Socio-Partisan Activism: Democratizing Political Representation

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ABSTRACT. **Objective/context:** The article develops the concept of socio-partisan activism to explain how activists simultaneously engage with both political parties and social movements through Brazil's collective mandates, examining the conditions under which this dual engagement can democratize political representation. **Methodology:** A qualitative multiple-case study analyzes 33 collective mandates—29 elected in Brazil's 2020 municipal elections, two municipal precursors from 2016, and two state-level mandates from 2018—drawing on 64 semi-structured interviews with 74 individuals, extensive documentary research, and inductive-deductive content analysis using Atlas.ti. **Conclusions:** Multiple affiliations between movements and parties are widespread across collective mandates, enabling the transfer of participatory repertoires and activist knowledge into legislative practice through horizontal office structures, expanded political councils, and sustained engagement in committees, hearings, territories, and protests both inside and outside institutions. Conflicts stem from party organizational constraints and legal ambiguity surrounding collective candidacies, legislatures' vertical and weakly deliberative routines, factional disputes within the Workers' Party (PT) and the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), and uneven internal alignment—pressures that can fragment collectives even as they broaden inclusion of historically excluded groups. Three conditions shape both success and conflict: party and legislative organization, shared affinities and programmatic alignment among co-councilors, and micro-relations within parties. Together, these factors

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condition how socio-partisan activism can recalibrate representation. **Originality:** By shifting the analytical focus from organizations to activists, the article introduces a generalizable framework—socio-partisan activism—that expands party–movement research beyond episodic alliances to everyday dual engagement, mapping how collective mandates adapt movement repertoires to representative institutions while reinforcing civil-society networks and proposing a comprehensive view of the universe of elected collective mandates at the time of study.

KEYWORDS: Brazil; collective mandates; party–movement relations; political representation; social movements; socio-partisan activism.

Activismo sociopartidario: democratización de la representación política

RESUMEN. **Objetivo/contexto:** el artículo desarrolla el concepto de activismo sociopartidario para explicar cómo los activistas interactúan simultáneamente con partidos políticos y movimientos sociales a través de los mandatos colectivos de Brasil, examinando las condiciones bajo las cuales esta doble interacción puede democratizar la representación política. **Metodología:** un estudio cualitativo de casos múltiples analiza 33 mandatos colectivos (29 elegidos en las elecciones municipales de Brasil de 2020, dos precursores municipales de 2016 y dos mandatos a nivel estatal de 2018) basándose en 64 entrevistas semiestructuradas con 74 personas, una extensa investigación documental y un análisis de contenido inductivo-deductivo utilizando Atlas.ti. **Conclusiones:** las afiliaciones múltiples entre movimientos y partidos están generalizadas en los mandatos colectivos, lo que permite la transferencia de repertorios participativos y de conocimientos activistas a la práctica legislativa mediante estructuras de oficina horizontales, consejos políticos ampliados y una participación sostenida en comités, audiencias, territorios y protestas, tanto dentro como fuera de las instituciones. Los conflictos surgen de las limitaciones organizativas de los partidos y la ambigüedad legal en torno a las candidaturas colectivas, las rutinas deliberativas verticales y poco rigurosas de las legislaturas, las disputas entre facciones dentro del Partido de los Trabajadores (PT) y el Partido Socialismo y Libertad (PSOL), y la desigualdad en la alineación interna; presiones que pueden fragmentar a los colectivos incluso al ampliar la inclusión de grupos históricamente excluidos. Tres condiciones influyen tanto en el éxito como en el conflicto: la organización partidaria y legislativa, las afinidades compartidas y la alineación programática entre los concejales, y las microrrelaciones dentro de los partidos. En conjunto, estos factores condicionan cómo el activismo socio-partidista puede recalibrar la representación. **Originalidad:** al mover el foco analítico de las organizaciones a los activistas, el artículo introduce un marco generalizable —el activismo sociopartidario— que amplía la investigación partido–movimiento más allá de las alianzas episódicas al compromiso dual cotidiano, mapeando cómo los mandatos colectivos adaptan los repertorios del movimiento a las instituciones representativas mientras refuerzan las redes de la sociedad civil y proponiendo una visión integral del universo de los mandatos colectivos elegidos en el momento del estudio.

PALABRAS CLAVE: activismo sociopartidario; Brasil; mandatos colectivos; movimientos sociales; relaciones partido–movimiento; representación política.

Ativismo sociopartidário: democratizando a representação política

RESUMO. **Objetivo/contexto**: o artigo desenvolve o conceito de ativismo sociopartidário para explicar como ativistas se engajam simultaneamente com partidos políticos e movimentos sociais por meio dos mandatos coletivos no Brasil, examinando as condições sob as quais esse engajamento múltiplo pode democratizar a representação política. **Metodologia**: o estudo qualitativo de casos múltiplos analisa 33 mandatos coletivos — 29 eleitos nas eleições municipais brasileiras de 2020, dois mandatos municipais precursores de 2016 e dois mandatos estaduais de 2018 — com base em 64 entrevistas semiestruturadas com 74 indivíduos, extensa pesquisa documental e análise de conteúdo indutiva-dedutiva utilizando o Atlas. ti. **Conclusões**: múltiplas filiações entre movimentos e partidos são comuns nos mandatos coletivos, possibilitando a transferência de repertórios participativos e conhecimento ativista para a prática legislativa por meio de estruturas de gabinetes horizontalizadas, conselhos políticos ampliados e engajamento contínuo em comissões, audiências, territórios e protestos, tanto dentro quanto fora das instituições. Os conflitos decorrem de restrições organizacionais partidárias e da ambiguidade legal em torno de candidaturas coletivas, das rotinas verticais e pouco deliberativas dos legislativos, das disputas entre tendências dentro do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) e do Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL) e do alinhamento interno desigual entre ativistas —pressões que podem fragmentar os coletivos mesmo quando ampliam a inclusão de grupos historicamente excluídos. Três condições moldam tanto o sucesso quanto o conflito: organização partidária e legislativa, afinidades compartilhadas e alinhamento programático entre os ativistas, e microrrelações dentro dos partidos. Juntos, esses fatores condicionam a forma como o ativismo sociopartidário pode renovar a representação. **Originalidade**: ao deslocar o foco analítico das organizações para os ativistas, o artigo introduz um enquadramento analítico generalizável —o ativismo sociopartidário— que expande a pesquisa sobre a relação partidos e movimentos para além de alianças episódicas, abrangendo o engajamento dual cotidiano. O artigo mapeia como os mandatos coletivos adaptam os repertórios dos movimentos às instituições representativas, ao mesmo tempo que reforçam as redes da sociedade civil, e propõe uma visão abrangente do universo de mandatos coletivos eleitos no momento do estudo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ativismo sociopartidário; Brasil; mandatos coletivos; movimentos sociais; relações partido-movimento; representação política.

