

CHAPTER 2



POLITICAL PARTIES, BIG BUSINESS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE 'VOICE OF THE PEOPLE'

**Views from Above and Below on the Crisis
Created by the 2016 Coup in Brazil**

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In 2016, the Brazilian congress voted to impeach the country's first female president, Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party (PT). The removal of the PT from power through a 'constitutional' coup d'état might seem puzzling. Having abandoned socialism for neoliberalized social democracy and class conciliation, the PT had become the 'acceptable face' of the Latin American Pink Tide in Washington and provided generous subsidies to Brazilian capitalists. In this chapter, we will examine specifically Brazilian dimensions of the fall of the PT and the political polarization that has resulted from the coup. Yet Brazilian experience also mirrors broader global trends.

The relative harmony that briefly existed in the twentieth century between capitalism and inclusive democracy in the North Atlantic world is being replaced everywhere by increasingly authoritarian combinations of financialized corporate capitalism and neoliberal modes of governing society. Elites are uncompromising in the sacrifices that they demand from working people in order to satisfy the 'economic imperatives' of a capitalist accumulation process that produces ever greater wealth inequalities and diminishing prospects for intergenerational social mobility. Yet even the poor and destitute are conscripted into participating in contemporary market society (Kapferer and Gold 2018: 43). The techniques developed to defend this new

order erode social bonds and solidarity and promote individualistic transformations of personhood and identity that serve a capitalist logic (Dardot and Laval 2014: 325). Yet they were embraced by centre-left social democratic parties throughout the world.

The failure of these parties to provide satisfying responses to the social consequences of labour market restructuring and deindustrialization has created a generalized crisis of liberal representative democracy. But democratic life has also been undermined from above, by elites and corporate think tanks arguing that effective capitalist management of the economy becomes impossible within inclusive democracies that give serious representation to the interests of the working masses and subaltern groups such as indigenous people.

As Wolfgang Streeck (2016) argues, authoritarian neoliberalism seems incapable of preventing the global capitalist system from succumbing to its contradictions, but the consequences are likely to be messy, since contemporary movements of the Left have found it difficult to define a coherent radical alternative and been pushed onto the political defensive. Latin America manifests many forms of grass-roots resistance to capitalist 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2007) in both rural and urban areas. Yet the lesson from Brazil is that even if political 'turns to the left' do not necessarily empower such resistance, 'turns to the right' prove very much worse. After 2016, Brazilian democracy fell into a deep crisis that was inflected by conditions rooted in the country's particular history, but there is a more than a passing similarity between the Brazilian crisis and the crisis of liberal democracy in Euro-Atlantic states, as diagnosed by Wendy Brown (2009) and other authors already mentioned.

A Long Cycle of Coups and the Fall of the PT

In many ways, Rousseff's ouster is another episode in a long historical cycle of interruptions of democracy engineered by an oligarchy determined to defend its preferred economic model and privileges of wealth and racially encoded status. The 1964 coup against João Goulart was followed by two decades of military dictatorship, whereas the 2016 coup was engineered through 'lawfare' against the PT and the judicialization of politics (Comaroff and Comaroff 2007). In 2016, there was no immediate threat of military intervention, although the military did subsequently re-emerge as a political actor in a lower profile manner. Nevertheless, the role of the congress and right-wing media in undermining a democratically elected president closely replicated events leading up to the 1964 coup and also the moves to unseat Goulart's mentor, populist president Getúlio Vargas, in 1954. Vargas

responded to the incipient coup by committing suicide, leaving a ‘testament letter to the Brazilian people’ that ensured his passage from life to myth and bought Brazil another decade of civilian rule before Goulart’s plans to embark on the radical reforms in the countryside that Vargas had avoided provoked another round of elite rebellion.

Brazilian society today is very different from that of the days of Vargas and Goulart, but the ghosts of populism past still haunt the present. One of the main objectives of the 2016 coup was to end the guarantees provided to labour by Vargas’s 1943 Consolidation of Labour Laws (CLT), which big business decried as an anachronism limiting Brazilian competitiveness in the global economy. New legislation allowed unrestricted subcontracting and outsourcing, even of teachers in public schools. The permitted length of the working day and number of working days allowed without rest days was increased. The aim was to replace workers enjoying state benefits and protection with cheaper, more precariously employed substitutes, reducing their costs further by relaxing health and safety regulations. Extreme even in terms of the ‘new normal’ of precarianization that now exists throughout the capitalist world economy, it is tempting to see Brazil’s ‘labour reform’ as a reflection of employer attitudes towards labour rooted in a slave mode of production not legally abolished until 1888. In the case of rural workers, the powerful agribusiness lobby in congress secured particularly regressive changes in employment conditions under a post-coup regime that relaxed vigilance of modern slavery as well as environmental conservation safeguards.

The Vargas era is also a point of reference in criticisms of the post-coup regime’s reckless abandonment of national resource sovereignty and its willingness to sell off national assets to foreign capital at knock-down prices. On both labour rights and the virtues of economic nationalism, PT governments identified themselves with the tradition of Vargas and his followers in contrasting their policies with those of the neoliberal administrations that preceded them between 1995 and 2002 under Fernando Henrique Cardoso, whose Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) remained the PT’s main rival in subsequent contests for the presidency. The coup’s new rules on outsourcing were based on draft legislation from the Cardoso era that the incoming PT administration persuaded congress to put on ice.

Dilma Rousseff was the chosen successor of the first PT president to be elected, Luiz Inácio ‘Lula’ da Silva. These two figures could hardly be more different in terms of social profile. Lula was born in north-east Brazil into a poor family, whose members joined the stream of migrants heading south to seek a livelihood in the industrial hub of São Paulo when the future president was seven years old. Lula began his working life as a child, selling on the street to support a mother abandoned by her husband. His only formal edu-

cational qualification is his certificate as a lathe operator. He became a leading figure in the militant independent trade union movement that emerged in the ABC industrial region of São Paulo under military rule, which formed the 'popular' base of the new Worker's Party of which he was a founding member.

Dilma Rousseff was the university-educated daughter of a prosperous immigrant businessman from Bulgaria. She joined the urban guerrilla movement against the military dictatorship as a student and was captured and tortured. Her career prior to assuming the presidency had followed a technocratic path, and she never displayed much relish for the kind of political deal-making at which Lula proved exceptionally adept. Dilma won public respect for taking a tough stand on corruption and facilitating rather than impeding the work of federal police and public prosecutors in investigating it, even when it was disadvantageous to her own party. But many PT supporters came to criticize what they saw as her deficit of political skills.

Lula gained office, on his fourth attempt, in 2002, in a run-off against the PSDB's José Serra in which he secured almost 53 million votes. Although Lula gained more votes from organized labour than his opponent, his victory was based on socially liberal middle-class voters opting for the PT, since he failed to secure a majority amongst the working poor of the urban slums (called *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro), and the rural poor in the north-east (Singer 2009). This pattern changed when Lula was re-elected for a second term in 2006 by over 58 million electors, securing a landslide win of over 60 per cent of the vote in the second round against the PSDB's Geraldo Alckmin. By this stage, increased economic growth resulting from the global commodities boom had enabled the Lula government to stabilize prices, increase minimum wages, create many new formal sector jobs and introduce schemes that gave poorer citizens credit to improve consumption standards. Singer argues that this was more important than the *Bolsa Família* conditional cash transfer programme in enabling Lula to win huge majorities amongst the poor in the north-east in 2006 because poor working families had become convinced that a PT government could redistribute resources to them without wrecking the economy.

