we should develop the capacity to act directly to regain control of our lives.

The MPL is a movement with a specific and clear demand: "free public transportation, with quality, managed by the workers." This is interesting, but not enough. Even as a movement with an agenda drawn from anti-capitalist struggles, their reforms may be useful to a capitalist tendency to adapt and to "humanize" the city. Perhaps the point of conducting this autonomous and horizontal fight is to serve as a reference point for other large social movements in Brazil, such as the housing movement and the landless movement, so that one day these movements will also get rid of their hierarchical structures and authoritarian ties. But waiting for other movements to radicalize their criticism and adopt the same horizontal and autonomous principles in their methods does not seem to be an option for many people who are ready to proceed to struggle against the authorities today.

If we are consistent in our radical critique of capital, we need to develop a critique of the cities themselves, which embody capitalist logic, serving as the main stage for the relations of profit and exploitation. To think of a life outside capitalism is to think of the end of the city as we know it. That means developing skills and parallel structures to confront the state and the corporations while meeting our needs ourselves.

In grassroots movements, such as movements for specific causes like housing, anarchist participation is still very weak compared to groups linked to parties and the classical or Marxist left. The MPL itself is one of the many autonomous groups that promote dialogue and coordination with more vertical and authoritarian movements while fighting for basic material needs that cannot wait. But this exchange is not always effective because of the rigid hierarchy of these mass movements. Groups like the MPL often fail to escape the traditional political division between political organization and social base, typical of the left. Showing signs of saturation, the MPL does not make it easier for new groups or individuals to connect directly with each other.

This strong participation in mass social movements differentiates the Brazilian context from most anarchist movements in rich countries. Social movements involving millions of people in a struggle for basic resources denied by the state and the market are typical of poor or developing countries. Figuring out how to build collective solutions and really anti-authoritarian methods for these problems without acting paternalistically is still a major challenge for anarchists who are organizing with or within urban occupations, building social projects in slums, suburbs, the countryside, or indigenous communities in Brazil.

The fact that groups from various classes and positions have joined the protests since 2013, organizing to advance their struggles or to create new groups and movements using anarchist collectives as reference points, is already a sign that new forms of organizing are on the horizon. It may be possible to develop projects and forms of organizing with better visibility. But we have to consolidate strategies and achievements in line with our anarchist perspectives, going beyond centralized vertical movements with a traditional relation to the base, and beyond the autonomous movements that reproduce this logic. Many of the people who have joined strug-

gles in the streets since the June Uprising seem more interested in demanding autonomy and participation immediately than in becoming the followers of an organization.

In addition to participating in existing social movements, anarchists must also build the material basis of a new way of life. Autonomous spaces, squats, cooperative networks, and self-managed workplaces, events, lectures and mutual-aid networks are being built to meet this need to come together and organize outside of protests and other street actions. These initiatives are important as steps towards the change we want and as spaces where we can share skills, experiences, and resources—to build, make, and steal what we need to live rather than just asking governments and employers to surrender to our demands.

Many of these collectives and physical spaces emerged as a result of the anti-globalization movement. Those who are still resisting today can feel the interest of new generations after the recent waves of mobilization. These spaces are still very scarce, but they transmit a rich experience. It is no coincidence that the regions and communities that have a great anarchist tradition are also the ones with more autonomous spaces and social centers.

Fighting alone, individualistically, as we were taught by bourgeois liberal ideology, we will not be able to achieve a real confrontation with the existing order, or to inspire others to desert it. We need to find ourselves, organize ourselves, collectivize and communize tools to fight and nourish our vital needs.

The Black Bloc Inquiry: In Praise of an (Almost) Perfect Crime

“Organizing has never meant affiliation with the same organization. Organizing is acting in accordance with a common perception, at whatever level that may be. Now, what is missing from the situation is not “people’s anger” or economic shortage, it’s not the good will of militants or the spread of critical consciousness, or even the proliferation of anarchist gestures. What we lack is a shared perception of the situation. Without this binding agent, gestures dissolve without a trace into nothingness, lives have the texture of dreams, and uprisings end up in schoolbooks.”

-“To Our Friends,” The Invisible Committee, 2014

In October 2013, still inspired by the struggles of June, protests and public school teacher strikes occurred simultaneously in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In São Paulo, crowds attacked the military police in front of the Secretariat of Education and then scattered, smashing banks and shops and destroying a police car in the city center. Hours later, two people who were photographing the event were arrested by police officers. There was no evidence they had participated in the protest except for a camera with pictures of it and a capsule of tear gas they had found on the ground. Still, the two were kidnapped and physically and psychologically tortured, and their homes were raided and looted by police without warrants. The two were charged under the National Security Act, created at the time of the Brazilian dictatorship to target those who “pillage, cause an explosion, or light a fire to express political nonconformity or maintain subversive organizations.” In a further effort to intimidate rebellious social movements, the state deployed an anti-terrorism law that sends ordinary people to be tried by a military tribunal—an unprecedented legal tactic that has not been used even in response to a series of attacks by criminal gangs that killed dozens of police in São Paulo in 2006. Two days after the arrest of the two

persons, a judge ruled that both would be released until trial—but they still face up to 25 years in prison.