Introduction

The "crisis of democracy" has become a common refrain, not just among political theorists but also in everyday conversations. This crisis particularly impacts political representation, as citizens increasingly distrust politicians and institutions, participate less in elections, and distance themselves from political parties. However, there is a paradox: even as people criticize the representative system,

many activists continue to push for change by forming new parties or working to reform existing ones from within. From the reemergence of movement-parties in Latin America and Europe (Anria 2019; Della Porta *et al.* 2017) to proposals for democratizing the political system like the Global Municipalist Movement in Spain and parallel experiments in Valparaíso (Chile) and Rosario (Argentina), the path to revitalizing political parties and representation involves connecting elected representatives and social movements while systematically incorporating participatory practices within representative institutions (Bookchin and Colau 2019; Kitschelt 2006; Mérida and Tellería 2021; Tablo *et al.* 2018).

In Brazil, social movements and civil society activists have introduced an innovative model called collective candidacies. In this format, a group of people campaigns together and runs for the same legislative seat (municipal councilor, state or federal deputy), and this group is presented to constituencies as the recipient of their vote. The spokesperson and legal representative of the mandate must be a party member, while the affiliation of the other members of the collective is optional.[1] The campaign is conducted jointly—where several people seek votes on behalf of a collective—with the direct or indirect support of the social movements and organizations they belong to. Once elected, they establish a collective mandate[2] with the participation of the entire group, divide responsibilities, and transfer participatory practices to the political office.

This article draws on the experience of collective mandates to examine how activists interact with parties and elections and what conditions are conducive to the democratization of representation. The connection between these two fields—participation and representation, electoral and non-electoral experiences—has gained increasing attention. However, influences between movements and parties still need further research, both within the scholarship on the trajectories of political regimes, party systems, and competition, as well as in social movement studies (Anria 2022). This article draws on a diverse body of research on the interaction between social movements and the political system, as well as specialized literature on party–movement relations, with a particular focus on mapping both the positive and negative consequences of these interactions (Banaszak 2010; Hutter, Kriesi, and Lorenzini 2018; Kitschelt 1989). However, it redirects attention to the concept of activism rather than solely focusing on social

1 Unlike other countries, the Brazilian electoral system does not accept individual candidacies or local or regional parties, only national ones.

2 In this paper, the word "mandate" is used to translate the word "*mandato*" in Portuguese. It refers to elected positions in legislative branches at different levels of government.

movements, since this approach allows me to advance the existing framework in at least two ways.

First, the concept of social movement usually focuses on types of performances; analysts define movements in terms of extra-institutional contentious performances, even when they engage in conventional behaviors and participate in political parties (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Building on the work of scholars who highlight actors as the key unit of analysis for understanding the links between parties and movements (Heaney and Rojas 2015), I propose shifting the focus to activists instead of movements. This perspective helps illuminate the everyday, less spectacular and fluid interactions between parties and movements, including informal and even individual connections that activists establish within these spaces (Abers, Almeida, and von Bülow 2022). In some cases, activists are not directly affiliated with movements but still advocate for causes and ideas that align with broader social demands (Mazur and McBride 2023).

Secondly, political parties and social movements are typically treated as two separate, homogeneous entities that interact only in particular political circumstances, rather than considering the long-lasting effects of their interactions (Anria 2019). By examining the internal networks and diverse activists that bridge movements and parties—including those linked to social movements, informal collectives, civil organizations, and other forms of activism—this article acknowledges the internal heterogeneity of both and offers a new perspective on the conflict between parties and movements. Instead of focusing solely on the specific dynamics between movement X and party Y, or the broader tension between movement and party identities and strategies, it is crucial to consider the variations in strategies and identities within the movements and parties themselves.

To address these challenges, I propose the concept of *socio-partisan activism*, which captures the dual engagement of activists with both political parties and social movements. This article, however, aims to go beyond the notion of multiple affiliations with movements (Mische 2009), highlighting the diverse forms of activism and the various ways activists promote their causes by strategically mobilizing available repertoires, resources, and strategies in both spheres. To explore these dynamics, the paper focuses on the electoral arena, examining the long-term relationship between activists and parties in collective mandates. The qualitative research covered all collectives elected in the 2020 municipal elections (29); the first two collective mandates from the 2016 municipal elections, and two state-level collective mandates—Pernambuco and São Paulo—elected in 2018, totaling 33 mandates analyzed.

Although focused on a specific type of party–movement interaction in Brazil, this study contributes to the literature on political parties and social

movements by offering new interpretations of these relationships. It also provides insight into activists' views on party limitations in engaging the broader public and civil society, opening a research agenda on party democratization. Research on collective mandates can further enrich analyses of similar experiences worldwide and shed light on how activists seek to influence or engage with political parties.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first presents the theoretical framework, connecting literature on party–movement interaction with studies on activism. The second outlines the methodology and examines collective mandates in Brazil, focusing on activists' social profiles and political trajectories. It analyzes party–movement interaction during campaigns and office-holding, exploring cabinet organization and how actors combine participation and representation through movement and party repertoires, while addressing the emerging conflicts. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and highlights conditions that enable socio-partisan activism.

1. Parties and Movements, Movement-Parties, and Beyond: Socio-Partisan Activism

Within the prevailing scholarly discourse, social movements and political parties have been predominantly conceptualized as distinct organizational forms with fundamentally incompatible identities and divergent strategic orientations (Piven and Cloward 1977). The connection with institutional politics was, until very recently, regarded by both social movement activists and their scholarly observers as synonymous with co-optation or demobilization, which Hellman (1992) called the "fetishism of autonomy." However, emerging scholarship has progressively challenged the conventional insider-outsider dichotomy. Feminist studies have been a forerunner in this change by documenting the efforts of activists and individuals—referred to as *femocrats*—within government agencies, which are seen as potential spaces for representing women's movement interests (Banaszak 2010; Eisenstein 1996; McBride and Mazur 2010; Sawer *et al.* 2023).

