



social movements and philanthropy in brazil

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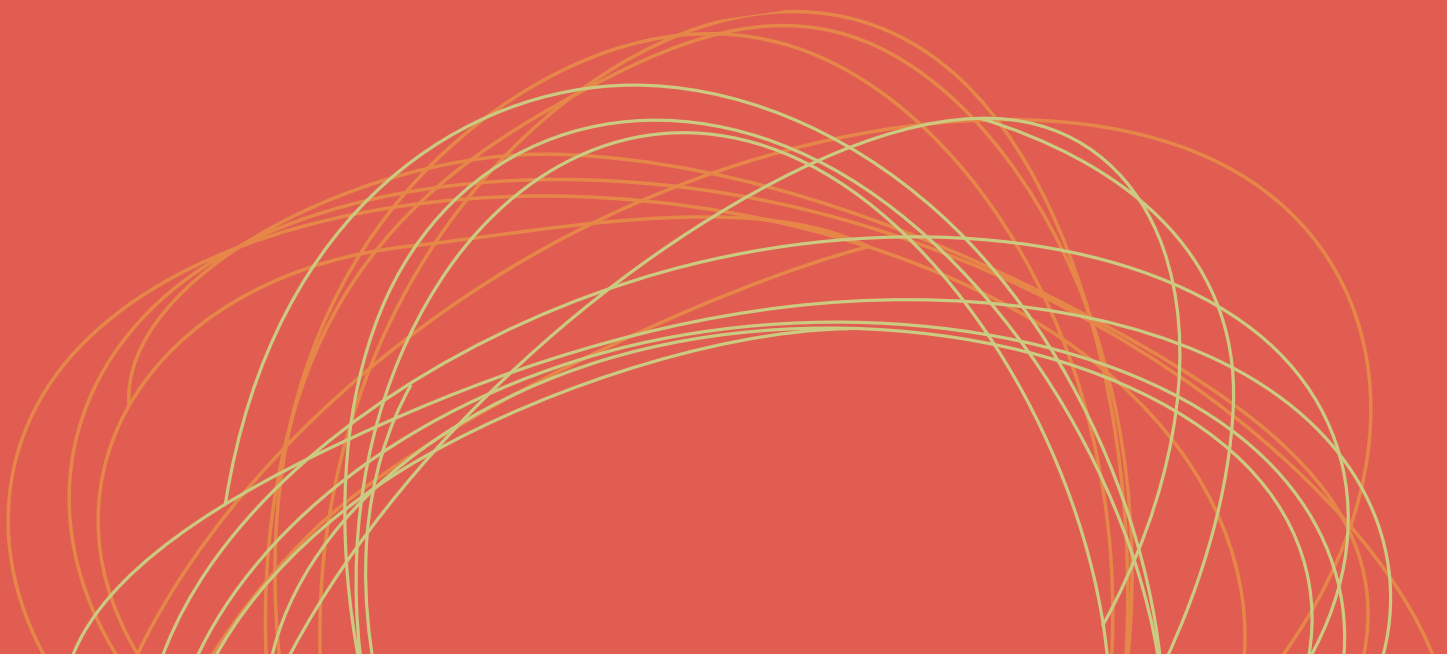
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Abstract

Social movements play a crucial role in the defense and promotion of rights, contributing significantly to the construction and consolidation of democracy. Historically, these movements were essential to the resistance against authoritarian regimes and the democratization of Brazil. In the present scenario, they face new challenges due to the rise of the far right and the growing violence against minorities and human rights advocates. This study, based on a bibliographic review, interviews and focus groups with representatives of philanthropy and social movements, explores the role of Brazilian philanthropy in funding and supporting social movements. The study also examines the self-financing strategies of these movements, the challenges they face, and the impact of philanthropic support on their activities. The report also examines the different philanthropy approaches and highlights the need for greater involvement of private social investment to strengthen social movements and promote significant social and political change. This study seeks to contribute to the national and international debate, in addition to stirring reflections on how Brazilian philanthropy can strengthen the fight of social movements in the country.



foreword

This research is a timely and important reminder of the power of people-led organising in Brazil. From defending democratic freedoms, securing rights and recognition for groups that have been systemically marginalised and oppressed, challenging the power dynamics of the status quo, and protecting the most vulnerable populations in difficult times, Brazil's recent history is rich with examples of resistance and wins secured by popular organizing. The driving force behind these transformational mobilizations and movements is a different kind of wealth. They are fuelled by the imagination and agency of activists. Social movements in Brazil, and elsewhere, often rise and flourish despite the practices and attitudes of dominant forms of institutional philanthropy, and rarely because of it.

At Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) we have come to realise that for philanthropy to effectively get behind the struggles for justice and dignity, it needs to concede that it does not have the answers and listen to the voices and wisdom of those closest to the ground. This paper sits within larger on-going efforts to foreground these voices and examine asymmetries of power in the funding relationship between philanthropy social movements in the global South. Together with research in Africa by Halima Mahomed (2020), and in Asia by Poorva Rajaram and Ashlesha Khadse (2023), these studies reverberate a common message – the need for philanthropy to examine its ideological underpinnings, grapple with its purpose in the world, with the inequitable conditions from which much of institutional philanthropy emanates and how all this informs its perception of how impact and accountability are defined. They call for a dismantling of the bureaucratic philanthropic processes that serve as the hallmarks of trust in this world and for imagining what relationships based on reciprocity, mutuality, solidarity and respect might look like.

The Brazil study offers a particularly practical perspective from within philanthropy on how we achieve this. A remarkable group of 'community and independent philanthropy' organizations connected via the Comuá Network in Brazil are living proof that it is indeed possible for philanthropy to be a partner in people-led agendas, to support and amplify social movements. It is possible for philanthropy to get past its bureaucracy and form relationships that are based on trust and solidarity with the political agency of social movements. Grounded within communities, seeded in activism, and strategically positioned as partners of human rights, and social and environmental justice agendas, the Comuá Network members light a path for dominant forms of institutional philanthropy everywhere for how we move resources and shift power to spaces where the imagination and the struggle for a better future are alive.

Chandrika Sahai

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1

introduction

Historically, social movements have played a key role in the fight for access to and recognition of rights. Therefore, they are strategic actors in the **construction, consolidation and defense of democracy**, given their capacity to promote relevant changes in the social and political sphere and in advocacy actions, influencing the design, implementation and monitoring of sectoral, affirmative and universal public policies. In fact, social movements and organized civil society in Brazil played a crucial role in confronting the military dictatorship and in the democratization process.

In the current scenario, social movements continue to play a strategic role **in fighting and resistance**. On the one hand, the advance of the far right is acting to attack democracy, threatening not only historically secured rights and spaces, but also the lives of activists throughout the country, especially representatives of minoritized groups. On the other hand, research corroborates the violence of the current context and reflects the inequalities and injustices that still permeate the fight for rights in Brazil, namely:

- According to a [report by the Pastoral Land Commission](#), with figures from 2023, the country witnessed the highest number of rural conflicts since research began in 1985: a total of 2,203 incidents, with 1,724 occurrences linked to land conflicts;
- According to the [Dossier: Murders and Violence against Transvestites and Transsexuals in Brazil in 2023](#), carried out by the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (ANTRA), there was a 10% increase in the number of murders against trans people and transvestites in Brazil between 2022 and 2023. In terms of the number of deaths, 155 were recorded, with 145 cases of murder;

- Brazil is the 2nd most dangerous country for environmentalists in the world, behind only Colombia. Of the 177 murders of environmental activists recorded by the organization [Global Witness](#), 34 occurred in Brazil;
- According to the [2024 Violence Atlas](#), 76% of homicide victims in Brazil are Black. The intentional death rate for the Black population is 29.7 per 100,000 inhabitants. The average for other racial groups is much lower: 10.7;
- In a survey by the Brazilian Public Security Forum (FBSP), Brazil had the highest number of femicides in 2023 since the crime was classified: 1,463 victims;
- According to the report [Violence against indigenous peoples in Brazil](#), by the Indigenist Missionary Council, violence against indigenous peoples persisted in 2023 with attacks on expanded rights and little progress in land demarcation.

We cannot fail to mention the murders of city councilwoman Marielle Franco in 2018, indigenous rights activist Bruno Pereira and journalist Dom Phillips in 2022, and Mãe Bernadete in 2023, among many others, as evidence that Brazil is still a violent country for human rights activists, leaving representatives of social movements throughout the country under constant death threats. Along with that, the criminalization and increase in attacks against civil society organizations, social movements, and activists are also part of the strategies of these groups. The bureaucratic criminalization of organizations and the “suffocation” of the political action of civil society organizations and social movements” has become a constant in Brazil’s fragile democracy, especially after the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff (Abong, 2022).

Such violence is also seen as a response to the rights that have been hard-won by social movements throughout the country. And it is these groups that will continue to resist this wave of attacks on civil society and democracy.

In view of this scenario, increasing financial support for social movements is essential to building new possibilities for the future, which resist and reverse “autocratizing” tendencies and the denial of rights.

More recently, within the context of the COVID-19 health crisis, social movements played a key role by occupying the front line in the fight against the pandemic, mobilizing donations, and facilitating access by marginalized groups to qualified information on prevention and access to health services. They were also responsible for generating data and research that highlighted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized populations.

As for in the public policy field, the influence of social movements is recognized in the history of Brazilian society. In other words, movements have played and continue to play a key role in the construction, proposal and defense of alternative models of public policies. Rebbeca, Kunrath and Tatagiba (2017, p. 6), when referring to studies on social movements in the country, highlight their role in producing “changes in public policy by integrating public policy networks and communities, interacting with other societal and state actors.” Consolidated public policies that we know today, such as the Unified Health System (SUS) and the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), were directly influenced by movements in the design, implementation and monitoring of these policies, from the municipal to the federal level.

In view of this scenario, increasing financial support for social movements is essential to building new possibilities for the future,

which resist and reverse “autocratizing” tendencies and the denial of rights. In this sense, social movements represent not only resistance, but alternatives for other possible futures and the guarantee of life.

As part of the process of shedding light on the central role played by these movements in the processes of social and political transformation, there is an urgent need for a closer look at the role of Brazilian philanthropy as related to these actors. Instigated by similar exercises carried out in Africa and Asia, this study is part of a series of publications promoted by *Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP)* and its partners. So, this report attempts to echo the voices of the global South and East that are actively working with social movements to support their initiatives.

Para acessar os resultados das pesquisas:

[Institutional philanthropy and popular organizing in Africa: some initial reflections from social movement activists](#), by Halima Mahomed

[Foregrounding social movement voices: Popular Organizing and Philanthropic Funding in Asia and the Pacific](#), by Poorva Rajaram and Ashlesha Khadse (Thousand Currents)

Both studies are available in English only.

In light of this scenario, the questions that emerge for the development of this study are: how are these movements and collectives funded in Brazil? What are some examples of the strategies that they develop to secure their work?

In the first chapter, the concept of social movements will be discussed, reinforcing the lens adopted in this report. The following chapter will outline a brief scenario of social movements in Brazil.

In the third chapter, we will delve into the (self-)financing strategies of movements, based on consultations with representatives of the social movements, as well as the available bibliography on the subject, which also reflects on the challenges faced by the movements in their mobilization and fundraising processes.

In the fourth chapter, we focus on the role of Brazilian philanthropy in relation to the funding of social movements. We will take into account the existence of conflicting perspectives about the processes of social transformation: on the one hand, the developmentalist vision prevails which is aligned with market and big capital logics. On the other hand we have a perspective committed to the defense of and access to rights. How do these distinct visions of country projects impact the relationship and funding of social movements through philanthropy?

Historically, in contrast to traditional and mainstream philanthropy, organizations that work in the field of independent philanthropy have played a key role in funding these groups. Therefore, in the fifth chapter, the publication will focus on analyzing and sharing some of these actors' experiences with the funding of social movements.

The conclusion reflects on the importance of supporting social movements for the construction of alternative futures. The urgency of climate and racial justice agendas, in their various expressions and intersections; LGBTQphobia, sexism, misogyny, and other forms of discrimination and reproduction of violence, call for the engagement of other actors in Brazilian philanthropy, especially

private social investment, to support social movements that fight for the recognition of these agendas on multiple levels – including the government level and other actors from the public sphere.

This study is relevant for its investigation of how philanthropy has contributed to strengthening social movements in the country, the challenges faced by these actors in building partnerships, and how it is possible to enhance the movements' impact in their fight for social transformation. Based on an exploratory analysis of the Brazilian case study, this publication aims not only to contribute to the international debate on the topic, but also to stir reflection within the sector, and to understand and expand on the primary demands of the movements in terms of their relationships with Brazilian philanthropic actors.

Happy reading!



2

methodological
approach

The qualitative methodological approach was chosen for the development of this study. A documentary research, a bibliographic review, and a collection of primary data were carried out through interviews and focus groups.

In the initial phase, a bibliographic survey was conducted on topics related to philanthropy and social movements, in order to map out the history and current scenario in Brazil and in the global South and East. Based on the documentary research, trends in the field were mapped out focusing on the relationship between social movements and philanthropy. As a starting point, databases and information produced by organizations such as GIFE (Institutes, Foundations and Companies Group), Candid, Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) and Comuá Network, among others, were accessed to support the identification of relevant bibliographies on the topic, especially those that relate to the Brazilian context and/or the Global South.

