

The 2018 Brazilian Elections and the Digital World: a case study about the digital game *Bolsomito 2k18*¹

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Abstract

This article is the result of a collective study conducted by anthropology researchers who study electronic games from the Center for Studies of Modernity (NEMO), INCT / InEAC / UFF. It is an analysis of a game produced during the 2018 election campaign entitled “Bolsomito 2k18”. The fieldwork began shortly after the game’s release, just before the first round of voting, and lasted until the forty-fifth day of the new Jair Bolsonaro government. The article is presented in three parts: in the first, we present a dense description of the game²; in the second part we raise considerations about the Spiritual Warfare and Seven Mountains doctrines preached by the pastor and now minister, Damares Alves.³ In the third part we discuss the ethnography and proposals of the plan for attaining power found in the Seven Mountain power plan, according to the theory of justification and *cités*, developed by Boltanski and Thévenot (1991).

Keywords: electronic games; 2018 Brazilian elections; Bolsomito 2K18.

¹ This article is an amplified version of a lecture realized in a round table during the event called: “Liberty, emancipation and democracy: the paradoxes of the digital” organized by Prof. Jorge de La Barre (GSO/UFF), at the French Consulate, Rio de Janeiro, in 11/21/2018. See also <<https://www.facebook.com/events/501628963685394/>>.

² Considering that many readers from the field of anthropology are not familiar with electronic games, we understand that it is important to conduct a detailed description of this game in particular. See also <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnZrWbiXCAY>>.

³ Minister Damares Alves is a pastor at the Igreja da Lagoinha neopentecostal church in Belo Horizonte, MG.



As eleições de 2018 e o mundo digital: estudo de caso sobre o jogo *Bolsomito 2k18*

Resumo

O presente artigo é resultado de um trabalho coletivo realizado pelo grupo de pesquisadores de Antropologia do NEMO (Núcleo de Estudos da Modernidade), INCT/InEAC/UFF que investiga jogos eletrônicos⁴. Trata-se de uma análise do jogo produzido durante a campanha eleitoral de 2018, intitulado, *Bolsomito 2k18*. O trabalho de campo foi iniciado logo após o lançamento do jogo, pouco antes do primeiro turno e durou até o quadragésimo quinto dia de governo do novo presidente eleito, Jair Bolsonaro. O artigo será desenvolvido em três partes: na primeira, apresentaremos uma descrição densa do jogo; na segunda parte, levantaremos algumas considerações que dizem respeito às doutrinas da Batalha Espiritual e dos Sete Montes da qual a atual Ministra Damares Alves é pastora; na terceira parte propomos uma discussão entre a etnografia e as propostas do plano de poder dos sete montes, a partir da teoria da justificação e das *cités*, desenvolvidas por Boltanski e Thévenot (1991).

Palavras-chaves: Jogos eletrônicos; eleições 2018; Bolsomito 2K18.

⁴ The work was conducted by Laura Graziela Gomes, coordinator of the project “Conflitos, controvérsias, identidades e moralidades nas plataformas digitais em perspectivas comparadas” [Conflicts, controversies, identities and moralities on digital platforms in comparative perspectives] (PPGA/NEMO/InEAC), Tony Bela Alves (master’s student/PPGA), Christian Thorstensen (master’s student /PPGA), and Isabele Acácio Soares (undergraduate student in anthropology, 5th semester), with support from Diogo Iendrick (master’s student /PPGA), and Diogo Castro (bachelor in anthropology/UFF).

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Introduction

Since Brazil's political and institutional crisis that erupted in June 2013, followed by the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, the judgement and incarceration of former president Luís Inácio (Lula) da Silva, and culminated in the electoral process of October 2018, digital platforms have had an active participation in Brazilian political and social life. Defamation campaigns conducted by sharing memes, images, videos and leaks on social networks, as well as the circulation of fake news on groups of *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Whatsapp*, wound up dominating other media. Even if these online activities were already part of people's daily lives, they became more intense and impregnated with meanings through their political and moral use, especially by supporters of the candidate Jair Bolsonaro who, according to electoral polls before the first term, would not have won the elections, if former President Lula was a candidate. It is important to emphasize this fact, because Bolsonaro was elected through his digital activism (particularly on Twitter) and the digital activism of his supporters and sons, also on their Twitter accounts.

It was in this context that on October 5th 2018, on the eve of the first round of voting, the electronic game *Bolsomito 2k18* was released for purchase with discounts on *Steam*.⁵ Produced and distributed by *BS Studios*, the game was classified as “violent”, “bloody”, “casual”, “political”, “indie”, “action”, and as containing “nudity”, by the developers and gamers. An important detail is that *Bolsomito 2k18* was initially scheduled for release on 28 September, and had its release delayed until two days before the first round of voting.

The narrative of the game is the trajectory of a “good citizen” called *Bolsomito* who, “tired of living in a society corrupted by the enemy”, goes out on a “great journey”, to destroy the fearful Red Army. It is another version of the struggle of Good against Evil imposed as a mission for the hero by a character called the *Oráculo* [Oracle] *de Carvalho*. The game has ten stages, each one with a title that indicates not only the sequences of the hero's journey to the conclusion of each one, but also who are the enemies to be fought and annihilated, where they are, what they do and who their leaders are. At the beginning of each stage, *Bolsomito* meets with allies before facing his enemies, all of whom are Non-Playable Characters (NPCs),⁶ although all of them were inspired by real people including his real supporters and even those he denominates as his enemies and linked to the “Red Army”.⁷

5 Steam is a electronic game sales platform. For more information, access: <https://store.steampowered.com/about/>. Accessed on 28 March 2019.

6 Characters not controlled by players (humans), but by the system of the game.

7 The “Red Army” combines the Workers Party (PT), the Landless Farmers Movement (MST), and the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST).

The first analysis made of the game concerns its playability. The first important observation is that a player has only one option when playing the game, which is to connect to the avatar of *Bolsomito*, because the game does not offer the option to connect to another character, even as an ally of *Bolsomito*. Thus, by imposing this condition on players, the game requires them to adopt the character's "point of view", from the beginning to the end of the journey. Before beginning the game, on the opening screen the player faces *Bolsomito* poking the Brazilian flag which is tattered and burning on the ground, in front of the Praça dos Três Poderes Plaza [Three Powers Plaza] in Brasilia, with the sculpture entitled "Os Candangos" melting in the background. To the right of the character is the main menu, and in the background we hear music in the *tecno brega* genre.

It may or may not be well-known, so it is important to highlight, that the electronic game industry in Brazil is already more profitable than "traditional" forms of entertainment. In 2017, for example, the income from games used exclusively on domestic computers was double that generated by music streaming apps, even with half the number of users, and this does not include money spent by users on games for smartphones and electronic consoles such as PlayStation. From a national perspective, in 2018 alone, revenues in the industry were estimated at US\$1.5 billion, from a total of 75 million players. These generalizations do not help us analytically, because we are dealing with an activity with many nuances and particularities. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the practice of playing videogames is already routinely present in the lives of Brazilians.

Bolsomito 2k18 has certain characteristics that allow classifying it in the *Beat'em Up* style, a type of game that became known in the 1980s and '90s in video arcades and on game consoles. This categorization is important, because it allows us to support the analysis on certain structures of this genre to better understand the symbols found. We are, therefore, addressing the game not as a "support for transmission" of a content, but as a structure upon which the content was created with characteristics that are specific to it and create an opportunity for this analysis.

As we said, this style of game has a structure that divides it into steps or "stages", all of which present the same standard in relation to the actions of the hero and his allies: the avatar controlled by the player walks from left to right on the screen in one or more scenes that can change, according to the stage, facing the NPCs who represent the enemies, which are controlled by the program of the game. The enemies pass through the same scene in the opposite direction (from right to left). At the end of each stage, the controlled avatar confronts the "leader" of the enemies corresponding to that stage and scene. It is important to say that the player only has access to the next "stage" if the previous one is concluded by destroying all the enemies and their respective leaders. This characteristic is aligned with another that is also iconic to this genre, the development of narrative. Only to the degree that players continue to play, will they encounter the larger plot that involves all of the stages, which are not random, but have an hierarchical relationship to each other, given that the game begins with a confrontation of the enemy groups considered weaker until the most powerful is reached. In addition, the protagonists of this genre are always heroes or heroines who go alone on a mission to face an enemy group which is quantitatively larger. The game in question uses this narrative structure which will be described in the following paragraphs. Two games of this genre became famous: *Double Dragon* (1987) and *Streets of Rage* (1991).

