

**UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI
FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE VEDE**

Paloma Camargo Varón

**Consumerism and infrapolitics:
Social tensions within the new and old middle classes in Brazil**

**Potrošništvo in infrapolitika:
socialne napetosti znotraj novega in starega srednjega razreda v
Braziliji**

Magistrsko delo

Ljubljana, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Paloma Camargo Varón

Consumerism and infrapolitics: social tensions within the new and old middle classes in Brazil

Brazil is historically one of the most unequal nations in the world. This has been changing since the 1990s and, in a more visible way, after 2003, in the government of Lula, with the phenomenon of the growth of the C class, the so-called new middle class. This study contextualizes this phenomenon and its consequences for the consumer habits of Brazil's "new" and "old" middle classes, focusing on the analysis of the "Infância Livre de Consumismo" (Childhood Free of Consumerism or CFC) and the "Rolezinhos" social movements. Moreover, this study examines the tensions created in Brazil's very polarized society through their antagonistic infrapolitical approaches towards consumerism. In Brazil, the relationship between consumerism and citizenship is an important key to understand these tensions.

Key words: consumerism, citizenship, Brazil, infrapolitics, new middle class

POVZETEK

Paloma Camargo Varón

Potrošništvo in infrapolitika: socialne napetosti znotraj novega in starega srednjega razreda v Braziliji

Brazilija je zgodovinsko gledano ena najbolj neenakih nacij na svetu. Od devetdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja se to spreminja, še bolj očitno pa po letu 2003, v obdobju vlade Lule, s pojavom rasti C razreda, tako imenovanega novega srednjega razreda. Pričujoča študija obravnava navedeni pojav in njegove posledice na potrošniške navade brazilskega "novega" in "starega" srednjega razreda, s poudarkom na analizi socialnih gibanj "Infância Livre de Consumismo" (Komunizma razbremenjenega otroštva) in "Rolezinhos". Poleg tega delo obravnava napetosti v izrazito polarizirani brazilski družbi, ki so nastale skozi antagonistične infrapolitične pristope k potrošništvu. Za razumevanje teh napetosti v Braziliji je pomembno poznavanje odnosa med potrošništvom in državljanstvom.

Ključne besede: potrošništvo, državljanstvo, Brazilija, infrapolitika, novi srednji razred

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Preface

I regret the fact that the social sciences have largely lost interest in the distribution of wealth and questions of social class since the 1970s. Before that, statistics about income, wages, prices, and wealth played an important part in historical and sociological research.” (...) “The truth is that economics should never have sought to divorce itself from the other social sciences and can advance only in conjunction with them.

The social sciences collectively know too little to waste time on foolish disciplinary squabbles. If we are to progress in our understanding of the historical dynamics of the wealth distribution and the structure of social classes, we must obviously take a pragmatic approach and avail ourselves of the methods of historians, sociologists, and political scientists as well as economists. We must start with fundamental questions and try to answer them. Disciplinary disputes and turf wars are of little or no importance

(Piketty 2014, 7).

Coming from one of the most unequal countries in the world to live in Slovenia was, for me, a shock. It was certainly a positive kind of shock, as I was astounded by the different levels of equality that the people of the two countries experience. I moved several times within my continental country and I lived in three different regions. Originally, I come from the poorest part of Brazil, the Northeast. In my city, Salvador, 80% of the population is black, and most of them are poor (according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). As I was growing up, I would often question why I could go to a good school and the daughter of the maid could not. I grew up in a place where poor children, instead of going to school, had to work or beg for money on the streets, to help their parents, if they even had them.

Salvador is a tourist city, where black people were accepted only when dancing, practicing capoeira, singing, drumming or playing football, of course. In any other place or activity, they were not welcome, mostly if these places and activities were considered part of the middle-class world. They could not walk or even worse run around places such as malls, stores, beaches in the center, as they were always considered suspicions. Even if their economic position has improved, the racism still pervades Salvador. As I

was only a child I thought that being black and being poor was always synonymous. I was not completely wrong.

This segregation that can also be called apartheid always bothered me. While I was growing up, I saw that it was not fair that people did not have the same opportunities. I always studied in good (private) schools and the bonus is that I was able to get to the best (public) university of my state. Even at that time, I knew that it was wrong. You had to pay for the entire education if you wanted to go a public university, for which you did not have to pay. Therefore, people who could not afford private schools would never go to a good university.

My sense of justice has always made me think about these realities. Maybe the fact that I am not white, I am a woman, I am from the Northeast of Brazil and moved to São Paulo (the biggest and most economically developed city in the country) made me think more and more about inequality, prejudice, meritocracy vs. access and opportunities. Many of my friends, from the elite, never thought about this at all. Meritocracy is a widespread value in Brazil.

All of the above-mentioned factors and circumstances shaped me and they are also the reason why I became an activist. Actually, I became a militant of the Workers Party at the age of 14. My mother was member of the Communist Party of Brazil. My father is Colombian and did not vote or care that much about politics. I chose my political party when I was a teenager. I had chosen my side years before, when I thought that it was not fair that black equals poor and poor people will not have the same opportunities as me and my cousins, friends, etc.

Ten years later, I was already an activist in many causes; however, I had distanced myself from the Workers Party due to ideological disagreements. Although, I do sometimes still vote for them. During those ten years, my country experienced vast political and social change because of Lula and the before-mentioned party. Then, in an unexpected twist of faith, I came to Slovenia.

I was aware of the fact that the situation in Slovenia was different from Brazil's. I realize that for people who grew up here, the level of social inequality, which has certainly been growing in the last decades, is too high. However, for me coming from

this former Third-World country turned global power, it is, in many aspects, almost an ideal world.

I am very thankful to be living in this country and to experience a different way of life; nevertheless, I will never forget my childhood, my origins, my country and its problems. That is why my view of the world will be always focused on social classes, differences, inequality and in the search for social justice everywhere.

It seems that, looking with some distance what you know from years of experience, brings other ideas and helps to establish new connections between them: theory and practice. When I learnt about infrapolitics for the first time, in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana, I was sure that I found the core of my research. I could regard social movements and consumerism – another issue in my life, especially after I had kids – with another look.

I was already thinking about the connections between consumerism and infrapolitics when the Rolezinhos movement started to pop-up in the Brazilian mass media. I looked at this in a watchful way. So it was natural that, when I started writing my masters' proposal, I decided to take a look on my country's inequalities by studying these two movements that are so revealing of our big ills as a country.

1 Introduction

Official data from the last three decades shows that Brazil has one of the world's most unequal distributions of income (Skidmore 2004).

Brazil is historically one of the most unequal nations in the world. However, Brazil's tendency towards a concentration of wealth has been reversing since the 1990s after the "Plano Real" (1994) economic stability measures, which was strongly enforced after 2003 as a consequence of the social policies implemented by Luís Inácio Lula da Silva's government. Brazil's Gini Index¹ grew from 0.5367 (1960) to 0.6091 (1990) then fell to 0.5957 (2001) and later to 0.5190 (2012) (Center of Social Policies/ Getúlio Vargas Foundation 2012).

As Neri warns, "the first years of the new millennium will be recorded in Brazilian history as the inequality reduction years, in contrast with the reasons for the occupation of icons of American and European wealth such as Wall Street in New York and the City of London" (Neri 2012, 32).

According to the World Bank, the percentage of the population belonging to the middle class was the same as that belonging to the lower classes – approximately 30% (World Bank, 2013). The rise of the middle class in Brazil has caused its social and political panorama to change in a variety of ways, as will be explained hereafter.

This study aims to contextualize the phenomenon of Brazil's middle class growth since 2003 and its consequences for the consumer habits of Brazil's "new" and "old" middle classes. It focuses on an analysis of the "Infância Livre de Consumismo" (Childhood Free of Consumerism or CFC) and the "Rolezinhos" social movements, and the tensions created in Brazil's very polarized society through their antagonistic infrapolitical approaches towards consumerism.

Infrapolitics is a theoretical neologism created by James C. Scott to denominate what he calls the "unobtrusive realm of political struggle" (Scott 1990). "For a social science

¹ The Gini Index is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income distribution of a nation's population.

attuned to the relatively open politics of liberal democracies and to loud, headline-grabbing protests, demonstrations and rebellions, the circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is, like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum" (Scott 1990).

"Infrapolitics is to politics what infrared is to light. Its domain encompasses the acts, gestures, and thoughts that are not quite political enough to be perceived as such" (Scott 1990). According to Marche, the term can be defined either in terms of discretion – what passes politically unnoticed – or of significance – what does not quite qualify as political. "When used in the service of studying collective action or social movements, infrapolitics evokes mobilizations that do not respond to the criteria for widely recognized forms of political action" (Mache 2012)

"Subaltern forms of resistance produce 'hidden transcripts', that is to say critiques of power that escape the notice of the dominant and contrast with the 'public transcripts' of power relations, which may contain no record of opposition. Such discretion allows the dominated to covertly resist being symbolically appropriated by the dominant." (Mache 2012)

The term "new middle class" was adopted for the first time in 2008 by researchers from the Center of Social Policies of Getúlio Vargas Foundation (CPS/FGV), in order to characterize a considerable part of the Brazilian society that had recently experienced a rise in their income levels; whereas, the "old middle class" is used to define that part of the population who traditionally had access to the consumer market and, consequently, to full citizenship.

"Considering that access to citizenship in Brazil is taking place by an increase in the power of consumerism, the purchase of a product which is from a valued brand means being recognized as a citizen, when it would be access to the basic services of the *polis* which would make you and me real citizens" (Sakamoto 2014).

"Rolezinhos" are decentralized movements concerned with ostentatiousness and the worship of consumerism, especially the goods and brands acquired by young Brazilians belonging to the new middle class. They gather in shopping malls to show off their

newly acquired consumer items and act like the old middle class, causing outrage among the latter. Since the implementation of the shopping mall concept in Brazil in the 1960s, these places had been frequented by the old middle class in search of escape from the tensions of the Brazilian streets. Rolezinhos are seen by many as criminal acts in private spaces, while others consider them to be a symptom of Brazil's veiled social apartheid.

According to Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco, "the symbolic dimension of consumerism overlaps with its practices, since a socially valued symbol is as vital to human existence as vitamins, proteins and carbohydrates" (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco 2012). They contextualize this in terms of the Brazilian society, which according to them discriminates based on skin color and social class. It is also a society where dressing well and having the latest gadgets is of vital importance. Brands, therefore, represent not merely a source of prestige, but citizenship, vitality and power as well.

Childhood Free of Consumerism is a collective that was founded in 2012 and is made up of Brazilian parents and citizens unhappy with advertising aimed at children. The movement's members have no link to any organization and work on a voluntary basis. Comprised mainly of members of the old middle class who historically had total access to the consumer market, CFC, on the other hand, rejects consumerism and ostentatiousness. It thus goes against the traditional middle class (old and new) values which focus on the glorification of the ever-expanding consumption of goods.

While the new middle class has recently been granted access to the world of consumerism and sees it as a true recognition of citizenship, part of the old middle class criticizes consumerism and recognizes its problems. However, even though they are antagonistic, both movements have a potentially high political impact in country as socially polarized as Brazil. This study attempts to understand the origins and reasons behind class tensions and their repercussions on the infra-politics of both groups in Brazilian society.

2 Methodological framework

2.1 Methodology

This aim of this study is to contribute to the study of consumerism and citizenship in Brazil in two ways: theoretically and empirically. The selected methodology for this study is a combination of desk research – or secondary research – and primary research, using qualitative and comparative methods to analyze the social movements already mentioned.

According to Vromen, the emphasis of qualitative methods in political sciences is on detailed, text-based answers, which are frequently historical or contain personal reflections from the participants in political institutions, issues, events or processes. The procedure is often characterized as the use of 'thick' description and analysis rather than broad, numerical generalizations (Vromen 2010).

Hopkin says that “case studies aiming to contribute to the development of theory – ‘law-like’ descriptions of social and political phenomena – must be complemented by comparative analyses if their theoretical implications are to have any value” (Hopkin 2010).

Theoretical Study

First, desk research will be employed for a review of important literature on the general relationship between consumerism and citizenship in Brazil. The result will be a theoretical framework which categorizes existing literature on consumerism (including theoretical as well as empirical studies) alongside the dimensions referred to previously. This framework will be used to formulate general hypotheses on the interplay between these two aspects of life.

Empirical Study

The specific research questions referred to in the project description will be addressed by two empirical case studies, namely the Childhood Free of Consumerism social movement, which was set up on Facebook in March 2012. It is still very representative with about a hundred thousand participants. Rolezinhos are a youth demonstration that happened mostly between October 2013 and February 2014 and was not organized by just one person, but had many leaders among young people also on Facebook. They agreed to meet in a shopping mall and they also sent invitations opening the participation to whoever would be interested. However, they also attracted the interest of the mass media and other conservative forces of the Brazilian society, who quickly succeeded in putting an end in this “subversive” movement.

Participant observation and ethnography are also carried out, since I have been a member of the CFC group since its foundation, so I contribute to it. I follow their discussions and activities, despite being currently abroad, so I have an "insider and close-up view" (Cantor Magnani 2002) of the social movement at the same time that I am an active researcher.

I cannot ask to be part of Rolezinhos, even if I support the initiative, as the movement is formed by young people from the peripheries of the biggest Brazilian cities, but I have been added to some groups and have come to meet (online) and talk to people who participate in or created and organized these groups. In this second case, I identify myself as a researcher interested in their movement, but clearly I am not one of them.

To sum up ethnography, as a method, is utilized to examine culture (meaning systems) or other facets of broadly conceived social structures, such as power (politics), economy, broadly conceived social, such as economy, power (politics), or social structure. The core principle of the process is participant observation, which involves a disciplined immersion into the social life of a certain group of people (Kubik 2009).

I used participant observation in my research as well, for example I used Facebook to join some closed groups, which are just for those responsible for its contents and in-depth discussions. I also joined some open groups, which are frequented by everyone. Facebook is a very useful tool, as you can participate in discussions and follow what is

going on even if you are in different country. This is especially useful if you are an expatriate interested in what is happening in your country.

Trickett and Oliveri (1997) argue that since political science faces increasing calls to turn from macro to micro levels, as well as to research actual mechanisms, the value of ethnography should become apparent. Especially considering that, as Kubik (2009) poses, ethnography can depict the dynamic of change in ways that snapshot surveys which use pre-established dimensions and response categories cannot.

2.2 Research question and goals

The first research question is as follows: in what way can such different (and opposing) infrapolitical approaches contribute to an understanding of Brazil's new economic and political panorama, which started changing significantly after 2003? The second research question is: how can these movements aid in understanding the relationship between consumerism and citizenship in Brazil?"

The above mentioned general research questions result in specific research questions including (but not limited to) the following:

- (1) According to Campbell (2005), advertising plays a very important role in consumerism, as it encourages people to believe that their everyday life experiences can be something more special. Following this line of thinking, we will address questions about the importance of consumerism in the Brazilian society. What is the government's role in encouraging purchasing and not regulating advertising? Why has the Brazilian middle class become consumerist but does not want the lower classes to be the same? Is there a clash between the high and low (or old and new) middle classes?
- (2) According to Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2012), the consumerism of the lower classes is not based on utility, but on the fact that they want to dress well and have goods in order to be recognized as citizens on the same level as the already established middle class. Therefore, we will examine why the consumption of expensive goods by the new middle class has not been legitimized by Brazilian society. In which way do these movements carry out

infrapolitics and what is its scope? What is the importance of both the above-mentioned social movements in Brazilian society? Is CFC an elite movement since only those who are already part of the consumer market can reject it?

