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# The consolidation of the term ‘right to the city’ in the city of São Paulo from the 2013 June demonstrations: a hegemonic articulation?

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This article aims to investigate whether the term “right to the city” can be considered as a hegemonic articulation in the city of São Paulo and the analysis is performed using the Political Theory of Discourse (PTD), developed by Laclau and Mouffe, as a theoretical lens. We traced through history the emergence of the term and the groups that relate to the notion it portrays, having June 2013 demonstrations in Brazil as a starting point: an event that destabilized the sense attributed to a previous hegemony, the city of capital. The local government’s response to those demonstrations was the implementation of the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City, with the intention of establishing the term as a nodal point. By analyzing the discourse of the different groups, we conclude that the right to the city is a counter-hegemony that has an antagonistic relationship with the current hegemony. The main contribution of this article is to identify and analyze the different meanings attributed to the term ‘right to the city’ in São Paulo and how the mapped actors discursively interact to propose new practices for production of urban space.

**Keywords:** political theory of discourse; right to the city; hegemony; city of capital.

## A consolidação do termo direito à cidade na cidade de São Paulo a partir das Jornadas de Junho: uma articulação hegemônica?

Utilizando a teoria política do discurso (TPD), desenvolvida por Laclau e Mouffe, como lente teórica, este artigo tem o intuito de investigar se o direito à cidade pode ser considerado uma articulação hegemônica na cidade de São Paulo. Para isso, percorremos historicamente o surgimento do termo e salientamos a emergência de grupos que se relacionam com este tema a partir das Jornadas de Junho de 2013: um evento que desestabilizou o sentido atribuído à hegemonia prévia, a cidade do capital. A resposta do poder municipal às manifestações foi a implantação da Coordenação de Promoção do Direito à Cidade, em uma tentativa de tornar o termo um ponto nodal. Ao analisar o discurso dos diferentes grupos, chegamos à conclusão de que o direito à cidade assume o papel de uma contra-hegemonia que se relaciona de forma antagônica com a hegemonia vigente. A principal contribuição do artigo está em identificar e analisar os diferentes significados adotados para o termo direito à cidade em São Paulo e como os atores mapeados interagem discursivamente no intuito de propor novas práticas de produção do espaço urbano.

**Palavras-chave:** teoria política do discurso; direito à cidade; hegemonia; cidade do capital.

## La consolidación del término derecho a la ciudad en la ciudad de São Paulo a partir de las marchas de Junio de 2013: una articulación hegemónica?

Utilizando la teoría política del discurso (TPD), desarrollada por Laclau y Mouffe, como lente teórica, este artículo pretende investigar si el derecho a la ciudad puede ser considerado como una articulación hegemónica en la ciudad de São Paulo. Para eso, indagamos históricamente el surgimiento del término y destacamos la emergencia de grupos que se relacionan con este tema a partir de las Marchas de Junio de 2013: un evento que desestabilizó el sentido atribuido a la hegemonía previa, la ciudad del capital. La respuesta del poder municipal a las manifestaciones fue la implantación de la Coordinación de Promoción del Derecho a la Ciudad que intentó establecer el termo como un punto nodal. Al analizar el discurso de los diferentes grupos, llegamos a la conclusión de que el derecho a la

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ciudad asume el papel de una contrahegemonía que se relaciona de forma antagónica con la hegemonía vigente. La principal contribución de la investigación está en identificar y analizar los diferentes significados adoptados para el término derecho a la ciudad en São Paulo y cómo los actores mapeados interactúan discursivamente con el propósito de proponer nuevas prácticas de producción del espacio urbano.

**Palabras clave:** teoría política del discurso; derecho a la ciudad; hegemonía; ciudad del capital.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the subject of the right to the city has gained relevance in the city of São Paulo, both in terms of government behavior as well as the behavior of organized civil society, mobilized by institutionalized organizations or movements and urban collectives. The greatest example of this is the constitution of a Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City (Coordenação de Promoção do Direito à Cidade — CPDC) in 2013 by the City Government of São Paulo (Prefeitura Municipal de São Paulo — PMSP) after the demonstrations that took place that year known as the June Demonstrations. This study is designed to understand the various discourses involved in the use of the term the right to the city in São Paulo and to verify whether its most recent usage constitutes a hegemonic expression. To do this, we will examine it using the Political Discourse Theory (PDT) developed by Laclau and Mouffe in 1985.

Based on a mapping of the main actors related to the term the right to the city which are academia, the city government, and the Coordinating Body of the Right to the City, social movements and urban collectives, organizations of civil society, and the posterior identification of the main discourse of each of these groups, we have been able to establish parallels with PDT.

With this, we have arrived at the conclusion that the right to the city, in the way that it has been used in São Paulo, represents an open, contingent concept, which involves a chain of equivalence composed of various signifiers. This chain of equivalence, however, is not consolidated in a universal representation with the power to neutralize its antagonist, which is a city controlled by capital. Even so, the analytic results promoted by PDT are relevant, because they make it possible to better comprehend the counter-hegemonic resistance processes (Barcellos and Dellagnelo, 2014) and can help the field actors structure better strategies to seek the consolidation of a hegemony.

To arrive at these results, this article has been structured in the following manner: we first discuss the rise of the term the right to the city. Next, we take a general look at PDT as well as the explanations necessary to understand the relationship dynamics between hegemony and counter-hegemony. Then we present our methodology, which provides a base for an interpretation of how the term the right to the city emerged in São Paulo through the 2013 demonstrations and the discourses used by the various actors which used this expression. Finally, we present analyses of the relationship between the emergence of the term the right to the city and the way in which a hegemonic relationship is formed.

## 2. THE APPEARANCE OF THE TERM 'THE RIGHT TO THE CITY'

The growing process of global and Latin American urbanization has reached levels of 54% and 80% respectively, and it has accompanied the continuing inequalities which cities have experienced, which have led to more and more problems being discussed — such as irregular, precarious settlements,

the challenges of providing urban services, natural disasters and new immigration (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2016). Within this scenario, the concept of the right to the city has gained force, being one of the most commented subjects in the area of critical urban studies, involving public policy, academia and activists (Purcell, 2014).

At the Polycentric World Social Forum in 2006, the World Letter for the Right to the City was presented, serving as “an instrument designed to strengthen complaint processes and urban struggles” (Carta Mundial pelo Direito à Cidade, 2006:2-3). More recently the International Meeting of the Right to the City (2014) was held, culminating in a Global Platform for the Right to the City, which hosted discussions that were brought to the Third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III). The term, however, ended up being cited only once in the New Urban Agenda.

In academia, the term the right to the city has emerged with a Marxist perspective, more specifically in critical urbanism, emphasizing aspects of the class struggle and the domination of capital. Henri Lefebvre was the first author to discuss this theme in his seminal 1968 work of the same name, arguing that the right to the city is “a superior form of rights” (Lefebvre, 2001:134). Peter Marcuse (2009) makes it even clearer that the right of the city is based on class issues: those who are entitled to the right to the city are those who have historically been denied the privileges of the city. Harvey also makes himself a theoretical reference on this subject, by pointing out that the logic of the hegemonic market is not being sufficiently challenged by the right to the city. To him, the city is also an “incubator of ideas, revolutionary ideas and movements” (Harvey, 2014:21), with room for counter-hegemonic practices which should “adopt the right to the city as a slogan and a political ideal precisely because it raises the question of who commands the relationship between urbanization and the economic system” (Harvey, 2014:76).

