Conflicting Frames: The Dispute Over the Meaning of *Rolezinhos* in Brazilian Media

by

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Abstract

This research analyzes the battle of frames in the controversy surrounding *rolezinhos*—flashmobs organized by low-income youth in Brazilian shopping malls. To analyze the framing of these events, a corpus of 4,523 online articles was compiled. These articles, published between December 7th, 2013, and February 23rd, 2014, were investigated using Media Cloud—the system for large scale content analysis developed by the Berkman Center at Harvard and the MIT Center for Civic Media. Data from Facebook indicated which articles received more attention on the social network.

A framing analysis was performed to describe the conflicting frames in the debate. The 60 most popular texts—those that attracted 55% of the social media attention in the corpus—were content analyzed. They served as an input for a hierarchical cluster analysis algorithm that grouped articles with similar frame elements.

The result of the cluster analysis led to the identification of three frames: one that criminalized *rolezinhos* or at least tried to discourage them (*arrastão frame*), another that acquitted the youth and blamed police, government, State, or society for discriminating poor citizens (*apartheid frame*), and a third frame that criticized both conservatives and progressives for using the controversy to push their particular agendas (*middle ground frame*).

After finding the keywords that singled out each frame, natural language processing methods helped to describe the genesis and evolution of those frames in the overall corpus as well as the framing strategies of the main actors.

Thesis Supervisor: Ethan Zuckerman
Title: Director, Center for Civic Media

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine how the Brazilian media and blogosphere covered the *rolezinhos* issue. It is not trivial to find an accurate English translation for the term *rolezinho*. Literally, it is a "little walk" or a "brief stroll." Since December 2013, the word has meant something very concrete in Brazilian media parlance: flashmobs organized by youth—mostly low income ones—in shopping malls. The meetings usually gathered from dozens to thousands of people and frequently triggered a harsh reaction by the local police.

This research does not intend to analyze the economic causes and sociopolitical consequences of the *rolezinhos*, but rather the discourses and dialogues created around this phenomenon in the Brazilian media. It aims to identify the main frames used to talk about *rolezinhos*, their origin and how some frames managed to achieve certain prominence in the public arena.

Some features inherent to the subject of *rolezinhos* make it especially suitable for agenda-setting and media framing analysis.

1. The *rolezinhos* issue is a neatly time-delimited phenomenon. The first gathering that mobilized media attention took place on December 7$^{\text{th}}$, 2013, [1–7]. In the third week of February, the controversy had already cooled down and was only receiving marginal media coverage.

2. The controversy presents an obvious keyword (*rolezinho*) that has no concurrent

meanings. Therefore, it is easier to use computational methods to assemble the corpus and perform a significant part of the analysis.

3. The *rolezinhos* phenomenon is a complex one and a single interpretation is not obvious. In addition, since the young promoters of the *rolezinhos* usually do not provide sophisticated analyses about their own motivations and intentions, experts from various ideological backgrounds are summoned to satisfy the public's thirst for explanations. The media debate becomes then a war of frames and each actor uses the controversy to push forward with his own agenda of social change or political reform.

In the following sections, a narrative of the phenomenon will be presented in a timeline that spans for about two months as well as a brief explanation of the historical, social, and political context of the *rolezinhos*. Then, the theoretical framework that guided this research will be outlined. The methods for frame identification will be thoroughly described and applied to understand the *rolezinhos* issue.

Finally, a critical review will reflect on the main contributions of this research: namely, the proposition of a new method to perform frame analysis—based on large scale content analysis, social network data, and cluster analysis—and the description of underlying frames that pervade racial and class conflicts in Brazil.

1.1 Timeline

From the beginning, it is convenient to have a general idea of how the *rolezinhos* issue evolved. The following is a brief summary of the main facts in chronological order.

The first *rolezinho* (12/07/2013–12/13/2013)

On Saturday, December 7$^{\text{th}}$, 2013, around 6,000 young people gathered at 5 p.m. at *Shopping Metrô Itaquera*, a mall in the East Side of the city of São Paulo, for the first *rolezinho* that drew media attention. Youngsters from the outskirts of São Paulo organized the event through Facebook. The event's description asserted, "nobody [at

the meeting] is famous" [8] (implying that it was not a fan gathering). The aim was just "to meet friends, mess around, kiss, and take photos." In the title, the *rolezinho* was defined as "Part 2" because a similar event [9] had happened at the same place on November 30$^{\text{th}}$, Saturday, at 3 p.m., but with few people and no press coverage or police reaction.

YouTube videos show the gathering in the parking lot [10] and inside the mall [11]. The security guards were unable to disperse the crowd and the mall called the police. Shopkeepers and customers got scared with the noisy crowd and some of them shut themselves in the stores [2]. Two people were detained: one was carrying a toy gun—a replica of a .38 revolver—and the other was already wanted by the police for a previous offense of unlawful possession of a firearm [6]. On Twitter [12] and Facebook [13], consumers mentioned thefts at the mall and in the vicinity, but no crime was reported at the police stations so it is difficult to confirm if instances of theft occurred. That day, *Shopping Metrô Itaquera* decided to close an hour and a half earlier, at 8:30 p.m.

Between December 8$^{\text{th}}$ and December 13$^{\text{th}}$, the news media started to follow the *rolezinhos* scheduled on Facebook for the following weeks [14–18]. Two planned events for the weekend of the 14$^{\text{th}}$ and the 15$^{\text{th}}$ were particularly popular on the Web: the *rolezinhos* at *Shopping Aricanduva* and at *Internacional Shopping Guarulhos*. The first—with 9,000 confirmed Facebook users—was canceled due to the organizer's fears of turmoil and of the police reaction [19]. Eventually, only the *rolezinho* at *Internacional Shopping Guarulhos* occurred on Saturday, December 14$^{\text{th}}$.

The initial spread (12/14/2013–12/22/2013)

About 2,500 people attended the *rolezinho* at the *Internacional Shopping Guarulhos* [20], a smaller crowd than the 6,000 in the previous week. However, the police reaction was harsher and 23 people were taken to the police station [21, 22], though they were released during the early hours of the following day [23].

One week later, on Saturday, December 21$^{\text{st}}$, there was another *rolezinho* at *Shopping Campo Limpo*. However, fewer than 200 people gathered there because the

presence of the police displaying rubber bullet guns and tear gas discouraged any adventures [24]. No one was arrested. Nevertheless, some stores decided to close during the gathering [25].

The next day, Sunday, December 22nd, another *rolezinho* took place at *Shopping Interlagos* [26–28]. Neither the police nor the shopping mall gave estimates for the number of participants, but the Facebook invitation to the event had more than 9,000 confirmations [29]. Although all news pieces mention detentions by the police, the reports are inconsistent. The number of detainees for that single gathering at *Shopping Interlagos* ranges from three [26] to 25 [30] young men depending on the news article.

On the verge of the conflict (12/23/2013–01/10/2014)

From Christmas to January 10th, there was only one *rolezinho* in São Paulo that grabbed media attention. On January 4th, around 400 youths gathered at *Shopping Metrô Tucuruvi*, in the North Side of São Paulo [31–33]. There were no crime reports but the mall closed three hours early, at 7 p.m. [34, 35].

During that period, *rolezinhos* began to occur outside the city (Figure 1-1) and the state of São Paulo (Figure 1-2).

In Campinas, a town 70 miles away from São Paulo, there was an attempted *rolezinho* on December 27th [36] at *Shopping Unimart* but the local police impeded the gathering. On January 3rd, however, the youth organized a successful *rolezinho* at the same place with no incidents [37]. On the following day, January 4th, there was another event at *Shopping Parque das Bandeiras*, but the security guards shut out any unaccompanied adolescents [38]. On January 10th, a group of 60 adolescents scheduled a meeting at *Shopping Iguatemi*, but they decided to move the *rolezinho* in the face of the mall's unwillingness to host the event. Eventually, they ended up at a hamburger fast food restaurant. Three police cars were parked nearby but the officers did not feel like interfering with the party [39].

In Araraquara, another city in the São Paulo State, security guards expelled a small group of 10 youths from *Shopping Jaraguá* on January 4th. According to the

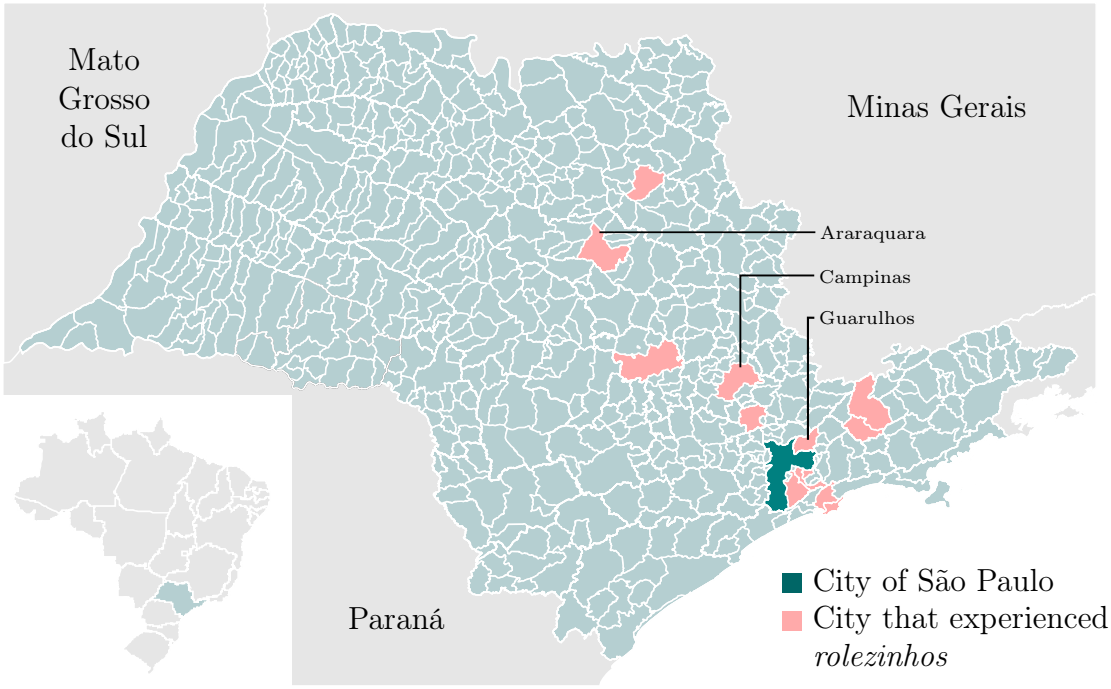

Figure 1-1: Cities in São Paulo State that experienced *rolezinhos* during the research period. (Only the cities most relevant for the controversy are labeled.)

mall, they were interfering with other customers [40].

In Maceió, Northeastern of Brazil, 15 youth were kicked out of a shopping mall on December 27th [41] under the suspicion of taking part in a *rolezinho*.

On January 5th, about 200 people gathered at *Shopping Palladium* in the city of Ponta Grossa—Paraná State—in the Brazilian South. The mall called the police and closed earlier than usual [42, 43]. In Cascavel, another city of the same state, there was a scheduled meeting on that same day in *Shopping Cascavel JL*, but the police and the rain dampened participation [43, 44].

Catching fire (01/11/2014–01/26/2014)

On Saturday, January 11th, police used tear gas and rubber bullets to break up a *rolezinho* in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera*, the same mall that hosted the first *rolezinho*. Two people were arrested [45–50].

The shopping malls *Campo Limpo* [51] and *JK Iguatemi* [52–56] obtained court injunctions prohibiting the holding of *rolezinhos*. In practice, the injunctions autho-

Figure 1-2: Cities outside São Paulo State that experienced *rolezinhos* during the research period.

rized the malls to deny, at their own discretion, access to people considered suspicious. In addition, anyone who tried to organize a *rolezinho* was threatened with a fine of 10,000 Brazilian reais (US$4,500). Other shopping malls adopted the same strategy in the following weeks.

The tougher response from the malls and the police caused many young people to give up on organizing *rolezinhos* in São Paulo, but they brought new actors to the stage: various social movements organized "protest-*rolezinhos*" in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro against racial and social discrimination [57–59]. The Homeless Workers' Movement [60] and the Black Movement [61] were responsible for these demonstrations. In addition, there was a politicization of the debate with the exchange of criticisms between the federal government and the state government of São Paulo on the proper response to the *rolezinhos* issue [62, 63]. Figure 1-3 helps to situate the key places for the *rolezinho* issue in the city of São Paulo.

The media coverage soared. At the same time, dozens of *rolezinhos* were organized all over the country, especially in the other state capitals [65–69].

Fading away (01/27/2014–02/09/2014)

After two weeks, the *rolezinhos* issue began to lose relevance to other topics in the headlines. On February 3rd, for example, a young black man, accused of theft, was beaten by an unidentified group of citizens, stripped of his clothing, and chained by the neck with a bike lock to a streetlight in Rio de Janeiro [70, 71]. A picture of him spread on the Internet and motivated an intense debate on discrimination and violence.

Three days later, protests against the World Cup in Brazil ended up in a tragedy. One protester threw a firecracker at the police in Rio de Janeiro, but the explosive eventually detonated near the head of a cameraman who was recording the confrontation [72, 73]. The cameraman's death caused great consternation in the public.

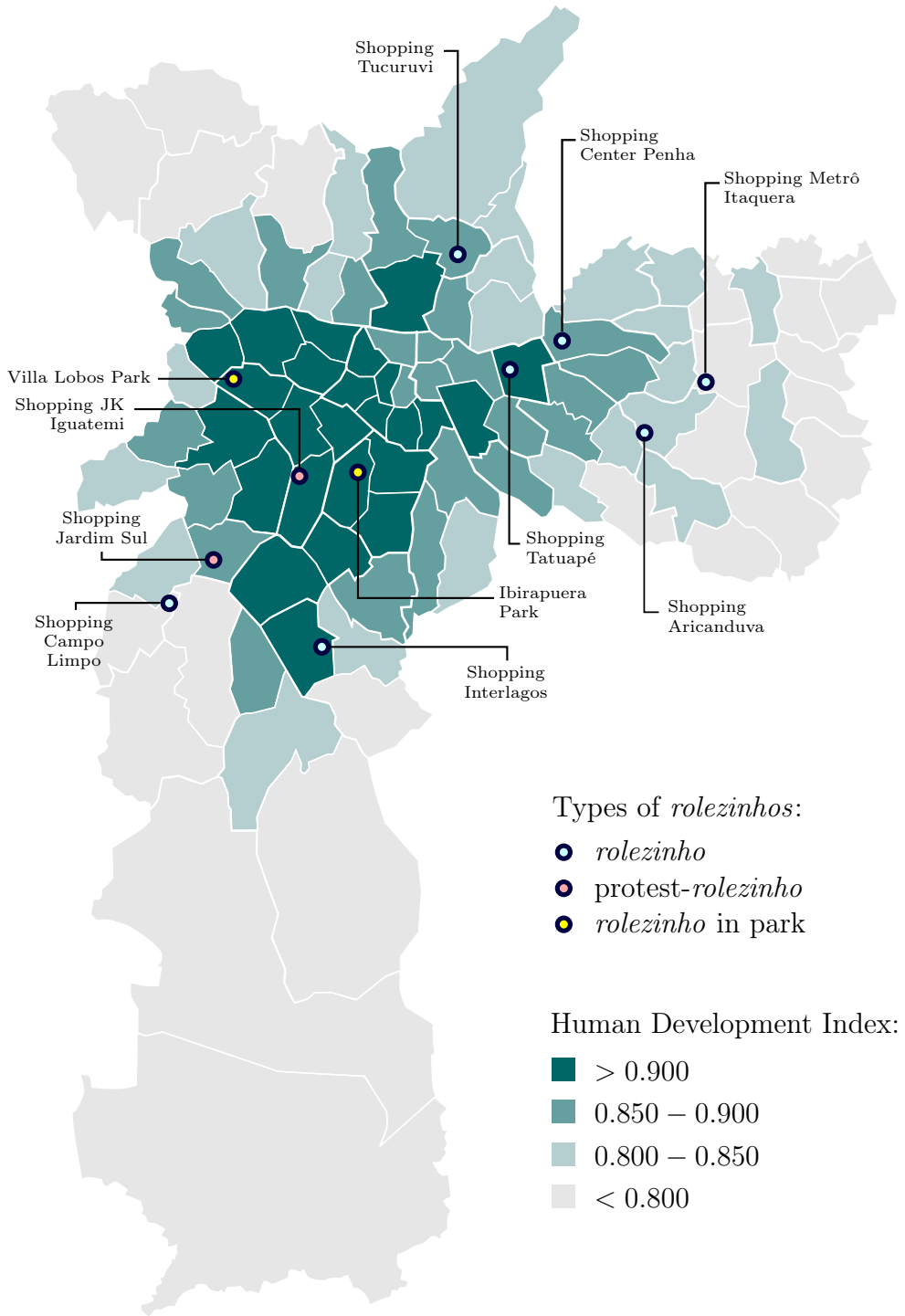

Figure 1-3: Places where *rolezinhos* occurred in the city of São Paulo during the research period. The colors show the human development index (HDI) for each district in the city [64].

A tame *rolezinho* (02/10/2014–02/23/2014)

The organizers of the first *rolezinhos* agreed to establish a partnership with the city hall of São Paulo [74]. They would hold meetings in city parks, as well as some public cultural centers in poor neighborhoods [75]. The first meeting took place on February 15$^{\text{th}}$ at Ibirapuera Park and gathered only 100 people [76]. Malls supported the agreement and said they would be willing to allow *rolezinhos* inside the malls if there was a commitment of gathering no more than 600 people at each meeting [77]. Sporadic *rolezinhos* received less and less media coverage.

