



# **UNDERSTANDING THE INFORMATION PATHS BETWEEN PRIVATE, SEMI-PRIVATE AND PUBLIC DIGITAL COMMUNICATION ARENAS**

**a key framework to the spread of  
misinformation in Brazil.**

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## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

In this paper, we address the question about how misinformation circulates in communication environments with different levels of visibility.

# MISINFORMATION

## OPERATIVE CONCEPTS

Misinformation and disinformation are both related to untrue messages, however, the first term is agnostic regarding the motivation of falsehood, whereas disinformation assumes that inaccuracy stems from deliberate intention. Both not only include false information, but also fabricated information, manipulated videos or manufactured, targeted political or commercial communications, organized trolling, visual memes and others.

In this paper we focus on the broader term, misinformation.

# PUBLIC X PRIVATE

## OPERATIVE CONCEPTS

Public means open, that can be seen, observed, what is made in front of a public, open so that all or to many can see, hear or talk about. In contrast, the private sphere is devoted to what is hidden from the view, what is done in secret or in a limited circle of people. Even though the characteristics of private and public may not be considered as excludent, communication platforms may be considered as more or less visible. In this paper, WhatsApp is considered as a platform that a relatively private and controlled environment for discussion, where users feel safer and less vulnerable to social sanctions. Twitter is considered as a more open platform, as all messages we collected were public: any user could see them directly in the platform.

# AMAZON RAINFOREST'S CRISIS

## CONTEXT

In August 2019, the number of fires in the Amazon region registered a record. The increase in the number of fires is not an isolated fact, but rather a part of a broader policy developed by the Jair Bolsonaro government that, in many aspects, disregards the respect to the environment, and a general discourse made by president Bolsonaro and the Environment Minister that legitimizes actions against the environment.

The situation in the Amazon region generated an international rebound and a internal political crisis, and the president and his staff chose a discursive strategy based on accusations and misinformation against their domestic and international opponents.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

We collected messages about a same issue in both platforms (WhatsApp and Twitter) from August 23rd to August 30th 2019. That represents the recent peak about this issue according to Google Trends. Besides that, the G7 meeting - where the Amazon issue gained more international visibility - took place from August 24th to 26th. Once established our time frame, we started to work with our data. Our WhatsApp data was collected from a total of 160 groups that support the Bolsonaro government. In addition to Bolsonaro being the central actor of our case study, literature shows that right-wing individuals are more susceptible to share misinformation.

# MOST SHARED LINKS

**VÍDEO: Alexandre Garcia esclarece interesses de outros países na Amazônia**



É PRA COMPARTILHAR!



O interesse de países como Alemanha e Noruega pela região da Amazônia conhecida como "Cabeça de Cachorro", tem um objetivo, revelado e esclarecido pelo insuperável Alexandre Garcia.

Sim, é o Níóbio.

A "Cabeça de Cachorro" detém a maior reserva de Níóbio do Planeta Terra.

AGRONEGÓCIOS

## Macron apoiou projeto que previa desmatamento de milhares de hectares com mais de 120 espécies protegidas na Amazônia

23/08/2019 às 11:44



# MOST SHARED LINKS

 **Jair M. Bolsonaro**   
@jairbolsonaro [Seguir](#)

O fogo que mais arde é o da nossa soberania sobre a Amazônia. Assista, comente e COMPARTILHE.



 **YouTube**     



**Mentiras sobre Amazônia**

319.936  30 MIL  1,9 MIL  COMPARTILHAR  SALVAR ...

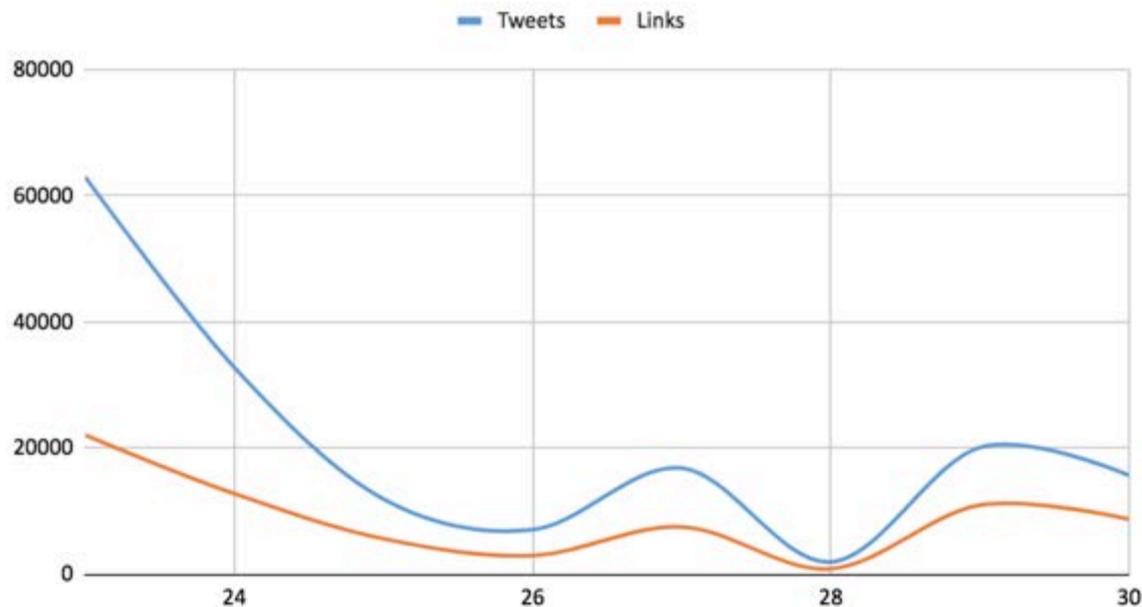
 **José Neumanne Pinto**  
304 mil inscritos [INSCREVER-SE](#)