In this study, we will attempt to provide answers to these questions, while thinking about the structure of classes and social inequality in Brazil.

This thesis does not intend to discuss "the new spirit of capitalism", does not aspire to research the causes of inequality nor the concept of social classes. Also it does not exhaust the subject of the Brazilian middle class and of the studied groups. This thesis is only a survey that serves as a starting point for understanding these issues in the Brazilian context and what can and should be conducted if there is interest.

3 Glimpses of history, Brazil's late capitalism, neoliberalism and Lula's government

“It is necessary to think of Latin American history as the formations and development of a certain kind of capitalism, a capitalism which was born late” (Mello 1982, 21). The basis of its origin was the old colonial system and it grew as a national mercantile economy. The later generalization of wage labor in the agrarian export-sector was not matched by development of the specific productive forces of capitalism, which were only consolidated later, with industrialization. This, in turn, had two basic constraints. Firstly, Latin America depended directly upon the export sector for its accumulation. Secondly, Latin America entered the world market at a time when it was already dominated by large companies.

“The history of late capitalism, whose most elaborate manifestation is Brazil, is not a unique case nor an automatic realization of pre-fixed stages. In fact, it is the history of capitalism in Latin America which is also the history of the world economy itself” (Becker 1992, 9).

In order to better understand any political, historical, social or economic events or context in Brazil – a country of massive dimensions, which was a Portuguese colony from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and had legal slaves until 1888 – we have to think how it was built to be a country of huge segregation since the sixteenth century.

Furthermore, we should keep in mind the fact that the country also has one of the most unequal wealth distribution systems in the world, as previously stated in the Introduction of this thesis. According to Becker (1992, 5), “Brazil is a rich country of poor people. The brutal social discrimination is appropriating the benefits of economic dynamism is a dominant feature of Brazilian society, even when compared with the rest of Latin America”.

This extreme inequality can be seen, at the same time, as a cause and a consequence of the country's socio-political panorama, as it worsens some attempts of representative democracy in the country. In the twentieth century, this situation was even more severe than it currently is, because then the oligarchies were stronger and controlled the entire political arena. Undoubtedly, as we will show later, there has been some progress, especially after new social policies were implemented in 2003.

According to Pochmann (2012), the delayed transition from an agrarian to an urban-industrial society in Brazil, linked to the incomplete structure of the labor market, held the base of the social pyramid linked to the primary sector and to activities of autonomous nature.

We can say that in the twentieth century the country experienced all sorts of tragedies. Additionally, after the year 1929 the world was gripped by depression. The direct impact on the Brazilian economy was that the demand for Brazilian coffee decreased drastically. The government tried to help plantation owners by buying the coffee they could not sell. However, popular discontent led to a revolution. After months of violence, the army intervened and put Getúlio Vargas into presidency. Vargas became the dictator of Brazil in 1937.

Vargas was a populist leader that made many changes in Brazilian economy. As the liberal model adopted in the earlier days of the twentieth century was no longer viable, a stronger, protectionist and interventionist state was necessary, which was, incidentally, very convenient for many of the dictatorships of the 1930s in Latin America. The most representative examples of these were Vargas in Brazil and Perón in Argentina.

It was the starting of the 'Import-Substitution Industrialization', known as the ISI policy, whose main objective was to ensure economic independence for the region. That was to be achieved with the construction of its own industry – instead of importing goods from industrialized countries, thus making the former colonies less vulnerable to the economic ups and downs of industrialized countries. The other important aspect of it was also creating new jobs in the region.

The ISI model, generating rapid growth in countries that have implemented, but already showing signs of weakness, worked quite well for the region until the mid-70s, when it was abandoned. The main culprits for the abandonment were the saturation of the market, the high costs of production, little or no investment in technology and the difficulty faced by local businesses, subsidized by the state, with complete inability to compete on the international market.

The industrial model of Brazil, as in the liberal times, had typical consequences for the region. It enriched the elites at the expense of the labor and the exploitation of the masses. This creates even more social inequality, since the wealth produced is concentrated in the hands of a small but powerful oligarchy.

According to Piketty, capital is always more unequally distributed than labor: “The first regularity we observe when we try to measure income inequality in practice is that inequality with respect to capital is always greater than inequality with respect to labor. The distribution of capital ownership (and of income from capital) is always more concentrated than the distribution of income from labor” (Piketty 2014, 175).

Vargas referred to his regime as the Estado Novo (New State). He nationalized industries like oil, steel and electricity. He also created the “Brazilian welfare state” and promoted industrial growth in Brazil. In 1945, after eight years of dictatorship, the same army who put Vargas in power forced him to resign.

The elections for the presidency were held after that and Eurico Dutra was elected president. Vargas later won the following elections in 1950. This time his rule was troubled by inflation and growing national debt. In August 1954, the army again demanded that Vargas, now democratically elected, resigned. Instead of doing so, he shot himself.

Another election was held and Juscelino Kubitschek won, thus governing Brazil from 1955 to 1960. He inaugurated the new capital of the country, Brasília, in 1960, and moved all administrative institutions from Rio de Janeiro to the new and modernly planned city. He was followed by Jânio Quadros, who resigned after only seven months, in 1961. Despite being a representative from the conservative sectors, Quadros gave a

medal to Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine guerrilla leader who was one of the heads of the Cuban Revolution and was minister of that country. This was considered too much by the Brazilians oligarchs.

After his resignation, Quadros was succeeded by João Goulart, who was elected vice president in the same elections, although was from a different political party, more inclined to the left.

3.1 The overthrow of democracy and the military rule in Brazil

The deepening of the economic crisis in the early sixties did not have a negative effect on the entire economy, as the elites and businessmen were profiting even with the high inflation. However, some more disenfranchised parts of the society, such as students, workers in trade unions, peasant leagues, etc. also started to gain force in their claims.

Similarly to many other Latin American and Third World countries, the elites in Brazil were prepared to do anything to preserve their privileges as well as the enormous gap that has always existed between the lower and upper classes in this country. Being aware of the fact that the top of the society can only exist because they are surrounded by poor or even miserable people, we can imagine how serious it was.

The elite-people relationship within the country is quite similar to the center-periphery or North-South relationship in the international arena. In Zibechei's words, "the center-periphery relationship is a jail that was built with the bars of colonialism and was shielded by the division of labor established by the capitalist world system. The guards are the North, and multinational companies that for five centuries have enriched with the expropriation of labor and the common goods of the South" (Zibechei 2012, 7).

Brazil's weak and recent democracy, which was still being constructed, was not a strong enough reason to prevent the military forces to, in 1964, overthrow João Goulart, considered then the first left-wing president Brazil ever had. Cohen argues that if the political leaders had transformed the demands of the Brazilian lower classes in a more moderate way, the military might never have intervened (Cohen 1987).

Due to this enormous inequality and class struggle, socialist ideology was envisioned as an alternative to the dependency model and social inequalities in many countries in Latin America, especially after the successful Cuban Revolution in 1959. But apart from Cuba and Nicaragua, which succeeded in overthrowing corrupt dictators in their small countries, Latin American socialists were overthrown by cruel and bloody military coups, with thousands of people ending up dead and disappearing in different countries.

Zibechi's analysis of the Brazilian and Latin American situation in the 1960s is that "in these years of intense theoretical creativity and strong militant activity, the climate surrounding the Latin American revolutionary thinkers is marked by the class struggle, the imperialist offensive of the United States and its close alliance with local elites to repress the left and popular movements". (Zibechi 2012, 21)

The military coup in Brazil came from the top to the bottom, so it was not a revolutionary or counterrevolutionary event, like the conservative sectors in Brazil state. However, it was supported by the elites and a large part of the population who were afraid of what they called "the communist threat." During the twentieth century, the Brazilian's weak and small middle class was, in general, more a supporter of the elites, as they dreamt to become part of it someday, than of the social movements. They were also deeply influenced by the media, controlled by the oligarchies, as it was mentioned before, and very scared of the possibility of losing their goods and the few benefits they acquired with sacrifice.

Baer maintains that it is reasonable to connect the growth decline to the political turmoil of the early sixties, which resulted in uncertainties about changes in the social structure and economy (especially about the roles of the private domestic and foreign sectors) and caused a radical decline in investment activities. The turmoil to which Baer refers was the result of President Quadros' resignation in 1961, which triggered one of the most severe political crises in Brazilian history. Vice-President Goulart, his legal successor, was unacceptable to many high-ranking army officers and to influential civilians (Cohen 1987).

All political parties except two were banned and trade unions were suppressed. The media was strictly controlled. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the military rule

became even more repressive. The repression coincided with a wave of urban guerrilla warfare. However, it also coincided with a period of rapid economic growth dubbed as the “Brazilian economic miracle,” as the economy grew more than 10% a year during that period. Still, not everyone benefited. Many people were extremely poor. What is worse, in the 1970s inflation began to increase sharply (Giambiagi 2005). Consequently, unemployment also soared.

In the late 1970s, the military rule in Brazil became slightly less repressive. After workers went on strike in Sao Paulo in 1977, trade unions were allowed to form once again. Then in the early 1980s, the army ended censorship in Brazil and allowed political parties to be formed. However, they decided that the next president of Brazil, who was scheduled to take power in 1985, would not be directly elected by the people. Instead of this, he would be elected by an “electoral college” made up of deputies and senators – Brazil was and still is a presidential country.

3.2 Elections, impeachment and replacements in Brazil’s new democracy

The army hoped the electoral college would elect a president favorable to them. However, it did not turn out that way. Instead, the college elected a politician named Tancredo Neves, who was not a left-wing man, albeit fought against the dictatorship. In 1985, he announced the new republic. Neves never took power, as he died shortly afterwards the elections and José Sarney, who was nominated his vice-president, became the president. Sarney was from the party pro-military dictatorship and went to the democratic party just one year before this election.

Sarney failed to solve Brazil's economic problems and inflation soared again. He changed the currency and decreed four failed economic plans, but the 1980s in Brazil were considered “the lost decade”. In 1990, Fernando Collor de Melo became the first democratically president elected in Brazil after the military rule. He won the elections in October 1989 against Lula, the trade union leader who would become a key person in Brazilian politics at the beginning of twenty-first century. Collor was accused of corruption and resigned in 1992. His vice-president Itamar Franco replaced him.

Franco's finance minister, Fernando Henrique Cardoso introduced the Real Plan, with a new currency called real, in order to curb inflation and bring economic stability. In October 1994, after the success of the Real Plan, Cardoso was elected president, again against Lula. He privatized the most important Brazilian companies (oil, steel, telephony, energy etc.) and adopted all IMF policies. Neoliberalism was his main policy. He was re-elected in 1998, when he won another election against Lula.

The neoliberal model in Brazil was implemented by the governments of Fernando Collor and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. According to Marilena Chauí, the connection between state and capital in its neoliberal form can be seen in the replacing of the concept of rights by services, which led to put rights (such as health, education, housing, transportation, culture) in the sector of services destined to become non-state and defined by market interests.

The reform, therefore, in line with neoliberalism, shrunk the public space of rights and expanded the private area not only there where it would be predictable – in activities related to economic output – but also where it is not permissible: in the field of social rights already conquered, undoing thus the democratic relationship between power and right.²

His Real Plan was a success indeed, yet still his government did not make any significant changes for the part of the population that lived in poverty. Although he was a sociologist and a professor, he did not invest in education, as the federal (and public) universities experienced their worst period during his mandate. According to Marcio Pochmann, this period was marked by “privatization, deregulation of social and labor rights and degradation of the general conditions of life and work” (Pochmann 2012).

The private universities, which see education as a business, grew substantially, thus maintaining the privileges of higher education for those who could afford it. Education and consumption were seen as privileges. At the end of the twentieth century, one century after the abolition of slavery, a new and stabilized currency was introduced;

² Brazilian philosopher Marilena Chauí said this in a debate that was transformed into an article, published on the book “Classes? Que classes? Ciclo de Debates sobre Classes Sociais”, published by Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2013, 93-94.

however, no significant changes concerning the structure of classes in this South American country occurred.

3.3 Lula and the twenty-first century in Brazil

“The semi-periphery is the synthesis of the contradictions of historical capitalism within the same national economy. It is the *locus* of the profound structural heterogeneity accumulated by capitalism through its long history, of which Brazil is a magnificent example” (Becker 1992, 9).

In 2002, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, was elected President of Brazil. His attempts at becoming president began at the first democratic election in 1989, yet it was only in 2002 that he succeeded. The main reasons for the victory were the changing of his image and of his party. He made alliances with conservative groups and center-right wing politicians as well as big owners of industries, contractors and bankers. His vice-president was José de Alencar, an industrialist and representative of the Brazilian oligopoly.

In 2011, after two consecutive mandates of Lula (in Brazil, a president can be reelected only once), Dilma Rousseff, the ex-Minister of Energy in Lula’s government, became the first woman president of Brazil. She is a member of the same party as Lula, the Workers Party (PT) and was re-elected in 2014, starting a new term in 2015. The Workers Party is called the biggest leftist party in Latin America. Although, nowadays it is controversial to define it as leftist party.

During Lula’s government, Brazil became more powerful nationally as well as internationally. The country paid all the external debts and became independent from the IMF. Nowadays Brazil is considered the powerhouse of South America and it is developing rapidly. In 2011, Brazil overtook the UK as the world's 6th largest economy. Meanwhile in the late 20th century the population grew very rapidly. Today the population of Brazil is above 200 million.

Zibechi states that Brazil is one of the few countries in the world that is fleeing the periphery. “It has many things going for it: size, wealth, population and, above all, the

political will is essential for converting capabilities into action. Not enough to be the sixth largest economy in the world, certainly the fifth in 2012, and to be among the first in the world in hydropower resources, oil, fresh water, biodiversity, biofuels, uranium, iron ore and other commons. Wealth by itself does not guarantee the independence and sovereignty of any nation". (Zibechi 2012, 7)

According to Piketty (2013), the question of capital control is another matter, as since the 1980s the governments in most wealthy countries have encouraged absolute liberalization of capital flows, with no control and no sharing of information about asset ownership among nations. International organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank, and the IMF endorsed the same array of measures in the name of the latest in economic science.

However, the movement mentioned above, Piketty continues, was propelled by democratically elected governments, reflecting the dominant ideas of a particular historical moment marked by the fall of the Soviet Union and unlimited faith in capitalism and self-regulating markets. Since the financial crisis of 2008, serious doubts about the wisdom of this approach have arisen, and it is quite likely that the rich countries will have increasing recourse to capital controls in the decades ahead.

The emerging world has shown the way, starting in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of 1998, which convinced many countries, including Indonesia, Brazil, and Russia, that the policies and "shock therapies" dictated by the international community were not always well advised and the time had come to set their own courses. The crisis also encouraged some countries to amass excessive reserves of foreign exchange. This may not be the optimal response to global economic instability, but it has the virtue of allowing single countries to cope with economic shocks without forfeiting their sovereignty.

