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CHAPTER EIGHT

Neoliberalism Out of Place: The Rise of Brazilian Ultraliberalism

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Far from being reduced to a moribund set of doctrines or restricted to the works of aging notables, ultraliberal arguments have gained an immense following among Brazilians under thirty-five years old. The swelling ranks have not only influenced the direction of political debate, but also have occupied spaces hitherto reserved for "the Left," such as university campuses, alternative sites of knowledge production, widely circulated newspaper columns, and different channels of cultural life. How has this been possible? The victory is certainly not a matter of chance or attributable to some eternal youthful dream of freedom. Rather, the appeal to youth and the related generational shift in the presentation and representation of ultraliberal ideas has been carefully produced, though not, we caution, conspiratorially or always consciously.

The trends that link the Workers' Party (PT, Partido dos Trabalhadores), the street protests in 2013 and 2015, the impeachment/coup of President Dilma Rousseff, and the election of President Jair Bolsonaro are complex. In what follows, we focus on the emergence of ultraliberal figures, groups, and networks that have most advanced the messy story of neoliberalism in Brazil since the 2000s. Taking a cue from the website *Boletim da Liberdade,* which "focus[es] on the defense of liberal ideas and specializ[es] in the country's proliberty ecosystem,"[1] we use the metaphor of an ultraliberal "ecosystem." Compared with a two-dimensional political continuum, the ecosystem metaphor

captures more aptly the possibility of adaptation and differentiation in a three-dimensional space. Brazil's rightward turn and the polemics around its previous leftward turn under the PT created a complex space where to be more radical does not always translate into being further "right" on a spectrum, but rather into being more ultraliberal along multiple possible dimensions. Moreover, since Brazilian political taxonomy defies familiar Anglophone categories such as "libertarian," we employ "ultraliberal" as a genus that includes a variety of anti-statist and market-fundamentalist species.[2] Likewise, the ecosystem metaphor allows us to avoid reductively designating positions as either for or against "neoliberalism."

We argue that in the ultraliberal ecosystem that has risen to dominance in Brazil, the adaptation and speciation of groups and positions has been driven by two dynamics: on the one hand, a push for more radicalization, that is, to position oneself as more properly ultraliberal than others, and on the other hand, an incorporation and reconfiguration of left-leaning and youth-cultural sensibilities—including appeals to minority and women's support and pop-cultural aesthetics. Together, the two dynamics have normalized neoliberalism by dispersing and displacing it through the ecosystem. In doing so, they set the conditions for fringe positions to be increasingly centralized, making the genus of ultraliberalism more appealing, expressive of a diverse society, and even cool and sexy.

Longtime Mont Pelerin Society member Murray Rothbard already prefigured this dual dynamic. In *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (1985), Rothbard took cues from revisionist historians in his presentation of U.S. political development when he criticized imperialist foreign policy, and he adapted arguments circulated in the sexual revolution by developing permissive positions on abortion, birth control, and pornography.[3] Hence, he entertained and reconfigured claims from a countercultural left. Likewise, a more-radical-than-thou dynamic quite clearly drove Rothbard's criticisms of Milton Friedman for being ultimately a statist.[4] There are deeper contextual reasons for

the installation of an ultraliberal ecosystem in Brazil, but what looks superficially like Brazilian mimicry of Rothbard actually evinces an important material reality: as journalists have shown, one reason for this similarity between Brazilian and North American ultraliberal advocacy is the financial and organizational support of right-wing think tanks in the United States.[5]

In the following chapter, we first sketch ultraliberalism's lines of descent before describing its "more-radical-than-thou" dynamic. Then we describe the appropriation of youth-cultural aesthetics and finally analyze ultraliberalism's recent prodiversity appeals. Invoking Roberto Schwartz's interpretation of the nonplace of liberalism in nineteenth-century Brazil, we conclude by considering why neoliberalism has been displaced from this story and indeed has found itself (in and) "out of place" in Brazil.

OUT OF WHERE?

The rise of the ultraliberal ecosystem in Brazil was made possible by the emergence of a new space in the political and intellectual scene of the mid-2000s. It is difficult to make sense of the politics and aesthetics that characterize the ultraliberal movements in Brazil beyond the fringe positionalities they affirm and gradually relocate to the center. Often born in the mid-to-late 1980s, the bulk of members of the emerging ecosystem commonly came into politics in the late 1990s or under PT governments (2002 to 2016) and what would come to be marked as the PT's first corruption scandals. Their dissatisfaction ran deeper than institutional politics, however, involving a carefully (if not always intentionally) crafted sense of exclusion in the face of the perceived hegemony of "the Left" in the public sphere. The harnessing and directing of such dissatisfaction made for the emergence of the ultraliberal ecosystem. In what follows, we highlight three lines of descent that can be traced to the 1980s and 1990s and that set the stage for this radical youth activist positionality.[6]

