

Democracy as a disputed 'message' in Brazil's 2022 elections: tracing echoes of trumpism and (de)naturalisation of violence across media spaces

Democracia como 'mensagem' em disputa nas eleições brasileiras de 2022: rastreando ecos do trumpismo e a (des)naturalização da violência em espaços midiáticos

Democracia como 'mensaje' en disputa en las elecciones brasileñas de 2022: rastreando ecos del trumpismo y la (des) naturalización de la violencia en los espacios mediáticos

RESUMO

Influenciado pelo Trumpismo, Jair Bolsonaro, presidente do Brasil, vem fazendo afirmações sem comprovação sobre a existência de supostas vulnerabilidades no sistema de votação local durante a disputa presidencial de 2022. À medida que Bolsonaro dá visibilidade a essas afirmações, tal sistema (e consequentemente a democracia) podem se tornar performativamente (ou 'produtivamente') desacreditadas ou alvos através da circulação digital e da violência textual. Esta pesquisa recorre a construtos foucaultianos e a perspectivas transdisciplinares para rastrear diferentes espaços midiáticos. Eles apontam para como disputas e dinâmicas de (des)naturalização da violência se tornam (in)visíveis no contexto eleitoral discutido.

Palavras-chave: crise da democracia; trumpismo e sistema de votação; Análise do Discurso; transmediatização e tradução; linguagem e (des)naturalização da violência.



ABSTRACT

Influenced by Trumpism, Jair Bolsonaro, the president of Brazil, has been presenting unsubstantiated claims about the existence of purported vulnerabilities in the local electronic voting system during the 2022 presidential race. As Bolsonaro gives visibility to such claims, that system (and consequently democracy) can be performatively (or 'productively') discredited and targeted through digital circulation and textual violence. This research resorts to Foucauldian constructs and transdisciplinary perspectives to trace different media spaces. These point to how disputes and dynamics of (de)naturalisation of violence become (in)visible in Brazil's 2022 electoral context.

Keywords: democracy crisis; trumpism and voting system. Discourse Analysis; transmediatisation and translation; language and (de)naturalisation of violence.

RESUMEN

Influenciado por el Trumpismo, Jair Bolsonaro, presidente de Brasil, viene haciendo afirmaciones sin comprobación sobre la existencia de supuestas vulnerabilidades en el sistema de votación local durante la disputa presidencial de 2022. A medida que Bolsonaro da visibilidad a tales afirmaciones, tal sistema (y consecuentemente la democracia) pueden volverse performativamente (o 'productivamente') desacreditadas y blanco a través de la circulación digital y la violencia textual. Esta investigación recurre a constructos foucaultianos y a perspectivas transdisciplinarias para rastrear diferentes espacios mediáticos. Señalan cómo las disputas y dinámicas de (des)naturalización de la violencia se vuelven (in)visibles en el contexto electoral discutido.

Palabras clave: crisis de la democracia; trumpismo y sistema de votación; Análisis del Discurso; transmediatización y traducción; lenguaje y (des) naturalización de la violencia.

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INTRODUCTION: ECHOES OF THE INTERNATIONAL FAR-RIGHT IN BRAZIL'S 2022 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Steve Bannon, former Donald Trump's political strategist, has stated that the 2022 presidential election in Brazil would be "the most important of all time in South America"¹. Bannon's statement points to interconnexions between Jair Bolsonaro and the international far-right. Amongst such interconnexions, the domain of communicational and (geo)² political strategies in particular reaffirms the influence of Trumpism over Bolsonaro's administration.

Through a process of politicization of digital technology, Trumpism may interconnect different types of online/offline violence against democracy, generating a hybrid stratagem of 'government'. For instance, an interconnexion involving neoliberalism, militarisation, religious discourse (e.g. neopentecostalism) and Trumpism can be perceived in different contexts. In the U.S.³, with Trump; and in Bolivia⁴, with Jeanine Añez⁵.

In Brazil, this interconnexion points to two relevant aspects: (i) the neoliberal echoes of the international far-right that resonate through Bolsonaro's Pinochetian ideals⁶; and (ii) the instrumentalisation of religious and military discourses and how Bolsonaro mobilises these to (somehow) reunite⁷ the State and the church, projecting a process of *de-calendarisation* (i.e. a sense of calendar disorientation or civilisational disruption). Since such discourses can relatively control through dogmas and condition through discipline/obedience, when associated, locally, they contribute to the dissemination of beliefs or the peremptory repetition of claims through *techno-preacherism* (SOUZA JÚNIOR, 2021, p. 14).

During the presidential race, preliminary poll results showed Bolsonaro behind⁸ his main opponent, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers' Party/PT). As a reaction, Bolsonaro began mobilising a script or a communicational repertoire of interpretation that was, to some extent, associated with Trumpism in the U.S. 2020 presidential election. Jair Bolsonaro's re-election campaign has been investing considerable time and effort in forging a belief that is expected to turn into a claim. In his

¹ See: <https://www.ft.com/content/4f150c07-41d7-4021-a911-a70ecacacb08>. Accessed on: 22 Aug 2022.

² In this paper, I use the parentheses in ways that might not be described in traditional grammar books/manuals. The parentheses will be frequently mobilised in order to: (i) indicate two possibilities of reading a term, like in *(geo)political*; and (ii) present actions or effects that point to a dispute, such as in: *(in)visible dynamics*.

³ Cf.: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/live-blog/2020-06-01-nationwide-protests-over-george-floyd-death-live-n1220761/ncrd1221511#blogHeader>. Accessed on: 29 Aug 2022.

⁴ Cf.: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-11/bolivia-faces-power-vacuum-and-more-chaos-after-morales-quits>. Accessed on: 29 Aug 2022.

⁵ Cf.: <https://www.riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/brazil/brazil-could-offer-asylum-to-jeanine-anez-convicted-of-coup-in-bolivia-newspaper/>. Accessed on: 16 Sep 2022.

⁶ In Brazil, the influence of Pinochetian neoliberalism is currently promoted by Bolsonaro's Ministry of Economy, Paulo Guedes – locally framed as a 'Chicago boy'.

⁷ It is observed even when the Constitutional principle of *secular state* repels that.

⁸ Cf.: <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/poll-tracker-brazils-2022-presidential-election>. Accessed on: 22 Aug 2022.

view, the system would be fraud⁹-prone. He has been sending mixed messages¹⁰, leading many to believe that, if he loses, defeat will not be conceded¹¹. This was Donald Trump's script/playbook for some time in the U.S. – what contributed to the emergence of the egregious Capitol events on 6 January 2021¹².

As Bolsonaro disseminates such claims and messages through different media spaces, not only the voting system can be performatively (or 'productively') discredited and targeted through *textual violence* (SOUZA JÚNIOR, 2022), but also democracy, as a Constitutional construct, becomes a disputed 'message'. Against this background of textual violence, a pro-democracy letter-manifesto has been presented and promoted by the Faculty of Law of the University of São Paulo (USP).