1.2 Historical background and context

Even when the *rolezinhos* became a national issue, its epicenter continued to be the Greater São Paulo area and its suburban youth culture, especially the dressing and behavior codes associated with the music style known as *funk ostentação* [78].

In the 1970s, radios and parties popularized American funk in the slums of Rio de Janeiro [79]. From the late 1980s on, the language, lyrics, and themes became highly localized. Parties gathered thousands of people in the poorest neighborhoods and mass media tried to describe the new phenomenon usually by discussing the relationship between the genre and hypersexualization, violence, and drug cartels [79].

In 2008, the genre migrated to the outskirts of São Paulo. The changes were not merely territorial. They were also accompanied by substantive transformations in the underlying topics and symbols associated with the music. The celebration of violence was replaced by a brazen consumerist stand. The artists (also known as MCs like American rappers) show off designer clothes and imported cars and the lyrics have various references to highly expensive brands.

The praise of material goods and comforts christened the new style as *funk ostentação* (in English, "ostentatious funk"). With no support from the big music recording companies, the MCs usually publicize their music videos through YouTube channels with remarkable success. Several videos have more than one million views [80–82].

Some MCs perform four shows in the same night and earn around 10,000 Brazilian reais (US$4,500) at each one of them [83].

In most *rolezinhos*, hundreds of poor youths gather in malls to flirt, sing the songs of their favorite MCs, and buy things. Like the leading artists of *funk ostentação*, those young people also strive to wear and use products that are beyond their purchasing power. One of the most famous songs by MC Guimê sums up the spirit of those gatherings: "You are worth what you have." A survey [84] conducted by a Brazilian advertising agency listed some coveted brands for the participants in *rolezinhos*: Victoria's Secret, Apple, Lacoste, Quiksilver, among others. Interviews performed by the same agency showed that many young people do not think twice before spending their monthly income on just one purchase and often incur considerable debt for the months to come.

There has been at least one study [85] that uses the framework of consumer culture theory in order to understand how the MCs build their identity based on brands, places, and objects associated with intensive consumption and, at the same time, spread that same identity among their young fans with remarkable effectiveness through videos and shows. In this context, it is easy to understand why the *rolezinhos* unfolded in shopping malls. Not only are they some of São Paulo's few public spaces, but also they are the spaces that capture the imagination and aspiration of those youths.

It is also important to situate the *rolezinho* phenomenon in the context of Brazilian democracy. After the military dictatorship in the 70s and the economic disaster of the 80s—with hyperinflation and stagnation—Brazil experienced two historical achievements.

In the mid-90s, inflation was defeated thanks to a successful economic plan outlined by the then finance minister Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who became president in 1995 and ruled the country with his Brazilian Social Democratic Party (in Portuguese, *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* or PSDB) for eight years [86].

In 2004, the Workers' Party (in Portuguese, *Partido dos Trabalhadores* or PT) candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva won national elections and bolstered social welfare

programs—especially the renowned *bolsa família* (family allowance), that provides financial aid to poor families through direct cash transfers. In conjunction with a surge in the labor market and policies to increase the minimum wage, those social welfare programs halved the population living below the poverty line: from 22.6% of the overall population in 2003 to 10.1% in 2011 [87].

Those youths in the *rolezinhos* are the children of both of the economic stabilization of the 90s and of the war on poverty in the early 21st Century. Against the backdrop of such socioeconomic achievements, their consumerist fascination is easier to understand.

In June 2013, Brazil experienced a series of protests. It started with midsize demonstrations in São Paulo against a 10-cent increase in bus fares. This period saw the biggest demonstrations since the impeachment, after a corruption scandal, of Brazilian president Fernando Collor de Mello in 1992. In São Paulo, protesters numbered 60,000. In Rio, they numbered around 100,000. The protesters' political spectrum was varied and their claims often inconsistent or at odds with one another. The demonstrations brought together people who advocate reducing bus fares, the nationalization of the public transport service, the impeachment of the governor of São Paulo, broad political reform, boycotting the World Cup, more resources for education, among other issues.

For many social commentators, the June demonstrations remain a puzzle. In the streets, there were contradictory demands made by very distinct groups, the common denominator being a pervasive dissatisfaction with government corruption and the poor quality of public services. In general, the government had a awkward reaction in all levels. Both PT and PSDB—the two hegemonic parties—seemed totally lost in the face of unusual social upheaval [88].

As in the *rolezinhos*, social networks helped to organize the June gatherings that started in São Paulo and then spread to other state capitals and major cities. The media made attempts to connect the June protests and the *rolezinhos*, but the June gatherings were clearly political [89], even if diverse and contradictory aims were represented.

The national and state elections this year further compounded the worries of officials about the possible negative impact of *rolezinhos* on public opinion. At the same time, many of them did not refrain from attempting to use the debate to blame political adversaries for supposed negligence or discrimination. It is worth remembering that both Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff and São Paulo mayor Fernando Haddad belong to the PT. On the other hand, São Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin is an incumbent from the competitor PSDB. Therefore, the *rolezinho* issue was placed squarely at the crossroads of the Brazilian political struggle.

This is not a complete explanation of the *rolezinhos* phenomenon, but should provide enough background for us to consider the question at hand: how this issue was framed and understood in Brazil's digital public sphere, which I will address in chapter 3.

Chapter 2

Theories and Methods

2.1 Theoretical background

In everyday life, we experience a plethora of different stimuli. In order to make sense of them, we rely on "one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation [...] that [are] seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful." [90, p. 21] Each schema of interpretation "allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences [...]." [90, p. 21] For Goffman, the examination of those interpretive frameworks that organize our ordinary experiences constitutes the research method known as *frame analysis* [90, p. 11].

Gitlin draws on Goffman's reflections to affirm that "we frame reality in order to negotiate it, manage it, comprehend it, and choose appropriate repertories of cognition and action." [91, pp. 6–7] Applying the *frame* category to media studies, Gitlin defines *media frames* as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse." [91, p. 7] They "enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences." [91, p. 7]

According to Gitlin, *media frames* are unavoidable even if for "organizational

reasons alone." Nevertheless, they are far from harmless. In a seminal study, Tversky and Kahneman present evidence that the same problem framed in different ways can elicit totally distinct decisions [92]. Such results lend support to Edelman's depiction of the "social world" as "a kaleidoscope of potential realities, which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized." [93]

Besides the cognitive and organizational justifications for frame selection, Entman proposes a deliberate component in framing strategies. For him,

> to frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described. [94]

For Entman, the promotion of a specific frame is not an unintended side effect, but the core aim of choosing an "organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events." [95]

Entman goes even further and points out that "[p]owerful players devote massive resources to advancing their interests precisely by imposing [persistent and politically relevant] patterns on mediated communications. To the extent we reveal and explain them, we illuminate the classic questions of politics: who gets what, when, and how [97]?" [96]

For the purposes of this research, the definition of frame is based on Entman's above-mentioned fourfold function: full-fledged frames typically perform *problem definition*, *causal analysis*, *moral judgment*, and *remedy promotion* [96]. In addition to being a widely discussed definition of frame in media studies [98], it is particularly helpful to consider the agency of journalists and the role of frame sponsorship, oft-neglected dimensions in framing research [99].

The impact of news framing is not restricted to inducing specific interpretations and reactions. Based on experimental data, Price, Tewksbury, and Powers suggest that a frame may stimulate "a kind of hydraulic pattern, with thoughts of one kind [. . .] driving out other possible responses." [100] In other words, frames can successfully

inhibit competing frames.

Gitlin has explored the connection between *media frames* and the Gramscian concept of hegemony—"rule by permanently organized consent" [101, I §48]—to unravel the relationship between the framing process and the distribution of social and political power. In his analysis of the parliamentary regime, Gramsci states that

> [t]he "normal" exercise of hegemony [...] is characterized by a combination of force and consent which balance each other so that force does not overwhelm consent but rather appears to be backed by the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion. [101, I §48]

Gitlin explicitly refers to Gramsci's core conception and advances it:

> [T]hose who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly *and indirectly*, by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule and, if not usurping the whole of ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout the society. [91, p. 10, emphasis in the original]

To borrow Hallin's model of three spheres, thoughts sanctioned by the hegemonic establishment constitute the spheres of consensus and legitimate controversy. Meanwhile, dangerous thoughts that challenge the sociopolitical order are banned to the sphere of deviance and do not gain currency in the public debate. "[Journalism] plays the role of exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge the political consensus. It marks out and defends the limits of acceptable political conflict." [102, p. 117]

There have been many attempts of integrating framing studies into the more established scholarship on agenda-setting and priming. Classical agenda-setting theory, as set forward by McCombs and Shaw, suggests that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*." [104, p. 13, as cited in 103] Priming is, in turn, a specific dimension of agenda-setting: by attending to some problems and

ignoring others, media alters the standards by which people evaluate public officials, government, and other institutions [105].

McCombs et al. propose that framing can be considered a second level of agenda setting. The first and traditional level states that objects (or issues) emphasized on the media agenda come to be regarded as important on the public agenda. The second level—that the authors identify with framing—"is the selection of a small number of attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed." [106] They revise the aforementioned Cohen's dictum: "Explicit attention to the second level of agenda setting further suggests that the media also tell us *how to think* about some objects." [106]

However, some researchers challenge the idea that framing is just an extension of the agenda-setting model [107, 108]. For instance, Price and Tewksbury argue that

> [a]genda setting looks on story selection as a determinant of public perceptions of issue importance and, indirectly through priming, evaluations of political leaders. Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented. [107, p. 184]

According to Entman, notwithstanding the possible divergences on their theoretical premises, both agenda-setting and framing strategies are closely united in the communication arsenal of political, cultural, and economic elites:

> Given limitations of time, attention, and rationality, getting people to think (and behave) in a certain way requires selecting some things to tell them about and efficiently cueing them on how these elements mesh with their own schema systems. Because the best succinct definition of power is the ability to get others to do what one wants [109], "telling people what to think about" [the classical definition of the agenda-setting effect] is how one exerts political influence in noncoercive political systems (and to a lesser extent in coercive ones). And it is through framing that political actors shape the texts that influence or prime the agendas and

considerations that people think about. [96]

Benkler suggests that a new and more democratic public sphere has been born since the advent of the Internet and social actors who had remained silent so far can now engage in the public dialogue. After stating that to understand *how* frames of meaning are shaped and *by whom* is an important dimension of freedom in contemporary societies, Benkler affirms that

> [t]he networked information economy makes it possible to reshape both the "who" and the "how" of cultural production [...]. It adds to the centralized, market-oriented production system a new framework of radically decentralized individual and cooperative nonmarket production. [110, p. 275]

Graeff, Stempeck, and Zuckerman apply the concept of *networked framing* to analyze the complex dynamic of the new digital public sphere described by Benkler. Based on the Trayvon Martin issue—about the African American who was shot to death in Florida and the subsequent stirring up of a nationwide debate on racial inequality—they argue that "the exceptional conditions of a national controversy [...] afford ad hoc emergent framing as networked media sources insert their frames into the coverage and meta-coverage." [111]

Like Trayvon Martin in the United States, the *rolezinhos* was a national controversy in Brazil and this represented an opportunity for online commentators and media activists to get traction for their larger agendas. This research aims to understand how digital newcomers influenced the public debate through inserting new frames into it.

2.2 Methods

This is the first study performed with the Brazilian corpus of Media Cloud, a system for large-scale content analysis developed by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard and the MIT Center for Civic Media [112]. Media Cloud currently captures stories published by approximately 1,300 Brazilian media sources.

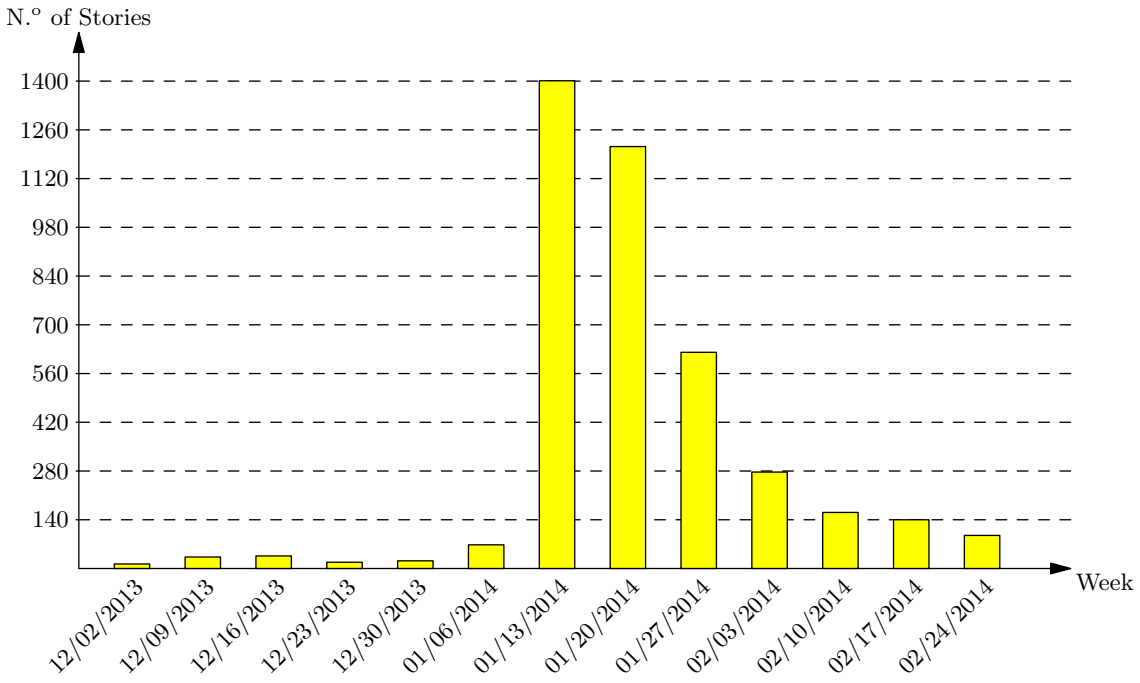

Figure 2-1: Weekly distribution of texts in the corpus.

The overall media set comprises more than 30,000 media sources, most of them in English.

So far, a few studies have already been conducted with the American corpora of Media Cloud, such as Benkler et al.'s analysis of the online debate on SOPA/PIPA—the hollywood-sponsored anti-piracy legislation [113]—and the aforementioned research by Graeff, Stempeck, and Zuckerman on the media coverage of the Trayvon Martin case [111]. With other corpora, it is worth mentioning a study on the Russian blogosphere by Etling, Roberts, and Faris [114].

2.2.1 Gathering a corpus

For this study, I downloaded all items in the Media Cloud database related to the *rolezinhos* controversy published between December, 7th, 2013, and February, 23rd, 2014. Initially the corpus for this research had 4,779 articles. After eliminating repeated records and unrelated stories, that number fell to 4,003 articles. Figure 2-1 shows the weekly distribution of those texts during that period.

It was then necessary to find a way to estimate the relative influence of each one of the articles in the corpus. The SOPA/PIPA and the Trayvon Martin studies used a tool called Controversy Mapper [115] to estimate that information. Controversy Mapper represents the corpus as a graph. Each edge in the graph is a link from one article to another. Presumably, the relevance of an article will be directly proportional to the number of inlinks the article has. However, the articles in the corpus of this study showed a rather low number of mutual connections which precluded the use of Controversy Mapper.

Presumably, this may reflect on differences in Brazilian and American blogospheres. It is common to stumble across texts in the Brazilian blogosphere that reproduce other websites' articles without adding links to the sources. There is a clear reluctance on the part of traditional media outlets to link competitors and even non-profit organizations. At the same time, tech-savvy activists—unwilling to increase the traffic and pagerank of websites they criticize—are using URL shorteners that redirect to a copy of the original page [116]. On the other hand, the SOPA/PIPA controversy might be a particularly link-rich corpus due to its tech focus.

For this reason, it was necessary to find another estimation for the relative importance of each article. The sum of comments, likes and shares that a link received in Facebook is a readily available information via the Facebook Graph API [117] and seems a good representation of influence due to the widespread usage of social networks. Currently, Facebook has 76 million users in Brazil, around 38% of the overall population [118]. About 47 million of them access Facebook daily. It is the most important social network with a 97.8% share of the time spent by Brazilians on this type of website [119]. For convenience, in the context of this research, the term *total count* will be used as a shorthand for the sum of shares, likes, and comments in a Facebook link and is interpreted as a consolidated measure of the attention received by that URL in the social network.

