**Historical Events as Bridges Between Social Domains**
**Taking Bolsonaro's Victory Personal in the 2018 Brazilian Elections**

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*Abstract*

How do historical events—emergent, intense, and collectively experienced instances of political contingency—generate sweeping bursts of politicization immediately after they occur? Rationalist outlooks see this capacity as stemming from how events perform as purveyors of information to citizens with exogenous and inflexible political identities. Politico-cultural approaches, on the other hand, contend that events politicize by changing the meanings with which people navigate politics. These outlooks assume that event's politicizing impact develops strictly within the domain of political experience. But, given that politics is scantly instantiated in everyday life, they have a limited ability to explain how events generate sweeping political activation. I offer an alternative "connective" approach to understand events' immediate politicizing capacity. I anchor this influence in events' ability to generate semantic disturbances that allow the infiltration of political narratives into stories and identities driving action from social spheres of more frequent instantiation than politics. I find support for this outlook by conducting qualitative fieldwork in São Paulo in the wake of the unexpectedly strong victory of right-wing extremist Jair Bolsonaro in the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections. My observations in public spaces and moments of sociability between left-leaning citizens portray this time as one of "politicization without politics". Bolsonaro's surprising popular support expanded feelings of vulnerability, leading to political perceptual and behavioral reaccommodations that emerged from changes in personal, rather than properly, political domains of social experience. These connective reaccommodations produced an environment of political "engagement without action" where visible political behavior drastically decreased while political conversations skyrocketed.

# Historical Events as Bridges Between Social Domains: Taking Bolsonaro's Victory 'Personal' in the 2018 Brazilian Presidential Elections.

## INTRODUCTION

A few minutes past 10 PM on October 7, 2018, the conversations in a party of left-wing sympathizers that followed with beers and peanuts in a downtown São Paulo apartment the results of the Brazilian presidential election sharply halted. At that moment, a small TV began showing a press conference from the Federal Electoral Court (TSE) announcing that a run-off election would take place on October 27 to decide the winner of the election between Fernando Haddad and Jair Bolsonaro, the most contrasting, polarizing, and voted candidates of a convulsed electoral process that had reflected as much as it had extended the political convulsions that had shaken and reshaped Brazilian politics in the preceding five years (Singer 2018; Patto Sá da Motta 2018; Pinheiro-Machado and Freixo 2019).

Runner-up Fernando Haddad was the last-minute candidate of the left-wing and technically incumbent Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT). He was a federal Education minister during the presidency of Inácio "Lula" da Silva, who was the PT's original candidate and the maker of the political hegemony the party had enjoyed until 2014, when anti-PT sentiments began after the country entered a steep economic crisis and began to be shaken by a highly mediatized judicial inquiry into systemic corruption practices. In 2015, this investigation produced and a massive wave of right-wing protests demanding the removal of PT president Dilma Rousseff, which occurred one year later after a controversial impeachment process. Her downfall put an abrupt end to fourteen-years of left-wing

governments in Brazil. In an attempt to remain electorally competitive, the PT nominated Lula as presidential candidate. At that time, he combined being both the most popular and the most divisive figure of Brazilian politics. Lula led the polls throughout 2018 even after being controversially imprisoned in April in connection with a corruption scandal, but his candidacy came to an end after the Supreme Court invalidated it on August 3. On September 11, Haddad entered the race as the PT's substitute candidate.

On the other hand, Jair Bolsonaro, the plurality winner, was a retired military official and a lackluster seven-term congressman known for his vocal and crude right-wing extremism. Once considered an inconsequential aberration of Brazilian politics, his political star began to grow parallel to the PT's downfall. Bolsonaro became the frontrunmer candidate after Lula's bid ended, and a stabbing murder attempt against him on September 6 cemented this position. In the last week before the election, his political ascendance took more than 600 thousand people took Brazil's streets in opposition or support for his presidential bid.

That Bolsonaro and Haddad would face-off in a run-off election was long and resignedly expected by many Brazilian left-wingers, including those with whom I was watching the Electoral Court's press conference. What was unanticipated, however, was how relieving its confirmation was going to be felt after the first official results of the election gave Bolsonaro a shocking 48% of the votes cast, a figure between 6 and 15 points higher than those forecasted by polls conducted two days before the election, and merely 2 points shy of an absolute majority that would make him president-elect that very night.

Having been spared seeing Bolsonaro become president-elect that evening, my party companions reacted to the Court's message with sighs of relief almost instantly. But this joyful instant did not last long. A new silence, this time more mournful than suspenseful,

spread into the living room moments afterward. I attributed this quietness to the fact that the election results consummated the evanescence of the left-wing tilt of Brazilian politics they had grown with. They reduced the vote share of the PT and the Brazilian left as a whole by a third relative to the preceding presidential election, turning it into the political minority in the country for the first time in the twenty-first century. They also gave Haddad, whose vote share was nearly half of Bolsonaro's, no chance to win in the run-off election.[1] On October 7, the agonizing fourteen-year long period of left-wing governments in Brazil received its coup de grace at the hands of a crude and unabashedly open homophobe, gun-supporter, climate-change denier, gender equality attacker, and apologist of torture and dictatorship (Dieguez 2016). That night, the country seemed to embark on the risky political adventure, unwitnessed in any liberal democracy since the 1930's, of allowing a man with overtly fascist tendencies to arrive in power by electoral means.

Whatever my party companions were thinking of in the muteness that came shortly after the Court's message, it didn't take long before the return of a minimal sense of normalcy. Some people resumed checking their cell phones, trying to get the most recently updated numbers of the vote count. Others occasionally threw isolated comments about the election with no apparent addressee. For a little longer, the most hopeful of the attendees among them maintained, each time less enthusiastically, that once the counting process reached the Northeast, a PT bastion, the election results would get easier to swallow.

This performance of serenity, however, was interrupted when Ifigênia, the party's host, walked in direction to a balcony at the end of the living room and began roaring onto

[1]The election's official results ended up giving Bolsonaro 46.6% and Haddad 28.5% of the votes cast. In the city of São Paulo both figures were smaller, but the relative distance between them similar: 44.6% and 19.1%, respectively.

the street the signature cry out of the anti-Bolsonaro protests that had flooded the Avenida Paulista, the city's flagship thoroughfare, a week before:

"ELE NÃOOOOO!" [NOT HIIIIIM!]

"ELE NUUUNCA!" [NEVER HIIIIIM!]

I joined Ifigênia in the balcony to see what these cries were about. When I got there, I realized her shouts were not the only ones being poured into the city. They were one among many others being thrown into the streets from other balconies and apartment towers.

The spectacle of vertical protests lasted for about fifteen minutes before fading into the night, leaving the sensation that a historical breaking point in Brazilian politics was just occurring before our eyes. This feeling began to impregnate that night with questions on how the coming days would become politically tainted. And more broadly, and against the backdrop of the multiple political ruptures that have recently emerged across the world—of which Bolsonaro's victory has become a major instance—how do historical events generate large-scale political modifications in the societies where they emerge.

