In June 2013 a small protest to prevent the demolishing of a city park in central Istanbul was subjected to excessive police violence. Within days, the tiny protest had become a countrywide civil revolt. The Gezi uprising, named after the park, has radically changed the dynamics of both elite and grassroots politics in Turkey, creating an enduring spirit of resistance among the millions who had never been involved in street activism before, and undermining the belief that radical popular challenges to the state emanate today primarily from the Kurdish, not the Turkish, population.

Millions took to the streets to challenge the authoritarianism of Turkey’s leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was widely regarded, at least by the international community, as a democratic figure, responsible for creating a “Turkish model” that could potentially act as a beacon for the Arab world in the transition to democracy. The Gezi uprising deconstructed this image outside Turkey while creating a deep political crisis within the power bloc inside Turkey. This crisis, combined with the newly vibrant wave of grassroots politics, is likely to alter irreversibly the trajectory of both parliamentary and street politics in Turkey.

In this article, I describe the history of the political and social conditions that structured the sudden and puzzling explosion of the nationwide Gezi revolt out of a small protest for an urban park in Istanbul. I first depict the macro-level political struggles that shaped the last decade and then portray the trajectory of grassroots political activism during the year preceding the Gezi uprising. The historical analysis is combined with my insights as a
sociologist living in Istanbul who witnessed the events firsthand. In explaining the uprising, I consider the grassroots effects of two political developments: (1) the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) had been involved in a striking level of intra-elite political competition for national power with the Kemalist establishment, which consisted of the high ranks of the military (the army), the civil bureaucracy (jurisdiction), and the Kemalist main opposition party (Republican People's Party) and their political party allies, and (2) the level of grassroots political activism, particularly against the government, had gradually and dramatically escalated during the year preceding the uprising in June 2013.

In its struggle against the Kemalist establishment, the AKP developed a hegemonic strategy of garnering ideological support from a wide array of liberal and left circles that were also discontented with the Kemalist establishment. Once it had beaten its Kemalist rivals, the AKP gave up its relatively liberal and tolerant policies and started to complement its neoliberalism with Islamist conservatism and authoritarianism under Erdogan's strict leadership. The AKP defeated its elite rivals, which enabled it to increase its authoritarian policies, but this then drove millions into the streets and undermined the party's power from below. I argue, in other words, that the AKP's victory on the elite level led to another, perhaps greater, challenge from the grassroots level.

The AKP, the Potent Target of the Protest

In the 2002 elections the AKP won two-thirds of the seats in the Turkish parliament. It was able to form a single-party government, a rare thing in Turkey, which has been ruled by coalition governments during most of the last three decades. The AKP gained wide support from those who were economically and socially hurt by the harsh economic crisis of 2001. The party has closely allied with an emerging provincial conservative bourgeoisie, which competes with the old secularist Istanbul bourgeoisie allied with the Kemalist establishment. In this struggle, the AKP was able to garner the necessary popular support from the poor informal proletariat and the rural population by combining neoliberalism, populism, and Islamist conservatism. This success also brought about a sharp crisis among political elites.

During the long decade of AKP rule, political competition for national power between the AKP and the Kemalist establishment, the close ally of the Istanbul bourgeoisie, has turned into a regime-wide political crisis. The Kemalists organized themselves into a semihegemonic bloc, consisting of
the CHP (Republican People’s Party) that was founded by Kemal Atatürk, but is today the main opposition party, and high ranks of the military and civil bureaucracies, media institutions, academics, and several NGOs. The AKP and the Kemalists have done their best to undermine each other’s political leverage by mobilizing every possible judicial, social, and bureaucratic force (Öniş 2007; Yörük 2012). In 2007 Kemalists mobilized millions of middle-class Turks into rallies in the largest cities of the country against the alleged threat of Islamic Sharia law (Şenyuva 2009). The same year, the army attempted to stage a coup d’état, and in 2008 the Kemalist bureaucracy tried to ban the AKP with the aid of the Supreme Court. In response, starting in 2008, the AKP launched police investigations that led to the imprisonment of many civil and military leaders of the Kemalist establishment, accusing them of plotting a coup. Currently, 15 percent of all army generals in Turkey have been imprisoned, indicating the extent of the AKP victory in the struggle. This has been accompanied by successive electoral victories, in the last of which, in the 2011 general elections, the party gained half of the votes (Yörük 2012). The Kemalists lost the battle—but their hatred for the AKP would manifest itself on the streets two years later.

A Year of Political Activism before Gezi

The year leading up to the Gezi protests had already been marked by a series of protests by Kurds, women, workers, LGBT individuals, students, and Alevi against the AKP’s unprecedented record of antidemocratic policies: Turkey alone accounts for one-third of all terror convictions in the world after 9/11 and has more journalists in jail than any other country, followed by Iran and China (Mendoza 2011; Committee to Protect Journalists 2012). Before the Gezi uprising started, Kurdish protesters had already helped push the AKP into peace negotiations through armed and civil disobedience (including a sixty-eight-day hunger strike of thousands of Kurdish prisoners from September to November 2012). In a country where women have had the right to vote since 1930, the AKP declared a series of policy changes that would limit women’s vested rights and liberties, including a proposed ban on abortion, and monitoring pregnant women and informing their families about the course of pregnancy. Official figures show that honor killings of women have increased fourteenfold between 2002 and 2009 (Turkish Parliament Proceedings 2009). This is most likely why women were the pioneers of the Gezi uprising, constituting 51 percent of protestors, according to the KONDA survey (2013). Women felt that they had been losing what they
gained before and that they would lose control over both their bodies and their future under the conservative AKP rule.

