

ERODING THE CLIENTELIST MONOPOLY

The Subnational Left Turn and Conservative Rule in Northeastern Brazil

Brandon Van Dyck
Lafayette College

Alfred P. Montero
Carleton College

Abstract: Well-financed opposition parties can exert their organizational strength to undercut the territorial advantages of political machines and clientele networks. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, leftist parties in Brazil's Northeast region brought conservative dominance to an end. The Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) led this shift, not only garnering regional majorities in presidential elections but also winning multiple governorships and increasing its share of federal and state legislative seats in the region. In contrast to arguments attributing recent electoral shifts in the Northeast to civil society, aggregate growth, and conditional cash transfers, we argue that the territorial expansion of the PT organization played a central role. A spike in party finances between 2001 and 2003 enabled the PT, for the first time, to establish party offices in northeastern municipalities from the top down. Drawing from underutilized data and sources, we show that the PT leadership eroded conservatives' monopoly on rural territory in the Northeast by strategically targeting hundreds of conservative-dominated municipalities and investing resources to stimulate the formation of local offices. The study demonstrates that this top-down territorial targeting produced considerable electoral gains for PT candidates across federal and state races.

The last fifteen years have brought an unprecedented wave of left-wing political victories in Latin America. A large body of literature has sought to identify the main causes of this "left turn," to categorize different new left parties and movements, and to explain variation in left governing outcomes (see Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Remmer 2012; Flores-Macías 2012; Weyland, Madrid, and Hunter 2010; Roberts 2008; Castañeda 2006). These studies all focus on the rise of the left at the national level. But some important left turns occur at the subnational level, and subnational left turns may have distinct characteristics and causes that national-level analyses do not pick up. Without disaggregating national-level analyses, we risk missing important mechanisms that are critical for a full understanding of the left's rise in Latin America.

Brazil's Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) is the most important case of recent left success in Latin America. Brazil has the largest society and economy in Latin America, and the PT has firmly established itself as Brazil's leading party, holding the presidency since 2003 and strengthening its presence at various levels of government over the last decade. The PT's progress in the poor,

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historically conservative Northeast has played a critical role in its rise and an even more critical role in its consolidation of power since early in the decade. Since 2006, the PT has won multiple governorships in the Northeast and increased its share of federal and state legislative seats in the region, making it a PT stronghold. Without the support of this region, Lula da Silva would have not been reelected in 2006, and Dilma Rousseff would have found a second-round victory problematic in 2010 (see Hunter and Power 2007; Montero 2012, 2014b).

Despite the critical importance of the Northeast to Brazil's left turn, the nature and causes of the PT's progress in the region remain poorly understood. National-level analyses of the PT have largely passed over the specific dynamics at play in the PT's electoral penetration of the Northeast. These national-level analyses tend to characterize the contemporary PT as an electoral-professional party (e.g., Hunter 2010; Handlin and Collier 2011; Levitsky and Roberts 2011; Flores-Macías 2012) and to identify the PT's ideological moderation and adoption of modern, professional campaign tactics as the main causes of its rise during the early 2000s (e.g., Hunter 2010; Samuels 2004; exceptions are Amaral 2011 and Ribeiro 2010). While this electoral-professional model is useful for understanding the rise of the national PT, it is not especially useful for understanding the PT's rise in the Northeast. In the Northeast, the PT has not advanced by adjusting its electoral tactics and program to appeal to a wider swath of voters. It has made inroads, in large measure, through a territorial, mobilizational strategy: by targeting conservative-dominated localities and establishing party offices from the top down in an effort to reach and mobilize poor voters for the first time.

The nature of conservative rule in the Northeast made the PT's mobilization-centered strategy necessary. Following Brazil's 1985 transition to democracy, conservative parties dominated electoral politics in the Northeast for two decades by maintaining clientelist monopolies. Conservative parties established bases of operation in poor areas and provided tangible short-term benefits to individuals in exchange for votes. They tightly monitored the distribution of information, goods, and services in these places, controlling local media and preventing or claiming credit for the inflow of outside resources. Conservative machines maintained a stranglehold on federal, state, and municipal offices in the region, while the leftist opposition, led by the PT, lingered in the wilderness (Montero 2014a).

But by mid-decade, leftist parties brought conservative dominance in the Northeast to an end. The 2006 general election marked a decisive turning point. Whereas in 2002, Lula's national vote share exceeded his northeastern vote share, in 2006, Lula won the Northeast in a landslide and secured reelection in the process (Hunter and Power 2007).¹ In the 2006 gubernatorial elections, three leftist parties—the PT, the Brazilian Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Brasileiro,

1. In 2002, Lula's share of the vote nationally was 46.4 percent in the first round and 61.3 percent in the second. His share in the Northeast in each round was 43.7 and 58.9, respectively. In 2006, Lula's national vote share was 48.6 in the first round and 61.8 in the second round. In the Northeast, his share in each round was 63.4 and 74.1, respectively.

PSB), and the Democratic Labor Party (Partido Democrático Trabalhista, PDT)—upended the conservative establishment, defeating center and right-wing incumbents in five states (Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Sergipe) and retaining governorships in two (Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte). The PT's victory in Bahia—the largest, richest, and most powerful state in the Northeast—stood out. Jacques Wagner (PT) defeated Paulo Souto of the conservative Liberal Front Party (Partido da Frente Liberal, PFL), toppling the powerful machine associated with ex-Bahia governor Antônio Carlos Magalhães and putting an end to decades of conservative hegemony in the state. At the federal and state legislative levels, PT candidates from the Northeast experienced disproportionate electoral gains (Van Dyck 2014b). In fact, in the Chamber of Deputies, the PT, despite losing seat share nationally (from 17.7 percent to 17.3 percent), increased its northeastern seat share (from 11.3 percent to 14.6 percent).