Since this is the first study performed with the Portuguese sources of Media Cloud, it was important to develop a method to test if there were blind spots in the media list that feeds the tool. The goal was to ensure that the corpus contained all relevant

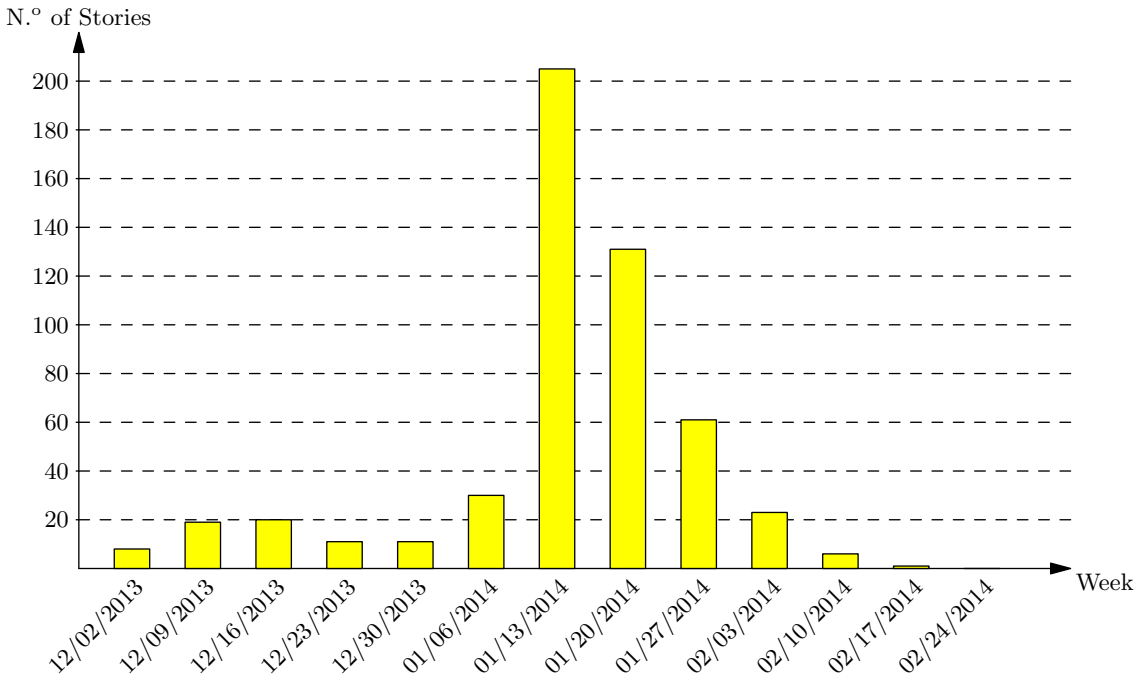

Figure 2-2: Weekly distribution of texts from Google search.

stories. In order to accomplish this validation, I downloaded all the search results for queries with the *rolezinho* keyword in Google for each day in the date range of the controversy. This search generated a list of 12,552 URLs. Around 662 stories were already in the Media Cloud database and 155 of them were duplicated records.

Naturally, it was not convenient to add all of them to the corpus because most of the results were simply unrelated noise or irrelevant comments on the issue. In order to determine the relevant URLs I again used the information from Facebook. The stories that received more attention in the social network (meaning having a *total count* greater than or equal to 100) were validated manually and, if deemed significant, incorporated to the corpus. After processing the Google data, 520 new stories were included to the corpus. The distribution of those texts in the analyzed time frame is shown in Figure 2-2.

The whole corpus was eventually comprised of 4,523 stories, about 88.5% of it coming from Media Cloud and 11.5% from the Google search engine.

2.2.2 Finding frames

In his comparison between framing and agenda-setting, Maher observes that

> [h]istorically, framing and agenda setting have had opposite trajectories. Agenda-setting began with valuable approaches to measurement, but lacked theoretical depth. By contrast, framing began with roots deep in cognitive psychology, but it has proved to be an *elusive concept to measure*. [120, p. 83, emphasis added]

In fact, a common methodological problem in the content analysis of media frames is that "it is extremely difficult to neutralize the impact of the researcher" [121, p. 503] because "a frame is a quite abstract variable." [122] As a result, the identification of media frames is often plagued by some concerns regarding validity and reliability. "Some approaches try to capture latent or cultural meanings of a text, which can be problematic in terms of reliability. Other approaches provide sharp and reliable measures but may fall short in terms of validity." [122]

To answer to those concerns, this study applied a combined approach of manual and computer-assisted methods, as proposed by Matthes and Kohring:

> [W]e understand a frame as a certain pattern in a given text that is composed of several elements. [...] Rather than directly coding the whole frame, we suggest splitting up the frame into its separate elements, which can quite easily be coded in a content analysis. After this, a cluster analysis of those elements should reveal the frame [123]. That means when some elements group together systematically in a specific way, they form a pattern that can be identified across several texts in a sample. We call these patterns frames. [122]

Even with the advances in natural language processing, humans greatly outperform machines in understanding texts and searching for components of frames. At the same time, computers usually surpass the human capacity for finding patterns in a wealth of data. The method described here strives to combine the best of both worlds.

The first challenge is to determine the frame elements that should be coded in the content analysis. Entman's definition of frame provides operational criteria to specify those elements. According to him, frames are usually constituted by a *problem definition*, a *causal interpretation*, a *moral evaluation*, and a *treatment recommendation* [94]. Variables that describe all those four dimensions would offer a good—and, to some extent, complete—picture of the frame.

Ideally, the values embodied by those variables should be uncontroversially apparent in the articles—in order to diminish the researcher bias—and be convertible to a numeric representation—a convenient input for a cluster analysis algorithm. Accordingly, in this study, the articles were coded based on multiple-choice or yes-no variables that cover the four dimensions of Entman's definition of frame.

Often, the core component in a *problem definition* (*what is the problem?*) is the most important actor of the frame (*who is the problem?*) [122, p. 266]. In the *rolezinhos* issue, the obvious response is "the youth." At the same time, many articles redeem the youth and focus on castigating the whole of society, the malls, or the State. There are also a few texts that opt to take a critical stand on all actors. In the present research, the *problem definition* is summarized in two yes-no variables: Are the youth the problem? Or are the State and/or society?

The reason for gathering all actors—except the participants in *rolezinhos*—under the umbrella term "State and/or society" is that those actors will be differentiated below, when the *moral judgment* elements are described. In the *problem definition*, a broader question is on the table: are the youth the problem or the victims in the *rolezinhos* issue? Naturally, "neither" or "both" are valid answers too.

The *rolezinhos* controversy certainly admits several *causal interpretations* based on economic, social, political, or cultural considerations. The diminishing of poverty in the last decades, for instance, constitutes a valid economic explanation. On the other hand, a description of the values and symbols of *funk ostentação* reveals the cultural underpinnings of those events. Sometimes such interpretations are mutually exclusive but, more frequently, they appear in the same text as a mosaic of arguments.

Every time a new *causal interpretation* was found, I added it to the coding protocol. At the end, if two interpretations were redundant, I usually merged them under a consolidating and more broad label.

If an article explicitly supported a specific interpretation, the corresponding variable was marked with "Yes" for that article. Accordingly, an explicit rejection of that interpretation yielded a "No" for the corresponding field. If there was no mention at all, the variable was left in blank. There is a theoretical reason for differentiating explicit negation and mere silence on a *causal interpretation*. A frame that denies an interpretation is farther from another frame that supports it than a third frame that does not convey any opinion about it. Such distinctions must be acknowledged.

For the *moral evaluation*, the content analysis assessed the perceptions conveyed by each text about the actors involved in the *rolezinhos* issue: participants, courts, malls, city hall, federal government, state government, society at large, progressives, conservatives, media etc. A five-item scale was used in the assessment—with the options "very favorable (opinion)", "favorable", "neutral", "unfavorable", and "very unfavorable."

Four yes-no variables described the *treatment recommendation* component of the frame analysis. Two of them comprised options related to the attempt to avoid or divert the *rolezinhos*. The first was the flat prohibition of the events in malls through court injunctions and the threat of fines or detention. The second variable represented the attempt of negotiating with the promoters of *rolezinhos* to move the events to public parks or other venues. The social movements usually proposed the solution described in the third variable: the escalation of tensions with more *rolezinhos* and protests. Finally, the fourth variable described the invitation to "dialogue and reflection," the premise being that the violent reaction against the *rolezinhos* was a consequence of ignorance about the youth culture in the suburbs.

Table 2.1 shows the frame elements as defined by Entman and the corresponding variables in our content analysis.

Obviously, the choice of frame elements introduces the possibility of researcher bias. Matthes and Kohring recognize this problem:

Frame element	Variables	
problem definition	main actor:	youth
		state and society
causal interpretation	economic:	new middle class
	social:	social criticism
		lack of civility
		social or racial prejudice
	cultural:	*funk ostentação* and social networks
		few options for recreation
moral evaluation	main actors:	youth
		malls
		police
	government:	city level
		state level
		federal level
		courts
	society:	media
		progressives
		conservatives
treatment recommendation	against:	fines and detentions
		rolezinhos in public parks
	pro:	more *rolezinhos* and protests
		dialogue and reflection

Table 2.1: Variables for hierarchical cluster analysis.

> The problem reliability in frame analysis is not completely resolved but is shifted to the content analytical assessment of single frame elements. However, the more manifest a certain variable is, the higher is its reliability. Therefore, single frame elements achieve a higher reliability in comparison to abstract, holistic frames. [...] [C]oding holistic frames is one of the major threats to reliability in frame analysis. Another crucial advantage of this method is that coders do not know which frame they are currently coding, as they are not coding frames as single units. Thus, the impact of coder schemata or coding expectations is weaker. Moreover, new emerging frames can be easily detected. [122]

Code	No	Blank	Yes
Value	-1	0	1

Table 2.2: Numeric representation of yes-no questions.

Code	Very unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Very favorable
Value	-2	-1	0	1	2

Table 2.3: Numeric representation of the five-scale responses.

Two coders were responsible for the analysis of the 60 most popular articles according to the Facebook *total count* ranking. The identification of frames was based on them. As I am looking for influential frames, this focus on the most liked, commented, and shared links is reasonable. Attention in media is widely believed to follow a Pareto distribution [124], with a small number of articles responsible for a disproportionate share of attention. Our corpus resembles this pattern as well: those 60 articles represent 1.3% of the corpus, but 55% of likes, comments, and shares.

After the content analysis, the codes were converted to numbers in order to be used as an input for the cluster algorithm. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 describe the criteria used for the numeric translation. Each one of the frame dimensions was multiplied by a different factor. The *problem definition* was tripled because it has a high importance in the frame analysis but it is comprised of only two variables in our coding schema. The *causal interpretation* and the *moral evaluation* was doubled. The *treatment recommendation* remained the same because most of the analyzed texts did not mention that dimension and hence it was not a good discriminating criteria. Then, the articles were grouped using a hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward method), the same technique successfully applied in previous studies by Matthes and Kohring [122, 123].

However, there are two significant innovations. First, in Matthes and Kohring's research, the numeric conversion of the content analysis engendered only binary variables. As the previous paragraph shows, this is not the case here.

Also, those authors determined the number of frames based on the so-called elbow criterion—similar to a scree test in exploratory factor analysis. This research employed the approximately unbiased probability values (p-values) method described by Suzuki and Shimodaira—a more specific strategy for assessing how strong a cluster is supported by the data [125, 126].

Interestingly, Suzuki and Shimodaira developed their algorithm in the context of biochemical research. They used hierarchical cluster analysis to perform DNA comparisons. In fact, this method is commonly used to draw phylogenetic trees: a graphic representation of the evolutionary relationships among different species. For instance, if a group of butterflies belong to the same biological genus or family, they are placed together in the same branch of the phylogenetic tree.

It is possible to draw a parallel between hierarchical cluster analysis applications both in biological and communication studies. The frame elements defined above are like pieces of the frame DNA. The algorithm processes them and outputs a tree that places together in the same branch those articles that belong to the same "genus or family of arguments": such subtrees are the frames we are looking for.

For this study, the outcome of the hierarchical cluster analysis is a binary tree where the leaves are the articles and the internal nodes are the p-values. A p-value is a percentage that indicates the probability of that node being the root of a meaningful cluster. Subtrees with higher p-values are more likely of being real world frames. With the clue given by the p-values, the next step is to read the texts in each cluster to validate the frames.

2.2.3 Evaluation of the results

Entman posits that the frames "are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords." [94] "[A] keyword can be thought of as a semantic isotope: a cultural tag, tracer, or dye that tracks changes in meaning deployed by diverse social actors during periods of change." [127] Accordingly, many researchers decided to map the frames using keywords [128–130].

In this research, the next step after validating the clusters was to find the keywords

that manifest the frames. Those keywords served as parameters for natural language processing (NLP) strategies that tracked and compared the evolution of frames over time in the whole corpus.

Since *rolezinhos* always happened on weekends, most of the analysis was performed in a weekly basis (with Monday as the first weekday). A ranking of the articles was established for each week based on the Facebook *total count* for the corresponding URL. Based on that ranking, it was possible to identify who were the voices setting the agenda each week.

Besides the most influential voices, I looked for the genesis of each frame and tried to determine the first voices to propose new frames. Interviews with strategic actors were also performed in order to validate the findings and include additional background information and quotes.

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Chapter 3

Framing

The result of the hierarchical cluster analysis and subsequent frame validation—described in the Methods section—is presented in Figure 3-1. Three subtrees were identified as three distinct frames and named after keywords or concepts associated to them: *apartheid* (Figure 3-2), *arrastão* (Figure 3-3), and *middle ground* (Figure 3-4).

Those three frames represent three different stands on *rolezinhos*. The *arrastão frame* tends to criminalize the gatherings and criticize the youth. On the other side of the ideological spectrum, the *apartheid frame* supports the *rolezinhos* and finds the source of the problem elsewhere: society, government, malls, police, and other institutional forces. Finally, the *middle ground frame* criticizes both conservatives and progressives for appropriating the controversy and using it in narrow-minded cultural wars.

The following sections in this chapter will unravel the inner structure of the binary trees that correspond to each frame. Before starting, it is worth providing a comment about the organization of this chapter.

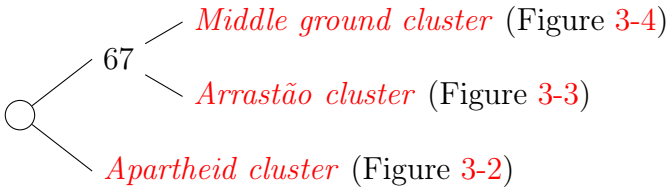

Figure 3-1: Root of the tree and the three main frames.

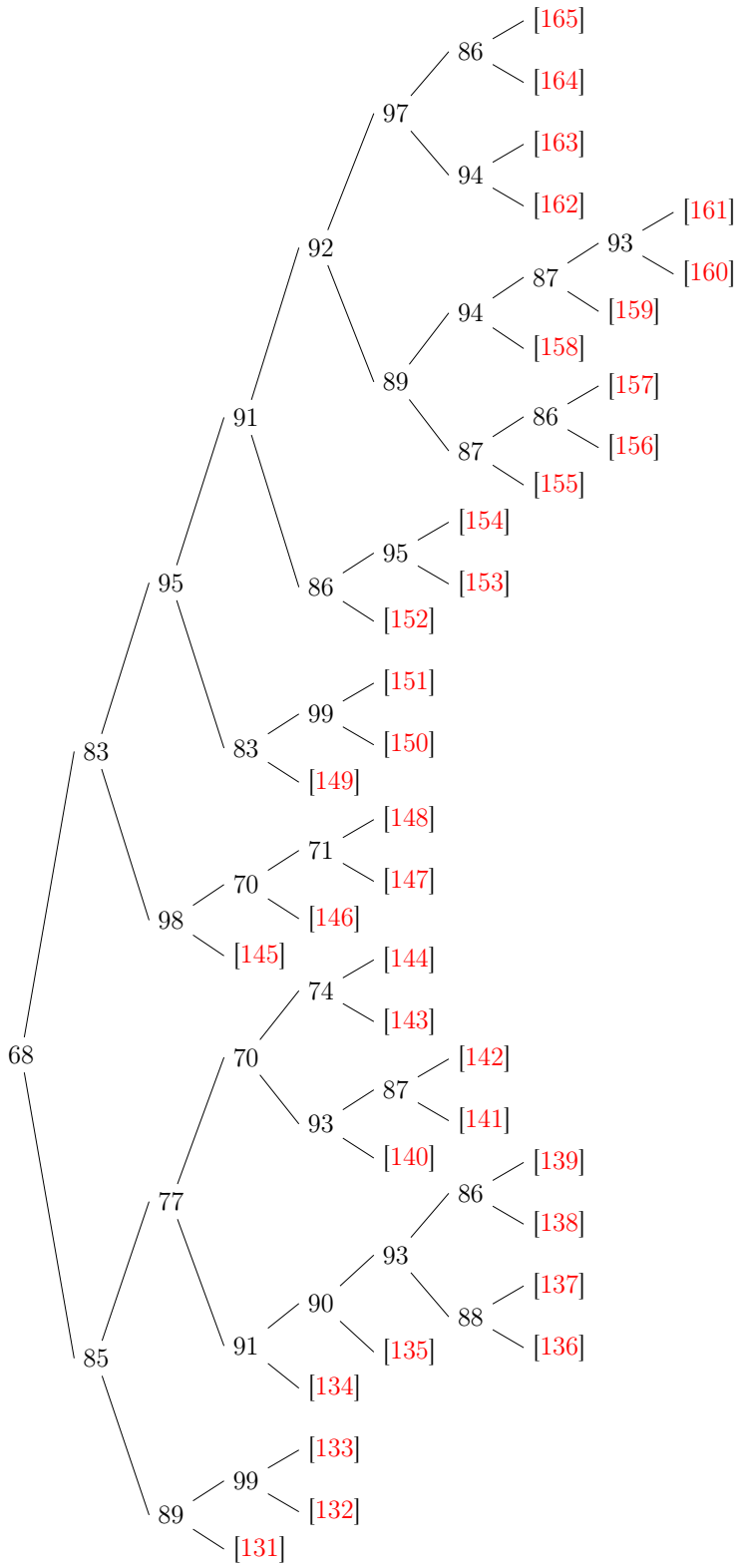

Figure 3-2: *Apartheid cluster.* Internal nodes are percentages that estimate how closely related the two children (subtrees) are to each other. The leaves are the articles. There is a collapsed and annotated version of this tree in Figure 3-10.