Within this broad subject, the capability of events to politically charge everyday life immediately after they happen is not well understood. The literature currently assumes that events generate shifts in politicization either as neutral purveyors of political information or through the changes they exert on the meanings that orient people when they use politics as an explicit lens of social experience. But, since politics is seldom activated as a frame of experience in everyday life (Bearman and Parigi 2004; Wyatt, Katz and Kim 2000), these arguments cannot fully explain how events can produce the fast and widespread changes in

political engagement they are credited with. In light of this gap, in this paper I ask how do historical events generate spikes of politicization in everyday life right after they happen.

In my answer to this question, I offer an alternative outlook to understanding the outset of historical events' durable political influence. My approach, which I call "connective," recognizes that in their daily life, people toggle between different domains of social experience, and that these domains are linked through intersectional elements of meaning that orient actions and interpretation in multiple domains. In this environment, I see an event's capacity to produce shifts in meanings that connect politics more closely with more frequently applied—or "instantiated"—domains of social experience as the locus of their disruptive power. These shifts allow an event to perform as a semantic bridge through which political stories infiltrate these other domains, leading to the production of political action out of them.

I develop this argument by drawing on the qualitative fieldwork I conducted in São Paulo in the wake of Bolsonaro's October 7 victory in public spaces and in socialization moments of left-leaning residents of São Paulo. My observations suggest that October 7 generated a political environment best described as one of "engagement without action." Politics increasingly started to occupy people's minds, generated sentiments of personal vulnerability, and became the dominant topic of conversation in personal interactions, all while behaviorally disappearing from public spaces.[2] These political modifications were related not to people's identities as left-wing sympathizers, but to shifts in their personal self-understandings. The political changes I observed after Election Day were connective. The

[2] I understand "political action" as a minimally purposeful behavior motivated or justified by accounts related to the field of politics. Alternatively, I understand "interaction" as conduct primarily aimed at the act of communication and not directly related to the attainment of a specific goal.

did not come from attempts to make political sense of Bolsonaro's victory; they proceeded, quite literally, from "taking it personal."

My investigation is divided into five parts. The first discusses current outlooks to evenemential politicization bursts, and introduces my connective approach to understanding them. I then proceed to discuss the methodological strategy I used to explore how Bolsonaro's victory altered the relationship between politics and everyday life in São Paulo. In the third section, I describe the political shifts I observed in the aftermath of October 7, and the fourth provides an analytical account of these shifts. The fifth section concludes by recapping the investigation's main findings and implications.

## EXPLAINING POLITICIZATION BURSTS: RATIONAL, POLITICO-CULTURAL AND CONNECTIVE APPROACHES

There are currently two theoretical frameworks available to understand how Bolsonaro's victory in particular and historical events in general can politically charge everyday life.

The rationalist approach to evenemential influence considers historical events as large-scale political billboards acting as neutral purveyors of information to actors carrying fixed political attributes. (Francisco 2004; Hess and Martin 2006; Beissinger 2013; Shultziner 2018). This outlook assumes that people are effortlessly capable of attending events and identifying them as political discontinuities. This contention is based on a model of political action that implicitly considers individuals as agents monitoring their social context continuously and exclusively from a political standpoint (Downs 1957; Olson 1965). One example of how a historical event would increase political engagement according to this rationalist outlook would be when someone discontent with economic austerity policies decides to join a demonstration after knowing of massive protests against them.

William Sewell provides an alternative theory of evenemential influence in *Historical Events as Transformations of Structures* (Sewell 1996). In this seminal essay, he argues that events produce shifts in political meanings and people's understandings of politics that lead to a higher level of political engagement. Sewell famously exemplifies this process by examining how the Storming of the Bastille modified the meaning of the terms "people" and "revolution" in ways that legitimized massive political participation from July 12 to July 23, 1789, in the wake of what we know now as the French Revolution.[3] This discussion suggests that events politicize people by increasing the frequency and time span of "instantiation" of politics as an active domain of social experience. In the context of revolutionary France, a case in point would be one when someone would have decided to take arms against the Bourbons after reimagining her political identity from "regal subject" to "member of a sovereign people."

Different as they are, rationalistic outlooks and Sewell's politico-cultural approach to event's political influence assume a strict correspondence in social domains between motivation and action. In both views, political behavior is understood as stemming only from political motivations instantiated in political chunks of experience. For practical purposes, these perspectives assume that events intervene in a social world where politics has been pre-activated as a social experience domain. But this assumption leaves unrecognized other paths through which an event might be able, in the words of Robin Wagner Pacifici (2017: 1358), be able to "force their way into subjects field of attention." In the French summer of 1789, it would have trouble identifying and making

[3] The dates indicate the moment when the Storming of the Bastille began to be imagined as a possible act and the day when this episode ended up being sanctioned as a legitimate episode by the French National Assembly.

political sense, for example, of someone who became a revolutionary to avenge the death of a loved one at the hands of monarchist soldiers.

However inconsequential this illustration might seem, it allows distinguishing an alternative form of evenemential politicization, which I call "connective." Here, the political ruptures that events generate end up politicizing perceptions and actions from domains of social experience that *are not* properly political. Harrison White's discussion of the interrelationship between social domains, identities, contingency, and action provides a useful framework to gain finer theoretical resolution into how these processes

White describes individuals socially as collections of identities that constitute specific and differentiated platforms of social perception and action (White and Mische 1998; White 2008, 1-10;) associated with specific "domains"—realms of social experience constituted by social networks and stories that embed meaning to them.[4] A person can, for example, act as "heterosexual" in the domain of romantic or sexual relationships, "bad dancer" in the domain of a techno party, or "leftist" in the domain of politics, a dimension of social experience related to the field inhabited by politicians, activists, or policy-makers interacting around protests, legislative reforms, or electoral campaigns (Bourdieu 1991). Each of these identities aim to control social uncertainty by generating regular behavioral and interpretive patterns in the domains they pertain to, and drives social action when these domains instantiate into people's experience. In a manner that can be thought of as similar to a shock absorber, an identity shifts in reaction to changes in the social networks or stories of its underlying domain.

These changes can be fully circumscribed within the domain where an identity operates. But when stories or networks are shared between domains—think, for example, of

[4] White names these spaces "netdoms." I will refer to them as domains for ease of exposition.

a person that is both a close friend and a work colleague—identities and behaviors in one domain might change in response to shifts from another one. This possibility opens up a "connective" path for evenemential influence. Unlike rationalist and politico-cultural approaches, here, an event provokes politicization shifts is by acting as a bridge that incepts political stories or changes the constitution of networks driving social action and interpretation in domains outside politics.