The left has since consolidated its northeastern electoral gains. Dilma Rousseff, Lula's successor, won the 2010 presidential election with a landslide in the Northeast larger even than Lula's. The PT and PSB won six of nine 2010 gubernatorial elections, including Wagner's reelection in Bahia, and most PT incumbents in 2010 federal and state legislative elections and 2008 mayoral elections prevailed with strong support in the former redoubts of conservative rule. In short, the Brazilian left has notably eroded conservative electoral dominance in the Northeast, and the PT has led this shift through strong performances in executive and legislative elections at the federal, state, and municipal levels.

The PT stands as an exception in the Brazilian party system. Unlike the parties that dominate the center-right (e.g., Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, PSDB; Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, PMDB), the PT puts a premium on grassroots organization building. Since its inception, a major feature of the PT's development has been to treat territory as a key arena of electoral politics (Meneguello 1989). During the PT's first two decades, the party's territorial expansion proceeded in a bottom-up manner, driven by the initiative of locally organized civil society leaders and allies (e.g., unions, Comunidades Eclesiais de Base or CEBs). In recent years, national and subnational PT leaders have vigorously pursued territorial expansion from the top down. In the same way that invading armies move divisions into enemy-held territory, the PT leadership has invested considerable resources to stimulate the formation of party offices and activist networks in untouched localities and opposition strongholds. Our central empirical claim is that the PT's organizational targeting of conservative-dominated enclaves in the Northeast has contributed significantly to the PT's recent electoral progress in the region. The PT's advances, we argue, demonstrate that a party with a resolute mission and, crucially, access to substantial financial resources can implant local activist networks in the territorial bastions of its rivals and thereby engineer a historic transformation. The theoretical significance of this finding is that by establishing a strong organizational presence in formerly hostile territory, leftist parties operating at a subnational level can engineer far more consequential shifts in the balance of power nationally, paving the way for or deepening extant left turns.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Beyond the contribution that this study makes to literature on the left turn in Latin America generally, we posit that local organizational penetration better explains the left turn in northeastern Brazil specifically than do alternative explanations. These alternative explanations highlight factors exogenous to the PT and the Northeast in order to explain the party's recent electoral success in the region. According to one such view, the PT's recent victories in the Northeast belong to president Lula da Silva, not to the PT. Specifically, this view holds that Lula's association with the popular conditional cash transfer program, Programa Bolsa Família (BF), largely explains the performance of "down-ticket," or lower-level, PT candidates. BF transfers, disbursed monthly in installments as high as US\$151 (R\$242), significantly weaken the material dependence of poor recipient households.² As a result, local political bosses who once managed political machines on behalf of conservative patrons—associated in the democratic period with parties such as the Liberal Front Party³—can no longer "buy" the poor vote easily. As the value of material incentives has fallen for families located in some of the poorer and more isolated rural areas of the Northeast—the so-called *grotões* (literally "big caves")—these erstwhile redoubts of conservative rule have flipped in favor of the PT due to a "Bolsa Família factor" (see Borges 2011; Fenwick 2009; Soares and Terron 2008).

While it is true that Lula and Bolsa Família remain popular throughout the Northeast region, the area with the highest concentration of recipient households, there is little empirical evidence that these factors, by themselves, have benefited down-ticket PT candidates (Montero 2012; Rennó and Cabello 2011, 42; Van Dyck 2014b).⁴ In the statistical analysis below, we provide additional evidence that BF has not helped lower-level *petista* (PT) candidates in the Northeast. BF and the Lula factor were available mechanisms for attracting poor voters to the PT, but territorial patterns of organizational placement demonstrate how these mechanisms were used. The PT, in general, was much more likely to benefit from conditional cash transfers and the Lula factor if it first established a party office in the relevant locality. Only then could party activists explicitly draw connections for voters between the PT, on the one hand, and Lula and BF on the other.

It should also be emphasized that Lula's 2002 victory and the implementation of BF occurred *after* the PT had begun to make organizational inroads in the Northeast to reap electoral benefits. Although the PT's organizational expansion in the Northeast intensified during the first decade of the 2000s, the construction of local PT branches in the region began to take off in the mid to late 1990s (Van Dyck 2014b). This pre-2000 organizational expansion coincided with a larger number of northeastern voters identifying as *petista*, even as the evolution of the

2. The funds are disbursed based on the number of children and under the proviso that these children attend school regularly, receive regular vaccinations, and are seen, along with pregnant and breast-feeding mothers in the household, by health care professionals.

3. Since December 2007, the party has been called the Democrats (Democratas).

4. There was a strong effect on Lula's behalf in 2006. See Zucco (2008) and Hunter and Power (2007).

party's historic base in the industrialized Southeast and South slowed and later declined (Venturi 2010). Between 1997 and 2002, the PT became the first party among northeastern survey respondents declaring a partisan preference, with 16 percent to the PMDB's 9 percent. This is notable because the party had not yet elected any governors in the Northeast and still held fewer than ten seats from the region in the Chamber of Deputies (Singer 2010, 99). In 2002, the PT elected its first northeastern governor, Wellington Dias, in Piauí, and the party's share of seats in the chamber increased from ten to seventeen. Thus even before the PT achieved electoral success at the presidential level, and well before the BF had its full effect on poor households in the northeastern states, the PT was making disproportionate gains in the region.

Another explanation of the PT's success in the Northeast concerns the party's strategic alliances with civil society organizations (CSOs). An emerging literature argues that the PT's construction of local offices during the first decade of the 2000s produced considerable electoral gains, both in the Northeast (Van Dyck 2014b) and nationwide (Zucco and Samuels 2014). Yet the determinants of recent PT office-building remain poorly understood. Zucco and Samuels (2014) provide statistical evidence that at the national level, the PT tended to build local branches in municipalities where nonprofit nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operated. The authors infer that the establishment of solid local PT networks depended on linkages with ideologically aligned CSOs. They argue that civil society played an important role in the PT's recent electoral progress by enabling or facilitating the key intermediate step of local organization building.

