

PARTICIPEDIA

June Journeys

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Language

English



1st version 05/16 by Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça, UFMG, Brazil.

Problems and Purpose

The June Journeys were a series of massive demonstrations that happened throughout Brazil in 2013. These demonstrations were mainly triggered by the increase of public transportation ticket prices in the city of São Paulo, although they have evolved in very diverse ways, encompassing a wide range of claims and grievances. Within a broader and international cycle of protests, thousands of Brazilians marched on the streets of dozens of cities and flooded online social networks with expressions of outrage and of demands for change. At its peak, on June 20, at least 1.4 million Brazilians demonstrated in more than 120 cities of the country (Peschanski, 2013, p. 59)

This cycle of protests can be located as starting in São Paulo, on June 6, when around four thousand demonstrators marched against a 20-cent increase in public transportation ticket prices.[1] These demonstrations were initiated by the Free Fare Movement (Movimento Passe Livre), expanding with the extensive use of online social networks. Founded in 2005, the Free Fare Movement is the result of a history of struggles in contemporary Brazil (MPL, 2013). Protests against the rise of public transportation fares had previously happened in Salvador (2003), Florianópolis (2004), Vitória (2006), Brasília (2008), São Paulo (2011), Teresina (2011), Aracaju (2012), Natal (2012), Porto Alegre (2013) and Goiânia (2013). This series of demonstrations boosted the idea of free public transportation as a way to promote the democratic reoccupation of the urban space.

It is, thus, important to understand this specific claim (to free public transportation) within the broader agenda of the democratization of cities or right to the city (Maricato, 2013). Brazilian urban areas are deeply marked by profound social inequalities. The agenda of the right to the city involves: housing, environmental issues, transportation, security, social inequalities, public use of spaces and urban planning among other elements. Its advocates argue that citizens must participate in the decisions that will affect the city and its future. The right to the city is, according to David Harvey (2012; 2013), an active right that enables each and every of its citizens to participate of its reinvention. Social movements had been highly engaged with this agenda in several cities, bringing public attention to the importance of occupying urban areas for the promotion of public interest (Albuquerque, 2013; Berquó, 2015).

The agenda of the democratization of cities has acquired new momentum in the context of the organization of two mega-events in Brazil: the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. The so called movements of people affected by mega-events had been organized throughout the country, in order to show the injustices created by the preparation of these sports events (Vainer, 2013). In June 2013, Brazil was hosting the FIFA Confederations Cup, which is a rehearsal for the World Cup. The occasion made clear to activists how several laws of the country could be disrespected in order to assure the "success" of the organization. It also showed them, however, a window of opportunity: after all, the entire world would have its eyes on Brazil.

In a broader national frame, the demonstrations can also be related to the exhaustion of a development model based on consumerism promoted by the labor government of President Lula, leading to the expansion of a middle class and its new demands (Ricci e Arley, 2013; Nogueira, 2013). The difficulties of President Dilma Rousseff in articulating a political coalition in her first mandate contributed to the exposition of many social cleavages and to the reactivation of civil society's agonistic potential (Nogueira, 2013; Nobre, 2013; Avritzer, 2016).

Although essential, this national background is, nonetheless, insufficient to understand the Brazilian Demonstrations. Focusing only at the national level would lead us to isolate this political process from the broader fabric of which it is a piece (Castells, 2013; Malini and Antoun, 2013; Secco, 2013). The excitement brought by the wave of demonstrations throughout the world is essential to understand the Brazilian protests. Iceland had written a new Constitution to the country (and a participatory one) after massive demonstrations. Dictators had fallen in Tunisia and Egypt. Citizens had occupied squares and parks in Spain and in the United States, presenting severe criticisms against the basis of current liberal democracies and the political influence of private organizations. In Greece, hundreds of thousands had protested against injustices and the problems of the financial system. In Turkey, more recently, millions of citizens were at the streets, demonstrating against the development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park and, more broadly, against authoritarianism.

It is within this background that the first demonstrations of São Paulo must be understood. The problem on the grounds of the June Journeys is this complex context and their purpose was to protest against diverse social problems. The development of these demonstrations and their diffusion throughout the country has been marked by many discursive struggles over their scope and goals. Soon, the demonstrations became an expression against corruption, against the political system and for the improvement of public services, among other foci.

