

**UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID**  
**FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y SOCIOLOGÍA**



**TESIS DOCTORAL**

**Brasil encima de todo, Dios encima de todos: una etnografía  
del Sentido Colonial Metafórico Bolsonaroista en las elecciones  
brasileñas de 2018**

**Brazil above everything, God above everyone : an  
ethnography of Bolsonaroist Metaphorical Colonial Sense in  
the 2018 Brazilian elections**

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

**Gabriel Bayarri Toscano**

Directores

**José Carmelo Lisón Arcal**  
**Gregory Downey**

Madrid

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to explain the success of Brazil's far-right-wing Bolsonarists in the 2018 election campaign. It analyses how the different communicative forms present in the campaign, were structured around foundational metaphors that generated the entire cognitive universe of *Bolsonarismo*, allowing it to link into the type of society Brazil actually was: a post-colonial society, historically racist, hierarchical and founded on a regime of the normalisation of violence, which at the same time built its management of these dilemmas on the cordiality and flexibility of its relationships through festive expressions, such as carnivals and football. Influenced by Caio Prado Jr's (2011/1942) concept of *colonial sense*, I have called the relationship between Bolsonarist metaphorical thinking and Brazil's colonial origin a *metaphorical colonial sense*. This concept of metaphorical colonial sense has been crucial to the testing of the hypotheses that were the starting points for this thesis. These were that the Bolsonarist phenomenon could be explained as a product of the existence of a global systemic crisis, as a product of the existence of specific elements in Brazilian culture closely linked to the colonial past that included an acceptance of hierarchies and a specific historical social order that was perceived to be at risk, and through the category of "far-right" rather than fascism, as, although *Bolsonarismo* shared certain features of fascism, it was a complex, particular and peculiarly Brazilian phenomenon better explained by the concept of "far-right."

The fieldwork for the thesis consisted of an ethnography comprising two central activities. In the first, three electoral campaigns in the State of Rio de Janeiro were followed, during which I studied the metaphorical thinking articulated in official *Bolsonarismo*. In the second, various people with profoundly different profiles were accompanied through their day-to-day lives during the months of the electoral period. Some of these people intended to vote for the Bolsonarist project. Others were members of a progressive politics, who attempted to counter the onslaught of *Bolsonarismo* with their own set of metaphors. The concept of a metaphorical colonial sense proved crucial to identifying that the Brazilian far-right was projecting a metaphorical universe that was only able to function because of the deep historical roots of post-colonial Brazil. Although sharing some obvious traits with international far-right phenomena, "fascism" fails to capture the particular elements of Brazilian post-colonialism that proved so decisive in the campaign, especially the myth of racial democracy and harmony

so necessary to understanding the continuing acceptance of violence as a means of managing conflict in Brazil.

Thus, through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory and the concept of metaphorical colonial sense it became evident that the consequences of Brazil's colonial period were present throughout the structuring metaphors of *Bolsonarismo*. The tensions of a society that had passed without explicit conflict from colony to republic, from slavery to abolition, and from dictatorship to democracy, could thus be exploited by an anti-establishment political program that declared Brazil itself as their party.

## Resumen

Esta tesis busca explicar el éxito de la extrema derecha brasileña Bolsonarista en la campaña electoral de 2018. Se analiza cómo las diferentes formas comunicativas presentes en la campaña, se estructuraron en torno a metáforas fundacionales que generaron todo el universo cognitivo del *Bolsonarismo*, permitiéndole vincularse al tipo de sociedad que Brasil realmente era: una sociedad postcolonial, históricamente racista, jerárquica y fundada en un régimen de normalización de la violencia, que al mismo tiempo construía su gestión de estos dilemas en la cordialidad y flexibilidad de sus relaciones a través de expresiones festivas, como los carnavales y el fútbol. Influenciado por el concepto de *sentido colonial* de Caio Prado Jr (2011/1942), he llamado *sentido colonial metafórico* a la relación entre el pensamiento metafórico Bolsonarista y el origen colonial de Brasil. El concepto del sentido colonial metafórico ha sido central para la comprobación de las hipótesis de partida de esta tesis. Estas fueron que el fenómeno Bolsonarista podía explicarse como producto de la existencia de una crisis sistémica global, como producto de la existencia de elementos específicos de la cultura brasileña estrechamente vinculados al pasado colonial que incluían una aceptación de las jerarquías y un orden social histórico específico que se percibía en riesgo, y a través de la categoría de “extrema derecha” y no del fascismo, ya que, aunque el *Bolsonarismo* compartía ciertos rasgos del fascismo, era un fenómeno complejo, particular y peculiarmente brasileño que se explicaba mejor con el concepto de “extrema derecha.”

El trabajo de campo para la tesis consistió en una etnografía que comprendía dos actividades centrales. En la primera, se siguieron tres campañas electorales en el Estado de Río de Janeiro, durante las cuales estudié el pensamiento metafórico articulado en el *Bolsonarismo* oficial. En la segunda, se acompañó a varias personas con perfiles profundamente diferentes en su día a día durante los meses del periodo electoral. Algunas de estas personas tenían intención de votar al proyecto Bolsonarista. Otras eran miembros de una política progresista, que intentaban contrarrestar la embestida del *Bolsonarismo* con su propio conjunto de metáforas. El concepto de sentido colonial metafórico resultó crucial para identificar que la extrema derecha brasileña proyectaba un universo metafórico que sólo podía funcionar debido a las profundas raíces históricas del Brasil poscolonial. Aunque comparte algunos rasgos obvios con los fenómenos

internacionales de extrema derecha, el “fascismo” no capta los elementos particulares del poscolonialismo brasileño que resultaron tan decisivos en la campaña, especialmente el mito de la democracia y la armonía racial, tan necesarios para entender la continua aceptación de la violencia como medio de gestión del conflicto en Brasil.

Así, a través de la lente de la teoría de la metáfora conceptual y del concepto de sentido colonial metafórico se hizo evidente que las consecuencias del período colonial de Brasil estaban presentes en todas las metáforas estructurantes del *Bolsonarismo*. Las tensiones de una sociedad que había pasado sin conflicto explícito de la colonia a la república, de la esclavitud a la abolición y de la dictadura a la democracia, podían así ser explotadas por un programa político antisistema que declaraba al propio Brasil como su partido.

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Y por último, agradezco y dedico esta tesis a Marielle Franco, pues investigar la violencia política en Brasil es aproximarse a las causas por las que fue ejecutada. A los jóvenes raperos favelados de Slam Poesía, de cuyos versos me he apropiado para iniciar cada capítulo. A May, por todo, por su sensibilidad y amor, por las lágrimas que derramó el día de su cumpleaños, coincidiendo con el asesinato de Marielle. Y a las poblaciones indígenas y aborígenes, habitantes previos de los espacios en los que he investigado (Brasil) y escrito (Australia).

## Abbreviations

ALERJ	Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro)
BB	Banco do Brasil (Bank of Brazil)
BCB	Banco Central do Brasil (Central Bank of Brazil)
BOPE	Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais (Special Police Operations Battalion)
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
BRL	Brazilian Real
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CARR	Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (UK)
CEASA	Central Supply Centre in Rio de Janeiro (Supply Centre for the State of Rio de Janeiro)
C-REX	Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo
CRWS	Berkeley Centre for Right-Wing Studies, University of California
CUT	Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Unique Central)
DD	Domain of Destination (of a metaphor)
DO	Domain of Origin (of a metaphor)
EPL	Estudantes Pela Liberdade (Students for Freedom)
FAFERJ	Federação de Associações de Favelas do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Federation of <i>Favela</i> Associations of the State of Rio de Janeiro)
FGV	Fundação Getulio Vargas (Getulio Vargas Foundation)
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBGE	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
Ibope	Instituto brasileiro de opinião pública e estatística (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics)
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IEDI	Instituto de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento Industrial (Institute for Industrial Development Studies)
IELAT	Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Estudios Latinoamericanos (University Institute for Research in Latin American Studies)
IL	Instituto Liberal (Liberal Institute)
IMB	Instituto Mises Brasil (Brazil's Mises Institute)
INCT-InEAC	Instituto de Estudos Comparados em Administração Institucional de Conflitos (Institute for Comparative Studies in Institutional Conflict Administration)
InEAC-NUFEP	Brazilian Institute of Comparative Studies on Institutional Management of Conflict
IPSOS	Institut de Publique Sondage d'Opinion Secteur
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex [persons]
MAM	Museo de Arte Moderna (Museum of Modern Art)
MBL	<i>Movimento Brasil Livre</i> (Free Brazil Movement)
MDB	Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (1965-1981; 2017 -)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPL	<i>Movimento Passe Livre</i> (Free Pass Movement)

MST	<i>Movimento Sem Terra</i> (Landless Workers' Movement)
MTST	<i>Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto</i> (Homeless Workers Movement)
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NUFEP	Núcleo Fluminense de Estudos e Pesquisas (Fluminense Nucleus of Studies and Research)
OAB	Ordem de Advogados Brasileiros (Order of Lawyers of Brazil)
PAC	Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (Growth Acceleration Plan)
PDT	Partido Democrático Trabalhista (Democratic Labour Party)
PM	Polícia Militar (Military Police)
PMDB	Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party)
PP	Partido Progressista (Progressive Party)
PPPs	Parceria Público-Privada (Public-Private Partnerships)
PSL	Partido Social Liberal (Social Liberal Party)
PSOL	Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (Socialism and Freedom Party)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party)
RGFIC	Centre for Research into Global Power, Inequality and Conflict (Macquarie University)
RJ	Rio de Janeiro
ROTA	Rondas Ostensivas Tobias de Aguiar (Ostensive Patrols Tobias Aguiar)
SM	Salário Mínimo (MW - Minimum Wage)