O presidente da França, Macron, postou um Twitter anunciando que vai à reunião do G7 em Biarritz exigir que a Comunidade Europeia puna o Brasil por estar deixando a Amazônia arder. Para ilustrar, usou imagens do fotógrafo Loren McIntyre, que morreu

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# KEY RESULTS

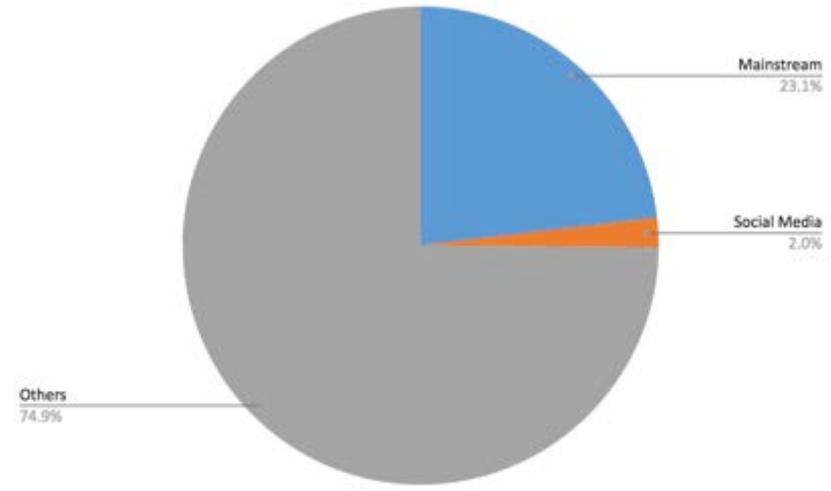
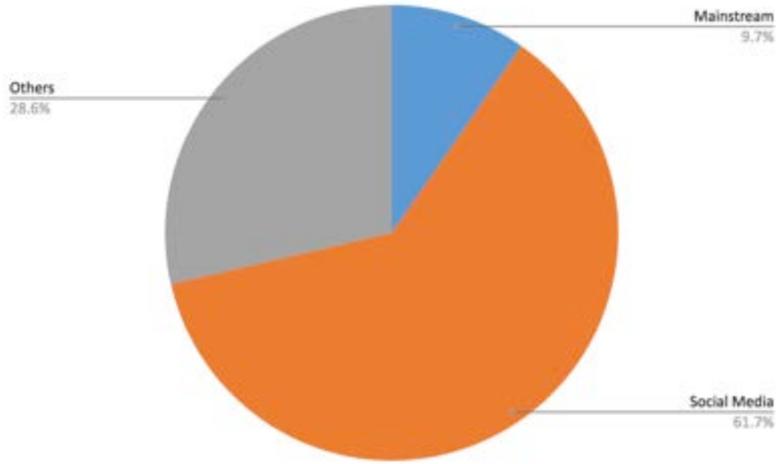
## Tweets e Links



