

**MANDATAS COLETIVAS: WOMEN IN THE FIGHT TO INCREASE  
REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT**

***MANDATAS COLETIVAS: MULHERES NA LUTA PELA AMPLIAÇÃO DA  
REPRESENTAÇÃO NO PARLAMENTO***

***MANDATAS COLECTIVAS: LAS MUJERES EN LA LUCHA POR AUMENTAR LA  
REPRESENTACIÓN EN EL PARLAMENTO***



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**ABSTRACT:** Electoral processes are fundamental in contemporary democracies, but they do not guarantee the representativeness of leaders and the expansion of citizenship by voters. *Mandatas coletivas* (collective mandates) are a recent political experiment that subverts the common forms of democratic representation. In this article, we seek to understand this phenomenon, which is more recurrent in the south and southeast of Brazil. We conducted 20 in-depth interviews with elected *mandatas coletivas* across the country to understand this new reality, which challenges the rigid structure of political parties and personalization in politics, i.e., the slate centered on a single personality. We found that these collective candidacies give a voice to a group of people who share a common identity, especially in women's collectives that seek to break the male hegemony in institutional spaces of power.

**KEYWORDS:** *Mandatas coletivas*. Democracy. Elections. Personalization. Women

**RESUMO:** *Processos eleitorais são fundamentais nas democracias contemporâneas, mas nem por isso garantem representatividade dos governantes e ampliação da cidadania por parte dos eleitores. As mandatas coletivas compõe um experimento político recente que subverte as formas comuns de representação democrática no parlamento. Neste artigo, buscamos compreender este fenômeno que é mais recorrente no sul e sudeste do Brasil. Realizamos 20 entrevistas em profundidade com mandatas coletivas eleitas por todo país com objetivo de compreender essa nova realidade que desafia a estrutura engessada dos partidos políticos e a personalização na política, isto é, a chapa centrada em apenas uma personalidade. Verificamos, dessa maneira, que essas candidaturas coletivas dão voz a um grupo de pessoas que tem em comum as pautas identitárias, principalmente em coletivos de mulheres que buscam quebrar a hegemonia masculina nos espaços institucionais de poder.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Mandatas coletivas. Democracia. Eleições. Personalização. Mulheres.*

**RESUMEN:** *Los procesos electorales son fundamentales en las democracias contemporâneas, pero no garantizan la representatividad de los gobernantes ni la ampliación de la ciudadanía por parte de los votantes. Las mandatas colectivas son un experimento político reciente que subvierte las formas comunes de representación democrática en el parlamento. En este artículo, buscamos comprender este fenómeno, más recorrente en el sur y sureste de Brasil. Realizamos 20 entrevistas en profundidad a mandatas colectivas elegidas en todo el país para comprender esta nueva realidad que desafia la estructura rígida de los partidos políticos y la personalización de la política, es decir, la pizarra centrada en una única personalidad. Descubrimos que estas candidaturas colectivas dan voz a un grupo de personas que comparten una identidad común, especialmente en los colectivos de mujeres que buscan romper la hegemonía masculina en los espacios institucionales de poder.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Mandatas colectivas. Democracia. Elecciones. Personalización. Mujeres.*

## Introduction

Electoral processes are a central object of study and reflection in political science literature since they express one of the fundamental moments of democratic dynamics. These processes are important for establishing the representative principles that serve as the basis for legitimizing regimes, maintaining or changing institutional structures, and establishing links between citizens and representatives in democratic societies.

Despite the importance of electoral processes, there is a consensus in the research community that elections are insufficient mechanisms to guarantee the representativeness of rulers and the expansion of citizenship on the part of voters. In Brazil, what Moisés and Meneguello (2013, p. 6, our translation) emphasize is institutional distrust, in which its "symptoms involve citizens' cynicism, alienation and feelings of indifference towards politics and, especially, their disbelief that public institutions actually ensure their rights".

Another fundamental aspect for understanding the inadequacy of electoral processes is the interference of economic power in electoral campaigns, the lack of transparency in the financing of candidates, which has an impact on the composition of parliaments and, consequently, on democratic dynamics. However, we can still say that elections play an important role in contemporary democratic dynamics. Przeworski (2021) offers us an important reflection on the aspects related to the democratic crisis, especially the dissatisfaction of citizens in various countries with electoral results. The author returns to the Churchillian perspective by reiterating that, despite the fact that many elections do not take place fairly, they are still important mechanisms of the democratic order.

Considering the global debate in relation to the defense of democratic institutions, we believe that analyzing and reflecting on electoral dynamics is a fundamental issue, especially when we consider the delegitimization of electoral processes carried out by politicians with an authoritarian bias, as we can see in the 2020 US elections with the stance adopted by former President Donald Trump.

The same narrative was adopted in Brazil for the 2022 elections by former president Jair Bolsonaro. Throughout his term in office, Bolsonaro questioned the voting system and condemned the electronic ballot boxes as a way of fueling distrust among his supporters. The result of this strategy was the invasion of the Planalto Palace, the seat of the federal government, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, as well as the Supreme Court, an event that became known as anti-democratic acts.

Considering the centrality of this debate in political theory, it is necessary to incorporate into the analysis the emergence of new political actors and new strategies and political practices to energize democratic societies. In this sense, we will analyze the emergence of a new political-electoral arrangement called collective mandate, a phenomenon that arose in the 2016 municipal elections in Alto Paraíso, Goiás, which seeks to bring more than a single candidate to parliament, including the collective that drove the campaign, creating the figure of co-parliamentarians.

In 2020, we saw an increase in this type of candidacy in municipal elections. From 13 in 2016 to 257 in 2020, 26 of these candidates were elected and began their legislative work in the city councils in March 2021. The unique aspect of the initiative is that the candidacy is not centered on a single political personality, but necessarily on a collective that presents itself to voters as an option for representation. This means that the proposal is to move away from the personalistic nature of electoral processes towards the collectivization of the campaign and, in cases where they have been elected, to carry out a collective mandate.

It is important to note that this initiative can be analyzed as a new way of tackling the crisis of parliamentary political representation, obviously not as a solution to the numerous challenges of democratic dynamics, but as a possibility of reducing the problems related to insufficient political representation. With the broad diagnosis of the crisis of political parties and political leaders, there are still few experiences aimed at questioning the existing protocols in parliaments, even when we look for examples in other countries. In this sense, the main objective of this article is to analyze the concept of political representation in the collective mandates elected in 2020, specifically addressing the representation of women, the so-called *mandata coletiva*<sup>3</sup>. This is the continuation of a research agenda that began in 2018 with the analysis of the election of the Activist Caucus to the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo<sup>4</sup>.

