

**Moraes, Alana; Gutiérrez, Bernardo; Parra, Henrique Zoqui Martins; Albuquerque, Hugo; Tible, Jean; Schavelzon, Salvador (eds.). 2014. *Junho: potência das ruas e das redes*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES): São Paulo, 252 pp. (ISBN 978-85-99138-59-5). Free online from publisher.**

Juan Grigera

The mass movements that shook Brazil in June 2013 were the largest and most significant of the past thirty years. Noticeably larger than *Fora Collor* in 1992 (the protests that lead to the resignation of President Fernando Collor de Mello) and only comparable in its massive character to those that triggered the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1984 (*Diretas Já*), the *Jornadas de Junho* (June Journeys), or *Manifestações dos 20 centavos* (Protests of the 20 cents) have produced a profound change in Brazilian society. Characterized as the largest crisis of the political system since the transition to democracy (F. H. Cardoso)<sup>1</sup> and a call to “a profound reform of the political system” in need of “oxygen” (D. Rousseff)<sup>2</sup>, emergent analyses from the social sciences are still somehow dominated by partial and immediate reports.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 Carlos Muanis e Aldo Fornazieri (eds) *Conversas políticas: Desafios públicos Entrevistas com Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Fernando Haddad e Aldo Fornazieri*, Record, 2014.

2 Discurso da Presidenta da República, Dilma Rousseff Palácio do Planalto, 24 de junho de 2013 (Available at <http://www2.planalto.gov.br/>)

3 Alongside a number of articles in journals and a few chapters in edited collections the question of June has so far been analysed in (among others): *Nas Ruas: a Outra Política que Emergiu em Junho de 2013* (Letramento, 264 pp.) by Patrick Arley and Rudá Ricci; *A Multidão Foi ao Deserto: as Manifestações no Brasil em 2013* (Annablume, 156 pp.) by Bruno Cava; *Vinte Centavos: A Luta Contra o Aumento* (Veneta, 240 pp.) by Pablo Ortellado; With a more interpretative intention is Marco Nogueira's *As ruas e a democracia. Ensaio sobre o Brasil contemporâneo* (2013), *Cidades rebeldes* (2013) and Cassio Brancalione et al., *As Rebeliões da Tarifa e as Jornadas de Junho no Brasil* (2014). Two documentaries are also worth mentioning: *A Partir de Agora*, by Carlos Pronzato, available on YouTube and *Junho: O Mês que Abalou o Brasil* by João Wainer.

The protests of June 2013 were triggered by a raise in transport fares (from R\$ 3.00 to R\$3.20) and a series of demonstrations that began in São Paulo on 6 June, organized by the radical left Free Fare Movement (*Movimento Passe Livre*, MPL), an autonomist non-party organization. After increasingly brutal police repression that assaulted demonstrators and shot them with rubber bullets (including passers-by and journalists alike), these demonstrations began to gain country-wide attention. Even the press began to shift from its first reaction of criticism (that first referred to them as vandals, unrealistic and disrupters of traffic) to one of open support (that included even the suspension of *telenovelas* in favour of coverage). After 13 June the protests erupted in various cities across Brazil.

With a very heterogeneous social composition and strong links to social media, the protests started with students and left-wing activists. In following days, they broadened to other sections of the (mainly white) middle-class. The media also attempted to intervene in favour of a multiplication and de-radicalization of the demands that can be characterized as very wide ranging: from the immediate trigger of the rise in transport fares they later moved to a broader request of better provision of public services and infrastructure, a condemnation of the costs of the FIFA World Cup, a defence of different social rights, a critique of corruption and even a wealth of contradictory placards for and against abortion, gay rights or even the return of military rule.

Internationally, June fits comfortably within the “new geopolitics of global indignation”<sup>4</sup>, i.e., the series of protests that range from *Occupy Wall Street* and Gezi Park

---

4 Bringel, Breno, and Geoffrey Pleyers. “Junho de 2013... Dois Anos Depois. Polarização, Impactos E Reconfiguração do Ativismo No Brasil.” *Nueva Sociedad*, 2015, 4–18.

to the Arab spring. In Brazil they had 84 percent of popular support (IBOPE), and are probably a key element behind the decline in popularity of President Dilma and the current crisis of governability (despite being somewhat neglected by mainstream political science). This is why *Junho: Potência das Ruas e nas Redes* (June: Power in the Streets and Networks) provides a welcomed original report and a first round of analysis of the protests with a valorous attempt at escaping the *sudestecentrismo* (the overrated importance of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) in accounting for what happens in Brazil as a whole.

The book begins with a general introduction that stresses the importance of June for contemporary Brazilian politics and characterizes it as an ongoing process “that is in the being”, alive in contemporary subjectivities, creating new spaces and social ecosystems (p.21). Rescuing the importance of horizontality and autonomist practices during the protests, this initial text also nuances the legacy of the PT policies (particularly under Lula) and the need to account for the unexpected power in a movement that “stopped political machines that seemed immutable” (p.15). Along with a necessary timeline of major events of June, this chapter begins to unravel the multiple intertwinings of transport with other issues and social movements (such as the movements against the World Cup), and of the multiple rhizomatic experiences of these days. This variety is also reflected in the structure of the book, which attempts to present the reader with a variety of experiences and multifarious standpoints, both geographical and political.

