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Peer review dynamics on Steam: gaming capital, violence and communication flows in Bolsomito2k18 reviews

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Abstract

In this work, we argue that content management by peers on the Steam platform, as well as its evaluation systems, generate flows that cause some content/products to gain greater relevance on this platform. Therefore, we observe the evaluations of the game Bolsomito2k18, paying attention to how these information flows occur. Discussions are articulated around assessment systems. We challenge the understanding of network communication dynamics as we consider them a system mediated by the management of gaming capital. We conclude that, given the communication flows, certain contents end up gaining more relevance. Also, evaluation systems can suffer distortions, especially due to the behavior of the evaluation flow itself, and that these distortions can be much more beneficial for companies than for users.

Introduction

Playing is an ordinary activity that presupposes a displacement of reality, a moment displaced in time and space (Huizinga, 2000), but this displacement can assume a mimetic form of the real, being constructed from the real (Caillois, 1990). This mimicry can be incorporated into institutional forms integrated into social life or be corrupted, which according to Caillois would be a form of alienation (1990, p. 77). Playing, then, enables several dynamics of social relationships that are set in motion, whether in the game or external to it.

These social relationship dynamics take place in disseminated communicational instances thanks to the incorporation of digital communication devices into everyday life. Debra Shaw points out that "certain cultural artefacts can be analysed as instrumental in both structuring and reflecting responses to the impact of technologies on social organisation and everyday life" (Shaw, 2008, p. 3), highlighting:

> as much as new technologies have an impact on everyday life, they also, inevitably, call into question much wider questions to do with how we experience the world, the representation of these experiences and their impact on how we construct society and the environment (Shaw, 2008, p. 4).

This space, then constituted as a real space and not a virtual one, creates a new spacetime configuration as a place where everyone, or at least everyone who has access to this technology and who is able to use it, can publish their opinions. It is important to note that, as stated by Hindman, "It may be easy to speak in cyberspace, but it remains difficult to be heard" (2009, p. 142).

We observe how the communication dynamics occur in the evaluation of media products that circulate through these media, in the case of digital games, based on the logic of publication of analysis and scores attributed to content and products. According to Fausto Neto, we are "facing a new form of social organisation and production, where capital would no longer be at the service of structures, but of flows and information" (2006, p.4). In this scenario, "the notion of circulation is updated, as we live in times in which the emphasis of the productive logic of capitalism shifts from the territory of structures to those of circulation devices" (Fausto Neto, 2006, p. 4).

On Steam, a platform for managing copyrights, commercialization and distribution of software, one of the forms of evaluation by users is the possibility to write reviews about products, in this case, games. Any registered user who owns a certain game, and wants to rate that, can write a public review which is associated with that product. Users are encouraged in several ways to take these evaluations. Once an evaluation is made, it is subject to the opinion of other users, who can evaluate the evaluation. Zuboff (2018) indicates that this type of architecture is a commodification of everyday experience, "from communication to thought, all intended to establish new paths for monetization and profit" (Zuboff, 2018, p.44, our translation). These evaluation systems, used in platforms, as proposed by Tom Slee (2017) when talking about Netflix, have particular dynamics

> the relationship between an individual note and the quality of the experience is nebulous. One of the results of the competition established by Netflix was that individual ratings came to depend on factors that had little to do with the films: people tend to follow a previous rating, which makes high-rated films remain highly rated (Slee, 2017, p. 178, our translation).

In this paper we propose to observe the communicational flows and counterflows (Braga, 2012) in the analysis   made by users of the game Bolsomito2k18. We understand that for the articulation of these elements it is essential to articulate the concept of gaming capital (Consalvo, 2007), which refers, among other things, to a person's game skills. In addition to skills, Consalvo indicates paratextual elements, ie, elements external to the text, are constitutive of that capital. Among these elements are: "player's

knowledge of past games in that genre or series, including previewed information from magazines or Web sites, and marketing's attempt at drawing attention to certain elements of the game" (Consalvo, 2007, p.5).

We can still include at this point the growing number of gameplay, tips and streaming channels on YouTube and TwitchTV (Montardo, 2017). Thus, the better a person's game performance, added to the more knowledge he or she has about the field and the culture of people who play the game, the more gaming capital they have. Platform users who have this capital as an element of distinction can, within this dynamic, use these flows and counterflows to be relevant within the platform. As Van Dijck points out "platform trends and reputation metrics have become vital in today's economy. Consequently, it is not surprising that many societal actors try to affect these selection mechanisms" (Van Dijck, Poell & de Waal, 2018, p.43).