We will present the main results of the research carried out in 2021, covering part of the collection of information on the collective candidacies that stood in the 2020 municipal elections across the country. Of these candidacies, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with

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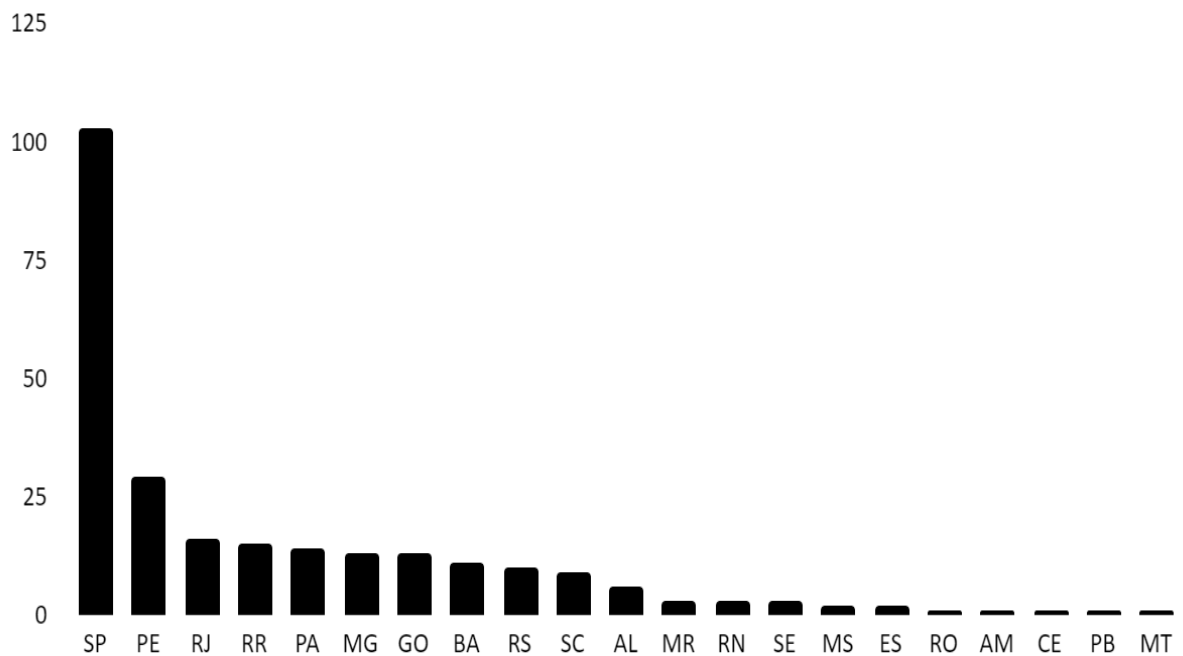
<sup>3</sup> In Portuguese, many words are gendered, so the term *mandato coletivo* (collective mandate) would be feminized by writing *mandata coletiva*, emphasizing the focus on women's presence and struggle within these spaces. For translation purposes, whenever the Portuguese term is used in the feminine we will not translate it into collective mandate.

<sup>4</sup> Collectivizing political mandates: A discursive approach to the Brazilian Bancada Ativista's campaign in the 2018 elections. Available: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0263395721990276>. Access: 18 Aug. 2022.

the elected mandates, which will be analyzed in this research proposal. The choice of the qualitative scope of this research suits this study as it presents the formulations that make up collective mandates and the perceptions of their elected members, since this is a new political practice.

Collective candidacies for the 2020 municipal elections grew significantly compared to the 2016 election and were strategies in various political parties, in various states, although there was a concentration in political parties from the left-wing spectrum, as we can see in the boxes below:

**Box 1 - Quantity per state**



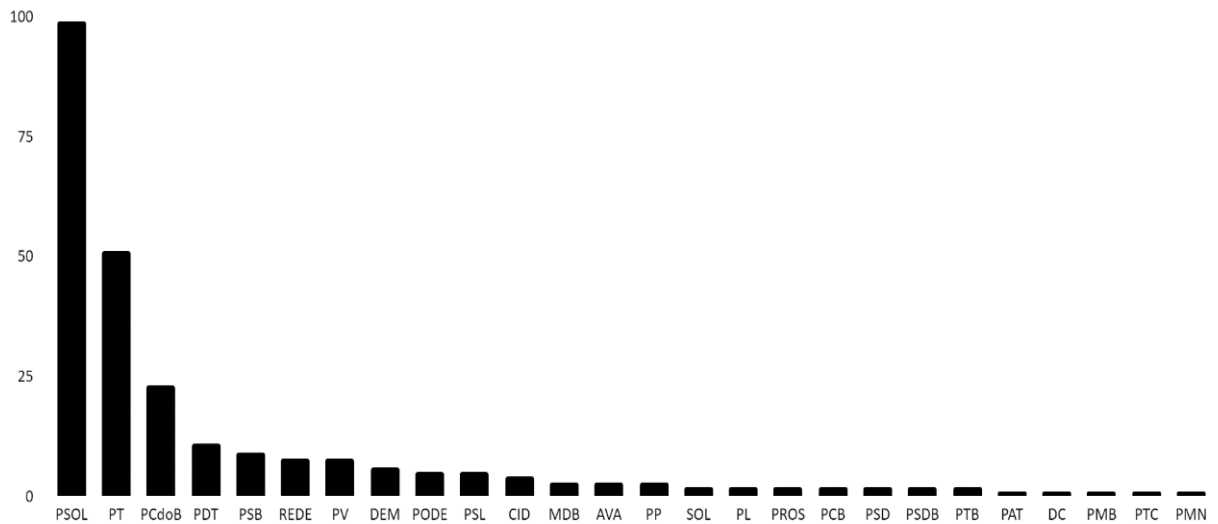
Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

**Box 2 - Quantity by state and type of municipality**

Bahia	Capital	1
Ceará	Capital	1
Goiás	Interior	1
Maranhão	Capital	1
Pernambuco	Interior	1
Santa Catarina	Capital	1
Minas Gerais	Interior	2
Paraná	Interior	2
Rio Grande do Sul	Interior	2
São Paulo	Capital	2
São Paulo	Interior	11

Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

**Box 3 - Quantity per party**

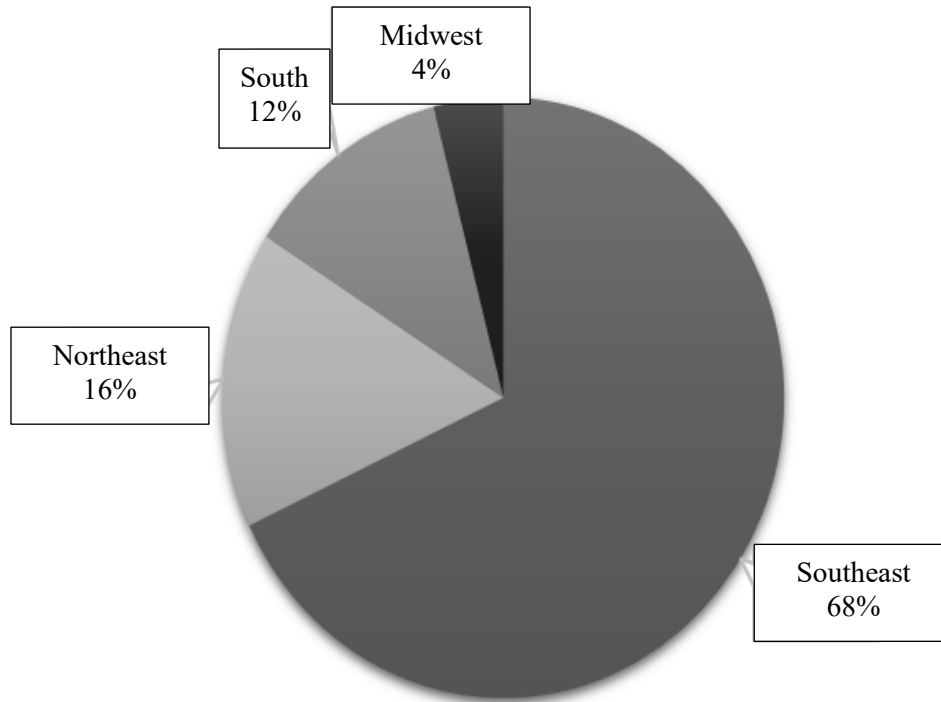


Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

It is noteworthy that this type of initiative was also observed in all regions of the country, according to TSE data. We can see the concentration in the Southeast, which had 68% of candidacies, followed by the Northeast with 16%, the South with 12% and the Midwest with 4%. The data shows that the initiative of collective mandates can be observed from party diversity and has spread throughout the country. This data shows that for some candidates,

especially those in centrist parties, it consists mainly of an electoral strategy and not a possibility of decentralizing power in legislative structures.

**Box 4 - Collective candidacies by region**



Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

### **Political representation and women in politics**

According to a survey by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), women continue to be the largest electoral contingent eligible to vote in the 2022 Brazilian elections. The total number of voters eligible to vote reached 156,054,011 and of this total 82,373,164 are women, or 52.65% of the total electorate.

These voters are concentrated in the country's three main electoral colleges - São Paulo (SP), Minas Gerais (MG) and Rio de Janeiro (RJ), respectively. In the state of São Paulo, of the total of 34,667,793 voters, 18,395,545 are women. In Minas Gerais, the number of eligible voters totals 12,827,296, of which 8,505,582 are women.

Even though they represent a significant portion of the Brazilian electorate, the under-representation of women in parliaments is still very significant. In the 2018 elections, in the Senate, of the 81 representatives, only 6 were women and in the Chamber of Deputies, of the

total 513 elected, only 77 were women. That same year, only one female governor was elected, Maria de Fátima Bezerra, in Rio Grande do Norte (RN). The number of women deputies in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2022 elections rose to 91. In the Senate, with a renewal of 1/3 of the house, 4 women were elected. In the 2022 elections, Fátima was re-elected and only one other woman was elected: Raquel Lyra, elected by the PSDB in Pernambuco.

The adoption of affirmative action, such as gender quotas on electoral lists and the allocation of the Party Fund, in accordance with Federal Laws 9.100/1995, 9.504/1997 and 12.034/2009, are undoubtedly important initiatives to increase women's participation in spaces of power, but are considered insufficient by various scholars (ARAÚJO, ALVES, 2007;).

Some factors can be listed to analyze strategies for promoting gender equality in legislatures, as we can see in the Inter-Parliamentary Union survey (BALLINGTON, 2008). The study carried out in 110 countries points out that it is not enough to increase the number of women elected to parliament. Gender equality needs to be materialized if women are to have a real influence on the decision-making process.

Brazil ranks 143rd out of 187 countries in terms of female representation in parliament, according to the Map of Women in Politics (2020), a survey carried out by the United Nations (UN), UN Brazil and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in May 2022. These indicators reveal the low participation of women in the Brazilian parliament. In Brazil, women are excluded from spaces of power and political decision-making. This means that approximately 52% of the Brazilian population is not represented in these spaces, which has an impact on the process of expanding democratic dynamics.

Campaign resources are fundamental to guaranteeing a candidate's chances of election and, in the case of elections with an open-list proportional representation system, competition between candidates is fiercer and access to financial resources can help the campaign gain greater visibility (SACCHET, 2012; SACCHET; SPECK, 2012). Proximity to and articulation with party leaders who influence this distribution can increase the chances of the candidate obtaining more resources, which is a problem, especially for women candidates.

The lack of transparency in the criteria for distributing resources within the parties is always pointed out as one of the problems, and there are often complaints during the elections of women who have accepted the candidacy at the invitation of a party, but who have not received resources for their own campaigns and, in some situations, are forced to hand over the resources they were owed to candidates nominated by the party leadership. In Brazil, this phenomenon is known as "*candidatura laranja*" (orange candidacy), i.e., when it is not for real.



The orange candidacy serves only to fulfill the party quota for women, illegally guaranteeing compliance with the TSE's rules.

In the case of Brazil, campaign financing is mainly obtained from public funds earmarked for the parties. There are two sources of public campaign financing: the Party Fund and the Special Campaign Financing Fund. As mentioned above, the lack of clear and transparent rules for the distribution of these resources among candidates can have a direct influence on the competitiveness of candidates, favoring party elites who have established themselves on the electoral scene.

Even with the creation of the Special Campaign Financing Fund in 2017, which provides for 30% of public funds to be earmarked for parties and reserved for women's candidacies, a rule that came into effect from the 2018 election, we can see scandals surrounding women candidates who claim to have been coerced into handing over these funds to other candidates and not actually campaigning.