The first and more direct line of descent is the appearance of the first Brazilian liberal institutes in the 1980s and 1990s. Most important here are the only two remaining from the 1980s: the Instituto Liberal (IL), created in 1983 in Rio de Janeiro by Brazilian businessman and member of the Mont Pelerin Society, Donald Steward, Jr., and the Instituto de Estudos Empresariais (IEE), created in 1984 by the Ling family in Rio Grande do Sul. These institutes were financed by the same businessmen whose interest in market reforms was often tempered by a countervailing interest in localized state protectionism.[7] While this first wave waned in the late 1990s, it left two legacies to the ecosystem that would emerge in the mid-2000s: the translation and circulation among businessmen and politicians of neoliberal and libertarian articles and books, most of all by Hayek, Friedman, and Rothbard, and an initial institutionalization through networks of individuals and organizations, both national and international.[8]

Most notable regarding the latter were some early connections to U.S. groups such as the Foundation for Economic Education, as well as the creation of the Fórum da Liberdade, which became the main gathering space of the ultraliberal ecosystem and its sympathizers. Indeed, all the major think tanks and movements have since been launched at the forum, which changes composition according to the internal displacements of the ecosystem. While it included leftist figures until the early 2000s, the forum became an exclusively liberal and conservative gathering place by the mid-2000s and included an array of guests from the Bolsonaro government in 2019.[9] Together, these legacies laid the foundation of transnational material support that the ultraliberal ecosystem has come to mobilize.

Second and less obvious is the challenge to hegemonic loci of authoritative knowledge by two developments in the 1990s and early 2000s. One is expressed in the role of the figure of Olavo de Carvalho, who, despite his association with a particularly aggressive conservatism in Bolsonarismo's culture wars, played a broader role in the emergence of the ultraliberal ecosystem in the late 1990s and early

2000s.[10] At that time, Carvalho helped mainstream the claim that leftist intellectuals had become imbecilic and were spearheading a cultural catastrophe by turning hegemonic and complacent.[11] This both fused "the Left" and "the intellectuals" as one and the same and marked it as a group as both institutionally hegemonic and intellectually and morally decadent. Fundamentally, it located the path to intellectual and political sophistication and irreverence on "the Right"—a muddied neoliberal and/or conservative position. This disposition was key in constructing a fringe positionality from which to claim authoritative knowledge and vocalize intellectual and political claims with a radical, antiestablishment aura.

This development was compounded by the consolidation in the 2000s of the think tank as a site of authoritative knowledge production. The role of think tanks as marginal and focused loci of knowledge production was itself conditioned by the loss of exclusive access to public universities that wealthy young students felt as an effect of the inclusive higher education policies advanced by the PT federal government. This sense of loss led to the establishment of alternative circuits of knowledge diffusion and acquisition, such as foreign college degrees and internationally connected think tanks.[12] Margaret Tse, a Brazilian former member of the Mont Pelerin Society board of directors and its current newsletter editor, reinforces this idea by presenting think tanks as a response, in the form of "precise information, and rigorous and transparent analyses," to a credibility gap between citizens, elected politicians, and knowledge.[13] This (highly contested) claim associates authoritative knowledge with specialized issue areas and the closed circuit of online, openly biased think tanks, prone as they are to creating echo chambers. While Carvalho took part in mainstreaming the position of the right-wing antileftist young intellectual against established knowledge authorities, the rise of think tanks established a site where such people could converge and that they could rely upon for learning, debating, and publishing, reaching an ever broader audience.

Last is the acceptance and spread of Washington Consensus social

and economic policies in the 1990s by the Fernando Henrique Cardoso presidency, later compounded by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's 2002 "Letter to the Brazilian People," a document stating the PT politician's commitment to continue his predecessor's socioeconomic policies, and the conciliatory politics of Lulism.[14] The "mainstreaming" of neoliberal policies not only lessened the need for liberal institutes—compounding the waning of the first wave—but more importantly contributed to the stage at which the ultraliberal ecosystem emerged by muddying the categories of "neoliberalism," "state intervention," "social democracy," "socialism," and "the Left." Indeed, the proximity between Cardoso and Lula would facilitate their being bundled together as no more than variations upon a theme. Just as many on the Left have criticized the PT for compromising, to the point of labeling its politics a product of "left neoliberalism,"[15] promarket forces could criticize Cardoso's neoliberalism for "not being radical enough," to the point of labeling it a version of "the Left." This configuration instilled the common reading in the ultraliberal ecosystem of the historical nonexistence of liberal ideas or of a liberal government in Brazil.

Indeed, Helio Beltrão—founder of Mises Brazil—retrospectively characterizes the ideological scene by reference to two "middle ground positions": social democracy and neoliberalism. In his view, both tendencies come from the compromising of liberalism by accepting different roles for state social and economic intervention.[16] This configuration of the field allows fringe positions in the ultraliberal ecosystem to migrate to the center by claiming to be more radical than their peers—rhetorically labeled "social democrat" or "neoliberal."