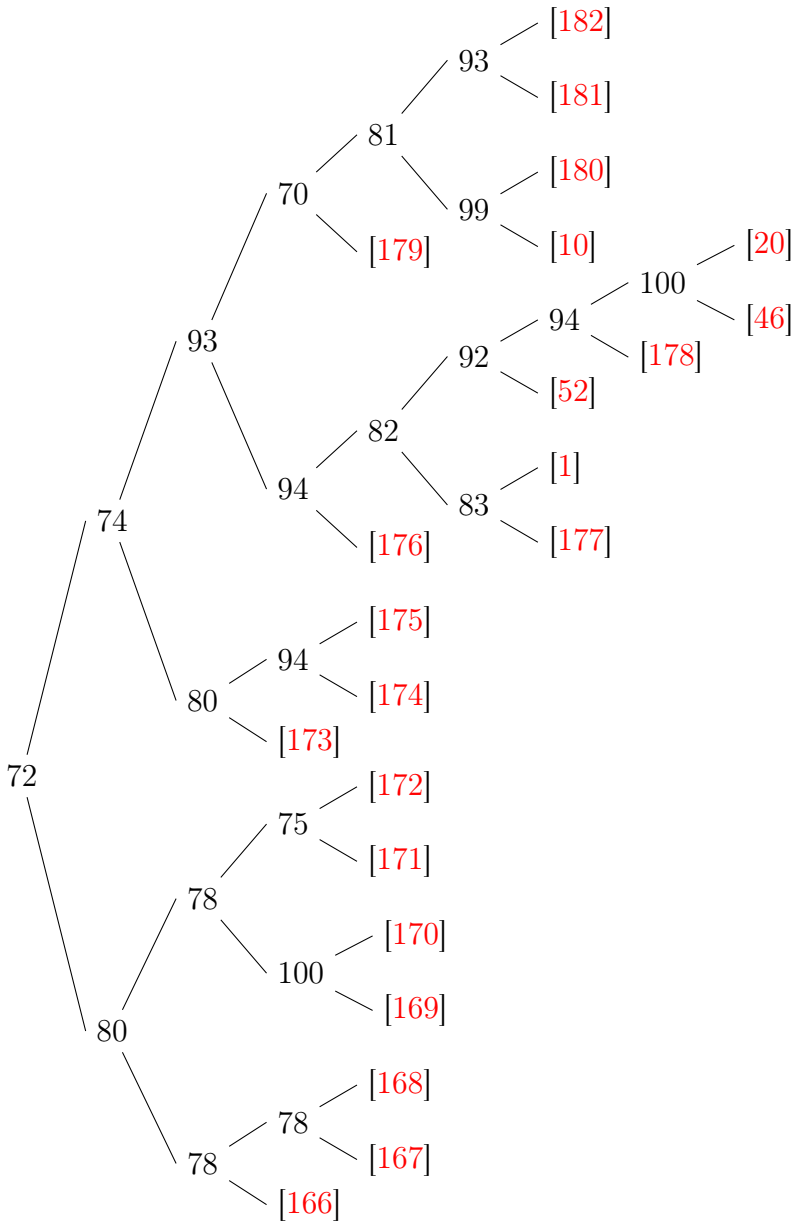

Figure 3-3: *Arrastão cluster*. Internal nodes are percentages that estimate how closely related the two children (subtrees) are to each other. The leaves are the articles. There is a collapsed and annotated version of this tree in Figure 3-5.

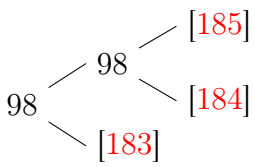

Figure 3-4: *Middle ground cluster*. Internal nodes are percentages that estimate how closely related the two children (subtrees) are to each other. The leaves are the articles. There is an annotated version of this tree in Figure 3-16.

Two previous projects based on Media Cloud—the aforementioned studies on SOPA/PIPA [113] and Trayvon Martin [111] controversies—opted for presenting the evolution of frames in a single timeline. However, there is a significant difference between those issues and the controversy on the *rolezinhos* in Brazil: at the end of the day, SOPA/PIPA was rejected by Congress and the Trayvon Martin case engendered a debate on race, rather than on other possible topics, like gun control or violence. In both cases, it was possible to identify winning and losing frames.

In the case of *rolezinhos*, this distinction is less clear because it is not possible to identify a clear conclusion for the controversy. The *rolezinhos* gradually disappeared from the media as other topics gained prominence in the public agenda.

Therefore, in this chapter, we preferred to address individually the temporal evolution of each frame without bringing them together in the same timeline. The intention was to avoid the impression of an epilogue for the controversy, something that is not supported by the data.

3.1 Arrastão

According to 37% of the texts in our 60-article sample, *rolezinhos* are unlawful. Those articles may differ on the best way to deal with the youth or if robberies and drug trafficking did occur during the events, but they agree on one essential point: at least for the sake of safety and civility, those gatherings should not happen in malls. Those articles constitute the *arrastão frame* (Figure 3-5).

On December 7$^{\text{th}}$, some people present at the first *rolezinho*, especially customers at the mall, posted their impressions on Twitter [12] and Internet forums [186]. Many of them used the term *arrastão* to describe what they had seen.

Arrastão is a tactic of collective theft in which a group of people invades a crowded space and demands money, jewelry, and sometimes even clothes or shoes of the disoriented passersby [187]. Perplexed by the screams and the hustle and bustle, the victims become easy prey for the thieves. The term began to be used in the 80s, but became famous in the early 90s, when an *arrastão* at Ipanema beach made the

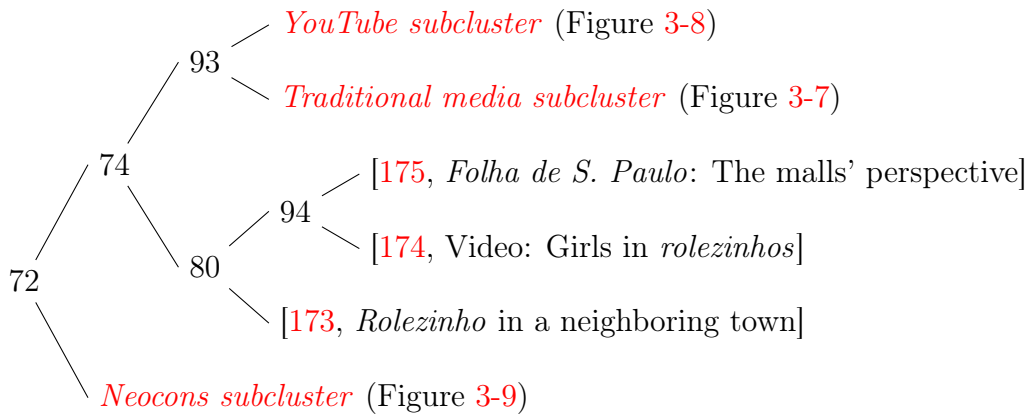

Figure 3-5: *Arrastão cluster*. A collapsed and annotated version of Figure 3-3.

headlines worldwide [188].

Since its origins, the term *arrastão* has a hint of social and racial discrimination [189]. It became part of the Brazilian sociological lexicon and is often used, even when there is no evidence of criminal activity, as an alert when a contingent of black and/or poor youth abruptly occupies a public area, such as a beach, a mall, a park, or an avenue. A cry of *arrastão* in any of those environments usually cause a fear reaction tantamount to the announcement of "fire" in a crowded theater.

Traditional media

In the course of the controversy, the term *arrastão* gradually lost importance to the point of almost disappearing, as shown in Figure 3-6.

Interestingly, the headline about the first *rolezinho* in *Folha de S. Paulo*—Brazil's main newspaper—changed two days after being published to eliminate the term *arrastão*. A search in the Wayback Machine at the Internet Archive shows that, on December 8$^{\text{th}}$, the headline was "Teens make an *arrastão* and mall closes earlier in SP." [190] Two days later, the word *arrastão* disappeared from the title replaced by "Teens schedule a meeting through internet and cause turmoil in a SP mall." [1]

Something similar happened at *Folha de S. Paulo*'s main competitor *O Estado de S. Paulo*. In the subsequent week, the paper published an article with the title "Teens make an *arrastão* in a shopping mall in Guarulhos." [191] A few hours later,

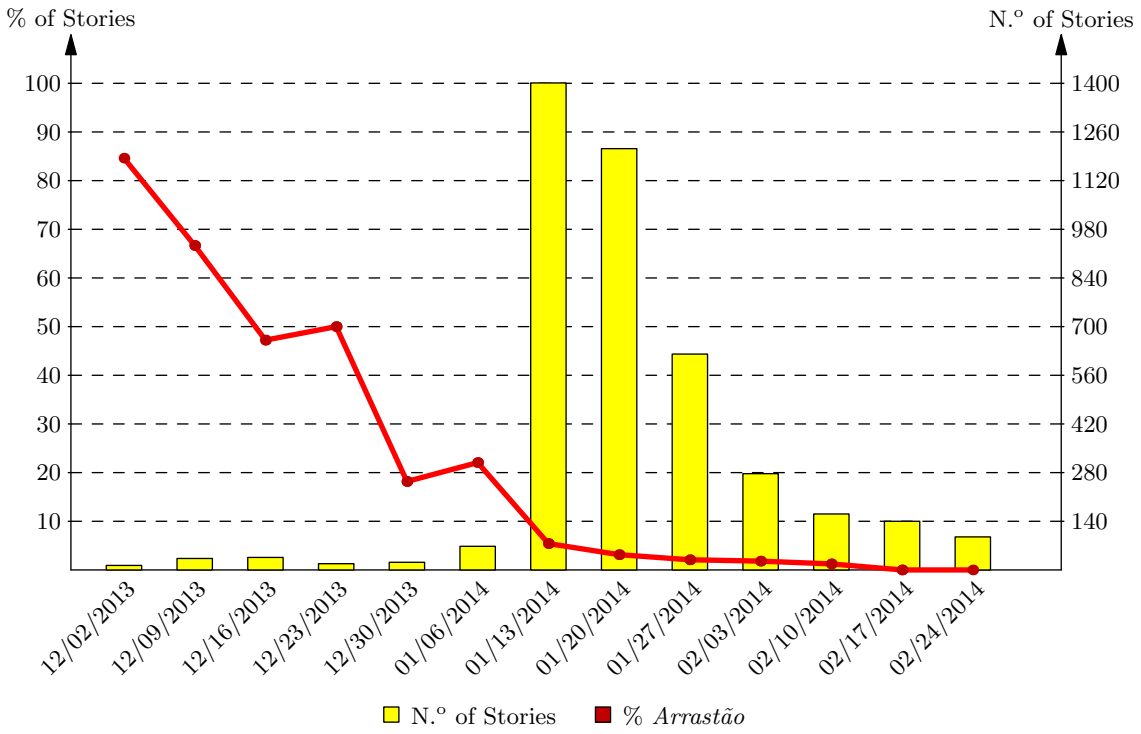

Figure 3-6: Weekly percentage of stories that mention the word *arrastão*.

the headline changed to "Mess in a mall in Guarulhos ends up with 23 detained." [21]

Very soon the majority of the media outlets realized that *arrastão* was not the most appropriate word to define a *rolezinho*. However, traditional media continued to have a conservative first reaction to the gatherings. Notwithstanding the dispassionate informative tone, the first texts often portrayed the events as harmful, messy, or dangerous. So much so that the first articles published immediately after the *rolezinhos* constitute a well-defined subcluster inside the *arrastão frame* as shown in Figure 3-7.

Interestingly, that bias seems a knee-jerk feature of the first article after a *rolezinho*. Subsequent stories usually had more nuanced statements and richer contextualization. Op-eds were also more diverse in their interpretations. Taking into account that *rolezinhos* happened over the weekends in the late afternoon or at night, it is possible to venture an explanation. Those articles were usually written by lone reporters, on duty during the weekend. They were not able to visit the mall, so they had to rely on police reports—usually a staunch conservative source—by telephone.

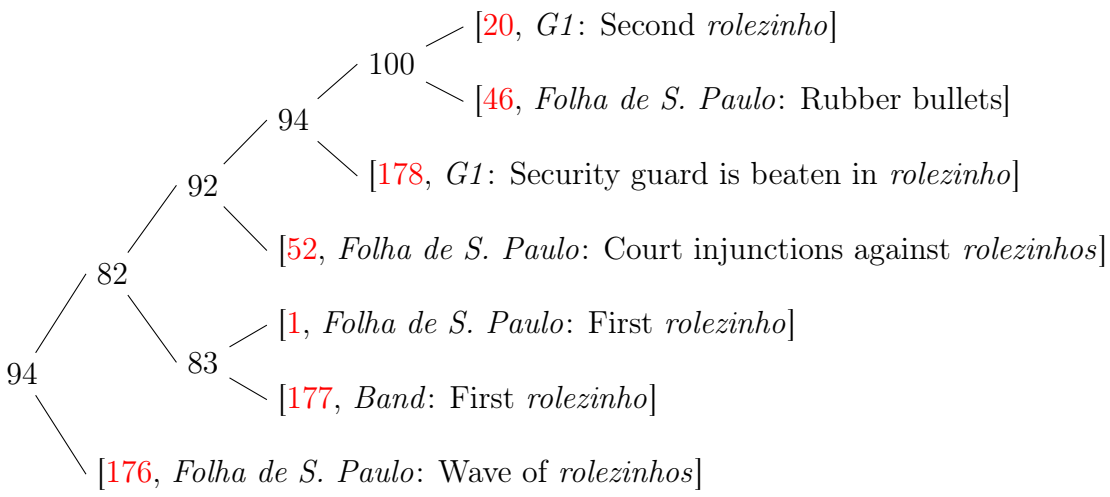

Figure 3-7: *Traditional media subcluster.*

In fact, a note published in the corrections section of *Folha de S. Paulo* on December 9$^{\text{th}}$—after the first *rolezinho*—supports this hypothesis [192]. The text attributes to the police the incorrect information that there was an *arrastão* in *Lojas Americanas* (a popular chain store) during the *rolezinho* in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera*. In fact, not only there was no *arrastão* but also there is no *Lojas Americanas* in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera*.

First impressions are frequently lasting impressions. Therefore, the framing influence of those first stories must not be underestimated. The most popular piece in this subcluster—a report of the first *rolezinho* by Band [3]—had a *total count* of 62,727, more than 3% of the total media attention in the overall corpus.

Another relevant piece for the *arrastão* rhetoric was *G1*'s "Guard is assaulted during 'rolezinho' in Guarulhos" [178] on January, 13$^{\text{th}}$ (*total count*: 11,236). That text subverted the traditional *apartheid frame*—the policeman was the victim and the youth was the aggressor. The participants in the *rolezinho* were allegedly drinking alcohol in a public park and, when the guard rebuked them, they stoned him.

G1's article—and the related video—went viral and became a frequent reference among supporters of the *arrastão frame*. Conservative commentator Rodrigo Constantino, for instance, recommended that video to "those who think that every criticism of *rolezinhos* comes from racial or social prejudice." [193]

YouTube

In the first week of the controversy, the main group that spoke out against the use of the term *arrastão* were the shopkeepers and shopping center owners, both individually and through their associations. In the very first article about the first *rolezinho* [3], the administration of *Shopping Metro Itaquera* denied an *arrastão* and even any sort of theft inside the mall. That was the consensus amongst the shopping malls throughout the controversy as it is demonstrated by a qualitative analysis of the 496 unique sentences in the corpus that mention the Association of Shopping Center's Retailers (Alshop), its chairman Nabil Sayhoun, or the Brazilian Association of Shopping Centers (Abrasce). They wanted to emphasize that the malls continued to be the safest spaces for consumption and leisure.

Rachel Sheherazade, an influential conservative commentator, suggested that the malls would rather deny the occurrence of thefts in order to "overshadow the negative propaganda" of *rolezinhos* because many customers would cease to go shopping on Christmas Eve if they believed in the risk of *arrastão* in shopping malls [179]. Her commentary was aired on the TV station SBT on December 16th, right after the second *rolezinho* at *Shopping Internacional de Guarulhos*, when 23 young people were detained and released shortly thereafter. Sheherazade's video achieved great prominence in Facebook (*total count*: 45,339). She also supported a bold police action against the *rolezinhos*. That piece became one of the high-ranking stories in defense of the frame *arrastão*.

Sheherazade's comment belongs to the *YouTube subcluster* (Figure 3-8), a group of articles that have two things in common: they are videos and they convey a negative—although very simple—message about the *rolezinhos*. There is no room for elaborate sociological reflections.

One of them does not convey any explicit message at all. It is a YouTube video recorded with a mobile phone in the first *rolezinho* [10]. At the beginning, the images are so chaotic that it is difficult to make sense of it. Then, when the private guards arrive to disperse the crowd, they are harassed by some youth. The resulting

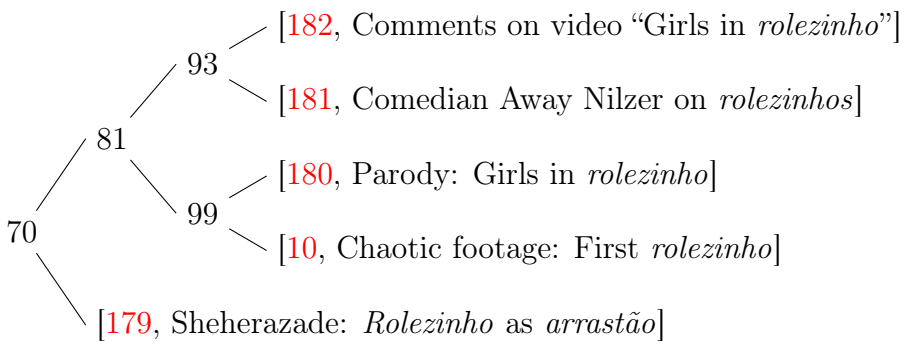

Figure 3-8: *YouTube subcluster*.

impression about the participants is unfavorable.