The second phase, on the other hand, consisted of data collection through six semi-structured interviews and three focus groups, based on the analysis done in the first phase. The interviews were conducted with actors in philanthropy, both institutional and independent. The focus groups included representatives of social movements from different parts of Brazil. The interviews and focus groups were conducted remotely, via video conferencing platforms. When they are quoted throughout this document, the people participating in this study will not be identified; only their profile (e.g., social movement representative) will be indicated in order to protect their identities. Statements may have been edited for clarity.

Due to time and resource constraints and the exploratory nature of this study, it would be impossible to cover the full complexity and profiles of actors that make up national philanthropy and social movements in the country. Therefore, for both the interviews and the focus groups, a non-exhaustive mapping of social movements and philanthropic actors was carried out based on a random sample defined based on several criteria. These include: i) diversity and intersectionality of themes of action; ii) geographic diversity; iii) gender, race, and class diversity; iv) existence (or not) of links with philanthropic actors. The list of people consulted includes:

- Director - Fundo Positivo
- Director - Fundo Casa Socioambiental
- Director - Fundo Brasil de Direitos Humanos
- Director - Instituto ACP
- Director - Coordenadoria Ecumênica de Serviço (CESE)
- International philanthropy operator - International Family Foundation¹
- Activist - Mulheres Negras Decidem
- Activist - Mulheres Rurais
- Activist - Hub Periférico, Fruto de Favela
- Activist - Revolution Reggae
- Activist - Instituto Periférico Waldir Onofre
- Activist - Assentamento Vitória da União

¹ At the request of the interviewee, the family foundation to which the person was then linked will not be identified.



3

debates and
reflections on the
concept of social
movements

In this chapter, we aim to explore the literature on social movements to identify and highlight definitions and characteristics relevant to this study. The intention here is not to conduct a comprehensive literature review on the topic, but rather to provide a theoretical foundation from a selected set of references that served as a lens for our analysis.

Over the last 20 years, studies on social movements have occupied a prominent place, especially in the areas of humanities and social sciences. There has been a great proliferation of research works, especially in the academic sphere, that have followed the trajectory of emerging movements both in Brazil, Latin America, and on a global scale. Certainly, the interest that social movements have been arousing in academic studies and applied research is directly associated with the fact that they are actors that occupy a prominent place in the contemporary political scene, and who, in our view, are key players in political and social transformation.

The definitions of social movements are vast and vary according to the different contexts, scenarios, and bibliographical and analytical approaches. For the purposes of our study, we will use the definition provided by the French philosopher Alain Badiou (2001), which is based on the principle that movement is a condition of all politics. According to Badiou,

"...if there is no movement, the only thing that can exist is order, control. All politics require the existence of a movement, which can be defined as a collective action that is not foreseen or regulated by the dominant power and its laws (the State), and therefore it is an action that breaks with repetition."

From this perspective, the movement is a way of organizing political affirmation, tracing new paths and dynamics. For the Badiou, in order for there to be a movement, there must be an idea that moves towards equality.

Other scholars help to draw this conceptual approach. For Antonio Negri, the movement is associated with resistance, and must be understood as the basis of every political process, an argument that is also highlighted by Walter Porto Gonçalves (2001) who states that,

"every social movement is configured by those who break with inertia and move, change places, reject the place to which they were historically consigned within a social organization and seek to broaden the spaces of expression."

Raúl Zibechi (2006) argues that social movements are able to mobilize society as a whole because they have the ability to question social relations and the existing forms of organization and representation, proposing an alternate society to the one established by the dominant power. He defines three components that characterize social movements: the mobilization structure or decision-making system; a collective identity; and repertoires of mobilization and fight.

Alain Badiou further defines social movements as heterogeneous in their social composition, in the origin of their insurgency and their spontaneous political convictions. He highlights that movements are multifaceted and include workers, students, migrants, and other social categories.

It is also worth considering, according to Abbers, Silva and Tatagiba (2018), that social movements are part of “interdependent relationships” with a diverse range of actors and institutions, constituting what the authors call relational structures. Beyond the political and social context, such relationships influence the formation and action of social movements while also affecting and influencing the actions of other actors. This statement triggers an important question for the development of this study: what is the relationship between philanthropy and social movements? Do the movements’ agendas affect the field of philanthropy and its practices?



4

social movements
in brazil

Brazil has a strong presence of social movements that have emerged both in rural and (mainly) urban areas, which are based on agendas aiming at the advocacy for access to rights and the recognition of specific political, ethnic, and socio-cultural identities, as well as the sharing of collective experiences.

The emergence and consolidation of indigenous movements on the political and social scene in their fight for the recognition of identities and territories was accompanied by the emergence of peasant mobilizations that established a significant presence in the country. The Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil is surely an emblematic case, since besides being a movement with a wide reach and visibility, the occupations of rural properties in search of comprehensive agrarian reform, the actions carried out against the agribusiness model and against the so-called settlements have made this movement an organization of major political relevance, even on a regional level.

In turn, the main demands of the Brazilian indigenous movement are associated with land ownership, since the right to occupation has already been legally recognized based on territorial demarcations, a decision that is frequently contested and disputed, often involving invasions and other acts of violence. Ethnic and cultural identity and the right to diversity are also relevant in the movement's cause. However, despite the advances made in public policies in areas such as education and health, indigenous people still remain in a vulnerable situation. They suffer from racism and discrimination, there are always threats of acculturation, loss of traditions and knowledge, and illegal occupation of demarcated territories, overlaid with various forms of violence.

Also, the housing movements known as the "homeless movement", such as the Movement of Homeless Workers (MTST) and the "Movimento de Moradia no Centro" (MMC) in São Paulo, are prominent. Their main fighting strategy is the occupation of old, empty buildings located in urban centers. In addition to gaining public visibility, these movements have managed to unify their activities with other urban movements, such as the homeless and the garbage collectors' movement, organized in the form of cooperatives or neighborhood associations.

It is worth noting here the presence and leading role that women's movements hold in the current political scene, specifically in the revitalization of feminist struggles and the recognition of feminisms of all kinds: Marcha das Vadias (SlutWalk); Marcha das Mulheres Negras (Black Women's March); Marcha das Margaridas (Daisies' March); #MeuPrimeiroAssédio, Think Olga, #AgoraÉqueSãoElas, #NiUnaMenos. Historical demands are mixed with new complaints and agendas, occupying the streets and social media. Women who are fighting for visibility, autonomy and freedom in terms of consumption, politics, production of knowledge, sports, and freedom over their bodies and lives. They are fighting against femicide, sexual harassment, for an end to domestic violence and patriarchal society. They advocate for the legalization of abortion, the formalization of prostitution as a profession, and equal pay. It is a movement anchored in the fight for and construction of a broad, complex agenda aiming for the recognition of rights and multiple identities.

The LGBTQIAPN+ movement, which emerged in Brazil during the military dictatorship, initially recognized as the "gay movement," put the issue of customs at the center of the fight, challenging the conservative morals of the time in favor of greater sexual freedom. More than 40 years after the 1970s, the movement has undergone major changes to its agenda, involving

cis and trans men and women, non-binary individuals, bisexuals, homosexuals, asexuals, among many other sexual orientations and gender identities, expanding the priority agendas aimed at recognizing the rights of the LGBTQIAPN+ population. Fighting the pandemic and the stigma of HIV (which plagued the 1980s and 1990s); confronting LGBTQphobia; combating violence and discrimination; and the recognition and validity of same-sex civil unions were crucial to the consolidation of the movement, influencing public agendas and government to promote specific policies focused on this community.

In this scenario, it is important to highlight the presence of the Black movement in Brazil, which involves an array of social, political, religious, and cultural dynamics and collectives that fight for the recognition of rights and against structural racism and inequality. The trajectory of the Brazilian Black movement is expressive and is crossed by numerous struggles and achievements throughout different historical moments. In the context of the democratization process (1980s), the Black movement managed to put several proposals and demands on the agenda and, in fact, the 1988 Constitution brought significant achievements for the Black population, such as the right to land for quilombolas. The creation of the Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (Seppir) in 2003 strengthened the implementation of policies to fight racial prejudice, giving way to the emergence of affirmative actions involving partnerships with other ministries, states and municipalities. The Racial Equality Statute (2010) and the Quotas Act, sanctioned by the Federal Supreme Court (2012) in favor of the constitutionality of the racial quotas policy, entailing the reservation of 50% of the total number of spots in universities and Federal Institutes for black people — were milestones in the movement's work.

However, it is important to highlight that even with the advances over the last thirty years, such as the conflicts related to the ownership of quilombola lands, racial discrimination still exists, as not only is poverty greater among black populations, but black people (mostly young people from low-income areas and women) are also the main victims of violence and homicide.

Within this dynamic, the Brazilian cultural movement, which has hip hop as an emblematic expression, also occupies a prominent position. Besides expressions like dance, music, poetry, and graphic art, it emerges as a form of resistance, criticism, to show that it is possible to transform reality. Many of those expressions emerge in the search for the power of speech, that is, from reporting the challenges that the populations of low-income areas face in their daily lives in the favela communities, because of the violence linked to drug wars, social injustices and racial prejudice. Made up of a diverse range of groups and collectives, the cultural movement seeks to establish new languages, new forms of communication, creating alternatives for integration in a context marked by extreme segmentation, stratification, and exclusion, in the organization of production and work and the modes of circulation and mobility within the city's territory.

Surely, the presence of social movements in Brazil's current political scene can be understood as the emergence of a collective subject that challenges the established political, social and power dynamics, and at the same time manages to establish forms of collective organization that are different from the dominant system.



5

The (self-)financing
of social movements:
strategies and
challenges

Financing is a core issue for the work of social movements in Brazil. Although there are no studies with current and consolidated data quantifying the resources mobilized by social movements in the country, this is also a challenge in the international context (Black Feminist Fund, 2023). Studies in the US, for example, show that less than 1% of international philanthropy funding is allocated to social movements (Mohamed, Hopstein and Kramer, 2020).

The representatives of the philanthropy and social movements interviewed believe that the challenges and obstacles to accessing financial resources are many. The lack of knowledge about the dynamics of the movements, lack of trust, and the imposition of bureaucratic criteria and procedures being the most frequently noted causes.

Although the funders interviewed, especially from community and independent philanthropy, attest that diversified, efficient mechanisms exist and can be created and implemented to ensure that the resources reach these groups, traditional Brazilian philanthropy² is still resistant to change, not only in terms of its donation practices, but also in terms of the allocation of resources.

The representatives of the movements interviewed believe that the paths to implementing a change in the funding scenario would be through certain practices based on respect, **responsibility, transparency** and the **decentralization of power and resources**.

“e ideal world is for the favela’s residents to decide where the money goes. social responsibility [of the companies] has to be more effective and democratized, so that people in vulnerable situations can more simply access resources.” (Social movement activist interviewed)

But why is it so hard to make this change? What are the challenges and barriers, many imposed by the funders themselves, still keeping the movements from participating in the decision-making about resources? And what strategies are the movements developing to get around this adverse, precarious scenario? In this chapter, we will outline a non-exhaustive overview of the funding of social movements, in terms of the challenges they face to mobilize and raise funds.

Self-financing

It is important to recognize self-financing as a cornerstone of the sustainability of social movements. For the purposes of this publication, self-financing is understood as a broad and diverse set of strategies to mobilize resources, not only from movement activists, but also from their territories and communities. In addition to the donation of financial resources from activists (through crowdfunding, for example), other strategies linked to the mapping and use of different assets from the territories themselves also make up the self-financing of movements.

Among social movements, the mobilization of community resources and assets (defined as community philanthropy which goes beyond money and includes relationships, knowledge, people, time, and skills) is not new

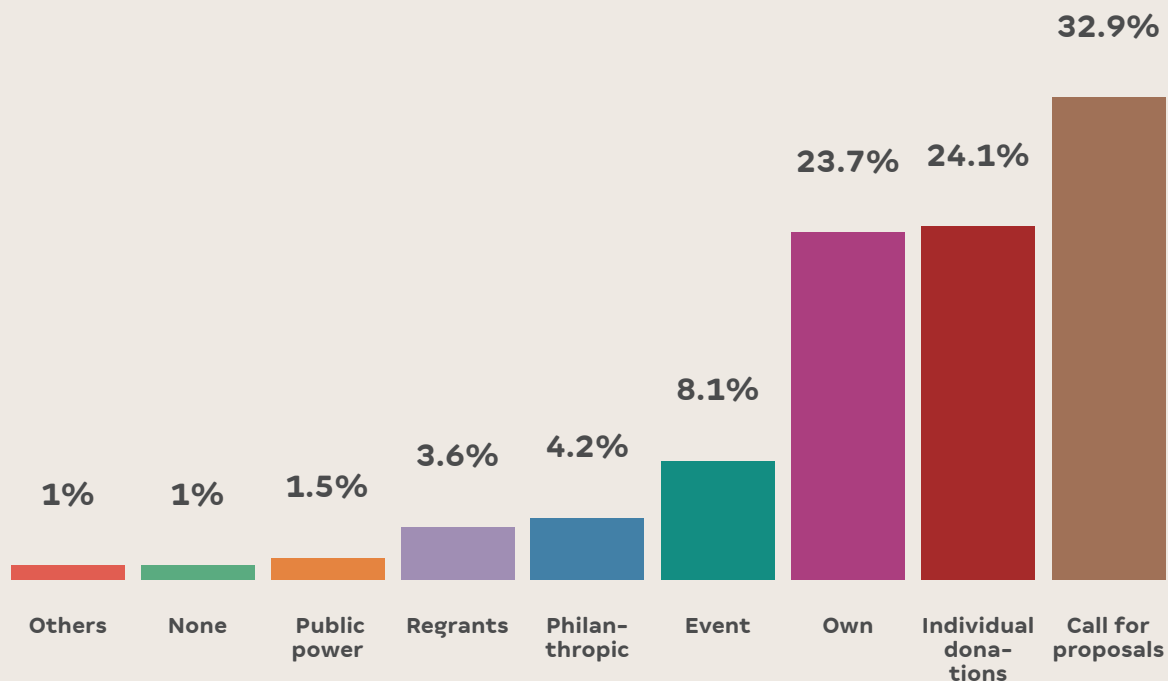
² In this study, traditional and mainstream philanthropy involves corporate, family and business institutes and foundations, which are the so-called private social investment actors in Brazil.

and is becoming evident as part of their strategies, not only of coordination and resistance, but also of subsistence. Holding events, fairs, selling products and/or food, as well as donating time, physical spaces, offering services, and creating businesses/cooperatives are all channels explored by different social movements, based on their contexts and internal dynamics.

