

# SWINGS AND SCALES OF DEMOCRACY: THE “TRANSGENDER EPIDEMIC” AND RESISTANCE TO ANTIGENDERISM

## O PÊNDULO E AS ESCALAS DA DEMOCRACIA: “EPIDEMIA DE TRANSGÊNEROS” E RESISTÊNCIA À (RE) PATOLOGIZAÇÃO DAS IDENTIDADES TRANS

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### ABSTRACT

Brazilian democracy moves like a pendulum: from time to time its limits are expanded or retracted (Avritzer 2019). After a virulent dictatorial period, re-democratization was strengthened in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Public policies for the enfranchisement of the LGBT+ population were particularly important in this process. The rise of bolsorism has been pushing the democratic pendulum back to its extreme opposite. This, however, does not go unchallenged. Against this backdrop, we analyze the online circulation of a poster for a lecture about a “transgender epidemic”, which was due to take place the Legislative Assembly of Porto Alegre in March 2020. Such textual disputes may help us reconceptualize the current state of Brazilian democracy as a friction between distinct scalar projects (Carr and Lempert, 2016). The textual trajectories we analyze suggest that the back and forth movement of democracy is not linear as Avritzer (2019) seems to assume. The illiberal retraction of recent years coexists with values forged in periods of democratic expansion, which explains the fact that the lecture was canceled due to online protests. Such resistance suggests that de-democratizing scalar projects are neither homogeneous nor totalizing, which allows new political collectivities to contest attempts to disenfranchise them.

**Keywords:** textual trajectories; democracy; scales; transgender; resistance.

### RESUMO

A democracia brasileira se move como um pêndulo: de tempos em tempos, seus limites são expandidos ou diminuídos (Avritzer, 2019). Após um período ditatorial violento, a redemocratização foi gradualmente fortalecida. Políticas públicas para a inclusão da população

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LGBT+ foram importantes neste processo. A ascensão do bolsonarismo, no entanto, vem puxando o pêndulo democrático para o extremo oposto. Contudo, isso não acontece sem contestação. Nesse cenário, analisamos a circulação de um poster divulgando uma palestra sobre uma “epidemia de transtornos”, que aconteceria na Assembleia Legislativa de Porto Alegre em março de 2020. Tais disputas textuais podem nos ajudar a reconceitualizar o estado atual da democracia brasileira como produzido na tensão entre projetos escalares (Carr e Lempert, 2016) distintos. As trajetórias textuais sob escrutínio indicam que o vai-e-vem do pêndulo democrático não acontece de forma linear como Avritzer (2019) parece sugerir. A recente retração liberal coexiste com valores e ganhos conquistados em períodos de expansão democrática, fato que explica o cancelamento da palestra devido a protestos online e offline contra sua realização. Esse tipo de resistência parece sugerir que projetos escalares desdemocratizantes não são homogêneos nem totalizadores, o que permite a novas coletividades políticas contestar sua opressão.

**Palavras-chave:** trajetórias textuais; democracia; escalas; transexualidade; resistência.

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## INTRODUCTION

In a trenchant analysis of Brazilian politics, Avritzer (2019) expounds that democracy moves like a pendulum: from time to time its limits are expanded or retracted due to various sociohistorical changes. These pendular swings encompass “political fluctuations [...] along which elites and the masses share a clear democratic enthusiasm and moments when the middle classes, aligned with the elites and various sectors of the working classes, reject politics altogether or engage in anti-politics” (Avritzer, 2019:16, see also Avritzer, 2020). Such oscillations have been investigated through analyses of macrosociological phenomena such as the quality and transparency of elections; the autonomy of the Parliament and the judiciary; the scope of freedom of speech, among others.

After a virulent 21-year-long dictatorship which ended in 1985, the Brazilian population witnessed democratic expansion. Political commentators agree that in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century re-democratization was strengthened (Miguel, 2018). During this period, public policies for the enfranchisement of women and the LGBT+ population, and, importantly, civil society’s role in their design and implementation were instrumental in this process (Quinalha, 2019). Such policies include (but are not limited to) the creation of the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality, and Human Rights<sup>1</sup>, the criminalization of domestic violence and femicide, the implementation of “Brasil sem Homofobia” (*Brazil without Homophobia*)

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1. This was recently turned into the Ministry of the Family, Women, and Human Rights and is led by an Evangelical preacher, Damare Alves. When Alves took office, she happily announced that “it’s a new era in Brazil: boys will wear blue and girls will wear pink.” (<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/alexandreorrico/brazil-boys-wear-blue-girls-wear-pink-damare-alves>)

– a nation-wide program to fight discrimination on grounds of sexual identification, State-subsidized gender reaffirmation surgeries and trans-specific healthcare, the National Human Rights Plan, and the legalization of same-sex marriage.

The election of Jair Bolsonaro, a notorious homophobe, can be seen as a reaction to these changes. In 2016, the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, the first female president of the country, helped bolsonarism establish itself as a type of rationality and a form of government. To a significant extent, this is so because Rousseff's demotion was orchestrated by the political right with a view to furthering its conservative agenda. Bolsonaro managed to capitalize on the dissatisfaction of the middle classes at the moderately left-wing governments that preceded him. The population's dismay with the political left was in part political, in part economical and in part moral.

Freixo and Pinheiro-Machado (2019:19) affirm that bolsonarism is an "ultraconservative worldview, which preaches the return of 'traditional values' through a nationalist and 'patriotic' rhetoric profoundly critical of anything that may be minimally identified with the political left and progressivism". Daniel do Nascimento e Silva demonstrates with vivid empirical detail how language use undergirds bolsonarist modes of action by establishing a pragmatics of chaos, that is "a reflexive, ordered, and laminated method of producing a permanent sentiment of agitation, murk, and discontent" (Silva, 2020:507). Such rhetoric has been pushing the democratic pendulum back to its extreme opposite as the scope of human rights is diminished and a kind of illiberal democracy grounded on the figure of the enemy (Mbembe, 2017) seems to be taking root. Corrêa (2018) explains that the connections between the rightward leaning of Brazilian politics and its de-democratization dynamics cannot be fully apprehended if the recent transformations in gender and sexual orders are not considered against the grain of entrenched layers of conservative discourses that had been dormant since the country's re-democratization.

Changes in gender and sexual orders most notably collided with conservative worldviews in the heated debates about an anti-homophobia booklet the Ministry of Education prepared in 2011. The "gay kit", as it was nicknamed by conservative politicians, aimed to introduce non-discriminatory pedagogical practices. Not coincidentally, one week after the Supreme Court declared same-sex civil unions legal, Catholic and Neo-Pentecostal lawmakers caused a turmoil about the sexualization of children Rousseff's government was allegedly embedding in its educational policies. Then a burlesque backbencher, Bolsonaro spearheaded the debate and was perhaps the most vocal representative of the backlash against

gender equality and sexual diversity. The commotion was such that Rousseff vetoed the distribution of the material. Despite this, the “gay kit” became a specter in Brazilian politics and was later turned into one of the main platforms for Bolsonaro’s victorious presidential campaign in 2018. This specter thrives off fearmongering. According to its detractors, the “gay kit” had a hidden agenda: teaching school kids that they can choose their gender at will. In an extremely transphobic country like Brazil, this deceitful portrayal of anti-discriminatory policies had its toll, providing Bolsonaro the ammunition to stir up moral panics and advance his promises to put the country back on track.

