

# Extreme Right Technopolitical Network and Democracy in Brazil

*Rede tecnopolítica de extrema direita e democracia no Brasil*

*Red tecnopolítica de extrema derecha y su acción en Brasil*

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## Abstract

What are the determinations that can guide our research to analyze the advance of the extreme right in the world? To this end, the proposed question considers the relationship between technology and politics, and aims to analyze the Global Technopolitical Network of the Far Right. The proposed challenge is to unveil the different articulations that define the formation of the technopolitical network. Its objective is to identify its agents, examine the division of tasks, analyze its articulations and the narratives that circulate within it, to demonstrate that its communication vectors produce a collective subjectivity of the extreme right. We highlight the participation of the influence industry which, through its algorithms, produces data analysis capable of recognizing target social groups which identify themselves by their way of thinking, doing, and being shared to whom fake news is directed, thus producing a “parallel reality” and “cognitive dissonance”. It transforms power relations in the world to benefit authoritarian and conservative values. The methodology’s starting point is interdisciplinarity, which combines knowledge of political science, communication, computing and geography. The data collection focuses on the action structure of the global far-right network and its representation in Brazil. The procedures are supported by a database that documents the information and application of computer programs to represent the networks. The analytical results identify the actors and agents, examine the division of labor in the technopolitical network to analyze their narratives, the processes and strategies of right-wing power, and demonstrate the expansion of political participation beyond political parties. No less important is revealing the connections between the global extreme right and the extreme right in Brazil and their consequences for democracy in the world.

**Keywords:** Technopolitical network. Far right. Influence industry. Fake news. Democracy.

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the extreme right has been advancing and gaining significant power around the world and in Brazil. The object of investigation is the Global Technopolitical Network of the Far Right. Our challenge is to identify its agents and actors, examine the division of tasks, read its narratives, represent its formation, and analyze its political actions as to demonstrate its importance in the expanding power of the extreme right in the world. To this end, the design, financing, data analysis, formation of target audiences, production and dissemination of narratives that produce disinformation are identified. It was necessary to analyze how this technopolitical network transcends states and nations, so to act in the global hybrid space. The network has become a new political actor, which produces mutations in political processes, and affects democracy and territory, transforming the balance of power in the world.

Our starting point is to verify the process of unification of different agents acting from a traditionalist, far-right value structure. These agents conceive, produce and disseminate fictional narratives on platforms and have the active participation of financial agents and the influence industry. In addition, they produce a set of vectors that spread across social networks and manipulate people’s minds, transforming their emotions and political action.

We also analyzed how the process of technological innovation promotes the digitalization of spatial and temporal relationships, through which IT corporations create platforms that, in turn, promote the formation of

networked collectives, and the expansion of possibilities for enunciating narratives and rhizomatic diffusion. This strategy makes it possible to connect different agents in different locations in the world-space. Through data science and algorithms, the social groups that are intended to be reached are identified so they be targeted with massive dissemination of narratives. The aim is, therefore, to manipulate individuals for the benefit of interests that, by defending the transformation of collective subjectivity, produce a collective consensus aimed at the implementation of a structure of extreme right-wing values and the transformation of the culture of nations, to establish their power on a global scale. The transformation of spatial relations gives rise to never-before-imagined forms of political, economic, and social articulation, which require a fresh analysis, supported by interdisciplinarity, in order to interpret the world in which we live.

We hypothesize that this Global Technopolitical Network of the Far Right, formed from the participation of agents – associating financial actors, ideologues, data analysts, media influencers –, promotes the enunciation of manipulated, fictitious narratives, detached from reality and their objective is to manipulate political action. The dissemination of these narratives is carried out through the application of algorithms that configure subgroups in the network, which are cohered through shared ways of thinking, doing and acting, penetrating the human mind and transforming collective subjectivity, involving political practices that impede the exercise of free will. Using complex communication and information systems, these algorithms strongly interconnect technology and human practices. They have the power to control data, identify targets and direct messages, opening space for the emergence of far-right networks that have expanded their roots around the world.

The circulation of information on the network corresponds to a strategy that observes the architecture in which actors who concentrate the greatest political capital, that is, the greatest number of *likes*<sup>1</sup>, are valued. The Global Technopolitical Network of the Far Right is based precisely on this strategy, which would apparently be a response to a need that emanates from society, from the bottom to the top. In practice, however, it is a transcendent top-down action from the owners of the networks, to impose their domination over the most ignorant social groups, where economic poverty, the small power of social resistance and intellectual fragility took over the social fabric.

This entire intricate operation is only made possible by the existence of a hybrid space, which articulates the constructed, vital space with the digital, virtual space, and condenses vitalities and virtuality. It allows for the fluidity of communication and the transversality and trans-scalarity of people, institutions, spheres and nations. In other words, this hybrid space enables forms of economic, political and social organization in transversality and trans-scalarity, transcending the territories of nations, States, capitals and political parties.

