Latin American Societies
Current Challenges in Social Sciences

André Luis Leite de Figueirêdo Sales

A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism

The Case of Brazil

Springer

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Current Challenges in Social Sciences

This series aims at presenting to the international community original contributions by scholars working on Latin America. Such contributions will address the challenges that Latin American societies currently face as well as the ways they deal with these challenges. The series will be methodologically agnostic, that is: it welcomes case studies, small-N comparative studies or studies covering the whole region, as well as studies using qualitative or quantitative data (or a mix of both), as long as they are empirically rigorous and based on high-quality research. Besides exploring Latin American challenges, the series attempts to provide concepts, findings and theories that may shed light on other regions. The series will focus on five axes of challenges:

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The first set of challenges revolves around the agenda setting in public and social policies in Latin America. This may include several topics like: redistribution policies, social mobility, marginalization. Another key item to be included deals with sources and consequences of environmental change – especially human-related change. These consequences threaten not only Latin American's material reproduction (e. g. by threatening water and food sources) but also deeply ingrained cultural practices and lifestyles. This section will, therefore, include proposals on environmental policies and matters. We welcome studies on a wide array of social, public and environmental policy making, implementation and effects.

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Both solicited and unsolicited proposals will be considered for publication in the series.

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To all my friends, who wager on me when I can't do it. For them who help me to be like Calvin and believe that the world is still magical. For them, the Hobbes exploring the magic of the world with me.

Foreword by Salvador A.M. Sandoval: Beyond Organizational Distinctions

Much has been written about social movements, and there is a solid community of scholars that have contributed to the way we regard these political phenomena. Historians and some sociologists have focused on the historical conditions and opportunity structures that facilitate or inhibit social movements; others have focused on political mobilizations and how these impact the political arena.

Some scholars have focused on repertoires of collective actions both in their historical roots among specific populations and their impact on movement success. Similarly, research has been conducted on recruitment mechanisms within communities and social movement organization that structures participation and decision-making. The literature has contributed to a better understanding of the social movement from the internal organizations and cultural analyses have focused on the dynamics between grass root mobilization and political outcomes.

Despite the broad array of topics studied about social movements, little attention has been given to an important aspect of social movement dynamics: that of the roles and performance of social movement militants and activists. Most of the time the literature has treated militant and activist as synonymous terms referring to the general category of movement leaders. On other occasions, militants and activists have been distinguished as performing different but coordinated roles in movement organizing, the first as leaders and the second as grassroots organizers. In any of the cases, militants and activists have been framed having identical perspectives with regard to the movement and only differing in their role in movement organization.

Yet knowledge taken from experiencing social movement phenomena suggest that indeed one can argue that there are significant differences between militants and activists that warrant a specific focus on this dynamic within the social movement. Literature on worker strikes and labor union organization has long pointed to the important differences between union stewards on the shop floor and the leadership in the union. This literature clearly points out the importance of coordination between these two types of activity, leadership and grass-roots organizing, and the different perspectives and consciousness that these two forms of engagement represent. In this sense, one can imagine that a similar difference may occur in social movement dynamics.

In this respect, André Luis Leite Sales' book presents research data that argues that the distinction between *militantes* (militants) and *ativistas* (activists) is more substantial than simple differences in roles and activities within the social movement. Coming from an experience of participating in Brazilian social movements, especially those advocating public health demands, André had the opportunity to observe the differences between movement leaders and grass-roots organizers. These experiences and his research offered the opportunity to observe these differences in the Brazilian case, both at the grass-roots level and the leadership spheres which provided the insight which the author develops in his book, an analysis that demarcates the role and cultural and political psychological differences between these two types of social movement actors.

This distinction of fundamental importance to understanding the internal dynamics of social movements has received a little discussion, especially when it is often at the base of the phenomenon of factionalism and cleavages within the social movements. Many times, the key actors involved in these cleavages are precisely militants and activists as they diverge over movement goals, strategies, organization, and/or representation. It is precisely to this point that the work of the author offers important insights into understanding the aspects that differentiate militants and activists, as well as pointing to how these differences, in specific contexts, underly processes of internal movement rifts.

André Luis Leite Sales goes beyond the mere distinction of militants and activists in terms of organizational roles to delve into the distinctions based on differences in their political consciousness in terms of values and beliefs about the movement; grassroot organization and representation; as well as participation and strategies. The author points out that these differences also reflect each's view from the perspective of their insertion in the movement. One could say somewhat analogous to the differences noted in the literature between union leaders and shop stewards.

In exposing the differences between activists and militants, the author brings to social movement analysis new political psychological approaches that penetrate the surface of participants "consensus about a movement" so as to get to dimensions of political consciousness that underlay the differentiation between both types of participation and account for better understanding tensions, divergences, and consensus between them. To this end, the author uses a multidimensional understanding of political consciousness as well as an understanding that social movements are processual phenomena constantly changing as they engage with the other actors in the polity. And it is this processual aspect that often brings to a fore specific differences between militants and activists and thus dynamizing processes that present contradictions between militants and activists.

Considering the renewed importance of social movements and popular participation in confronting the current wave of autocratic anti-democracy forces in many societies, it is of absolute importance that we understand better the internal dynamics of these democratizing social movements to make them stronger in light of

unprecedented levels of authoritarian designs which have emerged in the heart of democratic societies. This book will bring food for thought about how to understand our activists and militants, and how to avoid distracting or weakening rifts as the democratic forces confront the dangers of autocracy.

Pontificia Universidade Catolica de São Paulo Salvador A. M. Sandoval, PhD
São Paulo, SP, Brazil
São Paulo, October, 2022

Foreword by James M. Jaspers: Lessons from Brazil

Many countries have contributed to the history of protest, with various new ideas, tactics, and slogans, but none more so than Brazil. Peasant movements have existed since the nineteenth century, coming to focus recently on the 1988 constitution's promise of agrarian reform in the shape of the Landless Workers' Movement. Porto Alegre gave the world participatory budgeting and the practice of social forums, hosting the initial three World Social Forums starting in 2001. A vibrant student movement, trade unions, and the Workers' Party have operated as a kind of seedbed for many kinds of social protest.

As often happens, no one could have predicted the massive street protests of June 2013 triggered by an increase in municipal bus fares. Initially animated by university students who believed they should ride for free—the "free fare movement"—the protests quickly exploded and added grievances, first the horrendous traffic congestion of Brazil's cities, then the rough policing of the protests themselves, and eventually various corruptions in the government and political parties (especially the Petrobras scandal). Dilma Rousseff was impeached and several members of her government jailed. Brazil then innovated in another kind of social movement, the worldwide rightwing populism that led to the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and Jair Bolsonaro in 2018.

André Luis Leite Sales uses 2013 to discuss *ativismo*, a decentralized, prefigurative form of organizing that has roots in the 1960s or even earlier. Let me try to put that in historical and intellectual context.

There have been several great shifts in how scholars think about protest and social movements, and these turns have always been connected to how activists themselves think about what they do. For two thousand years intellectuals, always drawn from elites, dismissed protestors as emotional mobs, a view that has not entirely subsided (and reappeared in full on January 6th, 2011, to describe the Capitol protestors in Washington, DC). In the twentieth century, it was joined by a Marxist faith in the spontaneous radicalism of the masses who would unite together in a mass strike; by mass-society theories that blamed dictators such as Hitler or Stalin on radio, which allowed them to reach into every living room and kitchen;

and later by rationalistic theories that saw protestors as simply pursuing their interests in the street rather than the legislature.

The many movements of the 1960s—civil rights in the USA, liberation in emerging nations, women everywhere—inspired a sympathetic vision of protest as reasonable, even normal, but as heavily constrained by political structures and opportunities. In the work of Charles Tilly and others, this largely American perspective focused on what kinds of political opportunities, such as divided elites, slackening in repression, or fiscal crises, allowed an opening wedge for movements to emerge and influence policies. Revolutions were often taken as the ultimate goal of movements.

More recently, another intellectual shift has drawn our attention to the construction of subjects. None of the other views have entirely disappeared, but they have been joined by theory and research into how protestors and other political players see themselves, their groups, and their positions in society. The cultural tools by which humans craft their worlds include memories, narratives both personal and historical, moral intuitions and articulations, frames and schemas and other devices for symbolizing the world, and the range of emotions that animate our world and make us care about it.

Also inspired by the 1960s, in which he played a role, Alain Touraine's idea of a post-industrial or programmed society was that we are more likely to fight over these understandings than over the distribution of material goods that drove class conflict in industrial societies. Group identities are central because solidarity with others helps us work out our goals, forge acceptable means, and make us care about anything enough to engage others strategically. If laws and inequalities do not force group collective identities on us, we find ways to create them for ourselves. This recent concern with subjectivity and agency contrasts with structural traditions that tend to reduce social movements to members' demographic and economic positions. This "soft turn" in theories of protest was promoted especially by feminist and LGBTQ movements.

Although different countries have their own traditions of protest, movements occasionally attain a global reach, inspiring activism across continents. A recent example was the global justice movement, originating in Brazil and centered partly around regional and global social forums. This was an exciting movement, and most social movements in the years since owe it a debt. Because of the forum format, the movement devoted much creative thought and debate to the nature of democracy and deliberation. Sometimes too much, perhaps, generating an imbalance between internal focus and external engagement.

Targeting the capitalist markets and corporations at the heart of the World Economic Forum, the World Social Forum sought an alternative way to integrate the world, one more sensitive to human needs. Its concerns were very much in line with the humanistic vision of recent social-movement theories. But its critique of capitalism may have also contained the seeds of anti-integration. Or it may have simply been swamped by nationalist visions that had other sources altogether. For whatever reason, authoritarian leaders and movements of the Right seem to have gained more momentum during the last decade.

Political energy often arises as a reaction against the successes of the other side, just as it sometimes gains ammunition from the crises that opponents create. With Bolsonaro as a target and his mishandling of the COVID-19 crisis (and many other outrages) as the occasion, the time may be ripe once again for the activists that André Luis Leite Sales describes.

Both Touraine and his former colleague (and contemporary) Michel Foucault highlighted the concept of subjectivity. But Foucault's portrait of political agency is grim; anything more than very local resistance is likely to result in new oppressions, including new "subject positions" that promise more liberation than they deliver. The suggested strategy is an esthetic cultivation of the self. In Touraine's view, collective processes of self-reflexivity can generate genuinely liberating projects and can prevent to some extent the illusions that Foucault feared. Jürgen Habermas' confidence in the liberatory potential of discursive interactions is even more optimistic. These issues have only become more urgent with the resurgence of the Right, and André Luis Leite Sales places us at the center of these debates around creativity, learning, development, and agency—along with a variety of accompanying hazards we see the influence of both Foucault and Touraine on the activists he describes.

Not only are his arguments as pertinent as ever, but his disciplinary background is perfect for the moment. Older theories of protest and change—theories of the mob or of mass society—had foregrounded models of the mind, even though they were rarely written by psychologists. (Many such theorists were pop psychologists/writers, deploying a simplified, pejorative, and outdated Freudianism.) With the turn to rationality and structure around the 1970s, sociologists and political scientists became the leading experts on social movements, ignoring processes of the mind altogether. Grievances, emotions, and culture disappeared for a while. With their recent rediscovery, psychologists and social psychologists are again becoming central players in political research.

Names are at the center of subjectivity, the labels that define, constrict, and direct group identities. Protestors have been called many things over time: mobs, crowds, protestors, social movements, protest groups, social movement organizations, organizers, vanguards, cells, and of course activists and militants. Different countries and different languages have different terms, despite the frequency of direct translations from one context to another. Even the same word in a different language can take on different connotations. Labels such as *ativista* or *militante* matter a great deal: they offer a moral vision of what is valuable in human life, as well as practical blueprints for how to bring about social change, justice, and human development.

Please enjoy this book and engage with it. The future of all of us is at stake in our current political conflicts. The better we do at understanding our activist and militant strategies and traditions, the better we will do at avoiding the twin catastrophes facing us all, of authoritarian government and ecological collapse. As I write this, Brazilians are choosing between Lula and Bolsonaro, a race that is closer than it should be. Will the election outcome be a portent for the rest of us?

City University of New York
New York, NY, USA
Asheville, October 2022

James M. Jasper, PhD

Author's Preface: Message in a Bottle

A generous reader once told me, between cups of coffee during a harsh Canadian winter, that a doctoral thesis is the first of many books a researcher in the human sciences will write throughout their career. Your thesis, he said, should present you as a peer to your future academic community. It ought to introduce the conversation you aim to start in the most candid and inviting way possible. Over the years, I have kept this advice close to my heart and have tried to observe it faithfully while working on papers, drafting abstracts for conferences, preparing lectures, and especially while writing this monograph, my first book in English.

I am writing these words in September 2022. The Brazilian presidential election will happen in 10 days, and the atmosphere in the country is one of fear. The increasing political polarization and the symbolic violence that have inundated social media and WhatsApp groups since 2014 are now invading the physical world and increasing aggression and intolerance among the citizenry. Earlier this month, the Brazilian Public Security Forum released a study investigating people's perceptions of authoritarianism, political freedom, and trust in institutional democracy. The results show that people are concerned about the risks for democracy in the country, so elections will take place in a climate of insecurity, with a growing awareness of the risk of suffering politically motivated violence. To make the situation more complicated, and to exacerbate the already troubling levels of uncertainty among the populace, President Bolsonaro and his supporters are alleging fraud in the electoral system.

In the last five years, my politically progressive friends keep telling me they have no words to describe their horror at Jair Bolsonaro's systematic dismantling of the Brazilian state. They are supporters of the Working Party and resolutely trust its welfare policies as efficient mechanisms for decreasing the rampant inequalities that prevail in the country. Some of them are still perplexed by the existence of right-wing activism. Following the political traditions that inform their worldview, activism is carried out only by people aligned to the left of the political spectrum. It exists to expand citizen access to welfare policies, enhance democratic values, and decrease inequities. It seems inconceivable to them that a far-right president elected by popular vote could have occupied the country's federal government and used

public policies to redefine the kind of Future Brazil is moving toward. They feel aggrieved, cheated, and, above all, confused when they start to hear words like *militância* and *militante* being adopted by members of the far right who are trying to start a conservative revolution and who militate against everything leftists have fought for.

In the last ten years, the global rise of populist movements pushing conservative, reactionary, and violent agendas has required researchers to update their terminology to fully grasp what is happening in the streets, in the public squares, and on digital platforms. Since June 2013, the diversity of the forms of protest being explored, as well as the variety of demands being made, confirms the need for a change in the language researchers use to analyze political activity. In this book, I address this topic by exploring how and why, for the past 10 years, traditional political players, like labor unions and student association, and insurgent ones, like decentralized fighting fronts and collaborative federations, in Brazil have been fighting over the meaning of the words ***militância*** and ***ativismo***[1].

I am writing primarily from the vantage point of Brazilian political psychology; therefore, this exploration is fundamentally interdisciplinary and is situated at the intersection of psychology, sociology, and political science. I deal with crucial elements of collective action, such as mobilization processes, organizational structures, emotional dynamics, coalition formation, taste for tactics, strategic dilemmas, learning processes, forms of political consciousness, political imagination, agency, and activism. I engage with all of these dimensions of collective action, but my main focus is on the way activists attempt to reshape social norms by strategically mobilizing their relationships with themselves, their peers and foes, and their (political, social, and natural) environment.

Readers familiar with protest studies will recognize the sometimes explicit, other times implicit, influence in this work of John D. McCarthy, Sidney Tarrow, Robert Benford, David Snow, Alberto Melucci, Francesca Polletta, Deborah Gould, Maria Glória Gohn, Marcelo Kunrath da Silva, Angela Alonso, and Breno Bringel, among many others. These scholars helped me identify possible objects of investigation and introduced me to various methodological approaches one can adopt when trying to understand the ways in which humans act together to change society. I have been able to rigorously combine ideas from distinct field of investigation thanks to a methodological arrangement involving constant interaction with research groups and scholars from different disciplines in Brazil, the United States, and Canada. Senior scholars from psychology, sociology, and political science have not only helped me navigate the debates in each discipline, but they have also revised drafts, sharpened my conceptual understanding, and redirected my path of investigation multiple times, thus ensuring that the results I present here are as consistent and relevant as possible.

[1] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words *miliância* and *ativismo*—and their variations—in their original, untranslated form, and format them in bold and italics except when on the titles of the chapters.

Together we assembled a methodological protocol that has so far proven to be dynamic and effective for interdisciplinary investigations like this one. The protocol is made up of six steps, with a high premium placed on collaboration and peer review.

1. Delimiting the most relevant ideas in each field to address the issue under investigation and assembling them in a comprehensive conceptual model
2. Gathering primary and secondary data oriented by the conceptual model to build and analyze hypotheses
3. Integrating the models and the data into theoretically oriented essays
4. Submitting the essays to experts for evaluation and discussing their feedback with them
5. Revising and adjusting the essays according to experts' recommendations
6. Preparing the final versions of the essays for publication (Fig. 1)

The book consists of this introduction, five independent essays, a concluding letter, and an afterword. In devising the structure, I was inspired by books of short stories. My idea was to enable the reader to start their journey in any of the chapters and continue to explore the remaining ones according to their interests. Each chapter deals with a specific problem, outlines the methodological approach used to build the argument, and offers insight into the transformation of protest culture in Brazil. Together, the chapters provide a comprehensive answer to the question: What psycho-political differences lie behind the disparate forms of political activism adopted by ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** in Brazil?

My responses to this question are mostly theoretically based, though still empirically inspired. To develop them, I brought together scholarly debates, public opinion broadcasted in distinct media outlets, and first-person narratives of those who seem to be at the center of the transformation. More than providing the final word on the topic, my goal is to help frame an arena of interdisciplinary and international debate in which the Brazilian case can be studied in its relationship with global trends.

Chapter 1, *When Words No Longer Fit*, argues that the concepts of repertoire, strategy, and institution are crucial to understanding the changes that have taken place in contentious politics in Brazil since the events of June 2013. I suggest that these concepts shed light on the overlapping meanings of the terms ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** because they make explicit important differences between the distinct

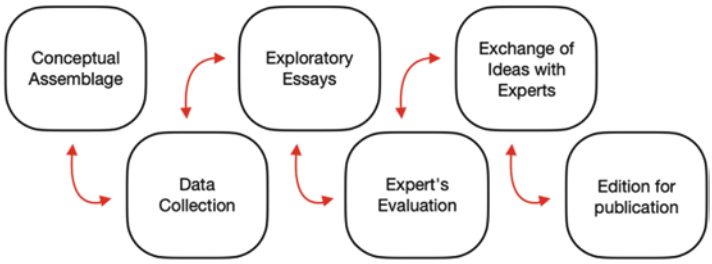

Fig. 1 Methodological Protocol

political cultures informing the way protestors who identify with one or the other category advance their political activism goals.

Chapter 2, *Ativismo and Pre-figurative Activities: The Sit-ins in the State of São Paulo*, is a case study. It analyzes the occupation of more than 200 public schools in the state of São Paulo by high-school students in a youth-organized protest against state plans to close public schools. It connects the Brazilian sit-ins with the broader transformations in contentious politics that are happening globally to suggest that the commitment to prefigurative activities sets the ***ativista*** movements apart from the ***militante*** ones. Then, it introduces a socio-historical approach to human development to discuss the relevance of future-oriented actions, commitments, and agency to understand how people grow and change throughout their lives.

Chapter 3, *Rethinking Resistance and Refusal to Understand Prefigurative Praxes*, takes a closer look at a popular idea informing protest strategies and social movement scholars' research, namely: the notion of resistance. Exploring the parallels between contemporary debates and those animated by Hebert Marcuse's ideas in the 1960s, it argues that collective action strategies rooted in resistance can lead protestors to assume a passive position toward the world. It claims that, alternatively, strategic efforts animated by refusals require protestors to take an active and experimental approach to actualizing the non-hegemonic values and principles they hold dear.

Chapter 4, *Brazilian Ativismo: A Collectividual Autonomist Strategy*, frames the ongoing transformations in protest culture in Brazil as part of the rising popularity of autonomist movements across the globe. It explores Brazilian protestors' preference for using the term ***ativismo*** and examines their approach to collective action, which is characterized by the adoption of prefigurative practices, a preference for network-based organizational models, and a proclivity for collective decision-making processes. It focuses on how these features of ***ativismo*** simultaneously enhance individual and collective autonomy, create conditions for qualifying individual and group agency, and impact protestors' path of development.

Chapter 5, *Militância and Ativismo: Two Forms of Political Consciousness*, explores Brazilian protestors' self-identification as either ***militantes*** or ***ativistas*** using the political consciousness framework proposed by Sandoval Salvador. Summarizing discussions made in previous chapters, it argues that the tension between ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** stems from the distinct forms of political consciousness that shape the two sets of strategic rationales. ***Militância*** is an antagonist strategy driven by a rigid morality—leading ***militantes*** to frame their opponents as enemies and develop tactical actions to exterminate anything that could jeopardize the realization of the sought-after future they are fighting for. ***Ativismo*** refers to a prefigurative, agonist strategy; it is driven by a flexible ethic encouraging ***ativistas*** to experiment with non-hegemonic social norms through their protest activities. The chapter comparatively analyzes these rationales to make sense of important distinctions in contemporary approaches to political activism.

Chapter 6, *Conclusions, Intentions, and Hopes*, discusses the book's structure, situates the arguments presented within ongoing debates in the field, and outlines the author's ethical-political affiliation. Additionally, it defines political activism as

future-oriented collaborative projects in which activists seek to strategically transform their relationships with themselves, their peers and foes, and their political, social, and natural environment, while reshaping existing social norms.

The afterword, *The Anchor Points for Militant Strategy*, invites the reader to explore influential moments in Soviet history. It maps a government strategy tailored to produce revolutionary-oriented dispositions within a population. Finally, it takes a closer look at important paths through which this governmentality became hegemonic in left-wing protest culture in Brazil.

My proposal with this book is to invite the reader to pay close attention to details that might have gone unnoticed. Amid the growing political tensions, institutional crises, presidential impeachment, and disastrous management of the covid pandemic 19, it might have been hard for researchers to think carefully about words and their meanings. However, I am a psychologist with a fondness for stories, so I hope this book shows you how much we can learn by investigating the stories on how the meanings we create for some words are also constitutive of who we are trying to become.

São Paulo, SP, Brazil André Luis Leite de Figueirêdo Sales
Sao Paulo, September 2022

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The collaborative approach I have taken in this project means the book is a collectividual achievement. I must acknowledge by name the partners and institutions that have accompanied me on this journey: Professor Silvio Yasui, advisor of my doctoral work in the Postgraduate Program in Psychology at Sao Paulo State University (Assis); Professor Flávio Fernandes Fontes, co-advisor of my doctoral research and long-time friend at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (Natal); Professor Salvador Sandoval, founder of the Brazilian Association of Political Psychology at Sao Paulo Catholic University in São Paulo (São Paulo); Professor Frederico Machado, former chief-editor of the Brazilian Journal of Political Psychology (Porto Alegre); Professor Angela Alonso, coordinator of the Social Research Laboratory at the City University of São Paulo (Sao Paulo); Professor Débora Alves Maciel of the Federal University of the State of São Paulo (São Carlos); and at the City University of New York: Professor James Jasper from the sociology department, Professor John Krinsky from the political science department, Professor Anna Stetsenko and Professor Eduardo Vianna from the psychology department; and at York University in Toronto, Canada: Professor Terry Maley from the political science department and Professor Lesley J. Wood from the sociology department.This book would have been impossible without the funding from the Sao Paulo Research Foundation (Grant ids: 2015/26241-0; 2017/00664-7; 2018/01064-6; 2020/05067-0; 2021/08714-9). I should also acknowledge the York University Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies Support for Publications and the untiring efforts of my editor at Springer, Bruno Fiuza.

Contents

About the Author

André Luis Leite de Figueirêdo Sales is a Brazilian Political Psychologist currently holding a post-doctoral position at Sao Paulo Pontifical Catholic University. Previously, he worked as a community psychologist in underprivileged neighborhoods and as public policies consultant in Brazil. His work focuses on contemporary social movements, prefigurative activism, and political imagination aiming to understand how people can transform the prevailing social norms while transforming themselves. Over the last five years, he has been a fellow at the São Paulo Research Foundation, FAPESP, a leading scientific research funding agency in Brazil, and worked with renowned sociologists, psychologists, and political scientists in Brazil, the USA, and Canada to craft an interdisciplinary approach to the political arena.

Chapter 1
When Words No Longer Fit

There are many ways of looking at and analyzing social movements and collective action. This study takes the approach of focusing on the terminology itself: specifically, the disputed meanings of the words ***militância*** and ***ativismo***[1] which came into use in Brazil following the June 2013 protests[2]. In theoretical circles, the two terms are often treated as synonyms (Dowbor, 2017; Bringel & Varella, 2016; Silva & Ruzkskowski, 2016). However, in the political contests involving social norms and cultural values, the words used by the players manifest the intentions of those choosing them and should not have their importance diminished. When political players are disputing the terms to be employed, researchers need to be mindful of these nuances and adapt their vocabulary accordingly[3].

Charles Tilly, a prominent social movement scholar, recommends paying attention to the symbolic coherence displayed by participants in collective action, which in turn demands an analysis of 'how participants, or observers, of the phenomenon attribute unity and meaning to it' (Tilly, 2006, p. 46). To illustrate the relevance and topicality of the language adopted, this book draws on various sociological studies on the novel forms of collective action that have taken place in Brazil since June 2013 and on research conducted by international scholars on the changes in the

[1] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words ***miliância*** and ***ativismo*** – and their variations – in their original, un-translated form, and format them in bold and italics.

[2] The 2013 demonstrations against the increase in the prices of public transportation fares are, also referred to as the 'June Journeys', 'Confederation Cup Riots', 'V for Vinegar Movement', and 'the Brazilian Spring'.

[3] The terms *players* and *arenas* are the terms used in Jasper's approach (Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015) to analyze collective action and social movements. I will deal with this approach in a specific section of the text.

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*, Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_1

language and grammar of protest in Brazil and around the world (Ancelovici et al., 2016).

Militantes and ***Ativistas*** are political players who act purposefully and intentionally to redesign the social norms of their time. They do so by targeting the relationships each ***militante*** and ***ativista*** establishes with themselves, with their peers and foes, and with their political, social, and natural environments. Because their activities are animated by their pursuit for sought-after Futures, these political players might embrace, refuse, deny, reject, and recast the prevailing political traditions. By reclaiming different words to describe themselves and present their projects to Brazilian society, ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** are stating that they are different from each other, behave differently, and use distinct strategies to create the Futures they are longing and willing to live in.

In simple terms: they move forward different kinds of political activism and sought-after distinct versions of the Future. I define political activism as Future-oriented collaborative projects in which activists seek to strategically transform their relationships with themselves, their peers and foes, and their political, social, and natural environments, while, at the same time and through the same processes reshaping existing social norms. This book will provide conceptual tools for researchers interested in understanding and exploring the psycho-political consequences of these differences.

In a study that focuses on the original use of the terms by those who claim to be ***militantes*** and ***ativistas***, my colleagues and I (Sales et al., 2019) concluded that both words refer to methodologies for producing collective action that are tailored to intervening in the status quo. Building on those findings, this chapter brings together the concepts of repertoire, strategy, and institution to construct a theoretical model and argues that these terms are especially useful for making explicit the differences between each group's respective methodologies. Through the concept of repertoire, it is possible to describe preferred routines, acts, and performances brought to the public stage by those participating in political contestation. By examining the idea of strategy, one can analyze the coordination of human collectives disputing social norms and to highlight the consequences of the decisions made by individuals participating in collective action. The concept of institution, on the other hand, allows us to observe how changes in repertoire and strategy tend to produce alterations in the participants' way of seeing, feeling, and acting. The mediating function of institution allows one to address the relationship between macrosocial processes and the production of subjectivity.

The articulation of sociological, philosophical, and psychological concepts presented here is an attempt to reframe the problem of the opposition between social determinations and singular agency by adopting a conception of subjectivity that recognizes social and political processes as inseparable from singular and unique stances each and every human takes to build themselves and their material reality. This provides a psychological perspective in the study of protest and contentious action, without 'psychologizing social phenomena' (Rose, 2008). Avoiding mentalism, fatalism, and reductionism in the study of political subjectivity is one of the most challenging goals of this book.

1.1 What Has Been Happening on the Streets of Brazil Since 2013?

The Free Fare Movement (*Movimento Passe Livre,* or MPL in Portuguese, hereafter referred to as FFM) was one of the main articulators of the June 2013 protests. Importantly, for the sake of its internal symbolic coherence, the FFM developed an autonomist discourse that was very critical of ***militância***, ***militante*** organizations, and ***militante*** engagement (MPL, 2013). Consequently, some prominent characteristics of the protests that occurred during those turbulent days in June were: the prevalence of a specific demographic (viz., young people residing in large urban centers); an explicit commitment to direct action and comprehensive participatory processes, which was expressed through a preference for horizontal and decentralized organizational structures (thematic collectives, protest networks, protest movements); independence from political institutions (viz., political parties, churches, and labor unions); mobilization and demands initially built around specific, local problems experienced by those directly involved in the protests (e.g., the cost of public transportation, high taxes, and the poor quality of public services); the use of mobile and digital technologies such as smartphones and social networks for mobilizing participants, disseminating agendas, and articulating with other movements based in other states throughout the country and internationally (Navarro & Brasilino, 2015). 'Such elements reveal the influence of autonomist, anarchist, Zapatista, and antiglobalization conceptions, combined with a disillusionment with regard to the functioning of political parties and institutions in general' (Saraiva, 2014, p. 43).

Alonso and Mische (2017) point out that autonomist approaches had been gaining ground at the international level since the antiglobalization cycle of protests started in Seattle in 1999. Three key influential components of the Seattle Model are: "a decentralized decision-making, hub-spokes model of spokescouncils and affinity groups (…) blockades – particularly the use of lockboxes (…) black bloc formations that engaged in property destruction of corporate symbols" (Wood, 2020, p. 54). The influence of those events is apparent in the global justice movement that has developed since, and in the formation of the World Social Forum as well as in the events that led to the Arab Spring. This autonomist trend would also become a distinctive feature of the pro-equity protest that occurred in Brazil between 2013 and 2017. The student movement, which came into being in November 2015 in the state of São Paulo and spread to other states throughout 2016, and which was characterized by the occupation of high schools, presented similarities with the autonomist modes of organization of the Free Fare Movement. These protests were supported by young people from big urban centers who adopted decentralized organizational strategies, sought independence from labor unions, political parties, and even canonical student organizations, engaged in extensive and intensive use of information and communication technologies, and showed a preference for the term ***ativismo***.

The June 2013 protests brought two crucial organizational legacies to the politics of protest in Brazil: firstly, the avoidance of vanguardist organizational structures, which are still common in labor unions, academia, political parties, and other Brazilian groups committed to social justice ideals; secondly, the preference among protesters for network-based organizational arrangements, a commitment to prefiguration used to booster protester's autonomy and the taste for direct action. The term vanguardism appears in Daniel Arão Reis's (1990) study on communist ideology in Brazil and describes a mode of organizing collective action which is marked by the centralization of decision-making processes and the concentration of power and the structuring of the relationship between the leading group and the other members in the organization according to a strict delineation of roles and positions. In vanguardist milieus, the strategic decisions are always made by a select group of specialists, and the ones outside this enlightened vanguard must follow what has been decided. In this regard, Sousa (2014, p. 60) emphasizes that '***ativista*** organizations do not fit into the concept of party, differing in terms of organization', and because, 'in some cases, the decision-making process is done by horizontal, consensual decisions'.

The FFM ***ativistas*** intensely criticized the hierarchical organizational structures, the centralization of information and decision-making processes, and the militarized rigidity which, according to them, characterized the ***militantes*** and ***militância***. Along with the FFM, several movements that arose after 2013 (Corti et al., 2016) chose to use the word ***ativistas*** to describe their members and ***ativismo*** to describe their actions. As a result, social movement scholars were urged to deal with the following question 'What are the new senses and meanings that have been being given today to the notions of "***militância***", "mobilization", "engagement", "activism", and "social movement"' (Bringel, 2012, p. 57).

1.1.1 Describing Collective Action: Repertoires

The observation of collective forms of public protest makes it clear the preference for some activities over others. An academic who studies protests as an object of research 'almost inevitably faces a sense of déjà vu since these events, in a given place, in a given period of time, can be grouped into a few categories, and present a very small number of variations' (Tilly, 2006, p. 50). In the twentieth century, social movements in the West usually sought to get their message out by way of marches, petitions, strikes, and the barricading of streets and highways, rather than through the use of bombs, suicide attacks, or kidnapping. After analyzing more than eight thousand public protests that occurred over a period of almost one hundred years and which were reported on by ten British newspapers, Charles Tilly begun to refer to these repeated forms of protest as 'repertoire'.

The concept of repertoire refers to a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and put into action through a relatively deliberate process of choice. 'Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they are not the fruit of abstract ideas

or the result of convincing political propaganda; they emerge from struggle' (Tilly, 1995, p. 26). Bringel (2012) highlights Tilly's ability to bring sociology and history together, closely observing the variation in forms of political and social confrontation over time and constructing categories that enable the classification and comparison of modes of popular and collective action at distinct historical moments. Although this also gives rise to some of the criticisms regarding the generalizations, inaccuracies, and excessive structuralism that characterize Tilly's work (Goodwin et al., 1999; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004), the perspective proposed by him guides our research on the changing nature of protest. In particular, Tilly's insights have enabled researchers of social movements to arrive at the consensus that historical forms of protest in a given region and on a given topic inevitably influence contemporary forms of protest (Tilly, 2006).

Alonso (2012) maps the changes in the definition of repertoire to refute the theses regarding the monolithic and tautological nature of the concept. Since it was initially proposed, the definition of repertoire has had a number of variations that can be categorized as follows: (1) repertoires of collective action (1970–1990); (2) repertoires of conflict (1990–2000); (3) repertoire as performance (2000–2008). These changes in the conceptualization reflect: (a) the gradual increase in the importance attributed to the agency of subjects in the construction of repertoire; (b) the strategic nature of the evaluation of opportunities, or restrictions, for existing activities in a given political environment; (c) the innovations that political players produce in a repertoire when they adopt it.[4]

Between 1970 and 1990, the focus was on the most standardized and repetitive modes of action and underlined the fixed and repeated routines employed in political praxis. From the 1990s onwards, as denoted by the addition of the term 'of conflict', the attention given to the context in which the protesters mobilize specific routines is emphasized. The purpose is to spotlight the critical part played by the context of the conflict both in the determination of the repertoire and in the analysis of its efficiency in a given situation. After the 2000s, the unique variations made by those who use it gained prominence, and the term 'performance' is employed to indicate how a repertoire manifests itself. According to Alonso's evaluation,

> [...] this last Tillyan approach to repertoires favors ... improvisation, the actors' ability to select and modify the performances of a repertoire, to adjust them to local programs, circumstance and tradition, that is, to the context of meaning of that group, in that society. (Alonso, 2012, p. 32)

Analyzing the mobilization processes and forms of protest present in the cycles of confrontation in Brazil between 2013 and 2016, Alonso (2017) briefly classifies the protesters' performances as manifestations of three kinds of repertoire, namely: socialist, autonomist, and patriotic. The study contrasts socialist and autonomist performances regarding organizational structure and the guiding principles informing protesters' activities and concludes that, during the protests, players made use of

[4] The concept of repertoire is closely related to two others: political opportunity structure and regimes. These issues are explored in detail in Tilly (2006) and Tilly and Tarrow (2007).

all the available repertoires. The socialist repertoire is expressed through use of red flags and t-shirts, in joint demonstrations with labor unions, students' councils, and left-wing political parties. It also displays a preference for hierarchal organizational arrangements and vanguardist modes of leadership. On the other hand, the autonomist repertoire reflects the esthetic elements of punk culture, such as the use of the color black together with anarchist symbols; the enthusiastic use of artistic expression such as flash mobs and music concerts as a form of protest, and decentralized organizational network structures coordinating direct actions.

By choosing the words autonomist and socialist to classify these repertoires, Alonso points to the political traditions that should be studied in order to understand what is happening in the current Brazilian context. Further, she makes explicit her alignment with the research principles proposed by Charles Tilly. Specifying crucial issues for understanding repertoires, Tilly insisted that it is necessary to 'keep on the research agenda the study of how historical models, memories, shared understandings and social relations – for example, residues of the Mongolian hegemony in a certain region – affect the current forms of protest' (Tilly, 2006, p. 16).

The multiple routines of protest carried out by multiple players, movements, and organizations that can be grouped into the categories ***militante*** and ***ativista*** attest to a field characterized by dispersion and diversity. This requires a refinement in the analysis, in which the differences in the ways collective action is presented are highlighted. The nature of the repertoire-performance, which is simultaneously both structural and cultural, is appropriate for describing the differences between those who claim to be ***militantes*** and those who claim to be ***ativistas***. It also makes it easier to understand why young protesters in Brazil reject the term ***militância*** and opt instead for the term ***ativismo***. Considering all of this, it is abundantly clear that, in the Brazilian case, the words ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** describe distinct repertoires and cannot be used interchangeably.

1.1.2 Organizing Collective Action: Strategies

Once one discards the still popular ideas extracted from Gustave Le Bon's crowd theory about the spontaneity of collective action and the irrationality of the subjects that engage in it, it becomes imperative to identify differences in coordinating methods among groups with diverse interests and in different contexts who are seeking to work collaboratively toward a shared objective (Jasper, 2017). Recognizing the strategic dimension of collective action and social movements allows us to: (a) observe a set of decisions that are taken to launch, maintain, and bring to an end protest activities; (b) consider the reasons for the successes and failures of a protest action in the face of favorable or unfavorable political circumstances; (c) disaggregate the multiple processes, meanings, and objects of study condensed in the idea of success that is achieved by the work of 'charismatic leaders' (Ganz, 2000). In fact, it is still of crucial to understand that 'participants in collective action, or the components of crowds, do not engage in them to narcissistically express pathological

needs, or even to resolve their Oedipal issues; they are not isolated subjects pathetically seeking connections or identities' (Jasper, 2017, p. 298). Analyzing the strategic dimension of collective action allows us to address this need.

According to military tradition, achieving success in a dispute implies maximizing gains and reducing losses. This is done by making as efficient use of the available resources as possible, while never losing sight of the enemy's resources and knowledge. It will be necessary sizing up your strengths in light of those under the enemy's command. It is also essential to be aware of the conditions under which the impending battles will take place. The strategists must evaluate permanently the group own resources, those belonging to the enemy and the set in which the battles will occur in order to elaborate a plan of action. The plan they produce to win the war is called 'strategy'. The type of instrument evaluated as appropriate – an atomic bomb, a tank, a petition, a scientific article, a play, or even a poem – as well as how it should be used, is defined according to tactical choices and strategic objectives. The strategists create, disseminate, and carefully follow through with the development of a plan that must be executed by a mass of individuals who are assumed to be not qualified to make important decisions in this context. It is not up to the executors to propose or change what has been planned, but rather to use their best efforts to execute meticulously the actions prescribed by the strategists.