3.4 The raise of Lulism or Lula's social policies

In the eight years of Lula's mandate (as we mentioned, he was re-elected for a second mandate in 2006), Brazil saw the raise of the Lulism – a neologism to define his social policies. Lulism represents the raise of what the government and the media called "the

new middle class". In his inauguration speech, Lula declared he would put an end to illiteracy and hunger Brazil.

He failed in the first attempt, but was successful in the second. In 2014, the United Nations released that, for the first time since it exists, Brazil was no longer in their World Hunger Map³. Lula created a new ministry to take care of this: the Ministry for Social Development and Against Hunger. Lulism is also known as a set of policies to decrease poverty and social discrimination in Brazil. Again, he was successful in one, but not in the other attempt: social discrimination is still very present.

Lula's policies were continued by Dilma Rousseff's government, but it was in the period between 2003 and 2011 that Brazil experienced the golden years of Lulism, marked by rapid growth of the country combined to the decrease of poverty and rise of the C class, the so-called new middle class: people that started to consume goods and spend money with private services (like education, health and retirement pension) for the first time in their lives.

The definition of C class has at least two different approaches in Brazil. Some economists say that the C class is formed by poor people who improved their lives with the government's policies, people who started having access to goods after the Lulism, which likes to call it a new middle class. Other economists and many sociologists, on the other hand, say that C class cannot be considered a middle class because it does not have the cultural capital for it. We will be back to these definitions in the chapter 4, when we will talk about middle class and its coverage in Brazilian society.

According to Piketty, the attention given to long periods should not be allowed to conceal the fact that short-term trends exist as well. These are certainly often balanced out at the end. However, the people who live through them frequently perceive them as the most vital realities of their age. It is logical, as these short-term movements may continue for ten years or even more, which is rather long when compared to the length of human life (Piketty 2014).

³ Hunger Map United Nations 2015: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp275057.pdf>

During Lula's rule, he devoted significant attention to Mercosur (Southern Common Market), Unasur (Union of South American Nations), the BRICS countries (BRICS is an acronym for the association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the search for partners in other continents such as Africa and the Middle East.

Alliances and bilateral agreements with the U.S. became strictly economic. Brazil and other countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador are not open to U.S. interventions in other spheres of its policies and society, although the cultural and market influence is still very strong in the urban centers.

The results of this shift in focus, the policy change with a closer look to their peers, can be seen not only in Brazil but in all Latin American countries. According to a World Bank report released in 2012, inequality has fallen in the region and the middle class has been gaining strength.

After assessing the broad socioeconomic trends in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the 2013 World Bank report has concluded that the level of moderate poverty in the region declined by approximately 10%, from over 40% in 2000 to less than 30% in 2010. The decade was marked by growth despite the effects of the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009 (World Bank Report 2013).⁴

The report also states that most poor who thrived did not enter into the middle class directly, but became part of a group located between the poor and the middle class. The report refers to this as the vulnerable segment and it now constitutes the largest social layer in the region.⁵

Yet the average Latin American class has grown: from 100 million in 2000 to 150 million at the end of the decade and, for the first time in history, the percentage of the

⁴ Economic Mobility and the Rise of Latin American Middle Class [Mobilidade Econômica e a Ascensão da Classe Média Latino-Americana]. © 2013 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/LACEXT/Resources/MiddClass_portugues.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

population in the middle class is the same as that for the poor (approx. 30%), while the percentage of poor people fell from 44% to 30% of the Latin American population. The two respective classes are now therefore relatively equal in size. This is seen an enormous step forward as in the past the (until about 10 years ago), the percentage of the poor fluctuated at about 2.5 times that of the middle class.⁶

The most important government's social policy of Lula's period, that still exists, is called Bolsa Família (Family Allowance). It is a program that gives money directly to the mothers of kids to feed them and provide education for them. It is a social welfare program that gives aid to the poorest families in the country.

*The Economist*⁷ described Bolsa Família as an anti-poverty scheme invented in Latin America, which is becoming more and more popular worldwide. The program was the centerpiece of Lula's social policy, and is reputed to have played a role in his victory in the Brazilian presidential election of 2006. The Bolsa Família is currently the largest conditional cash transfer program in the world, it benefits about 12 million Brazilian families or 25% of the Brazilian population⁸.

The Bolsa Família program has been mentioned as one of the contributing factors to the reduction of poverty in Brazil, which fell 27.7% during the first term of the Lula administration. The Center for Political Studies of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation has published a research⁹ showing that there was a sharp reduction in the number of people in poverty in Brazil between 2003 and 2005. Other factors include an improvement in the job market and real gains on the minimum wage.

The Bolsa Família is a direct transfer of income that benefits families in poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country. The program is part of the Brazil Without Poverty Plan, whose activities focus on the millions of Brazilians with family income

⁶ Economic Mobility and the Rise of Latin American Middle Class [Mobilidade Econômica e a Ascensão da Classe Média Latino-Americana]. © 2013 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/LACEXT/Resources/MiddClass_portugues.pdf

⁷ Happy families: An anti-poverty scheme invented in Latin America is winning converts worldwide: <http://www.economist.com/node/10650663> Published in 07.02.2008. Accessed in 15.09.2015

⁸ <http://mds.gov.br/assuntos/bolsa-familia>

⁹ Program Bolsa Família effects on poverty reduction and income distribution: <http://www.ipc-undp.org/publications/mds/46P.pdf>

less than 77 reais (or 17,08 euros) monthly and is based on securing income, productive inclusion and access to public services.

According to the Ministry's website¹⁰, "Bolsa Familia has three main axes: the transfer of income promotes immediate relief of poverty; conditionalities reinforce the access to basic social rights in the areas of education, health and social care; and actions and complementary programs aim the development of families, so that the beneficiaries are able to overcome the vulnerability."

Every month, the federal government deposits money on the accounts of families that are entitled to it. The service is done with a debit card issued preferably in the woman's name, who are typically in charge of a family or even the only adult in it. The sum of money received depends on the size of the family, the age of its members and their income. There are specific benefits for families with children, young people up to 17 years, pregnant women and nursing mothers.

The Bolsa Família and the social programs of Lulism alone did not take people out of poverty, but somewhat improved people's situations. Dilma Rousseff's government decided to put a limit to identifying extreme poverty, which was 70 reais per capita per month. This basically means that from an official point of view, any person who receives a little more than 2 dollars per day does not live in extreme poverty (Singer 2013)¹¹.

In September 2013, when it turned ten years old, the Bolsa Família provided basic necessities for some 50 million people. This is a quarter of the population which lives on an income below that which would allow the reproduction of its workforce in "normal" conditions.

It produced an undeniable transformation in Brazilian population. Zibechi wrote in 2012: "In 2003 the absolute majority of the population was poor, it had a family income

¹⁰ More about Bolsa Família available at <http://mds.gov.br/assuntos/bolsa-familia>

¹¹ Article in "Classes, que classes? Ciclo de debates sobre classes sociais". Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2013, 88

lower than three minimum wages. In 2010 the middle class (C class) increased by 30 million people becoming 50% of the population, and in 2014 is estimated to reach 56%, about 113 million¹¹⁷. While the poorest would become for the first time in the history of Brazil less than a third of the population” (Zibechi 2012)

Compared to a few decades before, it is an even stronger transformation: “In 1970 Brazil had 93 million inhabitants and 56% lived in cities. The vast majority were poor or very poor, and inequality was huge. By the end of the twentieth century Brazil still had 50 million poor. Today the situation is completely different. More than 80% of Brazilians live in cities and less than 20% in the field. Poverty has fallen sharply, but the turning point is that Brazil became a country of middle classes” (Zibechi 2012, 253).

4 The clash between the new and the old middle class in Brazil

“One of the main collective struggles of the country today is about the emergence of a new social class in Brazil, the Lulism. After all, all political actors agree that Brazil is experiencing a change in its class structure. 40 million Brazilians rose socially, many stepped into the job market and in the consumer world for the first time.” (Medeiros 2013, 88).¹²

The clash between the old and new middle class in Brazil, as suggested in the heading above, is not only happening in practice, it is also a theoretic war. It is precisely this feature what we will explore in this chapter.

How exactly do we define the new middle class? Can poor people who had their lives changed by Lula’s social policies be now considered part of the Brazilian middle class? Is the definition of middle class based on economics only?

According to Brazilian philosopher Marilena Chauí, a social class is not rigid nor is it defined only by economic factors. It is, however, a moral, political, social and cultural subject, which interprets itself through the class struggle. Furthermore, it is history in the making. Although therein lies the transformative ability of the working class, it also presents the possibility of concealment of its essence as well as the risk of their ideological assimilation by the ruling class. The first indication of that risk is the spread of the new middle class in Brazil¹³.

If giving a definition of a social class is something difficult to do in the present day of capitalism, conceiving the definition of middle class can be even more complicated.

¹² Classes, que classes? Ciclo de debates sobre classes sociais”. Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2013 (p. 10)

¹³ Ibid (p. 99)

Marx divided the classes between owners which had the means of production, and workers, or, in a very basic way, the exploiters and the exploited. The petit bourgeoisie would be the class in between, but there is no space for a middle class as we now know it. Weber talks about social stratification, where individuals with the same characteristic (occupation, income, wealth, social status) can be grouped. He places the middle class between the working class and the upper class.

Bourdieu defines the upper class as people who own cultural capital and do some kind of intellectual work. This is what differentiates them from the working class or proletariat, notwithstanding income or wealth. “Everything seems to indicate that Weber opposes class and status group as two types of real unities which would come together more or less frequently according to the type of society; [however,] to give the Weberian analyses all of their force and impact, it is necessary to see them instead as nominal unities, which are always the result of a choice to accent the economic aspect or the symbolic aspect —aspects which always coexist in the same reality” (Bourdieu 1966, 212-213).

According to Weinger, the consequence of the issues mentioned above is an assertion that class analysis can be reduced to the examination of economic relations. Rather, it simultaneously involves an analysis of the symbolic relations, similar to the “status communities” referred to by Weber. Moreover, by declaring that class analysis has both an economic and a symbolic dimension, Bourdieu also rejects one of the most fundamental facets of class theory. The idea that it is essential to demarcate classes from one another a priori (Weinger 2005).¹⁴

We tend to agree with Bourdieu in this aspect; however, as stated in the first chapter, we will not delve into the definitions of classes. What interests us here is the definition of middle class in the Brazilian context (late industrialization, late capitalism, and peripheral or semi-periphery capitalism, among others) and why it causes so many theoretical battles inside the sixth capitalist economy of the world.

It is not simple to define whether it is a new, a middle and, overall, a class that emerged in the era of Lulism in Brazil, although the dominant thinking wishes us to believe so. Similar to other parts of the world and other instances in history, the definition of class

¹⁴ More about Bourdieu and social classes: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Found-c4rev.pdf>

and more specific middle class is changing in Brazil as well. In the present day, the formulating of the definition is causing a war between the sociologists and economists who study the country.

Marilena Chauí writes about this concept in an article published in 2013. She posits that “Marx wrote about the petite bourgeoisie to indicate a social class that was not located in both ends of the constituent social division of the capitalist mode of production” (Chauí 2013, 95). The term petite bourgeoisie was created for two main reasons: the first, to break away from the English notion of middle class, which indicated exactly the bourgeoisie that is located in between the nobility and the working masses.

The second reason, she continues, was to indicate the social and ideological proximity to the bourgeoisie instead of to the workers. On the other, the term suggests that, although the ‘petite bourgeoisie’ does not have access to private ownership of the social means of production, it could own goods and properties privately. Essentially, the newly emerging class was outside the central core of capitalism, as it neither possessed the capital nor the social means of production. It was also not part of the workforce that produces capital.

It, therefore, stayed in the so-called liberal professions, the state bureaucracy (or public services), business (or in administration and management) in small landed properties and small businesses. It is especially the American sociology, which introduces the middle-class concept to label this socioeconomic sector, employing, as we said above, the income criteria, education, profession and consumption, the pyramid of classes A, B, C, D and E (Chauí 2013).

This C class of the pyramid cited by Chauí is precisely what is intriguing the researchers in Brazil. The person who is the most enthusiastic about the raise of the C class is the economist Marcelo Neri, who in 2012 wrote a book called *The new middle class: The bright side of the pyramid*. On 312 pages, he examines economic and social research produced in and about Brazil and says that, a few years ago, they shifted the focus from the analysis of absolute poverty to the living conditions of other segments of the population. In particular the evolution of Brazilian economic classes, A, B, D, E and C class, which is referred to as the new Brazilian middle class (Neri 2012).

So as not to be misunderstood by sociologists, he adds that they can rest easy, since he is not talking about social classes, such as the working class, bourgeois, capitalist etc., but about the economic strata. Neri explains why they decided to call the C class the new middle class. “New middle class was the nickname we gave to the C class a few years ago, to call someone as C class sounded derogatory, worse than A or B class, for example. The expression new middle class has a different soul than “nouveau riche” that, above of all, discriminates the origin of people” (Neri 2012, 18).

Although the term new middle class became popular in Brazil in the last 12 years – and much of that success is due to the enthusiastic articles by Marcelo Neri, it has to be questioned. On the one hand, there are authors and economists using it every day, and overvaluing the growth of so-called C class. On the other hand, some authors are questioning whether this expression accurately defines the class that started to purchase private services and goods not only for their subsistence after 2003, when Lula started his first term in the government. This perhaps is unprecedented in Brazilian history.

The fact is that establishing a specific sociography of the middle class in capitalist societies it is not a straightforward matter. In the evolution of capitalism, each phase of the development of productive forces redefines the margin between manual labor and non-manual labor. It thus “proletarizes” some professions and “nobilizes” others. In any case, the fact remains that those, in capitalism, that predominantly employ their mental activity, be it creatively or repetitively, tend to rely on the notion that “intellectual work” has higher “social prestige.” They, therefore, demand a better economic and social situation than the working class receives for their manual labor.¹⁵

Economists and researches were extremely excited about the rapid growth of consumption and the changes in the Brazilian society, at least at the bottom of the social pyramid. Even a new research institute was created to study this segment of the population. The Data Popular institute was established just to analyze the tastes, habits and way of life of the new middle class.

¹⁵ Décio Azevedo Marques de Saes in http://www.ifch.unicamp.br/criticamarxista/arquivos_biblioteca/critica21-A-saes.pdf

Other institutions and foundations, such as the Applied Economic Research Institute (IPEA) and Getúlio Vargas Foundation started to research this phenomenon as well. In the next paragraphs, I will present some relevant data acquired by these institutes.

The IPEA tends to organize society in a pyramid. The classes it designates are marked A, B, C, D and E. They take into account criteria such as income, goods, properties, education, occupation and profession. According to these criteria, the institute came to the conclusion that between the years 2003 and 2011, classes D and E decreased considerably, from 96.2 million to 63.5 million.

Classes A and B also increased from 13.3 to 22.5 million people. However, the truly outstanding expansion occurred in class C, which grew from 65.8 million to 106.4 million people. This expansion led to the belief that the Brazilian middle class has increased, or better yet, that it appeared as a new middle class (Chauí 2013).

Authors with different approaches and from various fields of knowledge tend to agree that the Brazilian social reality changed drastically between the years of 2003 and 2011. On the other hand, notwithstanding the enormous change, there is much more that needs to be done. A recent report of UN-Habitat, *Estado de las ciudades de América Latina y el Caribe 2012*, demonstrates that Brazil, although being the sixth largest economy in the world, remains one of the most unequal countries in terms of income distribution, even after all the advances achieved by the Lula administration. The only countries in Latin America more unequal to Brazil are, according to the report, Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia (Maricato 2013)¹⁶.