Women and feminist groups displayed powerful resistance to these policies, and they managed to force the government to withdraw the abortion ban. Labor disputes escalated significantly (including the Turkish Airlines strike and strikes in many textile-producing companies); LGBT protesters organized a strong public response against the killings of transgendered individuals; the student movement underwent a rapid expansion, especially after the riots at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara in December 2012 during the prime minister’s visit to the campus. Environmentalist groups launched several successful campaigns to provoke public reaction against government proposals to build nuclear power plants and new hydroelectric power plants. Alevis (a heterodox sect of Islam, whose followers constitute 20–25 percent of the population in Turkey) protested the naming of the new Bosporus bridge after Sultan Yavuz Süleyman, an Ottoman ruler held responsible for the deaths of many Alevis in the early sixteenth century. Hundreds of thousands from the secularist middle classes fought against the police barricades during the Republic Day celebrations on October 29 in an effort to visit Anitkabir, Atatürk’s monumental tomb in Ankara, as a protest against the government. Football supporter groups, especially the Çarşı of Beşiktaş, were also among the pioneers of the Gezi protests, and they had already and increasingly been involved in violent clashes with the police before the Gezi uprising began. Considering this history and the fact that Gezi has been identified by the idea of multiplicity, it is safe to argue that all the components of this multitude had already been active before the uprising. Gezi was but a unique juxtaposition and alliance among these different groups on the top of fierce police violence against the most “innocent” of these demands: “Don’t demolish a city park for a shopping mall.”

The Kurdish Conflict and the Gezi Unrest

The Kurdish peace process was critical for the Gezi uprising. The small protest over a city park led to countrywide unrest not only because of the “level” of state violence but also because, for the larger public, state violence was no longer seen as legitimate. The Kurdish political movement has been waging a struggle against the Turkish state for the last three decades. This struggle has led to a long period of armed conflict, but also to the creation of a vibrant Kurdish civil society and the formation of legal Kurdish political parties, HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, DTP and BDP, which were founded one after another when the Supreme Court quickly closed parties down for allegedly
supporting terrorism. In the summer of 2012, the armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish army escalated, yielding a stalemate in which neither side attained a clear victory. In the meantime, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, had been kept in isolation and incommunicado on the prison-island of Imrali for more than one and a half years. To call for an end to Öcalan's isolation and to urge the government to open peace negotiations, in September 2012 over 600 Kurdish political prisoners in Turkey (out of about ten thousand) started a hunger strike that lasted sixty-eight days. By the end of the two months, ten thousand Kurdish prisoners had joined the strike at least in part, in addition to six Kurdish members of the Turkish Parliament and many other Kurdish politicians. On November 17 Öcalan sent a message to the prisoners, asking them to end the strike “without any hesitation,” signaling the end of his isolation and the start of negotiations.

The hunger strikes of 2012 changed the political atmosphere in Turkey irreversibly. In the long history of hunger strikes in Turkey, this episode was unique not only because of the numbers that participated but also because of the level of larger societal mobilization that it generated. The strikes led to an enormous political mobilization first among the Kurds and then within the leftist and democratic public. After the fortieth day of the strikes, street protests were organized almost every day to support the prisoners, refreshing the activism capacity in the opposition in Turkey that had long remained relatively silent. Most importantly, the strikes lifted the isolation of Öcalan and led to the start of the peace process. In March 2013 Öcalan declared an unconditional cease-fire as a response to the opening of official peace negotiations between the Turkish state and the PKK, for the first time in three decades.

Since the 1980s the Turkish state has used the armed conflict with the PKK to govern Turkey by constantly militarizing the society. Governments have used the discourse of terrorism and relied on an eternal enemy-within to create and sustain a nation out of a population that otherwise would likely challenge the authority of a neoliberal state. Once this eternal enemy started to disappear, Turks were able to question the use of, at least excessive, state violence. This was most apparent in the coming together of Turkish nationalists and Öcalan supporters in Gezi Park, which would have never been possible had the peace process not started. In the same vein, for the first time in Turkish history, Gezi protestors in ethnically Turkish middle-class neighborhoods marched in massive numbers to protest the killing by Turkish security forces of a Kurdish activist in Lice, a small town in the Kurdish region, showing the extent to which the peace process and the Gezi uprising fed each
other. Free of the nationalist trap, Turks rebelled against their state and made it possible to transform from “being a nation into being a people,” in the words of the sociologist Nazan Üstündag (2013).

**Gezi and Class**

The class composition of Gezi protestors was much broader than any other public protest of any size that occurred in the last few decades. According to the Ministry of Interior, 2.5 million people joined the protests in all but two cities in the country (Sardan 2013). According to AndyAr Research Company, 12.1 percent of the entire population in Turkey participated in the protests, which amounts to more than 8 million people (Hatem and Taştan 2013). According to a survey done by the KONDA Research Company (2013) in Gezi Park during the first week of the events, 56 percent of the participants hold undergraduate or graduate degrees, while this rate is 14 percent for the Istanbul population in general.

These findings have led to a common observation that middle-class participation was one of the defining characteristics of the Gezi protests. Two types of middle-class sectors are said to crowd the protests: an emerging new middle class and a declining/proletarianizing middle class. According to Çağlar Keyder (2013), a new middle class of professionals and would-be professionals has developed extensive economic power and demanded a corresponding political power to shape and limit the policies of a conservative and authoritarian government. These new middle classes have been incorporated into and benefited from the globalized world by being positioned within an emerging market, and they would like to share the same levels of political democracy as in other developed countries. On the other hand, Korkut Boratav (2013) argues that most of the participants considered middle class indeed either belong to different segments of the working class or are becoming proletarianized. This includes service-sector employees, part-time employees (including call-center employees, interpreters, part-time graduate students, etc.). The second group of middle-class citizens has suffered from market conditions created by neoliberal capitalism established in Turkey after the 1980s, and especially during the AKP rule; henceforth, their grievances have been translated into street activism during the Gezi events. Finally, despite differences in economic well-being, “reclaiming the right to the city” was a common denominator for both sectors of the middle classes in fighting to protect the city park and protest policies of commodification and privatization (Kuymulu 2013).
Against this backdrop of widespread civil unrest against its rule, the AKP has developed a counterstrategy of deepening polarization in the society. By swiftly increasing the level of discursive and physical intolerance against the protestors (as opposed to what was done by Brazil’s ruling Worker’s Party, which faced a similar protest wave), the party managed to criminalize and marginalize Gezi protestors in the eyes of AKP supporters, thereby consolidating and sustaining its support base. This led to a sharp status divide, in the Weberian sense, between Gezi supporters and AKP supporters.