SP	São Paulo
STJ	Supremo Tribunal de Justiça (Supreme Court of Justice )
TSE	Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (High Electoral Court)
TSF	Tribunal Supremo Federal (Supreme Federal Court)
UFF	Universidade Federal Fluminense (Fluminense Federal University)
UFRJ	Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro)
Unafisco	Associação Nacional dos Auditores Fiscais da Receita Federal do Brasil (National Association of Fiscal Auditors of the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service)
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
Unifesp	Universidade Federal do Estado de São Paulo (Federal University of the State of São Paulo)
UPP	Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora (Pacifying/Peacemaker Police Unit)
USD	U.S. Dollar
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WID	World Inequality Database





***Preliminary remarks on my experience: “an innocent anthropologist” for the far-right?***

Before starting the thesis itself, I want to tell you about the singularities that this research has had and continues to have. I started the Ph.D. in 2016 while working in politics in an elected position, and with a keen interest in understanding the bizarre phenomenon that was the far-right. My years living in Brazil had helped me enormously to get to grips with the language and cultural codes, so a unique opportunity was finally presented to me: to do fieldwork with informants on the Brazilian far-right. The *Bolsonarismo* phenomenon was growing fast, and when I arrived in Brazil in August 2018 to accompany the election campaign it was not yet thought that Bolsonaro would win the elections. My political party, the Brazilian caviar left, and various sectors of the progressive field thought I had gone completely mad: “Study the far-right? Will you go as an infiltrator? How is it possible to investigate people whose beliefs you hate?” It was with these ethical questions, often raised by the voices of strangers looking at me in astonishment, that I began my fieldwork.

A series of coincidences led me to quickly meet people in the leadership of Bolsonaro’s party, and several days after arriving I found myself in a car with the advisor of Flavio Bolsonaro, candidate for the senate and son of the current president. My gringo accent made me inoffensive, and my comments could always be seen as those of a person who did not dispute power, but who had worked in politics, which they liked. Inspired by the classic book of Neil Barley (1983), I was something of “an innocent anthropologist” who, it should be noted, was always treated very well, with meals and good words, which helped me to deal better with my ethical conflicts and even to consider that some Bolsonarists might be good persons. When they asked me about my ideology, I quickly told them that in Spain the categories of ideologies were different, and not to worry, that I had nothing against anyone, that I was just doing research. These accesses gradually allowed me to enter a world that was completely alternative to my own, in which the discourses were alien to me because my sources of information were totally different from the ones these people seemed to read. I did not meet any flat-Earther’s, but I did meet people who assured me of various conspiracy theories, supposed deliveries of baby bottles with penis-shaped dummies to make children perverted, gay kits in schools,

supposed deliveries of *mortadella* sandwiches to supporters of the progressive field, and many other pearls that tested my reactions every day.

These early contacts opened up an enormous number of further contacts for me, as I got to know numerous politicians and activists of the far-right during the time I was doing my fieldwork, which, like a melody in crescendo, accelerated and intensified as the polls began to show Bolsonaro had a real chance of governing. What I thought at first would be a thesis on the far-right as yet another expression of contemporary chaos ended up becoming the possibility of a unique record: the accompaniment of the rise to power of the far-right in Brazil. The relevance that the phenomenon was acquiring day by day meant that many people began to ask me as a kind of guru what was the recipe for defeating the far-right, and I found myself having to disappoint with my notebook all those who thought I had the key to success.

I spent most of the time with Bolsonarists and the rest with people who hated Bolsonaro. I told the Bolsonarists that people on the left thought they were being manipulated by fake news. They laughed their heads off and told me the exact opposite, and people on the left laughed their heads off when they heard the same story in reverse. I lived in a house where the family was divided between the two sides, although the issue was taboo and talked about as little as possible.

The election campaign continued, and I daily encountered bizarre scenes: a taxi driver misled me about his vote so that I would pay him thinking he was a Bolsonaro supporter, two police twins who were informants were imprisoned for practices related to militias, people stuck stickers on my clothes and my forehead in support of Bolsonaro when I arrived at events until one day I emotionally exploded and went to a clown demonstration *against* the far-right and put *Lula Livre!* (“Free Lula”) and *Ele Não* (“Not Him”) stickers on my shirt. Afterwards I felt as if I had betrayed my Bolsonarist informants. I was also, inexplicably, ashamed to talk to my informants about being vegetarian since for many people eating meat was part of Brazilianness, and I found myself red with embarrassment on several occasions as I declined hot dogs and sausages. In addition to my personal adventures, the fieldwork seemed like a rollercoaster: I often found myself chasing events in an old car with my notebook and mobile phone to record events and on back roads without GPS, as new things happened daily: Bolsonaro was stabbed and almost died mid-campaign, Lula was imprisoned in Curitiba and was definitively barred

from participating as a candidate, Bolsonaro candidates broke a plaque in homage to the recently assassinated councillor Marielle Franco and, as if a metaphor for what was happening in Brazil, the National Museum burned down.

While I personally felt the sadness of seeing an authoritarian movement ascend to government, I was happy to see the richness of my fieldwork, increasingly intense and better connected. I got to know Jair Bolsonaro himself, because as an innocent anthropologist, the head of the press, an informant of mine, saw me in the distance and shouted: “let the gringo pass.” Ethical questions became pressing. Should I prioritise my political ideology or my ethnographer’s ethos?

I was no doubt feeling first-hand the power of being close to a celebrity. These feelings, intense and contradictory, ended up serving me for the theory I develop in the thesis. The power of celebrity showed that Brazil was at a historic moment, but I was subject to the kind of conflict that those who research people whose beliefs they hate must constantly suffer. In this regard, it is worth noting that for me there was a very clear difference between the Bolsonaro supporters and the candidates. This separation was essential because my emotions were clearly divided between the supporters, who opened the doors of their homes to me and treated me very well, and the candidates, whom I could not help seeing as madmen with a genocidal project. The particularities of this fieldwork accompanied my hypotheses and contradictions throughout the process, which took shape and clarity as I wrote the thesis.

*Bolsonarismo* has since won the elections, and Jair Bolsonaro became president of the Republic of Brazil. My research had occurred at an historic moment, leaving a bittersweet mark that stayed with me throughout the writing, about the attitude and gratitude I had to maintain towards my informants, those who had collaborated in creating an authoritarian country, but also in providing me with data of enormous freshness, usefulness, and relevance.

The thesis focuses on the events of the months before and up to Bolsonaro’s ascension to the presidency as a “time of politics” that I believe to be historic, but since I finished the fieldwork, many things have changed. Trump lost the US elections with the dramatic outcome of the Capitol invasion, Governor Wilson Witzel was politically thrown out the window in a fight against Bolsonaro and removed from office, Flavio Bolsonaro is in the middle of a judicial process for his links to militias, which in turn are close to the murder of councilwoman Marielle

Franco. The man who was treated as a hero in Operation *Lava Jato* (“Car Wash”) and who led Lula to prison, Judge Sergio Moro, was first appointed Minister of Justice and Public Security and then resigned over an internal fight with Bolsonaro himself over the leadership of the Federal Police. Bolsonaro’s instability and his crude way of managing the pandemic has weakened his ties with strategic sectors that were necessary to his election, such as businessmen and the military, and to move closer at the parliamentary level to the heterogeneous group called *centrão* which had been so harshly attacked by him. It is not clear how his administration will fare in electoral terms in 2022. Moreover, Lula has been released from prison and has recently benefited from the decision of the Supreme Federal Court to overturned the *Lava Jato* sentences, so Lula, the “son of Brazil” appears once again as a possible presidential candidate.

*I stand here as a disciple of the black man of Nazaré, Jesus Christ, and I wish you the peace of Jesus, who walked with the poor, who overcame prejudice, who overcame with love and did not authorise violence. Jesus who was hated by profiteering religious leaders, and was imprisoned, tortured and killed by a violent State, for Jesus, who in spite of that did not use hatred as an answer but died for love. The church must be autonomous from the State and from the political parties. But it cannot be neutral in the face of oppression and violence, the church has to be on the side of the oppressed and the poor of this country, that is the place of Christ in history. Jesus was a victim of torture, and we cannot support those who pay homage to torturers. Jesus called for people to love each other, not for people to arm each other. Bolsonaro's words and practices would kill Jesus today.*

Pastor Henrique Vieira

## Introduction



Figure I.1: Map of Brazil and the State of Rio de Janeiro (Source: Google Maps).