Together, these lines of descent—the preceding liberal institutes, the advent of alternative sites of authoritative knowledge, and the muddying categories of left and right—set the stage for the rebirth of ultraliberal forces. This space, as we will show, works as much by bringing together diverse groups and positions distinguishing themselves in common from external—read "leftist"—forces as by producing internal distinctions by claiming to be more radical than other

positions within that ecosystem. This dynamic of internal and external distancing produces the increasingly porous boundaries that have had a fundamental role in shaping the political scene in the twenty-first century.

FROM MARGIN TO CENTER

The first think tank of this new generation was created in 2005: Instituto Millenium (IMIL). Unlike its predecessors, the still-operating IMIL aims to reach not only the world of businessmen and politicians, but also beyond it, the scientific and student communities. However, like the liberal institutes of the 1980s and 1990s, IMIL is closely linked to positions of authority within the business, financial, media, and academic sectors and thus has had substantial support and resources.[17] Among its first founding and council members, one finds Armínio Fraga and Paulo Guedes, economists with close ties to the financial sector. While Fraga was president of the Central Bank (1999 to 2003) under the Cardoso administration and was announced as prospective minister of economy for presidential candidate Aécio Neves (defeated by Rousseff in 2014), Guedes was nominated minister of economy by President Jair Bolsonaro in 2018.

The ranks of early members also included representatives of important industrial holding groups and of the largest media outlets in Brazil—Organizações Globo and Grupo Abril. Furthermore, although IMIL publishes ideas ranging from those of self-proclaimed social democrats to those of liberals and libertarians, its core principles are attuned to a Washington Consensus version of neoliberalism, including an active role for the state—principles that would quickly place it under critical scrutiny.[18] Thus, IMIL maintained an organic relationship with the establishment, keeping to a somewhat riven position that sustained an important role in spreading ultraliberal ideas through its media connections and vast funding, while falling short of the kind of radical fringe position emerging in and through the ecosystem.[19]

Indeed, most of the movements that make up the ultraliberal ecosystem were more decentralized and consisted mainly of young college students and professionals. Positioned on the fringes created by their predecessors and informed by a radical antiestablishment ethos, they saw themselves as minoritarian oppositions fighting hegemonic forces in both public discourse and higher education. While the lines of descent presented above set the stage, the emergence of the ultraliberal ecosystem in the mid-2000s took place in a different scene: online groups focused on the discussion of liberalism in the now-extinct social networking site Orkut.[20]

Orkut's system of theme-oriented communities and discussion forums, alongside its widespread dissemination in the country (in 2014, half the total number of users were from Brazil),[21] amplified a mode of engagement that hitherto had been limited to mailing lists and on-and-off internet blogs. As Bernardo Santoro, one of the people brought in to rebrand the Instituto Liberal to conform to the codes of the ultraliberal ecosystem, recounts: "The liberal movement was dead, [but] in 2006 some people decided to start discussing liberalism seriously in Orkut. I was already a liberal, I had read Locke, I had even read some more radical things, but then there was the Orkut group on liberalism; we were discussing and someone quickly noticed that everyone there was too radical, everyone was more libertarian than liberal."[22]

Explicitly citing the effervescence of this moment of emergence, Beltrão would later criticize Livres[23]—a former wing of the Social Liberal Party (PSL) that broke with it over the acceptance of Bolsonaro as presidential candidate and became a cross-party political movement promoting ultraliberal ideas online and in Congress—for its association with figures close to the Cardoso government. He claimed that "the refoundation of true liberalism in Brazil by the generation of… Orkut, with an avant-garde vibe, left those people in a limbo, completely dumbfounded. The new generation is winning the battle of ideas. Neoliberals are incompatible with what we stand for."[24]

These online communities worked simultaneously as spaces for the discussion of ideas, for the translation and circulation of articles and material, and for identity building and organization. The participants would reinforce their alleged minority position, expressed in the running joke that there were not enough of them to fill a Volkswagen bus. Even as social media brought them together, the debates and proximities would also intensify the dynamic of differentiation within the ecosystem, which led to a proliferation of communities of distinct orientations.[25]

The initiative of these communities would slowly spill out toward a broader scene. Such is the case of the attempt to create a libertarian party in Brazil: the Partido Líber, an idea born and developed in the online Orkut scene. Despite its failing to be fully institutionalized, it represented the first experience in off-line political mobilization for many young liberals, as well as an opportunity to connect with like-minded people across the country.[26] Distributing flyers and mobilizing locally and nationally, this experience built an activist political ethos in many young members of the emerging ecosystem—an ethos that would soon pay off.