In the hybrid space, social relations are digitalized, which redefines the hegemony of power that dominant groups exercise over society. Gramsci (1979) teaches that the functions of groups are organizational and connective, being historically dated. If in modernity it were intellectuals who fulfilled these functions, in the network society we can say that this role belongs to technopolitical networks, which organize, connect, influence and cohesion a significant portion of societies.

The invention of platforms, as an offshoot of research and technologies conceived and developed by technology corporations, triggered a process of privatization of hybrid space and inaugurated forms of capitalist accumulation anchored in data science (Zuboff, 2021). The resulting hybrid space allows the formation of technopolitical networks of fluid communication and the association of collectives, giving rise to a new political subject, a networked political organization (Empoli, 2020).

The investigation and analysis of the role played by this far-right network are fundamental for unveiling the far-right techno-politics that allows for the advance of the far-right in the world, which has been gathering conditions to determine the reach of its authoritarian, violent and dictatorial objectives, and their effective consequences on democracy.

## Method and methodology

The epistemological challenge is to promote the interaction of categories and concepts from computer science, communication science and human sciences. Supported by interdisciplinarity, we believe we can successfully face the cognitive and methodological challenges required in the present historical context. We cannot, in any way, do it without the dialogue between the human sciences, the “new sciences” – including Social Psychology – and data science, because it is this dialogue that will allow the indexing of the collective experience of material and symbolic resources, absorbed in self-regulated systems, such as social networks.

The structuring of this article is anchored in two axes: the first one comprises the network itself, its main actors and functions, and political action strategies; the second consists of weaving the threads that articulate

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<sup>1</sup> The *likes* represent the number of followers one has.

this farright network with the *Bolsonarista*<sup>2</sup> network, presenting the relationships that articulate them. With this perspective, the following questions were formulated:

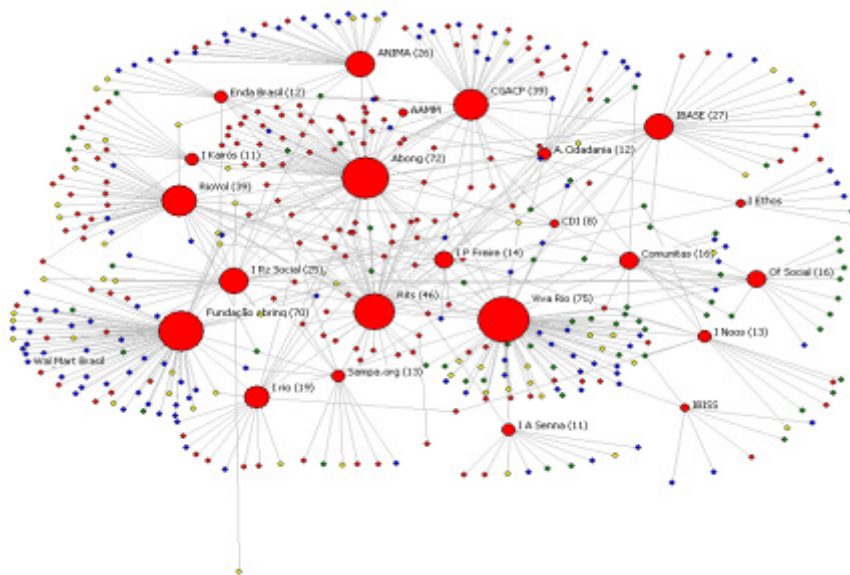
- What are the objectives of the far-right network?
- Who are the main actors participating in the operations?
- How are the tasks organized throughout the network?
- What is the dominant narrative?
- In which countries were influence industry projects developed?
- What are the influence industry projects and their consequences for democracy in the world?

To answer them, the following procedures were adopted:

- identification of actors;
- data collection and analysis;
- observation and analysis of the influence industry;
- representation of the network by graphs of actors and functions, using the GEPHI program;
- analysis of impacts on democracy.

The examination of links and flow of information and communication that exist between different agents is an essential procedure. We know that networks are formed by subgroups, *fields*<sup>3</sup> that are cohesive through the same way of *thinking, doing and being*, each with their own leadership. Taking this into account is fundamental to understanding the meaning of narratives, their circulation in network flows, how they are disseminated and how the integration of the subgroups that form the entire network is produced.

Figure 1 – Subgroups of the ABONG<sup>4</sup> network



Source: *In: EGLER, Tamara Tania Cohen. Ciberpólis: redes no governo da cidade. Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2005.*

### Agents and action strategies

To demonstrate our hypothesis, we focused on searching for the origin of this network, thus aiming to identify the *fields* and represent their articulation. When Cambridge Analytica was denounced<sup>5</sup> and widely publicized, it was possible to observe that this was a network performing different functions, constituted of different companies located in a network of territories spread across different countries in Europe and North America. To

<sup>2</sup> Bolsonaristas – the supporters of Jair Bolsonaro, former president of Brazil (2019-2022).