It is in this context that a detailed description of *Bolsomito 2k18* becomes necessary, because since it is a game of "stages", to the degree that they continue playing with the *Bolsomito* character, players are introduced and affected by the logic of the larger narrative structure that relates all of the stages, given that their sequence is not random and develops an hierarchy and greater complexity, beginning with a confrontation of enemy groups considered "weaker" and structurally inferior until reaching the more powerful and structurally superior groups. The development of each stage takes place through dialog boxes in which *Bolsomito's* allies are also presented and communicate with him, and at the end, indicate the allies in the next stage, as well as the

enemies to be confronted. Leaders and chiefs of the enemies of each stage also communicate at times with the main character, and vice-versa (through dialog boxes). All of the dialogs are previously programmed, so that players have no influence over the speech of the only avatar that they control.

It is worth emphasizing that each stage has a “theme”, which is expressed in the spatial identification of the enemies (their respective territories) to be confronted and their leader. It is possible to interpret the ten stages of *Bolsomito 2k18* as a manifestation of the enemies attributed to Brazilian society (since 2016), as well as their respective domains of action that wind up justifying the name given to them, the “Red Army”, and whose elimination is the main mission of the protagonist. *Bolsomito 2k18* is introduced before the first stage, in a type of preamble, in which the order of the “stages” is presented by the system of the game. The last enemy of each stage is the antagonist who exercises leadership, power and influence over the other enemies of that stage. Thus, a narrative structure is observed that in addition to establishing an hierarchy of the stages, also creates an hierarchy of the enemies and the difficulties of the game. The first chief is the “weakest” and easiest to be eliminated, then the second, and so on.

The fieldwork consisted of buying and playing the game (conducted by Christian, Isabele and Tony), watching various *gameplays* of *Bolsomito* on *YouTube* (Christian, Isabele, Laura) by other players, and accompanying the comments that were posted by players on *Steam* (Christian, Isabele, Tony). It should be emphasized that in terms of the experience with the game itself, none of the researchers were able to reach the end of the game (this will be addressed later on). We now come to the description of the game, to show the images mobilized, the symbolisms, and actions related to them in the narrative, to capture the meaning of the game in its totality, based on its own playability, that is, incorporating the socio-technical dimension of the game itself, as an important part of the “critical moment” in which we find ourselves and whose events were in many ways forecast in the stages of the game.

The game begins in the house of the main character, in an emblematic scene – considered to be so because it represents a situation quite familiar to Brazilian social life, which is someone at home, watching the television news, and becoming upset. It is a domestic world with a morality that judges the public world, a fact that is quite naturalized among us because of telenovelas (Gomes, 2002), and is thus a situation immediately recognized by millions of Brazilians. Thus, right at the beginning, players are mobilized in such a way that they may be affected and induced to place themselves in *Bolsomito*’s perspective. In this way, the scene does not take place by chance, but has the objective of creating two important socio-technical facts: first, to affirm a continuity between the off-line and online (Gomes and Leitão, 2018); and second, to establish the identity convergence between *Bolsomito* and Bolsonaro (Ramos, 2015). In this sense, it is soon seen that the game was not made to promote fun, distraction or “identity divergence”⁸ in a parallel world, because from the beginning it imposes “the here and now” as crucial elements of the narrative. Secondly, given that there is continuity and convergence, the possibilities to create the empathy of players with *Bolsomito*’s point of view radically increase or decrease, with no middle ground, causing players to emotionally react with indignation, anger, rejection or adhesion, enthusiasm and admiration for the character. In fact, emotions are important throughout the game for a player to engage or not with the character in the actions that both will have to perform from that point on. The more a player develops empathy for the character, the more the actions practiced will tend to be reaffirmed and successful, with a strong chance that the player will reach the end of the game. In contrast, if there is no empathy for the fictitious and real character, the player could quit the game before completing all the stages, or “die” many times during the game. This is certainly an interesting problem to be discussed,

8 “Identity divergence” is the term we use to describe the effect that some digital platforms have on some users, who when on these platforms act as if they had a different persona from their “social” identity. These platforms permit the development of different experiences of “self” or “self” inventions.

because it was what we saw happen with various players who published comments about the game on Steam and with the researchers who experimented with the game and gave up playing it until the end because they became highly indignant. In this sense, it is implicit that to complete the game, the player must in some way be engaged with Bolsomito's actions, whose only objective is to defeat his enemies. In the cases that we accompanied, quitting the game nearly always followed a rejection of the real and fictitious character.

The graphics and scenes of the game are also very important for promoting adhesion or quitting, due to the representations made of the "enemies" as entire social groups, including the spaces (territories) where they live and circulate, as well as the symbolism attributed to them in the current Brazilian political situation, at the same time as those considered "allies", along with the respective attributes that establish that condition, and the leaders of each group, both enemies and allies. The scenery of the preamble is the living room of Bolsomito's house, beginning the game from the world of the home, reaffirming it as a fundamental space for understanding the Brazilian social grammar and immediately locating the series of fights that will take place from the perspective of the opposition between the home and the street, particularly in terms of the moral superiority and precedence of the former over the latter. According to DaMatta (1985), the living room is the most public space of the Brazilian home, and in the game, it is the place from which Bolsomito conducts his passage to the world of the street, communicates and interacts with the outside world – through the television, laptop and cell phone. Quite spacious, the room has emblematic objects and symbols that affirm it as a prominent place and one of passage: a cross (religion) and a Brazilian flag are mounted on the wall and in this case confirm Bolsomito as a "good citizen", because of his religious belief and "patriotism", as well as the moral superiority of domesticity over politics. Simultaneously, and no less importantly, a rifle is also seen, something that reaffirms some of Bolsonaro's most important dimensions, which is his belligerence, his attachment to weapons and violent confrontation and to a constant reference to adversaries as enemies to be banned or annihilated, which is associated to a promise of freedom to carry guns and the famous gesture of making a pistol with his hands, which became his trademark as a candidate and his public image as President elect. We thus have the inaugural scene when after the news *Bolsomito* decides to call *Prof. Oráculo de Carvalho*.⁹ Their conversation is essential, because *Oráculo de Carvalho* – visible only in a dialog box in the upper part of the screen – is who "enthrones", or better, gives the initial "command" to *Bolsomito* to "save Brazil" and make "the people stop suffering", in keeping with the character's eagerness to "declare war" against those who he judges to be responsible for the news. *Oráculo de Carvalho* says that to begin the mission *Bolsomito* should meet his friend, *Sargento Fagur*¹⁰ to get more details about the "battles" that will occur. Given this guidance, *Bolsomito* only responds: "Positive, Professor", thus beginning the first stage.

It is also important to highlight that *Bolsomito* only defeats his adversaries with the counsel and guidance of his allies. Meanwhile, the adversaries are more numerous, and each has many allies who try to impede the hero's progress, while *Bolsomito* confronts all the threats from the Red Army on his own. Therefore, since the beginning, there is a messianic narrative that has the objective to present *Bolsomito* as "Savior of the Country", the "envoy", the "anointed" by God. This messianic narrative is strongly expressed in the speech of his allies, especially that of *Prof. Oráculo de Carvalho* when he says, "you should go step by step. Win battles to win the war".

9 This is a reference to Olavo Luiz Pimentel de Carvalho, a journalist, essayist, ideologue, and Brazilian free thinker. Olavo is self-taught in philosophy, and currently one of the leading representatives of conservative thinking in Brazil. He is the intellectual mentor of President Jair Bolsonaro. Source: Wikipedia

10 This is a reference to Sargento Fagur, a retired state police officer from Paraná and a Brazilian politician, affiliated to the Partido Social Democrático (PSD) and a former member of an elite force of the 4th Company of the Paraná State Highway Police (PRE). Source: Wikipedia

Tutorial

Before *Bolsomito* begins his mission, *Prof. Oráculo de Carvalho* instructs him to learn some tricks with *Vand Silva*,¹¹ which will help him during the battles. The hero then goes to the fight club, which has a boxing ring in the right corner, two rows of lockers with two golden trophies on top. In the left corner, there is a punching bag for training, and exercise equipment like weights and ropes. At the club, *Vand* teaches *Bolsomito* how to punch and kick, how to defend himself, and how to use his “special blow”. Therefore, their dialog informs players what buttons should be pressed so that the different actions take place. That is, although it is a dialog between two characters, the instructions are being passed to the player. Finally, the instructor says that, if “you are a sensitive person”, you can escape from the weaker enemies. But you will have to face the stronger ones and stop that “*mimimi*”.¹²

At the end of each stage, the player/*Bolsomito* receives virtual “trophies” known as “Conquests”, each with specifically appropriate names. They are exposed in the profile of the player on the *Steam* platform, and can be seen by other players and users of the same platform. Each “Conquest” has a different name; players are always awarded when they find an enemy chief and when they defeat the chief. That is, in each stage players earn two different “Conquests”, with names related to the theme of the stage. We will now present a “dense description” of each stage.