In Latin America, social and urban movements, often allied with political parties, have played a key role in promoting the democratization of political and party systems (Alvarez 1990; Garretón 2002; Jenkins and Klandermans 1995; Roberts 1995). In Brazil, civil society demanded constitutional reform and the expansion of social rights through participatory processes. The creation of institutional spaces that enabled civil society to influence public policymaking—such as councils and conferences—turned the state into an attractive arena for social movements to engage with and compete in (Zaremberg and Almeida 2025). It is therefore not surprising that Brazilian scholarship has been prolific in

analyzing broader forms of activism within political institutions, participation in policymaking through participatory mechanisms, and advocacy of ideas within bureaucracies (Abers and von Bülow 2011; Gurza Lavalle *et al.* 2018; Tatagiba and Teixeira 2021). However, scholarly efforts have mainly focused on the executive branch and its agencies, while interactions with political parties and electoral processes have received comparatively less attention (McAdam and Tarrow 2010).

Advancing this understanding is particularly crucial in the current context, where social movements are increasingly seeking electoral strategies. In various cities, movement-led candidacies aimed at establishing citizen mandates, as well as the reemergence of movement parties, highlight this trend. In Latin America, examples include the *Estamos Listas* movement in Colombia, *Wikipolítica* in Mexico, *Movimiento Valparaíso Ciudadano* in Chile, and *Ciudad Futura* in Rosario, Argentina. In Spain, the so-called Global Municipalist Movement—most prominently in Barcelona but also in several other cities—has launched candidacies of movement activists or individuals committed to participatory governance and the democratization of the political system (Mérida and Tellería 2021). In Brazil, following the escalation of the political crisis that restricted the access of progressive movements to the executive branch at the national level after the 2016 presidential impeachment, along with the wave of protests in June 2013, the pursuit of "moving structures through political representation" has gained momentum among movements that previously did not prioritize electoral engagement (Rodrigues and Freitas 2021). The collective candidacies serve as a clear example of this shifting dynamic. They are predominantly formed by activists with previous experience in so-called *feminist collectives,* black women's and LGBT+ activism, and social movements and organizations with a long history of engaging with the executive branch.

To understand this scenario of growing investment in electoral politics, I draw on existing theoretical frameworks, paying special attention to how they conceptualize the positive and negative consequences of interactions between movements and parties, as well as the challenges of combining dynamic forms of participation with representative institutions.

After a prolonged period of skepticism, positive outcomes from party–movement interactions are emerging, including coordinated and collaborative relationships that advance both electoral objectives and the broader efforts of social movements to influence policy and secure allies (Schwartz 2010). Elections—such as voter registration, candidate nominations, and electoral success (Andrews 1997; Gold and Peña 2019; Valdivia Rivera 2024)—and the organizational structure of parties have increasingly been shaped by the adoption of social movement tactics and framing, as well as by the circulation of activists

between these two spheres of action (Della Porta *et al.* 2017). When political parties originate from strong social movements and networks, movement influence tends to continue, particularly in candidate selection processes and in gaining access to public policies and decision-makers (Anria 2019; Heaney and Rojas 2015).

Furthermore, the relationship between movements and parties has facilitated the institutionalization of movement agendas within party structures. This is evident in the creation of Secretariats and other mechanisms that ensure ongoing influence, as well as in shaping party programs and organizational strategies (Feitosa 2022; Piccio 2016; Rezende, Sarmento, and Tavares 2020) When social movements join party politics, it can create a contagion effect, challenging the underrepresentation of marginalized groups and encouraging a more inclusive and responsive political system (Cowell-Meyers 2014). Additionally, these dynamics have sparked proposals for more decentralized and participatory models of party organization and political representation (Della Porta *et al.* 2017).

However, the negative consequences of party–movement interactions are far from negligible. The literature has long emphasized the divergent strategies and identities of political parties and social movements, which often render such collaborations short-lived or uncommon (Kitschelt 1989). While social movements focus on specific issues, political parties must develop broader, cohesive programs to appeal to a wider electorate. This misalignment often limits the influence of movements on party agendas and hampers the resolution of internal conflicts over the party's direction (Kitschelt 1989; Poguntke 2002). Furthermore, interactions between social movement organizations and political parties can give rise to invasive strategies, including co-optation, the displacement of movement agendas, and the emergence of insurgent behavior against parties and the political system (Schwartz 2010). These dynamics may lead to the dilution or moderation of movement identities and to the weakening of parties (Hutter, Kriesi, and Lorenzini 2018; Kitschelt 2006). Social movements can also affect political systems and representation in more disruptive ways. Their involvement in electoral politics might introduce extreme viewpoints and polarization (Caiani and Císař 2019; Tarrow 2021), foster authoritarian or anti-system/anti-party rhetoric, and promote low-intensity or plebiscitary forms of participation (Gerbaudo 2019; Pirro and Gattinara 2018; Welp 2022).

The spectrum of interactions typically examined in the literature focuses on short-term alliances, in which movements and parties remain distinct entities. In these scenarios, movements are often viewed as either allies or adversaries and participate in contentious politics—such as protests, campaigns, and marches—during extraordinary political moments. While some relationships extend into the medium or long term, both movements and parties are still commonly

analyzed from an organizational perspective or as unified analytical units, framed as either "the movement versus the party" or "the movement becoming the party." This perspective often overlooks the sustained and dynamic interactions among activists who operate simultaneously in both spheres and demonstrate multiple forms of political engagement.

In this paper, I argue that we should recognize greater fluidity between parties and movements and consider a third, less-explored layer of interaction—one that is more continuous, less dramatic, and perhaps more embedded in everyday political practices (Abers, Almeida, and von Bülow 2022). I propose that these types of relationships are better understood through the lens of activism rather than the broader and more demanding concept of social movements. Even the more fluid understandings of social movements—such as the notion of networks—fall short of capturing the multiple and shifting connections that often exist outside or independently of established movements (Zaremberg and Almeida 2022). According to Diani (2015), social movements are dense networks of informal interorganizational exchanges and strong collective identities that bind together members of different organizations. It is crucial to note that the conditions necessary for the existence of social movements are often missing in many contexts, policies, and countries, making it difficult to apply the concept consistently (Christel and Gutiérrez 2023). This challenge becomes even more significant when looking at mobilizations at the local level, where political parties and social movements tend to be less organized or less visible. Still, vibrant associative life and activism persist, often aligning with the broader ideas championed by social movements.

The definition of activism is often underdeveloped and generally linked to its adjectives, such as student activism. Joyce (2014) defines activism in terms of the types of participants (one person or a collective), the cause (in favor of or against the status quo), or the tactics and tools used (with varying levels of civic engagement). Among social movement scholars, activism—and militant engagement—involves collective action aimed at defending contentious causes, namely, collections of ideas supporting or opposing changes in the institutional organization of current power relations (Abers 2021; Sawicki and Siméant 2011). Femocrats and institutional activists, for example, are activists who advocate for feminist or movement ideas even if they are not directly affiliated with social movements (Abers 2021; Mazur and McBride 2023). What is more important is what they do as actors within state institutions and how their ideas connect with the causes of social movements.