## Justification

Brazil is a country located in South America. It is the largest country in the sub-continent and the fifth largest country in the world, with a larger surface area than Australia.<sup>1</sup> It has more than 211.8 million inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Brazil has the greatest biodiversity of flora and fauna on the planet, with more than 103,870 known animal species and 43,020 known plant species, as well as more than 60% of the entire Amazon rainforest. Its natural resources position the country as ideal for self-sufficiency, however, this has been limited until recently by its power structure and its historical role as an exporter of raw materials to Europe and subsequent lack of development of an independent industrial fabric. The country produces cotton, coffee, meat, leather, fish, eggs, and other commodities among its biological resources. Its energy resources

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<sup>1</sup> Brazil has an area of 8.516 million km<sup>2</sup>. Source: World Bank

<sup>2</sup> Estimate by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) as at 1 July 2020

include oil, uranium, natural gas, sunlight, and water resources, and its mineral resources include iron (Brazil is the world's leading producer of iron), niobium, manganese, copper, bauxite, granite, among others. All this means that Brazil heads the group of seventeen countries considered "megadiverse" as it is home to the highest biodiversity index in the world. These countries, which occupy 10% of the earth's surface, nevertheless account for 70% of terrestrial biodiversity.<sup>3</sup>

Despite its great natural wealth, Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in the world. It is a country of extremes. The country suffered from Portuguese colonisation until 1822, when independence was formally declared, and unlike other countries, abolished slavery only 134 years ago, in 1888. The presence of this colonial past is still visible in the social structure, and in the enormous racial, social and economic inequality. Oxfam's databases indicate that Brazil is the seventh most socially unequal country in the world (and number one outside of Africa). Brazil's six richest men have the same wealth as the poorest 50% of the population (around 100 million people). The country's richest 5% have the same income as the remaining 95%.<sup>4</sup>

After more than a decade of social democratic government led by the Workers' Party, in the 2018 elections, the far-right Jair Messias Bolsonaro won the presidency of the republic, conditioning the internal and global geopolitics of the entire sub-continent. As a candidate, Bolsonaro's 2018 campaign for the presidency of Brazil had put the world on alert: with a highly militarised and authoritarian discourse, Bolsonaro had presented himself in his long political career as a military captain in the reserves. At first, the world did not pay much attention, but as the election approached, several scholars began to see the possibility of a candidate from the so-called "far-right" governing South America's largest country.

This prospect suggested the possibility of a unique investigation: to follow Bolsonaro's entire electoral campaign before he became president of Brazil, to observe how he used rhetoric to lay the foundations of his political identity during his mandate both in terms of institutional representativeness, and in terms of a social phenomenon called *Bolsonarismo*, the political-

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<sup>3</sup> Source: World Conservation Monitoring Centre or UNEP-WCMC

<sup>4</sup> Source: OXFAM International <https://www.oxfam.org/en/brazil-extreme-inequality-numbers#:~:text=6%20vs%2050%25Brazil's%20six,as%20the%20remaining%2095%20percent>

ideological project shared by various sectors of the population that converged around the figure of Jair Bolsonaro.

The explanation of this political, social, and anthropological phenomenon is a key case study in the growing demand to understand the “far-right.” Today, the category of “far-right” is used widely by various authors. It is used to describe the historical experiences of fascism and Nazism, as well as contemporary phenomena such as neo-fascism, neo-Nazism, white nationalism, and other “isms” that cut across theocratic, racist, homophobic, militarised, anti-communist, or reactionary projects, leading to oppression, violence, forced assimilation, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide against groups of people based on their supposedly inferior citizenship. Donald Trump’s victory in the US, the widespread support for Marine Le Pen’s Front National in France, Matteo Salvini’s Lega Nord in Italy, Narendra Modi’s ultra-nationalist Hindu project in India, and Rodrigo Duterte’s militarism in the Philippines, are some of the paradigmatic cases for understanding this phenomenon.



**Figure I.2: Bolsonaro gives Trump a Brazilian National Football T-shirt bearing his name** (Source: Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons)



Despite the particular features of each historical and social context, these cases share common elements, such as nativism (in a fusion of extreme centralising nationalism with xenophobia) and authoritarianism (Mudde, 1995), as well as the defence of the hierarchies of the neoliberal order in systemic crisis.

The Brazilian case, however, due to its specific type of social and cultural construction, presented a multitude of particularities, making it essential to study it from the perspective of particularity rather than commonality. The specific focus on the State of Rio de Janeiro, with the city of Rio as the central geographical location for the research, came not only from Rio de Janeiro being Bolsonaro's city, but also from the importance of this city in the representation of the imaginaries of the so-called *Cidade Maravilhosa* or "Marvelous City," a place of festivals and football and a symbol of a culturally and economically flourishing Brazil. Yet, in 2018, the same year of Bolsonaro's win, Rio appeared to have become so violent and so close to economic recession that military intervention had been thought necessary for public security, ceding the competence of combating violence in the city to the army.

Further support for Rio as the research site came after reading Esther Solano's last paper, published in 2018, on the intensity of voting in the periphery of São Paulo several months before the elections (Solano 2018b). Solano's data indicated that disaffection with the political-representative system had led voters to consider supporting Bolsonaro and candidates of the far-right who were close to him. Bolsonaro was considered as the only "sincere" or "transparent" person standing, revealing in these categories the importance of political performance and the increasingly irrelevant construction of a political program. Such categories of performance had become important because of several cases of corruption, a practice inherited from colonial times and the result of a patrimonial relationship between state and society, as well as money laundering in the different parties. These had fuelled the emergence of various movements considered as far-right and the strengthening of a series of the usual demands associated with these actors, such as the proposal to reduce the age of criminal liability, the end of quotas for indigenous and Afro-Brazilian populations, and the full legalisation of the carrying of weapons. This construction of the political arena was further affected by the phenomenon of "fake news" when, in June 2018, the social network Facebook

decided to block several pages that it classified as being by members of a “disinformation network.” Many of these pages were related to pro-Bolsonarist movements.<sup>5</sup> The appearance of literature on the far-right in São Paulo provided further confirmation of the value in focusing the specific academic contribution of this thesis on the state of Rio de Janeiro, with the city of Rio de Janeiro at its centre. Not only was Rio de Janeiro the city where Bolsonaro lived and where he started his political career, but during the campaign, the city was likely to be used by both media and political actors to stage several debates that would feed into the research.

### **General research objectives**

The general research objectives of the project were:

- To carry out international research, based on an ethnography of the electoral context of the State of Rio de Janeiro.
- To produce a thesis in Anthropology as part of a cotutelle agreement between the Complutense University of Madrid and Macquarie University, Sydney.
- To contribute to academic discussion through academic publications, seminars, and participation in national and international congresses.
- To create an audio-visual record based on the ethnographic work to complement the preparation of the thesis.

### **Specific research objective**

The thesis aims to highlight the central role of metaphorical thinking in explaining the success of the Brazilian Bolsonarist far-right in building a broad political bloc during the 2018 election campaign, revealing in such metaphors the latent values of Brazilian culture that are currently in dispute. In doing so, it draws on the work of conceptual metaphor theorists such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who argue that metaphor is not exclusively a matter of language, but that human thought processes are largely metaphorical, and that even apparently contemporary metaphors used rhetorically for political purposes will draw on deep-seated “root” metaphors

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Article in “O Globo” at 25/07/2018. <https://g1.globo.com/economia/tecnologia/noticia/2018/07/25/facebook-retira-do-ar-rede-de-fake-news-ligada-ao-mbl-antes-das-eleicoes-dizem-fontes.ghtml>

within a culture to gain traction. A representative example of these metaphors is to understand the electoral period as a war, in which attack and violence against the political opponent, who is transformed into an enemy, is justified. These root metaphors permeate everyday life, the way we understand the world and the direction of our actions. Metaphorical thinking affects political positioning and mobilises actions in the political field.

The specific research underpinning the thesis aim consisted of an ethnography comprising two central but contrasting activities. On the one hand, participant observation was undertaken of three electoral campaigns in the State of Rio de Janeiro in which Bolsonarist candidates were elected to leadership positions: Jair Bolsonaro to President of the Republic of Brazil; Flavio Bolsonaro to a Senator of the Republic; and Wilson Witzel to Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Through this close observation of these campaigns, the *Bolsonarismo* metaphorical thinking articulated by candidates and officials alike, and the profound values of Brazilian society that are currently in dispute, were studied. On the other hand, the life stories of various people with different profiles who would eventually vote for the Bolsonarist project were collected, in order to try to understand, and explain, the deep motivations in their accounts (Hochschild, 2016), and their responses to the Bolsonaro rhetoric. The unprecedented experience of being an outsider (a “*gringo*”) able to accompany the process of the rise of the far-right in Brazil both from a leadership and an everyday perspective makes the fieldwork data a unique record that the thesis draws on in detail throughout the presentation of its argument.

### **Methodology: Ethnographic and audio-visual approach**

The research is primarily ethnographic: participant observation was the main instrument for obtaining the data for the thesis. The fieldwork was carried out in the State of Rio de Janeiro between August and November 2018, before enrolling at Macquarie University as part of a cotutelle scholarship. The work took place in spaces that were not geographically delimited, making it possible to follow multi-sited or widespread events such as the acts of the political campaigns before the elections of October 2018.

To build a robust ethnography, I also collected life histories, utilising the biographical method outlined by Pujadas Muñoz (1992), in-depth interviews, and general and secondary information. As a complementary activity, several *Bolsonarismo* WhatsApp and Facebook groups were followed, observing their forms of interaction and analysing the construction of their rhetoric. Material related to the campaigns from magazines, editorials, TV, radio, and social networks was also collected.

All the events and most of the interviews were audio-visually documented. Part of the originality of the thesis lies in the audio-visual work produced after the chapters were written. The thesis aims to demonstrate audio-visual methodology as a legitimate way of doing in-depth research (Lisón Arcal, 2005; 2011), specifically when using a hyper-text format that allows a broad vision to be offered through the combination of the written text with the audio-visual text. Specifically, through the audio-visual, a complex vision is provided of the symbols that have collaborated in the construction of the metaphors analysed in the thesis. Through visual anthropology, we imply the interpretation within the framework of the anthropological theory of all the more than 200 hours collected with the camera and related material, from the moment the recording or filming is planned until it is completed. This complex process took place in the following stages, following the six points of reference indicated in Lisón Arcal's article, 'Algunas reglas para la construcción de un audiovisual' ('Some rules for the construction of an audiovisual') (2014): context and contextualisation, informants integrated into their context, interviews, description of facts, interpretation, and editing. One or more short videos are associated with each chapter in order to aid visualisation of the issues being analysed.

