DEMOCRACY, A TRAGIC CARNIVALESQUE HERO

The Narratives of a Transnational Social Movement Against the Coup in Brazil

by

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Abstract

The concern that democracy in the largest country in Latin America could drive toward fascism has surfaced as a point of departure for the creation of forms of resistance among Brazilians in the diaspora. This thesis addresses this development by bringing to light the narratives of FIBRA, a transnational social movement created in 2016 to denounce the coup in Brazil. By combining militant, translocal and online ethnography, this thesis explores how FIBRA has constructed its narratives surrounding the erosion of democracy in Brazil. It looks at the experience of Brazilian migrants involved in campaigning against the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff, the imprisonment of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the assassination of the activist Marielle Franco, and the victory of Jair Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential election. Anthropological theories on social movement, democracy and narrative are revisited in order to investigate FIBRA's role in shaping ideas and expectations towards democracy. This thesis also explores ways to bring the artistic practices in the field into the anthropological text. I use elements of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theater, Greek Tragedy and Carnival in my writing and employ these artistic languages as conceptual tools to develop a notion of democracy as a tragic carnivalesque hero. In the spirit of the Brazilian carnivalesque, this thesis celebrates the subversive dimension of the relation between the "playful", the "political", and the "academic".

Keywords: Brazil, democracy, coup, social movement, transnational, diaspora

Acknowledgments

"Don't worry; we will go far away from the city once we arrive back in Brazil", said the Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa when he was leaving Stockholm after receiving an award. He was trying to comfort me as I knew that he and his family were targeted for murder. I was walking through the streets of Oslo with Magal, a representative from the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil, when she said: "So many *companheiros* (comrades) have been either arrested or murdered. Is it worth fighting? Do I have the strength to do that?", she couldn't hold her tears. "Being here and seeing that, even from so far away, people are fighting for our rights there in Brazil empowers me. We may be few, but we exist", she said as she hugged me. I was waiting for the bus that would take Toninho, another representative from the MST, to his next destination after a week of intense activities in Stockholm. "I am thinking about my *companheiros*, everyone is taking anti-depression pills. I am tired of traveling and I miss my family. But I need to stay strong, especially at such a difficult time", he said exhausted. As we hugged to say goodbye, he whispered in my ear how important my research is to the struggle. Just like those moments, I remember many others that gave another meaning to this thesis.

I dedicate this thesis to all activists as well as NGOs, social movements and organizations that have been struggling against the erosion of democracy in Brazil. I dedicate this thesis to my family and ancestors. I dedicate this thesis to my husband Carlos and my friends, especially the "Deises" of my life, who gave me emotional support to be able to continue this journey in the academy and outside it. I dedicate this thesis to all my teachers who taught me the value of education, and especially my supervisor Eva-Maria Hardtmann for her generosity and encouragement. I dedicate this thesis to all my classmates, for sharing two years of intense learning and amazing moments together. I dedicate this thesis to *Brasil* and *Sverige*, in these places I developed my love for studying culture. I dedicate this thesis to all artists who have been proving the power of art and culture in planting seeds, which continue to grow on multiple and diverse trees. I dedicate this thesis to all the victims of intolerance. "Marielles" have multiplied and with them our hope.

Abbreviations

FIBRA – The International Front of Brazilians against the Coup (*Frente Internacional de Brasileiros contra o Golpe*)

BRASSAR – Brazilians and friends of Brazil in Sweden for Democracy and against the Coup (*Brasileiras, Brasileiros e amigos do Brasil na Suécia pela Democracia e contra o golpe*)

PT – Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*)

PSOL – Socialism and Liberty Party (*Partido Socialismo e Liberdade*)

MST – Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*)

CUT – Unified Workers' Central (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*)

LAG – Solidarity Sweden – Latin America (*Latinamerikagrupperna*)

Viva nós, viva o povo brasileiro, viva nós,
viva o povo brasileiro que um dia se achará,
viva nós que não somos de ninguém,
viva nós que queremos liberdade para nós e não para os nossos donos.

Long live us, long live the Brazilian people,
long live us, long live the people who one day will find themselves;
long live we who don't belong to anyone;
long live we who want freedom for us and not for our owners.

(Ribeiro, 1984: 425; translation by Ribeiro, 1989: 319)

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PART I

THESIS EXPOSITION

1. Introduction

Recent dramatic changes to the Brazilian political scenario have contributed to the reinvigoration of the debate on the state of its democracy (Casara, 2017, 2020; Goldstein, 2019b; Foley, 2019; Miguel, 2019; Lima, 2020). Since 28 October 2018, when the far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro was officially elected the president of Brazil, scholars around the world have showed their concern that democracy in the largest country in Latin America could drive toward authoritarianism. Bolsonaro has been considered to be one of the most emblematic examples of neofascism[1] and new right-wing populism[2], characterized by hybrid warfare (Leirner, 2020), the implementation of neoliberal policies through authoritarian measures (Barros & Wanderley, 2019), the appropriation of democratic institutions by corporations (Goldstein, 2019a), the manipulation of mainstream media and the judiciary (Foley & Casara, 2019), the dissemination of hate speech and fake news on social media (Romancini & Castilho, 2019), the construction of the "leftist enemy" (Esteves & Herz, 2019), and the invention of the "good citizen" as the new Brazilian identity ideal (Guirado, 2019). Accordingly, this phenomenon is reinforced by the discourse of militarization (Macaulay, 2019), racism and white supremacy (Alfonso, 2019), misogyny and antifeminism (Tiburi, 2019b), anti-intellectualism (Neiburg & Thomaz, 2020), class hatred (Souza, 2017), conservatism and Evangelical fundamentalism (Feltran, 2020; Almeida, 2020; Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2020), and patriotism (Rebechi, 2019).

However, whereas so many of current efforts have focused on the authoritarian turn in Brazil since Bolsonaro emerged victorious, relatively few studies have paid attention to the transnational mobilizations to denounce the erosion of democracy in the country years before (Proner et al. 2016). With the opening of the impeachment proceedings against Rousseff in December 2015, Brazilians in the diaspora rapidly started mobilizing through manifestos, collective letters, petitions, videos, and protests to denounce what they called "a parliamentary coup", sometimes referred to as "soft coup"[3] (ibid.: 8). The *Não ao golpe* (Not to the coup) chanted by thousands of people around the world throughout 2016 has multiplied through the creation of innumerous collectives and given rise to FIBRA (the International Front of

[1] For an analysis of the use of the term "neofascism" in the Brazilian context, see the works of Lima (2020: 67-98); and Puzone & Miguel (2019: 285-296).
[2] For an approach to the new right-wing populism in different contexts, see: in the United States (Hawley, 2017), in Europe (Wodak et al., 2013; Fouskas & Gökay, 2019), in Western Europe (Akkerman et al., 2016), in the United States and Europe (Norris & Inglehart, 2019), in Australia (Grant et al. 2019).
[3] Similar parliamentary coups took place in Paraguay in 2012 and in Honduras in 2009. For an analysis of these "soft coups", see the 2016 NACLA Report on the Americas (Pitts et al., 2016).

Brazilians against the Coup). FIBRA started through a Facebook group in May 2016 as a platform dedicated to connecting the emerging collectives scattered around the world. According to FIBRA, currently 92 collectives in 25 countries and 58 cities are officially part of its network[4]; other organizations and activists also participate informally.

FIBRA's mobilizations have claimed that Brazil faced a coup. This so-called coup would lead to the impeachment and removal of the president Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the imprisonment of former president Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva in 2018, which culminated in the coming to power of Bolsonaro as president. But, given the innovative nature of this kind of coup, it did not result from a wide-open military coercion; but from the subtle misuse of the democratic institutions – such as the electoral system, the judiciary and the media (Santos & Guarnieri, 2016; de Albuquerque 2017; Encarnación 2017; Van Dijk 2017; Mustafá et al., 2018; Ansell 2018). These developments have demanded that we engage with fundamental questions regarding the scope and limits of the democratic rule. This thesis addresses this subject by analyzing how FIBRA has constructed its narratives of coup. Anthropological theories on social movements, democracy and narrative are revisited in order to investigate the movement's role in shaping ideas and expectations towards democracy. This thesis also explores ways to bring the artistic practices in the field into the anthropological text and employ elements of Epic Theater, Greek Tragedy and Carnival as conceptual tools to develop a notion of democracy as a tragic carnivalesque hero.

1.1. Aims and research question

Relying on the premise that FIBRA plays an important role in pursuing notions of democracy, this study aims to put democracy under an ethnographic lens. In order to do so, I pose the following questions:

- What prompted Brazilians in the diaspora to create FIBRA?
- How have FIBRA constructed its narrative of coup?
- What do these narratives tell us about FIBRA's notions of democracy?

By focusing on narrative-construction by organized collective actors, this thesis delves into the role of stories in producing ideas of democracy. Even though the object of inquiry in this study is specifically limited to democracy in Brazil and does not involve an analysis of the

[4] https://fibrabrasil.wordpress.com/coletivos/

actual stage of fascism in the world, I hope to contribute to the discussion about the global trends associated with the rise of neofascism and new right-wing populism. Overall, this thesis aims to explore the relationship between anthropology, politics, and the arts.

1.2. Thesis overview

I have divided my thesis into three parts. Part I: Thesis exposition inserts the background information, context, purposes, theoretical framework, and methods of my research. In this introductory part, I also rehearse how I bring my artistic practices in the field to the ethnographic writing and explain the division of Part II: Rising Action into the "chapter acts", where I combine the main division of a thesis structure – "chapters" – with the division placed within a theater work – "acts". Each chapter act opens with a scene extracted from my fieldwork, which is followed by an ethnographic description and an anthropological analysis of FIBRA's narrative-construction.

In Chapter Act 1, the opening scene presents the impeachment proceedings against Rousseff. The scene is followed by an analysis of the creation of FIBRA through a transnational perspective and a discussion of the narrative "Impeachment without crime is coup".

Chapter Act 2 deals with the imprisonment of former president Lula. The opening scene introduces the result of a theatre workshop during the "Second International FIBRA Gathering". After that, I employ tragedy and carnival as conceptual tools to analyze how the scene relates to activists' views on Lula's trial. I conclude by presenting the narrative "Election without Lula is fraud".

Chapter Act 3 presents an intersectional perspective on the mobilizations that emerged after the assassination of the Brazilian councilwoman Marielle Franco on 14 March 2018 and Bolsonaro's victory in the 2018 presidential election. The narrative "If he threatens my existence, I will be resistance" finishes the chapter acts.

Part III presents a concluding comment considering the whole set of narratives. There I reach into a notion of democracy as a tragic carnivalesque hero.

2. Theoretical Framework

By choosing to explore FIBRA's narratives, there is an overlapping of theories. I utilize notions around citizenship and participation that take on heightened importance to contextualizing Brazil's process of democratization (Holston & Caldeira, 1998; Dagnino, 2003, 2019; Foley, 2019; Puzone, 2019; Lima, 2020). Subsequently, I enter the field of social movements, where I combine Marxism with intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1983; Gonzales, 1982; Guimarães,1998; Klein & Luna, 2010; Bernardino-Costa, 2014, 2019) and transnational social movements' theories (Melucci, 1996; Alvarez, 1998; Ribeiro, 1998; Jeffrey, 2008; Gray, 2016; Earl & Rohlinger, 2018, Caballero & Gravante, 2018). Finally, I present my approach to narrative through Brecht's (1964) distancing effect, Austin's (1962) speech act and Polletta's (2006) notion of narrative in collective action.

2.1. Anthropology in context: democracy in Brazil

Even as notions of democracy have come to gain almost universal appeal, anthropologists have brought to the study of democracy an examination of its variety of interpretations (Paley, 2002). The debate among the various meanings attributed to the term suggest that democracy is not a single form of government, but a set of processes intertwined with culture and dependent on context.

In 1980s Brazil, after two decades as a dictatorship (1964-1985), democracy emerged triumphant as an aspiration for those who lived under an authoritarian regime. However, efforts at democratization in contexts where levels of poverty, discrimination and exclusion are high, as in Brazil, imply remarkable challenges. As Dagnino (2003) has pointed out, to confront the striking levels of social inequality would require a participatory project of extension of citizenship in terms of access to rights. Furthermore, Lima (2020) emphasizes that participatory democracy depends not only on access to civil rights but also on the distribution of power to the excluded sectors of society to engage in the political sphere.

Although the notion of citizenship came to constitute the core category of democracy in the political struggle in Brazil, a decade after the end of the military regime, Holston and Caldeira (1998) noted that elements of political democracy were operating relatively effectively, while citizenship was ineffective. The authors coined the term "disjunctive democracy" to describe these tensions between the state and civil rights. At the turn of the

century, the dispute among the various understandings of citizenship became more apparent during the "Pink Tide" or "turn to the left" when nearly 70 per cent of Latin America was governed by a leftist political party (Lima, 2020: 10).

In Brazil, the landscape of civil rights and participation changed when the Workers' Party (PT) came to power. The PT was founded in 1980 among the opposition to the military dictatorship, along with the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), and the Unified Workers' Central (CUT). The PT governed at the federal level from 1 January 2003, when Lula assumed the presidency, to 31 August 2016, when Rousseff was removed from office. Lula left office in 2010 as the most popular president in Brazilian history, with an unprecedented approval rating of 80 per cent (Hall, 2012: 15).

The PT's government created mechanisms of political participation and access to public goods that supported the inclusion of the poor and the institutionalization of social movements in structures of participatory democracy (Lima 2020: 23). Citizen-based policies were implemented, presenting a range of innovative trends in governance that tackled issues of inequality and accountability. On the other hand, corruption scandals crystallized a discontent with the PT's administration. The first major scandal was reported in 2005 when a group of PT leaders were charged with corruption in what became known as the *mensalão* (big monthly payment) (Foley, 2019:14). In addition, the party has received much criticism for having made alliances with elite sectors and "soften" its relation to Marxist ideas in order to remain in power (Puzone, 2019); and for having lost the centrality of its original claims of participatory democracy to the adoption of a new developmentalist model focused on economic policies (Dagnino, 2019).

In the end, the PT's efforts to confront inequality and deepen democracy had been outshone by the 2013 cycle of protests, popularly called the "Brazilian Spring" (Romancini & Castilho, 2019: 7). The demonstrations started as a protest against increases in public transportation fare, but they grew to include an unprecedented variety of issues: from corruption and government's spending on World Cup stadiums to inadequate welfare benefits, poorly functioning health services, a low education rate, and other concerns. What started as a protest of young left-wing activists, mostly students, rapidly broadened to include conservative, right-wing and extreme right-wing groups, setting the stage for the formation of "a new ideological and activist Right in Brazil" (ibid.: 8).

As the "activist Right" was consolidating, the "anti-PT sentiment" became strong and was eventually used to favor supporters of Rousseff's impeachment (Lima 2020: 72). The removal of Brazil's first female president on 31 August 2016 marked Brazil's "turn to the right" with the administration of her successors – Temer and Bolsonaro, respectively (ibid.: 1). Their governments are part of a shift toward reducing the number of democratic governance spaces (ibid.: 3). This shift has fostered a debate over the democratic collapse in the country. FIBRA is inserted in this context, when a president was removed from office and the Brazilian politics moved towards the reversal of civil rights and citizens' engagement in participatory mechanisms. As will be set forth hereafter, the notions of democracy in relation to citizenship and participation are fundamental for the analysis of FIBRA's narrative of coup.

2.2. Anthropology of social movements: Marxism, intersectionality and transnationalism

In order to analyze FIBRA in its constellation of causes and organizational forms, I combine Marxism in relation to class struggle with an intersectional approach to the multiple dimensions of identity and the transnational perspective that embraces the globalization agenda. These different theoretical models concern the complexity of the terrain over which FIBRA moves.

In *The Poverty of Philosophy,* Karl Marx (1976 [1847]) argued that production conditions made workers a new class for capital and their collective struggle would turn them into a self-conscious class. That is, the Marxist notion of class struggle appears as the various forms of the proletariat participate in its own social emancipation. Although Marx did not create a specific theory on social movements, he provided the basis for its analysis in relation to capitalism and class struggle (Barker et al., 2013). Marxism, as a primary source of the labor movement in Brazil, remains an important theoretical basis for the analysis of the recent political turmoil and the regressive labor rights in the country (Puzone & Miguel, 2019).

On the other hand, the emergence of new social movements (NSM) placed the issue of human action at the center of academic debates focusing on "struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference" (Edelman, 2001: 289). Marxism has since required an articulation of class struggle in interconnection with other oppressed groups' demands to suppress racism, sexism and LGBTQ-phobia. In order to stress the interconnections between race, gender, class, sexuality, and other axes of power

generating oppressions and inequalities, I employ the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1983) in the Brazilian context (Gonzales, 1982; Guimarães,1998; Klein & Luna, 2010; Bernardino-Costa, 2014, 2019).