The democratic expansion produced by recent changes in cisheteropatriarchal orders has been met with increasing suspicion by conservative factions of society who see their own sexual anxieties reflected in the figure of the angry white straight cis man (Kimmel, 2017) most notably embodied by Bolsonaro. Not surprisingly, Brazil has become a hotspot for anti-gender campaigns that oppose the enfranchisement of LGBT+ citizens through a crusade against “gender ideology” (see, for instance, Borba, 2019a; Corrêa and Kalil, 2020). Anti-genderism finds fertile ground in transphobia (Case, 2019) and has been pivotal to de-democratization dynamics globally. As Butler (2015) notes, however, recent political and social gains cannot be easily destroyed. Not only do they foster agency, but they also reshape the public sphere and its participation structures. Importantly, the affordances provided by social media amplify this phenomenon. A case in point is the viral performance of the chant *Un violador en tu camino* (“A rapist in your path”, sometimes translated as “The rapist is you”). Originally held in the Chilean capital city of Santiago in November 2019, the song and the embodied performance of rage against gender-based violence were re-enacted in several cities around the world as a form of feminist refusal to neoliberal de-democratizing dynamics (see Borba, Hall, and Hiramoto, 2020).

Faced with increasing re-entrenchment of masculinist rhetoric, women, queer, and trans people harness impetus to collectively oppose attempts to forestall their hard-won enfranchisement. However useful, Avritzer’s (2019) description of the democratic pendulum seems unable to shed light on the current paradoxes of democracy. The pendulum does not move linearly. Rather, Brazilian democracy might be better described as a friction between distinct scalar projects (Carr and Lempert, 2016) in which the maintenance or disruption of cisheteropatriarchal orders are at stake. While there are surely de-democratizing trends erupting in various levels of society (in Brazil and elsewhere), resistance to this kind of retraction abounds. Democracy, thus, seems to be a matter of scale: its shape, size,

and scope are constantly (re)negotiated. This nuance, however, is not captured by analyses that focus exclusively on the macrosociological level. Attention must be paid to how people in their daily lives tackle democratic retraction against the grain of the recent expansion and remodeling of the public sphere.

The coexistence of democratic expansion and retraction within specific contexts of action is the concern of this paper. We are interested in how people on the ground deal with recent changes in gender and sexual orders. Against this backdrop, we analyze the online circulation of a poster advertising a lecture about a “transgender epidemic”, which was due to take place at the Legislative Assembly of Porto Alegre in March 2020. Importantly, the case of the “transgender epidemic” happened a few months after the Brazilian Federal Board of Medicine (FBM) decided to comply with the World Health Organization’s code to depathologize transsexuality (Brazil, 2019; see also Borba 2016; 2019b).

The poster followed distinct online textual trajectories (Blommaert, 2005). In these itineraries, pseudo-scientific, religious, and political discourses serve to frame the lecture socio-historically and make evident various tensions regarding the expansion or retraction of democratic values. The textual itineraries we analyze suggest that the illiberal retraction of recent years coexists with values forged in periods of democratic expansion, which explains the fact that the lecture was canceled due to online and offline resistance. In an attempt to demonstrate how individuals zigzag through the current paradoxes of democracy, we investigate semiotic processes of scale-making in which gender and sexuality play a central role in (re)shaping participation in the public realm.

## 1. (RE)PERSPECTIVIZING AND (RE)CALIBRATING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Recent political analyses underline the fact that democracy cannot be taken for granted. The global rise of nationalist and nativist political projects has increasingly gained supporters and de-democratization dynamics have risen to unprecedented levels. Consider, for instance, the following quote:

*‘Anti-establishment’, ‘anti-system’, ‘anti-elite’, ‘populist’ sentiments are exploding in many mature democracies. After almost a century during which the same parties dominated democratic politics, new parties are springing up like mushrooms while the support for traditional ones is dwindling. Electoral participation is declining in many countries to historically unprecedented levels. Confidence in politicians, parties, parliaments, and governments is falling. Even the support for democracy as a system of government has weakened. [...] Loss of confidence in institutions extends to the media, banks, private corporations, even churches. People with different political views, values, and cultures increasingly view each other as enemies. They are willing to do nasty things to each other. (Przeworski, 2019:1, emphases added)*

This is the opening paragraph of Przeworski's most recent book *Crises of Democracy*. Faced with rising suspicion towards elections, the rule of law, and values such as inclusion, freedom of speech, and public debate, the author concludes that democracy is going through a seasonal crisis. According to Przeworski, this is particularly emboldened by the emergence of far-right ideologies that aim to strengthen modern masculinist views of the nation. That the waning quality of democracy is a concern to Przeworski is hinted at by the words we highlight above, which show the way he compares democracy today to what it used to be not so long ago.

Comparing and contrasting the gains of recent years to rising disgust towards them provides the canvas on which a host of recent analyses discuss phenomena that threaten democracy (see Snyder, 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2019; Nobre, 2020). The argument that support for democracy is in decline is an effort in what linguistic anthropologists call scale-making. Grounded on the tenet that "scenes of human life have innumerable qualities and dimensions that could be measured" (Gal and Irvine, 2019:218), the concept of scale refers to how individuals discursively make sense of their surroundings through measurements, calculations, quantifications, comparisons, and distinctions. Such acts may "refer to some quality, dimension or angle that might be measured [...] or [they] can refer to a particular value" (Gal and Irvine, 2019:218) such as democracy, public debate, and participation. Relational in nature, scale-making depends on points of view through which individuals assess the social and material phenomena in relation to their bigness or smallness. Since scale is a matter of perspective, a way of looking at some entity that emphasizes some of its dimensions at the expense of others, Carr and Lempert (2016) point to its epistemological and political nature. In other words, the ways people measure, qualify, and quantify the world are entwined with ways of doing and being.

Take, for instance, the (in)visibility of racial relations in the space of Rio de Janeiro. Fabrício and Borba (2019) discuss how the myth of racial democracy in Brazil meets its limits in the way the city's administration scales its official linguistic landscape with a view to emphasizing certain racial dynamics at the expense of others. Due to the 2016 Olympic games, the once derelict harbor area was remodeled to reposition Rio as a forward-looking city, ready to venture into the future. The gargantuan Museum of Tomorrow materializes this project. The structure of the building points outwards onto the sea as if showing the direction the city heads to. The size of the building, the enormous amounts of money spent on its construction, and the media attention it attracted, however, erase the historical importance of the neighboring area which served as the entry point

for millions of enslaved Africans. Comparing the Museum of Tomorrow with the small, underfunded, crumbling Museum of the New Blacks, which tells the story of slavery, one clearly sees conflicting scalar projects. The white-pristine Museum of Tomorrow eclipses Rio's colonial past. As Fabrício and Borba (2019) show, while up-scaling itself as a giant moving into the future, Rio down-scales the memory of slavery and thus makes the horrors of colonialism and racial inequalities look unimportant.

Inasmuch as scales are made, they can be remade and repurposed as "we orient, compare, connect, and position ourselves" (Carr and Lempert, 2016:3). Although the official linguistic landscape of Rio down-scales its colonial history, the graffiti on the walls of the city shed light on how this image is challenged from the bottom up. Portraying untold histories of Black Brazilians, these graffiti re-scale the harbor area and its memory as crucibles of resistance to structural racism the Olympic renovations attempted to disguise. As this example shows, when we scale, we (re)perspectivize and (re)calibrate space, time, people, and values via semiotic processes that throw into sharper relief conflicting ideological vantage points.