The digitalisation and dissemination of the manifesto generated a *transdimensional* and a *transmedia* event (SOUZA JÚNIOR, 2021). The event became transdimensional, because it interconnected the offline dimension of the University to the on-line domain of the internet. Moreover, it can be framed as transmedia, because the manifesto and its message circulated across different media spaces, pointing to digital traces, textual trajectories and on-line disputes.

I am interested in addressing that event and its on-line resonances. To do so, I resort to Foucauldian constructs and transdisciplinary perspectives. Guided by the transdisciplinary lenses of Discourse Studies and following recommendations from the domain of transdisciplinary studies (LATOURET, 2005, p. 124; p. 182), the discussion that the paper develops is focussed strictly on the unfolding of processes of (de)naturalisation of violence. As it stands, I simply try to understand how, through these particular processes, interconnected trajectories, (in)visible dynamics and disputes emerge.

In the final section, I present a final panorama regarding the context under discussion. This includes the limitations and the potential contributions of this study.

1. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS: DEMOCRACY, DISCOURSE, DIGITAL CIRCULATION, TEXTUAL DISPUTES AND (DE)NATURALISATION OF VIOLENCE

In different ways, several authors have been contributing to the study¹³ of democracy. They point to how it may be endangered/subverted or preserved and perfected.

⁹Cf.: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2022/07/bolsonaro-lies-about-ballot-boxes-to-foreigners.shtml>. Accessed on: 29 Aug 2022.

¹⁰ See: <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/bolsonaro-says-he-will-respect-brazil-election-result-if-clean-transparent/ar-AA10XXPT>. Accessed on: 03 Sep 2022.

¹¹ Cf.: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-58372754>. Accessed on: 03 Sep 2022.

¹² See: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/15/bolsonaro-brazil-election-trump-gop-jan-6-insurrection/>. Accessed on: 22 Aug 2022.

¹³ See, for example, Dahl (1989) for a more comprehensive discussion on aspects/principles that can be associated with the constitution of democracy.

Amongst such contributions, we find those that project what can be viewed as a *structural perspective*. The thesis proposed by Fukuyama (1989) would provide a model through which this perspective reverberates. Such studies may point to the existence of the following elements: (i) juridical foundation; (ii) local Constitution and its principles (e.g. rule of law); (iii) three-fold nature (which usually comprises the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislative as independent powers); (iv) institutions; and (v) a ‘toolkit’ of checks and balances.

This set of elements, which serves to exemplify some of the components and the epistemological complexity of democracy, would allow us to see each of these as ‘a brick in the wall’. The ‘wall’ would make visible the representation of a ‘final product’, whose ‘infrastructure’/bricks would reflect *liberal democracy’s* Constitutional principles. Such principles would impose a kind of order or normativity/positivity, whilst (de)regulating the functioning of democracy. The ‘image’ of the erected and ‘effective wall’ as a ‘fortress’ would also contribute to configuring and sustaining what is usually called *indirect or representative democracy*.

Alternatively, it is possible to examine democracy as a system of government by mobilising what can be described as a *relational perspective*. The latter, succinctly, leads the researcher to problematise at least two aspects. Firstly, the notion of ‘representation’ and its association with democracy. Secondly, the centrality of structures/institutions/principles and their constitutive hierarchical normativity. The assemblage of structures/institutions/principles would, on one hand, sustain and protect democracy like a fortress or, on the other, open a pathway not only to deregulation but also to *exception*, being the latter capable of endangering or subverting democracy and the normativity/positivity that it forges.

Drawing on Foucault (1995, p. 217; p. 221), it is possible to argue that the structural viewpoint and its (de)limitations contribute to understanding democracy in a rather idealised way. This viewpoint appears to ignore (or neglect) that representative democracy is constitutive of a system of government (or a domain of power-knowledge), whose positivity and trajectory are associated with some sort of condensed historicity. Nevertheless, the historicity of that domain (as a stable/structured form of ‘consciousness’/repertoire) and what it would ‘represent’ can be viewed as elements that are not transparent (i.e. easy to access). For this, the positivity that constitutes such elements may be misinterpreted (or not fully understood/accessed) by ‘ordinary citizens’.

The relational approach is also important for us to understand how circulated messages that target democracy (paradoxically being guided by one of the latter’s basic principles: *freedom*) can make visible performative changes in historicity. Such changes can put democracy’s institutions, values and integrity to the test as a central event. Through this perspective, it is possible to examine the performative/productive (de)construction of democracy “from the inside”, as Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2018) put it in *How democracies die*¹⁴ (2018).

¹⁴See: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2018/jan/21/this-is-how-democracies-die>. Accessed on: 05 Sep 2022.

Here, I focus more specifically on discussing actions and reactions as dynamics of power and resistance, when Bolsonaro's performances discursively catalyse and operationalise *networked violence*. Developing this focus becomes possible because, as Foucault observes: "(...) we must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case we impose on them" (FOUCAULT [1970] 1981, p. 67). As it stands, networked violence, in the case at hand, involves *textual violence*. Both give rise to textual disputes, through which the Brazilian electronic voting system and democracy can be targeted.

Furthermore, if it is possible to address democracy from a discursive point of view, hence, we can conceive democracy as a discursive construct, because both its representation and 'message'¹⁵ need to be constantly reinforced and circulated in a transdimensional way. Nowadays, if this 'message' fails to be reinforced, democratic values (as 'the message' itself) may no longer circulate, nor influence the social sphere/citizens. This potential failure can generate a process of (de)naturalisation of violence, through which democracy, haunted by perils and powers, becomes a 'disputed message'. For this, democracy, as a complex or multilayered domain of power-knowledge, can be (de)constructed during Brazil's 2022 electoral process.

Democracy can be associated with perils and powers these days because, to some extent, in the so-called Western societies (but not exclusively in these), the existence of this system of government is becoming more and more dependent on media discourse and on the circulation of texts. This dependence can be viewed as an effect of algorithmic¹⁶-multilayered influence of the so-called big tech firms over (geo)politics or local partisan politics.

This influence can catalyse disputes (and violence). They may involve, for instance, these kinds of textual manifestation: (i) national Constitutions; (ii) international treaties/agreements; (iii) (written/spoken) speeches; (iv) demonstration placards (and in other contexts the bodies that accompany those); (v) journalistic texts (e.g. news items); (vi) digitalised institutional manifestoes; and (vii) social media posts. The latter (materialised, for example, as comments, memetic constructs, fake news, deepfake videos or live sessions) are capable of encapsulating, redistributing and performatively (de)constructing the messages communicated by the abovementioned items.