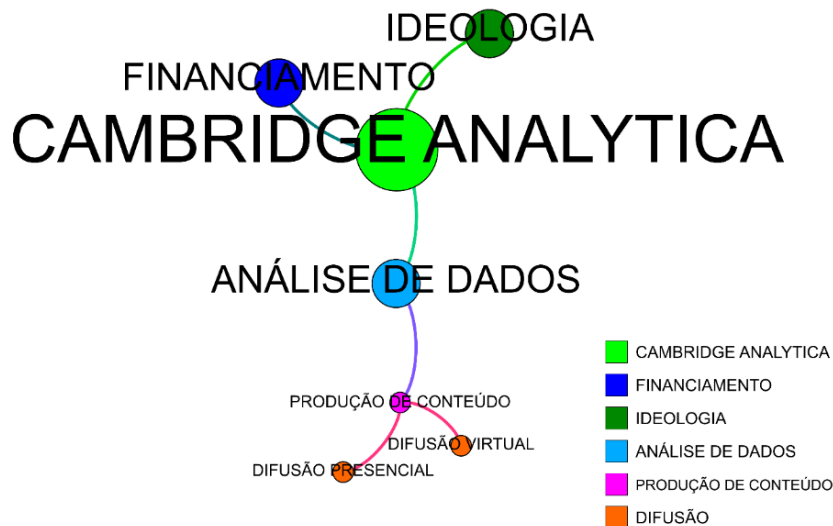
<sup>3</sup> To use the category by Bourdieu (1998,2004)

<sup>4</sup> Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não Governamentais. (Brazilian Association of Non- Governmental Organizations)

<sup>5</sup> Documentary: *The Great Hack*, available on Netflix platform.

carry out our analysis, we identified the organizations, their leadership, functions and intervention projects, and their location in different cities around the world. No less important was examining their political action strategy, which was explained through a division of tasks, each with its specific action, such as conception, financing, data analysis by algorithms, influence, representation, circulation and dissemination of conservative narratives. It brings together agents and people who share the same value structure and interests in the same totality. Its representation can be seen below:

Figure 2 – Division of tasks in the global network



Source: primary research and application of the Gephi program to represent the network (2023).

As seen in the description of the agencies, there is a common political and economic strategy, which unifies the following functions of this complex totality:

- ideological – aimed at conceiving and keeping alive the structure of conservative values;
- funding – it is responsible for financing the operations of the traditionalist network, which highlights the link between the extreme right and the financial funds industry (Pessanha, 2019);
- data analysis – its mission is to analyze data and integrate social groups to identify target groups;
- production of narratives – the image production company is responsible for creating videos and texts that support its structure of values;
- dissemination of content – responsible for disseminating narratives in a rhizomatic way on the network and ensuring the circulation of information and the targeting of fictitious messages to target groups, dissemination of narratives to persuade changes in political behavior.

This division of work articulates the different functions necessary to develop this set of tasks – design, financing agents, data analysis, formation of target groups, and production of narratives. It organizes its entirety into a technopolitical network to reproduce the same strategy in different countries around the world. This articulation, in turn, engenders a rhizomatic diffusion of narratives that circulate through the hybrid space and manipulate the opinions of millions of people around the world.

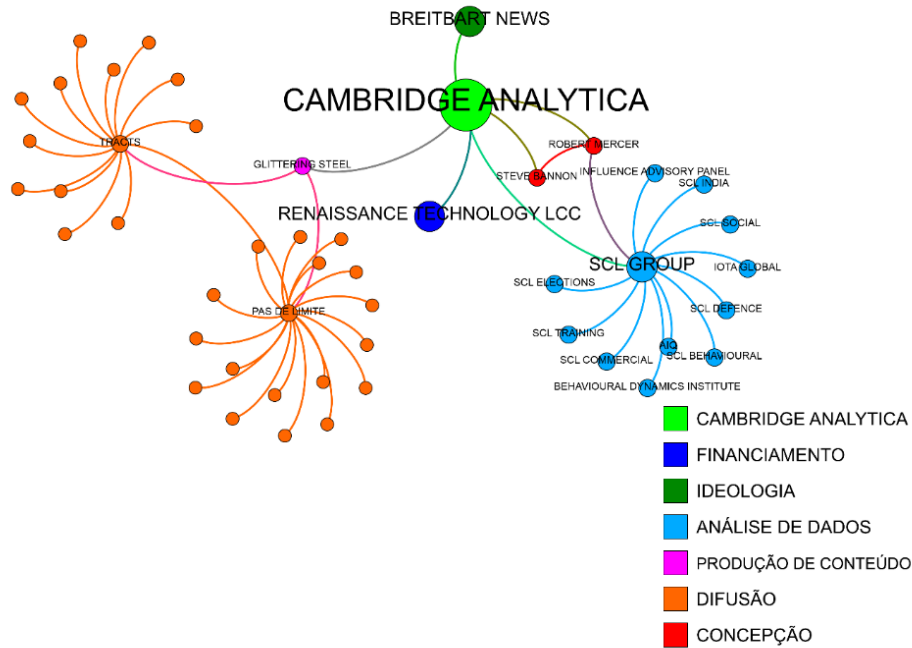
This allows us to understand part of the far-right discourse that proposes attacking democratic institutions or, better said, that defends another form of power that emanates from society. In place of the State and its institutions, it advocates the organization of an army of followers, associating a considerable number of people to this way of thinking and thus changing the culture of the liberal, capitalist and globalist nations.

