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KICKING OFF IN BRAZIL: MANIFESTING DEMOCRACY

On 6 June, nine days before the Confederations Cup was due to kick off in Brasília, the first of a series of public protests – 'manifestações' – began in São Paulo. They quickly swept across Brazil, rippling through at least 70 cities, including Rio de Janeiro, Belem, Belo Horizonte, Salvador and Brasília. The largest protests that the country, and indeed Latin America, has witnessed in more than twenty years, the manifestações have received widespread media attention and critical commentary both within Brazil and overseas. This dispatch reflects on these recent protests, signposting and discussing a number of issues that they raise in Brazil's current conjuncture and more broadly, such as urban and class politics, state violence, political mediation and representation, and the uneven developmental politics of Brazil's so-called 'emerging economy' identity. It suggests that the manifestações *pose challenging questions for all of these issues.*

On 6 June, nine days before the Confederations Cup was due to kick off in Brasília, the first of a series of public protests – 'manifestações' – began in São Paulo (figure 1). They quickly swept across Brazil, rippling through at least 70 cities, including Rio de Janeiro, Belem, Belo Horizonte, Salvador and Brasília. The *manifestações* have received widespread media attention and critical commentary both within Brazil and overseas. As we write this dispatch they continue to evolve, such that, as Emir Sader (2013) has put it, any attempt to explain away the protests would be tantamount to a form of reductionism. In fact, the difficulty in easily 'dealing with' the *manifestações* has been part of their political and cultural vigor. In this dispatch we signpost a number of issues that the *manifestações* raise in Brazil's current conjuncture, focusing on urban and class politics, and state violence, which we suggest are central to the historical context and ongoing dynamics of the *manifestações*. We also raise some issues around political mediation and representation in Brazil, and discuss the uneven developmental politics of Brazil's so-called 'emerging economy' identity, about which we suggest the *manifestações* pose challenging questions.

First, however, it is worth stressing the *manifestações*' absolute inseparability from football. Over the past year, Brazil has anticipated being in the global spotlight. The Confederations Cup held in June was the country's dress rehearsal for the Football World Cup that Brazil will host next year. As has been well reported, preparations for the event were far from straightforward. Out of the six planned stadiums only two were delivered within FIFA's scheduled timetable, and likewise transportation and infrastructure projects were beset by a number of problems. Nonetheless, by the start of the Confederations Cup stadiums were renovated, hotels primed, and restaurants

FIGURE 1 Protests in Praça da Sé, São Paulo, 18 June, 2013. Authors' own photograph.

and bars across the country expectant. In an impressive turnaround, Brazil seemed prepared for the world's gaze and, moreover, ready to assert itself on the global stage.

Come kick-off on 15 June, however, Brazil held the world's gaze for very different reasons; the *manifestações* were in full swing. Initially organized by the *Movimento passe livre* (MPL), the Free Fare Movement, protests began as opposition to a 7% increase in public transportation costs.[1] Metro fares in São Paulo, for instance, rose from $R3.00 to $R3.20, a significant increase for the city's minimum wage earners who on average spend one fifth of their salaries on public transport. Thousands of Paulistas took to the streets demanding zero-fare transport at a time when conspicuous spending on the Confederations Cup was evident to so many. The Confederations Cup catalyzed the protests, just as it provided the perfect global stage for the *manifestações*.

Democracy and the 'right to the city': contextualizing the *manifestações*

Public protests are not uncommon in São Paulo. The *manifestaçaõ* is an integral component of the city. In the three months leading up to the June protests, for example, the *Movimento sem teto* (Homeless movement), and the *Sindicato dos trabalhadores das universidades federais no estado de São Paulo* (Union of Federal University Workers in the State of São Paulo) led marches through the city, voicing demands and highlighting deficiencies in state provision.

