Chapter Twelve

The Politics of Defending Inequality: Hate Speech, Visibility, and Symbolic Containment

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Abstract

This chapter examines how inequality, particularly in Global South contexts, is not merely structurally reproduced but also politically defended through moral, symbolic, and hate-based discourses. Drawing on the case study of the campaign "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City,", launched during Brazil's 2024 G20 presidency, the authors show how redistributive proposals face not only institutional resistance but also symbolic disqualification in digital public spheres. Employing Charles Tilly's framework of "durable inequality," the chapter argues that hate speech operates as a political technology of symbolic containment, delegitimizing both actors and redistributive agendas before they gain traction. It contends that addressing inequality requires more than technical reform—it demands

rooted, insurgent, and territorially grounded communication strategies that challenge regimes of visibility and the moral attachments sustaining historical hierarchies.

Keywords: durable inequality; hate speech; fiscal justice; political communication; wealth redistribution; digital platforms; symbolic hierarchies; Global South; right to the city; taxation of the super-rich; grassroots communication campaigns.

1. Introduction

Inequality, in all its manifestations, is not an abstract concept. It is a concrete, recurrent experience for millions across the globe. In countries of the Global South, this condition is underpinned by enduring social engineering rooted in political, economic, and symbolic structures that continuously reinforce one another. Far beyond disparities in income or the uneven distribution of opportunities, inequality operates as a deeply embedded social logic, sustained through institutional mechanisms and moral narratives that naturalize hierarchies and legitimize privileges. What persists is not a technical deficit in understanding or solving inequality, but a political struggle over who benefits from its maintenance.

This chapter analyzes how inequality is not only reproduced, but actively defended – discursively, morally, and symbolically. We focus on the backlash triggered by redistributive proposals, such as wealth taxation, to examine what we call *the politics of defending inequality*: the array of discursive practices and affective reactions that seek to disqualify both redistributive agendas and the actors who advocate for them. Hate speech, in this context, is not an aberration or byproduct of political polarization. It functions as a political technology – shaping the boundaries of legitimacy, reinforcing symbolic hierarchies, and safeguarding privilege under the guise of common sense or moral indignation.

To analyze these dynamics, we draw on Charles Tilly's framework of durable inequality (1999), particularly the mechanisms of *opportunity hoarding*, *exploitation*, and *emulation*.

These concepts allow us to understand how hate speech and symbolic aggression operate not only to express disagreement, but to actively reproduce exclusion and inequality through moral and communicative closure.

Our analysis is grounded in the 2024 campaign "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City", organized during Brazil's presidency of the G20. The initiative brought together the BRICS Policy Center (BPC) and the Instituto Papo Reto, both based in Brazil, in partnership with the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS) of South Africa. It sought to translate one of the central priorities of Brazil's G20 agenda – the taxation of the ultrawealthy – into accessible, politically resonant language for residents of Rio de Janeiro's favelas[1] . These are territories that embody inequality not as statistics, but as everyday experience. The campaign, however, encountered virulent resistance: moral and racialized attacks, symbolic disqualification, and a wave of hostile digital narratives. These reactions are not anecdotal – they are analytically central to understanding how the legitimacy of redistribution is contested in public spaces.

We develop this argument in three main sections. The first explores the theoretical and empirical foundations of inequality, drawing on Tilly's concept of durable inequality to understand how material and symbolic hierarchies are reproduced and defended (Tilly, 1999). The second section analyzes how the political defense of inequality manifests in the reception of redistributive agendas, focusing on the case of the campaign "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City", launched during Brazil's presidency of the G20. Through four subsections, it examines the campaign's framing, narrative strategies, digital reception – including backlash – and broader implications for symbolic and political contestation. The final section reflects on the political imperative of translating critical knowledge

1 This campaign was part of a broader dissemination initiative led by the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS), aiming to translate research findings from the *Wealth Inequality and Elites in the Global South* project into accessible content for non-academic audiences. The project sought to expand public engagement with issues of fiscal justice and structural inequality in collaboration with the BRICS Policy Center and Instituto Papo Reto.

into accessible language, emphasizing that the legitimacy of redistribution is not only a matter of policy design, but also of communicative struggle.