This occurs because Brazil started from being one of the most unequal country in the world and this fact will not change in one generation. It takes time to overcome such misery. What must be taken into consideration is the starting point. One cannot compare the class structure in Brazil with that of the most developed countries, especially because the late beginning of capitalism there.

There is little doubt that we are overcoming poverty and inequality; however, it process is slow. A study developed by the economist Sergei S. Dillon Soares on behalf of the

¹⁶ She also has an article in the book “Classes? Que classes? Ciclo de Debates sobre Classes Sociais”, by Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2013.

IPEA shows that the degree of decline in the Gini index corresponds to the best of the welfare state construction times in the United States and England. It is only that Brazil's starting level was much worse than theirs. When Britain and the US severely reduced their level of inequality, around 1930, they started from a Gini around 0.40, and Brazil, 70 years later, is starting from a Gini of 0.60. That is a good indication of Brazil's delay (Souza 2013).

4.1 The official definition and the disagreement around it

In order to define “middle class” in Brazil, the current government united a group of researches, economists, sociologists etc. and their point-of-view was then strictly economic. They defined the middle class in Brazil as people whose per capita income is between R\$291 and R\$1.019 (€ 64,78 to € 226.84, in February 2016). This definition is posted on the website of the Secretary of Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the Brazilian Republic Presidency¹⁷. Of course this definition is not the only possible and it is not satisfactory for everyone.

According to Marcelo Neri's studies, the 105.5 millions of Brazilians that are in the new middle class – he was one of the first researchers to use this term – correspond to 55.05% of the population. It was no wonder that Neri, who has a PhD in Economy from Princeton University, was invited to head the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the Federal Government of Brazil, a position that he occupied from March 2013 to February 2015 (Neri 2011).

Other renowned Brazilian economists, as well as sociologists, disagree with the statement postulated by the government, that the lower classes who now have some purchasing power have become part of the middle class. Economist Marcio Pochmann, who was president of IPEA, and wrote a book entitled *New middle class? The work on the basis of the Brazilian social pyramid* is one of the government's main ideological opponents (among economists) in this aspect. In his book, he argues that it is clear that this does not signify the emergence of a new class – much less of a new middle class.

¹⁷ Government decides who is middle class in Brazil: <http://www.sae.gov.br/imprensa/sae-na-media/governo-define-que-a-classe-media-tem-renda-entre-r-291-e-r-1-019-cidade-verde-em-24-07-2013/>
Published in 24.07.2013.

“There is, in fact, an alienating and endless guidance orchestrated for the kidnapping of the debate about the nature and the dynamics of economic and social changes, unable to allow class politicization of the phenomenon of transformation of the social structure and its comparison with other dynamic periods of Brazil. The same seems to be repeated in other geographical dimensions of the globe, especially in the periphery of capitalism, according to the interest of multilateral institutions (like the World Bank, among others) to spread the success of neoliberal globalization” (Pochmann 2012, 8).

Similarly to Piketty in his book *Capital in the 21st century* (2013), Pochmann also analyzed the difference between wages and properties in Brazil. “A second course took place from 2004 to 2010, for example, when Brazil had six continuous years of growth in the share of wages in national income, while the relative size of the property has fallen on. Between 2004 and 2010, the total wage bill rose 10.3% and the property income decreased 12.8%. With this, the distribution of national income between labor income and property, in 2010, turned out to be virtually equal to that observed in 1995, in the beginning of monetary stabilization” (Pochmann 2012, 10).

Moreover, Pochamann speaks about the real increase of the minimum wage – and the power of purchasing that comes with it – occurred in Lulism period, but he states that it is not enough to create a new class. “Even with the limited educational level and professional experience, the new occupations services, absorbing huge redeemed masses from poverty, allow undeniable social mobility, though still far from any configuration other than the working class. By the level of income but also by the type of occupation, the profile and social attributes, the bulk of emerging population does not fit in serious and objective criteria that can be identified as middle class” (Pochmann 2012,10).

The Brazilian economist adds that it connects the general traits of the popular classes: "It associates the general characteristics of the popular classes, which, by raising the income, immediately extend the pattern of consumerism. There is, in this sense, nothing new, because it is a common phenomenon, since the worker don't save money, but spend all he can earn" (Pochmann 2012,10).

4.2 Public vs. private

Pochamann claims that the expression “new middle class” is a conceptual mistake that benefits the government and also entrepreneurs who sell things that should be public, such as education, health and social security, but in Brazil have low quality in general and many people prefer to pay to ensure the access to them.

He says: "The additional of people occupied at the base of the social pyramid reinforced the contingent of the working class, mistakenly identified as a new middle class. It may not be a mere conceptual mistake, but the expression of the dispute that settles around the design and conduct of current public policies. The interpretation that it is a (new) middle class results, therefore, an appeal to the reorientation of public policies for a primarily commercial perspective. (...) In other words, the strengthening of private health plans, education, social security, among others. In this sense, the propagandist action to devaluate public services is not isolated" (Pochmann 2012, 11).

André Singer, a sociologist and the ex-spokesman for the Lula's government also criticizes the statement about the C class as a new middle class: “The economist Marcelo Neri maintains that the C class, a categorization that comes from market research and is made from income levels and consumption, incorporates about 50% of the population. Therefore, the middle class would have become the majority in the country. It turns out that the C class, which I prefer to call C range not to create a sociological confusion, is not the middle class in the traditional sense, which could be characterized as it is in the book written by the political scientists Bolivar Lamounier and Amaury de Souza: one that is established as such for at least a generation, that is, which already has access to certain goods and services from their parents” (Singer 2013, 33)¹⁸.

In 2012, Neri wrote that "the C class receives, on average, the average income of society, that is, the middle class in the statistical sense" (Neri 2012, 83). “In line, Barros¹⁹ and Neri assume that the concept of classes that they adopt is fundamentally seated on a synthetic income criterion household per capita, is devoid of social, political and / or cultural contents that different sociological and historiographical traditions –

¹⁸ André Singer is a sociologist and was the spokesman of Lula in his government. He also has an article in the book “Classes? Que Classes?”, published in 2013 by Fundação Perseu Abramo.

¹⁹ Ricardo Paes de Barros was the subsecretary of Strategic Actions of the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of Brazil

classic (Marx and Weber) or contemporary (W. Mills, Thompson and Bourdieu, among others) – give it” (Souza 2013, 41-2).

“What characterizes the Brazilian middle class? "What are the goods and services that characterize this standard of living of the traditional middle class in Brazil? Without claiming a rigorous response, one might think in access to health insurance and private schools for primary and secondary education (as in higher education the public sector is still considered better)” (Souza 2013, 34).

On the other hand, sociologist Jessé Souza criticizes the strictly economic point of view of Neri and Pochmann and suggests other criteria, like the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu), to define the middle class. According to Souza, the boundary between the privileged and the oppressed classes is built on the opposition between manual labor and intellectual work. Even though both imply that a certain amount of knowledge needs to be incorporated into the work one is doing, the privilege of high wages, as well as the social recognition and prestige are linked to intellectual work only.

Souza wrote: “From our perspective is the privileged appropriation of technical cultural capital (for example, economists, lawyers, engineers, doctors) or literary (eg, journalists, publicists, teachers) establishing a ‘true middle class’, as a privileged class a modern society like Brazil” (Souza 2013, 34).

In this political and philosophical field, André Singer agrees with Pochmann: “The vast share of workers that are below proletarian condition itself marks the social formation of the country and produces the paradox that the proletariat itself occupies an intermediate position in Brazil, which can lead, in a mistaken view, to confuse it with the middle class. In fact, it is a fraction of intermediate class, because under it there is another layer, but that does not characterize it as middle class. On the other hand, if, in the classic formulation of Marx, the proletariat has nothing to lose, here it always had to lose. The proletariat can fall in subproletariat when there is unemployment, but can get out of it when employment increases” (Singer 2013, 46).

Marilena Chauí attempts to define the traditional middle class in the following way: in addition to what was previously stated by the other authors, the traditional Brazilian middle class is also defined by the authoritarian structure of the Brazilian society. It is marked by the prevalence of the private area on the public, as well as being extremely

hierarchical in all its aspects. Within the society, the social and intersubjective relations are always performed as a relationship between a superior, who commands, and a lower, which follows; the differences and asymmetries are always transformed into inequalities that reinforce the relationship command-obedience, and all sorts of inequalities are naturalized (Chauí 2013).

She also writes about the working class and its unprecedented consumption. The new working class is being guided to believe that it is the new middle class, which is reinforced by the fact that they now possess some purchasing power. Taking into account the symbolic point of view, the middle class is replacing the lack of political and economic power with the pursuit of prestige and its signs, such as degrees and titles of liberal professions.

In addition, it pursues the services and objects that indicate authority, such as wealth, social mobility, branded clothing, abundance, imported cars, etc. In other words, consumerism appears as a social ascension towards the dominant class, as well as an unbridgeable distance between them and the working class. When it comes to having access to mass consumption, the middle class tends to take this imaginary into reality and to adhere to it” (Chauí 2013).

Souza emphasizes that the “emerging C class” is not the “new middle class” which could lead to a speech that Brazil is finally becoming a Germany a France or a United States, where the middle classes – and not the poor, the workers, and the excluded, like in the periphery of capitalism – form the foundation of the social structure. (Souza 2010). In other words, the periphery of capitalism has other definition of middle class that cannot be directly compared with the inner capitalist world. The Brazilian middle class has some very specific ways of living and behaving.

4.3 The clash in practice

In practice, the war between the new and the old middle class occurs because the latter cannot tolerate that C class can now purchase the same products and services, attend the same schools or college, use the same health plan, have the same car, attend the same places as the people from the old middle class. In Brazil, the traditional middle class does not want rights, but privileges. It wants to have power over the working class, i.e. workers that come from the lower classes.

The domestic work in Brazil explains a lot about the country. “Nevertheless, a significant part of the activities developed in Brazilian houses still carries traces only observed in the servant and slave past. Not only the wages paid remains undervalued, but also the status of the human work in families is very often extremely undervalued” (Pochmann 2012, 118).

The maids in Brazil are called domestic employees. According to the Dieese (Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies)²⁰ data from August 2013, the majority of these domestic employees are women (92.6%), black (61%) and have very few years of formal studies (less than 3 years attending classes at school). In 2011, 6.6 million Brazilians were domestic employees and a great part of them made less than the minimum wage of the country.

With the rise of the minimum wage and new social programs of the Lulism, some people from the emerging C class could provide a different future for their kids, like putting them in school, instead of working, and, for the first time in Brazilian history, also send them to university. In some cases, the government gave scholarships to pay for private universities. These social changes did not please the traditional middle class.

Due to the fact that people from the working class can now afford to travel by plane caused an enormous discomfort in the traditional middle class. The question “airport or bus station?” was asked by a college professor when she saw and photographed a overweight brown man dressed casually at the airport and posted this on Facebook, became famous all over the country. Reactions like that, when people see their “opponents” in a place where they “should not be” became popular in Brazil of the 21st century.

A related fact was written by a famous Brazilian journalist, Danuza Leão²¹, who used to write about fashion and habits of the upper classes. To show her dissatisfaction with the social rise of the C class, she wrote an article saying that going to Paris is not much fun anymore, as now you can meet your doorman there.

²⁰ Data about domestic work in Brazil:

<http://www.dieese.org.br/estudosetorial/2013/estPesq68empregoDomestico.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.brasil247.com/pt/247/cultura/86189/Danuza-lamenta-que-todos-possam-ir-a-Paris-ou-NY.htm>

Souza says that “people and social classes not only struggle for "material" resources, but also for an extremely relevant and scarce resource: the struggle for having a ‘meaningful’ life”. What is central to Weber is the perception, common to Marx too, that for the privileged classes, this "sense" of meaning often assumes a form that is not settled with the satisfaction of the privilege itself, but also requires the formation of a self-consciousness to the "right to privilege”. To the people who are oppressed by the same social order, what remains is pain and suffering, imposed by the subjective consciousness of their "no value" for the social order that objectively downgrades them (Souza 2013).

In order to preserve the “right to privileges”, the traditional middle class entrepreneurs started adopting the term “gourmet” to identify things they consume and to point out the difference between them and the C class. Everything can receive this label, from apartments to food, signaling to the traditional middle class that it is good enough for them, but not accessible for the others. It makes them feel like they are part of the upper classes, but also gets and automatic price increase. It costs more, but it is the price they pay not to be seen as someone who just joined in the world of consumerism.

The exaggeration of very expensive products on the market generated the creation of the expression “gourmetização” (gourmetization). Life is now *gourmetized* for the part of Brazilians who can afford it and who even prefer to pay a triple price for something that they could get for much less. They do this for the sheer pleasure of feeling privileged, and, what is more, included in the system.

This status symbol is very important to be observed. We can look the composition of classes regarding lifestyles or some cultural capital that also includes something as an "inheritance" of another type. This middle-class heritage, immaterial par excellence, is completely invisible to the economic view dominant in the world. Sociological analysis therefore must take into account how social classes differentially appropriate the cultural and economic capital. This is important for the relationship between economic accumulation and specific symbolic violence.

Souza states that the capitalist development in Brazil, that is, the very process of modernization, would produce "an entire class of individuals not only without cultural capital or economic capital to any significant extent, but also lacking – this is the

fundamental aspect – the social, moral and cultural preconditions that allow such appropriation” (Souza 2010, 23-24).

The more the government announces the social changes, the more the traditional middle class fears those changes. For the first time in Brazil’s history, the C class represents more than half the population. Currently, around 100 million people are part of this social stratum, with family income between R\$1000 and R\$4000²². This means that the socioeconomic profile of the country has changed. According to the SAE website from 2011, in the last seven years (or since 2004), the family income of the new middle class – comprising mainly of young people with formal employment, high purchasing power and heterogeneous characteristics – experienced an increase of over 40%. This allowed greater purchasing power, access to technology and enrollment in colleges.²³

The expansion of employment and access to credit allowed the C class to (try to) behave as the traditional middle class, occupying the same spaces, using the same brands. However, they are still not accepted by the traditional middle class.

Pinheiro-Machado wrote about how the “disciplined middle class” sees young people of C class breaking the invisible walls and wearing the signs and brands of the hegemonic market: “The middle class sees these guys wearing the same brands it wears (or more expensive), but does not recognized itself in young people whose bodies seem to need to be tamed. The middle class does not recognizes itself in the Other and feels a deep and disturbing disorder because of this” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).²⁴

²² Between €222 and €887.

²³ <http://blog.planalto.gov.br/ao-vivo-seminario-politicas-publicas-para-uma-nova-classe-media/>

²⁴ Ethnography of Rolezinhos, article written in January 2014, was reproduced in blogs and magazines in Brazil: <http://www.cartacapital.com.br/sociedade/etnografia-do-201crolezinho201d-8104.html>

5 The “Childhood Free of Consumerism” movement

“Consumerism is equally dependent on and perhaps addicted to an identity politics that is wrapped up in merchandizing, marketing, and above all, branding; these characteristics played out over the long term diminish rather than increase diversity, and have the effect of totalizing and homogenizing what affects to be a pluralistic market society.” (Barber 2008, 165)

Why fighting against consumerism and not directly against marketing, brands and the industry itself? In the age of consumerism, the Childhood Free of Consumerism movement thinks that all battles mentioned above are worth fighting, but none of them will cause an effect if it does not attack the culture and habits of consumerism, starting at home, namely on a micro level. Additionally, its members would have to try to persuade other people about the importance of thinking before buying.