The new stage of social movements in the 21st century is also marked by technological innovations and online communication (Melucci, 1996; Alvarez, 1998; Ribeiro, 1998; Jeffrey, 2008; Gerbaudo, 2012; Gray, 2016; Earl & Rohlinger, 2018, Caballero & Gravante, 2018). In terms of the impact of new technologies on the formation of forms of collective actions, I employ Ribeiro's (1998) notions of "witnessing at distance" and "activism at distance". According to Ribeiro, communication technologies have evolved towards the increasingly immediate circulation of written, visual and audio information, which have allowed the "witnessing at distance" to operate to a much larger degree than ever before. The immediacy of witnessing, in turn, activates forms of commitment at distance and stimulates the creation of a "transnational virtual community" (Ribeiro, 1998: 328). These notions enable an analysis of "how cybercultural politics enhances the interplay between political actors anchored in different levels of integration, transnational flows of political information and articulation" (ibid.). These notions are consistent with recent work emphasizing the increasing importance of "planetarization of action" (Melucci, 1989, 1996, 1998) and the configuration of a new "global civil society" (see Hannerz, 1992; Falk, 1993; and Walzer, 1995; Anheier et al., 2001; Price, 2003; Dryzek, 2012). In the context of this thesis, a transnational perspective is central to the analysis of FIBRA's novel attributes as a social movement whose existence depends on online communication and mobilizations across national boundaries.

2.3. Anthropology of narrative: alternative stories matter

The centrality of narrative as a key to understanding life has almost become a cliché in anthropological research (Marcus & Cushman, 1982; Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988; Atkinson, 1992). Anthropology is to a certain extent a production of narratives. Anthropologists tell stories all the time. But narrative is not an unproblematic inquiry: a story changes when it is told (Arendt, 1958), listeners do what they want with it (Boyd, 2009), we are changed by the stories we tell as much as those we listen to (Frank, 1997), not everything is "sayable" (Jackson, 2002), and the narratives of the world are numberless, it is simply there, like life itself (Barthes, 1977). However, narrative exists only insofar as it exists for others. The process of narrating is thus contextual, and so the importance of narratives in anthropological inquiry.

Narrative is present in various spheres of anthropological research: from fieldwork in which anthropologists constantly deal with all kinds of storytelling, to the analysis of these stories, and the process of ethnographic writing (Aull Davies, 2007). It implies that narrative does not figure only as data collecting or a mode of analysis; but is constitutive of the production of knowledge itself. This thesis explores these different dimensions of narrative: I applied Freire's (1970) idea of "generative themes" to identify FIBRA's main words and narratives during my fieldwork (see section 3.4); in my ethnographic writing, I have assumed a critical reflective attitude by taking the position of a participant narrator (see section 4.3); and for the analysis of FIBRA's narrative-construction, I combine reflexivity with Brecht's (1964) distancing effect, Austin's (1962) speech act theory, which is discussed below.

The narrative turn in social science research (Mitchell, 1981) and the Writing Culture movement (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) have created a set of conditions through which the study of cultures would more reflectively include the researchers' perspectives of how the people studied account for their world. Reflexivity examines the individual and social underpinnings of the study, without refusing to acknowledge the "position" from where the researcher produces their work. That is, reflexivity challenges the idea that scientific production is independent of the researcher who develops it.

Let me do a parallel between reflexivity and Bertolt Brecht's (1964) Epic Theater. In Brecht's theater, the play is intended to provoke a critical view of the action on stage by using techniques to break the illusionary characteristic of theatre. Brecht called these techniques *Verfremdungseffekt* – also known as alienation effect and distancing effect (Mumford, 2017: 60-71). One of the most popular techniques is the breaking of the "fourth wall", that is, the imaginary wall in theatre that separates the actors from the audience. In his analysis of Chinese acting, Brecht argues that:

> Chinese actor never acts as if there were a fourth wall besides the three surrounding him. He expresses his awareness of being watched. This immediately removes one of the European stage's characteristic illusions. The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place (1964: 91-92).

In Epic Theater, the *mise-en-scène* (the stage setting) is exposed in order to remind the spectator that the play is only a representation of reality, not reality itself. The breaking of the fourth wall prevents the audience to bathe themselves in empathetic emotions, which Brecht saw as a necessary condition to develop a critical attitude.

Like Brecht's distancing effect, the Writing Culture movement also reveals the *mise-en-scène* of the ethnographic work (Marcus, 1997). Critical reflexivity has made visible the illusion of scientific neutrality by revealing that there is not a single path that leads to knowledge about social life. The exposure of the *mise-en-scène* is an aesthetic choice that involves a politics: in anthropology, it represents the recognition that there is not a single, master narrative; in Epic Theater, it prevents the emotional involvement from obscuring critical thinking.

It is important to note that the aesthetics of Epic Theater are based on a technique of making the familiar strange to invite the audience to think critically about their own contexts; anthropology seeks to a great degree to make strange phenomena familiar. As Polletta argues "stories make sense in terms of already familiar stories" (2006: 14). And because alternative stories are always disputing with dominant familiar ones, a certain degree of emotional involvement can be fundamental to shape people's interests. Taking this into consideration, I try to balance these aspects: a certain level of emotional involvement to make the strange familiar, and the distancing effect to make the familiar strange through a critical reflexive perspective.

But, of course, FIBRA does many things aside from telling and creating narratives. As in Austin's famous theory of speech acts "in which to *say* something is to *do* something" (1962: 12); alternative stories are not only about *telling* but also *doing* something. My approach to the role of narrative in collective action is one that focuses on *telling* as much as on *doing*. My interest lies in how FIBRA produces, disseminates and *acts* on narratives. It is in this encounter between language and act that the importance of narrative for collective action dwells, revealing the political potency of alternative stories to bring about social change (Polletta, 2006: 2).

3. Methods, places and ethics

I begin this section by briefly presenting my motivations for choosing FIBRA as my field-site. Then, I combine notions of translocal ethnography (Marcus 1995, Hannerz, 2003) with Gray's (2016) concept of "being then" to introduce the methodological challenges in conducting fieldwork in a transnational site. After that, I evoke Scheper-Hughes' (1995) anthropologist as *companheira* and Juris' (2008) embodied knowledge to discuss the ethical dimension of engaging politically in the field. I finish with Freire's (1970) notion of generative themes to address the narrative dimension of my fieldwork.

3.1. Why FIBRA?

On 17 April 2016 at Kungsträdgården (the "King's Garden"), in central Stockholm, I had my first encounter with BRASSAR (Brazilians and friends of Brazil in Sweden for Democracy and against the Coup) during the first demonstration that marked the creation of the collective. On that very day, the Brazilian congress voted to impeach Rousseff. Since then, BRASSAR has been dedicated to denouncing the coup and the abuses against democracy in the country. In the second half of 2018, while attending the first semester of the master's program, I was following the presidential election in Brazil from which Bolsonaro emerged victorious. This turbulent political scenario in the country aroused much international attention. Facing this scenario, I decided to develop my research on the mobilizations for democracy in Brazil. Even though the official period of my fieldwork would only begin late in 2019, it was conducted during a longer period as I started collecting data at the beginning of the year. During this process, my field was taking shape. Initially I would focus on BRASSAR, but FIBRA ended up becoming my main object of study. Even though FIBRA was created by a member of BRASSAR, my participation in this transnational platform was not regularly active before 2019. This triggered my research interest as I was entering relatively uncharted territory. My ethnography thus engaged with FIBRA by including other collectives in various geographical and digital field-sites.

3.2. Virtual and transnational spaces: translocal and online ethnography

Given the fact that FIBRA is a transnational field, how can I locate it and myself within it? How can I "be there"? In order to develop fieldwork across geographic contexts without a single physical territory, it is important to rethink the taken-for-granted anthropological ideal of "being there" in a local community. This scenario has caused remarkable anxieties, which includes concerns about the potential trade-off between breadth in every relevant site and the dismantling of the global-local distinction (Hannerz, 1989, 1996, 2016; Marcus, 1995; Kearney, 1995; Tsing, 2000; Hage, 2005; Rajak, 2011). These tensions are closely related to the notions of what it is to do anthropology widely understood to be committed to the local level, the small-scale, the micro: "a myriad of little pictures", as Hannerz calls it (2016: 4); and also to a certain methodological nationalism centered on the idea that the "Other" lies waiting to be observed – "the *most* other of others" (Hannerz 1986: 363).

FIBRA is inserted in this context of shifts in the conditions of anthropological research. As translocality is a significant feature of FIBRA, I conducted my fieldwork inspired by the notion of "translocal ethnography" (Marcus 1995, Hannerz, 2003). Inspired by Hannerz's metaphor of "zooming" (2016: 4), I engaged with various attempts to moving between scales in order to trace the multiple ways in which the local and global dynamics delineated my field, and how the "transnational connections" (Hannerz, 1996) in FIBRA underscore a sense of locality and national identity.

Despite the anxieties of not being in a specific place, there are also the possibilities of being everywhere online (Hine, 2000, 2015; Kozinets, 2010; Uimonen, 2012, 2015; Gray 2016; Winter & Lavis, 2020). Nowadays we can move around easily with our own cameras, taking photos and making videos, and sharing them with people as if they were right there with us. These technologies bring new challenges to ethnography: on the one side, the ethnographers can appropriate the new technologies into the data collection; but they are also able to "follow the people" on social media. In my online ethnography, I employed Gray's notion of "being then" to understand "the ways our bodies extend themselves in temporal copresence" (2016: 505), and Hine's ethnography of E3 internet (Embedded, Embodied, Everyday Internet) based on "bodily-located, circumstantially active and experientially focused ethnography (2015: 20).

My field explores these possibilities of moving between transnational sites of offline and online participation, intersecting dichotomies such as the "local" and the "global", and the "being there" and the "being then". My fieldwork was divided into a long-term fieldwork in Stockholm, and shorter fieldworks in Berlin, Oslo, and Helsinki. In Stockholm, I participated in the activities of the collective BRASSAR; in Berlin, I participated in the Second International FIBRA Gathering from 16 to 18 August 2019; I went to Oslo on 31 May 2019 on behalf of an invitation to BRASSAR to participate in a three-day meeting with national members of the MST at the Norwegian Solidarity Committee for Latin America; and I went to Helsinki between 8 and 10 November 2019 together with a member of Friends of the Earth Sweden to a solidarity's network meeting.

Aside from face-to-face encounters, I participated in FIBRA's online world, following live streaming of protests, events, and seminars; participating in Facebook and WhatsApp groups; attending organizational virtual meetings; and, in general, being active on social media as a digital activist in cyberspace. In addition, I conducted online interview using Google Forms, from which I created a link to the form and shared it on FIBRA's Facebook group, along with

a text explaining its purpose[5]. The interview was structured and followed a roughly chronological order about the interviewees' trajectory in activism. They were allowed considerable freedom in answering – which differs from the most highly structured formats where the interviewees are asked to select from a set of possible responses (Aull Davies, 2007: 94)

I also engaged virtually with other organizations, social movements, activists and politicians – to which Juris refers as the "cultural logic of networking" (2008: 1). Besides posts and comments, the online world provided me with manifestos, letters, leaflets, videos, pictures, news and references of academic works. Furthermore, through online ethnography, this study traced how FIBRA's activists integrated new communication technology in their cyberactivism, which was crucial to identify the translocal dimension of their discursive practices. By combining my online participation with "offline" encounters in different sites, I followed FIBRA's *modus operandi* as a transnational social movement. In this way, I was able to explore how face-to-face and mediated interactions intersect in FIBRA and shape its ideas and practices.

3.3. Political engagement and militant ethnography

In this study, I employ Scheper-Hughes' (1995) idea of anthropologist as *companheira* and Juris' (2008) embodied knowledge to put into practice a participatory research. Scheper-Hughes asks anthropologists to move away from a research position of a "spectator":

> We can make ourselves available not just as friends or as 'patrons' in the old colonialist sense but as comrades (with all the demands and responsibilities that this word implies) to the people who are the subjects of our writings (1995: 419).

The anthropologist as comrade - *companheira* in Portuguese - recognizes her obligations to those people whose lives are used as tools for scientific research. By this, Scheper-Hughes advocates that anthropology has a political responsibility in not only describing and analyzing, but rather, actively engaging in the circumstances of the field. Juris's militant ethnography, in turn, seeks the production of embodied knowledge by "using the body as a research tool to grasp the affective dynamics of mass actions, mobilizations, and gatherings" (Juris, 2008: 209).

[5] Access the Google form here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1HoGZYE-B4JcKrbwsyKXieC7ywJ5dTJwwkCQckZug7GQ/edit?usp=sharing

I conducted my fieldwork inspired by such calls. *Companheira* was the kind of relationship I sought to build with the activists by building relationships of commitment. Through embodied knowledge, I sought to experience the emotions associated with activism in a collaborative process. I also applied Gray's idea of "being then in temporal copresence" in relation to how the body experiences virtual spaces (2016: 505). That is, I utilized my body in both the "offline" and "online" worlds to get a sense of the field's affective dynamics.

The construction of affective and collaborative engagement was facilitated by the fact that I am a Brazilian migrant who advocates for social justice, which means that my own personal traits fostered my *companheiras*' empathy for me and mine for them. In addition, being a Brazilian played a crucial role in understanding the development of FIBRA, since I have previous cultural experience and knowledge about Brazil long before the current authoritarian wave appeared on the topics studied by anthropologists. In my case, therefore, the risk of "going native" was not related to the conduct of "anthropology at home" (see Hannerz 2006) because I was not "there" in Brazil, but because, like my *companheiras*, I am constantly negotiating my identity as a Brazilian migrant. This is in line with Hannerz notion of "studying sideways":

> Looking at others who are, like anthropologists, in a transnational contact zone, and engaged there in managing meaning across distances, although perhaps with different interests, under other constraints (1998: 109).

In that context, I conducted ethnography not *about* or *for* Brazilian migrants struggling for democracy, but *with* them. This kind of relation brings to light the political and ethical dimensions of anthropological research. For me it was not sufficient to sit idly by taking field notes, or to focus only on participant observation. By performing the role of anthropologist-*companheira*, I was regularly moving between anthropology and political action. Militant ethnography provided an epistemological ground that transformed my practice of researching activism into research as activism. On the other side, this engagement creates an apparent contradiction in ethnographic research. In actively interacting with the research subjects as *companheira*, I had to put attention to the issue of positionality. I needed appropriate reflective practices to address my position and its influence on the ways in which I engage, interpret and write about my field. Having this in mind, I have chosen to take the position of a participant narrator that I discuss in section 4.3.

3.4. Paulo Freire's "generative themes" and the practice of democratizing ethnography

The combination of militant, online, and translocal ethnography uncover a theoretical landscape that illustrates the range of possibilities brought about by ethnographic encounters, including one of its versions: the Freirean, one that seeks a practice of democratizing ethnography. The Brazilian revolutionary educator, Paulo Freire (1970), founded a critical pedagogy movement, known as "The pedagogy of the oppressed". The method is based on conducting an ethnographic evaluation of a community to identify its generative themes, that is, the familiar words, ideas, habits, relationships and conditions that are central to people's everyday life experiences. These themes contain the communities' own collective power through which they can recognize the causes of their oppression as the basis for critical dialogue and pedagogical strategies.

Freire's revolutionary education and politics through critical and democratic ethnography requires that anthropologists, as transformative researchers, appropriate people's references and contexts, and then amplify the generative themes back to them for further dialogue and actions. This implies listening, dialoguing and acting, which helps lead to the creation of a critical democratic public sphere (McKenna, 2013: 450). Freire's ideas thus involve transforming power-knowledge relations of researcher and researched as an active form of democratic participation towards actions for social change. Essentially, this kind of ethnography must be entrenched in a combination of dialogue, critical reflection and praxis.

Inspired by these ideas, I sought to establish a democratic dialogue with my *companheiras* and collaborate in diverse spheres of action from a critical reflective attitude. This prompted me to pay attention to FIBRA's generative themes. From this, I was able to identify FIBRA's narrative-construction in terms of the relationship between words and actions, which served as an analytical tool for understanding the movement's ideas of democracy.

4. Writing Culture: from the field to ethnographic text

In this section, I discuss how I bring the artistic practices in the field into the ethnographic text by combining elements of Epic Theater (Brecht, 1964), Greek tragedy (Chou, 2012; Scott, 2006, 2008, 2014) and Carnival (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]; DaMatta, 1984, 1991). I also

draw parallels between these genres with notions of democracy – after all, democracy is the main character of this story!

4.1. Between anthropology and the arts: an alternative presentation

There are many points of contact between anthropology and the arts: both have culture as their object; both critically observe, participate, and/or intervene in the lifeworld of a society; both translate the "everyday" in order to make representations of a "field" (Marcus & Myers, 1995). Art objects and cultural performances have offered anthropological research a laboratory for the study of social relations within societies (Boas, 1955 [1927]; Forge 1973; Fernandez, 1986; Turner, 1973; Witherspoon, 1977; Munn, 1973). Anthropology and the arts also feed on each other's source of knowledge to develop new interdisciplinary subfields, such as the anthropology of art (Howard & Perkins, 2006), the anthropology of performance (Turner, 1986), visual anthropology (Guindi, 2004), literary anthropology (Poyatos, 1988), and theater anthropology (Barba & Savarese, 1991).