Although institutional activism can occur without formal ties to movements, it is important to understand that its actions should not be seen merely

as individual preferences. Instead, they are embedded within relational and institutional processes and networks that influence their values and connect them to specific causes or actors (Fillieule 2010; von Bülow, Gobbi, and Dias 2022). Thus, to analyze activism in both parties and movements, I draw on the concept of multiple affiliation. Multiple affiliation is defined as the simultaneous engagement of activists in different political and social networks, such as political parties, social movements, churches, and non-governmental organizations (Mische 1997). When moving across different arenas, activists serve as bridges or intermediaries, transferring ideas, repertoires, and information from one context to another. They must also temporarily combine and negotiate their identities based on the set of relationships present in each situation, developing specific communication styles for their different audiences; for example, downplaying one's party identity when interacting with more anti-party movements. Mische (2009) argues that these identities do not disappear; rather, they remain potential sources of conflict and ambiguity.

The notion of socio-partisan activism is complementary yet distinct from that of multiple affiliation. First, like the latter, it highlights how social movements transition into other spheres, such as political parties, and transfer ideas and resources from one arena to another. This perspective has been notably employed by Della Porta *et al.* (2017) to analyze movement parties, illustrating how movement repertoires are adapted within party structures. Second, socio-partisan activism shifts the analytical focus from movements or organizations to the activists themselves. It thus differs from the traditional organizational affiliation model, seeking instead to give voice to diverse forms of social belonging in the contemporary world. It encompasses forms of collective action within civic organizations, informal collectives, and other flexible arrangements that may fall outside traditional social movement frameworks yet still connect to broader national mobilizations. Third, the literature has explored activism across multiple movements, examining its impact on activists' trajectories, political identities, and communication styles (Fillieule 2010; Mische 1997 and 2009). In Brazil, these studies have investigated activists' institutional transitions into the state, processes often mediated by party affiliation (Silva and Oliveira 2011). The focus on socio-partisan activism is more precise, as it addresses the relationship between activists and political parties. At the same time, it aims to move beyond simply analyzing party affiliation or institutional activism within the state. It questions how activists' simultaneous engagement in parties and movements draws on strategies, routines, and resources from both spheres to pursue their objectives, potentially producing consequences for each field.

While the article also examines the tensions inherent in multiple affiliation, taking activists and their activism as the unit of analysis moves beyond simply comparing "movement X" with "party Y." Instead of contrasting party strategies (focused on electoral outcomes) with movement strategies (centered on collective identity) (Mische 1997; Oliveira 2021), this perspective acknowledges the internal heterogeneity of both arenas. Conflicts arise within parties and movements alike, as activists often hold overlapping affiliations and networks. Moreover, political parties themselves are far from homogeneous, encompassing diverse factions and organizations.

This perspective on socio-partisan activism can help uncover relationships between society and parties that are often obscured by the lens of social movements. It can also address the debate about political representation, which is often missing from the literature, with few exceptions (Cowell-Meyers 2014; Gerbaudo 2019). Therefore, it does not serve as a specific tool for analyzing collective mandates but rather offers a perspective that can shed light on diverse experiences of electoral and party–movement interaction.

Finally, as already highlighted by the literature reviewed here, the effects can be positive or negative. Certain dimensions identified in the literature are relevant to understanding the dynamics of interaction between parties and movements derived from multiple affiliation. Notable among these are shared affinities, socialization, and common social experiences (Fillieule 2010; Mische 2009; Sawicki and Siméant 2011); the organizational formats and resources of both parties and movements, considering the density and extent of the movements' organizational networks, variation in their repertoires, and the party model's openness to participation (Anria 2019; Della Porta *et al.* 2017; van Cott 2005); the intermediation of socio-party leaders; the distribution of selective resources to movement supporters, such as positions of power and roles within the parties, and the divergences in the strategies and identities of both parties and movements (Oliveira 2021).

The next section examines collective mandates through the lens of socio-partisan activism, focusing on a) their formats and main causes; b) trajectories of interaction and overlap between movement and party activists (multiple affiliation); c) interactions during election campaigns; d) party–movement dynamics while in office; and e) conflicts arising from these relationships. The goal is to identify the key factors that explain the varying degrees of success of these experiences, both in managing the relationship between movements and parties and in advancing the democratization of forms of political representation.

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2. Party–Movement Interactions in Collective Mandates

a. Methodology

This article is based on a case study involving multiple units: 31 municipal collective legislative mandates elected in 2020 (except for two, elected in 2016) and distributed across different Brazilian cities, along with two state-level collective mandates elected in 2018. It then presents an in-depth study covering the totality[3] of legislative experiences that meet the definition of collective mandates. This wide-ranging view aims to describe this little-known phenomenon and, at the same time, introduce a new analytical construct to understand the interactions between movements and parties.

A total of 64 interviews were conducted; eight of these involved two or more co-councilors interviewed together, resulting in 74 individuals. Although I spoke to individuals rather than groups, interviews included at least two participants from each group to address the social and collective aspects of their operations, possible disagreements among them, and distinct views on these mandates. The interviews were conducted with the person legally responsible for the party mandate and one additional participant who responded to the invitation sent to all members. When an initial interview revealed differing views within the group, I made a point of also interviewing those with opposing perspectives.

These semi-structured interviews lasted an average of 1.5 hours. They were transcribed and analyzed using the Atlas.ti software to generate non-a priori codes. A qualitative content analysis sought to capture both expressed meanings and latent themes and ideas in interviews with actors directly involved in the innovative phenomenon of collective mandates in Brazil (Drisko and Maschi 2016). The first step was to inductively create subnodes corresponding to arguments around specific questions in the interview script (Elo *et al.* 2014). The same interview passage could express different meanings and therefore be coded in more than one subnode. The interviews were thoroughly categorized to cover a variety of themes, generating connotative and non-explicit codes for passages of interest. The second step was to aggregate codes, sometimes using deductive analysis when the data aligned with or exemplified the identified theoretical categories, such as the concepts of repertoires of action and multiple affiliations. The aggregated codes used in this article address the five analytical dimensions:

3 All mandates were mapped through 2020. Since the collective does not appear in the official data of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE, for its Portuguese acronym), identifying its candidacies was not always straightforward. The TSE database was searched using keywords such as "collective," "mandate," and "movements" to identify registered candidates. Candidates' digital media were also used to verify whether a candidacy was indeed collective.

political trajectories, causes pursued, interactions during elections, relationships while in office, and conflicts.