To stress that São Paulo is no stranger to public protest is to underscore a key fact: while inequality is a salient characteristic of Brazilian cities, as Teresa Caldeira remarks, 'in the past decades both the marks and the meanings of inequality and the relationships and spaces in which they are manifested and reproduced have changed considerably' (2012: 385). In fact, one could tentatively suggest that São Paulo (along with other Brazilian cities) has become something of a democratic space in so far as *manifestações* are quite normal, that people, largely the urban poor and marginalized, routinely assert their presence and voice through such performative articulations. This urban

presencing, what Saskia Sassen has referred to as 'urban capabilities' (2012), not only offers marginalized groups new forms of visibility, 'it also expresses new forms of political agency, expanding the openness of the city's democratic public sphere' (Caldeira 2012: 385).
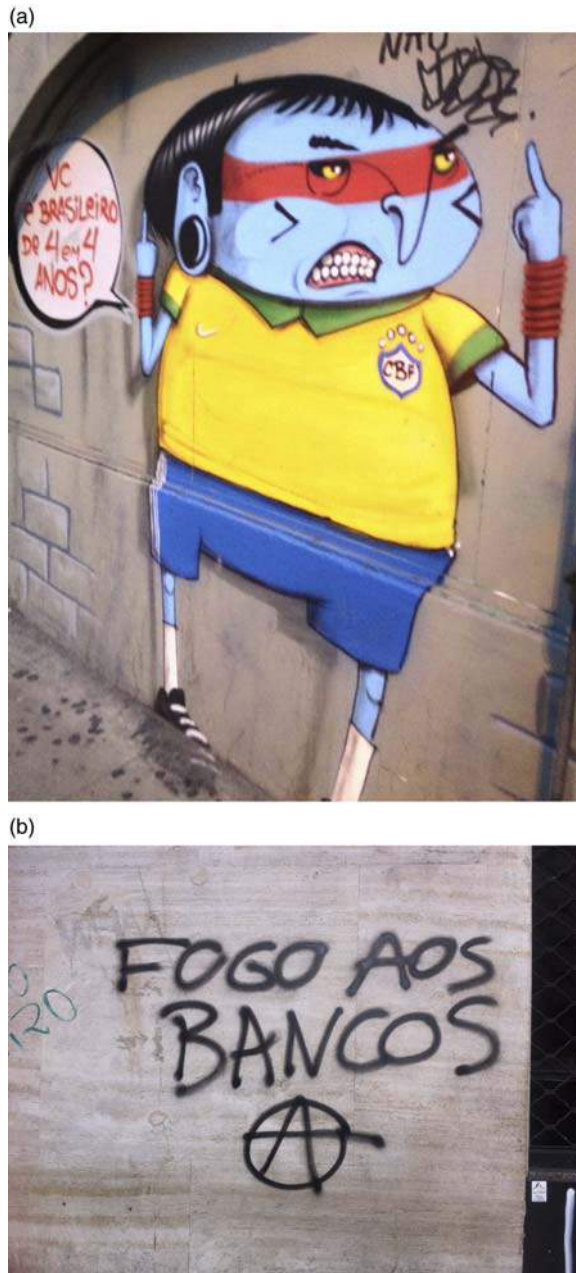

FIGURE 2   Political Graffiti in São Paulo.

All this is relatively normal in the only country in the world that, since 2001, has constitutionally guaranteed the 'right to the city'. A term first coined by Henri Lefebvre (1996: 63–184), the 'right to the city' is an abstract formulation denoting an imperative for the city's marginalized to become part of its production, and for urban development to meet basic social needs before serving in the interest of capital accumulation. In Brazil, however, this urban theoretical abstraction has been putatively grounded by an alliance of social movements, squatters, NGOs and academics that ensured it was enshrined in the 2001 City Statute of Brazil's constitution – a statute emphasizing democratic urban management, the city's 'social' function as a priority for urban development, and the well-being of urban inhabitants. As utopian as this sounds, this constitutional protection of the 'right to the city' emerged from the strange collision of neoliberalism and democratization that has been key to Brazilian developmentalism since the 1990s (Harvey 2012: xiv).

