

FORWARDING POWER

Mapping Political Information Flows on Telegram

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QUESTION: HOW DOES POLITICAL DISCOURSE GET ITS INFRASTRUCTURE?

**WHEN A POLITICAL MESSAGE TRAVELS ACROSS
TELEGRAM –
FORWARDED FROM CHANNELS TO CHATS DURING
AN ELECTION –
WHAT EXACTLY IS MOVING?**

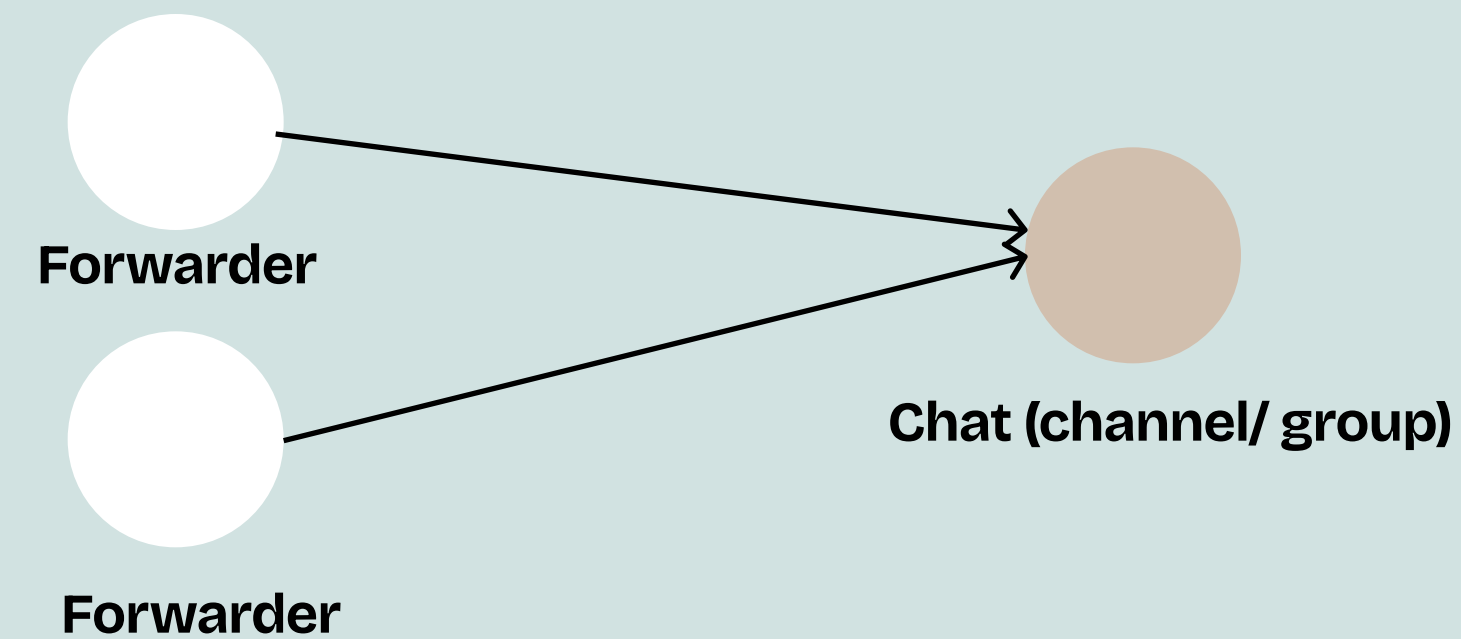
CONTEXT: TELEGRAM POLITICAL USE IN BRAZIL 🇧🇷



- After losing the 2022 elections, Jair Bolsonaro's political group called on their supporters to invade government buildings in Brasilia
- Encrypted messaging groups and channels were used to organize the anti-democratic attacks on January 8, 2023.
- Currently, Jair Bolsonaro is under arrest for coup attempt.