Lula now became 'popular' for the same reasons that Vargas became 'popular', as head of a government that delivered improvements to the lives of the very poor and social mobility to working- and lower middle-class families that enjoyed higher incomes. Yet Lula's humble origins gave him an even stronger appeal to lower-class Brazilians than Vargas, a member of the landowning classes. Elite Brazilians, including former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, proved unable to disguise their class prejudices against a figure they deemed unfit to occupy the highest office of state. Yet even if the economic boom that fuelled Lula's rising popularity was built on fragile

foundations, this ‘uneducated’ president became a respected international statesman who raised his country’s profile on the world stage. The coup regime rapidly squandered this asset as well as the reduction of income inequality secured by the PT governments.

However, as Lula himself came to recognize after the coup, PT governments did not transform the durable class divide reproduced by intergenerational transmission of wealth and cultural capital, despite affirmative action policies in higher education designed to counter disadvantages linked to race as well as family income. After his second defeat by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Lula had insisted that the PT abandon its earlier commitments to socialism, provoking a split that led to the founding of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL). He continued to emphasize his personal affinity with ‘the people’ (*o povo*) and promised to create a more egalitarian society from which hunger, poverty and illiteracy would be banished forever. Yet in the 2002 presidential campaign, Lula sought to reassure ‘the markets’ and established economic oligarchy by promising to preserve the neoliberal ‘sound economic management’ of Cardoso. As president, he put international investment banker Henrique Meirelles in charge of the Central Bank. Meirelles later became finance minister in the government imposed by the coup, pushing through a fiscal austerity package that froze public spending for twenty years, a move with drastic implications for public education and an already overstretched universal public health system. Meirelles also pushed for an equally socially regressive ‘reform’ of the state pension system, although that measure’s unpopularity with voters forced the regime to put it on hold until after the October 2018 elections.

Critics inside his own movement accused Lula of turning PT politics into a neopopulist ‘Lulism’ based on his personal charisma and Faustian bargains with the established political class and Brazilian capitalism, which would eventually prove the party’s undoing. Although they were not exactly wrong about the long-term outcome, this diagnosis was superficial, since it failed to address more fundamental contradictions that emerged within the PT as a whole from the moment that the party started winning municipal elections. But before turning to that, we will explore the mechanics of the coup process, since that reveals why PT rule was vulnerable to threats arising from the unreformed deep structures of social and political power.

Corruption, Lawfare and the Judicialization of Brazilian Politics

Dilma Rousseff was elected in 2010 with over 56 per cent of the vote, easily defeating the PSDB candidate in the second round, who was once again José Serra. Yet with clouds of recession gathering as the commodity boom

ended, her majority was reduced to 51.4 per cent of the vote in a tightly fought re-election campaign in 2014 against the PSDB's Aécio Neves. Many of the more than 54 million voters who continued to prefer the PT were disappointed when the new Rousseff administration partly capitulated to the demands for fiscal austerity that had been made by her rival during the election campaign. As the coup process unfolded, a deepening association of the PT with corruption further eroded grass-roots support for the party amongst poorer citizens who had previously voted for it.

The PT's claims to be different from other political parties had been battered during the first Lula administration as a result of a scandal over 'little monthly payments' paid to deputies in congress to buy their support for government legislation, the *mensalão*. The first Lula administration allocated ministries to minor parties with which the PT had some ideological affinity, leaving it little alternative but to offer such material inducements to less comfortable bedfellows. Yet disillusion over the *mensalão* was concentrated amongst the middle class voters in the south of Brazil, who had backed the PT in 2002, a loss more than compensated for by increased support from the poor in the north-east. However, as Rousseff took office for the second time, an even more devastating corruption scandal was emerging as a result of the Operation Carwash (*Lava Jato*) investigation being carried out under the direction of Federal Judge Sergio Moro in Curitiba. This centred on bribes paid to politicians by major construction and engineering companies in return for favours delivered in securing contracts with the national oil company Petrobras and other government entities. Most prominent amongst these companies was Odebrecht, founded and headquartered in Salvador, Bahia.

Odebrecht became a transnational company, and foreign politicians, including several presidents of Peru, have been charged with receiving illicit payments from its highly organized slush fund. It was clear to impartial observers that corruption at Petrobras had existed before the era of PT rule and that networks of corruption involved all the leading political parties. Yet Judge Moro's team focused their attention on the PT and its allies and systematically diverted attention from accusations that were made at an early stage against politicians from other parties. It rapidly became clear that their priority target was former president Lula himself. In 2017, Lula was found guilty by Moro of receiving bribes from another Bahian company, OAS, in the form of an apartment, despite the fact that he had never owned or lived in it. The principal evidence in the case came from the plea bargain testimony of OAS chief executive Leo Pinheiro, who had initially exonerated Lula but was subsequently persuaded to change his story.

Moro claimed inspiration from the Italian anticorruption investigation *Mani Pulite* ('Clean Hands'), arguing that since corrupt figures enjoying political power tend to be particularly adept at covering their tracks, it was nec-

essary to use plea bargains to induce partners in crime to denounce them, and legitimate to filter information to the media before the investigation was completed to increase the pressure. There is no *prima facie* case for regarding *Mani Pulite* as an unqualified success. It did destroy the traditional party system but simply ensured that more sophisticated methods of corruption would be used in future, opening the way to nine years of scandal-ridden government by Silvio Berlusconi (Vannucci 2009). Berlusconi was eventually convicted for tax fraud, although this did not end his political career; he was elected a member of the European Parliament in 2019. Yet what happened in Brazil revealed additional flaws in a justice system in which judges and members of the elite associate with the parties opposed to the PT, enjoying close ties of kinship and friendship, and are united by shared class prejudices.

As international human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson pointed out, the judicial process conducted by Judge Moro did not conform to European standards. Moro acted as both investigating judge, organizing the prosecution, and trial judge, reaching a verdict on the evidence and passing sentence. The three appeal court judges in Porto Alegre who unanimously confirmed Moro's conviction of Lula for corruption and money laundering in January 2018, increasing his sentence from nine and a half years to twelve years and one month, allowed the defence team to make a case but ignored it in proceeding to read out their already prepared and coordinated judgements.

Lava Jato investigators selectively filtered accusations against the PT to a mainstream press disposed to report them as if they were already proven matters of fact, prompting Lula's defence team to argue that their client was a victim of 'lawfare' based on the media spectacularization of charges without presentation of evidence. The nadir of this process was a press conference given by Lava Jato lead prosecutor Deltan Dallagnol, who used a PowerPoint graphic to illustrate how the PT had installed a regime of 'criminal governance' centred on ex-President Lula as 'supreme commander' of a 'bribe duct' from Petrobras but offered no proof of his accusations. The presentation also blurred the distinction that might be made between personal corruption and corruption linked to securing illegal campaign funds, routine in all major political parties.