Yet the Gezi protests were more than a middle-class revolt, an argument formulated by Francis Fukuyama (2013) and embraced by the AKP. The protest originated from a middle-class habitus but swiftly expanded into working-class squatter house areas, especially to ones in which Kurdish and Alevi minorities are highly numerous and the socialist Left is powerful. Middle-class participation was high, yet all of the six protestors who died during the protests were from working-class backgrounds in addition to being Alevi, which shows the high level of class heterogeneity in the events. More importantly, one should differentiate between a first and a second wave of Gezi protests: the first wave was the one and a half months after the end of May 2013, and the second wave was the month after mid-September. While the first wave originated and spread from the middle classes to the working class, from Istanbul to other cities and from the city center to peripheries, the second wave followed the opposite direction in all manners: from the working class to the middle class, and from the peripheries to the center.

In sum, I draw six conclusions from this analysis. First, the social actors of the Gezi uprising were already on the street during the year leading up to May 2013; the particularity of Gezi was their unique and sudden alliance. Second, the AKP’s decade-long victory against the Kemalist cadres left behind a dissatisfied middle class, whose disappointment with Kemalist actors’ abilities to challenge the authority led to militant street activism as the sole form of political opposition. Third, the Kurdish peace process undermined the state’s claim that using violence against protesters was both necessary and legitimate. Fourth, the AKP’s excessive and now less legitimate use of state violence brought the groups together. Fifth, the AKP’s popular base has been solidified even more at the expense of increasing political instability because of the radicalization of non-AKP supporters. Finally, the Gezi uprising shows that the AKP’s victory in the realm of elite competition ultimately undermined its power from below in the form of grassroots radicalism.
References


NEW MASSES?

The past few years have witnessed successive mass flare-ups in India, Turkey, Brazil; street protests have ricocheted up the Balkans—Zagreb, Sarajevo, Sofia, Bucharest—to Ukraine, where Yanukovich was chased from office last month. Paradoxically, it is not so much in the recession-struck Northern heartlands but in the neo-capitalist Second World, and in the—supposedly booming—BRICS and emerging economies, that popular anger has made itself felt. The weakness of resistance in the advanced-capitalist zones, despite the provocatively regressive policies of austerity and financial bail-out, remains to be explained—and, hopefully, transcended. But the marginalization since 1990 of capital’s historic antagonist, organized labour, must be part of the answer. In the East and South, what social forces and what politics are in play? In NLR 78, Göran Therborn offered a survey of the global class landscape, examining the realities of the ‘new middle classes’ of the developing world. In this issue, Therborn analyses the oppositional potential of subordinate layers across six continents: pre-capitalist indigenous and peasant forces, ‘surplus’ populations, manufacturing workers, wage-earning middle classes. Under what conditions can defensive protests against the commercialization of public space and services, as in Turkey and Brazil, or popular anger at corrupt, repressive regimes—Ukraine, Maghreb, Mashreq—trigger alliances between them? In Brazil, a bus fare hike sparked demonstrations across the country in June 2013. André Singer examines the social and political complex-ion of the protests, finding a confluence of classes out on the streets: déclassé youth and ‘new proletarians’—a Movimento Passe Livre organizer describes a ‘gigantic quantity’ of the protestors working in telemarketing, with college degrees—and inflation-hit middle classes. What politics do the cadres of the new resistance movements bring to the fight? Lines of descent can be traced from the alter-globo movements of the 90s—Chiapas, Seattle, Genoa, Porto Alegre—as well as from the Latin American protests of cocaleros and piqueteros, and from the Colour Revolutions of the early 2000s (some with discreet Western embassy backing). But as Singer describes, in Brazil as elsewhere, sections of the right and centre had major parts to play. Mapping out the contradictory contours of these upsurges will be a central task as future waves of resistance unfold.

* Lucas Oliveira, ‘Está em pauta, agora, que modelo de cidade queremos’, interviewed by Maria Caramez Carlotto for Revista Fevereiro, no. 6, 18 October 2013.
SEVERAL DAYS INTO the wave of protests that gripped Brazil in mid-2013, I began to hear people referring to the demonstrations—half-joking, half-seriously—as our ‘June Days’. Marx, of course, described the original June Days of 1848 as ‘the most colossal event in the history of European civil wars’, arguing in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte that, though the proletariat’s uprising was crushed by General Cavaignac, ‘at least it was defeated with the honours attaching to a great world-historical struggle’; ‘not just France’, he wrote, ‘but the whole of Europe trembled in face of the June earthquake’. The Brazilian June also produced a tremor, but I would not go so far as to call it an earthquake. Nobody seriously imagined that an attempt at revolution was taking place. Class and property were not at the heart of the demonstrations, and the basic framework of the country’s socio-economic order was not called into question. The political rules of the game, too, were only targeted in a diffuse way; proposals for a constituent assembly and a referendum came to nothing, and were forgotten before the month was out.

Yet the protests acquired such magnitude and energy that it became clear something was happening deep inside Brazilian society. Though mainly concentrated in São Paulo to begin with, over the next fortnight the movement expanded to more than 350 cities and towns, bringing millions onto the streets. The surge forced the authorities to cancel an increase in transport fares, and posed a real threat to the Confederations Cup, the showpiece football tournament then under way across the country—preparation for the World Cup Brazil is hosting in 2014, on which it has lavished billions. The Rousseff government had to throw
the emergency switches, rushing to offer what the President billed as a ‘national pact’: a constituent assembly, more stringent punishments for corruption, promises of investment in transport, health and education. Little has come of these ideas, of course, but there have been further flashes of protest since June: thousands marched through the streets in dozens of cities on Brazil’s Independence Day in September 2013, and there were further demonstrations in Rio in early February when its mayor announced that the fare increase cancelled after the June protests would now be implemented after all. The questions posed so urgently in June remain unresolved, and discontent still simmers, with the World Cup now in view. The tectonic plates of Brazilian society appear to have shifted.

If it would be misleading to designate the demonstrations as ‘June Days’, what should they instead be called? Many years after 1968, Sartre is reported to have said he was still trying to understand what had happened that May; I suspect the same is true of Brazil’s June protests, so perhaps we should borrow the French term—les événements—and label them simply as ‘events’. In what follows, after a brief sketch of the course of the protests, I offer some preliminary hypotheses on two dimensions in particular: the social make-up of the demonstrators, and the ideologies that crossed paths in the streets.