The other YouTube videos are (tentatively) humorous. Comedian Away Nilzer, for instance, is largely nonsensical and seems intoxicated [181]. He menaces the viewer—imagined as a participant in a *rolezinho*—with a knife while insulting him. When it is possible to understand him, it becomes plain that he is castigating the youths and their life style. He is also rude, even suggesting that the participants go to the mall only to have sexual intercourse in the restrooms. Nevertheless, he is the fifth most popular link in the corpus (*total count*: 51,534).

There are also two articles that make fun of girls who go to *rolezinhos*. Both elaborate on a more serious video produced by *UOL* that describes the behavior of those adolescents. That original piece belongs to the *arrastão frame* too [174], but it is more ambiguous: it gives room to criticize the girls for their frivolity but also to empathize with them for their naiveté and kindness.

The altered versions in the *YouTube subcluster*, however, do not leave much room for interpretation. One of them presents short sequences of the original video accompanied by sarcastic comments about the girls' clothes and ideas [182]. The other is more hostile. The original speech was replaced by degrading remarks. The new lines convey three main ideas: those girls hate going to school, they are promiscuous, and participants in *rolezinhos* are used to stealing from people [180].

Together, the five videos are remarkably influential. They represent 9.8% of the social media attention in the overall corpus.

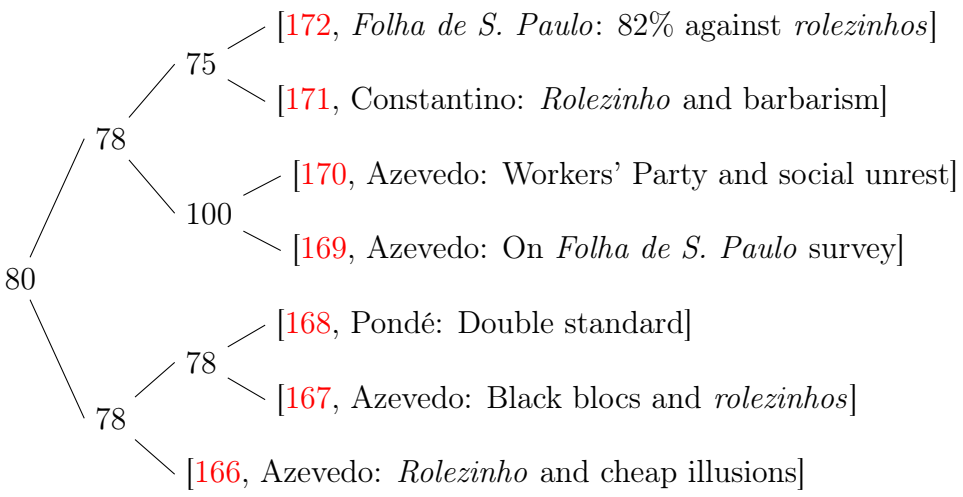

Figure 3-9: *Neocons subcluster*.

Neocons

Were it not for the need of being brief and simple on TV, aforesaid Rachel Sheherazade would probably be placed in another subcluster: the *neocons*. She belongs to a new generation of communicators and intellectuals who are challenging the progressive establishment, especially in the most influential media outlets.

Due to their ideological cohesiveness, all of them—except Sheherazade—are gathered in the same subcluster (Figure 3-9). They usually mention the *rolezinhos* issue in the context of the Brazilian cultural wars and to make a point against their left-wing adversaries.

Brazilian philosopher Luiz Felipe Pondé, for instance, refers to *rolezinhos* to expose the hypocrisy of "intellectuals who glamorize the *rolezinhos*." [168] The *rolezinhos* are just a side note in an ongoing argument with progressive debaters.

Rolezinhos found a more outspoken critic in Rodrigo Constantino, a blogger at Veja magazine. On January 14$^{\text{th}}$, he defined the participants in *rolezinhos* as "barbarians who are not willing to recognize their own inferiority, who are green with envy of the civilization" [171] (*total count*: 10,727). Later that same day, in an article titled "The apartheid in shopping malls is a behavioral one" (*total count*: 2,471), he wrote

> Yes, there is a class conflict. There is even an apartheid in Brazil today. But it is unrelated to race or skin color. It is a behavioral one! Good,

> hardworking, taxpaying citizens are victims both of the government that steal their money to pay welfare grants and of crooks who mess with their daily life. [193]

After being heavily criticized on the Internet, he felt like writing a third piece that same day to explain what he meant by "barbarians who are not willing to recognize their own inferiority." He explained: "I did not say that every funk lover is an inferior being. [...] I said that someone who organizes a *rolezinho*, as if the mall is a funk party, is giving evidence of envy, of a barbarian, uncivilized, and disrespectful behavior." [194]

In a personal interview for this research, Constantino explained his use of the word *arrastão* to define the *rolezinhos*:

> The debates on social networks tend to be very polarized. As a right wing blogger in a country where the leftist ideology is hegemonic, I feel the need of reacting in a more emphatic way. If our nation were more civilized, I would prefer to debate in a calmer tone, with fewer adjectives. I understand that I am pushing the envelope when I use the word *arrastão* to define the *rolezinhos*. *Arrastão* presupposes an intention to steal that is usually absent in *rolezinhos*. But in this dichotomous world of the social networks, where the alternative for me is the leftist opinion that *rolezinhos* are inoffensive, I will certainly side with those who call them *arrastão*. [195]

In the *neocons subcluster*, Constantino is very close to the only article that is not a neocon's text. It is a news piece about a *Folha de S. Paulo* survey on how inhabitants of São Paulo—the so-called *paulistanos*—feel about *rolezinhos*, published on January 23rd. Naturally, such proximity between Constantino and the survey is not by chance. After reading both texts, one understands how close to each other are *paulistanos*' and Constatino's opinions on *rolezinhos*.

The first paragraph of the survey reads like this: "If *rolezinho* is a protest against the social apartheid—as some progressive sectors portray it—this survey shows that

the city of São Paulo is deeply conservative: 82% of the *paulistanos* are against the gatherings in malls." [172] In the East Side of the city—the poorest region and venue for many *rolezinhos*—the percentage of disapproval is even higher: 92%. Around 73% of the *paulistanos* think the police must act to curb the *rolezinhos*.

Conservative commentators celebrated the results. Reinaldo Azevedo—an influential blogger at *Veja* magazine and author of four texts in the *neocons subcluster*—wrote a post titled "The subintellectuals [are] disappointed with the people": "While rich leftists engage in a frantic exercise in creative anthropology to see the *rolezinhos* as a scream of the poor against capitalism, those same poor request the end of the youth gatherings in order to go to the malls with no hustle." [169]

Undoubtedly, the term *arrastão* lost currency during the research period, but the spirit of the *arrastão frame* remained stronger than ever.

3.2 Social and Racial Apartheid

The *apartheid cluster* (Figure 3-10) is the biggest of the three clusters that have been identified as frames.

After reading the articles in the cluster, it is possible to describe their common denominator as the belief that *rolezinhos* reveal the cruel nature of the social and racial exclusion of the majority of poor (and usually black) population living in the suburbs of Brazilian larger cities.

Besides the word *apartheid* (which was in vogue due to Nelson Mandela's death on December 5th), the analogous terms "prejudice" and "segregation" were also considered keywords for the computational analysis described in this section.

In fact, many articles do not use the term *apartheid* although they do belong to the *apartheid frame*. Leonardo Sakamoto, an influential progressive blogger, explained in a personal interview that he consciously decided to not use the word *apartheid* in his article, although he endorses the view that there is a disturbing element of prejudice in the reaction against *rolezinhos*: "You cannot vulgarize the words. You have to preserve them for when they are really necessary. In the case of *rolezinhos*, apartheid

Figure 3-10: *Apartheid cluster*. Collapsed and annoted version of Figure 3-2.

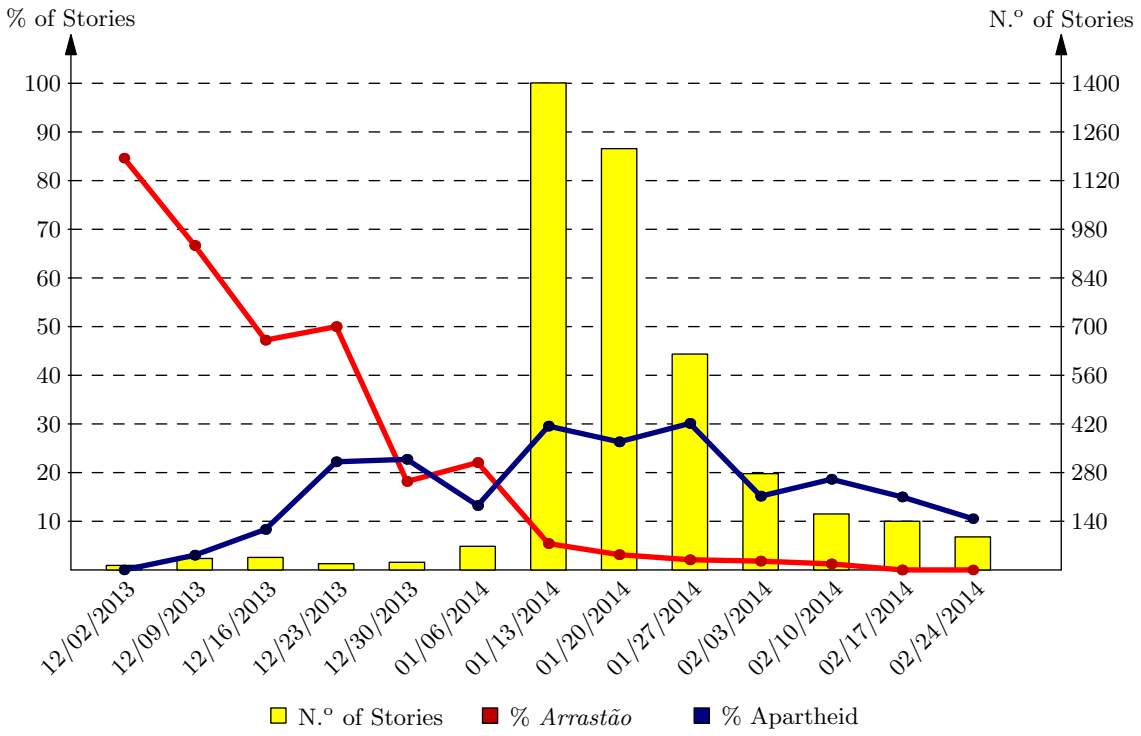

Figure 3-11: Weekly percentage of stories that mention "apartheid", "segregation", and "prejudice" (compared to *arrastão*).

is too much." [196]

The *apartheid cluster* (Figure 3-10) is harder to dissect than the other two clusters. There are two hypothesis to explain why. First, the subclusters might not be as cohesive as in the *arrastão frame*. Second, the articles in the *apartheid cluster* might be too homogeneous to allow a clear differentiation among subclusters. In any case, the following criteria were applied: a subcluster is any subtree with at least three leaves and a discernible common argument. Accordingly, four subclusters were identified and will be described in the following.

Progressives

A quantitative analysis (Figure 3-11) shows how the growth of the *apartheid frame* coincided with the plunge of the *arrastão frame*.

A qualitative analysis of the texts reveals that the concurrence of both trends was not by chance. The texts that support the *apartheid* thesis often establish a polemical

dialogue with the *arrastão frame*. A good example is the first text that mentions the term apartheid. That article was published on December 10th by *Baderna Midiática* blog. The title "Brazilian apartheid is exposed. About the so-called *arrastões* in malls" [197] not only questioned the use of the term *arrastão* to define what happened in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera* but also it pioneered the use of the word apartheid to explain the phenomenon of *rolezinhos*. *Baderna Midiática* (Media Uproar, in Portuguese) is an activist collective. Half of its roughly 20 members are students in the History department at University of São Paulo.

Baderna Midiática's text carries no byline. However, it was written by historian André Godinho. In a personal interview, Godinho said: "The idea of opposing 'apartheid' and '*arrastão*' in the title came from posts in my Facebook newsfeed by black organizations protesting against the episode of racism in Vitória." [198]

On November 30th, 2013, an incident in Vitória, capital of the state of Espírito Santo, had already revealed how *arrastão* is usually the first analogy used to explain *rolezinho*-like events [199]. A funk party had been organized in the vicinity of *Shopping Vitória*, a local mall. The police decided to investigate what was happening and possibly quit the party. Dozens of youth fled to the mall to avoid problems with the police, but the customers and shopkeepers interpreted the new visitors as an *arrastão* and called the police. There were no thefts or robberies, but many young people were searched. They were forced to take off their t-shirts and sit on the floor with the hands on the head.

A passerby took pictures with his mobile phone and posted on Facebook. The images of black innocent youth subjugated by the police infuriated civil rights organizations. On social networks, they thundered against the use of the term *arrastão* by traditional media and drew a comparison between the incident and the apartheid. Those references inspired Godinho in his text about the first *rolezinho*.

Baderna Midiática's *total count* was only 798, so it does not appear in the list of 60 top articles that fed the cluster analysis. Nonetheless, one of the subclusters followed in its footsteps: the *progressive commentators subcluster* (Figure 3-12). Most of them are well-established left-leaning intellectuals and journalists who work for major media

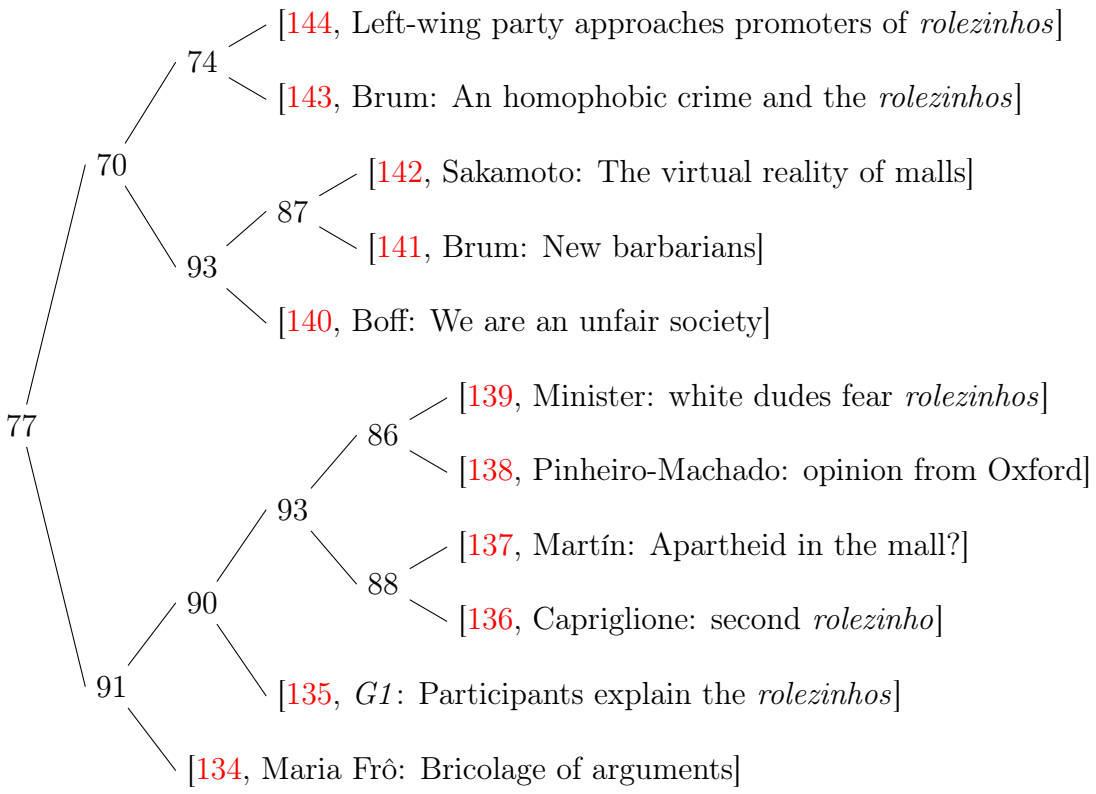

Figure 3-12: *Progressive comentators subcluster*.

outlets in Brazil.

It is easy to see why shopping malls rejected the *arrastão frame* early—they did not want to lose customers—but it is surprising that, in the first week of the controversy, only *Baderna Midiática*'s article directly challenged the potentially biased nature of that frame. It is likely that many progressive activists and reporters were unsure about how to react to the *arrastão frame* after seeing the contrast between the vehemence of the malls in denying the occurrence of an *arrastão* and the numerous reports on social networks of people who claimed to have witnessed shoplifting. There is, however, a significant increase in the number of mentions of the terms "apartheid," "prejudice," and "segregation" in the following weeks of the controversy. They coincide with the second wave of *rolezinhos*.

On Saturday, December 14$^{\text{th}}$, a *rolezinho* in *Shopping Internacional de Guarulhos* [20] ended up with 23 people detained [21, 22]. Again, the first frame used by the media was the suspicion of *arrastão*. However, in the following day, both the mall

and the police asserted that no theft had been registered. The young people who had been brought to the police station were released that same night because the police found no evidence that they had participated in any sort of criminal action [23].

On Monday, December 16th, journalist Laura Capriglione, who was present at the mall during the *rolezinho*, published a report in *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper [136]. The article was simply her narrative of the facts but put the young funk fans in a very favorable light. It emphasized from the first line that they have committed no crime—neither theft nor illegal substance possession—and hinted that the police's decision of taking some of them to the police station was arbitrary and disproportionate.

At the same time, it reported with irony the way a small business owner at the mall was "criticizing [the youth] among mouthfuls of rump pizza with cream cheese." References to the flavor of the pizza became a source of jokes and social criticism on Twitter [200] and Capriglione's article received wide dissemination on Facebook (*total count*: 29,390). The text became the standard narrative for many progressive commentators. Capriglione had on her side the fact that she was the only journalist who witnessed the event. The other media outlets could only count on second-hand narratives from the police and the mall's PRs.