In recent years, the institutionalization of the term the right to the city has been a source of academic criticism, due to the resulting depoliticization and deradicalization of this subject (Belda-Miquel, Blanes and Frediani, 2016). To academia, the right to the city can only be achieved through social movements in a self-management format, and is not a right that can be conceded by a higher organism such as an elite or the state (Dikeç, 2001). In Brazil, this term has gone through institutionalization processes, even though these have been incipient and conflicting. On the national level, the creation of a Statute of the City (2001) has been one of these processes, the fruit of the struggle of the National Movement for Urban Reform, responsible for consolidating “the struggle for the right to the city in the 1980s” (PMSP, 2015:17). In the city of São Paulo, the term has gained force with the June Demonstrations, “protests which erupted in hundreds of Brazilian cities in June 2013” (Gondim, 2016:1) and the implementation of the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City by the city government (Leblanc, 2017).

In this sense, the purpose of this work is to verify what the strength of the political force of the term the right to the city is in São Paulo and how much it is socially representative. To accomplish this, we will use PDT in order to analyze the relationship between the term the right to the city and hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations.

### 3. HEGEMONY AND COUNTER-HEGEMONY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE THEORY

Since the 1980s, various currents of public policy analysis have been developed which have distanced themselves from the rationality behind politics and have addressed what is symbolic. This movement has given itself the name of argumentative turn, an analytical approach which includes the study of

language and arguments as essential dimensions of the theory and analysis of public policies. The argumentative turn is based on the recognition that there are multiple interpretations of a given social and political reality which cannot be understood just through the rules and logic of traditional rationality (Fischer and Forester, 2002).

This article adheres to this approach and proposes that the paradigms which rule a city's production should be investigated based on a discursive analysis of the struggles for hegemony. In this sense, Political Discourse Theory (PDT) focuses on production processes and the construction of political ideologies, recognizing "the organizational complexities involved in the formation of hegemonic relationships" (Dellagnelo, Böhm and Mendonça, 2014:142).

Developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2015) based on their seminal work *Hegemony and socialist strategy*, published in 1985, PDT assumes a post-Marxist position to the extent that it seeks to recover the plurality of Marxist texts and is based on the advanced concepts of Gramsci, especially his concept of hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). The authors seek to reformulate the socialist project to incorporate other struggles that are not necessarily class based, because there has been an "expansion of social conflict" which creates the potential for more egalitarian societies (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015:51).

Some academic works use PDT as a theoretical base for the analysis of socio-political phenomena: Mendonça (2007) uses the concept of hegemony to analyze the image constructed by Tancredo Neves and the "Diretas Já" movement; Rosol (2013) uses PDT to make an analysis of the term "eco-density" in urban planning in Vancouver; Gaião, Leão and Mello (2014) use the theory to analyze the discourse of the Multicultural Carnival of Recife; Barcelos and Dellagnelo (2014) analyze the formation of the Circuit Beyond the Standard Boundaries (Circuito Fora do Eixo) collective through the concept of hegemony; and Valdivielso (2017) uses Laclau and Mouffe's theory to group together hypotheses about the We Can party in Spain. To provide a basis for these articles, we will utilize several concepts within this theory which are needed to orient this study. Here again we will address some PDT concepts, specifically those which make it possible to delimit the establishment of a hegemonic articulation, following a path similar to Mendonça (2007).

To Gramsci, hegemony is a phenomenon which leads to the "organization of consent: the processes through which subordinate forms of conscience are constructed, without resorting to violence or coercion" (Barrett, 1999:238). In other words, this is a type of political relationship through which subjects construct the interests that represent them, unifying a wide array of demands, visions and attitudes — but which cannot be exercised encompassing society as a whole (Torfing, 1999; Alves, 2010; Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). The difference between the concept of hegemony for these constructs is that when Gramsci situates hegemony within the totality of history, to PDT an identity (including class identities) is never totally fixed and what is social is always open (Alves, 2010). Laclau and Mouffe's concept makes it possible to think of contemporary social struggles in a manner that goes beyond Marxist class struggles, which is why they believe they are outlining a new form of politics for the left, through a democratic expansion which includes multiple antagonisms and demands (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). Based on the principle that there is no "closed space which corresponds to 'society'" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015:166), PDT proposes an analytic-discursive operationalization of the term hegemony (Rosol, 2013).

In 2000, Laclau discoursed about four dimensions of hegemonic logic which are: a) the constitution of an inequality of power among the various discourses; b) the suppression of the dichotomy between the universal discourse and particular discourses, given that the particular discourse needs to assume a chain of equivalence to become universal; c) the amplitude of this chain of equivalence generates a universal discourse which produces empty signifiers; and finally d) the discourse that articulates other discourses exercises a representation function. To put together an analysis of the term the right to the city in São Paulo and the possibility that it can consolidate itself into a hegemonic articulation, we will return to the main concepts to understand these dimensions.

In the first place, it should be noted that political hegemony occurs in a discursive field, in which the hegemony is the dominant discourse, which assimilates various visions, demands and attitudes (Torfing, 1999). Discursive structures are articulation practices that constitute and organize social relations and possess a material nature, given that articulation practices are not purely linguistic, but span “the material density of the multiplicity of institutions, rituals and practices through which the discursive formation is structured” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015:183). An articulation practice is a phenomenon which consists of the articulation of floating elements into “moments” which partially fix their significance, given that the field of overdetermination impedes absolute fixation and identities. Since any discourse always seeks to dominate the discursive field and construct a center, the discursive field is a battlefield. And in order for these battles to occur, it is necessary for another counter-hegemonic discourse to appear, which only happens in situations in which there is an inequality of power. Absolute power does not permit the rise of counter-hegemonic discourses.

In this scenario characterized by an inequality of power, a discourse needs to “leave its merely particular initial condition and become the locus of universalizing effects” (Mendonça, 2007:252). To achieve this universality, the discourse does not need to completely remove its particular content, but it needs to broaden it so that it makes sense in terms of other discourses, that is, it should encompass other particular identities. Universality is therefore an empty space that encompasses equivalent demands and occurs when “particular content assumes, within a given context, the function of embodying a missing plentitude” (Laclau, 2000:122).

This expansion of the limit of the discourse “involves the broadening of the chain of equivalence” (Torfing, 1999:174) because it permits the aggregation of various discursive positions in order to achieve a common objective and emerge in a confrontation with antagonistic articulation practices (Gaião, Leão and Mello, 2014; Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). Within the chain of equivalence, “differences cancel each other out to the extent that they are used to express something identical that underlies all of them” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015:205), simplifying what is social. Mendonça (2007) uses the notion of the chain of equivalence to examine the “*Diretas Já*” movement (1984), when two chains were formed: on one hand the representation of the hegemonic authoritarian discourse, and on the other, a chain of equivalence which assimilated various democratic demands. To PDT, antagonism is not an opposite relationship, it is rather a denial of identity: the authoritarian discourse during a military dictatorship does not permit the consolidation of a democratic discourse.

For the antagonistic discourse to have a chance to emerge, however, something has to destabilize the hegemonic discursive order, dislocating its significance. This dislocation is understood to be a series of events or moments that cannot be integrated within the hegemonic articulation, exposing its contingency and precariousness (Torfing, 1999; Dellagnelo, Böhm and Mendonça, 2014). These



moments of dislocation are key to demonstrating that “the reality being presented is not due to an essential characteristic of the social system. On the contrary, it is something subject to modifications and interference” (Barcellos and Dellagnelo, 2014:413) and, in the empty spaces of this hegemonic formation, various identities denied by it act, which makes it possible for there to be a regrouping of antagonistic forces. The establishment of a hegemonic relationship then, depends on the articulation of “various visions of the world in such a way that its potential antagonism is neutralized, or realizes its potential when we’re witnessing a rupture” (Motta and Serra, 2014:138).