The study “Peripheries and philanthropy - the barriers to accessing resources in Brazil” (2023), by the Pipa Initiative, explains some of these strategies.

“during the pandemic, i worked with a social project to organize basic food baskets. i distributed them through a network of acquaintances and my neighbor’s car. finding a common interest agenda and mapping out the territory is crucial to the mobilization of community resources. sometimes, [the person] doesn’t have r\$100 to support a fundraiser, but they do have a car, a sound system... my entire experience mobilizing resources comes from a collective perspective, from an perspective of exchange.”
(Social movement activist interviewed)

GRAPH 1 - What is your organization’s main source of funding?



Source: Peripheries and Philanthropy - the barriers to accessing resources in Brazil (2023), p. 50

“Own” resources and “individual donations” account for 47.8% of the respondents’ sources of resources, highlighting the central role of self-financing. The study also shows that 89% of the responding leaders and managers have other jobs. In other words, these are people who cannot support themselves with just their work with the organizations, collectives and movements in the low-income areas of the city. When looking at the profile of these leaders, the presence of black women especially stands out who make up 80% of the respondents.

So, this data shows the central role of minoritized groups, especially black women, for the maintenance and existence of movements and initiatives in the low-income areas of the country. At the same time, it is clear that there is a side to self-financing that marks the precarious conditions that social movement activists experience throughout the country. So, the lack of resources for these groups has a direct impact, not only on the very existence (and resistance) of these movements, but also on the living conditions of the activists, who must work on different fronts to ensure their livelihoods and defend their rights, often seeing their own lives threatened.

For this reason, it is urgent to move financial resources, namely, money to these groups. This ensures greater flexibility and adaptability, so that the movements can more immediately and directly respond to emergencies and promote transformations in local contexts. In addition, the availability of financial resources makes it possible to invest not only in remuneration for the activists’ time and work, but also in other initiatives. With money, investments can be made in the strengthening of training processes, establishing protection and security measures, providing compensation for activists, purchasing materials and

equipment, offering support for transportation and/or food, among other expenses that are crucial to the activities of these groups. This reduces the burden on the activists allowing them to focus their efforts for the cause and on designing advocacy strategies, not just in mobilizing and raising funds.

For many movements, self-financing is also political in nature. As one movement representative interviewed states, “we must make a political calculation when deciding whether to be present or absent from political spaces,” and the matter of funding influences this process. In other words, self-financing is a strategy to allow the movements to reaffirm their autonomy in the decision-making processes.

It is common among movements to associate external funding with interference in their agendas and guidelines (Souza and Damazio, 2010). So, self-financing allows the movements to limit the interference of external agents in terms of imposing agendas, as well as ensuring autonomy over the design and implementation of coordination and advocacy strategies. The management and allocation of resources are therefore carried out in deliberative and participatory spaces, such as assemblies, with the participation of activists and representatives from the movements. These spaces also constitute strategic environments for the accountability to groups, communities and territories.

However, as one of the interviewees pointed out, resources that go do not come with the imposition of agendas and value the autonomy of the groups and movements are still scarce in philanthropy:

“for a long time, we didn’t talk about philanthropy, we talked about ‘donations from abroad’. in the northeast, the organization process [of the movements] relied heavily on this kind of support. however, many of these donations are directed to projects, appealing to poverty, misery. in this context, more autonomous or radicalized political processes were not supported. philanthropy was not sympathetic to this approach.”
(Social movement activist interviewed)

To guarantee and defend this autonomy, there are movements that still are choosing to maintain strictly self-financing strategies, actually refusing to accept external resources, as also noted by one of the independent philanthropy managers interviewed. As part of this decision-making process, in addition to political considerations, activists also consider the activists’ livelihood, as reflected in the testimony of one of the focus group participants below:

“sometimes the situation is so vulnerable that we end up compromising on certain issues. it is a matter of survival. but there are things that are not negotiable, that represent death down the line. i don’t want to pass judgment, but sometimes it is a resource from a source that we do not find legitimate. on the other hand, if it comes from a public call and you compete for that resource, that’s another situation. you negotiate and you are aware that there is a price to be paid for associating your name to that brand.”
(Social movement activist interviewed)

For this reason, real philanthropic partnerships with movements must involve recognizing, valuing, and respecting the autonomy of these groups. Refusing to acknowledge and ignoring these internal dynamics and, above all, the impact that external funding can have on these groups, could ultimately entail the dismantlement of movements and their agendas. Therefore, the money needs to reach the dynamics of these movements in an appropriate, respectful manner, with funders addressing, in an open and transparent manner, the power dynamics that influence this relationship.

Calls for proposals and calls for projects: between the democratization of access to resources and the formalization barriers

Raising funds through calls for proposals is a common practice in the Brazilian civil society sector, and is a widely used tool among national and international philanthropic agents. According to the survey “Editais Brasil”, conducted by Prosas (2020), 1,675 calls for proposals from Brazilian and international organizations, both public and private, in view of funding social initiatives and the creative industry were launched by 1,069 organizations in 2019, showing its widespread use as a tool for the donation of resources to projects and/or organizations in the country.³

Although there is not much data on fund-raising via calls for proposals for movements, studies on the field indicate certain trends. According to the Pipa study mentioned above, calls for proposals are the main source of

³ This practice is also widespread in the private social investment sector. According to the 2022–2023 GIFE Census (p. 76), 74% of the responding member organizations said that they support “CSO initiatives based on preestablished programmatic lines and/or regular selection processes/calls for proposals”.

funding for almost 33% of the responding organizations from low-income areas. The Prosas study (2019) shows that 13.9% of the calls for proposals mapped were aimed at supporting projects and CSOs. A third study, promoted by Phomenta and the Pipa Initiative (2023), further reinforces that “fundraising via calls for proposals can represent a significant portion of the budget of many NGOs, especially the smaller (nano, mini and small) organizations.”

For the movements, however, research on the field indicates that access to this instrument can be influenced by different factors: formalization; field of activity; time; size and structure; human resources.

As far as formalization is concerned, studies by Phomenta and the Pipa Initiative (2023) indicates that “among the organizations that did not obtain resources via calls for proposals, collectives or social projects that are not legally formalized lead with a percentage of 58.33%, followed by formalized community-based or peripheral organizations, with 45.16%.” Since non-formalization is a common characteristic among social movements, the lack of a legal registration (or a CNPJ) and other bureaucratic requirements (such as minimum time of operation, audits, among others) therefore ultimately constitute a barrier to accessing resources, as explained by a person participating in the focus group:

“for less institutionalized groups, organizational structures will always be less capable of competing for resources. the more structured they are, the greater their access to those resources. this applies not only to philanthropy, but also to public calls for proposals. the demands of these calls for proposals often make it impossible for smaller organizations, which do not have qualified technical personnel, to participate.” (Social movement activist interviewed)

The field of activity is another factor that tends to influence the movements’ access to financial resources via public calls for proposals. According to a survey by Prosas (2019), most calls for proposals in Brazil are aimed at the cultural and creative industries. Adding up the calls for proposals tied to awards, competitions and curatorships of artistic segments, plus festivals, the study shows that 61.1% of all calls for proposals are focused on culture. The same trend emerges when analyzing areas of interest: 64.2% of the calls for proposals focus on arts and culture. In this sense, it can be inferred that movements tied to arts and culture tend to find a greater offer of calls for proposals, as compared to other areas. In contrast, the Defense of Rights was the focus area of only 4.7% of the calls mapped, which highlights how certain agendas, especially those tied to social justice and human rights, remain uncovered. It is also worth noting that these calls for proposals were launched by actors from community and independent philanthropy, rather than traditional and mainstream philanthropy.

However, the greater availability of calls for proposals in certain areas is not a guarantee that the movements will be able to access those instruments. In addition to these bureaucratic requirements, the complexity and time needed to fill out application forms is also an important barrier. According to the study Small NGOs and fundraising via calls for proposals (2023), organizations invest an average of 12 hours per month in the attempt to raise funds via calls for proposals. Considering the voluntary nature of a large portion of social movements, dedicating time to study calls for proposals, collective conception, writing and presenting the proposal requires a significant time investment by the people involved (especially black women and other minoritized groups) who need to work double or triple shifts to ensure their livelihoods.

The study Peripheries and Philanthropy (2023) also highlights the reality of the organizations that face “an obstacle in terms of information and the promotion of this type of funding option, insofar as these calls for proposals are not widely publicized. It is therefore necessary to reflect not only on new ways to access funding, but also on ways to publicize it” (p. 34).

One strategy to overcome these barriers, according to a social movement representative interviewed, is to promote dialogue between funders and movements:

“bringing funders and funding recipients parties closer together, with a team of people who understand the reality of those being served, makes a difference. dialoguing with those who design the calls for proposals cuts distances, helping the organization to connect what the call for proposals asks for with what it does.”
(Social movement activist interviewed)

Actively listening to the movements, however, is still a distant reality for traditional philanthropy. For an effective partnership with social movements, the review of the calls for proposals must, therefore, go beyond cutting back on criteria and bureaucracy. It must ensure that the call for proposals is, in fact, the result of a process of collective construction between funders and movements, in which transparency, dialogue and, above all, a close look at power dynamics are central components in this journey.

Other factors that influence fundraising are linked to the size of the social movements, as well as the availability of activists to develop these activities. Larger movements tend to have more resources and people dedicated to mobilizing and raising funds.

This process is facilitated when movements have people with previous experience in third sector organizations, who use their skills to write projects and thereby contribute to the movement’s activities.

the network is crucial to support fundraising. money attracts money. the fewer resources [your movement] has, the worse your chances are. in my case, i started writing projects to raise money for film production. [to raise funds] you need to dominate the language of calls for proposals and projects. those who already have this knowledge ultimately raise more funds.
(Social movement activist interviewed)

However, as another movement representative interviewed stated, “many grassroots movements often lack people who are proficient in the necessary tools for fundraising, which creates an inequality in the sector.” Moreover, for many, accessing calls for proposals is still a distant strategy that requires not only considering actions for gaining access to such instruments, but also training and support from activists and movement representatives.

Although it is a widespread mechanism among social movements, findings from the bibliographic review indicate that fundraising through calls for proposals is not unanimous among these groups. For certain groups, maintaining self-financing strategies and, consequently, reducing their fundraising activities through calls for proposals, is the result not only of economic, linguistic or structural barriers, but also a political decision, to distance the movements from the imposition of agendas by funders, which is reflected in the general lines of their calls for proposals, as explored in the previous section.

Another consideration is the tendency towards “professionalization” and “bureaucratization” that the movements face in their fundraising activities (Passa Palavra, 2010). By dedicating efforts to responding to calls for proposals, the people responsible would be increasingly involved in bureaucratic and administrative activities tied to the agenda and the demands of the funders, in detriment of their involvement in the movements’ coordination and political and training activities. Essentially, fundraising through calls for proposals would put the movements’ political coordination processes at risk, while reinforcing dependency and the distancing from movements’ asks (Souza and Damazio, 2018).

Another point to consider is the trend towards “professionalization” and “bureaucratization” that movements face in their fundraising activities (Passa Palavra, 2010). By dedicating efforts to responding to calls for proposals, those responsible would increasingly find themselves involved in bureaucratic and administrative activities tied to the agendas and demands of funders, at the expense of engaging in the movements’ political coordination and educational spaces. Essentially, fundraising through calls for proposals would put the political coordination processes of movements at risk by reinforcing dependency and distancing them from grassroots demands (Souza and Damazio, 2018).

In light of this scenario, how can philanthropy reduce the barriers to the movements’ access to calls for proposals? How can fundraising through this instrument be an emancipatory process and strengthen the autonomy of these groups, instead of an instrument that reproduces logics of control and imposes agendas?

Fiscal sponsors and “hidden CNPJs”

Another element present in fundraising strategies are fiscal sponsors — formalized organizations that receive and manage the resources donated (from both national and international donors) to the movements. Within this dynamic, movement representatives can either decide to create an association (or another legal entity), or establish partnerships with a formalized organization. This strategy is used by collectives and movements that, for whatever reason, chose not to formalize themselves. Bianca Santana, then a representative of Uneafro, gave an example of this dynamic at a panel organized within the context of the 11th GIFE Conference (2020):

“12 years ago, Uneafro created an association, a CNPJ, to handle the bureaucratic structure necessary for the movement, well aware of its independence. This legal figure remained hidden throughout the years, working for Uneafro, but also for other movements that lacked this bureaucratic structure.”

Other movements adopt similar practices. The Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) receives donations through the National Association of People Affected by Dams. In the same edition of the GIFE Conference, mentioned above, Andre Degenszajn, from the Ibirapitanga Institute, when highlighting the importance that funders consider the relationship between the movements and partner organizations and fiscal sponsors, states:

“Movements often rely on support from formalized organizations in order to receive resources. Our relationship [with the movement] is mediated by these organizations, which are often confused with the movement itself.”