Other processes achieved more substantial institutionalization, such as the creation and proliferation of ultraliberal think tanks and movements. In 2007, Beltrão, mobilizing his intensive participation in Orkut communities, spearheaded the creation of Mises Brazil, the largest libertarian think tank in the country. Following in the footsteps of the 1990s generation of liberal institutes, Beltrão associates the creation of Mises Brazil with leftist domination of universities and the ensuing consensus in favor of state interventionism.[27] Against this, Mises Brazil is dedicated to the dissemination of the Austrian school of economics—producing texts, podcasts, and videos, translating books and articles, and organizing seminars, online teaching programs, and summer schools—all aimed at attracting and training a younger public. The online and off-line presence of Mises Brazil makes it one of the main references for a generation of young liberals

in Brazil—and possibly beyond, because Beltrão is said to have influenced the founding of the Mises Institute of Sweden.[28] The creation of other institutes, think tanks, and groups has since led to ample ultraliberal networks in Brazil.

Nonetheless, Beltrão and Mises Brazil have also been vulnerable to the radicalization dynamics of the ultraliberal ecosystem. In 2015, the brothers Cristiano, Roberto, and Fernando Chiocca broke with Mises Brazil to create the Instituto Rothbard Brasil, harshly criticizing both Beltrão and the direction he was giving to Mises Brazil and causing a major break in the ultraliberal ecosystem in the process. Cristiano Chiocca accused Beltrão not only of misunderstanding basic tenets of libertarian thought, but also of courting recognition from establishment institutions such as academia, the media, and political parties—in short, expressing a proestablishment ethos.[29] Beltrão's response likewise portrayed Chiocca as both irresponsible and not ultraliberal enough.[30] Symptomatically, their "more-radical-than-thou" polemic over the issue of secession during the 2014 presidential election—in which each party accused the other of not taking the ultraliberal argument far enough in favor of separatism—turned a marginal, regionalized discussion into the matter of online debates and speculations.

The centrality of student movements in Brazil's political history and the expansion of access to high school and higher education led the Orkut "Volkswagen bus" also to move toward student movements. Most notable here is Estudantes pela Liberdade (EPL), created in 2012 in the aftermath of an Atlas Network summer seminar. The EPL was, from the onset, associated with Students for Liberty (SFL), the Atlas Network's partner engaging libertarian college youth, and was supported by both institutions through budget lines and training programs. EPL chapters contested university spaces by organizing reading groups, movie clubs, and seminars, electing student organizations, and engaging in campus activism opposing not only the monopoly of leftist ideas on university campuses, but also the residual positions occupied by those with compromising liberal perspectives.[31] As such,

the EPL took part in normalizing fringe positions associated variously with liberalism, libertarianism, and anarchocapitalism in the student scene. By 2015, its success was indisputable, being the largest Students for Liberty partner in the world, with more local branches than any U.S. or European partner, despite its shorter lifespan—which translated into a reflux influence of the EPL in Students for Liberty itself.[32]

Accusations of faulty management led in 2016 to the creation of Students for Liberty Brazil (SFLB), the part of the previous movement that remained connected to and funded by Students for Liberty. The messiness of the affair led to multiple accusations, mostly around the charge of "corruption,"[33] which came to carry special weight in the ultraliberal world—and in the political scene it helped shape—in view of the association of corruption with the derailing of fair (read: both efficient and moral) competition.[34] The affair was also taken advantage of by *Gazeta do Povo*, an online newspaper recently turned a voice of conservatism,[35] which denounced the fragmentation by pondering whether "the liberal student movement has been mimicking the Left not only in the broadness of its influence, but also of its internal divisions."[36] In doing so, of course, ironically, the conservative voice took part in that same dynamic.

Since 2017, the SFLB has organized Liberty con Brasil, a gathering of ultraliberal enthusiasts in São Paulo defined by Beltrão as a "die-hard" version of Fórum da Liberdade. While the latter encompasses newcomers to the ultraliberal ecosystem, the former is both smaller and more focused on the student/youth already willing to take anti-statist and proliberty ideas seriously. The mutual support as well as differences and rifts between Liberty con Brasil and Fórum da Liberdade might well speak to the coming chapters of the internal and external displacements of the ultraliberal ecosystem.

Although the size of the EPL in its heyday of the mid-2010s speaks for itself, its importance is difficult to dissociate from its relation to Movimento Brasil Livre (MBL). According to Juliano Torres, due to its international funding, the EPL could not participate in political

activities such as the street protests of June 2013 in Brazil. To circumvent this problem, they created a brand—Movimento Brasil Livre—and a Facebook profile through which to mobilize and participate in the street protests. With the waning of the 2013 protests, the project was abandoned and would be revived in 2014 only when Fábio Ostermann and Torres brought in Renan Santos and Kim Kataguiri to take care of the Facebook profile, raising the MBL to a new level.[37] Indeed, in 2015, the Atlas Network featured a note dedicated to celebrating the involvement of Students for Liberty in the MBL and the participation of its members in Atlas training programs.[38]