My research aims to explore the empirical traction of this connective possibility relative to the rationalist and political-cultural alternatives to evenemential influences previously discussed in the literature. In the next section, I discuss how I leveraged Bolsonaro's victory in the 2018 Brazilian elections to conduct empirical research for this aim.

## METHODS

Evenemential influence has mainly been investigated using retrospective accounts, elite written testimonies (Sewell 1996), or surveys conducted coincidentally during or close to a major political disruption (Beissinger 2013).[5] These types of data have been important for the production of seminal knowledge into processes of evenemential influence, but they are limited in their capacity to produce a sound empirical exploration of how events politicize daily life. This task demands the collection, in real time, of real-time microsociological observations of how people attend, make sense of, and react to a political contingency in their day-to-day experiences.

[5] Sewell's discussion of the storming of the Bastille, for example, is based on speeches of National Assembly deputies and articles from *Les révolutions de Paris,* a newspaper catering only to the scant 37% of the literate French population during 1789 (Markoff 1986; Gough 1988).

Conducting this type of research is, of course, is easier said than done. Like tornadoes, events are short-lasting and impossible to predict. These qualities pose strong barriers to research event effects observationally. I had the opportunity to conduct such work right after Bolsonaro's unexpectedly strong victory by being in São Paulo during October 2018. My stays in the city as a part of architectural design and social mapping projects during the two years prior to the election allowed me to gain ground experience with the city and develop a network of personal contacts that allowed me to conduct fieldwork during the last month of the 2018 Brazilian presidential election. Since my investigation is mainly interested in studying the immediate politicizing effects of a historical event, it is primarily based on day-long observations conducted during the first four days after Bolsonaro's triumph (October 8-11). Complementarily, I used news, social media, and archival data to inspect if these observations resonated with more aggregate patterns of reaction to Bolsonaro's victory.

Similar to Brubakers and colleagues' study on nationalism in Romania (Brubakers et al. 2006), my fieldwork centered on exploring how people reacted to Bolsonaro's election not when primed to do so, but in the actions and understandings they deployed in their daily life –in particular. My observations of these contexts were oriented at exploring the following questions: What were the narratives and the social domains through which people made sense of Bolsonaro's triumph? How did people understand his victory as a tangibly *consequential* outcome? When and how did the electoral results serve as motivations or justifications to reshape action in politics and other domains of social experience?

I explored these questions by observing social interactions in public spaces of downtown São Paulo and Avenida Paulista[6]. They both are symbolically important zones of intense public life. Downtown São Paulo is a collection of pedestrian areas, parks, and high-rises that combine middle-class residents with white-collar workers and a large homeless population. Avenida Paulista, on the other hand, is historically the city's flagship business district and its most diverse and densely used public interaction space.

I also observed moments of socialization between my personal contacts, their friends, and friends of their friends in coffee shops, restaurants, bars, parties, living rooms, kitchens, and workspaces. Most of my contacts were in their thirties, "white" in the multidimensional meaning that this term often carries in Brazil (Farah Schwartzman 2007); upper-middle class. They resided in São Paulo's central area and were creative professionals or social researchers.

My fieldwork conditions demanded identifying and observing an adequate number of analytically relevant situations under a very short period. My ability to do so was unavoidably limited by the irrepeatability of time, my incapacity to be in different places at once, and the fluidity of social situations characteristic of a major metropolis. I addressed these challenges by making my fieldwork as flexible as possible. I readjusted it throughout the day (and the days) in response to the shifting conditions of the country's political environment, the changing schedules of my contacts, and the analytic interest of the situations I ran into. As a result, the relevant situations I observe did not come at a steady, regular pace. Sometimes I observed these moments incompletely. In some periods, these moments were sparse; in others, they accumulated at a vertiginous pace. These

[6] I understand "everyday life" as the thread of concrete social experience that enters and gets out from specific social domains as people wake up, leave their house, work, eat, get out from work, relax, sleep and wake up again.

circumstances made the rhythm of observations so diverse that at moments days appeared as if they were not comparatively, but constitutively different from one another. Thus, rather than analyzing each of these daily observations as temporal stages of a linear process of evenemential influence, I examined them as an aggregate compilation of everyday situations.

## ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT ACTION: POLITICS AND THE EVERYDAY IN THE AFTERMATH OF JAIR BOLSONARO'S VICTORY

The political atmosphere I observed in the wake of Bolsonaro's electoral victory on October 7 can be characterized as one of "engagement without action." I begin discussing this environment by describing my fieldwork on October 10, which yielded the number of analytically relevant situations. I then analyze the political features that characterized the everyday situations I observed throughout my fieldwork period.

### *Inaction, Self-Censorship, and Exaltation: Wednesday, October 10.*

What is known now as downtown São Paulo is a mash-up of public squares, boulevards, occasional historic buildings, modernist masterpieces, and non-descript high-rises lumped together in the undulating area that contained all of the city by the end of the nineteenth century, when São Paulo was still a provincial capital, yet to become Brazil's economic powerhouse and the center of a 24-million people metropolis. This area has recently undergone repeated cycles of abandonment and reoccupation that have turned it into a multilayered patchwork of white-collar workers, buyers and sellers of low-cost commodities, middle-class residents, a small but visible population of creative workers, and a large population of homeless citizens. Three days after Election Day, on October 10, my

fieldwork began in this area where São João Avenue morphs into a pedestrian walkway descending into the Anhangabaú Park, an ancient riverbed. In the preceding days, my fieldwork had begun at 9 AM. With the memory of Ifigênia's chants still fresh and knowing of the strong political polarization that prevailed in Brazil, I was expecting to observe at this time, when downtown sidewalks become flooded with people rushing to work, multiple instances of politicized behavior. My expectations were incorrect. I was not able to witness any. As time went by and left Election Day behind, I concluded that the probability of observing these situations was low enough to justify starting my fieldwork that day an hour later, around 10 AM.

I began walking through a grid of streets that were undergoing their daily transformation into bustling shopping walkways. Like the days before, the only political elements I managed to observe were newspaper headlines. Hanging in magazine stalls, the cover pages of all three of Brazil's reference newspapers addressed stories related to October 7. Center-right *Folha de São Paulo* (or "Folha"), making reference to the feuds that had sprouted between within Brazil's once-dominant right-wing party (PSDB, *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira)* after its electoral implosion, informed that "Tension at the PSDB increases after Alckmin suggests Doria betrayed his candidacy." *O Globo,* another right of center newspaper, published that "Jacques Wagner negotiates with FH, Ciro and Marina," alluding to negotiations between a major PT politician and first-rank political figures across the spectrum aiming to build a united anti-Bolsonaro front for the run-off election. The headline story of right-wing *Estado de São Paulo* (or "Estadão"), on the other hand, skipped

the second electoral round altogether and reported news about the impending Bolsonaro administration: "Four generals coordinate Bolsonaro's government program."[7]

I continued walking in direction to the São Bento convent and sat in one of the benches of a rest area overlooking its severe, Gotham-city-like façade. My sitting neighbors were taking sunbaths, playing chess, having a break from shopping, or taking a break from shoppers. None were engaging in any form of political behavior. After twenty minutes of waiting, I began to walk again and entered the Antonio Prado square, a small and leafy bourgeois enclave home to the São Paulo stock exchange and the historic headquarters of many of Brazil's flagship banking institutions. I entered a Portuguese bakery meticulously decorated in the bland style of smart design, ordered an egg tart, and spent a good half hour eating it slowly and taking a look at the crowd that surrounded me. While the word "Bolsonaro" frequently crossed the air, but I could not identify any sustained conversation about him or the election results. This buzz was, however, the strongest kind of political act I observed that morning.