In a chain of equivalence, the privileged discourse that manages to settle the differences between the elements and dominate the discursive field, partially fixating the significance of elements, is called a nodal point. The nodal point “unites the interests and demands of various elements, articulating between them” (Barcellos and Dellagnelo, 2014:410), and this is why it is not external to these demands, it is constituted in the interior of this intertextuality which it extends beyond (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). When there is an expansion of the articulated elements of the chain of equivalence around this nodal point, this can become an empty signifier, or in other words a “signifier of the pure cancellation of all differences” (Laclau, 1996:72). To PDT, the emptying of the signifier is a necessary condition for any hegemonic formation (Laclau, 2000). This emptying occurs when there is the “confluence of multiple meanings in a discourse, to the extent that this discourse can lose a specific significance precisely because of an excess of signifiers” (Mendonça, 2007:255). The greater the polysemantic expansion of the chain of equivalence’s content, the greater the chance that this discourse will become an empty signifier and because of this, it is necessary for these differences to be weakened (Gaião, Leão and Mello, 2014).

In order to consolidate this empty signifier as a hegemony, which articulates an extensive chain of equivalence, the signifier must perform a representation function. That is, the empty signifier represents in a hegemonic form the various discourses that make up the social order: “this relationship, through a certain particularity assumes the representation of a totality that is totally out of proportion, which in discourse theory is called a hegemonic relationship” (Laclau, 2003:6). The representation relationship is never total and the hegemony formed will not be able to contain all the demands of the social order. Even if it becomes an empty signifier and assumes the role of representation, this hegemonic formation brings with it a consequence that could be severe for counter-hegemonic actors, which is its inability to keep its struggle restricted to their particular demands (Mendonça, 2007). At the same time in which a hegemonic victory that represents the objectives of a particular group is identified as the objectives of society as a whole, this victory is dangerous, because the chain of equivalence will unify around this objective and tend to empty it, removing the concrete meaning which was originally associated with it and weakening the ties that exist to its proponents (Laclau, 1996). Bearing these concepts in mind, we have developed the following examination of the emergence of the term the right to the city in São Paulo.

#### 4. THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN SÃO PAULO

The June 2013 Demonstrations were protests that erupted in more than a hundred Brazilian cities, sparked by a fare increase in urban public transport in São Paulo. Based on this fact, the Free Pass Movement (Movimento Passe Livre — MPL), which has been lobbying for free transport since 2005, encouraged people to take to the streets where they faced strong police repression. In a short space of time, the demonstrations had spread beyond the demands of the Free Pass Movement with the appearance of new banners involving other actors (Gondim, 2016).

Together with these agendas, the June demonstrations brought the following problem to the fore: despite important advances due to social participation in public policies, these instances did not exhaust the ways in which citizens wished to intervene in the city's production. In this sense, in response to the demonstrations and keeping in mind the population's demand for new forms of participation, in September 2013 the Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship (Secretaria Municipal de Direitos Humanos e Cidadania — SMDHC) created the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City, seeking dialogue with the groups active in São Paulo, the self-termed 'urban collectives' (Leblanc, 2017), according to the city government of São Paulo (2015:31):

The creation of the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City — which should be understood within the context of the large demonstrations in June 2013 regarding urban mobility — represents a response by the Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship (SMDHC) to various forms of human rights violations and the imposing of limits on citizenship and the freedoms promoted by recent administrations, as well as the adoption of a policy that encourages the occupation of public space.

The expression 'the right to the city,' as it is used in the international scenario (Purcell, 2013), has been incorporated in the discourses of multiple actors in São Paulo, such as academics, urban collectives, local government, and organizations of civil society, among others. Maricato (2013:1) states that "there is an academic response and also a response to the social struggle involved in this issue," thus highlighting the differences between the meanings attributed to the term based on the statements of the different actors.

Based on this statement, the discourses of several groups which have addressed this subject in São Paulo will be analyzed, in order to clarify which meanings are attributed to them, the key concepts mobilized, and finally how the right to the city has ended up being articulated semantically for all of them, even though they hold diverse positions.

## 5. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study seeks to articulate a methodological path that makes sense in terms of the articulation of the Political Discourse Theory in relation to this subject, recognizing the existence of a mutual dependence between the method and the theory (Langley, 1999). To do this, this study assumes the perspective of a critical paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) and has been structured in three steps: the identification of the actors related to this subject in the city of São Paulo; the research of the corpus of texts related to this subject published by these actors; and the mapping of meanings attributed by these actors to the meanings of the right to the city and its antagonist, piecing together an analysis of these results in relation to PDT which seeks to transcend the social view of this phenomenon.

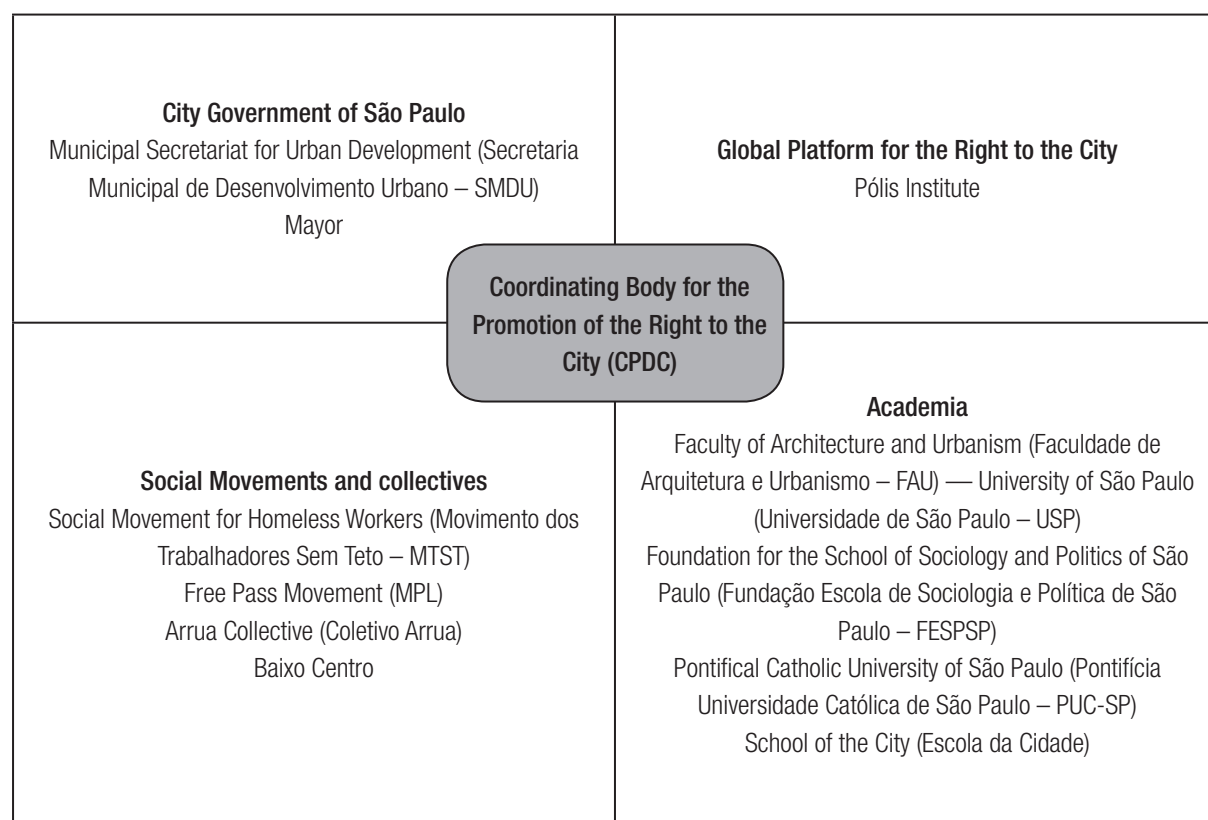
Taking into account that this study begins with the creation of the CPDC, it uses as a reference the website of the Coordinating Body itself to identify the actors with which it interacts, which as a consequence, have been related to this subject in the city of São Paulo. In this initial search, four groups of actors that the Coordinating Body interacted with in terms of its programs and projects were found, as well as their constitutive setting: academia, social movements, urban collectives, members of the Global Platform for the Right to the City, and the city government of São Paulo itself.