Directing my focus towards this 'textual dimension of democracy' is of sheer relevance. It allows me to discuss how this performative or productive dimension has an impact on the way 'democracy as a message' can be circulated, (mis)understood or (re)interpreted through textual disputes. These can 'translate' and/or be 'translated' as performative processes of (de)naturalisation of violence that derive from *transmediatisation*. The latter indicates a decentralised process of production and circulation of texts across media spaces.

¹⁵ Message, for example, of perennial dialogue, which allows for the existence of internal contradictions.

¹⁶ According to a study from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ/Netlab), Youtube's algorithm contributed to the uneven dissemination of pro-government content in Brazil's 2022 presidential race: <https://uploads.strikinglycdn.com/files/b5e2b957-f8b0-4ce1-bee8-c89b30b58c15/Special%20Report%20-%20Recommendations%20on%20Youtube%20the%20case%20of%20Jovem%20Pan.pdf>. Accessed on: 15 Sep 2022.

This characterisation of the process of circulation outlined above reflects aspects that are related to the concept of *transmedia order of discourse* (SOUZA JÚNIOR, 2021, p. 2). Through it, I am led to problematise discourses, media spaces (as domains of power-knowledge), participants and texts that can (re)forge (de)stabilisation and struggles as performative processes. In the case at hand, such struggles/disputes involve the performative circulation of discourses that may be specialised/‘authorised’ (e.g. legal/journalistic) or non-specialised/‘non-authorised’ (e.g. social media influencers’ or users’ dissemination of opinions/aspirations/beliefs).

2. CORPUS AND METHODOLOGICAL DECISIONS

The corpus of this study encompasses: (i) USP’s Faculty of Law pro-democracy letter-manifesto, which was made available at their website; (ii) a tweet made public by Bolsonaro’s official profile, through which he reacts to the circulation of the letter-manifesto; (iii) a news item from *Folha de São Paulo*, which captures Bolsonaro’s ethos of recalcitrant commentator in relation to Brazil’s 2022 electoral process and also reports one of his relevant statements about USP’s manifesto; and (iv) the so-called “*people’s letter*”, an alternative pro-democracy manifesto that has been proposed and promoted by André Janones (a federal lawmaker).

The selection of such texts can be justified, first of all, in terms of their quantitative relevance. Text (i) reached more than 1 million signatories from diverse segments of the so-called civil society 16 days after being released on-line, on 26 June 2022. Text (ii) was posted on 28 July 2022, generating 22,000 retweets/ 6,892 comments/ 113,400 positive reactions (i.e. Twitter ‘hearts’). Text (iii) was published on 9 August 2022, on *Folha de São Paulo*’s website – access average¹⁷ 24 million/month. Lastly, text (iv) was released on 19 August 2022 and until 26 September 2022 it had attracted the attention of those who identify as ‘the people’, making visible more than 110,110.000 signatories.

Additionally, this selection, which is never neutral, can be justified in terms of its: (i) balance (since I take into consideration different stages and voices that give visibility to the event); and (ii) qualitative relevance. In this regard, firstly, it becomes important to point to the aspect of semiotic restriction and expansion. Whilst having an English version of these available, texts (i) and (iii) seem to have been published to circulate farther. Texts (ii) and (iv) have been originally published in Brazilian Portuguese. For this, I had to translate these into English. Secondly, I was led to take into account aspects such as participants, discourses, kinds of texts, media spaces, trajectories and resonances that these selected texts make visible, as indicated previously.

Hence, such texts are part of the corpus because they capture three key and interconnected stages of Brazil’s 2022 electoral process, namely: (i) the emergence of USP’s letter-manifesto; (ii) how Bolsonaro’s reactions to that latter resonate through different media spaces; and (iii) how André

¹⁷Cf.: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2021/04/dados-de-audiencia-do-1o-trimestre-reafirmam-lideranca-da-folha.shtml>. Accessed on: 26 Sep 2022.

Janones, as an influencer, reacts to the circulation of USP's manifesto, projecting a new *letter* and his ethos. Janones gathers more than 12 million¹⁸ followers on social media. On Twitter¹⁹, he plays a very active role as a social media influencer, bringing into the spotlight an ethos that has been engaged in confronting and 'translating' the far-right strategies of disinformation or the intricacies of specialised discourses (including those circulated by the so-called leftists). Looking at how the alternative manifesto makes the communication of such discourses less specialised (i.e. less complicated) for the 'ordinary citizen' (or 'the people') matters.

Once these aspects, stages and resonances are traced, it is necessary, firstly, to reflect on how the emergence of USP's letter-manifesto pointed to a trajectory of actions and reactions. This sense of trajectory leads me to highlight the importance of the *genealogical perspective* (FOUCAULT [1970] 1981, pp. 70-71), which, succinctly, allows me to focus on how Discourse unfolds and circulates. In other words, I take into consideration Discourse, its formation, discontinuities and modulations, as these emerge across media spaces.

Through the *critical perspective* (Foucault [1970]1981, p. 73), it is equally important to take into account how the alluded trajectory of actions and reactions pointed to the emergence of textual and epistemic disputes that became visible as the event under discussion unfolded. I discuss how/what/who these disputes (as dynamics of power and resistance) performatively include or exclude, expose or invisibilise. More precisely, the critical perspective leads me to explore the domain of the (un)said, by discussing how these disputes produced (in)visible dynamics, threats and what/who is threatened.

3. DISCUSSION

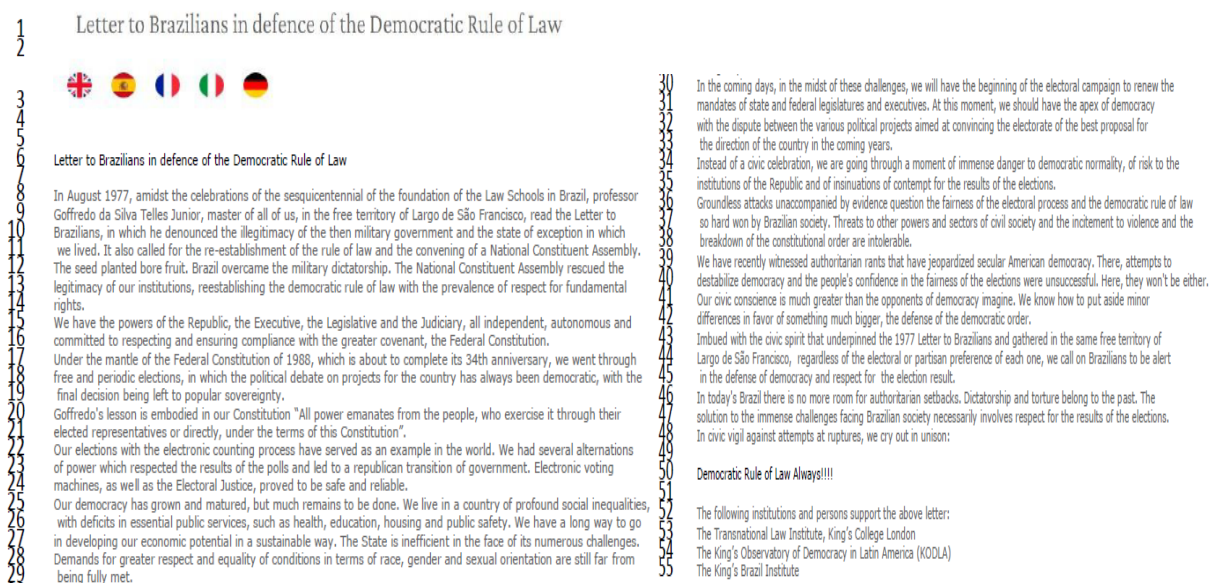
3.1 Democracy in USP's letter-manifesto and (de)naturalisation of violence