According to the Women's Representativeness Report 2021, drawn up by Update:

Brazilian elections, particularly those held at local level, are marked by a large number of candidates. In 2016, more than 427,000 candidates ran for a seat on the city council and more than 16,000 contested the position of mayor. In 2020, these numbers were even higher due to changes in electoral rules: there were more than 513,000 candidates for city council and 19,000 candidates for mayor. But the demographic profile of these candidates is nothing like that of the population. To begin with, the overwhelming majority of candidates are men, especially in the mayoral races. In exact figures, 87% of mayoral candidates in 2020 were men, a similar result to 2016 (GATTO; RUSSO; THOMÉ, 2021, p. 35, our translation).

The situation shown in the survey above is related to women's difficulties in accessing campaign funding that favors activities to publicize their agendas during election periods, but the problem is not restricted to funding and it is important to highlight that there are other initiatives that should also contribute to increasing women's representation in Brazilian politics.

It is essential that political parties, social movements and civil society organizations step up their efforts to increase women's participation in these spaces, so that women's representation can be increased. The low representation of women in executive and legislative powers is not limited to campaign problems, but to the ways in which women are still excluded from different spaces of power in Brazilian society.

## **Collective mandatas and mandates**

Faced with the crisis of representative democracy and the growing dissatisfaction of citizens with their representatives, collective candidacies and mandates have emerged in Brazil with the aim of helping to re-qualify Brazilian representative democracy. This is a recent political experiment that seeks to challenge the personalization characteristic of democratic representation, whose electoral system is centered on individual personalities.

Collective candidacies follow a model that seeks to reduce the dynamics of individualization in politics, expressed in the figure of a single person who concentrates campaign activities on their image, because they are legally the candidate. It is well known that behind a candidate there is a network of people working to make that candidacy viable, with a real chance of being elected. From this reality came the idea of making this collective public, giving rise to the term collective candidacy.

These candidacies are made up of a group of people who come together to stand in elections as co-parliamentarians [co-councillors]; [co-deputies], in order to contest a seat in the municipal, state or federal parliament. By launching themselves as co-parliamentarians, they seek to reduce the personalism characteristic of representative democracy, acting in a way that emphasizes collective political action, given that the candidate slate is not centred on a single political personality, as we will see below from the perceptions of the elected mandates interviewed. Thus, the collective candidacy is considered the stage prior to the collective mandate. In other words, from the formation of the slate to the choice of the name that will represent the group, there is a collective process of deliberation.

Collective candidacies and mandates seek to: i) the presentation of a slate of candidates during the electoral processes and also ii) during the mandate, exposing the challenges of acting in parliaments, considering the lack of regulation of this type of political-party arrangement, iii) they seek to debate and deliberate in the group of co-parliamentarians the decisions of the mandate, understanding that legislative activity must be carried out as a space for sharing power, iv) it is also fundamental to understand the parliamentary performance of collective mandatas and mandates as an initiative to reduce the distance between representatives and represented.

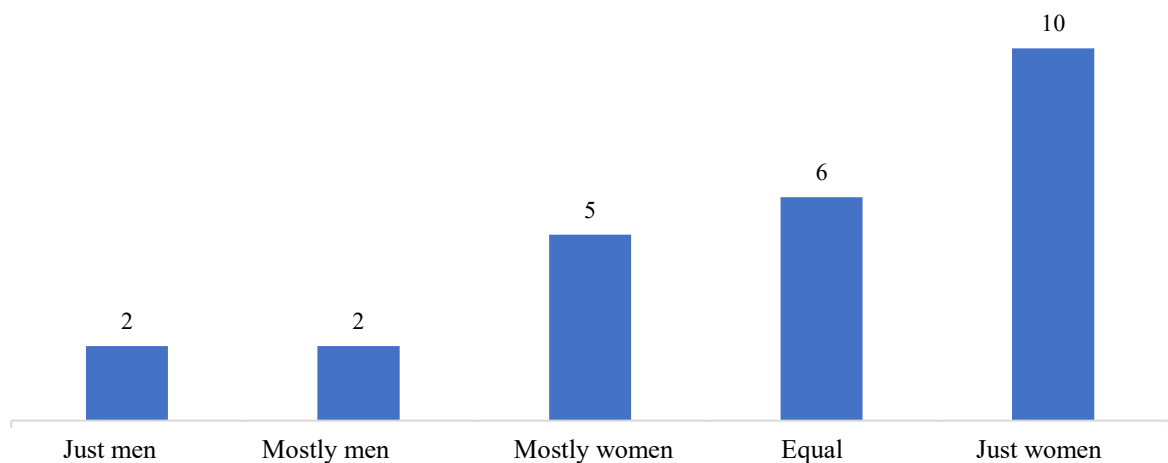
According to the National Front of Collective Mandatas and Mandates, even if one person takes on the role of legislative representative, the initiative seeks to broaden the forms of decision on the actions of the mandate, sharing with co-parliamentarians (co-councillors and co-deputies) a form of co-responsibility from the electoral campaign to action in parliament.

There are currently three bills going through the Chamber of Deputies to regulate this political practice.

*Mandatas coletivas* have gone from paper to practice by questioning the gap in minority representation and the rigid structure of political parties, which is characterized by a personalist approach to building leadership. More common in the south and southeast of the country, these collective candidacies for the legislature in the 2020 election have common identity agendas, which is mostly the case with women's collectives.

The strategies of the *mandatas coletivas* elected in the 2020 election can be analyzed in terms of the search to break the cycle of low representation and exclusion of women; the inclusion of gender agendas and increased participation in decision-making processes by occupying a space dominated by men. In the 20 interviews conducted with the collective mandates in order to understand this new reality, the representatives' desire to bring the despised wishes of those they represent closer to the institutional field, beyond the struggles of social movements, is noticeable. For Mill (2021, p. 51, our translation), "in the absence of natural advocates, the interests of the excluded are always in danger of being forgotten and, when taken into account, will be analyzed very differently from those of the people directly concerned". Mill (2021, p. 224, our translation) reminds us that "different types of issues may require different areas of representation".

**Graph 1 - Proportion of women to men**



Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

According to Graph 1, the elected *mandatas coletivas* are predominantly made up of 'women only', out of a total of ten, while two candidacies were made up of 'men only'. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the percentage of women in the Brazilian parliament - 15.2% - is below the world average of 26.3% of seats.