Stage 1: “Social victims”

Each stage was designed and placed in sceneries using images that immediately identify the enemies and “their many affiliates” to be faced, as well as where to find them. There is a clear pedagogic intention in the game to present the stages with stereotyped images to have the players criminalize certain social groups due to their historic vulnerabilities. This is the case in this stage of, “Social victims”, where the enemies are mostly black, poor and residents of favelas or “peripheries”. They appear as “bandits”, at the same time in which the scenery where they are located represents a poor, abandoned, destroyed and dirty neighborhood. There is no subtlety or ambiguity in this scene, and there is no explanation about it. It merely repeats the relationship that is naturalized in Brazil between poverty and criminality considering any discussions that problematize them as guilty of “*mimimi*”, “playing the victim” and “leftism”. Not by chance, the ally in this stage is *Sargento Fagur*, while the strongest enemy is *Maria dos Presidiários* [literally Maria of the inmates].¹³ As mentioned previously, the game begins with the weaker groups of enemies and their allies, members of structurally inferior groups: poor black residents of the peripheries, and federal deputy Maria do Rosário as the enemy leader. The main names of the enemies in this stage are *Mano Bráulio*, *Xuxo* and *Tuca Alemão* (who are bandits). It is important to note that when all of the enemies, from the first to the last stage, are destroyed by *Bolsomito*, they are transformed into feces. The confrontations are in the streets of this poor peripheral neighborhood, as can be seen in the scenery, from the types of residences and constructions that are part of the landscape, such as walls with graffiti, phone booths, tire repair shops, bars, *Lan houses*, and beauty salons, even public institutions such as health clinics (which are closed).

11 Reference to Wanderley Silva, Brazilian MMA fighter, specialist in Muay Thai, who along with Rodrigo Minotauro, Fedor Emelianenko and Mirko Cro Cop was considered one of the best fighters of the former Pride FC team, and a living legend of full contact fighting. Source: Wikipedia.

12 “*Mimimi*” is a popular expression. In the context of Bolsonaro’s campaign it referred to playing the victim and is used by his supporters to criticize minorities.

13 Reference to Workers Party federal deputy Maria do Rosário, who was humiliated by Bolsonaro in front of television cameras. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-ls96iNofU>. Accessed on 28 March. 2019. Rosário filed suit against Bolsonaro because of his statement and the court ordered him to indemnify her.

In the first stage, the “Conquests” are called “A good crook is...”, and “You don’t deserve to be!”¹⁴, received when finding and destroying *Maria dos Presidiários*. At the end of this stage, the player finds that the first enemies to be defeated by Bolsonaro are mostly black and poor - not by chance, the largest social segment of Brazilian society.

Stage 2: “They shall not pass”

Stage 2 begins with *Bolsomito* meeting once again with *Sargento Fagur*. Fagur, after complementing him for the destruction of the bandits and of *Maria dos Presidiários*, asks that *Bolsomito* also fight against the enemies of his friend *Sara Vintre*,¹⁵ who is found in the adjacent neighborhood, because she needs help to fight “alienated people” who want to kill babies (a reference to those who defend decriminalizing abortion). This is how the player is introduced to Stage 2 which is a fight against “feminists”, who are considered the main enemies in this stage. In parallel, there is a change of the environment where these struggles take place. The streets are not in decay, there is much less graffiti and fewer abandoned buildings. There are shops and large commercial buildings, including the building where the name of the studio that made the game appears, as well as a restaurant, bakery, and residential buildings, giving the impression of a middle-class neighborhood.

At a certain moment, *Bolsomito* passes by a wall with graffiti of Lula’s face and another with a hammer and sickle, the symbol of communism. The enemies of this stage are presented as mostly white, and there is only one black character, in a proportion exactly opposite to the previous stage. The form of representing the feminists reinforces stereotypes and prejudices, such as masculinized nicknames like “Xaromba”, dyed hair, and exposed bellies and breasts. Farther on, *Bolsomito* passes a truck from *Casa do Baiano* [Casas Bahia is a large national retail chain], on his way to find his strongest enemy in this stage, *Manujeba da Vila*,¹⁶ who he destroys in front of the *Boteco Gamer*, [Gamer Bar] “The hangout for the weak and jealous”, in a clear allusion to leftist social movements.

The second stage concludes with his ally, *Sara Vintre* thanking *Bolsomito* for destroying all those women. He thanks her, saying that he would give his life to save the children, to which she responds by asking for *Bolsomito* to keep moving on, because there are many problems: “The schools and universities that should educate youth are doing the opposite. Agents of the Red Army disguised as educators are brain-washing students. Can you go to the university and solve this?” *Bolsomito* responds by saying that he will “take care of this right away”. Upon finding the boss, the player is awarded with the “Conquest” “Bath and grooming”, and upon winning the battle receives “High Class escort”. At the end of this stage, the player finds that the game reinforces the confusion made by Bolsonaro and his political allies that feminists support abortion.

14 This is a reference to a discussion that was recorded on cameras between President Jair Bolsonaro (when he was still a congressman) and Congresswoman Maria do Rosário, in which he said he “would never rape her, because she did not deserve to be raped”. The incident was in 2003 and became a scandal with national repercussion.

15 This is a reference to Sara Winter, a celebrity who is part of the Brazilian branch of the group that began in Ukraine, FEMEN, which was never recognized as being feminist and was later discovered to be led by a man. By becoming a Christian, Sara Winter became a reference for many youth, having been redeemed for her sins. She is now active, particularly at universities, in opposition to discourses focused on sexual diversity and gender, and mainly struggles against the legalization of abortion. Source: Wikipedia

16 This is a reference to Manuela d’Ávila, a politician and candidate of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) for vice-president as the running mate of Fernando Haddad, presidential candidate from the Workers Party (PT).

Stage 3: “Indoctrinators”

The third stage begins with *Bolsomito* at a university, meeting with the spirit of *Dr. Fantasméas*,¹⁷ who asks for *Bolsomito* to listen to him carefully. The request is the same as that of *Sara Vintre*: to destroy the elements of the Red Army who are infiltrated in universities and indoctrinating youth. The scene for this stage is a university hallway with various doors and one of them, half open, has the number 12, followed by another that is totally closed with the number 13.¹⁸ While *Bolsomito* fights and kills young students, the player sees a number of walls with various posters including those with LGBTs, infographics, etc. All of the enemies with whom *Bolsomito* fights are represented with knapsacks, most are white and only one is black. The most important moment of this stage is the meeting with an important adversary *Dilmanta*,¹⁹ who is easily recognizable wearing a red suit, with prominent front teeth and accompanied by a “stored wind”.²⁰

After fighting and liquidating *Dilmanta*, *Bolsomito* is complimented by *Dr. Fantasméas*. But before saying goodbye, the doctor reminds *Bolsomito* that there are other battles ahead. *Bolsomito* indicates that he understands this and the doctor requests that he go to the center of the city where he will find the leaders of a criminal movement who are obviously part of the Red Army. The doctor says it is a movement that takes advantage of “poor people” to invade property and earn profits. *Bolsomito* agrees and continues. The “Conquests” received are the “Generation *mimimi*” and “Praise the Cassava”. In this stage the player advances a step in the hierarchy of the enemies and there is an explicit mention of an important social institution, in this case, universities. Moreover, the adversarial leader of this stage is stronger than those in the previous stages. Upon completing the 3rd stage, the player perceives that the public university, an important institution in Brazilian society, is considered to be a den of enemies – professors and students.

Stage 4: “Invaders of property”

Already beginning in the streets, *Bolsomito* once again meets with the MMA fighter *Vand Silva*. *Vand* explains that he was going to the gym when a riot broke out. So *Bolsomito* moves on to resolve the problem and *Vand Silva* offers to help him with “some tips for confronting this bunch”. In this case, the bunch is composed of militants of the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), women and men who are dressed in red shirts. In this stage, the situation is once again in the streets, but a bit different than in the previous stages. A large avenue is seen with many cars and buses, which run over the adversaries, and would even run over *Bolsomito* if he is not careful. The style of the buildings on the screen suggest it is Avenida Paulista in the city of São Paulo, with banks, currency exchanges, large office buildings, stores, etc. Not by chance, the most powerful adversary of this stage is called *Guilherme Boustas*.²¹

After fighting and killing *Guilherme Boustas*, *Bolsomito* is complimented by *Vand Silva*, who congratulates him for the deed and advises him to present his ideas to the media so that the people get to know him better. But he warns *Bolsomito* that he must be careful because the media is composed of snakes also trained by the Red Army. *Vand Silva* says he has a friend who can help him on this new undertaking. *Bolsomito* thanks him, and says that he knows how the media operates and continues to the next stage.