However, in the current context of the growing attacks on civil society and the criminalization of social movements, the figure of fiscal sponsors has also been used as ammunition by far-right groups to direct accusations against movements. In the context of the MST CPI (Parliamentary Committee of Investigation), in 2023, Associação Brasil Popular (ABRAPO) was named the “CNPJ of the Landless Workers Movement,” being investigated for agreements made with Petrobras and the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) . No irregularities were found, but this accusation should be understood as an attack strategy by far-right groups against the MST and its leaders.

Given this context, some questions that remain for the field are: how can traditional philanthropy expand its knowledge of different strategies to raise and mobilize resources? How can traditional philanthropy actors develop, as part of their resource donation strategies, other financing mechanisms for groups that are not formally registered? What is the contribution of philanthropy in disseminating and reducing stigmas and attacks against the movements and their alternative funding strategies?



6

social movements
and brazilian
philanthropy:
the landscape of
movement funding
in brazil

In this section, we examine the relationship between social movements and Brazilian philanthropy, first addressing the situation of the private social investment (ISP)⁴ sector, also referred to in this study as traditional or mainstream philanthropy (involving family and corporate foundations).

Secondly, we will address the scenario and the role of community and independent philanthropy in supporting social movements in the fight for access to and recognition of rights.

Finally, we will discuss some possibilities as to why the actors in this type of philanthropy do not support (or support just a few) social movements.

Private social investment (ISP) and an overview of the lack of financial support for social movements in Brazil

The GIFE Census is the main study in the sector conducted with private social investment actors. Executed every two years, the census presents the main trends in the ISP sector. For this study, information related to the thematic areas of investment, audiences and grantmaking (financial support to third parties) will be strategic for our analysis.

Although the Census does not produce an in-depth analysis of the support of social movements, it does provide information that can help understand how ISP funding for these groups takes place, as well as other characteristics of this relationship.

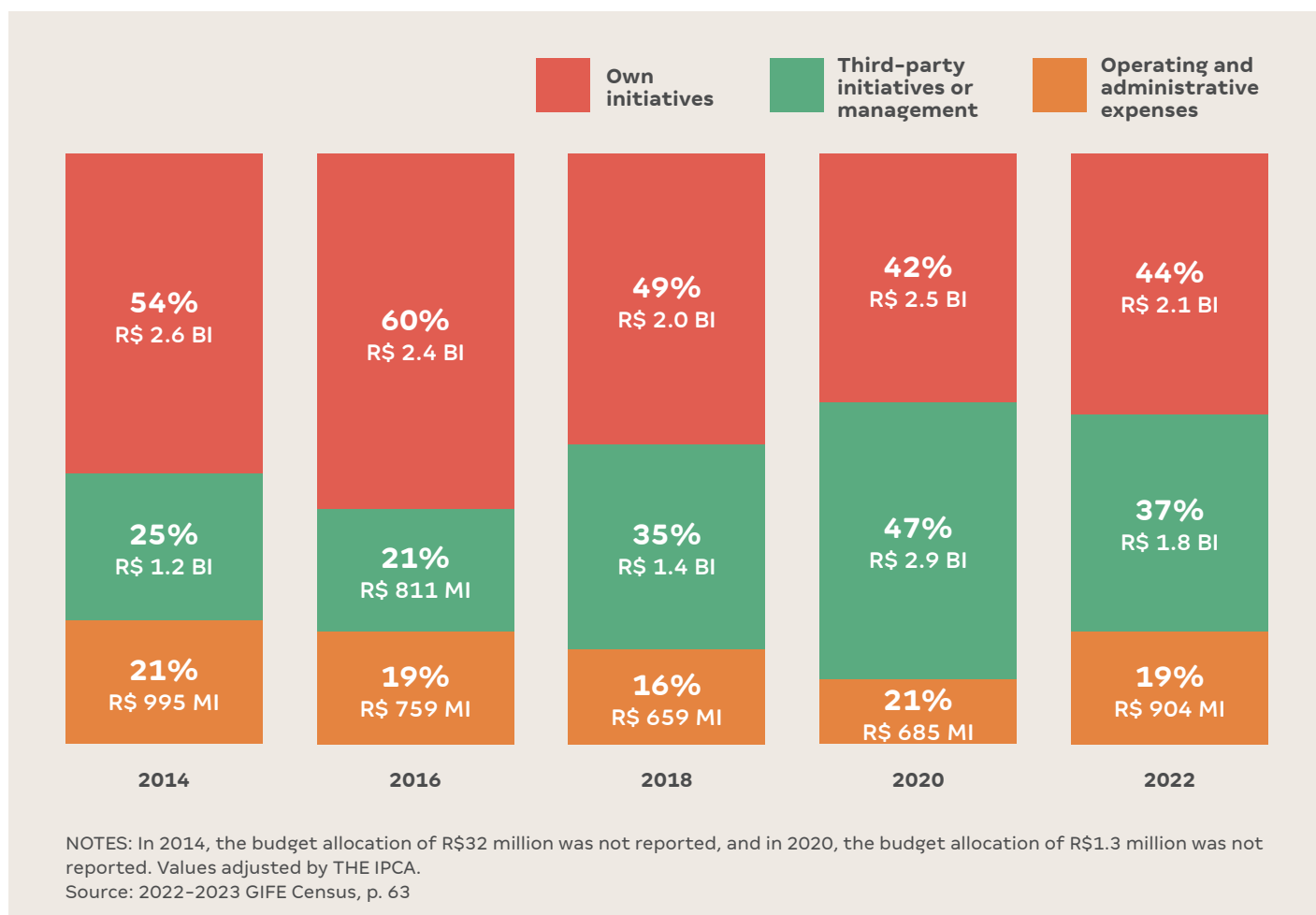
4 According to [the official GIFE \(Institutes, Foundations and Companies Group\) website](#), "Private Social Investment (PSI) is the mobilization of private resources for public purposes carried out in a planned, monitored, and systematic manner for social, environmental, cultural, and scientific initiatives of public interest. [...] The universe of social investment includes social actions carried out by companies, foundations and institutes of corporate origin or established by families, communities or individuals."

It is also worth noting that the definition of social movements adopted by the study as a category of analysis is unclear. In the 2016 survey (2017, p. 196), for example, social movements were included in the broader category of "civil society organizations" along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), collectives, cooperatives, residents' associations, associations and/or community and/or grassroots organizations. For this section, however, we will focus on data from 2018 onwards, when an explicit category was created for social movements ("social movements/collectives/networks").

The (low) volume of ISP financial resources allocated to social movements

The volume invested by Brazilian philanthropy is significant. In the last Census (2023), the total investment reached R\$4.8 billion. In 2020, however, the amount was even higher: R\$6.1 billion, influenced by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows, therefore, that there is an inherent capacity and potential in the field to invest and donate even more resources. However, another striking characteristic of traditional Brazilian philanthropy is that it is less of a donor and more of an implementer of its own projects. According to the 2022-2023 GIFE Census, 55% of the members who responded to the survey fit into the profile of being more of an executor. Added to this is the volume of resources allocated to initiatives managed by third parties: the historical series of data from the Census indicates that there is still in the private social investment field some resistance against donations – R\$1.8 billion of a total of R\$4.8 billion were allocated to third-party initiatives or management, representing 37% of the total. This shows a modest increase of 2% compared to the 2018 Census, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

GRAPH 2 – Total investment, by type of budget allocation (2014–2022)

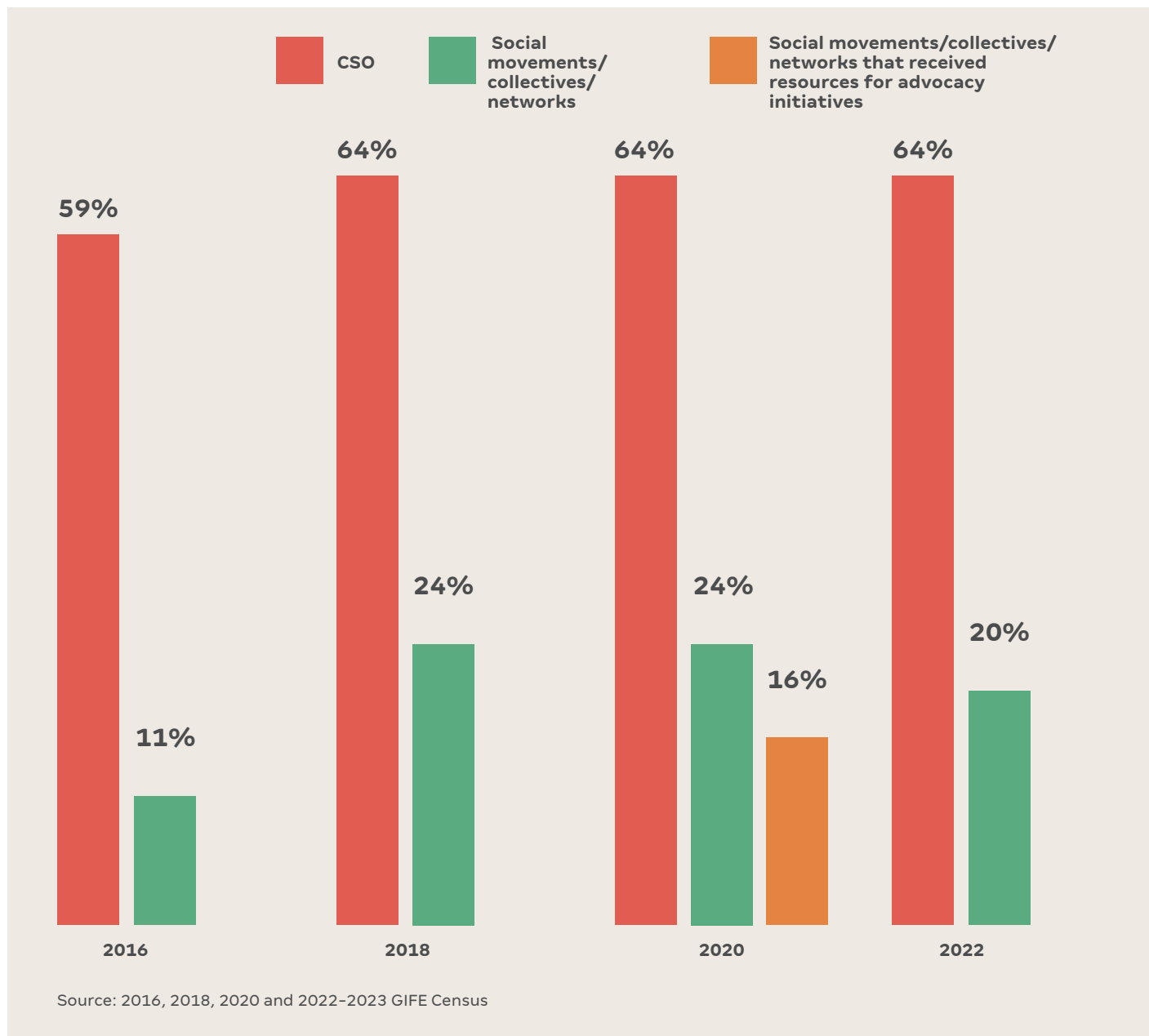


When looking at the types of third parties to which GIFE members transfer resources, we find a significant and growing diversity of actors. CSOs appear as the main one, since the 2018 survey, 64% of members confirmed that they transfer resources to CSOs.

More specifically in the category of social movements/collectives/networks, there was an increase between 2018 and 2022 in the mention of this group as a recipient of resource transfers by GIFE members — from

11% to 20%. In 2020, driven by support for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, social movements/collectives/networks were mentioned by 24% of respondents, with 16% specifically receiving resources for initiatives to fight COVID-19.

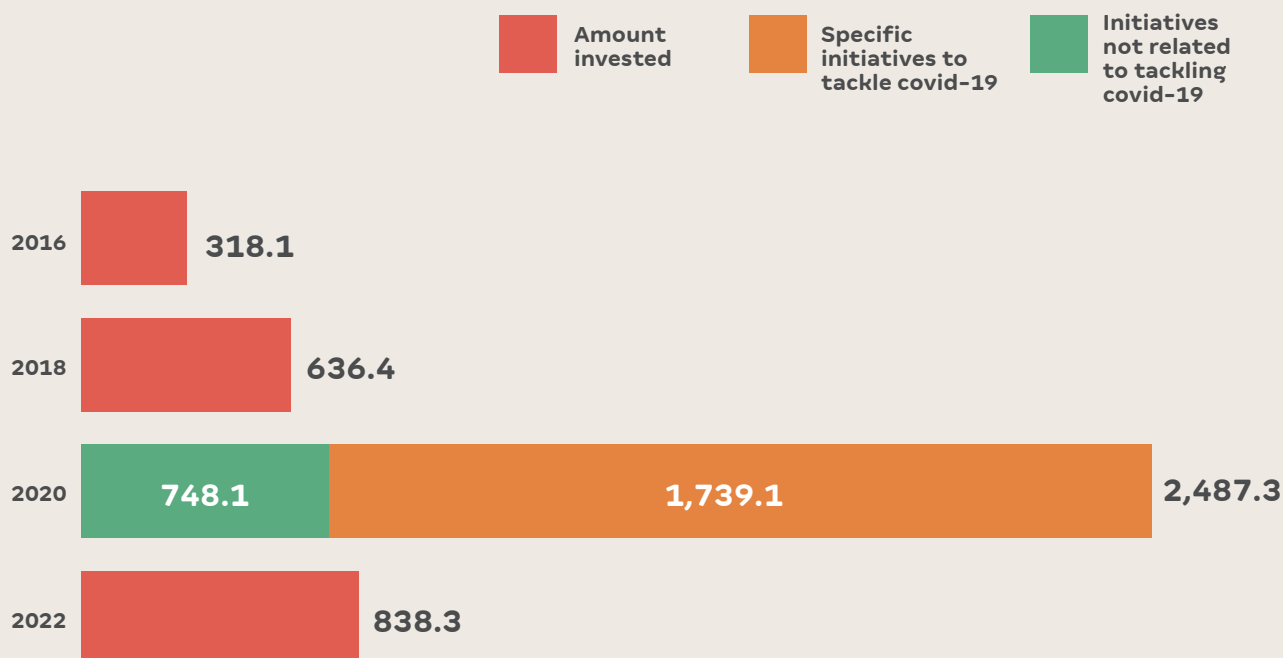
GRAPH 3 - % Organizations that transfer resources to CSOs and social movements/collectives/networks



Although this data seems to indicate a strong link between mainstream philanthropy and organizations and, to some extent, civil society movements, when looking at the volume of donations, the tendency towards low investments to support CSOs and even less to support grassroots organizations and social movements becomes clear (HOPSTEIN, PERES; 2021). According to the 2022 Census, the amount allocated to CSOs totaled R\$838 million⁵. Although the historical series, shown in the chart below, indicates an upward trend, it is notable that the volume of resources allocated to CSOs is not significant, only 17% of the total investment volume.