Analyses of democratic values and institutions regularly engage in scalar projections. Avritzer (2019), for instance, uses quantitative data to track democratic expansion or retraction. According to him, 42,7% of the Brazilian population believed democracy was the best political system in 2006. In 2018, a moment of bolsonarism had established its pugilistic rhetoric, this number reached its historical lowest: only 19,4% (see, Avritzer, 2019:143). Dwindling belief in democracy is obviously staggering, but quantification is unable to show how people on the ground, as it were, deal with values such as participation in the public sphere and the debate of contrasting ideas.

A scalar-sensitive approach manages to give nuance to Avritzer's view of the democratic pendulum. Attention to scale-making requires an analytical stance which "reject[s] the broad binary, assumed in many analyses of social life, that contrasts the 'micro' with the 'macro', as if time, space, and social activity all took place on a single dimension of bigness and smallness" (Gal and Irvine, 2019:218). As such, viewing the current crises of democracy as the outcome of frictions between contradictory scalar projects accounts for the commingling of the *long durée* and situated daily practices. At this juncture, timespaces get juxtaposed, allowing for the clash of different perspectives. Danillo Silva (2020), for instance, demonstrates that bolsonarist rhetoric reperspectivizes democratic values through the lenses of authoritarianism which, in turn, transmogrifies the 1964 military coup

into a democratic revolution through a populist discourse that is typical of far-right extremism (see, also, Wodak, 2015).

The rise of bolsonarism and the decline of democracy can only be fully grasped if we consider the changes in cisheteropatriarchal orders against the grain of dormant conservative values re-democratization temporarily forestalled. This pattern also finds resonance elsewhere since anti-genderism is instrumental to the global rise of right-wing extremism. At first blush, slogans such as Trump's "Make America great again"; Bolsonaro's "Brazil above everything, God above everyone"; Orban's "Hungary first"; Kaczynski's "There is only one Poland" etc. seem to highlight the greatness of these countries. Nonetheless, "these calls for national revival and unity invariably include appeals to [...] a sturdy masculinity, [...] heterosexuality as the only acceptable norm [...] and discipline" (Graff, Kapur, and Walters, 2019:551). Undergirding these claims to alleged democratic greatness is the desire to defend the nation from its enemies. As Borba (2019a) demonstrates, gender equity and sexual diversity figure prominently among such adversaries.

At stake is the clash between different scales of normalcy and deviance. As a perspectivizing pragmatic enterprise, scalability "involves laborious semiotic, textual, and discursive work which separates, classifies, values, and ranks things, people and their attributes according to parameters of normalcy and deviance" (Moita-Lopes and Fabrício, 2018:464). Meaning-making efforts to anathematize gender variance are egregious in contemporary Brazil. On the one hand, since the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, women, queer, and trans people saw unprecedented levels of enfranchisement, which changed the layout of their participation in the public sphere and provided them grounds for harnessing agency. Conservative factions of society have reacted quite viscerally against these changes. Central to their plights has been the figure of the threatened child who is depicted as at the mercy of feminist and LGBT+ activists (see Borba, forthcoming; Sauntson and Borba, forthcoming). The online trajectories of the "transgender epidemic" poster lay bare frictions between distinct scales of normalcy and deviance that (re)perspectivize and (re)calibrate the public sphere. Understanding this friction requires an overview of how trans identities have been put within the remit of medical institutions. We turn to this debate in the following section.

## 2. DE/RE/PATHOLOGIZATION: INTERSCALING TRANS

Since the fall of the dictatorship in 1985, Brazil has witnessed a steady re-democratization process which seems to have met its limits in 2016 with

the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. A hallmark of re-democratization is the strengthening of social participation and the promotion of citizenship for vulnerable groups such as women and the LGBT+ population. The establishment of supranational associations such as the *Associação Brasileira de Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Travestis, Transexuais e Intersexos* (ABGLT) in 1995 and the *Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais* (ANTRA) in 2000 epitomize the growing politicization of non-normative sexual identities in Brazil. These associations along with local advocacy groups, intellectuals, and NGOs have been at the forefront of the battle to widen LGBT+ rights.

The role of travestis and trans people in this context is significant. Pivotal in Brazilian trans activism have been mobilizations to depathologize transsexuality, which aim to dismantle the institutional control over trans bodies and subjectivities by physicians, psychiatrists, and the State (Zimman, 2012; 2019; Vergueiro, 2015). The pathologization of trans identities is harnessed on radically essentialist biomedical knowledge which institutionalizes “heterosexual reproductive hegemonies” and promote the “binary regulation of sexuality” (Butler, 2017:47). Particularly important in this process are the World Health Organization’s International Code of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association in which trans identities figured as mental disorders until quite recently.

Against this backdrop, since 2009 the international activist platform *Stop TransPathologization* has promoted various campaigns with a view to withdrawing the diagnostic categories of “transsexualism” and “gender identity disorders” from the remit of the ICD and the DSM. Among other things, depathologization entails access to hormone therapies and gender affirmation surgeries without the need for a psychiatric diagnosis. It aims to change social perceptions of trans identities as pathological and diminish transphobia. In fact, *Stop TransPathologization* has come a long way. As a direct outcome of international mobilizations, in 2012 the APA published the most recent version of its DSM in which the term “disorder” has been replaced by “dysphoria”, a concept that is less clearly associated with a psychiatric ailment (see, however, Lima, 2017 for a discussion of what the author dubs “gender euphoria”). In 2018, the WHO announced the extinction of “transsexualism” and “gender identity disorder” and their replacement for a non-diagnostic category named “gender incongruence”. Importantly, the most recent version of the ICD does not include trans identities in the chapter on “Behavioural and Mental Disorders” as it previously did. Rather, they are placed in a new chapter titled “Conditions Related to Sexual Health”. These changes reflect evidence that trans

and gender diverse identities are not conditions of mental ill-health and classifying them as such can cause enormous stigma and suffering (Favero, 2020a, 2020b).

Although with different degrees of intensity, depathologizing dynamics have been advanced by the Brazilian Federal Board of Psychology (FBP). Its Resolution 1/2018 establishes that trans identities cannot be treated as mental disorders. Despite this prohibition, “sexual conversion therapies” (aka “gay cure”) have been a political platform for conservative psychologists who even ventured a candidacy for the FBP’s board in 2019 but were unsuccessful. More recently, the Federal Board of Medicine (FBM) decided to comply with the World Health Organization’s code to depathologize transsexuality. The publication of the FBM’s Resolution 2.265/2019 changes the make-up of Brazilian State-sponsored trans-specific healthcare provision towards a less pathologized view of trans identities within the Brazilian Public Healthcare System (SUS). This was only possible due to the steadfast mobilizations of trans people and allies. Depathologization was not an act of good faith. Instead, it was slowly built up from the ground.

The changes in these documents produce *de jure* but not necessarily *de facto* depathologization. As a number of transfeminist activists and scholars propound, although the diagnostic nomenclature changes are an important step towards full citizenship, agency, and trans-affirmative healthcare, the way they have been done still places gender identity within the remit of medicine, psychiatry, and the State (Bagagli, 2019; Vergueiro, 2019; Favero, 2020b). As such, trans identities appear to be at the intersection of various measures of normalcy and deviance and can only be understood if we take into account how these scales interact and (in)form one another. Carr and Lempert (2016:13) explain that interscalability is “the way potentially scalable qualities or dimensions can be made to reinforce each other, almost like a kind of scaffolding on which people rely but take for granted”. Trans identities and trans-specific healthcare are still framed by nosological cisnormative perspectives which “stigmatize, marginalize, and dehumanize gender non-conformity” (Vergueiro, 2015:61, see also Bagagli, 2020). In this sense, the risk of repathologization remains potentially on the horizon. This is so because the categorical reorganizations deployed by the medical establishment to reduce the stigmatizing effects of its terms do not forestall the power of historically sedimented pathologizing scales in trans people’s daily lives.