Following the introduction are 12 chapters, each corresponding to a different major city in Brazil that had a role in the protests. Chapter 1 narrates the experience of June in Belo Horizonte and contextualises the protests as part of a growing history of

previous movements of resistance (despite the provincialism of the city). *Fora Lacerda* (a movement against the Mayor of BH) and the *Comite Popular dos atingidos pela Copa* (Popular Committee of those hit by the Cup), with roots in the city since 2010, are described as key in the protests of June 2013. The report provides some details on the autonomist and horizontal principles of the assembly and then details the occupation of a building (ceded later on by the government). The second chapter on Brasilia is a very personal narrative from a feminist activist (that includes a letter to her lover who became a PT official): the bulk of the report revolves around the resistance to a *Pastor* (a minister from the evangelist church) and the campaign against him (*Fora Feliciano*). In Brasilia the resistance against regressive policies in the arena of sexual and identity rights<sup>5</sup> is at one point encountered with the national protests of June.

Chapters 3 (on Curitiba) and 4 (on Florianópolis) are more directly tied to the events of June. The first one includes some reflections on the debates around direct action (including the 'black block' technique, and what the author flags as some incidents of vandalism), the early appearance of right wing tendencies (including *Fora Dilma* and structuring slogans around corruption) and a characterisation of the social composition of demonstrations. The author identifies three distinct groups: militants from social movements and political parties, students and MPL militants and Anonymous/black block activists. The chapter on Florianópolis briefly mentions the previous protests in 2004 and 2005 (rescued as key antecedents in Chapter 10) and moves to a detailed account of the author's personal experience in 2013 (that involves some clashes between his actions on Facebook and sections of the organized left).

---

5 For instance, the attempt at a state subsidised 'gay cure' that involved allowing psychologists to treat homosexuals seeking a "cure" for their "illness" (later withdrawn on July 1<sup>st</sup>).

Both chapter 5 on Fortaleza and chapter 7 on Recife are centred on different experiences of mobilisation that the authors of these chapters feel are the indirect results of June. In the case of Fortaleza, the chapter is about "Ocupe Cocó", an occupation movement in the central park of the city after an attempt to build an overpass (viaduct) was announced in July 2013. The chapter on Recife devotes a paragraph to June and then moves on to report on "Ocupe Estelita", a conflict that began in May 2014 to defend a series of *galpões* (warehouses) against a large speculative move to develop a series of flats/towers there.

The chapters on Porto Alegre (Chapter 6) and Rio de Janeiro (Chapter 8) can be seen as personal accounts by militants within specific organizations. The one on Porto Alegre begins in March 2013 by describing the *Bloco de Lutas* (a front of struggle), its weaknesses and strengths, and the author's own position in *Federacion Anarquista Gaucha*. The chapter on Rio de Janeiro deals exclusively with a movement within *favelas* that was key in *Ocupa Alemão* and *Ocupa Borel* (the occupation of two favelas) in the constant struggle against exclusion from the city. It provides some insight regarding the issues they fight for and their inventiveness in this regard, including the use of social media (e.g., a campaign under the title of "how many weapons do you see a day?") to raise awareness about gun violence, or the *farofaço*, a (re)occupation of the beach, a space favela dwellers are excluded from with a re-appropriation of a term meant to stigmatize poor class consumption. Chapter 9 on São Luis deals briefly with the sequence of protests, repression and growth of protest in the context of Maranhão.

The city of São Paulo has two different chapters. The first of those (Chapter 10) is the most engaging, in-depth attempt at discussing the meaning of June, including the puzzle of its limits, the unexpected effects of MPL's (the Free Pass Movement's) strategy

of an “organised decentralisation/disorganisation” (p. 207), and the risks for a “politics of spectacle” to become spectacle *tout court* (p. 212). For the author of this chapter, *Junho passou* (June is over), polemically rebutting the Introduction and the general tone of the volume that we are still in June, since besides showing another possible world it also found its own limits. The last two chapters (11 and 12) are written by an activist lawyer in São Paulo and consider a collection of sensations and pictures of the occupation of the bridge Terceira Ponte in Vitoria.

*Junho Potência das Ruas e das Redes* is not an attempt to provide the reader with a closed analysis of the movement and is thus not written in the usual discourse, nor uses the “toolboxes” of the social sciences (e.g., there is no data on transport or movements nor on the worsening of socioeconomic conditions). It would be interesting to see some of these topics more thoroughly discussed, such as the white/middle class component mentioned by many analysts, or the references to the international context. Also, in the light of the direction that discontent took in Brazil after 2013, it would be interesting to see in this volume (published in November 2014) whether the authors see a continuation or a rupture with June. To some extent, the slogan “It is not just for 20 cents” shows both the power and the limits of a denial: it is not just that, but what then?

However, a reading of the volume brings out more than an already colourful collection of militant and militant/academic narratives and experiences. The more in-depth reflections of Chapter 10 or the several sharp questions raised in the introduction can serve, along with the multiple experiences, to question the meaning of these protests.