Most of the candidacies analyzed focus on seeking representation for women, emphasizing intersectionality with issues of race, gender and sexuality. We can see this in the statement by Louise from *Adriana do Nossa Cara* (PSOL. Fortaleza. CE): "We are three co-councilors. All three of us are cis women, three of us are LGBTQIA+ women, peripheral women, and we are black women". And by the members, all women, of *Bruna e Coletivo Democrático* (PCdoB. Ijuí. RS) that one of the main strategies was to reach out to women (in an extremely sexist and conservative city) in order to have women's representation.

For Silvia of *Silvia da Bancada Ativista* (PSOL. São Paulo. SP), formed 'only by women', their aim is to fight for the feminism of the 99%. According to Paula from *Bruna Mulheres por Direitos* (PSOL. São Caetano. SP) - also made up of only women:

(...) the idea of the collective is also very much linked to this, as well as the fact that we are women, in a politics totally dominated by men, here and throughout Brazil [...] The campaign's flagship was women against the city's colonels (...) A new politics (Silvia Bancada Ativista, PSOL, São Paulo, our translation).

**Box 5 - Number per party and ratio of women to men**

CID	Majoria Mulheres	1
CID	Apenas Homens	1
PCdoB	Apenas Mulheres	1
PSB	Apenas Homens	1
PSDB	Majoria Homens	1
PSOL	Apenas Mulheres	5
PSOL	Igual	2
PSOL	Majoria Mulheres	2
PT	Igual	3
PT	Majoria Mulheres	2
PT	Apenas Mulheres	4
PV	Majoria Homens	1
REDE	Igual	1

Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

Most of the elected collective mandates are located in the state of São Paulo, Brazil's largest electoral college, with 11 in cities in the interior and 3 in the capital. PSOL and PT have 5 mandates each in the state. The other mandates, 12 in total, are distributed in 9 states, 3 in the South, 4 in the Northeast, 1 in the Southeast and 1 in the Midwest, and with intense presence in the countryside.

Male domination in Brazil has become a patriarchal order that runs through state institutions, protecting the status quo, normalizing sexism and gender inequality in the justice system through patriarchal law (SAFFIOTI, 2015). This domination is also seen in the legislative and executive branches of politics. In 2015, in an electoral mini-reform, Congress set a margin of between 5% and 15% in the distribution of party fund resources for female candidates, a limit that was overturned by the Federal Supreme Court (STF) in 2018, raising the minimum to 30%, a decision that was upheld by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). Women accounted for 16% of the elected councillor positions in the country in 2020, of which only 6.3% were black women. In the 2016 election, this representation reached 13.5%.

Patriarchy in Brazil is revealed as one of the facets of male domination (MIGUEL; BIROLI, 2014) and everyone participates in the spread of sexism until feminist education transforms society (HOOKS, 2020). In this sense, male domination is a more general phenomenon than patriarchy, however, refusing to use it implies leaving aside a concept that deals specifically with the subjection of women (SAFFIOTI, 2015). Observing the polysemy of the concept of patriarchy, we delimit its notion to the regime of domination-exploitation of women by men (SAFFIOTI, 2015), advancing in the control of their bodies (SAFFIOTI, 2015). Patriarchy is defined by institutionalized sexism (HOOKS, 2020). Thus, servitude and sexism are united in the appropriation of women's bodies by men (DORLIN, 2021).

With a structure built to keep forms of domination untouched, to abandon this perspective internalized in the culture of machismo would be to attack one's own privileges (SAFFIOTI, 2015). Male guardianship over female bodies has an institutional character. A woman had to have her husband's permission to practice a profession, before changes were made to the so-called married woman's statute<sup>5</sup> in 1962 (SAFFIOTI, 2015). Law n. 4121, which deals with the legal situation of married women, deals with the limits of women's bodies, in an appropriation considered legal, in which male domination grants authorizations, allowing or not, certain actions by women in the social space, in the name of protecting the family nucleus.

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<sup>5</sup> Lei 4.121 de 27 de agosto de 1962 dispõe sobre a situação jurídica da mulher casada. Disponível em: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/1950-1969/14121.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/1950-1969/14121.htm). Acesso em: 17 ago. 2022.

Only recently, in August 2022, a bill<sup>6</sup> in the National Congress repealed an article that required the husband's consent for tubal ligation procedures. The sixty years that separate the repeal of the articles that legally seize the female body, give the dimension of the slow structural change to untie the institutional knots created and controlled by men who grant power over women's bodies.

In 2021, a law was passed on political violence against women, punishable by up to six years in prison<sup>7</sup>. The legislation stipulates that it is a crime to embarrass, humiliate, harass, stalk or threaten a female candidate, inferiorize or discriminate against a woman or her color, race or ethnicity, and also applies to women who already hold elected office.

Discussions of gender, class and racism are breaking paradigms (HOOKS, 2020). When we researched the *mandatas coletivas* elected in 2020 in the Brazilian legislature, we found a strong presence at the intersection of women, LGTBQIAP+ groups, the anti-racist struggle and the fight against inequalities. A predominant part of the *mandatas* in Brazil incisively propose the scheduling of these issues at the institutional level. Dorlin (2021), based on Crenshaw, shows that there is an intersectional structure of domination that produces effects that destroy and destructure social movements. Resisting these attempts to weaken them is a daily task for the mandatas. The entire female population is subject to patriarchy in the form of class struggle and sexism. Sexism appears as a common denominator that cuts across power relations (DORLIN, 2021). There is also the possibility that some women suffer from sexism and racism, others from sexism, racism and LGBTphobia, or all of these dominations at once. In other words, each domination relationship is added to another, resulting in double or triple oppression (DORLIN, 2021).

### Box 6 - Intersectionalities in Mandatas Coletivas

<u>Mandata</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>LGBTQIA+</u>
Adriana Nossa Cara		✓	✓
Andressa Coletivo Nossa Voz		✓	✓
Bruna Mulheres por Direitos	✓	✓	✓
Bruna e Coletivo Democrático	✓	✓	✓
Cíntia Coletivo Bem Viver	✓	✓	✓
Coletivo Nós – São Luiz	✓	✓	✓
Coletivo Popular Judeti	✓	✓	✓

<sup>6</sup> The bill was passed by Congress in August 2022 and is heading for presidential approval with an estimated 180 dias until validity. Available: <https://www.poder360.com.br/congresso/senado-aprova-projeto-que-facilita-acesso-a-laqueadura/>.

<sup>7</sup> Law on political violence against women opens with up to six years in prison. Available: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/07/lei-sobre-violencia-politica-contra-mulher-estrela-com-pena-de-ate-6-anos-de-prisao.shtml>.