APPROACHES TO MAP TELEGRAM FORWARDING

FORWARDER → CHAT

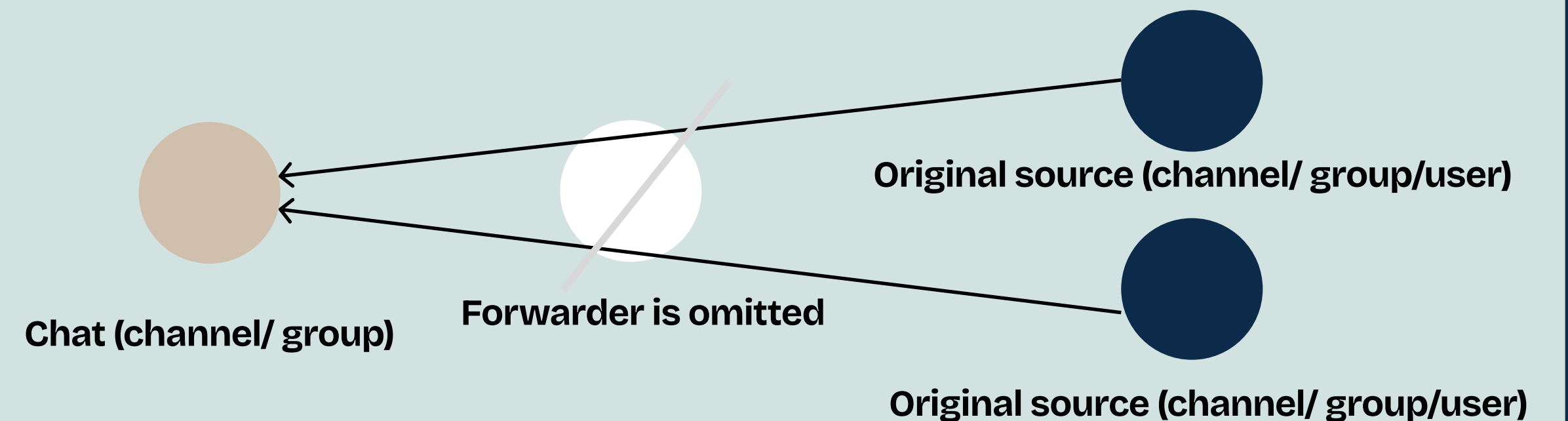


Direct network. Edges trace the forwarding action itself: who pushed the message into the receptor chat.

Limit: in groups, any user can forward; in channels, only admins. Nodes tell us little about source authority.

Forwarding action observed

CHAT → ORIGINAL AUTHOR



Direct network. The forwarder is dropped; edges connect the receptor directly to the channel/ group/ user that first authored the message.

Reveals: which chats draw on which sources – a sourcing pattern, not an action trace.