We believe that this explanation falls short when applied to the PT in the Northeast. Because the Northeast has low civil society density relative to the industrialized South and Southeast, we do not expect CSO networks to be widely available to the region's parties in general. Moreover, during the first decade of the 2000s, the PT explicitly adopted an organizational strategy of rural penetration—"interiorization" (*interiorização*)—and focused its efforts on areas with low levels of CSO networking (Ribeiro 2010). Ames (2001) and Montero (2010, 2012) show that leftist opposition parties in the Northeast have historically performed well in urban centers, but rural zones have remained largely under the control of clientele networks serving conservative party machines. In this decade, the PT, for the first time, built large numbers of local party offices well beyond the Northeast's urban centers (e.g., Salvador, Bahia), recognizing the obsolescence of a CSO-oriented approach in these areas. We therefore expect CSO development and office-building to be orthogonal in the Northeast.

Other explanations more specific to the Northeast emphasize the role of improved aggregate growth in the region, associated with an expanding formal labor market, improved wage earnings, greater consumption, and decreasing inequality and poverty (Silva, Braga, and Costa 2010). Similar to the BF effect, stronger household incomes should decrease the value of material rewards in clientele networks. Economic growth and modernization are powerful forces that undermine political clientelism in several ways. Clientelist political machines require the monopolization of public (and often private) goods to prevent subordinates from pursuing alternative political alliances (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and

Estévez 2007; Medina and Stokes 2007). Such monopolization is most effective in preventing clients from exiting their oppressive circumstances when reinforced by an underlying social structure of poverty and social hierarchy (Scott 1969; Chubb 1982).

The role of economic growth and modernization suffers from both the time-inconsistency problem we see in the Lula/BF argument and the obsolescing effect we associate with the CSO alliances position. The Northeast experienced solid economic growth after 2002, especially due to the export-oriented commodity boom and the rise in consumer spending that followed the Lula administration's 24 percent real minimum wage increase and implementation of BF (Hunter and Power 2007; Banco Central, various years). Yet the timing of this growth makes it orthogonal to the organizational efforts of the PT and its electoral performance. Household incomes did not register notable increases until months after the minimum wage increase went into effect in May 2005 (Singer 2009, 93). PT candidates in the opposition could not have benefited from this growth. If anything, conservative incumbents could have taken the credit (and did!) (Montero 2010). More importantly, economic progress was primarily an urban, coastal phenomenon and not one that swept through the interior of the northeastern states. Since colonial times, the economies of these states have remained most dynamic along the coastline (*litoral*), where the export-oriented sectors are based. Most agriculture occurs near the coast and not in the interior, which is mostly arid backcountry (*sertão*). Municipal-level mapping of economic growth rates and the human development index (HDI) between 2002 and 2010 confirm that these conditions did not cluster spatially with areas where the PT mobilized its resources or gained its votes.⁵

TERRITORY, POLITICAL DOMINATION, AND THE PT ORGANIZATION

Political control over territory is fundamental in the competition to secure office in Brazil. Given that the exchange of voter support for excludable material benefits is central to clientelism, limiting the domain of the local electorate's choices and the availability of alternative material reward systems is crucial for maintaining clientele networks. Both the monopoly aspect of the bosses' control over resources and the dependence of poor households on these goods and services heighten the threat, to voter-clients, of withdrawal for failure to commit (or precommit) to the machine's favored candidate(s). In this way, clientelist monopolies are strongest where local bosses can isolate their subjects, oversee their electoral behavior, and credibly threaten them if they renege on their vote-buying contracts (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007; Medina and Stokes 2007). The more established the clientelistic exchange relationship is, the more incumbents can be said to control political territory.

Maintaining clientelistic monopolies requires incumbents to close down resources that might otherwise flow to the opposition—a process that Gibson (2013) calls “boundary control.” The cost of this strategy is low in areas where the public

5. These cluster maps are available from the authors upon request.

sector, and therefore patronage, provides most of the employment. Thus, poor, rural, and isolated areas lend themselves to the formation and entrenchment of clientele networks and political machines (Chubb 1982; Scott 1969). Penetrating these local enclaves is central to the larger effort to increase the political competitiveness of subnational polities. An emerging literature has even identified this task as one of the most neglected areas in the study of democratization in comparative perspective (cf. McMann 2006; Giraudy 2010; Gervasoni 2010).

Brazil's poor and rural municipalities are enclaves of conservative domination (Ames 2001). The country's rural zones tend to be sparsely populated, making enforcement of vote buying less expensive. Face-to-face meetings between political operatives and voters to acquire signals of support in return for material favors are still possible in these places (see Nichter 2009; Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, and Nichter 2010). The continuity of these conditions has enabled conservatives to create political machines lasting decades, amid regime changes, economic modernization, and increased differentiation of the class structure. In the heavily rural Northeast, entrenched state- and local-level conservative machines have utilized incumbency advantages and territorial control to preserve regional hegemony since the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime (1964–1985) (see Vilaça and Albuquerque 1988; Mainwaring, Meneguello, and Power 2000; Power 2000; Montero 2014a). Incumbency has guaranteed the region's *coroneis* (local bosses, especially governors) access to the patronage that they must dispense to local bailiwicks in return for votes on election day.

For opposition parties such as the PT, the long-held symbiosis in the Northeast between gubernatorial largesse and local forms of political domination has proved particularly difficult to defeat and displace. Even during the first five years of the 2000s, as the left began to “interiorize” (*interiorizar*), or move out from urban cores into rural areas, the entrenched position of conservatives forced leftist challengers to mount offensives against the conservative establishment primarily from urban cores. Spatial analysis of the vote in these states demonstrates that leftist challengers moved out from urban toeholds established in earlier elections to capture votes in municipalities surrounding capitals, regional trade hubs, and coastlines, areas with larger and more diverse populations that are difficult for conservatives to isolate into clientele networks, and where the left can appeal to organizations such as unions and social movements to garner votes (Ames 2001; Montero 2012). These territories favored the labor-intensive organizational strategies of leftist partisan campaigns, which cost more to execute farther from urban centers (Montero 2010). In 2006, these spatial shifts in electoral support coincided with leftists capturing the governorships of most northeastern states.