Coletivo Teremos Vez	✓	✓	✓
Djalma Nery	✓	✓	✓
Elisa Representa Taubaté	✓	✓	✓
Josi + Coletivo	✓	✓	✓
Juliana da Ativoz	✓	✓	✓
Laina Pretas por Salvador	✓	✓	✓
Marcia Coletiva de Mulheres	✓	✓	
Mileide – Mandato Ramon Todas as Vozes	✓	✓	✓
Roberta do Enfrente	✓	✓	✓
Robson Amano	✓	✓	✓
Silvia Bancada Feminista	✓	✓	✓
Silvia Mandato Coletivo		✓	✓
Tamo Junto por Guaíra			

Source: Devised by the authors based on research data

Chart 6 shows how intersectionality is predominant in most *mandatas*. Systematized by black female jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw, the concept of intersectionality was born in black feminism and has become an important tool in white feminism, as it facilitates understanding of the physical and symbolic violence perpetuated against women by the power in the analysis of intersectional dynamics, also helping to structure debates and political actions that are guided by intersectionality, deepening the understanding of oppressions (BUENO, 2020).

Some *mandatas* did not mention identity struggles, which does not mean that they do not work on these fronts, in other words, they just did not bring up the issues during the interview. Laina, from the *mandata Pretas por Salvador*, defends confronting the "patriarchy" perspective with intersectional agendas: LGBTQIA+ perspective, anti-racist struggle, black feminism, right to the city.

The concept of intersectionality works as an analytical model for producing knowledge about the reality of oppressions, which breaks the silencing structured by patriarchal dominations (BUENO, 2020). Intersectionality occurs at the "intersection of various oppressions which produce a series of social disadvantages and inequalities", says Bueno (2020, p. 63, our translation), based on Crenshaw.

According to Collins (2019), intersectionality is a vision that encompasses the recognition of identities and the confrontation of inequalities. An important step in intersectional social movements is the recognition of "heterosexism as a system of power, normal, natural and normative" (COLLINS, 2019, p. 225-226, our translation).

Violence is part of the identity of subordinate groups (BUENO, 2020) of subaltern counter-publics who circulate counter-discourses in order to have the direction of knowledge production in affirming their identities and desires (FRASER, 2022), expanding the discursive space.



Reversing masculinity in the word "*mandato*" (mandate) appears to be the first institutional resistance in a space dominated by men. An initial conflict concerns the change in the inflection of the word "*mandato*" in order to express a specific grammatical category. They are, in the conception of the winning candidates, "*mandatas*". *Mandatas coletivas*. The use of the name *mandato* or *mandata* varies greatly. This inflection of the word depends on each group's understanding of its own forms of struggle.

Natália, a member of the *Silvia Bancada Feminista*, a candidate elected to the São Paulo City Council, believes that the word "*mandata*" is in dispute in a context of "subversion of politics" by feminist movements. Cíntia *Coletivo Bem Viver*, a candidate elected to the city council of Florianópolis, recognizes herself as a collective and a feminist, with the word "*coletiva*" being used to draw attention to women, as does *Márcia Coletiva de Mulheres*, elected to the city council of Ribeirão Pires.

According to *Coletivo Nós São Luiz*, *mandatas coletivas* are the future in bringing minority representation closer together. "We are breaking paradigms every day inside that plenary, which often seems not to be connected with the reality of São Luís" (our translation).

Political contexts considered authoritarian in the municipalities, revealing the patriarchal dimension, were mentioned at times in the interviews. Paula, from *Bruna Mulheres por Direitos* emphasizes the local struggle against councillors branded as colonels in the city of São Caetano. "The idea of the collective is also very much linked to this, as well as being women in a totally male-dominated politics, here and throughout Brazil" (our translation), explains Paula.

Traditionalist, elitist and ultra-conservative are *Coletivo Nossa Voz*'s definitions of the city of Itajubá in Minas Gerais, where the candidacy was elected. Reactionary and "extremely Bolsonaroist" are the perceptions of the *Josi Mais Coletivo* in the municipality of Ponta Grossa, in Paraná. A composition of "white men, families that dominate the city" (our translation), and have dominance in Ribeirão Pires, reveals *Márcia Coletiva de Mulheres*. Patriarchy, fascism and machismo are very present in the city of Ijuí, according to *As Gurias* collective.

A structural aspect in the formation of these mandates is the collective nature of the decisions, in a movement away from the representation of the elites in the peripheries, which denotes the rise of new leaders with strong links to the working classes and who therefore know first-hand the difficulty of inequalities when experiencing the daily distancing from institutional politics. Enílson, from the collective *mandata Nós*, from the city of São Luiz, emphasized the desire to break a hegemony within the City Council:



(...) we see people who have nothing to do with our life history. And one thing I always say, if we could give it a more practical name, the city council would be the boys' council, the playboys' council, because they are castes, families that have always been there, people who have been there for 32 years, have been there for eight terms in a row, people who have been there all this time, but the people do not know them on the street, the people do not know who they are (Enílson, Mandata Coletivo Nós, São Luiz, our translation).

The struggle of mandatas coletivas for institutional space begins with the lack of regulation of the candidacy built collectively, since the TSE and TREs only accept the registration of one CPF per mandate. This creates internal bureaucracy for the other members of the mandate, usually called co-councillors. The lack of electoral legislation on collective mandates creates legal uncertainty. "In the pre-campaign there was a lot of confusion, legally speaking. We had to find a lot of people to help us" (our translation), says Bruno, a member of the *Coletivo Nossa Voz*. Because of situations like this, the candidate took legal precautions in case her candidacy was rejected.

Elected in the 2020 elections, a period in which governors and mayors were adopting restrictive measures and advising against crowds due to the covid-19 pandemic<sup>8</sup>, the collective candidacies circumvented the difficulties in the pre-campaign and campaign by producing material to circulate on the internet. Manin (1995) stresses that the electoral campaign is structured around antagonisms and can be compared to a language. The dissemination of candidacies on the internet brought a language adapted to this fast-paced and multifaceted dynamic.