Forwarder omitted

FROM FORWARDS TO A SOURCE ECOLOGY

1,397 messages →
fwd_from_author and
chat pairs

**Forward
messages**

Edge = shared chats
(channels); weight =
frequency of co-use

Weight edges

**Compute co-
mobilization**

Which sources of
content are forwarded
into the same channels

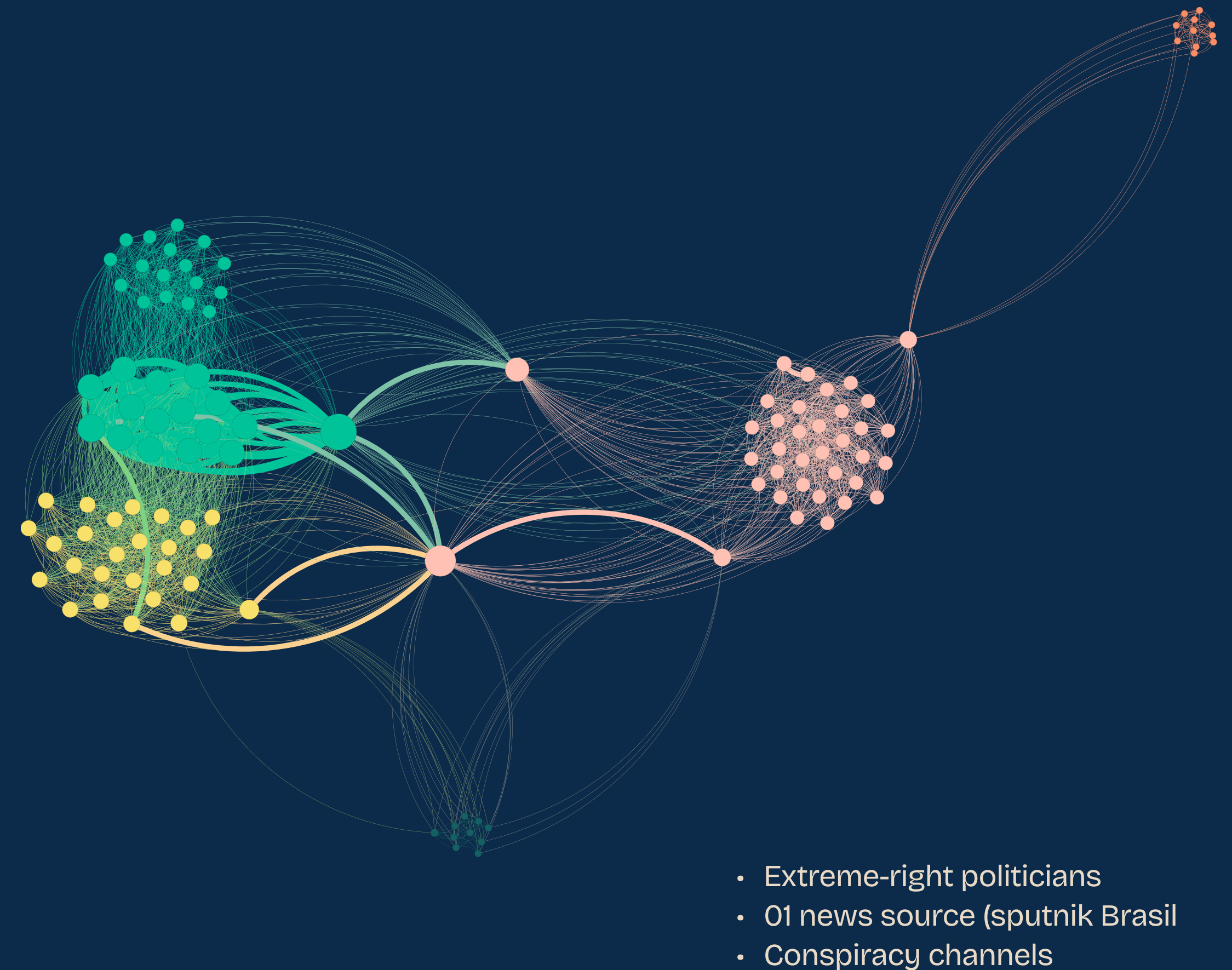
Gephi

Force-directed layout -
cluster structure
emerges

co-forwarded original authors

CO-SOURCES NETWORK

Undirected network. Only original authors (sources) remain; two sources are linked when they are forwarded into the same chat. Maps source authority: which channels are routinely cited together as references.



NETWORK FINDINGS

“Forwarding power” — the capacity to become an authorative passage point in political redistribution networks

DOMINANT POLES OF PRODUCTION

High-degree hub nodes – sources connected to dozens of others, forming the backbone of political information circulation across Telegram.

STRUCTURAL CLUSTERS

Groups of sources that travel together, invoked by the same communities of channels – revealing coordinated or habituated co-use, not just individual influence.

BRIDGING NODES

Sources that connect otherwise distinct clusters – functioning as informational brokers across political communities and making cross-cluster dialogue architecture visible.



**FOLLOWING THE AFFORDANCE AS
A METHOD MEANS ACCEPTING
THE PLATFORM AS AN ACTIVE
PARTICIPANT IN SHAPING WHAT
CAN BE OBSERVED AND
DESCRIBED**

Rogers (2013)

**NARRATIVES GAIN HIGH REACH
NOT BECAUSE RHETORICAL FORCE
ONLY, THEY ARE EMBEDDED IN
DENSE FORWARD NETWORKS
FAVORED BY THE PLATFORM**



Tucci & Gouveia (2025)

Forwarding power is not just about who forwards what.

**IT IS ABOUT HOW CERTAIN VOICES BECOME AUTHORITATIVE ON THE
CIRCULATION OF POLITICAL INFORMATION AND HOW PLATFORM
ARCHITECTURE MAKES THAT LEGIBLE.**

Forwarding Power (OSF): osf.io/gh4b3 | Encrypted Bias: osf.io/98mhq | TeleCatch: zenodo.org/records/15645167



THANK YOU

Questions?