Despite conservatives' gubernatorial losses since 2006, clientelist enclaves in the interior of the poor states have not simply melted away. On the contrary, the loss of gubernatorial patronage has strengthened conservatives' determination to retain control of the countryside. Northeastern conservatives have employed all available means to retain their poor, rural bailiwicks and use them to mobilize the comeback vote. Definitively breaking the back of conservative rule means targeting these rural bastions and developing local networks of activists who can raise the opposition's visibility (by showcasing party flags, wearing party shirts,

etc.), recruit and mobilize new members, do campaign work, and even distribute selective benefits (e.g., government and party jobs) (Van Dyck 2014b). In these ways, local activists, or “counteroperatives,” can provide an alternative to voters who know of no option other than to support the traditional boss’s preferred candidate(s).

Undermining conservative rule in the rural nerve centers of Brazilian conservatism is a challenging task, requiring an organizational sophistication and capacity for planning uncommon in the Brazilian party system. But in contrast to Brazil’s typical catchall parties, the PT is well organized and highly institutionalized, with a leadership that at least historically has enjoyed relatively little autonomy from the rank and file (Samuels 2004; Mainwaring 1999, 166; Keck 1992).⁶ High levels of internal participation by the PT rank and file, coupled with low levels of leadership autonomy, reinforce the use of mobilizational campaign tactics as party leaders share with grassroots activists the operating principle that empowering citizens through participation in politics is effective in undercutting clientelistic dependency (Nylen 1997, 430–432; Hunter 2010). The day-to-day influence of rank-and-file partisans imprints on the PT a tactical preference for mobilization. Comparatively, leftist parties in Brazil enjoy a strong connection between the grassroots and the partisan leadership, though with varying degrees of leverage by rank-and-file partisans over their leaders (Lacerda 2002, 41–42).

During the PT’s early development, the establishment of local party structures occurred in a relatively spontaneous, decentralized manner. Networks of PT activists sprouted up primarily in the industrial and urban municipalities of the Southeast and South, due to the initiative of key civil society allies (e.g., new unions, CEBs) and the concentrated presence of key constituencies (e.g., middle-class progressives). Unsurprisingly, the early PT’s major electoral victories came in these organizational bastions (Meneguello 1989; Keck 1992). In 1988, the PT won the mayoralties of São Paulo (Southeast) and Porto Alegre (South). In 1992, the PT won the governorships of Espírito Santo (Southeast) and the Federal District (Central West). Over time, the average petista remained an urbanite, generally living in municipalities with higher human development indices (Samuels 2008). Throughout the 1990s, the PT’s territorial expansion continued to occur primarily in urban cores and surrounding municipalities, driven by the local, bottom-up efforts of aligned civil society organizations (Ribeiro 2010, 250–251; Van Dyck, 2014a).

During this period, the heavily rural Northeast proved resistant to PT penetration, in organizational and electoral terms (Ribeiro 2010, 248). The Northeast has a lower population density and higher percentage of rural municipalities than any region in Brazil, save the more sparsely populated North. As of 2000, the PT had still achieved only a modest level of implantation in the Northeast. In the region’s large urban areas, strong PT structures had formed, but in the rural areas, local PT networks had either fizzled or, more typically, never taken root. In the early 2000s, the PT national leadership, for the first time, set out to expand the party

6. One exception is Ribeiro (2010, ch. 6), who argues that since the mid-1990s the PT national leadership has become increasingly autonomous from the petista rank and file.

organization from the top down. The broad strategy, called interiorization (*interiorização*), was to move the PT organization beyond capital cities and developed coastlines into Brazil's poorer, rural communities (Ribeiro 2010, 248–252). The national PT leadership focused primarily on the Northeast (Ribeiro 2010, 248).

PT leaders had long recognized that local organization building would be necessary to shift electoral support in the Northeast from traditional conservative candidates to petistas. But the PT only developed the capacity to penetrate the historically inhospitable Northeast in the early 2000s. This newfound capacity resulted, in large measure, from a spike in party finances (Ribeiro 2010). In 2001 and 2002, the PT's financial situation improved considerably due to an influx of corporate contributions in advance of the presidential race. In 2001 alone, party funds increased by more than 20 percent (Ribeiro 2010, 111). Then, in 2003, the PT's financial situation improved dramatically as the PT assumed control of the federal government apparatus following Lula's inauguration; PT statutes require all members with elected or unelected public-sector jobs to donate a fraction of their salary to the party. The PT national leadership capitalized on the inflow of resources, and on the surge in positive national publicity following Lula's 2002 victory, by launching a major membership drive (*campanha de filiação*) in late 2003 and early to mid-2004 (Ribeiro 2010, 243).⁷ The national office invested considerable financial and human resources to fund the recruitment operation, support and oversee the construction of municipal branches, and collaborate with state and local party organs in the region. Similar efforts continue to the present (Zucco and Samuels 2014; Amaral 2011).

Although the PT's resources and northeastern focus came from central headquarters, the party's specific organization-building tactics emerged more organically. Working within the interiorization framework established by the national office, PT leaders in the Northeast fixed on the municipalities most essential to state-level conservative dominance, as we will show below. In effect, the PT "went for the jugular" of northeastern conservatism, identifying and penetrating the key *grotões* that the region's right-wing machines had used to secure their rule for decades.

THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The Northeast contains more than 1,800 municipalities. As of 2001, an estimated 1,017 of these did not have a PT office. Between 2001 and 2005, the PT established new offices in 535 northeastern municipalities. Between 2005 and 2009, the PT established 294 more. What determined where the PT built these new offices? Did the PT's office-building deliver electoral benefits? In this section, we provide statistical evidence that during the early 2000s, the PT engaged in territorial targeting by building new offices in conservative-dominated zones, and the con-

7. Arguably, the PT's increased capacity also resulted, in part, from the surge in "ideational capital" (Hale 2006) associated with Lula's 2002 presidential election victory. Ribeiro (2010, 243) observes that the party's top-down infrastructural efforts accelerated following Lula's assumption of the presidency in 2003.

struction of these PT offices produced significant electoral gains in subnational and federal elections for the party's candidates.

To test the first hypothesis, we ran two logit regressions, each estimating the effect of municipal-level conservative dominance on the probability of PT office-building. To operationalize PT office-building, we drew on underutilized, municipal-level PT organizational data. Since 2001, the PT has held biannual, non-compulsory, direct elections (*Processo de Eleições Diretas*, PEDs) for party leadership positions at all levels. For each of Brazil's 5,564 municipalities, the party's national Secretary of Organization records how many petistas, if any, vote in the biannual PEDs. The PT's PED records thus provide comprehensive data on the size and evolution of the PT's municipal-level active membership during the period under study.

Using these data, we created dummies for PT office presence in 2001, 2005, and 2009. For each of the three years, we coded all municipalities in which PEDs were held as "1" and all others as "0". To operationalize PT office-building from 2001 to 2005 and from 2005 to 2009, we created two dummies, one for each of the two four-year periods, coding all municipalities without an office in both years (e.g., 2001 and 2005) as "0" and all municipalities that gained an office between the two years as "1". In other words, we only compared municipalities that did not contain a PT office at the beginning of the relevant period (in 2001 for the 2001–2005 regressions, in 2005 for the 2005–2009 regressions).⁸ We removed from our two logit models all northeastern municipalities that contained PT offices in 2001 and 2005, respectively.

Following Ames (2001), we operationalized conservative dominance as the right/conservative/establishment gubernatorial candidate's municipal vote share, weighted by the relevant municipality's contribution to the candidate's overall state vote share. Thus, instead of simply distinguishing municipalities in which conservatives dominated, the variable distinguishes municipalities that played crucial roles in statewide conservative dominance. Among municipalities with comparable levels of conservative support in percentage terms, those in which the conservative candidate garnered more support in absolute terms receive a higher score due to the larger relative impact on the statewide conservative machine. This measure captures both the capacity of clientele networks at the local level to produce support for right-wing candidates and the role of the statewide clientele network in scaling up local efforts to feed the political machine. The latter plays a crucial role in federal and subnational races, in which votes are pooled statewide.

We controlled for five variables: degree of urbanization, level of human development, civil society density, the presence of a sitting PT governor, and previous PT or leftist gubernatorial vote share. We included urbanization and human development (HDI) as controls due to two countervailing factors. On the one hand, urbanization and development generally contribute to the development of left parties. On the other, the PT national headquarters, as described above, sought to strengthen the party's organizational presence in the poor, rural, conservative strongholds

8. In this respect, we follow the research design of Zucco and Samuels (2014) and Van Dyck (2014b).

of the Northeast.⁹ We included civil society density following Zucco and Samuels (2014). We included the sitting PT governor control because having a PT governor, all else being equal, could make the creation of a PT office more likely.¹⁰ Finally, we included previous gubernatorial vote share because northeastern conservative machines depend heavily on the gubernatorial seat for access to patronage (Borges 2011; Montero 2012). Higher-than-expected prior vote share for opposition gubernatorial candidates—whether from the PT or another leftist party—indicates greater preexisting support for overturning conservative rule, providing an incentive for the PT to pursue party building in those municipalities.

For both regressions, we used urbanization and HDI figures from 2000. Following Zucco and Samuels (2014), we created an indicator of civil society density with nonprofit NGO data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). In 2002 and 2005, the IBGE gathered Brazil-wide data on the number of legal NGO workers per municipality and created a subset of these data specifying the number of nonprofit NGO workers. To estimate civil society density, we divided the number of nonprofit NGO workers in each Brazilian municipality by the population of that municipality. We used our 2002 civil society density variable for the 2001–2005 regression and our 2005 variable for the 2005–2009 regression. To operationalize the presence of a sitting PT governor, we created a dummy with four values: “0” if the municipality’s state did not have a PT governor in the first or last year of the period in question (e.g., in 2001 or 2005 for the 2001–2005 regressions); “1” if the PT gained a governor between the two years; “2” if the PT had a governor both years; and “3” if the PT lost a governor between the two years.¹¹ Finally, for the 2001–2005 regression, we controlled for 2002 prior PT gubernatorial vote share and for the 2005–2009 regression, we controlled for 2006 leftist vote share.¹²

As table 1 indicates, our logit models reveal a substantial and statistically significant positive relationship between conservative dominance from 2001 to 2005 and from 2005 to 2009 and PT office-building. We drew 1,000 simulations from each logit model, holding all other variables at their means (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). Figure 1 presents our probability curves for conservative dominance and office-building in 2001–2005 and 2005–2009. Given that our scale for conservative dominance is unintuitive, we included rug plots illustrating the concentration of observation points along the 2002 and 2006 conservative dominance spectra. As the rug plots indicate, almost all northeastern municipalities score between 0 and 0.004 on conservative dominance in 2002 and 2006. Within (and beyond) this range, higher levels of extant conservative dominance predict substantially higher probabilities of PT office-building.

9. We also ran a model with HDI instead of urbanization. The results, statistically and substantively, were approximately the same, but collinearity tests put the results outside accepted bounds of tolerance.

10. We did not include the gain or loss of PT mayors due to endogeneity concerns. Brazilian electoral law forbids parties to field mayoral candidates without a party office in the relevant municipality.

11. In 1998, the PT had no governors in the Northeast, and in 2002, the PT gained the one governor in Piauí.

12. We controlled for leftist vote share because in 2006, the PT, in four northeastern gubernatorial elections, allied with non-PT candidates instead of fielding its own candidates.