In this section, I discuss: (i) how the notion of democracy is mobilised; and (ii) what/who USP's manifesto performatively includes or excludes, whilst projecting processes of (de)naturalisation of violence.

¹⁸Cf.: <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/area/pais/proposta-por-janones-carta-do-povo-ja-tem-50-mil-assinaturas-confira-a-integra/> . . Accessed on: 26 Sep 2022.

¹⁹ Cf.: <https://twitter.com/AndreJanonesAdv> . Accessed on: 26 Sep 2022.

Figure 1: USP's Faculty of Law pro-democracy letter-manifesto



Source: <https://direito.usp.br/noticia/c26b69cbbd74-letter-to-brazilians-in-defence-of-the-democratic-rule-of-law>. Accessed on: 22 Sep 2022.

Preliminarily, Figure 1 exposes the layers of networked violence (cf. Section 1), which once have effectively contributed to leading Brazil to a dictatorship (line: 10). Now, context-specific elements of that network catalyse the emergence of USP's manifesto. Regarding such elements or layers, textual violence emerges explicitly in the following excerpts "(...) *insinuations of contempt* for the results of the elections" (line: 35); *Groundless attacks* unaccompanied by evidence [which] question the fairness of the electoral process and the democratic rule of law" (line: 36). These occurrences expose the vulnerabilities of democracy, if we take into account its 'textual dimension' (cf. Section 1).

It is also possible to observe how Figure 1 exposes the performative potential of textual violence. In other words: it makes visible what the repetition of such violent practices can actually generate through textual manifestations: "*Threats to other powers and sectors* of the civil society (...)" (line: 37). That potential can also give visibility to how these practices can be repeated and discursively naturalised, affecting, therefore, democracy: "(...) [through] the *incitement of violence* and the breakdown of the constitutional order (...)" (line: 38).

In addition, it becomes visible how the potential referred to can be expanded, become more hybrid and disruptive/destructive, if misleading premises of 'freedom' (cf. Section 1) are adopted locally in association with textual violence: "(...) *authoritarian rants* that have jeopardized *secular American democracy* (...) *attempts to destabilise* and people's confidence in the elections (...)" (lines: 39-41).

At this point, it is necessary to look at how the letter-manifesto produces a performative process of denaturalisation of that kind of violence. If violence unfolds in a networked way, it is

possible that reaction or a dynamics of networked resistance towards that emerges. Here, this dynamics/network can reveal a set of elements/layers, as indicated below.

The letter-manifesto itself is a form of textual manifestation (cf. Section 1) that can be viewed as the primary instrument of textual reaction. In this document, a network of textual and traceable 'instruments' (e.g. Constitutional principles) becomes visible. These instruments can work in association, whilst being capable of promoting textual reaction or denaturalisation of violence. In Figure 1, the following traceable and textual elements appear to work together/embedded: "[the] Letter to Brazilians (...) [which] *called for the re-establishment of rule of law*(...)" (lines: 9-11); "(...) the Federal Constitution of 1988 (...)" (line: 17); "(...) *political debate* on projects for the country (...)" (line: 18); "[a] *call on Brazilians to be alert* and in the defence of democracy and respect for the electoral results" (lines: 44-45). In this context, whilst *called for* and *call on* indicate ways of producing textual manifestation, *re-establishment of rule of law*, *political debate* and *to be alert* point to the embedded democratic elements or dynamics that indicate processes of reaction, dynamics of resistance and denaturalisation of violence.

A final dimension of the letter-manifesto can be explored. It projects specific constitutive elements that may be read as 'messages'. The latter seem to 'translate' and expand (moving beyond the mere semiotic mobilisation of English) the social and political meanings of democracy (i.e. what it would stand for in this context). These meanings and message project, then, expanded and indirect conceptualisations of democracy. Such conceptualisations would reflect, as indicated below, the cherished and the contradictory constitutive elements, which, in a relational way, co-exist and seem to characterise democracy in the Brazilian scenario.

Amongst the cherished ones, the following can be singled out: "(...) the *legitimacy of (...) institutions (...) the democratic rule of law* with the prevalence of *respect for the individual rights*." (lines: 13-14); "(...) *the powers of the Republic*, the Executive, the Legislative, the Judiciary, all *independent, autonomous*, committed to *ensuring compliance with the greater covenant, the Federal Constitution*." (lines: 15-16); "(...) the *dispute between the various political projects* aimed at convincing the electorate of the best proposals for the direction of the country (...)" (lines: 32-33); "(...) *respect for the electoral results*" (lines: 44-45). When it comes to the contradictory and co-existent ones, I highlight these: "(...) *profound social inequalities, with deficits in essential public services*, such as health, education, housing and public safety (...). *Demands for greater respect and equality of conditions* in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation" (lines: 32-33).

From a critical standpoint, it becomes relevant to highlight the following aspects that USP's letter-manifesto makes visible: (i) the targets of violence (e.g. democracy, its principles, powers, institutions, the electronic voting system); (ii) the ways through which networked violence emerges (e.g. through textual manifestation and textual violence); and (iii) the instruments through which textual violence can be equally resisted (e.g. pro-democracy letter-manifesto and defence of the

constitutional order and rule of law). In 4.2, we will see how such aspects can be related to the discussion involving Figures 2 and 3.