James Jasper is a member of a group of North American culturalist sociologists, whose work underscores the moral, emotional, and cognitive elements constitutive of tactical choices and strategic decisions (Jasper, 1997, 2006, 2011, 2018). He is one of the researchers responsible for the 'Emotional Turn' in studies of social movements and collective action. Gould (2009) uses this term to describe the moment when researchers such as James Jasper, Francesca Polletta, and Jeff Goodwin, among others, started to investigate more systematically how emotions, affect, and moral beliefs manifest themselves in protest activities (Goodwin et al., 2001).

The strategic dilemmas model (Jasper, 2006) proposes approaching strategic action by investigating the conflicts experienced by people who are about to engage in acts of a political nature. It starts with the premise that strategies are always executed by players who have multiple interests and experience diverse emotions and feelings, sometimes even contradictory ones. 'We need to recognize the broad array of goals, ideas, and feelings that make up the players, rather than reducing them to a mathematically tractable minimum' (Jasper, 2004, p. 04). Consequently, the perspective offers an alternative to the conception of rational subjects driven by the single purpose of increasing gains and decreasing losses, acting only when the political opportunity structure is favorable and following rigorously a plan laid out by their leaders.

By adopting the word *players*, the model emphasizes the agency asserted by subjects (Jasper, 2004). It also allows researchers to see that each participant in the movement is constantly required to actively assess the emotional, material, and symbolic implications of their deeds when making decisions. By using the term arena, the Strategic Dilemma Framework reinforces the empirical appeal of the model. These are understood as a 'set of rules and resources that enable, or

encourage, certain types of interaction' (Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015, p. 14) between parties involved in a given dispute.

Faced with the imperative to act, each player must uniquely evaluate: the consequences of their decisions on the pursuit of their individual interests; the utility of the action for the success of the group as a whole; the advantages the decision might confer on their opponents; and the various costs – material, emotional, and relational – that will be incurred. The decision-making process considers the prescriptions and recommendations that are shared with the players' allies, social norms and groups expectations, economic, and cultural influences, as well as other specificities of the particular context (arena) in which the dispute occurs (Jasper, 2006).

The idea of strategic dilemmas highlights the fact that each participant in the action, not just the group of enlightened vanguard strategists, seeks to find answers and balance the benefits and harms, losses and gains, and advantages and disadvantages associated with their decision. In conclusion: all players are strategists. Underlying the importance of key aspects of political practice such as culture and emotion, issues that are still rarely acknowledged, at least in studies in this field (Jasper, 2017, 2018), and paying attention to the dynamic and relational elements present in the phenomenon, this model claims that 'without examining the act of selecting and applying tactics, we will not be able to adequately explain the psychological, organizational, cultural, and structural factors that facilitate the understanding of these choices' (Jasper, 2004, p. 02).

Thinking of collective action through their strategic dimension requires us to: (a) examine the distinct historical, economic, and social contexts in particular strategies have emerged; (b) select and analyze the players' rationale for organizing resources, drawing up tactics, and choosing the means for carrying actions out; (c) examine the changes in tactics as a function of their use over time and consider the impact of these alterations on the strategies themselves; (d) understand the meanings attributed by the subjects to the tactics and strategies; (e) examine how these tactics and strategies influence the way those who execute them feel, think, and act in relation to them.

Valverde's (1986) study offers an example of the viability of analyzing ***militância*** as a strategy while considering how its use impacts those who participate in it. In ***Militância*** and Power, Valverde (1986) investigates speeches at the First Communist International, seminal works by Marx and Lenin, and publications from the Brazilian labor movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. The results highlight the defining characteristics of the ***militante*** strategy as being characterized by: (a) the adoption of a disciplinary regime designed by the revolutionary vanguard and exported from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to the world through the Communist parties; (b) the use of this disciplinary regime as the preferred tactic for producing ***militante*** engagement and as a means of ensuring the availability and willingness of the masses to work for the revolution; (c) the investment in obedient and reactive subjectivity as a way of increasing the commitment of the ***militantes*** to the revolutionary cause. These conclusions shed light on the possible reasons for contemporary Brazilian activists averting traditional ***militante*** practices.

Sousa (2014) reinforces the relevance of Valverde's conclusions and the utility of understanding ***militância*** as a strategy by contrasting its modes of mobilization with those common in ***ativista*** organizations. The author reports that, in the latter, affiliation to the organization is not mandatory, but voluntary. That is, 'the maintenance of its purpose, of its "agenda" of political objectives, is achieved through a continued sense of commitment and not by discipline resembling that of subordinated bureaucratic obedience' (Sousa, 2014, p. 60).

Highlighting the relational and contextual dimension of strategies, Jasper's proposal (Jasper, 2006; Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015) directs researchers' attention to the fact that every individual in a movement: (a) coordinates with other participants; (b) considers what to do in the face of specific dilemmas; (c) responds from their unique standpoint to the challenges posed by everyday situations. The study of strategic approaches highlights the subjects' capacity for agency, as it recognizes their autonomy, the skills they develop throughout their continuous participation, and their accountability for their own strategic choices. A movement, as an abstract entity, does not draw up strategies or make decisions. People coordinate themselves independently, and when they find themselves in a specific situation, they consider the feasibility of carrying out the plans made by the team of strategists. Understood in this way, as a participatory and fluid activity, strategy takes on a dynamic character. It becomes one of the many elements considered by individuals during the course of their actions.

In summary: a deeper look into the nature of strategic action, which is simultaneously both prescriptive and inventive, helps to explain why young members of contemporary collective action in Brazil reject the term ***militância*** in favor of ***ativismo***.

1.1.3 Investigating Subjectivity in Collective Action: Institutions

In a 1953 text, published in the wake of his studies on the relationship between empiricism and subjectivity, philosopher Gilles Deleuze states that man is an animal that has no instincts and therefore makes institutions. I will explore the consequences of this statement through the concepts of Institutional Analysis (IA) proposed by de René Lourau, Georges Lapassade, and Gregório Baremblitt and more recently appropriated in Brazil by the Social and Institutionalist Psychology framework (Rossi & Passos, 2014).[5]

Although a polysemous concept, it is easy to acknowledge the assumption, present in various definitions, that institutions are created to solve problems. An institution is the result of a demand that is present in everyday life. Institutional Analysis

[5] To read more about this subfield of Brazilian Social Psychology, see discussions of the research-intervention perspective (Romagnoli, 2014) and the cartographic methodology (Passos et al., 2009, 2016).

conceptualizes institutions as a mode of reasoning: 'they are trees made up of arguments which, according to their form and degree of formalization, may be laws, may be rules, and, when they are not stated in an obvious manner, may be guidelines, regulations of behavior' (Baremblitt, 1992, p. 27). Understanding them as rationalities that operate in a more or less explicit way, IA recognizes that institutions are found at a transversal level in the life of human groups. Thus, it is inappropriate to equate them with a law or a moral code.

This is the principle that enabled IA to gain ground among the cultural theories within social psychology in Brazil: institutions modulate the way humans see, feel, and act toward themselves, to others, and to their political and social environments. Their relationship with subjects is determined by signs, senses, and meanings that encourage people to conduct themselves in certain ways, or, on the contrary, that inhibit their conduct. Institutional encouragement-inhibition works through specific prescriptions, social organizations, and socially shared norms of conduct. The encouragement-inhibition pair also operates through the production of emotional-cognitive-libidinal models that codify what it is possible to think, do, or feel in a given situation. As René Lourau explains,

> [...] institutions are norms. But they also include the way in which individuals agree, or do not agree, to participate in these very norms. Real social relations as well as social norms are part of the concept of institution. [...] the institution is not a level of social organization (rules, laws) that acts from the outside to regulate the life of groups or the conduct of individuals; [it] crosses all degrees of the human experience and is part of the symbolic structure of the group, of the individual. (Lourau, 2007, p. 71)

The maintenance of human life demands a continuous process of institutionalization – the uninterrupted creation of transversal organizational rationales forged through the clash of diverse forces in distinct socio-historical contexts that aim to meet particular needs and solve specific problems. This process creates institutions that present themselves both in the form of norms, laws, organizations, and entities as well as modes of subjectivation that modulate the relationship of subjects with the world.

The consolidation of a norm does not extinguish the forces in dispute. On the contrary, the "defeated" forces will continue to question the institutional rationale thus forged and the subjectivities produced by that particular institution. The result of this ongoing tension is a system of fragile stability, in which instituting and instituted forces always coexist. Each and every institution will constantly submit to this pressure, either as a result of the predominance of the forces that induce change or that insist on the conservation of the existing institutionalities. Because of this, there is a constant risk that the instituting dimension will confine the instituted one, a process that often occurs through the naturalization of institutional mechanisms.

If institutions modulate subjects' ways of seeing, thinking, and acting, how can there be variation? How do subjects modify institutions if they are overly determined by them? In the scenario proposed by Institutional Analysis, the subject does not decide to act merely based on an essentially hypothetical-deductive, gain-maximizing rationality, which would tend to equate the activities of the subject to the prevailing institutionalities. The diversity of institutional arrangements to which

one is exposed, and the mutual, continuous, and processual nature of the relationship between subjects and institutions preserve the possibility that a subject or a particular group of subjects may give rise to instituting forces and provoke ruptures in the hegemonic institutional framework. The recognition that instituting-instituted tensions are constitutive of the very concept of institution itself allows us to move away from a fatalistic, or over deterministic understanding of institutional activity on human behavior.

Ultimately, institutions are not in a transcendental position, nor are they the products of an extraordinary set of circumstances; they are at the level of the environment in which people live and are produced within the intricate network of relations that people assemble in order to live together. They are tools – instruments that we use to engage in our communal life. It is through the network of institutional threads that subjectivities are woven. The weaving of these threads produces a form – what we have called a subject. Subjectivity, then, is a singularized form that each human constructs in the encounter with the pre-existing arrangements in the social and natural world. In this scenario, examining subjectivities ceases to be about understanding the limits of the experience of the self, or the mental life of an isolated individual. Examining subjectivity through institutions is about identifying the contours of a particular, singular map of forces acting in a specific historical context, making explicit the anchor points of these forces, and considering the institutional arrangements that are producing them, as well as the correlating modes of feeling, thinking, and acting.

The Brazilian Social Psychology scholars working with such premises aim to make explicit the collective, public, and shared dimension of subjectivity. They locate subjectivation as a phenomenon that takes place between human bodies and other bodies – biological, technological, discursive, cultural, and moral. Modes of being, thinking, feeling, and acting are constantly produced, reproduced, and consumed at the same time that institutional normativities related to them are forged, disseminated, and decomposed. What is sought by studying these phenomena is an understanding of the 'status of these components of agency that lie "in between", in interaction, between radically heterogeneous domains' (Guattari, 2008, p. 03). The aim is also to track the pragmatic effects of these *agencements* in the social, libidinal, emotional, and economic spheres. In the place once occupied by the subject who was its own master are subjectivation processes marked by the coexistence of various institutional arrangements that act on bodies in different directions, just like vectors in an electromagnetic force field. As a result of this, this system of fragile stability, what we call subjectivity, is produced.

The Institutional Analysis and Brazilian Institutionalist Social Psychology framework is based on an ethical-esthetic-political paradigm. It valorizes the dynamic aspects of institutional and subjective production; it seeks to understand subjectivity with respect to its multiple dimensions of forces, movements, and discontinuities, and is eternally unfinished. The unnatural and dialectical aspects of institutions are revealed; their conflictive nature is emphasized to demonstrate that they are, at the same time, a product of human activity and the producer of specific modes of humanity and subjectivity. The preoccupation with unconscious drives

and impulses of which the subject is not aware – so important to psychoanalysis and its offshoots – is replaced by investigations into how constitutive processes work, what their components are, and what they produce.

Nicholas Thoburn (2009) investigated the diagram of militant subjectivation and pointed to its effects on both members and everyday praxis within the American far-left *Weather Underground Organization* (WUO). Formed in the 1970s by students at the University of Michigan, the largest public university in the United States, the *Weather Underground* had as its ultimate goal to create and sustain a revolutionary political party to confront and weaken US imperialism. Drawing on Félix Guattari's cartography of the effects of Stalinism on the Russian Revolution of 1917, Thoburn, in a reading similar to that of Valverde (1986), concludes that the militant diagram is characterized

> [...] by the production of field of inertia that restricts the emergence of novelty and encourages the acceptance of slogans and doctrines; transforming singular characteristics into universal dogmas; attributing a messianic vocation to the party and establishing a relationship of domination and contestation – that 'love and hate of the militant' – with those known as 'the masses'. (Thoburn, 2009, p. 126)

In his examination of the function of this mode of subjectivity in a contemporary context, the author notes that it is most visible in radical and markedly fundamentalist movements, but that it is also present in the protest cultures of those on the left-wing fringes of the political spectrum.

Suely Rolnik (2016), a prominent scholar in the Brazilian Institutionalist Social Psychology field, starts from similar premise when reflecting on the limits of left political praxes in the midst of widespread conservatism in Latin America and around the world. The author strongly exhorts even the most radical ***militantes*** to abandon the idea of revolution:

> The idea of "Revolution" belongs to the same logic of the colonial-capitalist unconscious, in its leftist version: with the blockage of the out-of-subject experience, the unease of destabilization leads leftist subjectivity to defensively imagine another world which will replace the existing one as a single block, through the seizure of state power – an idealized world with eternity guaranteed, because in it we would be protected against the inevitable turbulences of life, which take us out of the comfort zone and demand the constant work of transformation, as a condition for the very preservation of life. (Rolnik, 2016, p. 06)

These studies help to illustrate the coercive and productive nature of the concept of institution being discussed here. They unveil institutional potential to product-specific set of conducts[6] while repressing others in a continuous way, while also make explicit the inconvenient side effects of some ideas and praxis dear to those in the left side of the political spectrum. They highlighted how can an institution like militancy can have simultaneously liberating and oppressive effects in people's subjectivity. They help me to claim that institutions are therefore critical tools for examining the differences between ***militante*** and ***ativista*** subjectivity. Addressing the

[6] Along the book, I will use intentionally conduct as a countable noun and pluralize it when necessary for theoretical reasons.

relationship between institution and subjectivation is a fruitful way of widening the use of theoretical tools so as to shed light on what has been happening on the streets, in the public square, and on digital platforms across Brazil and throughout the world.

1.2 Synthesis and Analysis

The terms ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** are used by protesters in Brazil to distinguish between two very different methodologies for producing collective action that seeks to disrupt the status quo (Sales et al., 2019). The concepts of repertoire, strategy, and institution can be used to gain deeper insight into the differences between these approaches. While assembling these three ideas into a conceptual model, I want to emphasize that each one of these ideas can give form to the other. Each one of them is a medium in and through which the other can gain form. In simple terms: there are expressive relations between them.

Working with the sociological theories outlined above, I demonstrated how, over time, the formulations of repertoire evolved from a repetition of behaviors learned from previous generations toward contemporary players' political performances. Even though repertoires are shaped by the historic contexts that produced them, their expression at the moment of action brings to the forefront the singularities of those engaging in them. The repertoires are revisited and modified when used. By bringing the concept of repertoire closer to the notion of performance, Tilly highlights the creativity, stylization, and renovation that protesters imprint on the repertoire at the moment they use it (Tilly, 2006; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). At the same time, he frames such innovations within a set of limits and possibilities that historically determine the ways in which repertoire is produced.

The relationship between repertoires and performances is a repetition of the same, but not a reproduction of the identical. The image created by Tilly to illustrate the difference is of a musician playing jazz while being guided by a musical score. The variations made by the musician while playing the music imprint the musician's unique style onto the song, but the music is still fundamentally determined the score. Performances will never be identical to the repertoires that produce them; however, it is unlikely that acts of protest will go far beyond the boundaries set by the repertoire. Repertoires, as cultural tools, are created and modified through the acts of those who use them – though shaped by their historical precursors, each repertoire is performed differently and reflects the specific experiences of the players performing it. The double-headed arrows in Fig. 1.1 demonstrate the expressive relationship between repertoires and performances.

A strategy works as a set of core definitions about principles, fundamentals, and processes that will guide players' decisions on how to organize, execute, and evaluate their activities. Strategies influence the strategic dilemmas faced by subjects (McGarry & Jasper, 2015), and help determine the processes and tools, which should, or should not, be used. Analyzing subjects' activities allows us to understand the strategies the latter employed, the dilemmas they faced, and their reasons

for choosing particular tools. Studying archives, documents, and records detailing strategies, while paying attention to the decisions taken during the unfolding of the action, allows us to gain insight into how strategies are executed, renewed, and reconstructed depending on the choices of the individuals involved. The kind of strategy designed will require activists to make specific decision and face specific trade-offs. As in Fig. 1.1, the double-headed arrows shown in Fig. 1.2 demonstrate the expressive relationship between strategies and dilemmas. They show the way in which dilemmas are a form of expression of strategies and vice-versa.

While exploring the analytical approach taken by the Brazilian Institutionalist Social Psychology, I pointed out both the importance of the subjects' agency in the production, consumption, and transformation of the institutional dimension of human existence, and the restrictive-productive effect that institutions have on their subjectivity. Institutions are entities that produce, through the process of modifying themselves, forms from which they express their creative characteristics. That is, the current modes of subjectivity are expressions, manners of appearance, of the institutional arrangements acting in a specific context. Institutions grant determined forms to subjectivity (see Fig. 1.3).

Institutions are organizing rationales that emerged at a given historical moment to solve problems related to the existence of human groups. Thinking about the problem of organizing collective action to intervene in the status quo, one can assume that, throughout history, different institutions have been created to manage these problems as effectively as possible. The production of different strategies to conduct protest activities can be thought of as an expression of these institutions. Each of these strategies tends to circumscribe tactically a set of preferred processes to be executed, which are then systematically modified by the participants as the action is underway. These preferred processes are recognized as efficient ways of

Fig. 1.1 Expressive relations between repertoires and performances

Fig. 1.2 Expressive relations between strategies and dilemmas

Fig. 1.3 Expressive relations between institutions and subjectivities

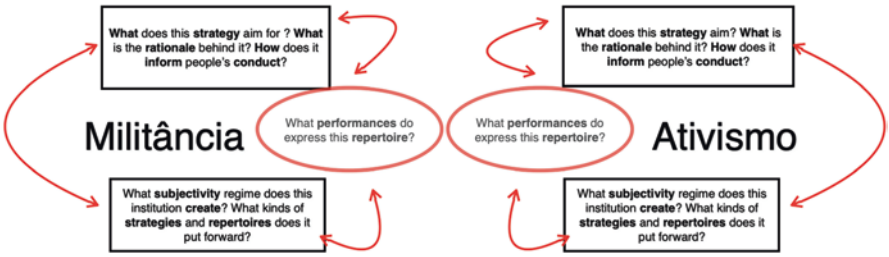

Fig. 1.4 Possible research questions framed by the conceptual model

engaging in political contestation and can potentially be consolidated into repertoires.

Figure 1.4 synthesizes the argument made and presents a set of possible questions to be explored in investigations that follow the conceptual path presented: this conceptual path enables fluid movement between sociological and psychological studies; it meets the scientific conditions of conceptual coherence and argumentative rigor; and it is directly relevant to the community of researchers interested in examining the ongoing changes in the forms of contestation of the status quo in Brazil. I opted for a flowchart rather than a table in order to most clearly represent, in graphic form, the dynamism and character of mutual production that exists among the three concepts discussed in this chapter.

1.3 Repertoire, Strategy, or Institution?

The claim that the three concepts discussed in this chapter are useful for examining the denotative and connotative meanings of the words ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** delimits a field of work that this book has only started to explore. Hopefully, other researchers will engage with this conceptual model to explore its utility and qualify our understanding of the transformations taking place in the forms of and approaches to protest and collective action around the world. This book aims to present ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** as distinct tactical rationalities and modes of conduct from an interdisciplinary and psychopolitical standpoint. The proceeding chapters will use

the conceptual framework drafted here to navigate through ideas from political philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Its ultimate goal is to disclose crucial features of the ***militante*** and ***ativista*** strategies and their consequences for political activists claiming to belong to one or the other group.

It is necessary to remind the reader that the concept of institutions adopted here situates them on a transversal plane to human activities. Institutions play a mediating function with regard to the creation of strategies and modes of conduct and, as such, will not be addressed separately in any section of the book. I argue that studying strategies, both through the observation of preferred modes of action and through the historical context in which the strategies were produced, can lead to crucial insights into their effects on a political group and its members. In the following chapters, the expressive relationship between repertoires, strategies, and institutions will be explored comprehensively to reveal ***militantes*** and ***ativistas***' forms of political consciousness.

Joel Wainwright (2010), immersed in Gramsci's philosophy of *praxis*, calls researchers' attention to the relevance of the meanings, ideas, and tools that inform people's understanding of their world and form their 'conceptions of the world'. The principle sustaining his claim is simple: 'political transformation requires grasping how particular conceptions of the world become effective: how, that is, they become realized' (Wainwright, 2010, p. 509). Discussing the benefits of a situated, historical, and transformative conception of agency, Stetsenko (2020) asserts that 'subjectivity is simultaneously a form of acting, knowing, and being by people collaborating in active pursuits of social transformations'.

I invite you, the reader, to join me as we immerse ourselves in the modes of action adopted by Brazilian ***ativistas*** and ***militantes***, so that we can grasp their efforts to reshape their conception of the world and ours.

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Chapter 2
Ativismo and Prefigurative Activities: The Sit-Ins in the State of São Paulo

2.1 A Restless Country in a Stormy World

Between November 2015 and January 2016, high school students in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, strove to achieve the impossible – that is to align the actions of the state with the needs of the population. Acting collectively, and organizing autonomously, they occupied hundreds of schools and took on the roles of principals, program coordinators, security guards, cooks, cleaners, and related functions. Allied with residents of the neighborhoods in which their schools were based, they resisted police brutality and took care of their schools. The protests aimed to stop the state government from implementing a project that would restructure the availability of public schooling, a euphemism for cutting expenditure and closing state run schools. In December 2015, the youth achieved their goal and the project was shelved (Hayashi et al., 2017). In 2016, inspired by the protest repertoires used in São Paulo, students from Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro (Wenceslao Jr. et al., 2017) also held protests and occupied public buildings. These 'juvenile' actions are part and parcel of the Brazilian version of the autonomist protest repertoire.[1]

While investigating the novelties and uniqueness of these protests, Gohn (2018) draws attention to the popularity of *coletivos [collectives]* as organizational instruments for social mobilization. As she explains,

> [...] collectives, unlike movements or other more traditional forms, are fluid, fragmented, horizontal groupings and many have autonomy and horizontality as basic values and principles. Collectives call themselves activist rather than militant organizations (Gohn, 2018, p. 120).

[1] The term 'autonomism' frames a set of antiauthoritarian ideas and proposals whose influence on forms of protest became globally evident, in the field of collective action, after the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, United States, in November 1999 (Alonso & Mische, 2017).

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*, Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_2

This investigation assembles multiple sources of secondary data to develop a case study of the occupation of public schools in the state of São Paulo. I conclude that sit-ins are an essential part of the protest cycle in Brazil that was triggered by the events of June 2013 (Alonso, 2017). I suggest that the commitment to prefigurative praxis sets **ativistas'** movements apart from the ***militante***[2] approach to political engagement that prevailed in Brazil between 1980 and 2013 (Avritzer, 2016). As will be detailed below, the distinctive, and analytically challenging, hallmark of these praxes is their attempt to prefigure, in the present time, values, norms, and ways of life belonging to the sought-after Futures that they are committed to bringing about (Yates, 2015a). This trait will raise puzzling questions like: if no one knows yet what the future will be like, how is it possible to prefigure such acts in the present time (Raekstad, 2018)? And, further, how is it possible to understand and analyze something that 'is not there yet' (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2)?

It is through the lens of the *Transformative Activist Stance* (TAS) (Stetsenko, 2008, 2013, 2017a) that these questions will be addressed. This framework will illuminate how these transformative activities impact, at the same time, the social norms organizing collective life and the path of individual development followed by the young protesters. Underpinned by a materialist ontology that does not oppose society and the individual, TAS posits human development as an active, permanent, and contingent process of becoming. 'In TAS, imagined futures are neither treated as fuzzy aspirations, nor taken for granted. The future is something people struggle over and struggle for in our action' (Hopwood, 2022, p, 05). Each human being can act from a unique standpoint by mobilizing the knowledge produced collectively and accumulated over their own personal history, and by committing to preferred Futures that they want to transform into reality.

TAS inserts purpose and intentionality in a field increasingly dominated by neurobiological fatalims to reinforce the centrality of one's explicit, or implicit, commitment to a sought-after Future. Its adequacy for analyzing prefigurative activities stems from its resolute claim that,

> [Human] development and learning is a collaborative work-in-progress of activist nature not confined to people adapting to what is "given" in the world; instead, these processes are reliant upon, and realized through, people forming future-oriented agendas and carrying out social changes in line with these agendas, within collaborative projects of social transformation (Stetsenko, 2017a, b, p. 232-3).

To develop one must purposefully produce and transform oneself, playing an agentic[3] and active lead in his process of perpetual state of becoming. At this same time,

[2] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words miliância and ativismo – and their variations – in their original, un-translated form, and format them in bold and italics.

[3] I am using the term 'agentic' and its variations to refer to a person's ability to direct their own activities, goals, and destiny. In the late 1980s, Albert Bandura, a psychologist at Stanford University, constructed a theory of social cognition that emphasized its relation to self-sufficiency and self-efficacy. Later, he focused on the function of agency and motivation in greater detail, and he came up with the term 'agentic', which describes humans as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulated.

and through the same process, they produce and transform the world. This perspective on human development provides conceptual tools that are suitable for understanding social transformation 'while we are in the midst of change, while the contours and directions of change are still being shaped' (Stetsenko, 2007, p. 112) and thereby equips researches to understand how prefigurative activities are 'inherently experiential and experiential' (Van De Sande, 2015, p. 189).

The chapter is divided into four parts. In the first, it presents the debate on prefigurative activities and exposes the main ideas of TAS. In the second section, it explains the methodological procedures used to assemble the case study. The third section presents and discusses the case study to answer the following questions: (1) In what sense are the high school sit-ins in São Paulo distinct from traditional forms of protest in Brazil? (2) How might these differences impact the course of development of those who call themselves ***ativistas***[4]? The fourth section summarizes the discussion and points to avenues for future research.

This work aims to contribute to the study of social movements and to the explore the interface between of political and critical psychology. With respect to the first goal, the results reinforce the importance of recognizing prefigurative activities as a relevant analytical category of the 'new culture of participation' (Gohn, 2018, p. 117) of young people in politics in Brazil and their popularity globally (Yates, 2021). With respect to the second, it challenges popularity of psychoanalytical ideas (Frosh, 2014) in the studies of the political conduct,[5] by offering an approach to subjectivity not in terms of unconscious wills or drives but as a product of 'collaborative processes of individuals acting as social subjects (...) who enact collectivities by changing them through their own, individually unique contributions instantiated in each and every act of knowing, being, and doing' (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 9).

2.2 Theoretical Lens

2.2.1 Prefigurative Activities

The debate over prefigurative politics has returned to the contemporary social movement scene combined with the explicit presence of anarchist values present in the 1999 Seattle protests (Day, 2005). Because debates about autonomy and self-determination were pivotal products of the 'Seattle Mode' (Wood, 2020), scholars started to point out the presence of anarchist approaches to the problem of organizing collective action. They started to claim that prefiguration is useful for

[4] To ensure the accuracy of my claims and to avoid losing crucial information in the translation, I will format the terms ***miliância*** and ***ativismo*** – and their variations – in bold and italics.

[5] Along the book, I will use intentionally conduct as a countable noun and pluralize it when necessary for theoretical reasons.

underscoring how the sought-after Future that protesters are committed to creating can inform, expand, and renew the political horizons, values, ideas, and strategies of social movements (Graeber, 2002; Maeckelbergh, 2009, Srnicek & Williams, 2015, Yates, 2021). Gordon (2018) concludes his genealogical study on prefiguration by arguing that understanding this idea as a 'concrete utopia' captures the meaning present in activists' practices and offers relevant approaches for inserting this concept into studies and analyses of political activities.

The verb 'prefigure' encompasses two key actions: to imagine something that is not yet known, and to be an early indication or version of something that does not yet exist. Raekstad (2018) analyzes the ways in which this term and its dual meanings have become part of the vocabulary of those on the left. He locates the beginning of the debate about the function of the prefiguration in politics in the disputes that occurred between the anarchist and Marxist attendees of the First International and argues that utopian socialism, anarchism, Italian workerism, and Marxism are the most influential intellectual traditions informing discussions on prefiguration today (Raekstad, 2016). Outside the global North, *Zapatismo*, *Buen Vivir* (the worldview of the Quechua peoples of the Equatorial Andes), and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of hope are also helping shape the debate (Dinerstein, 2015; Motta, 2016).

Raekstad & Gradin (2020) associate contemporary social movements' taste for prefigurative praxes with the historical anarchist struggles against vanguardism. When anarchists entered into the debates of the Communist International in the 1930s, they 'continued to advocate what we now call prefigurative politics, and to criticize hierarchical and vanguardist organization (vanguardism here is the idea that a more capable elite should lead the socialist movement from "above" (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 32). These authors also claim that feminists and anticolonial activists are vehement critics of vanguardist tendencies because vanguardist leaders tend to diminish the importance of regular people in creating a movement's strategy. Working with the premise that class is a broad enough identity to encompass all kinds of oppressions and violence, and with a narrow understanding of rationality and strategy, vanguardists tend to assume that it is unnecessary to take into account the ways in which gender, race, class, and other kind of oppression intersect when one is in a subaltern position (Acciari, 2021).

Cornell (2016) shows that in the United States, especially in the context of the New Left debates during the 1960s, the idea of prefigurative praxes was associated with issues of culture and ways of life. Members of revolutionary organizations were expected to exemplify with their lives, the values, principles, and social norms that should govern the postrevolutionary world. Wini Breines' work on the organizational preferences of the student movement is taken as an important reference in this regard (Breines, 1989 [1982]). Yates (2021) argues that the idea has gained momentum over the last 40 years among scholars studying social movements' strategies. Between 1990 and 1999, prefiguration was associated with cultural politics and the agenda of emerging social movements. This was a decade in which academics started to recognize that 'many new social movements were not, or not only agonistic but also developed new ideas, norms, and practices, [so] the imaginative and temporal dimensions of political activity were very important' (Yates, 2021,

p. 06). From 2000 to 2009, the term 'prefigurative' emerges frequently in the discussions about the distinguishing features of the alter-globalization protests and is also present in debates about federalism, autonomism, and contemporary anarchism. It was used to mark the distinctions between the rationale motivating contemporary forms of collective action from that of previous decades. After 2010, with the widespread occupation of public squares and other forms of insurgent political participation by events ike Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring, the term was used to stress the intentional attempt to embed in protesters' strategies the values, norms, and ideas that the movements were committed to producing (antiauthoritarian and antioppression activist added in their agendas the goal of producing nonhierarchical and participatory modes of protesting while demanding more equality).

Defending the relevance of taking activities as the unit of analysis for contemporary collective action, Yates argues that 'focusing on what people do and why they do it enables a better understanding of how political ideas and values are inherent in the activities – be they tactical or everyday – developed by movements. (Yates, 2015b, p. 243). To reinforce this argument, this chapter will adopt the Transformative Activist Stance's understanding of human development to highlight the inseparability and mutual production of social norms and individual development.

In my discussion of the sit-ins in the state of São Paulo, I will focus on the prefigurative nature of the daily activities developed by the students and explore its implications for path of development taken by those who participated in the protests. I should explain that the term 'prefigurative' here describes a conscious effort made by those involved in collective action to experiment with, in their deeds, strategies, tactics, and organizational structures, the social norms they are committed to producing. The ***ativistas*** prefigure modes of life and community in order to achieve self-transformation and learn how to enact changes in the shared norms that rule social institutions, which, in the case study explored here, means their school.

2.2.2 The Transformative Activist Stance (TAS)

TAS (Stetsenko, 2017a, b) presents a comprehensive proposition for going beyond theories in which human development and sociocultural evolution are conceived of as being independent, competing, or antithetical processes. It offers an alternative to mechanist, evolutionary and functionalist theories, which focus primarily on brain morphology, genetic inheritance, or species evolution over time as the key forces behind the process through which we become who we are. For a significant number of these theories, the mind, subjectivity, and human conduct can be completely understood through studies of neurotransmitters in the synaptic pathways or through the process of DNA decodification (Damasio, 2003). While it recognizes the advances in those areas, TAS takes a different path, positing collaborative and intentional activities, guided by preferred Futures, as the key element for studying how humans evolve over time.

TAS is an extension of Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology, which Anna Stetsenko constructed assembling Bakhtinian dialogism, and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, among many other theories (Stetsenko, 2017a). It conceives reality as an unfinished process, 'a shifting terrain of social practices, enacted by people as actors of collective projects and history, each contributing from a unique stance' (Hopwood, 2022, p. 4). Explaining the specifics of this perspective, Vianna et al. (2014) state that it proposes 'a new ontology and epistemology for which being, doing, and knowing are unified aspects of the human development process' (p. 62). In other words, there is a constant and unceasing exchange between people collaboratively creating and apprehending the world, while actively and intentionally producing themselves. In this sense, humanity and the world are understood as distinct, but not opposed, poles of a single production process. Both are simultaneously parts and products of a unified, though not uniform, field of collaborative and intentional activities (Stetsenko, 2017a).

Rather than focusing on the ways in which the entities involved in this productive relationship constrain, limit, and harm each other, the onto-epistemology of TAS understands these 'opposing' parts as distinct aspects of the same creative and productive process. In this ontology, structure is not in direct opposition to agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), since agency is understood 'as a situated and collectively formed ability of people, qua agents of social practices, history, and the world itself (…) to co-realize the world and themselves while challenging the existing status quo (...) with a particular horizon of possibilities in sight' (Stetsenko, 2020, p. 06). Sterile opposition and antithetical dualities are replaced by attention to how people contribute to (and not merely participate in) the enactment of reality (Stetsenko, 2017a, b). An agentic, purposeful, collaborative, and intentional perspective is the privileged mode through which humanity and the reality of the world continuously and mutually determine each other (Stetsenko, 2019).

TAS brings to the forefront the Future-orientated nature of human endeavors through which we become fully human. It recognizes goals, purposes, and objectives, whether explicitly stated or not, as fundamental motives guiding human developmental processes. If humans are, in part, the product of their past, it is about time to recognize that what they do in the present is 'guided by, and intelligible in light of, the destination [they] want to achieve and [their] commitment to achieving it' (Stetsenko, 2017a, b, p. 236). Equipped with this premise, one can understand the almost stubborn logic informing Brazilian ***ativistas's*** decision to use their quotidian activities, inside the sit-ins, as laboratories for reinventing themselves, while disputing with the authorities the Future of public education in São Paulo.

The centrality of the Future in TAS makes it a suitable framework to: (a) emphasize the relevance of using activities as a unit of analysis in the study of collective action and social movements; (b) understand the strategic function played by prefigurative practices in the context of the protests carried out by young Brazilian ***ativistas*** during the occupations of high schools in São Paulo; (c) recognize the impact that the prefiguration of the future can have on the course of self-development of young ***ativistas***.

2.3 Methodology

In November 2015, when a group of students occupied the first high school in the Greater São Paulo area and the similarities with events that I had been studying since 2013 became evident, I started to collect data on the sit-ins. I wanted to understand if and how these protests were related to the changes I was investigating. At the time, I suspected that the high school occupations in the state of São Paulo were an important moment in the creation, expression, and diffusion of the autonomist culture of political participation being forged in the country (Gohn, 2018). The popularity of sit-ins as a repertoire of protest increased throughout 2016 and reinforced my hypothesis (Ribeiro & Pulino, 2019). The immense amount of material produced by and about the occupations in São Paulo made it possible to transform my initial supposition into a research hypothesis to be investigated.

A prominent characteristic of the sit-ins was the efficient use of digital communication strategies. Digital communication, like other forms of communication, conveys messages to others, constructs knowledge, fosters understanding, and/or influences opinions. It effectively combines images, text, video, and other media in a digital format. In addition, digital communication uses an ever-changing set of digital tools and platforms to create purposeful artifacts, such as websites, multimedia blogs, social media posts, and digital storytelling. The student protesters used a comprehensive digital communication strategy to mobilize participants, organize and coordinate the distinct groups of students spread throughout the state of São Paulo, and present their positions to the general public (Corti et al., 2016; Corti & Crochik, 2021). Facebook pages, YouTube channels, and blogs were created and used extensively by students to disseminate organizational documents, to debate what could be done, and to present the students' version of the protest events. As the occupations started to gain momentum, they were covered by television news channels and newspapers throughout the country. Additionally, in support of the sit-ins, independent filmmakers produced short films and web-series documenting the first moments of the high school students' spring (Tavolari et al., 2018). Finally, academic researchers also took a keen interest in the phenomenon. The amount of information available was impressive due to its diversity but it was also difficult to collate due to its dispersion. It was a challenge to design a strategy to deal with such a diverse range and volume of information.

I organized my data collection in two stages (see Table 2.1). The first, which was carried out from November 2015 to July 2016, grouped different types of digital material produced by the students, and also about them. I cataloged videos available on YouTube and Vimeo, blog posts, content published on Facebook, and newspaper news reports from the traditional and alternative press, among others. The second stage was conducted between January 2016 and December 2018 and consisted of gathering together academic publications on the topic. I used the *Scientific Electronic Library Online (Scielo),* the most relevant database for academic publications in Portuguese.[6]

[6] The idea of using scientific research as a source of secondary data was inspired by the abductive approach to research. This form of reasoning is mostly 'concerned with the relationship between a situation and inquiry' (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 722). It recommends 'paying special attention to the

Table 2.1 Overview of data collected

Material	Amount collected	Collection time
Documents relating to the protesters' organization and mobilization	25,000 words of text published in blogs and on Facebook	October 2015 to March 2016
Videos available on digital platforms (Vimeo and YouTube)	30 h	January 2016 to July 2017
Scientific papers	41 articles	January 2016 to December 2018

This material was archived and classified into three categories of evidence: (a) student productions; (b) videos about the events; (c) academic analyses. Following the guidelines for data treatment suggested by Patton (2015), I submitted the archived data to an analysis searching for similarities among the narratives created by the students, those published in digital newspapers and produced by the filmmakers, and those published in academic journals. Then, I used prefiguration as a concept to evidence in the narratives created by protesters, journalists, and academic the distinctive traits of the culture of political participation associated with the term ***ativismo***. Access to information produced by the variety of actors outlined above contributed to the accuracy and plurality of viewpoints I used to build the case study and to develop my analysis (Bryman, 2012).

The goal of analyzing the data was to search for patterns, repetitions, and similarities that could shed light on the tenets behind ***ativista*** strategy. The following convergences emerged as a result of the recursive cycles of manual content analysis:

1. Acknowledgment of substantial differences between the collective action that occurred after 2013 and the traditional ways in which it had occurred previously throughout Brazil's history.
2. Recognition of the importance of the *Movimento Passe Livre* in São Paulo as the catalyst of the 'June Journeys'[7] and also a source of influence for forms of collective action triggered after 2013.
3. Agreement that the novelty consisted in the rejection of the labor union and party-based political models of triggering and conducting collective action.
4. Consensus that digital communication and technologies were an essential part of the originality of these protests (it is worth noting that there was strong disagreement among journalists and academics about the role digital communication played within the process).
5. Association of the changes with the presence of values that reinforce the importance of individual and collective autonomy, with or without direct reference to anarchist political culture.

surprising facts, the breakdown of understanding, and near surroundings of the problem under scrutiny' (See Brinkmann, 2012).