The expansion of political expression through Brazilian urban space took root much earlier, however, in the late '70s and early '80s, when social movements in São Paulo and beyond brought residents from the peripheries into the political arena. Their appearance followed the 'opening up' of political debate in Brazil, where, after the 1964 military takeover, citizen groups disappeared. The process of *abertura* began in 1977 and mobilized diverse sectors of the population, including women's groups and trade unions, to make their demands heard and generate spaces for oppositional movements. This new left became active in recreating a civil society, advocating anti-authoritarianism and expanding the terrain of politics by calling for discussions of links between everyday life and institutionalized power. Their mobilizations took to city squares, their claims for rights were incorporated in the constitution, and their ways of organizing became central to insurgent forms of citizenship that enabled a transition towards Brazil's modern political landscape (Holston 2009). Social movements also provoked qualitative changes to urban space, forcing the expansion of infrastructures and public services. It was during these years that 'democracy took root' (Caldeira 2012: 387). In the past decade, democracy has continued to penetrate deeply into Brazilian society, evolving way beyond the predictable realms of elections and party politics. Indeed, São Paulo's frequent *manifestações* signal forms of political expression that routinely use urban space for creative democratic articulation.

These days, the streets of São Paulo are the stage for varied forms of popular participation. The metropolis is home to politically inflected graffiti and tagging – *pixações* (figure 2). It is also striated by skateboarding and parkoor, rap and breakdancing. Since the 1990s, these practices have embedded themselves in the urban landscape, marking it, re-signifying it and taking it over.[2] Such urban mobilizations, and the subtle forms of political expression in Brazil they signal, challenge long-held stereotypical views of the population's passivity and the country's spirit of 'cordiality' that position conflicts in public space as anathema to national identity. They also force us to reevaluate ideas of Brazil's undemocracy, which have described universal notions such as citizenship and the public sphere as 'limited and contingent,' a legacy of patron-clientelism from the colonial period (Hanchard 1994).

Despite the ubiquity of urban political expression, as Caldeira (2012) affirms, such spatial movements have been by no means mainstream. Practitioners of these tactics typically constitute a minority of São Paulo's residents, who by and large stem from the working class. The MPL in this respect is significantly different in so far as it has

considerable middle class membership, and almost half of its followers are young college students whose families earn five times the minimum salary (Ibope in Pissardo 2013).[3] The recent *manifestações* and their particular urban interventions, therefore, represent broader class participation than previously associated with spatial and social tactics in Brazilian cities. As Sader writes, while Brazil's social movements have traditionally been linked to the working class and marginalized, the MPL 'represents a new generation and a new challenge' (2013).

Violence, escalation and emergent class concerns

In the early stages of the *manifestações*, the MPL's demands were dismissed and their protests largely condemned. Politicians denounced the demonstrations, with Geraldo Alckmin, governor of the state of São Paulo, describing participants as 'vandals' and 'troublemakers.' Journalists especially attacked the protests. *Veja* columnist Reinaldo Azevedo, for example, labeled demonstrators 'terrorists,' and Globo's Arnaldo Jabor compared the MPL to São Paulo's principal criminal organization, the 'Primeiro Comando da Capital.' Such condemnation exposed an authoritarian streak running through the Brazilian establishment. For many, this was confirmed on 13 June, when the state's unaccountable and ill-trained military police reacted to the mostly peaceful demonstrations with extreme violence. Using pepper spray, plastic bullets, tear gas, and stun grenades, the police indiscriminately attacked fleeing protestors and bystanders, injuring many. They arrested demonstrators found with vinegar (used to lessen the effect of tear gas) and hunted stragglers through the streets. This brutality provoked widespread outrage and drew thousands to a cause about which they might not otherwise have been aware. The press too changed its tune after reporters from São Paulo's main newspapers *O Estado de São Paulo and Folha de São Paulo* found themselves on the receiving end of the military police's violence. Mass mobilizations soon spread across Brazil, reaching unprecedented numbers. On 20 June, more than a million people took to the streets in 75 cities across the country, visibly affirming their right to protest – their right to the city.