17 This is a reference to Enéas Ferreira Carneiro, a Brazilian cardiologist, physicist, mathematician, professor, writer and politician. As a politician, he founded the now extinct Party for the Re-edification of the National Order, Prona. He was a presidential candidate in the campaigns of 1989, 1994 and 1998. Source: Wikipedia

18 Doors 12 and 13 that appear in the scene at the beginning of Stage 3.

19 This is a reference to Dilma Rousseff, former President of Brazil who was deposed on 31 August 2016, through a polemical and controversial impeachment process.

20 This is a reference to a speech that President Dilma Rousseff made at the UN when she discussed the effort to develop technologies to store wind energy. Some of her political opponents ridiculed the expression “stored wind”. See also <http://www.fapesp.br/eventos/2014/05/UK-Brazil/Williams.pdf>

21 This is a reference to Guilherme Boulos, one of the coordinators of the MTST – Movimento Trabalhadores Sem Teto (Homeless Workers Movement), who was also a presidential candidate in 2018 for the Partido Socialismo e Liberdade) [Socialism and Liberty Party] (PSOL).

The “Conquests” of this stage are called “Retaking property” and “Slaughtering the invader”. Upon concluding stage 4, the player perceives that Bolsonaro’s declared enemy in this stage is an important social movement, organized to support the right to housing.

Stage 5: “Dirty Media”

In this stage, *Bolsomito* meets with *Palmito Gentil*,²² who promptly offers him help to be able to face the “dirty media”. He says that he was an unexperienced reporter, but that after “taking a beating from the Red Army media” he learned how to confront them. This scene takes place in a closed space, with black walls. There are television cameras in back, shelves, a large water bottle. While he moves through this room, *Bolsomito* faces men in suits and women in skirts and blazers, all of them white. Given the theme and name of the stage, it is possible to gather that they are reporters and journalists. After some fighting, *Bolsomito* reaches a room that has a black desk, with blue stripes on the side and a “futuristic” painting. Two chairs in the same style are at the desk. In back, there is a large screen with the following words “FN Eleições [elections] 2018” (an allusion to the logo of the *Jornal Nacional* [nightly national news program] of the *Rede Globo*- Brazil’s largest TV network).

At this moment, the *Bolsomito* player perceives that he is in a recording studio, because he then meets a man with horns, named *Corner*.²³ Dressed in a suit and presented as the enemy, *Corner* has horns. *Bolsomito* asks about them, but *Corner* avoids answering, saying that “The candidate cannot attack us and go unpunished. Not now, and not in 2028.” The battle has begun. At certain moments, *Corner* throws an object that looks like a car key: a black base, with rounded edges, and something thick and gray stuck to it. However, it is not possible to clearly identify what it is.

Upon defeating *Corner* who is also transformed into feces, *Bolsomito* once again meets *Palmito Gentil*. He says that he is sure that everything will be fine and that thanks to the Internet, “the people have awoken” (Marins and Moura, 2018), and the “dirty media” will no longer be able to manipulate them. *Bolsomito* agrees, responding that it is enough to state the truth for the people to understand. *Palmito* comments that he trusts in *Bolsomito* and asks him to help a friend in need in the city. He does not say what the problem is, and asks *Bolsomito* to go see for himself. Before leaving, *Palmito* also encourages him to continue the fight against the “politically correct”. By facing *Corner*, the player is awarded with the “Conquest” “Words harm”. Upon defeating him, he receives the “Conquest”, called “Fake news”. Upon completing this stage, the player perceives that another important social institution is considered an enemy, in this case, the television media represented by Brazil’s largest broadcast network, *Rede Globo*.

²² This is a reference to Danilo Gentili, a Brazilian comedian.

²³ This is a reference to William Bonner, chief editor and lead anchor of the *Jornal Nacional* nightly national news program of the *Rede Globo* television network (broadcast at 8 pm).

Stage 6: “The bald guy or the one with a mustache?”²⁴

The sixth stage of the game begins with *Bolsomito* once again in the streets, this time, heading in the direction of a LGBT Parade, where he meets with *Alexandre Frete*,²⁵ who explains to him another attempt to destroy values of the “traditional family” and good costumes. It is an interesting dialog, and perhaps the longest of the entire game, because it shows not only one more institution to be taken in and restored, but also a chance for players to discover details about the origins of many of *Bolsomito*’s followers. *Frete*’s talk leaves *Bolsomito* surprised by hearing from him a criticism of the LGBT community.

Bolsomito reacts by accusing him of having been involved with this “bunch there” pointing to *Frete*’s incoherence pretending to defend good customs. *Frete*, however, demonstrates that he has repented and recognized his sin, expressing his desire to participate and help “the myth” on his journey. *Bolsomito* responds, accusing *Frete* of possibly being an opportunist. *Frete* argues that, like *Sara Vintre*, he once defended the “bad customs of the Red Army”, but now opposes them. He tells *Bolsomito* that if he trusted her, he can now trust him. Although he is not totally convinced, *Bolsomito* gives a vote of confidence by listening to what *Frete* has to say. Both want to convey they are not homophobic by showing that they accept differences, the main problem would be to accept ideologies of the Red Army.

In relation to the adversaries of previous stages, in this stage the enemies do not present themselves according to traditional gender representations. In comparison with the adversaries of the stage of the “feminist women” (Stage 2), in this stage we have *Fox*, an avatar dressed as a fox and the only black person; *Machado*, who has the clothes of a pink ballerina, red hair and a beard; *Jean* is in workout apparel; *Rafael* is wearing all black, a *top* and bikini that is meant to be leather; and *Lana* is an avatar in *jeans*, a pink blouse and dark glasses, a reference to one of the largest groups of culture and variety on *Facebook*, created by and aimed at the LGBT public.

The scene is an avenue with non-residential buildings in the center of the city where there is a commercial center, a group of shops including a *plus size store*, law offices, a cybercafe, a home appliance store and a currency exchange office. Between the light posts there are many banners that read “Let your son use the Kit at School”.

Along the avenue there are also some kiosks, on which there are signs offering the “*kit gay*” for free to children who pass by. This is an obvious reference to a key element of the electoral campaign, the *fake news* about alleged distribution of a “gay kit” in schools. Kit was the term used to describe a book that was broadly mentioned by the conservative media. A few days before the first voting round in 2018 Bolsonaro mentioned it in an interview with the *Rede Globo* to explain the plans of the Workers Party presidential candidate Fernando Haddad, the former minister of education in the Lula governments.²⁶ Bolsonaro said that the book would be given to young children so that they would learn to be trans- and homosexuals, and that it would be distributed in all the schools of the country.

Finally, the most powerful adversary in this stage is *Cuspidor* [Spitting] *Willy*.²⁷ After defeating him, *Bolsomito* meets again with *Alexandre Frete*, who thanks him for the deed. *Bolsomito* says goodbye with a “hetero hug”, of his new ally, to then return to his house where he once again speaks by phone with *Prof. Oráculo de Carvalho*, who recommends a meeting between *Bolsomito* and

²⁴ This is a reference to a hateful comment made by Bolsonaro when he was still a Congressman. Believing it to be a “joke”, he said in an interview that the problem of homosexual couples having children was that you would never know if their mother was the “bald guy or the one with a mustache.”

²⁵ This is a reference to Alexandre Frota, a porn actor in gay and hetero films until a few years ago who assumed his bisexuality. Currently, along with Bolsonaro and his congressional supporters, Frota presents himself as a defender of the traditional family and someone who disdains the left. Source: Wikipedia.

²⁶ Bolsonaro’s narrative was disproven by the publisher of the book, and only on the second week after the first round of voting did the Electoral Court require the removal of this false news from all possible platforms.

²⁷ This is a reference to Jean Wyllys, teacher, politician, former federal deputy from PSOL in Rio de Janeiro. He was known for having participated and won the popular reality show BBB (Big Brother Brasil). As a politician, he got national attention for having spit at Bolsonaro.

Mando Boura.²⁸ Upon facing *Cuspidor Willy*, *Bolsomito* receives the “Conquista” named “At the end of the rainbow”, and upon defeating him the “Conquest” is named “No spit”. Upon completing this stage, the player perceives that the LGBTQI movement is also considered an enemy by *Bolsomito*.