Polarization and violence in the political game

We believe that, in order to build this argument, it is essential, at first, to contextualise the event that triggered the flows that we take as the object of this analysis. This event is the release, on the Steam platform, of a digital game called Bolsomito2k18.[1]

In the game, the main character is Jair Bolsonaro, at the time candidate for the presidency of Brazil. The description of the game on its Steam page is: "a pixel-art indie game that follows the Beat 'em up (street brawl) style, and tells the story of a man tired of living in a society corrupted by an ideological enemy, who intends to perpetuate himself in power through a communist dictatorship".[2] From this description, we can have a good idea of the game's ideological bias, where the objective is to exterminate the enemies (Illustration 1), who are, according to an article about the game in Folha de S. Paulo, "feminists, homeless, gays and blacks" (Martins, 2018).

Illustration 1 – Characters from the game Bolsomito 2k18 representing the enemies of the title character on the left and the allies on the right

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/

This game was developed and published in a moment of extreme polarization of the Brazilian political spectrum. In 2018's Brazil, a part of the population took to the streets asking for a democratic setback, requesting a military intervention like that which occurred during the 1964 coup (Fleck, 2018; Teles, 2018). One of the factors that can explain this polarization is the network communication flows mediated by platforms. These flows, focused on concentrating the users' attention, create a process of dating life that, as Van Djick explains

> is beginning to play a central role in the configuration of social relations. Platform corporations expand their collecting and processing of data to track and predict an ever wider variety of users' performances, sentiments, transactions, informal exchanges,

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[1] Currently the game is called Bolsomito, it can only be accessed via a link, being excluded from the platform's search engine at the request of the game's distributor. There is no explanation in it as to the reason for the change.

[2] Retrieved May, 2021, from: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/.

and activities. The social, economic, and public value of data exchange is inscribed in its real- time and predictive character, allowing platform operators to directly track and influence streams of traffic, public opinions and sentiments, or, for that matter, students' cognitive advances. The business models of these platforms, in turn, inform how platforms technologically steer the flow of data (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018, p.36).

These flows intensified   in Brazil in the 2010s, more specifically after the demonstrations in June 2013. In the heat of the protests, much of the academic production about the events had an optimistic tone. Castells (2013), in his afterword to the Brazilian edition of *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, ends by talking about Brazil.

For what is irreversible in Brazil as in the world is the empowerment of citizens, their communicative autonomy and the awareness of young people that all we know about the future is that they will do it. Mobile-zed (Castells, 2013, p. 182, our translation).

However, in *Cidades Rebeldes*, Lima (2013) already observes during the protests some factors that make it interesting to point out in the 2013 scenario to place it in parallel with 2018, especially when discussing the social networks/traditional media relationship, dealing with a disqualifying culture of politics and politicians. The author show that the traditional media "[...] identified in the protests [...] an opportunity to 'deconstruct' the undeniable social achievements of recent years in relation to the fight against inequality, misery and poverty [...]" (Lima, 2013, p.92, our translation). This deconstruction also ends up being evident in the game's proposal and in the speeches articulated in its reviews made by Steam platform users.

In the same book, Sakamoto (2013) drew attention to some characteristics that are strongly reflected in the current situation of polarization, recalling that Brazilian society is extremely conservative and that "[...] is in favor of reducing the age of criminal responsibility [...] thinks that a woman is not the owner of her own body [...] is against gay marriage [...] is disgusted with immigrants [...] and supports the genocide of black youth" (Sakamoto, 2013, p.97). Also that there were ultra-right protesters within the movement, an ultra-right that "[...] uses physical violence and intimidation as pressure instruments [...]" (Sakamoto, 2013, p.98) and at this point, the similarities with the game are even more evident (Illustration 2).

Illustration 2 – Title character attacking stereotyped representations of the LGBT movement

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/

The recurring discourse on pages linked to the far right was about threats to the good citizen, the same threats that "(...) the army was forced to intervene in 1964 (...)" (Ribeiro, 2018). This good citizen is placed in opposition to anyone who characterizes a divergence from what they consider normality. According to Teles (2018), "(...) it creates, on the one hand, the 'good citizen', worker (or owner) and orderly and, on the other, the vagabond, vandal, drug addict, troublemaker, the individual outside the borders that delimit the possible authorized by the order" (Teles, 2018, position 1090, our translation). This construction of the other, enemy of the good citizen, is quite evident in evaluation, made by game users and present on the Steam platform, like this one: "Excellent game! Thousand! Too hot to beat up these bums. BUMS!! (sic)",[3] recommending the game.

In this context, elements of Brazil's 2018 polarized political scenario overflow into the game. Many of these elements are related to violence. Based on Bourdieu (1989; 2003), we understand that symbolic violence is that exerted by different means, here especially discursive ones. According to the author, this type of violence is deeply related to space disputes in specific fields, being related and mediated by the symbolic capitals present there. In the case of the game under analysis, we understand that the communication flows present in the evaluations that are made happen exactly at the intersection of social fields.