History

Case Data

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Overview

General Issue(s):

[Human Rights](#)

[Political Institutions \(e.g. Constitutions, Legal Systems, Electoral Systems\)](#)

[Planning \(e.g. Urban planning, Transportation, etc.\)](#)

Specific Topic(s):

[Democracy and Participation](#)

[Government Accountability](#)

[Public Participation](#)

Location

Geolocation:

Brazil
See map: [Google Maps](#)
BR

Geographical Scope:

[National](#)

Purpose

What was the intended purpose?:

[Raise public awareness](#)

[Protest](#)

History

Start Date:

Thursday, June 6, 2013

End Date:

Thursday, June 20, 2013

Ongoing:

No

Number of Meeting Days:

[no data entered]

Participants

Targeted Participants (Demographics):

[General Public](#)

Targeted Participants (Public Roles):

[Lay Public](#)

Method of Recruitment:

As already mentioned, the June 2013 cycle of protests was triggered by protests called by the Free Fare Movement in São Paulo. They have become stronger and more visible on June 13, when brutal police repression has become a turning point (Secco, 2013). From that moment onwards, the media supported the demonstrations (after all, its journalists had also been reached by the police). The expanding Brazilian middle class also showed support to the demonstrations.

June 17 was the day of Brazil's second game in the Confederations Cup. Massive demonstrations popped up in at least 30 cities and involving around 300 thousand individuals. In the capital city of Brasilia, demonstrators occupied the roof of the National Congress. The country was on fire and excited with its capacity to demonstrate. On June 20, more than 120 cities have risen and at least 1.4 million Brazilians were on the streets (Peschanski, 2013, p. 59).[2]

The demonstrations continued, with a wide range of groups, political perspectives and conflicting grievances (Rolnik, 2013). They were internally pervaded by discursive conflicts over the definition and purposes of the protests (Mendonça et al 2016). Besides these internal battles, which were fought along the marches, many others happened around them, in the media coverage, in social networks, in political statements, in conversations and in public spaces. In the complex structure of Brazilian federalism, mayors claimed demonstrators were against governors, who claimed they were really showing their rejection of the Federal Government. The claims against corruption were used against the Workers Party (PT). Conservative-nationalist and anti-political claims became a regular part of the demonstrations, as did more progressive demands.

Among these discursive battles, violence has always been an issue. As widely repeated by the media, several demonstrations began peacefully, but ended up with open conflicts between some demonstrators and the police. There were usual pleas for non-violence shouted by most demonstrators, but some groups engaged in confrontations with the police. As the demonstrations increased, the number of violent incidents also grew. Black blocs acquired more visibility, strengthening the links between the protests and transnational anticapitalist networks. Some demonstrators claimed, however, that several violent acts were generated by undercover cops.

It is also important to mention other strategies in the repertoires of action employed in Brazil. As in many cities over the world, occupations in symbolic places helped demonstrators to exert pressure upon public authorities and to re-signify these areas. In these occupations, new forms of organization were tested (Rolnik, 2013). Social networks were mobilized to gather support and donation for these occupations, which also became part of the cultural scene of main cities.

Another interesting practice was that of making horizontal assemblies in some cities. Such meetings happened within occupations, but also apart from them. They represented a new way to occupy public spaces. Assemblies were forums for the discussion of ongoing issues and for the planning of future strategies.

The repertoire of strategies also involved intense use of online platforms by demonstrators and by groups producing alternative forms of coverage.

Participant Selection

IBOPE (a renowned Brazilian opinion institute) conducted a survey with 2002 respondents in eight state capitals during the June Journeys. 43% of the respondents of this survey were between 14 and 24 years old and other 20% were between 25 and 29 years old. 49% had finished high school and other 43% had a university diploma. 76% of them were employed and 46% earned more than five minimum wages.[3] Another 46% of the respondents were in their first demonstration.[4]