[7] The 2013 demonstrations against the increase in the prices of public transportation fares are, also referred to as the 'June Journeys', 'Confederation Cup Riots', 'V for Vinegar Movement', and 'the Brazilian Spring'.

2.3.1 The Protesters' Perspective

The '*Coletivo Mal Educado'* page on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/mal.educado.sp), and the blog *Grêmio Livre* (https://gremiolivre.wordpress.com/),[8] which were both run by the same group of students, were used as the main channels for accessing the material produced by the protesters. The content published on these platforms aimed to inform protesters and observers of the reasons for the sit-ins; present student's demands to the state governor; propose possible solutions regarding the issues; and discuss on the organizational strategy to be adopted to increase the number of occupied schools. Videos, social media posts, memes, blog posts, and other content circulated widely on the Internet.

I applied content analysis techniques to underline the most frequent themes and identified the following results: (a) recommendations on how protests should be organized; (b) descriptions of the daily life of those involved in the occupations; (c) reasons for the occupations. These findings, when triangulated with the other results, proved to be quite consistent. From this data, one document deserved special attention, both for having circulated widely among the occupied schools and for having been identified by academic analyses as fundamental in the implementation of the students' strategy during the protests.

The pamphlet *How to occupy a school?*, edited by '*Coletivo Mal-Educado'*, is an adaptation of similar material used by Chilean students during the 'Penguin Revolt' (Zibas, 2008). In addition to presenting the movement's strategy, the booklet draws on the Chilean student occupations to mobilize the students: 'the occupations started in the schools where the classes were most engaged in the struggle, but the example served as inspiration for students from more places and, quickly, almost all the schools in Chile were taken over (...) What if we did the same in São Paulo?' (Mal-Educado, 2015, p. 1). Crucially, the writing style of the material, which will be discussed further, presents the students' intention to recreate the ways of presenting and implementing strategy and reinforces the argument that prefigurative activities are a defining feature of these protests.

2.3.2 Short Films and Documentaries

Between January 2016 and July 2017, I searched the video platforms YouTube and Vimeo on a weekly basis. Using the words '***ativismo'***, 'protest', and 'students', I found 48 videos, ranging in length from three to 139 min, and amounting to approximately 30 h of recorded data. Immersion in these stories gave me access to the discourses of the students and their parents, teachers, principals, and also other members of the communities where the schools are located. Due to time constraints,

[8] Both pages were still active in February 2023 when this book was edited.

analyzing the 30 h of video was not feasible, so it was necessary to create criteria to determine which videos to include in my research.

The materials produced by the students themselves reinforced the relevance of the daily life of the occupied schools as critical representations of their political goals. I was interested in understanding the distinctive traces of the new protest culture that the students were producing, as well as understanding the rationale driving it; consequently, including the students' point of view through the positionality of a filmmaker increased the plurality of perspectives with which I worked. With this idea in mind, I used the following criteria to produce my video sample: (1) The video had to be published while the occupations were still happening; (2) It had to focus on the activities taking place inside the occupations; (3) It had to present the students' point of view (which led to the exclusion of materials in which journalists, politicians, and academics gave their opinions about the facts); (4) It needed to explain why it was important for the students to distinguish their protest forms from those they conceived of as ***militante*****.**

The final sample included three documentaries: Occupied Schools – The Real Reorganization (Bro, 2015); São Paulo: Occupied Education (Vice-Brasil, 2015); School Occupation as told by the Students, Parents, and Society (Estadão, 2015). The combined duration of these videos is 60 min. I transcribed and submitted the material to manual content analysis with the aim of making explicit the distinctive features of the sit-ins. The result of this analysis evinced: (a) the importance given by the students to the activities developed inside the occupations; (b) the rationality of the strategy used in carrying out the occupations; (c) the ways in which the students organized themselves while dealing with the daily activities inside the schools; (d) the efforts to promote public, inclusive, and participatory decision-making and organizational processes. The triangulation of these findings with those obtained through the analysis of the other two types of evidence ensured the consistency of the results.

2.3.3 Academic Analysis

From January 2016 to December 2018, using the key words '***ativismo'***, 'protest', and 'students', I conducted a search in the *Scielo* database for academic articles about the high school occupations in São Paulo. The initial search came up with 41 articles,[9] only ten of which focused on the occupations in the state of São Paulo. As a result, my sample was restricted to these ten articles. These texts explore several aspects of the sit-ins, such as the strategy used, the educational activities proposed by students to promote open-classes during the protests, and the legal dilemmas

[9] The importance of the sit-ins has been widely recognized by the academic community studying the interface of protest activities and educational politics. The journal *Educação Temática Digital in 2017* published two volumes addressing the spread of the sit-ins throughout Brazil following the events in Sao Paulo.

caused by the fact that minors, citizens under the age of 18, were occupying public buildings.

The academic analyses were treated as raw data and not just as literature reviews. They were compared with the other types of data collected to increase the consistency of the information obtained and to validate the conclusions reached. While scrutinizing this material to discern what made the occupations different from the usual forms of protest in Brazil, I arrived at the following results: (a) experimentation with values, norms, and forms of conduct in the occupations that the students considered to be more reasonable than those currently adhered to in society at large; (b) denial of the strategies and repertoires of action typical of labor unions, student councils, and left-wing political parties in Brazil; (c) employment of autonomist values and principles; (d) intense use of digital tools in their communication and organizational arrangements.

2.3.4 Partial Conclusions: Toward a Synthesis

My examination of the diverse types of evidence outlined above led me to conclude that the sit-ins in São Paulo were exemplary events of transformation producing the new culture of participation that Gohn (2018) talks about. The analyses conducted so far evinced that, just like in June 2013, protesters were young people living in large cities, concerned with the issues of everyday life. Once again, they favored decentralized organizational arrangements, engaged in participatory decision-making, and were highly suspicious of political parties, student councils, and other traditional actors on the Brazilian protest scene. They insisted on calling themselves ***ativistas*** and their manner of political participation ***ativismo***. These tendencies reinforce the argument that the word ***ativismo*** in Brazil describes a collectividual autonomist strategy.

On the particularities of the sit-ins in São Paulo, students, video makers, and academics converged in pointing out the use of everyday activities like cooking, cleaning, and teaching, developed within the sit-ins as a practical way of defying ***militante*** culture. Protesters seemed to be aware that 'activism requires huge amounts of labor that is generally overlooked and undervalued by researchers and activists, just as similar tasks are undervalued in wider society' (Yates, 2021, p. 13). The ativistas purposefully frame as political the menial tasks necessary to keep a protest in operation and to build a community.

To explore these particularities, I chose to integrate the evidence I collected and the partial results I obtained into another analytical unit and build a narrative case study (Brandell & Varkas, 2001). I am interested in finding some specific characteristics o of an insurgent mode of political engagement that has been gaining momentum in the country since 2013. I worked under the assumption that the word ***ativismo*** is an important sign of the emergent political culture. Thus, it was necessary to search for the way it appeared in several places at a particular moment of time. Treating all the occupations in the state of São Paulo as one case study has the

limitation of suppressing the singularities experienced in each of the more than 200 schools in which sit-in occurred. However, this arrangement allows for a better understanding of facts that, if taken in isolation, could be of little significance to my goal. Presenting and discussing the facts that occurred using this analytical resource allowed me to explore traces of this culture of youth participation at a time when it was still being shaped.

2.4 The Case Study and Further Analysis

In November 2015, a student uprising happened in the public school system in the state of São Paulo. The sit-ins took place in response to a government plan designed to restructure the state school network, closing 93 schools and affecting the daily lives of thousands of young people. The students felt disrespected not only by the plan itself, but also by the way it was presented to them. The outrage of the plan provoked is captured in this text produced by a student in one of the occupied schools:

> [School restructuring] should be called [school] imposition because it wasn't discussed with the teachers or the parents, much less so with the students who will be the most affected by it. This reorganization, in fact, will end up making life worse for many people if it is approved. That's why we are here to fight to try to see if we can get it changed, because everything is being imposed on us (Estadão, 2015).

For a schematic presentation of the main facts related to the sit-ins, I assembled Table 2.2 based on the material produced by Hayashi et al. (2017). In it, I draw a timeline of events paired with mottos coined by the protesters. The mottos offer important insights into how students were framing the events that occurred in distinct moments of their struggle.

During the period that the students occupied the schools, they promoted artistic, cultural, and educational activities open to the members of the local community. Instead of the regular classes, with their curricular content mostly disconnected from everyday concerns, the occupiers designed a curriculum encompassing their own needs, desires, and dreams. Using resources available within their neighborhoods, and inviting members of their communities to give 'public lectures' students discussed politics, economics, history, prejudice, sexuality, machismo, and many other topics. Responding to the criticism that the occupations were reducing students' learning opportunities, they claim that:

> We learn every day and all the time. We learned how to organize ourselves. I learn every second with the people who study here with me. The occupation is changing everybody and this is something one can't deny: we are learning. We are learning. And I will take this with me for the rest of my life (Bro, 2015).

The students succeeded in: (a) making explicit difference between the governed and the governor's respective understanding of what constitutes high-quality education; (b) occupying more than 200 public schools; (c) forcing the incumbent State Secretary of education to resign; (d) preventing the execution of the school network

Table 2.2 Timeline of the sit-ins in the state of São Paulo

Period	Context	Motto
March 2015 June 2015	Mobilization by the state public school teachers, supported by some of the students, resulting in a strike that started on march 13 and ended on June 15.	The professor is my friend, if you mess with my teacher you mess with me.
September 2015	Secretary of education for the state of São Paulo announces plan for school reorganization.	Education is an investment, not an expense.
	Notification by the secretary of education of the list of schools affected by school reorganization.	Governors who close schools, inaugurate prisons.
	Start of street protests (in the capital and in the towns and cities outside the metropolitan region of São Paulo) against the school reorganization plan	Alckmin (Geraldo José Rodrigues Alckmin Filho was the state governor at the time of the protests): Terminator of the future.
October 2015	Announcement of the 93 high schools that are to be closed in keeping with the restructuring plan	Alckmin: Education's enemy number one.
	Occupation of the Diadema state school, in the city of Diadema.	If they close, we will occupy.
	Occupation of the Fernão Dias Paes state school, in Pinheiros, a neighborhood in the city of São Paulo.	
November 2015	Governor obtains a judicial order to evict students from occupied-schools,	Without education there is no democracy.
	São Paulo's court of appeals defends the occupation of schools against the state government and abrogates the eviction order.	
	The secretary of education confirms that, despite the protests, the state will move forward with the restructuring plan.	Occupying and resisting!
	Students boycott the State's high school evaluation exam	
	Students start to block roads, march on the streets with the aim of gaining public support for their demands	
	Students occupy 213 schools throughout the state of São Paulo.	We just took back what was already ours!
December 2015	Public Defender's office wins action against the state of São Paulo and the school restructuring plan is suspended.	Lord, take this Alckmin away from me!
	Repeal of the state decree which made the school reorganization legal	Backing down was never an option!
January 2016	Students vacate the last occupied schools	Occupying and resisting!

Source: Prepared by the author

restructuring project. Furthermore, these students gave national visibility to the ***ativista*** strategy of protest, making it explicit that their decisions and behaviors are based on an understanding that 'it is not possible to understand or enact a radically free, equal, and democratic society simply through reading and applying theory about it, that an expert has created' (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 157).

Assembling the distinct pieces of evidence in this case study convinced me that carrying out prefigurative activities was a distinctive characteristic of the high school occupations in São Paulo. Students strategically use the movement's reproductive tasks, those directly related to the maintenance of the basic conditions of the occupation like cleaning and cooking, as a laboratory for experimenting alternative forms of community development (Yates, 2021). They play with gender stereotypes, power relations, and modes of organizing collective action in order to rethink how they could be performed in no authoritarian and more inclusive fashions. The ***ativistas*** also explicit acknowledge that changing social norms forces people to reshape their relations with themselves.

As briefly pointed out in the previous section, the reproductive activities developed by the students inside the occupied schools, those who are usually framed as without any relation with a movement goals, were intentionally politicized. Those activities were framed as opportunities for self-development, in defiance of the social norms that currently inform collective life and as an opportunity to experiment alternative modes of communal life. Students, video makers, and academics highlighted the protesters' attempts to create learning spaces to experiment and experience social norms aligned with the sought-after Futures they were trying to produce. These attempts contrast with the traditional Brazilian ***militante*** legacy, sustained in the Stalinist version of Marxism.

Examples of activities in which the students expressed their desire to prefigure the future included: (a) implementing a unified, but nonbinding, strategy for conducting the occupations; (b) prioritizing open, participatory, and inclusive decision-making processes; (c) creating environments in which mutual respect and solidarity were nurtured by paying close attention to the power relations developed within the sit-ins; (d) using everyday activities within the sit-ins as an opportunity to reshape themselves while challenging the state's plans for education.

In the following subsections, I will sustain these claims exploring the relevance of an active experimental and experiential stance in the execution of prefigurative strategies (Yates, 2021). To highlight the inseparability of individual and collective development, I will use the Transformative Active Stance ontology of human development and argue in favor of prefigurative strategies as paths with potential to expand political imagination in the disputes over the invention of the Future.

2.4.1 Occupations as Prefigurative Spaces

Catini and Mello (2016) point to the existence of prefigurative praxes in the June 2013 demonstrations. The authors say that the refusal of the ***militante*** and vanguardist modes of political engagement drove the experimentation with forms of

political activity and organization that were more permeable to individual desires, situated hopes, needs, and dreams. In the case of the São Paulo high school sit-ins, prefiguration became more prominent, especially when contrasted with those commonly found in the Brazilian political parties and student unions.

Yates (2015a) suggests that prefigurative activities in contemporary forms of collective action are processes that mobilize five distinct components:

> [1] collective experimentation; [2] design, proposition, and circulation of political meanings; [3] creation of new norms, values, and behaviors aligned with the ideal of the future that drives the group; [4] inclusion of these in the movement's organizational structure, [5] diffusion and contamination of these ideas, messages, and goals among networks other than those of the movement's members (Yates, 2015a, p. 1).

When mobilized together, the five components create opportunities for participants to move beyond the negation of prevailing social norms and move experimentally toward the production of norms and values in line with their preferred Futures. Such experiments, which were very important in the case we studied here, allow participants to interrogate their own beliefs, exchange ideas about what needs to be done, and construct, in the Present, organizing structures and cultural identities suitable for inhabiting the desired Future. The occupied schools were used as a privileged location for experimental educational activities conceived of so as to surpass the poor and narrow activities offered by the formal education system. When students assumed the roles of teachers and course directors they managed to arrange for woman, black people, LGBTQ+ folks, and other recognized minorities to lead public lectures in which they could learn and invent together the features the Future they were trying to produce.

During the sit-ins, the need to build more equitable relations between genders was addressed using prefigurative practices. When dealing with the demands to set up teams to manage the essential maintenance activities of the occupied schools – such as building teams do handle security, cleaning, transportation of goods, and food preparation – the ***ativistas*** created gender-parity commissions. Further, they managed to play around with gender norms and allocated girls to tasks usually performed by males in Brazil (such as building security and the transportation of goods) and males were allocated to traditional female tasks (such as cleaning and food preparation).

Prefigurative experiments like this were developed within the daily routine of the sit-ins and produced learning environments in which young ***ativistas*** could create, learn, teach, and experience social norms, gender roles, values, and modes of conduct that bring to the Present, the Future that the students are committed to produce. Participating in these teaching-learning processes tends to impact the course of development of these young people, as one young activist informs us:

> I think that even in these 15 days that we have been here you can already notice a difference in people. Because everyone is like this, much more trained. People speak better, they talk better, they can think in a way that is not just in that little box (Bro, 2015).

The protesters' explicit intention of playing with the Future, learning from it, and embedding it in the Present, guided my choice of the term 'sough-after future'

instead of utopia.[10] According to the students, their ideal for the Future is not materialized in a pre-established project or program, one well-described and planned in advance by them. Instead, Brazilian ***ativistas***, like so many other protesters who came before them (Dixon, 2014), assume that the Future is in perpetual state of becoming and that political disputes, in diverse arenas, will determine the shape of it. Therefore, if a group shares the desire to rebuild the 'forms of sociability in civil society' (Gohn, 2018, p. 122), it must not simply expect, imagine or mentally anticipate another possible world. If a political group aims to be an agent of change, it has to agentically work 'to bring this future into a reality through one's own deeds, often against the odds, that is, even if a particular version of what is to come in the future is not anticipated as likely and instead, requires struggle' (Stetsenko, 2014, p. 19–20).

An important consequence of the use of prefigurative practices concerns the reduction in the distance between those who plan and those who execute political actions. In ***militante*** organizations, the organizational culture values centralized strategic planning done by specialists who will not execute the actions. In ***ativistas*** collectives, such as the ones that took over the schools in São Paulo, strategies and tactics tend to be worked out by those who will execute the actions. If ***militante*** organizations expect from their members devotion and rigor in the execution of strategies, centrally planned by the experts, in ***ativistas*** collectives, the strategy tends to be a recommendation. As a proposal it must be understood, evaluated, reinvented, transformed according to the needs, possibilities, and interest of the larger group who will carry it out, and only then, will it be executed. An analysis of the booklet *How to occupy a school?* (Mal-Educado, 2015) evidences how this was articulated in the case of schools.

The booklet contained the strategic plan designed to lead the occupations in all schools (Corti et al., 2016), thus having a crucial function in the unfolding of the process. The text is written in a descriptive and explanatory manner, with a style that avoids exhortations and prescriptions about what should be done. It offers examples of what has been done in similar situations and draws attention to aspects of the occupation that deserve students' attention. 'Once the decision to occupy the school is made by all the students involved, it is crucial and "mandatory" [quotation marks in the original] that the occupiers decide how this should be done' (Mal-Educado, 2015, p. 4). By indicating the assembly as the ultimate deliberative instance during the 'occupations' and recommending that extra time be provided for less experienced participants to 'elaborate their views' (Mal-Educado, 2015, p. 3), the strategists emphasized that the occupiers understanding of strategy as an open ended frame to pursue a goal. In doing so, they acknowledge, reinforce, and encourage the need to bring experimental and experiential actions into the field of political disputes. Further, the creators of the strategy call on the other protesters in the

[10] I am borrowing the expression from the TAS, and using to stress that 'A sought-after future – needs to be posited as a shifting horizon against which the present events and phenomena are judged, evaluated, and, most critically, grappled with' (Stetsenko, 2017a, p. 243).

occupation to assume a proactive and creative stance within the process. After all, 'there is no magic, or secret formula to occupy a school' (Mal-Educado, 2015, p. 3).

2.4.2 *Why Do Prefigurative Activities Matter?*

> "I think this experience they are having, of living like this, taking care of a property that is theirs, I think it was only for his development, I think he matured a lot" (Estadão, 2015).

This assessment of the effects of the sit-ins on the ***ativistas*** was made by a mother of one of the students from the Fernão Dias school. Her claim highlights some visible consequences of the students taking a stance in the political problems of their time, and acknowledging the impact of the collaborative activities under the path of development they are going to take. Once one is equipped with a theoretical framework that recognizes purpose, intentionality, and activity as crucial to defining the path that human development follows, the claim made by this mother makes total sense.

The Transformative Activist Stance (TAS) denies passivity or automatic adaptation to a static reality as the primary mode of relation between humans and the material world. This theory brings assumptions present in the foundational moment of Lev Vygotsky's Marxist psychology and affirms the process of human development as a critical element in the pursuit of active participation in the political struggles for freedom and self-determination. 'Vygotsky and his colleagues were striving to develop a new psychology that could participate in creating a new classless and just society – a process that they not only witnessed but also participated in and contributed to' (Stetsenko, 2005, p. 82). The capacity for abstract thought and conceptual thinking, for instance, was a privileged topic of concern in the context of the rapid changes occurring in the first half of the twentieth century, not because it signaled the optimum functionality of the brain or cognitive maturation, but because, ultimately, it enabled one to detach oneself from the most concrete aspects of daily life, to move away from the sphere of immediate necessity. To challenge the current hegemony and believe that 'another world is possible', as the participants of the World Social Forum did in early 2000s, one is compelled to imagine this other world vividly and commit to bring it about through their own praxis (Sales, 2021). Imagination, creativity, learning processes, and human development, among other psychological phenomena, must be properly understood for those aiming to dispute what human beings can become.

Moving away from Marxist approaches to psychological phenomena that leave no room for the individual aspects of shared life, TAS underlines the relevance of singular goals, objectives, desires, dreams, and Future projects of each subject in the construction of the course of their own development. Speaking about the peculiarities of the modes of human action, Stetsenko explains that the Future is always contained in the acts of the Present. 'Human acting is contingent on individuals' commitment to certain versions of the future and, more importantly, "always

already" gradually creating that future through their actions in the present' (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 18).

If activists want a world where there is more solidarity, political participation, and less gender violence, it will be necessary to try to insert these values in the activities that they themselves carry out in the Present, because this will allow them to commit and live according to this mode and struggle for the necessary changes to bring this kind of social normativity to the social world. The high schoolers refused and rejected the mode of acting of the vanguardist tendency of the Brazilian ***militante*** left. Furthermore, with their prefigurative experiments, they seem to have recognized that 'worldviews are not ready-made packages or preformulated values that individuals can simply receive from each other or that can be imposed on them from the outside in' (Stetsenko, 2017a, p. 241). Insisting on the need to bring the values of the desired Future into the daily routine of the occupied schools, the students offered an alternative to the worn-out practices of working-class consciousness-raising and sensitization done by the Brazilian ***militantes***.

Prefigurative activities matter because they provide a crucial clue for 'the left that doesn't know who it is'[11]: it is not by denying particular needs, desires, longings, and individual dreams that we change social norms. On the contrary, recognizing these singularities is a condition for charting other routes for human development, for pluralizing the preferred Futures, and thus escaping from the hopeless pessimism and overwhelming impotence that seems to surround some of those struggling for more equity in the way we are living nowadays.

2.5 An Inviting Conclusion

Two questions guided the investigation I pursued in this case study: what are the defining features of the school sit-ins? How can those features impact the course of the activists' development? Recognized by Brazilian scholars as an important event that expresses the changes in collective action underway in Brazil, I sustain the adoption of prefigurative practices as a specific trait of the '*ocupas*' (noun used by ***ativistas*** in reference to an occupied school). The hard work done by student activists to coordinate themselves using the values and principles they aim to see spread throughout the social fabric is visible when one adopts the prefigurative framework. 'Focusing on relationships [...] with a view to inventing new forms of community' (Day, 2004, p. 740), they have joined efforts, and worked collaboratively to live in their schools governed by social norms that, in fact, belong to their preferred version of the Future.

[11] This is the title of a provocative opinion article published by Eliane Brum (2018) in *El País* and that circulated widely in Brazil. In it, the author asks: 'How to stop just reacting, submitting to the rhythm imposed by the extreme right in power, and start moving with consistency, strategy, and purpose?'

The inseparability between changes in repertoires and strategies of protest and the impact this can have on the course of the people's' individual development is the feature highlighted throughout the text using the Transformative Activist Stance (Stetsenko, 2017a). Prefigurative activities encourage people to orient themselves, here and now, according to the social norms they believe to be adequate for organizing social life and which they are committed to produce.

In 2016, while the sit-ins were happening in Brazil, young black people in the United States were emphasizing that black lives matter. Students at several universities and colleges forced the administrators of these institutions to engage in long and arduous conversations about institutional racism and sexism, internal administrative policy revisions, and curriculum revisions (Conner & Rosen, 2016). In 2018, high school students marched for their lives (March For Our Lives) and entered the debate over federal gun regulation in the United States. In March 2019, students in more than 112 countries created Fridays For Future and marched in major cities around the world to protest over the lack of governmental action on climate change.

It seems Mason (2012) is correct in stating that these youth protests are 'still popping up everywhere' and thus putting pressure on researchers to qualify the theories used to understand their practices. I hope this chapter inspires scholars from humanities, especially other critical political psychologists like me, to join the efforts of reconstructing the lenses through which we comprehend how people understand and transform the world and themselves as the same process of creating and transforming themselves.

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Chapter 3
Rethinking Resistance and Refusal to Understand Prefigurative Praxes

3.1 Walking in the Past and Asking Questions About the Future

In 2013, Brazilian ***ativistas*** caught political analysts, social scientists, and ***militantes*** by surprise.[1] The young generation of protesters who occupied the streets and the Internet at that moment had a taste for organizational arrangements that were unfamiliar to the traditional political players in the country. They also astonished other political actors by claiming an affiliation with political traditions that were not popular among hegemonic left-wing groups, and by infusing their protest repertoires with joyful and artistic performances, such as dance and live music (Alonso & Mische, 2017). Over time, as the determination of several ***ativista*** groups to place personal needs and intragroup power dynamics at the center of their political concerns was increasingly regarded as an object of scholarly investigation, the incredulity at their unconventional approach to protest diminished (Ribeiro & Pulino, 2019; Rosa & Sandoval, 2019; Souza, 2020). However, the evaluation of the political consequences of ***ativistas***' strategies and protest repertoires still inspires heated debates.

Hur and Couto (2019) enthusiastically celebrate the 'new configuration of [political] forces expressed by the phrase "Occupy and Resist" and prefer it to the classic "Take the Power" '(Hur & Couto, 2019, p. 261) associated with ***militante*** traditions. Alternatively, Mendonça and Domingues (2022) argue that the protest cycle that started in June 2013 might have opened the door for dormant extremist tendencies in Brazilian society to enter the public arena and potentially harm democratic institutions by fortifying 'antirepresentation individualism'. The tension between a

[1] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words ***miliância*** and ***ativismo*** – and their variations – in their original, un-translated form, and format them in bold and italics.

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*, Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_3

political praxis that fosters subjects' autonomy and a praxis that reinforces discipline and heteronomy is not a novelty in Brazil.

Sousa's (2014) research on the urban political culture that informed the political activities of the young urban population of Brazil in the 1990s shows that those groups were deeply concerned about making their political endeavors as personal as possible. Dullo (2014) studied Paulo Freire's proposals for educating the 'oppressed' and concluded that they were in opposition both to 'the populist practices that subordinated this "mass" to the wills of a leader or the elite and, on the other hand, the recurrent claim of the need for the vanguard in the face of the population's political apathy' (Dullo, 2014, p. 26).

A closer look at the transformation of the protest culture that has been taking place in Brazil since 2013 (Bringel & Sposito, 2020; Gohn, 2022) shows that ***ativistas'*** concerns, values, and deeds are not absolute novelties; they are not making unprecedented claims in the context of political contestation in the country. What carries notes of novelty is their commitment to experimenting with the values and modes of life that belong to the sought-after Futures and that animate their political endeavors. In summary, their commitment to prefigurative activities (Sales et al., 2020) is a break with the vanguardist and ***militante*** traditions that dominate the left political landscape in the country. Through those prefigurative praxes, while developing intragroup trust and fostering a common purpose in their struggle, ***ativistas*** are honing their capacity for 'critically analyzing the world, taking initiative with competence and confidence, engaging in strategic action, and democratically running their own affairs' (Dixon, 2014, p. 45).

Direct action-oriented and antiauthoritarian activism in Brazil (embodied in and represented by the word ***ativismo)*** has been developed with, against, and beyond another kind of activism that values obedience, top-down chains of command, and the suppression of personal needs (embodied in and represented by the word ***militância***) (Sales, 2021; Sales et al., 2018). The dialectical tension between the political traditions associated with the duo ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** is longstanding. It is part of a dispute around the kind of political strategy and set of tactical decisions one should take while fighting for a world devoid of inequalities. As it is a perennial quarrel, it is worth revisiting critical moments to deepen our understanding of its nature and grasp more precisely what is at stake in the positions elaborated by ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** respectively to the always urgent question: 'What is to be done?'

In this chapter, I revisit Herbert Marcuse's ideas to understand how the adamant refusal to accept the immutability of the current reality, combined with a commitment to preferred Futures, are used as guides by ***ativistas*** while navigating between what their material reality is now and what they are fighting for it to become. I take closer look at Marcuse's analysis of the limitations of protest in his time and underline his insistence on the development of 'new sensibilities'. Building on this, I show that refusal and commitment are critical determiners when political players want to combine a resolute opposition to the current state of affairs with a series of practical attempts to go beyond the present reality.

The chapter goes as follows. First, it underlines the pitfalls of strategies for social change built mainly on the power of resistance. Then it explores affinities between

Marcuse's conception of great refusal and the popularity of prefigurative practices amongst Brazilian ***ativistas*** and other contemporary social movements. Finally, it draws on a theory of human development to examine the productive aspects of strategic refusal. The last section demonstrates how commitment, the willingness to dedicate time and energy to an activity that you believe in, and sought-after Future (not yet realized paths of personal and social development one individual or a group is struggling to create) are necessary conditions for transforming or preserving the status quo.

3.2 Can Political Resistance Produce Meaningful Change?

In the 1960s and 1970s, critical intellectuals and activists were moved by 'one abstract demand for the end of domination—the only truly revolutionary exigency, and the event that would validate the achievements of industrial civilization' (Marcuse, 1967, p. 435). A significant part of this abstraction was expressed in the form of oppositional resistance that Marcuse classified as 'politically impotent' for being unable to free itself from the conciliatory capacities of the capitalist structures in industrial societies. Taking a distinct road, his theoretical and political efforts were focused on conceptualizing autonomous yet interconnected social movements against capitalism, racism, and sexism. Those endeavours shared the aspiration of developing alternative modes of life with, against, and beyond capitalist society. His reflections were informed by his attention to a variety of insurrectional movements that sprang up around him. Due to the success of his book '*One-Dimensional Man*' (Marcuse, 1967), his writings had a strong influence on the New Left and helped shape its political agenda.

Marcuse's studies made explicit how capitalist societies constantly create new systems of dominance and control to stabilize internal contradictions, which make protester's attempts to attack the systems in their own terms ineffective. Looking for alternatives that aligned with his hopes for building a communist society, Marcuse pointed toward art as a tool that could assist subjects to get in touch with critical consciousness and, consequently, prone to help people to expand their capacity to defy current social norms. He believed that art – with its capacity of anticipating a world that is not yet here – was the key instrument in the 'reconstruction of the social and natural environment as a peaceful, beautiful universe' (Marcuse, 1969b, p. 32).

Sales et al. (2021) explored the tenets underlying Stalinist governmentality and their appropriation by left-wing political militants. According to them, the militant mode of bringing people together to intervene in the social order 'assumes the structuring of a disciplinary regime and the increased obedience of participants to strong leaders as conditions for the success and continuity of revolutionary collective action' (p. 133).[2] This strategy for organizing collective action correlates with 'the

[2] All the translations were made by the author.

shift in the revolutionary agent from the class-conscious proletariat to the centralized party as the avant-garde of the proletariat' (Marcuse, 1958, p. 40). It initially reflected Soviet leaders' strong belief in the immaturity of the Russian working class and was later converted into 'a principle of international strategy in the face of the continued reformist attitude of the "mature" proletariat in the advanced industrial countries' (Marcuse, 1958, p. 40).

Because Marcuse was deeply aware of the limitations of Stalinist strategy, he could not accept an autocratic solution to the organizational problem of fostering in the general population the desire for less oppressive and authoritarian ways of living. In fact, he was convinced that to produce the desire for freedom, and a 'new sensibility', changing the immediate material and economic conditions was a necessary, if insufficient, step. Hence, the research agenda and political interests he pursued for more than 30 years can be framed by this question: 'How can the administered individuals—who have made their mutilation into their own liberties and satisfactions, and thus reproduce it on an enlarged scale—liberate themselves from themselves as well as from their masters?' (Marcuse, 1967, p. 431). In addressing these problems, he advocated for the autonomous forms of refusal and social rebellion ***ativistas*** and others are participating in today. His thought resonates with what Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have referred to as 'multitudinal' resistance, Chris Dixon classified as another politics and John Holloway's theses on 'crack capitalism' (Dixon, 2014; Holloway, 2010; Negri & Hardt, 2017).

Angela Davis (2017), a former doctoral student of Marcuse, recognizes her mentor's ability to focus on the problems of his time and to conceive of critical thought as an indispensable tool to be used in 'the liberation struggles of all those marginalized by oppression' (p. viii). Because of this, Kellner (2005) insists that Marcuse's concepts can still be used to project 'alternatives to the current organization of society and mode of life' (p. 03). Marcuse considered social change to be possible, desirable, and necessary. He lay the groundwork for the analysis that informs many contemporary social movements – and which is captured by Naomi Klein's (2017) motto 'no is not enough' – and he knew that to escape from the totalitarian system that was providing the means of satisfaction in heavily industrialized societies, it was urgent to rewrite the 'defeated logic of protest' (Marcuse, 1967).

Political strategies informed by his ideas implied not only an opposition of the capitalist mode of production and 'all of its attendant institutional and cultural products of domination, but also that a "new human being" was produced' (Kellner & Pierce, 2014, p. 5) through the strategic refusal to comply with the rules of the sick, one-dimensional society. Marcuse believed people needed to develop a 'new sensibility', and to this end, that protest movements should bring 'together refusal of domination with affirmative commitment to building new social relations and forms of social organization in the process of struggle' (Dixon, 2014, p. 83). In an interview published in 1968, while talking about the goals that defined the agenda of the New Left in the United States, he dared the individuals and groups pursuing freedom in late capitalist societies to

> find a language and to organize actions which are not part and parcel of the familiar political behavior, and which can perhaps communicate that what is here at work are human beings with different needs and different goals which are not yet and I hope never will be co-opted (Marcuse, 2005, p. 126).

This call for a refusal of the modes of contestation that took place in the political arena in his time stemmed from his recognition that political resistance, mainly in its oppositional or reformist forms, was an inefficient method for producing the radical change he was interested in pursuing. In fact, engaging in traditional forms of resistance was dangerous because it had no power to break the one-dimensionality of thought, yet it preserved 'the illusion of popular sovereignty' (Marcuse, 1967, p. 435). Oppositional resistance, which was very popular amongst protest groups, could easily lead to political paralysis. It provided individuals a sense of activity, when its best outcome was to be neutralized by the conciliatory capacities of the modern societies. To acknowledge the contemporary relevance of this claim, it is necessary to take a closer look at the appeal of resistance as a principle for political organization and its collateral effects.

In their investigation of the uses of the idea of resistance in the field of sociology and political science, Hollander and Einwohner (2004) underscore the popularity of the term amongst scholars, the complex nature of its meaning, and the implicit agreement that 'resistance involves oppositional action, and that intentional action recognized by others would qualify as resistance' (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004, p. 546). The authors identify a shared view among critical researchers that there is a potential relationship between resistance and social transformation. Because scholars assume that resistance relates somehow with social change, they tend to accept using resistance as an explicative hypothesis for social contention. Scheuerman (2017) frames the impreciseness in the definition of resistance as 'both the source of its broad appeal — and its Achilles' heel'. The lack of a shared definition helps distinct groups in coalitions overcome their internal differences and build unity against powerful forces whose disruptive efforts need to be stopped. On the other hand, a more explicit conceptualization of what kind of action can be classified as resistance is essential to orienting distinct political players toward a shared forward-looking goal. Moreover, missing this clarity might eliminate the need to improve explanations about successes and failures and lead groups to strategic stagnation.

In their introduction to a book built on several case studies of contentious politics, Martin Butler, Paul Mecheril, and Lea Brenningmeyer et al. (2017) argue that resistance occurs as a response to an experience of inequality framed as injustice. They also suggest that two sets of assumptions inform studies on resistance:

> While one notion of resistance is based on the assumption of active agency, i.e., on the capabilities of individuals to interpret their environment and 'act upon' it deliberately through what is commonly referred to as appropriation (cf., e.g., Hall), the other one conceives of resistance as embedded in specific structures and relationships of power (Butler et al., 2017, p 10).

Defining resistance as an essential by-product of power relationships might entrap those committed to radical social transformation in a position of reactionary

passiveness, for it seems to conceive all possibilities of action as constrained by, and always in response to, the system of power they want to overthrow. What is at stake here is 'the risk of neglecting the role of cultural mediation in human development and thus result, ironically, in views that essentialize individuals and human nature, with the power of resistance and agency portrayed to be somehow inherently natural' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 219).

Demirović (2017) recognizes that the critical power of resistance can be compromised if it remains in a formal and subaltern position to the modes of life and governance it is trying to contest. After discussing the risks that are present in common interpretations of political resistance, he asserts that, 'resistance, subversion, or transgression are not sufficient to change the situation that made resistance necessary in the first place, to such an extent that resistance becomes unnecessary' (Demirović, 2017, p 43). In a similar vein, Dixon (2014) argues that an oppositional and antagonist perspective to social change is vital to identifying problems, uniting people, and challenging the current conditions under which we are living. However, this kind of resistance only addresses part of the problem and has limited capacity for transforming the power relations inside activist groups and in broader society.

In a text exploring the topic of human agency from a sociohistorical perspective, Stetsenko (2019) recognizes in the relational and situated frameworks for agency/resistance dangerous assumptions about passivity and behavioral adjustment. Those premises are deeply rooted in the theories about human develop and reinforce current trends in neoliberal ideology about 'the existing order of things and the world as it "is", under which we are supposed to live without much hope for radical change' (Stetsenko 2019, s. n).

To summarize what we have been discussing in Marcusian terms: acts of resistance, such as those made in direct opposition to the source of discontentment, always strikes the system from within. They tend to be integrated into the current state of affairs by the conciliatory powers of the one-dimensional social reality that characterizes contemporary societies. Moreover, the resistance framework might put humanity in a position of almost permanent reaction to current modes of governing, thereby restricting political imagination and limiting the possibilities of political action to a high degree of reactivity, accommodation, and adaptation.

Strategies for collective action underpinned by these premises have led key potential agents of societal change – like the ones performing New Social Movement-style politics – to work extensively toward the qualification of state power, for instance. For the most part, their protest activities have been captured by a politics of demands to the system. Their defiance is 'by necessity limited in scope: it can change the content of structures of domination and exploitation, but it cannot change their form' (Day, 2004, p 733).

Enhancing the repressive society's capacity to create and meet human needs will not lead those fighting for 'another possible world' and for a 'new sensibility' to a path of emancipation. After all, 'free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear—that is if they sustain alienation' (Marcuse, 1947, p. 62). The prevalence of oppositional resistance in left-wing parties and unions that are

oriented by Soviet Marxism was highly criticized by Marcuse and lies at the core of his claim about the inefficiency of the hegemonic protest logic of his time.

Marcuse's critique also steamed from his commitment to constructing modes of life beyond the limitations of modern industrial societies. The challenge posited to those daring to reimagine the productive systems organizing life in the late 1960s has become more critical now that we are facing the rise of authoritarian governments and an environmental catastrophe; thus, it is time for 'the attempt, and the at least temporarily successful attempt, to go beyond, to break out of the repressive universe of the established political behavior' (Marcuse, 2005, p. 126).

Taking Marcuse's concerns into account and bringing them together with a critical analysis of autonomist political actors and their strategy, I maintain that resistance can be a misleading framework for analyzing and moving forward with transformative action. For those studying social contestation and those committed to radical transformation of the status quo, refusal can be a more prolific concept and a more effective principle, respectively.