While the *manifestações* began with specific aims – to reduce the fare increase – as they grew, they took on more diffuse demands that transcended class boundaries; as demonstrators sang, '*Não é só vinte centavos*.' They turned into protests about a range of issues: the military police's brutality, the impunity and privilege of politicians, the state's neglect of the peoples' needs and poor levels of public service. Demonstrations were also catalysed by a more specific anger at political corruption and the perceived failure of democracy in Brazil. Protestors denounced the legislation known as PEC37 that would limit the power of federal prosecutors to investigate crimes. Many feared the laws would hinder attempts to jail corrupt politicians. Federal prosecutors were behind the investigation into the biggest corruption case in Brazil's history, the '*mensalão*,' a cash for votes scheme that came to light in 2005 and involved top aides of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva buying off members of congress to vote for their legislation. Last year the Supreme Court condemned two dozen people in connection with the case, hailed as a watershed moment in Brazil's fight against political corruption and impunity. Most of those condemned, however, have yet to be jailed because of ongoing appeals. The *mensalão* and subsequent failure to convict those

found guilty have brought home a popular belief that while Brazil has in theory been committed to Republicanism, the country has yet to fully realize its liberal principles. The military police's brutal response to initial protests was a reminder that popular forms of struggle and organization are still repressed, that formal and abstract ideals of equality before the law are still not present in Brazil, and that legality remains constituted as a fatal cycle of the arbitrary judgment of those in power. For Marilena Chauí (2011) these factors are markers of authoritarianism; an authoritarianism that in Brazil has roots in the Iberian history of colonization and was reinforced by the dictatorship of 1964. That *manifestantes* fought back against military police violence can be read then, not just as a sign that the people will no longer stand for corruption and impunity, but also as a demand for the end of all traces of Brazilian authoritarianism. In this respect, today's *manifestações* take up the demands for anti-authoritarian politics that were central to the social movements of the '70s and '80s.

But if the protests highlight unresolved issues from the past, they also bring to light key differences between now and then, not least if we ask why the protests erupted at this particular moment? Seeking to answer this question, many have sought to underscore commonalities between the demonstrations and other recent global movements: protests across the Arab world, Occupy in the UK and the USA, student demonstrations in Chile, the *Indignados* in Spain, and other flash points throughout the world. These escalations have been linked to some or all of the following: government repression, high youth unemployment, falling living standards and anger over immigration. One can certainly insert Brazil's *manifestações* into a comparativist framework that links together the *élan* and social dynamics of all these mass public protests, especially when the role of social media is brought into the frame (see below). At the same time, however, Brazil is a very different story.

Since the Worker's Party came to power in 2003, the country has been seemingly transformed. Its democracy is stable. Youth unemployment is at a record low. The past decades have seen a sustained rise in living standards, leading to – and crucially so – a new and emerging middle class. For economist Angel Ubide the poor allocation of public funds is an important factor for understanding the *manifestações*: 'A new middle class has emerged in recent years who began to feel that their economic expectations were not being met by the state' (2013). Protesting against poor education, housing, transport and healthcare, as well as political corruption and rising inflation, which has left many painfully overstretched, Brazil's new upwardly mobile class, which has benefitted from the boom of recent years, now seems collectively conscious of the inadequacy of state provisioning and everyday infrastructures. For Ubide, the recent protests signal 'the awakening of the new middle class emerging out of poverty and underdevelopment' (ibid.).

It is, of course, significant that this awakening took place during the Confederations Cup, when the country was stage-managing its global profile. The *manifestações* have highlighted to a watching world a deep and broad mass articulation of anger at a smorgasbord of issues. As Barbara Szaniecki (2013) notes, the *manifestações* have become polyphonous. They are characterized by a multiplicity of demands and social actors, making it near 'impossible to discern a collective discourse and consensus.'