As we can see in Figure 3 below, this network orchestrates a division of work across a set of agencies that perform different functions. Similar to a Taylorist factory, which fragments production functions, the circulation of information corresponds to the structure represented in the figure. In it, we can identify: ideological conception, investment fund, data analysis by algorithms, content production, narratives through videos and texts, and dissemination through social networks, up to the implementation of courses and marketing to publicize the

organization.

The data collected allowed us to identify its main creators: Steve Bannon, president of Cambridge Analytica until its dissolution in 2018, and Robert Mercer, one of the presidents of Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL). Cambridge Analytica groups organizations that are articulated in the network and its main responsibility is to manage this articulation. SCL is responsible for analyzing data through the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI), to influence people’s behavior and transform their political action to benefit the global network’s interests.

Figure 3 – Division of work between network members



Source: primary research and application of the Gephi program to represent the network (2023)

Figure 3 represents the agencies, leaders and circulation of information that make up the global network and that are dedicated to specific tasks. Steve Bannon’s centrality in this network can be explained, at least in part, by his eventful life story. We know that each individual’s experience forms a body of knowledge that allows us to develop thoughts and produce action. It was this path that allowed us to analyze both his life experience and his political actions. If, as a soldier, he underwent combat and defense training, when managing Breitbart News, Bannon adopted a speech of hate, fanaticism and violence. His time at Goldman Sachs expanded his ability to deal with money and understand the practices of the financial accumulation process. Also, in the world of entertainment, he financed the television series Seinfeld and was a film director, which allowed him to deeply understand image language, recognizing its importance in the formation of collective subjectivity.

As an extreme right-wing ideologue, he enunciates a justification that understands capitalism as a system of domination that transforms human beings into merchandise, requiring a return to a value structure associated with Judeo-Christian traditions. With the support of the American millionaire couple – the well-known Robert Mercer and his wife Rebeca –, it was possible to unify the knowledge associated with the data mining and computer science conglomerate with the Social Communication Laboratory (SCL) itself. It forms the cognitive totality that makes the design the political strategy for the formation of an extreme right-wing network possible.

The Global Technopolitical Network of the Far Right, led by Steve Bannon and Robert Mercier, raised 20 million dollars and invested it in the creation of Cambridge Analytica<sup>6</sup> to carry out the plan of action. Bannon’s ultimate objective was to bring together all agencies into a technopolitical network, expand communication processes and hide their activities from government control. That is why they were located in different nations around the world, under the aegis of different legislation. He was successful.

By collecting data on socio-technical networks such as Facebook, and applying the influence technique, which derives from the algorithms developed by Robert Mercier, Cambridge Analytica defines target audiences

6 Documentary: *The Great Hack*, available on Netflix platform



to be bombarded by fictitious narratives that retain little or no relationship with reality and build a parallel reality to produce cognitive dissonance. Bannon's experience as a soldier, investor, businessman, communicator, and his perception of the importance of techno-political networks, produced political action that interfered in the democratic practices of important countries around the world. He was able to interact in the culture of some nations in the world and define their political course.