In addition, sketches, drawings, paintings, photographs, videos, literature and poetry have historically been used to outline fieldwork notebooks. This affects how anthropologists present their findings incorporating artistic expressions in the conception, creation, and presentation of ethnographic work (Schneider & Wright, 2013). It is not, therefore, merely in the ethnographic data collecting that the creative vigor of anthropological knowledge production resides. When it comes to this thesis' presentation, my interest lies in how to bring the artistic practices in the field into the ethnographic text.

During my fieldwork, I helped organizing diverse artistic activities: from workshops to exhibitions, performances, theatrical scenes, concerts, and carnival parties. In addition, the fact that many Brazilians have found parallels between what was happening in Brazil and different genres drew my attention. Tragedy, circus, freak show, horror movie, theatre of the absurd, tragicomedy and telenovela were usually cited to describe the Brazilian political scenario. Politicians have also usually been associated with famous heroes and villains: Bolsonaro – Bozo the Clown; Temer – Dracula; Moro – Superman; Lula – Prometheus. My aim is thus to construct a kind of scenario configured through the interaction between speech acts, gestures, images, colors, and costumes.

I began to think about the relationship between anthropology and the arts, but it was not until I was confronted with the writing up of my thesis that I seriously engaged with these questions. I started to look for a viable compromise between the structure and language expected from a master thesis in Social Anthropology and the artistic expression. I was also concerned about obtaining a degree of clarity despite the complexity of the subject matter in relation to the accepted length of this thesis. Inspired by the artistic practices during my fieldwork and the writing workshops conducted by the professor Helena Wulff during the master program (Wulff, 2016), I then decided to delve into and include elements of Epic Theater, Greek tragedy and Carnival in my writing. I believe that this approach may also help the reader who is not so familiar with the Brazilian political scenario to follow FIBRA's narrative-construction more closely.

4.2. Dramatizing democracy: Epic Theater, Greek tragedy and Carnival

The *mise-en-scène* of anthropological work leads us to question what kind of narrative structure the anthropologists use in their writing (Webster, 1983; Geertz, 1988; Wulff, 2016). Anthropology has traditionally been inspired by realism presented in the classical novel, in which the author's task is to produce the effects of "objectivist realism" (Webster, 1983: 196). But, with the interrogation of representation's illusory character since the advent of the Writing culture movement (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), more attention has been paid to textual techniques, albeit anthropological text has not broken with the purpose of realistic interpretation to the same extent as some artistic forms did.

As mentioned in section 2.3, my goal is to strike a balance between the emotional involvement needed to make the strange familiar (Polletta, 2006) and the Epic Theater's distancing effect to make the familiar strange (Brecht, 1964). To accomplish this task, I decided to combine the main division of a thesis structure – "chapters" – with the division placed within a theater work – "acts". I divide Part II – where most of this thesis' "plot" occurs – into three "chapter acts"; each representing a moment of dramatic tension in the recent history of Brazil relevant to the development of FIBRA.

Since acts are usually composed by scenes, I begin each chapter act with a scene based on concrete events, characters, documented statements and fragments of intellectual journeys aimed to provide the reader with both a very engaging experience and a basis for

argumentation. In addition to politicians and public figures, there is also a chorus. According to Chou, the chorus in Greek tragedy represented "individuals that Athens had forgotten, repressed or exploited in reality" (2012: 58). In this thesis' scenes, the chorus is based on my field notes and represents the collective voice of FIBRA – also, comparatively, neglected and marginalized. But, since this is a master's thesis and not a theater play, each scene is followed by a more detailed ethnographic description and an anthropological analysis of FIBRA's narrative-construction.

In the scenes, I use distancing effect's techniques, such as the breaking of the fourth wall in order to remind the reader of the anthropological *mise-en-scène*. In addition to these techniques, I bring elements of Greek tragedy and carnival. In order to do so, I outline lessons from the tragic as a site of multivocality (Chou, 2012), and carnival's polyphonic subversion of social hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]). I use these elements because it is also possible to draw several parallels between them and the idea of democracy. I also bring anthropological perspectives of tragedy in terms of the timeliness of tragic sensibility (Scott, 2006, 2008, 2014) and carnival as the basis of the "Brazilian dilemma" (DaMatta, 1984).

Tragedy was invented during the transition from tyranny to democracy in the Ancient Greece. According to Chou (2012), the Ancient Greeks used their tragedies to deal with conflicting desires and values related to the idea of democracy. In dramatizing democracy, tragedy helped make voices beyond the official political scope be noticed. Chou uses the term "multivocality" to encompass this manifold of characters and issues that existed at the heart of Greek tragedy and democratic polis (ibid.: 51-79). It is important to note, however, that democracy in Ancient Greece was extended only to its citizens, which at the time excluded women, youths, slaves, and foreigners (ibid.: 8). I suggest, thereby, the subversive character of carnival as formulated by Bakhtin (1984 [1965]).

Bakhtin saw the carnivalesque as the representation of a subversion of one reality into another where hierarchies are suspended by the proletariat, the lower class, and the neglected. As such, the carnivalesque is *polyphonic* in that it appropriates a wide array of discourses in an inclusive democratic spirit: "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bakhtin, 1984 [1929]: 6). Like tragedy's multivocality, the polyphonic makes heard multiple voices. But, in contrast to tragedy, the polyphonic voices of carnival participate in the public arena. The combination of

these elements encapsulates a multiplicity of conflicting points of view, necessary for the process of dramatizing democracy.

4.3. The anthropologist as a participant narrator

Geertz (1988) has showed that the illusion of objectivity in scientific research is revealed in the very figure of the anthropologist as author. According to Geertz, the solution to the anthropological middle ground between art and science is to accept the literary dimensions of ethnographic text. The anthropologist as author would thus constitute territories where the ethnographic text becomes the anthropologist's views of the studied people's views. Like any professional storyteller, I have a relationship with the narrative: I am a Brazilian woman in the diaspora. As my fieldwork experience intertwined with the people studied, I decided to build the authorial character of my ethnographic text by constructing a narrative in which all interpretations intertwine, including my own. In the introductory scenes of each chapter act, I will play the narrator's character. The first-person dimension of the narrator as a character within the story – which is usually hidden from the researcher's voice under the assumed neutrality of ethnographic research – presents the dimension of the anthropologist as participant narrator.

By positing myself as a participant narrator in the introductory scenes, I combine my own personal story with FIBRA's, while also being able to distance myself from it through the chorus. By doing so, I avoid compromising my position as a participant and transforming the ethnographic writing into a monological authorial voice. In this way, I try to move beyond the dilemma between objectivism and subjectivism, making both myself and the audience-reader aware of my position in the ethnographic text.

Returning to Austin's (1962) idea in which to *say* something is to *do* something; "just as people *do* things with stories" (Polletta, 2006: 14), anthropologists *do* many things aside from *re-telling* stories. Here, ethnographic writing is a process of *doing*, and so the textual strategy is an important dimension. Scheper-Hughes once proposed: "anthropological writing can be a site of resistance [...] We can disrupt expected academic rules and statuses in the spirit of the Brazilian 'carnivalesque'" (1995: 420). As an imported "objectification" of the *tupiniquim* Brazilian woman who sings *bossa nova* and *samba* in Sweden, I still hope that carnival, one of the most important celebrations in Brazilian culture, will not be transformed into a military parade. In the same way, I hope to bring carnival's social transformative potential into my

writing. Carnival releases impulses that challenge the *status quo* and subvert social rules – is not that the purpose of critical knowledge? In the spirit of the Brazilian carnivalesque, this thesis celebrates the subversive dimension of the relation between the "playful", the "political", and not least the analytical "academic".

PART II

RISING ACTION

The Main Characters

Before starting the chapter acts, I first introduce the ensemble of characters and political figures in the scenes[6].

- Narrator: my own anthropological voice.

- Chorus: the voices of FIBRA.

- Lula: a founding member of the Workers' Party (PT) and president of Brazil (2003-2011).

- Rousseff: the first woman to hold the Brazilian presidency (2011-2016).

- Temer: Rousseff's vice president and president of Brazil (2016-2018).

- Bolsonaro: retired military officer and current president of Brazil since 1 January 2019.

- Franco: Brazilian councilwoman, feminist, and human rights activist murdered on 14 March 2018.

- Moro: Brazilian jurist who conducted Operation Car Wash, convicted Lula, and served as Minister of Justice and Public Security for Bolsonaro's government from 1 January 2019 to 24 April 2020.

- Cunha: President of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies between 1 February 2015 and 7 July 2016 who opened the petition for Rousseff's impeachment.

- Wyllys: winner of the fifth season of Big Brother Brazil and first openly gay-rights activist congressman (2011-2019). He gave up on his Congress seat in January 2019 and went into exile after receiving death threats.

[6] When it comes to Brazilian women in politics, they are often called by their first names. Feminists have pointed out that treating female politicians by their first name is one of the subtle ways of reducing the authority of a woman in power - the same can be applied to gay male politicians. I try to avoid it as much as I can, using their first names solely when I quote other people's statements.

5. Chapter Act 1: #NãoAoGolpe: The beginning of the end for democracy

On 2 December 2015, a petition for Rousseff's impeachment was accepted by Eduardo Cunha, the then president of the Chamber of Deputies (Foley, 2019: 17). The Rousseff's administration allegedly used *pedaladas fiscais* (deceptive budgetary measures), that is, the use of state banks to front funds without officially declaring a loan to pay general government obligations (ibid.). The accusation claimed that such action violated the 2000 Law of Fiscal Responsibility that "prohibited the usage of credit between a state financial institution and the government entity that controls it, and that comes to benefit from the loan" (Lei Complementar #101 2000, Art. 36). Rousseff's advocates argued that the opposition was breaching popular sovereignty by using a "common accounting technicality in the national public administration to annul the manifest will of the Brazilian people at the polls" (Lodi Ribeiro, 2015: 3). Rousseff was, nonetheless, formally impeached on 17 April 2016 and removed from office on 31 August 2016.

The circumstances in which the impeachment occurred, provoked immediate reaction between several international actors through manifestos, collective letters, complaints, and online petitions (Proner et al., 2016: 24-25). This event also marked the emergence of several collectives of Brazilians around the world. This chapter act addresses the formation of FIBRA as part of these international mobilizations. For this propose, I employ a form of narrative that has arisen from my fieldwork: memoir; that is, a collection of activists' memories about the events that were critical in building their urge for action – which Polletta calls "narrative reconstruction" (2006: 33).

I collected their narratives through online interview using Google Forms (see p. 19-20). Findings from the online interview were supported by visual material, informal conversations and a review of FIBRA's documents. Based on the data collected, I reconstruct the day that marked the emergence of FIBRA collectives in the scene below. In addition to bringing my own memories, I watched once again the six-hour voting session at the Chamber of Deputies available on YouTube[7]. I also revisited pictures and videos of the BRASSAR protest that took place that day in Stockholm.

[7] The session is available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-u2jD7W3yU

5.1. Scene: The stage is set: the BBB political show

This scene takes place on 17 April 2016 at the Brazil's Chamber of Deputies during the impeachment vote on President Rousseff; and at Kungsträdgården (King's Garden), in Stockholm, where the first BRASSAR protest occurred. All the deputies' statements and actions presented in this scene were collected from the voting session (*my translation*).

The scene starts at the Brazil's Chamber of Deputies.

- Narrator: Honourable audience, on the historical day of Sunday 17 April 2016, millions of Brazilians' eyes around the world were turned towards the Chamber of Deputies to follow the vote on whether the president, Dilma Rousseff, should be put through an impeachment trial. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets across more than twenty states in Brazil. Outside the Congress building in Brasília, the pro- and anti-impeachment protesters were divided by a steel barrier. On each side, giant screens were installed so that the protesters could follow the voting session. On the one side of the barrier, a red crowd of anti-impeachment protesters.

- Chorus *(chanting)*: *Não ao golpe*! Impeachment without crime is coup!

- Narrator: On the other side, a green and yellow crowd of pro-impeachment protesters.

- Pró-impeachment protesters *(chanting)*: *Tchau, querida*! Dilma out! Impeachment now!

- Narrator: During that Sunday afternoon, I was in the King's Garden in central Stockholm with dozens of Brazilians who gathered to demonstrate against the impeachment. The climate was a mixture of hope and tension over what would be decided in the voting session.

The scene moves to King's Garden. The narrator joins the Chorus and holds a placard stating, "Come to democracy". They start chanting together: "Fascists shall not pass!"

- Narrator *(leaving the Chorus):* After the protest, we went to our homes to wait for the chamber's voting session. The session lasted about six hours. The deputies were called one by one by the accuser-in-chief of the impeachment, Eduardo Cunha. They could use the microphone for some seconds to justify their decisions. With each vote, the crowd of deputies cheered or booed.

- Deputy: for the military in 1964, today and always; for the police; in the name of God and the Brazilian family, I vote yes for the impeachment! Lula and Dilma in jail!

- Deputy: For the end of corruption and paid vagabonds! I vote yes!

- Deputy: Bye to PT, the party of darkness, I vote yes!

- Deputy: In the name of the nation…

- Deputy: For my family, for the good citizens…

- Deputy: I, along with my children and my wife, who form the Brazilian traditional family that these bandits want so much to destroy with proposals that children change sex and learn sex at school at the age of six, my vote is yes!

- Deputy *(singing)*: Dilma goes away because Brazil does not want you. Take Lula with you and all the bitches from the PT!

- Narrator: The triad "God, family and nation" would reverberate again and again throughout the voting session[8] in a congress considered one of the most conservative in the history of Brazil, where the BBB benches…

The Big Brother Brazil theme song starts to play.

- Narrator: Actually, this is not the Big Brother Brazil reality show![9]

The song turns off.

- Narrator: The BBB is a conservative political coalition nicknamed "The Bull, Bible, and Bullet benches". The coalition represents together the agribusiness…

An actor crosses the stage holding a placard with a picture of Bolsonaro wearing a cowboy hat.

- Narrator: The evangelical Christian…

A placard with a picture of Bolsonaro being baptized in the Jordan River by Everaldo Pereira, Pastor and president of the conservative Social Christian Party.

- Narrator: And the military and security sectors…

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[8] For an analysis of how the pro-impeachment deputies used the words "God, family and nation" in their speeches, see Rebechi, 2019.

[9] Big Brother is a reality show based on a Dutch TV series created by producer John de Mol in 1997. The reality show follows a group of contestants who live together in a custom-built home under constant surveillance. The Brazilian version is called Big Brother Brazil, or simply BBB. The term "BBB" in Brazilian politics became popular to refer to a conservative coalition that represents the agribusiness, the fundamentalist Christian, and the security sectors.

A placard with Bolsonaro's image making a handgun signal, which became his campaign salute in the 2018 presidential election.

- Narrator: They campaigned against the social programs championed by the PT and portrayed the party as a "communist danger", a promoter of "gender ideology" with the purpose of destroying the traditional family and the religious values. Of the 367 deputies that voted to initiate the impeachment proceedings against Rousseff, 313 were members of one of the BBB coalition groups, and 53 were members of all three (Macaulay, 2019: 66).

- Narrator: The most outrageous moment happened when Bolsonaro, a deputy at that time, dedicated his vote in favor of the impeachment…

- Bolsonaro's voice: to the memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the dread of Dilma Rousseff…

The Chorus reacts fervently.

- Chorus: Do you know who Brilhante Ustra was? The first convicted officer in the Brazilian court / For kidnapping and torture during the military regime (OAB, 2018) / Dilma Rousseff was among those / Captured, tortured, and jailed / Bolsonaro has opened the door to fascism!

The deputy Jean Wyllys spit in the direction of Bolsonaro.

- Wyllys: First, I want to say that I am embarrassed to participate in this farce, this indirect election, led by a traitor and conspirator, and supported by torturers, cowards, political illiterates and sellout. This sexist farce! In the name of the rights of the LGBT people, the black people living in slums, the culture workers, the homeless, the landless, I vote no to the coup.

- Deputy *(addressing Wyllys):* Get out of here because we are going to revoke Brazil! We vote yes, and whoever votes yes puts their hand up!

The deputy releases a carnival confetti cannon, filling the air with a glittering cloud of color.

- Cunha: God have mercy on our nation, I vote yes!

The chamber erupts into cheers. The deputies who voted yes sing a football chant that has become the anthem of the pro-impeachment protests.

- Pro-impeachment deputies *(singing):* "I am a Brazilian with great pride with much love".

- Anti-impeachment deputies *(chanting):* "Coup, coup, coup".

- Narrator: The impeachment proceedings then moved to the Senate that decided to accept the charges and, on 31 August 2016, voted 61-20 to convict Rousseff.