Deliberation, Decisions, and Public Interaction

Although the demonstrations tend to be interpreted as a sign of an agonistic turn in politics, Mendonça and Ercan (2015, p. 268) argue that such agonism can be read through deliberative lenses. According to them "the adversarial nature of the protests help to promote, rather than hinder, the prospects for deliberation". Analyzing (1) the way the protests were organized; (2) how they were carried out; and (3) their public consequences, the authors claim that the June Journeys in Brazil (like the Turkish protests over the Gezi Park) generated public debate over key issues and involved deliberative processes on the basis of its organization. The Horizontal Assemblies are a clear example of this. In addition, "*protests have generated an awareness of difference, exposing the existence of silenced controversial issues in a public sphere often inhospitable to disagreement. The strong polyphony of the streets compelled demonstrators to acknowledge the strength of dissensus over topics such as LGBT rights. The acknowledgment of this dissensus is an important step for an effective and broad clash of discourses.*" (Mendonça and Ercan, 2015, p. 279)

Deliberation and public interaction are an important part of the way the protests were organized and of the overall structure of democracy claimed by many demonstrators. The idea that citizens should have a say in collective processes through which decisions are built is an important dimension on the grounds of the June Journeys.

Influence, Outcomes, and Effects

The June Journeys in Brazil had some immediate consequences over political institutions and actors, such as the reversal of fare rises in many cities, a presidential address claiming for political reform, tax cuts for public transportation, the approval of a bill in Congress directing 75% of Brazilian oil royalties to education and 25% to health and the refusal of a constitutional amendment that reduced the power of the Public Prosecutor's Office, and of a bill that framed homosexuality as a disease.

In addition to this quick institutional responses, the June Journeys also opened windows of opportunity to public debates over key issues. Political reform became an issue in the public horizon. Free fare transportation was seriously considered and arguments could be heard on different sides of this topic. Police brutality was seen as unacceptable. Many citizens saw, for the first time, that they could exert influence and that they were feared by representatives. Besides such debates, the June Journeys have nurtured an environment of cultural and political actions, expressed in many occupations and organizations in the following months.

The consequences of the June Journeys can also be found in an evaluation of the developments in Brazilian politics along the following years. In 2014, the presidential elections were extremely polarized and marked by a growing skepticism against political institutions and the government in itself. In 2015, this polarized political scene became more evident. Huge demonstrations against President Dilma Rousseff and the Workers' Party happened throughout the country and the President's approval rates remained very low. Such demonstrations were confronted by other protests that offered support to

[Open to all](#)

Process

Methods:

[Protest](#)

[Community Organizing](#)

Facilitation?:

No

If yes, were they ...:

[no data entered]

Facetoface, Online or Both:

Face-to-Face

Type of Interaction among Participants:

[Express opinions/preferences only](#)

[Organized Demonstrations](#)

Decision Method(s)?:

[Not Applicable](#)

If voting...:

[no data entered]

Targeted Audience :

[Elected Public Official](#)

Method of Communication with Audience:

[Other](#)

Other: Method of Communication with Audience:

Protest

Organizers

Who paid for the project or initiative?:

[no data entered]

Type of Funding Entity:

[no data entered]

Who was primarily responsible for organizing the initiative?:

[no data entered]

Type of Organizing Entity:

[no data entered]

Who else supported the initiative? :

[no data entered]

Types of Supporting Entities:

[no data entered]

Resources

the President and to her party. The intensity of this agonism is important to understand the suspension of President Rousseff in May 2016, when the impeachment trial started.

Secondary Sources

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External Links

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Total Budget:

[no data entered]

Average Annual Budget:

[no data entered]

Number of Full-Time Staff:

[no data entered]

Number of Part-Time Staff:

[no data entered]

Staff Type:

[no data entered]

Number of Volunteers:

[no data entered]

Notes

[1]Currency rates at that time were approximately: 1USD = R\$ 2.15. Fares had risen from 1.40 USD to 1.49 USD.

[2]These figures are highly controversial. I am presenting here the conservative estimates published in the Web Portal G1, which gathered data provided from the police. Available at: <http://g1.globo.com/brasil/protestos-2013/infografico/platb/>. Access on January 14 2014. According to EBC (a Brazilian government-owned communication corporation), the numbers were way higher than that: two million citizens had marched in 438 cities on June 20. Available at: <http://www.ebc.com.br/noticias/brasil/2013/06/quase-2-milhoes-de-brasile...> Access on January 14.

[3]The minimum wage in Brazil was, at that time, R\$ 678,00 per month (equivalent to USD 315.00)

[4]Available at: <http://especial.g1.globo.com/fantastico/pesquisa-de-opiniao-publica-sobr...> Access on: January 15.