3.2 Bolsonaro's reactions towards USP's letter-manifesto in the media: tracing (in)visible dynamics and transmedia resonances

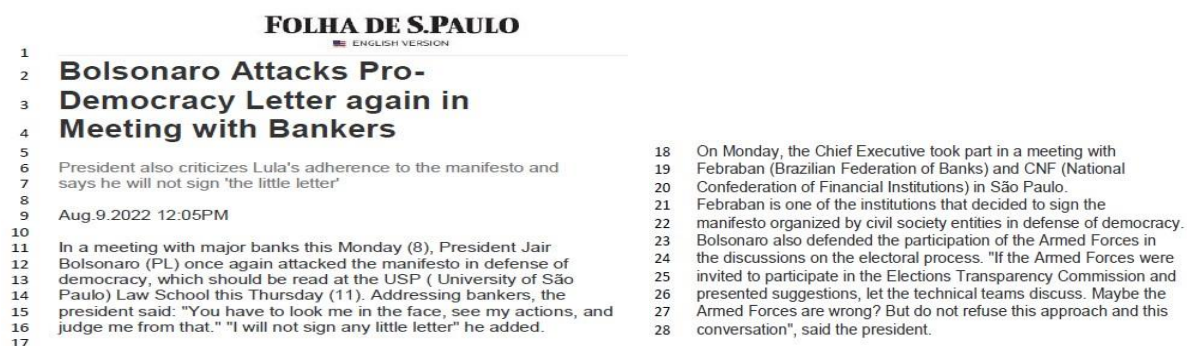
In this section, I address the process of transmediatisation of USP's pro-democracy manifesto regarding two different media spaces: Twitter and the news website *Folha de São Paulo*. Figures 2 and 3, below, allow us to have access to such spaces:

Figure 2: On Twitter, Bolsonaro reacts to the digital circulation of USP's letter-manifesto



Source: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2022/07/bolsonaro-says-he-doesnt-need-a-letter-to-defend-democracy.shtml>. Accessed on: 22 Sep 2022.

Figure 3: Bolsonaro's second reaction to the digital circulation of USP's letter-manifesto in the media



Source: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/brazil/2022/08/bolsonaro-attacks-pro-democracy-letter-again-in-meeting-with-bankers.shtml>. Accessed on: 22 Sep 2022.

In Figure 2, Bolsonaro's declaration could be viewed as an implicit dynamics of vulnerabilisation, targeting democracy. The latter, through its textual dimension, little by little, seems to 'crack' or become vulnerable with the emergence of networked and textual violence. The alluded sense of vulnerabilisation gives visibility (in different ways) to a process naturalisation of violence.

In Figure 3, this sense becomes not only more visible, but also reinforced across media spaces: "Bolsonaro *attacks* pro-democracy letter *again* (...)" (lines: 2-4). Moreover, this alluded reinforcement develops further, when, as reported by the media outlet, Bolsonaro refers to the pro-democracy manifesto as "(...) the *little* letter (...)" (line: 7). From a critical perspective, the mobilisation

of *little* projects the emergence of textual violence. It recycles and expands a sense of hierarchisation, which Bolsonaro's declaration projects in Figure 2.

It is important to note that, from a genealogical perspective, Bolsonaro uses *little* frequently – as a discursive resource, in order to construct himself as a 'superior' actor in contexts of conflict/crisis. *Little* is commonly mobilised by Bolsonaro, when he is confronted with entities or participants that may lead one to see him as inferior²⁰ in such contexts.

The recycling and expansion alluded to also contribute to making more explicit why the clash between collective (e.g. manifestoes) and individualistic forms of pro-democracy textual manifestation (e.g. tweets) should not be disregarded in Bolsonaro's declaration. In Figure 3, we can see his explicit refusal to adhere to USP's manifesto, in case Lula became one of its signatories.

In sum, we can observe that the reported statements in Figure 3 (if understood as projecting a 'conversation' with Bolsonaro's individual tweet in Figure 2) give visibility to his explicit dynamics of ratifying a perception of dispute for protagonism and legitimation in the face of the discursive authority of USP's manifesto as a collective pro-democracy textual manifestation. To understand why USP's manifesto becomes 'authorised' to circulate democratically two aspects need to be observed. On one hand, the manifesto not only emerges from a domain of power-knowledge that is specialised (i.e. a source of legal discourse), but also (and most importantly): the discourse projected through the manifesto is a Constitutional one. On the other, Bolsonaro, as a recalcitrant commentator, used his Twitter account in order to promote his own 'letter', which, according to the message that he projected, would neither be compatible with the pro-democracy views of USP's "little letter", nor with those of his opponent: Lula.

There is another implicit and relevant aspect in Bolsonaro's dynamics. Bolsonaro's explicit textual dynamics makes use of two different media spaces to become amplified. It is necessary to observe how this dynamics involves the media space of traditional journalism as its domain of culmination. In this way, an additional dimension or layer of networked violence can be activated. More precisely, in Figure 3, this suggested activation is connected with how the space of the news item and, as a consequence, the democratic and Constitutional principle of *freedom of press* may amplify a process of naturalisation. The latter can vulnerabilise democracy through textual violence.

This naturalisation is developed through an attempt to militarise the electoral process²¹, which, according to the Brazilian Constitution, should be conducted by civilians²². Here, we can see the rise of a militarising configuration or a *military order of discourse* (SOUZA JÚNIOR, 2022). This *order*, as discussed elsewhere, connects military, political and media discourses, whilst opening a

²⁰ During the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil, Bolsonaro repeatedly disseminated a belief that the deadly Covid-19 infection should be simply regarded as 'a *little* flu' (cf. SOUZA JÚNIOR, 2021, pp. 4-5).

²¹ Cf.: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/29/brazil-armed-forces-should-not-count-votes>. Accessed on: 9 Nov 2022.

²² It should be noted that, unlike the U.S., Brazil has in its Judiciary power a special segment, the Electoral Justice. For more details, see: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/15/bolsonaro-brazil-election-trump-gop-jan-6-insurrection/>. Accessed on: 08 Oct 2022.

pathway to the performative production of textual violence and vulnerabilisation in/of democracies, as a result of the activation of military interferences in civilian domains.

The attempt referred to allows for the amplification of Bolsonaro's militarising 'suggestion', which is reported (without any indication of democratic or Constitutional contestation) in the space of journalism as follows: "If the Armed Forces were invited to participate in the Elections Transparency Commission and presented suggestions, let the technical teams discuss. Maybe the Armed Forces are wrong? But do not refuse this approach and this conversation." (lines: 26-30).

If the relational perspective is considered (cf. Section 1), Bolsonaro's reported statements in Figure 3 suggest a sense of Constitutional deviation, which seems to be naturalised/trivialised in the space of traditional journalism. This deviation would potentially promote relations of friction as follows: (i) between State institutions (i.e. The Armed Forces/Brazilian Army and TSE - the Superior Electoral Court); and (ii) between the Executive and the Judiciary powers. In this way, we would have, 'from the inside' of democracy, rule of law giving rise to a configuration that would be capable of legitimising and/or ratifying the naturalisation of traces of a state of exception as a manifestation of networked violence.

