



As the pace of technological change increases,  
innovation becomes the key to success

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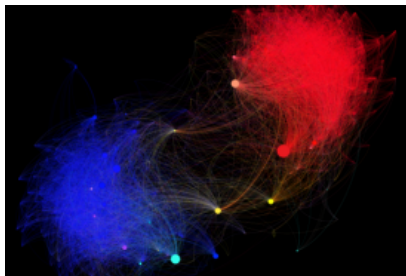
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## Brazil's electorate: still polarised but in a new way

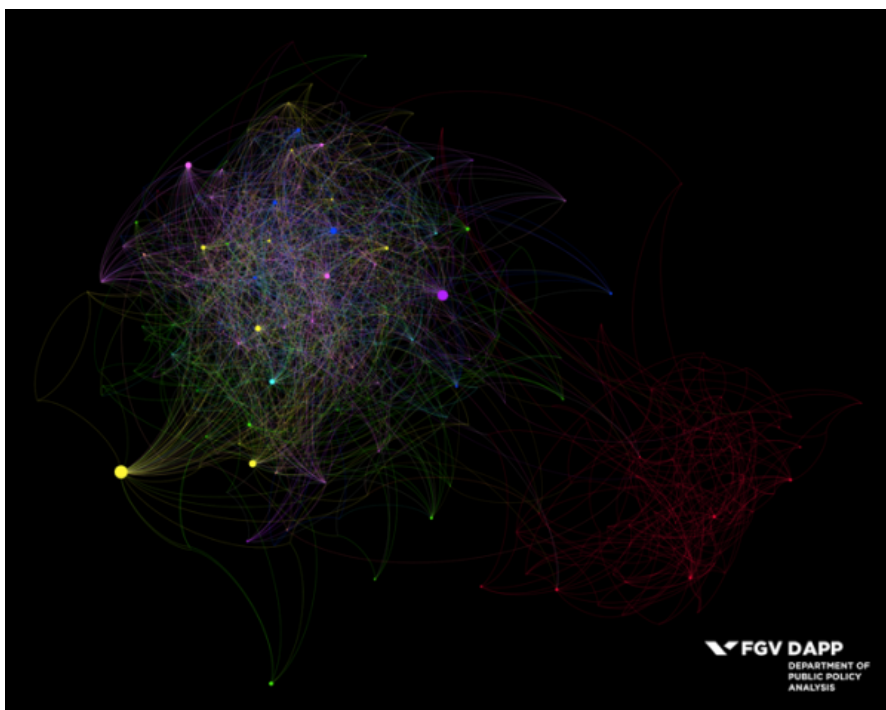
Jonathan Wheatley [Author alerts](#) Feb 24 17:20 [Comment](#)



Back in November, we wrote about an analysis of tweets in Brazil that illustrated the extreme polarisation of the country's voters on the eve of the presidential election on October 26. A striking image (seen in miniature on the left) generated by Marco Aurélio Ruediger and colleagues at the Fundação Getúlio Vargas, an educational institution in Rio de Janeiro, showed voters on each side of the two-way race talking exclusively among themselves and almost never to each other.

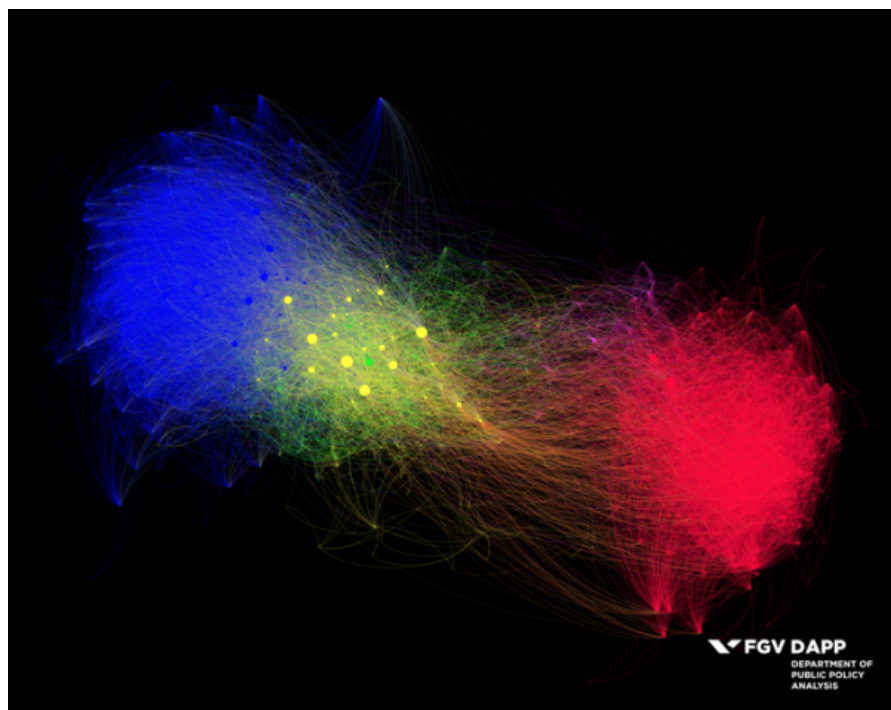
Three more snapshots produced by Ruediger and his team since the election suggest a big change has happened in the debate taking place on social media – but that supporters and opponents of the government remain as polarised as ever.