The day after their release, the DEIC SP (State Department of Criminal Investigations) used this case to open an investigation that frames the Black Bloc tactic as a practice of criminal association coordinated nationally. This allows them to prosecute participants for organized crime, according to the logic of counter-terrorism, rather than as perpetrators of isolated crimes to be judged individually. The whole operation was obviously conceived as an excuse to open an investigation to map and criminalize participants of protests and social movements throughout Brazil. At the time, they wanted to intimidate any mobilization that threatened to disrupt the 2014 World Cup. The case, known as the “Black Bloc Inquiry,” was conducted in secret with coordination between police and security forces from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro along with the prosecution.

In the face of the threat posed by widely spreading insurrectionary tactics and actions, the state set out to justify the use of any resource available to neutralize its enemies. Numerous cases around the world, from Chile to Greece, show the same pattern of manufactured terrorism cases conjured up by state agencies against anarchists and other social rebels. Here, we want to highlight two very specific points for analysis.

First, the Black Bloc Inquiry assumes that a tactic that has become common in almost every city where there were protests cannot consist of spontaneous actions. Either the agents of the state are unable to imagine a genuinely decentralized mode of action that is not directed by a central group, or—more likely—they know full well that this is possible but find it strategic to disingenuously claim that a national organization exists that is instructing people to make attacks. The latter could prove especially useful to justify enhanced punishment against protesters through mechanisms such as conspiracy charges.

The media spectacle and the criminal profile created by the police helped to promote the propaganda image of the Black Bloc. But the rapid, anonymous diffusion of the tactic via small independent affinity groups itself proved very effective at spreading the message: “We are many outraged people; we are finding each other; we will no longer accept police violence peacefully; we will support and be supported by those who also want a free world, who also dislike banks, shops, and consumerism.”

Here we see the state acknowledging its fear facing a decentralized and leaderless enemy that efficiently spread its methods, its message, and its combative stance, repeatedly getting away with fierce actions. This is the greatest compliment that can be paid to an anarchist tactic: that the vast majority of those who used it left no traces of evidence and avoided any punishment for their illegal actions—a (nearly) perfect crime.

There were impassioned debates about how to respond to the presence of black blocs in demonstrations. On the one hand, the tactic was welcomed by protesting teachers in Rio de Janeiro and by participants in a demonstration that rescued dozens of animals from a laboratory in São Paulo later in 2013. On the other hand, black blocs were explicitly banned from the marches of the homeless movement.

Those movements are not necessarily pacifist, themselves. For example, they clashed with the state in April 2014, when hundreds of workers from many squatted buildings in the city tried to invade and vandalize the Municipality building of São Paulo after councilors suspended the vote on the Strategic Master Plan relating to development and housing in the city. Some eager young militants have failed to understand that many movements simply do not need “help” from the

black bloc; the consequence is a sort of immature proselytizing and an exaggerated emphasis on a specific tactic without respecting the methods of those engaged in other fights.

Far from being a social movement or a model for anything, the black bloc is simply a tactic that made us reflect on all our actions. As an anarchist tactic, it became universally known throughout Brazil at a time when anarchism itself was not widespread; as such, it became the most prominent means of diffusing an anarchist message, occupying the headlines for months. It was common to hear in the streets and in the media a mutual association between anarchism and black bloc tactics. It's important to note that many people participated in political protests for the first time in black bloc actions, a fact confirmed by the massive and increasing participation of teenagers. If there was a mismatch between the autonomous and anarchist movements and this new generation that began its political life through these tactics, the responsibility also lies on older generations of anarchists who until then had not widely taken part in broader discussions or circulated their experiences within radical social struggles.

In addition, a wide range of people who did not fit into the ranks of the autonomous social movements before the upheavals of June 2013 joined the demonstrations through the black blocs. In a time of political vacuum, passivity, co-optation of social movements and organizations, and individual apathy and isolation, it was encouraging that an anarchist tactic united people and reconnected them to their power, demonstrating that the greatest enemies of freedom and humanity in general are the police, the state, and the economic elite. These immediate, spontaneous, anonymous affinity group actions can be one of the few truly participatory forms available to people to take action without being relegated to a "base" to be organized by students and activists. Wearing masks and throwing back their hatred in the form of projectiles was perhaps the only way to make visible the presence of those who are rendered invisible in everyday life and the activist milieu.