2. Inequality Struggles to Survive: Structure, Morality, and Power

2.1 The Durability of Inequality

Inequality persists not merely due to economic forces or statistical inertia, but because it is actively produced and reproduced through organized social relationships. Tilly's framework of "durable inequality" is especially instructive here: inequalities, he argues, emerge from categorical pairings embedded in institutions – such as male/female, citizen/foreigner, or rich/poor – and are perpetuated through *opportunity hoarding*, *emulation*, and *exploitation* (Tilly, 1999). These mechanisms generate and stabilize hierarchies that remain remarkably resilient across time and space.

In Brazil and South Africa, this resilience manifests in the extreme and sustained concentration of income, wealth, and power. According to data from Oxfam (Oxfam, 2017; Oxfam Brasil, 2020), the top 1% in both countries continues to hold a disproportionate share of national income and assets, while redistributive policies have faced recurrent blockades. Carlos Antonio Costa Ribeiro's work on class and social mobility in Brazil further reinforces this picture: despite sporadic progress, structural barriers continue to restrict intergenerational mobility, especially among racialized and low-income populations (Ribeiro, 2023). Branko Milanovic's global perspective adds another layer, highlighting how national inequalities are often reinforced by global patterns of capital accumulation, elite networking, and tax avoidance (Milanovic, 2016).

What we see, then, is a form of inequality that is not simply the outcome of impersonal market dynamics, but one that is deeply institutionalized, morally encoded, and politically defended.

2.2 The Politics of Defending Inequality

Resistance to redistribution is rarely expressed in purely economic terms. More often, it is articulated through moral grammars that delineate who deserves what – and why. Appeals to merit, responsibility, and hard work are commonly mobilized to justify privilege and oppose policies that would alter the status quo. These narratives frame wealth not as a product of structural advantage but as the natural reward for individual virtue – and, by extension, frame inequality itself as a fair outcome of differential effort, talent, or worth.

Empirical evidence from Latin America and Africa supports this argument. López et al. (2022), based on interviews and surveys with elites in Brazil, South Africa, and Uruguay, show that even when elites acknowledge that inequality generates serious externalities – such as violence and political instability – they often withhold support for redistributive policies. This reluctance stems not only from material interests, but from cultural perceptions: the poor are frequently viewed as irrational and politically incompetent, which delegitimizes them as partners in democratic redistribution. In this sense, symbolic hierarchies – constructed through moral judgments – act as barriers to policy change, reinforcing what the authors call a cultural mediation of economic incentives.

This moralized framing is reinforced by elite perceptions that systematically devalue marginalized groups. As Silva and Lopez (2015) show, Brazilian elites often portray the "people" as incapable, undisciplined, and irresponsible, constructing symbolic barriers that naturalize inequality and legitimize privilege. Such narratives not only justify existing disparities but also work to delegitimize redistributive demands by casting them as undeserved or socially destabilizing.

Recent research has further highlighted that the defense of inequality is not confined to elite discourses or formal political arenas. As Schieferdecker et al. (2024) demonstrate, everyday conversations among ordinary citizens play a crucial role in reinforcing or contesting perceptions of inequality. These informal exchanges, embedded in social routines,

often reproduce meritocratic frames and naturalize structural hierarchies, subtly anchoring resistance to redistributive agendas in the texture of daily life.

Such discursive strategies are central to what we call the politics of defending inequality. They mask the role of state capture by elites, who not only influence tax regimes and fiscal policies, but also shape public perceptions through media ownership and ideological campaigns. In Brazil, for instance, the regressivity of the tax system – as detailed in the SCIS Working Paper #54 (Bressan et al., 2023) – reflects elite interests that have long resisted meaningful reform, particularly regarding the taxation of property, inheritance, and financial assets.

Redistributive proposals, in this context, are not merely technocratic adjustments: they represent symbolic threats to entrenched social orders. Proposals like taxing the super-rich pose a threat not only to the economic advantages enjoyed by the wealthy, but also to the ideological narratives and moral frameworks that justify and legitimize those advantages. In deeply unequal societies, these initiatives are perceived as attacks on a presumed moral and racial hierarchy, thereby triggering defensive responses that range from political lobbying to symbolic violence – including hate speech. Understanding this moralized and racialized dimension of the defense of inequality is key to grasping why redistribution proves so difficult to achieve.

2.3 Speech That Closes Doors: Durable Inequality and Symbolic Containment

The conceptual architecture of Tilly (1999) provides crucial insight into how inequality is actively maintained across generations. His three mechanisms – *opportunity hoarding*, *exploitation*, and *emulation* – not only stabilize inequality institutionally, but also generate forms of social closure that are moralized and normalized. In the context of this chapter, we argue that hate speech operates as a contemporary extension of these mechanisms, especially in digital arenas where symbolic legitimacy is constructed and contested.