The Childhood Free of Consumerism movement (that we will call here by its English abbreviation, CFC) is a social movement made up of Brazilian mothers, fathers and citizens committed to a childhood free of advertising and merchandising directed at children. This is how they define themselves. According to some participants, at the beginning, it was a place (on internet), where people could meet and discuss about these subjects. Most expected that people of their same social class (traditional middle class) would not dare to challenge the law of the market.

This social movement was founded by a small group of Brazilian parents and other citizens unhappy with advertising aimed at children. According to Barber, children are very important in a world of too many commodities and too few shoppers, so children become valued as consumers (Barber 2008).

The movement began in 2012 when its members had no link to any organization and worked on a voluntary basis. Although comprised mainly of members of the old middle class who historically had total access to the consumer market, CFC rejects consumerism and ostentation – two very typical behaviors from this class. In doing so, they are going against the core values and behavior of traditional middle class, which focuses on the glorification of the ever-expanding purchasing of goods.

Active on the Internet since March 2012, the movement advocates the involvement of mothers and fathers in the debate on the regulation of advertising for children of all social classes, acting vigilantly, exposing media and market actions that may interfere with children's development. At the same time, they work hard to foster discussions between parents and educators on the relationship between media and childhood.

“Set in a scenario where the system is flawed, regulation is weak and almost all the power is concentrated on the hands of transnational companies, the urgency of this cause is increasing due to abusive advertising campaigns and distorted messages aiming children”, they advocate in their website.²⁵

According to the CFC's website, this movement was born on internet due to the indignation of the participants of “Consumerism and Advertising for Children” group on Facebook. At that time, some group members decided to participate in the debate proposed by a campaign elaborated by a marketing association about advertising to kids.

They quickly concluded that the true aim of the campaign was to blame exclusively the parents for all sorts of problems that advertising and consumerism may cause, making them solely responsible for controlling the exposure of their children to abusive advertisements currently being broadcasted. Thus, the campaign proved to be partial, as it advocated self-regulation and "common sense" of advertisers as the only drivers of advertising for children.

On the other hand, the parents that founded the CFC social movement argue that to fulfill their responsibility, which is to educate their children in values such as citizenship and sustainability they need the support of the state. “It is very disproportional to compete alone, as a parent, against the power of the market, media and industries. The government has to help us, controlling the content of advertising in public spaces and media (TV in Brazil is a public concession)”, says one of the members of the movement.

²⁵ <http://milc.net.br/>

Additionally, they claim for an effective compromise of private companies, the media and advertising agencies. In the face of excessive advertisements with manipulative and inappropriate content, they vociferate that they will not assume the responsibility of controlling the content and the results of the ads alone.

Since the movement was created, many actions and meetings have happened in the Brazilian Parliament, in debates across the country and, of course, on internet (blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). After CFC's actions in different spaces, many people who had no idea about how mass media and the market work started to think and act politically against the exaggerated consumerism in the Brazilian society, which can be very bad not only for the environment and for the health (children's obesity became a huge problem in Brazil²⁶) but also for the people who cannot afford to live this way and are, therefore, deliberately excluded from many public and private spheres of social life.

It is not the only movement against advertising aimed to children in Brazil, nor the only one who takes the consumer's party in this struggle against the media and the market, but it is the only one organized by parents and with no connection to NGOs, companies or social foundations. After its creation and growth since 2012, the CFC movement started to establish links with foundations and institutes that cares about childhood – like Alana Institute²⁷ and Rebrinc²⁸ (the last one was created after CFC and asked some CFC members for a partnership) –, but it maintains its independency.

The CFC movement is financially sustained by their members and occasionally receives some money (for campaigns and /or for presence in debates all over the country) from Alana Institute.

Most of the group's work – from the movement dissemination and writing texts for the blog and Facebook – is done voluntarily by its members. The management and

²⁶ In Brazil, One in three children aged 5 to 9 years are overweight. This BBC's article says that Brazil can become the most obese nation in the world in 15 years, according to researches:
http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/08/150826_obesidade_infantil_mdb

²⁷ Alana's webpage in English: <http://alana.org.br/en/>

²⁸ Rebrinc's webpage (in Portuguese): <http://rebrinc.com.br/>

organization of the group is collectively and decisions are made by consensus among the members that are part of a coordination group.

“What drove us to create the group was tiredness of being always identified as responsible for all the ills of society – "Where is the mother of this kid?", they ask when something goes wrong. And especially the exhaustion with the intellectual dishonesty of those who claimed that it was not necessary to control advertisers, that was enough that mothers control their children”, says one of the founders of the group.

They like to list some results of their activism against consumerism:

- Exchanging Toys' Fair in Brazil since 2012, part of the calendars of several Brazilian cities;
- Release of several videos dealing with the subject child and consumption;
- Prohibition of merchandising actions in infant audiovisual productions (by the Parliament, after);
- Suspension of various advertising campaigns such as Xuxa Park;
- Creation of the Brazilian Network for Children and Consumption;
- Approval of Resolution 163 of Conanda (by the Parliament, after several debates with the participation of member of the CFC);
- Spread boycott campaigns against many products that are not considered fair or healthy and make abusive advertising
- Children's Advertising as Enem theme in 2014.

Enem (National High School Exam) is a test that all students who want to go to the university have to do in Brazil. Every year they chose a different topic for the dissertation. In 2014, the topic was about advertising aimed to children in Brazil, showing that this form activism, that is considered a minor thing for some people, is being recognized nationally. It also shows that this topic is seen as a problem by the government, as the content of the exam is elaborated in the Ministry of Education. The CFC as social movement certainly strengthened after that.

5.1 Advertising's regulation in Brazil: laws and government's role

In April 2015, activists provoked the Brazilian Parliament to pass a bill which implemented stricter regulations regarding advertisements for kids. The activists associated with the CFC movement were not the only ones who helped bringing this out, as there were many who took up the cause before but never achieved nation-wide visibility before. Another bill called *Projeto de Lei (PL) 5921/01* exists since 2001, but, although the topic of the bill was called into discussion many times in the Parliament, it never received sufficient votes.

According to the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute, it is the Resolution 163 of the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Conanda, in Portuguese), which controls advertisement aimed at children under the age of 12. The resolution basically states that it is forbidden to use ads containing children's language, special effects, an excess of color; child soundtracks or songs sung by children, child representation, people or celebrities that appeal to children, characters or child presenters, cartoons or animation design, dolls or similar, promotion with distribution of prizes or gifts or collectibles that appeal to children, and promotion with competitions or games appealing to children.

When it was finally approved, it was seen as a revolution in this field. However, in the same month, the Easter promotions proved that, in practice, nothing has changed: the advertisers still use abusive methods to sell anything for kids, from cars to processed food. The advertisers know the influence that kids have in their families and that they are easily caught by images, so they use this fact to sell things for adults too, like cars and electronic devices.

The market is still self-regulated (or non-regulated) and sent a clear the message saying that "if you do not like it, do not buy it". They have a similar speech when questioned by the activists: "Parents need to learn how to say no to their kids". Once again they were blaming the parents and the consumers for children obesity, anxiety and other problems. According to them, the market and its abusive and coercive strategies do not play a role in these society's illness.

Blaming the victims is a worldwide strategy used by the most powerful part of the struggle. The market's law argues that, in this case, the consumer is completely individualized rather than being socially embedded; as well as less instead of more free

as a consequence. They are allowed to choose from a variety of options, yet are not permitted to alter or improve them in any way. In fact, in this way, the intricacies of consumerism render the individual more instead of less vulnerable to control. This occurs in much the same way an infant, for all its sense of power, is essentially defenseless in a world from which it is not able to distinguish itself (Barber 2008).

So since the approval of the Conanda resolution – which does not have the same power as a law, but is more a kind of a recommendation issued by the federal government –, it is not being put into practice, because of the strong lobby of the market and agencies, trying not to lose their strong influence power. In Brazil, this lobby is embodied by the largest Brazilian children's comic book, created by Maurício de Sousa, who sells royalties of his characters for any kind of product imaginable, from toys to instant noodles.

Officially, the resolution has legal force and must be complied with in full, otherwise it may result in suspension of broadcasting of the materials and fines. However, who decides if something is abusive or not? The decision is made by an institute that works for the market, namely the Conar, National Council for the Self-Regulation of Advertising. When the Council receives a complaint, it requires at least three months to analyze it, which means that the broadcasting of the product in question can already be finished when the sentence is finally given. So the advertisement agencies prefer to broadcast the maximum time they can before being caught and then pay a (small) fine, if necessary. Moreover, there is a new bill in the Parliament trying to overturn the decision of Conanda.

There is a consensus among psychologists that children are more vulnerable and do not understand advertising as adults do. Specialists say that children cannot distinguish advertising from storytelling, or fantasy from fact, so they should be protected. Therefore what is happening in Brazil, with the marketers exploiting this vulnerability without any restriction, should be considered illegal.

According to Barber, we live in a world where adults are childish, products from companies like Coca-Cola or Nike or McDonald's are consumed by everyone, as the market wisely focuses on training users since childhood. The industry sees a child as a small consumer, a consumer in training, who, if well prepared (molded), can always

consume more and better (in the point of view of the industry, of course): from medicines to lifestyles. The deputies in Brazil seem not to care about this.

“The infantalist ethos is potent in shaping the ideology and behaviors of our radical consumerist society today as what Max Weber called the ‘Protestant ethic’ was in shaping the entrepreneurial culture of what was then a productivist early capitalism society. Affiliated with an ideology of privatization, the marketing of brands, and homogenization of taste, this ethos of infantilization has worked to sustain consumer capitalism, but at the expense of both civility and civilization and at a growing risk to capitalism itself” (Barber 2008, 3-4).

The access of children to different media and advertising has been following the logic of the commercialization of childhood. The perception that children and adolescents are a profitable market has favored the development of advertising to children and the increase in advertising to this audience. Taking advantage of the innocence of children and their great power to influence their parents, the advertising market directs all available arsenal for persuasion towards them, not only promoting products from the infant universe, but also promoting goods and services for adults. It is not easy to escape this mass advertising, because it can be subtle and disguised.

The absence of laws governing advertising makes it reach absurd levels, as well as makes it present in all aspects of life, such as schools, playgrounds, birthday parties or anywhere that a child can go. Sometimes they come hidden in “social” actions, like the clown Ronald Mc Donald’s giving talks at schools to teach children how to eat healthy. This and other types of merchandising are everywhere. This is one more strategy that Brazilians imported from the United States of America.

García Canclini (1995) mentions this fact in his book about consumerism in Latin America, saying that through our relationship with Europe we learned how to be citizens. Through our ties with the United States, we learn to be consumers.

Barber postulates that “today’s new higher-education corruption comes from treating students themselves not as autonomous learners but as free consumers and not yet committed brand-shoppers – clients of educational services. Vendors see a \$200-billion-a-year market made up of “a particularly attractive subset of American youth” who are

still shopping for brands and who control extraordinary disposable income and market influence over their parents and other adults” (Barber 2008, 15).

What Barber notices in the United States of America is also happening in Brazil: education is converted into a business and merchandising is part of its existence, similar to books, teachers and students. He says that “corporate marketers do not limit themselves to turning education into merchandizing, they turn merchandizing into education, making each moment of the child’s day into a merchandizing opportunity – pop-up ads on the internet where students now do their homework instead of in ad-free libraries, holidays which formerly “holy days” [...] turned into selling marathons along with secular holidays like Valentine’s Day, President’s Day, Mother’s Day, Labor Day, all given their own unique commercial inflections, each offering, in Richard Woodward’s phrase, a testament to bottomless ingenuity of capitalism” (Barber 2008, 15).

According to Barber, the pervasive new ethos of infantilization is not, however, the only factor in our era’s hyper-consumerism. It has been both generated and reinforced by affiliated ideologies including privatization, branding, and total marketing that buttress consumerism and contribute powerfully to what he calls the infantilizing project.

“Among these, none is more salient than the ideology of privatization, a fresh and vigorous expression of traditional laissez-faire philosophy that favors free markets over government regulation and associates liberty with personal choice of the kind possessed by consumers. In its latest guise, privatization ideology takes aim squarely at the public and those democratic philosophies that created the last century’s prudent balancing of capitalism and popular sovereignty, with fateful consequences for citizens” (Barber 2008, 117).

In Brazil, like in many other American countries, the elites are utterly against state intervention in the economy. They are neoliberal, they do not care about privatizations, they do not want the state to interfere in their lives, and they want it to have as little power as possible.

According to Weber, there is a contradiction between the capitalism (market’s law) and democracy. In Brazil this is clear when we see that the elites are trying to overthrow the president because of any suspect of what they call the “communist threat” (for example,

some people defend the impeachment because of social policies like the Bolsa Família mentioned in chapter 3). This contradiction is very much alive in Brazil after Dilma Rousseff's reelection, in 2014, and the political and economic crisis that followed this.

Brazilian elites take the ideological claim that markets should be sovereign and is not willing to rethink their consumer habits or to consider that the state can determine something they consider private: if their children may or may not have access to advertising. They probably are not completely aware about this, but they advocate for the market, against their children. Also they believe in the speech of the marketers, which says that children have the right to advertisement, so as to be informed about products for their age.

“The cynical slogan behind which earnest marketers hide when faced with the tawdry, the harmful, and the meretricious proclaims: ‘Don’t blame us, we just give people what they want’” (Barber 2008, 291).

5. 2 Celebrating consumerism

Another facet of the Brazilian consumerist way of life which is very interesting to observe is when a typical middle class family celebrates their child's birthdays. In Brazil, children's parties are getting bigger, more luxurious and expensive. The aim here is to show to the others how much you love your child and you can only demonstrate this spending a lot of money to make them happy (even if it is a baby that does not understand why there are 100 people around him).

This is the review of one of the mothers of CFC in their Facebook page: “Birthday parties of a large group of children in Brazil have become a spectacle of consumerism. Often, the souvenirs given by the host after the party are more expensive (and more contaminated with children's advertising) than the presents given by the guests. In addition to the gourmet candies, infinite electronic games, specialized teams to “entertain” kids, decoration paid in many installments and a lot of waste, there is still horizon: confined animal offered as souvenir certainly doomed to death in absentia of any respect for life. Apparently, only to “match” with the theme of the party.” (Anne Rammi, member of CFC, 2015).

Some upper middle class Brazilians go further: they celebrate their toddler's birthdays with big parties in the United States. "To celebrate Arthur Medeiros's third birthday last year, there was a three-course brunch for a dozen guests at the Hotel Plaza Athénée's private dining room, which was expertly decorated to look like a scene from the movie 'The Lion King', complete with elaborate mini-jungle centerpieces. This was followed by another party at Dylan's Candy Bar, and then the climax: a trip to see 'The Lion King' on Broadway. Arthur is not from Manhattan, but from Brazil." This is an excerpt of an article published in the New York Times in October 2013. Even in a city like New York, famous for its excesses, some of these events may seem exaggerated, they say. However, in Brazil today excessive is considered best.