To identify individual specific actors within these large groups, we realized searches on online platforms such as Google and YouTube, looking for the publicizing of the relationship of these actors with the term “the right to the city,” the amplitude of the results, and the possibility of making advanced searches. To accomplish this, we inserted the following structure in our topic search field: (“the right to the city” AND “São Paulo” AND “academia” OR “collectives” OR “social movements” OR “municipal government” OR “organization”). We also identified actors through specialized websites such as the Global Platform for the Right to the City. Based on this search, events related to the term the right to the city in São Paulo were identified (congresses, meetings, classes, reports, and interviews), of which we related the specific institutional actors presented in figure 1, which interacted with the term according to the timeline in figure 2.

This more refined search made it possible to include and exclude specific actors. For example, the Global Platform for the Right to the City is composed of other actors of organized civil society in São Paulo. However, we did not find mentions of these actors using the term “the right to the city,” and these were thus excluded from the analysis. This is why the Pólis Institute (Instituto Pólis) is the only civil society organization included in this study because it has a strong relationship with this subject.

**FIGURE 1** ACTORS RELATED TO THE TERM THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN SÃO PAULO



**Source:** Elaborated by the authors (2017).

Based on the identification of these events and actors, we constructed a corpus made up of 20 texts, with two of them being the content of websites, one a documentary, the program content for two courses, four conferences or seminars, four text or video interviews, two online published columns, one publication, one public class and three institutional texts (plans, legislation, and competition notices). These texts were produced between the years 2013 to 2016 and were collected during the months of May and June 2016. The authors opted to use an already existing corpus, instead of conducting new interviews with the identified actors, due to the fact that the discourses made available through digital means represent what is publicly expressed in relation to this subject, and therefore they better represent a hegemonic articulation taking shape in public space. To facilitate the data analysis process, a timeline was constructed to organize all of the identified texts and actors (figure 2).

The third step corresponds to the data analysis. This analysis was conducted based on the reflexive methodology proposed by Alvesson and Sköldberg, which presents a proposed method which is in line with the critical theory. This reflexive methodology consists of analyzing social phenomena and processes in a deeper manner to understand the relationships and elements involved and understand their various meanings and forms of significance (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000; Campos and Costa, 2007; Scharf and Soriano-Sierra, 2008; Gasque, 2011). As expected in reflexive methodology, the findings of the present work are directly related to the authors' world views. In effect, a political and ideological character is inherent in social research, because it is impossible to disentangle knowledge from the person who knows it (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). The personal and professional journeys and experiences of each of the authors do not allow sufficient distance from this subject to address it in a neutral manner. On the contrary, they deny the neutrality of this study and that of any other. With this, the authors give up the attempt to arrive at an absolute truth, because this would be a contradiction of the theory utilized to orient this line of thinking.

However, the researchers have retained a critical view of themselves and their work, and have been attentive in selecting these actors and texts. Based on an intense process of interpretation and reflection, essential to understanding the phenomenon under examination, it has been possible to follow the events and discourses regarding the right to the city that took place in São Paulo between 2013 and 2016 through this theoretical lens.

The search for the meanings that these discourses attribute to the right to the city has made it possible to initially identify various floating signifiers (elements) that make up the chain of equivalence for this nodal point. At first, chains of equivalence were created for one of the groups of actors, and afterwards these chains were grouped together to represent the overall discourse. Remembering that a chain of equivalence groups "different discursive positions seeking a common objective, forming a chain of equivalence in opposition to a given discourse" (Gaião, Leão and Mello, 2014:157), we also have identified the discourses that correspond to the opposite of the right to the city, that is, taking a position that is antagonistic to what these actors have said. Thus, we have found the nodal point of "the city of capital" or the "market city," as well as the terms that compose the chain of equivalence (from the perspective of the actors examined here). Based on these chains of equivalence, we have developed interpretations that relate the right of the city in São Paulo to the Political Discourse Theory, mobilizing concepts such as dislocation, antagonism, empty signifiers, universal effects, etc.

**FIGURE 2** TIMELINE OF MAPPED EVENTS AND REPORTS ON THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN SÃO PAULO

8/24 & 28 — Pólis Institute holds the course “The City of Capital and the Right to the City,” taught by Prof. Erminia Maricato, Francisco Comaru and Renato Cymbalista (FAU-USP); Eduardo Cardoso of the Social Movements Center, Guilherme Boulos, of MTST and Silvio Caccia Bava & Nelson Saule Jr. of the Pólis Institute										3/26 — Thiago Carrapatoso, of the Baixo Centro Collective, shares his opinion of the Elevated Beltway in Huffpost Brasil, including critiques of CPDC actions																																																																															
6/22 — Raquel Rolnik (FAU-USP and ex- PMSP) is interviewed by Globo										4/9 — Arrua Collective begins the “Free Course on the Right to the City,” with classes taught by Prof. Karina Leitão, Prof. João Whitaker, and Prof. Caio de Carvalho										11/12-14 — “International Meeting on the Right to the City,” organized by various institutions, including the Polis Institute, takes place in São Paulo										5/14 — Theater of the Catholic University of São Paulo (Teatro da Universidade Católica de São Paulo – Tucarena) organizes a round table discussion with then Mayor Fernando Haddad: “The Right to the City: A Review of Urban Dynamics in the City of São Paulo.” Professors Maria Matilde Almeida and Reginaldo Nasser (PUC- SP) participate, among others										9/17 — MTST wins a victory through putting pressure on SP city government. Report.										3/8 — Social Service of Commerce (Serviço Social do Comércio – SESC) holds the Conference of the Right to the City in Rio de Janeiro, featuring participation of Raquel Rolnik and Erminia Maricato																																							
June Demon- strations 2013										2014										2015										2016																																																											
6/17 — MPL interviewed by Roda Viva										Sept. — Creation of Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City (CPDC)										1/23 — CPDC launches the “Plan to Occupy Public Space through Citizenship”										4/17 — William Nozaki (FESPSP), then Coordinator of CPDC, is interviewed by the Perseu Abramo Foundation										8/19 — CPDC launches “Networks and streets - inclusion, citizenship and digital culture” competition										12/11 — Arrua Collective invites Guilherme Boulos of MTST, to give a public class “SP in movement: experiences in the struggle for the right to the city”										5/14 — Theater of the Catholic University of São Paulo (Teatro da Universidade Católica de São Paulo – Tucarena) organizes a round table discussion with then Mayor Fernando Haddad: “The Right to the City: A Review of Urban Dynamics in the City of São Paulo.” Professors Maria Matilde Almeida and Reginaldo Nasser (PUC- SP) participate, among others										9/17 — MTST wins a victory through putting pressure on SP city government. Report. <td colspan="10">3/8 — Social Service of Commerce (Serviço Social do Comércio – SESC) holds the Conference of the Right to the City in Rio de Janeiro, featuring participation of Raquel Rolnik and Erminia Maricato</td>										3/8 — Social Service of Commerce (Serviço Social do Comércio – SESC) holds the Conference of the Right to the City in Rio de Janeiro, featuring participation of Raquel Rolnik and Erminia Maricato									

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2017).

### 5.1 DISCOURSE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Based on the research conducted, the Pólis Institute was identified as one of the main representatives of organized civil society in the discussions about the right to the city. The Pólis Institute was founded in 1987 with the mission to support the “construction of more just, sustainable and democratic cities”.<sup>1</sup> To accomplish this, it acts in three broad areas: urban reform, democracy and participation, and cultural citizenship. Within the area of urban reform, there is an axis of action entitled the Right to the City in which the institution sponsors projects and activities related to housing policy, zoning of social interest, human rights and adequate housing, urban development with social inclusion, and the elaboration of participatory master plans.