Around 11:30, I began walking westwards to have lunch with Paulo, a graphic designer in his mid-thirties. On my way, I ran into the first purposive political behavior of the day. In front of the Municipal Theater, an overcharged Belle Époque construction, a middle-aged man with a PT cap on his head shouted rallying cries against Bolsonaro under the utmost indifference of the passersby. A man and a woman, both younger, were barricaded with him behind a small plastic table full of Haddad campaign materials, waiting

[7] All translations are my own. Geraldo Alckmin was the PSDB's presidential nominee, and João Doria, then mayor of São Paulo, its candidate for the governorship of São Paulo. FH refers to Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a former Brazilian president and the PSDB's most important historical figure. Ciro Gomes was the presidential candidate of the *Partido Democrático Trabalhista* (PDT), a center-left party, and Haddad's main competitor within the left. Marina Silva, the presidential candidate of the centrist REDE party, was an environmentalist and a former Environment Minister in Lula's second administration.

in vain for people to get close by. No soul approached them before I decided to do so a few minutes after. I asked the younger man how many people had approached them that day. I received a mechanical reply: "Not many."

Without much excitement, he then let me take one sheet of Haddad stickers from the pile lying on the table. A few moments after, I joined Paulo on the terrace of a restaurant in front of the park surrounding the Mário de Andrade Library. Knowing that Paulo was an active Haddad sympathizer, I took the stickers out, and without much thinking, put one on my t-shirt and another on his. We ordered food and started catching up.

Our conversation revolved mainly around the results of the election. We talked about their shocking nature, how hard it was not to be continuously thinking about who had voted for Bolsonaro, the surprising absence of strong reactions for or against Bolsonaro in the streets, and the fear of Bolsonaro's victory bringing back a conservative atmosphere into the city. Our conversation was agile, but it was eventually obstructed by a string of monosyllabic phrases that began to pop from Paulo's mouth as he threw increasingly frequent gazes at other restaurant-goers.

"Is there something going on?" I asked.

"Do you see how they're looking at us?"

I took a look around. As far as I could see, nobody was watching us. "It all looks normal to me," I replied. We kept talking normally, but in a lower tone. Although the rest of the meal went by undisturbed, Paulo kept manifesting a certain discomfort. Every once in a while, he turned back his head again to take a look at the rest of the restaurant's clients.

After lunch, we took a walk around the area I had traversed in the morning. It was full of people, like in all other weekdays at that time. As we walked, Paulo suddenly threw the same interrogation he had made in the restaurant:

"Do you see how they're looking at us?"

I still could not see what he was seeing. In the middle of the crowd, I found it hard even to figure out what exactly his phrase was referring to until he ripped the Haddad sticker off his t-shirt and threw it in a trash bin. It then became crystal clear the sticker had made Paulo feel politically exposed.

We then entered a small bodega and bought a bottle of cachaça from a woman sandwiched between an old office desk and beer boxes. "I also like what that guy's saying," she said with a complicit smile as she pointed towards my Haddad sticker, which I had decided to keep. "It's great to hear that," I replied. "It's nice to see not everyone around voted for Bolsonaro." Paulo and I said good-bye a little bit after we were back in the street.

I spent the rest of the afternoon walking and doing errands. While waiting for a pair of sneakers to be fixed, I asked a shoemaker if he had not felt things differently after the election. "If you say so," he circumspectly replied. I then walked into a pharmacy ebullient with tired white-collar workers that had just finished their workday. When I finally made it to the cash register, a pharmacy employee—a young black woman—began talking to me as she scanned the things I had bought. "So you're not being fooled either, huh?" she said while looking at my sticker. "That Bolsonaro guy is just cheap spectacle. I think people will regret choosing him very soon." I told her I just wished that regret would come before the run-off election. I wished her luck and went back to the street.

On the way back to my apartment, I received a text message from Paulo. Attached to it was a cellphone screenshot of Grindr, a popular application for gay encounters. The image had been taken a few minutes before, showing a text box over the grid of users' pictures that usually pop out when the app is being opened. The text was succinctly titled "Warning." A brief but telling message followed suit: "After the recent election, members of the Grindr

community expressed concerns [about the] increase in violence. Take the necessary steps to remain safe this week."

In the evening, I took a car ride service to join a dinner at Paulo's, close to Avenida Paulista. My driver was a full-frontal Bolsonaro supporter—a "bolsonarista." He spent a good deal of time proudly explaining my travel companion, a Peruvian tourist, how the "Myth," as Bolsonaro was also known among his base, would get rid of "thieves" in the Brazilian government and kill those robbing in the streets. I tried to counter his bolsonarista fervor by pointing to the notable social achievements that Brazil had undergone during PT administrations and the perils of a law and order policy centered on violence. My intervention ended up being interrupted by the driver, who began to repeat a litany of Bolsonaro's talking points. He boastfully declared that the only thing he cared about was seeing streets "clean of thugs" and that he was happily certain that after Bolsonaro's inauguration, "rapists would be castrated, and thieves resisting police shot."

The rest of the ride went by silently.

It took me about forty minutes to get to Paulo's. He was finishing cooking in the company of Rafael, a visual artist, and João, a fashion designer. They both were gay and in their thirties. I met them at a house party on October 6, hours before polling booths started to open. That night stories related the election gained only intermittent traction. Every once in a while, someone referred to the topic speculating about the political positions of acquaintances or throwing lackadaisical comments about how rapidly Brazil had become seduced by the extreme right.

Five days later, at Paulo's, Rafael, João, and Paulo were dealing with the election in an entirely different manner. They literally could not stop talking about it, and did so in a heated and overexcited collection of screams, interruptions, and overlapped talk. They

repeated, again and again, the many stories of violence and harassment that were being vertiginously circulated in social media after the election. Rafael described how an acquaintance had been subjected to homophobic slurs downtown in plain daylight. João let us know of a tense argument the day before in the Copãozinho, a popular lunch spot, between a leftist client and a bolsonarista server. And all three meticulously dissected the story of a swastika carved out in the belly of a leftist woman by Bolsonaro supporters in the southern city of Porto Alegre.