Sometimes, to show how interviewees differ in their opinions on certain topics, the article offers quantitative data and frequencies. However, the main goal of this study is to interpret the actors' responses within the existing theoretical framework, the political context of these innovations, and the meanings created. Interviewees are given fictitious names (reflecting the gender they identify with) to preserve anonymity[4] and to reveal conflicts within the mandates. Quotations are used to illustrate the actors' views and the author's interpretation from an analytical and theoretical perspective, also enabling readers to access the data and evaluate the trustworthiness of the results (Elo *et al.* 2014). Beyond interviews, the study draws on extensive documentary research to characterize collective candidacies.

b. What are collective mandates? What do they stand for?

The involvement of social movements in elections and their interactions with parties, while common in many countries, is shaped by each political context. First, in Brazil, collective mandates have been a creative response by activists to a political system that largely neglects minority groups. Women remain severely underrepresented, accounting for only 18 % of the Chamber of Deputies after the 2022 elections. Representation is also racially imbalanced: although 56 % of the population is black, only 25 % of senators and 26 % of deputies are black. While underrepresentation around the world has led movements to create movement-parties, registering parties in Brazil is challenging: they must be national, require significant resources, and secure a minimum level of support from voters across different regions. Thus, activists may align with existing parties that share their collective identities or ideological and programmatic affinities, or they may form pragmatic alliances solely for electoral purposes.

Second, international experiences, such as the Global Municipalist Movement, have proposed shared mandates, in which a group supports activists' campaigns and collaborates in office after elections, discussing and sharing certain decisions. In Brazil, similar initiatives have existed since 1994, called shared mandates (Secchi, Cavalheiro, and Baumgarten 2024). Collective mandates differ from these proposals. They involve a group of people running for the same position from the start of the campaign. Legal responsibility rests with one candidate, who must be affiliated with a political party. Unlike shared mandates, collective

4 This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee in Brazil; participants were informed about the research objectives, risks, and benefits, and signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF).

candidacies aim to distribute all responsibilities of holding office among the group. Although not formally recognized under Brazilian law, discussions about their regulation are currently underway in the National Congress.

Third, interactions between social movements and political parties tend to increase during diverse democratic crises, generally reflecting dissatisfaction with the political system and suggesting a complementarity with participatory dynamics (Della Porta *et al.* 2017). It is no coincidence that many studies on collective mandates adopt the perspective of political representation—especially its descriptive dimension—or emphasize the complementarity between representation and participation during the democratic crisis (Almeida 2023; Campos and Matos 2023; Secchi, Cavalheiro, and Baumgarten 2024). However, approaching mandates from the perspective of activists and their multiple affiliations reveals a broader range of causes. Almeida (2024) classifies these into three main axes: the struggle for the rights and inclusion of marginalized groups; demands for various social policies; and calls for renewal and democratization of mandates and representation, especially through connections with participatory dynamics and the transfer of activist ideas and repertoires. The following sections examine how these causes are pursued and remain central to their ongoing work in office.

The first elected collective candidacy appeared in Alto Paraíso, a small town in central Brazil, in 2016. In Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais, two councilwomen who ran individual campaigns later shared a mandate through collective decision-making. During the 2018 state and federal elections, two collective mandates—Bancada Ativista in São Paulo and Juntas in Pernambuco—were elected to state legislatures. The collective candidacy format gained momentum following the 2013 protest cycle and the 2016 impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, a period marked by widespread discontent with the political system and diverse responses to the crisis of political mediation. In 2020, 29 out of 306 collective candidacies were elected. Data on collective candidacies show that 1,323 individuals ran as co-councilors, with an average of four members per collective. In 2022, 218 collective candidacies for state and federal deputy positions were registered, but only two were elected. The larger vote share and the increased resources required for higher-level elections in a country as vast as Brazil likely hindered the success of this format, which was often adopted by peripheral actors and minority group representatives. In the 2024 municipal elections, 22 out of 344 collective candidacies were elected.

Among the spokespersons of the 33 collective mandates interviewed, it is clear that they were more inclusive than the typical model of electing individuals: 78.8 % were women (26) and 21.2 % were men (7); whites were the majority (19), but unlike the profile of Brazilian elected representatives in general, there was a

high proportion of black (11) and brown (3) people. These mandates were mostly linked to center-left parties such as the Workers' Party (PT, for its Portuguese acronym) (12) and the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL, for its Portuguese acronym) (11), which have historically maintained a closer relationship with activists and movements in the field of minority rights and the defense of social causes.

c. The Activists' Dual Militancy: Navigating the Intersection of Movements and Political Parties

Almeida and Lüchmann's survey (2022) of 320 collective candidacies in the 2020 elections found that at least 85 % of them had ties to civil society organizations. Most groups interviewed for this article (30 out of 33) emerged through connections to social movements, civil society organizations, and other forms of more fluid activism, such as collectives and mobilizations. The remaining three were individuals with no prior links to organizations or any kind of socio-partisan activism in the cities.

The number of organizations they participated in or had participated in throughout their lives is more than double the number of interviewees, confirming that they had multiple affiliations, mainly involving student activism, feminist, LGBT+, black, and cultural movements and organizations, participation in councils and forums responsible for the formulation of public policies, and activism in political parties and digital platforms. Affiliation with different forms of activism helps explain why these mandates pursued both group inclusion and broader public policy goals. Some activists decided to run together after meeting through their involvement in various organizations, while others were invited by members based on their track record of activism and advocacy. In preparation for the elections, they adopted a name that conveyed the collective identity of their candidacy.

Party affiliation is not only a pragmatic strategy used by activists to run for office but also part of their daily activism. Half of the interviewees were already affiliated with their current party before running for a legislative seat (36), or they had been affiliated with another party previously (8). Even some co-councilors who were not legally required to be affiliated with a party also joined after being elected (6). Nearly all collectives participated in sub-party organizations dedicated to issues like Secretariats for women, race, and LGBT+, as well as in party executive boards and factions/tendencies.

The activists perceived the phenomenon of multiple affiliation as a constant and more natural experience than social movement analysis often suggests. Interviewees challenged the idea that interacting with political parties leads to co-optation. "If we are not inside a party, we become a manipulated mass" (Joaquim). Another activist argued that a movement without party engagement

loses influence because it cannot shape political agendas and defend positions that might otherwise be overlooked (Solange). Simultaneous engagement with political parties and social movements is effective when activists learn to activate different aspects of their identities depending on the arena and the timing of their interactions (Heaney and Rojas 2015). For Liana, there is no conflict as long as activists establish a clear division of roles, for example, refraining from representing the movement while holding a legislative position. Through this interaction, activists can negotiate the terms of the debate and the direction of decisions, rather than simply accepting them.

d. Elected: What Did They Do Next?