Due to the recent affordances provided by re-democratization and the growing visibility and politicization of gender variance, trans people have managed to challenge biomedical views of their identities as pathological. Such views, though, have a long historical pedigree and institutional clout, which makes

debunking them more difficult. The interplay between depathologization dynamics and the constant risk of repathologization places trans identities at the intersection of conflicting scalar enterprises (Carr and Lempert, 2016). What is at stake in these various assessments and reclassifications is the legitimacy and authenticity of certain gender identities at the expense of others. In a nutshell, de/re/pathologization throws conflicting scales of normalcy and deviance into sharper relief. With the rise of bolsonarism, the clash between such scales has become even more salient since it attempts to strengthen cisheteropatriarchy through the exclusion of those who challenge it. In this scenario, grassroots depathologizing scalar endeavors must be taken as indexes of ampler democratic values such as the right to one's identity, autonomy, and non-discrimination.

This paper focuses on the clash between repathologizing and depathologizing scalar movements in a historical period that is marked by de-democratization. This friction is visible in the case of the "transgender epidemic" lecture and the way its poster circulated on the web. In March 2020, psychiatrist Akemi Shiba was invited by representative Eric Lins to give a talk titled "Epidemia de Transgêneros: o que está acontecendo com nossas crianças e adolescentes?" (*Transgender epidemic: what is happening with our kids and teens?*) at the Legislative Assembly of Porto Alegre. Not by chance, the lecture would take place a few weeks after the FBM published the Resolution 2.265/2019, celebrated by trans advocates for its depathologizing stance.

### 3. NOTES ON DATA

Intending to understand how the interplay of de/re/pathologization and de/re/democratization takes shape in situated discursive practices, we engage in an online "ethnography of scale" (Carr and Lempert, 2016:10). Such a methodological procedure entails scrutinizing how people produce, perspectivize, and dispute viewpoints of the surrounding social world in their daily lives. Of interest here is how the "transgender epidemic" poster circulated on social media and garnered uptakes which put at play distinct hierarchies of normalcy and deviance and conflicting understandings of what is doable and sayable in the public space. Support to and resistance against the lecture emerged as its poster reached various online audiences. The data we investigate encompass textual itineraries in which different scalar projects emerge. On the one hand, attempts to repathologize trans identities index the recent democratic retraction for which opposition to the enfranchisement of LGBT+ constituencies provide ammunition. This

repathologizing/de-democratizing scalar project did not go untroubled though. The online circulation of the poster took it to places where it found vigorous resistance through depathologizing/redemocratizing scales.

The poster circulated across various online contexts and reached diverse publics and counter-publics. On the website of Articulação Conservadora (*Conservative Alliance*)<sup>2</sup>, a right-wing group of which the psychiatrist and the lawmaker who organized the event are active members, the poster frames gender variance as an epidemic, which reiterates a pathologizing scale the Brazilian Federal Board of Medicine does not acquiesce any longer. When the poster travelled to social media such as Facebook, however, it was met with diverging positions with regards to the lecture's legitimacy. To draw attention to the lecture, an advertisement was posted on the association's website on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (see Figure 1 below).

What is happening to our kids and teens?

ESCOLA  
sem doutrinação

SCHOOL  
without indoctrination

Palestra  
**EPIDEMIA  
DE TRANSGÊNEROS**

O que Está Ocorrendo com  
nossas Crianças e Adolescentes?

**dia 18 de março quarta às 19:00**  
Sala de Convergência da Assembleia Legislativa

**Dra. Akemi Shiba**  
Médica pela UFRGS. Psiquiatra de Adultos e de Infância e Adolescência pelo Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre. Psicoterapeuta de Orientação Analítica de Adultos Crianças e Adolescentes. Psicoterapeuta EMDR de Adultos, crianças e adolescentes.

Lecture  
**TRANSGENDER EPIDEMIC**

Wednesday, 18th March at 19:00  
Convergence room at the Legislative Assembly

Figure 1. Poster for the “transgender epidemic” lecture

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/MaespeDaDiversidade>. Access on Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

The poster lays bare its proponents' ideological perspective through several scale-making strategies. First, gender variance is likened to a contagious disease that may potentially affect a large number of individuals. The white-font bold-faced capital letters of “epidemia de transgêneros” (*transgender epidemic*) seem to overpower the image of the boy, whose body posture make him look quite small vis-à-vis the problem

2. See <https://articulacaoconservadora.org/>.

threatening him. That trans identities may be deemed the outcome of an infectious disease is legitimated by the words “palestra” (lecture) and the credentials of Akemi Shiba, who is nominalized as a doctor (i.e. Dra.) with a vast knowledge of the theme. The fact that the lecture would take place at the legislative assembly also serves to give it authority. In other words, gender variance is perspectivized as a widespread health problem that deserves the attention of lawmakers and the public alike.

Trans activists and advocates were soon notified and took action. For instance, “Mães Pela Diversidade” (*Mothers for Diversity*), a civil society group of mothers against discrimination on grounds of sexual and gender identification, published an open letter on its Facebook page to prevent the lecture from happening. At the time of writing, the post had 3.7 thousand reactions, 450 comments, and had been shared 804 times<sup>3</sup>. Signed by various human rights advocates, the petition argued that the lecture was based on unscientific evidence and would use a government building (the Legislative Assembly) and public funds to further discrimination within a democratic institution. These mobilizations attracted mainstream media attention and multiple outlets reported on the case. The online newspaper Sul21 published two reports on the event, which will also be analyzed.

Our analyses are divided into three distinct but interrelated moments. First, we laser in on an early incarnation of the “transgender epidemic” poster and how it perspectivizes gender non-conformity as an outbreak of an infectious disease, which runs counter to current understandings within the WHO, the APA, the FBM, and the FBP. Second, we focus on how distinct collectivities resisted the lecture with attempts to rescale trans identities outside the remit of pathologizing discourses. To do so, we scrutinize textual frictions that emerged due to the resistance Mães pela Diversidade spearheaded on its Facebook page. Online and offline protests against the lecture was such that it was canceled. We discuss its cancellation in our third analytical movement.

#### 4. SCALES OF RESISTANCE WITHIN DEMOCRATIC RETRACTION

Since it was first publicized online, the lecture was marked by conflicts between its supporters and its detractors. Such conflicts expose the clashing scalar projects of distinct constituencies and give us a more nuanced view of how participation in the public sphere is shaped by the coexistence of both democratic retraction and expansion. The negative impact of the lecture led the lawmaker responsible

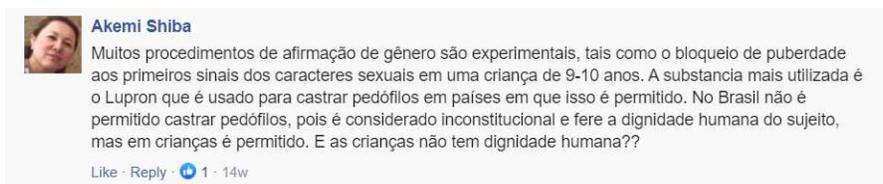
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3. See <https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade/posts/3943848352299893>

for its proposition at the Legislative Assembly, Eric Lins (DEM, *Democrats*), to be interviewed by *Gazeta do Povo* (*People's Gazette*), a conservative news outlet. In the article titled "A PSOL [*Socialism and Freedom Party*] representative tries to prohibit a psychiatrist's lecture about 'transgender epidemic'", the representative affirms that "we want to warn the population. People undergo sex reassignment surgeries but later regret it. They undergo double mastectomies, cut their sexual organs off; it's a one-way road, there is no way to go back" (*Gazeta do Povo*, 2020).