- Rousseff: Twice I have seen the face of death up close: when I was tortured for days on end, subjected to abuses that make us doubt humanity and the meaning of life itself; and when a serious and extremely painful illness could have cut short my life. Today I only fear for the death of democracy for which many of us here in this chamber fought[10].

Rousseff goes down the Presidential Palace's ramp, thousands of women are waiting for her with flowers. The chorus joins the crowd of women.

5.2. The creation of FIBRA

Online interview and the collection of memories

The question addressed in this chapter act is related to the motivations that prompted Brazilian migrants to collectively organize around a common cause. I collected the activists' motivations through online interview using Google Forms[11]. I received forty responses to the form. Among the interviewees, women accounted for the largest number, only seven men responded to it. Most lived in Europe and EUA, one in Western Asia. The period of residence abroad varied between 4 to 27 years, except for two who moved from Brazil in less than 3 years. Three interviewees were not born in Brazil but lived in the country before. The age ranged from 28 to 72 years. Most interviewees participated in more than one activist group. In addition to democracy-related collectives, they also mentioned feminist, LGBTQ+, Latin American, anti-racist and environmental activist groups. The majority had a trajectory in activism prior to FIBRA.

As Polletta points out, the personal dimension is central in narrative reconstruction: "the question of origins is historical but also personal" (2006: 44). My interviewees' narratives about their motivations present three important aspects in relation to the historical-personal dimension: 1. Each story is delineated by different places, inserted in a transnational context;

[10] President Dilma Rousseff's speech at the final judgment of the impeachment trial on August 29, 2016. See https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2016/08/29/veja-a-integra-do-discurso-de-defesa-de-dilma-no-senado

[11] Access the Google form here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1HoGZYE-B4JcKrbwsyKXieC7ywJ5dTJwwkCQckZug7GQ/edit?usp=sharing

2. Those telling their stories are constantly negotiating their identity as Brazilians in the diaspora doing activism at distance; 3. Their activist identities are directly intertwined with Brazilian politics. It is in these different transnational dimensions embedded in the activists' stories that I find my point of departure for analyzing the events that placed democracy at the center of a tempestuous scenario in Brazil. Taking these aspects into consideration, I selected the main motivations mentioned by the interviewees in order to analyze the creation of FIBRA:

1. The coup against Brazilian democracy in 2016 with Rousseff's impeachment
2. The anguish of witnessing the growth of political polarization and intolerance since the 2013 cycle of protests in Brazil
3. The urge to collectively oppose the coup and meet Brazilian migrants with the same purpose
4. The importance of informing international actors – such as the media, politicians, NGOs, social movements, etc. – on Brazil's current situation
5. The global rise of neofascism and right-wing populism

In the following, I go through these formulations and employ transnational social movements' theory as the basis for the analysis. Before proceeding, it is important to mention that I chose not to use any visual material for security reasons and the activists' real name may have been altered. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese and then translated by me, as well as the documents used in this chapter act.

Witnessing Brazil's political crisis at distance: a fuel for action

The interviewees' first motivation was presented in the opening scene. The historical day that buried Rousseff's government largely shaped the claimed reason that has triggered FIBRA's formation. April 17th, 2016 also marked the first action of BRASSAR, the new collective that had just been born in Stockholm. Like BRASSAR, most collectives emerged between March and August 2016. However, the interviewees' testimonies also reveal that they were driven by a concern over the fate of democracy in the years preceding Rousseff's impeachment, as presented in the second motivation. Fernanda, a journalist and one of the coordinators of FIBRA's weekly program on YouTube called *Vozes de FIBRA*, spoke of how in 2016 she got involved in the movement and suddenly stopped to note:

> It is important to mention the 2013 cycle of protests. In my opinion, it represented the beginning of the democratic setback that has happened in Brazil hitherto. Conservative and right-wing

> groups occupied the streets and the PT government watched these protests totally astonished. Brazil was going through a good period, but we were suffocated by the new models of civil organization that arrived in the country from the USA and by uprising movements taking place in other countries. It was clear that the world was changing the way of participating and mobilizing. We were late to respond to these changes.

Like Fernanda, most interviewees claimed that, although Rousseff's impeachment played a definitive role in FIBRA's initial actions, the 2013 cycle of protests was a relevant factor. In general, these formulations are in line with Ribeiro's (1998) "witnessing at distance". In the context of FIBRA's formation, the witnessing at distance via online communication enabled Brazilians in the diaspora to bear witness to the abuses against democracy in the country. The witnessing, in turn, produced an effect of copresence with what was happening in the country, which was often described through emotional reactions, such as "anguish", "concern", and "urge". In this development, Rousseff's removal represented the decisive factor for the "witnessing at distance" to become "activism at distance". That is, the witnessing was transformed into collective action during a breakdown, a dramatic event that led to efforts aimed at reconstituting ruptured democratic institutions.

It is also important to note that Fernanda inserts the 2013 cycle of protests in Brazil into the global changes in view of new models of collective action. According to Alonso (2017), besides the local factors, the wave of global protests for social justice from 2011 to 2013 contributed significantly to the 2013 protests in the country. Brazil also attracted worldwide attention with the hosting of mega-events – the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup, the 2014 World Cup, and the 2016 Olympics –, which provided a global stage for street protests. These protests were considered to be part of an ongoing cycle of protests worldwide, utilizing tactics and performances previously used in protests such as the Arab Spring, the Indignados and the Occupy (Mendonça et al., 2019: 5). The new models of civil organization are characterized by the extensive use of social media platforms by protesters to assemble individuals from diverse backgrounds and traditions – which Juris calls the "logic of aggregation" (Juris, 2012: 260). The "witnessing at distance" and the changing paradigm of social movements nourished Brazilian migrants' drive to act and provided much of the impetus for the creation of FIBRA.

The construction of a transnational community

The witnessing at distance and activism at distance are two political dimensions of what Ribeiro calls "virtual-imagined transnational community" (1998: 328). Communities existing

online are known as virtual communities. According to Rheingold, “virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (1993: 5). Ribeiro differs between a virtual community and an imagined community: an imagined community is an abstraction symbolically and politically constructed, while the virtual community, besides being that, is a parallel state between reality and abstraction (1998: 330). These notions of virtual and imagined communities have played an increasingly role in transnational social movements (Melucci, 1996; Alvarez, 1998; Jeffrey, 2008; Gray, 2016; Earl & Rohlinger, 2018).

Edgard, a member of BRASSAR who has lived in Stockholm for 13 years, was the person who first came up with the idea of creating a platform to connect the emerging collectives scattered around the world advocating for democracy in Brazil. His description of FIBRA’s creation presents how a new virtual-imagined transnational community was formed:

> We started to get in touch with collectives from other cities through social media and the idea to create a “collective of collectives” has evolved into FIBRA. FIBRA played a crucial role in bringing people together and consolidating locally the emerging collectives against the coup. After all, we are not simply a group of dozens of people in Stockholm, but thousands of people around the world who share the same ideas. FIBRA emerged from the need to connect Brazilian migrants who felt powerless in the face of the events in Brazil. Finding these people was crucial to start organizing collectively and forming a networked community.

Edgard’s many years’ experience working as an Internet Marketing Executive in media companies drove him to create a “collective of collectives”, which he sometimes refers to as “network of networks”. Gerlach and Hine had already, in the 1970s, recognized that “movement organization can be characterized as a network” (1970: 33). The authors determined that the most common type of activist organization was a segmentary, polycephalous, and integrated network, which became known as the SPIN model. Significantly, Gerlach (2001) adjusted the SPIN model to be less polycephalous (many-headed) and more polycentric (many-centered), indicating that contemporary social movements tended to be less leader-focused.

Although the existence of social networks as a sociological object existed before the digital technological boom, the emergence of online social networks as a technical and cultural phenomenon is innovative because it digitizes the connections between individuals. The

implications of the widespread use of digital media bring significant changes to the dynamics of contemporary civil organizations which also lead to an intense questioning of the meaning of collective action and of collective in general. Bennett and Segerberg (2013), for instance, explore how the mechanisms of digital media platforms bring diverse individuals together without the need for a coherent, unified, and homogeneous collective identity or formal organization. Juris and Khasnabish develop the idea of emerging subjectivities:

> new political actors who are building a new politics of autonomy and self-management rooted in local territories and identities while also reaching out horizontally across diversity, difference, and geographic space to develop new forms of regional and transnational coordination (2013: 18).

Edgard describes FIBRA as a "multi-partisan, horizontal, participatory, decentralized, diverse, and networked movement". These descriptions insert FIBRA in this changing context of collective organization. This is also expressed in the interviewees' testimonies that often communicated a collective identity of being leaderless. However, for FIBRA to evolve into a transnational social movement, it required the engagement of key people, like Márcia. "Without Márcia, FIBRA would probably not exist, she is the person who keeps us connected", Fernanda pointed out.

Márcia, one of the main coordinators of FIBRA, is a 38-year-old Brazilian woman from Pernambuco who lives in Netherlands. She is a social worker and skilled at organizing, bringing people together and solving conflicts. Márcia is a very dear person to FIBRA's activists; some call her "the great mother of FIBRA". In the online interview, I asked activists about their first contact with FIBRA. At this point, Márcia's name appeared several times. Besides playing a central role in the movement today, Márcia was also engaged in the first steps that gave birth to FIBRA. Fernanda was one of them:

> I arrived in Ireland with my son in February 2016. In the first days after my arrival, the political situation in Brazil worsened. I found a group of people on Facebook and we decided to organize a demonstration against the coup in front of the Brazilian embassy on 15 March. It was the first act of the newborn collective "Irlanda pela Esquerda". Due to our demonstration, a wonderful woman found us: Márcia, a person who ignites the flame of love wherever she goes. After the impeachment, the International Front was born and in October we began organizing the first International Gathering.

This example illustrates FIBRA's process of virtual organization through which an individual action online became a local collective action offline, and then the local collective became part of a transnational social movement. This process represents interviewees' third motivation: the urge to collectively oppose the coup and meet Brazilian migrants with the same purpose. It was through the lens of shared ideas that the need to create interpersonal bonds through social media arose. This was combined with a sensation of "self-enlargement", that is, the feeling that you are here and in many other places at the same time (Ribeiro, 1998: 330). The sense of enlarged self virtually transported to other places empowered people who "felt powerless in the face of the events in Brazil", as Edgard described it.

In this context, Márcia's role reflects the emergence of a new form of leadership, which Gerbaudo calls "soft" leadership: "influential Facebook admins and activist tweeps become 'soft leaders' or choreographers, involved in setting the scene, and constructing an emotional space within which collective action can unfold" (2012: 5). Márcia, nonetheless, constantly remind the activists that she is not FIBRA's leader. Gerbaudo uses the metaphor of dance to describe this characteristic of soft leadership:

> Just like conventional choreographers in the field of dance, these core organizers are for the most part invisible on the stage itself. They are reluctant leaders or 'anti-leaders': leaders who, subscribing to the ideology of horizontalism, do not want to be seen as leaders in the first place but whose scene-setting and scripting work has been decisive in bringing a degree of coherence to people's spontaneous and creative participation in the protest movements (ibid.: 13).

Márcia, as FIBRA's "choreographer", constructed an emotional space by means of spheres of intimacy provided by the interactive character of online communication, which is essential for the process of mobilization of a "spatially dispersed and socially diverse constituency" (Gerbaudo, 2012: 14). This brings us to another important aspect in the process of the construction of a transnational community: the daily dimension that social media provide.

Social media, cyberactivism and the battle of narratives

As we have seen so far, the witnessing at distance has given rise to other dimension of activism through the possibilities brought about by new communication technologies – especially the Internet, mobile phones and digital platforms (Melucci, 1996; Alvarez, 1998; Ribeiro, 1998; Jeffrey, 2008; Gray, 2016; Earl and Rohlinger, 2018, Caballero and Gravante, 2018). Besides facilitating people to find each other, it is through communication

technologies that FIBRA's activists made political participation a part of their daily life, exploring new forms of activism at distance. FIBRA was developed through a process that placed Brazilians in the diaspora at the center of initiatives and brought transnational activism into their daily lives. Fernanda and Márcia described this process as follows:

> Fernanda: The opportunity to exercise my right to claim a more egalitarian life for my fellow countrypeople is what inspires me to devote hours of the day to activism. Democracy is a daily exercise. Living abroad opened this perspective for me. It seems that from far away, we can do more. And FIBRA offers the conditions for me to practice this right.
>
> Márcia: FIBRA provided me a broader understanding of what global citizenship is, breaking the idea that, in order to fight for a better Brazil, we must live in the country. It also allowed me to meet activists in the world who, like me, dream of a democratic Brazil.

Both testimonies reveal the importance of FIBRA in transforming the way they think about home and political action in terms of the construction of a transnational idea of citizenship. Their identities and social practices are bound not only to one place or nation but grounded in transnational network social relations. These ideas mirror the discussions about global civil society (Hannerz, 1992; Falk, 1993; and Walzer, 1995). The concept of global civil society is commonly used to articulate questions about the role of non-state actors – such as nongovernmental organizations and social movements – in influencing public opinion and putting pressure on states and corporations.

This is expressed in the interviewees' fourth motivation related to the dispute of narrative on social media and is in line with another important characteristic of the witnessing at distance: how cyberpolitics can intervene in real politics, that is, "the virtual power of global public opinion, of the transnational community" (Ribeiro, 1998: 344). In Edgard's words:

> Living abroad means that we are outside the sphere of influence of the right-wing media bubble that surrounds Brazil and we can develop a more independent, diverse opinion. This is one of FIBRA's primary roles, to influence global public opinion by informing international actors about the real situation in Brazil, not the one sold by the Brazilian media monopoly. Moreover, it is safer to dispute narratives living abroad than in Brazil. People are more affected by violence there.

Edgard illustrates how FIBRA emerged as an alternative to the official singular story of Brazilian media monopoly, entering a field of "battle of narratives" (batalha de narrativas) – as FIBRA's activists usually call it. Lima contextualizes how the Brazilian media operates:

> The national mainstream media is almost entirely owned by family business such as the family Marinho, which owns Rede Globo television network, and the Macedo family, owner of Grupo Record television network. These giant media corporations are not engaged with a national development strategy, contrarily, they are dedicated to the financialization of the economy and the transnational integration of the Brazilian economy with international allies (Lima, 2020: 73).

This idea underlines the activists' claim that the Brazilian mainstream media, alongside the international capital in the support of neoliberal policies, was one of the entities that used its power and influence to mobilize both the civil society and the judiciary against the PT, which was central for the propulsion of the impeachment (Avritzer, 2017; Silva, 2017; Alonso, 2017; de Albuquerque, 2017, Foley and Casara, 2019). In that sense, FIBRA's cyberactivism manifests itself as a means of distributing alternative narratives through digital protests in order to influence public opinion by bring to light the interests behind the narrative promoted by the media monopoly.

A type of virtual mobilization largely used by FIBRA is hashtag activism. Hashtag activism has become an important organizing tool to advance alternative narratives and build diverse networks of dissent (Jackson et al. 2020). The first hashtags used by FIBRA's activists in 2016 were #NãoAoGolpe (Not to the coup) and #TodosPelaDemocracia (Everyone for democracy), drawing a historical parallel with the resistance against the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) and framing the fight against the impeachment as a struggle for democracy.

Brazil in a changing global context

Orientation towards global and external factors is most notably found in the interviewees' fifth motivation: the global rise of neofascism and right-wing populism. The global dimension is also very recurrent in FIBRA's documents. The document generated during the "First International Gathering for Democracy and against the Coup" in Amsterdam between 27 and 29 January 2017 states:

> The current global politics is characterized by a conservative wave, where hate speech and fascist rhetoric have been inexplicably tolerated by the judiciary and the political sector itself. In Brazil, this advance is accompanied by a neoliberal agenda that was defeated at the polls in the last four elections.

The data collected reveal a general concern with issues that have been central in global public debates – such as neoliberalism, neofascism and right-wing populism. In general, there is a widespread fear that fascism is re-emerging under different guises. The great promise of democracy in some decades ago when the world was celebrating the fall of the Berlin wall, the end of the Cold War, and the breakdown of dictatorships in Latin America has been replaced by narratives that advert to "crisis" (Lima, 2020), "threat" (Goldstein, 2019b), "collapse" (Miguel, 2019), "erosion" (Bradford, 2018), and even "death" of democracy (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

Fascism may be considered an ineffective analytical framework that does not adequately engage a series of new realities in Brazil, since the term is used mainly to refer to the European context of the political and economic crisis in the 1920s. However, activists and scholars have made continual reference to the rise of (neo)fascism in Brazil (Lima, 2020: 67-98; Puzone & Miguel, 2019: 285-296). Even though initially formed as a direct reaction to a specific event – Rousseff's impeachment – the need to engage politically to dispute the official narrative of a legitimated impeachment was strongly associated with the undemocratic conduct of governing elites and the global rise of a conservative wave. As examples, my interviewees mentioned the emergence of *Bolsonarism*[12] in Brazil and its international ties to the spectrum of "soft coups" in other Latin American countries, Donald Trump in the United States, xenophobia in several European countries, and Brexit in the United Kingdom. Added to these pressures, they also emphasized other global threats, such as climate change, and fear of war. This is consistent with Melucci's (1989) notion of planetary action and recent work emphasizing the rise of new right-wing populism as a global political force (Wodak et al., 2013; Akkerman et al., 2016; Hawley, 2017; Fouskas & Gökay, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Grant et al. 2019). In this sense, FIBRA intersects with transnationally circulating discourses, articulating the economic, political and cultural forces affecting the planet.