In this context, exception would materialise through Bolsonaro's 'simple suggestion'. However, this 'suggestion' ought to be read as a kind of textual violence, which, discursively, can subvert and vulnerabilise the textual dimension of democracy. This 'suggestion' also exposes how the Brazilian Army may be activated locally to take part as an actor in a context that projects an atmosphere of crisis and competition between institutions. The military are expected to operate through a domain of inter-institutional dynamics. The latter can lead the Army to take a pathway to what can constitute a deviation from their Constitutional duties, at the expense of taxpayers, whilst the military partake in a Commission whose Constitutional prerogatives of legitimation are civilian in nature.

As an effect, this scenario can promote exception instead of the ratification of the Constitutional order/normativity. The alluded senses of deviation/subversion, violence and vulnerabilisation would become manifested if the dynamics of redirecting the Armed Forces to a civilian domain (i.e. the Elections Transparency Commission) became a reality.

When examined through the genealogical lenses, it is possible to understand how a trajectory of 'conversation' between Figures 1, 2 and 3 is projected; and how these can reveal additional (in)visible layers and dynamics.

If critically observed, invisibilising (or not targeting explicitly) those who could be framed as a threat to democracy can be viewed as one of the key dynamics in USP's manifesto. When Bolsonaro refuses to endorse the message of democracy that the manifesto projects and promotes his individual tweet, it can be viewed as an attempt to 'replace' or compete with USP's manifesto. This dynamics seems to lead him to 'take a bait', which, in a sophisticated way, was 'left hanging' in the manifesto. The interconnexions between Figures 1 and 2 show how, as he takes that 'bait', this may


performatively contribute to projecting Bolsonaro as a source of violence or the potential ‘aggressor’, whose dynamics the manifesto seemed to denounce, but did not explicitly mention.

To sum up, the interconnexions between Figures 1, 2 and 3 seem to amplify Bolsonaro’s projected ethos of aggressor. One of the indirect effects of this alluded amplification points to how Bolsonaro’s conspicuous refusal to adhere to USP’s pro-democracy manifesto promotes and amplifies the image of Lula as his main opponent, whilst ratifying, through an invisible or indirect dynamics, the latter as a pro-democracy candidate. Understanding this indirect amplification of Lula’s image in that way becomes possible, since Figure 3 indicated that he was about to become a signatory of USP’s manifesto.

3.3 Democracy, (re)interpretation and co-existent ‘messages’: a ‘conversation’ between USP’s letter-manifesto and ‘the people’s letter’

In this section, we shall look at how the so-called *people’s letter* ‘converses’ with USP’s letter-manifesto. Figure 4, below, allows us to explore dynamics of (re)interpretation and related (in)visible dynamics that (de)naturalise networked violence:

Figure 4: The people’s letter

	<p style="text-align: center;">THE PEOPLE’S LETTER!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">#ThePeople’sLetter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Read and Sign the Pro-democracy People’s Letter</p>
<p>Carta do povo brasileiro em defesa da democracia</p>	<p>Letter from the Brazilian people in defence of democracy</p>
<p>(1) Muito tem se falado sobre democracia. Mas afinal, o que é democracia para nós, o povo?</p>	<p>Much has been said about democracy. But, after all, what is democracy for us, the people?</p>
<p>(2) Democracia é termos o direito do voto, do livre pensar, de professar nossa fé e nosso credo. É vivermos livres de ameaças autoritárias e do medo da fome e do desemprego. A democracia que exigimos é aquela em que uma mãe não tenha que empurrar, com os olhos marejados, o próprio prato de comida para matar a fome de seu filho.</p>	<p>Democracy means that we have the right to vote, right to freedom of thought, right to profess our faith and creed. It means to live without [fearing] authoritarian threats, [without] fearing hunger or unemployment. The democracy that we demand is one in which a mother, teary-eyed, doesn’t have to skip a meal to feed her child.</p>
<p>(3) Nossa democracia só será para valer quando cuidarmos de todos os pequenos, os miúdos, os fragilizados, e não deixarmos ninguém para trás. Uma democracia com direitos para todos, mas que olhe especialmente para os mais vulneráveis.</p>	<p>Our democracy will only be a democracy when we take care of the little, the tiny, the vulnerable ones, not leaving anybody behind. A democracy with rights for all, and, yet, one that looks in particular after the most vulnerable.</p>
<p>(4) A democracia que buscamos é a democracia das oportunidades, onde um agricultor possa celebrar o abraço carinhoso da filha, que conseguiu, com sua dedicação e esforço, entrar numa boa universidade. Para estudar o que desejar, construir seu próprio caminho e vencer na vida.</p>	<p>The democracy that we pursue is the democracy of the opportunities, where farmer[s] can enjoy their daughter’s warm hug, after she, with dedication and effort, entered a good university. To study whatever she wants to, in order to find her own way and become a winner.</p>