Dilma Rousseff was not impeached by the congress for corruption but for manipulating the public accounts to make the economic outlook seem better than it was prior to the election. Such *pedaladas fiscais*, moving money from one category of public spending to another, had not attracted criticism from congress when employed by previous administrations, including those of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. In the event, Rousseff's alleged 'crime of responsibility' played a relatively insignificant role in the impeachment debate. Deputies in the lower house voting for the impeachment preferred to

invoke God, the family, morality and decency, whilst more sober elements in the Senate laid the blame for economic downturn on the president's mismanagement of the economy. Rousseff's ouster was a political lynching.

The fact that the PT administrations had strengthened anticorruption investigations by guaranteeing the Federal Police and Public Prosecutor's Office freedom from political interference worked to the party's disadvantage initially because the system was biased, but the damage did spread to the entire established political class in the longer term. The impeachment process was launched in the lower house by its leader, Eduardo Cunha of the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB). Lula had decided to make the PMDB, the largest party in congress, the PT's main coalition partner in national government after his 2006 election victory, hoping to avoid the governability problems that had produced the *mensalão*. The PMDB had emerged from the dictatorship with some moral authority but was subsequently converted into an electoral machine lacking a consistent ideological orientation. Dedicated to securing the spoils of office, particularly at state government level, the PMDB's lack of competitiveness in presidential elections made doing the same at federal level through coalition an attractive strategy. Rousseff's PMDB vice president, Michel Temer, automatically became unelected president of the country as a result of the impeachment.

Rousseff refused to block investigation of the sources of the large sums of money that Eduardo Cunha had salted away in offshore accounts, which gave him a personal motivation to seek revenge. Once he had fulfilled his role in the coup, Cunha was found guilty of corruption and gaoled, but Michel Temer was subsequently accused of buying his silence on the sins of other leading figures of the PMDB, including himself. A growing number of members of the House and Senate from the main parties supporting the coup, the PMDB, PSDB and right-wing Democrats (DEM), became subject to corruption investigations as a result of plea bargains offered to Odebrecht executives. Another federal police investigation into corruption in the meat packing and export industry led to the head of the JBS company, Joseley Batista, seeking a plea bargain. Always assiduous in tape recording his confidential dealings with politicians, Batista discredited both the defeated PSDB candidate in the 2014 elections, Senator Aécio Neves, and substitute president Temer.

Although the Federal Police had found it impossible to 'follow the money' from Petrobras to Lula, in the cases of Neves and Temer they managed to film large sums of cash being carried in bags by associates of the politicians. Observing that 'the bag says it all', the Federal Attorney General launched two indictments against Temer, but congress voted to prevent investigations proceeding further. Deputies justified their votes as necessary for mainte-

nance of 'economic stability' (read as protecting the coup agenda). Temer purchased his impunity by authorizing big new public spending plans to enhance the political capital of the representatives who voted for it, hardly consistent with the claimed need for draconian fiscal austerity.

Neves was suspended from the Senate, but a supreme court judge ruled that he should resume his seat, on the grounds that the electors of Minas Gerais who had voted for him would otherwise be unrepresented. This might seem an odd decision, given that the removal of Dilma Rousseff left 54 million voters unrepresented, but it was symptomatic of bias at the highest level of the judiciary that called the reality of a separation of powers into question. There are many other examples. As she fought to defend her government, Dilma had tried to appoint Lula her chief of staff, only to have the move blocked by Gilmar Mendes, a Supreme Court judge notorious for his PSDB sympathies, after an illegally wire-tapped telephone conversation between the *petistas* was made public by Moro. Yet the Supreme Court had no problems when Temer chose Wellington Moreira Franco to head the General Secretariat of the Presidency, rejecting a petition by the PSOL that he be debarred on the same grounds as Lula, since accusations of corruption made against him by Odebrecht executives would no longer fall under Moro's jurisdiction once Moreira Franco became a minister but enter the notoriously drawn out process of judgement by the Supreme Court. This exemplifies another difference between Lula's treatment and that of politicians aligned with the coup. Cases against Lula were pursued with unusual celerity, whereas the latter could be confident that their day of judgement would not come any time soon, should it ever come at all.¹

Yet the PMDB and PSDB could not stop the public exposure of the corruption in their ranks. One of the most damaging cases was the fall of Bahian PMDB strong man Geddel Vieira Lima. Forced to resign from Temer's cabinet for attempting to bully a fellow minister into committing an improper administrative act to benefit his personal real estate investments, Geddel was later arrested, in September 2017, after Federal Police found 51 million reais in cash stashed in suitcases and boxes in an apartment that he owned in Salvador. As the corruption scandals generalized, and the economic situation failed to improve for most Brazilians, citizens became increasingly conscious that an unelected government was writing off the debts of big companies and agribusiness to the tax and social security systems while introducing legislation to make working people pay for the crisis through lower earnings, precarization of employment and loss of public services. In December 2016, the PT suffered heavy losses in municipal elections, but as 2017 advanced, Lula declared his candidacy for re-election as president, secure in the knowledge that he was leading the polls with support from voters across the class and age spectrum.

Even after the appeal court ratified his conviction by Moro, opinion polls continued to show Lula trouncing all other likely candidates for president in the October elections. Yet his candidacy was threatened from the start by another anticorruption move that Lula had himself sponsored when in power, the ‘Clean Slate Law’ (*Lei da Ficha Limpa*). Whether that could be invoked before the nation went to the polls depended on further rulings by superior courts. The judicialization of politics, and the politicization of judges and police, had become a major problem for Brazilian democracy in the coup’s ever-expanding state of exception. Furthermore, the continuing centrality of the figure of Lula in Brazilian political life did not necessarily imply that his party or the Brazilian Left in general were guaranteed a resurgence. To see why, we need to explore deeper structural perspectives on the contradictions of PT rule.

Critical Reflections on the PT in Power and the Broader Dilemmas Facing the Left

Media demonization of Lula did damage his personal reputation, and it became commonplace to hear people in poor communities complaining that ‘Lula is a thief, like all the rest’. Yet the damage suffered by his party was even greater. In the 2016 municipal elections, the PT mayor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad, considered one of the brightest lights in the younger generation of leaders, lost his campaign for re-election by a catastrophic margin to João Doria, a wealthy and flamboyant media baron who presented himself as an ‘administrator’ rather than a professional politician, even though he was the official PSDB candidate, supported by state governor Geraldo Alckmin. In Rio de Janeiro, the new mayor was Marcelo Crivella, nephew of Edir Macedo, founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, of which Crivella had been a bishop. This neo-Pentecostal church has extended its reach far beyond Brazil and has considerable economic and social power within the country, owning one of the three biggest television networks. In the second round, Crivella defeated Marcelo Freixo, a candidate of the PSOL famous for campaigning against the politically connected paramilitary groups called *milicias*. The *milicias* drove drug trafficking gangs out of many favelas, only to terrorize and extort their residents. Crivella won in the favelas, and not simply because the *milicianos* told people not to vote for Freixo. Freixo’s vote, like Lula’s in 2002, principally came from the ‘progressive’ middle classes.