3.3 What Is Productive About Refusal?

In the first 20 years of the current century, diverse attempts to move beyond the existing state of affairs were grouped under the term 'autonomist movements' (Alcoff & Alcoff, 2015). From the 15 M in Spain and Occupy Wall Street in the United States (Ancelovici et al., 2016) in the Global North, and from the *Piqueteros* in Argentina (Dinerstein, 2010) to the high school students staging sit-ins in public schools in Brazil (Ribeiro & Pulino, 2019) in the Global South, waves of collective action have been undertaken to produce a more equitable and sustainable world for current and Future generations. Protesters in these movements draw on experiences and experiments carried out by previous generations and expanded the popularity of 'a direct action tradition that ties the building of equitable relationships and institutions to the disruption of the status quo' (Wood, 2020, p. 63).

Let me now present the paradox of resistance as it has been framed by autonomist movements: the 'new modes we create for living, relating, and organizing always come up against the dominant social order. (…) And yet we can't bring a new world into being unless popular movements can envision and create something new here and now' (Dixon, 2014, p. 83–84). Building on insights like this, contemporary social movements are recognizing the deficiencies of resistance and embracing strategic refusals to foster their organizational capacities and enable their collectividual agency (Sales & Fontes, 2020). Direct action-oriented activists are exploring their power to transform themselves and their political praxes through 'leaderless and prefigurative forms of organizing, and a participatory governance process based in grassroots democracy and consensus decision-making' (Funke et al., 2017, p. 04).

Day (2004) notes that the goal of some of these autonomist movements is 'to refuse, rather than *rearticulate* [italics in the original] those forces that are tending

toward the universalization of the liberal-capitalist ecumene' (p. 730). Most of the activists self identified as autonomist share 'a desire to create alternatives to state and corporate forms of social organization, working "alongside" the existing institutions; proceeding in this via disengagement and reconstruction rather than by reform or revolution' (Day, 2004, p. 740). This section explores the possibilities that emerge when political defiants opt for refusal rather than resistance as a core principle for their political strategy. Yet, it sheds more light on the parallels between Marcuse's preoccupations and the concerns of activist groups that are adopting prefigurative praxes.

Vieta (2017) notes that claims of autonomy, self-determination, cooperation, solidarity, decentralized organizational arrangements, and other themes that are important to contemporary autonomist social movements reflect Marcuse's core arguments in books like *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) as well as *Eros and Civilization* (1974). Cornell (2016) shows that in the United States, especially in the context of New Left debates, the idea of prefigurative activities was associated with issues related to culture and ways of life. Members of revolutionary organizations were expected to exemplify with their lives the values, principles, and social norms that would govern the postrevolutionary world. Khasnabish (2017) recognizes affinities between the author of *One-Dimensional Man* and current protesters playing 'a politics of prefiguration that seeks to embody in practice the world to which it aspires' (p. 130). Finally, Cornish et al. (2016) observe that this approach to politics is a response to the tendency for many liberation movements to replicate their adversaries' repressive tactics, frequently excusing violent repression of dissent as a pragmatic response to the period's circumstances. Following these authors, I frame the prefigurative ethos present in Brazilian ***ativistas*** as an attempt at the development of the 'new sensibility' Marcuse proposed.

Marcuse believed that the principles of a postcapitalist society could be accessed more directly through the esthetic dimension of life because the essential trait of any artistic experience is to make explicit the dialectical, unfinished, and processual nature of the world:

> There is no work of art which does not break its affirmative stance by the "power of the negative," which does not, in its very structure, evoke the words, the images, the music of another reality, of another order repelled by the existing one and yet alive in memory and anticipation, alive in what happens to men and women, and in their rebellion against it (Marcuse, 1972, p. 92).

Because they mobilize the last 'nonconformist dimension of human existence', the esthetic aspects of life could pave the way for the construction of a 'new sensibility', one that would be able to sharpen humanity's taste for freedom and for less oppressive forms of life. Marcuse could see this new sensibility being developed through the experimental and experiential stance that was being taken by nonhegemonic groups in the 1960s and 1970s – the same groups that Cornell (2016) argues were committed to prefigurative activities. He was convinced that innovative sensual experiences and disruptive forms of community were emerging 'in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life' (Marcuse, 1969a, p. 25).

He admired the hippie lifestyle and the Black Panthers movement because they were actively drafting ways of living infused by the 'negative power' of art. The political players in those groups embraced the artistic experience as 'a force in the constitution of the real that is constantly emerging and moving beyond that which exists in the present' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 198). Art can attest to the effectiveness of creativity and imagination as tools for advancing the construction of a multidimensional, esthetically oriented society: 'These esthetic expressions, protests of the marginalized, and alternative living experiments were to be vaunted and imitated because their deeply imaginative, instinctual, and sensual practices already offered an "absolute refusal", or a "determinate negation", of one-dimensional society' (Vieta, 2017 p. 261).

Marcuse identified the commitment to moving beyond the given reality in experiments in *avant-garde* forms of expression like surrealism. He noted that the transformative power of art was mostly absent in artistic expression in the USSR during the first 50 years after the 1917 revolution. Under Stalin's government, the task delegated to Soviet art was to eradicate every single vestige of bourgeois culture in proletarian culture. All artistic activity was expected to stress the current achievements of the Party and the desirability of a communist society (James, 1973). According to Marcuse, the attempt to fully discipline artistic expression reveals a poor understanding of the subversive role to be played by art in the dialectics of a communist world because it demanded individuals accept the current state of society 'as the final framework for the artistic content, transcending it neither in style nor in substance' (Marcuse, 1958 p. 130).

Actually, official art in the Soviet regime confirms the repressive character of the Soviet state while inadvertently making explicit the inconvenient similarities between it and its capitalist enemy. Its totalitarian attempts to control artistic content reveal that the Soviet regime was not successful in subverting oppressive rationale in hegemonic capitalist centers. Moved by the need to intensify the productive forces of the system and improve the USSR's economic and military capacities, the Stalinist regime ensured that 'the enslavement of man by the instruments of his labor continue[d] in a highly rationalized and vastly efficient and promising form' (Marcuse, 1967, p. 93). Contemporary non-authoritarian and prefigurative activists are not only deeply skeptical about the potential of vanguardist and centralized political action, but also exploring the potential of art as a tool in political dispute.

Pro-equity protest movements that has unfolded in Brazil since 2013 has shown an esthetic preference for performances with deeply personal content and strong emotional appeal to the audience. ***Ativistas*** treat music and dance as a form of protest, and explore the political power of individual artistic expression within the political arena (Alonso & Mische, 2017). This contrasts with the militarized esthetics of traditional ***militante*** marches. Young ***ativistas*** consider their participation in political action to be part of their project of self-development and insist that the political and personal spheres of human life are inseparable. Reinforcing the claims made by the movements Marcuse was interested in, ***they*** have been compelling researchers to pay even more attention to how social norms and official rules are 'implemented and interpreted, the factors that affect a person's ability to have their voice heard, to take part on an equal footing, and so on' (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020).

Returning to the question that frames this section, the productive features of the refusal are: (a) the recognition of the historically transitory nature of the current state of affairs; (b) the acceptance of the dialectical and unfinished status of the current reality; (c) the invitation to move beyond what is possible in a situated historical moment. Refusing to accept that the norms organizing society are final, natural, or inevitable is fundamental to moving beyond the fatalist assessment made by Margaret Thatcher that there is no alternative.

Collective refusal can compel subjects to take part in an 'open-ended form of inquiry that seeks to expose the roots of systems of exploitation and oppression even as it explores possibilities of how we might live otherwise' (Khasnabish, 2017, p. 131). Refusing, instead of opposing, requires those defying social norms to develop creative and imaginative ways of relating to the world; it obligates them to infuse their activities and organizational arrangements with values belonging to the sought-after Futures[3] they are committed to realizing. Welcoming, instead of suppressing, the personal dimension of the political carves the path for the recast of activists' relationship with themselves, with each other, and with the political environment they are in. It also creates space for intersectional analysis with increased capacity for complicating political positions in progressive circles that still take social class as the absolute determiner in the chains of oppression that people are trapped in.

3.4 How Can One Balance Resistance, Refusal, Negation, and Creation?

In his analysis of diverse endeavors of individuals and groups dedicated to autonomist values, Vieta (2017) uses Marcusian lens to underline the fact that because they are performing a strategic refusal – also known in autonomist Marxist milieus as 'exodus' – they are 'not only reactively resisting global capital and neoliberal enclosure but also proactively seeking out and reinventing alternative forms of technologically mediated life' (Vieta, 2017, p. 279–80). As discussed above, the great refusal and the development of a new sensibility are conditions intended to direct humanity toward emancipation. Dinerstein (2015) asserts that 'it is very difficult to disentangle negation and creation, for negation makes it possible to engage in the new that is already on its way, or is going to be released from its oppression' (p. 62). She considers it pivotal to balance the relation between negation and creation amidst contemporary political players in their commitment to prefigurative practices – 'to enact in the present the change that wants to be seen in the future' (Dinerstein, 2021, s/n).

[3] 'A sought-after future – needs to be posited as a shifting horizon against which the present events and phenomena are judged, evaluated, and, most critically, grappled with' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 243).

The ‘new sensibility’ that appears more frequently in Marcuse’s writings after 1965, the sensibility he identified in the marginal figures of his time – artists, folk singers, people involved in the counterculture in the USA, and other key players in the New Left – was a result of individual and collective efforts to organize daily life under ‘different goals and values, different aspirations in the men and women who resist and deny the massive exploitative power of corporate capitalism even in its most comfortable and liberal realizations’ (Marcuse, 1969a, p. VII). It appears in people, and groups, that managed to embrace ‘the possibility of self-determination and constructing one’s own needs and values’ (Marcuse, 1967, p. 08). In ‘An Essay on Liberation’ (1969), Marcuse acknowledges that it is impossible for humanity to be free under the norms of the established society; therefore, another set of standards must be created by ‘a political practice which reaches the roots of containment and contentment in the infrastructure of man, a political practice of methodical disengagement from and refusal of the Establishment, aiming at a radical transvaluation of values’ (Marcuse, 1969a, p. 06).

Kellner (1984) asserts that individual refusal of the institutions and ways of life could open the room to liberation ‘from capitalist needs’ and create the conditions for the development of ‘“radical needs” for comprehensive social change’ (Kellner, 1984, p. 279). According to Kellner, from the early 1960s on, Marcuse was in quest for sources of revolutionary action, and he saw a glimpse of it in groups engaged in self-transformation and self-development according to non-hegemonic values and needs. The great refusal was then conceived as a necessary, even if insufficient (Farr, 2009), condition to mobilize one’s ‘capacity to think for oneself, to legislate goods, and act upon desires that could be reflectively avowed’ (Feola, 2017, p. 124).

Day (2017) argues that Marcuse found himself at a theoretical and political impasse: a theoretical impasse because he mobilized the power of critical thought to shed light on political problems for which critical thinking could not provide solutions; a political impasse because as his ideas were becoming popular among protesters in the 1960s, the demand for strategic advice on how to move forward increased. Pointing toward the esthetic dimension of life was the Marcusian key to breaking this deadlock. This analytical resource made the philosopher identify the prefigurative commitment of the leading political agitators of his time. In fact, acknowledging the value of esthetic experience, mainly in the way it allows political actors to engage with the dimensions of reality that have not yet materialized, provides a relevant guideline for those engaged in contemporary theoretical and political struggles for autonomy and self-determination.

Scholarly, this approach is explored by Andrea Davis in her critique of the multicultural citizenship framework adopted by the Canadian state (Davis, 2022). Writing from a perspective of a Black scholar, she searches literature, theater, and music for forms of national recognition, belonging, and reparations for Caribbean and African women outside of the hegemonic forms of citizenship arising from ‘racial capitalism’. She frames the cultural production of black female artists as an unexplored repository of possibilities with the ability to produce a shared experience of ‘future now’, by which she means ‘a future not as a promise of life lodged in some perpetually delayed horizon, but as an ability to live beyond the constant

specter of death—to live today the kind of future I want to live tomorrow' (Davis, 2022, p. 185).

In line with the argument made by Maynard and Simpson (2020) during the emergence of the Canadian Black Lives Matter Movement, Andrea Davis conceives the 'future now' as a product of a 'generative refusal' of the current living conditions and sought-after Futures that shape the horizon of black and indigenous people living in Canada. She uses literary fiction to show black female characters assembling 'alternative models of survival that, however tentative, lead to different formations of family and community modeled on reciprocity and an ethics of care' (Davis, 2022, p. 186). Her analysis reinforces the argument that the esthetic experience is the source of a 'new imaginary' and attempts to build solidarity and communitarian belonging. Further, it stresses the potential of exploring the productive side of refusal.

Politically, in the first two decades of the current century, social movements fighting for diverse agendas – improving democratic institutions, reclaiming the right to be on the streets, participating in cities' budget determinations, among others (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Maeckelbergh, 2009; Sales et al., 2020; Vanden & Prevost, 2017) – have explored the power of refusal through their prefigurative activism. Their endeavors carry a valuable lesson: when developing a strategy to explore a refusal's affirmative potential, the pivotal tasks are not to scrutinize the structural chain of oppression created by the system or to engage in reactive opposition to neoliberal modes of life. Their most valuable ventures consist of showing 'how it is possible to live a life worth living, here and now, within, against, and on the margins of the Establishment' (Day, 2017, p 140).

Contemporary autonomist forms of collective action are recognizing more and more that holding visions and beliefs about the immutability of the world is essential to preserving the status quo. They are aware that engaging in direct opposition also means colluding with and reinforcing one-dimensional society's capacity to 'silence and reconcile the opposition' (Marcuse, 1967 p. 65). In a strategic move, they seek to temporarily suspend the perceived/assumed weight of societal constraints to actively and agentically[4] experiment with different social relationships in their praxis.

In the sit-ins organized by high school students in Sao Paulo state in 2016, one that managed to keep almost 200 public schools occupied for nearly 2 months, the prefigurative commitment to building more equitable relations between genders led to exciting experiments. For example, while those ***Ativistas*** faced the need to set up teams to manage the essential maintenance activities of the occupied schools – such as building security, cleaning, transportation of goods, and food preparation – they

[4] I am using the term 'agentic' and its variations to refer to a person's ability to direct their own activities, goals, and destiny. In the late 1980s, Albert Bandura, a psychologist at Stanford University, constructed a theory of social cognition that emphasized its relation to self-sufficiency and self-efficacy. Later, he focused on the function of agency and motivation in greater detail, and he came up with the term 'agentic', which describes humans as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulated.

created gender-parity commissions. Further, they played around with gender norms and inverted societal expectations, allocating girls to tasks usually performed by males in Brazil (such as building security and the transportation of goods) and males to traditional female tasks (such as cleaning and food preparation).

3.5 How Can One Increase the Creative Potential of Refusal?

The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements recognizes prefiguration as an important feature of contemporary activism. 'Prefigurative activism involves taking the political personally – either by engaging in lifestyle changes and hoping they will spread, or trying to create ideal organizational practices within one's own activist group' (Saunders, 2013, s. n). Elaborating on it, Dixon (2014) claims that this mode of collective action addresses protester's fundamental 'need to organize in ways that point beyond what is—that create new capacities, new relations, new forms of social organization, and new possibilities for what our world could be' (Dixon, 2014, p. 174). In this section, I use a psychological theory of human development to explore the relevance of prefiguration in the struggles for the kind of Future humanity is walking toward.

3.5.1 Embracing the Personal in the Political

Exploring the relevance of an individual transformation as both a condition to, and a product of, distinct political horizons demands a brief look at the psychological theories of how humans develop over their lifetime. The mainstream understanding tends to assume (explicitly, or implicitly) that passivity and adaptation to a static world are the primary ways in which people become who they are (Koops & Kessel, 2017). As a response to the perennial search for objectivity and to conceal psychology's 'lack of a natural–scientific foundation' (Teo, 2020, p. 759), debates about human nature and development have been colonized by neuroscience. The dominant discussion in this sub-area of psychology has been focusing primarily on the level of genetic determination, neurotransmitters, and hormones (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002; Glozman, 2013) at the expense of other considerations. In this paradigm, questions like 'Where did we come from?', 'How do we become social human beings?', and 'What should we do to improve as humans?' can be answered by the results of ancestry DNA tests or a blood sample. These overdeterministic approaches do not have a lot to say about how collaborative practices and engagement in shared activities can affect the course of one's development.

By contrast, Anna Stetsenko, who builds on Vygotsky's ideas and stresses the limits of Marxist Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)[5], calls scholars' attention to the active and agentive role played by human activity in the process through which their grow their humanity (Stetsenko, 2020a). She conceives of agency, activity, and collaboration as cornerstones of human development. Embracing a dialectical and materialist standpoint and stressing the unfinished character of history (Stetsenko, 2020b), Stetsenko interrogates the canonical belief that humans develop primarily through adaptation to the current social norms, while theorizing about the role played by human activity in the construction of our shared reality. She posits that human development is a process of creative defiance and reinvention of the status quo (Stetsenko, 2019) that it is embedded in whatever political conflicts are unfolding at any given time. According to the Transformative Activist Stance (TAS), subjectivities are a product of collaborative practices 'understood to be continuously and cumulatively evolving through unique activist contributions by individual participants' (Stetsenko, 2013. p. 15).

The TAS adopts Marxist tenets to lay out a transformative and transactional ontology (Stetsenko, 2017). It theorizes the process of human development and the production of material reality at the nexus of individual and collective activity. The TAS maintains that people are agents of communal history who create social norms by transforming them through their own individually distinct contributions. It brings to the forefront the inseparability, and indispensability of the individual and collective contributions to the collaborative processes producing the shared reality. To stress the relevance of a realm of collaborative and transactional praxes, humans establish with each other and with their political and natural environment, Stetsenko proposes the neologism 'collectividual'. Her idea is to emphasize that individuals 'always act together in pursuit of their common goals, being inescapably bound by communal bonds and filaments' (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 15). However, and at the same time, 'each individual acts from a unique sociohistorical position (standpoint) and with a unique commitment (endpoint)' (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 15). It is exactly in and through the process of taking singular stances in the collective struggles of their times, that human subjects become who they are over their life span.

Marcuse's quest for a 'new sensibility' might be understood as an attempt to make explicit the conditions to breaking out repressive capacities of modern industrial societies and to bring about a more free and equality-oriented subjectivity. Marx's ideas appealed to him because Marxism's ultimate goal is to rescue humanity from capitalism's reifying and oppressive tendencies. Considering Marcuse's political engagements, it is safe to say that his strategic refusal was not meant to foster a great escape from the conflicts shaping the current norms organizing social

[5] CHAT is a term widely adopted in cultural psychology, even though its meaning and the limits of what can be added under this umbrella term have been debated since its popularization outside of Russia. In this article, it refers to Vygotsky, Leontiev, Luria, and the school of thought they founded which is based on an analytical approach that assumes that activity is a fundamental analytical category to think about psychological phenomena in a materialist, nonindividualist, and nonintrospective fashion.

life at his time; it was quite the opposite. He encouraged protest activities that recognized the power of individuals taking political action. In his ceaseless efforts to identify and understand the agents of change in his time, Marcuse's thought aligns with Stetsenko's claims that, 'it is within creative processes of co-authoring the world by contributing to its collective dynamics that people simultaneously co-author themselves in becoming individually unique and irreplaceable within the communal world shared with others, in one bidirectional spiral' (Stetsenko, 2019, p. 439).

Prefigurative praxes are fueled by activists' desire to become more autonomous in defining their own needs. The effort prefigurative activists make to set in motion nonhegemonic forms of community and sociability (Sales, 2021; Sales et al., 2020) aims to leave behind a position of an object of oppression. In their attempts to bring the reality signs of they want to live in, they embrace their 'collectividual' capacity to rearrange the societal forces constraining them as a group, and as singular subjects. This animates them to engage in individual and communal struggles for the development of needs and forms of satisfaction that are not 'products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression' (Marcuse, 1967, p. 60). Imagination is a central tool for those who are trying to remake the world, after-all choosing how to engage with reality ultimately involves 'people's ability to imagine what does not yet exist, what they think needs and ought to be created and struggled for' (Stetsenko, 2014, p. 185).

While facing the rise of authoritarian ultra-right-wing leaders and the threat of global climate breakdown, youth protesters worldwide are actively experimenting with unusual ways of protesting, living, and making politics. Through their imagination and actions, they are developing 'new sensibilities', challenging 'the present and stretching beyond the status quo' (Stetsenko, 2014, p. 185). In Brazil, for instance, these experimentations lead to a promising innovation within the country's institutional politics. Collective candidacies, organized groups with four or five members campaigning together for one seat in a government office, were proposed by distinct ***ativista's*** groups for the 2016, 2018 and 2020 elections. Those representative instruments embrace prefigurative activists' commitment to building a more democratic and less authoritarian political environment. Further, they amplify channels for diversifying participation and increasing institutional accountability, fostering citizens' sense of political efficacy, and encouraging inclusivity in the electoral system.

When seen through the TAS's lens, prefigurative frameworks are strategic attempts to mobilize personal commitments and material conditions in order to challenge the logic behind the creation and fulfillment of human needs in contemporary society; they are tactical moves to broaden the productive dimension of refusal. When pursued by those seeking a more equitable society and nonhegemonic modes of life, prefigurative frameworks help carve out paths of 'optimal development of the individual, of all individuals, under the optimal utilization of the material and intellectual resources available to man' (Marcuse, 1967, p. 61).

If the feminists of the 1960s taught us that the personal was political, the prefigurative activists of today teach us that the political is personal. Brazilian ***ativistas*** are

defying the paternalist and vanguardist mode of doing politics by insisting that singular standpoints are fundamental to the construction of a comprehensive agenda capable of fighting against the multiple forms of inequality defining society today. That ***ativistas*** pay careful attention to the power relations within groups and acknowledge that singular needs and individual projects are both building blocks for the common struggle does not indicate moralistic naïveté. ***Ativistas***' efforts are a component of an experimental stance through which they want to realize, literally make real, the preferred Futures they are fighting for.

3.5.2 Committing to the Desired Tomorrow

To fully acknowledge the relevance of individuality to the construction of social change, one ought to be equipped with an understanding of human development as a product of 'people collaboratively moving beyond the status quo (i.e., the present 'given' reality), via individual agentive and activist contributions to this process, while relying on interactivities and cultural tools for creating social change predicated on a sought-after future' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 34). Prefigurative activities try to avoid the risks of the 'defeated logic of protest' (Marcuse, 1967) by advancing a great productive refusal on the assumption that people 'realize their development in the enactment of changes that bring the world, and simultaneously their own lives, including their selves and minds, into reality' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 34).

In the transformative worldview proposed by the TAS, history is seen as 'a continuous flux of social practices, to which each new generation contributes, while inevitably transforming it' (Vianna & Stetsenko, 2006, p 82). People engage with this reality in the making informed by: (a) their past experiences; (b) the present conditions of their individual and communal development; (c) their commitment to world that does not yet exist. 'What the notion of commitment suggests is that a person not so much expects or anticipates the future but, rather, actively works to bring this future into reality through [their] own deeds and often against the odds' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 239). By committing to sought-after Futures, prefigurative activists can make their strategic choices and organize their tactical efforts in an efficient manner.[6]

It is worth noting how the notion of commitment allows for a comprehensive and dialectical assessment of the conditions under which protesters dispute the Future's creation. Because one of their goals is to produce in the Present tangible, concrete, and experiential access to the Future they are striving to create, they tend to develop analyses of 'how the present situations and conditions came to be and, also, in light of the imagined and sought-after future – of what [they] believe ought to be' (Stetsenko, 2020b, p. 09). The (in)famously endless meetings and the need to work

[6]Yates (2021) explores the impact of prefigurative praxes under distinct dimensions of collective action's strategies.

with the maximum level of consensus possible among prefigurative protesters are critical. The lengthy meetings function as laboratories for crafting, testing, and enacting nonhegemonic forms of authority and power relations (Polletta, 2002).

The communal spaces created by assemblies and spokescouncils[7] are relevant arenas in which prefigurative activists learn collaboratively what steps should be taken to understand their assumptions, their goals, and the path from the Present to the sough-after Future. They use these spaces purposefully to rethink ideological dogmas and fetishized practices still common in the left-wing political milieu (Sales et al., 2021). According to Dixon (2014), antiauthoritarian and prefigurative movements work in an experimental fashion, and by synthesizing a diverse range of political traditions in their quest for answers to questions such as: 'What strategies can we use both to struggle more effectively and to create meaningful alternatives? How can we organize in ways that foster liberatory modes of being, doing, and relating? What structures can we develop to tap into ongoing antagonisms, bring people together, and cultivate collective power?' (Dixon, 2014, p 221).

The premise underlying the idea of commitment in TAS allows analysts to identify the agentive stance taken by activists who infuse their praxis with elements of their preferred Futures. The assumption that human beings, irrespective of political, social, or economic status, are active players in the course of history allows one to see how human activity plays a vital role in the realization (again, literally, the making real) of the Present of potential Futures. Where more paternalist and vanguardist political agitators insist on seeing juvenile naiveté in the daily commitments taken by the prefigurative political players, a researcher equipped with TAS's ideas can see intentionality and purpose (Sales et al., 2020). The Transformative Active Stance (Stetsenko, 2017) allows one to identify amongst prefigurative activists a less mechanical view of sociohistorical development; and underline that prefigurative activists refuse to frame the dialectical course of history using a 'universal method with rigidly fixed rules and regulations' (Marcuse, 1958, p. 137). Actually, this youth protesters seem to have learned from previous activist generations that the Past is an essential determiner of the Present. Now they can teach their old comrades that commitments taken in the Present are critical to shaping the Future.

In sum, this mode of political action wager decisively on the transformative role of humans in creating History by changing the current circumstances grounded in the Past, in a refusal of an immutable fate for the Present or a predetermined or inevitable Future. Dismissing canonical modes of action and governmentalities (Sales et al., 2018) that produced the dogma of the end of History and popularized the idea that there are no alternatives to capitalist societies (Fisher, 2009),

[7] The spokescouncil process enables consensus decisions with hundreds and thousands of people. It is used by many groups such as social centers, workers' co-ops, peace, and environmental movements (…) It takes the models for consensus in small groups further by replacing the need for everyone to come together in one meeting with a system of delegate meetings. It is an effective way of allowing all members of a large group to actively participate. - Source: Seeds for Change, available at https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/spokescouncil

prefigurative activists have been establishing commitments to 'sought-after futures' and enacting those Future through their collectividual agency (Sales, 2021).

3.6 Between What It Is and What Could Be

Crises are times in which the constructed nature of the Future is made explicit. Disruptions of normality remind us that the rationale ruling social norms is written continuously and (re)defined by people's commitment to maintaining the status quo or intentionally fighting to change it. All the adaptations and reconstructions demanded by the inopportune SARS-CoV-2 pandemic reinforced a usually forgotten fact: it is possible to modify the current state of affairs. The dramatic changes people have had to undergo in their lives since 2020 might have helped us to grasp the idea that the forms of living, working, and learning that are available in a specific historical moment are contingent on human effort and the daily decisions taken by each one of us and could always be otherwise.

I should emphasize that I am not talking about free will or individual choices made without any societal and natural constraints. I also am not saying that taking an agentive stance toward the Future is simply a matter of personal willpower or whim. In line with the efforts of those experimenting with prefigurative activism, I am acknowledging, however, that the actions and commitments taken by each and every one of us are critical to the construction of the current state of affairs. Further, our deeds are the arena in which the kind of Future we are going to live in is disputed.

Prefigurative opposition, rooted in the refusal of rather than resistance to the status quo, creates optimal conditions for responding to the urgent task of human emancipation. It tends to compel activists to carve out individual and collective developmental paths toward not only subverting the hegemonic needs that keep the systems of oppression in the Present working, but toward anticipating here and now the sought-after Futures they are trying to realize.

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Chapter 4
Brazilian *Ativismo*: A Collectividual Autonomist Strategy

4.1 Watch Out for Signs of Change

The text signed by the *Movimento Passe Livre* (F*ree Fare Movem*ent) São Paulo published in the collection *Cidades Rebeldes* (*Rebel Cities)* anticipated what was going to happen Brazilian society over the next few years: the massive demonstrations 'did not start in Salvador, it will not end in São Paulo' (MPA, 2013a, p. 13).[1] The article was published side by side with a David Harvey's essay comparing the demonstrations that took place in June 2013 in Brazil with the Occupy Wall street and links both events to the Seattle protests from 1999. In the nine years between June 2013 and June 2022, people walked the streets together to protest for and against the presidential impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, the first female president of Brazil, to support or oppose Jair Bolsonaro, the far-right elected president in 2018, as well as to demonstrate on issues as diverse as pension reform, labor reform, investments in education, racism, and the fight against corruption (Sales, 2021).

Alonso and Mische (2017) treat the June 2013 uprisings as the 'opening of a broad cycle of protests,[2] composed by distinct actors, concerns, processes, and outcomes (...) that changed rapidly over time, developing in very different ways' (p. 145). In the continuum of this cycle, the agendas defended by those who took to the streets to protest changed, the repertoires of struggle used in demonstrations diversified, and the preferred organizational arrangements used by protesting subjects transformed.

[1] All translations from Portuguese were made by the author.

[2] A protest cycle is a series of demonstrations carried out by a distinct political player over an extended period of time. 'Protest becomes a protest cycle when it is diffused to several sectors of the population, is highly organized, and is widely used as the instrument to put forward demands' (Tarrow, 1989, pp. 14–15).

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*, Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_4

Members of the Free Pass Movement in Brasília (Saraiva, 2010), Florianópolis (Liberato, 2014), and São Paulo (Movimento Passe, 2013a), who referred to themselves as ***ativistas,***[3] and characterized their activity as ***ativismo***, challenged the typical organizational forms of ***militantes*** and ***militância*** by using 'fluid, fragmented, horizontal' organizational arrangements (Gohn, 2018, p. 120). The term ***ativismo*** is an important sign of the ongoing transformations in the protest culture in Brazil (Gohn, 2018; Sales, 2021) and, its use encompasses three key concepts: repertoire, strategy, and institution (Sales et al., 2019).

In his discussion of the organizing style adopted by the young people who participated in the events of June 2013, Sousa (2014) outlines the defining features of ***ativismo***:

> ***Ativista*** organizations do not fit into the concept of a party, differing in terms of their organizational capacity and, in some, the decision-making process is made through horizontality, consensus decisions, and "non-mandatory" but voluntary ***militância***. In these organizations, the maintenance of their purposes and their "agenda" of political objectives are done in continuity with a sense of commitment and not by reinforcing disciplinary routines or bureaucratic obedience (Sousa, 2014, p. 60).

Ativistas valorize the individual dimension of collective action, pay particular attention to the singular needs of people involved in the political campaigns, and strive to build a commitment to shared goals without ignoring, or undermining, the particularities of each of the player that participate endeavors (Sales, 2021). Not coincidentally, this mode of action was employed in disputes related to the concrete and immediate needs of daily life in large urban centers, such as public transportation and education.

Gohn (2016, 2018) claims that the protest cycle that started in 2013 is distinct from the classic trade union, labor, and agrarian movements in Brazil; from the struggles against dictatorial regimes in Latin America during the 1970s; and also from new social movements, which organized their symbolic coherence around solid identity constructs. The participants of the current cycle cast aside the title of ***militantes*** and refuse to be classified as members of a movement:

> They usually refer to themselves as belonging to *coletivos*.[4] They do not have leadership, but they are all leaders. They self-produce images with discourses without reference to the past, as if they had no other embedded memories besides themselves (Gohn, 2016, p. 134).

> 0Collectives, unlike movements or other more traditional forms of political organization, are fluid, fragmented, horizontal groupings, and many have autonomy and horizontality as basic values and principles (Gohn, 2018, p.120).

When analyzing the protests of June 2013, Bringel (2013) ponders on the analytical challenges brought about by the events, and recommends paying attention to the

[3] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words miliância and ativismo – and their variations – in their original, un-translated form, and format them in bold and italics.

[4] The *coletivos* (collectives) are organizational arrangements that also express the reorganization of the semantics of contentious politics in Brazil. The dossier organized by Gohn et al. (2020) explores the issue by focusing on the methodological challenges they bring to researchers.

relationships between the facts unfolding in Brazil, and similar events that had been taking place around the world. Two years later (Bringel & Pleyers, 2015), he reinforces the argument that there are similar changes in approaches to protest occurring globally. Bringel underlines that the changes in Brazil have led to 'a questioning of the traditional codes, subjects, and actions that have prevailed in the country during the last two decades' (p. 4). In 2020, beyond insisting on the global character of the changes, the author endorses Gohn's (2016, 2018) claims and points out as characteristic of contemporary uprisings in Brazil, a 'greater "de-centering" of the classical "movement form"; (...) actions and political positions combining diverse scales in a more fluid way; changes in the dynamics and instances of political socialization and in visions of social change' (Bringel & Sposito, 2020, p. 3). He claims that all of these transformations take on a specific form according to national contexts. One of the distinguishing features of the protest movement in Brazil is that the protesters deliberately choose to use the term ***ativismo*** to articulate the particularities in their mode of behaving, strategizing, and engaging in collective action. Overall, protesters seek to replace the theory and praxis associated with the word ***militância*** with a new understanding of political engagement (Sales et al., 2019).

Elaborating on Bringel and Sousa's arguments, I frame the ongoing transformations in the protest culture and collective action in Brazil that occurred after June 2013 as a local response to three global issues: (a) the economic crisis of financial capitalism that has been underway since 2008; (b) the recognition of the limits and difficulties of representative democratic institutions to align themselves with the interests of most populations[5]; (c) the diffusion of a networked-based strategy of interference into social norms and the reliance on autonomy as a tool for increasing the agency of the players involved in collective action aiming for social transformation. The recognition of the collectividual character[6] - simultaneous and necessarily collective and individual – of this mode of acting together is an original contribution that the author wants bring to the debate of contemporary forms of collective action (Sales et al., 2020; Sales, 2022).

Tatagiba and Galvão (2019) report that 'the protest pattern seen in this period [2011–2016] is characterized by the combination of two distinct dynamics: political polarization and heterogeneity of actors and demands' (p. 63). This heterogeneity makes it difficult to locate the participants of collective action on the political spectrum, and undermines the precision of the categories right and left. The social movements and protests I have focused on to understand Brazilian ***ativismo*** vociferously criticize the legitimacy of the Brazilian political representative system and make a radical defense of social rights and public policies such as free education, healthcare, and public transportation. Therefore, instead of characterizing them as leftist

[5] To understand the first two factors, I recommend both the collection edited by Marcos Ancelovici (Ancelovici et al., 2016) and the dossier Social Movements and Transformations of Contemporary Activism, edited by Breno Bringel and Marília Pontes Sposito (Bringel & Sposito, 2020). In these works, several authors analyze the current global cycle of street protests in its relation to the expansion of economic austerity in public spending that is taking place in several countries.

[6] The expression was proposed by Anna Stetsenko and will be discussed further later in the chapter.

movements, I will treat them as pro-equity movements. This term aims to differentiate them from other movements that arose in the same period [2013–2018].

The *Secundarista* Spring (Ribeiro & Pulino, 2019), a series of high school students led sit-ins started in the state of São Paulo in October 2016, grew and moved forward the grammar of protest adopted by the Free Pass Movement in 2013 (Gohn, 2018). Scrutinizing the rationale of the sit-ins will unveil the constitutive traits of Brazilian ***ativismo*** (Corti et al., 2016; Tavolari et al., 2018). This chapter explores the strategic dimension of ***ativismo*** through the analysis of collaborative forms of praxes employed by political groups who were working to make improvements to the welfare state in Brazil between 2013 and 2018 (Nobre, 2022). It claims that the word ***ativismo*** refers to a connective action strategy to recast social norms in light of sought-after Futures. To support my thesis, I highlight and analyze three constitutive characteristics of this phenomenon.

The argument starts by outlining facts and trends from the 1990s onwards and connecting them with events that occurred between 2013 and 2018. It then reflects on the impacts of technological advances on collective organization. This framework will make visible the rationale behind the not-unprecedented novelties that have taken over the squares, streets, and public spaces, as well as the Internet, to defend the fragile Brazilian welfare state. In the section 'Methodological Notes', I will explain the resources I mobilized to explore the hypothesis that in Brazil the words ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** identify distinct methodologies for intervening into social norms (Sales, 2021). In the subsection 'Recasting autonomy', building on the Brazilian social movements' scholarship from early 1990s, I discuss the valorization of autonomy by the subjects who call themselves ***ativistas***. This section also addresses the relationship between anarchism and autonomy and argues that the relevance attributed to autonomy is not sufficient for asserting that what is underway in Brazil is a mere rebranding of anarchist ideology.

In the subsection 'Networks are structures', I examine the idea of spontaneity that is present in many early analyses of the events of June 2013. In it, I underline the ***ativistas***' choice for an organizing logic that uses network structures to intentionally and agentically[7] negate a linear and unidirectional hierarchical model of collective action. In the third section, 'Connective actions', I analyze the insufficiency of the logic of collective action to explain the rationality of activist strategy. The argument makes explicit the relationship between the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the creation of organizational arrangements allowing people to contribute to collective action from singular and unique perspectives.

[7] I am using the term 'agentic' and its variations to refer to a person's ability to direct their own activities, goals, and destiny. In the late 1980s, Albert Bandura, a psychologist at Stanford University, constructed a theory of social cognition that emphasized its relation to self-sufficiency and self-efficacy. Later, he focused on the function of agency and motivation in greater detail, and he came up with the term 'agentic', which describes humans as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulated.

Finally, in the section 'Autonomy in the key of collectividual agency', I point out how the elements discussed here create conditions for increasing the collectividual agency of those who make use of the ***ativista*** strategy. The reader will notice a change in the level of analysis: here, I will examine how the ***ativista*** strategy impacts the course of development of those who use it. Supported by the Transformative Activist Stance proposed by Anna Stetsenko (Stetsenko, 2017), I highlight how individual and social developments are complementary poles of the process through which young ***ativistas*** develop, grow, learn, and insert themselves into the conflicts defining the social norms of the future society they are building. The goal is to explore the consequences of the political phenomena into the individual path.

4.2 Methodological Notes

Psychology has long suffered from overly restrictive conceptions of scientific methodology. Researchers seem to believe that the mechanical repetition of established procedures is enough to guarantee proper knowledge production. In opposition to the fetishism of the method (Koch, 1981), several authors have defended the importance of theoretical reflection for the advancement of knowledge in psychology (Fontes & Falcão, 2015; Laurenti et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2015; Teo, 2019). The authors affiliated with the field of theoretical and Philosophical Psychology conceive the method as a critical pursuit of forms for capturing the uniqueness of the phenomenon under scrutiny. They recommend moving away from mechanical and rigid procedures and techniques and forging a methodology that maintains a close connection with the object of study (Furlan, 2017).

Identifying defining traits of contemporary Brazilian ***ativismo*** is a challenging task. This is an evolving phenomenon, something still in the making, so designing a comprehensive methodological approach and adopting multiple sources of information is necessary. The study I am drawing on was carried out between 2013 and 2018. It used as raw data video and written materials elaborated by the ***ativistas*** (Sales, 2021) journalistic and audiovisual content broadcast nationally produced by corporate media about **ativistas** and scholarly analysis of the ongoing transformations in Brazilian protest culture (Sales et al., 2020).