That same day, progressive blogger Leonardo Sakamoto posted a comment [142] based on Capriglione's narrative that drew considerable attention (*total count*: 17,952). It began with the hostile comments by the small business owner who ate rump pizza and then stated that the way the mainstream media was dealing with the *rolezinhos*—the *arrastão frame*—reinforced racial and social stereotypes, and did not provide a reasonable explanation for the gatherings in shopping malls. His reflection ended with vows of more *rolezinhos* in order to "see if the bubble [that isolates the economic and social elite in São Paulo] bursts."

In an interview for this research project [196], Sakamoto mentioned that, when he wrote the text, he was not so interested in the *rolezinho* issue itself, but in how the *rolezinho* exposed another problem: the urban aberration represented by shopping malls in São Paulo. In the absence of enough public parks or theaters, they became the number one alternative for leisure in the city. However, they are not places for

culture or sports. The main pleasure they offer is consumption. Sakamoto also guaranteed that he had not read Godinho's article in *Baderna Midiática* blog. Godinho confirmed that he did not have direct contact with anyone in the group of progressive commentators that led the debate after his intervention.

Another article in the corpus [201] with less although significant impact (*total count*: 4,275) and more incisive in its criticism was published that same day in a left-wing website called *Quadrado dos Loucos*. It accused the police and malls of racism, stating that the young people had been taken to the police station "because they are black." It also underlined that the use of the word *arrastão* to describe *rolezinhos* was a consequence of the racism pervading Brazilian press and it manifested a perverse habit when it comes to judge any social phenomena involving black poor people. The text was republished on various left-wing websites and blogs.

Those three articles in the second week laid the foundations of the *apartheid frame*. In the following weekend, there were two more *rolezinhos*: in *Shopping Campo Limpo* [24, 25] and *Shopping Interlagos* [26–30]. On Monday, December 23$^{\text{rd}}$, journalist and commentator Eliane Brum published in the Brazilian version of the Spanish newspaper *El País* an article that also drew great attention on the social networks: "The new Brazilian 'thugs'" [141] (*total count*: 31.405). In that article, after harshly criticizing the discrimination inflicted on young black and poor people, Brum interviews the sociologist Alexandre Pereira Barbosa, a specialist in "cultural manifestations from São Paulo's suburbs."

One week later, on December 30$^{\text{th}}$, Rosana Pinheiro Machado, Professor of Anthropology of Development at University of Oxford, contributed to the debate with an article titled "Ethnography of Rolezinho" [138] published on her own blog (*total count*: 26,574). From then on, she would become one of the most quoted experts on the subject of *rolezinhos*. She argued that *rolezinhos* are not traditional protests, but they clearly reveal the exclusion and discrimination against young people in the suburbs.

Those handful of articles helped to set the tone of the debate before the media storm in the third week of January. Later on, other commentators worked to keep

the flame burning. On January 23rd, for instance, Leonardo Boff published "The *rolezinhos* blame us: we are an unjust and segregationist society." [140] He mentioned Pinheiro Machado as one of his references. With a remarkable *total count* of 35,688, Boff's text is the ninth most popular article. He is an important thinker in Liberation Theology, an influential movement among Latin American Christians, chiefly Catholics, that advocates for social justice and has a Marxist inspiration.

On January 13th, activist Maria Frô published an article [134] (*total count*: 8,533) that criticized "malls, the bourgeoisie, the police, and the Courts." It referred to the police as *capitão do mato* (literally, "captain of the woods")—the 19th Century term for those who performed the vile task of recapturing escaped slaves—which is a clear reference to the racist component in the reaction to *rolezinhos*.

The *progressive commentators subcluster* received 10.6% of the total Facebook attention in the corpus. As a comparison, it is more than three times the amount their nemeses—the *neocons*—gathered (2.94%).

Anti-police and anti-injunctions

The *apartheid frame* received new impetus after several shopping malls obtained court injunctions to prevent *rolezinhos* [52–56] and after the violent police response on January 11th at the Shopping Metro Itaquera [45–50]. According to the reports, police expelled about a thousand people from the shopping mall and then used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse them. After that incident, the share of news related to the *apartheid frame* more than doubled (from 13% to 30%) according to our corpus (cf. Figure 3-11).

On January 13th, Brazilian writer Vanessa Barbara, who witnessed the police's action at the mall, published her report in *Folha de S. Paulo* [154]. According to her, the police tried to intimidate the youth with threats such as "I'll break your face." That week, Barbara's article had a significant impact (*total count*: 10,632) and played a similar role to Laura Capriglione's story [136] in December, offering to progressive commentators a convenient narrative to criticize the crackdown on *rolezinhos*. Two days early, *Folha de S. Paulo* had already published a video that showed policemen

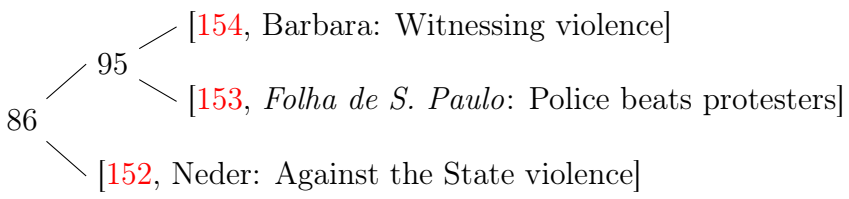

Figure 3-13: *Anti-police subcluster*.

assaulting youth in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera* [153] (*total count*: 13,435).

Both articles belong to another group of URLs: the *anti-police subcluster* (Figure 3-13). It is a small set of articles that conveys a very critical position about the police.

In addition to the flood of articles criticizing the Brazilian apartheid, "protest-*rolezinhos*" were organized by social movements [57–59], especially black organizations [61] and the Homeless Workers' Movement [60]. Unlike traditional *rolezinhos*, those protests happened inside (or at least in front of) shopping malls in affluent neighborhoods. While the organizers of the traditional *rolezinhos* tried to minimize conflict with security guards and the police, the protesters tended to stimulate confrontation in order to drew more attention to their agenda. Their political message was also much clearer, because it was explicitly stated in their flyers and banners. Such protesters helped to spread the *apartheid frame* in the media coverage because it was unavoidable to mention their demands when reporting the protests.

Such demonstrations were fueled by the revolt against the court injunctions that threatened with fines and detention those who organized and attended to *rolezinhos*. One article that became the fourth most popular written piece in the controversy had the following headline: "Prohibition of *rolezinho* enshrines the Brazilian apartheid" [149] (*total count*: 53,480). Published on the left-wing portal *Brasil 24/7* on January 12th, it drew a parallel with the segregation that African-Americans suffered in the United States in the 60s. It even embedded a YouTube video with a civil-rights discourse by president John F. Kennedy. That article belongs to another small subcluster: the *anti-injunctions* (Figure 3-14), a group of texts that criticized the courts for giving institutional support to an allegedly racist action.

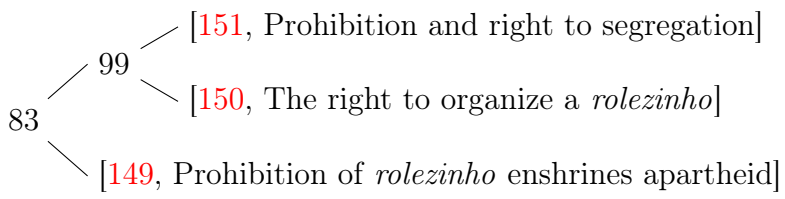

Figure 3-14: *Anti-court injunctions subcluster.*

Anti-conservatives

The main criticism against the *apartheid frame* was based on the fact that the traditional *rolezinhos* did not occur in affluent malls. They were born and spread in the malls located in the poorest regions of São Paulo, enterprises that thrived thanks to the new prosperity and generous credit supply to the low income families during the last decade.

Shopping Metrô Itaquera, for instance, is located in a neighborhood where 58% of the population belongs to low-income families and 34% earn less than 720 Brazilian reais (US$320) per month (the average percentages for São Paulo are 53.1% and 27.8%, respectively) [202]. *Shopping Internacional de Guarulhos* is located in Guarulhos—the second most populous city of the state of São Paulo, with about 1.3 million people. According to a 2003 study by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) about 43.21% of the population in Guarulhos is below the poverty line, a percentage well above the State average (26.6%) and even the city of São Paulo (28%) [203].

The first article that highlighted that possible contradiction was published on December 19$^{\text{th}}$ in a controversy against Leonardo Sakamoto's article [142] of December 13$^{\text{th}}$. The title was "Sakamoto and *rolezinhos* or 'another evidence that the Left hates the honest poor'." [204] That post in Luciano Ayan's blog *Ceticismo Político* (Political Skepticism) did not receive much attention (*total count*: 261). The argument was: we are not watching a class conflict, but a struggle between poor people who want a funk party at the mall and poor people who want peace and safety to go shopping and to eat Big Mac's.

Conservative commentator Reinaldo Azevedo also published two articles—"*Role-*

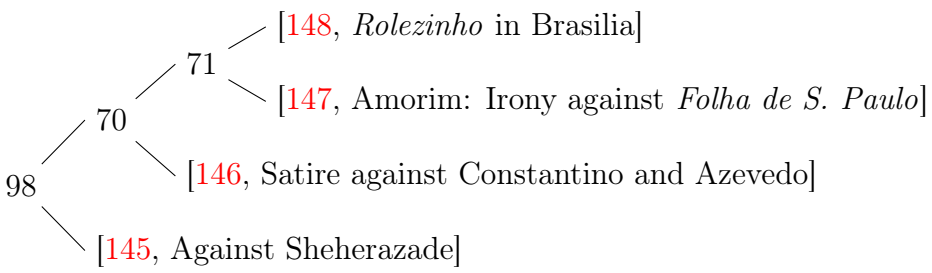

Figure 3-15: *Anti-conservatives subcluster*.

zinho and cheap illusions" [166] in *Folha de S. Paulo* (*total count*: 5,118) and "The foolish Left already wants to take advantage of the *rolezinho*" [205] in *Veja* magazine's Website (*total count*: 4,156)—along the same lines but with more impact.

The *apartheid frame* answered to those criticisms through theoretical arguments—represented by the *progressive commentators subcluster*—and through ad hominem attacks that constituted a subcluster on its own (Figure 3-15). The strategies ranged from ridiculing the adversary with satire or irony to proposing legal actions to silence them.

Lino Bocchini, for instance, suggested that the government should revoke the broadcasting concession for SBT, the TV station that aired Rachel Sheherazade's commentaries [145]. Another text in the corpus has the title "[Rodrigo] Constatino: symbol of a rotten elite." [206]

The former Globo reporter and now enthusiast of the Workers' Party Paulo Henrique Amorim published a very successful 33-second video [147] (*total count*: 26,021) on January 15$^{\text{th}}$. He reads an excerpt of a *Folha de S. Paulo* analysis that foresaw "the *rolezinhos* would lose their original meaning [of a poor youth party] and become more similar to the June protests of the last year." [207] Amorim finishes with an ironic smile. The title of the video gives the key to understand his irony: "*Folha de S. Paulo* summons and organizes *rolezinhos*." The implicit part is: "... in an attempt to destabilize President Dilma's government."

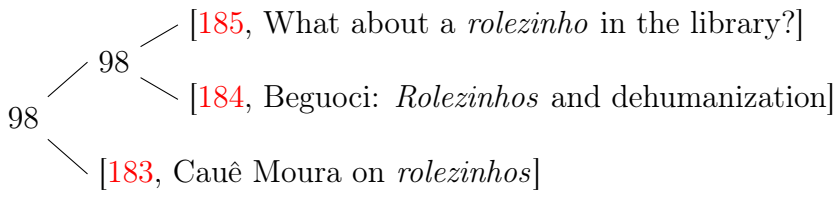

Figure 3-16: *Middle ground cluster*. Annoted version of Figure 3-4.

3.3 Middle ground

There is a third and small frame that challenges both the *apartheid* and the *arrastão* perspectives. It does not criminalize the youth but, at the same time, sympathizes with those who do not agree with *rolezinhos* in the mall. The chosen label for it is *middle ground* (Figure 3-16).

The *middle ground cluster* comprises only three texts (out of 60) in the top articles sample. At first sight, it might seem an insignificant share: only 5% of the total corpus of top articles. However, it represents 13% of the Facebook attention in the top articles sample and 7% in the overall corpus.

In fact, the most popular article in the corpus belong to the *middle ground cluster*: a seven-minute Youtube video by Cauê Moura in a channel called *Desce a letra* [183] (*total count*: 86,228). Published on January 13th, therefore at the peak of the media storm, it is an unashamedly didactic piece that relies on exotic visuals and aggressive language to attract teen attention (which probably explains his video's huge popularity). According to Moura, his Youtube channel aims to help adolescents think more critically about contemporary issues [208].

In his commentary on the *rolezinhos*, Moura points out that most *rolezinhos* happen in the suburbs. That fact, according to him, renders the "class conflict discourse" void. At the same time, he says it is impossible to deny the existence of prejudice against poor black people. He tries to delineate an alternative frame to the *arrastão* and *apartheid* narratives, but notwithstanding castigating the right and left-wing readings of the controversy, the video does not try to offer a full-fledged explanation of the possible causes of the *rolezinhos*.

A more nuanced analysis came with Leandro Beguoci's article "*Rolezinho* and the

dehumanization of the poor" [184] published on the next day, January 14th. The subtitle gives a good summary: "The extremist debates by the Left and the Right are ignoring the people who take part in the *rolezinho*. It is time to understand the suburbs." Beguoci, a former reporter at *Folha de S. Paulo*, drew on his personal experiences as a poor teenager in the Greater São Paulo and on his reflections of the recent social changes in Brazil to reach the conclusion that the hopes and fears related to the *rolezinhos* are, by and large, unrealistic.

In a personal interview for this research, Beguoci explained the reasons that moved him to write that article:

> When I read Laura Capriglione's article [136] on the second *rolezinho*, something bothered me... It was probably the depiction of the small business owner criticizing the youth "among mouthfuls of rump pizza." That narrative leads to think that she belongs to a distant elite, but I don't think that is the case. She could be one of the participant's mother. [209]

At the same time, he was far from supporting the hostility that some conservative commentators expressed towards the participants in *rolezinhos*. According to him, his article was an attempt at offering a third perspective outside the realm of the cultural wars.

He invites the reader to follow the example of Samuel Klein, a Brazilian entrepreneur who realized that poor people are often better customers than the wealthier consumers and founded a successful retail chain in poor neighborhoods. According to Beguoci, Klein was a visionary leader because he left behind sociological discourses and elitist prejudices, and decided to talk to poor people.

Beguoci affirms that he did not draw inspiration from specific articles, although he appreciated Vinicius Torres Freire's "Um rolê pelo rolezinho" [210] in *Folha de S. Paulo* (*total count*: 307). According to Beguoci, Freire's text was published on January 14th, when Beguoci's article was almost finished. Freire described the *rolezinho* issue as a "stereotypical conflict between the Left and the Right" over the real meaning of the

youth gatherings.

Beguoci's article was published in a young media venture called *Oene* that has the challenging aim of making money from high quality journalistic content and comments. Significantly, *Oene*'s motto is "Very reasonable" and the "About us" section [211] of the Website states that the texts will be as "objective" as possible and removed "from the passions that can inspire good chats in a pub but so often blind us." Beguoci is one of the initiative's founders.

His article reached a remarkable popularity, not only for the number of likes or shares (*total count*: 45,980) but especially for the prestige of the media outlets that quoted him, as a search for his name in the Media Cloud corpus shows. On the following Sunday, January 19th, *Folha de S. Paulo*'s ombudsman Suzana Singer praised his text as a "very lucid analysis." [212] That same day, an article in the *The New York Times* [213]—that would be translated and published on the next day by *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper [214]—also quoted his text. He was also interviewed by TV Cultura [215]—the public TV channel in São Paulo—on January 17th and took part in a conference organized by the Cultural Center Ruth Cardoso on February 13th [216]. His article's success—2.3% of the overall attention in the corpus—probably indicates that there is a demand for conciliatory discourses in the Brazilian media ecosystem.

The *middle ground frame* offers a challenge for computational analysis because it is very difficult to associate keywords to it. It blends terms from the *arrastão frame* and the *apartheid frame*.

Apart from that, in the highly polarized debate on the *rolezinhos*, there were not many *middle ground* articles to be found. In the list of top articles, for instance, there is only more one exemplar: Everth Vêncio's "*Rolezinho* in the library" [185] (*total count*: 7,716). In the rest of the corpus, there is another one: Ruth de Aquino's "Summer's rolezão" [217] (*total count*: 279), published in *Época* magazine on January 17th. She downplayed the importance of the youth gatherings and invited "leftists and fascists" to quit the hysteria.

3.4 Other actors and frames

Two social actors conveyed coherent messages during the controversy. However, their points of view were usually subsumed in the frames described above and never reached the state of a full-fledged frame. Those are the shopping malls and the politicians—especially the ones in the Workers' Party.

In the analysis so far, the mall's perspective was put under the umbrella of the *arrastão frame*. Although they denied the occurrence of *arrastão*, they supported other dimensions of that frame: the role of the police and the inconvenience of *rolezinhos* for the sake of safety. At the same time, the Workers' Party's take on the *rolezinho* became blended with the *apartheid frame*.

In this section, we are going to analyze the particular elements and strategies employed by those two groups of social actors.