Among the three, *opportunity hoarding* is particularly resonant. This mechanism describes how privileged groups restrict access to valuable resources and positions by establishing social boundaries and exclusionary practices. Hate speech, when deployed against advocates of redistributive policies, acts precisely in this way: it delegitimizes their claims, discredits their moral authority, and marks them as outsiders to the space of legitimate political discourse.

In digital environments, this dynamic is structured by platform algorithms that prioritize controversy, amplify antagonistic content, and reward visibility over substance. These platforms do not merely reflect public discourse – they actively shape it. By controlling what circulates, what is promoted, and what is ignored, digital platforms participate in a new form of *opportunity hoarding*: one that allocates symbolic visibility along lines of conflict, sensationalism, and structural privilege.

As Fernanda Bruno (2013) argues in her analysis of algorithmic governance, platforms do not simply mediate public discourse – they constitute regimes of visibility that classify, filter, and hierarchize subjects. In contexts of inequality, this apparatus reinforces processes of social sorting and symbolic exclusion, determining who appears, who is ignored, and who is rendered suspect in the digital public sphere. Through what she calls "machines of seeing," Bruno reveals how algorithmic infrastructures not only produce visibility but govern through transforming attention into a political vector that amplifies normative profiles and silences dissenting presences. In this sense, digital architectures operate as *dispositifs* that intensify *opportunity hoarding* by reallocating visibility along pre-existing lines of privilege and marginality.

Emulation, in turn, helps us understand how these patterns become institutionalized. When hate-based narratives are reproduced across media platforms, political arenas, and even policy debates, they reinforce the idea that resistance to redistribution is not only acceptable but normative. *Exploitation* is also at play: hate speech contributes to the symbolic subjugation of marginalized groups, reinforcing their economic

and political exclusion by undermining their capacity to articulate demands.

Thus, hate speech is not simply noise or provocation. It functions as a mechanism of containment that reinforces durable inequality by policing the boundaries of political legitimacy. Beyond hate speech, seemingly mundane conversations can also act as mechanisms of symbolic closure. Drawing on Schieferdecker et al. (2024), we can see that everyday talk frequently polices the boundaries of political legitimacy, privileging narratives that justify inequality while marginalizing those that advocate for redistribution.

This informal, relational dimension of inequality defense intensifies the resilience of durable hierarchies. As we will explore in the following section, the backlash to the campaign 'Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City' offers a vivid illustration of how hate speech operates not in abstraction, but through specific discursive strategies, targeted hostility, and platform mediated amplification. As we will explore in the following section, this logic was fully visible in the public reception of the "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City" campaign, where digital attacks became a central site of struggle over the meaning and desirability of redistribution itself.

3. Hate, Resistance and the Right to the City: A Case Study

3.1 Framing the Campaign: The G20 and Brazil's Redistributive Agenda

The campaign "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City" did not emerge in a vacuum. It was conceived within a specific geopolitical context: Brazil's presidency of the G20 in 2024.[2] That presidency marked a deliberate shift in tone and substance, aiming to reframe the forum around the structural

2 The full content of the campaign *"Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City"* is available at: https://www.instagram.com/paporetoinstituto/. The posts related to the campaign were published between October 4 and October 24, 2024.

drivers of global inequality. Among the pillars emphasized by the Brazilian government, justice in taxation occupied a central place. The agenda sought to push forward discussions on the taxation of large fortunes, inheritance, financial assets, and corporate profits – all themes traditionally marginalized in global economic governance (Garcia and Fernández, 2024).

The Brazilian presidency positioned fiscal justice as a precondition for democratic legitimacy, sustainable development, and a renewed multilateralism. This effort reflected a broader understanding that inequality is not only a matter of income distribution, but of power asymmetries entrenched in tax systems, institutional norms, and global financial flows.

However, it also faced resistance, both from within the G20 – where consensus on redistributive taxation remains elusive – and from domestic elites invested in the maintenance of regressive tax structures (Bressan et al., 2023).

Against this backdrop, the campaign developed by the BRICS Policy Center, the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, and the Instituto Papo Reto sought to translate this high-level agenda into a language rooted in the everyday struggles of Brazil's urban peripheries. It was not merely a communication exercise, but an attempt to reclaim the legitimacy of redistribution from below. By tying the call for taxing the super-rich to the right to the city, the campaign articulated fiscal justice as a matter of urban dignity, public service provision, and territorial recognition.

