
#ELENÃO

**#ELENÃO MERE PRESENTA [#HE DOES NOT REPRESENT ME]
AN INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST STRIKE**

**#NENHUM DIREITO AMENOS [#NOT ONE RIGHT LESS]
#NI UNA AMENOS [#NOT ONE [WOMAN] LESS]
#DITADURA NUNCA MAIS [#DICTATORSHIP NEVER AGAIN]**

During the 2018 presidential campaign in Brazil, the international feminist strike (Gago 2018: 663) *#EleNÃO* [#NotHim], also called *primavera feminista*, took place. It was the largest mobilization led by women in the history of the country (Domingos de Lima 2018: 3). The hashtag was both the name and the most important demand of this strike: to prevent the election of the sexist, homophobic, and racist candidate Jair Bolsonaro. *#Elenão* became a signifier loaded with meanings; it started with women, because Bolsonaro openly made disparaging remarks concerning women, but came to encompass many things, such as the defense of democracy and human rights (Rossi et al. 2018: 1). In this context, one could observe a new popularization of feminism(s), especially among younger generations – strongly influenced by the dynamics of social media and digital communication – creating networks of solidarity. This coalition of diverse feminist subjects created a new visibility for a feminist narrative in Brazilian society and a strong momentum of resistance. Women played the central role in organizing the protest and formed a clear majority in both digital and street mobilizations (Becker 2018: 2; Jiménez 2018: 1): “[...] using the strike as a tool that puts us in the position of political subjects against a systematic attempt to reduce our pain to the position of victims in need of repair (usually by the state). [...] the strike is constituted as a process and not as an event” (Gago 2018: 663).

— The group *Mulheres Unidas Contra Bolsonaro (MUCB)* [Women United Against Bolsonaro] was founded on Facebook on September 12, 2018, in response to Bolsonaro’s hate speech and insults during the election campaign. It was characterized by a highly diverse, mostly female membership. Members of Black women’s movements, indigenous women’s movements, queer/trans movements, student movements and religious groups all took part. The organization and articulation of this act of resistance was initially led by a small number of activists who launched a campaign promoting women’s rights and opposing the presidential candidate

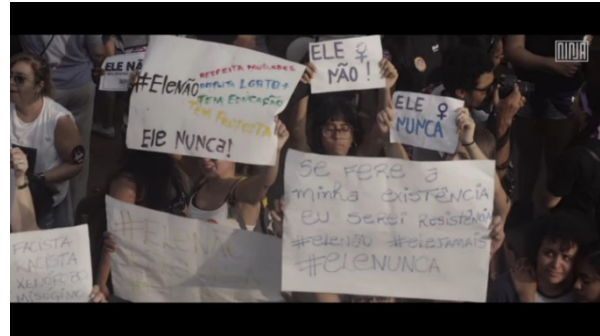
(Teixeira 2018: 00:35:00ff.). Within a very short time, the Facebook group had more than 2 million members (Domingos de Lima 2018: 2f.). Resistance continued to grow and finally manifested itself in a jointly organized protest march on September 29. Many participants declared themselves to be politically leftist and feminist (Moretto Ribeiro et al. 2018: 3f.), but, apart from these two common points of identification, they could hardly have been more diverse. Their struggles and claims with regard to social justice and rights came from different perspectives, because it was not only gender that played a role as a marker of social inequalities here. It is important to recognize the intersectionality with other categories – such as race, class, etc. – as well as performativity (Barad 2003: 808) as a form of fluidity between such constructivist categories. These women did not reproduce their respective categories and the hierarchical structure of social power; rather, they formed a broad and interest-based coalition across all challenges of difference. They agreed to disagree in certain respects in order to achieve a higher goal – the rejection of Jair Bolsonaro and all he stood for.

— The main claims of the #elenão strike were based on the defense of women rights (also minority rights) (#NenhumDireitoAMenos [#NotOneRightLess]), a denunciation of the multiple forms of violence against feminized bodies (#NiUnaAMenos [#NotOne[woman] Less]), and the demand for a new conviviality in society (more plural, inclusive, equal) (#EleNãoMeRepresenta [#HeDoesNotRepresentMe]). Another facet was the threat to Brazilian democracy; many women described Bolsonaro as a fascist and feared a return to the period of military dictatorship in 1964 (#DitaduraNuncaMais [#DictatorshipNeverAgain]) (**Fig. 1–4**).

— Violence against female bodies played a fundamental role for this mobilization of resistance, which linked the production of feminist subjects and agency to the matter of bodies itself (Barad 2003: 808). The reconceptualizing of sexist violence has been a key element of the transnational feminist agenda: “a new political language that not only denounces violence against women’s bodies, but also includes other feminized bodies in the discussion, and moreover, moves from a single definition of violence (...) to understand it in relation to a web of economic, institutional, labor, colonial, and other violence” (Gago 2020: 57f.). This pluralistic definition creates a bridge between different female perspectives, because it is a threat that concerns all women in numerous dimensions. As a result of the mobilization and awareness strategies of the feminist movement(s), this structural violence has become more and more visible in its