My dinner companions were completely taken by these stories, avidly perusing them a first, second, and a third time in a seemingly endless loop they eventually came to recognize as exhausting. "That's enough, guys," Rafael said at one moment, as if he had been brought back to reality by an exorcism. "Can we just try to stay sane for a while and stop talking about the elections for at least 5 minutes?" Everyone nodded in agreement, and screams and hasty way finally gave way to silence. A few moments later, however, the truce was broken by an interrogation thrown by João as we were finishing eating: "How much time do you think will pass before they start shouting at you in the street?"

*Taking Politics Personal: Political Evacuation and Experiential Proximity*

Many of the situations I observed on that Wednesday illustrate several important characteristics of how politics manifested in everyday situations in São Paulo during my fieldwork.

The most straightforwardly visible was, ironically, the absence of public political action. In the first four weekdays before the election, I observed three unprompted political acts performed by non-activists in downtown streets. By contrast, the dreary stall of PT

militants where I had picked up Haddad stickers was the only open political act I saw in the first four days after the election. Public life in São Paulo appeared strikingly numb to the watershed quality of Bolsonaro's victory. Brazilian reference journals—*Folha*, *Globo*, and *Estadão*—showed equally indifferent reactions. Less than half of their headlines cast the election results as out of the ordinary during my fieldwork. This trend was even stronger in tabloids, where electoral stories were a cover topic only twice.[8]

Against the backdrop of these negative findings, the term "evaporation" that Nina Eliasoph (1998) uses to describe how political apathy enters the everyday life of middle-class U.S. citizens seems adequate to describe the political atmosphere that prevailed in São Paulo after October 7. There is, however, one important difference: in São Paulo, the disappearance of political action did not go hand in hand with avoidance of politics. On the contrary, Election Day intensely politicized social interactions.

These increases were particularly notable in arm's length transactional interactions. In the first four weekdays before the election, I engaged in 17 such interactions, and none of them addressed politics. One week after, political talk started to leak into these instrumental interactions, as my interactions with the women in the pharmacy and the bodega attest. From the 26 transactional interactions I counted having then, 5 carried political content. In one instance—my car ride to Paulo's—politics became the dominant topic of conversation.[9]

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[8] Examples of headline emphasizing the extraordinary nature of the election include, for example: "The stock exchange soars after the conservative wave in the new legislature" (*Estadão*, October 9); "Bolsonaro and Haddad commit to respect the Constitution of 1988" (*O Globo*, October 9). Headlines that presented October 7 as a common general election covered issues like government formation or run-off election polls—for example, "Bolsonaro and Guedes recruit executives for their administration" (*Folha*, October 9); or "Datafolha: Bolsonaro has 58% and Haddad 42%" (*Globo*, October 11). In tabloids, most headlines covered crimes, soccer matches, or practical advices—for instance, "The falsifier of cheap clothing strikes again" (*Súper Notícia*, October 11).

[9] There were interesting interactive differences between bolsonaristas and leftists in these types of interactions. The interventions of bolsonaristas tended to be longer. They were also more prone to lead to substantive deliberations and were less likely to demand political homophily.

Although these politicized talks remained a minority, their occurrence marked a substantial departure from their complete absence in the week before the election.

The electoral results were also frequently addressed in other forms of public talk. I overheard references to Bolsonaro's victory in coffee shops, restaurants, and bars. However, this topic appeared in fickle and short-lasting word exchanges rather than in long deliberative conversations. Early on October 8, for example, I heard a magazine vendor caustically saying to an acquaintance that "it would fun" seeing Bolsonaro "kill the fags" ("*matar viado)*. He was clearly referring to Bolsonaro's well-known and highly publicized homophobic positions, which had become a major campaign topic (Maracci 2019). A few moments after, he effortlessly switched to talk about soccer matches with his friend.

In personal interactions, politicization increase in intensity rather than frequency. Before October 7, the election was already a frequent conversation topic and continued to be so afterward. What was new in this period was how dominant it became as a conversation topic. The week before the election, I witnessed only one conversation where the election became a focal talking point. The week after, it was the protagonist in all but one conversation.

On October 9, Clarice toggled back and forth when talking with two friends in a museum coffee shop about maternity issues, moving out from São Paulo, the future of state patronage for the arts under Bolsonaro, and friendship and family and friend relationships stranged by political disagreements and Bolsonaro's victory.[10]

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Leftists' interventions were shorter. They were exclusively catered to express solidarity, and seemed to appear only after people were certain of having a minimal ideological affinity with another person.

[10] Clarice was an architect and a recent mother in her thirties. Her friends were a heterosexual couple working in the film and advertising industry.

The next day, as I described at the beginning of this section, I observed how both little and big stories and gossip about post-electoral violence and harassment guided Paulo, Rafael, and João's conversations at a dinner party.

On October 11, at a get-together in the apartment of Francisco and his partner with Paulo, Ana, and Julia,[11] the conversation meandered around inside jokes, stories of sexual conquests, and wholly unexpected and abrupt switches towards the election. One began when Francisco stormed from the kitchen into the living room, interrupted the juicy love story being shared by Juliana, and anxiously shouted how in June a friend had suffered a homophobic assault in Higienópolis, an affluent neighborhood not far from downtown. His intervention immediately led to a political detour in the conversation for more than an hour. This shift showed the level of interest and concern that the people present in that living room had about the state of Brazilian politics behind the political disinterest they attempted to perform, evidently without much success.

The next morning—at the very end of my fieldwork—I had breakfast with Emilia, an expatriate architect, and her partner Franco, an engineer. Considering that I had not seen Emilia in many years and had not met Franco yet, I expected our breakfast would contain a good chunk of personal catching up. But to my surprise, the election was pretty much the only theme we talked about in the two hours of our meeting.

Overall, these situations suggest that, at least in left-wing circuits, the evaporation of public political behavior that occurred after October 7 was accompanied by an equally strong process of political "condensation" in personal conversations. In a nutshell, politics seemed to have been "evacuated" from action to interaction.

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[11] Francisco was a makeup artist of around forty years. His partner was a artist of a similar age. Ana was a retiree and a neighbor of Francisco. Julia was a black woman in her late thirties employed as an office worker.

This evacuation did not only provoke changes in the frequency with which my contacts talked about the elections. It also changed how they talked about them. Politics stopped being "far from home." Overnight, it began to be felt very close—sometimes too much so—from tangible daily experiences.