When deciding to form a collective and run together, the party–movement relationship deepened and became more stable. Maintaining links with the movements, collectives, and associations they were part of was seen by the interviewees as essential for electoral success. Movement networks were key for mobilizing supporters and running campaigns in the streets and on social media. They also contributed resources and facilitated discussions about the group's political programs and projects. Although they were newcomers to the electoral field with few financial resources for their campaigns (Almeida 2024)—most interviewees (54) had never run for office—their candidacies benefited from their associative resources and collective format.

And how did activists use party and movement resources, routines, and strategies while in office? The interviews focused on the organizational formats of collective mandates and analyzed the cabinet organization, the transfer of participatory practices and issues to representative institutions, proposals for changing political representation, and the conflicts that emerged from these dynamics (Table 1).

Analyzing the organizational format has revealed that multiple affiliation was converted into socio-partisan activism, aiming to transform how parties and mandates operate. Collective offices were structured to minimize both physical and political hierarchies between councilors and their teams. Since only the head of the list was legally recognized as a parliamentarian and received public funding, co-councilors often acted as legislative aides (assessors). Their ability to serve in these roles depended on each city council's organizational structure, which varied widely. In smaller municipalities, where advisory positions might not exist, co-councilors often held secondary employment alongside their legislative responsibilities.

Table 1. Organizational Formats of Collective Mandates

	Items	Variables
Cabinet organization	Division of functions in the mandate	➢ Division by themes ➢ Division by tasks ➢ Division by working groups ➢ Division by territory
Participation in the legislature	Plenary sessions	➢ Participation in the plenary session is allowed for a limited number of councilors ➢ Participation in the plenary as a listener ➢ Participation in the plenary via videos ➢ Participation in the plenary session is prohibited
	Commissions	➢ Co-councilors participate with the right to voice, not to vote ➢ Co-councilors cannot participate
	Public hearings	➢ Co-councilwomen participate and lead ➢ Co-councilwomen participate
Decision-making process	Decision making	➢ By consensus ➢ Majority consensus, vote when necessary ➢ Without consensus, listening to other people or political advice until a decision is reached ➢ By vote

Source: Own elaboration based on interviews.

The division of functions in the office was based on knowledge and social militancy. This allowed them to divide responsibilities by debate topics, legislative initiatives, themes and groups they supported, specific tasks, or the areas and neighborhoods they represented or advocated for as activists. Co-councilors (at the municipal level) and co-deputies (at the state level) aimed to remain continuously involved and engaged in the daily dynamics and decision-making processes of the offices, dividing political responsibilities and duties. Only the spokesperson was permitted to participate in the plenary. However, co-councilors frequently engaged in other informal settings, such as committees and public hearings, where participation was open to all those interested in the issues being discussed. Committees and public hearings both served to advocate for the demands of various groups, thereby advancing inclusion, facilitating the development and implementation of social projects and policies, and building a closer relationship with the constituency.

The decision-making process was also influenced by a model of activism that valued greater horizontality and collectivity. Most interviewees said they made decisions by consensus and resorted to voting only when disagreements persisted after debate. The main decisions of the mandates should be made collectively among co-councilors, sometimes also including their legislative teams (Table 2).

Table 2. Adaptation of Repertoires and Mechanisms of Interactions

Political council	› With political council › No political council, but consultation with a group of political supporters › No political council
Council participants	› Supporters during the campaign › Social movements, activists, individuals, with and without party ties
Interaction with society/ public	› Demand and/or voting apps. › Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp) › Virtual plenaries › Assemblies and meetings in the territories › Itinerant offices in the territories › Cultural activities › Thematic committees for discussing agendas
Interaction with social movements and collective actors	› Organization and participation in protests › Project discussion › Public hearings › Parliamentary fronts › Directly in the offices, plenary › In the territories › Working groups › Coordination with community leaders › Online interaction

Source: Own elaboration.

Activists from collective mandates used both party and movement resources, routines, and strategies in different ways. First, the mandates involved some type of expanded group or political council that enabled continuous interaction with society. These were broad discussion groups that brought together campaign supporters, partisans, and activists from different movements—usually around 50 people—to help resolve conflicting issues, introduce demands, and discuss projects. Given the challenges of sustaining long-term engagement

among a large number of participants, these councils met at irregular intervals or maintained communication through applications and digital media, such as WhatsApp groups. These groups of supporters assisted in agenda mobilization, provided input on various decision-making topics, and helped mediate disagreements among co-councilors.

Second, activists transferred participatory practices into legislative offices to enhance their connection with constituents, a point widely recognized in theories that highlight the limitations of representative democracy. Popular participation in this case took place in various ways, especially through representatives' direct contact with society and social movements in the territories (55 mentions in 64 interviews), as well as through working groups, public assemblies, itinerant offices, and committees, among other forms. Interactions ranged from the most informal practices, such as receiving demands, to the most formal ones, in which mandate projects and agendas were collectively developed. These interactions might also take place via social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for accountability and WhatsApp for receiving demands.

Third, adaptation of movements' repertoire within offices and political parties has been addressed in the literature, especially their use of protest (Della Porta *et al.* 2017). In the collective mandates studied, 43 of the 64 interviews confirmed that activists took part in protests, with half serving as organizers and even helping with infrastructure. However, coupling the definition of social movements with participation in protests, as done in the literature on movement-parties, restricts our view of how parties and activists might interact and mutually influence political representation.

These collective mandates show that knowledge acquired in social movements was used in legislatures, aiming to change the way representation functions. They brought scientific and expert knowledge (Christel and Gutiérrez 2017), as well as expertise gained through participation, as means to influence bills and agendas. The mandates also engaged with various organizations, activists, and community leaders in the daily operations of municipal councils and state assemblies. For instance, they collaborated on policy discussions, held positions in advisory bodies, and participated in parliamentary fronts and public hearings proposed by the office. Their repertoires were adapted, and contentious actions were implemented within institutional settings. Activists exerted pressure on legislatures by occupying plenary sessions where proposals were discussed or voted on, aiming to support or block specific bills (Joaquim; Naneth). Activist Luíza reported that they also organized occupations outside the City Council to disrupt meetings that were strongly opposed to their demands, noting that they had succeeded even in the presence of a bloc of oppositionists supporting the bill. They influenced bills

through digital activism and pressured state deputies and municipal councilors individually by sending "letters to the municipal council requesting support for a certain bill that the mandate will eventually submit. We make movement from the bottom up because otherwise it won't go forward" (Andreia).

Finally, socio-partisan activism fostered collective organizing and movement development within the city.