I aim to refine the ideas used to understand the motivations behind Brazilian ***ativismo***. To do this, I reframe the ideas present in the national scientific literature, as well as in corporative media on ***ativista*** strategy with a view to greater precision and accuracy with respect to the intentions of this new generation of protesters who took the country's streets and to social media. I have done this by identifying and scrutinizing the core notions that inform the activity of the groups that call themselves ***ativistas*** and by pointing out how these create the conditions for the exercise of collectivist agency (Stetsenko, 2020a).

The continuous and parallel work with materials in which ***ativistas*** presented themselves to Brazilian society, the reactions that such presentations produced in the country's corporate media, and the scientific analyses that emerged throughout

that period, created a strong observation point from which to capture crucial elements of the ***ativista*** mode of protest. This standpoint has allowed me to identify the main ideas and concepts used to understand the changes in the culture of political participation ongoing in Brazil since June 2013. After having discussed the prefiguration as a distinctive trait of Brazilian ***ativismo*** (Sales, et.al, 2020)***,*** this chapter aims to contribute to the field by stressing autonomy, networked organizational design, and communication technologies as essential elements of the ***ativista*** strategy.

Finally, it is important to underscore that, unlike other conceptions of methodology, 'the description of methodological procedures in conceptual research does not have the function of ensuring the reproducibility of the results' (Laurenti et al., 2016, p. 55). The assumptions, theoretical references, sources, and conceptual tools driving this research invite criticism, correction, and alternative interpretations. I laid them out here in a comprehensive fashion to facilitate the improvement by those who came after me.

4.3 Recasting Autonomy

Sousa (1999, 2002, 2014) uses the category 'youth' to analyze the transformations in the modes of contestation present in the Brazilian political life. Her research indicates an intensification of forms of collective action marked by a distancing from the canonical institutions of representative and participatory democracies. Her studies into the urban cultural underground scene on the periphery of large cities during the mid-1980s show that this was a minority trend (Sousa, 1999). However, since the second half of the 1990s, it has become more popular and has presented itself as a distinctive approach, both in terms of the form of organization young protests are engaged in and in the types of demands they are making.

Martins (2009) recalls several moments when the struggle for education reform used occupation as a protest repertoire. Writing about the events of 2015, he (Martins, 2016) defies the ongoing understand at that moment when the students occupied their high schools that sit-ins were a unique and most significative novelty brought by ***ativistas*** to public arena. Further, his analyze also offers important insight into how movements for global justice (Alonso, 2017) and contemporary Brazilian activism have been influenced by anarchism:

> The occupation of schools is not unheard of and occurs more frequently than we think (...) Events such as those that took place with the workers' movement of the 1910s and 20s, mainly under the anarchist influence, or even the struggle on the peripheries for the democratization of public school, of mothers for day care centers in the 1940s and 50s, the community schools that are still spread throughout Brazil, or even the practice of the schools of the *Movimento dos trabalhadores Sem terra* (Landless Rural Workers Movement) all show that the process of school occupation takes place in various locations and at different times (Martins, 2016, s/n).

The parallel between several anarchist traditions and the organizational principles guiding the *Movimento Passe Livre* São Paulo (MPA, 2013b) is explicit. The emphasis on mutual support and solidarity, the preference for direct action, the focus on local communities and spaces, and the federative alliances between independent entities are critical to the MPL and historical anarchist movements. However, these similarities should not be overstated. It is necessary to rectify two widespread understandings: (a) the occupations and repertoires of political action brought about by the ***ativistas*** are unforeseen in Brazil; the autonomist values informing the ***ativista's*** ideology are a mere importation of anarchist values.

Liberato's research (2006) details how anarchist ideology was being revitalized nationally in Brazil through urban movements. The protest experiments taking place across Brazil in the period in question were creating a contestation culture in response to the State's limited capacity to protect human relations from the incursions of capitalism. Deeply skeptical of representative democratic institutions, this culture put a high premium on individual direct action and self-organization. Eight years later, the author sheds light on more elements of ***ativismo***: 'Italian operaism, Mexican zapatismo, neozapatismo (the fruit of the encounter between Leninism and Mayan culture), and also a heterodox Trotskyism present in internal currents of the Workers' Party' (Liberato, 2014, p. 15–16).

In their analysis of the creation and diffusion of a political culture supported by the idea of autonomy and globally associated with a revival of anarchism, Alcoff and Alcoff (2015) point out that it is necessary to avoid reducing it to 'the new face of anarchism' (p. 230). The authors recognize that anarchists and autonomists are both committed to the following: self-organization, direct action tactics, self-management, actions addressing local, everyday concerns, and distrust in established political parties and democratic regimes. However, they underscore a crucial distinction between contemporary autonomist and anarchist ideals: the way each one of them conceives the concept of autonomy. In autonomist circles '(...) autonomy is thought of as being a social relationship, not a self-generated individual ability, moral imperative, or political value' (Alcoff & Alcoff, 2015, p. 232).

In autonomist milieus, autonomy is not an essential attribute of a biological body; it does not name an innate vital impulse toward self-determination that the individual will follow throughout their life. It is not a natural right that supports the free will of citizens. Nor is it a mental capacity possessed solely by extraordinary subjects. In fact, autonomy is a relational capacity, the strength of which is directly proportional to a person's ability to establish connections with other people and their environment. Its function is to foster people's power to act in these relational contexts (Sales, 2021). Variations in levels of autonomy depend on the context in which one is situated, and its development involves the construction of relationships marked by collaborative independence and solidarity. ***Ativistas*** understand autonomy as an ontologically collectividual capacity (Stetsenko, 2018a).

There is a paradox in this argument, one that has informed several critiques of the ***ativista*** movement: one can't make others autonomous, but it is impossible for one to become autonomous in the absence of the others. In another worlds, the path to nurturing one's autonomy is an individual one, however, it is impossible to achieve

autonomy in isolation. Unsurprisingly, the autonomist nature of the ***ativista*** movement has been conflated with the selfishness and individualism that is symptomatic of 'a fascist, anti-institutional, antirepresentation, and, ultimately, antidemocratic drive' (Lima & Hajime, 2018, p. 91). We will explore this issue further when we discuss the relationship between autonomy and agency.

The forms of collective action carried out by the Movimento Passe Livre ***ativistas*** in 2013, those adopted by high school students in São Paulo in 2015, and some of the protests in 2016 appeared to have sprung up spontaneously. Initial analysis associated them with strategies that lacked any historical precedent in Brazil. However, this was a hasty conclusion. A careful analysis reveals that they were grounded in a tradition of political contentious that had long been part of the less popular side of Brazilian protest culture. Nonetheless, even with anarchists as an inspirational source, it is impossible to claim that ***ativistas*** are fully identified with this political tradition or explain their actions as a contemporary version of anarchism.

Ativismo*, as a strategy,* embraces the culture of social participation and collective action that was fostered by the anarchist contingent of the antiglobalization movement of the early 2000s (Alonso & Mische, 2017; Wood, 2020). It also incorporates Latin American autonomist traditions that were developed in the struggles for self-determination, self-management, and self-government (Dinerstein, 2015, 2019). The apparently novel principles and practices the ***ativistas*** introduced to the contemporary Brazilian protest scene are in fact rooted in the struggles of the Mexican Zapatistas, the *Piqueteiros* in Argentina, and the Landless Movement in Brazil. What perhaps sets them apart from their historical predecessors is that the ***ativistas*** are largely comprised of members of a young population that grew up in a period of relative political, economic, and institutional stability in Brazil (Alonso, 2017). In the next section, while exploring the affinity between technological advances and the concept of autonomy that informs ***ativista*** strategy, I will address the still-prevalent misconception that they lack organizational structure and only engage in unplanned, spontaneous actions (Nunes, 2014).

4.4 Networks Are Structures

Because of the nature of the *MPL* ***ativistas*** refusal of the organizational structure of political parties, student councils, and trade unions in 2013 and beyond, analysts have overestimated the role of spontaneity in their protest style. As ***ativistas*** share a vision of power as stemming from the expansion of the people's capacity for action and not from the disciplining of their behaviors (Sales et al., 2018), the myth of organizational anarchy has been reinforced. To dispel the myth that spontaneity and disorganization are inherent characteristics of ***ativismo***, it is necessary to analyze more closely the consequences of using a network as an organizational structure (Davis et al., 2005).

Powell (1990) emphasizes that maintaining a network organizational structure demands building relationships based on reciprocity and collaboration among its constituents. The environment must foster trust and interdependence between players. The efficiency of this organizational design depends not only on the quantity but also on the quality of the relationships established among the various elements underpinning the network. In other words, the organizational connections are sustained by and through the relationships among players. The model's premise is that people in the network trust each other and can produce and disseminate efficient, reliable, and appropriate information, which will guide the organization toward its tactical and strategic objectives.

Elaborating on this view, Mason (2012) claims that the network organizational model responds best to situations where the quality of information is a fundamental element, but the process of obtaining the information itself is uncertain. A hierarchical model is more effective when the organization has well-defined goals, which demands from its members the fulfillment of orders transmitted through precise commands in stable situations in controlled environments. High-structured and hierarchized arrangements are stable and reliable but have their efficiency compromised in contexts with high levels of volatility and unpredictability. The network organizational model is more appropriate if there is a fluid and steady flow of information, sudden environmental changes, and the demand for creative responses to unexpected events.

More research is needed to gain a full understanding of how collective action has transformed in Brazil since June 2013. However, one is already justified in stating that spontaneity is not involved in the design of organizational structures that are sustained by relations of solidarity between group members. Therefore, classifying the political action produced by these arrangements as accidental, intuitive, or even irrational is highly problematic. If anything, adopting these categories is more indicative of the inadequacy of the theoretical tools researchers are using to understand the phenomenon than of the disorganization or naivety of the political players themselves.

Renewing the interpretive lenses allows one to understand, for instance, that when protesters shouted the motto 'No leadership', they were not making an open claim for chaos and disorder. On the contrary, they were presenting a legitimate demand for particular form of leadership that was highly coherent with the organizational model they had opted to use. No vanguard group can lead all the others, nor does one person take command permanently of a given group. Instead, there are multiple and disperse group members who are able to exercise political leadership if and when necessary. In the context of high school protest against the restructuring of public school in São Paulo State (Sales et al., 2020), the motto appeared insistently when institutions like the *União Paulista dos Estudantes Secundaristas* (São Paulo Council of High School Students Unions) arrived at the street protests claiming to be the legitimate representative of the students. By chanting 'they do not represent us', the ***ativistas*** decapitated the idea that a charismatic leader – or institutionalized leadership as such – was necessary for the achievement of political aims.

In their rationale, leadership is no more than a function that must be exercised in a less personalistic way possible.

These student protest embodied the proposition that strategy is the multitude's prerogative and that leadership fulfills nothing more than a tactical function one that as inconvenient as it is necessary (Hardt & Negri, 2017). In hierarchical organizational arrangements, still prevalent in many ***militante*** organizations, strategic decision-making and other governing activities are carried out by a small and enlightened vanguard which relates to the mass of the movement through a charismatic and popular leader (Sales et al., 2020). In the ***ativistas'*** milieus, however, there is an intentional effort to produce the strategic decisions in a collaborative fashion, which is possible thanks to the prevalence of solidarity and mutual trust among members.

In *coletivos* ***ativistas***, there is no one leader to be arrested, held responsible in court or co-opted by the group adversaries. There are many potential leaders who are co-responsible for the group's governance. The decision of the São Paulo State Government to take a bus in which to detain students who participated in the occupation of the state school *Newton Pimenta Neves* in the city of Campinas on October 13, 2016, reveals their awareness of the fact that ***ativistas*** are guided by multiple leaders.[8] Overall, it is imperative to recognize that Brazilian ***ativistas*** 'can and must create radically new and more democratic forms of exercising power, since these are part of the reconstruction of social relations, the reconstruction of the processes of production and exchange' (Barker et al., 2014, p. 14).

If it is possible to speak of equivocation, we researchers should assume it as something we should always be aware of in our analyses. It is inaccurate to assume that centralized organizational models are the only efficient way to produce collective action. After all, whether consciously or not, the organizational and decision-making model proposed by young activists in Brazil creates the conditions described by Ganz (2000) to expand the strategic capacity of an organization.

4.5 Connective Actions

The protest cycle started in June 2013 was the first one in which smartphones, mobile internet data, and other contemporary communication tools were highly integrated with protest activity in Brazil. These technologies allowed protesters to broadcast highly personal narratives about their role in or opinion about what was happening in the streets. Mobile technologies were crucial both for the dissemination of information about the protests themselves and as a means for providing alternatives to mainstream news broadcasts that dominated the airwaves (Castells, 2013, 2015; Romancini & Castilho, 2017). It is impossible denying that as these

[8] PM seizes students from occupied school and takes them to police station. Published 10/13/2016 09:59 AM. Available at https://goo.gl/uubd9j. Accessed October 09, 2022.

technological resources were partially integrated into the daily life of large urban centers in Brazil and animated initiatives such as the Center for Independent Media, (*Mídia Ninja* – Independent Narratives, Journalism, and Action) and even *midiativismo*[9]. The 2018 presidential electoral campaign in the country would make evident the strength and relevance of network-based organizational arrangements mediated by new communication and information technologies (Figueiredo, 2019).

However, as in other countries, the debate about the role information and communication technologies (ICTs) have played (and should play) in collective action remains ongoing, intense, and complex. The analyses vary considerably. ICTs are

> sometimes perceived as generating new possibilities for the establishment of social bonds and, consequently, of various collective actions (from flash mobs to crowdfunding actions), sometimes understood as individualizing threats to the construction of social capital (Mendonça, 2017, p. 131).

The analysis that follows will frame ICTs as tools that favor the construction of autonomy in relational terms. The discussion underlines the effectiveness of these tools

> not only [to] diffuse interpretive framings of personalized and singularized collective action but also [to] highlight the relevance and overlap of these framings in the construction of networks that facilitate their sharing (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 41).

I claim that ICTs are crucial to constructing structures that enhance the capacity for singular agency. In particular, they make collective and institutional actions possible because part of the strength of network arrangements is their reliance on the power and quality of relations established among the constituents. Through ICTs, it has become more feasible to create and sustain organizational structures for political actions in which members are simultaneously recognized as strategic decision-makers and executors of tactical moves. Various technologies can be adopted purposefully to increase people's participation in the coordination tasks and foster collaborative modes of exercising power.

Creating autonomy-producing relationships demands recognizing the singularities of the individuals in the relationships. It is also necessary to develop organizational structures that explore the affinities and differences among people with the ultimate goal of expanding everyone's capacity to act. Put another way, the production of autonomy through relationships recognizes that 'all people matter and make a difference in the world of common and shared practices' (Stetsenko, 2018a, p. 368). Building collective action under this assumption can disrupt the centralized modes of action coordination and requires ***ativistas*** to deal with a significant number of internal conflicts within the group.

When a group wishes to reinforce its members' autonomy, it must share common values that inform the participants' choices and decisions. Each participant should recognize that each other group member is as capable as they are to make strategic

[9] The term has been employed in Brazil to describe the use of communication and information technologies as a tool for political struggle and has gained greater relevance throughout the protest cycle that began in 2013 (Maciel, 2012).

decisions. Internal disputes among ***ativistas*** tend to center around the construction of shared values that guide actions and the ultimate goals and effective change they want to effect. As a result, less energy is spent in micromanagement of menial tasks that should be done than in experimenting with manners of embodying the transformation of reality they want to implement.

The competence of a member to make a strategic decision tends not to be doubted. The governance of ***ativista*** organizations can be executed collaboratively and encompass distinct levels of power delegation. There is a shared understanding that any group participant is a potential decision-maker, so frequent and sometimes, unending assemblies are fundamental. These spaces make possible the collective and collaborative clarification of values and principles that undergird all major decisions as they are conceived as the privileged pedagogical arena in which protesters learn what should be done (Mal-Educado, 2015; Polletta, 2002).

The notion of power exercised in networks is what drives the rationality of connective action conceptualized by Bennett and Segerberg (2013). The authors claim that this mode of organization erupted from people's lack of belief in the institutions of representative democracy and relies on the capacity for individual agency and on the availability of communication and information technologies to promote social change. Consequently, connective action is produced through networks in which each individual connects with others using personalized and singularized forms of expression. Further, it is executed through temporary networks in which each individual, expressing his or her beliefs, values, ideas, and lifestyle, constitutes a crucial point for sustaining the action and the network. 'In this connective logic engaging in a public action, contributing to the achievement of a common good becomes an act of personal expression, recognition or self-validation' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 752).

The work of Sousa (1999, 2014) had already underlined the desire of young Brazilians in the 1990s to bring their everyday, individual needs closer to their political practices. Political action was understood among the young people studied by Sousa as one of the ways of expressing individuality. The group, the collective, and whatever organizational arrangement they use, should, as a point of strategy, embrace its participants' needs for self-expression. ICTs created the conditions for making this aspiration an organizational reality. These tools enabled connective action to be 'self-motivated (though not necessarily self-centered) sharing of previously internalized ideas, plans, images, and resources with networks of other subjects' (Bennett & Segerberg, p. 753).

It is in the context of the significant expansion of access to and personalization of ICTs[10] – when the logic of collective action begins to coexist with the logic of connective actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) – that a large part of those who are involved in political activities in Brazil reject the terms ***militância*** and ***militante***.

[10]The survey 'TIC Kids Online Brazil', developed by the Regional Center for Studies for the Development of the Information Society (Cetic.br) between 2012 and 2015, shows this increase. The indicators analyzed are available at: https://goo.gl/i1TXq4 and were accessed on October 17, 2022.

The ***ativistas***' refusal to adopt the terminology of ***militância*** is a gesture of self-affirmation and validation, one that reinforces their collectividual desire of producing here and now the values of the future they are committed to produce.

Familiarity with mobile and digital technologies has allowed Brazilian ***ativistas*** to transform aspirations carried out by social movements in the 1960s into effective contentious strategy. This is because as their alleys from the last century ***ativistas***: (a) do not recognize social class to be the supreme axis for combating all forms of oppression; (b) refuse immutable truths and totalizing conceptions about social change; (c) proclaim the inseparability of and coherence between the desired changes and the means by which they can be achieved (Day, 2004). Those engaged in the study of social movements must refine their tools and theories accordingly so that they can better understand how and why insurgent forms of action for social transformation no longer wager so much on reforms that increase, or recover, the efficiency of the hegemonic system of exercising power (Day, 2005). I hope this chapter contributes to this end.

4.6 Autonomy in Key of Collectividual Agency

In an analysis of the conceptions of autonomy embedded in the materials produced by ***ativistas***, I identified (Sales, 2021) three groups of ideas: (a) independence from political parties, labor unions, and other classical representative organizations; (b) acknowledgment of the particular and immediate needs of the people as the starting point for collective actions; (c) tool for the construction here and now of unseen manners of governing and being governed.

Such findings are congruent with Anna Cecilia Dinerstein's (2015) understanding of autonomy as a distinctive feature of hope movements. The participants in this kind of collective action are committed to 'anticipate, imperfectly, alternative realities that emerge from the gaps in present reality' (Dinerstein & Deneulin, 2012, p. 585). In this context, autonomy refers to a multifaceted process involving: (a) the denial of the status quo and the recognition that material reality is in a constant process of becoming; (b) the use of political imagination to create new forms of life; (c) the management of the contradictions inherent to the process of trying to position oneself with, against, and beyond the prevailing forms of life and government; (d) the consciousness of surplus, the fruit of the awareness that reality contains possibilities that have not yet been actualized (the not yet) (Dinerstein, 2015).

When ***ativistas*** started to criticize the political parties and traditional participative organizations in 2013, the members of Brazilian left and other groups committed to more progressive ideals got astonished (Gohn, 2016, 2018). The perplexity might explain why Brazilian scholars emphasized mostly the negative and deconstructive aspects of autonomist practices. It is urgent to continue investigating the productive possibilities steaming from autonomist praxis. While scrutinizing the productive features of the autonomist strategy, I aim to understand how

'autonomous organizations mobilize something that does not yet exist, but nevertheless occupy a central place in the politics of movements' (Dinerstein, 2015, p. 233).

In previous studies (Sales, 2019; Sales et al., 2020), I focused on the 'antagonistic tension between positive forces of creation and the challenging dialectical negation involved in the idea of autonomy' (Böhm et al., 2010, p. 27) to illuminate the prefigurative commitment of ***ativistas***. This allowed me to explore autonomy's productive effect (Maeckelbergh, 2011) both on ***ativista*** strategy and on the ability of ***ativistas*** to assume an active and transformative role toward themselves and their communities (Sales et al., 2020). At that time, I tangentially discussed the relationship between autonomy and collectividual agency. In this section, I bring that debate to the forefront.

Many participants in contemporary collective action and social movements are driven by the possibility of creating new social norms and exercising power in ways that are distinct from those that organize the status quo. This makes them particularly interested in increasing their capacity to exercise 'the world-shaping and history-building function' (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 7). It is not by chance that debates about autonomy as a strategy for public contestation stresses 'implicitly or explicitly – the relevance of locally organized community practices of direct democracy, antibureaucratic forms of self-management, and the rejection of the state as the primary locus of political change' (Dinerstein, 2015, p. 233).

The coordination and mobilization efforts of ***ativistas*** are an integral part of autonomist movements quest for 'alternative forms of social reproduction are prefigurative because they challenge what is real in reality and connect to that part of reality that is not yet there' (Dinerstein, 2017, s/n). Understanding how humans actively construct Futures through their commitments and actions in Present demands recognizing the ontological inseparability of the creation and reproduction of social practices and human development (Stetsenko, 2008; Sales et al., 2020; Sales, 2021). This is possible when one abandons mentalist and reductionist conceptions of human subjectivity and embraces an understanding of it as 'a process implicated in, produced by, and derived (or invented) from the mundane, practical, and meaning-filled activities of people who together transform their world and are transformed by it' (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 474).

Anna Stetsenko's work is clearly grounded in Marxist thought (Stetsenko, 2020b). However, she conducts her research on the premise that: 'those who wish to work with ideas of others, need to be willing to do battle with those others' (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 8). This is an invitation to abandon reverential relationships with the classic authors and embrace the ideas of those who come before us by criticizing, revising, and expanding them. To avoid sectarianism, while working with canonical theories such as Marxism, one should engage with these from the unique position of one's research question, social positionally, and ethical values. Following her own advice, she has recovered the political commitment to radical transformation that is present in Vygotsky's project (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004; Stetsenko, 2020b) and brought it closer to contemporary formulations such as 'critical race theory, critical pedagogy, radical feminism, among other perspectives united in the

conviction that Western society is thoroughly racist, sexist, and oppressive' (Stetsenko, 2020c, p. 5). As a result, her explanation on how we become human goes beyond the idea of participation and adaptation to a given reality. Engagement in the collaborative activities for the transformation of material reality is the cornerstone of what produces the humanity of humans.

Stetsenko's propositions challenge the assumptions of passivity, adaptation, and biological maturation that are widely accepted and regularly reinforced by human development theorists. Her tenacity in bringing to the forefront the ideals of equality, justice, and transformation underpinning Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)[11] is remarkable. In her work on the integration of socioculturally-based concepts and theories, Stetsenko aims to 'dialectically [supplant] relational ontology with the notion that collaborative purposeful transformation of the world is the core of human nature and the principled grounding for learning and development' (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 471–472). She highlights the constitutive character played by the ceaseless interchanges in the production of material and subjective dimensions of reality. 'It is the relations between organisms and the world (...) that occupy the primary position, the foundational field in which, and through which, human development emerges and takes place' (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 124).

She aims to replace the interactionist paradigm and its antinomies such as social-individual, innate-acquired, mind-body, and nature-culture. She proposes to shift 'beyond the concept of development as a mechanically additive, hybrid product in which external and internal (genetic and environmental) influences are mechanically summated and combined as extraneous and separate units to be added to each other' (Stetsenko, 2019a, b, p. 249). The Transformative Active Stance (TAS) focuses on the transactions that emerge in a subject's life when this one engages actively in activities with peers and foes over time by using the cultural artifacts the community one belongs to has produced. Human development is a self-organized process dependent on past experiences, present deeds in which individuals take part using the shared tools and future oriented goals.

To mark the uniqueness of the process throw which we become human, Stetsenko proposes the neologism collectividual (Stetsenko, 2013). The term refers to an ontological foundation created at the interface of the social and individual dimensions of reality thanks to 'the individually unique contributions to the ongoing communal dynamics and changes in the inherently social, distributed, collaborative practices' (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 10). Collectividual refers to the dynamic, processual, and dialectical ontological ground in which, and through which, humanity and material reality mutually and continuously produce each other through purposeful activities carried out by human beings.

[11] CHAT is a term widely adopted in cultural psychology, even though its meaning and the limits of what can be used under this umbrella term have been debated since its popularization outside of Russia I use the term in this book referring to Vygotsky, Leontiev, Luria, and the school of thought they founded which is based on an analytical approach that assumes that activity is a fundamental analytical category to think about psychological phenomena in a materialist, nonindividualist, and nonintrospective fashion.

The TAS invites researchers to understand 'people not as "subjects" who acquire knowledge or simply participate in social contexts, but as agents who produce changes in the prevailing social order' (Bidell, 2017a, b, p. 57). Passivity, adaptation, and conformism are displaced and 'people collaboratively transforming their worlds according to their goals and purposes – a process through which people come to know themselves and the world' (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 474) - come into play. The conceptual turn brought about by these postulations carries with it 'the problematization of the notion of reality "as it is" in its status quo, allowing it to be replaced by the notion of reality as the terrain of the struggles and efforts of what is to come' (Stetsenko, 2018b, p. 441).

The activities through which the ***ativistas*** foster their own autonomy – denying, creating, contradicting, and exceeding the limits of reality in this particular historical moment – demand that they recognize themselves and the world as always being in the making. Accordingly, the ***ativista*** strategy must invest in organizational arrangements that are capable of potentiating 'personal agency, commitment, and responsibility' (Sales et al., 2020, p. 281). The young protesters leading the sit-ins in Sao Paulo state share an understanding that politics is a field of ceaseless disputes. Their demands are urgent as they stem from their most immediate needs and directly impact the reproduction of their daily life. Moved by this urgency, they are compelled to imagine and concretely test in the Present, some possible ways of living that anticipate the sought-after Futures they are committed to producing. Because prefiguration is an integral part of their strategy, in the process, they must navigate the contradictions evoked by the need to 'act together, negotiate, cooperate [with], confront, and antagonize' (Dinerstein, 2015, p. 255) the state and the demands of a free marked organized society which insist in diminishing more and more any kind of social security net.

The conception of autonomy informing the ***ativista*** strategy not only presupposes the exercise of the participants' agency, but also seeks to cultivate it. This fuels the use of information and communication technologies and the adoption of network forms of organization. They approximate the end goals and organizational structures used to prefigure the worlds they wish to produce, and, in so doing, conjugate personal and social transformations.

Their autonomist practices set in motion recursive cycles in which: (a) organizational conditions help individuals recognize their own agency; (b) from this agentive position, people can 'engage in collective and individual innovative practices, which herald the reality of the future (not-yet-become)' (Dinerstein & Deneulin, 2012, p. 594); (c) the experience of taking part in what 'does not yet exist' reinforces the sense of collectividual agency enhanced by organizational conditions; (d) the determining role of organizational arrangements and the particular way of using the technological tools are recognized as fundamental to their embrace of their collectividual agency.

The 'transformative turn in sociocultural theory' (Bidell, 2017) proposed by Stetsenko informs my understanding that the potential for agency is a necessary effect of the active and transformative position that marks the way humans engage with their realities. For the argument being made here, this is a pivotal element for

the exercise of autonomy as 'a hypothesis of resistance that carries with it the delineation of new horizons beyond what is given as truth' (Dinerstein, 2015, p. 2). To enable humans to engage with the not-yet actualized dimensions of reality and to collectively commit to the production of this not-yet, autonomy summons ***ativistas*** to recognize and amplify their own collectividual agency in a historical moment marked by ideologies of conformism, neutrality, and immutability that are grounded in Margaret Thatcher's immortalized assertion that 'there is no alternative' to capitalism's development paradigm.

Playing autonomy in a collectividual key, like a musician plays a score in a particular tone, the idea can be conceived of as people's ability to recognize their co-dependence on the world and the people around them to help them, by way of collaboration, meet their own needs, and express their potentialities without diminishing or overestimating the relevance of their singular needs in the production of dimensions of reality that do not yet exist. In simple words, autonomy is collaborative independence. Thus, autonomy and agency are located 'at the intersection of individual and collective planes, within the unified dialectical scenario of human praxis' (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 10). This nuanced definition informs the ***ativista*** strategy for social transformation and characterizes it as collectividual.

4.7 Sharpening Tools to Participate in the Future's Invention

The repertoires and strategies mobilized by ***ativistas***, and their radical commitment to using their unique needs and personal development as building blocks for social transformation, demand that observers reimagine what is possible and impossible in specific moments of history (Mendes, 2018). The rapid expansion of fear and despair brought about by the significant changes in the political-institutional-economic trajectory of Brazil since 2013, conditions that have culminated in the election of far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro, have made it difficult to grasp the affirmative, creative, and imaginative dimensions put into play by countless Brazilian citizens who are constructing, and being constructed by, the ***ativista*** strategy. A little less fear and a bit of hope (Dinerstein, 2019) can help us to identify how ***ativistas's*** prefigurative commitments helped to bring impossible Futures to a Present sterilized by diverse kinds of brutality.

The ***ativista*** strategy required the scholarly community in Brazil to expand the theoretical models (Sales et al., 2019), re-frame problems (Sales et al., 2018), and refine our conceptual tools (Tischler, 2019) to navigate among the tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions involved in building other possible Futures with, against, and beyond a Present that often prevents us from breathing let alone living or living well. This chapter was meant to address some of those needs.

The inseparability of means and ends and the refusal to regard individual and social development as mutually exclusive invites researchers from other fields to bring their theoretical lens to effort to understand contemporary modes of activism. Political psychologists, as well as other scholars, must join the efforts of

sociologists, political scientists, and anthropologists, who traditionally deal with the field of social movements and collective action aimed to rewrite the norms of the world in which we live. Researchers interested in the renewal and politicization of Cultural Historical Activity Theory are more than welcomed to join this endeavor. After all, 'understanding that people always contribute to social practices (...) places [the] activities that enable individuals to intentionally transform the world at the center of the development of the self' (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004, p. 494).

Whether you are an activist, a social scientist, or an observer, there is an important message here: it is imperative to recognize that we are also active participants in the relationships that oppress us, and taking back the agency and power that we generally feel has been stolen from us is both possible and necessary. If we are partially produced by Past events and circumstances, our commitments and actions in the Present are the arena in which we struggle to become who we want to be and to create the world we want to live in the Future.

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Chapter 5
Militância and *Ativismo*: Two Forms of Political Consciousness

5.1 Reshaping Consciousness

In the struggle to transform social norms, words are not neutral – they carry meaning, produce worlds, and shape subjectivities (Tilly, 2010). Since June 2013, Brazilians have been watching a tremendous political, economic, and institutional crisis unfold (Bringel & Sposito, 2020) along with a massive transformation in the country's protest culture (Gohn, 2014, 2016, 2018). Whether citizens choose to characterize their political activity as ***militância*** or ***ativismo***[1] reflects the tension between traditional forms of political organization and the public expression of opposition Brazil and defiant ones (Sales, 2021).

Ativistas are key players in the wave of youth-led and youth-organized protests that have been challenging 'the codes, actors, and actions that ha[ve] dominated the social and political scenario'[2] (Bringel & Pleyers, 2019, p. 239) in Brazil. Actually, in the first 20 years of the twenty-first century, following the Seattle model, (Wood, 2020) political groups have embraced, refused, and recast political traditions worldwide (Alonso & Mische, 2016; Gohn, 2018; Pleyers, 2010; Trott, 2016). In their attempt to create 'other possible worlds', they have built a grammar of political conflict based on 'a contested relationship in and against the state, the market, and hegemonic discourses on development' (Dinerstein, 2010, p. 356).

Pivotal to Brazilian ***ativistas'*** criticism of the people and institutions associated with ***militante*** traditions is a rejection of "old-left" practices of focusing on structural and economic determinants while failing to address how people in movements for social justice often relate to each other in oppressive ways' (Cornish et al., 2016,

[1] To ensure the accuracy of my claims and to avoid losing crucial information in the translation, I will format the terms ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** – and their variations – in bold and italics.

[2] All the translations are the author's.

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*, Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_5

p. 115). Like their antiauthoritarian comrades protesting in other parts of the world, Brazilian ***ativistas*** embrace a 'synthetic political approach' in their endeavors to create 'another politics' (Dixon, 2014). Their strategies and repertoires reappraise and update ideas, principles, and practices from the Situationist International, the American New Left, and other political groups committed to autonomist values (Dinerstein, 2015; Foust, 2010), and to the ideas underpinning the alter-globalization movement (Juris, 2008).

Aiming to understand the psychopolitical determiners of people's engagement in political activity, Sandoval (2001) proposed a model for dissecting the 'interrelated social psychological dimensions of meanings and information that allow individuals to make decisions as to the best course of action within political contexts and specific situations' (p. 185). I adopt his framework to distinguish ***militantes***' and ***ativistas'*** different configurations of political consciousness and to argue that these differences allow one to better grasp their preferred strategies, modes of conduct, and protest repertoires.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I briefly introduce the major political debates taking place in Brazilian civil society and present the Political Consciousness Model (Sandoval, 2001; Sandoval & Silva, 2016). Then, I explain the methodological premises on which my argument is grounded. Third, I outline the configurations of political consciousness carried out by ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** respectively, emphasizing how they entail specific modes of political action. Finally, I summarize the discussion and invite scholars from diverse disciplines to turn their analytical attention to the dynamics involved in people's efforts to rewrite the rules organizing their daily lives.

5.2 From Consciousness to Action

Since June 2013, the political environment in Brazil has been noisy and turbulent. Tensions and antagonisms among Brazilians have exploded into a myriad of outraged players arguing over the country's future in the streets, on the Internet, and at the ballot boxes (Kingston & Power, 2017; Bringel & Pleyers, 2019; Pinheiro-Machado, 2019; Nobre, 2022). The significance of this turmoil is still in dispute among academics, political parties, and left- and right-wing activists (Caetano, 2017). In this conflict, a fertile area of investigation has been opened up by scholars who have turned their attention to the impacts of these changes on forms of political participation and the protest culture across the country (Gonh, 2014; Bringel, 2017; Sales et al., 2018; Tavares & Pfrimer, 2020; Sposito & Corrochano, 2020, Groppo & Oliveira, 2021).

Political parties and trade unions have been regarded as untrustworthy and easily prone to cooptation by a generation of youth activists born in the Internet era (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), who are inspired by autonomist values and motivated to organize and participate more intensely in governmental process (Perez, 2019). At the same time, thematic collectives, mutual aid networks, autonomous fighting units, and decentralized thematic coalitions, among other forms of collective

organizing and acting (Gohn et al., 2020), have become very popular[3] (Bringel, 2018). Studies have shown that the new generations of Brazilian protesters are not moving away from politics as much as redefining the political arena itself (Bringel & Sposito, 2020).

In previous investigations (Sales, 2021), I have shown that the tension between the forms of social participation that are characteristic of representative democracies, on one hand, and the forms of social participation that are less structured and marked by fluidity and ephemerality, on the other, should not be reduced to a debate about organizational preferences. This conflict, which in Brazil is encompassed by the umbrella terms ***militância*** and ***ativismo***, points toward distinct sociohistorical positions, political traditions, and singular personal development. These distinctions inform how ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** give meaning to their realities and act to transform it. The Political Conscientiousness Model (Sandoval, 2001; Sandoval & Silva, 2016) offers a set of categories by which to examine these differences comprehensively.

A lot of ink has been spilled, most of it by authors situated on the left side of the political spectrum, on the centrality of political conscientiousness in the fight against diverse forms of oppression and subalternity. In general, the users of the idea share an implicit assumption that consciousness describes both a state of awareness one ought to have in order to act, and a part of the self, responsible for intentional and volitional acts. Snow and Lessor (2013) explain that the concept's popularity stems from its relationship with 'the cognate concepts of class and oppositional consciousness, false consciousness, consciousness-raising, and consciousness transformation' (s/n). While exploring the transformations of the Brazilian labor movement and the emergence of distinct forms of working-class contention from 1945 to 1980, Sandoval (1993) concludes that mobilization and political participation could be better understood in a framework that connects sociological and psychological concepts and ideas.

Sandoval's model (Sandoval, 2001) is built upon the premise that the decision to act collectively, or not, to address a political problem is oriented by a mix of collective and personal interests and by an evaluation of the current conditions for success (Costa & Prado, 2017). It conceives of political participation as being produced 'at the intersection between structural factors; interactive social relations; worldviews informed by cultural prejudice; and the conscious personal evaluation of costs and benefits of taking part in a collective action' (Sandoval, 1989, p. 68). Thus, researchers investigating political activities must carefully unravel past, present, and future political socialization activities, because they create opportunities for the development of collective identity, communal interests, and the belief in the efficacy of collective action (Gonçalves, 2009; Silva, 2007).

The willingness of a person or a group to act, or not to act politically, as much as the manner in which one chooses to act, can be understood as a product of the ongoing dialectical interaction between societal expectations and beliefs, the sense of

[3] The quest for improving channels of popular participation and the careful attention to intragroup power dynamic, lead citizens to experiment with unorthodox organizational arrangements and expand the standard political vocabulary used to describe collective contention in the country.

collective identity, the shared feeling of collective interests, assumptions about political efficacy, and the identification with the aims and contentious repertoires available in a specific context and mobilized by a specific group (Sandoval, 2001). The multidimensionality of this conception of political conscientiousness provides a comprehensive assessment of the conditions under which individuals and groups decide to participate, or not, in collective action.

The framework combines the contention politics approach developed by Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) with insights from Agnes Heller on the impact of quotidian events (1997), Alberto Melucci (1996) on interpretative framing, and Henri Tajfel's social identity theory (1982), among others. Sandoval crafted an interdisciplinary approach that equips researchers with analytical categories which enable them to delve more deeply into the psychopolitical conditions under which groups or individuals decide to enter into the political arena.[4] The model consists of seven dimensions which are: societal beliefs and expectations, collective identity, perceived collective interests, political efficacy, feelings toward adversaries, willingness to act collectively, and persuasive action proposals (Sandoval, 2001). Combined, these aspects frame political consciousness as 'socially and historically determined (but not mechanically so) by the existing material conditions and constituent social relations within a given society at a given stage of its development' (Stetsenko, 2018, p. 179).