The agencies are listed below:

- Breitbart News: far-right website specializing in fake news, produced by an organization of journalists ideologically associated with misogynistic, xenophobic and racist thinking. Its function is ideological and it supports political action. It is based in New York. Steve Bannon was its vice president until 2018.
- Renaissance Technologies LLC<sup>7</sup>: financial fund created in 1982 by award-winning mathematician James Simons<sup>8</sup>, considered the best money manager in the world. Specializing in quantitative models derived from mathematical and statistical calculations, this investment fund employs financial system experts, computer scientists, mathematicians, physicists, signal processing experts and statisticians. Its highly profitable Medallion retirement fund had, in 2021, US\$165 billion in discretionary assets under its management, having produced an investment return of around 33% between 1988 and 2018. It was chaired, among others, by Robert Mercer and Peter Brown, both computer scientists specializing in computational linguistics. It is based in New York.
- Strategic, Communication Laboratories (SCL)<sup>9</sup>: led by Roger Mercer, plays a key role in all of this. In London, at the organization's office, scientists compile and analyze billions of pieces of information about individuals, to determine what motivates human behavior and, from there, design persuasive speeches. A specific message is directed to each human group to influence the targets/humans.
- Glittering Steel<sup>10</sup>: small audiovisual production company, whose function is to represent, in videos and texts, the narratives proposed by ideologues and influencers. Based in London.
- Pas de Limite<sup>11</sup>: advertising company, whose function is to respond to the digital dissemination of narratives. Based in Paris.
- Tracts<sup>12</sup>: its meaning can be read as parts of a system that act together to achieve a common objective. This company focuses on marketing management, such as the production of events, conferences, exhibitions, seminars, and courses, among others<sup>13</sup>.

It is worth highlighting the presence and role of Robert Mercer as president of the different groups that make up the network because it reveals his important participation in the conception, formation and financing. This intertwining denounces the relationships that associate the political power of the global network and financing funds around shared interests. This relationship between IT corporations and financing funds can clarify their power in the world (Pessanha, 2019). Financing funds aim to finance high-yield projects that allow paying their investors. To achieve this, IT corporations need to produce extraordinary profits to guarantee the due payment of interest to the capital markets.

We give special importance to the SCL, as it governs a group of network organizations, namely: the Behavioral Dynamics Institute, Cambridge Analytica itself, the Influence Advisory Panel, Iota Global, Iota Trade, Iota Defense, Iota Elections, Iota India and Iota Training – which operate in different fields, monitoring and manipulating human intelligence and subjectivity. By tracking, disseminating and consuming online narratives on social media, SCL directs its strategic communications consultancy activities to governments, political parties, and military organizations around the world.

Its complex methodology involves three categories – description of the phenomenon, prognosis and transformation – associating a set of variables, taken from politics, economics, history, culture and psychology. Using concepts from different disciplines, this agency is capable of producing indicators that are stored in a database, which allows for analysis through algorithms that identify how human beings organize themselves and what content should be directed at them. Its nearly 9,000 employees, most of whom are experts in Artificial Intelligence (AI), have already carried out 400,000 assessments around the world. Through the influence industry and methodologies for expanding

7 WEBSITE SEEKING ALPHA. Hedge Fund Portfolio Tracking: Renaissance Technologies (Jim Simmons), Q3 2008. 2009. Available at: <[8 Was a code decipherer during the Cold War](https://seekingalpha.com/article/114021-hedge-fund-portfolio-tracking-renaissance-technologies-jim-simmons-q3-008?external=true&gclid=CjwKCAjwlcARbBYEiwAK341jeUmHmngNSYHHgBTvDYap0hU3s0iZjYWfsaUFvjqmoKfHmov3VmLkRoC2EMQAvD_BwE&utm_campaign=14926960698&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_term=127894704186%5Edsa-1427141793820%5E%5E52341146729%5E%5E%5Eg.></a></p>
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9 <https://sclgroup.online/>

10 <https://projects.propublica.org/trump-town/organizations/glittering-steel-llc>.

11 Freely translated from French as “no limits”

12 It was not possible to establish its location.

13 It was not possible to establish its location.

knowledge of people’s behavior, it is dedicated to expanding the consumption of any merchandise. Supported by social and behavioral scientists, it aims to guide the actions of governments and their military organizations globally<sup>14</sup>.

This so-called influence industry causes important transformations in the economy and politics. Shoshana Zuboff, in her extensive research, exposes the phenomenon and calls it “surveillance capitalism” to reveal how human experience is transformed into behavioral data that is analyzed as “behavioral surplus.” The data, through feeding manufacturing processes known as machine intelligence, generate “prediction” products – i.e., anticipate people’s behavior – called future behavior markets. Applying these categories to the influence industry, it becomes possible to make a behavioral prediction and, thus, predict the preferences of voters in the future. In this way, the global right discovers how predictive sources cause a behavioral surplus, which represents voices, personalities and emotions. This allows it to intervene in the game, to encourage, persuade and produce political behavior. Data analysis not only allows for knowledge, but also shapes human behavior, both in purchasing goods as to electing rulers (Zuboff, 2021).