Symbolic violence, present in these communications, is then presented as a violence that occurs in a systemic, invisible way, as described by Bourdieu, but at certain times it is also quite evident, as pointed out by Žižek (2014). Observing these violences, according to Megan Condis allows us to

> create a miniature model of how we understand gender, sexuality, and race, and we can track how these concepts are stretched and reshaped to fit various subcultural contexts (Condis, 2018, p. 3)

Therefore, we can dedicate ourselves to exploring these dynamics that allow us to understand how these communication flows take place in a community about digital games, contributing to a broader panorama of the social fabric.

Evaluation system on Steam

The Steam platform evaluation system can be treated as a hybrid rating system, as it mixes points awarded by magazines and specialized sites with evaluations made by users. Users evaluations can be in the form of *recommend* and *not recommend*, and its average assigns to the game one of the following categories: Very Positive; Positives; Neutral; Negatives; Very negatives. These rankings are established on the amount of recommendations assigned to the game and have two categories, which are *General Reviews* and *Recent Reviews* (Screenshot 1).

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[3] User reviews will be translated as posted on the platform. Users will not be identified. In the original: "Jogo excelente! Mil! Gostoso demais bater nesses vagabundos. VAGABUNDOS!! (sic)"

Screenshot 1 – User ratings chart for Bolsomito 2k18

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/
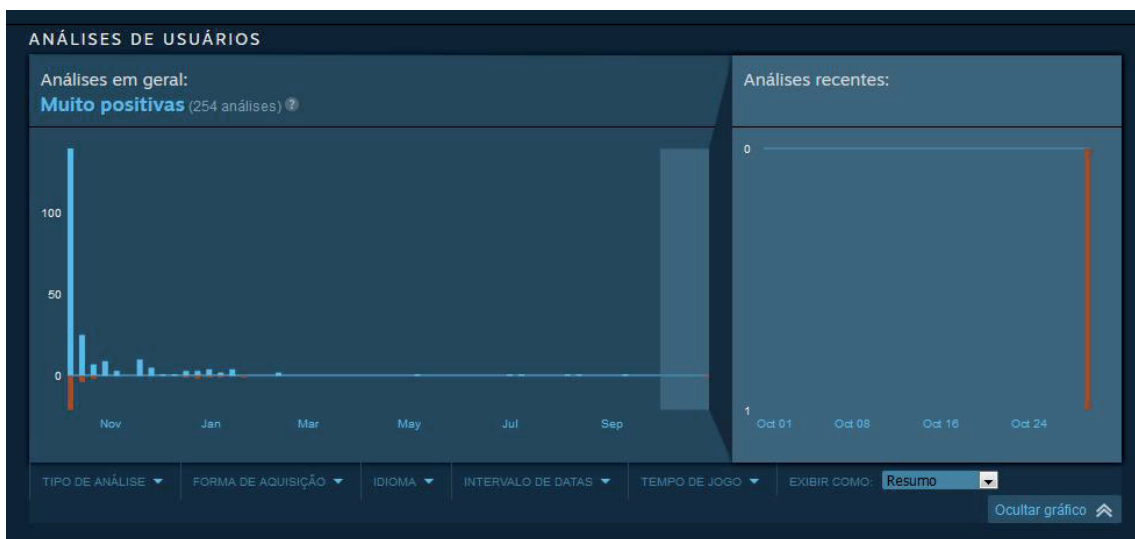
These evaluation systems, based on the perceptions of users/consumers, are increasingly present in our daily lives, in a good part of our consumption practices in digital or non-digital media. Just as there is the possibility of evaluating softwares on Steam, it is possible to evaluate video productions available on open or closed networks, such as Youtube, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, products purchased in physical or digital stores, such as on the B2W marketplace,[4] and also services provided through apps like Uber, iFood or AirBnB. If, as presented by Van Dijck (2018), the communication flows concentrated in the platforms lead to a process of datafication of life, which in turn creates a commoditization mechanism that "involves platforms transforming online and offline objects, activities, emotions, and ideas into tradable commodities. These commodities are valued through at least four different types of currency: attention, data, users, and money" (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018, p.40) In addition, the author points out that

> platforms also play a crucial role in determining the "reputation" of users and services. Users are constantly asked to review each other's behavior and performance, for instance, as deliverers, drivers, guests, teachers, or hosts. In turn, these metrics are fed back to users, allowing them to quickly assess whether it is a good idea to engage in an economic exchange with another user (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018, p.43).