Figure 5.1 was inspired by the model's graphic representation from 2016 (Sandoval & Silva, 2016). In it, each dimension is associated with specific

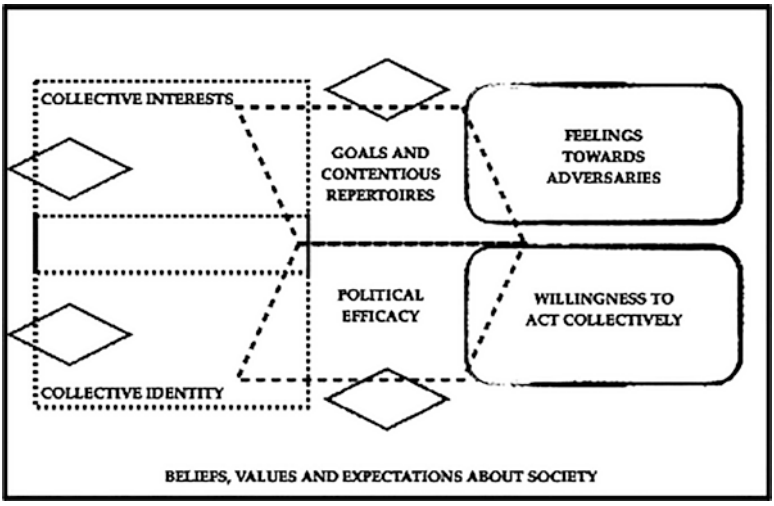

Fig. 5.1 The conceptual model of political consciousness

[4] Assuming contention and interactivity are main traits of political action, I follow the 'players' and 'arenas' framework (Jasper & Duyvendak, 2015); this choice precludes the use of canonical terminologies like 'actors' and 'field'.

emotions; this reflects the fact that in its latest version, the model considers affectivity to be a transversal qualifier that potentially impacts all dimensions.

5.3 Notes on Methodology

In a bibliometrics investigation covering data from 2000 to 2017, Szwako et al. (2020) analyzed Brazilian scholarship on social movements and collective action. The results indicate the prevalence of case studies and highlight the necessity for more theoretical nuance with which to gain insight into the specificities of contentious politics in Brazil. This need had already been identified by Silva (2010) and resonates with Alonso's assessment (2009). Altogether, these results reinforce the need for revision and further development of the available conceptual frameworks to grasp more accurately 'the symbolic characteristics and the global dimension of contemporary activism' (Alonso, 2009, p 74). A psychopolitical approach can contribute a lot to this endeavor.

Psychology has long been suffering from narrow and restrictive definitions dictated by theoretical parochialisms. The dogmatic adoption of prescribed routines and procedures as the necessary conditions for producing reliable and valid scientific data has led to restrictive analyses and theorizations. The focus on finding functional correlations between discrete variables related to human behavior has prevented psychologists from exploring, comprehensively, the phenomena produced at the nexus of the natural, social, political, and economic dimensions of human life. These characteristics stem from when 'psychology erroneously attempts to emulate traditional sciences like physics, chemistry, and more recently biology and medicine (and may even pretend to outpace them)' (Teo, 2020, p. 761). Critical theorists like Teo, argue for the acknowledgment of the dualistic nature of psychological phenomena (simultaneously cultural-historical and biological-natural) and for the development of theorizations in psychology as a part of the field of humanities (Teo, 2017, 2018).

Comprehensive and interdisciplinary frameworks like the one proposed by Sandoval offer researchers an alternative to the narrow understanding of political conscientiousness. The model moves investigations in political psychology closer to related fields like sociology and political philosophy while recognizing the uniqueness of psychological phenomena – which are necessarily produced at the nexus of the biological, sociopolitical, and cultural aspects of life.

This chapter takes a psychopolitical standpoint to investigate the changes in Brazilian protest culture and action repertoires and their impact on the conducts[5] of demonstrators. To this end, I adopt the categories and definitions proposed by the Political Conscientiousness model to revise, reclassify, and reframe conclusions

[5] I am aware that the word conduct in English is mostly used in a singular form. However, because I want to stress the variability of the manner in which militante and ativistas can behave on a particular occasion or in a particular context, I decided to pluralize it.

already present in previous studies (Sales, 2019, 2021; Sales et al., 2018, 2019, 2021). My goals are to advance the theoretical understanding of the distinction between ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** and between ***militantes*** and ***ativistas***, while 'providing the kind of interdisciplinary analysis that fuses levels and perspectives to interrogate politics in motion' (Hammack & Pilecki, 2014, p.86).

5.4 *Militante* and *Ativista* Political Consciousness

At the core of one's political conscientiousness are 'the meanings that people give to the social structure and institutions and their insertion in them in terms of the political relations between the social categories and the intentions of the people that comprise those social categories' (Sandoval, 2001, p. 187). This highlights ideas, principles, and values shared with other members of social groups. It stresses the relevance of meanings each individual creates about norms and cultural structures that he/she is living in. This level of analyses draws researchers' attention to the relevance of people's thoughts and shared experiences and emotions in the political field and offers an opportunity to move beyond limitations of the structural frameworks that were predominant in the field until the early 1990s (Melucci, 1996; Jasper, 1997).

The model conceives of consciousness as a mosaic formed by changing information, shifting emotions, and fluid meanings that political players lace together and use to orient their decisions. Because it localizes political consciousness at the intersection of macro and microstructural levels, it facilitates the analysis of how collaborative practices and personal experiences can lead to group solidarity and engagement in political activities. Sandoval's comprehensive perspective contests the widespread assumption that the weight of societal pressure is an insuperable barrier to the ability of regular people to act – even though the capacity of exceptional subjects or a very specific set of conditions could eventually overshadow societal constraints (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Actually, the model is imbued with dialogism and interrelatedness and emphasizes individuals' and groups' ability to make sense of and create meanings about the societal structures in which they find themselves. In short, the model portrays political players as subjects that 'engage with the world, beginning with how they understand and feel about it' (Jasper, 2017, p. 298).

5.4.1 Societal Beliefs and Expectations

This dimension was grounded in Agnes Heller's thesis on the unthinking and automatized aspects of everyday life. Therefore, the model depicts quotidian life as mostly mechanical and lacking critical thinking. Under ordinary set of conditions, people's actions are oriented by an immediate problem-solving rationale repeating

and reinforcing the current state of affairs. Consequently, people might unwittingly embrace and support the assumption that the prevailing social norms at the specific historical moment in which they live are natural, stable, and potentially immutable. 'Quotidian routine is the aspect of social reality that contributes the most to alienation, one that manifests itself in the silent coexistence between the demanding deeds of daily affairs and the macro social order determining it' (Salvador, 1993, p 64).

The development and transformation of configurations of political consciousness occur through people's engagement in shared activities and deeds. Under normal circumstances, the configuration of conscientiousness will be representative of hegemonic values, ideas, and beliefs that define a specific sociohistorical reality. However, because people take part in tasks that potentially defy their understandings about everyday life and experience the possibility of rewriting societal rules via political endeavors, they can actively challenge the assumptions and premises they have received from their social environment and modify the norms informing their worldview. In this regard, a personal (but not a social) dimension of conscientiousness is an indispensable element of Sandoval's approach. Like recent scholars who subscribe to Cultural Historical Activity Theory claim, the model conveys an idea that people

> never start from scratch and never completely vanish; instead, they enter and join in with social practices as participants who build upon previous accomplishments and also inevitably and forever change the social matrix of these practices (if only in modest ways), leaving their own indelible traces in history (Stetsenko, 2012, p. 150).

In considering ***militantes***' and ***ativistas***' societal beliefs and expectations, one must take the context of Latin American societies and their specific political histories into account. According to Sorj (2015), interventions by members of civil society in the political arena in the region can be divided into three consecutive and intertwined waves of mobilization. The first one, which started in the nineteenth century, is related 'to wage earners' organizations', and had as its more influent players workers and students' unions and, later, professional associations. In the second one, nongovernmental organizations were key players. It swelled in response to the rise of military regimes in the region in the 1970s and 1980s and grew into social movements and political mobilization aligned with new social movements' agenda: identity rights, human rights, and environmental issues.

The primary focus of these two waves is the position political players occupy in the world of work and in state apparatuses and on how these positions might impact and be impacted by personal expression. Consequently, the collective identity of the worker is integral to their project. The specific demands of the first wave were oriented around a 'comprehensive platform in favor of the recognition of social rights and the valorization of the worker's place in society' (Sorj, 2015, p. 25), while the demands of second one were 'based on social identity (gender, sexual, and ethnic orientation) or universal rights aspirations (human rights, environment)' (Sorj, 2015, p. 25). Finally, in the third wave, political players in urban centers have converted the virtual space on the Internet into a crucial sphere for political

engagement. Simultaneously, their mobilization strategies and collective action decrease the distance between the public and private domains of life, stress the idea that the personal is political, and embrace personal transformation as one of their political goals (Sorj & Sergio, 2005; Sales, 2021).

The third wave is embedded in cyberspace and blurs the lines between the online and offline political arenas, individual and collective motives and goals, as well as individual and collective political motivation. The people responsible for it are embracing, challenging, and recasting key aspects of the agendas and repertoires of actors from the previous waves of mobilization. Whether they choose to use the term ***militante*** or ***ativista*** to characterize themselves exposes the contradictions and tensions that arise when protesters decide to disrupt the prevailing societal norms and expectations that determine what is expected from them. Opting for on or the other of these words indicates a difference in values, principles, political preferences, and beliefs (Sales, 2021).

In Brazil, the societal beliefs and expectations informing ***militante*** political consciousness were sketched out from the following sociopolitical trends: (a) the political power of industrial workers' associations in the second half of the twentieth century (Sandoval, 1993); (b) the tensions that arose in the 1970s and 1980s when the new syndicalism adopted a more combative agenda by defying the restrictive state legislation during Brazilian constitutional process and creating their own party – the Workers Party (Ladosky & Oliveira, 2014); (c) the re-articulation of grassroots movements under the influence of the Liberation Theology in rural areas and the appropriation of Marxist Leninist political strategies in urban areas by social movements such as the one that struggled for universal healthcare (Sader, 1989).

On the other hand, the terrain in which Brazilian ***ativistas*** are developing their beliefs about the world they live in and how they should act to produce social change is framed by: the secular fights for autonomy in Latin America (Dinerstein, 2015); the repertoires of action and strategies developed by social movements seeking global cooperation against the prejudicial social, economic, environmental, and political impacts of neoliberal globalization (Wood, 2020; Pokhrel, 2011), and the personalization of contentious politics that is being encouraged by current technologies of communication (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bennett et al., 2018).

5.4.2 Collective Identity

Over the last decade, identity has been a crucial area of focus in studies about political participation, social movements, electoral behavior, and other forms of collective action (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Jenkins, 2008; McGarry & Jasper, 2015). Despite numerous disagreements on the topic, there is a consensus that identity points toward a zone of intersection between the communal and individual dimensions of human activity and provides an important starting point for understanding processes like new members recruitment, group belonging, and networks of alliance.

Evans and Gamman (1995) suggest adopting an action-oriented understanding of collective identities by framing them as 'necessary fictions'. An identity offers a point of reference around which people can grow a sense of belonging. Political mobilizers might strengthen and solidify the ideas informing their identity in the hopes of making it more appealing to demonstrators and bystanders. In so doing, though, they obscure the fluid, contested, and multifaceted nature of a collective identity (Jasper et al., 2015) and strategically forget the fictional nature of the construct. Scholars are not immune to this selective oversight, and crystallization of their approach to collective identity. Social class, for example, epitomizes the pitfalls of these practice amidst academics. In an almost ironic conclusion, Jasper and his colleagues assert: 'class theorists were hoping for a collective homogeneity that few members of the working class felt, except when rallied by a self-labeled working-class party' (Jasper et al., 2015, p.19).

Sandoval originally included in his model an action-oriented definition of collective identity to stress the ways in which singular and collective players grow, express, and promote their solidarity. He defined this dimension as 'the way individuals establish a psychological identification of interests and sentiments of solidarity and belongingness to a collective actor' (Sandoval, 2001, p.187). In 2016, Sandoval moves the mobilizing role played by a collective identity to the fore front and specifies more the personal aspects of identity creation. A collective identity is 'that moment in which an individual chooses to focus his loyalty and solidarity upon a specific social category' (Sandoval & Silva, 2016, p.39). This definition reinforces the fact that identity is a product of people's active participation in the shared tasks that are necessary to achieve their political goals and is created while political players in a group produce meanings, communicate internally and externally, and make strategic decisions to achieve their goals.

Polleta and Jasper (2001) help us to better understand the changes made by Sandoval in the concept of identity adopted in the later version of the model while distinguishing it from similar ideas like ideology and self-interest. Ideology does not encompass the development of positive feelings toward the people the ideology is shared with. After all, 'far from simple cognitive grids or distinctions, collective identities are based on positive feelings toward one's group and, often, by negative feelings toward out-groups' (Jasper et al., 2015, p. 08). On the other hand, the idea of interests implies a systematic and continuous process of rational evaluation that is replaced by a sense of duty once the collective identity is established. In sum collective identity is 'individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution' (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285). This connection stems from players' interactions with themselves, their symbols, and their targets, and it is built upon 'a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity' (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285).

The collective identity of Brazilian ***militantes*** gravitates toward the goal of the total emancipation of the working class from its chains of oppression (Sales et al., 2021). This identity framework depicts a crystalized, rigid, and hard-to-mold

identity as an ideal in ***militante*** milieus. A vast amount of time, energy, and resources are spent on presenting ***militantes*** as driven, ascetic, and selfless subjects who are moved mostly by the moral commitment of fighting against anyone who can present threats to the agenda that they are trying to advance. This morality impacts them to such a degree that they tend to frame their adversaries as enemies to be destroyed and ultimately fully eliminated from civic life (Sales et al., 2018). Unity in action, discipline, and bravery are at the core of their sense of worthiness, self-esteem, and utility for society.

Brazilian ***ativistas'*** collective identity, which has been in the making since the events of June 2013, is rooted in the daily struggles and oppressions experienced by mixed-race communities situated mainly in large urban centers around the country. The political players in question tend to have informal employment (job positions not regulated by Brazilian labor laws, freelancing, gig economy tasks, among others) so they do not share the traits of the traditional working class, such as formal employment, unionization, and regular working hours. Another core elements of their identity are their tendency to champion multiple forms of direct action leading to a taste for shared decision-making processes. Furthermore, as a mark of their identity, they place a high premium on fluidity and openness, which can lead them into long, sometimes endless, debates about routes of action, purposes, and tactics (Sales & Fontes, 2020). Typically downplayed by the ***ativistas*** are some potentially negative aspects of this commitment to a contested identity, including a lack of clarity about goals and an increased likelihood of internal conflicts.

Because the dedication to fostering internal trust and suppressing organizational hierarchies as much as possible are sources of joy and pride for the ***ativistas***, the lines between the public and private aspects of their lives tend to be blurred. Moreover, the distinction between instrumental and expressive political action (Klandermans, 2013) can be unclear because self-expression is recognized simultaneously as a tool for political disputes and as an arena for political contention.

The prominent traits of ***militantes'*** and ***ativistas'*** distinct collective identities relate to two contrasting viewpoints that are present in the literature investigating the topic: one emphasizes the rigidity of the social categories that inform identities (i.e., the essentialist approach) and the other emphasizes the fluidity of social categories that shape identity (i.e., social constructionist and culturalist theories) (Franco-Zamudio & Dorton, 2014). An analytical challenge that is likely to be addressed in the coming years is to specify how the characteristics of each collective identity impact the demands made, the recruitment of allies, and decisions about strategies and tactics.

5.4.3 Perceived Collective Interests

In the first version of the model (Sandoval, 2001), this dimension was defined as 'antagonistic interests and adversaries'; it was built to capture how the political players feel about, think about, and respond to the conflicts between diverse groups

in a society. Sandoval suggested that agonism and competition among individuals was a positive force leading to individual and sociopolitical development. In fact, identifying a target with which one would engage in competition was assumed to be a fundamental determiner of political participation. 'A key to a political consciousness that supports collective action is the feeling of an adversarial relation between oneself and another group or social category' (Sandoval, 2001, p.188).

Sandoval's model is partially inspired by Henri Tajfel's socioidentity theory and is also supported by the fact that social movement organizers spend much of their time fostering intragroup emotional trust and joy, while pointing fingers at their political adversaries (Jasper et al., 2020). In 2016, the name attributed to this dimension changed in the model, and it started to be termed as 'perceived collective interests'. This title highlights the active role played by people involved in collective action to building a sense of common purpose. Moreover, the change aimed to call researchers' attention to how different approaches to political antagonism could lead to distinct kinds of rivalry. To illustrate the disparate ways ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** tend to frame their collective interests, I will borrow Chantal Mouffe's vocabulary on the constitution of an agonistic public sphere (2005a, b).[6]

Militantes' societal expectations and beliefs are rooted in the socialist doctrine about the industrial world (Sales et al., 2021). Their collective identity reinforces the idea of unfairly oppressed workers moving History through their fair and necessary war against situated forms of domination. Winning the war would grant to these status quo defiants the possibility of becoming the rulers of the current power relations. To put in traditional marxist terms, once the unprivileged ones took the Power, they would govern it aligned with their own interests – eliminating all forms of oppression for those willing to identify with the ***militante*** identity. Not surprisingly, conquering state power and overcoming their enemies in the state apparatus tends to be a critical goal for many ***militantes***. Because, the primary concern in ***militante*** milieus is to replace those in power, they tend to downplay, or postpone, the need to address the violence created by current modes of exerting power.

The political arena is conceived of as a battlefield in which the ultimate conflict for hegemony occurs. Therefore, political disputes and adversarial relationships between groups are conceived by ***militantes*** using, implicitly or explicitly, the antagonist friend/enemy antithesis. As a consequence, they might develop destructive forms of rivalry and assume that the condition for overcoming current forms of domination is total destruction of their enemies.

Conversely, ***ativistas'*** perspective on society is grounded in autonomist and anarchist principles that have been reshaped by recent forms of transnational solidarity, mutual aid, and cooperation, such as those articulated in the World Social Forum (Sales et al., 2018; Sales, 2021). By keeping a contested collective identity, one that is potentially open to being redesigned and reframed by emerging needs or the induction of newcomers into the movement, and investing in open-ended strategies

[6] For a comprehensive overview of the work of Chantal Mouffe, a political scientist committed to understanding the nexuses of struggle in democratic regimes, consult Wenman (2013).

for fostering individual autonomy, they tend not to frame political disputes in terms of a struggle for hegemony (Day, 2015).

Learning nonauthoritarian (Dixon, 2014) modes of governing and ruling society is at the core of ***ativistas***' prefigurative endeavors (Sales et al., 2020); thus, the figure of the enemy is replaced by the notion of an adversary, who is described as: 'the opponent with whom we share a common allegiance on the democratic principles of "liberty and equality for all" while disagreeing about their interpretations' (Mouffe, 2005b). Further, inventing modes of self-governance in tune with the sought-after Futures they are committed to creating is perceived by ***ativistas*** as a political victory. Consequently, gaining state power is not necessarily a final goal to them; the political arena is considered a space for ceaseless matches amongst players with conflictive interests. That said, the perceived collective interest of ***ativistas*** tends to be viewed through an agonist lens framed by the ally/adversary antithesis.

5.4.4 Political Efficacy

Sandoval built this dimension using Hewstone's theory of attribution (1989). This framework investigates 'how individuals select, process, store, recall, and evaluate (causally relevant) information and how the information is then used to draw causal inferences' (Försterling, 2001, p. 10). Hewstone's (1989) approach to the topic stood out in the field for emphasizing the importance of personal, affective, and relational aspects involved in the processes of people acknowledging causality between phenomena. The author placed tremendous value on social interactions, cultural values, personal beliefs, and social expectations to assert the situated nature of the attribution process. Attribution is at the core of the political conscientiousness configuration because participation or not in collective action hinges on how people understand their actions as relevant or not to achieving the goals of collective action. Consequently, attribution will affect political players' sense of efficacy because high levels of political efficacy are related to conceiving collective action as a mean to address political problems.

If one believes that macrostructural or transcendental forces produce political outcomes, it is unlikely one will feel capable of making a difference. As a result, one will be reluctant to participate in collective political action, which, in turn, will reinforce one's feelings of low political efficacy. On the other hand, if one understands that one's own behaviors, attitudes, and commitments have an impact on the course of political action, one might engage individually in political activity as a way to intervene in the political arena. This belief will also result in limited political efficacy. Finally, if one supposes that political outcomes stem from struggles carried out by distinct groups, the chances of being interested in political action will increase, as will one's sense of political efficacy.

Social movement scholars studying framing processes (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2007) support the argument that there is a correlation between attribution and efficacy. Researchers are currently convinced that 'the more effective an

individual believes collective action participation to be, the more likely s/he is to participate' (Klandermans, 2013a, s/n). Consequently, diverse authors have been exploring the consequences of the situated and relational aspects of attribution processes pointed out by Hewstone (1989) and in so doing have refined their understanding of political efficacy. Contemporary studies have focused their attention on how participating in social networks and joining political discussions are instrumental to increasing in people's feelings of political efficacy (McClurg, 2003; Klandermans et al., 2008a; b).

Militantes' expectations and beliefs stem from values associated with stability, predictability, and standardization. As part of their work on their collective identity, they tend to recognize and highlight the structural constraints and systemic impediments produced by inequalities in the distribution of power, goods, capital, and services in contemporary societies. Therefore, ***militantes*** are inclined to mistrust individual actions and to be skeptical of individual efficacy. Accordingly, ***Militantes***' sense of political efficacy tends to be directed primarily toward hierarchically organized and disciplined collective action. Consequently, the ***militantes***' strategy will be more appealing to people and groups that attribute the power of change to this form of political organization (Valverde, 1998) and the sense of individual efficacy might be low.

The Brazilian ***ativista*** system of values and beliefs was developed in a context of rapid advances in technology, global financial and ecological crises, and a growing sense of unpredictability about the course of one's life. The identity of ***ativistas*** is marked by high levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, all of which encourage people to embrace all the opportunities available to them for fostering their collective and individual agency (Sales, 2021). Consequently, ***ativista*** organizations place great emphasis on personal initiatives and embrace the role of individual efficacy in the fight for social and political transformation. In sum: political efficacy for ***ativistas*** is likely to be high because it is understood to be a product of autonomous individual and collective efforts – or collectividual efforts, if we use Stetsenko's terminology (2020) - to increase people's transformative agency (Stetsenko, 2019) in seeking more sustainable and equitable ways of living.

5.4.5 Emotional Dispositions

Political action is a specific kind of determined strategic interaction between individual and groups of players (Jasper, 2010) in complex arenas. In these contexts, expressing worthiness, unity, and commitment (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) is fundamental to improving the players' capacity to convince bystanders, and even adversaries, to support particular positions without paying or coercing them (Jasper et al., 2020). In the early 2000s, sociologists, political psychologists, and other social scientists became increasingly attuned to the relevance of this issue.

When Sandoval was searching for ideas to construct his framework (Sandoval, 1989), the emotional aspects of collective action were, at that time, not as important

to social movement researchers as they have since become (Jasper, 2011). Consequently, the model framed the relation between emotions and political action through a very broad lens. Back then, Sandoval concentrated on 'how an individual comes to view any social arrangement in terms of whether that arrangement represents the level of social reciprocity between the actors that the individual would consider as just' (Sandoval, 2001, p. 189). This choice stemmed from a vast field of social movement literature discussing how moral shock and outrage could trigger collective action and orient an individual's loyalty (Heise, 1979; Jasper, 1997; Alexander et al., 2006). In the updated version of the model published in 2016, in tune with the development of the field (Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Stekelenburg, 2006; Turner, 2014), emotions were presented as critical to the process of political action (or nonaction). Sandoval drew on evolutionist theories assert the adaptive role played by emotions, and worked with an understanding of emotion as a 'complex chain of loosely connected events that begins with a stimulus and includes feelings, psychological changes, impulses to action and specific, goal-directed behavior' (Plutchik, 2011, p 345–46).

Equipped with this understanding, Sandoval and other researchers have been able to identify a more complex set of emotional processes that shape configurations of political consciousness. Since 2016, the model incorporated 'emotional feelings' as an integral component in the process of consciousness-raising and political action. Those dispositions contribute to molding other dimensions of one's consciousness. Feelings give meaning and lend relevance to past experiences and events for individuals. They influence the kind of memory a group or a person will access while facing present challenges, sharpen their perception, and impact their decisions to act, or not. Emotions impact political players sociability and motivation. For example, one's emotional disposition can determine whether one desires to join or avoid others in political situations. Finally, feelings influence people's willingness to act individually or collectively because they have an impact on how past and present experiences of political participation are evaluated (Sandoval & Silva, 2016).

A comprehensive understanding of the ***militantes***' and ***ativistas***' emotional dispositions can only result from an equally comprehensive empirical-research agenda. To gain greater insight into the political function of emotions, it will be necessary to investigate how specific individual and collective players carry out emotional work in order to evoke specific emotional reactions in participants and bystanders. Let me provide a set of initial hypotheses to this end that build upon Sandoval's insights.

Militantes are prone to framing societal antagonisms as a by-product of vicious macrostructural disparities in the power capacities between people. Their organizations reinforce the feelings of alienation and unfairness experienced by people in underprivileged social positions while espousing the destruction of privilege as the definitive solution to the imbalances of power in society. As a result, a complex emotional assemblage of positive and negative emotions (Jaspers, 2012) should inform the strong conviction that individuals who do not share the ***militantes***' beliefs and identities are enemies and should be destroyed.

On the other hand, ***ativistas*** mostly understand that inequalities and imbalances in power relations are a result of people's decisions to preserve the status quo. Their organizational arrangements and organizational culture are designed to foster the collectividual capacity to refuse the immutability of social norms and to use a praxis-oriented and experimentalist approach to rebuilding social norms and institutions. Due to this, the emotional assemblage that probably prevails in ***ativista*** milieus might reinforce the value of cooperation and broad solidarity networks between potential allies seeking to challenge their adversaries.

5.4.6 Willingness to Act Collectively

On this point, Sandoval's and Klandermans's work is aligned. Both authors recognize that social embeddedness, the insertion of people in relational and institutional networks, is a crucial component of their willingness to act politically (Klandermans et al., 2008a; b). The model assumes that political activity is only possible for a subject who recognizes him/herself to be a member of a particular citizenry. The political players are enabled to act by building tools – ideals, ideologies, protest repertoires, political institutions, and collective identities, for instance – they share with a community of peers and foes. When individual agents, embedded in relational networks, engage in political praxes, they act from singular and irreplaceable positions and stances. 'It is within these networks that individual processes such as grievance formation, strengthening of efficacy, identification, and group-based emotions all synthesize into a motivational constellation preparing people for action' (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 894). Consequently, it is through the deeds performed in these shared activities that political consciousness is shaped.

Aware of the limits of an explanation centered primarily on the cold evaluation of costs and benefits, and highlighting the relevance of the other motivating or demotivating factors, Sandoval points to the five dimensions of political consciousness discussed above as the basis for a person's decision to engage, or not, in collective action:

> We understand that these choices are informed and become meaningful for individuals through: their collective identifications; their societal beliefs, values and expectations about society; their sentiments of political efficacy, their perceptions of self-interests and the adversaries they face; and, lastly, their feelings of justice/injustice (Sandoval, 2001, p. 190).

Sandoval's model provides the means for arriving at a dynamic and contextualized understanding of engagement in public affairs, while its action-oriented nature places emphasis 'on people en-countering, con-fronting, and overcoming the circumstances and conditions that are not so much given as taken up by people within the processes of actively grappling with them and thus, realizing and bringing them forth in striving to change and transcend them' (Stetsenko, 2018, p. 48). For analytical purposes and theoretical development, it is helpful to conceptualize the

eagerness to act, or not, as a multifactorial phenomenon co-related to cultural values, personal beliefs, and expectations about society, collective identity, perceived collective interests, political efficacy, and emotional dispositions.

When it comes to the political conscientiousness of ***militantes*** and ***ativistas***, both conscientiousness configurations will lead players to act. However, they will tend to do so in distinct fashions because they are mobilized and persuaded by a different set of perspectives and oriented by different intentions. In another words, the distinction between the configurations of political consciousness specific to ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** respectively is key to understanding the different kinds of political activism advanced by members of each group.

5.4.7 Persuasive Action Proposals

This last dimension is concerned with the alignment between the goals, strategies, and methods used by a particular group of players and the personal convictions of an individual player who might join, or not join, that group. The appeal of a specific path of action a group might take is determined by the content that informs the way the political consciousness of that group is configured. Crafting appealing proposals and aligning them as much as possible with the expectations of the movement's sympathizers as well as with its current participants is a crucial challenge faced by leadership teams. The focus here is

> on the extent to which participants feel that the goals and proposals of the social movement and its leadership match their own material and symbolic interests, address their claim for justice against the perceived adversary and find that the collective actions proposed are within the scope of their own feelings of political efficacy at a given time (Sandoval, 2001, p.190).

An accurate assessment of current cultural values, personal beliefs and expectations about society, the perception of collective needs and interests, the sense of political efficacy, and the emotional dispositions informing particular audiences can help political organizers craft more psychosocially appealing proposals for their audiences. In fact, the model can be used to develop an assessment of the current content and configuration of consciousness in particular groups so as to improve the appeal of their actions for mobilization purposes as well.

Considering all the distinctions already made between the configurations of the political consciousness of ***militantes*** and ***ativistas***, the former is likely to prefer to engage in actions they assume will transform, rapidly and irreversibly, the current social order; the latter would be more attracted to actions that put a high premium on communal praxes, grassroots activism, and personal development, and that lead more gradually to systemic transformation. ***Militantes*** are persuaded by proposals targeting macrostructural issues and tend to believe in the state's capacity to reflect, embody, and drive changes in current hegemonic power relations. On the other hand, ***ativistas*** will be persuaded by proposals framing social relations (activists' relationships with themselves, their peers, and their foes, and their political, social,

and natural environments) as the anchor points of hegemony today. Because of this, they might be skeptical about state-oriented political transformation.

5.5 Challenging Conclusions

This chapter aimed to explain in comprehensive terms the current tensions between protest cultures, modes of action, and political strategies; it shed lights on it the rationale moving distinct forms of political activism. Using Sandoval's model, it did this by focusing on how past traditions, present decisions, and future goals inform the manner in which people act politically. We are in a historical moment marked by interconnection and acceleration. Political trends travel instantly via social media, and national tensions can have a global impact. So, studying the local is necessary for comprehending the global. That is why I tried to explore the Brazilian case and its relationship to trends in Latin America and around the world. Hopefully, my insights into the Brazilian case will illuminate our understanding of other realities.

Sandoval's model acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of the analysis and shows the potential, and the need, to bring history, sociology, and psychology closer together to analyze attentively the rationale of distinct modes of political activism. It has allowed me to think about the personal – but never a-social – aspects of humans' purposeful and intentional efforts to redesign the social norms of their time. Hopefully, it will help other researchers to move their investigations beyond the organizational differences between canonical and insurgent forms of collective action. I am convinced that empirical research will show how the tendencies laid out here are singularized in specific movements. Still, in line with my previous arguments, I am also convinced it is safe to claim that ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** are committed to distinct forms of political activism, are moved by distinct rationales, and have a preference for different collective action strategies.

The word ***militância*** designates an antagonist strategy; it is driven by a rigid morality, leading ***militantes*** to frame their opponents as enemies and develop tactical actions to exterminate everything that might jeopardize the conquest of the utopian Future they are fighting for. It intends to create a total transformation of the current social order so that people can experience an ideal society in a distant Future. On the other hand, the word ***ativismo*** refers to a prefigurative and agonist strategy; it is driven by a flexible ethic encouraging ***ativistas*** to actively experiment with nonhegemonic modes of relationship with themselves, their peers and foes, and their political, social, and natural environments. It seeks to make protesters taste in the Present modes of sociability that characterize the sought-after Futures they are fighting for.

From the various conceptual challenges that emerge from this conclusion, one is particularly urgent in the context of growing popularity of activism animated by far-right reactionary values and agendas: specifying the similarities and differences between left- and right-wing adoptions of ***militante*** and ***ativista*** strategies.

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Chapter 6
Conclusions: Reflections and Aspirations

Brazil has a long tradition of using letters to reflect on critical moments in its history. In 1500, after landing on Brazil's coast, Pedro Vaz de Caminha sent a letter to the Portuguese King, Dom Manuel, enthusiastically describing the botanical diversity of the newly conquered lands. In 2002, while running for the country's presidency, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva sent an open letter to Brazilian citizens promising to conciliate the interests of private investors and underprivileged folks by introducing welfare policies and creating a robust domestic market. In 2015, the vice-president of Brazil, Michel Temer, used some of the country's most prestigious newspapers to send a letter to President Dilma Rousseff complaining about the lack of importance of the vice-presidency during her time in the office.

I want to follow this tradition and end this book with a letter to my readers. A letter can most clearly convey my scholarship's political and theoretical agenda. Further, because I conceive the intellectual work as a long conversation among peers committed to sharp the tools we use not only to understand but also to transform the world, I sometimes adopt the first names of the scholars my work dialogues directly with. Finally, a letter will allow me to adopt a warmer tone so that I can invite you, the reader, to join the conversation I have initiated in this book.

Because I explored Brazil's recent past, borrowing an idea from the historian Angela Maria de Castro Gomes, I consider this work to be a first draft of about our immediate history. However, by calling it a sketch, I have no intention of diminishing its value. Instead, I want to stress that it was written while the transformations I was analyzing were rapidly unfolding. As a result, my writing runs the risk of missing noteworthy dimensions of the events in question. Furthermore, I want to highlight the book's unfinished nature; it is part of a larger academic project I am committed to develop over the next years. The collaborative activities agentically[1]

[1] I am using the term 'agentic' and its variations to refer to a person's ability to direct their own activities, goals, and destiny. In the late 1980s, Albert Bandura, a psychologist at Stanford

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*,
Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_6

carried out by political players who welcome, foster, and enhance the inseparability of personal and societal development in their political activism are at the core of this research project. Hopefully, my attempts to show the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to this kind of study will have the desired effect of inspiring other researchers to join me in this pursuit.

This book also introduces to the academic community my particular interest as a political psychologist in exploring the interface between cultural-historical psychology, sociology, and political philosophy. It is my hope that the validity and rigor of my research are not in doubt, even by those – *especially* by those – readers who may profoundly and vehemently disagree with the conclusions I have reached.

I could not have pursued this goal without the support and solidarity of the senior scholars in the abovementioned disciplines that have dedicated hours to reading rough versions of this manuscript. Any value the reader finds in the book belongs to them, while any errors one might uncover are all mine. On that note, let me talk about some of the limitations I have identified in my approach.

6.1 Trying to Walk in Your Shoes

Inspired by contemporary social movements who are defying the traditional prerogatives of political actions, I built my argument in a synthetic fashion. I drew on concepts, ideas, and analyses from distinct fields and integrated them using a socio-historical transactional approach; this has allowed me to examine political activism through its constitutive interactions. Throughout the book, I paid especial attention to the strategic way ***ativistas***[2] cultivate and manage relationships with their peers, foes, and environment. I did this to emphasize that creating a community with whom one can share meaning, hopes, and dreams is pivotal to any political activity.

I maintain that the activities carried out in these communities: (a) inform participants' preference for particular action repertoires in their quest for distinct sought-after Futures; (b) allow participants to learn with their peers inside the community and teach folks outside their groups the social norms they are trying to adhere to in the Present and hope to carry into the Future they are committed to realize; (c) provide them with the tools they need to develop as individuals and to transform the society. Throughout the book, and especially in chapters two and four, I insisted that agentive engagement in collaborative deeds is the building block of individual and social development and that political activity is always already personal (but never a-social).

University, constructed a theory of social cognition that emphasized its relation to self-sufficiency and self-efficacy. Later, he focused on the function of agency and motivation in greater detail, and he came up with the term 'agentic', which describes humans as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulated.

[2] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words ***militância*** and ***ativismo*** – and their variations – in their original, un-translated form, and format them in bold and italics except when in chapter's titles.

However, my conceptually oriented point of view might lead political psychologists with a taste for empirical research to think that my argument is overgeneralized, and lacking in verifiable evidence. Even though I subscribe to Kurt Lewin's idea that 'there is nothing more practical than a good theory', I acknowledge the legitimacy of my empirically oriented peers' concerns, and would like to reassure them that more detailed case studies are included in my ongoing investigative agenda. Actually, dear readers, if you are equipped with tools to conduct this kind of investigation, I invite you to bring your methodological skills to the table, and to design studies to defy, support, and/or sharpen the conclusions I have reached.

I foresee one important point of tension and source of criticism from scholars in sociology, particularly those from North America, who might read this book, which is my use of Marxist ideas to portray a theory of agency. Marxist enthusiasts, like my unofficial mentor, John Krinsky, regard the absence of Marx's ideas in social movement studies as one reason for the field's narrow understanding of the interwoven issues that lead people to participate in collective action such as lack of access to healthcare, job insecurity, and so on. Krinsky and others also blame this lacuna for diverting attention away from the harmful effects on individuals, society, the environment produced by contemporary capitalism.[3] On the other hand, scholars who are less eager to support the Marxist wager that the working class can transform itself and its conditions through revolutionary collective action – scholars like my semi-official Ph.D. mentor, James Jasper – attribute to Marxism, and other structural theories, influence the creation of an overdeterministic approach to the field that fails to recognize the importance in the political arena of everyday people interacting with each other, making decisions together, and responding emotionally to the situation at hand. Not surprisingly, John Krinsky welcomed the use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) in studies of social movements.[4] While, James Jasper was more skeptical about CHAT's potential contribution to a theory of strategic action. Jasper argued that CHAT is a theory about collective activities, and not about how people take part in the struggles for a Future that is not here yet. Therefore, theorizations informed by CHAT's tenets could potentially downplay the relevance of singular contributions to collective praxis[5].

Ironically, in the same building and floor in the Graduate Center at the City University of New York where I meet and work with Jim, the nickname Jasper

[3] In 2013, Krisky and his comrades (Barker et al. 2013) edited a book that explores the absence of Marxism in studies on collective action. Jonh's chapter in the book insists that Marx's ideas could provide a more accurate understanding of the contradictions manifested in human praxis.

[4] In the last of John's work I read, one entitled '*Fields and dialectics in social movement studies'* (Krinsky, 2021), he explores CHAT and Gramscian perspectives as praxis-oriented frameworks able to help sociologists 'better understand their objects by understanding the conditions and contexts of their own knowledge production vis-à- vis those objects' (Krinsky 2021, p. 188).

[5] In a short piece published in 2010, Jim (Jasper 2010) outlines the effects of overdeterministic assumptions on the theoretical work in the field of social movement studies. In fact, this concern that would direct his work for the next 10 years. If you are an emerging scholar like me, you might read this piece to see how you some ideas and hypotheses a scholar carries in his junior years are further elaborated and addressed over time.

prefers to go by, and John, I found a framework to reconcile the tensions between their opposing positions. Jim's skepticism is a response to canonical versions of Marxism that have avoided discussing topics like agency, affectivity, and human mind. John's enthusiasm for Marxist analysis is animated by the possibility of reading Marxism in a transformative light. Seeking to navigate my mentors' differences in opinion, I turned to the Transformative Activist Stance (TAS) because its inventor, Anna Stetsenko, has spent the last 20 years working to address the concerns at the heart of this very conflict.