The campaign also intersected with the Urban 20 (U20), an engagement group within the G20 framework that brings together mayors from major global cities.[3] While the U20 has

3 As part of the same dissemination strategy, the seminar *"Inclusive Urban Strategies: Bridging Research and Community Action"* was held on November 15, 2024, during the U20 Rio Summit. Co-organized by the BRICS Policy Center, the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS), and Instituto Papo Reto, the event provided an opportunity to present the campaign's core themes—wealth inequality, fiscal justice, and the right to the city—to an audience of policymakers and specialists engaged in urban governance debates

historically focused on sustainability and infrastructure, the Brazilian campaign pushed its boundaries by introducing questions of inequality, race, and territorial exclusion. In doing so, it bridged multilateral discourse and local political struggles, showing that the city is not only a site of policy implementation but a space of symbolic and material contestation (Harvey, 2012).

As Brazil prepared to hand over the G20 presidency to South Africa, the campaign also raised critical questions about continuity. Would the themes of redistribution and fiscal justice remain on the agenda? Could South Africa, a country marked by its own history of racialized inequality, take up the mantle and deepen this agenda? These questions underline the fragility of redistributive momentum in multilateral spaces, but also highlights the strategic role of transnational civil society in sustaining pressure beyond state transitions.

It is within this political and institutional constellation that the campaign must be understood: not as an isolated advocacy effort, but as a situated intervention in a broader struggle over the meaning, legitimacy, and future of redistribution in the Global South.

3.2 Communicative Strategies and Narrative Disputes

The campaign's communicative strategy was grounded in a fundamental political wager: that a global agenda – fiscal justice – could only become meaningful and transformative if articulated through the language, symbols, and imaginaries of those most affected by inequality. Rather than reproducing institutional jargon or academic abstractions, the campaign relied on visual storytelling, accessible metaphors, and culturally situated narratives. The objective was not merely to inform but to mobilize, provoke reflection, and spark recognition.

This wager demanded resonance – not only conceptual, but affective and territorial. Hosted on the Instagram profile of Instituto Papo Reto, with its base of over 20,000 followers, the campaign drew from the organization's deep-rooted experience in favela-based communication. Through familiar

urban iconography, references to collective struggles, and juxtapositions between scarcity and opulence, the message was embedded in lived realities. This approach reflected a deliberate effort to produce symbolic friction within a public discourse dominated by elitist imaginaries.

The campaign reached 61,325 unique accounts and generated 83,188 impressions on Instagram, with 3,219 likes, 236 shares, and 203 comments across 14 posts. Although the content was collectively produced and contextually grounded, not all posts were distributed organically. A selection was boosted with paid media, and these promoted posts – those with greatest reach – became the principal target of hostile responses. These reactions were not accidental. They concentrated around content that made redistribution visible, legible, and urgent to wider publics – precisely the kind of visibility that threatened symbolic privilege.

Rather than weakening the campaign, this polarized reception became its analytical core. It made visible the social boundaries that delimit who is perceived as legitimate when speaking of redistribution. What emerged was a complex communicative landscape in which the same post could generate solidarity and hostility, affirmation and attack. The platform's algorithmic architecture amplified these tensions, transforming each comment section into a miniature public arena.

At this point, Tilly's concept of *opportunity hoarding* proves particularly useful. The backlash against the campaign was not merely a matter of disagreement — it was a symbolic effort to shut down the space of contestation and disqualify claims before they could become normalized. Delegitimizing the messengers — young favela-based communicators speaking about taxing billionaires — served to reinforce social boundaries that keep political voice unequally distributed.

More than that, the very functioning of the platform contributed to this process. The content that received the most hate was precisely the one promoted through paid media — in other words, the content that Instagram itself chose to amplify through its boosting mechanisms. It is important to

note that this promotion was configured to reach the largest possible audience, without specific targeting, which meant the content extended beyond supportive circles and was exposed to potentially hostile segments. In this sense, the platform was not merely the stage for conflict: it acted as an active agent in producing asymmetries of visibility.