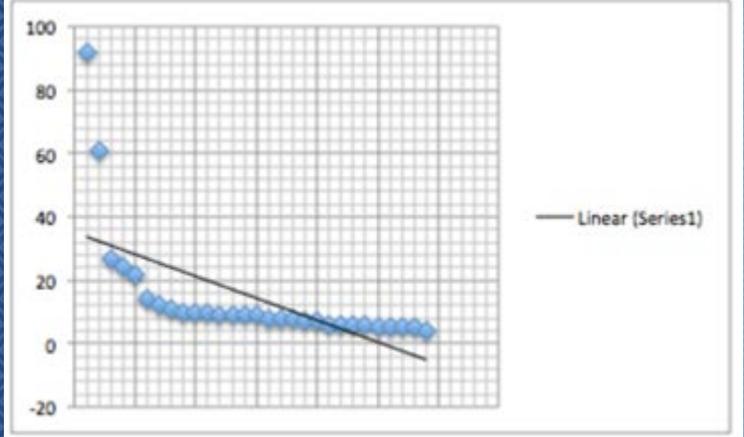
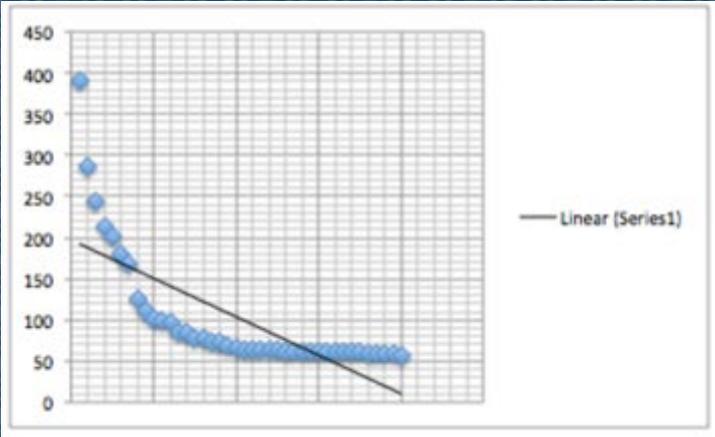
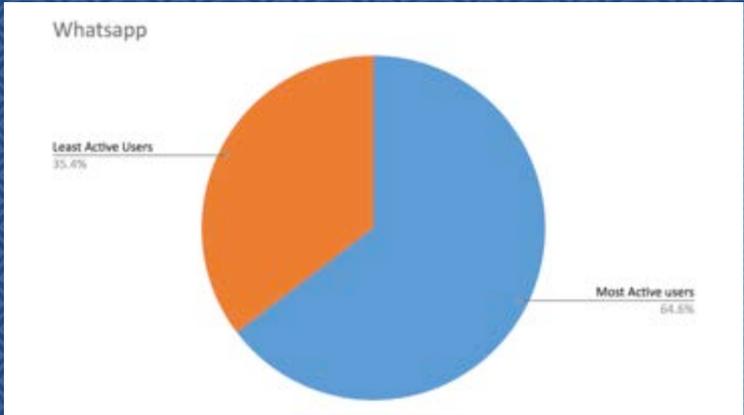
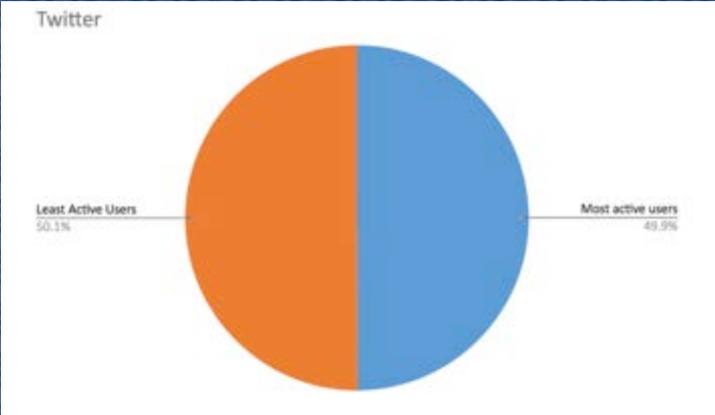
## POSTS & LINKS

Both platforms presented a very high correlation between the volume of messages and hyperlinks: 0,97 on Twitter, and 0,99 on WhatsApp. So, the content sharing behavior about the Amazon fires during the recent crisis was strongly related to the use of external sources: the more posts about the issue, the more links.

# LINK'S SOURCES



# MOST ACTIVE USERS PARTICIPATION



## DISCUSSION

The content sharing behavior about Amazon during the recent crisis was strongly related to the use of external sources: the more posts about the issue, the more links.

We expected that in a less visible communication environment, such as WhatsApp, where users could feel more free to share misinformation, mainstream media links would be less mentioned as endorsement to arguments in comparison to more open environments, such as Twitter. But, as we see, that was not the case.

On WhatsApp the 20% most active users generated almost two thirds of all messages, while the same group on Twitter was responsible for less than half of all tweets, as we expected.

## NEXT STEPS

A semantic analysis, aiming to better understand content that is shared, allowing us to more properly characterize disinformation and to attest the quantitative significance of this kind of content in our case study.

Develop our typology of link sources and users related to misinformation sharing and plot networks based on their interactions and connections.

Verify the diffusion dynamic along our time frame to better detect the waves of sharing, and which users are more central on the process.



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