The PT itself was weak in Rio favelas because the federal governments of Lula and Dilma had backed the city and state governments in implementing policies that had had deeply negative impacts on the lives of many favela

residents. Deindustrialized Rio strove to reinvent itself by hosting sporting mega events and redeveloping its central zones to make them more attractive to foreign tourists and higher income residents. Depicted as sites of criminality and violence, the favelas were 'securitized' as a menace to other users of urban space. Since some of the space that the favelas occupied was in prime locations appropriate for redevelopment and gentrification, the new security models developed to police them also served to support the forced relocation of some residents, a process that combined 'social cleansing' of the poorest with opportunities for real estate developers to profit from 'accumulation by dispossession' (Freeman and Burgos 2017).

Beginning with the 2006 Federations Cup football tournament, PT governments sent troops to reinforce state government-controlled police in 'guaranteeing the security of visitors', placing some favelas under a virtual state of siege. Equally significant was the continuing development of a policy of mass incarceration under the PT. Whereas Fernando Henrique Cardoso became an advocate of drug decriminalization after leaving office, under Lula and Dilma Brazil's gaols became ever more overcrowded because poor black men and women found in possession of drugs continued to be routinely convicted of trafficking by a class and racially biased judiciary, if they were not simply left sitting in a cell waiting for their case to be heard. The prison system has not simply become an incubator of crime but the principal basis for the national expansion of organized criminal networks born within its inhuman conditions, provoking violent conflicts between them for control of both gaols themselves and the poor communities outside them that are dominated by criminal factions.

All this lies at the heart of a national public security crisis that has continued to deepen since the coup (Gledhill 2018). The PT federal government backed the PMDB-controlled state government's strategy of implanting Pacificatory Police Units (UPPs) in Rio's favelas, which PT state governors copied in Bahia. Any prospect of securing the consent and collaboration of favela residents had faded by the time Rio hosted the Olympic Games. The social programmes that should have complemented the new policing model failed to materialize, and the governor on whose watch they were initiated was subsequently gaoled for corruption. The bankrupt state over which his successor presided could do nothing about escalating violence between traffickers and police or increasing police corruption. This gave Temer a pretext for taking security out of the hands of the state authorities and handing over control of the police and prisons to the military, despite the fact that past use of the military had proved ineffective in suppressing crime but increased complaints from favela residents that their human rights were being violated. This unprecedented 'intervention' in what had been a responsibility of democratic civilian government since the dictatorship ended provided the

immediate political bonus of making it impossible for congress to vote on the unpopular pension reform because no constitutional changes could be voted through while it was in force. Yet it was preceded by a measure that reassigned the trials of soldiers accused of human rights violations from civilian juries to military courts, raising further worries about where this new process of militarization might end, especially in relation to repression of protests.

The 'Olympic legacy' in Rio de Janeiro thus proved negative for the PT, which had also been complicit in promoting social exclusionary patterns of neoliberal urbanism in other regions of the country. A more structural perspective on the PT's record shows that the explanation for this goes far beyond any 'Faustian bargain' with capital made by Lula to further his personal ambitions.

The PT, founded in 1980, was the political fruit of a convergence between the trade union movement of São Paulo's ABC region, whose strikes during the dictatorship were led by Lula, and left-wing intellectuals, artists and professionals. This new unionism, the base of the CUT (Single Workers' Central), still a bastion of *petismo*, emerged beyond the state's systems of control, co-optation and clientelism. The PT also enjoyed the support of other types of grass-roots movements, promising to promote broad and inclusive 'popular participation' in decisions about public spending and urban development. From the standpoint of the 1980s' new social movement theory, with its exaggerated emphasis on the autonomy and internal democracy of the new movements, the novelty of the PT lay in its offer to make them partners in socially inclusive, participatory, democratic governance. Nevertheless, as Willem Assies (1999) pointed out, this perspective obscured the role of other types of actors in the PT's development, notably sectors of the Catholic Church and segments of the middle class that had been temporarily radicalized by the suspension of their democratic rights under the dictatorship.

Many middle-class activists became disillusioned with the popular movements when the restoration of civilian government brought a return to 'traditional' clientelistic relations that undermined their autonomy. Furthermore, when professionals such as lawyers, architects, urbanists and social workers went back to working on the interface between the state and civil society, they began to think more in terms of 'concrete results' than mobilization, and their own class interests (and prejudices) began to play a stronger role in shaping their behaviour. Once the professionals started working within the framework of the neoliberal government of social problems that continued under the PT, middle-class professionals lost interest in listening to their former allies in militancy, as members of the lower classes were converted into 'target groups' and individual 'clients' of the social programmes that they designed as 'experts' (Assies 1999: 223). At the same time, many once radi-

cal activists became distanced from the masses in whose name they claimed to speak as spaces opened up for them within the state apparatus (Lehmann 2018).

Although Lula's decision to move the PT from socialism to social democracy provoked ideological splits, not all the internal conflicts within the party had an ideological character. From the moment in which the PT began to win municipal elections, the party entered into the 'normal' logic of Brazilian political life. The motives behind many disputes were local, with questions about personalities, and alliances between different interests, organizations and movements. The conquest of power opened up new opportunities to accommodate PT militants and representatives of allied civil society organizations in government. This was essential to secure control of the government apparatus, but it also created opportunities to cultivate clientelistic relations. The transformation of the role of middle-class professionals provoked by the embrace of neoliberal techniques of governance also impacted on the forms of citizen 'participation' that PT administrations delivered in practice. As Albert (2016) demonstrates in an ethnographic study of the participatory institutions of the *petista* municipalities of the ABC region, in some contexts representatives of independent social movements and NGOs did enjoy a degree of protagonism in participatory assemblies and public consultations by virtue of playing a role in the direction of these meetings. Yet in the most important meetings, the representatives of popular organizations were obliged to sit in the seats for the general public and content themselves with directing questions to a technical team of public functionaries, who controlled the proceedings about policies that were, in fact, being made in advance at another level and according to criteria that mixed a concept of 'social interest' formulated from above with considerations of a more narrowly political kind.

The greater inclusion of social movements within government enmeshed these actors in the pragmatic logics of the political field, in particular the logic of winning elections, which inevitably included the less transparent side of the acquisition of campaign funding and negotiation of contracts. The effects of institutionalization went far beyond Lula's alleged 'personalism'. Oliveira (2006: 10–11) observed that leaders of the 'autonomous' trade union movement became workers' representatives on the boards of the private pension funds, which played a major role in Brazilian finance long before 2002. During the deindustrializing years of the Cardoso administration, they became complicit in decisions on redundancies and plant closures, which had eroded the party's base in the organized working class by the time it finally achieved national power. Furthermore, as Caldeira and Holston (2015) observe, the greater 'participation' of 'civil society' in government decisions proved a double-edged sword in the case of 'democratic'

consultations about urban planning. Within an egalitarian frame in which every voice counted equally, representatives of property developers and the middle classes had an equal right to express their point of view. Even in the absence of political influence and bribery, a logic of treating actors differentiated by economic and social power as equals fails to guarantee that the interests of lower-class citizens will be privileged.