The research was conducted according to a timeline divided into the following stages:

*Stage 1: Data collection (Bibliographic) – January to July 2018.* The main literature of the thesis was collected and read, including general studies on the far-right, studies of Brazilian social thought of the twentieth century, and studies on rhetoric, paying special attention to the specific literature on metaphorical thought.

*Stage 2: Ethnographic Fieldwork – July to November 2018.* Fieldwork in the State of Rio de Janeiro was conducted, with a margin of a few weeks before and after the beginning and end

of the electoral campaign. A camera and field notebook were the fundamental tools for the documentation process in the day-to-day work.

*Stage 3: Conducting qualitative interviews – July to November 2018.* During the same months as Stage 2, I immersed myself in the company of various Bolsonaro sympathisers, united exclusively by their ties to *Bolsonarismo*. Interviews took place in a structured and semi-structured manner, with the intermediate moments in which other types of opinions and actions were constructed by the informants being fundamental.

*Stage 4: Transcript of interviews – December 2018 to June 2019.* More than 200 hours of videos of the various interviews, videos of the events, as well as other information gathered during the campaign such as news broadcasts and YouTube videos, were transcribed. The task of organising this material according to the campaigns of each of the candidates, and on the other hand, according to the life stories of each of the people accompanied was also begun.

*Stage 5: Analysis and interpretation of the results of the field work – 2019.* During the whole year of 2019, analysis and interpretation of the results took place, with the regular collaboration of my supervisors. To do this, the field notebook was articulated with the transcripts, grouping the information into the relevant themes that the data offered according to the objective of detecting the rhetorical structure and latent social values. From this analysis emerged the decision to focus the rhetorical study on metaphorical thinking, as the data were extremely “open” to be analysed from this broad and fluid perspective, while at the same time explaining theoretically the concepts detected as nodal points in official Bolsonarist rhetoric.

These analyses were complemented by regular presentations at the Berkeley Centre for Right-Wing Studies at the University of California (fortnightly meetings from May 2020), the Centre for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo (weekly meetings from April 2020), and the Research into Global Power, Inequality and Conflict group (*RGPIC*) at Macquarie University (from September 2019). These venues reinforced the premise of a systemic crisis in neoliberalism that is argued for in this thesis, gave me diverse insights into the literature, and helped me to define an original analysis.

Frequent visits during the time of the fieldwork to the Brazilian Institute of Comparative Studies on Institutional Management of Conflicts (InEAC-NUFEP (UFF)) were fundamental to starting the research with the right literature on Brazilian social thought and to give the required weights to militarism and the colonial question as a central part of the approach.

*Stage 6: Writing articles for publication and presentation at congresses.* The urgent need to understand the phenomenon of the far-right meant that, in parallel with writing the thesis, I was able to write several journalistic articles that aimed to help an international audience to understand this phenomenon. Three academic articles were also written, one already published and the other two in progress, drawing on the conclusions that emerged from the thesis, and a further three articles are currently being developed to help disseminate the results of the thesis. Results have also been shared with colleagues in the fields of Anthropology and Political Science through presentations at eight conferences.

*Stage 7: Elaboration of the Thesis – 2020 – March 2021.* The elaboration of the thesis took place over the entire year of 2020 and the first three months of 2021. The first approach to the organisation of the enormous amount of material that had been gathered was analysis and classification of the data into themes arising from religion, nationalism and violence. These themes gave rise to the organisation of the different parts of the thesis, and subsequently of the chapters, which were then built up in parallel, several chapters at the same time, at different rhythms and intensities, according to the discussions and the fieldwork that set the pace, expanding the literature and outlining the descriptions.

*Stage 8: Presentation/Defence – July 2021.*

### **Assumptions that formed the starting hypothesis**

The consequences of Brazil's colonial period are present in the structuring metaphors of *Bolsonarismo*. Targeting this metaphorical thinking is therefore an appropriate way to try to understand the apparent contradictions that allowed an extreme neoliberal right-wing project to acquire the dimensions of a mass phenomenon. This is because I argue, in line with the studies of Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1999), that metaphorical thinking provides a logical

foundation that is capable of supporting the broadening of the political spectrum of a grassroots interested in material issues, to the extent that they contribute to the victory of a far-right group.

This hypothesis, which I study throughout the thesis, is based on the three basic premises. The first is of a general nature: the existence of a global neoliberal systemic crisis will result in reactionary expressions of a desire to restore a default social order. This contemporary global crisis is the result of the appropriation of the resources that a neoliberal system requires to function and a subsequent rupture between democratic rules and the economic-social system (neoliberalism). This rupture can generate diverse forms of emotional adherence to leaders such as Bolsonaro, as part of an international emergence of expressions of disaffection with the establishment and current political-economic conditions, with specific consequences in semi-peripheral countries such as Brazil.

In January 2021, the levels of unemployment and the scale of the economic recession at the global scale were hitherto only comparable to the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>6</sup> This has led multiple influential Western media outlets, journals and magazines such as *The Economist* and *Foreign Affairs* to predict the decline of American hegemony and therefore the demise of the neoliberal world order that had emerged at the time of the global crisis of the 1970s.<sup>7</sup> This is a context that many Marxist-leaning authors such as Robert Cox (1982) or Dylan Riley (2019) have called a “crisis of hegemony.” Hegemony, according to the Gramscian school, implies the construction of a material, institutional, cultural and ideological system that operates in the interests of the ruling class but is supported by a cross-section of other classes through consensus. Thus, a hegemonic capitalist system is one in which an entire social system is constructed based on how it best benefits the upper classes,<sup>8</sup> especially that fraction of capital that controls the commanding heights of the economy while presenting the benefits of the capitalists as in the interest of all. When the façade of this system erodes, such as at times when the system can no longer offer a minimum of prosperity or security to the masses, a crisis of

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<sup>6</sup> Great Depression: <https://time.com/5818819/imf-coronavirus-economic-collapse/>

<sup>7</sup> Decline of American hegemony: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/should-america-retrench>

<sup>8</sup> See the explanatory note on the analytical use of social classes in the next section below.

hegemony can emerge, as it did in the 1930s, 1970s, and more recently, as I argue in this thesis, since the current global financial began in 2008.

The second premise is specific to Brazilian culture: the particularity of Brazilian colonial history constitutes a sociological particularity concerning issues such as violence, militarism, religion, racism, and inequality. This particularity flows from the deep roots of a colonial system that has created an hierarchical society in which the middle class has seen a series of rights advanced by the most vulnerable groups in the society, mainly the poor, blacks, women and LGBTQI+ groups. In recent years, Brazilians have revised their notion of the Brazilian “national,” incorporating the grammar of multiculturalism into their political and public agenda. The 1988 Federal Constitution introduced the legal and identity recognition of traditional peoples and communities. Today, this change is at risk from the emergence of critics of policies of identity difference made by the high and middle class, who feel threatened because they see their remaining rights from the aristocratic, hierarchical and colonial past at risk.

The third premise is classificatory. There are various debates on how to classify these emerging authoritarian leaders: Bonapartists, Caesarists, alt-right, ultra-right, extreme right, and, most controversially, fascists. Several scholars, including Marxists, have labelled Bolsonaro, Trump, and similar figures as fascists. However, in this thesis, and for the reasons explained below, I argue that *Bolsonarismo* is not a fascist phenomenon, nor are any of its leaders fascists. The category used for these in this thesis is the broad category of far-right. This is not due to any rhetorical, ideological or attitudinal distinction. Rather, attempts to define Bolsonaro and other far-right-wing leaders of similar ilk as fascist or not miss the point, which is to understand the conditions required for fascism to fully emerge. Despite being in a moment of crisis, these conditions have yet to be fully met. Gramsci’s explanation of crisis, his theorising of hegemony and articulation of fascism, help to explain this assertion. Bolsonaro signifies a time of unresolved crisis where “...the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 276).

There is an understandable temptation to use the fascist label for any political or social movement that employs racism and fear to oppress worker and minority rights, and that



valorise the nation and militarise society. However, sharing the definitions of Trotsky (2005), Gramsci (1978), or Riley (2019) that fascism is a last resort of the capitalist ruling classes fatigued by their constant struggles against mass agitation from below, characterised by a heightened struggle and fascist response as the crisis of hegemony escalates, there has been no suspension of bourgeois liberties or state-sanctioned use of violence by *Bolsonarismo* thugs to crush any anti-establishment agitation from workers or other progressive revolutionary movements. Crucially, Bolsonaro has not suspended bourgeois liberal democracy or jettisoned the rule of law. While there is no evidence that Bolsonaro would stand as a bulwark against efforts to destroy democracy or the rule of law if a significant threat from the left endangered the party's own and its allies' wealth and power, this has not happened yet. Bolsonaro is probably more likely to move towards a dictatorship given his background and his public praise for Brazil's 1964-1985 right-wing military, pro-US, dictatorship. However, even the installation of a military dictatorship would not, on its own, produce a fascist regime. For fascism to emerge, there is a requirement for other aspects of the liberal bourgeois system to be dismantled, usually violently, including the military, police, and other institutions responsible for protecting the interests of the ruling order. It is also a requirement of fascism, according to Gramsci (1978), that the leader, party, and movement surpass the class control on which it relied in the initial phase of its ascent to power. This has yet to happen in Brazil under Bolsonaro.