Another relevant moment of this textual trajectory encompasses the publication of the article "Warning: dangers of gender ideology and of gender affirmation treatment" (*Articulação Conservadora*, 2020), which appeared on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 on the website of the association of which both Eric Lins and the psychiatrist Akemi Shiba are members. In this article, Shiba scales trans identities through a pathologizing perspective. This is done via selective recontextualizations (Milani, 2020) of fake news and stereotypes which have no resonance in current understandings of gender variance in the social and human sciences or in psychiatry for that matter. The pathologizing scale the doctor projects onto trans identities provides the ideological grounding for the lecture Shiba would deliver at the Legislative Assembly, but, interestingly, also offer ammunition for online counteraction.

Shiba and her accomplices portray gender variance as a disease and thus contradict the ICD and the DSM. This provoked reactions to their pathologizing/de-democratizing scale. Comments debunking the psychiatrist's arguments motivated her to stand up for her position. Responding to comments that either accuse her of a crime under the law or that point to the fallacious character of her argument, the psychiatrist makes her perspectivizing attempts more solid in the comment below (see figure 2).



*Many gender affirmation procedures are experimental such as puberty hormone blockers at the first signs of sexual characters in a 9-10 year old child. The most used substance is Lupron which is also used to castrate pedophiles in countries that permit this. In Brazil, castrating pedophiles is not allowed, because it's considered unconstitutional and harms the individual's human dignity, but it is allowed for children. Don't children have human dignity?*

Figure 2. Psychiatrist Akemi Shiba comments criticisms of the detractors.

Source: <<https://articulacaoconservadora.org/alerta-perigos-da-ideologia-e-tratamento-de-afirmacao-de-genero/>>. Access on Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

In this comment, Shiba makes use of analogies, comparisons, and metaphors which bring trans people, children, and pedophiles close together. Comparing and contrasting the use of Lupron as a measure to chemically castrate child abusers elsewhere and its supposed application to block trans teens' puberty put seemingly unrelated issues *pari passu*. Her argument is that human rights activists would protest the use of this drug to pedophiles, but do not bother when it comes to protecting children. The figure of the threatened child takes center stage at this debate. Note, for instance, the poster of the lecture (Figure 1 above) which pictures a white boy in distress. As Edelman (2004) cogently shows, the figure of the child, usually portrayed as an innocent in need of protection, represents the possibility of the heterosexual future against which trans folks are positioned as the embodiment of a futureless society. Race also chimes in as an important dimension of the apocalyptic future Shiba and her acolytes want to ward off from evil. The representation of a white boy whose body posture and gaze index frailty, smallness and distress seems to suggest that gender and sexual diversity are not the only issues at stake. As such, the alleged "transgender epidemic" seems to be a threat not only to cisheteronormativity but also to white supremacy as it is likely to dismantle the threshold on which a desired gender and racial order rests. If, as her analogy suggests, pedophiles cannot be made to undergo hormone treatment to curb their sexual drive, why should we let children be the subject of such a disastrous measure? The white boy portrayed in the lecture poster and the image of children in need of protection Shiba advances in her comment scale trans identities as a malaise that threatens the possibility of a healthy future (see, in this sense, Favero, 2020a; 2020b).

Hosting a lecture guided by nonscientific content in a Legislative Assembly seems to respond to a projection of de-democratizing scales that pervades Bolsonaro's Brazil. Integral to this scalar project is the invention of enemies (Mbembe, 2017; Borba, 2019a). The moral crusade against gender equality and sexual diversity undergirds bolsonarism and its modes of action at various levels of the polity. Antigenderism thrives off moral panic against the small but powerful changes we witnessed in recent years with regards to social and judicial reforms spearheaded by feminist, queer, and trans activism (Corrêa, 2018; Miguel, 2018). If, on the one hand, Shiba and her acolytes seem shaken by the recent changes in gender and sexual orders and try to curtail their reach, these changes have modified the distribution of agency and interfered in the structures of public participation, on the other.

The friction between these scalar projects is clearly seen in comments against the "transgender epidemic" lecture on Facebook. Contrary to what Avritzer

(2019) seems to suggest, these textual conflicts illustrate that even in moments of democratic retraction the social gains of erstwhile foster forms of agency that complicate the picture of the pendulum as moving linearly. The exchange below, which includes comments to the open letter *Mães pela Diversidade* posted on its social media, illustrates this scalar tension (see Figure 3)<sup>4</sup>.

**Cláudia** *Why, instead of trying to censor her, don't you go to the Lecture and discuss what she says civilly? The fact that you want to cancel the doctor's lecture just shows that she must be right.*

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**Lúcia** *We didn't hear of trans kids because most of them were Repressed at home and forced to hide not to "dirty the family name". To think that in the past trans people and others who are part of the LGBTQIA+ acronym is sheer ignorance, we have always existed, but were forced to live in the shadows, many times being murdered or committing suicide, things that still happen with alarming frequency. Trans kids who have their gender identity respected and validated by their parents and health professionals see the chance of committing suicide drastically reduced. You don't need to have ample knowledge of gender to know what it is. I have always known I'm a girl as trans kids also know what/who they are. Regarding hormone treatment in Brazil it is prohibited until one reaches legal age. Hormone blockers may be used in some cases for teenagers, but with psychological counseling (which is mandatory) this is just a right, gender dysphoria is a serious thing, thus we can't demonize hormone blockers. To sow prejudice and disinformation like this, to say that trans is an epidemic, this is the type of thing that cannot be tolerated.*

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Figure 3. Exchange between Cláudia and Lúcia on Facebook.

Source: <<https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Cláudia's<sup>5</sup> comment projects a scale in which she compares the requests for canceling the transphobic lecture to censorship, an act she views as anti-democratic and *uncivilized*. Thus, she frames resistance to the repathologization of trans identities as a threat to democracy while discourses that reiterate an exclusionary stance through conspiracist and hyperbolic rhetoric based on selective recontextualizations and fearmongering are portrayed as "freedom of speech". Cláudia's attempt to legitimize the lecture, however, does not go unchallenged. Lúcia's comment, for instance, questions the pathologizing/de-democratizing scale

4. Due to space constraints we show only the English translation here. The Brazilian Portuguese version of the data can be found in the appendix.

5. We use pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the research participants.

Cláudia advances. Positioning herself as trans (*we have always existed*), Lúcia makes use of several pragmatic measurements (Gal and Irvine, 2019) such as quantifications and qualifications of such quantifications. For instance, she says that “believing trans people or other members of the LGBTQIA+ group did not exist in the past is *sheer* ignorance. We have *always* existed, but were forced to stay in the shadows, being *many times* murdered or committing suicide, things that still happen with *alarming frequency*.”