The MBL is best known for its leading role in the movements that led to the impeachment/coup against President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. Their claim to radicality began early on: they were the first to call for demonstrations against Rousseff's electoral victory in 2014, antagonizing similar groups, such as Vem Pra Rua, which felt that upholding electoral results was imperative. Instead, the MBL worked to short-circuit mainstream political opposition, explicitly stating they wanted to sideline the main opposition parties and substitute them with the true and largest opposition: the Brazilian people mobilized in the streets.[39] The MBL's edginess would soon be attacked on a number of grounds, from accusations of juvenile ambitions to statist inclinations and leftist inspirations. Behind the undeniable success of the MBL in the ultraliberal ecosystem lies their skillful mediation between "more-radical-than-thou" practices and adaptation of left-associated mechanisms. In this, they express a heightened version of the second dynamic marking the ecosystem. In the next two sections, we further explore this interplay.

SEX APPEAL: YOUTH AESTHETICS

In this section, we present the second dynamic by which an ultraliberal ecosystem has come to install itself in Brazil: namely, that of an appeal to and reconfiguration by prodiversity youth sensibilities. A

dual mechanism has constructed ultraliberal ideas to appeal to—to address and to be desirable to—the younger set. This mechanism operates along the two dimensions by which market fundamentalism and antistatism have been renovated and reconfigured: presentation, mainly in terms of the deployment of youth-culture aesthetics, and representation, principally of women and minorities.

The appeal to youth has involved both giving (making ideas and arguments available to youth) and taking (making them desirable by appropriating youth and leftist culture aesthetically). As regards giving, ultraliberal groups have subsidized the not insubstantial labor of translating Austrian economic thinking into Portuguese and making it available either in blogs and online articles or in handsomely designed editions. Though not conspicuously touting a connection to Mises Brazil, LVM Editora makes available in Portuguese translation the collected works of Mises and a number of other classics that inspire antistatist, liberal, and New Right thought. Sharing Ludwig von Mises's initials, LVM actually abbreviates Liberdade/Liberty, Valores/Values and Mercado/Market. Besides Gustave de Molinari's *The Production of Security* and books by Hayek and Rothbard, LVM Editora publishes translations of works by Hans-Hermann Hoppe and Walter Block and, in a gesture of gender and racial inclusion, features in its Brief Lessons series Thomas Sowell and Ayn Rand.

Moreover, sometimes the giving has occurred not on the production end, but in material distributions as donations to youth. In a revealing convergence of promarket voices, the MBL positively endorsed a 2017 announcement by Helio Beltrão that Mises Brazil would donate five thusand print copies of Mises's *As seis lições*, a translation of *Economic Policy: Thoughts for Today and Tomorrow* published by LVM Editora, to São Paulo public schools to answer the challenge made by the city's businessman-mayor João Doria to encourage more private donations.[40] Aside from its presence in public schools, Mises Brazil makes available for free download most of LVM's books, and, despite the Mises/Rothbard split, Instituto Rothbard does the same. Flooding the

market with free video lessons on and texts of Austrian economics, the two institutes' broad dissemination of such ideas has helped to transform anarchocapitalism from a fringe into a mainstream position, such that even statist neoliberals of stature—such as those around Michel Temer, who as vice president benefited from the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and became president upon her removal—have to defend themselves against Austrian economic arguments.

The spread of ultraliberal ideas in Brazil, especially among younger people, owes some of its success to serious efforts by groups to change the stuffy popular image of promarket politics and to rupture the automatic associations of right-leaning politics with dusty conservatism, militarism, bigotry, or the lunatic fringe. Hence, ultraliberal activists have made concerted efforts to disseminate their message by cultivating seductive influencers. In fact, several groups have openly expressed concern about their "sex appeal" deficit. Not letting the Left monopolize "coolness" has been a refrain among the younger, newer antistatist groups, as a Reason TV report on the young activists of the 2015 protests makes clear.[41] However, cultivating coolness generates contortions around style and substance, especially in the MBL, which reputedly balances ultraliberal economics with moral conservatism while capitalizing on youth appeal.

The EPL, the SFLB, the MBL, and Livres have actively courted younger followers through a variety of techniques, from online book clubs, to targeting potential adherents based on their social-network activity, to producing fast-paced video commentary on current political controversies and classic liberal debates intercut with memes and funny low-tech effects. Before donning suits as elected politicians, members of the MBL became famous for their YouTube juvenilia in which they appealed to followers in irreverent broadcasts looking like video game enthusiasts and "indie rockers."[42] Kataguiri actively cultivated the aesthetics of youth culture by sometimes dressing as a ninja and deploying, according to one *Time* reporter, "an anarchic style" to spread antistatist—not anarchist, but market-fundamentalist—ideas.[43]

Livres counts on Mano Ferreira, a cofounder of the SFLB, as director of communications to produce videos daily, including "#PolíticaEm2Minutos," which digests controversies from homophobia to the toppling of racist monuments into lessons in ultraliberalism.