> So, as soon as we were elected, we created three cultural collectives in the city, one LGBTQIA+ collective. The collective focused on black issues, and we created a street collective linked to the hip-hop movement. (Rodrigo)

> The head office belongs to the collective, right? A political office of the collective and the mandate, so everyone bears the costs, because there is rent, water, internet, coffee; there are all these expenses (Amália).

The excerpts above show that, after taking legislative office, activists maintained close ties with communities and social movements. Their engagement not only sustained activism within political parties but also reinforced the movements themselves by providing infrastructure and resources, as well as by supporting the organization of collectives that demanded public services from state authorities.

e. Political Representation and Conflicts in the Party–Movement Relationship

Collective mandates and their various formats remain experimental and aspirational. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the conflicts within these relationships, as they shed light on the necessary conditions for democratizing representation and reveal how political actors sustain dual activism.

First, party structures and internal organization play a crucial role. The collective mandate format is not regulated by Brazilian law, which creates tensions with political parties from the very start of the campaign. Parties in Brazil must meet the 30% gender quota for candidacies. Several interviewees highlighted that parties either tried to convince members of collectives to run individually, especially women, or initially did not support collectives. Resistance was strongest among party members who saw the participation of these collectives as "unfair" competition, since having more than one candidate requesting votes for a single seat made it easier for collective candidacies to garner more votes. In many cases, they succeeded in being elected while older party members failed. There were even reports of party members threatening to have collective candidacies lose

their registration and taking legal action to cancel the election due to its collective format. Collective mandates highlight the difficulty of challenging the existing balance of power within parties. These conflicts persist even though they are largely concentrated within center-left parties, which are typically more closely linked to social movements and more supportive of social participation within their structures and governments.

Given the highly verticalized structure of political parties, theories on movement parties or movements contesting political representation have frequently emphasized efforts to transform party organizations. These attempts often led to anti-party narratives and a plebiscitary conception of participation[5] (Della Porta *et al.* 2017; Gerbaudo 2019; Hutter, Kriesi, and Lorenzini 2018). The activists involved in the collective mandates studied also had limited institutional capacity or power to bring about structural changes within parties, and they often criticized the constraints imposed by the party and political systems:

> Political parties need to get fresh oxygen, as the way they work no longer responds to the ideal society. [...] We are, let's say, already in 5G, in the twenty-first century, [but] Brazilian legislatures are in the carrier pigeon [era]. (Roberto)

However, focusing on activist practices rather than on organizations or movements themselves helps us understand the complexities of this relationship. Some activists, instead of rejecting political parties, recognized the inescapable necessity of engaging with them to challenge their structures and promote internal renewal. This is, in fact, an argument they used when addressing parties to justify the need for change: "Do you want renewal? Renewal begins with the same principle: you must accept novelty, work with it, and if it goes wrong, we fix it and move forward" (Anna). Activists also acknowledged that the interaction between parties and movements was crucial to counter the prevailing negative perception of politics: "And when people linked to the movement enter politics, for us it is encouraging, because people need to believe in politics again; they have to" (Aline).

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5 Plebiscitary participation emphasizes the involvement of the largest possible number of people in deciding issues through binary choices—yes or no. In this sense, it contributes little to the development of deliberative and transformative dynamics within political parties (Gerbaudo 2019).

The statements show that, at least among these groups, there was an intention to democratize the parties through transferring political agendas and projects from the movements to the parties.

> We did not propose to create a party; we introduced a political project, a political project that aims to vie for active popular participation. (Leila)

> We didn't want a party just for the label, and so we have also sought to engage our militants, our people, our communities with the party. (João)

> I don't think that parties have to domesticate social movements. It's not that; it's social *movements that have to bring radicalism into institutions*. [...] I don't think it's just competing for such a space in the city either; it's a dialectical relationship between movement and institution, between movement and party. Movement and party are not antagonistic to one another. (Solange, my emphasis).

The relationship is not inherently antagonistic, as Solange explains; individuals can navigate and blend party and movement identities at different moments, allowing for strategic engagement with both (Mische 2009). As discussed earlier, representation can be transformed by adopting a more decentralized and participatory approach. This shift brings the represented closer to the entire political process—from articulating demands to actively participating in decision-making. In addition to challenging party structures, the democratization of representation also entails the inclusion of groups historically excluded from these institutions. In this sense, the activists bridged two central causes within these experiences: "So, besides the very idea of political renewal, we brought the idea of representativeness, of women occupying this space, black women, trans women" (Jussara).

The research has also demonstrated the need to go beyond the constraints imposed by party structures and devote greater attention to the legislature's institutional characteristics. In Brazil, challenges include difficulty in advancing and approving progressive agendas, mayoral control over legislative priorities, and a lack of substantive debate. These obstacles are intensified by the fact that nearly all collective mandates remain in the minority, with only one aligned with the mayoral coalition. The vertical, weakly deliberative structure of the legislature poses specific challenges for activists and social movements, whose modes of action differ significantly from such institutional logics. Interviews highlighted these differences between what they called a "kick-in-the-door" strategy of movements and negotiated action in parliament.

> In militancy, you don't have much of that; in militancy, you do what you like, and you do militant work in places you want to be. Now, in the municipal council, it's not like that. Projects will come that you will not like to read and study. And you have to do it because you have this responsibility. (Marisa)

> Oh, it's very difficult because we, as a movement, have more of a kick-in-the-door form of action, while as a member of the legislature, we always have to be careful and walk on eggshells and still risk breaking them all. (Flávia)

Second, these cases align with existing research that highlights the importance of shared socialization around political projects for successful party–movement interactions. However, when examining socio-partisan activism, conflicts extended beyond questions of identity and ideological alignment between the movement and the party. On the one hand, these conflicts emerged from the coming together of a diverse group of actors, drawn from different networks, who had to deal with the challenges of forming a new collective, navigating internal differences while forging their own identity and sense of belonging. In collective mandates, programmatic and agenda alignment proved essential. But equally important was the personal rapport among participants, fostered by a shared history of interaction and collaborative work: "It's a marriage that may last four years and go on for more time. So, it's a marriage that needs a lot of respect, a lot of commitment, really sharing some ideas" (Claudia).

Such affinities and shared socialization gave the participants a set of historically learned social movement repertoires, along with experience in participatory practices, which they then incorporated and adapted to the representative mandate (Almeida 2023). Because collective mandates were formed by various types of activists and connected to networks that did not share the same collective identity, it seems that members had to be politically aligned for mandates to succeed: "We are not a mandate that decided to be a political group to be a mandate. It is a group that has been acting politically since before; on most issues we agree politically" (Bárbara). When alignment is absent, various conflicts can emerge, including uneven levels of member engagement in mandate activities, interpersonal tensions, insufficient horizontality in the spokesperson's decision-making, significant political disagreements, and disputes over organizational structures. Thus, the focus on activists can be applied to the study of other experiences, since individuals often belong to multiple networks that are not always dense or have a strong social movement identity, which can lead to interpersonal conflicts.