**Chronicle of revolt**

The events can be divided into three phases, each of which lasted approximately a week. The first unfolded between 6 and 13 June, and was largely confined to São Paulo, though there were two small demonstrations in Rio de Janeiro. At this point, the protesters were mostly drawn from a small sector of the middle class, and they had a specific objective: to block an impending rise in the cost of public transport. The Movimento Passe Livre (Movement for Free Passes) played a prominent role in organizing the first protests; emerging from a confluence of PT, anarchist and anti-globalization strands in the early 2000s, it had been centrally involved in earlier struggles over transport, notably in the cities of Salvador in 2003 and Florianópolis the following year, where it secured free transport for students. The MPL now mobilized thousands of people on the

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same model, notably through the use of social networks. On 6 June, an estimated 2,000 people filled São Paulo’s Avenida Paulista, while a second demonstration on 10 June drew perhaps 5,000 to block major thoroughfares in the west of the city, eventually leading to confrontations with the police. The third day of protests, called by the MPL for Tuesday 11 June, also drew some 5,000 demonstrators, but this time there were pitched battles with the forces of order; newspapers reported many violent clashes and scenes of property being destroyed. The recurrence and intensification of the clashes prompted the PSDB governor of São Paulo state, Geraldo Alckmin, to adopt a tougher stance for the fourth demonstration, called for Thursday 13 June. On that day, a large number of people—the São Paulo State Military Police put it at 5,000, though the organizers claimed 20,000—marched peacefully from the centre of the city to Rua da Consolação, but were then prevented from reaching Avenida Paulista. From this point on, a tide of violent repression spread across a large part of the São Paulo metropolitan area, with the Military Police attacking demonstrators, passers-by and journalists indiscriminately for several hours. Participants and eyewitnesses spoke of ‘crazed’ policemen and open-air ‘battle scenes’.

Such excessive use of force drew the attention and sympathy of the general public. This marked the start of the second stage of the movement, which reached its peak with the demonstrations that took place between 17 and 20 June. Now other sectors of society suddenly arrived on the scene, multiplying the protests’ numerical strength many times over while at the same time making their demands more diffuse. The thousands in the streets became hundreds of thousands. On Monday 17, when the MPL called a fifth day of action, some 75,000 people marched in São Paulo—participants reported a much higher figure—and the protests were mirrored in all of Brazil’s state capitals. Almost every demonstrator carried a placard, resulting in a profusion of slogans and demands:

‘I don’t care about the World Cup, I want money for health and education’
‘We want FIFA-standard hospitals’
‘The giant has woken up’
‘I was goin rite sumfink clevah, but I aint educated’
‘It’s no joke. There’s money for a stadium but what about education?’

Unless otherwise indicated, estimates are from the press—the Folha de São Paulo or O Globo. These estimates are, of course, always controversial; I use them simply for reference, with no claims as to their accuracy.
'It was a funny country, it had no schools, only stadiums'
'Everyone against corruption'
'Dilma out!'
'PT = Pillage and Treachery'
'Alckmin out!'

Many other demands were raised, including calls for electoral reform and opposition to Constitutional Amendment Proposal (PEC) 37, which would restrict the attorney-general’s power to carry out independent investigations, effectively eliminating an important tool against corruption. A spirit of rejection of all parties and politicians was in the air, similar to the ¡Que se vayan todos!—‘Get rid of them all!’—that gripped Argentina in 2001. The mood was also expressed in seizures of public buildings: on 17 June, protesters attempted to storm the Legislative Assembly in Rio de Janeiro and thousands occupied the National Congress and Ministerial Esplanade in Brasília.

In this second phase, which coincided with the start of the Confederations Cup on 16 June, São Paulo began to play a less central role. The main focus of protests moved to cities where matches were due to take place: Brasília, Fortaleza, Salvador, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro. In Rio especially the demonstrations took on the character of a popular uprising, with mobilizations spreading on 18 June to the municipalities of Duque de Caxias, São Gonçalo and others in the Baixada Fluminense, to the north and east of the city proper. On 19 June in the northeastern city of Fortaleza, some 10,000 students and social-movement activists clashed with the police before and after the game between Brazil and Mexico. That same day, the São Paulo city and state authorities cancelled the increase in transport prices, frightened into accepting the protesters’ demands; similar price hikes were cancelled in several other cities, including Rio. On 20 June, when huge demonstrations were held to mark this event, the movement was at its height: gatherings took place in more than 100 cities across the country, involving a total of perhaps 1.5 million people. In response, four days later the President proposed a constituent assembly devoted solely to political reforms, which she suggested would subsequently be put to a popular referendum.

In a third and final stage, which ran from 21 June to the end of the month, the protest movement fragmented into a series of demonstrations with specific aims: reduction of traffic tolls, repeal of PEC 37, protests against
the government’s More Doctors programme, and so on. For example, a march against PEC 37 brought some 30,000 people onto the streets of São Paulo on 22 June; that same afternoon in Belo Horizonte, as many as 70,000 protested at the amount being spent on the Confederations Cup before the game between Japan and Mexico. Propelled by the momentum gained during the second stage, but now moving in different directions, the protests began to split, like a river dividing into many tributaries as it flows down a mountain.

*Middle class or new proletariat?*

There have been two views of the social composition of the June events. The first identifies participants as being mainly of middle-class origin; the second emphasizes instead the predominance of the ‘precariát’—‘the mass formed by unskilled or semi-skilled workers who rapidly enter and leave the labour market’. By analysing the available data, I would like to advance a third hypothesis: that the protesters could have been both at the same time. In other words, the demonstrations were both the expression of the traditional middle class’s dissatisfaction with various aspects of the national reality, and a reflex action by what I prefer to call the new proletariat. This group has many of the characteristics attributed to the precariat by authors who prefer that term: it comprises workers, mainly young, who gained formal employment during the decade Lula was in power, 2003–11, but who still suffer from low wages,

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1 For an example of the first, see Armando Boito Jr., ‘O impacto das manifestações de junho na política nacional’, *Brasil de fato*, 2 August 2013; for the second, Ruy Braga, ‘Sob a sombre do precariát’, in Erminia Maricato et al., *Cidades rebeldes*, São Paulo 2013, p. 82.