These evaluations, when made by users/consumers, are given as a recommendation and it is necessary to write an analysis text. As characterized in illustration 3, a user analysis is presented to the public with the following sectors: 1) profile picture, name, number of games and number of analysis performed; 2) recommendation or not recommendation, game time and form of acquisition of the product (on Steam, external or free); 3) date of evaluation and text of the analysis; 4) number of people who found the analysis useful and/or funny; 5) buttons for review evaluation and access to comments. Users taking the review can lock and manage their comments area. In the case of Bolsomito2k18, the vast majority of users preferred to close (188 of the 227 evaluations in Portuguese) and 2 users deleted and/or added comments to their posts so that it would have 17 comments, alluding to the number of the candidate in the election 2018. The button to mark the analysis as not useful has no statistical representation.

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[4] Marketplace that brings together the brazilian stores Americanas, Submarino and Shoptime.

Illustration 3 – Structure of a user analysis
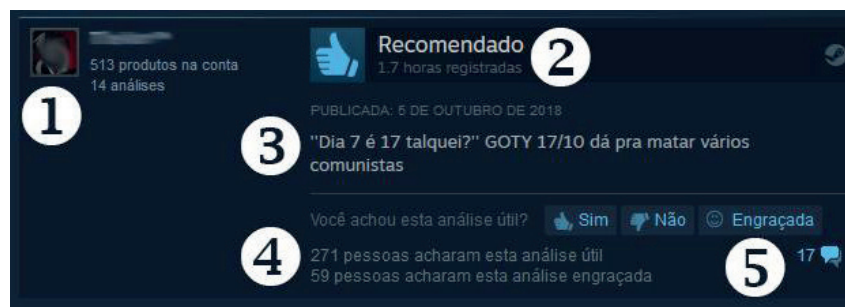
Source: created by the authors

There are other elements that should be taken into account when talking about Steam's review system. If on the one hand, as we have seen before, anyone able to use the network can manifest and publish their opinion, the problem in this new communication scenario is "(...) to be read, seen and heard (...)" (Silveira 2017, position 319, our translation). If it is increasingly easier to produce content for the internet and, mainly, make this content available, it is increasingly difficult to become relevant, so "(...) millions of content creators do not have the same capacity and condition of concentration of attention (...) it can be seen that the large access flows are concentrated" (Silveira, 2017, position 357, our translation). In this way, the gaming capital of certain users is enhanced. This is evident when the platform indicates the amount of games the user has and the number of evaluations were made, as well as an indication of how many hours were played to carry out the evaluation. This, combined with the tendency of platforms to value content with greater potential to focus attention and, consequently, generate a greater flow, allows these users to receive benefits, such as early access to certain products and/or free products, since their recommendations are valuable   for certain products and for the platform itself. In this sense, the platform transfers responsibility for the quality of the product to people who benefit from the evaluations. Zuboff, when talking about the platforms' posture, points out that "the formal indifference and distance of users, combined with their current freedom from regulations, sanctions or laws, protect Google and other surveillance capitalists from the consequences of distrust (Zuboff , 2018, p.50, author's highlight, our translation).

Trolling and gaming capital

In the game Bolsomito 2k18, 226 user reviews were carried out in Portuguese, in the period from October 2018 (game release) to January 2019 (when the game is removed from the public list and can be found only through the direct link). Of these reviews, 197 were *recommendations*, and only 29 were *not recommendations*, which classifies the game as having *Very positive* evaluations. Some quantitative data give us clues about how this flow of attention moves. The average rating of the reviews as *helpful* was 35, and the review with the most credit on that rating received 878 marks as *helpful*. This was a non recommendation of the game as can be seen in screenshot 2.

Screenshot 2 - User review with more indications as useful[5]

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/
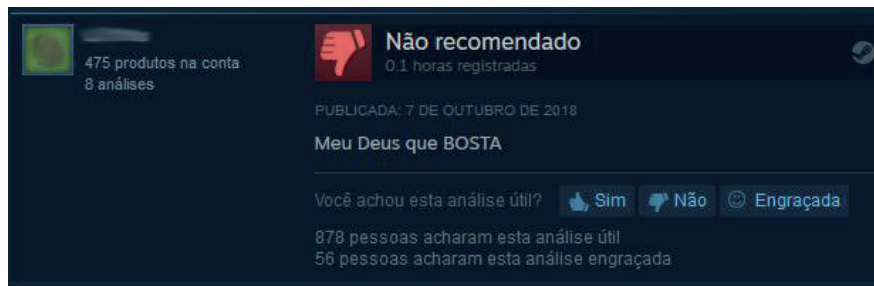
The analysis brings a significant trait that is internationally associated with the behavior of brazilian gamers, who are recognized for trolling. Suely Fragoso (2015) in an analysis of brazilian gamer behavior conceptualizes that "all trolling is intended to upset others and foment conflict, but this can be achieved in different ways. A very common way is to mock a person, or a small group of people, before a wider community (Fragoso, 2015, p. 138, our translation).