The appropriation of a youth aesthetic occurs by fairly obvious presentational effects, then. Not only have the MBL and Livres deployed pop-cultural aesthetic styles for communication, but also many of the groups sell T-shirts with clever phrases ("Less Marx, more Mises") and graphic designs meant to replace leftist social justice icons such as Che Guevara. Market-fundamentalist networks such as Rede Liberdade have also "appropriated" pub space by promoting politicized bar nights, such as "Chopp sem Impostos" (Beer without taxes) to celebrate the date in June when Brazilians' annual tax burden is paid off and their earnings are no longer "confiscated" by the state. If the bid for neoliberal hegemony depends on the construction of popular consent, then these productions carry great importance, for they educate viewers' and consumers' "common sense" by distilling ultraliberal arguments in a way that clarifies and stimulates background experiences and affects.[44]

Other appropriations are more subtle, however, and here we must deal briefly with the harrowing question of the Left/Right convergence and split in the 2013/2015 protests and the Left/Right resonances of antistatism. Even if not a conscious appropriation, the MBL fed off the momentum in the 2013 protests of the MPL (Movimento Passe Livre, the Free Fare Movement), an antiauthoritarian, autonomous, apartisan group that advocates for the right to the city and free urban circulation. The protests of 2013 began initially as demonstrations against the public transportation fare hikes in several Brazilian cities, but exploded in size and scope, especially in response to brutal police repression of some protesters. By mid-June 2013, millions of people had marched in the streets, objecting to political corruption—from across the political spectrum—and the dismal contrast between the quality of public services and local, state, and federal investment in

facilities for megaevents that Brazil would host, the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016).

Although initially the 2013 protesters were progressive leftist critics of the Brazilian government, some of them organized under the banner of the EPL, which, as already noted, incubated the MBL, which in turn took a coordinating role in the demonstrations of the anti-PT, pro-impeachment protests of 2015. While of course no single group owns the 2013 protests, it nonetheless makes sense to speak of an appropriation by the EPL and MBL of the broad-based youthful energy arising from the MPL's initiative. The swapping of initials—MPL→EPL, MPL→MBL—suggests a revaluation of antistatism from autonomist-inspired to anarcho-capitalist. Typically, after parlaying its capture of political energy into success in 2015 and after, the MBL later tried to "unmask" the MPL as bourgeois opportunists capitalizing on contrived sympathy for urban working classes. Obsessed with routing "Communists" at any cost, the MBL courted associations with Bolsonaro in 2018, and consequently some of its members won local, state, and federal elections.

DIVERSITY'S APPEAL

The MBL's successful appropriation of political energy emerging from the Left and of aesthetic presentation and communication practices associated with youth cultures has provoked reactions by other groups, such as Livres. It also seemingly spurred an autocritique: the sexist animus that Kataguiri and others of the MBL managed to whip up against Brazil's first woman president, followed two years later by its participation in a transphobic and homophobic crusade against Queermuseu, an art exhibit celebrating nonnormative gender and sexual expression, created a bad impression that the MBL later attempted to redress. Certainly, the MBL still offends political correctness, but it expressed regret for creating a polarized public sphere and since 2019 has publicly repudiated its association with Bolsonaro.

Dissociating themselves from Bolsonarista intolerance while sharply rejecting leftist identity politics, ultraliberal activists' initiatives on women's and minority issues have become an important field of neoliberal articulation in Brazil that also functions recursively to rearticulate racial, sexual, and gender identity. Rather than diminish such initiatives as only cynical appeals to capture support, it seems to us important to recognize the fact that even in superlatively unequal Brazil, the New Right cannot afford to ignore the shift in mainstream valuations of inclusive diversity. The imperative appeal to diversity in recent neoliberalism contrasts, for example, with Reaganite or Thatcherite neoliberalism and signals real wins by the so-called identitarian Left.

Liberals' active contestation of the perceived leftist hegemony on questions of minority identity have sometimes provoked acrimonious exchanges: the left-leaning presidential hopeful Ciro Gomes ridiculed Fernando Holiday, an openly gay (but sexually abstinent) Afro-Brazilian politician and prominent MBL organizer, as a "bush captain" in a 2018 interview. Holiday sued over the insult, which refers to a (stereotypically light-skinned Afro-Brazilian) hunter of fugitive slaves. However, we think that the incident marks another sort of boorishness on the part of the Left: namely, a tendency to dismiss support of ultraliberal arguments by women, LGBT persons, and people of color as a species of false consciousness, rather than to understand it in terms of new modalities of racialization and gender and sexual identification on the part of the New Right.[45]