⁵ Out of this total, 196 million Reais came from tax incentives.

GRAPH 4 – Investment allocated to CSOs (2016–2022)



Source: 2022–2023 GIFE Census, p. 73

Regarding the number of donations to CSOs reported by members, the total was 6,762. As the report also highlights, however, this does not mean that this was the total number of civil society organizations supported, since different members may have donated to the same organization. Even if these were unique figures, GIFE members would reach around 0.76% of the total number of CSOs in the country⁶, indicating a tendency to concentrate resources in a small number of organizations and the low capillarity of the Brazilian private social investment. The Pipa Initiative study reinforces this by indicating that, among the peripheral organizations and collectives that responded, only 4.2% reported receiving resources from philanthropy,

as previously shown in Graph 1. A statement from a social movement representative who was interviewed also reinforces this tendency towards concentration in certain types of civil society organizations:

“ngos dispute this space of resource mobilization [with the movements]. there is a difference in the mobilization of resources for social movements and ngos. i will qualify it as a dispute, not in the sense of a conflict, but rather in the sense that ngos have an advantage as compared to social movements. [...] in ngos, there are people who are much better prepared to write projects and to be present in spaces.” (Social movement activist interviewed)

⁶ The CSO Map counts 879,326 civil society organizations as active until 2023. Available at: <https://mapaosc.ipea.gov.br/post/186/mapa-brasil-tem-879.326-organizacoes-ativas-ate-2023>

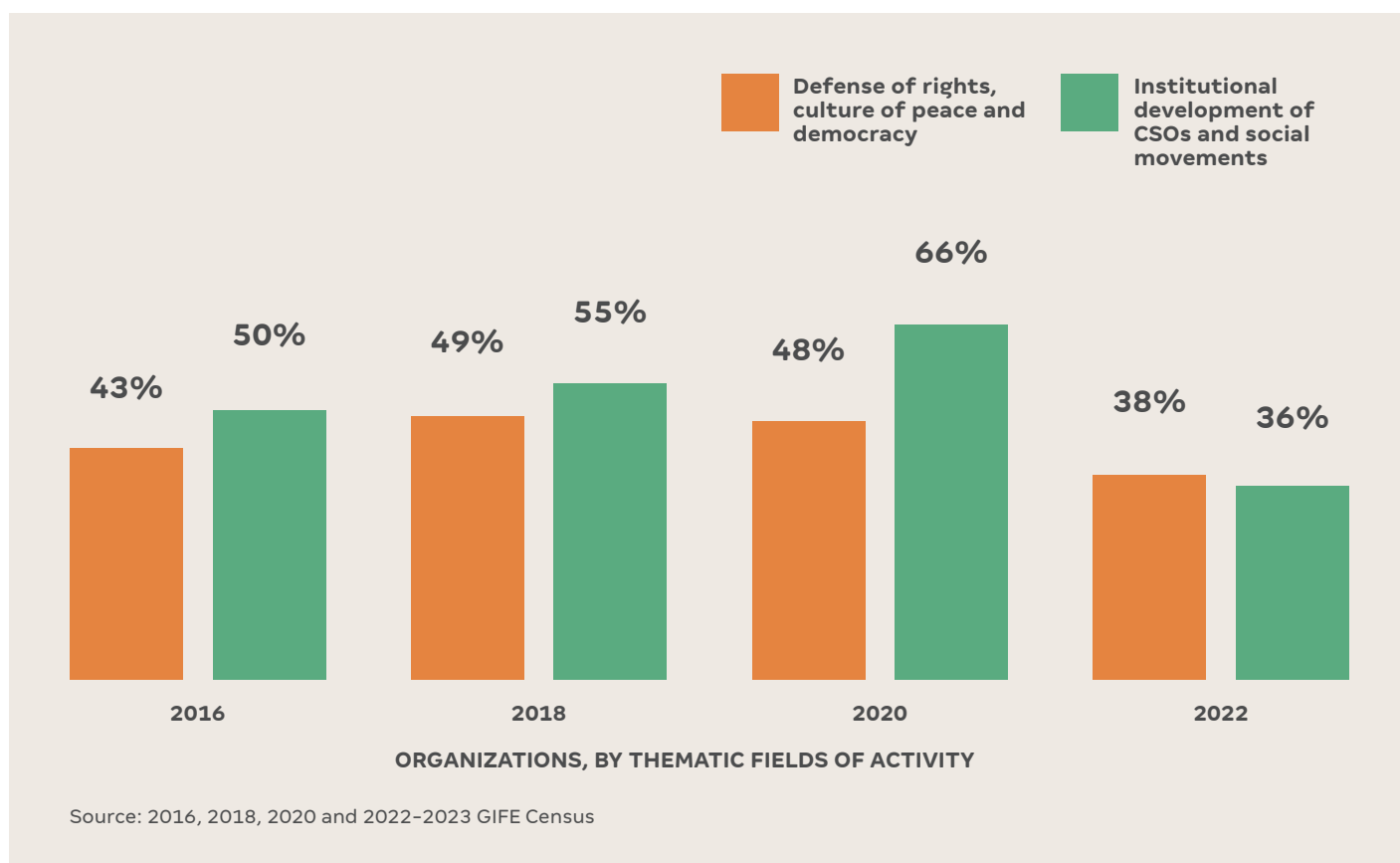
Beyond funding: the disconnect between private social investment and the social movements causes

In addition to the volume and scope of resources, the GIFE Census provides additional data that shows the disconnect between private social investment and the social movements' agendas and causes.

The study reveals that education continues to be the main area of investment, with 42% of the total resources invested, equivalent to R\$1.9 billion. However, support for areas such as "Defense of rights, culture of peace and democracy" and "Institutional development

of CSOs and social movements" has fallen in recent years. In relation to the volume of resources invested, in 2022, support for these areas was reduced, with only 5.2% of the total investment directed to the defense of rights and 3.6% to the institutional development of CSOs and social movements. The graph below shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that they support "Defense of rights, culture of peace and democracy" and "Institutional development of CSOs and social movements" in the latest GIFE Census studies.

GRAPH 5 - % organizations by areas of activity⁷



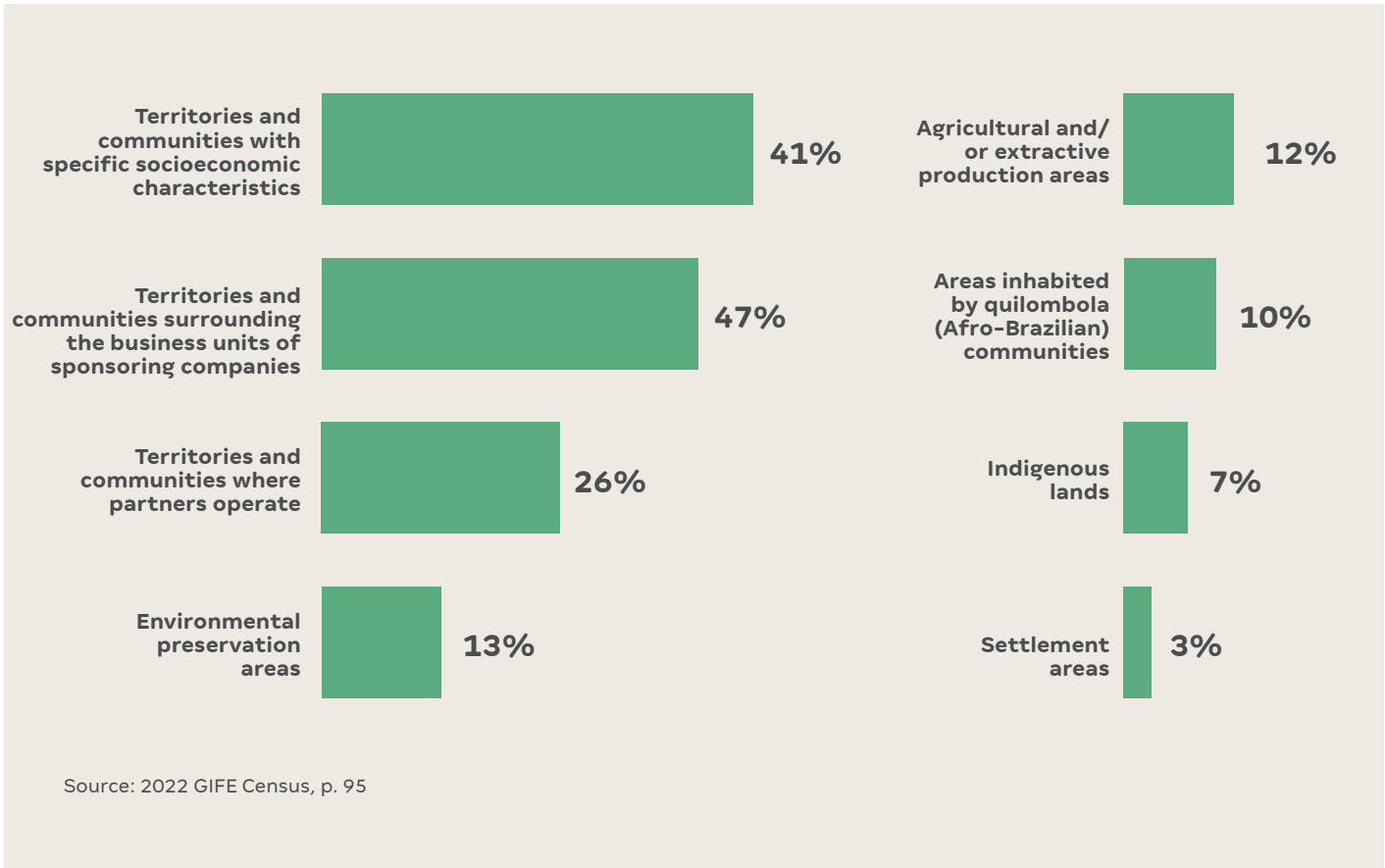
⁷ In the 2022-2023 Census, respondents were also asked about their priority area of activity. Only 9% stated "Defense of rights, culture of peace and democracy" as a priority, while 4% stated "Institutional development of CSOs and social movements".

This decline may reflect the disconnect between philanthropy and issues that are crucial to Brazilian democracy, especially amid the polarized and violent political scenario for civil society. Although there is a growing presence of independent philanthropy, which supports these causes more solidly, traditional philanthropy still shows little commitment to these issues. Institutional philanthropy, if it is indeed committed to defending democracy and the rights that have been secured, cannot exempt itself from allocating resources to these agendas. As one of the independent philanthropy managers interviewed pointed out, “Philanthropy in recent years has been more open to the rights agenda. But this was not by chance. It was

because there was an advocacy movement to make this happen.”

The geographical concentration of private social investment is also notable. Most investments are made in territories with specific socioeconomic characteristics and close to company headquarters, predominantly in the Southeast region. There is little support for critical areas such as environmental preservation, quilombola communities, indigenous lands, and rural settlements. So, there is an urgent need of increased support for the fight for land, which is at the core of the social movements’ advocacy work in Brazil and remains largely neglected by traditional philanthropy.

GRAPH 6 - Organizations, by direct action territories (2022)



Finally, there is also a marginal presence of social movement representatives on the boards of member organizations. In 2023, only 7% of company boards, 4% of family foundations, and 17% of independent foundations and institutes included representatives from CSOs or social movements. This low rate of participation suggests a limited influence of these groups in the decision-making about the allocation of resources, especially among traditional philanthropic actors. International data, such as the Building Movement Project report (2023), confirms that, although foundations often consult the leaders of social movements, this does not translate into a corresponding increase in financial support, evidencing an intention merely to extract knowledge from these movements.

The question arises what is behind this gap between institutional philanthropy and social movements?

What explains the lack of ISP funding for social movements in Brazil?

From bureaucratic and compliance obstacles to different visions of the country, there are a number of barriers that impact the relationship between the ISP and social movements in Brazil. The obstacles presented in this section are far from being the only ones regarding the relationship between these two groups of actors. The aim, therefore, is not to offer an exhaustive list of all the challenges, but rather to present a set of them, as elements for the field to reflect on in order to establish new bases for the relationship between philanthropy and social movements.