Nevertheless, the term fascism appears throughout the thesis because it is a classification used by many in the progressive field in the study. Analytically, however, in using the concept of far-right instead, the thesis follows the trajectory of European literature that has tried to unify studies of the subject of extreme right wing politics in works such as those by Arzheimer (2018), Von Beyme (1985), Ignazi (1992), Mudde (1996), or by Carter (2005), Betz (1994), Kitschelt (1995) and Norris (2005). The publication of Cas Mudde's *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (2007) marked a turning point in this area of study in development of the concept of the "far right" to encompass the common features of the various ultra-right parties in Europe. Brazilian scholars themselves also refer to the Bolsonaro phenomenon as "far-

right.”<sup>9</sup> However, in order not to keep this category in an overly Eurocentric epistemological framework, I introduce the colonial element into the theoretical framework to differentiate the socio-historical aspects of the European far-right from cases such as Bolsonaro.

The first two premises outlined above are contextual, while the third is classificatory. Together, they help to explain how the political, social, economic, and moral pacts and alliances between the middle classes, the upper classes, and other institutions such as the evangelical church in Brazil, have been reconstructed through *Bolsonarismo*. As will be seen, the neoliberal system breaks its democratic alliance, and seals a new alliance with the army and the evangelical church, defending in its discourse the moral guidelines of this institution, such as the values of a so-called “traditional family.” In doing so, it aligns with terms that order the principles of individualist and neoliberal ideology such as meritocracy.

### **Brief notes on the categorisation of social classes: analytical category and native category**

Throughout the thesis, there will be observed various accounts in which the interviewees, informants, or the discourses themselves, use concepts such as “poor,” “lower class,” “middle class,” “normal people,” “rich,” “upper class,” “elite,” or “bourgeoisie.” It is therefore important to note the differences between the use of these categories in native terms, what these concepts mean according to the experiences of those using the terms, and the use made of them analytically in the thesis.

Thus, in this thesis, the category “social class” refers to the collective that shares similar socio-economic conditions, though not necessarily political positions. In this sense, some authors prefer to use “social stratum,” however, because the thesis includes constant assessments of the material and metaphorical motivations of these sectors, the concept of class, although restricted in its classification to socio-economic conditions, is flexible enough to include an interpretation of supposed political motivations according to the interests of that social spectrum. This is a more Weberian interpretation, whereby classes share a “pattern of life.” Also, despite sharing the Marxist logic of the division of labour as well as later interpretations

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Rocha (2018) or Solano (2018)

of lower class, middle class, and upper class, this classification allows the inclusion of studies carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) according to monthly household income. This more precise analytical categorisation is divided into five classes, to which I add to the numbers the name designated according to the Datafolha (2012) studies, although altering their lower-middle-class category to lower class.<sup>10</sup>

<b>Class</b>	<b>Number of Minimum Wages (MW)</b>	<b>Family Income (R\$) in August 2020</b>
A High/ Rich elite	Above 20 MW	R\$ 20.900,01 or more
B Medium-high	10 to 20 MW	R\$ 10.450,01 to R\$ 20.900,00
C Median	4 to 10 MW	R\$ 4.180,01 to R\$ 10.450,00
D Low	2 to 4 MW	R\$ 2.090,01 to R\$ 4.180,00
E Excluded/ Poor	Up to 2 MW	Up to R\$ 2.090,00

**Table I.1 Social Classes per Minimum Wage (Source: IBGE, 2020/Class rankings: Datafolha, 2020)**

The data provided by these studies should be interpreted broadly, as they correspond to the census conducted every ten years by IBGE in addition to the difference in the minimum wage specifically during the election year of 2018: in that year, the minimum wage in Brazil was R\$ 954.00, in contrast to that the minimum wage in 2020 of R\$ 1045.00.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the data does not measure variations in inflation and the level of consumption by rank, cost of living, or identity elements. It also does not take into account possible assets added on top of

<sup>10</sup> In several Datafolha classifications, instead of five categories, six categories are used by sub-dividing item D into lower-middle class and lower class.

<sup>11</sup> As of 15/01/2021, the exchange rate of the Brazilian real to the US dollar was as follows: 1 Dollar from United States /USD (220) = 5.2714007 Real/BRL. However, to understand in the proper context prior to its sharp devaluation, the election year exchange rate was as follows (as of 15/01/2018): 1 Dollar from United States/USD (220) = 3.1963005 Real/BRL. Source: Central Bank of Brazil (BCB)

household income. Nevertheless, it offers a sufficiently concrete view to establishing the conceptualisation of each of the social classes referred to throughout the thesis.

The following graph shows the distribution of this classification as it occurred in 2018 (dividing category D into two blocks).

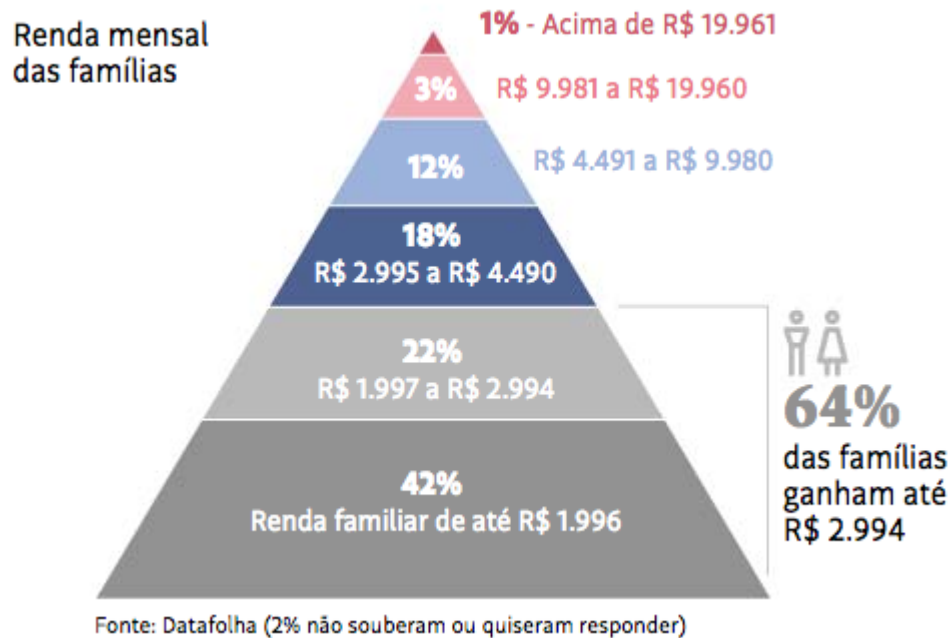


Figure I.3: Distribution of Wealth by Social Class (Source: Datafolha 2012).

The distribution of national wealth is not covered here, as the purpose of the section is to justify the use of the analytical categories. However, to maintain a more comprehensive social landscape, it is worth noting that according to 2020 data from the National Association of Fiscal Auditors of the Brazilian Inland Revenue (Unafisco), 0.1% of the Brazilian population accumulates 30% of all national wealth, in what Unafisco call a hyper-concentration of the country's capital. In contrast, the bottom 50% of the country's population accumulates only 13.9% of the country's capital. According to the World Inequality Database (WID) 2020, Brazil is, after Qatar, the country with the highest hyper-concentration of wealth in the world.

## Outline of the thesis

The thesis that follows is comprised of eleven substantive chapters and a Conclusion. Chapters 2 to 11 are grouped into four parts, the first part laying out the context and construction of the political field under observation, the second and third being the central parts of the study covering, first, the metaphorical thinking of the candidates and second, the deep stories of some representative voters, and the fourth and final part describing the opposition or “anti-campaign” to the Bolsonaro project. The four parts are book-ended by this Introduction and a theoretical framework chapter (Chapter 1), and a Conclusion. For each part of the thesis an audio-visual anthropology production has been made. In total there are four videos, one for each part. Links to all the material is provided in Appendix II. In addition, at each part division, links to the relevant videos are provided in a footnote.

Chapter 1 presents a literature review of the scholarly contributions to the study, as well as a series of notes on Brazilian social thought in the twentieth century, and on metaphorical thought and “deep” histories. The chapter introduces the concept of *metaphorical colonial sense* which was devised as a tool for the theoretical analysis of the metaphorical thinking revealed in the empirical studies that enabled the broadening of the political spectrum of a grassroots interested in material results to the extent that it was willing to contribute to the victory of the far-right. The chapter further establishes the three starting premises discussed above, and expands on the reasons for not considering *Bolsonarismo* fascism rather than a “far-right” phenomenon. The subsequent parts of the thesis are structured as follows.

Part One, *Context and Construction of the Political Field*, outlines the recent national context, and studies the elements that made-up Bolsonaro’s rhetoric, presenting the symbols and actors that attempted to create the Bolsonaro universe. The part is divided into two chapters. Chapter 2 entitled Rio de Janeiro: The Rhetoric of the *Bolsonarismo*’s Far-Right, Built on the Streets, presents the elements that have allowed a new far-right to emerge in Brazil since the 1980s, and shows how the rhetoric was constructed in the streets of Rio de Janeiro from the demonstrations of 2013, until the consolidation of *Bolsonarismo* in the electoral period of 2018. Chapter 3, The Construction of Heroes in the Brazilian Electoral Campaign, presents the

construction of three figures with heroic traits that compounded identities in the political field: the figure of Jair Bolsonaro, the figure of Lula, and the figure of Marielle Franco.