3.4.1 Shopping malls

The shopping malls presented consistent behavior during the span of the controversy. All the time, they were guided by three principles:

- Shopping malls are private places, so they have the right to expel those who do not behave well.
- *Rolezinhos* have a perverse economic impact on taxpaying businesses.
- *Rolezinhos* threaten other customers because shopping malls do not have the infrastructure for that sort of social gathering.

Two associations represented mall owners' and storekeepers' rights and demands: the Brazilian Association of Mall's Storekeepers (Alshop) and the Brazilian Association of Shopping Malls (Abrasce). Both organizations were in perfect consonance with each other. The shopping malls also showed a high compliance with the associations' strategies during the media storm.

Nevertheless, only one text among the top articles sample can be considered a pure manifestation of the shopping mall's position: *Folha de S. Paulo*'s piece on the

meeting of the president of Alshop, Nabil Sahyon, and São Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin [175]. The text solely conveys Sahyon's point of view that "all are welcome, but the admission of thousands of people jeopardizes the security of the malls. There might be an accident and the mall will be held accountable. A mall is not the proper place for a funk party." [175]

In the first week of the controversy, they sent a letter to the State Department of Public Security requesting special policing around the shopping malls [218]. To the press, although denying the occurrence of an *arrastão*, they argued that shopping malls are like soccer stadiums and therefore require special protection from the public security services in order to shun any threat to public safety [15]. To look at the aggressive tactics used by the police on December 14$^{\text{th}}$, with the detention of 23 youths [22], it seems their request was heard by the State government.

However, after two *rolezinhos* over the weekend before Christmas [24–28], one article in *Folha de S. Paulo* reports that Alshop was trying to lobby for policing inside the shopping malls as a preventive measure [219]. The malls were willing to pay an additional stipend for the policemen. In the same article, São Paulo governor Geraldo Alckmin argued against the solution pointing out that shopping malls are private places and must be protected by private guards, not public police.

After a period of calmness during the holidays, on January 11$^{\text{th}}$, various media sources reported the new strategy of the shopping malls: court injunctions (in Portuguese, *liminares*) that would forbid any *rolezinho*. Offenders would be liable for a fine of 10,000 Brazilian reais ($4,500). The Media Cloud corpus shows that all stories published on January 11$^{\text{th}}$, before the violent repression at *Shopping Metrô Itaquera*, were reproductions of only two articles distributed by the news agencies associated to *Folha de S. Paulo* and the web portal *Terra*. Both pieces have different takes on the issue. *Folha de S. Paulo*'s article [52] simply reports that four shopping malls obtained court injunctions to avoid *rolezinhos* scheduled for that weekend. *Terra* preferred to focus on just one of the malls—the Shopping JK Iguatemi—the only one located in a wealthy neighborhood. Its headline highlighted that fact: "Luxurious mall obtain court injunction against *rolezinho*." [220]

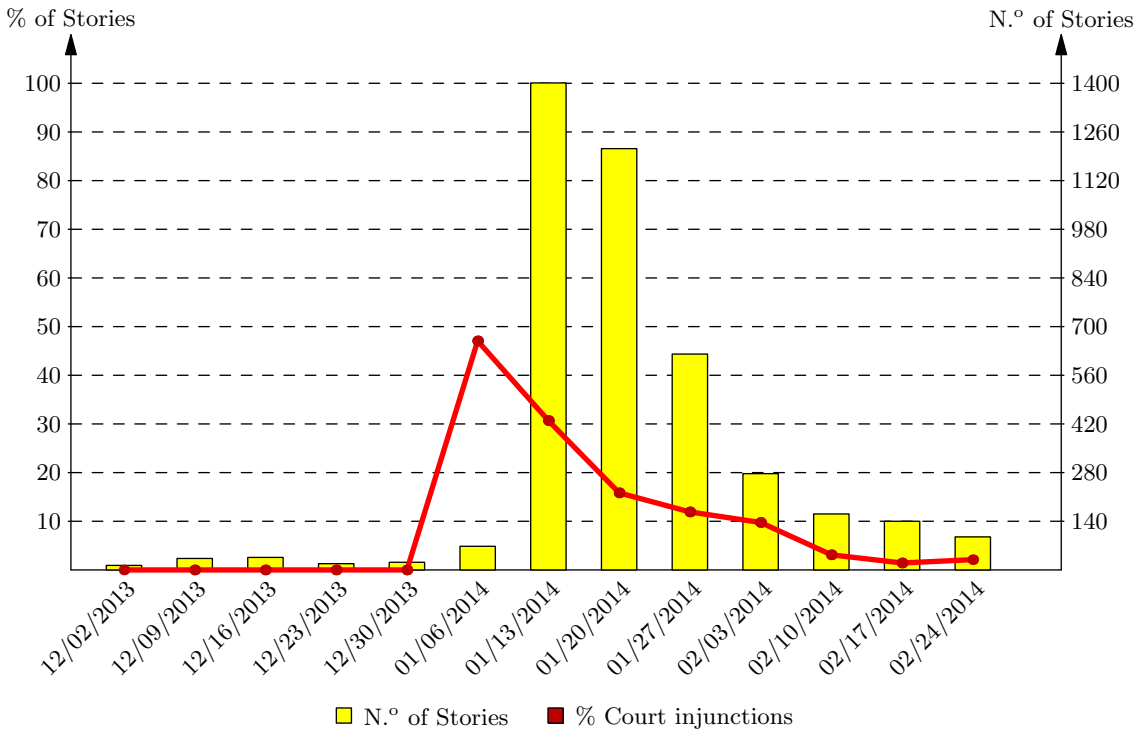

Figure 3-17: Weekly percentage of stories that mention "court injunctions."

As it can be seen in Figure 3-17, the media storm comes just after the soaring number of references to "court injunctions."

Such proximity is not a coincidence: 81 out of 199 articles (41%) that explicitly reflect on the social and racial apartheid contain references to the court injunctions. Shopping malls and judges faced an angry backlash from human rights organizations, left-wing parties and progressive commentators over the fairness of the court decisions (see section 3.2 Social and Racial Apartheid on page 52).

The shopping malls answered that they were not discriminating against people according to their race or social position, but it was a decision based on safety concerns.

However, the "everybody is welcome as long as they embrace the rules" argument also received an embarrassing response: a YouTube video (*total count*: 25,619) that shows a messy party in *Shopping Eldorado* that has been organized every year since 2007 by middle to upper class students from the School of Economics at the University of São Paulo [162]. It resembles a *rolezinho* in its crowded and noisy exuberance but

without any complaints about security threats or peace disturbance. On the contrary, some shops in the mall even give financial support to it.

It is a particularly interesting case because the video was discovered by the left-wing publication *Rede Brasil Atual* and found its way to the mainstream media. The video was first mentioned on January 13th, in an article polemically titled "Shopping mall bans youth from the suburbs, but welcomes *rolezinho* with University of São Paulo students" [221] (*total count*: 3,334). The article was reproduced by other left-wing websites [222, 223] and, on January 15th, the students from the School of Economics at the University of São Paulo offered a response to it on their Facebook page [224]. Funnily enough, they agreed with the criticism and suggested that there should be equal treatment for their party and for the *rolezinhos*. On January 18th, the mainstream portal *UOL* published a similar article [225] (*total count*: 1,201) about the same topic and, on January 21st, *Folha de S. Paulo* also spread the word [163] about the "upper class *rolezinho*" (*total count*: 9,852).

Towards the end of the controversy, the shopping malls decided to adopt a more conciliatory approach [226] suggesting that *rolezinhos* should happen in open spaces like public parks [227].

3.4.2 The politics of *rolezinhos*

Many commentators pointed out that the current *rolezinhos* conflict between the "traditional middle class" and the "new middle class" that invaded the shopping malls would never happen without those socioeconomic changes that took place during the era of President Lula (cf. section 1.2 Historical background and context on page 21). According to that interpretation (favorable to Lula's ruling party), the *rolezinhos* would be a "blessed" problem: a sign that Brazil has been winning the war on poverty.

At least two articles at the beginning of the controversy briefly mentioned the "new middle class" frame: the already cited Sakamoto's "Rolezinho" [142] and Brum's "The new Brazilian 'thugs'." [141] After them, other commentators also inserted the *rolezinho* issue in the context of the major economic changes of the last decade [134, 164, 184].

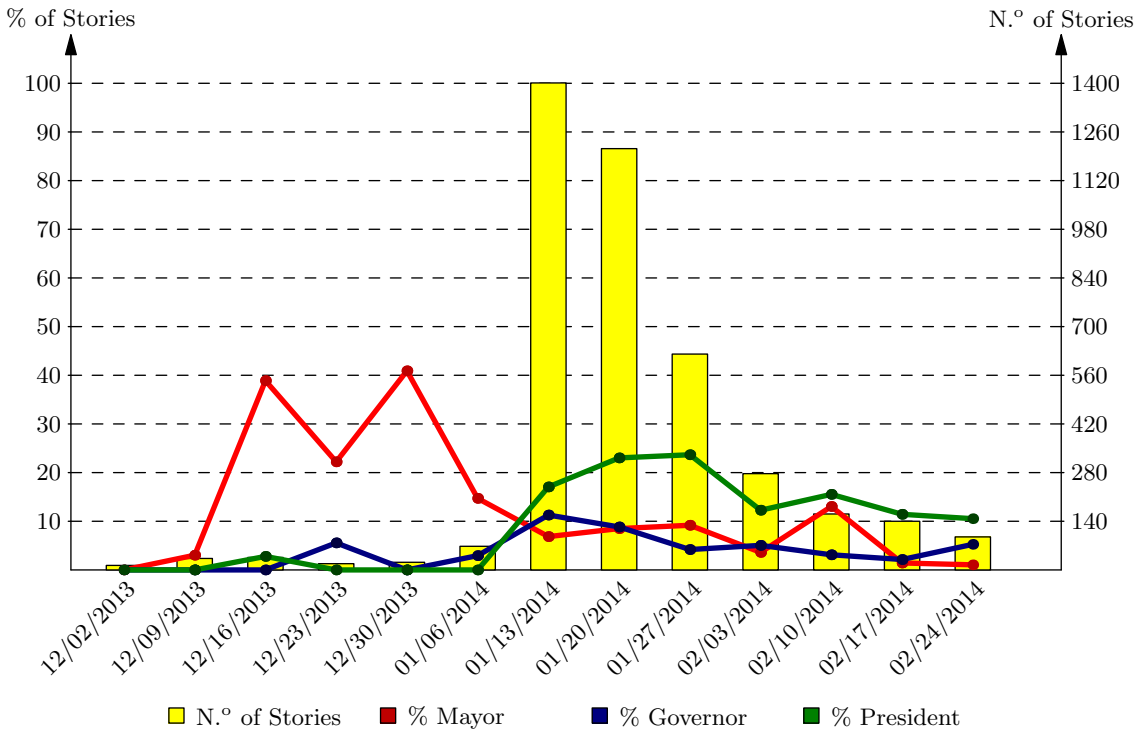

Figure 3-18: Weekly percentage of stories that mention government officials in the city, state, and federal levels.

However, it was only after the incident with rubber bullets and tear gas on January 11th that the *rolezinhos* became a disputed issue between the two main parties in Brazil: the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) and the Workers' Party (PT). Figure 3-18 is a comparison of the number of references to authorities at the city, state, and federal levels.

At the city level, two authorities were considered: the mayor Fernando Haddad (PT) and Netinho de Paula, who was chosen by the mayor to negotiate with the organizers of the *rolezinhos*. It is clear that they had a more prominent role in December, but not during the media coverage peak, according to Figure 3-18.

For the state level, the governor Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) and the Secretary of Public Security, Fernando Grella, were included in the analysis. Their importance in the debate increased significantly after the incident on January 11th, most of the time because they were blamed (and sometimes praised) for the police reaction to the *rolezinho*.

However, the increase in references to officials in the federal level is impressive after January 11th. In addition to president Dilma Rousseff (PT), the query considered the minister of Racial Equality, Luiza Bairros, and the minister of the General Secretariat of the Presidency, Gilberto Carvalho. Until then, there had been almost no references to any federal authority.

On January 16th, Bairros' opinion on the *rolezinhos* made the headlines: "Fear of *rolezinhos* is reaction of white dudes" [159] (*total count*: 13,112). That same day Carvalho attacked the aggressive tactics used by São Paulo state police and said that it was like "throwing gasoline in a bonfire," [228] meaning that it would make the social unrest even worse (*total count*: 5,269).

Interestingly, the main reaction did not came from the governor or his party, but from the mainstream media. In the following day, *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper reported Bairros' and Carvalho's opinions under the headline: "[President] Dilma is already using the 'rolezinhos' against the opposition." [63] (*total count*: 1,347). The article affirmed that both ministers were following Dilma's guideline of using the *rolezinho* issue to attack governor Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) and weaken his party for the second semester elections.

Conservative journalist Reinaldo Azevedo also posted a harsh criticism on his blog at *Veja* magazine: "An absurdity without Gilberto Carvalho is always incomplete" [229] (*total count*: 2,637). He accused Carvalho of promoting *rolezinhos* with his criticisms against the São Paulo police.

O Globo—an influential newspaper that is part of the most important media conglomerate in Latin America—also published an editorial on January 21st. The title was "*Rolezinhos* and manipulations." [230] Among other things, it accused the federal government of "creating problems" to governor Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB), "the enemy to be defeated in the ballot box this year."

Eventually, when the media spotlight moved away from the *rolezinhos*, the topic also disappeared from the officials' discourses.

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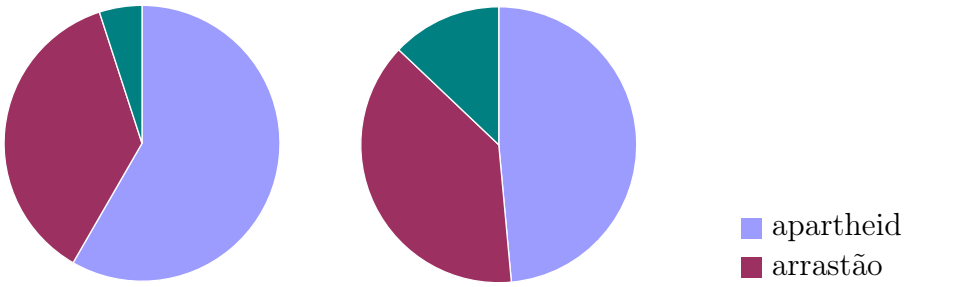
Chapter 4

Critical analysis

4.1 Comparisons

In the sample of the 60 most popular articles in the corpus, the *apartheid frame* does significantly better than the other two competing frames, both in the number of articles and in the estimated attention based on Facebook *total count*.

However, it is interesting to compare the differences among the number of articles and the Facebook *total count* (Figure 4-1). The sharing of the *apartheid frame* when it comes to number of articles is 10% greater than its *total count*. At the same time, with only 5% of the articles in the corpus, the *middle ground frame* manages to receive 13% of the overall attention. The *arrastão frame* has a similar ratio.



(a) Number of articles (b) *Total count*

Figure 4-1: Share of (a) number of articles and (b) Facebook *total count* by each frame.

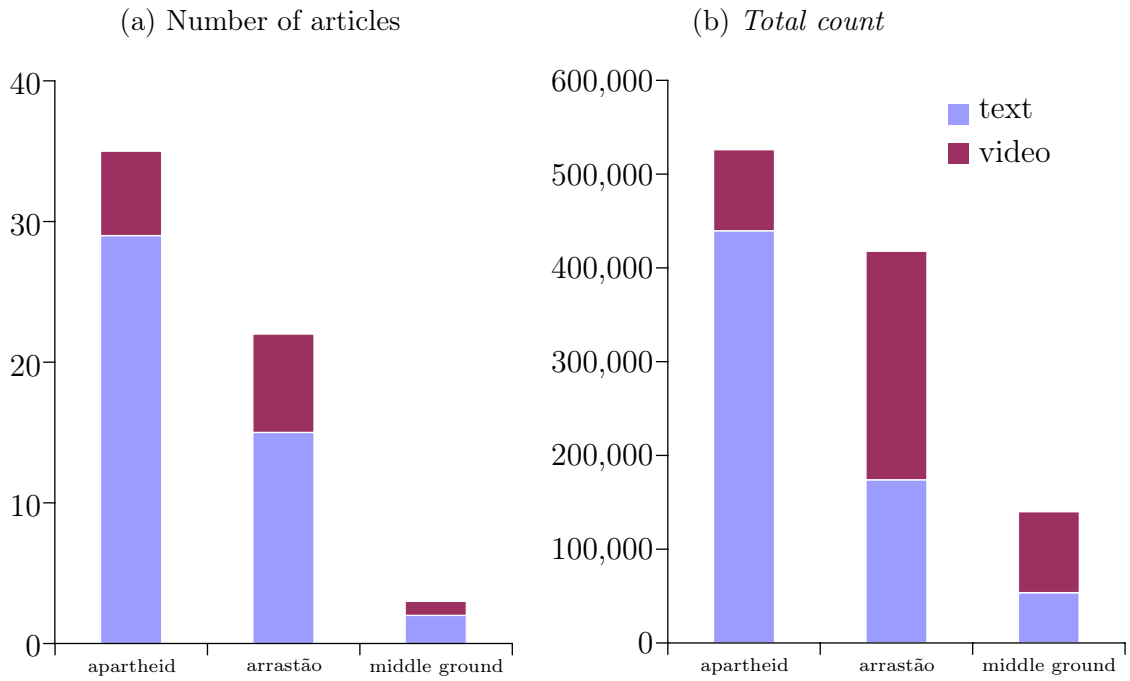


Figure 4-2: Proportion of text and video in each frame by (a) number of articles and (b) Facebook *total count*.