[12] The term Bolsonarism has been used to describe Brazil under Bolsonaro's administration and the rise of right wing activist groups. For an account of Bolsonarism, see Calejon & Vizoni (2019), Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco (2020), and Casara (2020).

5.3. Narrative: Impeachment without crime is coup!

Polletta (2006) points out that narratives "may precede and make possible the development of a coherent community or collective actor" (ibid.: 12). In the context of FIBRA's formation, the narrative "Impeachment without crime is coup" produced signs of identification during interaction online, providing Brazilians in the diaspora a sense of proximity and belonging in the process of constructing a "virtual-imagined transnational community" (Ribeiro, 1998: 328). Facilitation of cross-border interactivity and the activists' participation in the production and distribution of narratives are crucial factors in FIBRA's transnational activism – a process that activists refer to as "the battle of narratives". As presented in the ethnographic description, the narrative disputes are now structurally different: they occur largely on online platforms (Jackson et al., 2020). Movements like #NãoAoGolpe and #TodosPelaDemocracia, induce public discussions, articulate antagonisms, and give visibility to narratives that are not voiced in the Brazilian media monopoly.

But, considering that impeachment is a constitutional process of the legal systems, what drove so many people to claim that Rousseff's impeachment was a coup? The legal process that culminated in Rousseff's removal simply does not meet the standard of a coup – commonly understood as an illegal seizure of power, usually by means of a military intervention. However, the narrative "impeachment without crime is coup" challenged this plea. A report by the Public Prosecutor's office found that Rousseff was not guilty of any crime and an International Tribunal declared Rousseff's impeachment an illegitimate coup (Shahshahani, 2016). According to Lima, "the impeachment as a constitutional procedure to put a final check on the president's power constitutes a new type of instability in Latin America, which has replaced the former military coups" (2020: 81). This new type of instability has been called "parliamentary coup" or "soft coup", as shown by the 2016 NACLA Report on the Americas that provides other examples of similar coups, such as in Paraguay in 2012 and in Honduras in 2009 (Pitts et al., 2016).

FIBRA's narrative holds that the impeachment was a strategy to regain power through non-electoral and undemocratic means in order to implement an ultra-neoliberal agenda that was defeated at the polls for four consecutive elections. According to this view, the apparently legality of the impeachment proceedings has served to uncover the coup and to incite the public to disregard the context. FIBRA's activists referred to a set of factors as the impetus for their narrative of coup: the 2013 cycle of protests in Brazil (Romancini and Castilho, 2019);

the emergence of new right-wing activist groups (Goldstein, 2019; Barros and Wanderley, 2019); the increasing influence of anti-PT ideologies (Rebechi, 2019; Macaulay, 2019); the influence of the Brazilian media monopoly and its international allies (Avritzer, 2017; Silva, 2017; Alonso, 2017; de Albuquerque, 2017, Foley and Casara, 2019); the global changes in view of new models of collective action (Mendonça et al., 2019: 5); and the role played by democratic institutions, such as the Lower and Upper House of the National Congress of Brazil, which was briefly presented in the scene.

Upon returning to the initial events, FIBRA's activists argued that the 2013 cycle of protests were misappropriated by coup sectors to feed a climate of general discontent due to the 2014 presidential election, which marked a violent polarization in the country. Despite the massive protests, Rousseff was re-elected and so the impeachment requests against her started directly after she assumed the new mandate. The steel barrier during the voting session presented in the scene physically symbolized the polarized political spectrum that took over the country: the colors of the Brazilian flag became a symbol of the new patriotic right-wing activism; while the red was the predominant color among the anti-impeachment protests, drawing a parallel with its historical association with trade unions and left-wing politics.

The Chamber of Deputies' voting session incontestably exposed the conservative ideology of the political project of the coup sectors through the BBB benches' speech act for "yes" vote. "God, family and nation" were the three reasons for the pro-impeachment votes, revealing an alarming absence of constitutional motive related to the elements of the accusation (Macaulay, 2019). The conservative forces that impeached Rousseff and came to elect Bolsonaro, used sexist stereotypes to discredit Rousseff's administration (Encarnación, 2017; Tiburi, 2019b). FIBRA's activists emphasized the gendered aspects of the impeachment and condemned the sexist violence directed against Rousseff – which is depicted in the scene when the chorus joins the crowd of women in front of the Presidential Palace.

This process is further complicated by the fact that the leading political figures involved in the coup were implicated to some degree in corruption investigations. As Lima points out, "303 out of the 513 members of the Lower Chamber were facing criminal charges or corruption investigation at the time of the impeachment vote, a caustic contradiction of a process said to 'clean' politics" (2020: 82). Rousseff's supporters then argued that the actors pushing the impeachment were not trying to protect democracy, but, rather, to manipulate it to serve their political agenda.

After Rousseff was impeached, Michel Temer took office and served as the president of Brazil to 31 December 2018. During Temer's administration, FIBRA's collectives adopted the hashtags #ForaTemer (Temer Out) to oppose the legislative changes to Brazil's labor and pension laws that were central to Temer's economic reform agenda. Alongside #ForaTemer, there was the hashtag #DiretasJá (Direct Elections Now). *Diretas Já* was a civil movement in Brazil in 1984 that demanded direct presidential elections as part of Brazil's democratization process after two decades as a dictatorship (Puzone, 2019: 31). In drawing this parallel, FIBRA emphasized the importance of the right to vote for popular sovereignty and democracy in Brazil, inserting Rousseff' impeachment into the historical context. As we shall see in the next chapter acts, the impeachment was just the beginning of the coup's "Machiavellian plot".

6. Chapter Act 2: #LulaLivre: the erosion of democracy on the court's stage

In April 2018, another dramatic event took place in Brazil: the imprisonment of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, known as Lula. Lula's trial was part of a corruption investigation called *Lava Jato* (Operation Car Wash) that begun in the last years of Rousseff's first presidency (Proner et al., 2018; Sá e Silva, 2019; Aragão, 2019; Foley & Casara, 2019). The investigation was initially headed by the judge Sérgio Moro who would later convict Lula. The arguments for the lawsuit were twofold: first, prosecutors claimed that Lula had "orchestrated and supported" the corruption scheme at the Brazilian Petroleum Corporation Petrobras; second, they claimed that, as a direct beneficiary of this scheme, Lula had received a three-story apartment with "special finishes and appliances" (Sá e Silva, 2019: 35).

The criminal conviction of an ex-president in political circumstances, provoked immediate reaction between Brazilian and foreign lawyers who carefully verified the verdict rendered in the extent of the procedure (Proner et al., 2018: 3). Due to irregularities and questionable circumstances of Lula's imprisonment months before the 2018 presidential election, the *#LulaLivre* (Free Lula Movement) was created with the goal to ensure a fair trial. FIBRA became part of the Free Lula International Committee together with several other national and international organizations, labor union and social movements – including MST and CUT[13].

The Free Lula campaign played a central role in the Second International FIBRA Gathering, featuring the debates, protests and artistic presentations during three-day's activities. FIBRA organized the Gathering between 16 and 18 August 2019 at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Berlin. I was asked to volunteer for the artistic commission to help organizing the cultural activities. I found the invitation a good opportunity for my research. I would be able to investigate FIBRA through an artistic perspective while collaborating in an event of importance for the movement.

In the artistic commission participated nine Brazilian women living in different parts of the world. Among them there was Beth Firmino, a 53-year-old Brazilian woman, who has lived in Madrid since 2007. She is a doctor of Performing Arts and develops research on Theater

[13] https://comitelulalivre.org/en/who-we-are/

Anthropology and *Candomblé*[14]. Given our common interests, Beth and I decided to offer a theatre workshop together. Beth proposed to create a free adaptation inspired by the Greek tragedy "The Prometheus Bound" (Aeschylus, n.d.) and the poem "Address to Comrade Dimitrov" written by Bertolt Brecht in 1933 (Brecht, 2018: 477-8), combined with cabaret and carnival. Together, these elements would be brought into the Brazilian context marked by Lula's trial. My role was to assist her in writing a semi-structured plot that would be further developed during the workshop through improvisation theater games.

In this chapter act, I take Beth's scenic ideas as a point of departure to analyze the role of Free Lula movement in FIBRA, which is combined with field experiences at the Gathering, and encounters in Helsinki and Stockholm. I employ tragedy (Scott, 2006, 2008, 2014; Chou, 2012) and carnival (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]; DaMatta, 1984, 1991), as conceptual tools to analyze how the scene relates to activists' views on Lula, combined with notions of democracy and citizenship in the Brazilian context. Before proceeding to the analysis, I present the result of the scene.

6.1. Scene: The cabaret on fire and the Prometheus Bound

Characters:
- The Prometheus represents Lula.
- The Goddess represents the fire that Prometheus steals; she is dressed in red cabaret style.
- The Chorus represents the humankind to whom Prometheus gives the fire.
- The Eagles represent the judges and attorneys involved in Lula's prosecution. They are dressed in a judge's black cap and an eagle look *comedia dell'arte* mask.
- The Oceanus, who is sympathetic to Prometheus' plight in the mythology, recites parts of Brecht's poem.
- The narrator's speeches that I include here are based on the manifestos of The International Committee of Solidarity in Defense of Lula and Democracy in Brazil[15].

The scene begins with a dance between the Goddess of fire and Prometheus (Lula). The dance finishes with Prometheus stealing the fire from the Goddess. Prometheus takes the fire with him and brings it to Earth to give it to the Chorus (humankind). The Chorus celebrates the

[14] Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian religious tradition.
[15] https://comitelulalivre.org/en/who-we-are/

gift. Lula's voice in his inaugural address to the Presidency of the Republic in January 2003 starts to play:

- Lula's voice: Brazil can no longer coexist with so much inequality. We need to overcome hunger, poverty and social exclusion. Our war is not to kill anyone: it is to save lives[16].

The Eagles (judiciary) enters the scene to rule Prometheus' sentence. The scene turns into a court.

- Narrator: Brazilian Democratic State and rule of Law have been violated in a systematic and permanent way since the *coup d'état* applied to president Dilma Rousseff in 2016, with an undeniable participation from the judiciary and media. Since then, facts of major gravity threaten to establish an anti-democratic and repressive regime in Brazil, beginning with a radical politicization of the Judiciary. The latest victim of this arbitrary act is former president Lula.

- Eagles/Judiciary: He stole the fire and gave to mortals; trespass grave / For which the Gods have called him to account / That he may learn to bear Zeus' tyranny / And cease to play the lover of mankind.

- Chorus *(chanting):* Fascists shall not pass!

- Oceanus/Brecht: Comrade Dimitrov *(addressing Lula)*, since the day you stood before the Fascist Court / Accused of many wrongdoings and convicted of none / The voice of communism / Through the noise of whips and batons / Speaks loud and clear / In central Germany

- Chorus: Brazil

- Oceanus/Brecht: Voice that can be heard in all European nations

- Chorus: All nations in the world!

The Eagles start to get more violent while chaining Prometheus.

[16] http://www.biblioteca.presidencia.gov.br/presidencia/ex-presidentes/luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva/discursos/discursos-de-posse/discurso-de-posse-1o-mandato

- Oceanus/Brecht: Voice that can also be heard / By all the exploited and battered and / Incorrigible fighters

- Chorus: Fighters!

- Narrator: As never before in our generation of fighters, what is at stake is the future of democracy. The prosecution of Lula refers to all Brazilian citizens.

The Eagles finally manage to chain Prometheus. A Bolsonaro's supporter dressed in the green and yellow uniform of the Brazilian national soccer team and an eagle-like look comedia dell'arte mask enters the scene shouting: "Thief! Thief!"

- Oceanus/Brecht: They scream and drag you and so / Confess that they have no reason, just power

- Eagles/Judiciary: Nor sound of human voice, nor shape of man / Shall visit you; but the sun-blaze shall roast / Your flesh; your hue / This is your wage for loving humankind

The Eagles begin to bite Prometheus with their long beaked masks.

- Eagles/Judiciary: We do what we must do!

- Oceanus/Brecht: They can kill you, but they will never win

- Chorus: Never!

- Eagles/Judiciary: Nail him to the rocks!

- Oceanus/Brecht: Because, just like you, resist this force / Although not as visible / Thousands of combatants, even / The bloodstained in their cells / They can be slaughtered / But never defeated

- Chorus: Never!

- Oceanus/Brecht: Like you, they are suspected of fighting hunger / Accused of revolts against the powerful / Accused of fighting oppression / Convinced of the most just cause

- Chorus: Who of the Gods is there so pitiless / That Moro can triumph in your sore distress?

- Prometheus/Lula: Moro has devised these chains / The new throned potentate who reigns / Chief of the chieftains of the Blest. Ah me! / The woe which is and that which yet shall be / I wail; and question make of these wide skies / When shall the star of my deliverance rise.

- Chorus *(chanting): Lula livre*! Free Lula!

The Chorus runs towards the Eagles to free Prometheus. One of the Eagles, playing the Judge Moro, exchanges his judge cape for a Superman cape and leaves the scene "flying". After the Chorus releases Prometheus from the chains, a wedding ceremony between Prometheus and the Goddess begins. The scene turns into a carnival celebration. In the background plays the song "Proibido o Carnaval" (Carnival is forbidden) by Daniela Mercury[17].

6.2. The Second International FIBRA Gathering and beyond

Lula as Prometheus: the democratization of food

As Brazil's first working class president, a man with very humble origins in the country's economically depressed Northeast region, Lula first rose to power only at his fourth attempt (Bourne, 2008). The introduction of social welfare programs – such as *Bolsa Família* (Family Allowance) and *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger Program) – were the centerpieces of Lula's administration (Hall, 2006, 2012; Paiva et al., 2019). They are credited with taking Brazil out of the UN World Hunger Map. According to the report *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014*, overall poverty in Brazil fell from 24.3 percent to 8.4 percent of the population between 2001 and 2012, while extreme poverty dropped from 14.0 percent to 3.5 percent (FAO et al., 2014: 23).

Bolsa Família is the world's largest conditional cash transfer (CCT) in number of beneficiaries and has proven a programmatic success in reducing poverty and inequality (Paiva et al., 2019: 21). This success has served to strengthen the image of those leaders at its helm, especially Lula (Hall, 2012: 7). His image as "spokesman for the poor" helped to make Lula the most popular president in Brazilian history, with an unprecedented approval rating of 80 per cent when he left office in 2010 (ibid.: 15). This view on Lula corresponds to the motif behind the campaign "2019 Nobel Peace Prize for Lula"[18]. The campaign was led by Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, a recipient of the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize. In his letter presented to the

[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Dp_gGsWOw
[18] https://comitelulalivre.org/nobel/

Norwegian Nobel Committee, Esquivel refers to the influence the social welfare programs implement during Lula's administration has had across the world, both by example in Brazil and as part of co-operation programs in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa (Esquivel, 2018).

Several of FIBRA collectives participated in the campaign, which involved contacting politicians and academics to support it and sign the nomination form. The Free Lula International committees also made a caravan in Europe to denounce Lula's political incarceration[19]. In addition, the "Lula Day" was created to celebrate Lula's birthday, serving as "a memory act of the historical and political fight for democracy and social justice in Brazil"[20]. Beth's motivation for bringing the Prometheus mythology to the scene was based on this view on Lula as a central figure in the struggle for democracy and combat against social inequality:

> Prometheus was punished for defying the gods by stealing the fire and giving it to humanity; and so, bringing hope and technology. Lula represents this myth in that he implemented the greatest social inclusion ever seen in Brazil, which aroused admiration and fury at the same time. That is why he was punished with such treachery, persecuted with so much hatred.

The fire stolen by Zeus and given to humanity represented, in the context of Lula's trial, the social welfare programs for incorporating the poorest strata into the social sphere. In this analogy, just as Prometheus was punished by Zeus for democratizing fire, Lula was punished for democratizing food, housing, education, work, and health care. Beth's analogy is in line with studies that turn to tragedy in order to apprehend the present. The anthropologist David Scott (2006, 2008, 2014) analyzes the experience of historical time to speak of our time as tragic and argues for the timeliness of a tragic sensibility. The tragic sensibility is "more attuned to the myriad ways in which we carry our pasts within ourselves" (Scott, 2006: 152). In the Brazilian context, Lula, as a tragic hero, was punished for trying to overcome the Brazilian colonial past that still defines its present, giving hope for an emancipatory future. The excluded people who were once filled with hope when a working-class man became the president of Brazil, are now exposed to disillusionment.