Fragoso points out that trolling is divided into three stages: the first-order intention, that is, what the trolling person wants; the informational intent, which is the content; and the ostensive stimulus, which is the strategy used, "the bait that the troll expects someone to bite" (2015, p.137, our translation). We can then observe the flow and counterflow movements, triggered by the postage logic used in trolling. We can understand the first-order intention as the intention to create controversy and consequently to focus attention, the troll's desire. The informative intention is the evaluation itself, as well as the positioning of those who make it in relation to the political field. Thus, a counterflow is created from this strategy, as Braga states "in the counterflow, we start to produce from the answers we intend, hope or fear" (Braga, 2012, p.40). Thus, we can infer that the evaluation of the analysis illustrated in screenshot 2 as useful may be associated with this type of behavior. Comments for the evaluation were closed by users, which demonstrates, within the platform's logic, that he tried to avoid conflicts, but also avoiding the contradiction to what he believes. But the very act of creating controversy generates a continuous flow with other social fields. Braga (2012) points out that "this continuous flow circulation is not just an abstract description. It manifests itself concretely in society, in the form of circuits – which are culturally practiced, are recognizable by their users" (2012, p. 41), creating this interpenetration between fields, generating more complex circuits.

> We find a circulation in continuous flow, related to the generation of complex circuits – in two ways: by the variety of environments crossed; and by the diversity of processes, means and products that can be articulated to the circuit. The circuits most marked by the mediatization of society cross established social fields, shaking its refraction capacity and the design of its sphere of legitimacy. In such circuits, there is often a focus on the receiving pole, producing what we call "listening counterflow" (Braga, 2012, p.48, our translation).

It is important to think of these communications as articulated in a space that is recognized as being predominantly male (Kurtz, 2017) and racist (Mukherjee, 2017). Adding to this, given the polarized scenario and a naturalization of hate speech, a series of evaluations that have a trolling tone end up adopting a very violent posture, with crossings of other social fields, such as: "If you found the game offensive, use it and sue for "Image Rights", because you are one of the enemies portrayed in the game ;) (sic)"; "Anything gets fun when you can eliminate communists/socialists(sic)"; "You punch Maria do

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[5] User review, in the original: My God what a SHIT

Rosário and William Boner is a 10/10 (sic)"; "vr good, good bandit is a dead bandit talkei? (sic)"; "I PLAYED AND LIKED TAOQUEI? IF YOU DIDN'T LIKE IT YOU HAVE TO F U C K Y O U FINISH, IT'S MY IDEA(sic)"; "A lot of oppression for one game (sic)"; "Beating up Corrupt Politicians and watching leftists turn [shit]????? for only 10 bucks? Was it worth every penny Talkei? (sic)".[6] Several of these comments reproduce campaign slogans or reproduce speeches that circulated before and during the electoral process, with some that last until the writing of this article and that are apparently linked to the Brazilian alt-right, the alternative right, an extreme right political movement linked to nationalist and white supremacist movements that emerged in the United States in 2010 (Poggi, 2018, p. 338) and that have become increasingly sexist, misogynistic and homophobic (Pinheiro-Machado, 2019, p. 90). In these evaluations, symbolic violence and troll action are evident. According to Condis, "these incursions serve the dual purpose of infuriating the target and boosting the social capital of the troll." (2018, p. 19).

Another issue that caught our attention was an analysis by a curator.[7] Unlike the previous one, this one had the comments area open and received 95 comments. The average of comments in the analysis was 1.6. In a total of 352, i.e., this analysis concentrated almost one third of all comments referring to the analysis about the game (screenshot 3).

Screenshot 3 – User review with more comments[8]

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/
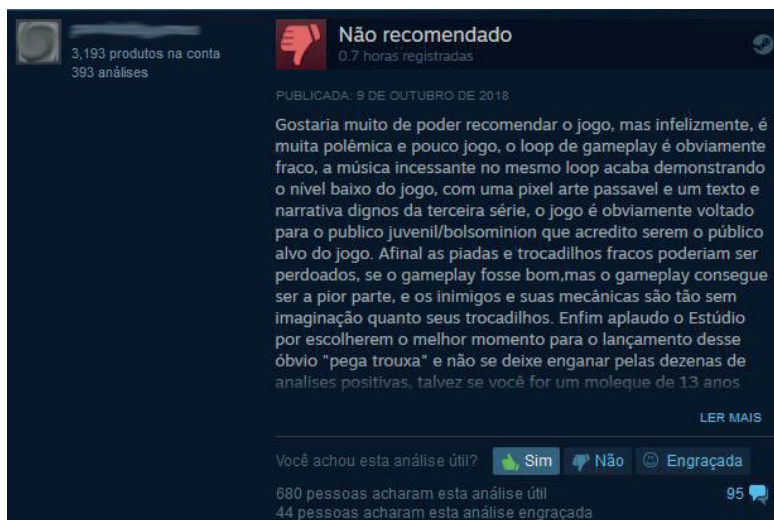
Let's look at some elements in the construction of the evaluation: "I would very much like to be able to recommend the game, but unfortunately, it's a lot of controversy and little game". As proposed by Braga (2012) and Fausto Neto (2006), we understand that this placement is audience-oriented, in