With two prominent national organizers (now politicians) from minority racial backgrounds, one of whom is also gay, the MBL has situated itself in the liberal debate on minority questions. Indeed, optics and self-irony play an undeniably important role in spreading the MBL's criticism of the Left's arguments about racial and sexual minorities: Right-leaning critics avoid appearing racist or homophobic when they advance positions already voiced by Holiday, Kataguiri, or their minority proxies. The MBL frequently accuses the Brazilian Left

of reveling in a U.S.–exported victim's mentality and ridicules the Left as beholden to political correctness. Defying PC culture, Kataguiri provocatively ironizes his Japanese heritage with stereotypes. In one video that lures his audience into thinking that he will criticize his MBL ally João Doria for a xenophobic social media post that offensively switches the letters "l" and "r" (a common racist trope), Kataguiri ends up instead rejecting leftist criticism of racial-cultural representations, promotes studious, well-mannered Asians as the "model minority," and closes the video schooling Doria on the correct way to mock Japanese.[46]

Holiday's videos, by contrast, deploy less irony, but the indignation remains loud, and his argument that movements for racial equality lost control after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., lacks nuance, moralistically treating the latter iconically.[47] To the MBL, struggles for racial equality must never engage in violence, vandalism, or terrorism, as Malcolm X, Black Lives Matter, and Nelson Mandela purportedly have done.[48] Against a Left that allegedly reverses racism by stoking Black supremacy, the MBL promotes legal equality, individual initiative, and the capitalist market's expansion of opportunities as solutions to racial and other discriminations. Like its counterparts elsewhere, the MBL flirts with Islamophobia when it charges leftists with self-contradiction for criticizing Orientalist costumes at Carnaval, but supposedly refusing to condemn homophobia and sexism in Islamic societies. To the MBL, Israel merits praise, but the Brazilian Left kowtows to Islamist and dictatorial socialist regimes with a history of repressing women or sexual minorities.[49]

The MBL has recently undertaken two initiatives, MBLGBT and MBL Mulher (MBL Woman), to redress its reputation of being dominated by male enfants terribles who protest women presidents and queer art. Already claiming social media presence, the initiatives offer ultraliberal alternatives to leftist "indoctrination" on gender and sexuality and to right-wing sexism and homophobia. Typical for a group claiming liberty as panacea and objecting to "special" (minority) rem-

edies, MBL organizers had to allay supporters' anxiety about whether their initiatives "segregate" women and sexual minorities.[50] One MBL Mulher debate, featuring perhaps the only prominent woman of the 2015 protests, Adelaide Oliveira of Vem Pra Rua, presented various diagnoses for women's lack of participation in politics. While most participants, including Oliveira, identified restrictive stereotypes in childhood and an ongoing lack of encouragement, others, such as Cris Bernart, a prominent aide to Holiday, suggested that women must overcome innate, cerebral propensities that leave them less suited for dominant modes of politics.[51] (Bernart probably summarizes the research of Leonard Sax's bestseller *Why Gender Matters*, the Portuguese translation of which was published by LVM Editora.)

Whereas the MBL created platforms to encourage LGBT and women's participation, Livres has focused on racism as an ultraliberal concern. Against anarcho-capitalist hard-liners, Livres argues that some remedial policies actually promote the exercise of ultraliberal autonomy where generations of intense inequality have distorted market opportunities. Whereas the MBL's Holiday vocally rejects affirmative action and preferential treatment of minorities, yet publicly deploys his minority identities to promote ultraliberal modes of racial and sexual identification, Irapuã Santana of Livres is an increasingly prominent Afro-Brazilian voice for reconciling ultraliberalism with affirmative action. For Santana and Livres, racial quotas, as well as investment in public education and health, remedy unequal starting points and thus are compatible with meritocracy.[52]

Santana coordinates the Livres's Luiz Gama initiative, named for a freeman sold into slavery who fled to freedom after learning to read and understanding the illegality of his situation. Gama subsequently practiced law to free other slaves. The video publicizing the initiative features a statement by Gama that would shock the sensibilities of Livres's ultraliberal peer competitors: "Any slave that kills his master, whatever be the circumstance, kills in legitimate self-defense."[53] The potent quotation underscores the group's interpretation of chattel

slavery as the "biggest attack on liberty invented by humanity" and subsequently of corrosive anti-Black racism as deeply rooted in Brazilian culture.[54] Although seeming to converge with some leftist arguments about structural racism, Livres ultimately aims to generate ultraliberal equality of opportunity that stimulates individualism.