[19] https://comitelulalivre.org/caravana-lula-livre-na-europa/
[20] https://comitelulalivre.org/en/23-demonstrations-worldwide-marked-the-first-lula-day/

Between tragic and superhero democracy

Singer (2018) describes the PT's project of democracy as a "Rooseveltian dream" of inclusion, integration, and reduction of inequality. This notion of the revolution of inclusion of the poor has been conceptualized as *Lulismo* (Singer, 2012, 2018). The image of Lula as the "spokesman for the poor" (Hall, 2012: 15), however, has been contrasted with the *anti-Lulismo* that set the stage for Lula's trial. While revisiting pictures of anti-PT protests from 2014 to 2018, I found a fifteen meters tall inflatable doll of Lula in prisoner striped clothes (Veja, 2016) and a twelve meters tall doll of the judge Moro in Superman costume inscribed with the phrase "The Brazilian hero" (Cople, 2019). Both dolls were used as the mascots of the anti-PT protests. These protests were performed as *a luta contra a corrupção* (the fight against corruption) – a motto that became the title of a book written by the lead prosecutor of Operation Car Wash (Dallagnol, 2017).

The accusatory scenario against Lula was built like a boxing ring where the fight took place between Lula (the Thief-villain) and judge Moro (the Superman-superhero). The analogy of a boxing ring was extensively explored by the Brazilian media, being reproduced on the covers of the largest magazines in the country (Ferreira, 2017). In a session of the Brazilian Congress, a deputy even delivered a Champions League trophy to Moro with his name engraved on it (Shalders, 2019). The construction of the accusatory scenario for Lula's trial inspired Beth to bring Brecht's poem to the scene: "There are many similarities between the Leipzig fascist court that sentenced Dimitrov and the Operation Car Wash in Brazil in its persecution against Lula, especially for the enmity and the farce that was set up in both cases", she said.

Lula's supporters resignified the Moro-Superman analogy by questioning his partial performance as judge. Moro, from this perspective, is not a hero who follows the tragic model, but the superhero of the American comic books: the one who acts outside or above the law and does whatever it takes to defeat the villains, even if it entails a violation of the most fundamental legal standards. Lawrence and Jewett describe the superhero as "the American monomyth" in which "a community threatened by evil is redeemed through superherosim" (1977: 249). The authors investigate how the American monomyth has constructed a set of cultural assumptions to explain the desire in American government to "save" the world. In the book "Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The dilemma of Zealous nationalism", Lawrence and Jewett (2003) argues that the popularity of superhero's narratives engendered a

susceptibility to political appeal to governmental superheroism, which legitimated the use of military action as a national response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The relationship between Moro-Superman analogy with the United States was also used to cast doubt on Moro's interests, pointing to the secretive collaboration of the U.S. Department of Justice in the Operation Car Wash (Fishman et al., 2020). From these assumptions, it is possible to draw two notions of democracy: on the one side, the "tragic democracy" as the revolution of inclusion represented by *Lulismo*; and, on the other side, the "superhero democracy" of "the American monomyth" that, in the name of democracy itself, operates with what amounts to authoritarianism, militarism, and vigilantism.

The cabaret on fire and the spectacularization of the judiciary

In Brazil, the phrase *Pega fogo, cabaré* (The cabaret on fire) became popular to refer to the country's political scandals and has been largely used to address the disclosure of leaks. Just before the Gathering, the online news publication *The Intercept Brasil* released leaked Telegram messages exchanged between the Operation Car Wash's top prosecutors and judge Moro[21]. The massive archive shows multiple examples of politicized abuse of prosecutorial powers (Greenwald, 2019). This served as the basis for the scene: The Eagles (judiciary) persecuted Lula relentlessly until he lost his political rights, keeping him out of the race when all polls showed that he was the front-runner. *Pega fogo, cabaré* expressed the expectation that the revealed leaks would change the course of Brazilian politics.

Soon after the Gathering, BRASSAR organized a seminar with the Brazilian jurist Rubens Casara that took place at ABF Stockholm on 10 October 2019[22]. Before starting the seminar, Casara said: "I want to ask you to believe in the facts that I will present here. I know these facts are hard to believe, but they are well-documented and verifiable evidence". As the facts were presented, I was observing the facial expressions of astonishment of around 40 people in the audience. In his book "Estado Pós-democrático", Casara (2017) presents a detailed study on the performance of the judiciary's actors who have used the harmful potential contained in this instance of power to ideological or partisan ends. The author also points out that the politicization of the judiciary is related to its spectacularization in close collaboration with media corporations:

[21] See: https://theintercept.com/series/secret-brazil-archive/
[22] http://www.latinamerikagrupperna.se/2019/10/demokrati-under-attack-i-brasilien-democracia-sob-ataque/

> The attempts to rationalize criminal law have been replaced by the phenomenon of spectacularization, which is a feature of post-democracy. There is a new commodity to be offered to the consumer-spectator. This is "the criminal proceedings as spectacle", in which the plot takes precedence over the fact and is directed by the judge to please either the public opinion or the desire of media corporations (the media then manufacture heroes for the masses). (Casara, 2017: 51, *my translation*)

The spectacularization of the judiciary staged during Lula's trial was assisted by heated media coverage in cooperation with Operation Car Wash. Some examples include:

> Judge Moro tipped off the media that the police would be visiting Lula's house to bring him into police custody, ensuring that footage of this dramatic event dominated that day's television news cycle. He also arranged to tap Lula's telephone calls and subsequently released these recordings to the media as well […] Moro also released conversations among Lula's relatives that were absolutely private (Sá e Silva, 2019: 39).

For the success of the spectacularization of punishment, the judicial, legislative, and media apparatuses operated the "legal formalism" (Casara, 2017: 41) in what Bakhtin calls "officialdom": "the one-sided rhetorical seriousness" (1984 [1965]: 121). According to Casara, the legal formalism serves to mask the relationship between political domination and economic exploitation, where the state is as a mere instrument for preying on undesirable people and expanding the conditions for capital accumulation (2017: 14). In the Brazilian context, the officialdom of legal formalism neutralized the ideological endeavor that set the official narratives of Lula's trial, presenting it as apolitical, non-ideological, legal, serious.

Carnival: the power of Brazilian people

Brazil is known worldwide as "the country of Carnival". Rio de Janeiro is the apogee of the celebration with the Samba Schools parade. Both carnival and samba emerged as symbols of Brazil's national identity. Brazilian anthropologist DaMatta captured this national significance of carnival when he wrote, "it was not Brazil that invented *Carnaval*; on the contrary, it was *Carnaval* that invented Brazil" (1984: 245).

DaMatta (1991) analyses what he calls the "Brazilian dilemma" through three conceptual domains forming the Brazilian society: the house, the street, and other worlds. Brazilian carnival is the public event in which house and street invert each other by suspending temporarily the hierarchies and moral codes that separate them as distinctive social spheres.

Other worlds stand for the liminal place that intermediates the binary oppositions house-street. During the liminal period, activities normally associated with the intimacy of the family house are projected into the street. For DaMatta, the house-street opposition represents the dialectics that constitute notions of order and disorder in Brazilian society.

Beth captured the importance of carnival for the formation of Brazil's national identity and proposed to use its ritualistic potential for the adaptation of the scene. In her words:

> Aeschylus' work was a trilogy from which only 'Prometheus Bound' survived, that is, the hero was stripped of his power as the fire bringer and of his freedom. Our adaptation involved these forgotten concepts. The Goddess of fire gained relevance and Prometheus's reconciliation with freedom is represented by their marriage. Because performance is also a ritual, we made a bet that it could happen to Lula. He would be freed by the power of people (the Chorus) and, at the same time, reclaim the fire through the marriage that was celebrated as a Carnival, a happy outcome, an explosion of joy.

In the scene, carnival represented the power emanating from the people (the chorus) to free Lula (the Prometheus). According to Chou, the chorus in Greek tragedy represented "individuals that Athens had forgotten, repressed or exploited in reality: the weak, old, servile and fallen" (2012: 58). By combining carnival with tragedy, Beth evoked the power of the subaltern voice of the chorus. In doing so, she brought an anti-tragic humanist perspective to the scene: "this humanism is articulated in the outline of a subaltern subject who, in however small and barely visible ways, contributes to remake her or his own world *from below*" (Scott, 2008: 201). If, in tragedy, the hero is doomed to failure; carnival, on the other side, provides a space for an "imagined horizon of emancipation, […] in tragedy there are no such consolation" (ibid.).

Lula, in his image as the "spokesman for the poor" (Hall, 2012: 15), inverted the social hierarchies embedded in the spirit of carnival. When he became the president of Brazil, Lula ruptured the traditions of the once unquestionable hierarchy in Brazilian politics. For the first time in the history of Brazil, a metalworker from a poor background could exercise such power beyond the temporary, suspended time of carnival. The tragic in carnival thus lies in the notion that the subversion of social hierarchies are allowed only for the time of the festivity, as a temporary moment of illusion. By creating an almost permanent condition of carnival, Lula opened the way to a new order of things – what Bakhtin described as "life turned inside out", "life the wrong way round" (1984 [1929]: 100-101). For "turning life

inside out", Lula was imprisoned and deprived of his political rights as a presidential candidate.

This counterpoint between tragedy and carnival forms the basis for the idea of democracy as a "tragic carnivalesque hero". If democracy was to be considered simply as a tragic hero, one doomed to failure, then FIBRA would be nothing more than a call to save a dysfunctional political system. A tragic carnivalesque perspective of democracy gives glimpses of hope for a future, "an imagined horizon of emancipation" (Scott, 2008: 201) in which "order and disorder" coexist (DaMatta, 1991: 183–97). A tragic carnivalesque perspective combines different temporalities, from the timeliness of tragedy to the suspended time of carnival: a colonial past that persists in the social inequalities of the present; by subverting it, if only temporarily, it provides a space for an emancipatory future in a democratic carnivalesque spirit, one that releases centuries of colonization and inequality.

FIBRA practicing democracy: between order and disorder

The guests invited to speak at the Gathering's opening ceremony appeared to embody the growing heterogeneity of feminist and queer practices. Among them were Maria Dantas, the first Brazilian woman to become a member of the Congress of Deputies of Spain; Renata Souza, the first black woman to chair the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights and Citizenship of The Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro; James N. Green, director of Brown University's Brazil Initiative and researcher on homosexuality in Brazil; Breno Altman, coordinator of the Free Lula Campaign; Márcia Tiburi, Brazilian philosopher who ran for Governor of Rio de Janeiro in the 2018 state election; and Jean Wyllys, LGBTQI+ activist and politician. Their speeches reflected the multiple voices and causes that FIBRA's activists advocate for.

On the next day, the "Organization Workshop" began to define FIBRA's future actions and objectives. This day was specially oriented toward drafting and voting on documents that would contribute to FIBRA's platform of action. Fernanda and Ana conducted the activity. They presented the ideas and divided the participants into small working groups. Each group created a list of actions on themes ranging from racism, homophobia and sexism to climate change, immigration, and indigenous peoples' rights. The ideas were presented, and a final document was voted for in plenary.

The Gathering involved 139 Brazilian activists in the diaspora living in 16 different countries, including 100 women and 39 men. The activists presented diverse views and political stances. For that reason, the Organization Workshop was marked by tense moments, passionate arguments and difficulties to reach an agreement. As Juris points out:

> Networked spaces of transnational activist encounter are rife with political and cultural tensions, conflicts, and power imbalances […] that ensues in the encounter between activists from diverse movements, political contexts, and cultural backgrounds (2013: 4).

Activists sitting next to me constantly complained, "What chaos!". But, at some point, I heard a question that caught my attention: "Well… isn't that the meaning of democracy?". According to Chou (2012), democracy in Ancient Greece served primarily to remind the Greeks that order should not be tyrannically imposed. Democracy was, therefore, necessary to prevent oppression embedded in the idea of order as its source. This means that democracy deals with the inevitability of chaos and unpredictability: "self-institution (or Being) must be and ultimately will be subject to self-limitation (or Chaos)" (Chou, 2012: 51-52). Tragedy revitalized democracy in its multivocal form by revealing to people that "chaos lurked just beneath the order they had erected" (ibid.: 53).

The dilemma between order and disorder was experienced at the Gathering as chaotic and annoying. This was also confirmed in the online interview. Three activists were planning to leave FIBRA because, in general, they found it difficult to deal with so many conflicting ideas. As an example, the relation to Free Lula campaign operated at different levels in FIBRA. There was still the bitter memory of the *mensalão* scandal that made many of PT's supporters uneasy (Foley, 2019:14). Some activists complained about the alliances between the PT and sectors of the political and economic elite (Puzone, 2019). There were also activists who did not agree with Lula's protagonist role in FIBRA. For these reasons, some collectives split up and formed new collectives in the face of significant points of disagreement.

FIBRA tries to resist tyranny embedded in the idea of order and, at the same time, deals with difficulties and dilemmas of democratic practices. It brings together numerous voices-ideas, as in tragedy's multivocality (Chou, 2012). The challenge, nonetheless, is to balance these voices-ideas in order to construct a democratic space where all voices are placed as equally significant, as in carnival's polyphony (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]). That is, FIBRA's democratic practices involve balancing and organizing power among multiple voices-ideas. This task was

relatively well accomplished in the Organization Workshop. Even with all apparently chaos, at the end of the day, it was possible to define the document with the guiding principles of FIBRA's future actions:

1- Unconditional fight for Lula's freedom
2- Unconditional fight for human rights, including the rights of black, women, LGBTQ+, *quilombolas*, indigenous and traditional peoples
3- Defense of education, culture, public health and social rights
4- Defense of freedom of expression and international solidarity to migrants, exiles and refugees
5- Unconditional fight against fascism and all forms of oppression

These guiding principles reveal important aspects of how a transnational mobilizing has allowed the negotiation of a collective identity of Brazilians in the diaspora through the intersection of multiple struggles – which will be further discuss in the next chapter act.

The presentation of the scene: Lula is free!

We arrived early on the Gathering's last day to prepare for the presentation of the scene. When everything was ready, we went to the main room where the stage was set up. It was lunch time, people were sitting in the audience, eating, talking and interacting with what was being presented on stage. At the end, everyone was dancing, hugging each other and chanting "Free Lula! Moro in jail!". I saw Márcia shedding tears of satisfaction. Lula, at that moment, was symbolically free.

Nobody knew at that time that, less than three months later, Lula would be released from prison following a supreme court's decision that defendants can remain free until they have exhausted all appeals (Londoño and Casado, 2019). On the day Lula was release, I arrived in Helsinki. I traveled with Bosse, a 69-year-old Swedish man with decades of collaborative work between Sweden and Brazil. We went to Pertti's apartment where we stayed the next two days. Pertti, a 73 years old Finnish man – "but Brazilian by heart", he said – is a psychoanalyst who works in the MST schools developing a pedagogy called *Conscientia*[23].

After hours talking about their experiences in the MST, I opened my Facebook page and saw an avalanche of messages celebrating Lula's release from prison. The three of us followed the celebrations on social media together in Pertti's kitchen. The scene's gamble that Lula would

[23] http://conscientia.se/fi/index.php

be released like a carnivalesque explosion of joy came true. As of writing Lula is still trying to prove his innocence and Beth remains hopeful that he will be acquitted of the charges, as Dimitrov was.

6.3. Narrative: Election without Lula is fraud!

"Election without Lula is fraud" was a manifesto promoted by legal professionals, academics, politicians, artists and union leaders across the world in support of Lula's participation in the 2018 presidential elections[24]. The manifesto claimed that Lula's trial was purely an act of persecution in order to eliminate the front-runner in the race. The U.N. Human Rights Committee requested the Brazilian government to allow Lula to exercise his political rights as a presidential candidate[25]. However, he was disqualified from running by the Superior Electoral Court on 31 August 2018.

Besides reinforcing the perspective on the vote as fundamental for democracy, the narrative "Election without Lula is fraud" presents Lula's imprisonment as an unconstitutional act, pointing him as a political prisoner. Casara (2017) describes this process as part of the politicization of the Brazilian judicial system in collaboration with media corporations. Lula was condemned and portrayed as a prisoner in striped clothes long before his trial began, which was reinforced by Moro-Superhero analogy. Judge Moro as superhero, in turn, overstepped the ethical lines that define the judge's role – as in the American monomyth (Lawrence and Jewett, 1977).

When placed in the historical and lived context of Brazilian politics, the officialdom (Bakhtin, (1984 [1965]: 121) behind Lula's trial presents itself as a "spectacle of the judiciary" (Casara, 2017: 51). Therefore, it is central to distinguishing between the legal formalism and its internal logic, as Lula's imprisonment resulted from articulated actions by means of democratic institutions – such as the electoral system, the judiciary and the media. FIBRA's narratives thus function to unmask the officialdom, presenting Lula's imprisonment as spectacle. A spectacle that operated through the harmful potential of democratic institutions to act against their democratic obligations, appealing to governmental superheroism. Unmasking the spectacle is one of FIBRA's strategies, as it provides alternative narratives (Polletta, 2006) on the forces shaping the political conflict in the country.