In addition to its efforts to improve the incomes of poor Brazilians, increase formal employment with entitlement to social security benefits, and restore expectations of social mobility extinguished under PSDB rule, the PT sought to reverse deindustrialization and promote future economic growth through infrastructure modernization. Key instruments of an economic policy whose economic nationalist orientation contrasted with that of the administration that preceded it, and was totally abandoned after the coup, were the National Development Bank (BNDES) and subsidies offered to the private sector from the public purse. Yet even industrialists in Brazil preferred the rentier profits provided by some of the highest interest rates in the world to new investment and technological innovation (Oliveira 2006: 14), finally opting to back a coup to drive down wages by precarianizing employment. The profound financialization of Brazilian capitalism is one of the country's most serious problems. Although the pensions enjoyed by some privileged categories of beneficiaries, notably judges and politicians, might seem excessive, Brazil's fiscal crisis was not the consequence of a state pension system that was overly generous to the majority of employees. Its principal cause was the enormous cost of servicing the public debt that resulted from the high interest rates underpinning extraordinary bank profits, a deeply regressive personal tax system and the unpaid taxes of the corporate sector, mostly written off since the coup.

PT governments strongly supported internationalization of some of the country's most important corporations. These included Odebrecht and JBS, two companies that exemplify the links forged between the logics of financialization, rentier profits and corruption. The economic performance of PT-led governments proved fatally dependent on agro-exports and mining, but this dependence also made it difficult for the PT to support the radical Movement of Landless Workers (MST), just as its support for neoliberal urban development made it impossible to support the Movement of Homeless Workers (MTST). Although both these social movements opposed the coup, since its implications for them were clearly far worse than continuing PT rule, resentment over past neglect remained profound. The PT also failed to win much applause from indigenous people and environmentalists for its strong backing for the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam project. What was at the time the worst environmental disaster caused by mining in Brazilian history occurred during the Rousseff presidency.

Yet beyond the PT's more obvious 'pacts with capital' lay a deeper embrace of the logic of neoliberal market society, with profound repercussions. With the laudable intention of improving their living standards, the PT promoted the extension of credit to the poorer sectors of Brazilian society. A sense of being able to participate in consumer society added to the 'feel good' effect of PT rule, but the economic downturn rapidly produced crises of personal debt. It also promoted the neoliberal cultural transformation towards construction of the self through consumption. This kind of individualization had negative consequences for maintaining solidarity within communities and social movements. In this, PT governments were acquiescing in processes of social change being promoted by other forces, including ever-expanding evangelical churches preaching prosperity theology and self-help, which was also part of the package promoted by neoconservative US foundations. These foundations proved active in fostering the 'turn to the right' throughout Latin America through organizations such as the libertarian Atlas Network.

Membership of a neo-Pentecostal church may come to substitute faith in the ability of politicians and the state to offer individuals a better future. Yet as Crivella's victory in Rio de Janeiro demonstrated, evangelicals could compete successfully with left parties for the votes of the working poor within the political field itself. Furthermore, although it helped Lula regain ground, the discrediting of the PSDB and PMDB resulted in a situation in which the next most favoured candidate in the polls was the ultra-right, racist, sexist and homophobic former soldier Jair Bolsonaro, whose solution to the country's problems of crime and violence was to put a gun in the hand of every 'decent' Brazilian. The only form of politics at which Bolsonaro is truly adept is the politics of hate.

Openly expressing his admiration for the military dictatorship, Bolsonaro, who had been a particular mediocre federal deputy for more than a quarter of a century, was not really the uncorrupted political outsider that he claimed to be, and he and his sons, also politicians, turned out to have strong personal links with Rio's *milicias*. Yet his authoritarian and socially illiberal attitudes had some appeal across class boundaries, although the hard core of his support came from segments of the white middle classes resentful of the threat posed to their social privileges by the success of PT governments in improving the living standards and access to higher education of lower class people of colour.

Once Bolsonaro also declared his support for ultra-neoliberal economic policies, the damage that corruption scandals had done to the electoral prospects of the PSDB and PMDB made him an acceptable means of pushing forward the coup agenda both to Brazilian elites and to the US interests that supported their efforts to drive the PT from power. Bolsonaro chose

Paulo Guedes, a Chicago-trained economist and investment banker who had worked in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship, as his economic advisor for the 2018 election campaign, subsequently appointing him Minister of the Economy after winning the election in the second round against Fernando Haddad, who replaced Lula once the candidacy of the ex-president, now convicted and held in solitary confinement in Curitiba, was blocked by the Superior Electoral Tribunal.

Bolsonaro won the presidency in the 2018 elections with the strong support of evangelical churches and television stations and also through the systematic diffusion of lies and ‘fake news’ via an unprecedented social media campaign, financed by Brazilian business and US ‘dark money’, which remorselessly directed a negative politics of hate towards the PT, who were accused of undermining ‘Brazilian moral values’ as well as being a ‘communist’ organization, whose economic mismanagement was responsible for all the country’s problems. Yet Bolsonaro’s win also reflected the impact of the highest rate of voter abstention since 1989. This replicated the basis for the defeats that the Left experienced in the 2016 municipal elections at the hands of Crivella in Rio de Janeiro and Doria in São Paulo. Voting is mandatory in Brazil, but it is possible to cast a null or blank vote. In both these metropolises, the number of null or blank votes exceeded those cast for the candidates who were elected. This kind of ‘antipolitical’ reaction is not unique to Brazil. The record rate of abstention in the French general election that brought Emmanuel Macron to power should be considered in any argument that liberal democracy can be rescued by looking for a fresh face supposedly representing the ‘centre’ of politics. Bolsonaro was neither a fresh face nor a centrist, but he was the beneficiary of the same kind of disillusion with established political parties. Doria, the plutocratic opportunist, was happy to endorse him in the second round even though this could be seen as a betrayal of his former political patron, defeated PSDB candidate Geraldo Alckmin.

The growth of ‘antipolitics’ is evident from our own research in a large favela with a long history of grass-roots militancy in Salvador, Bahia, presented in the next section. But before turning to that, we complete the analysis of this section by looking at how a ‘popular’ critique of the 2018 Rio de Janeiro carnival parade unsettled the coup regime by projecting an understanding of the roots of the country’s problems that is consistent with our own arguments.

Two Rio samba schools stole the show by organising parades that were immediately read as ‘political’. Beija-Flor (Hummingbird), the champions, entitled their parade ‘the forgotten children of the country that gave birth to them’, juxtaposing the corruption of elites with the violence of drug gangs, police ‘stray bullets’, mass incarceration and social exclusion, which remained the lot of the people of the favelas. Beija-Flor made the bags of

money delivered by businessmen to politicians a central motif, but its parade conformed to a reading of Brazilian history in which corruption is seen as an enduring legacy of Portuguese colonialism, making the country a Frankenstein's monster, the first allegorical figure in the Beija-Flor parade. This reading contrasted with that of Paraíso do Tuiuti, the samba school voted carnival vice champions, whose theme 'My God, my God, is slavery extinct?' pointed the finger at slavery as the foundation of Brazil's enduring social inequalities by focusing on the coup's attack on the rights of workers.

This school savagely satirized those who had participated in the street demonstrations in favour of Rousseff's impeachment; they were presented as being manipulated by giant hands, representing the Globo media empire and the São Paulo Federation of Industries (FIESP), creator of the symbolic yellow ducks on which other *manifestoches* (demonstrator puppets) were mounted.² The last element in Paraíso do Tuiuti's parade was an image of a vampire bearing a striking resemblance to Temer and wearing a presidential sash. Direct critique of the coup proved too much for Globo TV, whose commentators simply stopped commentating as the meaning of the performance unfolded, but it was to little avail, since the video immediately went viral on social networks.