Through these re-scaling strategies, Lúcia manages to challenge the portrayal of gender variance as an infectious disease whose outbreak is currently underway. Quite the contrary. Trans people *have always existed but have been forced to hide*. What has changed is the public visibility of such identities made possible by recent social and judicial reforms (Zimman, 2019). Comparing a pathologizing stance with a depathologizing one is also an important scaling act Lúcia performs. She says that “trans kids whose gender identity is respected and acknowledged by their parents and healthcare providers *drastically reduce* their chances of committing suicide”. In her comment, Lúcia entextualizes depathologization discourses forged by transfeminists and LGBT+ activists (Vergueiro, 2015; Bagagli, 2020). The exchange between Cláudia and Lúcia illustrates how the gains of recent years provide the impetus for resistance in moments of democratic retraction. Although the democratic pendulum is currently moving back to an authoritarian extreme, this does not happen without contestation.

Upon contrasting distinct scales of normalcy and deviance (Moita-Lopes and Fabrício, 2018), Lúcia’s comment challenges Cláudia’s attempt to repathologize trans identities and highlights current de-pathologizing stances advanced by transfeminism and, importantly, by healthcare associations. To do so, Lúcia questions the highly institutionalized scales (i.e. the State and Medicine) Cláudia projects to support her argument. This is done by rescaling hormone therapy and the use of hormone blockers as trans people’s rights, which allows Lúcia to recalibrate Cláudia’s point-of-view as “prejudice”, “disinformation”, and “the type of thing that cannot be tolerated”.

This exchange lays bare distinct moral and scientific values the friction between de/re/pathologization dynamics establishes. It also makes clear a clash between de/re/democratizing dynamics and the configuration of public debate. The use of terms such as “freedom of expression”, “censorship”, and “civility” exemplifies how scales of normalcy and deviance are at stake. In other words, the (re)entextualization dynamics of the lecture produces links between gender variance and democracy in which the shape, size, and scope of the latter are

rehashed. Although political analysts seem to agree Brazil faces a turn to illiberal democracy, this portrayal is problematized by people who question the democratic retraction in their daily practices. The clash between these two scalar projects can also be seen in the exchange below.

*Cláudia* literally gender non-conforming children and teenagers are indeed being subjected to puberty blockers, early harmonization and surgeries. She refers to an epidemic because this happens ever more frequently and is questionable from whichever point of view. Exactly opposite of what is said, there is nothing that questions gender in these procedures. It's a matter of accommodating boys' and girl's bodies to gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity with which they identify because that's what they are taught. Debating different views of this or any other matter is essential to a democracy. Attempting to prevent the psychiatrist's lecture from happening is not.



*Carol* Preventing the dissemination of hatred and bigotry yes, dear. If it was a lecture questioning, again, in a HEALTHY way, absolutely nobody would be bothered. It's not because LECTURE is written that people should shut up and listen to someone whose opinions are wrong or are not educative. Flat-earthers by the way give many lectures, so they must be right, isn't it? Now do me a favor and show me, preferably with reliable sources, where and how is this DELIVTISH EPIDEMIC which forces children to undergo surgeries and hormone therapies. What we want is to debunk the normalization of the view that trans is Wrong and that cis is right. What is happening mor frequently is that unspoken topics of the past are now talked about, it's to take issues that were seen as taboo instead of being respected by society and made normal.

**QUESTIONING GENDER IS NOT A DISEASE AND DOES NOT NEED TREATMENT.**

*There is no epidemic because it is not a disease.*



Figure 4. Exchange between Cláudia and Carol.

Source: <<https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Cláudia goes on to perspectivize the cancelation of the lecture as a threat to democracy once she scales the theme, i.e. a “transgender epidemic”, as “essential to a democracy”. In this sense, she interscales (Carr and Lempert, 2016) State/Democracy and Science/Medicine/Psychiatry as mutually legitimating her repathologizing/de-democratizing stance. The processes of differentiation and classification which qualify the “doctor’s lecture” (Figure 3) and the “psychiatrist’s lecture” (Figure 4) within the Legislative Assembly index the way this semiotic process gets materialized in Cláudia’s comments. Interscaling the State/Democracy and an outdated pathologizing psychiatric perspective works to give Cláudia’s view

institutional legitimation. Despite the power of the institutional scales she projects, her attempt to support the democratic value of the lecture do not go unquestioned.

Carol's comment challenges Cláudia's repathologizing/de-democratizing perspective. By questioning the natural and compulsory character of the cisgender privilege (Vergueiro, 2015; 2019), Carol down-scales the importance of gender binarisms and of deterministic understandings of socialization by questioning Cláudia's view that trans people reiterate rather than problematize gender stereotypes. Since "scaling projects frequently disavow if not erase their own communicative labor, personnel, and material supports, naturalizing the scalar distinctions they produce" (Carr e Lempert, 2016: 14), Carol's down-scaling endeavor is pragmatically achieved by questioning naturalized psychiatric and biomedical notions of gendered behavior as starkly dichotomous and immutable. So while Cláudia interscales State/Democracy/Psychiatry, Carol disentangles these pragmatic linkages and argues that "there is no epidemic since [it] is not a disease." As such, Carol scales the cancelation of the lecture as a way to reaffirm democratic values by belittling Cláudia's perspective while amplifying the importance of depathologizing trans identities. This is done by semiotically recalibrating points-of-view. According to Carol, what "is essential to a democracy" is to "curb the dissemination of hatred and bigotry" to which a transphobic lecture contributes and which authorizes her view that it should be halted.

To support the cancelation of the lecture, Carol ironically makes use of an analogy juxtaposing two forms of scientific denialism which, on the one hand, pathologize trans identities despite the growing scientific acknowledgment that they are not mental disorders, and, on the other, flat-Earth discourses (*flat-earthers also give a lot of lectures so they must be correct, right?*). As such, Carol delegitimizes the "transgender epidemic lecture" as scientifically valid. In other words, trans identities are as pathological as the Earth is flat. This way of recalibrating the repathologizing scale brings into the remit of this debate ampler sociopolitical issues such as scientific denialism and anti-intellectualism bolsonarism validates and which characterize the retraction of the democratic pendulum in Brazil at a marcosociological scale.

As our analyses so far highlight, the case of the "transgender epidemic" throws into sharper relief various tensions between distinct scalar projects for Brazilian democracy. The recent social and judicial gains related to gender equality and sexual diversity are met with growing suspicion but do not seem to wane as they keep providing grounds on which agency against repathologizing/de-democratizing dynamics can be contested. This can be seen in the example below.

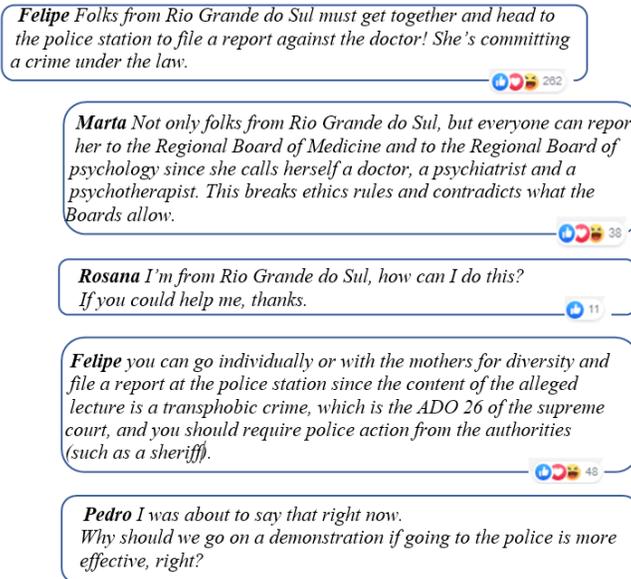


Figure 5. Exchange between Felipe, Marta, Rosana, and Pedro.