[24] https://www.change.org/p/sociedade-brasileira-em-defesa-do-direito-de-lula-ser-candidato-a-presidente-do-brasil
[25] https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23464

Lula marked the first time that a political party organized by the working class led Brazilian government. This means that a key for understanding the development of the accusatory scenario set for Lula's trial is to be found in the complexities of Brazilian class struggle. This idea was explored in this chapter act through two notions of carnival: carnival as the Brazilian dilemma (DaMatta 1991), and carnival as the subversion of social hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]). Lula, from this perspective, represents the idea of democracy as a "Rooseveltian dream" of inclusion (Singer, 2012, 2018). This view on Lula was brought to the scene through Lula-Prometheus analogy: Lula, as a tragic hero, was punished for "stealing" the power and distributing it to the people, fighting hunger and social inequality. Through tragedy and carnival, I constructed a tragic carnivalesque perspective of democracy combining different temporalities: the carnivalesque temporal suspension of social hierarchies subverts a colonial past that is tragically carried within us, providing hope for an emancipatory future. Lula's release from prison symbolized this glimpse of hope and was celebrated as a carnival parade.

7. Chapter Act 3: #EleNão: The final act of Brazilian tragedy

The year 2018 was marked by dramatic events in Brazil. On March 14, the political assassination of the Brazilian activist Marielle Franco and her driver Anderson Pedro Gomes in Rio de Janeiro shocked the world. Franco was a councilwoman from PSOL in Rio de Janeiro, and a leading voice in the black feminist movement in Brazil world (de Araujo, 2018; Rocha, 2018; Loureiro, 2020, Perry, 2020). Her death gave rise to global protests still ongoing at the time of writing under the hashtags #MariellePresente (Marielle is here) and #QuemMandouMatarMarielle (Who ordered Marielle Franco's murder?).

In the same year, the presidential election that brought Bolsonaro to power was marked by dramatic polarization, violence and massive disinformation campaigns on social media (Calejon & Vizoni, 2019; Esteves and Herz, 2019; Macaulay, 2019; Alfonso, 2019; de Castro, 2019; Tiburi, 2019a, 2019b; Casara, 2020; Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2020; de Paula et al. 2020). Huge protests initiated by Brazilian women took the streets across Brazil and abroad against Bolsonaro's presidential candidacy. Marches were organized by a social media campaign under the hashtag #EleNão (Not Him) (Lima, 2020: 99-10).

This chapter act is based on ethnographic examples of my participation in protests in Stockholm and Oslo. I employ an intersectional approach to analyze how FIBRA points into directions that confront the consolidation of Bolsonaro's political agenda through a notion of democracy that challenges the rigid social hierarchies of class, race, gender, and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1983) in the Brazilian context (Gonzales, 1982; Guimarães,1998; Klein & Luna, 2010; Bernardino-Costa, 2014, 2019). Before proceeding to the analysis, I present in the following scene a perspective on the mobilizations that emerged after Franco's assassination and Bolsonaro's victory in the 2018 presidential election.

7.1. Scene: The death of democracy: from grief to struggle

The stage is empty. Background sounds of people screaming, gun shots and car noises.

- Franco's voice: It's important to be together, a blackness that not only decolonizes spaces but occupies spaces. From where I am speaking, I hope that we can build together, from occupying a space of representation of a black woman that I occupy. We're going to blacken

the City Council, racialize the debate, to hire black and favela cabinet chiefs. I did nothing in my life alone, everything was done in the collective and this is how I will continue getting things done (Fenizola, 2016).

- Narrator: Marielle Franco, 38 years old black queer activist from Favela da Maré (Maré slum), a sociologist with a master's degree in Public Administration, a city councilwoman elected with 46,502 votes, was killed on March 14th, 2018 alongside her driver Anderson Pedro Gomes. On that day, Franco participated in a round-table discussion titled "Young black women moving power structures", at *Casa das Pretas* in Rio de Janeiro. After leaving the place, they were fatally shot.

- Chorus: A barbaric execution! A political execution! Of a black, LGBT woman from the favelas! An attempt to execute her voice, her ideas! The shots that targeted Marielle tried to kill her dreams and dishonor all those who mobilize to build more just and democratic societies. But our voices will not be silenced. *Marielle, presente*! Marielle is here! Marielle lives on!

The Chorus reproduces an action that took place in Stockholm on 14 March 2019 in memory of the one year of Franco's death. An altar is set up with flowers, a picture of Franco, an LGBTQ+ flag, and a street sign named after Franco that says, "Street Marielle Franco (1979-2018), councilor, human rights defender, murdered on 14 March 2018".

- Chorus: Today we think about Marielle Franco's life. They tried to silence her voice, but she speaks through us. Marielle Franco may be gone, but she is not silenced.

- Franco: I am because we are! We are the flowers of resistance!

- Chorus: Marielle multiplies!

The scene moves to Paris on 21 September 2019 at the inauguration of a public garden in honor of Franco. Aside from a large audience, attended the event Renata Souza and Márcia Tiburi – both participated at the Second International FIBRA Gathering –, Franco's parents, Antônio Francisco da Silva Neto and Marinete da Silva, and her daughter, Luyara.

- Franco's family *(in front of a photo of Franco):* A year and a half after her murder, we demand that justice be done and that this crime not go unpunished.

- Chorus *(chanting):* Justice for Marielle! Who ordered Marielle Franco's murder?

The scene moves to São Paulo. Angela Davis, a symbol of the American black feminist movement, visited Brazil on October 2019 for the release of her autobiography in Portuguese[26].

- Davis: The last March in the United States, Black Lives Matter movement, anti-racist, feminist movements, abolitionist movements joined you in speaking out against the brutal assassination of Marielle Franco. We all keep her legacy alive by emphasizing the interconnections among racism, misogyny, poverty, homophobia and transphobia.

- Chorus: Marielle lives on! Marielle multiplies!

- Davis: When we consider black women's historical struggle throughout this hemisphere, we recognize that it can be no democracy without the participation of black women. And, conversely, when black women move toward freedom, they never represent themselves alone. They represent all their community: black communities, indigenous communities, poor communities, communities that suffer economic exploitation, gender oppression, and racist violence. This is an important lesson about the struggle for democracy. A democracy that excludes black women is no democracy at all.

The Chorus repeats the names of activists murdered in Brazil. Each name is followed by the word "presente". The word "presente" alludes to the assassination and criminalization of activists, and the impunity surrounding state-perpetrated violence.

- Franco: How many others will have to die before this war will end?[27]

A photo is project on a screen showing two deputies who broke a sign made in memory of Marielle Franco. One of them is dressed in a t-shirt with Bolsonaro's face, another with a t-shirt saying, "My party is Brazil". They are smiling and holding the broken street sign (Vasconcelos, 2019).

- Deputies: It's Bolsonaro from now on! We are restoring the order!

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[26] Davis' speech available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lff8ScaF1Y

[27] Shortly before her death, Franco twitted "How many others will have to die before this war will end?", see https://justiceformarielle.com/

The theme-song of the Mangueira Samba School's from the 2019 carnival in honor of Franco starts to play[28]*. Photos of street marches around the world with hundreds of signs named after Franco are projected on a screen.*

- Chorus: Marielle multiplies!

A video of Bolsonaro campaigning in the Brazilian State of Acre plays on the screen (Ribeiro, 2018). He picks up a camera tripod, and, pretending it is a gun, yells:

- Bolsonaro: Let's shoot the *petralhada*[29]!

The Brazilian national anthem starts to play. On the screen, a video of Bolsonaro ascending the ramp of the Planalto Palace to receive the presidential sash.

- Bolsonaro: I stand before the whole nation on this day, the day when the people began to free themselves from socialism, from the inversion of values, from State gigantism and from the politically correct. Ideologies that destroy our values and traditions, destroy our families, the foundation of our society. It is also urgent to end the ideology that defends thugs and criminalizes the police. Our concern will be with the security of the good citizens and the guarantee of ownership and self-defence rights. Let's restore order in this country. Our flag will never be red. It will only be red if we need to bleed over it to keep it yellow and green[30].

noises of a crowd chanting: Myth! Myth! Twitter, Twitter! WhatsApp, WhatsApp!

- Narrator: The final coup against Brazil's democracy occurred when a deputy paid homage to a military officer convicted of torturing political prisoners and ended up becoming the President of Brazil.

The national anthem gets louder.

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[28] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMSBisBYhOE

[29] *Petralha(da)* was coined by the Brazilian journalist Reinaldo Azevedo. It is a pejorative term used to refer to PT's supporters. *Petralha* is a portmanteau of metralha (mobster) + petista (member of the PT).

[30] Bolsonaro's inaugural address: http://www.brazil.gov.br/government/speeches/2019/01/address-by-president-of-the-republic-jair-bolsonaro-to-the-nation

7.2. FIBRA multiplying voices

"I am because we are": The embodiment of resistance

Franco was a councilwoman and a leading voice in the black rights movement in Brazil who opposed the *militia*[31] groups in the favelas. In her master thesis, she asserts that "the military intervention has permanently shed blood of slum dwellers, imposing a death penalty outside the institutional sphere of the Rule of Law" (Franco, 2014: 74, *my translation*). She became head of a commission tasked with monitoring potential abuses of force by the military intervention in the Rio de Janeiro's slums shortly before her assassination took place. Early investigations determined that the bullets found at the crime scene had been purchased by the federal police (de Araujo, 2018: 209).

The violence against Franco coincided with the eruption of intolerance and political polarization that marked the 2018 presidential election from which Bolsonaro emerged victorious (Tiburi, 2019a; Foley, 2019; Alfonso, 2019; Casara, 2020; de Paula et al. 2020). Almost a year after the crime, two former police officers with direct ties to the Bolsonaro family were arrested in connection with her death (Perry, 2020: 157). The question of "Who ordered Marielle Franco's murder" became a way to draw attention on the relationship between Bolsonaro's family and criminal *militia* groups in the belief that clarifying the circumstances of the crime would be fundamental to fight authoritarianism in Brazil.

Franco's assassination aroused a great amount of demonstrations, tributes, altars, streets signs, along with a garden and an institute created in her memory[32]. This dramatic event represented the moment when Franco as an individual became a collective actor. This collective dimension echoes in the chants *Marielle, presente!* (Marielle is here) and *Marielle multiplica* (Marielle multiplies), pointing to the continuity of her struggle through the mobilizations after her death. Franco's activism also reflected the individual merging with the collective. Her campaign slogan says *Eu sou porque nós somos* (I am because we are), that is, *I* resist because *we* have struggled for generations to obtain fundamental rights. As Polletta argues:

[31] The militias in Brazil are paramilitary groups composed by retired and off-duty police officers with roots in the death squads of the Brazilian military dictatorship.
[32] https://www.institutomariellefranco.org/

> Where authorities are unyielding, storytelling sustains groups as they fight for reform, helping them build new collective identities, link current actions to heroic pasts and glorious futures, and restyle setbacks as way stations to victory (2006: 3).

Franco's story helped to build collective identities, not only because she embodied the crossroads of Brazil's long-oppressed and ignored identities, but also for her activist role in politics. Davis' speech in Brazil presented in the scene highlights the importance of intersectionality to activism in order to achieve a democratic form of political agency. By combining Marxism with intersectionality, Davis (1983) demonstrates that black people are racially exploited by capitalism and oppressed by racism. Focusing her analysis on black women, Davis emphasizes that racism and sexism converge. As a black bisexual low-class woman and single mother from Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* (slums), Franco embodied the multiple dimensions of oppression. The notion of intersectionality within the black feminist tradition encompasses these factors through a systematic analysis of the interlocking oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality and other axes of power (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1983).

Women united against Bolsonaro

On 29 September 2018, women took to the streets in Brazil and in many cities around the world to protest against Bolsonaro's candidacy in the 2018 presidential election (Lima, 2020, 92-99). The mobilization started through social media with the hashtag #EleNão (Not Him). A Facebook group called *Mulheres Unidas Contra Bolsonaro* (Women United Against Bolsonaro) was created and united more than three million members in few weeks. The #EleNão movement has already entered history as the largest manifestation of women in Brazil (ibid.: 99).

A year later, on 29 September 2019, women mobilized to remind the one-year anniversary of the historical #EleNão. In Stockholm, it took place at Sergels torg, the city's central public square. When I got there, a place was being set up for the protest. Colorful balloons and flowers, a Brazilian flag next to a placard reading "Brazilian manifestation against fascism", a large banner written in red "#EleNão, #NotBolsonaro", a street sign named after Marielle Franco, and a photo of Paulo Freire with the text "all proclaimed neutrality is a hidden option". In the background, a Brazilian song was playing. Esther, a member of BRASSAR, had brought several placards and gave me one. In the placard, there was a photo of an

indigenous women facing a line of shielded policemen followed by the text “Fight like an indigenous woman”. People were coming gradually with new banners: “The myth kills the forest”, “stop Bolsonaro, save democracy”, among others.

There was a microphone for people to speak. Between each speech, protesters chanted “Marielle is here!” and “Not him!”. But, in one moment, there was no chanting. After a moving speech by Kelly Mattias, a 25-year-old Brazilian woman who came to Sweden to begin a Master program, everyone became quiet:

> A year ago, we united to say “not him” to a presidential candidate who represents the elite, the agribusiness, the conservatism. I mention this because I consider myself the fruit of a country in which, for the first time, the poor, black and slum dwellers were able to dream. Dreaming of seemingly minor things for most people, as having food on the table every day. We were also able to dream big: to go to university, to learn a foreign language and, who knows, one day travel to study abroad. The #EleNão means that the poor will not hide away, the black will not accept racism, and women will not give up our rights. The #EleNão means continuing using my voice in honor of black women who have been murdered by a system that does not want us alive. I will continue fighting to occupy spaces that I never imagined I would: the granddaughter of a domestic worker will graduate at a university abroad. This means that we will not be silenced!

At this point, there was no place for Brecht’s (1964) distancing effect. Everyone was moved by Kelly’s story as it was in dialogue at varying levels with the activists who were there. Domestic labor is an emblematic example of the Brazilian context. According to the International Labour Organization, Brazil is the country with the highest number of domestic workers in the world; and black lower-class women are the majority working in this professional occupation (ILO, 2013: 74). This context reflects the country’s long history of slavery and colonization. Brazil is the country of the Americas that received the largest contingent of African slaves and one of the countries where slavery lasted longest in the world (Klein & Luna, 2010).

Bernardino-Costa points out that “due to Brazil’s colonial history, domestic labor is seen as the black woman’s ‘natural place’” (2014: 72). Guimarães (1998) argues that racism in Brazil manifests in the structural inequalities of access to education, income and work. In the same line, Gonzales (1982) asserts that the racial minorities in Brazil were confined to the *favelas* (slums), where public polices function not to protect slum dwellers but to repress them in

order to serve the interests of the economic elite in maintaining cheap labor. Kelly, like Marielle, whose only possible path in life was that of a domestic worker, began to occupy spaces exclusively reserved for the elite until recently – such as university and political institutions.

This happened in some extent due to the programs of social inclusion during the PT's administration. According to Bernardino-Costa, the demands from the black movement "have never been so often met as during the PT's time in power (2019: 160). On the other hand, Bernardino-Costa points out that, even though the PT took important steps, its alliances with sectors of the political and economic elite "have prevented further progress in the pursuit of racial equality in Brazil" (ibid.). For this reason, the author proposes, in terms of the extension of participatory citizenship, a "decolonizing project aiming at radical transformation" (ibid.).

Globalization-from-below and the new anti-authoritarianism movement

Even though the #EleNão movement has reached such magnitude as to be considered "the largest manifestation of women in the history of Brazil" (Lima, 2020: 99), Bolsonaro ended up winning the election. However, the movement brought about new anti-authoritarianism movements:

> These include the Marxist-inspired Movimento dos Trabalhadores sem Terra (MST), indigenous people movements, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto (MTST – Homeless Workers Movement), university lecturers, feminists, left-wing governors in the Northeast, environmentalists, and many others who form a resistance coalition of tens of thousands willing to defend democratic freedoms (Lima, 2020: 99-100).

During my fieldwork I participated in several meetings and events with MST representatives. Besides a three-days meeting in Oslo, I also participated in the week of celebrations of "the International Day of Action for Peoples' Food Sovereignty and against Transnational Corporations" organized by La Via Campesina[33]. Representatives of MST and NGOs in Brazil visited various countries to report serious violations against Brazilian peasants since Bolsonaro took office, such as the growth of state violence and the dismantling of institutions related to the issue of land reform in the country. In Sweden, the visit was organized in partnership with Makten över Maten[34], a network that brings together Swedish environmental

[33] https://viacampesina.org/en/
[34] https://maktenovermaten.se/

and human rights organizations. I also participated in a carnival organized by BRASSAR, LAG, Friends of the MST and FIAN Sweden to support the MST's project to plant 100 million trees in Brazil.