After the June 2013 demonstrations, the Pólis Institute released a video entitled *The City is for Everyone: the June Demonstrations and the Right to the City* (A cidade é para todos: as jornadas de junho e o direito à cidade, 2014). This video cites the motivations that led citizens to take to the streets in June 2013, with the initial motive being an increase in transport fares and the Free Pass Movement, and the spread of these demonstrations after repression by the Military Police of the State of São Paulo, and the evolution of various demands for improvements in public services. In 2015, it launched a course about “The City of Capital and the Right to the City” covering subjects related to capitalist production in public space and the struggles for the right to the city and public policies related to housing, the environment, urban reform, transport and health. This course was taught by representatives of the institute itself, university professors and members of social movements, which revealed the interactions between subjects with different discourse positions.

It also organized the International Meeting on the Right to the City which contributed to the formation of the Global Platform for the Right to the City. To the organizers, “the right to the city seeks to combat the inequalities that result from a process of accelerated unplanned urbanization [...] and citizens should appropriate the urban environment and participate integrally in its decisions and uses its services”.<sup>2</sup> The platform played a crucial role in the articulation of Brazilian civil society in its participation in Habitat III, to ensure the “development of more just, inclusive and democratic cities”.<sup>3</sup>

### 5.2 ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Academia also is a central actor to the understanding of how the concept of the right to the city was mobilized, because it interacts with other actors, participating in seminars and open events and influences government. It is important to mention that only the discourses of these actors that go beyond academia were utilized, because they represent broader channels of articulation with society.

The studied events included several academics: Ermínia Maricato and Raquel Rolnik, from The Right to the City Conference (Conferência direito à cidade — David Harvey, Ermínia Maricato e Raquel Rolnik, 2016); Karina Leitão, from the Free Course on the Right to the City (Curso livre de direito à cidade: aula 1 (íntegra), 2015); Matilde Maria Almeida Melo and Reginaldo Nasser, from the Right to the City round table (Direito à cidade — Tucarena — 14.5.2015, 2015); and João Sette Whitaker

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <<http://polis.org.br>>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <<http://polis.org.br>>.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <<http://polis.org.br>>.

Ferreira and Ciro Pirondi, from the São Paulo and the Right to the City round table (Seminário Fespsp: mesa redonda “São Paulo e o direito à cidade”, 2015). One relevant aspect is that of these academics, three of them already had occupied positions in the city government: Maricato served as the Municipal Secretary of Housing and Urban Development from 1989 to 1992; Rolnik served as the Director of Planning from 1989 to 1992; and Whitaker served as the Secretary of Housing from 2015 to 2016.

Melo (Direito à cidade — Tucarena — 14.5.2015, 2015) affirms that there is no one interpretation or perspective of the right to the city: on one hand, it has become instituted as a paradigm of urban governance regarding who manages the city and its social functions, and on the other hand, as a political ideal and a path to be followed which includes terms such as sustainable cities, healthy cities, etc. Also, according to the sociologist, the dominant class uses fear and insecurity as the mechanism to deny this right.

In an interview with the Mobilizer Network (Rede de Mobilizadores), Maricato (2013:2) presents the right to the city as being an “urban party, or in other words, a city that expresses its diversity and uses its most valuable spaces to offer leisure, culture and services to the population”. To this academic, it is capital that will determine the production of the space and not planning, and this is why the class struggle is constant. This determination of capital occurs due to an alienation maintained and repeated by the working class’s lack of knowledge about the city, and that is why it is necessary to combat urban illiteracy by discussing its production. Also, struggles should be waged to achieve changes in the living conditions represented in the symbolism of the cities. Leitão (Curso livre de direito à cidade: aula 1 (íntegra), 2015), also an architect and an urbanist, analyzes the right to the city from the point of view of struggles and territorial disputes through the promotion of the social function of property.

In the same manner, Whitaker (Seminário Fespsp: mesa redonda “São Paulo e o direito à cidade”, 2015) says that it is within cities that the conflict is made explicit and, following this logic, the struggle for the right to the city should offer the infrastructure that is necessary for everyone and not just a few individuals throughout the entire city. Also, he talks about new forms of appropriation of the city suggested by the engagement of civil society in seeking change. In the debate with Whitaker, the director of the School of the City, Ciro Pirondi called attention to the relationship between the city and its nature which needs to be harmonized, in the sense of being understood through its physical and spatial aspects. To him, “the city is the place that man has invented for seduction.”

Rolnik (Conferência direito à cidade — David Harvey, Ermínia Maricato e Raquel Rolnik, 2016), in turn analyzes the right to the city in terms of the right to housing in the same manner that Maricato says that capital is what appropriates urban policy, given its political, symbolic and communicational hegemony. To illustrate this, she traces the relationship between large companies and public works affirming that this process goes far beyond the corruption that exists in campaign financing and assumes a decisive role in the transformation of the city. Also, she argues that the impact of the June Demonstrations on the debate about cities: “this [June] movement, or an important part of it, is for the right to the city” (Sprejer, 2013:2). Effectively cities have been the stage for global movements of conflict in recent years. To Nasser (Direito à cidade — Tucarena — 14.5.2015, 2015), urban space is currently configured as a stage for these revolts, which are urban revolts.



### 5.3 SOCIAL AND COLLECTIVE MOVEMENTS

In making a search about urban social and collective moments related to the right to the city in São Paulo, actors were identified who make use of this term in public classes, interviews and journalistic articles, namely: the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), the Free Pass Movement (MPL), the Arrua Collective and Baixo Centro.

The MTST first appeared at the third National Meeting of the Homeless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in 1995, seeking to expand the struggle for agrarian reform to urban areas (Caetano, 2017). And Guilherme Boulos, the national coordinator of the movement, gave a public class for the Arrua Collective about this subject and is a member of the faculty at the Pólis Institute. In his statements, he relates the right to the city to the right to housing, addressing two subjects in particular: what is housing in a city of capital and the history of this struggle: “we have to speak of decent housing, structure, leisure and urbanism” (Gould, 2015:4).

Another relevant movement is the Free Pass Movement, which arose in Porto Alegre (2005) and presents itself on its website as a “social, autonomous, apolitical, horizontal and independent movement”. It played a fundamental role in the June Demonstrations because it organized the first act in São Paulo, which promoted the revocation of an increase in public transport fares. The movement constructs its narrative in terms of the right to the city based on urban mobility, given that “it is by making the right to transport effective that you make the right to the city effective, you make the right to health effective and the right to education” (Movimento Passe Livre, 2013).

A number of urban collectives acting in São Paulo emerged through the demonstrations (Cymbalista, 2015-2016) and they seek to recover the sense of belonging that has been lost in private logic. The Arrua Collective appeared in 2012, and it positions itself on its website as a collective that “is fighting to reinvent the city as a democratic space and participates in networks in a distributed and collaborative manner,” and it has promoted a free course on the right to the city. According to Rafael Pereira Borges, a member of Arrua, the term the right to the city “has been vocalized [as] a magic term [...], something that is used in a somewhat vague manner and no one knows very well what it is exactly. You see it used in the newspaper in one way and in demonstrations you hear it used in another way” (Curso livre de direito à cidade: aula 1 (íntegra), 2015). The course was taught by academics from FAU-USP, as well as members of social movements such as the MTST.

Baixo Centro is another example of an urban collective which is militant about this subject. In seeking funding on its crowdfunding website, the collective presents itself as “a network, a movement, a network in movement, with clear objectives: take the streets back as a common space for meeting, a public location for art, and various kinds of protest.” Thiago Carrapatoso, a member of the collective, assumes a critical posture in relation to the strategies for the right to the city used by the city government, affirming that “the mayor uses the banner of ‘the right to the city’ to create more and more spaces for the elite white youth of São Paulo” (Carrapatoso, 2016:2), arguing that he has been responsible for generating even more exclusion. He also questions the fact that the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City has not been included in the city’s discussions about relevant urban issues, emphasizing that its absence in these meetings indicates that the city government is not worried about taking “mitigating actions to avoid the expulsion of the low-income population that lives in this region” (Carrapatoso, 2016:2).