4 The data I have relied on in this essay were drawn from the following four sources: (1) two surveys conducted by Datafolha in São Paulo at the demonstrations of 17 June and 20 June (766 and 551 interviews respectively, with a margin of error of 4 percentage points either way), available at www.datafolha.com.br; (2) polls from the demonstration in Rio de Janeiro on 20 June by Plus Marketing (498 interviews, margin of error 4.2 per cent); (3) a national survey conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE) during the demonstrations of 20 June (2,002 interviews in eight cities: São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Recife, Fortaleza, Salvador and Brasília; margin of error 2 per cent), available at g1.globo.com; (4) research carried out at the 22 June demonstration in Belo Horizonte by the Instituto Innovare (409 interviews of 5 minutes, margin of error 5 per cent), available at www.innovarepesquisa.com.br. My thanks to Antônio David for alerting me to the IBOPE poll, and to Plus Marketing and Innovare for sending me their reports.
high turnover and poor working conditions. The information on which I have drawn relates only to a few demonstrations in a handful of cities, and therefore offers no basis for coming to definitive conclusions as to which view is correct. My intention here is simply to offer an alternative interpretation, through an analysis of the age, educational levels and incomes of the demonstrators.

Table 1 indicates the predominance of young people over other age groups among the demonstrators. Those under the age of 25—often taken as the point at which adult life begins—provided the relative majority of participants in every case, accounting for an absolute majority in São Paulo on 17 and 20 June and in Belo Horizonte on 22 June. Yet the presence of other age groups was far from negligible, at least in the second phase, as the marches increased in size. Looking at the figures provided by Datafolha in São Paulo, we can see that between 17 and 20 June the relative weight of the older age groups also increased, from 12 to 19 per cent. This does not point to a linear progression, however, as the later demonstration in Belo Horizonte had a particularly young profile, with 55 per cent of participants under 25. Despite this tendency towards a greater mix of generations, it is nonetheless clear that the percentage declined as the age of the cohort increased, with minimal participation from adults over 50—5 per cent in São Paulo—or over 60: only 2 per cent in Rio de Janeiro.

Table 1. Demonstrators by age group (%)

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Sources: São Paulo: Datafolha surveys; Rio: Plus Marketing research; eight state capitals: IBOPE surveys; Belo Horizonte: Instituto Innovare survey.
Janeiro. This was therefore a movement based predominantly on young people, complemented by a significant number of young adults—roughly, those aged between 26 and 39—and a smaller number of middle-aged and older adults. Taken together, the two main age groups comprised approximately 80 per cent of those on the streets.

As the data in Table 2 indicate, participants on the whole had high levels of education. A very small fraction of them had only primary-school education, either complete or incomplete: 1–2 per cent at the two São Paulo protests for which we have data, and 4 per cent in Belo Horizonte on 22 June, compared to 54 per cent with only primary education in the overall population. The proportion was substantially larger in Rio de Janeiro on 20 June, accounting for 14 per cent of demonstrators, suggesting that lower-income groups played a more significant role; but they were still very much in the minority. Comparable data for the 20 June protests in the eight state capitals was not available, but the low share of participants with incomplete secondary education—8 per cent—confirms that those with little education had a minor presence there too. Taken together, the figures suggest a virtual absence from the protests of the base of the Brazilian social pyramid.

Conversely, the figures show particularly high levels of participation among those with advanced degrees. In the eight state capitals, for example, no fewer than 43 per cent of demonstrators had a university diploma, and the figures for Rio and Belo Horizonte were 34 and 33 per cent respectively (data for São Paulo is lacking). By contrast, among the Brazilian population as a whole the figure was only 8 per cent, according to 2010 census data; even in São Paulo, where university education is more common, it stood at only 18 per cent. If we combine graduates with those currently studying at university, the proportion of demonstrators that fall into this group is even greater: almost 80 per cent in the two São Paulo protests, two-thirds in Belo Horizonte. Again, the national share of the population enrolled in higher education is only 15 per cent; though this has doubled in the last decade, it is clear that those with access to universities had a disproportionate presence in the June events.

The sociologists Amaury de Souza and Bolívar Lamounier argue that having only primary education is characteristic of the two sectors at the base of society, which they call the ‘working class’ and the ‘lower class’, together comprising 54 per cent of the population: *A classe média brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro 2010, pp. 18–19.

The prominence of students and graduates in the protests thus lends support to the idea that they were the expression of this social sector. However, an examination of income levels reveals a different picture (Table 3, overleaf). Firstly, the sector with the lowest incomes was a more significant presence than is suggested by their educational levels. In the eight state capitals, 15 per cent of demonstrators had family incomes of two minimum wages or less, and in Belo Horizonte the figure was 20 per cent. (The data for Rio are again strikingly different—and should therefore be treated with some caution: some 34 per cent of protesters apparently had only one family minimum wage per month.) If we

Table 2. Demonstrators grouped by education level (%)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>1 (Basic)</td>
<td>2 (Basic)</td>
<td>14 (Basic)</td>
<td>8 (Incomplete secondary)</td>
<td>4 (Basic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>22 (Secondary)</td>
<td>20 (Secondary)</td>
<td>52 (Secondary / Higher incomplete)</td>
<td>49 (Secondary / Higher complete)</td>
<td>31 (Secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>77 (Higher)</td>
<td>78 (Higher)</td>
<td>34 (Higher complete)</td>
<td>43 (Higher complete)</td>
<td>66 (Higher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: São Paulo: Datafolha surveys; Rio: Plus Marketing research; eight state capitals: IBOPE surveys; Belo Horizonte: Instituto Innovare survey.

turn makes more plausible the idea that what some analysts have called the ‘traditional middle class’ had a strong influence on the protests. Defined by the late Amaury de Souza and Bolivar Lamounier as a social layer that has ‘achieved its goals in the past and today has consolidated its gains’, this group has held its current status for at least a generation; despite recent changes that have allowed a sizeable number of young people with low incomes to enter higher education, in the majority of cases a university degree remains a distinguishing feature of this ‘traditional middle class’.7 The prominence of students and graduates in the protests thus lends support to the idea that they were the expression of this social sector.