Table 1 Logit results

Office-building 2001–2005 (n = 891)				Office-building 2005–2009 (n = 325)			
	Coef	SE	p		Coef	SE	p
Conservative dominance	350	64.2	***	Conservative dominance	597	175	***
Urbanization	.200	.412		Urbanization	.446	.681	
HDI	1.99	1.88		HDI	-1.61	3.15	
Civil society	-488	1.05		Civil society	-1.71	2.81	
Prior PT gob. vote share	3.77	.664	***	Prior left gob. vote share	.028	.007	***
PT governor	-.807	.285	**	PT governor	.209	.267	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

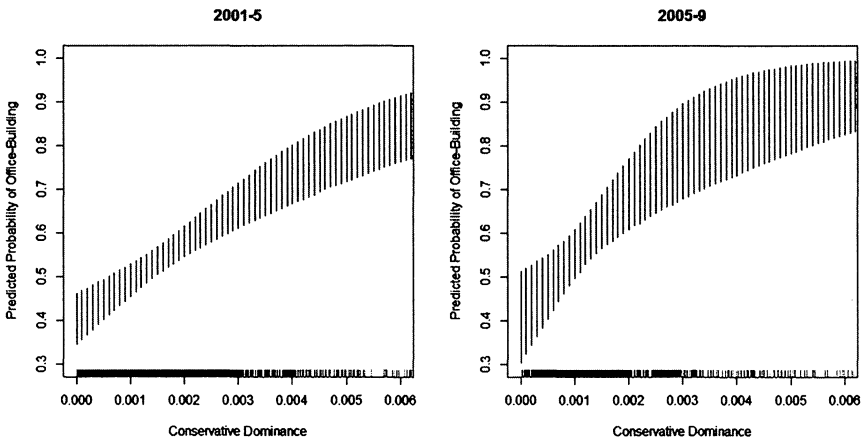


Figure 1 Conservative dominance and PT office-building (2001–2009)

The empirical association between conservative dominance and office-building supports our central claim that the PT, in carrying out organizational expansion during the early 2000s, targeted conservative-dominated municipalities. Our logit tests show no association between office-building and urbanization or HDI. This negative finding follows from the nature of our sample. As mentioned above, our regression samples only included municipalities that did not contain offices at the beginning of the period in question (2001 for 2001–2005, 2005 for 2005–2009). Since the PT’s pre-2000 northeastern offices tended to sprout up in more-developed urban areas, our sample was skewed from the beginning toward underdeveloped rural zones. Figure 2 illustrates the placement of new PT offices in all nine northeastern states for the 2001–2009 period, showing a clear pattern of interiorization, or penetration beyond state capitals and coastlines.

Secondary results provide added nuance to our interpretation of PT office-building during the first decade of the 2000s. First, our logit tests reveal a

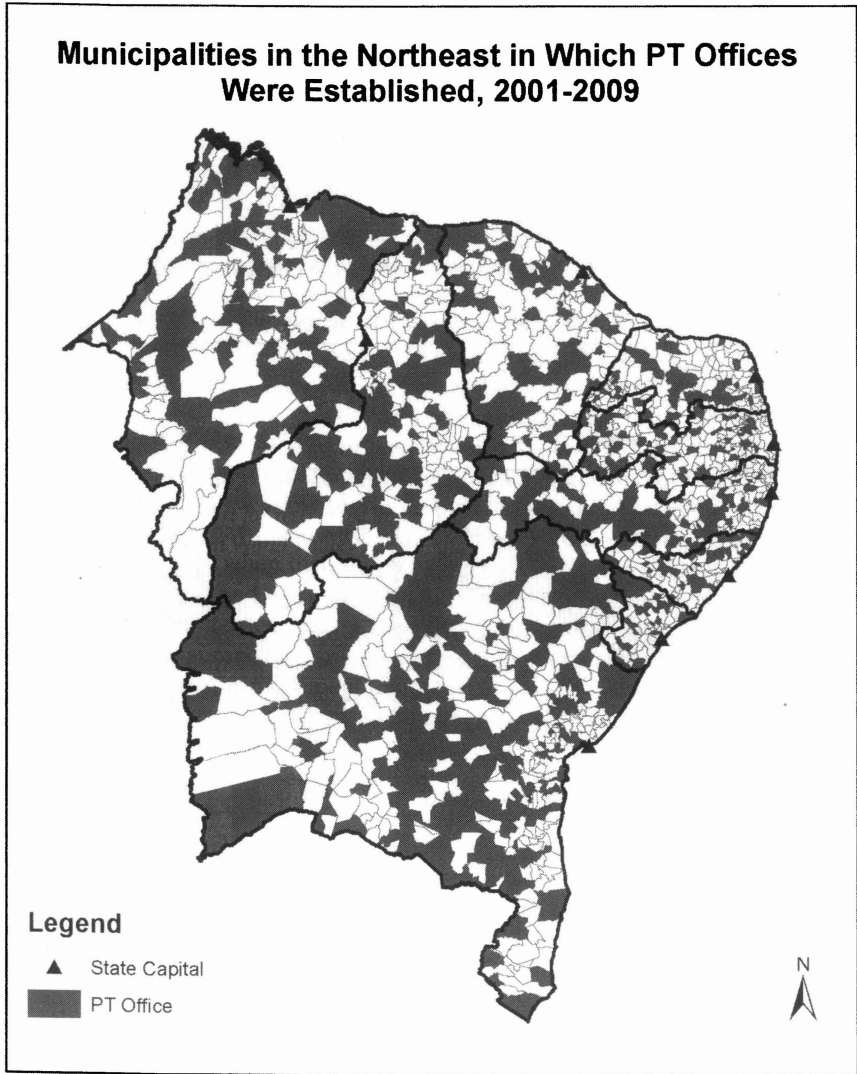


Figure 2 The geography of PT office-building in the Northeast (2001–2009)

statistically significant, positive association between office-building and prior PT or leftist gubernatorial vote share. While this might seem paradoxical, left support is not weighted like conservative dominance. Rather, it is simply the left's aggregate share of the vote in each municipality. It follows that the PT, during the early 2000s, tended to build offices in northeastern municipalities where it or another left party had previously received moderate support, but where conservatives still dominated. In other words, the PT went for the "jugular" of

conservatives, but it did so by capitalizing and building on previous opposition toeholds.