Source: <<https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

In this exchange, the textual trajectory of the controversy about the lecture and its cancellation swerves to scales of a different nature. The interactants' pragmatic work jumps from scales of "democracy" and "science" to scales of law-enforcement and crime. At stake here is the lecture's legitimacy within judicial norms upheld by the State and professional associations such as the Federal Board of Medicine. The repathologization of trans identities is gradually reperspectivized by these commentators through categories of "crime", "justice", "legality", and "ethics". Such measures of qualification and classification are made in such a way that the boundaries between online and offline political action are blurred. In other words, a police report should be filed because Akemi Shiba is committing a crime under the law (i.e. transphobia) and professional misbehavior which is subject to sanction by the FBM and the FBP.

The intensity of the online controversy was such that the case was reported by various media outlets. Due to space constraints, here we focus on how the online newspaper Sul21<sup>6</sup> reported the event since it demonstrates how the textual

6. On its webpage, Sul21 is described as a media outlet that upholds democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, and social development. See <https://www.sul21.com.br/quem-somos/>.

trajectories of the “transgender epidemic” encompass the interweaving of online-offline resistance to repathologization within a period of democratic retraction. Such resistance first forced the proponents of the lecture to change its title and later led to its cancelation. Challenging naturalized scales of normalcy and deviance, the coordinated online action of collectives, NGO’s, human rights activists, and various civil society actors made the transphobic and de-democratizing nature of the lecture visible. Such scaling of the lecture also mobilized progressive politicians who engaged in countering the event and the values it entailed.

A case in point is the news article published on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 whose headline is “Luciana Genro summons the Public Ministry against the ‘transgender epidemic’ lecture at the Legislative Assembly”. Sul21 explains that “Akemi Shiba has been criticizing changes in the legislation on sex reassignment surgeries and hormone therapy for people with gender incongruence *which goes against the recommendations of international organizations and the Federal Board of Medicine itself*” (SUL21, 2020:sp, emphases added). The newspaper reperspectivizes the pathologizing scales at stake in other moments of this textual trajectory. Medical knowledge and science are used to portray Shiba’s view of gender variance as in disaccord with what is propounded by medical associations to which as a psychiatrist she should abide. This depathologizing stance can also be glimpsed at the use of the term “gender incongruence” instead of “gender identity disorder”, which suggests that Sul21 reiterates the current depathologizing view of trans folks. The repathologizing/de-democratizing scale is delegitimated by highlighting its dissonance with the international scientific consensus about trans identities. The State is also called upon to challenge the transphobic nature of the lecture. Sul21 reports that a formal complaint has been filed at the Public Ministry of Rio Grande do Sul demanding the cancelation of the lecture. The complaint was signed by several lawmakers as well as civil society representatives.

Interscaling current medical/scientific knowledge and the State seems to have had some traction in countering the repathologizing/de-democratizing values the proponents of the lecture attempted to validate. The staunch resistance the lecture faced on social media led to its cancelation, a fact that Sul21 reports, as shown in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6. Image from the article in Sul21.

Source: <<https://www.sul21.com.br/ultimas-noticias/politica/2020/03/luciana-genro-aciona-ministerio-publico-contrapalestra-sobre-epidemia-de-transgeneros-na-al/>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

In its online textual trajectory, the “transgender epidemic” poster interpellated various publics and counter-publics, producing intense textual disputes over the meaning and legitimacy of trans identities in contemporary Brazil. From its first incarnation on the Associação Conservadora website on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to its recontextualization in Sul21 on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the poster mobilized debates in which conflicting scalar projects for Brazilian democracy were negotiated. The repathologizing/de-democratizing scale projected by the lecture was constantly challenged by depathologizing/redemocratizing projects to which the recent changes in gender and sexual orders in Brazil provide authority. The poster was thus thrust into a semiotic and ideological debate in which individuals “metapragmatically employ multiple signs, engaging in a multidirectional movement” (Fabrício, 2020:3) whose unpredictability offers possibilities for change. These scalar clashes show that even though Brazil currently experiences democratic retraction due to bolsonarism and its antigender politics, the recent changes in cisheteropatriarchal orders cannot be easily vanquished. Trans psychologist Sofia Favero (2020a:15)

cogently summarizes the ideological disputes we analyze here: “If we are told that the LGBT community defiles institutions (families, schools, among others), we must counter-argue that the hegemonic lenses about our bodies impose violence these institutions purportedly fight against. They create the problem and deposit the responsibility on us. Not any longer!”

## FINAL REMARKS

Tracking the online trajectories of the “transgender epidemic” poster through a scalar-sensitive approach sheds light on the inevitable commingling of situated semiotic resources interactants use locally and broader social, historical, and cultural dimensions. This means that in their scaling actions, individuals “metapragmatically index the ideological value of the signs they utilize [and] position themselves, dynamically shifting from the small-scale interactional event to large-scale interaction with historical meanings” (Fabrício, 2020:5). This theoretical tenet provides the ground for the argument we advance in this paper: from a discursive point-of-view, democracy and its values are radically contingent, multidimensional, heterogeneous. In other words, although democracy moves like a pendulum, its swings are not linear. Quite to the contrary. They are rife with scalar oscillations – ups-and-downs different groups produce and orient to in their daily practices. As such, political collectivities may be regarded as the outcome of joint scalar projects whereby forms of agency are fathomed and deployed in local semiotic actions. Our analyses suggest that social media provide affordances for such an endeavor.

Indeed, the textual trajectories we analyze suggest that the back and forth movement of democracy is not linear as Avritzer (2019) seems to assume. Rather, the illiberal retraction of recent years coexists with values forged in periods of democratic expansion, which, in the case we analyze in this paper, explains the fact that the lecture was canceled due to online protests against it. Such resistance to the repathologization of trans identities seems to suggest that de-democratizing scalar projects are neither homogeneous nor totalizing, which allows for new political collectivities to contest their disenfranchisement and challenge oppressive regimes in their daily lives.

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## APPENDIX

Data in Brazilian Portuguese.

**Cláudia** Por que, em vez de praticar censura, vocês não vão a palestra para discutir civilizadamente o que ela diz? O fato de quererem cancelar a palestra da doutora só mostra que ela deve ter razão.

Curtir · Responder · 13 sem · Editado  141

^ Ocultar 33 respostas

A opção "Mais relevantes" está selecionada, portanto, algumas respostas podem não ser exibidas devido ao filtro.

**Lúcia** Não se ouvia falar em crianças trans pq a maioria era reprimida em casa e obrigada a se esconder pra não "sujar o nome da família". Achar que antigamente não existiam pessoas trans e outras pessoas que fazem parte da sigla LGBTQIA+ é pura ignorância, nós sempre existimos, mas éramos obrigados a ficar nas sombras, muitas vezes sendo assassinados ou cometendo suicídio, coisa que infelizmente ainda acontece com uma frequência alarmante. Crianças trans que tem sua identidade de gênero respeitada e validada pelos pais e profissionais de saúde tem a chance de cometer suicídio drasticamente reduzida. Vc não precisa ter vasto conhecimento sobre gênero pra saber o que é. Eu sempre soube que sou menina, assim como as crianças trans tbm sabem o que são/quem são. Sobre tratamento hormonal aqui no Brasil ele é proibido até a maior idade. Bloqueadores hormonais podem ser usados em alguns casos na pré-adolescência, mas se tiver acompanhamento psicológico sendo feito (o que é obrigatório) isso é apenas um direito da pessoa, disforia é uma coisa séria, portanto não podemos demonizar os bloqueadores hormonais. Disseminar preconceito e desinformações como essa, falando que ser trans é uma epidemia, é o tipo de coisa que não pode ser tolerada.