7 De Souza and Lamounier, A classe média brasileira, p. 215.
add those who earn between two and five family minimum wages per month, who would still be considered among the lowest income strata in Brazil, we can see that together these groups accounted for around half the demonstrators (and still more in Rio: 88 per cent). In other words, a substantial proportion of the protesters came from the lower half of the country’s income distribution—in marked contrast with the image suggested by the data on education levels, which implied that almost all were in the upper half.

Making some very rough calculations, we could assume a family income of five minimum wages works out as 1.5 to 3.5 minimum wages per wage-earner. This would place the demonstrators among the occupations listed by the economist Waldir Quadros in his discussion of Brazil’s ‘middle class’: shop assistant, primary-school teacher, nursing auxiliary, clerk, receptionist, driver, waiter, hairdresser and manicurist. If 45 per cent of protesters in the eight state capitals and 56 per cent in Belo Horizonte had a family income of less than five minimum wages,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rio de Janeiro, 20 June</th>
<th>Eight state capitals, 20 June</th>
<th>Belo Horizonte, 22 June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest (Rio 1 minimum wage, others 2 min. wages)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate 1 (2–5 min. wages)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate 2 (Rio 6–10 min. wages, others 5–10 min. wages)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>High (more than 10 min. wages)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100’</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 6 per cent did not reply. Sources: Rio: Plus Marketing research; eight state capitals: IBOPE surveys; Belo Horizonte: Instituto Innovare survey.

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8 This is based on converting (in minimum wages of the time) the classification in Waldir Quadros, ‘Brasil: um país de classe média’, *Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil*, 1 November 2010.
a high proportion of them may well have been employed in occupations of this type. If so, they would not belong to the traditional middle class, generally employed in liberal professions or non-manual jobs, as technicians and administrators.\textsuperscript{9}

On the one hand, then, the educational levels of the protesters point to a strong presence of the upper half of the social scale, including the traditional middle class. Yet on the other, the data on incomes and the occupations they imply suggest that the bottom half of Brazil’s social pyramid played a significant role. The combination would tend to confirm the notion that a new proletariat or ‘precariat’ did take to the streets. The hypothesis gains plausibility when we consider that the majority of demonstrators were young, and had recently entered the job market—76 per cent were in employment in the eight state capitals, 71 in Belo Horizonte and 70 in Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{10} Moreover, the last decade has brought a marked increase in education levels, with an expansion of state university places and an explosion of private-sector institutions; the number of students entering higher education in Brazil more than doubled between 2001 and 2011.\textsuperscript{11} To resolve the contradiction set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3, then, we may conjecture that the mass of young people taking part in the demonstrations had levels of education higher than their incomes would suggest.

Taking all these factors into consideration, perhaps the best way to describe the social composition of the demonstrations is to envisage two relatively equal blocs. These comprised, on the one hand, middle-class young adults, and on the other, people of the same age but drawn from the lower half of the Brazilian social pyramid. Table 3 indicates that, with the exception of Rio, around half the demonstrators had a monthly family income of more than 5 minimum wages, and over 20 per cent received more than 10 minimum wages, a level more typical of the traditional middle class. This reinforces the impression that, while there was a sizeable middle-class contingent in the demonstrations, it did not account for the whole phenomenon. What the second stage of the protests produced, then, was a crossover of classes.

\textsuperscript{9} De Souza and Lamounier, \textit{A classe média brasileira}, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{10} According to surveys by \textit{ibope} in the eight state capitals, Innovare in Belo Horizonte and Plus Marketing in Rio.
\textsuperscript{11} Weber, ‘Brasil tem 6,7 milhões de universitários’.
Catalysts

Socially heterogeneous, it should come as no surprise that the June events were also ideologically multifaceted, embracing tendencies ranging from eco-socialism to neo-fascism via different kinds of reformism and liberalism. Naturally, the extremes of the spectrum were more visible on the streets than were the points in between. The progressive slant of the demonstrations was immediately apparent, prompting many at the time—myself included—to see them as the possible prelude to a new cycle of workers’ struggles, like the one that began in 1978 and lasted until the end of the 1980s. At the same time, there was clearly also a right-wing element to the protests which aimed to push back the popular forces that have been the PT government’s support base since 2003. Yet it might be easier to understand the June events if we look more closely at the centre. This is the hypothesis I now wish to test.

As we have seen, the June protests can be divided into three stages. The Movimento Passe Livre was the catalyst and connecting thread of the first phase. For the MPL, the protests were part of a larger anti-capitalist struggle: ‘The barricades erected against successive fare increases are the expression of justified anger at a system completely dominated by the logic of the market.’

In many respects the inheritors of an autonomist tradition that reached Brazil in the 1980s, the MPL represents a move away from what it terms ‘hierarchical’ models of struggle, in favour of horizontal, decentralized initiatives; in the words of the philosopher Pablo Ortellado, an activist with long-standing links to the movement, the MPL takes ‘enormous care over process’. This was apparent, for example, in the interview given by two MPL members, Lucas Monteiro de Oliveira and Nina Cappello, to the ‘Roda Viva’ programme broadcast by TV Cultura on 17 June. Firm and precise in their responses, the two adhered strictly to their movement’s objective—cancellation of the fare increases—saying only what their assembly had authorized them to say. Asked about trivial aspects of her personal life, such as her leisure pursuits, favourite books and films and so on, Cappello refused to answer, saying ‘We are not here to talk about ourselves’. She and Oliveira refused to project themselves as individual leaders, who could

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13 ‘Pablo Ortellado: experiência do MPL é “aprendizado para o movimento autônomo não só do Brasil como do mundo”’, Coletivo DAR, 10 September 2013.
immediately be absorbed by the star system. In a few short minutes, this absolute respect for the collective and rejection of the opportunity for personal promotion brought a new political ethic into the spotlight—marking the appearance on the Brazilian political scene of a new left, in tune with Occupy Wall Street and the *indignados* in Spain.