Stage 7: “Fast and furious”

In this stage, upon meeting with *Mando Boura*, *Bolsomito* is convinced to go after a singer who is “trying to bring people from the Internet” to his side, the Red Army, and to make fun of *his* music. Unlike the previous stages, in this stage there is no physical combat. Actually, there is a massacre where *Bolsomito* enters in an ally’s car and simply runs over his adversaries. The dialog with the boss of his enemies in this stage is with *Titico Senta Cuz*.²⁹ The “Conquest” for reaching the chief is called “Petal to the Metal” and the “Conquest” for defeating him is called “Communist pig”. At the end of this stage, players understand that segments of the digital media are also under the power of the red army.

Stage 8: “The Alienated”

This stage begins with *Bolsomito* meeting with *Izas*,³⁰ who declares he is being persecuted. *Bolsomito* continues running through the streets to fight with *Izas*’ enemies, and at this time various mules and donkeys appear on the screen (an allusion to people from the Workers Party) with banners from PT, running in the opposite direction. *Bolsomito* runs over and kills them, as did the cars in the previous stage. Moreover, the scene changes, and is similar to that of the first stage of the game (a peripheral neighborhood). However, the scene quickly changes, returning to an urban scene where *Bolsomito* now meets with a powerful adversary called *Retarddad*.³¹ Upon seeing him coming in his direction, *Bolsomito* says: “Hey I know you, you are that famous mayor!” to which *Retarddad* responds: “Well, someone finally recognizes my work!” to which *Bolsomito* counters: “you were the first candidate for re-election in history to lose in the first round! Hahaha”. The fight begins, *Retarddad* is eliminated and *Bolsomito* continues moving towards the next stage. The “Conquest” for finding the *Retarddad* is called “Confronting the militants”, and after defeating him it is “Brazil above all” (as mentioned, the game was released before the first round of voting). To finish this stage, the player realizes that the Workers Party and its militants are an enemy, considering they were the strongest adversary in the presidential elections.

Stage 9: “Rural terrorism”

This stage begins with *Bolsomito*, upon *Izas*’ request, going to save a friend called *Eduardo Decostas*,³² who in the game is also a large landowner who is persecuted by the Red Army. After killing various militants of the Landless Farmers Movement (MST) on the way, *Bolsomito* finally confronts *Eduardo Decostas*. The scenery at this time is no longer an urban center, but a road that is completely blocked with traffic, trucks, buses, cars and militants from the MST, possibly a reference to the truckers strike that took place in May 2018.

28 This is a reference to Nando Moura, a heavy metal musician and music teacher who also became one of the main Bolsonarista *youtubers*. Recently, after being denounced a number of times for hateful discourse, *YouTube* removed advertising from his channel. Source: Wikipedia

29 This is a reference to Tico Santa Cruz, a Brazilian musician, composer, and writer. He is the vocalist from the band Detonautas Roque Clube. He studied social sciences at UFRJ. Source: Wikipedia

30 This is a reference to Arthur do Val, Mamãe Falei, an activist from the right-wing Free Brazil Movement (MBL), a *Youtuber* and state deputy from the DEM party. Source: Wikipedia

31 This is a reference to Fernando Haddad, a politician, professor, and former mayor of São Paulo and the Workers Party candidate for president in the 2018 elections.

32 This is the real name of a leader of farmers who was charged with killing a landless worker. Source: Wikipedia

To reach the MST leaders, *Bolsomito* and *Decostas* decide to get a truck that they use to run over militants until they meet the *Vampiro Temeroso*.³³ Questioned about his presence there, the vampire confesses he is trying to stop *Bolsomito*, thus admitting that he is part of the Red Army. After annihilating the vampire, *Bolsomito* is complemented by *Eduardo Decostas* who warns him that to win the war he will have to go to where the leaders of the Red Army are located. *Bolsomito* agrees and moves ahead. The “Conquest” obtained for reaching the *Vampiro Temeroso* is called “Terror in the fields”, and for defeating him the trophy is called “Sem temor” [No fear]. The next to last stage ends with the inclusion of another important social movement as an enemy, the MST, the movement responsible for the struggle for land reform in Brazil. It should be highlighted that the main ally in this stage is the rural leader Eduardo Costa.

Stage 10: “If you shout, you’ll catch a thief...”³⁴

The tenth and final stage begins with the encounter of *Bolsomito* and *Juiz Muro* [*Judge Wall*]³⁵ in Brasília, in front of the presidential palace, which appears to be blocked by traffic cones on the sidewalk and even a black and yellow barrier with a the sign “We Buy and Sell votes, speak with the manager”. *Muro* welcomes and thanks him for coming. He says that he has been trying to catch leaders of the Red Army for some time, and was able to get some, “but there are many of them and they know how to run away from me”. *Bolsomito* thanks the judge for his work, saying that now he will take command; he says the struggle will not be easy, but he knows his enemies’ tricks. They say goodbye and *Bolsomito* continues to the final stage, that is, the final confrontation with *Luladrão*,³⁶ the most powerful of all his adversaries. In the game, *Bolsomito* defeats *Luladrão* saying that he represents the past and now he, *Bolsomito*, will construct a new country. At the end of the final stage, *Bolsomito* reached the great leader of his enemies, the largest of all, *Luladrão*, while his main ally is Judge *Muro*.

At the end, *Prof. Oráculo de Carvalho* appears as an NPC saying that much will have to be done to improve the nation. The entire scenery of this final stage is in front of the National Congress in Brasília, where on the entrance ramp there is a black man sitting with the football World Cup trophy. This is the end of the game for those who complete all the stages, there is an image of a crowd of Brazilians with the national anthem playing in the background. The final “Conquest” for those who encounter *Luladrão* is “Brasília green and yellow” and the one for defeating him is “Impugned”.

The game and the Brazilian 2018 elections

Until 31 August 2018 the electoral slate formed by Luís Inácio “Lula” da Silva and Fernando Haddad was ahead in the polls. However, on 31 August the Federal Supreme Court definitively prohibited Lula’s candidacy, requiring PT to pragmatically nominate Haddad for president and Manuela D’Ávila of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) for vice president. Given the indignation of Lula’s supporters, the PT used Lula’s name when launching Haddad’s campaign, with the *hashtag* #LulaéHaddad, to encourage an immediate transfer of votes

33 This is a reference to Michel Temer, senator from the MDB party, and the former Brazilian Vice-President who assumed the presidency after the removal of Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

34 This is a reference to a common Brazilian proverb, applicable to situations where there is not a single innocent person “in the room”.

35 This is a reference to Sergio Moro, a former judge who was responsible for the corruption investigation Operação Lava-Jato [Operation Carwash], who is now Minister of Justice in the Bolsonaro government.

36 “Luladrão” is one of the many nicknames given by the far right to former President Lula.

from Lula to Haddad. Without analyzing if this strategy was effective or not, the fact is that on 6 September, one week after Lula's removal, Bolsonaro was stabbed in the abdomen in an attack in the city of Juiz de Fora, in Minas Gerais.³⁷

In this context, with Jair Bolsonaro hospitalized, Haddad became candidate for the presidency on the PT ticket, and began to give interviews, participate in debates, and travel through Brazil accompanied by his vice-presidential candidate Manuela D'Ávila. They were relatively successful, winning passage to the second round with 29.3 % of the valid votes, while Ciro Gomes, candidate for the PDT, remained in third place, with 12.5 %. Jair Bolsonaro led with 46 % of the valid votes.

Without discussing the reasons why Haddad did not receive the votes of all those who said they would have supported Lula, what is seen in the narrative of the game is that upon its release on 28 September 2018, Lula's removal from the ticket had been foreseen, as well as the defeat of Haddad and Manuela. Observing the stages of the game, the causes for this defeat are also found, foreshadowing the result of 28 October, when Brazilians who did not support Bolsonaro and Mourão became aware of the *fake news* promoted against Haddad and his running mate. In any case, this fact may even explain the delay of the release of the game until 28 September 2018, only nine days before the first voting round. If this was not clear to progressive voters, it is because there was hope that there would be a transfer of votes from Lula to Haddad and an expectation that Ciro Gomes would support Haddad's campaign. As is now known, Gomes did not support Haddad, but to the contrary, as soon as the first-round results came in, he left the country and refused to contact or support the PT slate, which took second place in the first round. In this regard, the game leaves room for reflection. Ciro Gomes does not appear in the game, not even as an NPC or in a dialog box, as ally or enemy. There is a single reference to him in the game, which is the number 12 [the number of his slate] on a half-open door to a room in the university in stage 3.³⁸ It is a bit strange that the game released on 28 September only focused on a dispute between Bolsonaro, Lula and or Haddad.