Part Two, *Metaphors And Deep Thinking In Candidates' Rhetoric*, discusses the particular values of Brazilian culture that are currently in dispute in Brazil through the construction of root metaphors. This is done through accounts of each of the three main Bolsonarist contenders in the electoral campaigns in the State of Rio de Janeiro: Jair Bolsonaro, Flavio Bolsonaro, and Wilson Witzel. The literature on Brazilian social thought in the twentieth century is a determining influence in this analysis of the deep values of Brazilian society in this part of the thesis, for these contenders are permeated by these values and post-colonial ideas. To organise the discussion, each biographical line is associated with one of the main metaphors that make up Bolsonarist deep thought. In this way, the second part is divided into three central chapters. Chapter 4, Jair Messias Bolsonaro – “Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone,” discusses the universe of the divine and sacred in the Bolsonarist universe. The relationship between emotion and religion is analysed in the various events, and I show how this metaphor is articulated in cognitive terms, in the construction of a religious Joint Speech (Cummins, 2018). In Chapter 5, Flavio Bolsonaro – My Party is Brazil, the nationalist phenomenon is analysed as a community imagined through its metaphor and given specific meaning by Bolsonaro’s supporters, re-signifying the concepts of “order,” “family,” “militarism,” “race,” and “class.” In Chapter 6, Wilson Witzel: Good Bandit/Dead Bandit, I explain the various ways in which Bolsonaro’s supporters normalise violence, which is justified by a greater purpose through the metaphor of a Just War, with Christian crusade traits, against the enemies of Brazil. In this chapter, I argue that the elements of deep culture latent in this metaphor are linked to Brazil’s historical structural violence.

In Part Three, *Deep Stories of the Bolsonarist Voter*, the life stories of the various Bolsonarist informants whom I accompanied in their day-to-day lives during the months of the electoral period are presented, following the biographical method of Pujadas Muñoz (1992). Drawing on Hochschild’s work on the latent metaphors that make up Deep Life Stories (Hochschild, 2016), the different logics and motivations that lead voters to support Bolsonarists are analysed. In the face of the apparent contradictions of the collectives attacked by

*Bolsonarismo*, I study how metaphorical thinking is central to understanding these apparent material and identity contradictions. The third part is divided into three chapters, which are also central to the thesis. In Chapter 7, *A Bus Between Two Universes*, I cross-reveal the biographies of two families who intend to vote for Bolsonaro: an upper-middle-class family and a lower-class family. The families are linked through a maid, a member of the lower-class family, who comes to the home of the upper-middle-class family every week. Through the biographical method and these life stories, I study how two different social, cultural, and economic profiles are motivated by their deep histories to support Bolsonaro beyond their social class identity, as both share the deep metaphor of “put order in the house,” although bringing different meanings to the concept of order. In Chapter 8, *The Paradoxical Vote*, the question arises as to how it was possible for individuals belonging to collectives attacked by *Bolsonarismo* to vote for Bolsonaro. To answer this question, the chapter follows the trajectories of a black and a *favela* (slum) voter, as well as those of two women, revealing once again that the key of *order* takes precedence over the key of identity politics when it comes to establishing the preferences of Bolsonarist voters from these collectives. Chapter 9, *The “Obvious Vote,”* on the other hand, follows the life trajectories of representatives of what was once the majority voter for Bolsonaro’s project: the white man with higher education and a military background. The representatives include an armed Bolsonarist candidate, a military policeman, and a Brazilian monarchist and Bolsonarist candidate. These profiles share the metaphor of the Just War with the Bolsonarist contenders, as well as a metaphorical logic based on what Lakoff (1996) calls “The Strict Father.”

Part Four, *The Anti-Campaign: Voices for Democracy*, is the last part of the thesis. In its two chapters, I show how sectors of the so-called progressive field were also constructed through shared metaphors, albeit in opposition to those of *Bolsonarismo*. Although their campaign was marked by the Bolsonarist pattern in its rhythm and message, the progressive field presented itself as an anti-campaign, which necessarily led to the construction of the elections as a frontline of political confrontation between “us” and “them.” Analysis of the metaphors used in the anti-campaign during electoral events and interviews, enriches the account of the Bolsonarist phenomenon offered in the thesis. Chapter 10, *Anti-Bolsonarist Rhetoric in Public*

Spaces, shows how the spaces of the city of Rio de Janeiro were signified during the electoral period by the progressive field. Thus, the chapter shows how the hegemonic dispute over the political field was conditioned by the construction of a political-affective identification, capable of identifying and mobilising the subject in an imagined collective in opposition to that of the Bolsonarist camp through the utilisation of a larger metaphor: the metaphor of Dictatorship against Democracy. Chapter 11 is called Voices for Democracy. Unlike the previous chapter, which focused on showing the crystallisation of a political identification during the electoral period, this last substantive chapter shows a more leisurely reflection of the various actors, politicians, and activists whose voices were constitutive of the discourse and metaphors that the community or group belonging to the progressive field had adopted.

Finally, in the Conclusion of the thesis, I return to the concept of metaphorical colonial sense to explain that the consequences of Brazil's colonial period are present in the structuring metaphors of *Bolsonarismo*. Furthermore, engagement with metaphorical thinking provides a viable path to understanding the apparent contradictions that allow a neoliberal far-right project to acquire the dimensions of a mass phenomenon. During the electoral campaign, a common-sense characterisation of *Bolsonarismo* crystallised that was fundamental to the construction of the Bolsonarist collective subject as an identity with its own will, for which, once again, metaphorical thinking was central. Within this thinking, the tensions of a society that had passed without explicit conflict from Colony to Republic, from slavery to abolition, and from dictatorship to democracy, can thus be detected. Nevertheless, all of the situations covered in the fieldwork for this thesis revealed the historical difficulty that Brazil has had with conflict, for whenever conflict existed it was always constructed as being in the name of "avoiding conflict," that is, for the recovery of order, and ultimately, the maintenance of existing social hierarchies.





# Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

## 1.1. Introduction

Studies on radicalisation and the contemporary far-right in the Global South are still an incipient field in Anthropology. A review of anthropological studies carried out on cases in the global South, reveals a real deficit of anthropological research. One of the main reasons for this is because the discipline has always encountered ethical and methodological difficulties in approaching fieldwork in far-right studies (Pasięka, 2019).

Furthermore, studies on the far-right have historically been linked to European case studies, influenced in turn by specific historical, social, and cultural processes such as the different forms of authoritarian governments experienced in the twentieth century, and generally been treated from an interdisciplinary approach. Centres such as the important Centre for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo and the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) in the UK have worked on these issues in depth in Europe, where Nazism or fascism are two terms used quite frequently in studies of the contemporary far-right. The Tea Party phenomenon and Trumpism have recently captured the attention of studies on American nativism and authoritarianism, which have been concentrated in research centres such as the Berkeley Centre for Right-Wing Studies (CRWS) at the University of California. In the case of the Global South, especially in the Brazilian case in the context of Latin American, there was an emergence of a small “boom” (Rocha, 2018a) of studies after Bolsonaro’s electoral victory. However, many of these erred in trying to adapt analytical categories from the European or North American literature for the historically differentiated processes in the Brazil, such as the diverse consequences of its post-colonial situation. The field remains incipient.

Because of these limitations, the literature that shapes the theoretical framework for this thesis comes from a series of texts specifically on the Bolsonarist phenomenon, followed by another series of works that form the basis for understanding the specific contemporary sociology of Brazil. The theoretical framework also links deeply with studies of what is now known as “twentieth century Brazilian social thought.” Here the various interpretations of the

particularities of Brazilian society by classic authors can be found. It is worth highlighting the high quality and depth of social studies in Brazil: the search for a post-slavery identity of its own meant that the twentieth century, and from then until the present day, created a literature of its own, personal and with varied influences that tried to explain Brazil from different perspectives.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I show the main works that have been central to the realisation of this thesis, and which directly or indirectly served to interpret the phenomenon of the Brazilian far-right. This literature crosses central debates on the profile of the Bolsonaro supporter, Latin American populism, partial citizenship, violent militarism, the family, Pentecostalism, and emotions. Due to the little work done to date from Anthropology on the Bolsonarist phenomenon, I draw on works from sister disciplines in the social sciences: these are necessary for the discussions set out in the thesis. The choice of these authors does not in any way mean that there could not be other studies that, in parallel, might be useful in the study of the Bolsonarist phenomenon, but a cut was necessary, and mine is built around these essential fields of study. Nevertheless, some of the conclusions of the main thinkers of Brazil in the twentieth century did help to outline a specific concept of the “Brazilian far-right” or *Bolsonarismo* within the umbrella of the international far-right, while intensely defending the Brazilian phenomenon based on its particularities. These authors were indispensable to a central post-colonial approach, and their theoretical contributions to this thesis are discussed.

In the second part of the chapter, I explain the theoretical bases of the metaphorical thinking that I applied to both the literature of the Brazilian far-right and the literature of Brazilian social thought in the twentieth century, and discuss Caio Prado Junior’s concept of Colonial Sense (2011/1942). The aim here is to introduce the particular theoretical contribution of the thesis to the study of the far-right in post-colonial societies such as Brazil, developed through this study of the Bolsonarist phenomenon: the concept and existence of a *metaphorical colonial sense*.