A number of journalists and academics have commented on the difference between the Beija-Flor reading of the roots of Brazil's problems and that of Paraíso do Tuiuti. The latter conforms to sociologist Jessé Souza's insistence that we should stop trying to explain Brazil's problems in terms of historically rooted cultures of corruption. Corruption is hardly a uniquely Brazilian vice and is associated with contemporary capitalist financialization (Souza 2017). Souza urges us to focus instead on how Brazil's elite has replicated the logic of a slave-owning society up to the present, not only in its attitudes to labour but in its entire strategy of accumulation, characterized by a short-term rentier orientation based on plundering the population through high interest rates and liquidating natural resources without thought for the future.

A View from Below: The Political Perspectives of the 'Popular' Classes

We have conducted more than a decade of field research in collaboration with the leaders of Bairro da Paz, a 'socially peripheral' area of the city of Salvador created by land invasion whose residents now find themselves living in a principal new centre of residential and commercial expansion. Our aim here is to develop the kind of political ethnography that Pinheiro-Machado (2016) deems essential for deepening understanding of how what Brazilians call the 'popular classes' think and act in the context of a coup. Our analysis

rests on a wide range of observations and shared experiences; in particular, our extended case study of the community's Permanent Forum of Entities (FPEBP), of which our research team were founding members, offering advice and logistical and technical support (Hita and Gledhill 2018).

We focus here on internal disputes between leaders of the Forum and other community organizations. We recorded the themes and political debates that emerged in the exchanges between members of a WhatsApp list³ created to discuss issues of interest to the Forum in 2015 and subsequently expanded by the participation of various other activists and figures from outside the community involved directly in its affairs, complemented by various interviews with these protagonists conducted at the end of 2017. We examine four different but interrelated conjunctures. The first, from March to May 2016, is when the national debate around the impeachment began. The second, between August and October 2016, started with the Senate's confirmation of Rousseff's impeachment and ended with heavy electoral defeats for the PT throughout the country. The third, between November 2016 and February 2017, was one in which the coup advanced its agenda on fiscal austerity and labour reform, but the country was sliding deeper into economic and political crisis. The fourth conjuncture takes us up to January 2018, which was marked by growing support for Lula's return to the presidency in the face of escalating political polarization and moral crisis, and ending with the Porto Alegre tribunal's ratification of Lula's conviction by Moro. This made Lula's imprisonment and eventual exclusion from the election possible, after the Supreme Court rejected pleas from Lula's defence team and a ruling from the United Nations Human Rights Committee that the sentence be deferred until all appeals had been exhausted.

The objectives of the FPEBP are defined by Article 2 of its rules, revisited by its secretariat, employees of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia NGO, between April and May 2016 in an effort to defend the collective against the attacks of critics, especially Bocão, volunteer anchor person of the Community Radio station, who always questioned what other community leaders did in an aggressive manner. Bocão never tired of accusing leaders of offering 'pseudo leadership', describing the community as a place where there were 'many chiefs but few Indians'. He complained that when he denounced major problems reported to the Community Radio on the WhatsApp list, leaders showed little interest in resolving them, preferring to participate in meetings that never led to action and pursue their personal interests. Article 2 states that the Forum should act as an inclusive higher council for deliberation and debate on the community's problems, diagnosing them but leaving it to the individual entities, in particular the Residents' Council, to execute actions to solve them. Yet the principle of seeking to support the entities without competing with them in the production of concrete actions was al-

ways interpreted in different ways by different participants, particularly new members not familiar with the Forum's rules or the history of past discussions. This inevitably produced conflicts and misunderstandings, a sensation of always starting everything again from scratch, and desires to establish new rules depending on who was participating most at a given moment.

The postures of members of the WhatsApp list remained more or less consistent during the first three conjunctures, reflecting their ideologies and political and party preferences. Nevertheless, the third conjuncture proved a watershed, after election results had shown a significant advance for the right. During the first conjuncture, discussion focused on the impeachment and produced heated and polarized positions. One side opposed the impeachment in defence of democracy and the verdict of voters in the 2014 election. Some acknowledged mistakes by the government and especially by Dilma Rousseff herself, whom they not only recognized as lacking Lula's charisma and political skills but also felt had betrayed his legacy. Yet they contested various accusations that the other side was making against the PT, arguing that the party had provided Brazil with its best government in history, a government that looked to the interests of the poorest. On the other side were those who defended the principle that Dilma had to go, arguing that the impeachment was not a coup or attack on democracy but a constitutional act that was a legitimate response to a deepening crisis. It was clear that a majority believed most of the news that the mainstream media was propagating against the PT, which laid responsibility for corruption exclusively or principally at the door of that party.

In the first camp were Mino, leader of Apompaz, a grass-roots socio-educational NGO in the community; Bocão from the Community Radio; Dulce and Mario, important community leaders active in Catholic lay organizations; and Lia, also connected to Catholic groups and the PT's local candidate for election as a city councillor. Those on the other side, whose opinions were regularly based on Globo's anti-PT reporting, included the most important small businessman living in the community, Faustão, who had been very active in the Forum and Residents' Council in earlier years, along with some participants in community groups dedicated to Afro-Brazilian music and culture. Some of the latter were followers of Salvador's mayor, ACM Neto, who had returned control of municipal government to the political right in 2012 as a DEM candidate, although the state government remained under the control of the PT. ACM Neto astutely sought to build political support in poor communities by patronizing truly 'popular' black culture.⁴ The main DEM political operator in the community and candidate for city councillor was Waldemar, a native of São Paulo, who had lived in Bairro da Paz since 2012 and worked for the municipality, bringing problems reported by residents to the relevant city government departments for resolution.

Other leaders of cultural groups belonged to the ranks of the critics of impeachment but adopted a softer tone. Particularly notable was Caio, who had been co-ordinator of the Forum during one of its most active periods. Associated with militant black politics, Caio adopted more aggressive postures towards authority, including the police Community Security Base installed under Bahia's equivalent of Rio's UPP programme. A member of the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) and advisor to Silvio Humberto, one of its town councillors and an important figure in the Unified Black Movement, Caio seized the opportunity to criticize the PT but without supporting the impeachment. This was also the posture of the PSB's leader in Bahia, Senator Lidice da Mata. Rejecting the pro-impeachment stance adopted by her party nationally but without defending the record of a party that was an electoral rival, she participated in street protests convened in the name of defending democracy that identified the impeachment as a coup.

Few participants in these debates referred to these street protests, with the exception of Bocão, who constantly pointed to information that did not appear on *Globo News*, and Renan, who worked on family health projects and posted news reports from the *New York Times* that also questioned the vision offered by mainstream Brazilian media. The debates during the first conjuncture focused on whether the impeachment was correct or not, and the postures adopted were strongly polarized, reflecting the pattern in society as a whole.