The first of the three looks at tweets on November 28 following the announcement of a new, market-friendly economics team. (Dilma Rousseff, the re-elected president, vilified “neo-liberal” economics during the campaign but subsequently named a strongly orthodox team to tackle Brazil's dire economic problems.)



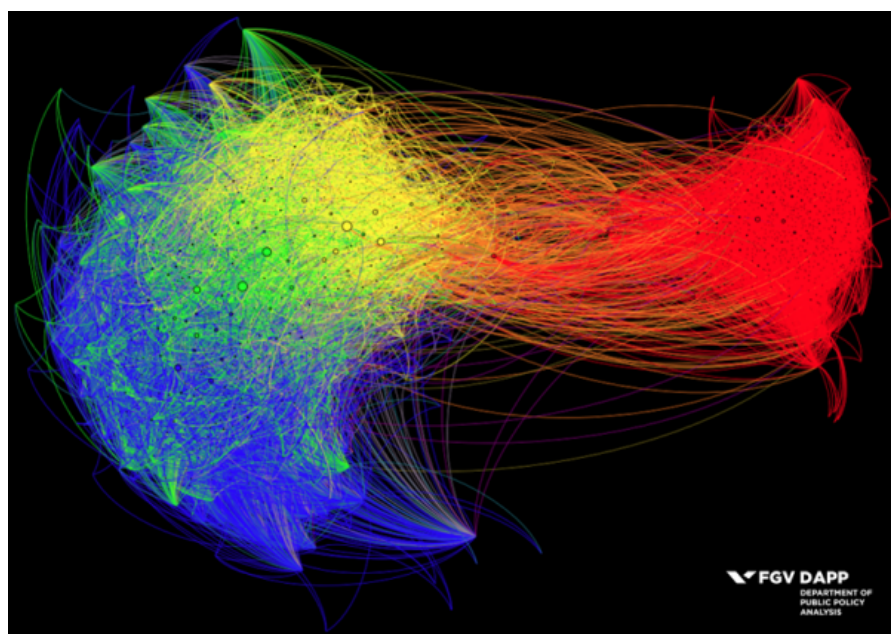
The image (above) analyses 26,000 tweets so is not as clearly defined as the one from October 25, which analysed 620,000. But there

is another striking difference between the two. Back in October, mediators between the two groups – journalists and other media outlets – formed only the most fragile of connections. In the image above, tweets generated by supporters of the opposition, the press and non-aligned groups form a colourful cluster on the left. The appointment of the Chicago-trained Joaquim Levy and his peers was seen as positive by government critics and generated a consensus among tweeters of various profiles. Only the government's supporters, many of whom resisted the appointments, remain isolated down in the bottom right-hand corner.



In an analysis of 360,000 tweets on February 1, the FGV team went on to capture the reaction to the election of a new president to the lower house of Congress. This may sound arcane but it was a significant moment. Eduardo Cunha is a member of the PMDB, a party nominally in the governing coalition. But he is also a severe critic of the government – a paradox not uncommon in Brazil – and he beat the government's own candidate. This was a blow to the Rousseff administration in itself, and a signal that it will be held more closely to account by Congress than it had anticipated. Once again, the event polarised government supporters and opponents. And, once again, the debate involving third parties was closer to the opposition than to the pro-government camp.

Finally, an analysis of 590,000 tweets on February 6 and 7, following the announcement of a new chief executive at Petrobras, the government-controlled but publicly-traded oil company at the centre of the biggest corruption scandal in Brazil's hardly corruption-free history.



More so than before, opposition and independent commentators are closely aligned to the left of the image, with government supporters over on the right. This image is more nuanced than the others, however – but not, sadly, in a way that suggests the birth of a culture of debate. Petrobras's new boss, Aldemir Bendine, was a disappointment to the opposition. But as the head of another government-controlled but publicly-traded institutions, Banco do Brasil, his was a name that went down well with many government

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supporters – hence their greater interaction with those bringing the news. However, the two sides of the political spectrum remain as far apart as ever.

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