What is left of the Brazilian “Left”? 

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Motivations

Latin American Left
Background

Empirical Analysis

Data
Method

Results

Lula's Move to the Center
Terms of the Political Debate
The People
The Economy
Land Reform

Conclusions
Latin America’s path towards a “responsible left”

- Carlos Andres Perez, Venezuela: 1974, 1989
- Ricardo Lagos, Chile: 2000
Question

How did the left-wing discourse evolve in Latin America since re-democratization?

Research Agenda

Content analysis of presidents’ discourse in order to identify how it changes in time

Pilot Project


This paper

Lula’s TV campaigns in 1989 and 2002
Lula’s Path towards a “Responsible Left”

The 1989 Campaign

- First election after 21 years of authoritarian rule
- Aftermath of debt crisis: external debt from US$ 17 bi in 1974 to US$ 120 bi in 1989
- Hyperinflation: 1430% a year in 1989
- Polarization — Lula vs. Collor de Mello

The 2002 Campaign

- Lula’s fourth and allegedly “last” attempt towards the presidency of Brazil
- “Confidence” crisis in financial markets
- Unemployment: 12.2% in 2002
- Convergence — Lula vs. José Serra
The “electronic stage”: Brazilian TV Campaign

- Established by law
  - Time is allotted in proportion to party’s size
  - On for 2 months before election
  - Aired twice a day (at noon and prime-time)
- Very important political asset
  - Large audience (50%)
  - Motivation for pre-electoral alliances
  - Most expensive item in campaign expenditures: Between 42% and 85% of total expenditures
- Transcriptions of all programs
  - Two elections: 1989 and 2002 (1st round)
  - About 22 programs each cand/year
  - 700 words each program
Method

- Wordscore: Word frequency in Lula’s TV programs
- Identification of most frequent words
- Classification of words in groups of themes
- Compare themes across elections

Future steps
Lula’s path towards a “responsible left”

- Polarization in 1989, convergence in 2002: Lula’s move towards a “responsible left”?
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Results: Terms of the Political Debate

Ideology

Efficiency

• Divisive terms used in 1989 are replaced by “managerial” terms in 2002
Results: Terms of the Political Debate (cont.)

“Friends”

- References to workers significantly reduced from 1989 to 2002

“Enemies”

- Identification of the “rich” also disappears, replaced by “market”
Results: References to “the people”

- References to “the people” significantly reduced in 2002, increase of the use of “all”
Results: Economic Issues

“Economy”

- Inflation -> Employment, unemployment
- Decreased mentions to debt

“Debt”

- Changed perspective on debt
- No mention to banks in 2002
Results: Land Reform

- Most important policy in 1989: “as the air we breathe”
- In 2002, always followed by: ordered, peaceful, well-planned
- “Incentives to tourism, agribusiness and land reform” in 2002
Conclusions

- Allegedly a move from left to right
- More than that: a change in the terms of the political debate
  - De-politicization of Lula’s discourse
  - From zero-sum to a win-win game
  - From friend/enemy and confrontation to all-together/social pact
  - From ideology to “administrative efficiency”
  - From representative of the people from the leader of a team of specialists