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[6] User reviews, in the original: "Se você achou o jogo ofensivo, aproveita e processa por "Direitos de Imagem", porque tu é um dos inimigos retratados no jogo ;) (sic)"; "Qualquer coisa fica divertida quando se pode eliminar comunistas/socialistas(sic)"; "Você soca a Maria do Rosário e o William Boner é corno 10/10 (sic)"; "mt bom bandido bom eh bandido morto talkei? (sic)"; "JOGUEI E GOSTEI TAOQUEI? SE NÃO GOSTOU TEM QUE SE F U D E R CABÔ, É A MINHA IDEIA(sic)"; "Muita opressão pra um jogo só (sic)"; "Bater em Políticos Corruptos e ver esquerdistas virarem [merda]????? por apenas 10 reais? Valeu cada centavo Talkey? (sic)"

[7] Curators are users of the Steam platform who manage groups of players and have their analysis highlighted.

[8] "I would very much like to be able to recommend the game, but unfortunately, it's a lot of controversy and little game, the gameplay loop is obviously weak, the incessant music on the same loop ends up demonstrating the low level of the game, with passable pixel art and text and narrative worthy of the third series, the game is obviously aimed at the youth/bolsominion audience who I believe are the game's target audience.[...] "

a double bias, stating that I would like to recommend. In this way, it ends up adhering to the possible flow of the gamer community field, crossed by the political field, which at that time was in line with the social positions of the game's theme-character. At the same time, it ends up investing its gaming capital, by presenting technical aspects to make the non-recommendation right away. As previously presented, creating this type of flow is very favorable to the platform, as it generates relevance for the product, that is, the curator's subjectivity is commoditized, aiming to increase his own relevance, while valuing the product by exposure. According to Fausto Neto,

> These mechanisms produce and make a new form of society, whose purposes are productional, but directly linked to the logic of flows and operations, and whose aim is to produce a new form of social bond, in this case the structures of connections. (Fausto Neto, 2006, p. 3, our translation).

Then, the analysis seeks to emulate a certain seriousness, creating classification categories and assigning grades to various aspects of the game, such as: gameplay; audio; graphics; audience, optimization etc. Even with these characteristics, we can distinguish elements of the troll culture, which was a recurrence in the analysis of the game, such as the category *Base of players* having the option *kids/ bolsominions* and the *Graphics* category, the option *Potato running in paint.exe* (screenshot 4).

Screenshot 4 – User review with more comments (detail)

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/
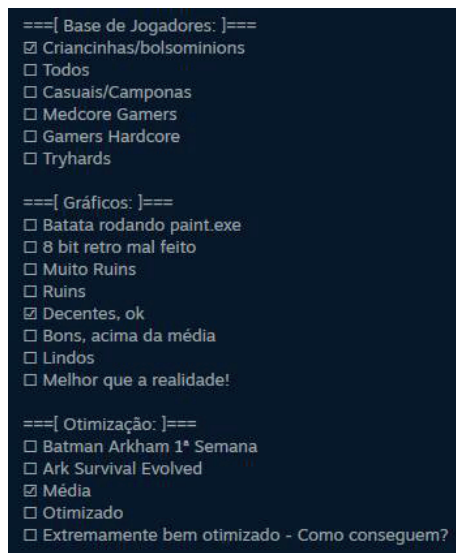
An important factor to be highlighted is that some of the negative reviews were specifically related to the game and its technical characteristics, as we can see in screenshot 5. To criticize the game logic without this meaning that they disapproved of the title character, users who carried out this type of evaluation began the text declaring their support for Bolsonaro. In this sense, there seems to be a great concern in not betting on their gaming capital, controlling the flow. In this way, the evaluation demarcates a political position that follows the flow of the gamer community, while not compromising the gaming capital.