Let's look once more at the National Security Act of 1983, under which the two arrestees of October 2013 are being charged. Article 15 of the National Security Act provides a penalty of 3 to 10 years imprisonment for those who practice sabotage against "military installations, communication facilities, vehicles and transport routes, shipyards, ports, airports, factories, power plants, dams, deposits and other similar facilities." This follows a military logic to protect what is essential for the functioning of the economy: the logistics infrastructure of its materials and energy resources. Besides serving as an exemplary punishment to intimidate social movements, the use of this law reveals the key weaknesses of this system and the real fears of those who defend it.

In recent years, the demonstrations that besieged, attacked, and occupied government buildings did not cause much beyond a momentary disorder. If a palace is occupied or even burnt down, our rulers will find other places from which to organize and control our lives. The real control in our society occurs outside the palaces, chambers, and senates. It happens in closed rooms where the unelected leaders of corporations and cartels decide how the political class will rule to advance their interests. If we are to get our voices heard by causing disorder, it will not be by holding up signs in front of buildings, nor by blocking a street or an avenue late at night. Instead, we should consider blocking the massive flow of raw materials, goods, energy, labor, and information—one of the few ways to actually interrupt the operation of this system and blackmail its bosses. Rather than merely reacting to the economic crisis, let us become the crisis threatens capitalism, and learn to live within it—not necessarily in that order.

The origins of the black bloc tactic as we know it today date back to the struggles of the autonomous movements in Germany in the 1980s to defend occupations and communities against evictions. When we adopt a tactic, it is important to question what purpose it serves and what strategy it fits. What are we defending when we march or fight in the streets? Who are we fighting? Who is on our side? At first, this kind of radical action may have been adopted as a vent for a cry of rage that had been stuck in our throats for some time. The lack of demands or coordinated strategy among the black blocs does not nullify its role in the resistance of the last three years. But if we never go beyond this form of spontaneity, this outlet risks becoming little more than a safety valve to enable us to get back to work and the misery of our homes the following day. Just like any concert, party, or football game. Worse, our tactics can become so predictable that they are rendered harmless.

It also does not sound promising to limit the forms of resistance to reactive actions triggered by a specific situation. We must organize ourselves to create the right circumstances for the actions that we take. Once we could no longer count on having the element of surprise, especially as people started to organize Facebook pages for the black bloc in each city, it became easier for the state to control, isolate, and repress us. Thus the tactic that had been the gateway for people to become engaged in political action became impossible once more.

A shared understanding of who our enemies are, who our friends are, what we want, and what we oppose was the basis for the dissemination of black bloc tactics throughout Brazil. As a weed, a sort of pioneer vegetation, this may have opened the way for more complex forms of organization to arise. We will find out whether this is true in the coming years. The movement of occupations that gave rise to the classic form of the black bloc three decades ago in Germany stands today worldwide with the same principles: property is theft, and if we want something, we must organize ourselves to take it over, occupy it, and resist. Other forms of action are spreading now, too. The first ZAD (“zone to be defended”) began in northwestern France to protect a region slated for the construction of an airport; it led to the occupation of a territory in which hundreds of people live and resist, producing and sharing what they need. Other ZADs have arisen to prevent the construction of a dam in the southwest and a tourist complex in the southern forests of France. Today, dozens of occupations arise to frustrate the interests of government and business. They encourage interchange and mutual aid rather than the use of money, and intend to stay and create an enduring legacy of resistance for future generations.

Many other ways to understand and act have yet to emerge. We can see other examples of resistance in the fights that indigenous and maroon people in Brazil are waging today against the expansion of white supremacist, urban, and industrial society. It’s up to each group to find a fertile field for new experiments. That could mean occupying streets, squares, or entire territories, toppling presidents, or smashing corporations—anything to free up our lives and spaces from capitalism.

Fighting Will Be a Crime

“The police are the front line of capitalism and racism in every fight. You might never see the CEO who profits on fracking your water supply, but you’ll see the police who break up your protest against him. You might not meet the bank director or landlord who forces you out, but you will see the sheriff who comes to repossess your home or evict you. As a black person, you might never enter the gated communities of

the ones who benefit most from white privilege, but you will encounter the overtly racist officers who profile, bully, and arrest you.”