Second, given that conservative-dominated municipalities are relatively scattered, our hypothesis would predict a geographical pattern of dispersion rather than clustering in the PT's recent organization building. Spatial analysis supports this hypothesis. We ran both global (Moran's I) spatial auto-regressive and local indicators of spatial association (LISA) analyses on each of the northeastern states during the study period and we could find no consistent patterns of geographic clustering in the region.¹³ Of the nine states in the region, only Pernambuco returned a significant but negative Moran's I coefficient, indicating a global pattern of dispersion. The balance of the spatial and statistical evidence demonstrates that the PT party leaders, like precise marksmen, targeted select municipalities in which conservatives had garnered especially large fractions of their statewide voter support.

In sum, the PT has strategically invested its organizational resources, moving beyond municipalities with high levels of urbanization and civil society density, and implanting local networks precisely in the electoral redoubts (*redutos eleitorais*) of erstwhile conservative machines. These findings illustrate the limitations of analyzing national-level phenomena and controlling for fixed effects at the state level. Zucco and Samuels (2014) show that at the national level, civil society density strongly predicts PT office-building, but in the Northeast, civil society density falls out as a statistically significant predictor.¹⁴

To test our second hypothesis—that PT office-building during the early 2000s produced substantial electoral gains for the party's candidates—we ran five ordinary least square (OLS) regressions. Each regression estimated the effect of PT office-building on municipal vote share change for PT candidates in federal or state elections. The regressions cover two pairs of electoral cycles: 2002 to 2006, and 2006 to 2010. Following Van Dyck (2014b) and Zucco and Samuels (2014), we regressed 2002–2006 PT municipal-level vote share change on 2001–2005 PT office-building, and 2006–2010 vote share change on 2005–2009 office-building. For the 2002–2006 period, we ran regressions for PT federal legislative, gubernatorial, and state legislative candidates. For the 2006–2010 period, we ran regressions for PT federal legislative and gubernatorial candidates.

In each, we included five controls: the presence of a sitting PT governor, the degree of conservative dominance, the scope of BF, civil society density, and GDP growth. We included prior gubernatorial vote share and the gubernatorial dummy because PT governors' popularity (or lack thereof) could improve or hurt successor candidates and down-ticket PT candidates. We included conservative

13. These cluster maps are available from the authors upon request.

14. Our conservative dominance finding is robust to a wide range of specifications. We ran various permutations of our logit models, controlling for fixed effects and additional variables including BF scope and per capita GDP. For every permutation, our main results, both substantively and statistically, stayed approximately the same. We excluded our fixed effects controls from the reported models because they caused multicollinearity (variance inflation factors greater than four). We excluded BF scope and per capita GDP because they lacked a clear (e.g., BF scope) or independent (e.g., per capita GDP) rationale for inclusion.

Table 3 PT office-building and vote share change (2002–2010)

	Estimate	SD	95% CI
State assemblies (2002–2006)	.021 (2.1%)	(.004)	.013, .029
Chamber (2002–2006)	.031 (3.1%)	(.005)	.021, .042
Chamber (2006–2010)	.043 (4.3%)	(.018)	.007, .078
Gubernatorial (2002–2006)	.025 (2.5%)	(.015)	-.004, .054
Gubernatorial (2006–2010)	.002 (0.2%)	(.031)	-.057, .060

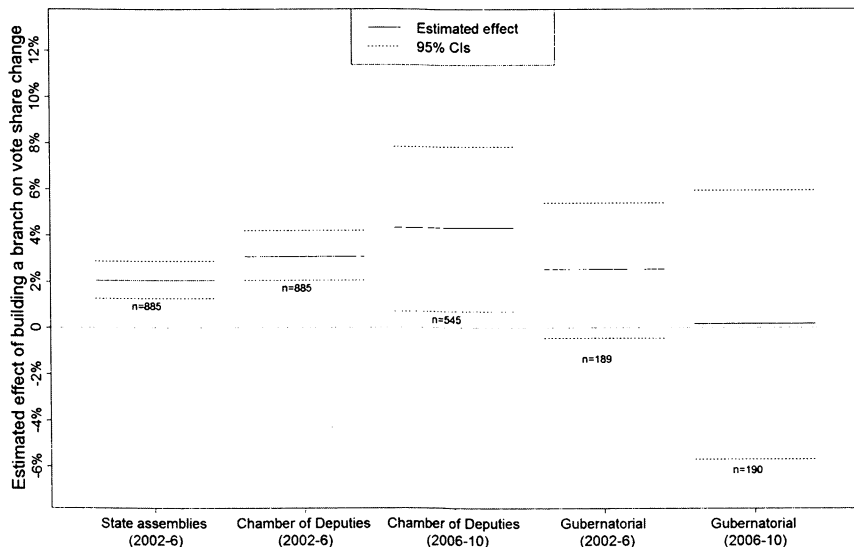


Figure 3 PT office-building and vote share change (2002–2010)

Sergipe and Bahia elected their first PT governors, and Piauí reelected one.¹⁶ In contrast, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, and Alagoas have never elected a PT governor.

Secondarily, our OLS tests for 2002–2006 provided evidence of electoral interiorization and prior gubernatorial vote share effects for down-ticket PT candidates. On electoral interiorization, our models returned statistically significant negative urbanization coefficients for every 2002–2006 election. This indicates that even given the rural skew of our sample, 2002–2006 PT vote share change was still systematically higher in the less urbanized municipalities. One possible

16. Arguably, within the Northeast, the PT is least competitive in Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, and Alagoas. In Maranhão, because the PT is factionalized, the percentage of new offices built may not indicate how the party overall stands in the state. In Ceará, the PT has relied on alliances with the PSB. These considerations all speak to the role that state-specific factors may play in the PT organization’s penetration of northeastern municipalities.