Leaderless protest, the challenge for political representation, and social media

While protestors' multiple frustrations may be patent, the *manifestações* have become somewhat inchoate, and, as some have bemoaned, leaderless (Chauí 2013; Saad Filho 2013). Their unprecedented scale, sudden surge and veritable polyphony have left many perplexed. Gilberto Carvalho, Dilma Rousseff's secretary general, for one, told a congressional hearing, 'it would be pretentious to say we understand what's going on' (quoted in Watts 2013). The failure to comprehend the demonstrations testifies to their multifaceted character.

Vocalizing varied dissatisfactions and demands, protestors are not united by a common ideology or political belief. This is markedly different from the past, specifically from the social movements of the '70s and '80s (Chauí 2013). Led by workers' movements (trade union associations), those popular protests were mobilized by shared and clearly specified aims and strategies: the introduction of social, economic and cultural rights, the right to self-organization, the introduction of a democratic landscape with new political parties to mediate with the state. The recent *manifestações* seem to indicate that this kind of struggle has now been replaced by a fragmented political landscape, made up of what Augusto de Franco calls 'micromotives' (2013). Thus while the *manifestações* may have inherited a tradition of political mobilization from the past, inserting themselves into the city and campaigning against poor public services, they represent a significant move away from traditional forms of party political affiliation. In this respect, it is significant that the MPL describes itself as 'autonomous, independent and non-partisan.' All of this opens key debates concerning politics itself, concerning organization and leadership, between those asserting autonomist tendencies (like the MPL) and those committed to more traditional party structures (including the PT). As Sader asserts (2013), the protests signal much more than a frustration with public infrastructures and urban services, they represent a challenge to the country's political groups, to the PT in particular, and point to the emergence of a new, uncertain political landscape.

'Leaderless protest' is not without its dangers. The abandonment of coherent single-issue political agendas and class-driven organization can lead protests down a 'flare and fizzle' cul-de-sac (Žižek 2011; Milne 2013). Worse still, protests without leaders open themselves to false friends. Indeed, Brazil's right-wing groups have attempted to co-opt and manipulate the protests to assert their own political agenda. For example, on 20 June members of trade unions and left-wing groups, including the PT, who were participating in a São Paulo demonstration were attacked, their banners destroyed and burned by Integralists draped in the Brazilian flag, singing the national anthem and proclaiming 'My party is my country.' In response, the MPL immediately abandoned the demonstration, denounced the right's attempts to hijack the protests, and temporarily stopped organizing *manifestações*. The right-wing media have also made efforts to co-opt the demonstrations, attempting to unite the population against the PT government. Initially opposed to the movement, as it is with all popular protests, Globo reporters soon began to promote the demonstrations by agitating against the federal state, realizing this would help wear down support for the government.

In spite of these specters from the right, and in spite of the protests' apparent political incoherency, the *manifestações* should not be dismissed, or mistaken as a sign of mass political illiteracy and naïve idealism. Neither is it the case that the organized left has been absent from the protests; the presence of trade unions and left wing groups testifies otherwise. As Szaniecki (2013) writes, while the protests may not be impelled by collective discourse or consensus, it is nevertheless possible to ascertain certain commonalities through their multiplicity: namely, criticism of politicians and urban administrators, and a demand for a constant and direct dialogue with political representatives and institutions. These objectives may resonate with those of the '70s and '80s social movements, yet, as Szaniecki stresses, they are also profoundly different in their emphasis on a need for *direct democracy* versus *representative democracy*. This raises the question of whether and how traditional parties, like the PT, can respond to this call for a new kind of politics.

The *manifestações* therefore expose how political parties can no longer rely solely on election results and opinion polls for longevity and popular approval. There is a need for parties to pursue ever more creative methods for constant dialogue with the population, what Szaniecki calls 'continuous listening' (2013), which in turn signal new temporalities of the political. This is especially pertinent for the PT given its grassroots origins. If, from the 1970s onwards, it was factory work that generated the unions, which in turn helped establish political parties linked to workers (the PT), there are now new forms of productive association in Brazil, especially in its cities, which require new forms of political organization, communication, and new ways of relating to and with the people (ibid.).