Stetsenko has long been aware that acknowledging human action as embedded in an activity system, and claiming that humans act and develop through the use of tools inlaid with the values and contradictions of historically situated communities, is not enough to prevent the spectrum of passivity from haunting theories about how humans change, learn, and act over the span of their lives. Outrunning the passivity ghost, she has been expanding Marx's dialects of a reality-in-the-making via human collaborative praxis and theorizing how people singularly contribute to the communal life by taking irreplaceable stances in the Present oriented by versions of the Future they actively sought-after.[6]

Like James Jasper, Anna Stetsenko would not conceive as precise theorizations that lose sight of how each and every person in protests matters in the collective endeavor of contesting social norms. She has been long arguing that relationality and embeddedness are not adequate premises to elaborate on how humans enable their agency and why they do so in particular ways.[7] Discussing agency through situated and relational paradigm, can lead researchers to inadvertently restate atomistic, self-contained notions about subjects; or, elegantly collapse the unique way people take stances to exert their agency into a network of multiple apolitical actants. Analyzes built on these premises do not shed enough light on the struggles humans engage in to improve their agency by accessing the symbolic and material tools available in the world; they are limited to explore how people use these tools to transform themselves in, through, and as the same process of transcending the circumstances past generations have placed them into. Jasper and Stetsenko would mostly agree that relationality and embeddedness divert researchers' attention of political activism core elements: strategic actions and commitment to a version of the communal world that is not here yet.[8]

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[6] In their review of Anna Stetsenko's book The Transformative Mind (Stetsenko 2016), Collins et al. (2020) not only argue on the necessity of Anna's work in the landscape of current critical theory. They provide us with a short and persuading note that even though a book on human development 'is perhaps not where people might first look for a major contribution to the reorientation of critical social science as a whole, at a time of global crisis. That is, however, what the reader will find' (Collins et al. 2020. p.62).

[7] When I needed to introduce Anna's ideas on agency to friends acquainted with Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Bruno Lattour Karen Barad's work I sent them the chapter: '*Radical-transformative agency: Developing a transformative activist stance on a Marxist-Vygotskyan foundation'* (Stetsenko, 2021).

[8] From the several articles written by Anna that I sent to Jim over the years, I do think he can really enjoy this one: 'Radical-Transformative Agency: Continuities and Contrasts with Relational

Like John Krisky, Anna Stetsenko trusts that Marxism can provide a foundation for scholarship and worldviews inspired by an unwavering commitment to social transformation. She has been exploring the Marxist roots of the Vygotskian project and stressing that society, history, and human development are always 'in the making' (Stetsenko, 2020c). John and Anna are comrades sharing a commitment to making Marx's ideas 'dangerous again' (Stetsenko, 2020a) by using them to theorize activism as a central piece in the efforts for social change toward a better life for all. In times like today, when intergenerational inequalities and the rampant exploitation of natural resources jeopardize the quality and even possibility of life on earth for future generations, scholars ought to mobilize their critical tools to reclaim hope and political imagination.[9]

Because my focus on political activism has required me to see how people are animated by nonhegemonic values and commitment to effecting change, out of all the current debates on agency amongst CHAT scholars,[10] the Transformative Activist Stance (TAS) seems to fit best. TAS, which is a theory about how people grow, learn, and act over the course of their lives, does not split the singular paths of development of each human being builds over their life spam, from the collective struggles for freedom and self-determination moving history. Actually, replacing the popular notion of participation in communal life for the idea of contributing to communal life allowed Stetsenko to focus on the nexus of individual and collective dimension of human praxis.[11] This change led TAS to ground human development in purposeful and agentive 'contributions to the dynamic and ever-shifting world-in-the-making composed of shared communal practices colored by visions of, stands on, and commitments to, particular sought-after futures at the core of various transformative pursuits (or projects), always ethico-politically non-neutral' (Stetsenko, 2020b, p. 09).

From this position, Anna Stetsenko was able to underline the collectividual – necessarily and simultaneously individual and collective – nature of human praxis; conceive human develop as a ceaseless process of mutual creation of oneself and of the world instead of an adaptive processes through which people are taught how to follow the current norm in a given society, and acknowledge striving to thrive as a critical component of the process through which, in which, and out of which we

Agency and Implications for Education' (Stetsenko 2018).

[9] I think John would totally agree with the claims made by Anna in the article 'Hope, political imagination, and agency in Marxism and beyond: Explicating the transformative worldview and ethico-ontoepistemology' (Stetsenko 2020a).

[10] Nick Hopwood (Hopwood 2022) has given us all a gift by reviewing the debate on the topic in 'Agency in cultural-historical activity theory: strengthening commitment to social transformation'.

[11] Readers with an interest in social and political theories will enjoy reading the chapter in which Anna (Stetsenko 2016) delves into them to reassert that the work, labor, and collaboration performed by historical agents are the foundations of human development.

bring our personhood[12] to existence. In TAS agency is 'a situated and collectively formed ability of human beings — qua fully communal agents of social practices and history, though each acting from a unique position and stance— to project into the future, challenge the existing status quo, and commit to alternatives in thus realizing the world and human development' (Stetsenko, 2021, p. 55).

If in political activism, people's ability to imagine versions of the Future and strategically orient their actions in the Present to achieve it is critical, this trait is even more relevant in contemporary forms of prefigurative activism. Trying to embed political goals, values, and nonhegemonic norms into the social movement's process and people's quotidian life is paramount to groups carrying on prefigurative praxis. TAS provides social movement scholars with a precious gem to discuss prefigurative activism for elaborating on the leading role played by people's commitment. According to TAS, commitment 'foregrounds specifically the struggle for the future, rather than its mere anticipation or expectation as is alternatively expressed in the notions of hope, utopia, and political imagination' (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 11). This way of thinking about the horizon orienting people's action allows researchers to explore the relevance of the sought-after Futures, goals, and end points people are committed to, so that scholars can grasp how distinct versions of the Future work as key determiners in the ongoing struggles maintaining and contesting the status quo.[13]

The radical transformative agency animating the TAS worldview offers scholars investigating social change a fruitful dynamic and nondualist conceptual basis from which to identify unique goals and stances inside the communal praxes moving collective actions in defiance to the status quo. It offers tools to scrutinize current contemporary forms of activism marked by deeply intersection of 'personal' and 'political' motives and interests (commonly misconceived as antagonistic) because it conceives humanity and its material reality as a ceaseless process of active becoming. Further, it emphasizes that it is in the creative 'processes of coauthoring the world by contributing to its collective dynamics that people simultaneously coauthor themselves in becoming individually unique and irreplaceable in the communal world shared with others, in one bidirectional spiral of self-creation and world creation' (Stetsenko, 2020a, p. 69).

Considering all this, I am convinced that TAS is suitable for studying political activism because it brings individual (but never a-social) intentionality, aims, purposes, and subjectivity to the forefront of human activity. Further, because prefigurative activists comprehend engagement in political activities as part of their quest for personal growth, TAS grants researchers a valuable framework to understand how political deeds can be carried out by people acting from particular and irreplaceable standpoints, taking the initiatives to become somebody that they are not

[12] Most of the claims I make in this book are based on the premise that words matter. Anna shares this understanding with me and, to avoid all the reductionism and mentalism embedded in personality studies, she strategically refers to personhood (Stetsenko, 2020a).

[13] If you think that the assumption that the Future is a determiner of the present sounds too unrealistic, intangible, and theoretically fanciful, you might want to read more about the foresight framework developed by the Institute for the Future in California (https://www.iftf.org/home/)

yet and to realize (literally make real) (Stetsenko, 2016) versions of the Future they are committed to. I hope I have persuaded you that TAS provides us with a dynamic theory of activism – one that helps us clarify the reason young protesters are screaming on the streets and on social media that there is no Planet B.[14] If I was successful in my attempt, I hope you reader can use these ideas to refine your research methods and data collection procedures so that we can capture how prefigurative activists foster, enhance, and mobilize their interactions as tools to strengthen their collectividual agency.

I should confess that I was unable to anticipate points of disagreement my potential readers in political philosophy may have. Far from signaling the flawlessness of my arguments, this lack of clarity reflects the fact that I am still getting acquainted with the debates in the field. Regardless, I think that some of you might be pleased to know that over time I expect to shed light on the affinities between the philosophical foundations of CHAT and Gramscian perspectives. John Krinsky has long been telling me about this route's potential benefits. But only recently, after hearing Brazilian far-right political strategists using Gramscian terms, I decided to take this path and try to understand why these democracy enemies are so interested in debating hegemony, common sense and war of positions.

To this end, critically exploring the concept of activity in CHAT in tandem with Gramsci's philosophy of praxis seems to be a productive starting point. The philosophy of praxis was proposed as an attempt to move away from the nondialectical and mechanistic versions of Marxism that developed after the Second International in 1916. In a similar moment, but in a distinct geography, Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Luria created an activity theory to reorient the study of psychology from a focus on the private domain of the mind to the public arena of collaborative deeds. I think that exploring the commitment to achieving more political freedom and strengthening the capacity for self-determination in Gramscian and Vygotskian scholarship can make a Marxist inspired concept of activism more appealing to social movement scholars.

6.2 What If You Tried Walking in My Shoes?

The book has a spiral structure. Each chapter is self-contained and was tailored to be read separately, almost like a book of short stories. To improve the flow of ideas, I followed tips from authors of storybooks and placed most of the debate about ***ativistas*** and **a*tivismo*** – the book's main characters – together in the second, third, and fourth chapters. I used the fifth chapter to wrap the discussion up, and presented the historical novella about ***militantes*** and ***militância*** as an afterword. I wanted to take the readers through the same themes several times over but with different emphases each time; I hope this approach allows them to move from one chapter to

[14] I borrowed this motto from the youth-lead movements fighting for climate justice. If you want to read about the kind of action being proposed, have a look at 'There is no Planet B: a handbook for the make-or-break years' (Berners-Lee 2021).

another according to their interests and in the order that best suits their needs. Beyond my 'creative' impulse (which is inspired by the popularity of singles in the music industry), this structure is also a response to material demands: (a) the possibility of people buying individual chapters on Springer's website; (b) the fact that articles, not full-length books, are the most read content in the academic community, as well as its most valuable productivity indicator.

The spiral structure may have generated an unintentional repetition of ideas or sentences. With the help of editors, proofreaders, and dear friends whom I bothered in the final stages of writing; I have tried to eliminate any accidental repetitions. I apologize if, despite my best efforts, some managed to slip through the proverbial cracks and annoyed you. Another inconvenient side effect of this structure is that the reader might not feel compelled to read all chapters. In case you fall into that category, I gently ask you to consider reading the whole book to grasp my argument comprehensively. I assure you that, if you read the book in its entirety, some of the concerns you may have had in one chapter will be resolved in another, and that your thoughts will be propelled in interesting directions.

Inspired again by the youth-lead movements I have been following, I tried to conduct my theoretical writing in an appealing and welcoming fashion – without losing sight of precision, accuracy, and responsibility. I was driven by the desire to honor the past generations of academics that have inspired me and by my commitment to transforming political psychology in the Americas. In the preferred Future I imagine for the field, the respect for methodological traditions from North America will walk side by side with the comprehensive and action-oriented investigations from South America. In the field's Future I, and many others are pursuing with our efforts, those traditions will be fully compatible.

In the meantime, I am learning how to explore in a constructive and positive fashion the nexus between traditions from the natural sciences that are oriented toward procedures and standards, and traditions from the psychological humanities with a proclivity for theoretical approaches. This book is part of my quest to work with both traditions and to combine rigor with creativity. Luckily, Brazilian scholars in the field of psychology with diverse methodological dispositions and theoretical affiliations have long been working meticulously and collaboratively to address this challenge; thus, not only I have multiple sources of inspiration to draw upon, but I also belong to a lively community that can foster my collectividual agency and support my efforts to navigate rigorously the dual nature of psychological knowledge (simultaneous cultural–historical and natural-biological).[15]

[15] For years, language barriers have prevented academics from the Global North from accessing the growing body of psychological knowledge produced in Brazil. A remarkable attempt to address this problem, one that you would do well to explore, is the book edited by Silvia Koller in 2019 (Koller, 2019). Inspired by the book *Scientists Making a Difference: One Hundred Eminent Behavioral and Brain Scientists Talk About Their Most Important Contributions*, Koller invited 19 eminent Brazilian scholars working in developmental psychology, health psychology, personality and differential psychology, and the history of psychology to address in a chapter length text, questions like: what is your most important scientific contribution? How does your contribution add to

By now, attentive readers might have noted that the Future I envision for the field brings the contested relationship between politics and science to the forefront. I have a hard time imagining how a discipline dedicated to analyzing the interrelationships between psychological and political processes can avoid this problem. However, I know that one can deal with this issue in many ways: by surgically detaching these processes with the use of refined statistical techniques; by assuming political power is omnipresent and pervades all aspects of human life, and that, therefore, 'everything is political'; by framing the interaction between the processes as productive and problematic, etc. Because I think all this solution are valid, let me present my approach.

I build my argument on the assumption that psychological knowledge is never value-neutral and politically impartial. I frame knowledge in general, and scientific knowledge in particular, as a tool, a device like a hammer, that can be used in distinct ways and for various purposes. I learned with prefigurative activists that the preferred Future one is striving for is a crucial determiner of how one will strategically use the available tools in the Present. So, the question becomes: which horizon of possibility animates my academic endeavors?

I am an heir to Paulo Freire's tradition. I belong to a community of scholars whose work acknowledges Brazil's social and political challenges and who try to translate the knowledge gleaned from their research into potential interventions. On top of that, I study political activism. The stance I take on my scholarship is informed by a fierce conviction that the current version of the world is not the last, much less the best possible one. Through my investigations I aim to contribute to the ongoing struggles for more equality and sustainability in the way humans engage with themselves, each other, and their environment. And if this makes my theorizations partisan, I am glad I made this explicit so you evaluate how my partnerships engages with yours.

Yet, in this regard, I hope you have noted my attempts to be prefigurative in my way of producing theory. My writing is informed by personal experiences, and I have tried to acknowledge as much as I could the community I belong to and the allies I have found on my journey. Unfortunately, advances in neurobiology and computational statistics are leading psychologists to forget that proposing concepts and creating theories to explain psychological phenomena are at the core of our work.[16] Borrowing vocabulary and explicative mechanisms from related areas while being enchanted by the cleverness of mathematical calculations, some psychologists are losing touch with the dualistic nature (i.e., cultural–historical and natural-biological) of psychological phenomena and downplaying the need to build theories to properly address it.

I endeavored to avoid this pitfall by taking the social, economic, and political determiners of political activism into account while looking attentively at the ways

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the production of international scientific knowledge? How is your contribution reflected in the world outside academic psychology?

[16] I have been learning more about this issue by reading Thomas Teo's work (Teo, 2005, 2020).

militantes and ***ativistas*** have struggled to interfere with those determiners. By doing this I was able to draw attention to the decisive and active role the sought-after Future plays in how ***militantes*** and ***ativistas*** mobilize themselves, make use of the tools at their disposal, and navigate the chain of relations constituting them as political activists.

From this position, I was able to define political activism as Future-oriented collaborative projects in which activists seek to strategically transform their relationships with themselves, their peers and foes, and their political, social, and natural environment, while, at the same time, and through the same processes, reshaping existing social norms. Because activism is oriented by something that is not there yet, political players might embrace, refuse, deny, reject, and/or recast prevailing political traditions and the sought-after Future other activists are trying to build. Finally, what differentiates prefigurative and nonprefigurative forms of activism is activists' purposeful, intentional, and strategic insertion of collectively imagined social norms that activists are committed to in the social movements' mobilizing, reproductive, and coordinating's deeds.[17]

These definitions are now the cornerstones of my scholarship and investigations into contentious politics, political creativity, experiments with radical democracy, and institutional innovation. Writing this book has been an exciting and meaningful adventure, and I can barely wait to see my approach and insights being embraced, rejected, and/or recast by myself and my readers over time. After all, as the fruit of the collaborative and ceaseless human quest for knowledge, scientific concepts are perishable artifacts that we create to make sense of a material reality that is continually being remade by the communal efforts of our peers and our foes.

Thank you for spending your time with me today.
Sincerely, André Luis Leite de Figueirêdo Sales
São Paulo, Fall 2022

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Chapter 7
Afterword: The Anchor Points for the Militant Strategy

7.1 Unfolding Ideas That Brought Us Here

Since June 2013, Brazilians have been dealing with myriad political, economic, and institutional crises. This fraught period has been marked by a number of troubling events including: a presidential impeachment in 2016, the election of the far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of the country in 2018, and a huge spike in unemployment – in the first quarter of 2019, a record number of 13.4 million people were seeking employment (IBGE, 2019). Since 2015, a climate of intense political polarization has developed in the country with a different narrative for each of the aforementioned events depending on who one asks. For instance, the impeachment of the president Dilma Rousseff is understood by a portion of the population to be a legitimate exercise of the popular will through a constitutional democratic process. At the same time, another part of the citizenry sees the phenomenon as a congressional coup d'état that was led by the agents of speculative financial capitalism. It was in this polarized scenario that left-wing ***militantes***[1] discovered 'that there was a ***militante*** and feisty right-wing in the country' (Solano, 2018, p. 9).

Militância, as a notion dear to members of student councils, labor unions, political parties, and other organizations traditionally situated on the left of the Brazilian political spectrum, was challenged by the youth protesters that took to the streets of Brazil in June 2013. These social antagonists called themselves ***ativistas;*** they attacked ***militante*** traditions to construct a protest culture that negated the ultimate privilege of state power in political disputes (Holloway, 2010a, 2010b; Sales, 2021) while actively endeavoring to improve individual and collective capacities of self-organization and self-determination (Sales et al., 2020). A similar critique with a mistrust of ***militante***

[1] To ensure accuracy and avoid confusion, I will use the words ***miliância*** and ***ativismo*** – and their variations – in their original, un-translated form, and format them in bold and italics except when in chapters' titles

A. Sales, *A Political Psychology Approach to Militancy and Prefigurative Activism*, Latin American Societies, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25034-7_7

organizations reappeared during the high school protests against the reduction of public schooling offers that started in Sao Paulo state in 2015 and spread throughout other states during 2016. As in 2013, the young protesters refused to be called ***militantes*** and instead called themselves ***ativistas*** (Gohn, 2018).

I make the claim that an institutionalist framework is useful for comprehending the relationship between historical events and current forms of ***militante*** subjectivity. In using this approach, I aim to understand how particular institutional arrangements and forms of government can produce specific modes of conduct. The pursuit of this goal moves this research away from the most common lines of investigation on the topic, especially as pursued by French sociologists who focus primarily on militant engagement (Filliieule & Pudal, 2010 and Sawicki & Simeant, 2011). My approach is also distinct from those studies that focus on the specific ways through which particular movements in Brazil embrace and develop their militancies – readers interested in such a perspective will enjoy the works of Mesquita (2003) and Oliveira et al. (2009).

The chapter will use Foucault's archeological methodology to explore militancy understood here to be a government strategy tailored to produce revolutionary-orientated subjects. It starts by exploring moments in Soviet history, showing how they played a pivotal role in constructing this widely used mode of governing masses to promote political revolution. It goes on to explore some critical channels through which this form of governmentality became hegemonic in Brazilian protest culture. Mapping these past events generates critical insights into the rationale informing ongoing tensions between ***ativistas*** and ***militantes'*** values, moralities, and repertoires of action.

Although the approach I use is unusual, it would be inappropriate and pretentious to assume that it is unprecedented among Brazilian researchers. Over the past 30 years, many scholars have tried to problematize ***militância*** by examining how it directs people's conduct (Figueiredo, 1993, 1995; Macedo & Silva, 2009; Souza, 2016; Valverde, 1986). Gohn (2018) states that Brazil is going through a process of constructing a new culture of youth participation in politics, in which the canonical forms of social participation and protest are being rejected, contested, and modified. In this chapter, while unveiling the anchor points of the ***militante*** culture, and political strategy, I shed light on key events that inform behavior, principles, and strategical tendencies that have been defied by Brazilian **ativistas.** The time has come: 'we need to talk about'[2] the history of militancy and its inherent side effects.

Previous investigations that have explored ***militância*** in a similar way to mine argue that the socialist experiments carried out in the Soviet Union were crucial to the creation and diffusion of the political meaning of the term. They also insist on the relevance of Lenin and Stalin's ideas for constructing the notion of political militancy. In an archeological study, Valverde (1986) argues that democratic

[2] This is a very popular expression within Brazilian ***ativista*** circles. It is used to highlight the need for debate on complex topics such as racism, homophobia, sexism, machismo, and other issues that are of central concern to young people and slightly inconvenient to traditional left-wing activists in the country.

centralism is Lenin's most significant contribution to the revolutionary process and conceives it as a central element in the organization of Stalin's government. I have followed this lead and brought together texts, policies, and reports from that period to produce a documental archeology of militancy. I have accounted for facts, traditions, and practices that have informed current modes of conduct of militants, aiming to de-essentialize them based on the radical historicist assumptions that: '[a] the relevant tradition is defined not by an essence or fixed principles but as the particular slice of the past that best explains the relevant actions and practices (...) [and, b] change occurs contingently as people reinterpret, modify, or transform an inherited tradition in response to novel circumstances or other dilemmas' (Bevir, 2010, p. 427). For this reason, I subscribe to the field of governmentality studies.

Walters (2012) claims that the concept of governmentality captures the productive and creative aspects of power relations. This framework conceives governance as a widespread phenomenon not limited to the sphere of the state, emerging whenever individuals and groups seek to shape their own conduct, or that of others. It directs the focus of researchers to particular rationales and the techniques of government used to elicit specific sets of behavior. For the purposes of my analysis, it is crucial to embrace the 'equivocal nature of the term "conduct"' just as Michel Foucault did. 'To "conduct" is, at the same time, to "lead" others (according to mechanisms of coercion that are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities' (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). This ambivalence captures the fact that, when it comes to conducting one's own conduct, there is always, even within distinct proportions, coercion and consent.

I explore the ambiguity of the word by simultaneously taking into account its meaning as a noun – the way a person acts, especially on a particular occasion or in a certain situation – and as a verb – to plan and carry out an action; to lead or direct (someone) to a specific goal or in a general direction, to oversee the execution of something previously planned; (to conduct oneself) to act in a certain way. Therefore, I regard militant governmentality as a specific manner of directing the conduct of political players to embrace a-critically and reverently a centralized, personalized, and specialized political leadership. The rationale for this mode of government, still prevalent in many left-wing-dominated contexts, is based on the belief in the mythical notion that a total transformation of reality, a Revolution understood as a dramatic and wide-reaching change in the way something works or is organized or in people's ideas about it, can be produced by a very disciplined and homogeneous political body fighting a just war against the those who support distinct political positions to their own.

I am not ignoring the existence of singularities in the various 'left-wing' projects that have occurred throughout the twentieth century and at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Communists, socialists, anticapitalists, social democrats, libertarians, anarchists, Zapatistas, and autonomists, among others – a comprehensive list would be immense, and there would be many differences to demarcate. Due to my methodological approach and respecting the specificities of the object of my investigation which is how this governmentality gives form to the ***militância*** in Brazil, the considerations made here are particularly valid for the Marxist-Leninist left-wing

milieus – being more or less aware of their own Stalinist heritage. This trend, in spite of the many internal variations, expressed through different parties, distinct currents within political parties and trade unions, reached a global scale of influence because it informed the main political opposition to the capitalist system during the Cold War era. Arguably, these ideas informed a theory-movement of worldwide protest against the economic mode of production that organizes all aspects of people daily lives (Bringel & Domingues, 2014).

The chapter draws the 'family tree' of the militant governmentality during the Stalinist era and retrieves 'forgotten struggles and subjugated knowledge' (Walters, 2012) in Brazil, honoring the ***ativistas'*** refusal of the ***militantes'*** praxis**.** It illuminates the relationship between actions developed in the context of managing the dictatorship of the Russian proletariat the way many of those who, today, dressed in red and committed to the communist hypothesis (Badiou, 2010), continue to militate on the left of the political spectrum for the transformation of society, feel, think, and act. Finally, I frame the ***militante*** strategy and the ***militante*** conduct in Brazil as particular modes of expression of a revolutionary governmentality widespread globally. Thus, I will use the terms militant and militancy when referring to the broader phenomenon and ***militante*** and ***militância*** when discussing the particularities of the Brazilian case.

By analyzing the strategic function associated with the idea of militancy in Soviet context, the chapter outlines the political structure, the type of organization used, and the guidelines and norms of conduct forged at that time. The focus is on the militant governance understood 'as an eminently practical activity that can be studied, historicized, and specified at the level of the rationalities, programs, techniques, and subjectivities which underpin and give it form and effect' (Walters, 2012, p 02). In summary, the text explores the hypothesis that militancy can be characterized as an institution in the terms proposed by French institutional analysis (Lourau, 2007).

The text is divided into five sections. The first presents the methodological proposal used; the second underlines the historical facts supporting the argument; the third highlights the distinct oppositional efforts carried out by those on the left who are opposed to militant governmentality; the fourth shows the paths through which Soviet ideas have been inserted into the imaginary of the Brazilian political left; the final section summarizes the conclusions reached, presents possibilities for further studies, and explains the author's aims and intentions in approaching the topic in such way.

7.2 Definitions and Methodology

This study adopts the essay as its structure. Because I am trying to identify some of the forces at work in the production of militant subjectivity it was, then, fundamental to use a textual genre that allowed me to pursue this endeavor, considering my

former militant position, in a rigorous consistent, and creative way.[3] I am following a tradition that includes György Lukács, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno and I use this textual genre to explore the characteristics of the object of my study both expressively and descriptively. The essay format stands out as a methodological imperative (Adorno, 1986) because within it the flow of ideas and arguments must follow attentively and rigorously the specificities of the object under investigation. At the same time, it takes into account the essayist's personal experience which enables one to produce a dynamically written, situated, posited, historically localized argument.

The traditional representation of a Brazilian ***militante*** conveys the image of someone who makes exhortative speeches and has firmly held ideas and unshakable convictions. This individual is always willing to persuade, or even to defeat, if necessary, those who hold convictions that are different from their own. Always carrying the flag of the Revolution, s/he believes it to be urgent to raise their flag at every possible opportunity. Furthermore, should the context be more or less favorable, she/he is likely to use the flagpole to exhort those around her/him about the righteousness of the cause she/he is fighting for. For these and other reasons, some people think that 'every ***militante*** is annoying' (Coimbra, 2015). Besides being seen as dull, it is common to think of ***militantes*** as strong people. In Brazilian literature, music, and cinema, they are represented as unstoppable, assertive, and resolute.

Stereotypes about ***militantes*** make sense if we look at the original meaning of the term militancy (Valverde, 1986). As a person who is constantly at war with hegemonic powers and social norms, it is not always easy for a ***militante*** to adjust the height of the flag of the cause she/he is fighting in order to avoid it functioning as a pair of blinders. Analyzing the relationships between identity formation processes and militant engagement, Naujorks and Silva conclude that 'militant identity holds on the identity correspondence for its production mechanism and on the interpretative framing process for its source of fulfillment and meaning' (Naujorks & Silva, 2016, p. 148). The correspondence is constituted by both collective and individual dimensions. The first is created by sharing ideas and ideals with other militants. The second relies on how the values and collective projects shared with group members provide models for individuals. Together, these dimensions inform a set of moral beliefs and values that militants use to conduct themselves in the political arena and other fields of their life.

In a similar vein, Rolnik (2014), a former left-wing militant, contends that militants' stubbornness and deep emotional investment in the struggles they are engaged in are a vital source of strength for militant organizations. These conduct dispositions allow militants to present themselves to society as privileged virtue holders

[3] Walters (2012) argues for the relevance of style development in genealogical studies: 'Certainly the principles of a certain style can be written down and learnt. But there is also something eminently practical and improvised about style' (Walters, 2012 p.117). I am convinced that essays are a rigorous and productive form for carrying out critical studies to historicize and denaturalize scientific praxis, and make explicit the untold power relations embedded and in the knowledge production.

and nonalienated citizens fighting a just war to promote the political programs they defend. A side effect of these behavioral tendencies is the framing of nonmilitants, or militants with different agendas, as enemies, alienated citizens, or people who are naive and who need to be rescued from their own ignorance and gullibility. At the core of these beliefs, Rolnink identifies a nondialectical and reductionist understanding of historical processes:

> The first thing that draws the cartographer's attention is the epic-dramatic vision shared by revolutionaries about historical development: they claim to obey destiny's programmatic line, one that everyone will be necessarily submitted to one day. This line, they explain, is totally predictable: all that is needed is to 'become conscious of it' and 'assume it'. The cartographer notes that the line they imagine is that of their political party, a line that, according to them, will lead them (...) to the promised land of revolutionary society. That is why they defend it tooth and nail. That is why – the cartographer understands – the discourse and attitudes of some militants border on fanaticism (Rolnik, 2014, p. 128).

Rolnik claims that two founding myths motivate militant subjectivity: the national-popular identity and the Revolution. The first produces: (a) a fierce defense of their collective identity (usually conceived of as being pure and incorruptible) and their entrenched existential territory (one that is not so inclined to external interference, or prone to negotiating different modes of pursuing social change other than their own); (b) the tendency to organize their discourses and activities to deconstruct and attack the current status quo without much focus on creating alternatives to it; (c) the comprehension of individual desires, needs, and dreams exclusively as the co-opting effects of the bourgeois lifestyle model. The second item listed, the rapid and definitive transformation of a status quo brought about by a Revolution, is an empowering image; one that provides part of the necessary strength that the militants need to support the cruel material reality in which they fight their daily battles. If militants were not to defend unconditionally this postrevolutionary Future, then living in the Present would be unbearable: 'what sustains them, in their militant culture, from this point of view, is to imagine themselves with bloodied chests in the flag-draped trenches of the revolutionary struggle, managing to put an end to this reality that they consider cursed' (Rolnik, 2014, p. 129).

The word militancy was already used at the end of the Middle Ages in reference to groups belonging to proto-military organizations created to defend towns and villages (Silva, 2003). The term can also be found in reference to the knights who joined the crusades on behalf of the Holy Inquisition, or even in the sacro-pedagogical colonizing movements undertaken by the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus in the newly conquered Americas (Franca, 1962; Leite, 1965). The contemporary uses of the word and the meanings attributed to it in many revolutionary circles, especially when associated with the dissemination of a liberating, de-alienating, and redeeming truth, still carry traces of this past.

Macedo and Silva (2009) state that, in the twentieth century, the communist militant was the model of political militancy in most Western societies. From the 1920s onwards, and especially in the period of Stalin's rule, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, while pursuing its goals of fighting the capitalist system, expanding socialism, and spreading Communism around the world, exported not only the

communist ideology, but also a strategy of challenging social norms that was founded mostly on Marxist, Leninist, and Stalinist ideas. This framework set out tactical objectives, routines of action, and strategies of struggle. Over time, this mode of contesting the social order was taken over – with greater or lesser intensity – by dissatisfied individuals and groups around the world (Hobsbawn, 1995, 2011) to such an extent that it continues to 'temper' the militant's conduct today.

This chapter's main goal is to unveil the revolutionary governmentality and its associated institutions that were assembled by the Soviet Union's leaders while governing the proletariat dictatorship between 1917 and 1967. It will explore the hypothesis that this moment was fundamental for the creation, spread, and consolidation of a set of routines of action and socially relevant practices for the construction of militancy as an institution. The governmentality framework is 'a manner of looking, a specific orientation' (Bröckling et al., 2011, p. 15) adopted here to denaturalize specific rationalities. I use it to highlight the technological aspects of power relations designed to evoke – by coercion and by consent – specific sets of conduct. From this position, one can examine: what were the conducts[4] elicited by the Soviet programs during their expansion under Stalin's government? What kind of institutional arrangements were created to produce these conducts? How do these rationales and institutions inform the behavior of contemporary militants?

This chapter adopts a broader definition of institution, one that is not confined to its organizational aspect – even though it necessarily includes it. Institutions are normative rationales permeating social life. They direct, shape, and mold people's dispositions to particular ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (Lourau, 2007). Because of it, they exert a privileged role in the architecture of human subjectivity. The institutional ontology proposed by French institutional analysis and adopted by the Brazilian Institutionalist Social Psychology framework, assumes a permanent and insoluble tension between instituting and instituted forces. Rejecting an overdeterministic perspective of institutional action over subjectivities, it argues that the same institutions that produce subjects are created simultaneously and continuously by human endeavors.

Finally, the concept of subjectivity that sustains this investigation is built on the work of Michel Foucault's (2004) and Deleuze and Guattari (1976). It also adopts the dynamic ontology originally proposed by Friedrich Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1995) and claims that: the forms available in the world – and human subjectivity is one of these forms – are the result of a 'play of forces and waves of forces, at once one and multiple, here accumulating and at the same time there waning, a sea of forces storming and undulating in themselves, eternally changing, eternally recurring, with discomfiting years of return' (Nietzsche, 1992, XI). Mapping the production of subjectivity, then, demands that one identifies how such forces act on bodies and how they produce them. What is at stake here sheds light on how historically situated regimes of power produce specific forms of subjectivity. After all, 'it may be that the

[4] In English, the word conduct is an uncountable noun and does not support pluralization. However, as I want to show that even in the most rigid regimes of power, there is space for refusal and counter-conduct, I will tension the grammar and pluralize it.

problem about the self has nothing to do with discovering what it is, but perhaps with discovering that the self is only the correlate of the power technology introduced into our history' (Foucault, 1993a, b, p. 223).

In terms of methodological procedure and data gathering, following in the footsteps of my Brazilian counterparts (Figueiredo, 1993, 1995; Macedo & Silva, 2009; Souza, 2016; Valverde, 1986), I started my search with a canonical piece written by Lenin: *Democratic Centralism* (1904). Then, I continued to collect texts where the core ideas presented by Lenin were explained, as well as documents that showed how the political program tailored by him was put into operation in the context of the Soviet regime through Stalin's edicts. My data sample was focused on the period between 1917 and 1967 (Denzin & Lincon, 2018). I accessed most of this data in English by consulting the Labor Archives and the Anarchist Collections in the New York University library system at the Tamiment Library. With the aim of making the material easy to locate for readers, I will provide references to the works that are available in the Marxists Internet Archive.

Based on historical evidence, the chapter will develop the thesis that, from an institutional point of view, militant governmentality was created to produce: (a) an antagonist strategy carried out by the Communist Party and its offshoots; (b) a set of tactics for the governance of a population anchored in demo/autocratic centralist governmentality; (c) a mode of subjectivity that reinforces and values homogeneity among political players, in which internal divergence is framed as dangerous; (d) a disposition among militants to think of their political opponents as enemies at war with them and not as adversaries in political quarrels. I am convinced that 'if the chosen angle does not account for many relevant aspects of the question, it has the merit of bringing us closer to a very (...) comprehensive understanding that can work as a good starting point for other analyses' (Figueiredo, 1995, p. 41).

7.3 Building a New World Order and a New Humanity

Moving in a direction contrary to the one prescribed by social norms that have been reinforced from birth requires the ability to put up with adversity and life's tribulations. Recognizing the need for such strength, those in charge of revolutionary groups must face the question: how does one produce subjects that are willing and able to carry out the Revolution?

Valverde (1986) recognizes that this was a critical problem for the expansion of communist ideology at the dawn of the twentieth century. His research analyzes material from various World Congresses of the Communist International as well as seminal works by Lenin and Stalin. He concluded that Soviet leaders dealt with this concern by using the best governmental resource available at the time: assembling a disciplinary power regime to produce robust, vigorous, competent, efficient, and obedient subjects (Foucault, 1982).

I hope the readers do not feel offended by the claim that well-intentioned contemporary militant groups might bear any resemblance to the horror associated with

the controversial Stalinist regime. To avoid such confusion, I invite them to follow in Lucien Sève's (1999) footsteps and ponder the choices made in the Soviet experiment, as well as those made in militant surroundings today, taking into account their militant 'commitment to social, cultural, and economic transformation, achieved through radical changes' (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p. 02). It is from this more comprehensive and situated position that Sève (1999) analyzes the creation of democratic centralism without diminishing the relevance of the cruelties it created under Stalin's leadership and the collateral effects of the militant strategy.

Democratic centralist governmentality embraces two distinct and contradictory values: (a) unity in strategy, tactics, and goals, and (b) the right to disagree on strategies, tactics, and goals. In his report on the Unified Congress of the Social Democratic Labor Party, Lenin (1906) synthesizes the idea through the expression 'freedom in discussion, unity in action'. Sève (1999), in his research into this and other crucial texts from the period, concludes that democratic centralism is the answer to the problem of the organization of the masses of Russian peasants and proletariat at the beginning of the twentieth century, once Soviet leaders realized 'the radical incompatibility between the proletarian revolution as a strategic goal and spontaneity as an organizational attitude' (Sève, 1999, p. 63).

Reis Filho (2017) explains that the October Revolution of 1917 was part of a revolutionary cycle: 'the revolution of 1905; the two revolutions of 1917; the civil wars that extended between 1918 and 1921; the Kronstadt revolution in 1921' (Reis Filho, 2017, p. 67). The author then emphasizes the importance of the civil wars in shaping the type of socialism produced in the Soviet Union. The urgent needs of the Russian population (plagued by chronic shortages of food and housing at the end of the revolutionary cycle) combined with the Soviet vanguard's strong belief in instrumental scientific reason and Stalin's authoritarian tendencies, transmuted the democratic ideal associated with centralism into an autocratic one. Such change produced in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), an authoritarian and violent regime, marked by the expansion of bureaucracy and disciplinary control over the lives of the Soviet population (Sève, 1999). The rationale behind this mode of governance appears extensively in the official speeches and political programs in the USSR between 1920 and 1950 and is associated with democratic centralism. This rationale informed a set of 'scientific beliefs and associated technologies that govern [people's revolutionary] conduct' (Bevir, 2010, p. 438) and were exported to the entire world by the Communist Party's offshoots.

There are other elements beyond the blatant contradiction between freedom and unity that lies at the core of this mode of governing that explain the scorn for internal democracy within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the increase in the use of violence by the regime during Stalin's years in power. Two important ones are: (a) the decrease in the frequency of the Party's National Congresses, which lead to the gradual loss of its collective deliberative function, and (b) an unwavering trust in bureaucratic rationality and positivist scientific progress that characterized the zeitgeist of the period (Sève, 1999).

Employing the most advanced disciplinary technologies available at the time, the Soviet regime assembled its institutions to: (a) mobilize the population to continue the Revolution based on the ideals of democratic centralism; (b) maximize state economic productivity through the USSR's five-year economic plans; (c) overturn old habits, values, and cultural beliefs and create a new humanity via the instrumentalization of arts and literature. Whether democratic or autocratic, the centralist model informed diverse programs and actions aimed simultaneously at optimizing economic development (in Marxist terminology, accumulating the productive forces) and creating subjective dispositions (making the New Soviet man) favorable to the regime's needs.

Reis discusses the centrality of this experience in the construction of the left-wing imaginary and clarifies that:

> [...] a new type of socialism had emerged in Soviet Russia, unforeseen, but no less real – authoritarian socialism, of a national character. […] The model would be long-lived, hegemonizing international socialism, also because the other two great socialist revolutions of the 20th century – the Chinese and the Cuban one – would observe the same dictatorial dynamics, because they shared similar general circumstances (agrarian societies with fragile democratic traditions, emerging in the context of wars and with a strong national character) (Reis Filho, 2017, p. 75).