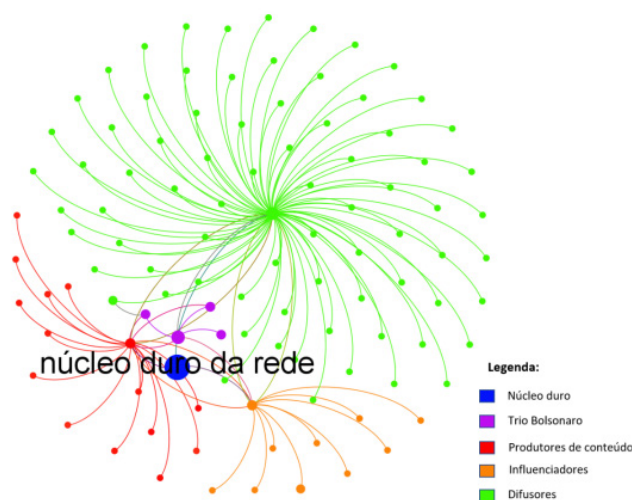
This indoctrination, which captures millions of people in the world, destroys the followers’ ability to think and delegates to the Other the responsibility for attributing meaning to existence, destroys and subordinates the activity of understanding. It reserves the analysis of facts for itself alone and produces authoritarian governments that are constituted of aggressiveness and tyranny (Arendt, 1999). To this end, the Global Network of the Far Right must produce a discourse that is accepted by society, consisting of a set of fake news and woven by complex vulgarizations to seem common sense. This is how the owners of the networks gain the consent of society, seeking to overturn an old order and produce a new intellectual order.

### Far-right Bolsonarist network

There is much evidence linking the far-right network in Brazil to this global network. The intimate relationship between Donald Trump and the Bolsonaro family is widely reported in the press, a relationship that network theory dubbed *betweenes*, which means “between two groups”. Our contribution is to analyze the action strategy and observe how it was reproduced in Brazil.

Identical organization by network functions can be recognized by examining the Bolsonarist Network, led by Jair, Carlos and Eduardo Bolsonaro, and which has ideologues, influencers, digital content producers and broadcasters. Below we represent the *hate network*, which authorizes us to say that the strategy designed by Steve Bannon and Roger Mercer was successfully applied in Brazil, having fulfilled its objective of electing Jair Bolsonaro president of the country. To understand the action strategy, the research is developed based on the separation between leaders and followers. To do this, it was possible to examine the division of tasks based on the testimony of Joice Hasselmann, in the *CPI<sup>15</sup> of Fake News*, read in WhatsApp conversations, which allowed us to represent the network. See the graph below:

Figure 4 – Bolsonarist network on WhatsApp



Source: primary research in the research database and application of the Gephi program (In: Egler; Kraus; Costa, 2020)

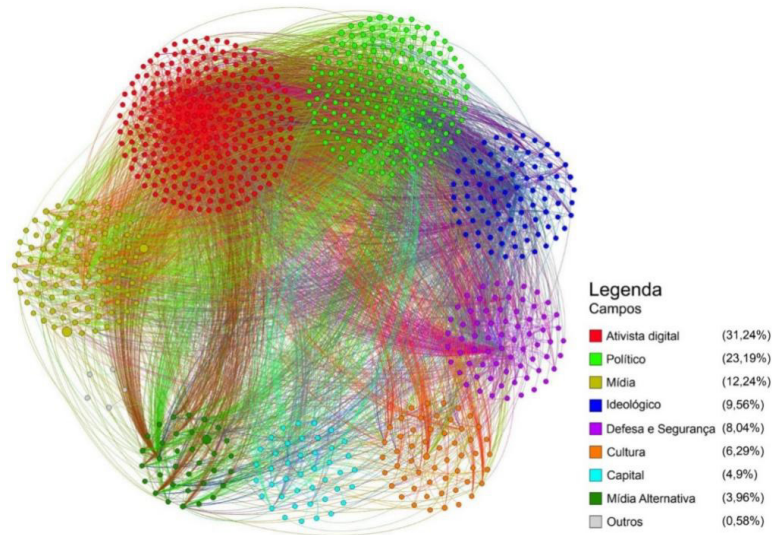
14 <https://sclgroup.online>. Access on: 06 mar. 2022.

15 CPI (*Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito*) - Parliament Commission of Inquiry, freely translated.

This figure clearly shows correspondence to the same division of tasks as the far-right network, the same Taylorist organizing principle that divides the factory into ideologues, digital content producers and broadcasters. Although it was not possible to identify the important influence industry that analyzes the data through algorithmic mediation, everything indicates that the analysis of target groups is present. This certainty results from research carried out on Facebook, which we analyze below; in it we can observe that the narratives are directed to different social groups.