According to Edwards, consumerism is not only a matter of style. It is linked to economics, money, political policy and implication, social practice and division. The concept itself brings up questions related to individualism, identity, power, inequality and social as well as economic stratification (Edwards 2000).

In a historical sense, consumerism can be comprehended in a variety of ways. It has been seen as the central indicator of status and class position, as "a mechanism for fantasy and day-dreaming related to the rise of city cultures, or as modern form of justification for economic exploitation through production (Veblen 1934; Adorno and Horkheimer 1973; Benjamin 1973). More recently, the focus has shifted to the role of consumerism in the formation and preservation of identity. More specifically as part of the development of style cultures (Ewen 1988; Featherstone 1991; Lury 1996)" (Edwards 2000).

5.3 Consumer activism

At some point, the CFC movement started a consumer rebellion, trying to challenge the market and make people think about their purchasing habits and sustainability before buying in these special dates, for example. They started a boycott campaign against manufactured Easter eggs, which in Brazil are very big and include little toys inside, making people buy because of the "exclusive" gifts. The campaigns were quite successful, but of course they cannot compete with the coverage that market campaigns have. However, at least they represent a resistance.

These CFC parents claimed that the ads for kids were cruel and organized collective resistance. On the other hand, they then became the *avant garde* of consumerism, namely brands that are green, alternative or not as committed to the big markets started to use them as influencers of people who wanted to be (a bit) outside of the dominant trend.

According to Edwards, “consumer activism and consumer rebellion are often variants on the theme of consumer power, which contrasts sharply with the notion of consumers as victims – the consumer as powerless” (Edwards 2000, 11). He adds that clearly a paradox exists since such consumers endorse other products, particularly those related to ecological, environmental or health concerns (Edwards 2000).

“The clear paradox here is that such consumers equally endorse other products, particularly those related to environmental, ecological or health-related concerns (...)” (Edwards 2000, 12).

Even with this paradox and not being so substantial in size, the CFC movement represents a risk to the market, which tries to oppose their talks and ridicule their campaigns.

The market requires free access to children. However, it takes more than just marketing to influence children, they also need to be separated from their protective environment, namely uprooted from the habits that have initially protected them from the predatory market and commercial exploitation (Barber 2008).

The market sees the parents as guardians that have to be beaten if they wish to sell their products to children. For trivial economic reasons, the parents are being pushed out of the way in the name of “empowerment,” namely the need to make autonomous consumers out of children, as a child embedded in a family community makes for an awful shopper (Barber 2008).

The marketers and even some parents talk about the autonomy of the children to decide; although in truth that autonomy leaves them unprotected, vulnerable, as well as susceptible to external manipulation (Barber 2008). Unlike in Europe, where the government protection of children on the web and elsewhere is commonplace,

American and Brazilian market ideology prefers self-policing and other market mechanisms to deal with what only some people think are abuses in the first place.

Why have they become so important to the point of being invited to public debates? Why they represent a risk to the market? Why have they got so many fans? Probably because in the middle of this generalized crisis of the old middle class, some of these members started to think that they do not need all the goods and services they were supposed to have to live a decent life.

The simple fact of not accepting that, for example, children need to receive new gifts for all dates created by the market or, even worse, the boycott of such souvenirs and massive propaganda around these dates became a big risk for the marketers' interests. The old middle class who constitutes the CFC movement knows how to do it being inside the market.

“Cultural jamming tries to use inside-the-market tactics to challenge the market. But to choose who take seriously the civic side, even when the market seems the only game in town, there are ways to civilize – that is to say ‘civicate’ – markets on both the demand and supply sides” (Barber 2008, 293).

The only way this could be possible is if it was done by people who know and play by the market's rules. Additionally, they started to encourage other parents to do the same. They resisted in both larger and smaller aspects. They also provided the people with the ability to question their social class cultural habits, which can be as or even more effective than only questioning the system.

When they ask themselves why so much ostentation of symbols of status and consumerism, they change their own consumer habits and in people who are already slightly open to the ideas, it can create a domino effect. Many parents boycott not only some brands, but some old previously consolidated habits as well.

“These market-side reformers see in consumers (...) an instrument of demand-side power – for example, boycotts – and in corporations a supply-side tool of responsible organizational citizenship that can ‘do well by doing good’. They play the market to change how market does business. On the demand side, ‘civic consumerism’ hopes to ‘empower’ consumers for real by making them thoughtful and responsible shoppers

using collective consumer clout to shape what is sold and how it is sold” (Barber 2008, 293).

In interviews with the members of the movement, we had answers like: “They ask us if it is not easier to educate a child than to prohibit the companies to advertise for kids. Of course not, it is very difficult to educate a child, moreover if there are such powerful forces against us. If for a mother that is conscious, well-educated and well informed it is difficult to deal with children’s behavior after watching these ads, imagine for the most vulnerable part of the population? We need to protect our children and their childhood from the market”, said one mother of CFC movement.

“It is a huge challenge to educate a child to be a conscious consumer, to give value to being and not to having, to be supportive, kind and loving, when the whole atmosphere around says the contrary, when the whole market communication says that to be, first you have to have, when marketing correlates happiness, self-esteem, self-acceptance to owning objects”, said another member of the group.

“It is very difficult to raise a child, when to do it, we (mothers, fathers and teachers) need to negate from childhood precisely what makes them children: the innocence. We negate part of their childhood when we need to tell our children that the world is bad, that the industry that produces their favorite lie to them on TV and that the characters they love are only on the packaging to try to seduce them”, said Mariana Sá, one of the founders of the movement.

With lots of irony, Anne Rammi, also member of the movement, states: “The industry that produces and puts unhealthy hyper processed foods laden with all types of fattening and chemical additives in the corridors of all supermarkets? Has no responsibility. Advertisers who advertise with many attractive colors, shapes, characters, jingles and add gifts to these sub-foods to children who cannot even read their own name yet? They are just doing their jobs. The governments that should have the responsibility to ensure the health of its citizens? It is not their business as well. Schools that take on the role of co-educators of children, including at mealtime? Forget it. Mathematics is important, but what the child will swallow daily for 15 years of her life has no importance”.

She ends the ironic statement with: “It's your fault, you cannot say no. Shame on your kid, who does not exercise. You two are really very mushy!”. This is the hidden

message of the advertisers to defend themselves when they feel challenged by parents that dare not to behavior as they want.

6 The “Rolezinhos” movement

“Rolezinho” (little stroll) is a movement, which involves walking through the mall in a group. Something that would be considered very common to a Brazilian youngster, but it is not accepted if this youngster does not belong to the elite or to the traditional middle class.

Rolezinho is a decentralized movement, consisting mostly of youth from peripheries of the greatest cities of Brazil concerned with ostentation and the worship of consumerism, especially the goods and brands acquired by young Brazilians belonging to the new middle class. These youths gather in shopping malls to show off their newly acquired consumer items and act like the old middle class, causing outrage among the latter.

According to some members of the movement, they started in 2012, with the name of “meeting of fans”, where the most popular funk singers and dancers on internet invited their fans (people who followed them on Youtube) to go for a walk in a mall with them. The name “rolezinho” came one year later. Rolé (“dar um rolé”) is a Brazilian slang that means “to walk around”. Rolezinho is, then the diminutive form of rolé.

The Rolezinhos (in plural, because there were many) became more noticeable in the last few years, especially in the main cities of Brazil, but they happened more often – simultaneously in different cities – and became famous between December 2013 and February 2014, when they were also severely restrained by the police.

Since the implementation of the shopping mall concept in Brazil in the 1960s, these places have been frequented mainly by white people, originally from the old middle class and the upper class, in search of escape from the tensions of the Brazilian streets. In Brazil, streets and public spaces are for the lower classes. Malls and private spaces are frequented by the ones who have more money and possess economic power, in other words, for the elite.

Rolezinhos are seen by many as criminal acts in private spaces, while others consider them to be a symptom of Brazil's veiled social apartheid. Black and poor people were

there only for working, to serve the clients. When it came for purchasing, it was clear that this place was not for them.

As the so-called new middle class started to have access to consumer goods, this story began to change. For some groups – especially black and marginalized people – any social status is denied, they are not considered members of the consumer society. The more abject and problematic that this consumer society can be – and is, in many ways – it is only for a few elected or privileged people. The youths from Rolezinhos only want to be recognized as members our society, or the consumer society, as it is the only one that they know.

Since December 2013, Rolezinhos have gained national and international visibility, especially after one attempt ended with young people being forbidden from entering the malls. According to a survey by Datafolha²⁹ conducted in February 2014, 82% of the population in São Paulo is against Rolezinhos. A huge debate on social and racial segregation has emerged in the country as a result and hundreds of new Rolezinhos have been organized nationwide.

Pinheiro-Machado³⁰, who studied a similar phenomenon called “brand clans” in Porto Alegre, Brazil, wrote an article about Rolezinhos, which became very famous and utile to understand the movement: ‘What is behind the Rolezinhos? Are they a form of demonstration, as many newspapers have reported? Or do the “kids just want to have fun”, as The Economist stated in an article on the phenomenon? We believe – both” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).³¹

Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco studied this phenomenon in 2012, before it gained national visibility. They analyzed the strategies and sacrifices young people make to

²⁹ Data Folha is a survey institute that belongs to Folha de São Paulo, the largest newspaper in Brazil. The results of the survey about Rolezinhos in São Paulo are here: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2014/01/1401561-82-dos-paulistanos-sao-contra-rolezinho-diz-pesquisa-datafolha.shtml>

³⁰ Rosana Pinheiro-Machado is Departmental Lecturer in the Anthropology of Development at Oxford Department of International Development - ODID (Oxford, UK).

³¹ Pinheiro-Machado’s article about Rolezinhos became very famous and was reproduced in many different websites. Here is her blog: <https://rosanapinehiromachado.wordpress.com/2013/12/30/etnografia-do-rolezinho/>

acquire products they consider gateways to social inclusion in a context of extreme poverty and social and racial exclusion. “Consumerism today reveals some critical aspects of modernity in developing countries, and is a fundamental key to the understanding of poverty and the new ‘emergent middle class’ in Brazil” (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco 2012).

The two Brazilian anthropologists did research on the C class youth from Porto Alegre. They describe their walk through a mall during a Rolezinho, stating that the boys revealed their favorite stores and brands to them. The boys indicated that wearing brands is a way of getting girlfriends, “followers” and fans. They described doing everything they could to acquire these goods, such as getting work or buying second-hand clothes. For them, leaving the slums and heading to the mall was a form of empowerment and pleasure. Their intention was not to scare people, but the opposite. Dressing up was a ritual to them and using the best brands made them worthy of walking through the mall.

However, for some people Rolezinhos were more than just fun. One boy told the researchers that he wore the best clothes and brands so he would be able to go to the mall and be seen as a citizen and as a human being. In other words, it appears that through wearing this type of clothing these young people are attempting to solve a deep tension regarding the visibility of their existence.

At the same time, shop owners were frightened, and watched the young people closely to make sure they did not steal anything. One employee was painfully frank saying that “it is no use dressing up in brands and paying in cash. Only poor people use cash. They come over and we soon notice they are poor. “The young people, however, believed themselves to be the most admired and empowered clients in the stores” (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco 2012).

While the youth that was finally gaining some social visibility, they did not expect that not only they were frightening the usual customers of the malls, but they were also embarrassing the owner of some brands supposedly designed for white people. “And along with the fear, there is contempt: one businessman with a well-known brand once told us, “we are embarrassed by this appropriation phenomenon of our brand by those thugs” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).

In order to praise consumerism and the new habit to purchase known brands, this young people composes funk melodies, which in Brazil are called ostentatious funk. “Material Goods” is a funk song produced in the peripheries that worships expensive brands. When Pinheiro-Machado showed it to a class of students in Brazil, one person from the upper social layers commented: “When we see the dude all geared up, branded logo printed and all, we can already tell it’s a favelado nigger (a pejorative expression to indicate someone from the favelas/slums).”

Stephanie Ribeiro, a young black student of architecture who entered in a famous university in the quota system implemented by the Lulism policy, posted her opinion about ostentatious funk in Brazil on her Facebook page: "If a poor and black boy wants to have brand sneakers, it is not because he is weak, consumerist or wants to “appear” (to be seen, to be recognized as someone that matters). Is it because he is part of a society that is always shaping his mind to believe that to belong is to be, and at the moment he is nothing. And although I believe that the wave of ostentation in the peripheral music helps to fuel this idea, there is no way to blame the ostentation funk for this. There are so many white advertisement men to criticize and I am seeing liberal middle class badmouthing the composers of these songs”³².

We also interviewed some participants of Rolezinhos and they said that they do not go to malls in big groups to steal anything, but to buy their favorite brands – in general with their parents’ money or the money they get doing some occasional job – or just to flirt with girls, to see and be seen.

“I spend all the money I get from my jobs with hats or sneakers”, said one of the guys. “A nice short or t-shirt is important to me. Also the girls and other people treat me better if I am well dressed”, he said. They are all proud of being part of this group of people who have better conditions than their parents and can afford the purchase of branded clothes.

“Every time I go out, I need a new outfit, I do not want to repeat it”, said one of the participants. “I like to be noticed, so if I have to spend a lot of money for this, I will”, told me a 17 year old guy. They prefer not to give their names because they are all afraid of the police. “It doesn’t matter if we are well dressed, they still treat us as

³² Her Facebook profile is public: <https://www.facebook.com/stephanie.ribeiro.93?fref=ts>

thieves”, some of them told me. I asked them if they think it is related to their skin color and all of them said that this is sure.

They are still marginalized and often ridiculed because of their skin color, because of their (poor) origin and because of their ostentation. These people who criticizes the “funkers” or the youth periphery because of their ostentation are the same kind of people that says it is absurd for poor people to buy a television and that poor people should focus on feeding their family. They also do not see the obvious issue, which is that the old middle class also does the same in their social networks, like Instagram, Facebook or Twitter. They show different trips, exclusive places, events for the more privileged people.

Pinheiro-Machado wrote that in a famous charity event that happens every at Christmas in Brazil, in which poor children send letters to Santa Claus through the Post Office asking for their most desired gifts and people from the upper classes receive the letters and buy the gifts. Some children ask for specific brand items. “Dear Santa: I behaved well, I passed school, I took care of my grandma, and my dad disappeared from home. I just want a pair of Adidas pants!” In general these letters like these are largely ignored because of an unattractive morality which states that the requests of boys and girls for branded clothes should be seen as an effrontery. According to this moral, the poor should only ask for school books, childish toys and bicycles (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).³³

The youth from the Rolezinhos does not care about movements against consumerism or against the hegemonic market. If you listen to them, it is exactly the opposite, as following the rules of the hegemonic market is a way to be someone. And of course the old middle class who criticizes and fears them has no clue of how is to live in the periphery of the periphery of capitalism.

6.1 The Rolezinhos and infrapolitics

There is no significant difference between a ritualized and organized Rolezinho and the more ordinary visits to the mall (even though going to the mall has never been an

³³ More about this project: <http://www.correios.com/sobre-correios/sustentabilidade/vertente-social/papai-noel-dos-correios>

ordinary act for the low-income classes). According to Pinheiro-Machado, in her *Ethnography of Rolezinhos* (2014), it is “a continuity which culminates in a political phenomenon that highlights the obvious: the segregation of Brazilian classes that scream and bleed for inclusion” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).