In 2017, the year commemorating the centenary of the Russian revolution, a controversial portrait, laden with baffling ironies and full of acerbic humor, was released in movie theaters and, not surprisingly, censored in Russia. *The Death of Stalin*, a film by Scottish filmmaker Armando Iannucci, fictionalizes how the members of the Communist Party's Central Committee reacted to their great leader's death. Exploring the terror and absurdity that characterized how Stalin exercised his tyranny, the film leaves the audience confused about how to react to it: Should one laugh, cry, scream, get angry, refuse to disbelieve? What was the appropriate way to process those images? The uneasiness produced by the movie offers the audience some idea of how ambivalent and destabilizing daily life under Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin must have been (Fitzpatrick, 2000).

I will now analyze the structural aspects of the socialist experience in the USSR with particular focus on how daily life was organized. I identified the elements of study by considering: (a) the role they played in maintaining the Party's governability; (b) the role played by them in the organization of everyday life in the USSR; (c) the way they structured and reinforced the regime of disciplinary power elected to create worker-citizen-soldier-militants for the Revolution; (d) the importance they occupied in the expansion of communist ideology; and (e) their constituent function in creating the communist way of life 'controlled, directed, and rectified consciously by critical thinking'.

I will scrutinize *Demokraticheskiy tsentralizm*, S*takhanovshchina*, and *Zhdanovshchina*, arguing that they were the anchor points underpinning militant governmentality and therefore played a key role in the development of militant institutions, strategies, and conduct dispositions. Identifying such points will help us understand why contemporary militants' ways of thinking, feeling, and acting hold rigid discipline, submission to leadership, and heteronomy in such high esteem.

The journey through facts and documents, in the Communist Revolutionary context, will make explicit how the production of Soviet governmentality created a particular kind of institutional rationale that continues to influence and inspire the conduct of many militants today.

7.3.1 Democratic Centralism: One for All

Marx postulates that socialism is an intermediate stage between the capitalist condition and the communist one. As for the constituent characteristics of this transition, there is little consensus among theorists. In Bertucci's words, 'there are different conceptions of the path that would lead society to such a system that would allow freedom and the broad development of human capacities for all its members' (Bertucci, 2010, p. 178). In this section, I discuss Lenin and Stalin's perspectives on this issue and demonstrate how they had a direct influence on the decisions and actions concerning governance that were taken during the socialist stage of the Soviet revolutionary process.

Arguably, it was through the matrix of interpretation, intervention, and governmental programs, drafted from Lenin's writings, that Soviet leaders tried to execute the transition from socialism to communism. The political choices made and the importance attached to the positivist-scientific rationale produced an autocratic instead of a democratic path from a state in which each person has access to the world according to their productive ability to one in which access would stem from people's needs. A pivotal element determining the transition was the complete faith in positivist science. Rodrigues explains that

> Lenin's entire conception of socialism is identified with the need to concentrate power in the factories, in the hands of the technicians, those who have bourgeois knowledge and culture, to whom the workers, subjected to a strict discipline, should render unconditional obedience (Rodrigues, 1989, p. 94).

These core ideas informed the governing technologies executed by the Russian Communist Party. They were employed without distinction in the Soviet army, in industry, and throughout the population. Furthermore, these are principles prevalent, more or less explicitly, in current iterations of militant organizations.

In a text written in April 1918, in which he lists the immediate tasks for Soviet leadership, Lenin provides an illustrative summary of the methodology he believed could make communism viable: 'the unreserved subordination to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of labor processes, organized along the lines of large mechanized industry' (Lenin, 1918, n.p). Figueiredo (1993) considers the belief in the possibility of absolute control over the will as a distinguishing feature of militant subjectivity. 'The common trait in the distinct forms of militancy is the question of the will. Should one de-alienate her/his will and/or volunteer oneself? Should one impose one's will and/or interpret the will of others?' (Figueiredo, 1993, p. 211). To what extent do militant organizations still demand, from newcomers,

unrestricted submission to the will of group leaders? Are the production lines of automated industries still adopted as a reference for producing people devoted to the radical transformation of social norms? Is the evaluation of the newcomers' willpower, capacity for self-discipline, and reverential obedience still prevalent in militant organizations?

Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism was the scientific discipline used as the structuring principle of Soviet socialism. It consolidated the party as the mechanism for centralizing power, for being the legit governor of the proletariat's will, and for fabricating the revolutionary masses. Lenin is explicit in this regard:

> By educating the workers' party, Marxism forms the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of taking power and leading the whole people to socialism, capable of leading and organizing a new regime, of being the instructor, the chief and the guide of all the workers, of all the exploiters, for the creation of a society without the bourgeoisie, and against the bourgeoisie (Lenin, 1917, n.p).

Lenin and Stalin believed in scientific reason. They espoused the idea of progress prevailing at that time, and were willing to employ the most effective means at their disposal to bring about the sought-after Future they so fervently pursued. It is essential to keep in mind that formulating strategy involves a combination of reflective and imaginative activities 'based on what leaders have learned from previous experiences, careful observation of the present time, and an anticipation of the future' (Ganz, 2000, p. 1009). Being products of their time, both of them were fully convinced that their strategy – assembling structured and disciplined governmentality – was the best option for enhancing their capacity for strong, united, and efficient collective action. However, they seemed to be blind to the side effects of the party mirroring an army and demanding maximum discipline and subordination to its hierarchy.

Valverde (1986) asserts that the centralist governmentality imposed by the Communist Party in the USSR legitimized the absolute moral superiority of the party leaders and the disenfranchisement and infantilization the Soviet population:

> The clairvoyance of the "vanguard", combined with its naive conviction of its historical importance, gives it the right, not only to speak for others, to be the voice of their consciousness, but also the power to penetrate their unconscious (...). In the limit, therefore, the direction simply wants to be the "soul" of the supposed "revolutionary body" (Valverde, 1986, p. 25).

To put this in Gramscian terms, the Soviet experience produced a bureaucratic centralism: a mode of organizing the revolutionary process that was unable to align 'thrusts from below with orders from above' and incapable of creating 'a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the solid framework of the leadership apparatus which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 198–89).

Discussing the pitfalls of the Italian Communist Party, Gramsci warns about the potential consequences originating from the strategic goal of making the party the source of satisfaction for all the needs of a political community. He insists that totalitarian polices like this might lead to 'destroying all other organizations or

incorporating them into a system of which the party is the sole regulator' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 265). The tendency toward unification 'regardless of human cost, and despised by those who wanted to rest from the revolutionary struggles' (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p. 02) - in short, the tendency toward totalization – was reproduced in the authoritarian socialism implemented in the USSR. Over time, this bureaucratic and autocratic centralism was adopted by diverse communist/socialist parties and, according to Amadeo Bordiga, the chief leader of the revolutionary minority in the Italian Socialist Party after World War One and of the Italian Communist Party from 1921 to 1923, assumed to be sufficient for guaranteeing 'the historical continuity of the struggle which, surmounting successive obstacles, always advances toward the same goal' (Bordiga, 1922. s/n).

By self-declaring themselves 'enlightened by reason' and acting from an alleged position of 'infallible laws of historical evolution' (Gramsci, 1971), the leaders of the Communist Party could claim as naive and misleading any kind of political position criticizing their actions. Internal disagreements – on tactics, on repertoires of action, on analyses of the current situation – had to be excluded from the scene. The ban on factions within the party (Lenin, 1920b) that was announced during the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party in the context of the dispute between the Central Committee and the Workers' Opposition, goes some way in explaining how the space for dissent in the party was replaced by a demand for general obedience to the leaders of the proletarian dictatorship. Any disagreement had the potential to call into question the popular belief in the totalizing action of the revolutionary vanguard. So, any dissensus was framed as excessively risky for the agreed-upon strategy and called for punishment.

Within the topography of war in which these rationales were formulated, individual desires, longings, and aspirations that deviated from the norms dictated by the party were categorized as an expression of the enemy's strength (Valverde, 1986). Anderson identifies the following pervasive effects of this rationale:

> [...] the grassroots movements were curtailed and autonomy and spontaneity extinguished by the bureaucratic caste that had seized power in the country; in the cupolas, the party was gradually purged of all Lenin's comrades. All serious theoretical work ceased after collectivization. Trotsky was forced into exile in 1929 and murdered in 1940; Riazanov was deprived of his functions and died in a labor camp in 1939; Burkahire was silenced in 1929 and killed in 1938; Preobrazzhensky fell out around 1930, dying in prison in 1938 (Anderson, 1976, p. 31).

The leaders of the Soviet regime generally understood independent thinkers, autonomous forms of organization among workers, and the fulfillment of individual needs as evidence of the power of bourgeois ideology to co-opt proletariat consciousness. These infantile disorders of left-wing communism were nothing but an obstacle to the Revolution. The collective needs (defined in a standardized fashion by the party leaders) and the crowd (not singular individuals) were taken as the touchstones of revolutionary action. In Stalin's conception, the focus on masses and not on individuals was the point on which anarchism and communism diverge. This was such a pivotal difference that it convinced him that anarchists were the true enemies of the working class (Stalin, 1907).

Describing the longstanding effects of centralist governmentality on the French Communist Party (FCP), Sève (1999) highlights that it 'led, for too long, to the FCP paying an enormous price, ignoring so many great emerging causes, from feminism to ecology, so many new aspirations, from self-management to sexual liberation, so many refreshing forms of action' (Sève, 1999, p. 75). Hardt and Negri (2017) understand that the insurgent strength of the multitude in assembly stems from the recognition, not the denial, of the singularities of the desires of each individual that composes it. Gohn (2018) points out that Brazilian ***ativistas*** refuse to reproduce the instrumental relationship between leaderships and subordinates that is prevalent in militant organizations. The young protesters claim that in ***militante*** surroundings, individuals are mere instruments used by the organization to advance its agenda. This criticism also reflects current Brazilians' skepticism about the effectiveness of political participation, as the ***ativistas*** share a widespread belief that citizens are no longer of any value to the state once they have deposited their vote in the ballot box during elections.[5]

Could the long history of mutual attacks, splits, splintering, and the dissolution of leftist parties be a by-product of a deliberate tactic of intolerance? How sustainable are mobilization tactics that demand the suppression of singular wills, desires, and dreams? Is denying significant contradictions and affirming a fictional unity of militants an effective way to organize transformative action?

7.3.2 Stakhanovism: Working to Save the Revolution

The incompatibility between a belief in the capacity of the Soviet population for spontaneous action and the need to prepare for expanding the communism globally was paired with the challenge of dramatically enhancing the USSR's productive capacity. According to Soviet Marxism's roadmap for communism, industrialization was vital for freeing humanity from the realm of necessity. Members of the Soviet intelligentsia would have to convert a predominantly agricultural country, recently devastated by World War I and various civil conflicts, into an industrial power. Lenin's question presented itself again: What Is To Be Done?

The year was 1920, and in the capitalist world's centers of production, the principles of scientific labor management proposed by Frederick Winslow Taylor had begun to be adopted. Why not learn from the masters of labor productivity, subvert part of the logic of Taylorism, and assemble a Marxist version of it in the USRR? In this subsection, following the work of Augustin (2015), I explain how, motivated by the urgency to rebuild a Russia devastated by wars, cold, and hunger, Lenin, Stalin, and the Communist Party Central Committee put S*takhanovshchina* into operation.

[5] In the rural towns of the state of Ceará, Brazil, on election day, it is common for citizens to ask each other if they have already lost their value – jokingly asking whether they have voted or not. It is taken as common sense to assume that citizens lose their importance to the democratic regime once they vote.

For the leaders of the Central Committee, there was no contradiction between the ideals of a communist society and Frederick Taylor's recommendation to detach the workers from the final product of their labor. Depriving workers of the responsibility of planning their own labor activities and granting the task to a manager/supervisor were framed as a technical decision without political consequences. Accordingly, as the state apparatus would appropriate the surplus generated by increasing productivity, there would be no structural contradictions or worker alienation in this model.

The working class would rule the state during the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some worker alienation resulting from the use the most modern technologies developed by capitalist management sciences was considered a fair price to pay in the general interests of the working class. Aiming to make the Soviet Union economically powerful and globally relevant, the question regarding what should be done about industrial productivity was answered by breaking down labor activities into menial operations to increase industrial efficiency. Combining this with a comprehensive system of surveillance did not seem incompatible with the Marxist imperative of freeing the proletariat from their chains of oppression by suppressing the private means of production.[6]

Trotsky advocated making work mandatory for all Soviet citizens. He also argued for managing this compulsory workforce as if it were an army. To do this, an organizational rationality was put into motion in Soviet industries. Some of its main characteristics were: (a) submitting the workers' activities to constant control and surveillance; (b) imposing assembly-line production in factories on the basis of a precise and effective topography to avoid time-wasting; (c) using the most advanced bourgeois scientific knowledge available at the time to alienate the worker from the fruits of their labor; (d) converting independent unions into disciplinary agents of the regime's governmentality; (e) rigorously and continuously examining productive and worker activity with the aim of improving efficiency. This model meets all the criteria of disciplinary regime of power exercise (Foucault, 2005). It was through these procedures and techniques that the Soviet regime aimed to convert part of its population into an efficient army of militant workers willing to advance the Revolution through the productive capacity of their bodies.

In 1921, during the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was approved.[7]Within this context, the Taylorism-inspired approach to organizing labor gained prominence. Despite Lenin's criticisms of Taylorism, which he outlined in his article *Taylorism: the enslavement of man by machine* (Lenin, 1914), he embraced the *zeitgeist* of his times. Together with Stalin

[6]The paradoxical, and even controversial, appropriation by Marxist-oriented movements of the premises of labor organization proper to capitalism is addressed in detail in the text *Labor, Rationalization, and Emancipation: from Marx to Marxism, and back* (Lucas, 2016).

[7]Beginning in March 1921, the Soviet government implemented a series of measures that allowed peasants to freely sell surplus grain. They also restored private trade and small-scale private enterprise and limited government spending. Most agricultural, retail trade, and small-scale light industry were returned to private ownership and management, while heavy industry, transportation, banking, and foreign trade remained under state control.

and other members of the revolutionary intelligentsia, Lenin welcomed the scientific organization of labor as the best alternative available for transforming the USSR into an industrial power. Aleksei Gastev, founder and director of the Central Institute of Labor between 1920 and 1937, expressed his support for:

> [...] not only the application of orthodox Taylorism (study of work movements to increase productivity, reduction of worker knowledge to a minimum, expansion of management power, transfer of knowledge to the upper echelons of decision-making, hierarchical and vertical command), but also the transformation of these ideas into social policy which covered all fields of human life, such as education, leisure, even basic and essential activities (Miguel, 2006, p. 39).

According to Gastev, producing a revolutionary population demanded organizing citizens' daily activities in the same way one organizes workers in assembly-line plants. Gastev used his position as principal researcher at the Institute of Labor to implement the scientific management of work with the aim of improving productivity and efficiency. As an enthusiast of Taylorism, he was one of the most prominent figures in the implementation of 'red-Taylorism' (Augustin, 2015). Stakhanovism (S*takhanovshchina*) was, allegedly, a spontaneous movement that emerged among the workers. Once it had been identified and embraced by the Soviet leadership, it was appropriated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and adopted as a policy to increase economic productivity by rationalizing and disciplining labor activities. Initially designed for the coal industry and later extended to transportation and agriculture, the policy aimed to raise overall labor productivity and was one of the NEP's priorities. Analyzing the main characteristics of the program, Augustin (2015) asks: 'wasn't this precisely the spirit of *stakhanovism*, to choose some "labor heroes" to serve as models for all workers and convince them to intensify the pace of work?' (Augustin, 2015, p. 21).

The main difference from the capitalist iteration of Taylorism is that, under socialist regime, the power to make decisions in the factories was given not to the bourgeois technicians, but to the *Stakhanovists*.[8] However, even though these proud workers already belonged to the factory community, once they were selected by the Party's Central Committee to expand S*takhanovshchina,* they assumed managerial functions similar to those occupied by managers under Taylorism. Responding directly to the Party, the *stakhanovists,* besides inspiring the other workers, also had to discipline and punish them.

Tsentralizm and S*takhanovshchina* – necessary policies for creating the conditions to achieve communism – share methods, tactical goals, and procedures. They were crucial elements in the construction of militancy as an institution and through them a totalitarian disciplinary governmentality was expanded. This governmentality allowed the party's vanguard, its organic intellectuals, and the highly committed *Stakhanovist* workers to rigorously discipline the tasks to be performed by the 'under-informed, under-experienced, under-valued, "base militant"' (Sève, 1999).

[8] The term was used in reference to workers who were inspired by Alexey Stakhanov. These workers prided themselves on their ability to produce more than necessary, working harder, and more efficiently, thus strengthening the socialist state.

Ultimately, this mode of governing the Soviet population aimed to exterminate all individualities and singularities, imposing in their place 'only regularity, uniform steps, faces devoid of expression, of soul, of lyricism, of emotion, measurable not by a shout or a smile, but by a pressure gauge, or a speedometer' (Bailes, 1977, p. 378).

Militant subjectivity was produced by taking part in this regime of disciplinary power. The regime was carefully planned to make revolutionary subjects inclined to have 'no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, and no name [except] the single thought and the single passion for Revolution' (Nechayev, 1869, s.p). This governmentality, which was initially used for organizing political and economic activities, was later expanded to the field of the arts. Its ultimate goal was to convert each member of the Soviet population into a militant-soldier-citizen who was filled with the desire to defend and expand the Revolution.

The members of the Soviet vanguard understood that private matters were political and, therefore, had to be governed when a political group aimed to defy the *status quo* of their time. Since 2013, Brazilian ***ativistas*** have been trying to remind left-wing militants that personal is always already political. This book supports the ***ativistas'*** claims that transformative goals cannot be advanced by the systematic suppression of singular desires, hopes, and dreams. I hope that by recollecting these inaugural revolutionary experiences and pointing out their relevance in the production of intolerant, war-like, and sectarian conducts, we remind ***militantes*** that 'who/what we are is not given or inevitable; [who/what we are] is not a matter of destiny or grand design, but a series of contingent becomings'. (Walters, 2012, p. 115).

7.3.3 Soviet Realism: Engineering Human Souls

Valverde (1986) maintains that the sought-after Future that gives life to militant organizations is shaped by a

> negation of the dominant values, whereby [militancy] would be an instrument of the transmutation of certain values – especially those of the dominant morality or "ideology," to which it would oppose an ideal of justice defended with "scientific" criteria and weapons and founded, ultimately, on a romantic belief in the categories of reason (Valverde, 1986, p. 63).

As demonstrated in previous sections, Soviet leaders espoused the hegemonic ideal of progress and the technical-scientific conceptions of development of their time, and were convinced that scientific reason had to be the absolute rationale in the march toward communism. Trotsky did not hesitate to state:

> Faith alone promised to move mountains. Technology, which takes nothing "on faith", is actually able to knock them down and move them. [...] Man will occupy himself with the new inventory of rivers and mountains. He will seriously and repeatedly correct nature. He will eventually reshape the face of the earth to his liking (TROTSKY, 1907, p. 176).

As pointed out previously, this set of beliefs informed the exercise of strict and totalitarian disciplinary power over the population of the USSR. This section details how the imperative of building cultural hegemony impacted the arts and led to the latter's regulation by the same set of principles used to govern political disputes and rule the Soviet workforce.[9]

Between 1900 and 1930, several artistic movements, inspired by disparate esthetic values and with different intentions, coexisted in Russia. Even though the rural Russian population was predominantly illiterate – having only become literate after entering the army or the industrial workforce – Russian literature 'continued a sumptuous repertoire of old traditions and achievements, even when it integrated with the great European modernist movements: symbolism, futurism, imagism, surrealism, constructivism' (Keach, 2007, p. 11).

In 1905, writing about the function literature must perform in the Revolution, Lenin conceives of it as a powerful tool to counter bourgeois habits and dispositions. He claimed that the arts must offer a counterpoint to the ideas spread by the bourgeois press and should be mobilized to this end: 'Literary activity must become a part of organized, planned, unified social democratic party work' (Lenin, 1905, n.p.). Such an intention reverberates in the opening address delivered by Andrei Alexandrovitch Zdanov during the First Congress of Soviet Writers, held in 1934. This was the occasion in which the official foundations, in which revolutionary artistic expressions, were laid out.

During his speech to the Soviet literati, Zdanov proposed that all influence exerted by bourgeois culture on the proletariat must be eradicated. Being the artists the soldier to act in this front. Zdanov's proposal conceived of all forms of art as instruments for educating the proletariat and disseminating Party ideals; he saw artistic production as a tool for forming the consciousness of the proletariat, for extinguishing individualism, frivolity, and any other bourgeois concerns. By presenting what would be the task of the 'engineers of the human soul', he synthesized the guidelines of socialist realism, also known as *Zhdanovshchina (Zdanovism*):

> In the first place, this means knowing life in such a way as to be able to present it truly in an artistic form, not to represent it in a dead, scholastic way, not simply to represent it in its objective reality, but to be able to represent it in its revolutionary development. Moreover, honesty and historical truthfulness must be combined with the ideological and educational reconstruction of the working class (Zdanov, 1934, n.p).

This prescription for artistic conduct elicited: (a) a simplistic and realist esthetic that could be easily assimilated by the artistically uninstructed proletariat; (b) the adoption of a heroic tone praising the accomplishments that had already been made; (c) a painting style designed to disseminate political propaganda (Egbert, 1973). These

[9] It is beyond the scope of this book to address the multiple existing artistic expressions, the various forms of relationship between them, and the way they positioned themselves in relation to the regime that was being established. The work of Jáder Diniz Miguel (Miguel, 2005, 2006) explores the relationship between art, education, utopia, and revolution, providing an interesting starting point for a study in this regard.

instructions would inform the production of large panels extolling Stalin's strength and the Party's achievements and virtues.

Soviet Realism's ultimate purpose was to highlight the sacrifices made by the Soviet population in the Present, the heroism, the bravery, and the moral superiority necessary to bring the revolutionary Future into reality. *Zhdanovshchina* was also an integral part of the project to secure the commitment of the militant-soldier-citizen in making the revolutionary Future flourish. According to its criteria, any personal expression, poetic lyricism, or sentimental flourish in the field of art were framed as egoistic, petty bourgeois, and a threat to the success of the Revolution. In a 1949 publication, Zdanov reaffirms his convictions on the role art must perform within the communist society:

> By pointing out the best feelings and qualities of the Soviet man, by revealing to him his future, we must at the same time show our people what they should not be, we must scour the remnants of the past, the remnants that prevent the Soviet man from marching forward. Soviet writers must help the people, the State, the Party to educate our courageous and confident youth in its strength, without fearing any difficulties (Zdanov, 1949, n.p).

The artist Vladimir Lagrange laments the collateral effects of these restrictions on artistic practice on everyday life: 'they thought for us, they deprived us of any autonomy, everything was familiar, everyone did his or her own job. Blindfolds, created by the Party leadership, did not allow us to think about what could be different' (Lagrange, 2015, n.p). Apparently, the artists were not the only ones who felt disenfranchised by the Central Committee's decision to unify the general will of the Soviet people. Concluding her research into everyday life under Stalin, Sheila Fitzpatrick indicates that the mentality 'us' versus 'them' was at the core of Soviet subaltern mentality. '"They" were the people who ran things, the people at the top, the ones with power and privilege. "We" were the ones at the bottom, the little people without power or privilege whom "they" pushed around, exploited, deceived and betrayed' (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p. 222). This kind of rivalry still resonates in contemporary militants' mode of dealing with those who do not share their convictions.

As one might imagine, the Soviet artistic class did not uniformly adhere to the governmental guidelines. Obviously, those who did not comply were accused of misunderstanding the needs of the Soviet people and of betraying revolutionary ideals. Inevitably, traitors were persecuted politically, militarily, and judicially (Miguel, 2006).

7.4 Governing Is a Ceaseless Battle Over Conducts

Lemke (2002) argues that through the perspective of governmentality, Foucault localizes conduct and subjectivity at the hinge between 'technologies of domination' and 'technologies of the self'. This perspective allows Foucault to investigate the problem of power and subjectivity outside the framework of repression and

consider the role played by the governed in the maintenance of their own subaltern conditions. In the arena of the power games that produces subjects and subjectivities, to govern is to direct someone's conduct with particular goals in mind with the awareness that such an individual must consent to being directed in that manner. This analytical framework stresses the contestable nature of power that is exercised even within the most totalitarian regimes. It also emphasizes the possibility for those governed by a tyrant to refuse to comply with particular prescriptions of their conduct. After all, governing 'is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by her/himself' (Foucault, 1993a, b, p. 203–204).

The path traced so far has investigated a set of actions, procedures, and tactics exercised on a large scale, and which, therefore, have exerted a remarkable influence on the consolidation of militancy as an institution. *Demokraticheskiy Tsentralizm, Stakhanovshchina*, and *Zhdanovshchina* were crucial elements in that scenario for determining how to organize the masses, increase production, and create a revolutionary army willing to defend communism. In this section, I will address, though not exhaustively, refusals and oppositions to governmentality constructed by the Soviet regime and trace the tensions that were endemic within the process of producing the revolutionary disposition. I want to show that the ***ativistas'*** critics and practical attempts to move beyond ***militante*** praxes are part of a long dispute about the question on what is to be done.

7.4.1 Power to the Soviets!

In March 1918, during the negotiations which would mark Russia's withdrawal from World War I, a dissident group, under the name 'Left Communists' was formed. The organization operated surreptitiously and its members were persecuted by the Communist Party Central Committee. In a text she wrote in 1918, Rosa Luxemburgo (1991), a Polish-German thinker whose ideas influenced left communism, foresaw the deleterious effects of Stalinist autocratic centralism on revolutionary political organization:

> Without general elections, without unlimited freedom of the press and assembly, without freedom of opinions, life is stifled in any public institution, it becomes an apparent life in which bureaucracy exists as the only active element. Public life gradually becomes dormant, a few dozen bosses, partisans of inexhaustible energy and boundless idealism, direct and govern; among them, the direction is assured, in reality, by a dozen superior spirits, and the elite of the working class is summoned from time to time to meetings to applaud the speeches of the bosses and to vote unanimously on proposed resolutions: it is thus, at bottom, a clique that rules – it is a dictatorship, it is true, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is, a dictatorship in the purely bourgeois sense, in the sense of Jacobin domination (Luxemburgo, 1991, p. 68).

Responding to the growing criticism against *Demokraticheskiy tsentralizm,* Lenin wrote 'Left-Wing' Communism: an Infantile Disorder (Lenin, 1920a). Talking about the immediate tasks to move the Revolution forward both locally and globally, he reinforces the main tenets of *Demokraticheskiy tsentralizm* and concludes that 'the second and immediate objective, which consists in being able to lead the masses to a new position ensuring the victory of the vanguard in the Revolution, cannot be reached without the liquidation of Left doctrinairism' (Lenin, 1920a, n.p).

Herman Gorter, an influential Dutch poet and distinguished supporter of communism in the Netherlands and Germany, vehemently opposed this position in the pamphlet *Open Letter to Comrade Lenin* (Gorter, 1920). In his harsh critique, Gorter repeatedly points out: Lenin's ignorance of the specific features of the proletarian movement outside Russia; the impossibility of effectively transposing the tactics developed in the Russian context to the European setting; and the violence present in the way the Soviet leaders related to the population they were governing:

> We are still looking for the right leaders, those who don't try to dominate the masses, those who don't betray them; until we find these leaders, we want to do everything from the bottom up and through the dictatorship of the masses, by themselves (Gorter, 1920, n.p).

Years later, in his letter to the Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which he wrote in December 1922 and which is considered by many to be his political testament, Lenin himself expressed concern over Stalin's personality traits and the way he led the regime: 'Stalin is too abrupt, and this defect, which is fully tolerable in our midst and among us communists, is intolerable in the office of General Secretary' (Lenin, 1923, n.p). The information released in Nikita Khrushchov's speech (Khruschov's, 1956) to the twentieth Communist Party[10] congress offered evidence that the issues raised by Gorter and Rosa Luxemburg were not irrelevant and acquired decisive importance for the regime itself.

7.4.2 Our Work, Our Choice!

The Workers' Opposition were the main critics of *Stakhanovshchina*. They claimed that denying the control of factories to workers was denying communism itself. They demanded the implementation of the collective management of the factories and the preservation of the trade unions' autonomy from the Party. The Left Opposition, led by Trotsky, was sympathetic to the movement and recognized, in the contradictions of the *Stakhanovshchina*, an important limit of the New Economic Policy. The Party's Central Committee's responded to this demand by reinforcing a

[10] This speech was a pivotal element for the de-Stalinization of the Soviet regime. Among other topics, the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union between 1953 and 1964 denounced Stalin for forcibly expelling entire nationality groups from their homes during the war (such as the Karachay, Kalmyk, Chechen, Ingush, and Balkar peoples) and for purging critical political figures from Leningrad (1948–1950; see Leningrad Affair) and Georgia (1952).

resolution against party division that was approved at the Tenth Communist Party Congress. Based on it, Trotsky and other sympathizers of the movement were expelled from the Party.

Augustin (2015) asserts that the Workers Opposition's demands were seen as quixotic by their contemporaries. But, he notes, the Workers' Opposition fulfilled an important role in reminding the Bolsheviks of their old promises to the proletariat 'at a time when the USSR was already showing its tendency to bureaucratization. There were few party leaders who pointed out the problems, even if the solutions presented were problematic' (Augustin, 2015, p. 18). The party leaders did not take their claims seriously; even so, they engaged fiercely in the debate about who has the legitimacy to reflect and represent proletariat interests.

'Soviet Marxism', published by Hebert Marcuse in 1958 explored the contradictions between the dialectical, situated, and dynamic nature of Marx's ideas and the violent, inflexible character of the Stalinist government. In a conclusion that still sounds inconvenient to scholars standing for the moral superiority and inherent characteristics of the socialist regime, he asserted that: 'Soviet society has not reversed but retained the oppressive relationship between the laborer and the means of his labor in which Marx saw the root of exploitation' (Marcuse, 1958/2014 p. 319).

7.4.3 Imagining to Make It Real!

Analyzing the artistic context prior to the consolidation of socialist realism, Miguel presents the following tension:

> The vanguardist artists sought engagement with a broader audience, but were not aligned to the party's vision and did not seek to adapt their artistic production to the prevailing tastes of the moment. On the other hand, the artists who sought to embrace the party's vision ended up helping to defeat the vanguardists, by launching themselves into an aesthetic-artistic struggle, as well as ideological one, against the vanguardists (Miguel, 2006, p. 106).

The attempt to direct the iconoclastic and transformative force of the cultural avant-garde movements in Russia toward the formation of revolutionary men caused the Central Committee to conduct an inquisition of dissident artists. After 1930, the persecution of those considered leftists and, therefore, counterrevolutionaries, was severe, and they were sent to prisons or to the GULAGs (*Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei*, or Main Camp Administration). Zdanov characterizes the resistance movements against the state sanctioned esthetic as corrupt, empty of ideas, and vulgar (Zdanov, 1949).

If, from within the USSR, it was too dangerous to oppose the pragmatic and instrumental way the Party had been dealing with the question of art, this task was taken up by those outside of the Soviet Union's borders. Diego Rivera and André Breton published their manifesto: *For an Independent Revolutionary Art* (Breton & Rivera, 1938). In it, they compared the actions of Josef Stalin to those of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler; they denounced the advocates of socialist realism for

dictating the themes art should deal with, and proposed to create instead, 'a ground to bring together all revolutionary defenders of art to serve the revolution by the methods of art and to defend the very freedom of art against the usurpers of the revolution' (Breton & Rivera, 1938). These comrades did not shy away from carving out, with their characteristic irony and humor, a path on which artistic plurality could accompany political unity, a path that continues into the present day: 'the Marxists can walk here hand in hand with the anarchists, on condition that both break ruthlessly with the reactionary police spirit, whether represented by Josef Stalin or his vassal Garcia Oliver' (Breton & Rivera, 1938, n.p).

7.5 From the USSR to Brazil

Reis Filho (2017) argues that it is necessary to reassess the events of October 1917 to fully appreciate the contemporary relevance and vitality of the communist hypothesis (Badiou, 2010). He concludes that the rural sociodemographic characteristics that justified *Stakhanovshchina* and the incipience of democratic values in postczarist Russian society formed a fertile terrain for authoritarian socialism. Arguing against those who say that there was no real socialism in the USRR, he claims that, not only was there real socialism, but a socialism that presented an inconvenient resemblance to the proto-Nazi and fascist regimes currently haunting the Western world.

Bolshevism had a substantial and lasting influence on the construction of the left in Brazil throughout the twentieth century (Lopes, 2010; Valverde, 1986), especially the Brazilian Communist Party. Founded in 1922 and occupying a hegemonic position until 1960, the *Partidão* (literally, the Great or Big Party) was the main reference point for leftists in Brazil for the better part of that century. During the 1960s, when a process of fragmentation and differentiation among leftists started,[11] the ideas, strategies, and repertoires of action presented by the Brazilian Communist Party were copied, followed, reorganized, abandoned, or dismissed by nascent political organizations.

Lopes (2010) identifies the following programmatic affinities among the Brazilian left-wing players between 1970 and 1982: (a) the fight against the military dictatorship; (b) the criticism of capitalism and imperialism; (c) the defense of nationalist and developmentalist economic projects centered on industrialization. She also highlights significant cultural convergence between them: (a) strong Stalinist influence; (b) playing down the importance of internal democracy in the face of the necessities of the Revolution; and (c) a preference for a vanguardist organizational structure. The party manifesto which the United Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU) presented in the 2018 Brazilian electoral race, expresses quite

[11] It is beyond the scope of this text to follow the long, intense, and multifaceted process of differentiation of the left in Brazil. For a comprehensive understanding of the influence of Soviet ideals on the Brazilian political system, read Lopes (2010).

intensely how strongly some of these tendencies are still present within Brazilian left-wing circles. In the initial sections, the text states:

> Elections will not change lives. Only a socialist revolution, which frees the country from the domination of imperialism and puts an end to free-market capitalism, can change Brazil and the lives of our people. That is the only path that can free us from this social captivity (PSTU, 2018).

The research conducted by Reis Filho (1990), in the book *A revolução faltou ao encontro – Os comunistas no Brasil* [*The revolution didn't turn up for the meeting – the communists in Brazil*], makes it explicit that the beliefs, values, and ideas prevalent in Brazil were not very different from those that moved Soviet leadership. The members of the Brazilian left-wing vanguard were also convinced that they were destined to represent the best interests, wishes, and dreams of the proletariat. If necessary, due to their revolutionary virtues, they could politically and ideologically discipline, in a totalitarian manner, Brazilian society toward the Revolution.

It is imperative to stress that after the failure of the guerrillas and the armed struggles in the 1970s, political leaders with distinct communist tendencies recognized that a big gap existed between the revolutionary militants and the people whose desires the militants claimed to represent. Consequently, they identified the excess of vanguardism as an important reason for their failure. This self-analysis was fundamental to bringing some of these communist tendencies closer to the diverse social movements, both urban and rural and of popular origin, that emerged, especially after 1977. It should also be noted that this criticism was very present at the birth of the urban movement that would go on to found the Workers' Party (Lopes, 2010).

Even so, in the context of the ongoing institutional crisis in Brazil, Safatle echoes the concerns of ***ativistas*** and asserts that:

> [...] what most destroyed a certain type of left-wing movement and its structures was its dirigisme, whether explicit, through the opaque decision-making of the party leadership, or implicit, through the practice of meetings with little purpose but to build hegemony (Safatle, 2016a, p. 22-23).

It is about time for the Brazilian left to recognize the inconvenient side effects consequences of embracing concepts, methods, ideas, and institutions that derive from the Stalinist version of Marxism. Leftists in Brazil would do well to seize the opportunity that has grown since the eruption of protests in 2013 to focus on self-analysis, reinvention, and renewal. It is about time for the Brazilian left to overcome its 'centralist, dirigiste, hegemonic, hierarchical' (Safatle, 2016b) tradition and put forward proposals that allow them to (re)enchant the concrete.

7.6 Amidst the Left and the Right

My approach to investigating the problem of militant strategy and its subjectivity was inspired by the Nietzschean-Deleuzian question of what regimes of force produce and sustain certain forms of life. I argued that this governmentality was

designed to transform each member of the Soviet population into a body available to perform simultaneously, the functions of honorable citizen, committed militant, and Revolutionary soldier. The necessity of making communism a global regime was the ultimate reason for producing an army devoted to 'one pleasure, one consolation, one reward, one satisfaction – the success of the revolution' (Nechayev, 1869, s.p). I have made explicit the reasons for the creation of militant subjectivity to underline the prevalence of this kind of disposition in the way many militants still feel, think, and act today. Through my investigation, I have clearly demonstrated that 'faith, hierarchy, and discipline constitute the explanatory triad of this total militant, engaged, in an organized and devoted way, in the transformation of society' (Macedo & Silva, 2009, p. 379).

I recollected attempts to contest the militant governmentality over history to contrapose attacks of naivety and unpreparedness that Brazilian ***militantes*** did to ***ativistas***. I brought back arguments from Rosa Luxembourg, Gramsci, Marcuse, and many others to place the ***ativistas'*** concerns and efforts in political disputes from the past. Critical social scientists like me have the duty to find the connections between the modes through which young people are defying the immutability of the social norms nowadays with the attempts that previous generations made in this regard. Hopefully, this chapter can inspire other researchers to join this task.

My research has shown that militancy was forged as an antagonist strategy to revolutionize people and existing institutions in the Present to achieve, in the Future, the transformation of society they aim to produce. Executed through centralized organizational arrangements, it presupposes the structuring of a disciplinary governmentality and the absolute obedience of participants to strong leaders as conditions for the success and continuity of revolutionary collective action. Apart from explaining some of the reasons why militancy is valued by those identified with leftist values in Brazil, this conclusion also sheds light on the use of the word ***militância*** by right-wing political players in Brazil.

Congresswoman Joice Hasselmann, a former supporter of the far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, employed the term insistently in her videos during the 2018 election campaign. Olavo de Carvalho, considered by many to be the organic intellectual and the ideological father of the contemporary Brazilian far-right-wing, ended his participation in the meeting of the Conservative Summit of the Americas by highlighting the fundamental role to be played by the ***militância*** in sustaining the government of Jair Bolsonaro. It is tempting to suppose, then, that after June 2013, right-wing and left-wing ***militantes*** militate for, and against, different national projects using similar repertoires and strategies. I am writing this conclusion in August 2022, and an interesting hypothesis for future investigation might be: the political polarization in Brazil nowadays is a by-product of a cultural war being fought by left- and right-wing ***militantes***.

The 2022 electoral campaign in Brazil has barely started. Yet, it is already characterized by political polarization, mutual aggression, and hate amongst supporters of the two leading candidates: Jair Bolsonaro and Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. Both contenders seemed to rely on their respective armies of ***militantes*** to destroy their opponent's reputation on social media, overcome their opposition's demonstrations in the streets, and triumph over them in the ballots. This ongoing war is causing

many Brazilian to fear for the future of democracy in the country and to expect contestation around the election results, irrespective of which side wins.

This chapter examined the origins of a mode of govern of bodies and a political strategy to produce social change that seem to be dominant at this particular historical moment in Brazil. For those on the left, who I assume comprise the majority of the readership of this book, it is about time to confront the limitations of militant strategy, to recognize its harmful consequences and its virtues without nostalgia. In a time when uncritically repeating traditions seem inadequate to addressing the challenges we face, I hope that remembering the origins of the ***militância*** helps us work through it.

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