Through all this it may be perceived from the different statements and discourses of the social movements and urban collectives that the expression “the right to the city” has been used to make references to various types of objectives: whether it is in regard to assuring free fares, giving access to urban mobility to the entire population, or whether it is assuring a right to housing or even reoccupying the city, creating spaces for coexistence and resurrecting a sense of belonging.

#### 5.4 DISCOURSE OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF SÃO PAULO

In terms of the city government of São Paulo, we have analyzed the statements made by Mayor Fernando Haddad (2013-2016) in an event about the subject of municipal documents. Haddad (Direito à cidade — Tucarena — 14.5.2015) cites the participative elaboration of the Strategic Master Plan (PDE) as the greatest right to the city, which managed to promote significant advances in the consolidation of a more just city, with the approval of the basic construction coefficient of 1%, an increase in Special Zones of Social Interest (Zonas Especiais de Interesse Social - ZEIS), and investment in the acquisition of land for social housing. Also, in his statements, the mayor emphasized the relevance of this participation and the pressure exerted by social movements especially in terms of housing for this plan's approval.

In the Strategic Master Plan, the right to the city is listed as one of the seven main orienting principles and “includes the process of the universalization of access to the benefits and comforts of urban life for all citizens, and the offer and use of public services, equipment and infrastructure” (PMSP, 2014b:3). The term was cited two other times in this instrument, namely: “promoting actions to improve the urban landscape in public spaces, [...] which guarantees the right to the city” (PMSP, 2014b:62) and “[...] increasing the breadth of the principle of the right to the city, guaranteeing cultural citizenship, tolerance and respect for cultural, social, ethnic, and sexual diversity through the access to culture, education and art” (PMSP, 2014b:191).

Demonstrating the interaction between the actors represented here, the city's Secretariat of International and Federal Relations and the Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship participated as organizers of the International Meeting on the Right to the City, creating the Global Platform for the Right to the City. In addition, the institution of the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City was created as a response to the June Demonstrations of that year.

#### 5.5 COORDINATING BODY FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

As mentioned above, the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City (CPDC)<sup>4</sup> was created in September 2013 as part of the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship, with the objective of “organizing a set of actions [to] connect humans to the project of urban development of the city based on various initiatives” (Entrevista FPA com William Nozaki, 2014). The CPDC discourse was treated differently from the city government because, even though the former belongs to the latter, each treats the concept in a different manner. In addition, a special nature was attributed to the discourse of the Coordinating Body, because it represented the institutionalization of the term *ipsis litteris*.

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to mention the extinction of the CPDC during the 2017-2020 administration (Leblanc, 2017:80).

In the vision of the CPDC, the right to the city is a human right that:

[...] launches a challenge to construct egalitarian, inclusive and participatory cities. In the same manner, the democratic management of the city implies assuming the social function of property linked to a paradigm of mobility that prioritizes mass and pedestrian transport and values public spaces as places to meet and coexist, [...] in the construction of a more democratic, more colorful city, with less fear and more solidarity. A city of encounters, networks, human rights and citizenship. [PMSP, 2014a:14]

The relationship between the right to the city and the hegemony of capital also appeared in the discourse of the Coordinating Body. Nozaki, the ex-coordinator, emphasizes the process of privatization that has marked the city of São Paulo and the resulting emptying of public spaces, favoring individual and economic interests that do not provide room for what is considered different or conflicting (Entrevista FPA com William Nozaki, 2014).

The actions of the CPDC are guided by the Plan to Occupy Public Space for Citizenship (PMSP, 2014c:5), whose guidelines consist of promoting and reassigning meaning to public spaces, the promotion of trans-sectoral city management and the territorialization of human rights and citizenship policy and the strengthening of new forms of participation and social dialogue. These guidelines are put into practice through three axes of operation: 1) Culture of Human Rights; 2) Occupation of Public Space; and 3) Social Participation. To put these axes into practice, the CPDC develops actions such as: urban interventions in public spaces on the part of social actors; the realization of symbolic cartography in urban interventions in public spaces; public calls to promote initiatives to occupy public spaces by social actors; the realization of cartography that symbolizes human rights and citizenship; the articulation of the human rights center, promoting a decentralization of policy and consolidating a thematic network; the creation of a collaborative platform to make the relationship between government and civil society more dynamic; and the conducting of dialogues designed for reflection to seek solutions for the city.

The CPDC also operates in the international sphere. Bearing in mind the articulation of local governments for Habitat III, it was invited to participate in events promoted by the Pólis Institute to present public policies and promote the right to the city as well as the use of public space.

Another source found was the Training book: Right to the City, launched by the SMDHC with the CPDC, which establishes a direct relationship between the right to the city and the right to dignity (PMSP, 2015). The CPDC "as a stimulus to the exercise of citizenship, culture, leisure, sport and economy, [proposed] a re-signification of the public space through public management initiatives articulated to the interventions of civil society" (PMSP, 2015:34). With this, a relation will be established between the emergence of the right to the city and the formation of a hegemonic articulation, following the parameters of the PDT.

## 6. THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO IN LIGHT OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE THEORY

The objective of this section is to reexamine the right to the city in São Paulo in light of PDT, in order to determine whether the emergence of this term has resulted in a hegemonic articulation. The right to the city in São Paulo seeks to be effective through existing articulation practices performed by the various actors cited above. As the principle of concrete discourse establishes (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015),

the articulation practices do not consist solely of linguistic phenomena — they are in fact structured through what is material, their institutions, rituals and practices, in the laws of urban planning, in demonstrations, in the interventions realized in the city, etc.

Initially, based on the discourses of each of these actors, it is possible to perceive that the meaning of the term the right to the city has different connotations. Some mention that the term can be utilized from a number of perspectives as a “magic” term, which according to the situation and space in which it is being used, for example, in struggles, newspapers or academia, can take on different forms of meaning. To Laclau and Mouffe (2015), this opening is related to the fact that the meaning of the term cannot be closed; there is always space for overdetermination. This is due to the role of contingency which “denies the essential nature of the social, making it possible to observe it as something open, subject to modifications and interference” (Barcellos and Dellagnelo, 2014:408).

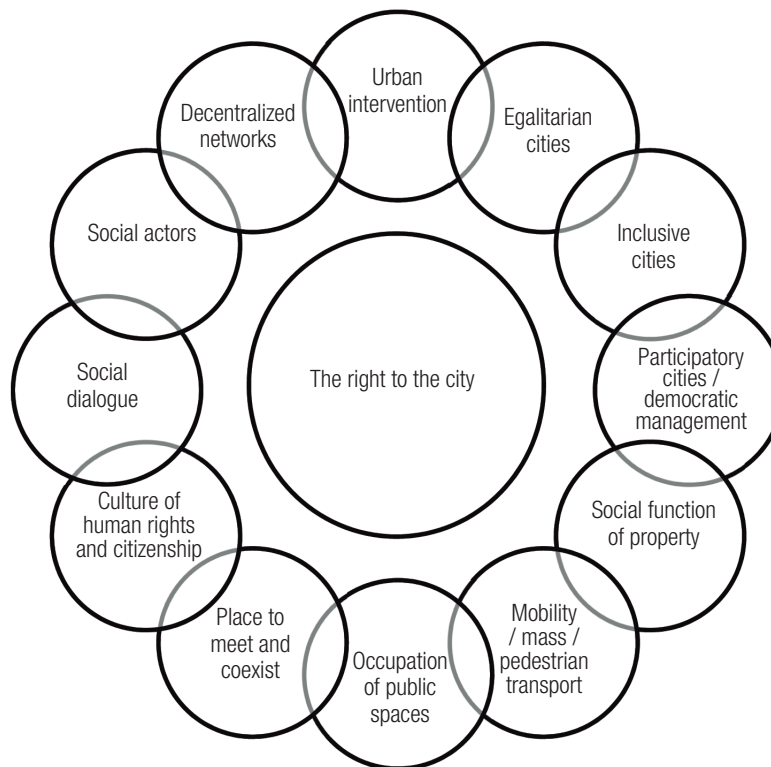
### **6.1 THE FORMATION OF THE CHAINS OF EQUIVALENCE AROUND THE NODAL POINT**

According to the discourse of some actors such as Professor Raquel Rolnik and the city government itself, the June 2013 Demonstrations played a crucial role in this discussion about urban space. The city government (2015) affirms that the creation of the Coordinating Body should be considered within the context of these large demonstrations. Thus, it is possible to consider that these demonstrations were events that dislocated the meaning of the then-existent hegemony, demonstrating its precariousness in terms of meeting the demands initially related to transport in large cities. Through these events, the counter-hegemonic movement gained force and representativeness, and was no longer neutralized by the antagonistic force, but it did not establish a nodal point with a chain of equivalence to encompass the various demands that arose during the demonstrations.