The way the election results approximated the concrete experiences of my contact took many forms. Sometimes they brought the election to their direct daily experiences by engaging in speculations about the political leanings of the people they saw or interacted with. For instance, Pedro, an architect in his mid-thirties, told me he could not stop thinking who among the passersby he saw in the streets had decided to support Bolsonaro the day after the election. He became so flustered by these thoughts that he chose to spend the rest of the afternoon alone. Similarly, Jorge, a film student in his early twenties, mentioned that after the election, he decided to stop small talking to a bus driver he had befriended for fear of hearing he had voted for Bolsonaro.[12]

The proximity with which politics began to be felt after October 7 also became manifest in the frequency with which people related the election results with the emergency of mental and even physical discomforts. For example, Pedro described how time slowed the Monday after the election as he failed to shut down thoughts about it. Lina, a middle-aged public official, told me she woke up with intense back pains the morning after the election, which she attributed to stress from the election results. She also mentioned having had trouble sleeping, which most of my contacts also reported having experienced. Bernarda, an artist in her early thirties, told me during a telephone conversation in mid-October that she had been unable to sleep more than three hours since Election Day due to constant

[12] Jorge shared this information after I asked him on the matter in the last week of October 2018.

nightmares about Bolsonaro's triumph—in fact, electoral nightmares appeared to be widespread enough to merit op-eds on the matter; see Zuker and Zeytounlian 2018).

The type of post-electoral news, stories, and conversations that were most frequently attended to was another evidence of how close the Bolsonaro's triumph was felt. Information on public policies or campaign trails received very little attention. Most of the people's interest went to concrete stories of political harassment and violence in Brazilian streets.

Some of these stories came by word of mouth. I came to know of an altercation between a bolsonarista and a left-wing sympathizer in a downtown restaurant through Rafael, who learned of it via text messaging with friends. Another example is a harassment episode I heard from a black woman in her early thirties as we were descending an elevator late in October. She told me that a few days after October 11, a friend was jeered with racist slurs in the square in front of her building by young men in a car with Bolsonaro stickers.

My contacts also became familiar with other harassment stories through social media. An Instagram account that was particularly popular in disseminating them was *elenãovainosmatar*—literally, "he [Bolsonaro, it goes without saying] will not kill us"—.[13] It had had 66,000 followers twenty-four hours after its creation on Tuesday, October 9. By Thursday, it had 88,000 (Mena 2018).

Online news sources were also another important source of information on physical and symbolic political violence. They regularly published extreme stories of violence and harassment in the first post-election week. One such news was the swastika-in-the-belly incident I came to know through Paulo, Rafael, and João. This startling story was a

[13] Other examples of these repositories were *vitimasdaintolerancia.org*, an open Google maps titled *Violência Política no Brasil*, and *mapadaviolencia.org*. Until May 2019, the first two were still active as webpages.

conversation topic in all but one personal interaction situation during my fieldwork. In the incident, which occurred on a few hours before I joined Paulo and his friends for dinner, a young woman in a bus was attacked by Bolsonaro supporters after they confronted her over the anti-Bolsonaro stickers she carried in her purse. News of the attack, together with the alarming image of the woman's carved belly, was originally published on the Facebook page of a Porto Alegre journalist and began to be vertiginously disseminated by major online media outlets immediately after (*El Pais* 2018). Another news that received wide attention was an op-ed published on October 11 in *El Pais*, a major online journal. The text brought attention to the psychological toll of hostility acts against leftists, women, and LGBTQ people that the election had produced. It also included several first-hand accounts of these aggressions, like the following:

> A friend was breasting her child, who was less than a year old, in a bread store near her house, when one of two men walking through began staring at her and screamed: "When he [Bolsonaro] wins, these sluts [*vagabundas*] won't be able to this anymore (Brum 2018).

The protagonists of this news and many of the post-electoral political stories I heard in my fieldwork were not soldiers, party bosses, nor militants. They were not politicians, activists, or legislators either. Bolsonaro himself was only a contextual character. The main characters of these stories were ordinary citizens that appeared, borrowing from von Clausewitz' famous aphorism, "doing politics by other means." They certainly were not doing so through bellicose acts, but by executing politically motivated behaviors in their spare time. As a result, an ambivalence developed regarding the social domains these actors pertained to. They had a foot in the domain of politics and another in everyday life. They authored their actions as Bolsonaro supporters, but the settings where they performed them were anchored

in their experiences as laypersons. They performed their actions in their spare time and in the sidewalks and parks my contacts and many other people regularly traversed.

Last but not least, a final evidence of how much the election results were perceived as a personally close experience was the widespread development of sentiments of fear and worry, and the concomitant readjustment of social behavior that emerged out of these feelings, in the people I observed. The fear of retaliation from passersby made Paulo, for example, self-censor himself and take out a political sticker on his t-shirt. I witnessed another glimpse of similar feelings while chitchatting in an elevator on October 26, when a black woman in her thirties shared how the days after October 7 felt to her: "like a gun pointed at your head".

In sum, my observations in the wake of October 7 describe this moment as one of "political evacuation": public political performance evaporated, political talk skyrocketed in private interactions, and sentiments of malaise, exposure, and vulnerability became common for left-wing sympathizers. Further research should be conducted on how representative these trends were of broader political experiences of Brazilian left-wingers (and how different they are from those of Bolsonaro sympathizers), data I gathered from traditional and social media suggests what I observed might not have been atypical.

I found no news evidence, for example, of major demonstrations having taken place in the week after the election. In contrast to their intense coverage of the pre-electoral demonstrations for and against Bolsonaro, neither traditional nor online news outlets reported instances of demonstrations against (or for) the election results in the week after.

News connecting the election with feelings of worry and mental health erosion, on the other hand, were abundant and well attended even in centrist outlets. Stories of this type—a genre rarely seen up until 2018—were published eight times in *Folha* and *El Pais* the

first week after the election. Each was directly retweeted on average 64 times in the first three days after their release. This number was more than four times large than its equivalent figure before October 7. The most circulated news on mental health was the *El Pais* op-ed I described earlier. The text was directly retweeted 331 times three days after being published—a figure similar to the one received from run-off election poll results published by *Folha* and *O Globo* in an analog period.

Last but not least, there is also ample evidence of a generalized spike of consumption of news on political violence. Analyses of political dynamics in social media conducted by the Sala de Democracia Digital at Fundação Getúlio Vargas (SDD-FGV) show several supporting trends in this regard. The evening of the election day on October 7 saw 3,200 tweets on political violence being published per minute. Four days later, by October 11, 2.7 million tweets on violence had been poured into this platform—a volume 300% larger than in the *thirty* days prior to the election (SDD-FGV 2018a). On October 11, tweets on violence amounted to the combined number of messages in this platform about campaign issues related to public safety, corruption, economy, health, and education (SDD-FGV 2018b). It is also estimated that the swastika incident in Porto Alegre was tweeted about more than 329,000 times the day it occurred (SDD-FGV 2018a).

## TAKING IT PERSONAL: POLITICIZATION OUTSIDE POLITICS

Earlier in this investigation, I discussed three different theoretical approaches to understand how historical events shape the relationship between politics and everyday life when they

occur. In the following paragraphs I discuss how well each adjusts to the political shifts I observed occurring after Bolsonaro's victory?