In the second conjuncture, discussion of the impeachment virtually ended, and attention was focused on the coming elections. The majority believed the impeachment to be irreversible and justified by the incapacity of the PT and Rousseff to control the crisis that the country was experiencing, for which they had rightly been judged culpable. Only those who had declared themselves against the impeachment continued to defend the PT indirectly, and most of those produced arguments in favour of the type of left-wing leaderships for which people should continue to vote because they defended the interests of the kind of people who lived in the neighbourhood. In the new conjuncture, Caio aligned less ambiguously with this group. Yet anyone sympathetic to the Left was ferociously counterattacked. Those with strong partisan sympathies tried to use the WhatsApp list to make political propaganda in favour of their preferred candidates, inside and outside the neighbourhood, provoking a reaction in which the majority of participants favoured a rule prohibiting its use for party political purposes. The FPEBP's secretariat argued that the list's space for expression of popular perspectives on politics should focus on the common good of the neighbourhood rather than party politics, which only raised passions and produced disunity.

The results of the October 2016 local elections showed that the majority of the 7,720 registered voters of Bairro da Paz had withdrawn the sup-

port that they had previously given to the PT. In Salvador as a whole, mayor ACM Neto secured re-election with an overwhelming majority, including within the popular classes. He reversed his heavy defeat by the PT in Bairro da Paz in 2012 by securing 63 per cent of the community's votes – 2,000 votes more than the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) candidate of a left coalition that included the PT. In the elections for councillors, the candidates of minor parties that the mayor brought into his coalition and provided with active personal support included the *pagode* singer Igor Kannário, whose songs were enormously popular amongst the youth of the urban periphery because of their constant references to the world of crime and police violence. Kannário received 150 votes in Bairro da Paz. Of the community's own candidates, Lia of the PT secured most votes, with 328, but was only just ahead of Waldemar, the DEM candidate, with 299, and candidates from the mayor's coalition secured over 24 per cent of the votes for councillors cast in Bairro da Paz. Yet even more voters no longer wanted to have anything to do with political parties. The number of null and blank votes amounted to almost 29 per cent.

Symptomatic of how popular anger focused on disillusion with the PT during the second conjuncture was Bocão of the Community Radio, who earned his living working as a security guard in a supermarket in a nearby middle-class neighbourhood. Having once been a PT militant himself, he continued defending Lula even after confessing his disillusion with the party, but he now began to make stronger criticisms of PT corruption. When Mino continued to defend the PT in a combative manner, this provoked escalating counterattacks from the *antipetistas*. They not only accused Mino of having a personal economic interest in defending his party, as an advisor to PT politician Vânia Galvão, but also attacked his socio-educational projects, which had played an important role in getting young people from Bairro da Paz access to higher education and received economic support through his political networks outside the community. Some of Mino's critics, especially from the cultural groups patronized by ACM Neto, went so far as to seek to humiliate him personally.

Polarization on party lines was dampened a little by the debates about the divisive nature of using the WhatsApp list for electoral propaganda purposes, which continuously produced calls for the unity, tolerance and patience that would enable people to focus on what really mattered for the neighbourhood as a whole. Yet no real consensus was reached on this issue, and other contradictions emerged. Lia, the PT candidate for councillor, administered one of the community's Catholic crèches. She was enthusiastic about the various social projects that the Community Security Base (BCS) was developing in the neighbourhood and enjoyed cordial relations with its commander. Despite the doubts expressed by some of the leaders of the

other entities that participated in the FPEBP, the commander insisted that the BCS had the right to become a member of the Forum as an entity working in the neighbourhood, in the same way as the Santa Casa or groups from the Federal University. He also participated in the WhatsApp debates, which provoked difficulties when participants complained about truculent treatment of residents by the base police and Special Patrol Group police, who periodically entered the community searching for drug traffickers.

Difficulties escalated as the Forum began to prepare a public meeting on neighbourhood security to discuss alleged abuses committed by police and agents of the municipal government's commercial regulation department in the community. The base commander declared that this meeting was being transformed into a political act, attacking Caio in particular, in public and via the WhatsApp list, for criticizing the BCS as an institution of the repressive state without recognizing the benefits of its social programmes to the community. As tensions mounted, some new WhatsApp groups were created that excluded all 'external entities' and were restricted solely to residents of the neighbourhood.

When neither of the neighbourhood's own candidates (Lia and Waldemar) were elected councillors, some participants in the original list complained that the effect of trying to suppress discussion of electoral matters had been to ensure that more residents gave their votes to candidates from outside the community. One of the outsiders, Igor Kannário, had enjoyed a special opportunity to enhance his profile inside it. In September 2016, he had been the star attraction in an event called 'Culture of Peace', criticized by the Residents' Council, some Forum members and the community newspaper for having been sponsored by the Military Police through the BCS. This was certainly not all 'new politics'. Some of the younger members of the cultural groups may not have campaigned directly for Waldemar and the DEM but they did help him to hand out T-shirts and drum up votes in return for promises to asphalt streets and attend to other infrastructure problems in more precarious areas of the community.

The Kannário show was followed by support from the BCS and municipality for their own events. It was no coincidence that new members from these groups joined the WhatsApp list before the elections, arguing that the community had to ask for more of the kinds of benefits that Kannário's event had brought, which included some free medical attention. These young people aggressively rejected the platforms of other parties, including Caio's insistence on the need for affirmative action to combat racial inequalities, which united this PSB militant with Mino of the PT in a further polarization of the debates. But the DEM triumph reflected the success of the Right in deploying clientelistic ways of doing politics to make the most of an electoral environment reshaped by disillusion with the PT and antipolitics.

There were still moments in which more or less the whole community managed to come together. The public meeting on security produced evidence of real problems and served as a vehicle for complaining about inadequate investigation of past human rights abuses, which included extrajudicial killings. The Forum and Residents' Council successfully resisted the BCS commander's demand to act as co-organizer of the event, provoking a truculent reaction in which he threatened to take action against some community leaders for disrespecting his lawful authority. Another case that produced consensus amongst members of the WhatsApp group was a demand that the construction companies responsible for building a new metro station that would affect residents of the neighbourhood should negotiate about the compensations due to the community in the form of social projects with its representatives rather than impose them without consultation. Direct action in the form of blocking the main road running past the neighbourhood into the city centre was discussed as a way of pressing this and other demands related to getting the same kinds of benefits for the community out of the restructuring of the local transport system as were planned for middle-class residential areas in the vicinity. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the presence of the BCS has become more acceptable to residents over the years and that it has produced greater fragmentation in the popular organizations of the community as the result of the emergence of new leaders more closely aligned with government as a result of the projects sponsored by the base.

The tendency in our third conjuncture was for sentiment to turn against the government installed by the coup. In different ways, and with growing critical attention to what was disseminated by mainstream media, even the most conservative participants in the WhatsApp group began to diminish their expressions of rage against PT corruption, as if they were finally becoming conscious that they had been manipulated. This seems to have been the case with small businessman Faustão, but there was also a change of posture on the part of the followers of Kannário, who slowly began to disengage from defence of the DEM. This change of attitude was driven by rejection of the coup's retrograde legislative agenda on labour and public spending, and direct experience of rising unemployment and precarization of the jobs that remained. Growing evidence for corruption on the part of leading figures of the PMDB and PSDB also helped shift the focus of discussions towards rejection of Temer. Although some participants still refused to name the coup a coup, most who had contested the idea that the impeachment had been a coup earlier now fell silent. Some continued to express a special hatred towards the PT and insisted that its eventual return to power was unthinkable, but expressions of indignation about the corruption of all politicians became the order of the day. This strengthening of 'antipolitics' during

the third conjuncture did not, however, seem likely to produce a general PT recovery.