## 1.2. Far-Right and Brazilian Social Thought

### 1.2.1. Contemporary literature for understanding the Brazilian far right

In the analysis of the Bolsonaro's voter profile for this thesis, the work of Esther Solano is central, as well as that of members who frequently collaborate with her at the Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Estudios Latinoamericanos (IELAT), such as Camila Rocha. Her research offers an understanding of the various segments of the population of Brazil, and the construction of the main motivations that allow for greater identification with a collective phenomenon. Among her many works, her 2018 book *Crisis of Democracy and Right-Wing Extremism* (*Crise da democracia e extremismos de direita*) is central to this research. Similarly, Marcio Pochmann's work, *The Myth of the Great Middle Class: Capitalism and Social Structure* (*O mito da grande classe média: Capitalismo e estrutura social*) (2014), serves to identify a characteristic feature of the category of "middle class" in Brazil: the self-perception of being a neglected and constantly threatened segment. Of course, these concepts are based on the structural studies of twentieth century Brazilian social thought. This means that the theoretical foundations for the analysis of the Brazilian far right are country-specific, as it is only through local studies that the postcolonial particularities of *Bolsonarismo*, its relationship with religion, its concept of nation and its structural violence can be understood.

Central to the construction of the specific categories of the "enemy" are the works on the anti-PT (anti-Workers' Party) by Solano (2018;2019;2020), and Telles (2017), as well as Singer's book, *The Meanings of Lulism: Gradual Reform and Conservative Pact* (*Os sentidos do lulismo: Reforma gradual e pacto conservador*) (2012), which explains historically and sociologically the origin of hatred. The magazine *Perseo*, with its dossier 'As direitas no Brasil' (Rights in Brazil) (2016), and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, have carried out powerful intellectual work that helps to decipher the systemic crisis and the vacuum of political proposals that have also facilitated the rise of *Bolsonarismo*. Ariel Goldstein's work, *Bolsonaro: Brazil's Democracy in Danger* (2019) builds this bridge between the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party or PT) and the new phenomenon, but also draws on structural elements, although its justifications are not built around the post-colonial context. Moreover, the recent book *Democracy at Risk? 22 Essays on Brazil Today* (*Democracia em risco? 22*

*ensaios sobre o Brasil de Hoje*), written by multiple authors under the Companhia das Letras (2019), demonstrates the different angles from which the Bolsonaroist phenomenon is being studied.

One of the main academic debates current in Latin America, and specifically in Brazil, is about the reformulation of populist theories into new digital forms. The recent work of Leticia Cesarino (2020) is fundamental to this project, as she develops the concept of “digital populism” in Brazil. In her work on digital populism in WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook, Cesarino re-adapts the traditional work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe on the reconstruction of the frontlines of political identification to adapt to social networks. She also uses Benedict Anderson’s seminal work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), to refer to the new digital communities as “imagined communities” that share series of codes such as aesthetic or rhetorical codes. As with “populist moments,” Cesarino uses Victor Turner’s concept of “liminality” (2017/1967) to talk about moments of greater reception to certain types of discourses, such as electoral moments. Her work is in dialogue with that carried out by Comeford, Palmeira, Heredia, and Mariza Peirano, all members of the Anthropology programme of the National Museum at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (and specifically of the *NuAP- Núcleo de Estudo de Antropologia Política*), which is very important for understanding, from a political anthropological perspective, the role of rituals in the construction of a “time of politics” (Palmeira, 1992): a special time, socially accepted and shared, whose rules allow the exaltation of performative elements, such as violence itself. Although this thesis is more focused on a rhetorical approach, these influences are evident in the organisation of the thesis’ structure, with a section that sees the companionship in the campaigns as moments of a special time, and then the study of the various deep stories as spaces in between and parallel to the rhetorical theatricalisation observed in the campaign events. In this structure, the influence is evident of Stanley Tambiah’s work on the efficacy of language in ritual action, developed in ‘The magical power of words’ (1968), which, in the present case, refers to the electoral ritual as “political time.”

Irllys Barreira’s fantastic work, *Chuva de papéis: ritos e símbolos de campanhas eleitorais no Brasil* (*Rain of papers: rites and symbols of electoral campaigns in Brazil*) (1998), carries out

an ethnography of ex-president Lula da Silva's campaign, using as a central category the concept of the time of politics, so her mechanisms for applying this concept have been a reference in the thesis. The "time of politics" is understood in this thesis as a ritual period in which, through various campaign actions, latent values of Brazilian social thought in dispute are expressed. From this perspective, the electoral campaign is a sequence of elections featuring the construction and assimilation of rhetoric. During these elections, messages crystallise and become incorporated into the logic of everyday life. This occurs during "intervals" or moments in which people assimilate and then reinterpret these messages.

The usefulness of the concept of populism is limited in this thesis to framing the elections in this period of liminality as "populist" moments, with less interest in the term as an analytical category. In this framing sense, the work of Ferreira and de Castro Gomes, *O populismo e sua história (Populism and its History)* (2001), as well as the paper 'Populism and the Social Sciences in Brazil' by Ângela de Castro Gomes (2001), are central to the framing of liminality in populism in Brazil, pointing to the difficulties of systematising the term. Rather, the thesis employs some of the tools of more traditional populist studies, such as the "chains of equivalence" defined by Laclau in his *Populist Reason (A Razão Populista)* (2005). Mazzarella's article 'The Anthropology of Populism: Beyond the Liberal Settlement' in *The Annual Review of Anthropology* (2019), also provides insight into the breadth of the term and breaks new ground in its use. However, in the chapter in the thesis that could have drawn more heavily on populist studies, such as Chapter 3: The Construction of Heroes, I instead draw on the literature of narrative construction, following the work of Propp (1928), and national mythology in the construction of heroicity, as in the work of Da Matta (1983). I avoid categorising the Bolsonaro phenomenon in terms of populism, although I use authors who use this concept, such as Errejón and Mouffe (2015), and García Linera (2014), to speak of the construction of a Bolsonarist collective subject and a specific sense of the common good. In this respect, I have tried to come closer to what Karina Kuschnir calls a "political anthropology" (Kuschnir, 2007), which studies the power relations latent in Brazilian metaphorical thought sociologically.

Studies on the European far-right serve in the thesis to contextualise the phenomenon, but with special care not to generalise the Bolsonarist phenomenon. Works such as those of Cas Mudde and others, cited in the Introduction, help mainly to identify the elements of what has been called “far-right” in the European framework, and how it is, in interpretations such as Gramsci’s explanation of fascism, a violent expression of the neoliberal systemic crisis in its attempts to rearticulate itself. This is probably the central element in which I find proximity to the international phenomenon, which is also referred to by these scholars as populism because of the reproduction of a relatively standardised rhetoric, but which finds in Brazil a specific historical, cultural and social phenomenon.

The complexity of Brazilian society is analysed with the enormously influential studies of citizenship by Roberto da Matta, particularly his classic distinction between the individual and the person made in *Carnavais, malandros e heróis: para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro* (*Carnivals, Tricksters and Heroes: Towards a Sociology of the Brazilian Dilemma*) (1983). Da Matta’s understanding of public space as being in constant negotiation, and affected by such categories as individual and person, is essential to understanding how *Bolsonarismo* is constructed as a particular phenomenon involving a privatisation proposal articulated within an apparently protectionist project, as well as the distinction between an “us” and a “them.” This is what Evans-Pritchard (1940) defines as binary segmentarity in his studies on segmentarity and micro-politics. The “them“ in the terms of the main figures of *Bolsonarismo*, would not be bearers of rights, or of “dignified moral substance” to use the phrase used by Brazilian authors such as Carvalho (2002), Kant de Lima et al. (2010), Cardoso de Oliveira (2008), and Mota (2012). In this sense, the studies by Fabio Reis Mota and Roberto Kant de Lima, in the context of research by the Núcleo Fluminense de Estudos e Pesquisas (NUFEP) and the Instituto de Estudos Comparados em Administração Institucional de Conflitos (INCT-InEAC), delve into the incomplete citizenship that constitutes Brazilian society and which justifies the violent *modus operandi* of militarised institutions in regions such as the *favelas* (human settlements such as slums or shanty-towns). This work helps to decipher the sociology of violence that runs through the backbone of the Bolsonarist project. Jorge da Silva’s work makes an enormous contribution here to understanding Brazil as a militarised country in terms

of the construction of order and hierarchy, which transcends military institutions such as the army and the police themselves (Da Silva, 1996).

Militarism is central to this thesis' understanding of Brazil's sociology of violence. It is analysed through works such as Celso Castro's *O Espírito militar: um Estudo de Antropologia Social na Academia Militar de Agulhas Negras (The Military Spirit: a Study of Social Anthropology at the Agulhas Negras Military Academy)* (1990), which was central to understanding a public space symbolically divided between the civilian and military worlds. The fluidity between these two categories is evident in Bolsonaro's campaign, giving militarised features to its rhetoric. Piero Leiner's (2009) work on military anthropology complements this question, establishing that "the military" is the Bolsonarist government itself.

In the thesis, I understand militarism as one of the consequences of the colonial state, however, the recent military dictatorship makes it necessary to analyse the latent elements of this in *Bolsonarismo*. Leiner's work analyses the historically constituted relationships and social mechanisms that structure practices that are conceived as corrupt and corrupting. Although the military dictatorship is central to studies on corruption, Bolsonaro's rhetoric uses an *anti*-corruption logic that is central to its worldview in which the army is a "saviour" institution. Pedro Henrique Pedreira Campos' renowned work, *Strange Cathedrals (Estranhas Catedrais)* (2014) explains this ease of articulation in *Bolsonarismo* between the military sectors and large Brazilian companies, as social relations that, although historical, were normalised and strengthened during the period of military dictatorship. Similarly, the book *Brasil: nunca mais (Brazil: Never Again)* (2011/1985), written by multiple authors and edited by Paulo Evaristo Arns, helped to explain the process of the trivialisation of violence and the construction of "the enemy" based on military culture, as the book recounts the human rights violations committed during the dictatorship as part of a normalised, systematised and generalised *modus operandi* of the military. Finally, concerning the central studies of militarism, the work of Daniel Arão Reis (2010) provides an understanding, once again, of how the military dictatorship configured logics that are reproduced today in the functioning of the pro-Bolsonarist/Bolsonaro's militias.