Yet by refusing, in line with their principles, to impose a meaning on the demonstrations from above, the MPL left the way open for views that were very different from theirs. The centre and right rode the torrent unleashed by the new left, and before long there were so many riders that they ended up changing the direction in which it flowed. Sections of the middle class aligned with the centre and right sensed that the protests offered an opportunity to express a vague sense of discontent at the country’s situation. Research carried out by Datafolha at the start of the protests, on 6 and 7 June, indicated that among voters in the highest income brackets, satisfaction with Dilma Rousseff’s government had already fallen significantly in the three months since March 2013, from 67 to 43 per cent. It seems that the MPL’s call to action, directed mainly at young members of the proletariat, reached the dissatisfied ears of the middle class. But what were they so dissatisfied about?

A poll conducted on 11 June by the Belo Horizonte-based Vox Populi Institute found that, of 2,200 people interviewed in 207 towns, half said they were very concerned about inflation. Economists who otherwise disagree on almost everything concur that there had been a significant rise in prices before the protests. For example, according to Luiz Carlos Mendonça de Barros, a minister in the Cardoso government in the 1990s, retail prices—which have a real impact on consumers—rose by around 10 per cent in the first months of 2013. Marcio Pochmann of the PT, meanwhile, suggested that for those with higher incomes the increases were even greater, since their expenditure is dominated by services, whose cost rose still further. The rising cost of living for middle-income groups might explain, at least partially, the dissatisfaction expressed on the streets in June. In my view, however, inflation on its own could not have supplied sufficient fuel for the protests; it may instead have acted as the spark for innumerable criticisms that the middle classes, on both left and right, were making of the PT governments. These had become

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all the sharper because of the difficulties faced by those living in cities, especially with regard to transport and security.

**Opposition banners**

The reality is that, from the moment a significant portion of the middle class took to the streets, what had begun as a movement of the new left rapidly became a rainbow movement, in which everyone from the extreme left to the extreme right was to be found. Thereafter the protests acquired an oppositional slant they had previously not possessed—both in relation to the federal government and to state and city-level administrations. During the march of 18 June in São Paulo—the fifth in that city—a group with far-right characteristics split off from the main body of protesters and tried to attack City Hall, where the incumbent is a PT politician, Fernando Haddad, who had been directly supported by Lula in the 2012 elections. That night the old city centre, abandoned by the police, was ransacked by a mob. In Rio de Janeiro, a campaign was started against the state governor and the city’s mayor, both PMDB. Brazilian flags were ever-present, alongside placards demanding lower taxes.

The right helped to strengthen the anti-corruption message of the demonstrations. The trials of those indicted after the mensalão vote-buying scandal, which were widely televised, ended six months before the June explosion. The affair clearly stuck in many people’s throats, and when the MPL issued its call to occupy the streets, they may have sensed an opportunity to voice their anger. The slogan rouba mas faz, ‘he steals but gets things done’—used in the 1940s to describe São Paulo mayor and later state governor Adhemar de Barros—has recently been levelled, more or less subtly, against the PT under Lula. The great advantage of the anti-corruption banner is that it can draw in all sectors of society, as a matter of common sense: who would be in favour of corruption? It is possible, however, that the right’s desire to attack the federal government led them to support a broader que se vayan todos attitude which may have rebounded on local and state administrations led by the PSDB. The assault on the Legislative Assembly in Rio, which

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15 In 2005 it was revealed that deputies, party leaders, bankers and publicists had been receiving monthly payments in exchange for supporting Lula’s government. Indictments were made in 2007, but the trial only began in mid-2012. That November, PT leaders José Dirceu, José Genoino and Delúbio Soares were among the 25 the Supreme Court condemned to prison sentences ranging from six to ten years.
from 17 June onwards took over the leading role in the protests from São Paulo, might be compared to the strategies adopted in Argentina in 2001, though there is no way of knowing for certain who was responsible for the violence.

The anti-corruption slant of the demonstrations was further strengthened when popular slogans against the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games were taken up, especially in cities where Confederations Cup matches were then being held. The ‘whitening’ of the modern temples of football being built for 2014, with ticket prices that are prohibitive for ‘blacks’—that is, most of the population—spurred a justifiable revolt by those ‘down below’. For example, on 19 June the Homeless Workers’ Movement, a radical urban organization linked with the MST, marched in the south and east of São Paulo to protest against ‘the rise in the cost of living and against the price of the World Cup, which is impossible for the workers’. Criticism of the amount being spent on sport gave the left a second banner to raise, alongside that of lower transport prices. Vast sums of public money were being used to build luxury stadiums that will be profitable for business, but will prove of little use after the tournament—and this in a country where the poor have no access to adequate sanitation, medical care, decent transport or public safety. Now, to add insult to injury, they were being excluded from the football as well. Ultimately, the leitmotif of the ‘anti-FIFA’ narrative was a critique of Brazil’s persistent inequalities.

The upsurge of protest in Brazil’s major cities was entirely foreseeable. The political temperature of the country’s urban centres had been rising ever since the October 2012 municipal elections, when almost all of the state capitals elected opposition mayors, regardless of which party had previously been in power. The tepid reformism that has characterized the Lula and now Rousseff governments meets with much greater obstacles in hyper-urban contexts, since any changes here cost much more and are likely to involve class confrontations that are not part of the PT’s model. Moreover, as the architect Ermínia Maricato has observed, in recent years there has been a resumption of violent evictions, which have victimized the poor; and ‘mega-events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games have added fuel to the fire’.

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Post-materialist politics?

I would argue, then, that the right brought the problem of corruption to the second phase of the demonstrations, and the left that of the inequities of urban life. This produced an ideological crossover that echoes the mix of classes noted earlier. Perhaps what was most novel, however, was the way the centre behaved. Able to lift either banner—protesting simultaneously against corruption and the privatization of public funds—it therefore unexpectedly served to generalize the spontaneous political demands of the streets. The condition on which it performed this function was that calls for ‘FIFA-standard’ hospitals and schools should not become a genuine challenge to capital, as the left hoped, or a real pursuit of those accused of corruption, as the right proposed. The centre’s willingness to raise both banners depended on seeing them as the reflex of a modern society against an antiquated state. This logic served to reduce the conflicts within society that the different demands might generate, instead focusing on the idea of a unified, participatory social fabric taking on an oppressive, backward-looking and corrupt state apparatus in need of renewal. This also explains in part why social networks played such an important role: as well as permitting a kind of participation that ran against standard political practice, the use of the internet and social media served as a token of modernity in comparison to an outmoded state.  