(5) A democracia que buscamos todos os dias, é uma em que pais e mães não ficam com o coração apertado toda vez que seus filhos saírem para estudar, trabalhar ou se divertir, por medo da violência que mata. E que castiga ainda mais a população pobre e preta das periferias.	The democracy that we pursue every day, is one in which fathers and mothers don't have to be worried every time their daughters and sons leave for school, for work or to have fun, for fearing violence, which kills. And that punishes even more those who are black, poor and live in the peripheries.
(6) A democracia que almejamos é aquela onde lazer e cultura sejam verdadeiramente direito de todos. Ir ao cinema, assistir a uma peça de teatro, ouvir uma boa música, não podem ser privilégios de poucos.	The democracy that we seek to attain is one where leisure and culture are truly rights for all. Going to the cinema, to the theatre, listening to good music cannot be regarded as a privilege of a few.
(7) O Brasil democrático não aceita que crianças sejam abandonadas à própria sorte, com dificuldade de ler e escrever aos 10 anos. Democracia é ter direito a escola de qualidade e ter professores reconhecidos.	The democratic Brazil does not tolerate that children are left behind on their own, still facing difficulties to read and write at 10. Democracy means to have a right to quality education and teachers who are valued.
(8) Democracia é ter direito ao descanso merecido depois de décadas de trabalho duro. Ter aposentadoria decente, para poder aproveitar os netos e tudo aquilo que foi sacrificado durante a jornada da vida.	Democracy means to have the right to [some] well deserved rest after decades of hard work. To have [a] a decent pension, so that [one] can stay in touch with [their] grandchildren and enjoy the fruit of all sacrifices of a lifetime.
(9) A democracia que queremos para o Brasil cuida de cada indígena e preserva cada pedaço de terra, pois entende que o respeito à natureza e aos nossos povos originários dizem muito sobre nosso passado e ainda mais sobre o futuro que queremos. Democracia é garantir que todos tenham o direito de ser como são e amar quem quiser. Livre do preconceito, da opressão e do julgamento dos outros.	The democracy that want for Brazil takes care of every indigenous person and preserves each piece of land, because it understands that the respect for nature and our autochthonous people say a lot about our past and even more about the future that we envisage. Democracy means guaranteeing that all have the to right to be as they are and love whoever they want to. Free from the shackles of prejudice, oppression and judgment of others.
(10) A democracia do povo brasileiro só será verdadeira quando todos tiverem não somente um teto, mas também um lar para descansar o corpo e a alma depois de um dia duro de trabalho.	The democracy of the Brazilian people will only be true when all have not only shelter, but also a home in order to rest body and soul after a hard day of work.
(11) Na democracia desta nossa terra onde tudo que se planta prospera, o Estado precisa estender as mãos aos que têm os pés rachados, as mãos grossas e o rosto marcado pelo trabalho de sol a sol. Aos que usam a enxada e o arado para levar comida à mesa de todos.	In the democracy of our land where whatever you sow grows, the State needs to stretch out its hand to those who have cracked feet, thick hands and their face marked by labour from sun to sun. To those who use the hoe and the plough in order to take food to every table.
(12) A democracia que exigimos garante água em cada torneira e saneamento em cada morada. Não tolera crianças brincando em valas cheias de esgoto e lixo.	The democracy that we demand guarantees water in each tap and a sewage system that works for each home. [It] does not put up with children playing in ditches full of waste and garbage.
(13) Democracia é o direito ao amparo na hora da doença. Não deixa faltar leitos, remédios e vacinas. Não aceita que filhos e filhas, pais e mães, tenham que chorar ao leito de um ente querido que tenha partido pelo descaso do Estado.	Democracy is the right to have [some] support in times of illness. Not allowing failure in the offer of hospital beds, medicine and vaccines. [It] does not accept that sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, have to cry before the bed of a loved one who passed way because of the negligence of the State.
(14) Democracia é o direito a ter a carteira profissional assinada e direitos trabalhistas garantidos. É ter apoio e dinheiro para empreender e montar o próprio negócio. Fazer da própria criatividade e perseverança o seu ganha pão. Direito a ver o imposto que pagamos ser revertido em benefícios para todos, e não apenas para poucos.	Democracy is the right to have an official document that attests your professional trajectory and labour rights. [It] means having [some] support and money to do or start your own business. Making a living out of your own creativity and perseverance. [It means] the right to see the taxes that we pay turn into benefits for all, and not only for a few.
(15) Democracia é valorizar quem nos protege. Quem pede bênção pela manhã e vai à luta, fardado ou não, com honra e coragem, para garantir a segurança de nosso povo.	Democracy means valuing those who protect us. Those who pray for blessings in the morning and go make a living, [be it] in a [military] uniform or not, with honour and bravery, in order to guarantee the safety of our people.
(16) Democracia é o direito de conhecer as belezas deslumbrantes do Brasil. Levam a família para a praia, brincar na areia e ver o mar. E vez ou outra, o Pantanal, a Amazônia, a Serra Gaúcha, os Lençóis Maranhenses e o Cristo Redentor.	Democracy is the right to visit the stunning wonders of Brazil. [It means] taking [your] family to the beach, playing in the sand and go seeing the sea. And, once in a while, [visit] [the] Pantanal, [the] Amazon, Serra Gaúcha, the Lençóis Maranhenses and [the statue of] Christ the Redeemer.
(17) Liberdade, cuidado, direitos e oportunidades. É disso que é feita a democracia. É o que nós, o povo, acreditamos.	Freedom, welfare, rights and opportunities. This is what democracy is made of. That is what we, the people, believe in.

Source: <https://cartadopovo.com.br/>. Accessed on: 23 Sep 2022.

In Figure 4, *the people's letter* seems to propose and promote a dynamics that reinterprets, 'translates' and makes visible several aspects. The latter seemed invisibilised or gained less attention in USP's pro-democracy manifesto. In paragraph (1), *the people's letter* appears to contest the specialised way through which USP's manifesto communicated the message of democracy.

This epistemic contestation, however, does not seem to reject or defy the authority that legal discourse (in accordance with the Constitution) confers to USP's manifesto. The contestation makes visible a dynamics of expansion, which addresses an often invisible (and very subtle) layer of networked and textual violence.

This layer points to the repertoire or principles of democracy (e.g. *rule of law*) and their constitutive legal complexity as a form of epistemological violence – a violence that democracy may impose, for example, on the so-called 'ordinary citizens' (cf. Section 1). The following question is indicative of that (violent) sense of complexity which triggers contestation: "Much has been said about democracy. But, *after all, what is democracy for us, the people?*"

Additionally, the dynamics of expansion referred to makes visible a dispute that seeks to expose epistemological complexity and overcome some sort of 'communicational breakdown' or barrier between 'the people' and domains of specialised discourse like, for example, universities or courts of justice.

At this point, it is important to stress how translation can contribute to overcoming this communicational barrier. In *the people's letter*, translation emerges as a visible communicational and sociopolitical dynamics of democratisation or 'palatability', which can help 'the people' in their task of understanding 'encrypted' or complex democracy principles, such as *rule of law*. Locally, the strategy derived from this dynamics allows for more comprehensive and complex processes of reinterpretation than those that have been mobilised by USP's manifesto. The latter resorted to different semiotic systems/resources (i.e. Brazilian Portuguese and other languages/signs) in order to circulate its message of democracy, including the global sphere (cf. Figure 1).

In Figure 4, we can see how the translated and communicated meanings of democracy expand it as a message. These meanings and message, firstly, point to traces of co-existence, which emerge as transmedia resonances. Secondly, these resonances bring into the spotlight disputes that gain visibility, as we explore additional paragraphs of *the people's letter*. When we trace and contrast these resonances, translated meanings and message(s) of democracy, it is possible to perceive a 'conversation' between media spaces. As a consequence, in Figure 4, we can see some sort of *translanguaging* being strategically developed as a derived form of 'translation'.

Translanguaging, in this context, emerges as a dynamics that crosses discursive fields and serves to make levels of discursive specialisation less complex (or more understandable), pointing to how Constitutional principles of democracy, such as *rule of law* and *secular state*, resonate through those levels. In Figure 4, these principles co-exist, being reaffirmed and communicated through translanguaging, in a 'less complicated' way, as paragraph (2) shows: "*Democracy means that we have the right to vote, right to freedom of thought, right to profess our faith and creed. Moreover, it means to live without [fearing] authoritarian threats (...)*". This co-existence, as an effect, reinforces, firstly, the crafting of democracy as a continuous endeavour as well as a collective

construct. Secondly, this suggests stark contrast with Bolsonaro's individualistic dynamics of "pro-democracy" textual manifestation, which projected networked and textual violence in Figure 2.