To analyze the challenges of resource mobilization faced by social movements in the context of traditional philanthropy, it is important

to examine the origins and history of these groups. Jessica Sklair, in her 2021 book *Brazilian Elites and their Philanthropy: Wealth at the Service of Development*, questions the role of philanthropy as a reproducer and legitimizer of a project of global capitalism, driven and perpetuated by philanthropic elites in movements such as “philanthrocapitalism” and “social business and finance.”

Looking at the Brazilian context, Sklair argues that organized civil society grew and consolidated itself by focusing its actions on direct opposition to the Brazilian military dictatorship, while corporate and family philanthropy, self-styled ISP, emerged from a movement of the elite, interested in consolidating a development model along neoliberal lines. In this context, the resistance of elite philanthropists to engage in donations to civil society actors would have to do with the rejection of the development model defended by organized civil society, one that is aligned with social justice and access to rights agendas. As the author states,

“[...] there are deep historical and political tensions between elite philanthropy and the activities of Brazilian organized civil society. These tensions emphasize the dissociation between the aspirations of philanthropy for the future of Brazil, the alternative objectives of civil society actors and social movements in the countries, and what is at stake is the dispute between their different visions of national development” (Position 327, translated by the author)

The philanthropy representatives interviewed for this publication share the view that, historically, mainstream Brazilian philanthropy

does not finance the agenda of access to and defense of rights and, in general, socio-environmental justice and human rights.

“[according to the aspirations of traditional and elite philanthropy] it is not the transformation that the big movements are looking for, which leaves everyone out. they will never finance someone who will question that.” (Independent philanthropy manager interviewed)

There are reports, however, arguing that in recent years national funders have been allocating more resources to issues related to political disputes, but even so, and as evidenced by the GIFE Census data presented above, very timidly.

“in the past, philanthropy was much more focused on cultural and educational issues. the human rights agenda, which is very much involved in the sphere of conflict and class struggles, was not embraced by traditional philanthropy. philanthropy focused more on social assistance, supporting important causes, but did not support social movements or agendas such as human rights and the fight to combat violence against leaders. this was gradually assimilated by philanthropy. today, some areas of philanthropy still have a hard time supporting the rights agenda.” (Independent philanthropy manager interviewed)

This timidity of philanthropy in relation to progressive agendas is not unique to Brazil. According to Anand Ghiridharadas (2020), the bias of the elite towards their own solutions is a global problem.

“They believe that their solutions deserve to be at the forefront of social change. They may join or support movements initiated by ordinary people to fix aspects of their society. More often, though, these elites start initiatives of their own, taking on social change as though it were just another stock in their portfolio or a corporation to restructure. Because they are in charge of these attempts at social change, the attempts naturally reflect their biases.” (2021, p. 3)

The priorities of Brazilian philanthropy need to be viewed in this light. Private social investment has historically prioritized the education agenda without a critical lens that takes into consideration issue of rights and equitable access of minoritized populations. As a result indigenous or *quilombola* education projects are underfunded while ISP funding continues to reinforce meritocratic and neoliberal models of education. In other words, we need to ask, in what way would support from private social investment be “naturally mirroring their biases” or actually promoting collective and emancipatory solutions for education, based on social justice and human rights?⁸

The social movements’ work creates tension with the agendas of mainstream Brazilian philanthropy, which causes us to reflect on its role as both the source and part of the problem.

When discussing the challenges in supporting social movements by traditional Brazilian philanthropy, we must emphasize, above all, the differences in the political agendas of these sectors. Those discrepancies ultimately

⁸ More in-depth studies on private social investment donations in Brazil could provide more input for this debate.

create barriers to funding, reflected in the lack of trust, the creation of different bureaucratic obstacles, among others that make it difficult for the movements to access these resources.

The lack of trust in civil society and social movements

Trust (or the lack thereof) has been a growing debate in the field of Brazilian philanthropy. Movements such as Trust-Based Philanthropy, #ShiftThePower, among others, have influenced the debate and encouraged actors in the field to rethink their practices in order to build trust with their donors.

In Brazil, the lack of trust in civil society and social movements is associated with corruption and embezzlement scandals. Since the early 2000s, civil society has been systematically subjected to a process of criminalization, including in the context of the NGO CPIs (Parliamentary Committee of Investigation), the first of which took place in 2005 and the second in 2023. This is certainly significant and decisive in explaining the atmosphere of distrust, since the problems with the sector's reputation and trajectory have had negative repercussions, instilling in the public opinion (encouraged by the media) the idea that social organizations are mere tools to launder money, generating a discrediting atmosphere in the work done by civil society and permanently damage the trust of both the population and the funders (HOPSTEIN, PERES, 2021).

Cases such as the "Anões do Orçamento" scandal, the Brazilian Legion of Assistance (MORTARI, 2022), the Brazilian Red Cross⁹, among others, have tarnished the reputation

of organizations in the country's social sector, which have been wrongly associated with corruption. More recently, as noted before, the rise of the far right in the country has intensified the disinformation campaigns and attacks on civil society organizations and movements, directly impacting the public's image of civil society organizations, movements and collectives.

Some field research has also examined this. Launched in 2022, the study entitled "*Percepção de brasileiros/as sobre a sociedade civil*" ("The Brazilians' Perceptions of civil society") shows that, "even though unaware of the specificities of the sector, the population has a positive assessment of civil society organizations. The study indicates that more than half of the people interviewed have a positive impression of the work of these institutions: 21% attribute this to knowing the work done by the organizations well, 19% to the testimonies they have seen by people who were supported by them, and 16% to trusting the integrity of the people who are part of a civil society organization"¹⁰. The study entitled [Doação Brasil](#) indicates that the trust inspired by NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic has not endured — it dropped from 41% in 2020 to 31%. According to the study, "despite the worsening image among Brazilians, the level is still higher than in 2015 (26%)".

Regarding private social investment, according to the 2022-2023 GIFE Census, "reliability, transparency and knowledge of the issues in which they operate are the main criteria adopted by social investors when selecting the supported CSOs" (p. 72). On the other hand, when considering the difficulties faced to support CSOs, the "difficulty to monitor and evaluate the initiatives" (50%) and the "weak management capacity/low capabilities of the

⁹ <https://exame.com/mundo/cruz-vermelha-admite-desvios-de-doacoes-de-ate-r-25-milhoes/>

¹⁰ <https://gife.org.br/pesquisa-revela-que-mais-da-metade-da-populacao-tem-avaliacao-positiva-de-organizacoes-da-sociedade-civil/>

CSOs seeking support” (47%) are among the main reasons. It is also worth noting that 11% of the respondents reported “difficulty to establish relationships of trust and good communication with the CSOs/difficulty to find reliable and transparent CSOs.” These reasons also indicate, in addition to the political and social context, the extent to which the trust in these actors is determined by their compliance with certain standards of organizational efficiency and management or, in other words, by the questioning of the management capacity of civil society groups. In this sense, social movements, whose structures often deviate from the expected models, tend to face even more distrust.

Formalization as a condition for support

The requirement of legal registration (CNPJ) for a minimum period is a recurring rule in calls for proposals promoted by private social investment organizations. So, formalization is seen by funders as a testament to the technical capacity and guarantee of good resource management by the supported organization. For companies and corporate institutes, especially, formality is seen as essential to adhering to their sponsors’ compliance rules.

The agenda of support for the institutional development of social sector organizations has also influenced the debate on formalization. Although a long-standing demand of the sector, the COVID-19 pandemic was a milestone in terms of the broadening of the debate on the institutional development of civil society organizations based especially on flexible, unrestricted and multi-year donations, as well as through training, legal support, among other demands identified by organizations in their maturing process. Institutional development is also associated with the increased potential to raise funds, reinforcing the centrality not

only of formalization in this process, but also of a response to management and performance standards that are more interesting and attractive to more traditional donor organizations.

In the experience of one of the interviewees, this pressure for formalization has ultimately brought new challenges:

“when we became an ngo (with a cnpj), we were unable to raise more funds. raising funds became more bureaucratic due to the level of institutionalization. we did not know we had to pay taxes and we got into legal trouble.” (Social movement activist interviewed)

However, this view of institutional development disregards other forms of association that organizations and social movements can take on, many of which are even linked to “informality.” In this sense, in what way are the debates on institutional development currently promoted in the field of philanthropy actually willing to consider this diversity in civil society? And, among those that do wish to formalize themselves, are they provided the proper support for this process?

For the philanthropy practitioners interviewed, formalization was also mentioned as an obstacle to the support of social movements. As one of the interviewees stated:

“i don’t think that philanthropy predominantly supports these movements. it supports them very little, and when it does, it is through intermediaries. in addition, there is the whole issue of supporting social movements that do not have a cnpj and all the necessary compliance. supporting social movements is much more

complex and complicated. if we have already left so many civil society organizations out for bureaucratic issues, that applies even more so to social movements.” (Traditional philanthropy manager interviewed)

One interviewee, on the other hand, reiterates the importance of reducing barriers to allow the movements to access resources:

“in the communities in low-income areas, most of the leaders work as activists without receiving a salary, as there are no projects that pay those people for their work. the political advocacy of rubber tappers, indigenous people, quilombolas, and associations in low-income areas of the city is done by fragile organizations, which are at the base of militancy. demanding certain administrative and financial rules of these fragile organizations is very harsh and does not contribute to the advocacy agenda. so, one challenge is to create specific rules for managing resources, allowing these organizations to operate in their territories without major constraints. when there are too many demands and strict rules, you end up criminalizing the group, which may not know how to use the money according to the rules imposed.” (Independent philanthropy manager interviewed)

The philanthropy managers interviewed recognize that there are ways and alternatives in place to ensure that these resources reach non-formalized groups, recognizing in independent philanthropy actors, as we will see below, a mechanism for distribution and access, without bureaucracy and the imposition of agendas. In this sense, the experience of

independent philanthropy actors, showing the importance of facilitating access to resources by non-formalized groups, is crucial, respecting even those who choose not to formalize their operations. Institutionalization is not seen as the only path to social transformation.

The issue of the difficulties to support non-formalized groups is even more flagrant when it comes to human rights advocates. According to the report *Understanding Activism: How international NGOs, Foundations and others can provide better support to social movements* (2017), by Rhize, the differences in donor approaches, depending on whether the grantee is an organization or an individual, tend to impose even more barriers to the access of resources by activists. Another finding of the study shows that this support is usually given to people in leadership positions, limiting access to resources for emerging leaders.

Brazilian institutional philanthropy is still afraid to take risks, preferring to support organizations and movements with a longer history in the field. Although the experience of older movements and leaders should be honored and celebrated, the support of social movements has to be based on the understanding that social transformations are complex and require time. Furthermore, changes in context and other factors can influence the emergence of new movements, which continue and expand on the different fights for recognition and access to rights. Ensuring resources for the formation of new movements and leaders (and also for their protection) is a crucial step towards the strengthening of civil society.

“We are living in a scenario where social movements are being criminalized. At this time, it is even more important to strengthen our relationship

with the field of philanthropy. [...] This also means providing a safety net for those who are most vulnerable today and for social movements that are so exposed.” (Bianca Santana, 2020)

The concentration of resources in formalized organizations

The “competition” for resources between movements and formalized organizations was mentioned as another challenge by focus group participants, in addition to being empirically observed in the practice of donors. For the movement representatives consulted, formalized organizations are considered a priority for mainstream and international philanthropy because they comply with and adapt more easily to the bureaucratic demands of the funder. This perception becomes clear in the statement of a focus group participant:

“the practice of donations and investments should be streamlined, to strengthen the organizations in their work. today, philanthropy is very much geared towards financing already structured organizations. they often romanticize the work and actions of territorial organizations. that is why i use pipa data¹¹ a lot to oppose these spaces in philanthropy. if philanthropy followed the concept [of love for humanity], there would be less inequality. but since it is currently governed by the logic of profit, the path to prosperity is made more difficult” (Social movement activist interviewed)

Another interviewee also highlights that:

“groups that are less institutionalized are in worse shape to compete for resources. the more you participate in more structured organizations, the greater your access to those resources will be. this applies not only to philanthropy, but also to public calls for proposals. often, the requirements of these calls for proposals make it impossible for smaller organizations, which lack qualified technical staff, to participate.” (Social movement activist interviewed)

In turn, it can be said that institutional racism is visibly reproduced in the context of philanthropy, given that organizations led by black people have fewer opportunities to access resources. According to an activist interviewed:

“[...] philanthropy has always been seen as welfare-based. white organizations with much more access and technical staff are the ones that access the money.” (Social movement activist interviewed)

In this sense, it is essential that philanthropy promote more intentional efforts to decentralize the resources, recognizing the contribution of organizations and movements of different sizes and profiles in the fight for the defense of rights.

Measuring of the impact of social movements

Also linked to the demands for formalization and institutionalization, demands from traditional philanthropy for the implementation of impact measurement systems in civil society organizations have intensified in recent years.

¹¹ Reference to the study Peripheries and Philanthropy, previously mentioned in this report.