A rationalist approach to evenemential influence would have expected decreases in left-wing collective action and political engagement after October 7 since a steep electoral defeat, and an impending extreme-right government diminishes the expected benefits of dedicating time and attention to politics. A rationalist outlook also assumes that changes in political attributes are not at play when an event occurs, so it would also expect Bolsonaro's victory would not provoke major shifts in how people related to politics.

These expectations did not adjust well to my observations, which saw a decrease in political action accompanied by substantial increases in political engagement and broad cognitive and perceptual changes in the way people made sense of politics.

The politico-cultural approach to evenemential influence advanced by Sewell, on the other hand, adjusted to my observations only partially well. October 7 generated cultural changes indeed. Some of them were fully ascribed into the domain of politics. But these "strictly political" changes received the least attention and provoked the fewest reactions. Very few conversations were dedicated to discussing how someone like Bolsonaro had won an election in the world's fourth-largest democracy or future courses of action in the context of an impending run-off election. Instead of talking about rallies or hemicycles, most of the conversations I witnessed directed their attention to the effects of the election in streets, parks, and squares. These consequences might have been of lesser importance than the policy and governance changes that the election results heralded, but they were also the most relevant for my contacts' personal experiences. In addition, these conversations did not occur in overt political activism sites, but in times of leisure where friends were being

gathered with the nominal objective of just having a good time. In these interactions, the domain of politics continued being weakly instantiated.

As I discussed earlier, this inactivation of politics as a direct lens of social experience did not bar my contacts from undergoing profound behavioral and perceptual political modifications. But these shifts did not originate in changes of meaning fully contained within the domain of politics. Instead, they were provoked by the way in which Bolsonaro's electoral victory managed to infiltrate political stories into my contacts' "personal domain"—that is, the domain of social experience related to individuals' self-understandings as distinctive, temporally continuous, physically concrete, and biographically consistent social agents. As a result, October 7 appeared to generate a politicization wave connectively.

The politicization process that that election provoked started in the way it crushed long and widely held assumptions about the size of popular support for the left and right. In a matter of hours, the left was forced to relinquish its long-held majority condition in favor of a right-wing block led by its most virulently reactionary strand.[14] And since in a liberal democracy electors are also restaurant-goers, joggers, neighbors, and coworkers, the sudden change in the content of what the "political majority" meant in Brazil after October 7 created an opening that allowed Bolsonaro's victory to impact identities and network perceptions from domains outside of politics. The election results became primarily embodied not in the figure of Bolsonaro or other professional politicians, but in the flesh and bones of the people my contacts ran into in their everyday life, who came to be perceived as potential authors or tacit supporters of the aggressions that my contacts vertiginously talked about in the wake of the election.

[14] I do not mean that this specific breaking point was enough to generate the post-electoral reactions I observed. Had the PT lost the election against the moderate PSDB, its historic rival, reactions to the election probably might not have been as strong and abrupt as the ones I observed.

These appreciations, however, appear to be connected to perceptual rather than factual changes in Brazilian political reality. While all of my contacts knew of politically induced acts of aggression, none witnessed any directly. Some of the key stories of violence they shared had actually occurred long before the election—for example, the assault that Francisco's friend suffered in June. Others were later found to be false. A few days after our dinner, for example, João found out that the restaurant altercation he had in the dinner at Paulo's had not actually happened. Tellingly, the widely covered swastika incident in Porto Alegre also turned out to be manufactured (Gazeta do Povo 2018).

As Table 1 shows, I also was unable to find much aggregate evidence supporting an association between changes in societal concern with violence and trends in factual episodes or news of aggression. The number of tweets on violence in the first four days before the election skyrocketed to 2.68 million—a nine-fold increase in relation to the four days prior to it. This variation supports a broader increase in societal attention to violence beyond my fieldwork observations. This spike, however, is not paired with a similar trends on news of violence or police reports on hate crimes. In these cases, absolute numbers remain relatively low, and underwent, comparatively, much lower increases before and after the election.

TABLE 1
VOLUME OF POLICE REPORTS, NEWS AND TWEETS OF VIOLENCE
BEFORE AND AFTER THE ELECTION [1,2]

| | Volume | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| | Oct. 4-7 | Oct. 8-11 | Δ |
| 1.—Tweets on Violence[1]. . . . . | 284,036 | 2,686,894 | + *945.96%* |
| 2.—Hate Crime Reports[2]. . . . . | 64 | 95 | + *048.43%* |
| 3.—News on Violence[3]. . . . . | 04 | 11 | + *275.00%* |

[1] Source: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Sala de Democracia Digital (FGV-SDD)
[2] Police Reports on Hate Crimes in the city of São Paulo.
[3] News on violence published in printed versions of *Folha de São Paulo*, *Estado de São Paulo*, and *O Globo*, and the online edition of El Pais.

*Table 1. Volume of Police Reports, News, and Tweets of Violence Before and After the Election*

These patterns indicate that the attention that political aggressions received during my fieldwork was not related to factual increases in violence or news on violence. Instead, they suggest they were associated with perceptual shifts that attempted to make sense—or "control", in White's parlance—the suddenly unavoidable realization that it was more probable that someone would have preferred voting for a raw, right-wing extremist than for any other of the alternative. Trying to make sense of this new realization, the people my contacts sighted in their everyday lives were resignified from being anonymous and generic entities to becoming politically inclined characters: political opponents, bolsonarista supporters, and final likely executors of his intolerant agenda.[15] This transformation generated a path through which political narratives began to connect with and reshape

[15] A startling example of this resignification process in the media was an op-ed in the Brazilian edition of The Intercept on October 16. It was titled "Bolsonaristas are wanting a Crystal Night", making a not so subtle association between the results of the election and the political environment that prevailed in Germany on November 1938, when the Nazi government prompted a wave of lynching instances against the Jewish community (Magalhães 2018).

personal domains of experience by grafting political components into its constitutive stories. This occurred through three processes I call attributional politicization, classificatory politicization, and motivational attribution.

*Attributional politicization* occurred when political stories began be used as accounts for social situations that were previously attended as non-political. One such instance was Francisco's talk of the homophobic aggression a friend of his suffered in June. Instead of tying this aggression to deep-entrenched "structural" processes of heteronormative violence—an argument commonly used in Brazil and elsewhere to account for these inexcusable acts—he saw it as an instance of violence triggered by Bolsonaro's political rise even if this act had occurred four months before the election, when Lula was comfortably leading the polls.

In some other instances, situations that were previously not tied to the realm of politics began not only to be explained through political narratives, but be classified as properly political moments. I call this process *classificatory politicization*. One example was how the way the woman in the elevator narrated the racial slurs her friend suffered shortly after October 7. In her account, her friend's aggressors had not acted as young, male, probably white, or probably wealthy people (or any combination thereof). Their behavior belonged fundamentally to the field of politics they had executed as Bolsonaro supporters.