To carry out this research – the Netfizz tool was available on the platform – 980 pages and 9 million followers were counted. To achieve this analysis, we applied Bourdieu’s field theory (1998, 2004), when we divided the network into nine fields, associated by a shared thinking, doing and being. See the graph below:

Figure 5 – Bolsonaroist network on Facebook



Source: primary research using the Netfizz tool on Facebook (Egler; Pereira, 2021)

This representation allowed us to identify the so-called followers. The vast majority is made up of extreme right-wing digital activists, domestic and international. It was possible to identify important actors from the international and national right. The political *field* with the presence of far-right actors such as Donald Trump, Mitt Romney, Jair and Eduardo Bolsonaro, Movimento Brasil Livre (MBL). No less important are the members of Defense and Security, which bring together the military, police, shooting clubs and the arms industry. In the culture field, conservative clergy and artists were included. Identification by fields reveals the target social groups, which were identified and attracted to the important international far-right network, that operates in Brazil and around the world (Egler; Pereira, 2021).

We know that Olavo de Carvalho, a Nazi ideology believer, was one of the main creators of this organization in Brazil, guiding its political action anchored in hatred. Organized in a centralized and authoritarian way, the organization emanates hatred against everything and everyone who opposes its extreme right-wing positions, when the violence of the necropolitics that sustains its action becomes clear. It is these ideologues that propagate the destruction of science and technology, the means of communication, the erasure of social sciences, the persecution and use of all types of violence against all opponents.

The content producers are designers, videographers, writers, those who transform the meanings proposed by ideologists into digital content, when they apply AI that adapts the movement of the mouth to people’s speech, modifies the characters’ faces, swaps the voice of one person for the voice of another. These producers manipulate the movement of the eyes and mouth, or even replace the entire face, invent scenarios, attribute any meaning they wish to a document. In short, they manage to produce a symbolic, fictitious representation, fake news, and misinformation and produce political action in benefit of authoritarian and conservative values, producing a new meaning in the political action of the target nations (Egler; Pereira, 2021).

Since Freud, it is a fact that we can read the subject’s thoughts from three registers – the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary –, which form an indivisible totality. Lacan teaches how the symbolic simultaneously refers to the language that condenses social relations between men, how the imaginary designates the relationship with the image that the individual can produce about himself and the Other, and how the real, which must be distinguished from reality, is an effect of the symbolic, that which the symbolic is not capable of representing (Chaves, 2009).



To understand the meaning of real, in Lacan, it is necessary to understand the difference he establishes with reality. If the real can be read in the relationship between the subject and his analyst in the act of psychoanalysis, reality is associated with the social dimension itself. What we can read in the totality of human relationships that are studied in Human Sciences, and can be measured, examined and understood. This distinction is important because the far-right narrative, guided by a sick, egocentric, perverse personality, confuses the enunciation of the reality of leadership with social reality.

Also, since Freud, we have known the importance of the leader's discourse, which produces a mental contagion and determines the manifestations that allow a feeling of invincibility and produces a collective being that acts in the direction indicated by the leader, when the individual sacrifices his individual interests for that of the collective. We can imagine how this phenomenon is enhanced by the invention of technopolitical networks that allow everyone to enunciate for everyone (Freud, 2011).

Human life cannot be reduced to the imagination of an extreme right-wing political organization that takes over the representation of reality for itself. Everything that can be analyzed and understood is symbolic. It is here that the constitution of the subject takes place because it is referred to the object that exists in reality. The symbolic fulfills this function of conferring meaning in time and space, preserving man in his existence. It ensures that the subject carries thoughts beyond their imagination, focusing on the social world (Chaves, 2009 p. 21). Any and every speech originating from the imagination leads to an illusory reality devoid of meaning, referring to an unhealthy collective subjectivity devoid of social meaning. This discourse, which individualizes and ignores the social dimension of existence, is supported by a political strategy in which a "parallel reality"<sup>16</sup> is produced and that has little or no relationship with social existence.

The broadcasters of the narratives enunciated by the leaders are associated with this ideology and their function is to rhizomatically flood the network, to expand the reach of their narratives. Targeted at vulnerable social groups, with little intellectual capital, they produce fragmentation and polarization into two groups of the social fabric. A first pole that defends a civilizing and democratic value structure, and a second in defense of traditional extreme right values, resulting in a profound change in our culture.

This requires examining the meaning of President Bolsonaro's narratives, which flowed throughout social media. Every kind of false accusation could be read, from lies about sexuality, about the body, accusations of facts that never existed, or narratives valuing the Covid kit and its chloroquine as protection against the virus. No less important is the destruction of institutions such as the Superior Federal Court (STF) and the Superior Electoral Court (STE), supporters of the democratic regime, and the enunciation of speech against the left, against the STF, the STE and the National Congress, Lula, Dilma, Haddad and Moro. Even STF judges were the target of fake news that aimed to destroy the constitutional principles that underpin democracy.