Soon after the demonstrations (in September 2013), the city government inaugurated the Coordinating Body for the Promotion of the Right to the City. According to PDT, it is possible to analyze this creation as an attempt to establish a nodal point for the right to the city: “an attempt to dominate the discursive field and deter the flux of differences to construct a center” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015:187). The city government gives the term “the right to the city” a special emphasis as the answer to multiple demands, such as “various forms of violations of human rights and the limiting of citizenship as well as the freedoms promoted by recent administrations, as well as adopting a policy encouraging the occupation of public space” (PMSP, 2015:31). In analyzing the Coordinating Body’s website, its main working documents (such as the Plan to Occupy Public Spaces through Citizenship and the Networks and Streets Competition), and the interview conducted with its leaders, we have been able to extract the main elements that integrate the chain of equivalence around the nodal point of the Right to the City, represented in figure 3.

The action of the city government could not take the term right to the city to constitute itself as a hegemonic articulation given that it cannot be referred to as a specific logic of an isolated social force (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). However, other actors active in the city of São Paulo during this period added new demands to the right to the city, such as the right to housing, mass transport, leisure, and access to services, among various others. These new demands, extracted from the discourses of all of the texts examined, include terms that are not part of the chain of equivalence of the right to the city established by the Coordinating Body. That is, there was an expansion of the number of elements that make up the chain of equivalence for the right to the city nodal point. These terms are represented in figure 4.

**FIGURE 3** CHAIN OF EQUIVALENCE FORMED BY THE COORDINATING BODY FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

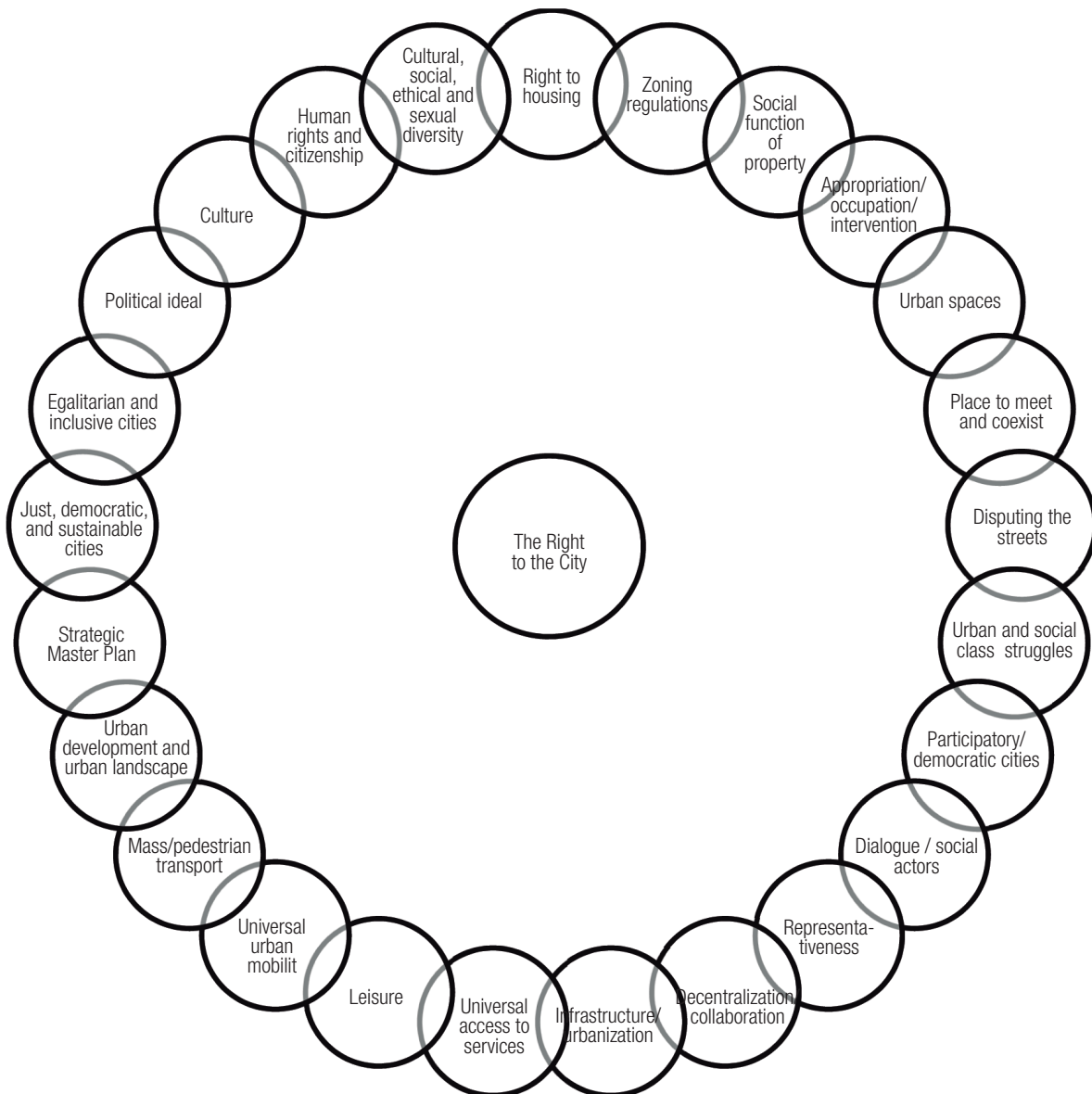


**Source:** Elaborated by the authors (2017).

It is interesting to note that during the period examined, there was no attempt by the Coordinating Body to expand its chain of equivalence which impeded it from becoming the central actor in the discussion regarding the right to the city in São Paulo. This fact has been criticized by other actors, even though it was in an incipient form during this period, when they reveal that the Coordinating Body was not included in relevant discussions about the city in terms of urban infrastructure, for example.