The centre which took to the streets of Brazil from 17 June onwards might be described as ‘post-materialist’, in the sense used by Ronald Inglehart: as societies gradually resolve their material problems, values change, shifting from an emphasis on ‘economic and physical security’ to one on ‘self-expression and quality of life’. This is a trans-generational process that takes place as those already socialized in a middle-class milieu, free from the material burdens of previous generations, become the majority, producing a sea-change in their manner of political engagement. The analysis of the June events offered by the economist André Lara Resende is a good example of this. Not coincidentally, Resende is one of the intellectuals closest to Marina Silva, the former PT Environment Minister who left the party in 2009 to stand against Dilma Rousseff as

18 For a symptomatic discussion of the importance of the internet in the June events, see the interview with Manuel Castells: ‘Dilma é a primeira líder mundial a ouvir as ruas’, Istoé, 28 June 2013.

Green candidate for the presidency. For Resende, the demonstrations were an expression of dissatisfaction with a state that had become a useless ‘drain on resources’. The signs of this, he wrote, ‘are so obvious that there is no need to know or analyse the numbers. The Executive branch, with 39 ministries absent and non-functioning; the Legislative, which supplies only bad news and frustration; the Judiciary, pompous and exasperatingly slow.’ The anti-state malaise has been propagated by the internet, running counter to official institutions and the traditional media. This is why the June explosion caused such bewilderment among all the established political actors. According to Resende, it was computers that enabled this cultural shift to take place unnoticed. He describes the underlying transformation in values as follows:

The relation between income and well-being is only clearly positive up to a relatively low level of income, which fulfils the basic necessities. From that point on, increased well-being is associated with what one could call quality of life. The basic elements of this are time with one’s family and friends, a sense of community and trust in fellow-citizens, health and a lack of emotional stress.

The June protests revealed the existence of a new agenda and stance which I believe are typical of what Inglehart terms post-materialism. If so, the second stage of the protests did not represent a hijacking of the movement by the right, but a much more subtle re-positioning by a post-materialist centre, in which both ‘FIFA-standard hospitals’ and ‘exemplary punishment for the corrupt’ came to symbolize the ‘modernization of Brazil’. My hypothesis that this broad current of opinion provided the axis for the second stage of the June events is based on polling data on the ideological profile of demonstrators in São Paulo (Table 4, overleaf). Those describing themselves as belonging to the ‘centre’ form a plurality, at 31 per cent; if we consider those categorizing themselves as ‘centre-left’, ‘centre-right’ and ‘don’t know’ as part of a wider centre, 70 per cent of the participants could be said to belong there. It makes sense to think that left and right found themselves in the centre when, coming from opposite directions, they crossed paths on the mainstreets of Brazil.

The presence of middle-class youth among the demonstrators is clearly compatible with the centrist ideology that ended up dominating the

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movement at its height. One of the most interesting questions arising from the June events is how these post-materialist positions were received by the new proletariat. For low-income workers, of course, a materialist agenda is still very relevant. Left and right have clear proposals on this: more state on the one hand, more market on the other. The centre seeks to escape this dilemma by means of ‘greater social participation’—something nobody disagrees with in theory, but which, once it is removed from the realm of distributive conflicts, can only be of interest to those whose material problems have been solved. According to the Ibope survey of 20 June, interviewees spontaneously mentioned three main demands. Political change came first, raised by 65 per cent of participants, with 50 per cent making specific reference to corruption; transport came second, mentioned by 54 per cent of respondents, while the cost of the World Cup was third with 40 per cent. It would be interesting in future to research whether there was any connection between these choices and the education and income levels of those interviewed.

It is obvious that there is little in common between ‘poorly paid young workers in precarious working situations’ and ‘ladies in designer clothes, laden with bracelets, brandishing placards calling for an “end to corruption” and broadcasting their opinions on Twitter’. Why, then, should the first group be attracted by the ideology of the second? The political scientist Henrique Costa recounts an episode that took place in a metro station in São Paulo during the 17 June demonstration. While a group of young people from the city’s outskirts were putting ‘free passes now’ into action by jumping the turnstiles, some middle-class youths were

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Table 4. Position of demonstrators on the political spectrum (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Centre-Left</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Centre-Right</th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Datafolha survey, 20 June 2013.
shouting at them: ‘no vandalism, no vandalism’; the two groups evidently came to blows. Judging by this account, there was a latent tension between the two social classes involved in the demonstrations, which occasionally—as in this case—came to the surface. Yet although the world of the post-materialist middle class might be objectively distant from young people in lower-income groups, it may be a desired goal for those who have begun to move towards it thanks to better educational opportunities. Sociology teaches us that, when no strong class subcultures exist, individuals can identify with the social position they would like to occupy rather than with the place they come from.

At present it is impossible to say which way the new proletariat is leaning. There could, on the one hand, be an understanding that the problems raised during the protests can only be resolved through greater social spending by the state, as the left maintains; on the other, they could adhere to the view put forward by the right that only a struggle against corruption will lead to greater wealth creation. It is also plausible that the new proletariat is drawn to the idea that the solution to Brazil’s problems lies in a combination of greater social participation and a rollback of the state, as the post-materialist centre believes. It is even possible that they might hold all three views at the same time. What Table 4 shows is that when the demonstrations were at their height, these different ideological currents were all in the streets together. Despite the symbolic expulsion of left parties from the Avenida Paulista on 20 June—possibly by far-right groups, acting with the silent approval of centrist demonstrators—the social left still played a significant role in the protests, even if it was not the majority. The right was also present, though it was much less important than it might at first have appeared to be. But it was the centre that predominated, both numerically, culturally and ideologically. The effects of the strange crossover that took place in June are still unfolding, and it is impossible to predict what the long-term outcomes will be. But we can expect further tremors during the World Cup this summer—and after it, as long as the country’s underlying social geology remains unaltered.

Translated by Nicholas Caistor. An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, no. 97, November 2013.