Table 4 Rate of new PT office creation in the Northeast by state (2001–2009)

	2001–2005	2005–2009
Rio Grande do Norte	22.4%	8.7%
Paraíba	23.0%	16.2%
Alagoas	24.5%	11.8%
Ceará	30.8%	17.0%
Maranhão	31.3%	26.3%
Piauí	31.5%	25.7%
Pernambuco	33.3%	6.7%
Bahia	33.3%	17.3%
Sergipe	41.3%	4.0%

interpretation is that PT office construction tended to have a greater impact on vote share change in more rural municipalities.¹⁷ On the consequences of prior gubernatorial vote share for down-ticket candidates, our models returned statistically significant positive coefficients for the 2002–2006 Chamber of Deputies and state assemblies elections.¹⁸ On our interpretation, prior success in gubernatorial elections signaled to voters in 2006 that PT opposition gubernatorial candidates or incumbents (as in Piauí) could win the most consequential, high-profile political seat in their state, and this made them more likely to support down-ticket candidates.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The PT's recent gains in the Northeast illustrate that opposition parties can exert their organizational strength to undercut the territorial advantages of political machines and clientele networks. We have argued and provided evidence that during the early 2000s, the PT leadership targeted conservative-dominated territories in the northeastern interior for organization building, and that the resulting office placement generated substantial electoral gains for the PT in state assemblies, the Chamber of Deputies, and at the gubernatorial level. We have also shown that alternative explanations of the PT's recent electoral gains in the Northeast fall short. Without local offices present, northeastern voters in the early 2000s, by and large, did not credit the Lula administration's hallmark achievements—Bolsa Família and improved aggregate growth—to the PT, so these factors did not, by themselves, drive the electoral gains of petistas. Civil society organizations are weak or nonexistent in the rural Northeast and therefore could not contribute substantially to the PT's penetration of the region's interior during the first decade of the 2000s. Our statistical results support all the above arguments, indicating that in the Northeast, BF scope and economic and social development

17. In the conclusion, we provide brief remarks on the mechanisms through which PT offices affect local voting behavior. This topic, as we stress in the conclusion, will require further research.

18. Our models also returned statistically significant negative coefficients for the gubernatorial elections. This negative finding likely results from ceiling effects.

do not predict recent PT vote share change in state elections or federal legislative elections; that conservative dominance has a robust relationship with recent PT office-building while civil society density does not; and that the PT's placement of offices in the northeastern interior delivered considerable gains across federal and state elections throughout the decade.

The PT's territorial incursions in the rural Northeast continue a historical pattern of local organization building but also depart from it. During early development, the party prioritized local organizational rootedness and relied heavily on the creation of local branches to make electoral progress. Yet for years, the party lacked the resources and national brand necessary to stimulate the formation of offices from the top down, in key opposition strongholds. Early organization building thus proceeded from the bottom up, through local civil society (e.g., unions, Catholic grassroots communities). As a consequence, the party remained organizationally weak in large areas of Brazil, especially the rural Northeast. In this respect, the PT's recent penetration of the rural Northeast—and of rural Brazil generally—represents a departure from the party's historical pattern. In the first decade of the 2000s, the PT leadership took advantage of increased funds and the popularity of Lula to grow the PT organization from the top down, precisely in the areas of Brazil where PT networks had not sprouted up organically (Ribeiro 2010, 252). Working in tandem, the party's national office and subnational leaders targeted rural conservative strongholds and invested party funds and political capital in the creation of hundreds of new local branches. This rural targeting contributed substantially to the erosion of northeastern conservative rule.

Yet the story does not end here. Our analysis raises a series of questions: What are the specific mechanisms that link the placement of PT offices to improved electoral outcomes in the Northeast? More specifically, what do local PT offices in the Northeast look like on the ground? What types of counterincentives do party workers provide to voters in the region's isolated zones? How do local PT offices, which are often quite small, achieve resonance with a large portion of the municipal electorate? These issues remain to be explored. A thorough, systematic account of the nature and activities of local PT branches in the Northeast will require more data from surveys, interviews, and field observation.

Although we reserve this data-gathering for future research, a few brief remarks are in order. Since the advent of modern democracy in Brazil, the PT has been more unknown than unpopular in the rural Northeast. Local media, historically, have ignored the party. Scholars have even coined the term "electronic clientelism" (*coronelismo eletrônico*) to describe conservatives' near monopoly of local television and radio in the region (Motter 1994; Bayma 2001; Lima 2008). Voters in the Northeast's rural zones tend to obtain political information from these electronic media (especially community radio) and/or from conservative brokers. In such contexts, a PT party office, however sparsely staffed, can do the important work, first, of making the PT visible. By putting up flags and other party symbols and simply by informing voters that a new electoral option exists, members of local PT offices can place the PT in voters' "consideration sets" for the first time. Further, local office staff and members can do campaign work for federal, state,

and local PT candidates. Campaign tactics might include drawing links between the PT and Lula, claiming credit for higher-level PT policies like Bolsa Família, promising new policies if elected, promoting party ideals (e.g., economic equality and opposition to poverty and discrimination), and even distributing selective benefits, especially in areas governed by PT mayors and/or governors. Crucially, if the PT becomes visible and appealing to a critical mass of voters, the party may affect the political discussion within social networks and neighborhoods, which other research has shown to shape voters' choices (cf. Baker, Ames, and Renno 2006).

In sum, although local organization clearly matters for the PT in the Northeast, precisely how it matters remains to be assessed. The mechanisms linking PT office presence to the party's electoral gains are a potentially rich area for future research.

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