In Figure 1 (cf. lines 25-30), aspects related to social inequalities (i.e. "race, gender and sexual orientation") as well as deficits in essential public services (i.e. "health, education, housing and public safety") are presented or 'translated' as "challenges" that "the State is inefficient [to deal with]". In Figure 1, such aspects seemed to have been naturalised as attributes that are part of the repertoire of liberal democracy. These "challenges" (a term that is often found in the liberal jargon) did not seem to be understood as part and parcel of what liberal democracy as a regime of government can also produce. If contrasted with Figure 4, this process of naturalisation, which projects networked and textual violence in Figure 1, seems to focus on the defence of *rule of law* as the cornerstone of democracy, whilst everything else (e.g. inequalities and deficits) appears to be framed as 'collateral' effects.

In Figure 4, it is exactly this idea of regarding *rule of law* as 'the real' driving force of democracy that projects a dispute. The latter leads us to see how democracy becomes a disputed message. The message under dispute indicates that the constitution of this system of government ought not to be viewed or defended solely from the point of view of legal discourse or political liberalism (cf. Section 1). Undoubtedly, *rule of law* is central, for example, to the constitution of liberal and representative democracy. Nevertheless, from a genealogical perspective, this cardinal principle may also be activated or embraced in order to produce *exceptions* to the rule, as certain 'democratic' claims or 'suggestions' emerge, giving visibility to traces that point to dysfunctional democratic panoramas (cf. Section 3.2, Fig. 3).

As it stands, in *the people's letter*, this disputed message involves the principle of *rule of law*, whilst the latter seems to be mobilised in order to expand democracy's repertoire (cf. Section 1). Through this alluded expansion, democracy's repertoire and its associated legal positivity/normativity are activated no longer to identify "challenges" that seem to be invisibilised or framed as collateral effects. In turn, through this expansion, this disputed message gives visibility to two notions of 'justice'. In Figure 1, USP's manifesto takes as central a notion of justice that is specialised, being more oriented by the technicalities of the legal domain.

In Figure 4, this specialised notion of justice appears to be complemented and balanced, making visible a(n) expanded/hybrid form of democratic consciousness/repertoire. The latter is not simply restricted to/by the technical/legal domain. It becomes, to some extent, more sociopolitically inclusive, projecting an emergent positivity or notion of *social justice*. Through this notion, the idea of *social democracy* emanates and becomes interconnected with that emergent positivity/notion. This interconnexion allows us to understand that, in the panorama under discussion, the notion of social democracy and its historicity can be viewed as a more 'productive' discursive construct, when we compare the repertoires of liberal democracy and social democracy, and the panoramas that each of these notions can derive.

For this, in Figure 4, the notion of social democracy and its productivity point to traces which become central. These can no longer be framed as ‘collateral effects’ in democratic panoramas that seem to be more robust, since they are influenced by two interconnected notions: democracy and justice. As a result, two groups of traces that interconnect and are oriented by the notions of social democracy and *social justice* can be highlighted in *the people’s letter*:

a) Components of relevance: (i) *gender and/or sexual orientation* (paragraphs: 3 and 10), (ii) *education* (paragraphs: 4 and 7), (iii) *race* (paragraphs: 5 and 9), *housing* (11), *health* (paragraph: 14), *public safety* (paragraph: 16);

b) Expansions and aspirations: (i) *infra-structure* (paragraph: 13); (ii) *employment and citizenship* (paragraph: 15); and (iii) *culture and leisure* (paragraphs: 6 and 17).

These invisibilised traces or less detailed dimensions in Figure 1 resonate from an expanded notion of democracy, which gains visibility in Figure 4. This alluded expansion indicates the necessity of amplifying liberal democracy’s repertoire in the context under discussion, whilst calling into question Fukuyama’s thesis (cf. Section 1). These traces, dimensions and expanded notions lead us to understand that the abovementioned repertoire/consciousness seems to be limited to relationally cater for the contextual and current democratic aspirations of a considerable amount of Brazilians.

As it stands, Figure 4 suggests that this limited repertoire, then, needs to be locally expanded, by incorporating a relational and more comprehensive notion of citizenship, which can be sustained and developed in tandem with an expanded notion of social justice. Otherwise, the erected wall of democracy, if (de)limited to/by the notion of *rule of law*, may begin showing its ‘cracks’ or, in other words, it may become dysfunctional, vulnerable to networked violence and/or disruptions. It is this notion of citizenship, after all, that the co-existing traces listed in *the people’s letter* appear to dispute and reflect upon. Indicative of this co-existence is what the message of democracy that the final paragraph of the *letter* textually projects as a form of denaturalisation of violence whilst it envisages: “Freedom, welfare, rights and opportunities”.

A FINAL PANORAMA

I have been arguing that violence can be performatively operated in a networked way, through the domains of language and Discourse. The operationalisation of this kind of violence gave visibility to textual violence and epistemic disputes. The latter have been ‘translated’ in this research as dynamics of (de)naturalisation of violence. To some, the notion of textual violence should not be conceived as ‘real’ violence. If this perspective is taken into account, one may argue that the focus on this ‘subtle’ kind of violence could be viewed as one of the limitations of the present study.

Notwithstanding, I have sought to show that currently this ‘subtle’ type of violence ought not to be framed as a ‘minor’, ‘less disruptive’ or ‘less destructive’. I contend that textual violence can

lead us to identify the first signs of friction and/or fracture in the erected wall of *rule of law* – here, translated as the central pillar of democracy. Textual violence can also open a pathway to the activation of additional dimensions of the repertoire of networked violence in unpredictable ways.

When we reflect on Bolsonaro’s communicational strategies of techno-preacherism and de-calendarisation (cf. Introduction), we can see that these have interconnected locally with the script of Trumpism. Both the script and its related resonances appear to have contributed to Bolsonaro’s defeat in the 2022 presidential race. In 2020, Trumpism generated a similar result in the U.S. With Bolsonaro’s electoral defeat, a demand²³ which combines the domain of *social justice* with that of *rule of law* as part of democracy’s expanding repertoire of checks and balances has re-emerged locally. The alluded combination would pave the way to hold Bolsonaro accountable for the charges that he faces – some including accusations of genocide against indigenous people. As discussed, language and Discourse allow us to understand democracy as a discursive construct, which gives visibility to the textual dimension of democracy and its related resonances. The latter lead us to look at how digital circulation in connexion with digit(al)ised texts can disseminate and/or counter violence.

Lastly, in what concerns the contributions of this study, I would highlight how, depending on one’s theoretical and methodological perspectives, it invites, encourages or challenges researchers from diverse areas and transcultural contexts to address and discuss democracy. Additionally, it offers a perspective that takes as central the roles of language, Discourse and texts as common (inter/trans)disciplinary elements. These elements, as primary sources of (in)visible traces, can tell us a great deal about the democratic (?) contexts through which such traces emerge.

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²³ See: <https://oglobo.globo.com/blogs/bernardo-mello-franco/coluna/2022/11/bolsonaro-precisa-ser-julgado-e-punido-por-crimes-que-cometeu.ghtml> [Available in Brazilian Portuguese]. Accessed on: 8 Nov 2022.

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