Digital architectures function as dispositifs of algorithmic governance: they classify, hierarchize, and modulate the circulation of subjects and discourses based on criteria that reproduce preexisting social logics (Bruno, 2013). When applied to contexts of inequality, these infrastructures amplify processes of social ordering and symbolic exclusion. The campaign makes clear that Instagram, by boosting redistributive content beyond solidarity networks, deliberately exposed it to hostility — thus operating as a device of durable inequality, not simply reflecting conflict, but actively shaping it.

Viewed through this lens, the campaign's strategy of counter-hegemonic communication directly challenged mechanisms of durable inequality. It disrupted *emulation* by refusing the sanitized language of policy elites, and it exposed *exploitation* by foregrounding the disproportionate burden carried by low-income communities under unjust fiscal regimes. The hate it attracted was not an aberration, but a response to this disruption. Hate speech, in this context, operated as a tool for symbolic containment: a contemporary expression of how inequality defends itself.

In refusing to back down, the campaign asserted that taxation is not a bureaucratic technicality but a moral and political line. Through clarity, insistence, and grounded legitimacy, it claimed a space – however contested – in the symbolic economy of the public sphere. This, in itself, was an act of resistance against both material and discursive exclusion.

3.3 Hostility, Profiles, and the Symbolic Battle Over Redistribution

The hate speech observed during the campaign was not a collateral phenomenon – it was a core dynamic of how fiscal

inequality is defended in symbolic arenas. These responses, while seemingly informal and individualized, reflect the broader logics described by Tilly (1999): symbolic exclusion operates through mechanisms of *opportunity hoarding*, *exploitation*, and *emulation*, even in the digital micro-politics of comment sections.

The attacks varied in tone and form: some framed the campaign as communist propaganda; others insulted favela residents or mocked the legitimacy of the young communicators involved. Rather than engaging with the substance of the proposal – taxing the super-rich – these reactions sought to discredit the messengers. This strategy transformed a structural policy issue into a cultural provocation, reasserting boundaries of class, race, and political authority.

Several comments followed familiar scripts. One user dismissed the campaign with sarcasm: "*Instituto Papo Reto*. Just by the name, you can see that it's an institute with great credibility and much knowledge about economics." Another mocked a supporter with open hostility: "Shallow thinking, illiteracy and lack of arguments. You're the typical leftist who doesn't even know what you stand for but serves as a maneuver." Others reinforced moralistic narratives that blame poverty on personal failure or laziness – "Go to work, do nothing" – while reducing the redistributive proposal to absurdity with statements like "Tax is theft, no one should pay." These comments illustrate how ideological disdain and hate speech converge to disqualify redistributive claims, not by debating substance, but by ridiculing those who raise them.

A number of comments went further, subtly criminalizing peripheral populations by implying that support for redistribution signals gullibility or moral weakness. One user warned: "The more tax they have to pay, the more taxes we'll pay in their place," portraying fiscal justice as a zero-sum threat. Another commented: "The citizen who is in favor of any kind of alimony, tax or taxation, has already ceased to be a citizen and has become a zombie," equating support for redistribution with brainwashed servitude. These framings

reinforce the idea that low-income voices lack legitimacy in political debates. Hate speech, in this context, operates as symbolic exclusion—an attempt to expel certain groups from the terrain of democratic deliberation itself.

While many of the profiles behind these attacks are anonymous or closed, a pattern emerges. The most aggressive comments were posted almost exclusively by accounts that appear to be white men, often featuring hypermasculine imagery or containing minimal publicly available content, making it difficult to determine the authenticity of these profiles with certainty. Although we cannot confirm the authenticity of each profile, the available data suggest that these voices predominantly perform a familiar script: the self-made man, disdainful of the poor, allergic to redistribution, and eager to display contempt.

These expressions are not only ideological; they are affective postures embedded in gendered performances of strength, dominance, and disdain. In this sense, hate speech becomes not just a defense of economic hierarchy, but a reassertion of symbolic authority through masculinized aggression. The hostility was frequently expressed through ridicule and performative disdain—strategies that reinforce exclusion without requiring rational engagement. Even without definitive verification of identity or intent, the symbolic function remains clear: to reestablish control over the boundaries of legitimacy and deny peripheral actors the right to speak of justice.

The hostility encountered by the campaign was not incidental. It emerged from deeply sedimented ideological formations, long cultivated by traditional media and sustained through algorithmically mediated public discourse. As Gillespie (2018) observes, platforms do not merely mirror social hierarchies – they actively participate in their reproduction, privileging visibility for antagonistic reactions while marginalizing dissenting or redistributive perspectives. What gains traction is often not the proposal itself, but the moral

backlash it provokes, which displaces structural critique with symbolic confrontation.