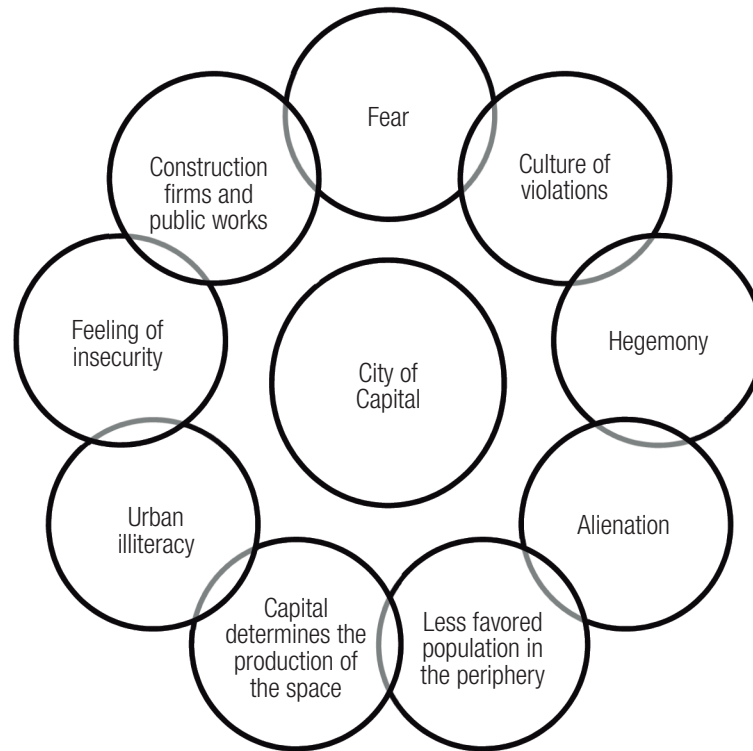
As envisioned by Laclau and Mouffe (2015), a chain of equivalence is always articulated in opposite fields which introduce this antagonism to the social field. In the discourse of the groups that interact in relation to the right to the city in São Paulo, many of the different signifiers attributed to the nodal point appear or are emphasized in relation to what is considered antagonistic and what can be considered an articulation with the ruling hegemony, evoking how it is the city of capital. The city of capital is taken to mean something that impedes the right of the city to be itself, to build itself, transforming it into a force against the hegemony that remains in this struggle. The discourse of fear and insecurity promoted by the city of capital is an example of how, based on this, it is impossible to construct the right to the city. There are various meanings attributed to the city of capital that form its chain of equivalence as represented in figure 5, showing the elements extracted from the discourses of each of the actors studied.



**FIGURE 4** CHAIN OF EQUIVALENCE FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors (2017).

Before the June Demonstrations, the city of capital could be considered the hegemonic model that ruled the organization and the transformational processes in cities. However, no hegemonic formation manages to fix the meaning of reality, nor is it able to meet a variety of social demands (Barcellos and Dellagnelo, 2014). The antagonistic formation exists, because it manages to articulate different views of the world and neutralize the antagonism (Motta and Serra, 2014). In this case, the counter-hegemonic antagonism is the right to the city.

**FIGURE 5** CHAIN OF EQUIVALENCE OF THE CITY OF CAPITAL

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors (2017).

Beginning in 2013, the term the right to the city gained force and became a preeminent discourse in São Paulo. There are various actors involved in the spaces created which make it possible to make articulations involving this term and its signifiers. The actors mentioned are part of and often represent multiple discourses simultaneously, which indicates a fluidity in the interlocutors in relation to “where one speaks,” as long as “what one says” is maintained constant. However, it is necessary to analyze these results more deeply in terms of the four dimensions of hegemonic articulation stipulated by Laclau (2000).

## 6.2 THE RIGHT TO THE CITY AND THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF HEGEMONIC ARTICULATION

Despite the growth of the articulation practices related to the term, the right to the city in São Paulo consists of an attempt to become a hegemony (Gaião, Leão and Mello, 2014) and, even though it finds support in relevant institutions and assumes a central character in discourses of people linked to this area, it still has not been enough to neutralize its antagonistic discourse. This conclusion is based on the four dimensions of hegemonic articulation presented (Laclau, 2000; Mendonça, 2007), which are still in the development stage in relation to this term.

Within the established unequal power scenario (the first dimension of a hegemonic relationship), the right to the city in this period presents itself as the desire to point out gaps in the hegemonic articulation of the city of capital or the market city. The sequence of events that occurred in June

2013 dislocated the hegemonic meaning, demonstrating the contingency and precariousness of this formation, like any other hegemony that is unable to meet all of the public's demands (Laclau and Mouffe, 2015). Despite the inequality of power, the discourse of the city of capital, mainly represented by its concrete practices, rules the process of production within the city. Thus, the possibility that the right to the city will become the new hegemony will depend on the ability of the actors "to present their particular objectives as being compatible with the real functioning of the community" (Laclau, 2000:54), overcoming the dichotomy that exists between the universal and the particular (second dimension of the hegemonic relationship), emptying the term's signifier so that it can encompass other demands (empty signifier as the third dimension) and establish a representative relationship (fourth dimension).

Three aspects are central when considering the dimensions of the hegemonic formation which were not fully achieved by the right to the city. In the first place, the attempt of the Coordinating Body to establish a nodal point in 2013, in which some meanings of the term were emphasized to the detriment of various others, ended up excluding other discourses in the process. That is, the beginning of its individual actions did not leverage something compatible with the entire community. And over time, the chain of equivalence of the Coordinating Body also did not expand, which demonstrates that this actor which was privileged in the discussion of this term in the city and wielded institutional power, limited its operations to quite specific demands.

Later, with the involvement of other actors, there was an expansion of the chain of equivalence in the right to the city. In this process, the term was taken to new spaces, for example public classes, the International Meeting on the Right to the City and debates that occurred on this subject. This is why the nodal point established as the right to the city came to encompass new demands and can be considered an empty signifier.

However, the group of actors involved with the subject of the right to the city who opposed the city of capital was relatively limited to professors of architecture and urbanism, urban collectives who were volatile in their city activities, and a few organizations of civil society. These leads us to the analysis that the dichotomy between the particular and the universal, even with the expansion of the chain of equivalence, was not supplanted. This means that the demands present in the chain of equivalence in the right to the city belong to individualized groups with strong inter-relationships, but they have not advanced to become universal. Thus, even though they occurred on different scales, we can perceive that this is true by comparing this experience with what happened with the "*Diretas Já*" movement:

If before, the opposition to the authoritarian regime was begun by isolated identity movements, such as those of the workers, feminists, the homeless, and students, with the "*Diretas Já*" movement, the demands for substantial democracy — in other words, social rights that went far beyond the mere right to vote for president — resonated with millions of Brazilians, who whether they were members of identity movements or not, wanted to put a definite end to the political regime that was absolutely rejected by the people. [Mendonça, 2007:255]

Thus, the articulation of the right to the city does not assume the form of a representation of an impossible totality, which would be called a hegemonic relationship. To Laclau (2000:57), "the ground on which a hegemony expands is the generalization of representation relationships as a condition for

the constitution of a social order” (fourth dimension of hegemony). Given the lack of the appropriation of this term by other representative groups in connection with particular groups, it may be considered that the right to the city has not achieved this emptying, that is, it does not present the ambiguity that emanates from an empty signifier, to the extent that it does not constitute an impossible totality – because it does not represent other discourses.

## 7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: A HEGEMONY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

With this article we have sought to analyze how the events that occurred in São Paulo beginning with the Demonstrations of June 2013 could have achieved the formation of a new hegemonic articulation: the right to the city. Examining this using the theoretical lens of Political Discourse Theory, we have performed a reflexive analysis that encompasses 20 texts produced by various actors in relation to the right to the city between June 2013 to March 2016. Through this analysis, we have arrived at the conclusion that the right to the city presents itself as a counter-hegemonic articulation in relation to its antagonistic hegemony which is expressed by the actors as the city of capital. Within the dimensions of the hegemony analyzed, the right to the city could progress to the representation of an impossible totality, assuming the representation of other discourses and demands, but in order to do this, it would have to cease expressing merely its particularity.

In this sense, the conclusion of the present work follows the same line argued by Harvey (2014:76), that the right to the city has not yet sufficiently defied market logic which would be needed to achieve a universality of representation, “to unify these struggles, adopting the right to the city as a slogan and a political ideal.” But to do this, it would need to go beyond the isolated groups that have appropriated the term the right to the city in São Paulo and, by doing this, include demands that could represent a universality. Thus the term would become an empty signifier, a necessary condition for hegemony. However, it is important to pay attention to the cost of making this term a hegemonic articulation, because a hegemonic victory is also a dangerous victory (Laclau, 1996): at the same time that it generalizes representation and transforms what were particular objectives into general objectives, this hegemony will also weaken the existing ties with its proponent groups, diminishing its connection with its concrete meanings.

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