In all these events, the 2016 coup was mentioned, the campaigns for Lula's freedom and justice for Marielle Franco were raised, and Bolsonaro's attacks against human rights and the environment were denounced with a focus on the international role in Brazil's domestic problems. This is in line with what Falk calls "globalization-from-below", that is, a global civil society linking:

> transnational social forces animated by environmental concerns, human rights, hostility to patriarchy, and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking an end to poverty, oppression, humiliation, and collective violence (1993: 39).

In this context, Bolsonaro appears as the antithesis of these struggles.

#SOSAmazon, indigenous rights and climate change

Stockholm, 7 September 2019. After the thousands of fires burning in the Amazon rainforest echoed internationally, huge protests took place around the world under the hashtag #SOSAmazônia (SOS Amazon) (Phillips, 2019). In Stockholm, two thousand people walked from Odenplan to the Brazilian Embassy to protest against Bolsonaro's anti-environmental policies. BRASSAR stood as organizers, along with about twenty Swedish NGOs and environmental groups[35].

I arrived at Odenplan square and was surprised by the large number of people united, despite the unstable weather. There, representatives from each organization would give a speech. When it came to BRASSAR's turn, Edgard emphasized the process that led to Bolsonaro's victory since the 2016 coup. Esther spoke on behalf of *Mulheres da Resistência* and sang the #EleNão (Not him) version of the Italian anti-fascist resistance song "Bella ciao". We then marched to the embassy chanting "What are we going to do? Save the Amazon! When? Now! When? Now! When, when, when? Now, now, now!". Arriving at the embassy, spontaneous speakers took turns, singing, drumming, chanting. After several powerful and emotional

[35] https://www.amazonwatch.se/demonstration-7-sep-2019?fbclid=IwAR0S2aXfE7BDTmAIcToCtXws8_QeTxPlnrob1fhGkypqox2vuRLg3AzA9dI

speeches, a recording with sounds of the Amazon rainforest began playing and 2000 people suddenly became quiet, carefully listening to the sounds of nature.

A month later, a delegation of indigenous leaders started a one-month tour through 12 European countries with the campaign "Indigenous Blood: Not a Single Drop More" [36] to report violations against Brazilian indigenous peoples since Bolsonaro took office. Sonia Guajajara, an indigenous activist and the PSOL candidate for the vice-presidency of Brazil in the 2018 elections, came to Stockholm and gave a talk at the Marx 2019 Conference "Climate change and the end of capitalism" [37]. She denounced Bolsonaro's plans to open up reservations to mining and commercial farming; and gave many examples on the threat that the new president poses to the survival of indigenous peoples.

In December, I followed the Brazilian indigenous leader Davi Kopenawa Yanomami during his one-week visit to Stockholm to receive the 2019 Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel[38]. Kopenawa is a shaman, one of the most respected indigenous leaders in Brazil and one of a few among the Yanomami to speak Portuguese. In his acceptance speech on the day of the award ceremony, Kopenawa claimed that the Bolsonaro government is a threat to their territories and emphasized the importance of the international authorities to put pressure on the government to banish the goldminers from the Yanomami land (The Right Livelihood Foundation, 2019). During the week's events, Kopenawa also emphasized how Swedish pension money has contributed to the deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

These mobilizations are consistent with recent work emphasizing the increasing importance of planetary action (Melucci, 1989). According to Melucci, "today, it is this planetary space that frames every discussion of collective action and social movements" (1998: 423). The demonstration against the fires in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest that took place in several places around the world is an example. In addition, planetary action has facilitated efforts to promote "a politics of nonterritorial democratization of global issues" (Alvarez et al., 1998: 21). The nonterritorial dimension of the struggle for democracy has become a prominent feature of FIBRA's collectives, with focus on actions against the impact of measures by foreign governments and corporations on the environment and indigenous peoples in Brazil.

[36] https://en.nenhumagotamais.org/
[37] http://marxconf.org/
[38] https://www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/laureates/davi-kopenawa-hutukara-yanomami-association/

Keck and Sikkink employ the concept of "transnational advocacy networks" to refer to "relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values" (1998: 2). The transnational advocacy networks function to put pressure on states and corporations to amplify the demands of domestic groups. As we have seen so far, FIBRA acts with the purpose of connecting these different actors in various parts of the world advocating for democracy, human and environmental rights in Brazil.

7.3. Narrative: If he threatens my existence, I will be resistance

Oslo, 31 May 2019. Bosse, Marlene, Carlos, Lennart and I went to Oslo on behalf of BRASSAR, Friends of the MST and LAG Sweden for a meeting with representatives of the MST. The protest "Stop Bolsonaro" was scheduled as our first activity. We went directly to the central square to meet *companheiros* who came from Brazil and other Scandinavian countries for the meeting. When we arrived at the square, I saw a large poster with the faces of Lula and Franco, and the text: "Marielle is here, Free Lula, Socialism, Feminism and Anti-imperialism". There were also MST flags and several posters with the name of Bolsonaro followed by an equality sign (=) and a text: "Bolsonaro = fascism", "Bolsonaro = poisoned food", "Bolsonaro = more poverty", "Bolsonaro = attacks on human rights", "Bolsonaro = destruction of the environment", among others. We walked down the main street. It was a beautiful sunny day. As we walked, people applauded us, some spontaneously joined the protest. Suddenly, a Brazilian man passing by started shouting: "you are the enemies of Brazil", "terrorists", "go to Venezuela", "It's Bolsonaro from now on", "the *mamata*[39] is over". The atmosphere became tense. But luckily, a person took him away.

This reaction against the demonstration reflects Bolsonaro's promise of elimination of the PT supporters and his attempts to classify the MST as a terrorist organization. Bolsonaro is a voicing opposition to most forms of gun control legislation and defender of landowners' right to shoot rural workers occupying the land without being considered a crime – which is emphasized in his inaugural address presented in the scene. In her analysis of Bolsonaro's inaugural address, Guirado delineates how the new government defines the *cidadão de bem* (good citizen) as an invention of the new Brazilian identity ideal, in contrast to the "evil citizen":

[39] *Mamata* in Portuguese means "easy money". "The mamata will end" became a popular slogan of Bolsonaro's presidential campaign, to say that he would end corruption.

> it is this citizen (the "good" one) who, at first evocation, has the right to self-defense: "they deserve the means to defend themselves..." Thus, the separation between good and evil citizens is sealed. To the latter are the enemies of the Homeland. Probably second-order individuals who "don't deserve it". Policemen, in the sequence, are the concrete category of those who "sacrifice their lives for our safety". […] They are in audible opposition to second order "evil citizens," who would not deserve the rights to defense (Guirado, 2019: 6).

The notion of *cidadão de bem* does not includes Franco, Lula, Rousseff, MST activists, indigenous peoples, and other minority identities. Through the narrative "If he threatens my existence, I will be resistance", FIBRA highlights that the new government aims not only to deny rights but also eliminate those who do not follow the new identity ideal.

The protests, slogans and chants presented in this chapter act reveal that FIBRA is committed to fighting racial, sexist and economic oppression. This intersectional approach dialogues and broaden the Marxist perspective in that it seeks to unite not only those who are exploited by capitalism but also all those who are oppressed, excluded, and discriminated (Davis, 1983). Besides combating multiple oppressions in the Brazilian context, FIBRA also participates in the global struggle for human rights and environmental justice. FIBRA appears thus as an arena in which sociocultural, gender-based, racial, economic and political exclusion is contested and re-signified through a perspective that links the local to the global level – as in Melucci's notion of planetary action (1998).

FIBRA is integral to the deepening of "nonterritorial democratization of global issues" (Alvarez et al., 1998: 21), making possible the processing of conflicts surrounding the construction of transnational identities and the definition of spaces in which those conflicts can be expressed. These demands circulate in FIBRA through different forms of organization, from isolated actions by a collective to simultaneous actions in different countries and collaborative projects with international and national NGOs and social movements – including the MST, Women United Against Bolsonaro, Lula Livre Committees, labor movements, environmental and indigenous rights organizations, NGO's for solidarity in Latin America, and queer and black feminist groups. The wide variety of causes and networks in FIBRA form the basis for "the new anti-authoritarianism movement" (Lima, 2020: 99).

PART III

CONCLUDING COMMENT

8. Democracy, a tragic carnivalesque hero

Upon returning to my research questions – What prompted Brazilians in the diaspora to create FIBRA? How have FIBRA constructed its narrative of coup? What do these narratives tell us about FIBRA's notions of democracy? – FIBRA was formed based on three notions of democracy. The first notion is related to a crucial aspect in traditional versions of citizenship: the right to vote (Dagnino, 2003: 220). FIBRA draws a historical parallel with the *Diretas Já* (Direct Elections Now), a civil movement in Brazil in 1984 that demanded direct presidential elections after two decades as a dictatorship. In doing so, FIBRA emphasizes the importance of the mobilization for direct election as part of Brazil's democratization process (Puzone, 2019: 31). Given this context, Rousseff's impeachment was considered a tough blow for a country that had staged less than three decades earlier its first direct election since the end of the dictatorship. Through the narratives "Impeachment without crime is coup" and "Election without Lula is fraud", FIBRA alleges that the electoral system was corrupted when the votes of Brazilian people in the 2014 presidential election were disqualified through an illegitimate impeachment against Rousseff and when Lula was deprived of his political rights as a presidential candidate in the 2018 presidential election.

The second notion of democracy is related to the rule of law, according to which "citizens' fundamental rights and guarantees cannot be obstructed at the discretion of state actors" (Casara, 2017: 43, *my translation*). According to FIBRA's narratives, the rule of law did not apply to Rousseff and Lula, indeed it was used against them to political ends. Both Rousseff's impeachment and Lula's imprisonment resulted from articulated actions by the judiciary in close collaboration with media corporations – what Casara calls the "spectacularization of the judiciary" (ibid.: 51). However, the "officialdom" (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]: 121) behind the "legal formalism" (Casara, 2017: 41) neutralized the ideological endeavor that set the official narratives, presenting both Rousseff's impeachment and Lula's imprisonment as apolitical, non-ideological, legal, serious. In this context, FIBRA's narratives function to unmask the officialdom by presenting these processes as spectacle. Unmasking the spectacle that led to the current Brazilian tragedy is one of FIBRA's strategies, as it provides alternative narratives on the forces shaping the political conflict in the country. This example sheds light on the role of alternative stories in efforts to bring about social change (Polletta, 2006: 2).

The third notion of democracy is manifested in the idea of citizenship, in terms of access to rights and distribution of power to the excluded sectors of society to engage in the political sphere (Lima, 2020: 7). When looking at the trajectory of the PT's government, it is important to recognize its contribution to the deepening of participatory democracy. The so-called revolution of inclusion of the poor, also known as *Lulismo* (Singer, 2012, 2018), put poverty and inequality reduction as a priority. However, it is also imperative to understand what PT was not able to do with its moderated discourse that veered toward more neoliberal policies even as redistributive programs went forward (i.e. *Bolsa Família*) (Lima, 2020: 84). This dynamic is reflected in the various stances that FIBRA's activists took in relation to the Free Lula movement and the different views on Lula – from a tragic hero to villain.

Rousseff's impeachment marked the "turn to the right" in Brazil, a shift toward reducing the number of democratic governance spaces (ibid.: 3). The implementation of several measures to reverse the trajectory toward democratization in terms of citizenship started with Rousseff's successor, Temer, and continued even more aggressively throughout the government of Temer's successor, Bolsonaro. This is emphasized by the movements #ForaTemer (Temer Out) that opposed Temer's economic reform agenda and #EleNão (Not him) that presented Bolsonaro as the antithesis of the struggles for human rights and social justice. In contrast, the human rights activist Marielle Franco became the symbol of resistance. Her assassination coincided with the eruption of intolerance in the country marked by the presidential election that brought Bolsonaro to power (Tiburi, 2019; Foley, 2019; Alfonso, 2019; Casara, 2020; de Paula et al. 2020).

The intersectional approach of the main characters in FIBRA's narratives sheds new light on the frame of democratic collapse in the country (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1983; Gonzales, 1982; Guimarães, 1998; Klein & Luna, 2010; Bernardino-Costa, 2014, 2019). Let me *re*-introduce the characters: Rousseff, a former Marxist guerrilla who was tortured and imprisoned during the dictatorship and became Brazil's first female president; Lula, a former metalworker and union leader from a poor background who became the President of Brazil; Franco, a black bisexual single mother from the Maré slum who earned a master's degree and was elected a councilwoman. Their fate? Rousseff was impeached and removed from office. Lula was arrested and lost his political rights. Franco was murdered.

Categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality permeate the bodies of Rousseff, Lula, and Franco, intersecting multiple inequalities and oppressions. The notion of *cidadão de bem*

(good citizen) (Guirado, 2019) as an invention of the new Brazilian identity ideal does not embrace them. They are, in this context, the representation of the "evil citizens". That is, their rights will be denied, and they will be excluded from political participation, even if it entails a coup or even assassination. When we move to the "coup" side, we have Temer, Moro and Bolsonaro as the "good" citizens. All men, white, heterosexual, from the political, economic, religious elite of Brazil. Their fate? Temer replaced Rousseff as president. Moro became the Minister of Justice and Public Security. Bolsonaro was elected president.

By bringing Rousseff, Lula and Franco to the center stage, FIBRA presents their existence as a political act, in that it challenges Brazil's colonial past. They inverted the social hierarchies as in the suspended time of carnival, rupturing the traditions of the once unquestionable hierarchy in Brazilian politics. This is the "polyphonic" in Bakhtin's (1984 [1965]) carnivalesque sense where the multiple voices are placed as equally significant. By contrasting these characters with the political white male elite, FIBRA reveals a Brazil born of slavery and colonialism that continues reproducing these models under the massacre and criminalization of marginalized peoples and the silencing of their polyphonic voices.

Bolsonaro appears as the one who can bring the "natural" order of things back, providing legitimacy to the predominant hierarchical *modus operandi* in colonial Brazil. Let us remember that, in the name of the Brazilian traditional family, God, nation, that Rousseff's government was buried in 2016 (Macaulay, 2019). At this point, one may recall the question that has attracted much global curiosity: "Why did millions of Brazilians vote for Bolsonaro?". Even though the object of inquiry in this study does not involve answering this question, I hope that my analysis of FIBRA's narratives in its perspective on the erosion of democracy in Brazil can contribute to future research on the issue. But, to give a fraction of an answer, I turn to tragedy.

Greek tragedy as described by Chou (2012) shows that it is in the inevitability of chaos that democracy finds both, its potential to fight oppression and the possibility of self-destruction – as a tragic hero. The potential and limits of democracy appears in ethnographic accounts of citizenship throughout the Brazilianist literature (Dagnino, 2003; Albert, 2016; Avritzer, 2017; Puzone & Miguel, 2019; Lima, 2020). The general concern framing most ethnographic studies of democracy in Brazil has centred around whether participatory democracy can live up to its promise.

Despite the promises that democracy encompasses, it continues failing. Democracy is meant to include, but it also excludes. Democracy is meant to overcome its colonial past, but it still reproduces inequalities. There is also a sense of insecurity around the idea of "disorder" that democracy encompasses. In Brazil, Bolsonaro seems to have fostered a collective nostalgia of a military past seemingly more "secure", "disciplined", "ordered". In his inaugural address, Bolsonaro promised to "restore order". It is no accident that *Ordem e progresso* (Order and progress) is the motto inscribed on the Brazilian national flag. Therefore, the Brazilian dilemma – as DaMatta calls it (1991) – lies between "the country of carnival" and "the country of order and progress".

A tragic carnivalesque perspective combines the multiple dimensions of tragedy and carnival. It merges tragedy's multivocality (Chou, 2012) with the carnival's polyphonic subversion of social hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]) in order to articulate a democratic balance of conflict without denying it – disorder exists at the heart of all orders (Chou, 2012: 139). The tragic carnivalesque also encompasses different temporalities, from the timeliness of tragedy to the suspended time of carnival. That is, the carnivalesque temporal suspension of social hierarchies subverts a colonial past that is tragically carried within us, providing hope for an emancipatory future in a new democratic spirit, one that releases centuries of colonization and inequality.

FIBRA, in its narrative construction of new meaningful stories, offers an alternative to the official singular story of domination, combining multiples signifying voices. By doing so, FIBRA demystifies tyrannizing narratives. It is from alternative narratives that FIBRA operates to limit the power of one story over another in order to resist the oppressive reproduction of Brazil's colonial past. Micro-revolutions are taking place outside the reach of narratives based on colonial, racist, patriarchal, heteronormative, and fascist rhetoric. Anthropology and the arts have shown that alternative narratives matter.

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