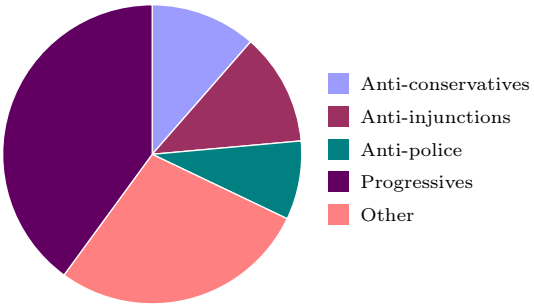
Part of the *apartheid frame*'s inefficiency in converting the number of articles in Facebook audience might be related to its poor use of video, which is a highly spreadable medium on social networks.

Video and text

Figure 4-2a suggests that Brazilian progressives—the main sponsors of the *apartheid frame*—relied heavily on the written word. Only one fifth of its media was video, compared with one third in the other frames. Further, *apartheid*'s movies were not as successful. The average *total count* for them was 14,408. By comparison, the *total count* for *arrastão* and *middle ground* were 34,813 and 86,228 respectively (although it is worth remembering that the *middle ground frame* is comprised of only three articles).

Around 40% of the Facebook activity in the *apartheid frame* comes from the *progressive commentators subcluster* (Figure 4-3a) that does not have a single video. The second most popular piece in that subcluster is Brum's "The new Brazilian 'thugs'"

(a) Apartheid



(b) *Arrastão*

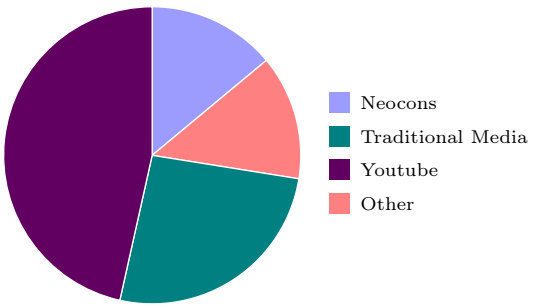


Figure 4-3: Share of Facebook *total count* by each subcluster in (a) *apartheid frame* and (b) *arrastão frame*.

[141], a text with a startling 49,000 characters. On the other hand, the main subcluster in the *arrastão frame* is called *Youtube subcluster* with 46% of the attention share (Figure 4-3b). As a result, while the video share of *apartheid frame*'s *total count* is around 16%, the same variable for the other two frames amounts to roughly 60% (Figure 4-2b).

Apartheid frame supporters usually favored a stern approach with long and thoughtful texts. There is only one comic video in their cluster: a mashup based on a well-known scene of *Downfall* [155]. Nazi officials explain to Hitler the phenomenon of the *rolezinhos* and a disturbed führer proposes a violent reaction. A hesitant officer observes that "poor people should have the right of having fun." There is an implicit analogy between Hitler and the ruling authorities in the places where the *rolezinhos* happened—specifically, the governor of São Paulo, Geraldo Alckmin. On the other hand, the *arrastão frame* counted on at least four videos with comic content. Three of them—already described in section 3.1 YouTube on page 48—are a very caustic attack on the participants in the *rolezinhos*.

Ebb and flow

Nonetheless, the *apartheid frame*'s preeminence is indisputable. It represents almost 50% of all Facebook activity in the sample. An analysis of the aforementioned *progressive commentators subcluster* shows that, among its five most influential articles, four of them were published in December (Figure 4-4), before the media storm in

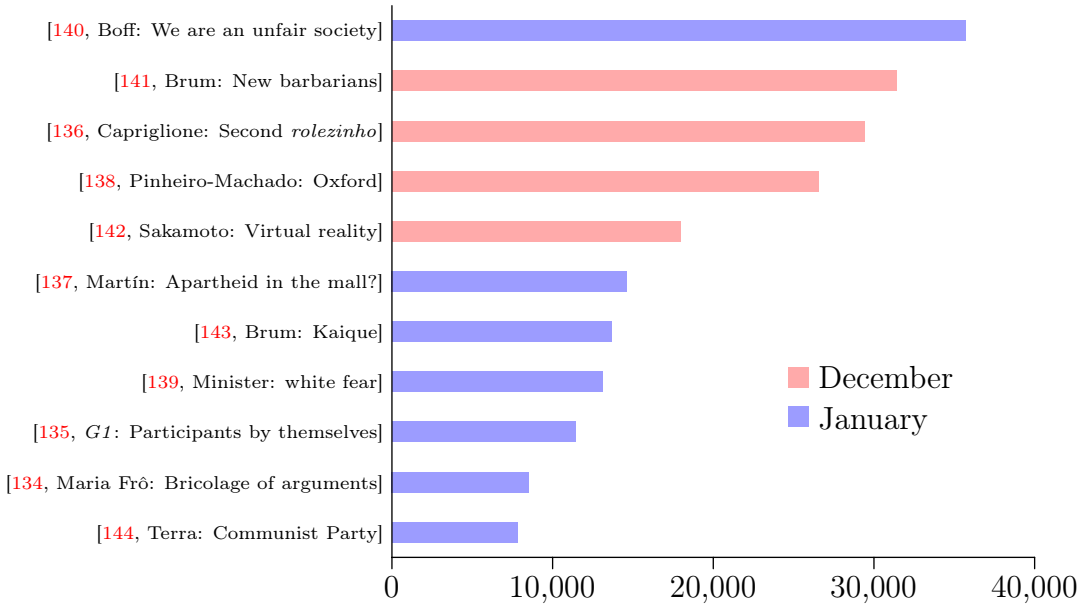


Figure 4-4: Facebook *total count* per article in *progressive commentators subcluster*.

the third week of January. That is an indication of their importance in framing the *rolezinhos* issue in the onset of the debate.

The same chart also suggests the predominance of traditional media, influential journalists, or well-established sources in the debate. There is only one article that comes from an alternative source—the blog post by activist Maria Frô [134].

It is worthwhile to see how the three frames interacted with each other during the weeks of the controversy. The scatter chart in Figure 4-5 offers an interesting visualization that relates the impact of each article with the chronological evolution of the controversy.

It seems clear that, during the first two weeks, the *arrastão frame* was the only voice framing the debate. Some articles—namely, the ones about the first *rolezinho* in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera*—had a remarkable spread even if compared to the most influential articles in subsequent weeks. In the third week, the *apartheid frame* came to challenge that hegemony. In fact, during late-December and early-January, it was an uncontested perspective.

After the incidents on January 11$^{\text{th}}$—rubber bullets in *Shopping Metrô Itaquera* and court injunctions in other malls—a real battle of frames began. In the noisy environment of that week, the predominant force continued to be the *apartheid frame*.

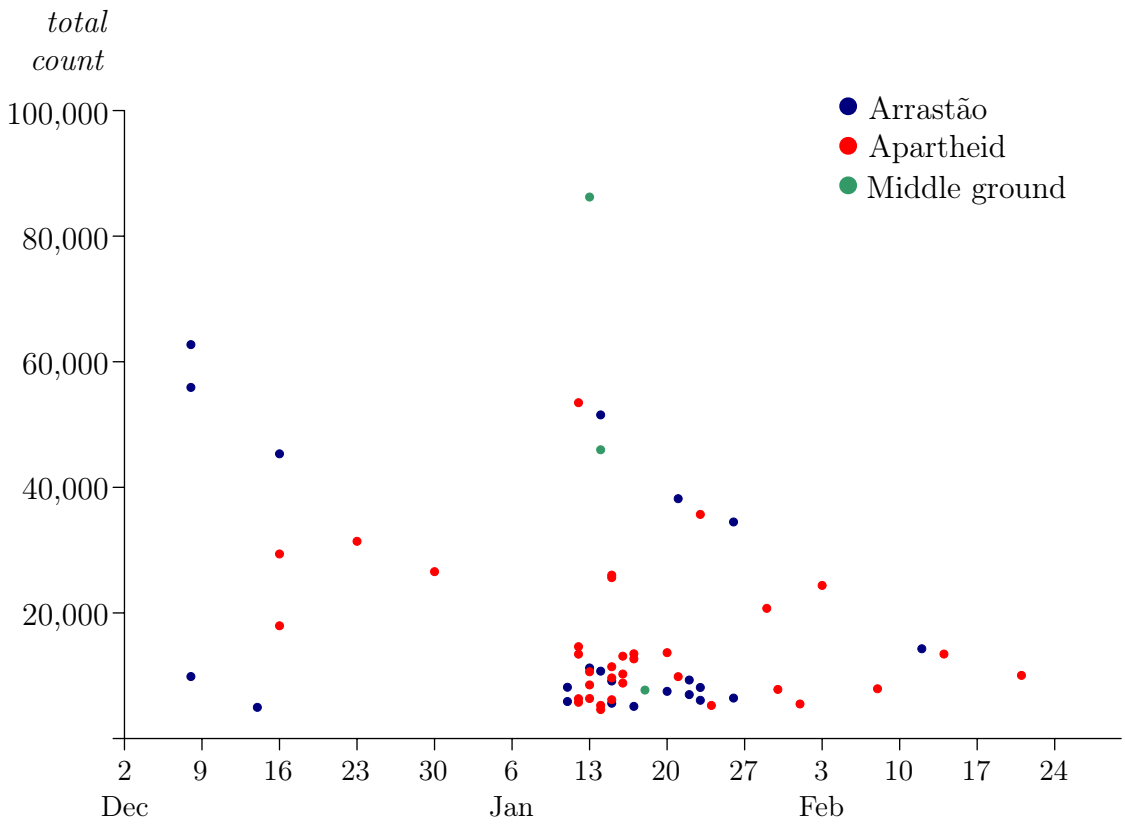


Figure 4-5: Articles distributed according to publish date and Facebook *total count*.

In the following week, there was a reaction to the *arrastão frame* that lasted for a few days. Finally, the *apartheid frame* became the most common interpretation floating around on social media. However, the controversy was already waning to become a side topic in other issues.

It is possible to recognize the ebb and flow of both frames, although it seems the *apartheid frame* ended as the prevailing toolkit to interpret the *rolezinhos* in the Brazilian media. A much more complex question—and outside the scope of this research—is the concrete impact of such media consensus in public opinion. Taken at face value, aforementioned *Folha de S. Paulo*'s survey on January 23rd [172] discourages any proud boast by *apartheid frame* supporters.

The *middle ground frame* proved to be a very successful frame during the peak of the debate. When interviewed for this research, Beguoci attributed his article's success to the perfect timing of its publication [209]. Media, government, and citizens were craving well-informed interpretations among media, government, and citizens. However, the *middle ground frame* did not succeed in winning strong support for its view as the subsequent weeks demonstrated.

Government and media

Nothing is better to gather momentum for a media storm than a truculent response from the public security forces. That has been an oft-ignored lesson in recent Brazilian history. On June 2013, a movement that started with a boring protest against a 10-cent increase in bus fares turned into a nation-wide issue after São Paulo police decided to use tear gas and rubber bullets to curb the demonstrations.

Similarly, the data in this research supports the hypothesis that the surge in media coverage followed closely behind the use of aggressive means of coercion on January 11th and added legitimacy to the *apartheid frame* discourse that the State is at the service of social and racial elites.

In fact, minister Gilberto Carvalho's was not alone when he said that the police reaction was equivalent to "throwing gasoline on a bonfire." [228] Elio Gaspari, an influential columnist in *Folha de S. Paulo*, suggested: "The best starting point for

dealing with *rolezinhos* is to ignore those solutions that exacerbate the problem." [231] In fact, after the severe media backlash, the authorities in charge of the problem started to reach out the youth and try more conciliatory approaches.

Significantly, *rolezinhos* have become a term on its own in the Brazilian social lexicon and, unlike *arrastão* and *apartheid*, with a fairly positive overtone. Different groups have used the word to promote various activities: a *rolezinho* for blood donation, a Christian *rolezinho*, a legislative *rolezinho* (to approve new bills) etc.

Race

Race is a thorny issue in Brazil. In 2012, when the government passed a bill that instituted racial quotas in all federal universities, for instance, some political commentators criticized what they saw as an attempt to import a social conflict (from the United States) extraneous to the Brazilian context. The premise was that, after slavery was outlawed in the 19th Century, the relationship among different racial groups has been peaceful and friendly. If there is an apartheid, it is not racial, but social. Accordingly, some of those commentators were willing to support quotas based on socioeconomic criteria, but staunchly opposed to racial ones [232, 233].

Eventually, racial quotas were approved and have been implemented all over Brazil. Nevertheless, from time to time, the discussion over racism in Brazil surfaces, as in the *rolezinhos* issue. The questions are usually the same: is there an unofficial apartheid? If so, is it a racial or merely economic one?

In his interview [198], Godinho said that the idea of using the word *apartheid* to describe a *rolezinho* came from black organizations in Brazil. They had been using that frame to describe a similar incident in *Shopping Vitória* (see section 3.2 Progressives on page 54). The same organizations were also responsible for promoting demonstrations in affluent shopping malls, after the incidents on January 11th, further promoting the *apartheid frame*.

As expected, some critics explicitly challenged the racial component of the frame (see section 3.1 Neocons on page 50). Constantino—in an article significantly titled "The apartheid in shopping malls is a behavioral one" [193]—compared pictures of a

white woman being thoroughly searched at a mall's door and a black family having lunch at another mall without suffering any embarrassment from the nearby police. His point was that there is no racism in the reaction against *rolezinhos*.

Nevertheless, the fact that virtually every commentator on *rolezinhos* was obliged to take a stand on the racial problem—no matter if positive or negative—represents a considerable victory for the black organizations in Brazil and a sign that their framing efforts were successful in determining the terms of debate. Figure 3-11 is a graphic representation of that success for it suggests how the *apartheid frame* gradually deallocated the more bluntly racist elements of the *arrastão frame*—to start with, the use of the term *arrastão* itself.

4.2 Innovations, limits, and future directions

In addition to a better comprehension of the *rolezinhos* issue and the Brazilian media ecosystem, this research provided three methodological innovations that can be used in future research.

1. It is the first use of the Brazilian corpora of Media Cloud and, as such, a pilot study to validate it. So far, the results are encouraging. About 88.5% of the analyzed texts came from Media Cloud and only 11.5% from a complementary source, a fairly good ratio. One of the most important outcomes of this research is a road map to adapt Media Cloud for other languages.

2. Facebook data proved to be a consistent estimation for the audience and relative relevance of URLs in the Media Cloud corpus. The use of like, share, comment, and *total count* is a promising approach for future research.

3. As a means of achieving a higher level of validity and reliability in framing studies, hierarchical cluster analysis seemed a consistent method. This research elaborated the original approach suggested by Matthes and Kohring [122].

Among the limits of this research strategy, it is possible to recognize that one frame frequently shares some points of view with other frames. A possible representation

Frame or actor	There were thefts	Successful social policies	There were prejudices	Police overre-acted	*Rolezinhos* are lawful
Arrastão	yes	no	no	no	no
Apartheid	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Middle Ground	–	–	yes	yes	no
Mall's case	no	–	no	no	no
PT's case	no	yes	–	yes	–

Table 4.1: Comparison of opinions associated to some frames and actors.

of those shared beliefs is presented on Table 4.1.

Therefore, it is not trivial to disentangle the different frames and, in fact, there were cases when an article presents multiple—even contradictory—frames, for example, when a story written with the *arrastão* perspective also quotes the storekeepers on the need of police action. A future improvement might be to code groups of paragraphs instead of whole articles.

A reasonable criticism to the method of using keywords in the computational analysis to identify stories belonging to a frame is that a keyword can also be mentioned in order to discredit a frame. An article that challenges the *arrastão frame*, for instance, will normally use the word *arrastão*, perhaps in the title [197], but it will try to enumerate the possible flaws of the *arrastão* argument.

Based on George Lakoff's reflections on contemporary public discourse [234], it is possible to argue that to engage in a dialogue, even a controversial one, with the *arrastão* or the *apartheid frames* is, at least implicitly and pragmatically, equivalent to accepting those frames and contributing to their spread in the public arena.

Another limitation is that Facebook data gives a good estimation of audience size but without any hint of how knowledgeable is the readership. In fact, there is a considerable difference if an article influences 300 13-year-old boys or 300 mainstream media reporters. The latter audience has arguably more tools and skills to spread the word.

The content analysis was performed with 60 articles. Although it is a small sample, it represents 55% of all Facebook activity in the corpus. This study is based on the

assumption that, with a good audience estimation, it is possible to focus the content analysis on the articles with higher impact in public opinion. At the end of the day, we usually do not need an exhaustive inventory of frames, but a reliable depiction of the framing strategies that really mattered for the public discourse. Nonetheless, it might be interesting to increase the sample in future research. Given the uneven distribution of attention among articles, a sample with the 300 most popular URLs would represent 86% of the Facebook activity in the *rolezinho* corpus.

It would also be convenient to consider each one of the Facebook variables—like, share, and comment count—separately. In fact, their social meaning is different. To press a "like" button usually means "support" to an idea, a cause, or some piece of news. The number of comments is a good proxy for the buzz caused by an article. The number of shares has a more ambiguous meaning: it normally indicates support but Facebook users also share articles that they particularly dislike, usually with a message stating their opinion. It is also true that a user can "like" a link because it was posted with deprecating commentary, in which case the like to that post would mean a dislike to the link itself. The meaning can also depend on context. A flood of comments on a politically hot issue might mean something different from the same amount of comments in a funny video. Therefore, in order to use those individual variables, it would be necessary to propose a consistent model to accurately interpret and relate the numbers.

Finally, in future studies, the hierarchical cluster analysis could also be performed for each individual period of the controversy. Thus short-lived frames or subclusters could be identified more easily. However, a bigger corpus is advisable. In the *rolezinhos* issue, some weeks had only a few dozens of articles, a limited input for the clustering algorithm.

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