We must also mention the bombarding of opposition websites and the persecution of politicians, artists, teachers, among others. Their objective is to annihilate the opponent by enunciating a narrative that makes all kinds of inversions, produces fear and immobilizes political action. Its cruelty aims to prevent any discursive action that could put its hegemonic power at risk. In the network society, far-right speeches are enunciated based on a very simple logic: people with technical and discursive capacity assume leadership status and are recognized as influencers. There is only the formulation of a persuasive speech associated with a feeling, dealing with emotions, capable of producing an army of followers, it is completely devoid of the logic of rationality. To examine this enormous number of followers, it is necessary to consider the intellectual and economic fragility of the social group. The universalization of access to cell phones and participation in social networks, in the political debate, allows for hypothesizing how this group only accesses the information that circulates on the network, and this becomes the "parallel reality" in which they believe. These people become part of a collective and this cohesion forms a feeling of identity and belonging.

To understand its effects on human life, it is necessary to consider the complex ecosystem of fake news production, the continuous production of forged narratives (Salmon, 2007), detached from the phenomena that occur in existence and derive from the misinformation that takes over the social fabric, producing a reality that does not exist in the present, has no facts. Its objective is to consolidate the establishment of an extreme right-wing, totalitarian, conservative and traditionalist State in Brazil.

### **The hegemony of media discourse: the belief in establishing a new world order**

It is this combination what makes hegemony a central concept (Gramsci, 1979). Accessibility and connectivity to information and communication expanded the possibility of political participation, giving room for social groups devoid of any category of capital – cultural, political, economic or social – to become the privileged object of the disinformation process, defrauding the free will of individuals and the culture of nations as a whole. In the name of

<sup>16</sup> Using the category of Rocha (2021).

legitimacy produced by conviction, the extreme right seeks to establish a new world order, anchored in ethical, moral and political regression. An order that destroys the principles of democracy, founded on the power of collective action and resulting from the consensus that orchestrates the social fabric towards the common good.

There is a difference between the immanent, *bottom-up* meaning of democracy and the immanent meaning proposed by the right-wing network, since the latter brings with it a criminal discourse centered on the production of a malleable mass, without desire or discernment of its own. This mass is completely subordinated to the desire of the leader, whose objective is to produce the domination of others, through political acts perpetrated by criminal processes. A leadership impulse that can only be described as radical evil (Arendt, 1999).

It is an illusion to think that this far-right network lost its power following the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the Presidency of Brazil in 2022. This net is well consolidated, and its political action remains active. It is necessary to recognize that the world has changed and that socio-technical networks have taken over communication in the digital space. As we are facing a broad communication network that allows broad social participation, it goes beyond political parties. It is about valuing the immanent power of social networks for the benefit of the common good.

No less important is to note that Lula's election resulted from the strong participation of the progressive field on social media. From the outset, the different identity fields self-organized themselves, to circulate narratives anchored in science and facts. Many actions defended democracy. A self-organized alternative media that we can read in so many blogs, or of progressive civil society that soon started using WhatsApp and Facebook, of graphic artists and their memes, of musicians who made us laugh with their parodies must be mentioned. Every day we observed on the network counter-power that managed to firmly collaborate with Lula's election, and with that putting the country on the path to democracy.

Today's challenge is to place limits on the manipulation of human subjectivity. To do this, it will be necessary to advance Bourdieu's field category, which gives meaning to the forms of organization of the social fabric. This is because we can observe a conflict that is established between the technopolitical networks that defend democracy and the extreme networks that defend authoritarianism. We can recognize the opportunities for the formation of technopolitical networks that fight and resist the power of the extreme right. Far-right networks represent a hegemonic power, and, at the same time, democracy defense networks represent a counterpower, read as a form of expression and democratic action. This is the meaning of our analysis, to recognize how politics transforms, and technopolitical networks must be examined as social movements of resistance in the digital space. That is why they propose the formation of democratic defense networks within the government and outside it, for the difficult task of placing limits on the uninterrupted process of flooding fake news, which produces disinformation among people who participate in social networks and undermines democracy.

The only possible opposition to authoritarianism is democracy, which proposes the priority of the collective will over the individual will. The radicalization of democracy (Habermas, 2003) subordinates and absorbs authoritarian power to defend a project of equality and social justice. It is about fighting for a social order based on consensus, in which power results from autonomously organized collective action. Therein lies the importance of technopolitical networks that assert a democratic project and promote therapeutic work aimed at combating the "parallel reality" (Rocha, 2021). It is everyone's task to disseminate information about what exists in social life, in order to produce a sense of reality and free people from illusion. It is, in other words, about opposing the objective conditions of social existence to the illusory discourse, of producing information to combat disinformation.

This is our warning: it is about including in the democratic political strategy the power of self-organized networks, immanent in the exercise of politics. To articulate the fields that make up democratic society, including different actors, such as political parties, institutions of political society, culture, academia, corporate media and alternative media.

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