But the peculiarity goes farther. On 28 October 2018, the second round of voting was held, and the victor was Jair Bolsonaro, who took office on 1 January 2019. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, the objective in conducting an ethnography of the game was also to evaluate what could happen in the future after the result of the second round of voting, if the candidate did or did not win. In this case, Jair Bolsonaro won according to the script of the game. It thus becomes important to briefly mention how the game allows explaining or justifying what happened, especially between the first and second round of voting. It is important to remember that the game was released nearly on the eve of the first round voting, and certainly there was not enough time for the game to be played and seen for it to influence the first-round election results, differently from the second round. An important fact to be highlighted is that during the second-round campaign, Bolsonaro's attacks on his adversaries (both candidates and supporters), as well as the final election result, were very similar to the situations presented in the game, especially referring to the explicit mention of fake news that were triggered on social networks, precisely between the first and second round, and which guaranteed victory to Bolsonaro.

By now, August-September 2019, it has been confirmed that Bolsonaro was elected through the use of *fake news* promoted on *Whatsapp*, using illegal *robots* and false accounts, and combined with Bolsonaro's refusal to participate in any interview or debate with Haddad (see for example Soares and Grillo, 2018), using the excuse of the "attack" that he suffered.

37 A few days before the first round of voting, Bolsonaro was "attacked" in Juiz de Fora. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cF5vUjzjfrA>, last accessed on 28 March 2019. In December 2018, a documentary called *Facada no mito* was posted on Youtube and social networks, casting many doubts on the veracity of the attack, supporting suspicions that the 2018 elections were fraudulent.

38 There is no other mention of Gomes, although he was a well-positioned candidate throughout the campaign and took third place, far ahead of the next candidate, Geraldo Alkmin of PSDB. Ciro Gomes was considered as a possible candidate on the progressive slate in the second round, if Haddad did not take second place. For the Workers Party, in reality, it was a risky maneuver to count on Lula's candidacy until the final moment.

Haddad had become prominent as Minister of Education in the Lula presidency, when he implemented measures that guaranteed greater access to the poor and minority population to public universities. For this reason he was represented in the game as a “retard” and a failure, and as being responsible for the main threat of moral corruption at universities, given that blacks, feminists, and LGBTIQ populations were among the minority groups that gained increased access to universities. Not by chance, these arguments were also used in fake news. In terms of women, the greater access to the university has been treated as responsible for their distancing from traditional social roles, as wives and mothers. Bolsonaro’s refusal to participate in debates organized by *Rede Globo* TV was also hinted at in the game, in *Bolsomito*’s hostile attitude towards the anchor of the nightly news program of the country’s leading broadcaster (represented by the NPC *Corner*). In sum, with the exception of the “attack”, what is known today about Bolsonaro’s victory was announced in the game, in such a way that if a player was paying attention, upon reaching the end of the game, he or she could be angry or not, but not be surprised. How was it possible that all of the situations that pointed to Bolsonaro’s victory were foreseen and announced in the game, even knowing that many of them were not true? How was it possible that all the suspicions about the victory and how it was obtained were confirmed in the game? Meanwhile, soon after its release, the game was denounced to the federal Public Ministry for inciting violence and intolerance. Nevertheless, it was only removed from the air on 28 January 2019, after Bolsonaro took office.

Neopentecostalism: the doctrine of the Spiritual Battle and the Seven Mountains

Now that the game has been described, to consider its playability, narrative and references to social groups, institutions and movements, the next step is to reflect on what followed the conclusion of the elections and inauguration. Analyzing not only the game, but campaign materials and especially observing the first months of the Bolsonaro government, and ministers and politicians who support him, we perceive a quite close causal relationship between the references used in the game and the “justifications” for them, including the aesthetic and images used. We turn to sources used by Bolsonaro supporters, many of them religious and Neopentecostal, to understand in their own terms the victory and the first months of government. The first important relationship appeared during the transition period, just before inauguration, when the name of Pastora Damares Regina Alves began to circulate in the media as the first woman minister to be appointed by Bolsonaro to occupy the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights. With her indication confirmed, Damares became a constant presence in the media due to her polemical public declarations about issues important to her post. One stood out: “This is the moment for the Church to govern” (Campanato, 2018). Given this affirmation that conflicts with the principle of the secular state, we sought to learn about her religious trajectory and her church. We thus examined the Igreja Batista de Lagoinha (“Os Sete Montes da Lagoinha”),³⁹ which has “invested strongly in the view of the reorganization of society through a project called the Seven Mountains” (idem). When searching the internet for the expression “Os sete montes da sociedade” [The seven mountain of society] we found various relevant sites and one of them stood out for being the site of Jovem (Jovens com uma Missão) [Youths with a Mission], one of many international missionary organizations whose objective is to “contribute to the growth of the Kingdom of God in distinct segments of society” (“The Seven Mountains”), are a reference to: *Church and religion; Government and politics; Family; Media and Communication; Economy and Business; Education and Science; Arts and entertainment;*

³⁹ From September 2018 until the present, Evangelical blogs and video games have been followed that present doctrines of a few religious denominations. The blog *Graça Plena* [Complete Grace] is only one of the sites that can be found about the doctrine of the Seven Mountains. We use it as a reference because it is an international organization and because it was created by one of the “authors” or “founders” of the movement.

Conducting more internet searches about this doctrine, we found the text of Domingos Sávio Rodrigues Alves (s.d.), in which the author makes a summarized analysis of it. In sum, the doctrine originated in the 1970s when two Christian youths “established some important targets in society, which needed Christian influence. The objective was a better and more just world, based on the positive influence of Christians in various segments” (Alves, s.d.).

Later, “other people like Lance Wallnau, Randy Clark, Peter Wagner, and others, [...] mixed this vision of the seven areas with the Neopentecostal theology of the Spiritual Battle, resulting in what is now known as the Vision of the Seven Mountains, whose objective is to dominate the world” (idem). In sum, for the church to attain political power over the world it must control these areas in contemporary society. But why does the Church need to attain political power? What church is it speaking of?

The objective of the article is not to discuss Neopentecostalism in Brazil, but to propose a discussion about the origins of the political actor and of the belligerent messianic promise incarnated by Jair Bolsonaro/Bolsomito that led him to victory in the 2018 election, which was due in large part to the engagement of Evangelicals in Brazilian political life. This required us to examine these groups, especially their doctrines, in an effort to identify them in the game. In fact, there is a vast Neopentecostal literature that treats Spiritual Battles as a strong movement within Neopentecostalism in general and in Brazil today, not only because of the conflict with African-Brazilian religions, whose beliefs and rituals have been systematically demonized by these churches, but due to a project to refound Brazilian society. In this sense, it is possible to say that the successive stages of the game are inspired by and make references to the forms of action of “spiritual battles” against the demons that “control” the different areas or domains of society (in this case Brazilian), according to the Seven Mountains doctrine. It is not by chance that Bolsomito’s successive victories in the game are over those social segments to be reconquered, as indicated by the doctrine of the Seven Mountains. In this sense, it is important to briefly present these two doctrines.

In relation to the doctrine of “the spiritual battle” we opted to use as the first reference the report of a Presbyterian pastor Augustus Nicodemus Gomes Lopes,⁴⁰ that is, someone authorized from the field of Reformed religions. Not only did he present and discuss the Biblical passage that gave origin to the doctrine (Ef 6:10 - 20) of the “spiritual battle”, but he also criticized the Neopentecostal interpretation given by the creator of the movement, a missionary named J.O. Fraser who in the 1930s worked in a rural village in China. Nicodemus affirmed that according to Fraser, the inhabitants of the village believed in curses and demons and for this reason resisted conversion. Fraser made various attempts to combat these demons, because at a certain moment “he thought that his business was with the demons, no longer with the people and the Scriptures”. After various attempts he developed a pragmatic method that worked, because through it he was able to pursue the demons, invade the territories controlled by them and “bind them”. Until his death, this method had not been revealed. According to Nicodemus, the leading promoter of Fraser’s method was the writer Frank Peretti in a novel entitled *This Present Darkness* which became a best-seller in the United States and was translated into various languages. The novel took place in a small university town in the United States, where there were many students from other regions. Due to the arrival of these youth, the peaceful way of life of the town changed to give way to a mundane life with much vice and sin, according to the author, because of the demons who came to control the city. Based on this fictitious narrative, another missionary, Peter Wagner, then created the Spiritual Battle movement, whose main characteristic is a revival of a dualism (Manicheism) recreating the struggle between good and evil, as well as the combative posture as expressed in the biblical passage written by St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. As a Presbyterian pastor, Nicodemus is one of the leading Brazilian Protestant

40 See also <<https://solascriptura-tt.org/Seitas/Pentecostalismo/BatalhaEspiritual-OMovimento-Nicodemus.htm>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mu2qgJKHHY>>, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALNHfQtURPc>> and <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALNHfQtURPc>>.

pastors who criticizes the movement of the Spiritual Battles, especially because of the fact that this doctrine attributes to demons territorial specializations in certain fields or activities, and even for attributing as much or more power to the demons as to God, in conflict with the main dogma of Judeo-Christian monotheism, that the demon is a fallen creature submitted to and used by God for his own purposes.