On the other hand, the relationship with political parties can influence socialization with movements and collectives. Respondents reported difficulties

in forming ties with their organizations, responding to diverse and sometimes contradictory demands, and protecting the movement's autonomy in this relationship (Tatagiba 2010).

> We are attacked from both sides. Because, within the legislature, they delegitimize me because I am part of the movement and come from social minorities. And within social minorities, they delegitimize me because I am in a space that has historically harmed [these minorities]. (Tatiana)

The solution was to try to uphold a commitment to both spaces. As Alda explained, "the big challenge is: to not become a council rat, to [not] be entrenched in institutions, also because we cannot achieve victory without being connected to the real demands of the population, of the movement." Thus, "in legislative mandates, 70 % of actions [were aimed at] consolidating things that happen outside institutions" (Iana). Some balance could be achieved if activists were able to differentiate their roles in both arenas.

> So, yesterday we went there to coordinate with the leaders about the master plan to discuss with the community. *But during the meeting itself, we just observe. Because if we were militants, we would go there and say something.* For me, there is this change: now we need to be careful not to assume a relationship where you take advantage of the space. (Larissa, my emphasis)

> Because of our bill, they found out; they mobilized and went to the municipal council [referring to the organization he belonged to], and then some meetings were scheduled. I was always very careful not to be the person who took the lead in the movement, so as not to mix up what the movement is with what the legislative mandate is. (Moisés)

> I can't go to the municipal council and act like an activist. I have to go to the council and behave like a councilwoman with activist principles, but I can't forget my role inside. (Helena)

Thus, the interviewees emphasized the need for both parties and movements to avoid fully conforming to institutional logic while staying connected to the movement. They acknowledged the evolving nature of their representational role. While cautious about overstepping into organizational leadership through their institutional positions, they nevertheless strived to keep vital channels of communication and exchange between these distinct spheres.

Third, the literature on the interaction between parties and movements emphasizes conflicts that arise from differences in their strategies and identities. Looking at the activists has helped me recognize that conflicts also occur at the micro-relational level within the parties themselves. Political parties must be re-examined, taking into account their internal heterogeneity and the different groups and disputes within them.

Most legislative collective mandates are affiliated with the PT and PSOL, two left-wing parties structured around national or regional tendencies and factions with varying degrees of formality. Currently, the PT has 16 tendencies, while the PSOL includes 28 factions. The interviewees in this study were part of at least 15 factions from both parties. Therefore, belonging to different political groups and tendencies within the parties was one of the main reasons for the breakup of collective mandates or the splitting of the group, leading to the exit of co-councilors. Sometimes, party members moved from one faction to another after elections, or some party tendencies split to form a new one. In addition, having members from more than one party made collective mandates more fragile. Activists also struggled to participate in internal structures to defend specific agendas, such as gender, race, and LGBT+ concerns. This internal plurality, positions of power, and roles within parties have been a source of conflict.

There was also internal variation within the parties by locality, underscoring an often-overlooked element of party heterogeneity. Most mandates operating in smaller municipalities—where there was no local party structure—reported a lack of dialogue (7 of 9 mandates). In cases where there was no organizational structure and even no local party activity, maintaining multiple affiliations and influencing party dynamics became particularly challenging. Moreover, the choice of party itself was often influenced by strategic calculations regarding electoral viability.

These various conditions highlighted here help explain the difficulties collective mandates faced. As of 2022, when this research was conducted, in one of the 33 collective mandates interviewed, the spokesperson resigned in the early months of their term, allegedly for personal reasons, and seven others broke up.

Conclusions

Collective mandates are a recent innovation, and their duration within the Brazilian electoral landscape is uncertain. However, studying this experience has allowed for both proposing changes in how the interaction between movements and parties is understood and giving visibility to proposals that rethink the connection between participation and representation. The article draws on extensive

literature examining the interaction between social movements and the political system and the consequences for organizations and political representation. It also advocates for shifting the analytical lens toward socio-partisan activism; that is, the actions of activists who champion contentious causes while leveraging resources and strategies from both parties and movements.

Concentrating on socio-partisan activism has revealed fluid forms of collective action and social organization that do not fit neatly within traditional definitions of social movements. Activists used the resources of social movements and organizations during campaigns, mobilizing supporters both on the streets and on social media, while also shaping the political agendas and projects of their groups. They promoted their causes within the office, proposing changes to the organization of legislative terms, applying knowledge from social movements to influence bills, and adapting repertoires of collective action, such as protests both outside and inside institutions. This adaptation introduces a dynamic of conflict and diversity into legislatures, challenging the institutional logic of these spaces and simultaneously provoking and pushing them to evolve. Moreover, as movements and parties interact, new routines are established, and efforts to maintain ongoing dialogue and collective work during mandates emerge. In some cases, this strengthens networks and collectives within civil society. Finally, they incorporate different mechanisms to interact with the represented, whether they are the general population or specific social groups and organizations.

At least three key conditions contribute to conflicts, but they also reveal the essential elements for more successful interactions: the organizational formats of political parties and legislatures, the shared affinities and political alignment among participants, and the relationships within parties themselves. While these conditions are addressed in party–movement literature, they take on new significance when the focus shifts to activists.

First, collective mandates reveal that parties often lack structure in cities and continue to concentrate power despite widespread criticism, making it difficult for activists to compete within institutions and avoid personalism. This finding underscores the importance of examining party organization at subnational levels and understanding how it affects the relationship between parties and movements. Second, political alignment becomes even more challenging when adopting a network approach that is attentive to the internal heterogeneity of its members. The risk of breakdown exists not only in relations between parties and movements but also internally among activists, particularly in a context of multiple affiliations and social ties, including those not officially linked to organizations. This clashes with the traditional dynamics of legislative politics and the multiple demands of being both an activist and a representative

simultaneously. Third, collective mandates encourage us to look closely inside the parties and their micro-relations, examining the constant interactions that occur through candidacies, secretariats, party factions or tendencies, municipal executive boards, and multiple affiliations.

Although my aim is not to declare the end of the conceptual divide between social movements and political parties, this study suggests that these two arenas of political competition should be viewed as spaces where actors not only move but also collectively build their identities and defend their causes. The democratization of representation does not automatically follow from interaction. However, the study indicates that more practices of socio-partisan interactions might be tested than our current analytical lenses can capture.

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