Yet as the results of interviews conducted towards the end of the fourth conjuncture demonstrated, Lula's personal political recovery did manifest strongly in Bairro da Paz. Even some who suspected that he might actually be guilty of personal corruption now saw his return to the presidency as the best solution for the country and the poor, confident that a new Lula government would cancel the retrograde measures imposed by the coup regime. A striking result was that even some of ACM Neto's supporters, including Waldemar, declared that they would vote for Lula in national elections, and there were tantalizing hints that some would vote for an alternative candidate nominated by Lula should he be debarred from contesting the election. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that Lula opened up a new chapter in Brazilian populism by being 'of' the people rather than simply managing to convince them that he could govern successfully in the interests of the less privileged. National polls at the time of these interviews showed that Lula's support was particularly strong in the north-east, but it was not restricted to that region, as he enjoyed substantial middle-class support as well, although it was less clear to whom, if anyone, his votes would transfer were he unable to stand. Some of those interviewed in Bairro da Paz simply said that they would not vote at all if they could not vote for Lula.

Conclusions

The one thing that all Brazilians could agree upon at the start of 2018 was that their society was profoundly polarized. Although this polarization expressed itself in a politics of resentment on the part of better off Brazilians towards citizens who had achieved a modest social ascent during the years of PT rule, we have shown ethnographically that polarization, anger and hate also became manifest within relatively deprived communities. The crisis provoked by the coup revealed long-standing strands of social conservatism and support for authoritarian solutions in Brazilian society. Yet change in social values is also evident.

Some of the young people who took to the streets to demand the ouster of Dilma Rousseff combined support for unfettered free market economics with socially liberal attitudes on questions such as sexual preference. The fostering of cultures of consumption and identity politics have turned Brazil into a neoliberal market society that sometimes seems the epitome of a new social world in which the economic becomes the measure of all things, inhabited by individualized subjects who, as Dardot and Laval put it, are 'one day invited to change cars, the next to change partners, the next

their identity, and another day their sex' (Dardot and Laval 2014: 325). Yet since many people in poor communities like Bairro da Paz, including some PT supporters, remain socially conservative, support for the politics of Jair Bolsonaro can be found in all social classes. Bolsonaro's proposals for solving the crisis in public security were obviously class biased, but lower-class Brazilians have shown a notorious willingness to accept repressive policing when it is directed at 'bandits' rather than at themselves as 'honest workers'. This ensured some support for Bolsonaro's 'iron fist' public security policies amongst (mostly male) residents of poor communities nationally, although in the 2018 elections Haddad did beat Bolsonaro in Bahia and the other states of the north-east. In terms of both repression and interventions by social workers in the lives of the poor, Brazil exemplifies the Janus face of what Wacquant calls the 'neoliberal government of social insecurity' (Wacquant 2009) but in doing so draws on historically rooted notions about keeping racialized lower classes in their proper place, with which members of those classes can be partially complicit.

Nevertheless, the political resurrection of former president Lula demonstrated that the lower classes have a sticking point when it comes to elite attempts to renew their exclusion from democratic political life. In dismissing 'lulapetismo' as 'mere populism' based on the manipulation of 'ignorant *nordestinos*', Brazilian elites make two mistakes. They misread the deep-seated demands for respect and equal treatment embedded in the structures of feeling of the 'popular classes' and the capacity for self-organization that they still possess despite the impacts of neoliberal governmentality. They also ignore those sectors of the middle classes whose politics are not driven by resentment but by a genuine desire to create a fairer and more egalitarian society free of patriarchal violence and homophobia. Only elites have any reason to welcome the coup's efforts to return Brazil to its former status as an agro-export and resource extraction periphery of the capitalist world economy at whatever environmental and social cost, advanced further by the Bolsonaro government giving the green light to accelerated deforestation in Amazonia and agribusiness use of ever more dangerous agro-toxins despite high existing levels of contamination of urban water supplies and other public health risks.

Where polarization and the growth of a politics of resentment and hate will eventually lead remains as uncertain in Brazil as in the rest of the world, but it would be premature to assume that the difference between 'left' and 'right' has become irrelevant under neoliberal capitalism, even if old certainties about what the Left should do have been eroded. What the Right stands for is now starkly obvious to working-class Brazilians. The Left may need to pay more attention to the communalistic transformation of social property relations, as recommended by Harvey (2012) and Dardot and Laval (2015),

and to delivering on past promises to make democracy more participatory and also rethink how state power should be deployed if it is to truly empower citizens and promote a more egalitarian society. Lula may have had little practical alternative to conciliating elites and accommodating PT rule to existing political and judicial institutions, but the unreformed nature of those institutions combined with the reproduction of existing structures of social power made even moderate social democratic government vulnerable to overthrow in Brazil. Even so, it was necessary to resort to extraordinary measures to prevent Lula returning to power in 2018.

The road ahead remains difficult. The developments that brought Bolsonaro to power have revealed the anti-democratic consequences of the failure of Brazilian democracy to bring the military to account for the crimes committed under the dictatorship and the failure to protest against the military being assigned the role of 'guardians of order' under the 1988 democratic constitution. Generals felt empowered to make directly political declarations without precedent since the dictatorship in the new environment created by the 2016 coup. Equally unprecedented since the dictatorship was the number of former soldiers that Bolsonaro appointed as government ministers, although this also contributed to internal conflict within the administration between the more pragmatic military figures and civilian ministers determined to pursue ultra-rightist ideological projects. As time has gone by, the 'hidden hand' of US foundations, think tanks, corporate interests and government in the assault on Brazilian democracy and national resource sovereignty has also become more visible and documentable, especially in relation to Operation Carwash. Judge Moro was rewarded for services rendered to the coup and Bolsonaro's election by being appointed Justice Minister in the new government, with the promise of a Supreme Court seat to come in the future.

Nevertheless, as its true nature and the mechanisms through which it was carried out became clearer, the latest in the long cycle of Brazilian coups exposed the weaknesses not only of the Left but also of the Right and of the political forces supporting the coup that tried to represent themselves as occupying the 'centre' of the political field. This offers hope that the latest episode of authoritarian rule will be followed by the more profound structural reforms necessary to end the cycle for good.

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NOTES

1. Both Moreira Franco and Michel Temer were finally charged with corruption in 2019 but only after they had left office and fulfilled their roles in the coup process.
2. The 2013 street protests against rising public transport charges as well as the costs of hosting the Games in a country that needed to spend more money on public education and healthcare rattled the Rousseff administration prior to the Olympics and were generally seen as a positive awakening of young people. Less noticed at the time was the role of protestors with right-wing agendas, who joined the organized movements that demanded Rousseff's impeachment in 2016 (Gohn 2017).
3. WhatsApp proved a crucial element in the Bolsonaro electoral campaign on social media. Bulk dissemination of messages was funded, illegally, by business interests backing Bolsonaro and 'dark money' originating in the United States.
4. Mayor Antônio Carlos Peixoto de Magalhães Neto is the grandson of Bahia's most important twentieth-century politician, Antônio Carlos Magalhães, original bearer of the soubriquet ACM. ACM Grandson (Neto) has skilfully updated the right-wing populism that assisted the 'conservative modernization' directed by his distinguished forebear.

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