Meanwhile, a search in the academic literature about Neopentecostalism and spiritual battles shows that despite the many works about this religious field, there are not many about the doctrine that is now a strong movement in this religious field in Brazil and throughout the world. Brazilian scholarly work about the doctrine of the Spiritual Battle especially concerns the climate of belligerence towards religions of African matrix, promoting a culture of religious and political intolerance in the country. Although, these analyses often have a perspective from outside the Neopentecostal camp and more focused on the impacts on the religious and minority groups it attacks. In this regard, perhaps one of the first studies to mention the issue is an article by Birman (1997), situating it as something not restricted only to the Neopentecostal field, but relative to the problem of evil and the fight against evil. In any case, the literature in this field is scarce, compared to that about ethics and the theology of prosperity that earned more attention from scholars of Neopentecostalism in Brazil.

In relation to the Bolsomito game, it can be said that the ethics of prosperity and its meritocratic corollary is subjacent as a basic premise in social life, although, what is highlighted in all the stages of the game and justifies it is the fact that if a part of Brazilian society does not accept this premise, and rebels against it, in favor of social “victimization”, these groups and all of their modes of existence must be eliminated or banished. In the game, these groups form the Red Army against which Bolsomito and his allies must fight in successive battles until they eliminate all of the enemies, given that for Bolsomito and his allies, the denial of the premise of meritocracy is due to the presence of evil, that is, because of the “moral corruption” found in Brazilian society, which places us before doctrines and movements of the Spiritual Battle and the Seven Mountains, both of which are important for their soteriological character and the purification of society. In our understanding, both inspire the candidate’s entire campaign through the countless crusades and moral purges conducted by the Neopentecostals, in the same way that their pragmatic *modus operandi* was appropriated by the game’s developers. Seeking references from academic works that study Neopentecostalism in Latin America, we found the article by Birman⁴¹ mentioned and articles by Clara Mafra, one of which (2012)⁴² was quite elucidative about the point that we want to highlight in this article. In it, Mafra explained that “the geopolitics of Christianity has been inverted: the largest Christian populations are found in the Global South and no longer in the North” (idem). In this sense, she asks along with other scholars about the “specificity of the growth and questions why, among so many possibilities for development of Christianity, is it precisely Pentecostalism that has been more accepted by the populations?”. Citing Joel Robbins, Mafra affirms that there is a consensus about this that attributes the “success of Neopentecostal proselytism” to the doctrine of the Spiritual Battle. Upon asking why the Spiritual Battle was so central, Mafra responds citing Robbins:

This is because Pentecostalism operates “as a repository of an enchanted dualism, which strategically serves to capture traditional cosmologies and attack them, deeply altering how they are understood” (Robbins 2004, free translation). This interpretative line supposes that the process of conversion to Pentecostalism involves a recategorization of the faithful’s previous cosmology of belonging: what was initially a divine entity, became, through the work of conversion, a demonic entity. This means that the operation of conversion concerns the learning of a new classification and a new mapping of the world, something that normally would be transmitted by missionary work – i.e., by the engaged ideologue in the tariff of proselytizing...⁴³

41 This is a reference to the author’s article in the book *O mal à brasileira*, published in 1997 by Editora da UERJ

42 <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/rs/v32n2/07.pdf>. Last accessed on 09/08/2012.

43 Mafra, Carla. “O percurso de vida que faz o gênero”. In *Religião e Sociedade*, Rio de Janeiro, 32(2): 124-148, 2012.

In fact, in all the stages of the Bolsomito game, we have various indications that the Spiritual Battle concerns the negation of a certain cosmology, forms of classification and representation of reality that until then morally justified the existence of these groups and their place in society, as well as the legitimacy of their demands. If we take the Brazilian religious cosmology constructed over more than five centuries of hegemony of the Catholic Church, “God is Brazil”, and thus loving (cordial), while the Devil or demon is a more rebellious version of the *malandro* and of *malandragem*⁴⁴, much more than a mediator and not by chance is identified with Exu of the African-Brazilian cults. Actually, until then, this identification was not explicitly questioned by practitioners of Candomblé and Umbanda, but accepted by them as part of the tacit agreement established by the principle of coercive harmony, (Nader, 1994; Gomes, 2002) the same principle that supports the myth of racial democracy and of the cordiality of Brazilians – despite social inequality. According to both Neopentecostal doctrines, the cosmology of Brazilian social movements and segments presented in the game, notably the movements for human rights, housing, feminists, students, access to land, and the media itself which in the past represented the search for justice, equality and solidarity, have come to be criticized and demonized as representatives of moral corruption, converting the national political debate into a moral conflict controlled based on a dualist Neopentecostal perspective.

By chasing, defeating and directly annihilating militants of the Workers Party and its leaders, the game shows that the existence of the Battle is real, and sustains a political and transnational project, which in the Brazilian case seeks to occupy spaces and positions of political power. It no longer involves convincing of or seeking legitimacy. That is, of gathering the congregants, because the human material available already guarantees a significant change in terms of votes that allow the substitution of the previously existing moral and symbolic order, if strong resistance is not made. This issue was quite eloquent as the stages of the game unfold. Although they are numerically superior, the enemies are not able to defeat Bolsomito, and his allies and advisors and it is at this moment that we can infer the inspiration of the doctrines of the Spiritual Battle and of the Seven Mountains on the developers of the game who convert these social segments into “enemies” who correspond to the “usurpers” (enemies and or demons, following Wallnau, Clark and Wagner), who would be occupying each “Mountain” in our society, in the different stages of the game, from the *Media and communication; Government and politics; Economy and business; Education and science; Family, Church and religion, Arts and Entertainment*.

In terms of the main mode of action of the Bolsomito character, the Weberian concept of causal adequacy helps us to understand how the doctrine of the “Spiritual Battle” was used in the game to present *Bolsomito* as a fighter, issuing “mortal blows” against his “enemies” to destroy and eliminate them. The problem became more serious, the more it was proven that most of the accusations against the different groups represented in the game were based on fake news. And, although the information was proven to be false, the candidate’s supporters continued to believe in them, and even accuse the traditional communication media of also being “leftist” and wanting to “damage the Myth”. One example of this hate and discredit in relation to the traditional media can be found during Bolsonaro’s inauguration ceremony, in Brasilia, when groups of supporters shouted “*Whatsapp*” and “*Facebook*” to journalists of *Rede Globo* who were covering the event.

Finally, on 19 December 2018, the Federal Public Ministry filed suit to suspend the game from the digital platform where it was being sold, (Steam, as the company responsible for the game was being investigated since 10 October 2018), the game was only removed from Steam on 28 January 2019, therefore, after Bolsonaro took office). What calls our attention is that in keeping with the narrative of the game, the stage of transition and the first six months of government of the new president of Brazil were based on actions that found strong references

44 DaMatta (1979) argues that the *malandro* is not a criminal or a marginal. It is a complex liminary brazilian category that stays “between and betwixst” the licit and the illicit. The *malandro* is someone whose acts are not easily perceived into a binary morality axis. It’s almost like a trickster with smart and quick practices, inserted in a brazilian context.

in many stages of the game, such as the growing demonization of feminism, LGBT movements, and even the warnings about education policies, entrance to public universities, the demonization of secular education, particularly higher education, with the consequent demoralization of science and scientists, synthesized in the scene in which *Dilmanta* appears next to an image of “stocked wind”.

How pragmatic sociology can contribute to this discussion:

As we affirmed in the previous section, during the first theoretical treatment given to the material collected after we described the game, we observed that there was a relationship between its narrative and two Neopentecostal doctrines - Spiritual Battle and Seven Mountains – both practiced in Neopentecostal churches in Brazil. To better understand this fact, we believe that the theory of justification proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot in their book *De la justification* (1991) [On Justification] and also in the article “Sociologia da capacidade crítica” [“Sociology of critical capacity”] can be promising (2007).