Another way of approaching these challenges is to suggest how the popular call for more direct avenues of political engagement signaled by the *manifestações* betrays a groundswell of opinion that the country's politicians constitute something of a 'political class' that thinks, acts and conducts itself *as* a class, alienated from the daily conditions affecting most ordinary Brazilians. This is particularly significant for the PT. Some commentators have suggested that the MPL gained traction because, after a decade in power, the PT has lost its appetite for social mobilization (Hennigan 2013). Many leaders of social movements linked to it are now ensconced in comfortable government appointed jobs, suggesting the PT has lost its connection to the people. The footage of President Dilma Rousseff being loudly booed by 42,000 people at the opening of the Confederations Cup in Brasília is telling. In this sense, and from the vantage point of the street, to resist turning the energy of mass public protest into a dialogue over a series of easily deliverable demands is precisely what holds the potential to split asunder the complacency that envelops the political class (see Žižek 2011).

The role that social media has played in the *manifestações* is not insignificant in this respect. Facebook, Twitter and various citizen journalism platforms have been key drivers of the gathering momentum and ever-expanding articulations (in both senses of the word) that have constituted this informal urban politics. Placards in the *manifestações* testify as much, 'Saimos do Facebook,' reminding that the geography of these protests is not contained just within urban space. The *manifestações* are at one and the same time thoroughly networked, rampantly viral, and rapidly dynamic, just as the urban itself is no longer isolated from the hyperconnectivity of virtual space. The *manifestações* have been fuelled by a 'revolution in communication that is transforming people's expectations of influence and voice' (Harris 2013). Gathering together, voicing and

manifesting 'urban capabilities' (Sassen 2012), has never been so accessible to so many. Social media have given a new generation of Brazilians direct and quick access to 'the political' in its ontological dimension (Mouffe 2005), in the process short-circuiting the formal channels of politics with which politicians are more familiar. Social media are also far richer in information and lighter on sensationalism than the printed newspaper and static TV coverage. As such, those who have taken to the streets are, in Szaniecki's words, 'super-productive, hyper-informed, ultra-connected and full of opinion' (2013). The political class's unfamiliarity with the dynamics and political potential of social media has helped consolidate them *as* a political class, that is to say out of touch with everyday urban society. The *manifestações* are evidence of social media's role in the very production of new kinds of participatory spatialities of 'the political' in late modernity.

What, then, of the government's response? President Dilma Rousseff's expression of pride at the demonstrations, which she said testified to 'the energy of our democracy, the strength of the voice of the streets and the civility of our population,'[4] can perhaps be read as the PT's attempt to rise to the political challenges posed by the *manifestações*, whilst also coopting them into a historical narrative of change through urban protest to which the PT itself is integral. More concretely, Dilma responded to protestors' demands for change by proposing a series of measures. After meeting with organizers, she encouraged local governments to reverse the increase in transport, which has now happened in Rio, São Paulo and other cities. She also promised tighter penalties for corruption through a new law that would classify it as a more serious crime, a R\$50bn (£15bn) program for public transport, new measures on health and job creation and a new Public Transport Council that would work with civil society to expand and strengthen urban mobility projects. In addition, she proposed a referendum on political reform. Legislators also dropped the controversial PEC37 Bill to which protestors were so opposed.

All this would suggest that the *manifestações* have been successful in achieving concrete changes; however, it would be premature to celebrate the protests as such. On 9 July, Dilma's call for a plebiscite on political reform was rejected in Congress on the grounds that it was unfeasible. Following disagreements between PT legislators and other groups allied to the federal administration, the leader of the House of Representatives, Henrique Eduardo Alves, instead suggested a commission of politicians to discuss the proposal. As Márcio Falcão observes, this commission excludes the people from the consultation process, ignoring calls for dialogue that have been key to the *manifestações* (2013). In July, the Senate also announced cuts to health and education that had previously been ring-fenced and subsidized by oil revenues. All this will surely only reinforce widespread distrust of politicians and political parties, and further enhance their alienation from the people. Indeed, while the *manifestações* evidence calls for continuous dialogue with political representatives and institutions, these recent backtracks beg the question – is anyone listening?