Screenshot 5 – User analysis contrary to the game but favourable to the character[9]

Source: https://store.steampowered.com/app/930460/BOLSOMITO/
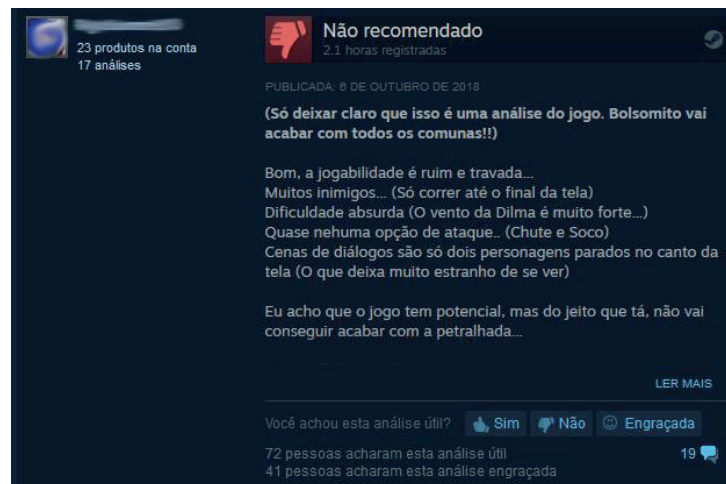
These evaluations account for a fundamental element to understand these communicational dynamics within the platform. To understand the implications, both of a negative evaluation that uses technical aspects, and the categories articulated by the people who carry out these evaluations, a specific knowledge of the field is needed. People who are part of these communities articulate a type of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989) specific to this field, defined as gaming capital. Mia Consalvo (2017) defines gaming capital as a concept that provides a fundamental way to understand how people interact with games and which also works as "a currency that is necessarily dynamic – changing over time and between types of players or games" (Consalvo, 2007, p.04). According to the author, "being a member of the gaming culture is more than just playing, or even playing well. It's about having knowledge about releases and game secrets and passing this information on to other people" (Consalvo, 2007, p.18). According to Walsh and Apperley (2009) "(...) gaming capital encapsulates cultural, economic, social and symbolic forms of capital that are embodied through the knowledge, skills, and dispositions (...)" (Walsh & Apperley, 2009, p.2) is that:

> Different game players possess different gaming capitals based on their accumulation of – or inability to accumulate - various gaming capitals across social fields. Gaming capital has to be evoked through the social element of games because when looking at games on their own, gaming capital has limited exchange value (Walsh & Apperley, 2009, p.5)

The concept of gaming capital then allows us to infer the way and reasons why certain valuations were written and what the implications are in the relationships of people who invest this capital. In cases of criticism of the game that begin with the defense of the character Bolsomito, the gaming capital is invested thinking about the social environment. In the case of the analysis that satirizes with Bolsonaro's voters, the curator uses his gaming capital to increase the flow in his evaluation. In any case, it is in this increased flow that attention is focused on the platform that, based on the accumulation of data about

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[9] "(Just make it clear that this is a game analysis. Bolsomito will wipe out all communists!!)
Well, the gameplay is bad and stuck...
Many enemies... (Just run to the bottom of the screen)
Absurd difficulty (Dilma's wind is very strong...)
Almost no attack option. (Kick and Punch)
Dialog scenes are just two characters standing in the corner of the screen (which makes it very strange to see)
I think the game has potential, but the way it is, it won't be able to end the petralhada..."

other users, highlights the type of content that will suit their profile, trying to predict what will capture more attention. According to Van Dijck

> Platforms algorithmically determine the interests, desires, and needs of each user on the basis of a wide variety of datafied user signals, personalizing the user's stream of content, advertising, and contact suggestions. Personalization depends on "predictive analytics": the ability to predict future choices and trends on the basis of analyzing historical patterns of individual and aggregate data (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018, p.41)

To better observe the flows, we opted for a graphical representation. We can see from the graph in illustration 4, generated from the total of collected comments and the relationships between profiles, a large amount of connections generated from a red dot (1) that concentrates most of these connections, which represent the comments made. This is the evaluation presented in screenshots 3 and 4. Another important point to be observed in the graph is the low amount of interconnections, that is, commentators rarely repeated or had interactions with other users. We believe this is largely because many of the reviews have the comment area closed.

Illustration 4 - Graph demonstrating connections between users
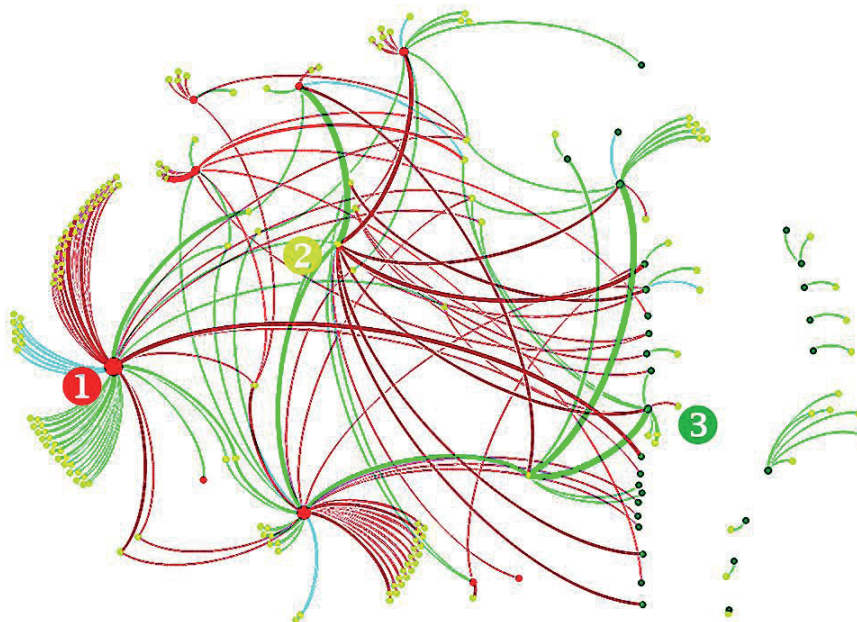
Source: created by the authors