As part of this process, the creation of theories of change, logical frameworks and indicator matrices are considered by funders as strategic tools to monitor (as well as control) the actions developed by the grantees, as they are able to impose models that are deemed more appropriate and effective to evaluate the results of the support. These results are presented through reports that serve as the basis to report back to the Boards of institutes and foundations about the presumed good and efficient use of the donation. A social movement representative interviewed reports the difficulty to meet these standards:

“when we manage to access philanthropic resources, the way we present the results often does not meet the required criteria: well-prepared reports, with quantified results. organizations that have this structure tend to provide much more elaborate reports than a grassroots social movement. in practice, when we evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions and the work carried out, the group with better structures generally produces better results.”
(Social movement activist interviewed)

The monitoring and evaluation systems promoted by traditional philanthropy are based on the predictability of the results. However, the work of civil society organizations and, specifically, social movements, show the contrary. As Hopstein, Mahomed and Kramer (2021) state, impact and result measurement tools limit the funders' visions of the long-term impacts involved in the social movements' causes. The complexity of the fight for rights is difficult to translate into logical frameworks. And, to support these groups, the funders must review their monitoring and evaluation practices and be willing to create processes and tools, in partnership with the

collectives, based on other premises. As Andre Degenszajn stated in a panel at the 11th GIFE Conference (2020):

“It is very difficult to predict in advance all the contours that those activities will take in the relationship established with the social movements. Much more important than defining the specific activities and the results expected of them is to agree on the meaning of the work that is being done.”

(In)visibility in the digital world

Social work and donations from mainstream philanthropy are also part of the communication and marketing strategies aligned with their sponsors, with the aim of increasing visibility and protecting their reputation. So, partnering with civil society organizations with a massive presence in the media and digital communication channels is an important asset for this philanthropy.

In a digital world governed by algorithms, social movements also seek to use these tools to publicize their actions. However, according to the people interviewed, this also represents a challenge. They believe that the visibility of the leaders of organizations and movements is conditioned to the number of followers on social media. The greater the reach on social media, the greater the chances of getting funding. Although this presence on social media does not necessarily mean legitimacy and relevance, this logic ultimately distances the movements that are less active on digital communication channels from new opportunities for philanthropic funding..

today, they only want to fund those who have followers on instagram. if you do not have many followers, you are not relevant. if you are not based in [urban] centers and in the southeast, you are unable to raise funds. the grassroots cannot raise funds because they lack visibility. the social media showcase is robbing the grassroots of the chance to get funding. **(Social movement activist interviewed)**

So, it would be up to traditional philanthropy to consider other approaches and paths to learn about and delve deeper into the work of the movements. The fight is not (only) fought on social media — it is also happening in the territories, councils, schools, public facilities, and countless other spaces. Visiting these movements and collectives in their own territories, inviting them to visit the institutions, and opening spaces for active and careful listening can be much more effective ways to come closer to the work of those actors, in addition to social media.

The (alleged) association with partisan politics

In a political and social context of a country that grows increasingly polarized, the tendency, which is also seen in other contexts, is that traditional philanthropy will take even fewer risks and increasingly avoid supporting agendas that could associate it with a certain side of the political spectrum, particularly concerning rights-related issues.

In this scenario, social movements tend to be associated with partisan political disputes, even though this association does not exist in many cases. The report *Philanthropy — The Future of Philanthropy in Brazil* (2023), launched by the BEJA Institute, highlights this:

“[...] while some would like to fund social movements, the prevailing view is that this would associate them with the left of the political spectrum, and, in some cases, especially for corporate philanthropy, that is difficult to do.” (p. 36)

In the same report, the field professionals and experts consulted consider it relevant for philanthropy to have a more active role in defending democracy, which many philanthropists still resist doing. An international philanthropy operator also reinforces this challenge, evidenced in donor due diligence processes:

one of the bigger studies done in what we know as due diligence is to determine whether there are policies involving politically exposed people, that is, whether there are any political associations. a great deal of care goes into this, because these [grantmaking] organizations do not like to expose themselves. [...] living in opposition to the political field is something we need to handle better, as it distances us from increasingly supporting the black movement, the women's movement, and their agents. **(International philanthropy operator interviewed)**

This view, however, demonstrates a lack of knowledge of the different ways in which social movements organize their fights, beyond the action in political parties, which the donors ignore. In other words, the fight for rights does not happen only in the political-partisan arena — it happens in different spaces, institutional and otherwise, and it needs to be recognized.

The lack of knowledge about the practices of social movements and the distancing from the territories

The lack of knowledge about the practices of social movements is a constant among actors in traditional philanthropy. This lack of knowledge, combined with distrust, makes it difficult to create spaces for dialogue and active exchange with social movement representatives. Instead of being seen as partners in the construction of initiatives and the promotion of social transformation, civil society organizations and movements are often placed in the position of “service providers.” Guided by a “verticalized” agenda, donations are often decided by board members, without knowing the demands and characteristics of the communities, reinforcing donation practices that are often disconnected from the practical reality of the human rights violations within the territory in which the organization operates, leading to the possibility of bureaucratization or the pursuit of goals that are not in line with reality.

In other words, traditional philanthropy remains distant from the social movements, and this distance is also felt by their representatives. According to the members of social movements interviewed, philanthropy has historically been characterized as a form of assistance, as a way for “the super-rich to deal with the supposed guilt of having a lot of money,” in addition to being “very distant from the grassroots and authoritarian.” So, the resources go where donors decide, to agendas that they believe make sense. The lack of knowledge of the dynamics that exist between the movements, as well as their real demands, is still very real. As the Black Feminist Fund (2022) report states:

“I think most funders do not recognize the true scope of the ‘instrumentalization’ of the true nature of social movements. They talk about building social movements, but philanthropy cannot build social movements. Real social movements emerge from the action of communities and local activists.”
(Translated by the author)

Another symptom of this distancing is the fact that many leaders who build social movements often do not even know what philanthropy means. So, thinking about strategies for closer communication and building bonds of trust and real relationships with movements is an essential condition for generating true connection between these two actors, which would require intentionality and political will, in addition to resources. For the people interviewed, given this scenario, there is also a collective analysis that believes that changing the profile of the people who operate philanthropy can help change this perspective for the sector and transform practices¹².

Another barrier mentioned by the interviewees is the role of social relationships and networks. Establishing relationships and personal ties are essential for fundraising. From the interviewees’ perspective, this becomes a hindrance, since they do not have access to or circulate in certain places where funders are present. Without this connection, fundraising becomes even more challenging. At the same time, it reinforces the gap that still exists between funders and movements, with the absence of spaces that actually intentionally foster the relationship between these two groups. The presence of social movements in spaces of power and decision-making in the field,

¹² It is important to be aware, however, of the tendency to impose the role of educator on these people, many of whom come from minoritized groups, adding a mental and workload.

without tokenism, is essential to address the power relations that exist in philanthropy, with movements contributing in a real way to decisions related to the allocation of resources for the fight for rights.

Brazilian philanthropy, however, goes far beyond the traditional, represented by corporate, family and company institutes and foundations. The diversity and plurality of the field in Brazil shows that there are indeed other actors in the field who are developing innovative mechanisms that seek to reduce barriers to access to resources for social movements and activists: community and independent philanthropy.

7

where are the resources to support social movements in brazil?

the role of community and
independent philanthropy
in supporting grassroots
communities and collectives
fighting for rights

In Brazil, there is a group of philanthropic organizations whose mission is to expand and democratize access to resources for civil society organizations, movements and collectives. Many of them having been created by social movements themselves, these organizations emerged as a direct response to the withdrawal of international donors in the early 2000s,

leaving a vacuum in the funding of civil society organizations. In this context, independent philanthropic organizations, many of which are now part of the Comuá Network, have positioned themselves as strategic funders of organizations and movements active in the human rights and social justice agendas.

BOX 1 - Independent philanthropy donor organizations

For Comuá Network (2023), independent philanthropy donor organizations, active in the areas of socio-environmental justice, human rights and community development, involve a diverse universe of organizations: “thematic funds, community funds and independent community foundations that operate in the field of grantmaking, that is, donating financial resources (direct donations) and non-financial resources (indirect donations) to various civil society initiatives — groups, movements, leaders, organizations, networks — in the areas mentioned above” (p. 9).

The independence of these actors is defined based on three aspects:

- Mobilization of resources through diverse sources (national or international, institutional or individual), without depending on a sponsoring company or family;
- Extensive knowledge of the fields of activity (actors, agendas, scenarios), in addition to the high capacity for coordination with actors and networks of civil society;
- Existence of governance and management structures that guarantee autonomy in decision-making processes.

For independent philanthropy organizations, partnership and building trust with civil society organizations, movements and collectives are central pillars of their work. They are also characterized by the political nature of their

donations, that is, their grantmaking *practices*¹³ are based on the “promotion of human, civil, social, economic and cultural rights, with special emphasis on the fight for access and recognition of rights of minoritized groups”

13 For Comuá, grantmaking is understood as: “A strategy that involves financial support – through direct resource donations – to foster the work of civil society organizations, collectives, groups, movements, and leaders. It is an ongoing practice that entails amplifying and enabling resources and new capabilities, broadening and strengthening their ability to act socially (in the broad sense of the term) and, consequently, strengthening Brazilian democracy.” (Brazilian Network for Social Justice Philanthropy, 2021)

(Comuá Network, 2023, p. 21).

The independent philanthropy organizations that make up the Comuá Network are strategic actors in promoting agendas linked to **community philanthropy and socio-environmental justice** and the transfer of power

in the field, such as the #ShiftThePower movement (#PoderParaAsComunidades).

BOX 2 - Community philanthropy and socio-environmental justice

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: can be defined as a form and force aimed at developing local resources, talents, capabilities and trust. It is a way of transferring power closer to the territories, so that local populations and actors have greater control over their own destiny¹⁴.

SOCIAL JUSTICE PHILANTHROPY: support – through direct and indirect donations – aimed at strengthening civil society movements, organizations and groups linked to social transformation, equal access, human and civil rights, the distribution of all aspects of well-being and the promotion of diversity and equality of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture and support for people with disabilities and neurodivergent people.

Although there are distinctions in which the definitions of community philanthropy point more towards form and those of social justice towards themes and audiences, we are aware that they are not dissociated in terms of field practices.

Reproduction: Mapping of independent philanthropy donor organizations, (Comuá Network, 2023, p. 21)

14 HODGSON; POND, 2018 apud PHILANTHROPY NETWORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, 2021a, p. 8.

Why does community and independent philanthropy support social movements?

Community and independent philanthropy in Brazil are characterized by a commitment to strengthen civil society. For community and independent philanthropy, social movements are central and integral parts of democratic processes, as actors that actually challenge the establishment and promote real social change. Therefore, grantmaking, for these philanthropies, goes far beyond the transfer of resources: it has to do with consolidating and defending the foundations of Brazilian democracy through support (financial or otherwise) for civil society.

In this context, supporting social movements is, first and foremost, **a recognition and appreciation of the contribution of their work to the consolidation of the democratic field in Brazil and access to rights**. As the manager of an organization that donates to community and independent philanthropy who was interviewed said:

“social movements are crucial, because we cannot think of a sovereign and democratic country without the active participation of civil society. [...] i want to emphasize the importance of social movements as collective subjects that exert political pressure in an organized, coordinated manner. these movements force the state to be more democratic, raise their voices so that society becomes more inclusive, and strengthen democracy.” (Manager of an independent philanthropy donor organization)

Some of the interviewees also identified an important challenge in terms of the funding

of agendas tied to the fight for rights, social justice, and human rights. A scenario of scarcity of resources that has worsened even more with the pandemic and years of governments that not only cut funding, but also criminalized civil society organizations. In this sense, one manager who was interviewed noted:

“many groups were greatly weakened by the pandemic, many have shut down and others returned with few resources, after losing funding during the previous government. as a result, many groups have shut down and are vulnerable. this is a challenge: how can we keep the political fight with the grassroots for the defense of rights if the groups are becoming more fragile? these groups have to be strong at the grassroots level so that the fight for rights can be strengthened.” (Manager of an independent philanthropy donor organization)

In this context, support for social movements is even more strategic, with community and independent philanthropy actors often being the only donors to these groups. Donating to these actors is, therefore, **a political act**, and, as stated by an international philanthropy operator interviewed, an act of “understanding oneself as a supporter of a movement, and not necessarily the protagonist.”

How does this support for social movements manifest in the field of community and independent philanthropy?