Of the 'B' in 'BRICS'?

The protests erupted at a time when so much tax income is being conspicuously spent on the Confederations Cup and the World Cup, hence the *manifestações*' popular chant,

'*Hey FIFA, paga a tarifa.*' The country has already spent R\$31 billion (£9 billion) preparing for the World Cup (R\$1 billion alone was spent on refurbishing Rio's Maracanã stadium), three times more than South Africa's total 4 years ago. Several stadiums constructed for the games have been pilloried as white elephants because they are being built in cities with only minor teams. The new £325 million Mané Garrincha stadium in Brasília has a capacity of 70,000, but the *Brasília Futebol Clube* rarely attract more than a few thousand fans. It is hardly surprising then that many have criticized tournament spending as wasteful and have also critiqued FIFA's own estimated profits, especially given the lack of resources and high costs of living that beset the majority of Brazilians, who currently pay the highest taxes of any country outside the developed world (36% of GDP) and receive little by way of public services (figure 3). It is no coincidence that the *manifestações* escalated during the Confederations Cup. Indeed, many of the protests used specific matches as platforms for their expression.

The 'Brazil as an emerging economy' narrative is not incidental here either. Despite the lack of single-issue politics, what *is* being expressed is the people's sense that they are not benefiting economically and developmentally while the nation-state's international profile skyrockets and the elites' pockets get fuller and fatter. Emerging economy for whom? The uneven development that is the result of Brazil's embrace of neoliberalism is painfully obvious now, as the country bends over backwards to comply with FIFA's binding covenants, often to devastating effect. For example, the next stage
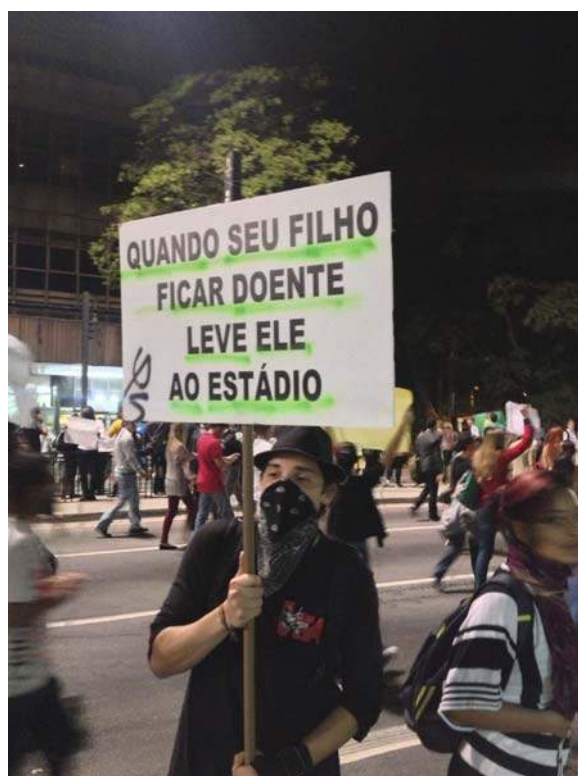

FIGURE 3 'When your child becomes ill, take him to the stadium.' Protestor on Avenida Paulista, São Paulo, 20 June, 2013. Authors' own photograph.

of Maracanã's transformation for the World Cup will involve the destruction of a monument to Brazil's indigenous groups, the demolition of a thriving school and the removal of its adjacent swimming baths, both of which serve the local community, all to make way for a fit-for-FIFA multiplex with maximal retail space from which to propagate as much profit, most of which will be siphoned out of the country by FIFA's multi-national corporate partners.