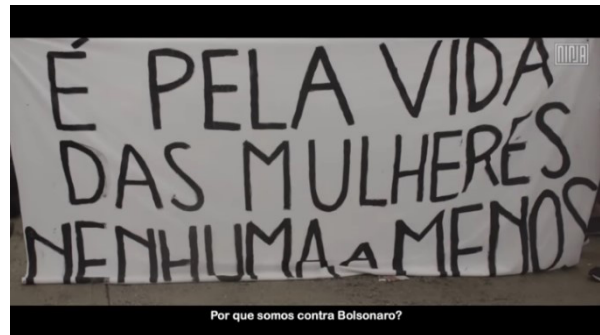
// Figure 1



// Figure 2



// Figure 3



// Figure 4

diverse forms and spheres over the last decades (Almeida 2019; Sarti 2001; Barsted 2016). However, the common element is not the violence itself but the “situated and transversal questioning of this violence” (Gago 2020: 58). In other words, the feminist claims against sexualized violence achieved a new dimension of visibility and popularity in the public discourse, accompanied by a general politicization of women. It also materialized beyond the discourse in concrete social and political practices: it became an international feminist strike.

[...] the strike responds to an action, political language, and mode of violence against women that seeks precisely to negate us politically. That is, they seek to confine us to the position of victims (who are, almost always, indirectly guilty). With the tool of the strike, by stopping our activities and our roles, by suspending our gestures that confirm patriarchal stereotypes, we build counterpowers against the femicidal offensive that is nothing other than the way in which an intersection of different types of violence is manifested on women’s bodies today (Gago 2018: 662).

— The strike on September 29 took place in over 62 Brazilian cities. However, the strike was not limited to Brazil; it involved the

// Figures
Posters about resistance and violence during the #EleNão street mobilization, Brazil 2018, © Photos: Mídia NINJA, 2018

// Figure 1
If it hurts my existence, I will be resistance

// Figure 2
#NotHim, #NeverHim, #NeverEverHim

// Figure 3
Respect my existence or face resistance

// Figure 4
It is for the life of all women

mobilization of women internationally in over 181 cities on five continents (Mídia NINJA 2018: 01:27:00ff.). #Elenão can therefore be considered a global mobilization, especially when compared to similar international feminist mobilizations, like the Argentine movement #NiUnaMenos [#NotOne[woman]Less], which campaigned against sexualized violence and femicide, and the Chilean performative protest(s) “*El violador eres tú!*” [You are the rapist!], which denounced state violence against women’s bodies. They started with a national mobilization and quickly became an international strike. In this new feminist internationalism, the body becomes a performative territory which materializes individual and shared struggles and resistance: “It is the composition of a common body that produces a type of resonance and result: a politics that makes the body of one woman the body of all. That is what makes that old slogan, chanted in all the marches, so attractive: If they touch one of us, they touch us all” (Gago 2018: 661). Women are occupying the internet and the streets, fighting for their rights and against systematic oppression. They mobilize on a global scale; solidarity is no longer limited by national borders. The forms of oppression wrought by sexualized violence, limited rights, a lack of self-determination over one’s own body, and poorly paid or unpaid labor are a global phenomenon among women. Of course, the local specifics must be considered in each case. In countries where there has been a radicalization of conservative forces in recent years, it is predominantly women who are standing up against the political and social backlash and raising their voices in support of a different model of society. They do not accept losing their rights and conquered territories and spaces to traditional gender hierarchies and patriarchal discourses and practices. The possibilities offered by virtual networks and the facilitated connection between political actors on the internet, above all social media, to organize counter mobilizations and discourses against hegemonic power hierarchies play an important role in this international feminist solidarity. In the case of #elenão, the resistance materialized through the circulation of the hashtag, a virtual symbol of protest that became the slogan of the strike.

— However, the incredible strength and presence of this movement in the virtual and public spheres did not go unanswered. This predominantly feminist coalition provoked an extreme polarization of the female electorate, which has never been so divided during a presidential campaign in Brazil (G1 2018: 5). Anti-feminist women did not identify themselves with the critiques and claims of the #elenão mobilization and vehemently defended Jair Bolsonaro

and his ideas in social media and in the streets. These women felt represented by his morals and ideology centered on the traditional Brazilian family and a more conservative female role model. They did not feel offended by the misogynist comments of the presidential candidate, or they interpreted them as fake news created by manipulative media and leftist radicals to weaken his campaign. This questioning of the facts and media coverage played a crucial role in the systematic manipulation and remodeling of the truth in Bolsonaro's populist campaign (Araújo et al. 2020). This struggle between "ideals" of female subjects contributed decisively to the polarization of the electoral campaign and shows that solidarity between women is not something given. The dynamics of this feminist strike in Brazil should be understood as part of a global phenomenon of feminist resistance against a conservative anti-feminist backlash.

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// About the Author

Lea Loretta Zentgraf is a sociologist and doctoral researcher at the BMBF Junior Research Group “*Food for Justice: Power, Politics and Food Inequalities in a Bioeconomy*,” based at the Institute for Latin American Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin. Her PhD project looks into women’s mobilization targeted at entangled inequalities in the German food system and consequent social and political innovations. She graduated with a B.A. in Translation and Cultural Studies at the Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg and the Universidade de Sao Paulo. She finished her M.A. in Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies at the FU Berlin in May 2021. Her research interests are *social movement studies, feminist theories, intersectionality, environmental studies, food studies, digital food activism, digital media studies*. Contact: lea.zentgraf@fu-berlin.de

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