Finally, *motivational politicization* occurred when people re-estimated upwards the prevalence of political motivations as drivers for social behavior. For example, by fearing being harassed for carrying a Haddad sticker after lunch, Paulo assumed that it was very likely that somebody would bring forward his condition as a Bolsonaro supporter and confront him downtown in the middle of the day.

These three perceptual shifts made the election results seem and feel closer than they objectively were. The election results began to be felt not as a political phenomenon, but as something that was ineludibly personal. It was from the feelings of personal vulnerability that came from this perspective where both avoidance of political action and hyper-political engagement in personal interaction rose. Rather than running independently from one another, they were two sides of the same attempts at stabilizing behaviorally and cognitively the contingency that the election results had provoked.

## CONCLUSION: EVENTS AS BRIDGES BETWEEN SOCIAL DOMAINS

At no time since perhaps the 1960s has studying the socializing effects of historical events been as relevant as today. Major political ruptures have taken front stage in global political reality at a disciplinary moment that has developed a keen interest in the relationship between contingency and social change (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Swidler 1983; Padgett and Ansell 1993; Sewell 1996; White 2006; Wagner Pacifici 2000). Against this backdrop, my work seeks to refine our theoretical understanding of events' poorly understood ability to abruptly change everyday life's political load right when they occur. I propose that this ability stems mainly from an event's ability to generate changes in meanings that lead to the infiltration of political stories into motivational and interpretive schemas that drive action in non-political domains of experience. Leveraging a rare opportunity to explore observationally and in real-time how an event impinges on people's daily lives, I conducted fieldwork in São Paulo in the wake of Jair Bolsonaro's electoral victory on October 7, 2018, to evaluate this proposition and existing approaches to evenemential influence.

I observed a near-complete absence of political action in public spaces. Had my research been focused only in them, I would have probably concluded that Bolsonaro's victory had gone without major consequences. In moments of intimate socialization between personal contacts, on the other hand, I saw his triumph becoming a dominant and heated conversation topic. If my fieldwork had been solely centered on this type of situations, I would probably have concluded that October 7 had generated a large and dark wave of political action in São Paulo's streets. But by conducting fieldwork on both types of settings, I was able to see that the almost complete absence of public political manifestations in the wake of Bolsonaro's victory did not go hand in hand with political apathy. The wake of October 7 was characterized as much by an evaporation of political action as by increasingly politicized exchanges in personal interaction networks.

This combination of engagement without action developed as a consequence of a chain of semantic, perceptual, and identity-related attempts to make sense—or "control" — the results of the election in ways that fit poorly with rationalist or politico-cultural approaches to evenemential influence, but aligned well with a connective stance that relates this influence with the capacity that events have to infiltrate political narratives into constitutive stories of social domains of frequent everyday instantiation.

In my fieldwork, this infiltration process originated in how the election results snatched the Brazilian left of its long-held majority position and gave it to a right-wing block dominated by its most extreme strand. This sudden change unleashed cognitive readjustments that required the making and use of new political stories and frames of reference to make sense of this shift. These cognitive readjustments became manifest in the vertiginous consumption and strong personal reactions to news and stories of violence and harassment against leftists and social identities associated with the left. These stories

provided a novel, compelling, and readily available frame of reference to understand the new political reality emerging after the election in Brazil. They also changed the meanings my contacts ascribed to the people they encountered as they traversed the city. Before the election, these persons were barely experienced as tangible presences. Afterward, they were felt as concrete—and dangerous—politicized and politicizing presences.

While the morphing of laymen from everyday extras into avid bolsonaristas did not do much to increase the instantiation of politics as a direct frame of experience, it introduced political narratives into domains of personal experience out of which processes of attributional, classificatory, and motivational politicization began to develop. Politics was more frequently used to account for social situations; a larger array of social moments began to be classified as political; and politics was imagined as a more frequent driver of people's actions. Out of these changes, my contacts began to perceive their everyday environments as unsafe and started to change how they imagined themselves in them. Their personal identities became tainted with a hue of vulnerability that transformed the political contingency of Bolsonaro's victory into a personal emergency. This transformation became the locus of the behavioral rearrangements I observed in my fieldwork: on the one hand, acts of self-censorship of political action, and on the other, a steep increase in political talk.

These perceptual and behavioral reconfigurations challenge available theoretical outlooks to evenemential influence.

Against the expectations of rationalist theories, Bolsonaro's victory led to a reduction of political action that was paired with an increase in political engagement and behavioral shifts related more to perceptual than factual shifts in São Paulo's political environment. But these changes did not fit smoothly with politico-cultural theories of evenemential influence either. The ruptures "for politics" that the election provoked received much less attention

and produced fewer reactions than the "bridging" ruptures through which the electoral results started to infiltrate into and inform non-political domains of social experience. These extra-political changes were the ones that modified political behavior. My contacts *did* politics without experientially *being* in politics. They reacted to Bolsonaro's victory not by "taking it politically", but by "taking it personally". These shifts align better with the connective perspective outlook towards evenemential influences I laid out in this investigation.

In a seminal essay, William Sewell characterized historical events as "dislocations and transformative rearticulations" of social structures (Sewell 1996, 861). Distilling further his powerful assertion, my research suggests that the most impactful of these rearticulations are the ones that confer events an ability to act as bridges between politics and other social domains. Events' capacity to reconnect domains are likely to play an important role in the construction of their intriguing ability to generate widespread political disruptions in "settled times" contexts when politics is infrequently instantiated as a domain of experience. In these situations, a connective path of influence can enable an event to produce large political modifications without necessarily having to build the cognitive scaffolding that people without prior sustained political experiences would need to robustly expand the time they dedicate to socially participate as political subjects (Fiske 1983).[16] In this sense, historical events' everyday political influence might be less directed by the properly political dislocations it produces than by the bridges they build between politics and more frequently instantiated domains of social experience.

[16] At the same time, the fact that events may politicize without necessarily strengthening frames of experience that are properly political might also be a reason why the politicization waves they produce tend to be short lasting.

All in all, this article has sought to make a theoretical contribution to our understanding of how events begin to exert everyday influences on those exposed to them. Previous models of evenemential influence see the locus of their effects in the changes they make in the political information and meaning environment of a society. But analytically, these explanatory models implicitly but strongly assume a type of social actor that is, to put it in a way, perpetually imprisoned in politics. By doing so, they leave unrecognized a large part of people's everyday experience, thus relinquishing explanatory capacity. In a time when the eruption of multiple political contingencies across the globe has made the study of politicizing role of events increasingly relevant, adopting a connective perspective recognizing and analytically focused on events' capacity to produce shifts in meanings spilling from politics into other non-political social domains of experience can help us move towards a fuller understanding of events as bundles of ruptures in political meanings, and be instrumental in understanding differences across them in their politicizing capacity in terms of variations in the type, number, and destination of the bridging connections they are able to perform.

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