In the graph, the red dots are *non-recommendation* evaluations for the game, the green ones are *recommendation*, and the yellow ones are from users who only commented on evaluations from others. The size of the points is relative to the amount of comments received. Red lines are for opposing comments, green for supporting, and blue for neutral comments. Red lines are for opposing comments, green for support, and blue for neutral comments. Line thickness indicates the amount of interactions between users, i.e., the more responses within posts, thicker the line. Most of the connections that had a common flow were between posts against the game.

Some points help us to understand these flows, such as the yellow dot (2), where the commentator interacted with several people who made evaluations, bringing information about the game being under investigation and making several criticisms of the then candidate and character of the game. His

connections are in support of those who criticize and in opposition to those who recommend the game. Still, we can see some lines of opposition between point (2) and some red dots (non-recommendations), which are the cases of people who support Bolsonaro but didn't like the game. This is the case of red dot 4, related to screenshot 5, which, due to its political position, ends up having more links related to the evaluations that were favorable to the game. The green dot (3) is an example of a user who has erased comments so that his evaluation would have exactly 17 comments and its denser connection is with a yellow dot that made several comments in support of the candidate.

The commentator/commentator interactions were not analyzed, but the sequences of conversations followed the same logic as the evaluations, such as the discussion in the evaluation of point (3): "Every communist loves to abuse little children. All leftists and PT voters have a pedophile complex hidden inside";[10] "Every communist is dumb"[11], followed by two opposite answers "every bozominion is mouse";[12] "the only place where MITO has the courage. Out of the game it's a mouse".[13] The antagonistic positions then had more potential to generate interaction than the gaming capital implied in these publications, concentrating in this way the flows.

It is possible to point out, starting from the graphical visualization, that the greater concentration of connections, and, consequently, the greater flow, are related to two non-recommendations. Both then put themselves in counterflow, as most evaluations regarding the game are positive. However, one of the users makes his political position very clear (4), in line with the majority, while another (1) does a trolling. Both generate a communication flow that spans the polarized spectrum relative to the political field. From the platform logic of   presenting content that may be relevant to users, in both cases, the flow ends up being favourable to the product and, consequently, to the platform.

Conclusions

We realized that, given the communication flows in a networked system, where actors compete more and more for attention, certain contents end up gaining more relevance from datafication and commodification mechanisms. We also concluded that, despite the evaluation systems looking for a way to provide users with information that helps in the consumption decision, they can suffer distortions, especially due to the behavior of the evaluation flow itself. Because its conception is oriented to the logic of flows, thinking about possible responses, these distortions can be much more beneficial to companies than to users   .

In the case of the game Bolsomito2k18, we believe that the determining factor for its success, in addition to the symbolic representations of violence, which are a reflection of our contemporary society, was the flow of attention generated by users who negatively evaluated the game, especially those with strong gaming capital invested when carrying out their evaluations. We can consider that there was a certain opportunism by the game's developer - denounced to local authorities - to release the game on a date close to the first round of the Brazilian presidential elections. In this way, the company takes advantage of the polarized scenario to generate controversy and, consequently, sales, appropriating the platform's own economic logics, by producing a game that ends up receiving more reviews regarding its political bias disguised as a joke than properly due to its quality.

Communications made about this game by users on the Steam platform, as a reflection of this

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[10] User comment, in the original: "Todo comunista adora abusar de umas criancinhas. Todos os esquerdistas e eleitores do PT têm um complexo de pedófilo escondido no seu interior"

[11] User comment, in the original: "Todo comunista é burro"

[12] User comment, in the original: "todo bozominion é rato"

[13] User comment, in the original: "o único lugar onde o MITO tem coragem. Fora do jogo é um rato"

polarized society, were presented in the same way, with two clear poles, concentrating information flows and connections that deepen the differences and are harmful to the debate - especially when their troll spirit makes it even harder for interactions to result in genuine exchanges of insights and learnings.

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