As a result, *Marcia Coletiva de Mulheres* produced a program called "*Lugar de Fala*" (Place of Speech). When they noticed a certain emptying of the networks in the campaign, they took to the streets with leaflets. The aim was to "stick the name of the collective". The Robson Amano mandate created a program entitled "*Prosa, café e política*" (Prose, coffee and politics) on the networks to discuss the pre-candidacy with cultural groups and expanded actions by going out into the streets and squares calling voters to debate. *Coletivo Nós São Luiz* dialogued with the community and created a consultative committee for popular participation, supra-partisan, with more than 70 people to discuss various agendas with activists, specialists and teachers. *Cintia Coletivo Bem Viver* organized the political platform by holding online plenary sessions on eco-feminism, racial equality, social assistance, agroecology and holding assemblies to discuss all the issues more broadly, as well as taking to the streets to canvass for

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) classified covid-19 as a pandemic in March 2020. Available: <https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/noticia/2020/03/11/oms-declara-pandemia-de-coronavirus.ghtml>.

votes at popular points. *Bruna Mulheres por Direitos* built its pre-campaign with a political council that dialogued with activists from different areas: the environment, civil service, health, education. The political platform was built on these thematic conversations.

*Silvia Bancada Feminista* held thematic plenaries on topics such as feminism, anti-racism, education, the city and ecology, with more participation from young people. The formation grew naturally around municipal workers, subway workers, socio-environmental movements, the black movement, the vegan collective, the LGBTQIA+ collective, health workers and housing movements. *Márcia Coletiva de Mulheres* researched the *Bancada Ativista* to consolidate the idea: "I think you have to hear from everyone what collective candidacy is" (our translation), explains Dani H, a member of *Coletiva*. Roberta do Enfrente was inspired by the experience of the *Bancada Ativista* and Alto do Paraíso to form the collective candidacy. *Mileide Mandato Todas as Vozes* followed the same path, seeking to learn more about the experience of the *Bancada*.

The structuring of the candidacies has its particularities, but the agenda of minorities is something they have in common. Identity agendas are the main flags among the candidates. The LGBTQIA+ struggle, the anti-racist struggle and the feminist struggle have encouraged many collectives to form candidacies to act on these and other issues in the institutional field. These struggles join other agendas such as health, civil service, the environment, the right to housing, education, law, sport, among others. "We deal with any demand that comes our way" (our translation), Silvia emphasizes.

Voices disregarded by the institutions have found ways to express themselves in municipal legislatures, by putting on the table demands that were previously repressed by political representations that were often far removed from their realities. Fraser (2022) highlights the dilemma between recognition and redistribution. It is the difficult reconciliation between an affirmative policy of identity recognition and the redistribution of the welfare state. *Mandatas Coletivas* try to combine identity agendas with social inequality agendas.

Members of *mandatas coletivas* are part of subordinate groups (BUENO 2020), or subaltern counter-publics (FRASER, 2022) that fight to dilate the institutional arrangement. Refuting dominant discourses about their bodies and their realities changes stratified societies in which their institutional structure generates unequal social groups in a situation of subordination, as only plurality of participation and deliberation in public debate breaks the exclusionary institutional arrangement (FRASER, 2022).

Voters' distrust of politicians is a relevant aspect. *Mandatas coletivas* seek to create an identification between representatives and represented in order to bring minorities closer to institutional spaces. Elections do not produce a natural "identity" in relation to those who govern and those who are governed, because the bond of identification breaks down (MANIN, 1995). *Mandatas coletivas* appear with the aim of creating identification and establishing relationships of trust. Manin (2017) far from the context in which *mandatas coletivas* arise, thinking about party democracy, public democracy and the personalization of electoral choices in the face of the influence of the mass media in the political field and beyond, stresses the importance of "trust" (MANIN, 1995).

In this sense, *mandatas coletivas* are intended to break the personalistic bond highlighted by Manin (2017), which has been boosted by neoliberalism that encourages personalization and individual candidacies to the detriment of political parties. According to the *Nossa Voz Collective*, *mandatas coletivas* "break the narrative of what legislative power is about individual and personalistic powers".

In view of the plurality of the feminist movement, which is divided into various fronts, such as revolutionary feminism, liberal feminism and black feminism, among others, some candidates also reflect these ideological positions. The *As Gurias Collective*, elected to the Ijuí City Council, is raising the banner of black women. "It's a debate we have to bring up" (our translation). Candidates who fight alongside black feminism recognize that white women have a social privilege (HOOKS, 2020) and giving up white supremacy feeds sorority, because feminism needs to be anti-racist and anti-homophobic in order to be global in the fight against patriarchy (HOOKS, 2020).

*Silvia Bancada feminista* defends the feminism of the 99%, linked to a revolutionary, anti-capitalist feminism. "We used this a lot," explains Natália. The feminism of the 99% engages in an anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-LGBTphobic confrontation, encompassing women from the lower classes, indigenous, *caiçaras*, peasants, riverside dwellers, *quilombolas*, articulating race and ethnicity, gender and class (ARRUZA; BHATTACHARYA; FRASER, 2019). For the leader of the feminist caucus, the feminism of the 99% also has to dialog with men and make them allies, an idea that is in line with the thinking of Bell Hooks.

Andrielli from *Mandate Fátima Maria, Coletivo Teremos Vez*, in Viamão, touches on the point of women entrepreneurs, women's financial independence, linked to a more liberal feminism, without neglecting the LGBTQIA+ and black women's agenda. More reformist, liberal feminist thinking has a market-related outlook at its core, with meritocracy rather than

equality as its main aim (ARRUZA; BHATTACHARYA; FRASER, 2019). Individual empowerment provides a subsidy for strengthening neoliberalism and for blaming women who have not reached the level required by the market (SAFFIOTI, 2015). Different strands of feminism meet in the *mandatas*, generating an intersectional struggle against patriarchy.

The "*Ele Não*" (not him) movement, a protest that took to the streets during the 2018 elections, warning of a Jair Bolsonaro victory, encouraged Natália da *Silvia Bancada Feminista* to become more involved in party politics by joining PSOL in 2019. Bolsonaro's victory in the presidential election spurred the formation of two collective candidacies. Robson Amano, elected to the Machado city council, consolidated the idea of a candidacy through a WhatsApp group called "Resistance". Juliana da Ativoz, a candidate in the city of Osasco, in São Paulo, explains that her candidacy was a reaction to "occupy spaces of power".