-“The Thin Blue Line Is a Burning Fuse,” CrimethInc., 2014

In response to the extensive criminalization of social movements over the past three years—including the suspension of the right to strike and protest, arbitrary arrests, judicial frauds, and other measures—activists have responded by emphasizing that it must not be considered illegal to participate in a social struggle. The slogan “Fighting is not a crime” has appeared on banners, posters, and graffiti. But let’s stop to consider: if we aspire to bring about the demise of capitalism, the destruction of patriarchy, white supremacy, and all forms of racism, and an end to private property, not to mention the abolition of the state, democracy, borders, and all forms of control, oppression, and hierarchy... do we really expect to achieve all of this without our struggles being criminalized?

A system based on so many injustices will attempt to render anything that genuinely challenges it impossible or illegal. If we really aspire to tear down the entire system of oppression and exploitation, we should expect to be criminalized and face serious repression. Democratic, legal, and constitutional means are designed to allow only the kinds of change that keep the system running, adapting it to new demands and easing tensions. But slaves with more comfort and rights are no less slaves.

The changes in police, military, and other repressive apparatuses introduced before the World Cup in 2014 only confirm the thesis that even the meager rights we have are liable to be suspended if corporate and government leaders decide it is necessary. In this context, we understand the serious and important rationale underlying the slogan “fighting should not be a crime,” since we should neither passively accept the loss of the few rights we have won, such as the right to strike, nor abandon struggles for those that still remain distant for millions of people, such as the right to housing. But we need to build perspectives that keep us standing in the face of the possibility of an even worse future, in which any efforts to fight for significant changes will be crimes—as they were just a few decades ago during the military dictatorship. We need to be able to think and act independently of whatever laws and rights are granted or denied to us by the state.

Many of the justifications we make for our struggles are premised on bourgeois morality and statist reasoning, suggesting that we should “constitute” a new order based on the same current logic of legitimacy. This narrative of *constituent power* refers to abstract values similar to divine right or the sovereignty of a constitution. Anyone who claims to defend these values is claiming the legitimacy to rule over others, like a priest whose revealed word connects mere mortal bodies to divine truth. This old equation, in which “the will of god” or “the constitution” is replaced by the “will” of the people, always serves to justify the authority of those who come to power by promising to free us from the tyranny of the previous system. We do not need a universal justification for our self-determination. Privileging any one perspective as possessing legitimacy and representing the will of the people generates sovereignty and supremacy. If we want a world in which many worlds can coexist, we must not depend on a narrative that purports to offer the same legitimacy to all human groups while demanding a false union or uniformity.

We can create theories and map objectives that enable us to function as a war machine against the existing order. We do not use theories to *create* our strategies—our theories are *part* of the strategy. We need theories and practices that make us powerful, regardless of legislation, constitutions, legitimacy, moralism, or any other form of regulation.

This system will not last forever. Economic and political crisis have already been serving as a permanent means of governing for a long time now; they are a standard part of the management of order, just like corruption. But now, the end seems to be drawing closer. The water crisis affecting Brazil's southeast is beginning to spread to neighboring regions. Army officers discuss what to do in case of riots spread due to lack of water, while soldiers conduct trainings simulating occupations of the water treatment plants. Another mega-event, the Olympics, has perpetuated and reinforced the permanent state of siege in which the rich go on profiting from our misery.

Holding back from breaking windows or respecting police cordons will not guarantee that we can stay out of jail. Perhaps for a time, this will suffice to protect some white youths, but it does not seem likely to work for most of us from now on. In Spain, dozens of people were arrested in a massive operation against "terrorism" that targeted social centers and squats in cities like Barcelona and Madrid. At least seven of them were arrested simply because the judge overseeing the case alleged that they used secure emails such as riseup.net. Merely choosing not to be bound by the corporate services that archive and map all the data involved in our communications is now an excuse to frame us as a threat to the system.

We are not only people on the prowl seeking to destroy this system. Fascists, fundamentalists, illegal gangs, the cartels of illegal capitalism, and numerous other forms of parallel authoritarian powers are also conspiring. Our enemies are many; they walk together and know how to organize. Alone, we are vulnerable; we must find each other.

So this is our attempt to share some lessons drawn from the years of social struggle we have recently lived through. One must consider the end of this world as we know it; it may come sooner than we imagine. We need to be prepared to survive its demise, to inhabit the crisis and survive the state of siege. Whether the means we utilize are legal or illegal should not be the center of our thinking, but rather a merely strategic detail: should we attract the attention of the police now, or later? Our answer will depend on how much time we have to flee, how much power we have to resist. We need to know how to keep fighting when any form of organization or struggle will be considered a crime. Even if we should fail to spark a revolution or create a new society, let us at least fight to survive in the most beautiful and joyful ways possible.

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June 12, 2017

Retrieved on 23rd April 2021 from crimethinc.com
Translation by CrimethInc.

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