Curtir · Responder · 13 sem  45

Figure 3. Exchange between Cláudia and Lúcia on Facebook.

Source: <<https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

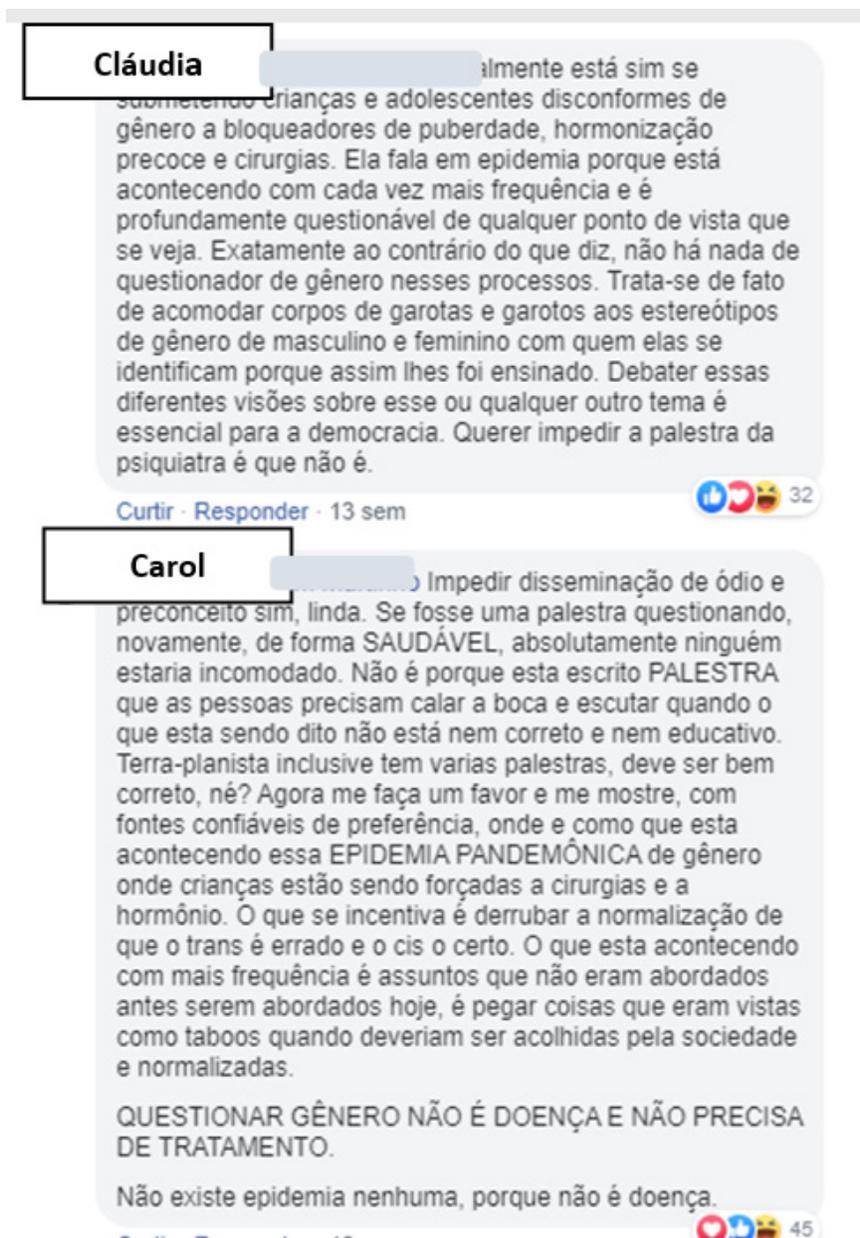


Figure 4. Exchange between Cláudia and Carol.

Source: <<https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

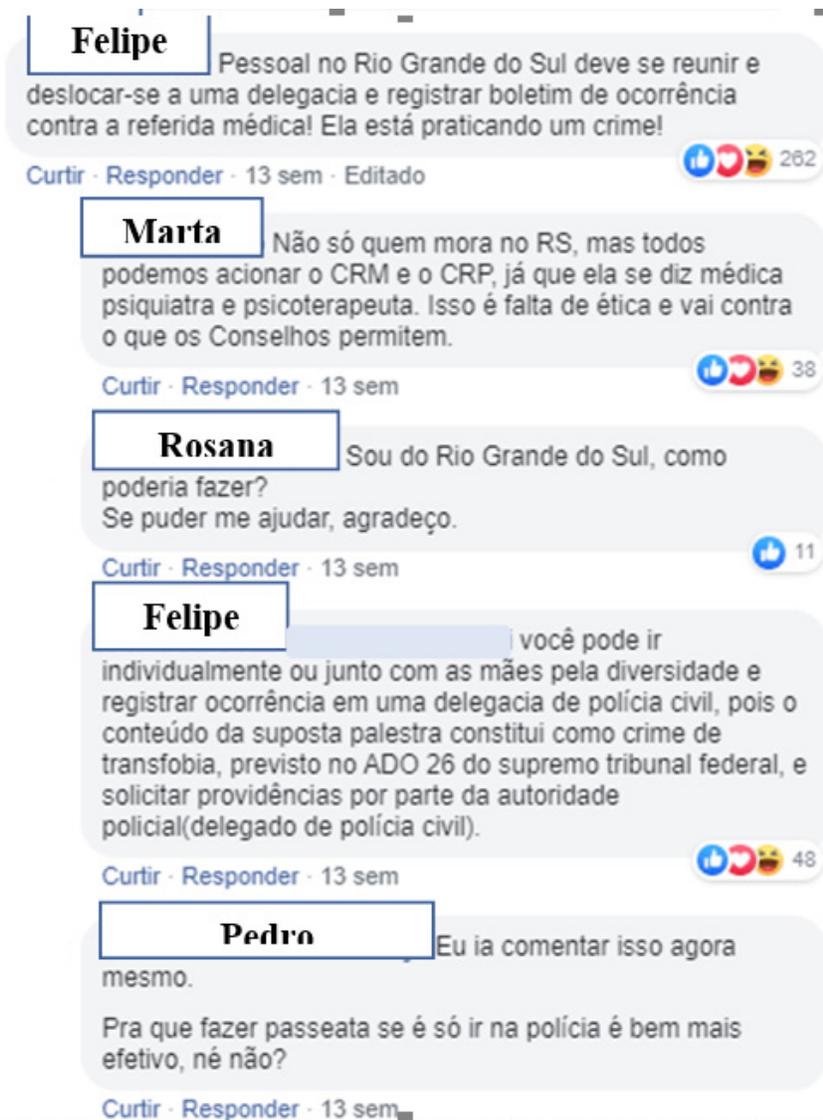


Figure 5. Exchange between Felipe, Marta, Rosana, and Pedro.

Source: <<https://www.facebook.com/MaespelaDiversidade>>. Access Jun 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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