*Mileide Todas as Vozes*, elected candidate for the Ribeirão Preto City Council, explains that her inspiration to run for the local legislature came from the idea that the "periphery needs to occupy the center" (our translation). Bringing the periphery closer to the center is one of the main objectives of several *mandatas*. *Coletivo Nossa Voz*, elected to Itajubá's city council, saw space to "put forward a narrative that didn't exist in the city". Affordable housing and the environment are strong issues in the mandate of *Silvia Mandato Coletivo*, elected to the Piracicaba City Council. *Roberta do Enfrente*, elected to the Ourinhos city council, emphasizes the identity agendas "that didn't exist in the city council" (our translation). Representation "adequate for minorities is an essential part of democracy" (MILL, 2021, p. 112, our translation)

The lack of representation in the periphery was the driving force behind the candidacy of the *Nós São Luiz* Collective. The inspiration came from the critical view of a "completely whitewashed" city council in one of the states with the largest black population in the country. "We have councillors who are in their sixth consecutive term, who have been on the council for thirty years", explains Enílson. "And these people all live in the same place. They live in the same region of São Luís, which is the noble area of the city" (our translation) The class struggle is clearly evident in the conflict between the white elite and the working classes, who have historically had little or no opportunity to occupy spaces in the institutional arena.

Robson Amano, who was elected to the Machado city council, works a lot on racial issues because of his proximity to the *congadas* and other flags. "We raise a lot of identity issues within the collective mandate", says Robson. Cíntia of the *Bem Viver* Collective believes that collective mandates bring the possibility of protagonism to oppressed sectors of society in institutional politics:

There are a lot more black people in these collective mandates than in the personalist mandates, working men and women, these people who find it harder to access these spaces and have found a possibility in the collective mandate model. During the campaign, it was noticeable that people from these more marginalized sectors, who find it more difficult to access these institutional spaces, were the ones who most identified with and were most curious about a collective mandate (Cintia Coletivo Bem Viver, PSOL, Florianópolis, our translation).

Difficulties in consolidating the candidacy were pointed out by eight mandates. Candidates reported disagreements and misunderstandings in a rigid party structure: an attempt to separate members of a mandate with the justification of having more candidates to reach the electoral coefficient; a lack of understanding of what a collective mandate is on the part of party leaders, complicating the construction of the candidacy; discouragement to advance the candidacy, as it was suggested that they would not win the seat in the legislature and delegitimization, leading to symbolic violence; signaling the determination of positioning for some party groups in cases of autonomy in deliberations within the party; scarcity of financial resources in certain candidacies in relation to others within the party. Members of a legislative candidacy were called "crazy" by the party's top echelon for wanting a collective candidacy. "Building within the party wasn't easy. But we're women, we're persistent" (our translation), explains one candidate. "We've discussed it a lot, we've talked about the importance, we've said how difficult and important collective discussion is, but we're still in the construction phase" (our translation), says a member of the *Marcia Coletiva de Mulheres* mandate.

In a cross-party candidacy, there was friction between two parties, with one of the parties trying to dissuade women from running, because they would be damaging the chances of male candidates winning, which reveals how male domination is rooted in society in a hegemonic structure that does not accept breaking the social bonds that maintain women's exclusion from spaces of power. "The party colonels don't like that" (our translation), says the member of a *mandata* who ran for a progressive party.

In an environment of progressive parties, there was authoritarian behavior from men in leadership positions against the candidacies of some women candidates, demonstrating the idea of superiority with the empty justification of little chance of electoral success. Given this conception, men would have a better chance of winning seats in the legislature, jeopardizing the conscious use of the 30% quota for women in proportional elections and the increase in orange candidacies. In these cases, the sexist barrier stands as an obstacle to be overcome within the party itself. Stories of attention being paid to women candidates after their electoral success are common. Many parties that did not believe in women candidates during the campaign were

forced to give up space within the party. The scarce political capital of the people who make up the *mandatas* gains more weight when they win seats in the legislatures, changing the structure of the political field.

Most incumbents also encounter resistance within the legislative houses, which are generally conservative environments in which their members cherish traditions. The arrival of *mandatas* in these places causes discomfort in many town halls. The most common justification given by traditional mandates against *mandatas* is the lack of regulation of these candidacies, in a questioning of legality that hides the disturbance of sharing institutional space with previously excluded individuals. In this sense, some *mandatas* face delegitimization from their peers who are elected by the traditional mandate. Overcoming bureaucracy and delegitimization for women candidates depends on a daily fight against patriarchy, sexism and the men who make up most municipal councils in Brazil.

### **Final considerations**

Collective mandates appear as an alternative to the crisis of representative democracy, with the aim of helping the process of qualifying the electoral menu, challenging the personalization of candidacies and the domination of the political field by white men belonging to a political elite distant from the reality of the peripheries of municipalities. The struggle even includes the name, from mandate to *mandatas coletivas*.

Members of the *mandatas* are heterogeneous oppressed minorities from social movements or with direct dialog with these protest groups who could not find identification in traditional candidacies. In this way, women, LGBTQIA+ groups, black men and women have brought their identities to institutional discussion in the formulation of public policies, as well as other concerns such as the right to the city and the fight against inequalities.

Challenges and obstacles first arise within the political parties in some candidacies, with a lack of money to run an election campaign. Machismo, sexism and the maintenance of rigid party structures also occur in the progressive camp. The second difficulty occurs after the electoral victory when dealing with other peers, who resort to delegitimization and disrespect. There are cases in which collective mandates are well received. As there is no regulation of these candidacies, attacks justifying the lack of legal provision arise to diminish the parliamentary performance of women candidates.

Violence is part of the identity of the subordinate groups and subaltern counter-publics that the *mandatas* represent and resistance in the circulation of counter-discourses in the

institutional dimension in order to have the direction of knowledge production in affirming their identities and desires, expanding the discursive space. A structural aspect in the formation of these mandates is the collective nature of the decisions, in a movement away from the representation of elites in the peripheries, which denotes the rise of new leaders with strong links to the working classes and who are therefore intimately familiar with the difficulty of inequalities as they experience daily distancing from institutional politics.

While in the first axis we clarified the desire of collective mandates to correspond to the plurality and diversity of the population, in the second axis we identified the under-representation of women and minorities which demonstrates the weakness of Brazilian democracy, shedding light on inequalities, *mandatas* appear as a model of representation that aims to break with the mechanisms of production and reproduction of male domination such as patriarchy.

Breaking the male hegemony means moving into the spaces of power that make it possible to guarantee control of public policies that cross their bodies, bringing more discussion, participation and deliberation. The political agenda presented by the candidacies and *mandatas coletivas* seeks to include women in politics with the aim of expanding the conquest of rights and deepening the democratic order.

Thus, we stress that these initiatives can be analyzed as a new way of confronting the crisis of parliamentary political representation as a possibility to address the insufficiency of this representation. Although they are not the only solution to the countless challenges of democratic dynamics, the initiatives are intended to contribute to the requalification of Brazilian representative democracy.



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