More devastating still is the destruction of poor neighborhoods and *favelas* as part of the process to make cities more palatable for World Cup crowds. Rio's *Favela do Metrô*, for instance, located just 500 meters from the Maracanã stadium, was leveled in 2010 and its families transferred to public housing estates in the peripheries. This is not an isolated case. In the past four years, Mayor Eduardo Paes has evicted 19,000 families from 192 slums around the city (Brisolla 2012). Those who have not been forcibly displaced from their homes have been driven away by the rising costs of services (Szaniecki 2013). These urban displacements only enhance the relevance of the 20-cent rise in public transportation costs for those whose commutes have been significantly lengthened as a direct result of these displacements. Thus despite chants of '*Não é só vinte centavos*,' for many 20 cents remains a real issue and, perhaps as a result, an issue that transcends class.

All of this testifies to just how Brazil's development as an emerging economy has been built on an embrace of neoliberalism and all the social and spatial consequences that entails. As the country has made great efforts to become a global power, it has seemingly turned its back on social policies adopted by the PT. These policies, which led to a significant reduction in poverty, the emergence of a new middle class, the acknowledgment of discrimination against indigenous populations as well as people of African descent, and a growing recognition of indigenous land rights and *quilombolas*, have been replaced with an emphasis on internationalism and an active role in the growing prominence of the emerging economies of the BRICS. Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes that 'policies aimed at social inclusion dried up, no longer meeting the expectations of those who felt they deserved more. The quality of urban life deteriorated as precedence was given to internationally prestigious events that ended up absorbing investments that were supposed to improve education, transportation and public services in general' (2013).

That the *manifestações* grew to articulate mass grievance about a range of issues united only by discontent at the state's neglect of social policies and peoples' basic needs signals a familiar story about underdevelopment. Public transport, health, education, community leisure facilities, and even indigenous heritage are commons resources that the state is turning its back on as it pursues its economic development. Whether this constitutes what David Harvey (2003) has referred to as 'accumulation by dispossession' hinges on whether the state has turned those commons resources into profitable use or not. But this is perhaps a less germane question than whether the state *should* do more to ensure it provides universal access to these commons, especially given its constitutional commitment to the right to the city. It is the street that seems to be posing the question.

What is happening in Brazil can also force us to think about broader issues regarding the BRICS and their growing global presence. For example, think of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, and, of course, Brazil's hosting of both of these mega-events in quick succession. As well as being PR exercises, such events are used to boost development by accelerating investment in national infrastructures and, so the logic goes, provide future growth. However, as Brazilian protestors are showing, the costs to the people and the public purse of this kind of global

FIGURE 4   Brazil in progress. Banner at protest on Avenida Paulista, São Paulo, 20 June 2013. Authors' own photograph.

presence raise questions about whether the money may be better spent improving basic foundations for society? Likewise, whether the money may be better invested in ensuring that Brazil's progress is universal and benefits everyone equally (figure 4)?

As we write, protests in Brazil continue. The movement that emerged in June 2013 is clearly much more than just two weeks of unrest in the streets. It remains unclear what material policies will eventually be implemented, if any. Yet, arguably, this matters little in the face of the larger changes to the political landscape and democratic process that the *manifestações* have already precipitated. What happens in the future remains open. As one 22-year-old student in São Paulo put it: 'It's a cultural shift for my generation' (quoted in Brooks 2013).

Acknowlegements

Notes

1   Formed in Porto Alegre in 2005, the MPL campaigns for free public transportation. See http://farefreebrazil.blogspot.com.br.

2   There are also other forms of cultural and political mobilization in São Paulo, notably the *Parada Gay* (Gay Parade), which brings over 3 million people to Avenida Paulista and Consolocao annually, and the *Virada Cultural*, a massive production of street shows that lasts 24 hours. These events, however, are less spontaneous and sanctioned by the city administration.

3   Both conservative commentators, like Globo TV's Arnaldo Jabor, and left-wing writers, such as Paulo Henrique Amorim and Chico Pinheiro, have also mentioned the MPL's middle-class membership.

4   In her first televised address to the nation on the protests, on Tuesday 18 June.

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