The authors affirm that there are two forms of resolving disputes in modern and contemporary societies: through violence or through justice. Once an option is made for the first, the doctrine of the Spiritual Battle can fit perfectly, to the degree to which it includes violence and a justification for it based on theological and New Testament arguments because as the text of Clara Mafra informs us, the Spiritual Battles movement has strengthened through a process of substitution of a Catholic cosmology that is more flexible in relation to the problem of evil for another form that demands a radical distancing from this previous mode of grasping the world. As seen in the game, in fact, from the perspective of Bolsonarism, there is no longer room for a middle ground or any form of mediation, mediators and negotiation between Bolsomito and his allies and their enemies (or with allies of the enemies). From the perspective of the player, he either dies if he is not able to kill the enemy or he kills them, turning them into feces, and thus the game continues until the last stage, which culminates with the definitive destruction of the head of the demons – Luladrão.⁴⁵

If justice is opted for, the subjects in dispute recognize universal principles and submit to them to resolve the dispute in question. Therefore, the authors conceive a model of justification based on these known universal principles that are shared in the Western world, disposed in six contexts, orders or *cites* [which has been translated as “polity” or “city”], where, depending on the nature of the dispute, these principles can be located and resolved. Although they admit that these principles vary, according to societies and according to the contexts where they take place, they are distributed as follows: the domestic order, based on loyalty and respect, in which tradition and hierarchy perform an important role; the order of work (industrial), whose principle is efficiency, in which performance, technique, and know-how have more importance than tradition and where professional knowledge has greater importance; the civic order, whose principles are laws, representativeness and democracy; the inspired order, whose principles are authenticity, creativity, and imagination, although domesticated by science, education and culture. Even if religion is included, the latter would respect the principle of secularity; the order of the market where the principles are interest and competition; and finally, the world of opinion, whose principles are fame, glory and mediatization.

Although this is a quick summary of pragmatic sociology, it allows us to visualize and compare the two models of *justification* that are found in dispute in Brazil today. The first would be the model that was “deposed” in 2016, having been conceived in the Constitution of 1988, based on the return of justice, through a republican, secular and modern Western representative model, and therefore closer to the proposal of

⁴⁵ To be accused by an Evangelical prosecutor as being the chief of the largest organized criminal, in Brazil, is equivalent to saying that Lula is/was the leader of the demons that took control of Brazil. The fact that he was condemned to prison without objective proof, passing above all the procedures of due criminal process, proved that Lula as the demon should be, if not totally destroyed, at least “bound” – an expression used in the jargon of the Spiritual Battle that refers to the possibility of restricting the powers of the demons. In fact, once imprisoned, as a demon, Lula was “bound” so that he could not impede the defeat of PT.

the authors of *La justification*. The second, which erupted in 2013, and which was “victorious” in 2018 and took power in 2019, would be that presented in the game *Bolsomito*, with a reference to the doctrine of the Spiritual Battle, in which there is no space to seek justice based on the laws of the secular state. In these terms, as we highlighted previously, violence is justified, because what is sought is to depose and destroy the previous model that involved a complete acceptance of the Brazilian secular state, as formulated in the Constitution of 1988, which initiated a new cycle in the Brazilian Republic, known as the “New Republic”. This period officially began with the government of Fernando Collor de Mello, the first civilian elected president after the fall of the military regime, and was consolidated in the following presidential administrations of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) and the Workers Party (PT). In this new period, the civil world (laws and democracy), certainly acquired more importance, supported by the world of the market, the world of opinion (FHC/PSDB), the industrial world and that of inspiration based on greater access to education and culture (PT). The proposal was to create a new cycle of national development that included a project for social inclusion, which would be made viable by the expansion of the world inspired by secular vocation in terms of universal access to schooling for the population in general, focused on the qualification of labor, an expansion of jobs, employability and improvement of public administration (open competitive hiring). In these terms, the domestic world, that of the market (particularly the financial market) and the mediatized order, although strengthened, would in principle be submitted to the civic world, that is, subordinated to laws and be at the service of guaranteeing justice, and politics encompassing democratic governments.

In contrast, what we have in the game *Bolsomito* is an example of an inverted reading about democratic governments in Brazil, given that these governments, are presented as totally “corrupt”, incompetent and promoters of communism and atheism (demonic work). We thus have what Boltanski and Thévenot call a “critical moment”, which in the Brazilian case has lasted some time, if we consider the period from Criminal Action 470 in 2005,⁴⁶ until the events that made possible the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. In this period, the dispute took place through attempts to invert and submit the civil world to the world of inspiration, in the direction of a religious fundamentalism, with Neopentecostalism and the doctrine of the Spiritual Battle becoming the main arena where various measures and actions are being conceived with the goal of brusquely interrupting important public and social policies of the previous governments, thus creating an institutional crisis through the Brazilian social and political system. Although these measures of exception are being guaranteed by legal measures, it is necessary to consider that an arm of the Brazil judiciary has “converted” or is part of Neopentecostal churches or the charismatic and more conservative version of Catholicism which allied to the Neopentecostals, and therefore accepts innovations that were previously unthinkable, banal measures that had been considered illegitimate or of “exception”, such as preventive prisons and plea bargains within the Lava-Jato investigation. These measures have been followed by others, like the moral crusade that also comes from the world of inspiration, and are based on the predominance of the radical, charismatic and fundamentalist religious discourse that seeks to impose itself on all of society. It depends on the exclusion of other discourses, beliefs and religious liberties, which is one of the pillars of secularization, and is accompanied by unconditional support for the “domestic world”, through the concept of “traditional family” as the domain that should control all of Brazilian cultural life in terms of customs and values. All of this has corroborated and institutionalized forms of violence and established what has been called a “culture of hate”.

The second important context in the dispute has been the world of opinion in which, since 2006, a project has been underway to substitute the progressive narrative that was predominant until 2016, which valued democratic and social growth of the country, with narratives that use various strategies to deny reality. This involves a revisionist take on Brazil’s official history that had been consecrated and legitimate until then and

⁴⁶ Criminal Action 470 was a case involving the Workers Party purchase of political support from congressmen in other parties during the early years of Lula’s first government. It was widely known as the “Mensalão” or “monthly allowance”.

led to the process to demoralize both primary and higher education, including a fierce attack on the most important academic and scientific institutions of the country that have suffered devastating policies and budgets cuts. In this sense, much of the Spiritual Battle triggered by the current “winners” is being realized through mediatized actions, which include the intensive use of the internet, in the form of languages and genres until recently not present in the Brazilian political debate. It is in this context that the game *Bolsomito* appropriated a language that in principle is “ludic”, or in the style of traditional electronic games of “street fights”, to promote the *modus operandi* of the doctrine of the movement of the Spiritual Battle, which justifies and legitimates the use of violence (physical and symbolic).

Conclusion

For those who participate in the community or culture of electronic games, the game *Bolsomito 2k18* may appear crude, naive, Manicheist and even dull - given the diversity and variety of genres and styles of games found today. Nevertheless, as we sought to show in this article, the observation of the game and of comments (positive and negative) made by players, allowed us to identify a successful attempt to appropriate this type of narrative structure for political and electoral purposes, and moreover, to corroborate the substitution of a world view, as Carla Mafra affirmed in the article mentioned. Thus, during the recent presidential campaign, this style of game, combined with the doctrines of the Spiritual Battle and of the Seven Mountains, allowed normalizing categories of accusation against social movements, minorities, militants and supporters of a political party that was historically important to the revival of democracy in Brazil, by transforming all of these political actors and segments into the internal “enemy” of the nation. Moreover, the game strongly corroborates Mafra’s identification of a substitution of world views in Brazilian society. In this sense, it is possible to say that one of the fundamental elements of Brazil’s current political crisis is the substitution of a Catholic-based culture based on coercive harmony (Nader, 1994:18-29) that includes the Republican project deposed in 2016, by a Neopentecostal model, based on Spiritual Battles.

Considering the doctrine of the Seven Mountains that is also present in the Neopentecostal project, it was possible to use the theory of justification of Boltanski and Thévenot (1991, 2007) to consider the domains of society that are being disputed by the new project. In this way, what surprised us was not only the content of various stages of the game that explicitly opposed social minorities, institutions and public figures, because the media in general certainly present similar contents, but the use of a electronic game genre – the street fight – in which the stages of the fight were organized through environments that express these domains in dispute and where, according to the Neopentecostal narrative, the evil is found that has afflicted Brazil.

Bolsomito 2k18 channeled and promoted this process of substitution highlighted by Mafra, while mobilizing national symbols, representations, associations, sentiments and emotions that were present and circulated in our society long before the 2018 elections. Having the game take place in stages, in which each one constitutes an escalation in the “Myth’s” [Bolosnaro’s] epic struggle against evil, allowed creating a performatic form based on two important Neopentecostal doctrines to advance this movement in a digital and ludic environment of entertainment related to youth culture.

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Anexos

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