Even when such discourse emerges from anonymous or fragmented profiles, its function aligns with the broader architecture of inequality. Platforms do not need coordinated campaigns to reproduce structural violence; by privileging outrage and symbolic aggression, they amplify narratives that stigmatize redistribution and silence dissent. In this way, digital environments enable a diffuse but effective defense of inequality.

This logic resonates with Charles Tilly's framework of durable inequality (Tilly, 1999). Hate speech here functioned as a mechanism of *opportunity hoarding*: it worked to discredit peripheral voices advocating for redistribution, excluding them from symbolic legitimacy. It also reproduced *exploitation* by reaffirming their subordinate moral status, and enacted *emulation* by normalizing ridicule and disdain for redistributive claims. In this sense, the symbolic violence channeled through hate speech became a strategic means to defend inequality.

Far from being a sign of weakness, the presence of hate signaled the campaign's political potency. By bringing redistribution into view – conceptually and territorially – it disrupted normative boundaries and revealed the emotional and ideological attachments that underpin the political defense of inequality. The emotional intensity of the response, particularly among privileged sectors, revealed not only resistance to fiscal justice, but a broader defense of the hierarchies on which that privilege rests.

Hate speech, then, should be understood not as noise, but as a political technology of inequality management. It disciplines imagination, stigmatizes dissent, and pre-empts redistributive claims before they can gain legitimacy. In algorithmically driven digital spaces, it travels fast, resonates widely, and is difficult to confront without reinforcing the very frames it imposes.

The experience of the campaign illustrates with precision the mechanisms discussed in the previous section: hate speech

operated as a form of symbolic containment, reinforcing the durability of inequality through *opportunity hoarding*, moral exclusion, and public disqualification. At the same time, as Schieferdecker et al. (2024) argue, these dynamics unfold in the terrain of everyday discourse – where legitimacy is granted or denied not only by institutions, but through informal interactions. The campaign exposed how these seemingly banal communicative arenas become key battlegrounds in the struggle over redistribution. Confronting inequality, therefore, requires more than policy – it demands symbolic conflict, and the courage to inhabit it.

3.4 Lessons and Contradictions for the Global South

The campaign "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City" offers a set of lessons that extend far beyond its immediate context. First and foremost, it reveals that fiscal justice is not merely a matter of technical policy design but a deeply political and symbolic battleground. In societies marked by extreme inequality, redistributive proposals confront not only institutional inertia and elite interests, but also affective attachments to moral hierarchies and racialized notions of deservingness. The resistance to redistribution is not only rational or material – it is also visceral and affective, anchored in social imaginaries that have been historically produced and fiercely defended.

Second, the campaign demonstrates the strategic role that grassroots communicators and territorial organizations can play in shaping national and even global agendas. By translating abstract policy debates into everyday language and framing, the campaign broadened the constituency for redistribution, especially among those most affected by fiscal injustice. This underscores the importance of engaging civil society not as a recipient of elite messaging, but as an active producer of political meaning. However, the campaign also revealed the costs of this visibility: backlash, exposure to hate, and emotional labor placed upon those who dare to speak truth from below.

Third, the case points to contradictions inherent in South-South global governance. While Brazil's presidency of the G20 made unprecedented room for a redistributive agenda, its domestic political landscape remains hostile to fiscal reforms that would meaningfully tax the wealthiest. The transition to South Africa offers both a challenge and an opportunity: the potential to carry forward this agenda within a new context of racialized inequality, but also the risk of dilution or abandonment in the face of geopolitical fragmentation and competing development priorities.

Finally, the campaign illustrates that hate speech is not an unfortunate byproduct but a structural feature of political life in unequal societies. It acts as a force of containment and discipline, limiting the imaginative and political scope of redistributive action. This insight invites us to take seriously the symbolic and affective dimensions of policy disputes, and to build coalitions capable not only of proposing new tax regimes but of defending their legitimacy in hostile public spheres.

For the Global South, the lesson is urgent: the struggle for redistribution will not be won solely in ministries or summits. It will require symbolic insurgency, institutional creativity, and affective endurance. The campaign offers a glimpse of what this might look like – and of the forces aligned to prevent it. In this sense, the G20 does not merely serve as a policy arena, but as a contested symbolic space where the legitimacy of redistribution itself is constantly at stake.