This political act of going to a place where you are not accepted is not as clear to some of them. The infrapolitics of the Rolezinhos dwells in this contradiction. “This is quite subversive, but between appropriation and resistance there is a significant gap. Adoring symbols of power – in this case, brands – hardly conforms to the idea of resistance that many people would like to see in this act of appropriation” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).

The Rolezinhos movements are complex, not only because they reveal Brazilian class segregation, but also show the tensions of inequality between developed and developing countries, between North and South. They also show the lack of citizenship for the majority of people in a populous country like Brazil (about 200 million inhabitants). “While such global symbols are venerated among the weakest, freedom will never be complete and the worst of dependences will be eternal: the ideological one. It is because of this that to understand the relation global peripheries have with brands and malls, we must go back to colonialist and post-colonialist studies” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).

In her article about the Rolezinhos, Pinheiro-Machado tends to agree with the American anthropologist James Ferguson in that it is less of a political subversion and more of a desperate plea to be part of the global order. She postulates that “it is necessary to understand Rolezinhos within a Global South perspective of centuries of violence exerted in an attempt to produce standardized, desirable and disciplined bodies” (Pinheiro-Machado 2014).

The middle class sees them wearing the same (or even more expensive) brands it wears, but does not recognize itself in the youngsters of the periphery and feels deeply disturbed. Rolezinhos were not organized to be a political act, but became such a strong movement due to the overreaction of the old middle class. The symbolical meaning of the movement became more important than the movement itself.

Consumerism practices in western societies are highly motivated by social, economic and political factors. The elderly and the infirm, and especially the low paid, are more often than not excluded from common consumerism practices, which is mostly due to

various from credit control to passports. The consumer practices of many young people. “The consumption practices of many young people, including those from racial or ethnic minorities and the unemployed, in mimicking, stealing or aping the style cultures and commodities of their more affluent counterparts may undermine any sense of simple economic determinism, but still supports an analysis of consumption that incorporates a conception of its economic importance, political significant and social divisiveness” (Edwards 2000, 30).

What Barber means by the infantilist ethos is the fact that the market focuses on children and youngsters, but wants to sell the idea of eternal youth to the adults as well. The adults purchase some items believing that they will make them feel younger. The citizens are adults, public selectors, whom social freedom empowers to affect the environment of choice. The choices are seen as determined and portrayed. On the other hand, the infantilized consumer is perceived as a private selector, whose ability to participate in communities or affect change is reduced and whose public judgment is diminished (Barber 2008).

“The citizen, in other hand, is an adult, a public chooser empowered by social freedom to effect the environment of choice by agendas by which choices are determined and portrayed; the infantilized consumer is the private chooser whose power to participate in communities or effect changes is reduced and whose public judgment is attenuated. The infantilist ethos, then, does the necessary work of consumer capitalism, but at expense of the civilization that productivist capitalism helped create” (Barber 2008, 36).

There is another important way in which globalization fuels selling to the young. As it turns out, the global market is characterized by the more or less collective tastes of youth. Whereas the adult cultures are distinctive and plural, the youth culture is strangely universal. According to Chip Walker, middle-class young people all over the world appear to live as if in a parallel universe despite living in different cultures. They all wake up in the morning, get dressed in their Levi’s and Nikes, take their personal Sony CD players and head to school.

May it be the Ibo tribesmen, Iraqi Sunnis, Brazilian patriots or the French *citoyens* children are still children. “If their countries and tribes and religions can be made to

appear as secondary to their global market tastes and youth-branded appetites as children, capitalism need not to be impeded by pluralism” (Barber 2008, 17).

6.2 Consumerism and citizenship in Brazil

We live in a society where citizens are seen as consumers. If they are not allowed to be consumers, they are not citizens either. In this aspect, the Lulism, policy in which people were integrated into the society as consumers, could be a positive thing in some ways, the problem is that the access to public services and the democratization of it failed. What is worse, the Workers Party did not even try to amend it. Even if, at the end, this policy was not viable, especially after one decade and another crisis (political, economic and social), but is still installed in Brazilian society right now.

What is clear is that a consumer society that includes more people is still a problematic society. As Barber puts it, the victory of citizens and that of consumers, respectively, are not synonymous, as the fate of citizens under capitalism is not necessarily triumphant (Barber, 2008, 4). According to Edwards, consumers are kings or victims precisely according to their economic and demographic status. In some capitalist countries, like USA and Brazil, consumers’ rights are wider and better respected than citizens’ rights.

The irony is that in Brazil the Workers Party – considered a socialist party – democratized consumerism, allowing everyone to purchase basic and also more expensive goods, but it did not democratize other aspects of social life. According to Barber, at one point, capitalism was at least partly associated with values such as responsibility, citizenship and democracy. However, today it is associated with vices, which although serving consumerism, undermine the values mentioned above. The question we then face is whether, not only democracy, but capitalism itself are able to survive the infantile ethos upon which it has begun to depend (Barber 2008).

García Canclini points out the importance of purchasing practices for the communication aspects of the right to citizenship, demonstrating how purchasing is not an "irrational" act, an unnecessary and useless expense, but a space which organizes part of economic, political and social-psychological rationality. When we select the goods and use them, we define what we consider publicly valuable, as we integrate and distinguish ourselves in society. Thus, the electronic media outbreaks the masses in the

public sphere and moves the performance of citizenship towards the consumption practices (García Canclini 1995).

The book's introduction chapter, "Consumers of the century, citizens of the eighteenth century," problematizes that while this society treats us as consumers of the twenty-first century, where the global distribution of goods and information approaches the consumerism of central and peripheral countries. However as citizens, it takes us back to the 18th century, where decisions were all concentrated in elites and consisted of a bulk deletion system incorporated as "customers" (García Canclini 1995, 5).

According to Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2012), the symbolic dimension of consumerism overlaps its practice, as a socially prized symbol is as essential to human existence as proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins. The same can be inferred regarding citizenship. They contextualize this in terms of the Brazilian society. "In a society that discriminates by color and social class, dressing well and having the latest gadgets is very important". They conclude that "brands are not only a source of prestige, but also vitality, power and citizenship" (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco 2012).

At the end of the day, the Rolezinhos' youth is no different from young people all over the world. The global market is not interested in their (or lack thereof) social status, nationalities, citizenships or individualities. In the global arena, markets are free from all constraint, rational or otherwise, in fact as well as in theory. According to Barber, global citizens do not exist, only global consumers. Similarly, there are no global states or countries, but merely global capitalist companies.

Barber also argues that there is no commonweal, but a culmination of what consumer markets, nations and individuals desire. He also concludes that there are no global cultural or national identities, which are by definition local and parochial, only the void identity provided by brands (Barber 2007).

6.3 The social invisibility of the new middle class

Where some people see an obsession with brands, others see the desperate act of trying to escape from the social invisibility to which this youth is condemned. According to

Boff³⁴, this people are typically poor and young, without culture and leisure, condemned due to bad or absent public services such as school, health and health infrastructure, security, leisure and transport. They watch television, where advertisements attempt to coax them into purchasing products they will never be able to afford. They do, however, know how to use computers and get on social networks, so they can join meetings. He also states that it would be unreasonable to expect them to theoretically depict their dissatisfaction. However, they do feel discontent, because the society purposely excludes and despises them, as well as keeps them invisible.

According to Boff, the Rolezinhos denounce our greatest plague: social inequality, whose real name is historical and social injustice. However, with the social policies of the Workers Party's government inequality seems to have decreased. According to IPEA's research³⁵, the 10% poorest of the society had, between 2001 and 2011, a cumulative revenue growth of 91.2% while the richest part grew 16.6%. This difference did not reach the root of the problem because what overcomes inequality is a social infrastructure of health, school, transport, culture and leisure functioning and the accessibility to it all. It is not enough to transfer income. The state has to create opportunities and offer services, something that was not the main focus of the Ministry of Social Development in Brazil.

The youth from the Brazilian peripheries enters a "paradise of goods," which they seen on television. They can even feel the goods in their hands. This is considered blasphemy by the owners of shopping malls. They are not willing to talk, but just call the police to beat and close the doors to these 'barbarians.' TzvetanTodorov points out something similar in his book *The fear of barbarians: beyond the clash of civilizations*. He argues that the marginalized around the world are leaving the margins and heading for the center to raise the bad conscience of "happy customers" and tell them, this order is order in disorder. The real citizens are frustrated and unhappy, filled with fear, afraid of their similar (Todorov 2010).

³⁴ Leonardo Boff is a former Dominican monk and a left-wing theologian linked to popular movements and the liberation theology. He wrote about Rolezinhos in his blog: <https://leonardoboff.wordpress.com/2014/01/23/os-rolezinhos-nos-acusam-somos-uma-sociedade-injusta-e-segregacionista/>

³⁵ <http://www.ipea.gov.br/code2011/chamada2011/pdf/area11/area11-artigo7.pdf>

The mentioned authors who wrote specifically about Rolezinhos, agree that it is not a movement about consumerism. Instead the young people involved seek recognition, acceptance in society, leisure, culture and want to show what they can do, which is sing, dance, create critical poems and celebrate human coexistence. This is in contrary to the view of some, like Pochmann (2012), who says that to a large extent the segment of the popular classes in emergency presents itself depoliticized, individualistic and apparently rational measure that seeks to establish the capitalist sociability, they are organized into groups. They challenged the establishment together.

6.4 Youth and the city

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, in Portuguese), the population living in the slums grew faster than the total population and the urban population in the period between 1980 and 2010. There is absolutely no doubt regarding the strong negative effect globalization had on the Brazilian metropolises between the years of 1980 and 1990. The problem was that the globalization was dominated by neo-liberal ideology imposed by the national elites. The main cause of this was due to the sharp decline in economic growth, rising unemployment and the decline in public investment in social policies.

According to Maricato, “the categorization of the proposals in the Washington Consensus demonstrates the power of such political domination and what it can impose on an unequal society, especially in partnership with local elites. Such actions are contradictory to the interests and needs of the majority of the population. She also cites Milton Santos³⁶, who argued that since the public transportation is expensive and bad, the residents of the peripheries are in a sense in exile. This is true especially of young people, who do not have the option to leave” (Maricato 2013, 145).

On the other hand, the police in Brazil is a corporation that has a tradition of torturing and killing black and poor people, which prioritizes private institutions instead of human lives. The cities and its streets do not seem safe places to be. The situation in the slums is even worse. Because of this, the young people’s search for the malls is also part of the emerging class dreams.

³⁶ Milton Santos (1926-2001) was a Brazilian geographer who became famous for his pioneer works in various fields in geography, notably urban development in developing countries.

According to André Singer, this new proletariat (like Pochmann, he refers to the new middle class as the new proletariat) was born in a cultural environment with strong capitalist and religious power. First, there was the expansion of so-called “prosperity theology,” which involves a number of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches. This worldview proposes that with the individual effort each one will achieve the desired upward mobility and success. Second, the deep penetration that society has suffered decades ago by neoliberalism has resulted, for example, in the worship of the brands that has been spreading within the youth of the suburbs of Brazilian cities. The worship of brands is something that goes very well with the theology of prosperity, both referring to capitalist values" (Singer 2013, 32).

This makes us thinking in a question: what is missing to “rolezeiros” (participants of the Rolezinhos) and the Brazilian proletariat in general to be accepted by the traditional middle class in their spaces in the divided cities of Brazil? Cultural capital could be a good answer.

As we already mentioned in the chapter 4, the concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class. Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others – the same taste in movies, for example, or going to the same school – creates a sense of collective identity and group position (“people like us”). This group position can also be achieved by wearing the same brands, valuing and purchasing the same goods.

Bourdieu also points out that cultural capital is a major source of social inequality. Certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others, and can help or hinder one’s social mobility just as much as income or wealth³⁷. But in Brazil the color of the skin and the origin of the person, so whether they live in a poor area or come from the poorest regions of Brazil – can also hinder the social mobility, even if they now have prosperity.

This is easily noticed in the reaction of the owners of stores or even other habitual mall goers when they see these groups coming from the peripheries to coexist in the same

³⁷ Read more about Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in the website: <http://routledgesoc.com/category/profile-tags/cultural-capital>

space for a few hours. The fact that these guys can afford the purchase the brands they want is less important than their origin. This can be clearly noticed in the interviews the owners of stores and brands gave to journalists and to the survey institute Data Popular³⁸.

According to the article cited above, some of the owners consulted the Data Popular Institute, which specializes in market data in this segment of the population (the so-called new middle class), to ask for guidance on how to shake off its image of people attending the Rolezinhos.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can be held in three forms – embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. One's accent or dialect is an example of embodied cultural capital, while a luxury car or an apartment in a nice neighborhood are examples of cultural capital in its objectified state. In its institutionalized form, cultural capital refers to credentials and qualifications such as degrees or titles that symbolize cultural competence and authority.

That is why, even if social mobility does occur, one cannot quickly achieve the embodied or institutionalized cultural capitals. It takes at least one generation to change this social status and without this cultural capital a person does not have social visibility and, in consequence, is not considered a complete citizen with rights in an unequal society like the Brazilian one. The link between consumerism and citizenship was never as clear in Brazil as during the advent of Lulism and of movements from the emergent peripheries, as the Rolezinhos.

³⁸ Brands are ashamed of their poorer clients, says Data Popular:
<http://economia.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2014/02/03/marcas-de-grife-tem-vergonha-de-clientes-mais-pobres-diz-data-popular.htm>

7 Conclusion

Analyzing the two movements in relation to politics and citizenship, we noticed that they are based on the same principle, namely consumerism, but deal with it in opposite ways. The Childhood Free of Consumerism movement, on the one hand, is conscious that their approach is political, as its members think that fighting against the society of consumerism is a struggle which will guarantee their kids full citizenship, in which the individual is more important than the market.

In the case of Rolezinhos, on the other hand, consumerism is an important part of their search for citizenship. As they are young and not as experienced, they do not perceive their movement as political. The members' interviewed said that they just go to the malls to meet girls, to flirt, to walk around and get together with friends. They do not see themselves as a threat – as they are seen by the old middle class – or as an unusual thing, they only want to have the same right to walk around as any other youngster from the big cities in Brazil, for whom the only leisure place is a mall.

The thing is that before 2003, they could not even think about occupying these spaces, as the social barriers were very strong and they knew where not to go. After 2003, with the Lulism, these barriers were torn down, however not entirely, as the youth of the new middle class started having access to high school and universities for the first time, changing the status quo and their own future.

In the 1990s, even with the economic stability (at least of the currency), the daughter of a maid or nanny could not think of a different future for her. It could happen, of course, but it was very unusual. In general, they would grow up to become maids as well. After the first years of the social policies of Lula's government, the social landscape started changing and it was possible to see the daughter of the maid and the daughter of the boss sharing the same classroom at the university.

The old middle class had a very strong reaction to these changes, at least the most conservative part of it. This reaction is seen every day in Brazil, so it was not unexpected what happened when the Rolezinhos movement started to grow. If it was uncomfortable to see a couple of young black and "poor" guys walking around a mall, when they became dozens of guys, it became unbearable to the old middle class. The old middle class then called the police, the owners of the malls got injunctions and found all possible manners to scare them away. Of course they got what they wanted. The Rolezinhos were prohibited from the big malls and the peace came back to these "islands of security and capitalism", that are, in Brazil, the main leisure place for youths and young adults.