Livres, although a self-identified anarcho-capitalist group, has developed a reputation as the most "leftish" presence in the ultraliberal outburst in Brazil. Individual liberty, Livres insists, undermines itself by egocentrism, and therefore necessarily demands defending others' liberty as well. Thus, according to Livres, ultraliberals must tolerate intolerance only up to the point where intolerance manifestly restricts others' liberty and opportunities.[55] Accordingly, Livres, and Santana specifically, show greater support toward #BlackLivesMatter and #VidasNegrasImportam protests than the MBL, which associates them with violence, and Beltrão, who characterizes them as just as ochlocratic and authoritarian as Bolsonarista fanatics.[56]

Whereas the MBL has tried to distinguish itself on gay issues, Livres celebrated Trans Visibility Day by posting an interview with proud trans and intersex affiliates. The video presents personal liberty as crucial for individual projects of aligning bodily comportment with psychic gender. Against such individualizing personal journeys of discovery, it criticizes leftist activists for the "standardization" of identities.[57] Despite noting the positive impact of decriminalizing homophobia and transphobia, Santana nevertheless cautioned that extending anti-racist legislation to cover homophobia and transphobia, as Brazil's Supreme Court did in 2019, must occur by congressional vote, not judicial activism.[58]

The MBL and Livres have gone furthest in presenting analyses and projects specific to Brazil. Nonetheless, Mises Brazil plays a crucial role in translating and disseminating North American libertarian arguments on minority questions. On Mises Brazil's website, one can access, in Portuguese, nearly a dozen articles by Thomas Sowell, the African-American opponent of affirmative action, alongside Walter

Block's infamous defenses of discrimination. Occasionally, the institute finds Brazilians to parrot Block-type arguments, and the MBL's Holiday might not have (hubristically) put himself on a T-shirt next to Sowell and Martin Luther King, Jr., had Mises Brasil not helped spread Sowell's message.[59] Notably, though, the more youth-engaged groups distinguish themselves from the older guard in their willingness to confront bias. In this sense, they confirm ultraliberalism's historic trend: just as Rothbard criticized the U.S. war in Vietnam—a species of anti-imperialism that later fed antiglobalism—and incorporated 1960s countercultural insights in his libertarian manifesto,[60] so have the new ultraliberals felt compelled to formulate prodiversity positions.

CONCLUSION

Researchers of Brazil and South America debate whether the PT years represented a turn *away* from neoliberalism specifically of the Washington Consensus, a *post*neoliberalism that adapted features of neoliberalism,[61] or *left* neoliberalisms.[62] Whichever the case, though, associations with the "Communist" PT or its discredited predecessors taint neoliberalism in the eyes of Brazil's ultraliberals. In their radicalism, they have paradoxically normalized arguments that surpass neoliberalism, marginalizing it as passé. Neoliberalism has thus been out of place in our story, echoing the fate of classical liberalism in Brazil.

In a famous 1977 essay titled "Ideas Out of Place," the Marxist critic Roberto Schwartz explicated nineteenth-century writers' debates about how liberalism was "out of place" in Brazil.[63] A slave society, Brazil lacked free labor, legal equality, and political universalism. In Europe, such bourgeois ideas were of course properly ideological in the Marxist sense, describing the realm of appearances only, since in reality, capital exploited labor. Yet qua *ideology*, liberalism was at home in Europe. In Brazil, however, the rhetoric of liberalism could not even falsify appearances, because it deceived no one. In the face of racial slavery

and a clientelism that joined free whites while differentiating them by status, liberalism became merely decorative, a set of ideas one might spout to sound modish—in short, a misplaced, second-degree ideology. However, this was no secondary matter: while liberalism did not falsify appearances, it was through its all too recognizable out-of-placeness that nineteenth-century cultural life took form, argued Schwartz.

Although neoliberalism does not carry the same decorative verve of its nineteenth-century counterpart, neoliberalism's out-of-placeness has had a fundamental role in giving form to twenty-first-century cultural life. Coming *out of Brazil*, neoliberalism has found itself repeatedly out of place not because it is a decorative, second-degree ideology, but because it is a governing rationality overdetermined by the lines of force generated by nineteenth-century legacies of racial slavery, clientelism, heteropatriarchy, and Indigenous genocide, as well as Brazil's location in the Global South. Thus, each construction of neoliberalism—Cardoso's, those of the PT, Temer's—necessitated calibrations of some patterns of inequalities against others. When Brazil's neoliberal constructions serially encountered turbulence from global financial markets, international trade, and crises of political legitimacy, ultraliberals were able to magnetize popular anxieties by representing "leftist hegemony," "state intervention," "market restriction," and paternalistic attitudes generally as causes of dissatisfaction and resentment. Zeal for individualist freedom via competition and self-investment would correct neoliberalism's failures to *truly* remedy inequalities by sustaining growth.

Hence, Brazilian ultraliberals constructed from relatively fringe elements of neoliberal discourse—anarchocapitalism, market fundamentalism, and U.S. libertarianism—*another* (though perhaps not altogether separate) governing rationality to displace Brazil's series of neoliberalisms. From being a non-Brazilian import under Cardoso to compromised chimeras under the PT and a timid platform under Temer, neoliberalism was never properly itself or at home in Brazil, but now would be displaced by an ultraliberal governing rationality.

Caught in the interplay of the lines of force that Schwartz identified and others that he did not, ultraliberals' bid for a more enduring hegemony will depend on how they construct "state" and "market" relations to rearticulate the contradictory affects/effects generated by the legacies of inequality that continue to beset Brazil. Their opponents face the same daunting task.

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