4. Conclusion – The Political Power of Communication

The "Tax the Super-Rich for the Right to the City" campaign was more than a response to fiscal injustice. It was a bold experiment in translating complex, often inaccessible knowledge about inequality and redistribution into public language and shared imagination. Crucially, it did so in the context of Brazil's presidency of the G20, a moment when questions of wealth taxation and global inequality gained unusual visibility on the multilateral stage. This alignment

between grassroots communication and global governance agendas was not coincidental – it was strategic, and it allowed for a rare convergence between academic research, territorial activism, and institutional opportunity.

This convergence underscores a broader argument: the struggle for social justice is inseparable from the struggle to communicate it. The campaign's commitment to producing accessible, politically grounded content – territorial, affective, and insurgent – was not ancillary to its aims. It was central. In making complex fiscal debates accessible and resonant, the campaign challenged both discursive hierarchies and material inequalities. It proved that clarity can be radical, and that language – when grounded in lived experience – can become a tool of political transformation.

Yet such efforts do not proceed uncontested. In deeply unequal societies, proposals for wealth taxation do not fail merely because of elite lobbying or institutional vetoes. They are also discredited symbolically, framed as threats to freedom, merit, or national identity. Hate speech, in this scenario, functions as a gatekeeper. It targets the moral and political legitimacy of redistributive claims, attempting to shut down the debate before it gains traction. Naming inequality and demanding justice thus become acts of exposure – both analytical and personal.

The campaign illustrates that it is possible to inhabit this space of conflict productively. It showed how to provoke without alienating, to translate without diluting, and to mobilize without moral retreat. Its communicative strategy operated as a form of counter-power – subverting *opportunity hoarding* by expanding access to political discourse, disrupting *emulation* by refusing elite-coded language, and challenging *exploitation* by empowering marginalized voices to articulate demands. For researchers, educators, and activists committed to transforming the structures of inequality, the lesson is unmistakable – ideas matter, but their circulation matters just as much.

Knowledge generated in universities and policy centers cannot remain sequestered in specialized languages or elite

venues. It must become image, narrative, and collective demand in the hands of those who live inequality daily. As Schieferdecker et al. (2024) remind us, political struggles over inequality unfold not only in parliaments and media outlets, but also in the countless everyday interactions where perceptions are negotiated and solidarities are built – or eroded. Recognizing the political weight of these informal arenas is essential for any strategy aimed at challenging entrenched hierarchies and advancing a more just social order.

5. Recommendations

In light of these findings, a set of recommendations becomes imperative. Future campaigns must recognize communication not merely as a tool, but as a central battleground in the struggle for fiscal justice. This entails investing in the production of accessible narratives — politically grounded and territorially attuned — that broaden the reach and legitimacy of redistributive proposals. Likewise, the articulation between knowledge production, social activism, and institutional opportunity must be cultivated as a core strategy, rather than an episodic coincidence, in confronting inequality.

Moreover, it is urgent to democratize political language. Universities, research centers, and civil society organizations must assume responsibility for translating technical knowledge into public discourse, actively dismantling the discursive hierarchies that exclude those most affected by systemic injustice. This process must be anchored in listening, co-production, and representativeness, ensuring that fiscal proposals are deeply connected to the lived experiences of affected communities.

A further critical issue concerns the need to confront hate speech as a strategic political barrier. When left unchallenged, the symbolic disqualification of redistributive agendas erodes the possibility of public articulation and morally delegitimizes the political actors who embody these demands. It is essential to name this mechanism and to develop collective strategies

of protection and support for social leaders who stand at the forefront of this struggle.

Finally, insurgent pedagogies must be incorporated into mobilization and education strategies. Political and fiscal education cannot be detached from the ways in which people experience the world. It must be territorialized, affective, and insurgent — enabling popular knowledge not merely to complement, but to challenge and reconfigure hegemonic technical expertise. Knowledge produced in universities cannot remain enclosed within the aristocratic circuits of professors and researchers who claim ownership of the field; it must overflow those boundaries and become image, narrative, and demand in the hands of those who endure the daily realities of inequality.

In short, the challenge is not merely to think critically, but to speak clearly — and collectively. In an era marked by symbolic violence, digital polarization, and institutional erosion, this is not simply a task of communication. It is a political imperative. To communicate well, in this context, is not embellishment. It is to contest power.

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