What became clear to us is that it reveals a big gap within the Brazilian society more than the statistics do. In real life, in a closed space, we can see how racist, segregationist and anti-social mobility the Brazilian society can be. The apartheid exists there and it is felt every day by the ones who are not part of the elected group. It does not matter if they now have money to spend; their origin, color and the place where they live will always be more important.

While for the CFC to be a citizen is to show one can conquer the all-powerful market and make their own decisions regarding consumerism, for the Rolezinhos citizenship is to be accepted, following all the rules of consumerism imposed by the market's law. CFC believes that the market massacres the children. The teenagers from Rolezinhos do not care about this massacre.

For the CFC, not to consume is the most valuable protest. Boycotting consumerism (and also specific brands and products) is a political and necessary part of their lives. For

Rolezinhos' members, there is no life without social visibility. I buy therefore I am, is what they think. In order to exist, they need brands, they need products, they need to purchase.

They do not exist in some spaces and all they want to do is to exist, to be there and to be treated like any other person in the same situation – which, of course, do not happen in these spaces where the old middle class is the dominant group.

The CFC's members pay to have access to education, can afford to pay for private health insurance and go for a walk in the nearest mall; what is more, they never had to care about not being accepted in these spaces. When the new middle class started to show up, its members also started to pay for education and health – because one of the characteristics of the new middle class in Brazil is the privatization of life –, but the part of the acceptance is still missing.

The youth of the Rolezinhos was not only neglected, but some of them were killed. Killed by the police or by their peers, in fights for territory or girls, in the favelas (slums) or suburbs where they live, these places where the state (here representing the law) only exists in the form of repression.

While the CFC got one victory in the Parliament, an official resolution against advertising in the media, even though it is not being respected by the market; the Rolezinhos failed in all its attempts and had its members persecuted by the police and the justice department. The first and only leftist government of Brazil failed in the attempt to promote social equality, because the social mobility it got with its policies was based on consumerism, not on citizenship.

Sometimes it can seem trivial to be against consumerism in a world where many people cannot afford water, food or basic necessities. In a country like Brazil, however, where the First and the Third Worlds coexist, it shows the different priorities of its population. The tension here is between those who can afford all items advertised, but do not want to buy them, and those who never could and now want to grow and be visible socially through consumerism.

In all countries of the capitalist world, consumerism has increased a great deal in the last decades and the situation was no different in the periphery of capitalism, with the

exception that there it is more cruel because it evidences the social gap and the different treatment people receive when they want to purchase the same items.

The Brazilian old middle class does not want to be confused with Brazilian new middle class, so the first counter measure it takes is to forbid the latter to participate in its activities in the same way. It is all about privileges. The role of advertisement is very important here, because it creates the same desires in different people, but only a few of them can fulfill these wishes. Others, who are without money or without permission, will need to wait.

The government encourages people to purchase, because it moves the economy. The more people purchase, the more the economy of the country seems to be growing. Brazil became the fifth economy in the world during Lula's government. Currently, in the second mandate of Dilma's government, its economy is showing signs of strain, but the country still has low rates of unemployment and plenty of opportunities to work and buy.

The potential of a continental country like Brazil was never ignored by the market that strongly imposes new needs to the population. Advertisement and merchandising are the most effective ways to talk with this new middle class, ready to buy, to belong. The state does not want to regulate it and take the risk to see consumption and economy decrease.

According to a study coordinated by Getúlio Vargas Foundation, 39.6 million of Brazilians entered the class C between 2003 and 2011. This means, of course, a big increase in the consumer market. That means that almost 40 million of people could begin to be part of the consumer society for the first time in their lives.

It is very unlikely to expect the so-called new middle class to reject this chance. On the contrary, they celebrate the opportunity and try to maintain their new social status – and grow more, if possible. Only those who always had access to the world of consumerism can chose to leave it. CFC is, indeed, an elite movement since only those who are already part of the consumer market can reject it. It is a clearly addressed to the old middle class and, among it, it is playing a good role empowering their peers with regards to consumerism, boycott, citizenship and infrapolitics. They know their place of speech and make good use of it.

On the other hand, in spite of its total invisibility when they are not in big groups or when they are not on the news, the Rolezinhos form an important social movement that carries more activism than its members believe. Even unintentionally, they did a good job revealing Brazil's social contradictions and are still a problem for the old middle class that has to get used to them in a daily basis.

According to García Canclini (1995), many of the citizens' questions are answered more by the private consumption of goods and mass media than by abstract rules of democracy or collective participation in public spaces. The Rolezinhos defeated this logic when they decided to turn consumerism into a political action. When they decided to move from a place where they are expected to be – namely the favelas and peripheries, so the margins of society – to the place which they “cannot” enter: the malls.

By changing this logic, they agitated the structures in a stronger way than producing media, such as the video clips of ostentation funk, very common in the peripheries of Brazil, which is listened mainly by their peers. They came from the margins to the inner place of consumerism to show they exist and want to be noticed. Now the old middle class has to deal with it.

With so many social problems, sometimes it seems that caring about consumerism is a secondary thing. “How much should we care? In an epoch when terrorism stalks the planet [...], when AIDS and tsunamis and war and genocide put democracy at risk in both the developing and the developed world, it may seem self-indulgent to fret about the dangers of hyper-consumerism. When poor children in the developing world are being exploited, starved, prostituted, and impressed into military service, anxiety about the prosperous young in the developed world who may be growing up into consumers too fast, or about adult consumers being dumbed down too easily, can seem parochial, even solipsistic” (Barber 2008, 4).

Although consumerism is not the number one topic of political discussions, it should be considered an important topic when it comes to discussions regarding capitalism, neoliberalism, environment and sustainability. That is CFC's role in the Brazilian political sphere and they are more and more aware of it.

According to Souza Santos, we live in a classist and prejudiced society. In a recent interview for Brazil's biggest newspaper, Folha de S. Paulo, the philosopher talked about the Brazilian middle classes³⁹. He argues that the appropriate levels of social redistribution should be maintained by taxing the richest according to their wealth, which in the spirit of neoliberalism is of course impossible. "The new middle class was, therefore, integrated into Brazilian society on the principle of consumerism, similar to that of the old middle and upper classes, not citizenship. The government did not think of new types of consumption (like public transportation) or in qualifying public services that now had more demanding customers (from health services to universities)", said him.

Souza Santos adds that the new middle class is typically thankless to whom enables it to ascend to the new status and tends to identify itself with those who are above it and not with those below. Those above are the ones who always looked with suspicion to the progressive governments. "After all, these governments [Lula's and Dilma's] brought a new political class, made of ordinary people, to whom people from the top, in a classist and full of colonial rancidity society, had always looked and still looks with disdain and even disgust", concluded.

According to Betto⁴⁰, Lula's mistake was to have facilitated people's access to personal property and not to social goods. What occurred in Brazil is the opposite of what happened in Europe in the early 20th century, when people were first given the access to education, transportation, housing, and health, then to personal property. In Brazil, one goes to a slum and people have a big TV, cell phone, stove, computer refrigerator, microwave and even a car, but still live in slums, where they do not have access to sanitation nor access to education of quality (Betto 2015).

Betto continues: "In other words, the economic inclusion made possible by Lulism was based on consumerism and disregarded political inclusion. People were purchasing,

³⁹ Boaventura de Souza Santos was interviewed by Leonora de Lucena, from Folha de S. Paulo (2015). <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2015/08/1675611-classe-media-e-ingrata-e-nao-sera-leal-a-outros-governos-diz-sociologo.shtml> (accessed in 31.08.2015)

⁴⁰ Frei Betto is a friar and important left-wing philosopher in Brazil. He participates in social movements like MST and was part of Lula's government in 2003, and helped to implement some programs for social inclusion.

money was rolling and inflation was under control, but the government did not create sustainability for this. Now the fun is over, it is time to pay the bill and to call Joaquim Levy [Current Finance Minister, responsible for the budget cuts and austerity policies in Brazil]” (Betto 2015).

How to keep growing and decreasing inequality without basing this “policy” in the consumerism of goods? This is a challenge that Brazil faces right now.

Since the presidential elections of October 2014, Brazil is diving into a political and economic crisis. The Lulism policies, maintained and increased in Dilma Rousseff’s first mandate, are not helping that many people anymore, albeit Bolsa Família is still playing its important role of social inclusion, as the national budget suffered many cuts in this new mandate of Dilma Rousseff, started in 1st of January 2015.

Brazil leads in reducing extreme poverty, according to the World Bank⁴¹. That is important, but the people involved are far from becoming a new class, according to Pochmann (2012). André Singer (2013) argues that since the growth was not supported by other pillars, Brazil’s economy and social mobility is now losing steam.

Pinheiro-Machado (2014)⁴² has the same opinion. She argues that the Lulist years have, indeed, altered the course of things. However, the government opted for economic rather than political empowerment of the emerging class. Even though the social inclusion projects resulted in some of the greatest victories in Brazilian history, such as the decline of poverty, the social mobility project was shattered by the political and ideological agenda.

She also postulates that choosing economic as opposed to political empowerment had direct consequences on the sort of citizens being formed in Brazil. She continues saying that “it is not a coincidence that this same man who just ascended socially can today rise the irrational flag of hatred against PT [Workers Party]. Inclusion based on consumerism encourages the alignment towards neoliberal values. All this goes hand in hand with a raw capitalism, a society of aristocratic values and a fragile democracy”.

⁴¹ The number of Brazilians living with less than 2.5 US dollars (about 7.5 reais) a day fell from 10% to 4% between 2001 and 2013. http://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/04/23/politica/1429790575_591974.html

⁴² <http://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/a-falencia-do-pt-a-ascensao-da-direita-e-a-esquerda-orfa-7538.html>

Today it is possible to buy more, from food to refrigerator, but what are the values of these rising groups? Class prejudices, color and sexual orientation discrimination. Similarly, violence due to fascist tendencies seems to be spread from the elites to the grassroots levels. There is therefore a strong need for a project that values human rights and fundamental rights, encourages critical thinking and strengthens the political capital at the base. (Pinheiro-Machado 2014)

While the market is worried about the world's elites and middle class's needs and pseudo-needs, there is a whole periphery just wanting to be seen as humans, to have the right to be there as well.

We noticed, in this study, that while the Childhood Free of Consumerism movement claims for the State's commitment with the advertisement aimed to children and all its consequences, including obesity and other health problems; the Rolezinhos are repressed by the same State, and that is almost the only face of the State that they know: a Police that represses and kills black and poor people.

It is never too much to remember that the black and poor youth is being killed⁴³ for many years in Brazil, more than in a civil war. For this, the State doesn't take the responsibility. The Brazilian Parliament is trying to reduce the criminal majority from 18 to 16 years old. The jails and cemeteries⁴⁴ all over the country are already full of black and poor people.

In 1992, ten years before Lula da Silva took power, Brazil was considered by Becker and Egler as one of the few economies in the world where the richest 10 percent controlled more than half the national income, and any indicator of social welfare reflects this situation. It is clear that this class struggle exists and the majority of the population is excluded, even after all changes that occurred in the last 13 years.

This study tried to make an insider and close-up view of the Brazilian middle classes, in order to understand their contradictions, tensions and dichotomies. Of course it has

⁴³ The Map of Violence in Brazil 2015 shows the main causes of death. It is elaborated every year by the National Youth Secretariat, linked to the Presidency of the Republic:
<http://www.mapadaviolencia.org.br/pdf2015/mapaViolencia2015.pdf>

⁴⁴ BRASIL. Ministério da Justiça. *Departamento Penitenciário Nacional – Sistema Integrado de Informação Penitenciária (Infopen)*. Brasília, 2011. Available in:
<<http://portal.mj.gov.br/data/Pages/MJD574E9CEITEMIDC37B2AE94C6840068B1624D28407509CPTBRNN.htm>>

limits, as we are looking at a reality that is changing every day. When we decided to study these movements, Brazil was still surfing in the economic boom of the so-called new middle class. After some years, it was becoming more and more clear that they never arrived to be middle class and the “new” is already outdated.

As we mentioned before, this study does not exhaust the subject of the Brazilian middle class and of the studied groups. This thesis can be a starting point for understanding these issues in the Brazilian context and what can and should be conducted if there is interest. There are many other topics that can be expanded after this study, such a comparison to other Latin American nation, like Argentina, or event to a country like Slovenia – which was my initial attempt – that came from a communist to a capitalist system and changed drastically its consumer habits by then.

In our point of view, consumption and inequalities are good starting points to understand the social and political history and the present of a nation. In the case of Brazil, it was because of consumerism more than other political aspects, that the tensions within the upper and lower classes became clear. It does not matter if two persons can buy the same object, there will be a struggle to say who has the right for this. It seems that this right cannot be acquired: one is born with it or not.

It is necessary, according to Pinheiro-Machado (2015), to politicize poverty, and not to celebrate consumerism. The clash between the old and new middle class in the public arena is just beginning.

8 Povzetek diplomskega dela v slovenskem jeziku

Čeprav je s historičnega vidika Brazilija ena najbolj neenakopravnih držav na svetu, se ta trend spreminja od začetka 90ih let prejšnjega stoletja, ko je brazilska vlada uvedla tako imenovan "Plano Real" (realen načrt). Leta 2003 je z ukrepi za ekonomsko stabilnost načrt še ojačala vlada, ki jo je vodil Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. Spremembe so bile tako očitne, da je veliko Brazilskih raziskovalcev trdilo, da se je rodil nov srednji razred. Vzpon le-tega je na socialnem in političnem prizorišču v Braziliji povzročil celo vrsto sprememb.

To diplomsko delo si prizadeva kontekstualizirati fenomen rasti brazilskega srednjega sloja od leta 2003 naprej. Prav tako se osredotoči na različne potrošniške navade novega in starega srednjega sloja. Analiza se osredotoči na dva socialna gibanja: "Childhood Free of Consumerism" (Otroštvo brez potrošništva) in "Rolezinhos", ki sta s svojim antagonističnim in infrapolitičnim pristopom do potrošništva povzročila ogromno napetosti v že tako razdvojeni brazilski družbi.

Z analizo obeh gibanj v odnosu do politike in državljanskih pravic smo ugotovili, da oba temeljita na potrošništvu, vendar pa se z njim spopadata na različne načine. "Childhood Free of Consumerism" (Otroštvo brez potrošništva) je zasnoval stari srednji

sloj. Menijo, da boj proti potrošniški družbi pomeni, da bodo njihovim otrokom zagotovljene polne državljske pravice in da bodo živeli v družbi, kjer je posameznik bolj pomemben od trga. Po drugi strani pa člani, ki so del gibanja "Rolezinhos" menijo, da je ravno potrošništvo del državljskih pravic katere iščejo.

Čeprav potrošništvo ni glavna tema političnih debat, je pomembna za diskusije o kapitalizmu, neoliberalizmu, varstvu okolja in trajnostnemu razvoju. Ta študija je poskušala brazilski srednji razred pokazati od blizu in z vidika insajderja, z namenom, da bi razumeli vse kontradikcije, napetosti in delitve le-tega. Po našem mnenju sta potrošništvo in neenakopravnost dobri začetni točki za razumevanje socialne in politične zgodovine Brazilije in pa tudi današnje družbe.

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