Principles and practices of independent philanthropy in supporting social movements in Brazil

For the Comuá Network (2021), community philanthropy practices are related to the

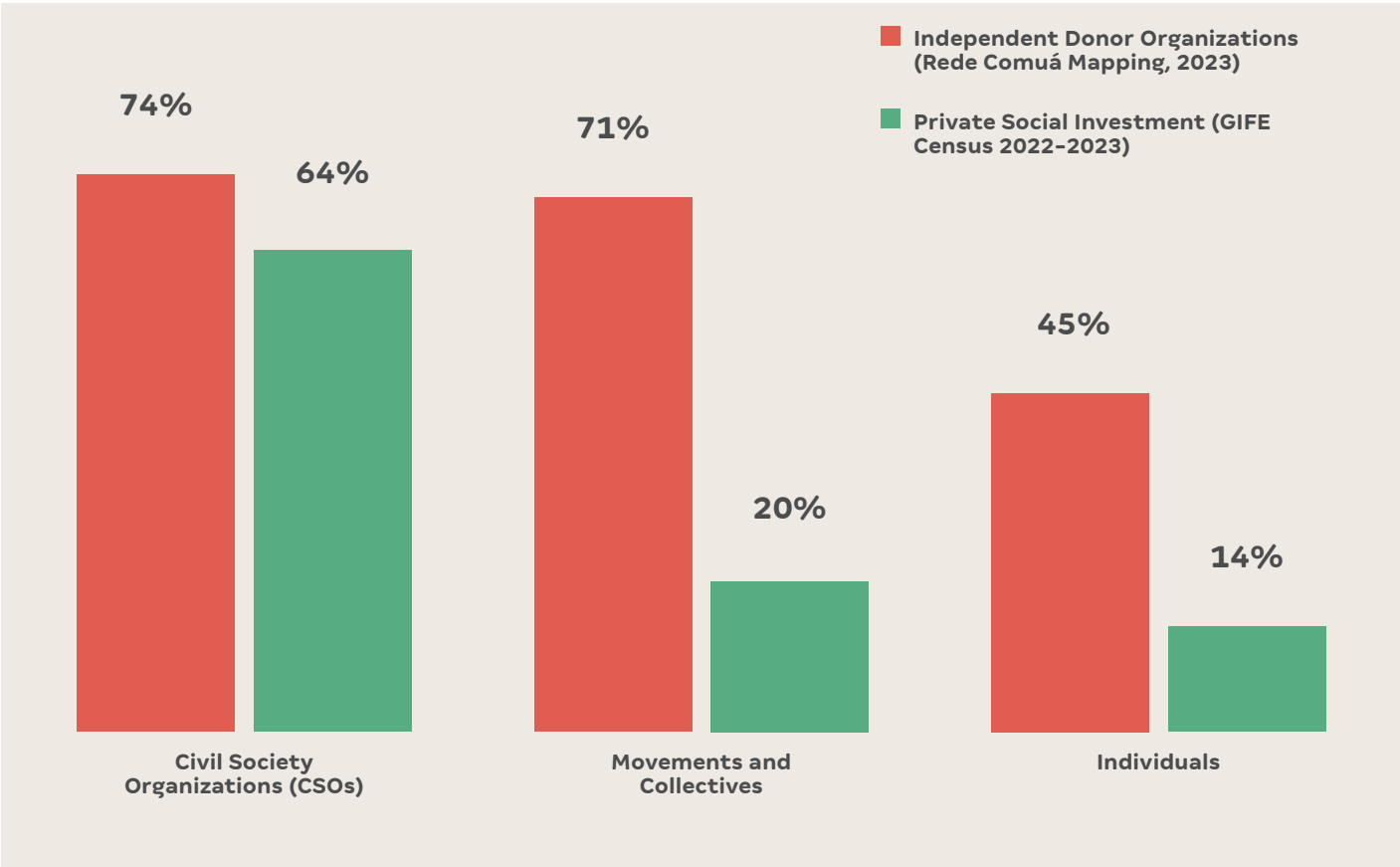
donation of resources to strengthen civil society organizations, the fight for access to rights, especially for historically marginalized groups, and democracy. Independent and community philanthropy is part of a logic of power transfer and embraces the complexity involved in the fight for access to and defense of rights. It does not intend to install “ready-made and scalable” models; on the contrary, it seeks to create and adapt financing mechanisms that better dialogue with the demands and needs of civil society actors, including social movements.

“when we open a call, we know that money is tight. but, in this process, we talk to the people and movements involved to

understand what is most urgent and necessary. and we translate these needs into the call.”
(Manager of an independent philanthropy grantmaking organization interviewed)

This becomes evident when analyzing the target audiences to whom the resources are directed. As shown in the graph 7 below, movements and collectives as well as individuals¹⁵ are not considered as priority target groups for private social investors in Brazil, highlighting the difference in support for social movements by independent philanthropy organizations in relation to institutional philanthropy..

GRAPH 7 – Target audiences (Mapping of independent grantmaking organizations x GIFE Census 2022-2023)



15 However, it is not clear from the categorization adopted by the Census whether, for example, human rights advocates and activists would be included in this universe.

The practice of members of community and independent philanthropy involves, first of all, **the recognition and appreciation of the assets of the organizations and movements supported**. For community philanthropy, communities mobilize a wide range of assets and resources, which go far beyond the financial. The dedication of time, ancestral knowledge and knowledge of members of the territories, skills (technical, artistic, among others), relationship networks, spaces, materials, and lived experiences make up a complex set of assets and resources that community members mobilize to develop solutions to social challenges in their territories.

For Rao (2023), this holistic view of resources constitutes the logic of a new system, in which one begins to “influence and negotiate new forms of appreciation, collaboration, partnership based on mutual respect, dignity, integrity and a redistribution of power — the true basis of collaboration.” This logic is commonplace for social movements, as said by a social movement representative in a focus group statement when asked about the ideal scenario for philanthropic funding:

“the view [of movements] regarding resources is very different. resources are what sustain the community, such as rivers, native seeds, trees. [it is important] that these are considered as resources.”
(Social movement activist interviewed)

Recognizing the power of territories and communities means, above all, valuing and strengthening the **autonomy of supported organizations and movements**. Behind this logic lies the transfer of power, which guides the leading role of communities and territories in the conception and definition of the direction of the project and its management,

both in terms of decision-making power and resource management. And one cannot talk about supporting social movements without respecting the autonomy of these movements.

Another practice that differentiates community and independent philanthropy support in relation to movements is the **development of actions to strengthen local and community leaders and the community fabric**. In other words, these philanthropies look to the people who actually promote the struggle. By providing unrestricted resources to these movements, independent philanthropy organizations allow movements to value and, above all, care for their activists, assuming care as a political act and strengthening the resistance and struggle of these groups.

Support for these people takes on an even more strategic character when considering the current political and social context of the country. The election of a progressive government raises concerns about the depletion of civil society organizations, whose leaders leave institutions and movements to form part of the government’s technical and/or political framework. In this scenario, there is a risk of creating a power vacuum in the territories, which ends up being occupied by conservative, far-right leaders.

Another factor was raised by one of the interviewees, regarding the aforementioned criminalization and attacks on civil society leaders:

“i think one concern is the growing criminalization of leaders. many people are being persecuted in their communities, prevented from working, having to flee and asking for support to protect themselves. these leaders make a difference. so, we have the challenge of protecting them. how will these leaders continue to be protagonists

in their communities if they are being persecuted and victimized? this is a major challenge. although there is a more favorable scenario with the new government, the dangerous far-right continues to act in the territories, engaging in terrorism where the organizations operate. many leaders are receiving death threats, and several have already died. how can the fight

in brazil stay strong if many leaders are being undermined?"
(Independent philanthropy manager interviewed)

In this way, support to local leaders assumes a central role in the defense of democracy and the rights achieved by the different territories. Linked to this is the strengthening of the community fabric, collective actions and social participation, another key element for the

BOX 3 - Labora Fund (Brazil Human Rights Fund)

The Labora Fund is an initiative of Brazil Fund, in partnership with the Laudes Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Foundations. Its aim is to "strengthen and expand support for civil society's fight to defend workers' rights in Brazil."

The fund has so far launched two calls for proposals (in 2022 and 2024). In both cases, one of the work axes is "Proposals aimed at strengthening and institutionally developing grassroots organizations that work for decent work and/or social protection, and that are led by workers directly affected by the processes of precariousness and informality, aiming at their consolidation and the expansion of opportunities for these individuals to participate in labor movements."

The emphasis on recognizing the autonomy of organizations is also clear among the prioritized action strategies:

- o - "Political training and mobilization of workers, with the construction of common agendas and revitalization of the collective organization of workers";
- o - "Actions to strengthen social participation in decision-making processes, fostering the protagonism of historically marginalized groups in public spheres (committees, councils, working groups) and spaces for the formulation of civil society (forums, networks, national meetings)";

Learn more about the Labora Fund by clicking [here](#).

transfer of power. The experience presented below, from the Labora Fund (Labora – Fund for Decent Work), is an example of this, by explicitly supporting actions to strengthen social participation. This criterion is also commonly present in other calls for proposals from member organizations of the Comuá Network.

Another expression of this work is the direct support for environmental and human rights advocates. The bureaucracy imposed by institutional philanthropy makes it difficult for leaders, especially younger ones, to access resources that support their activism — from training activities, transportation, trips to conferences and events, and even their protection and security (physical and mental). Independent grantmaking organizations therefore act as central agents to ensure access not only to financial resources (including emergency resources), but also to a support network that includes other human rights organizations and rapid response funds.

Democratizing access to resources is another pillar of the work of independent donor organizations. Based on active listening of communities and movements, independent philanthropy has developed a series of innovative funding mechanisms that ensure that financial resources reach communities. Bureaucratic barriers are reduced, making it easier, for example, for informal movements to access adequate resources to develop their actions.

In addition to access to resources, accountability is also facilitated. According to the Mapping (2023), 81% of mapped organizations request financial and activity reports from their grantees. As organizations that also mobilize resources and need to be accountable to their funders, mapped organizations also face similar difficulties when it comes to reporting and accountability requirements. However, for their grantees, they seek to make these processes more flexible and adapt them, so

that “the process becomes empowering in itself and strengthens the grantee, instead of being punitive (with the cancellation of transfers, for example), a more common logic in mainstream philanthropy” (p. 80).

Finally, another practice of community and independent philanthropy is the **promotion of diversity and the participation of representatives of supported organizations and movements in decision-making processes/instances**.

Although the Comuá Network Mapping does not delve into information on the composition of governance boards, it does present data on the organizations’ boards of directors. According to the study, 87% of the mapped organizations have women on their boards, and 31% of the organizations have paid boards composed entirely of women. In terms of race, 1 in every 5 mapped organizations has exclusively black people on their boards.

As the Comuá Network mapping also states, “the majority (87%) of the mapped organizations also seek to include the contributions of leaders, communities and supported organizations in their decision-making processes” (p. 14). Community and independent philanthropy therefore put pressure on certain areas of power in the field, redefining councils as more associative, inclusive and more distributed instances of power, coming closer to the associative practices of social movements.

In short, community and social justice philanthropy practices demonstrate the collective intelligence, dialogue and trust behind support that is truly committed to social transformation. Independent grantmaking organizations are not mere “intermediaries” or “regranters”, but are part of a complex dynamic and a policy that involves coordination, knowledge, listening, and relationships.

“we are not an intermediary fund from the [global] south; we are a legitimate fund consisting of movements and we have to be seen that way. [...] you cannot do what [independent] funds do from the outside in; that is impossible. it is only possible when you are part of the movements and have a horizontal structure. if you are set up along the lines of international foundations, it becomes more difficult to have the level of flexibility and reach that is required.” **(Director of an independent philanthropy organization)**

In other words, it is these philanthropies, in the plural, that are supporting the resistance and the construction of other possible futures, in which civil society movements and organizations truly play a leading role.



8

conclusion:
supporting social
movements as a pillar for
future building

At both national and international levels, we observe a growing wave of attacks against hard-won rights as well as democracies under constant threat. According to the 2023 V-Dem report, the number of countries undergoing autocratization has risen to 42, compared to 13 in 2002. Meanwhile, the number of countries going through democratization processes has decreased—from 43 in 2002 to 14 in 2022. Additionally, the report states that 72% of the global population lives under autocracies.

In Brazil, although the perception of democracy as a better model than any other form of government is still relatively high (71%, according to a Datafolha survey), a downward trend has been observed in recent surveys. The attempted coup d'état, illustrated by the attack on the symbols of the three branches of government on January 8, 2023, is just one symptom of a process of erosion of democracy, orchestrated and driven by far-right groups. They use a series of tactics, including disinformation campaigns and fake news, to continue to discredit democracy as a political system.

The global democratic crisis and attacks on human rights demand an immediate and committed response from philanthropy. If Brazilian philanthropy is truly committed to social transformation, it must reassess its relationship with social movements. This effort must be intentional, political, and urgent. Threats to democracy and the rights that have previously been secured will not let up in the near future, and, more than ever, diverse efforts and resources must be mobilized to ensure resistance and struggle. It is essential to overcome distorted and monolithic views about movements, recognizing and supporting them in all their complexity and diversity. Only by opening spaces for active and careful listening, and delving deeper into the movements' causes and contributions,

can we promote a more effective and fair philanthropy.

Reviewing financing practices is strategic in this process. Expanding access to free, multi-year and flexible resources is imperative for these movements. As part of this process, institutionalization cannot be seen as the only path to social transformation, but one among many. More important than legal registrations and CNPJs, it is important to guarantee the safety, life and well-being of the activists of these movements. Funding the fight for rights is also about care — a perspective often neglected in the philanthropy field.

At the same time, investing in new movements and leaders is crucial for the future. A truly strategic philanthropy with a long-term vision is committed to supporting both established and emerging movements. Social transformations are complex and take time and patience. By fostering new leaders and movements, we are planting the seeds for a more just and equitable society in the future.

The construction of these possible futures depends on the daily struggle of those activists who dare to dream of other possible routes. Other worlds free of violence and discrimination. Other forms of collaboration, construction and partnerships. Other models of being and existing in the world, which include different bodies and knowledge in the definition of what it really means to live well. This emerging system needs to be built on respect, responsibility, transparency and the decentralization of power and resources. And social movements hold these possibilities.

Although they are on the front lines, movements alone cannot implement these emerging systems. Therefore, supporting the ecosystem of social transformation involves recognizing that the movements do not act alone. The

coordination of various actors is essential for an effective and sustainable fight for rights. Strengthening other organizations, including community funds, which contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to transformation, is equally important. Therefore, a systemic vision is necessary on the part of Brazilian philanthropy.

In short, by reflecting on these issues, this publication hopes to call on the field of philanthropy to self-examine, deepen its understanding of the role of social movements in social transformation, and recognize that there is still much to be done in terms of supporting these groups and collectives. This reinforces the importance of a philanthropy that is aware of its role in these transformation processes, responsible, inclusive and, in fact, strategic, that values and enhances the diversity of social movements, building, through real partnerships, a more just and equitable future.

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