The importance of the concept of "family" in the study of *Bolsonarismo* makes the work of Ana Claudia Marques highly original. In her article 'Política e questão de família' (Politics and



family issues’) (2002), the author traces the relations of authority and the constructions of the political that are submerged in family discussions. Her work helped to reveal the deep values that existed in the family discussions I observed during the fieldwork for this thesis.

Lacerda’s (2017) study on the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil, while maintaining his link between evangelicalism and a clientelist network of diverse interests, was central to understanding the evangelising role of *Bolsonarismo*, and its theocratic traits. Ronaldo de Almeida’s (2017) work also establishes a direct link between the Brazilian right and Pentecostalism. This question of the role of Pentecostalism in *Bolsonarismo* has been explored from the perspective of authors such as Alberto Moreira (2018) and João Décio Passos (2017), to cite those to whom I have given the greatest interpretative relevance. However, Pentecostalism is mostly analysed as a form of “Joint Speech” (Cummins, 2019) that articulates in the Bolsonarist use of metaphor, a project with theocratic rather than religious features.

In the field of emotions associated with Brazilian sociology, Christian Dunker is an author who has paid great attention to *Bolsonarismo* from the perspective of psychoanalysis, having worked on issues such as the culture of consensus (see Dunker, 2015). He becomes a relevant influence insofar as imagination and emotion are central to the construction of the metaphorical frameworks that I identify and study as part of Bolsonarist thought. Adriana Vianna’s work into an anthropology of emotions is important here, too, as she conducts a series of studies on the implications of narratives in the materialisation of feelings (see Vianna and Facundo 2015, for instance). Her work shares elements with the works used in the following section: Arlie Hochschild and her “Deep Stories” in *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning in the American Right* (2016) as part of that brand of the sociology of emotions that she has constructed, as well as Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1999), whose studies on metaphorical thinking are central to this thesis. In this respect, at a certain point in the thesis, I again draw on the cross-cutting study of Fred Cummins on “Joint Speech” to delve into the construction of collectivising rhetoric, analysing its implications in each of the senses. Trying to go further, LeDoux’s work in *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life*

(1998) allowed a brief exploration of the foundations of the cognitive science on which metaphorical rhetoric is built.

### **1.2.2. Literature of Brazilian social thought in the 20th century**

Through “The Greats of the Twentieth Century,” I studied the fundamental notions of the construction of a Brazilianness in which to detect the colonial influence on *Bolsonarismo*: the notions of *coronelism*, family, patrimonialism, religion, racism, and national identity. The influence of these authors is central to the second part of the thesis, where the deep thinking and latent social values within the root metaphors of *Bolsonarismo* are explored. As these are influences rather than direct engagements to be illustrated through quotations, I break down how their works have informed my interpretation in the following section. The colonial conflict itself, however, can be seen in the difficulties black writers, especially women, face in trying to make an impact in a field that is dominated by the “classics” - works written by men, most of them white and with the economic resources to access high intellectual status. The literature is flooded with such classics. The works of these thinkers are, no doubt, fundamental, however, the neglect of works by black male and female authors such as Beatriz Nascimento, Clóvis Moura, Eduardo de Oliveira e Oliveira, Guerreiro Ramos or Virgínia Bicud, to name a few of the great Brazilian thinkers beyond the classics, is telling.

#### ***1.2.2.1. Coronelism, clientelism and patrimonialism in the post-colonial context***

My analysis of *coronelism*, clientelism and patrimonialism draws on various scholars that constitute Brazilian social thought in the twentieth century. These authors worked specifically on the relationship between the Brazilian state and the private corporation interests. Scholars such as Florestan Fernandes, Darcy Ribeiro, Caio Prado Jr, Victor Nunes Leal, Sergio Buarque de Holanda, Gilberto Freyre, and Raymundo Faoro have provided a conceptual framework in which the condition of Brazil as a post-colonial state emerges as a fundamental key to understanding the patrimonial relationship between common resources (represented in the state) and particular interests. In contrast, Souza’s contemporary work, *A Elite do atraso: da escravidão ao Bolsonaro* (The Elite of Backwardness: From Slavery to Bolsonaro) (2019), however, places slavery as the central issue characterising contemporary Brazilian society. The author is not one of the so-called “great thinkers” of twentieth-century Brazil, but I cite his

work because of the reinterpretation he tries to make of authors such as Raymundo Faoro, by establishing a dichotomy between slavery and patrimonialism, disregarding central works in Faoro's *oeuvre*, such as *Os Donos do Poder: Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro (The Owners of Power: Formation of Brazilian Political Patronage)* (1958) and his central category of the "bureaucratic estate." From the perspective of this thesis, patrimonialism is the result of colonial society itself, so the debate should be about the construction of this relationship, and not about the demarcation of its opposites (Brazilian sociologists Sergio da Matta (2017) and Rubéns Goyatá Campante (2003) have also criticised Souza's distinction).

Since the colonial period, the construction of the Brazilian state has been instrumentalised to serve the particular interests of colonisers. The contemporary period holds powerful traces of this reality. Various Brazilian institutions (state and extra-state) were created to defend the imperial interests of settlers and slave-owners in Brazil. The reality of the current time is that these institutions continue to maintain their foundational logic and purposes, that is, to criminalise the working-class while protecting the privileges of the elite. Bolsonaro's supporters express this patrimonialist character of the Brazilian post-colonial state. The Brazilian literature has defined these patrimonial relations through different concepts and analytical categories, adapting them to different periods, geographical regions, and local realities. However, they are all fundamentally grounded on the relationship between the private and the public spheres in the Brazilian state: the "Bureaucratic *estament*" defined by Raimundo Faoro (1958), refers specifically to the structure of patrimonial power in the state.

*Coronelismo* ("Coronelism") was the term first applied by Victor Nunes Leal (2012/1948) to the power and violence exercised by the figure of the Colonel in Brazilian municipalities during the Old Republic (1889-1930) that built, at the same time, a network of interests with national institutions. In other words, both levels, local and national, were connected and mediated by the figure of the Colonel. In addition, the category of "clientelism" has been widely used to refer to the unofficial exchange of favors between various close actors with political interests, as well as between different administrative levels. In this sense, clientelist relations occurred both horizontally and vertically. Lastly, *Mandonismo* is a purely Brazilian concept that comes close to what is referred to in Spanish-American literature as *Caciquismo* (rule by local chiefs

or bosses). This concept refers not to a system, but to the characteristic of a traditional political figure: the *mandão* or “boss” – a figure that exercises and concentrates power in an oligarchic and personalised structure; the one that orders.

The purpose of indicating these concepts is not to try to detail or analyze the validity of each of them as an analytical category in the thesis. Rather, I start from the premise that these are entangled concepts that occur simultaneously. What I seek to demonstrate is the extensive work already produced in the Brazilian literature to understand the specificities of the Brazilian state’s formation in relation to public and private interests. In doing so, I highlight the underlying framework of this thesis, as well as the logic and ideologies sustaining the practices of *Bolsonarismo* here analyzed. In this sense, the empirical case explored in this thesis is not an isolated case, rather, it is part of a wider, historical, post-colonial articulation of private interests with the state.

#### ***1.2.2.2. Racial Democracy, Cordiality, Capitalism, Miscegenation***

Gilberto Freyre, and his immense work *Casa grande e senzala (The Masters and the Slaves)* (2003/1933) represents a break in nineteenth century Brazilian social thought. Up to that time, Brazilian thinkers had associated Brazilian miscegenation with national backwardness. For these authors, *mestizagem* (miscegenation) was a central element in the social, economic, and cultural conditions of Brazil at the beginning of the twentieth century. Freyre breaks with this principle, claiming miscegenation as a positive feature of Brazilianness, linked to cultural richness. Drawing on intellectual influences from North American culturalism, Freyre compared the forms of racial segregation that existed between the southern states of the USA with those in the Northeastern patriarchal and slave-owning society of Brazil (“Black Brazil” or “African Brazil”), the region where the slave trade between the Portuguese African colonies and the first capital, Salvador de Bahia, had begun in a systematised way. In this comparison, Freyre noted that racial segregation did not occur in the same way in Brazil as it did in the US: the Brazilian aristocracy maintained daily contact with the descendants of the slaves, and they shared activities. Despite the violence of slavery, Freyre concluded that Brazil was not a country that could be categorised as racist, but one in which there was a certain balance between opposites, a “relationship of equilibrium.” Freyre’s ideas in his book were normalised

in later literature as the author advocating a “racial democracy,” a popularisation that took place during the authoritarian period of the *Estado Novo* led by Getúlio Vargas (1937-1945) when a project of the harmonisation of national identity was initiated as a way of preventing conflict and attracting foreign investment.

What is relevant in Freyre’s work for this thesis is the positive perception of miscegenation, as well as his first notes drawing attention to racial harmony. However, in my interpretation, I question the idea of a racial balance that is not justified by historical relations of domination and submission. It is relevant again to recall that Brazil did not go through major civil wars that helped in the consolidation of a black identity, as did the US or colonial apartheid. This *lack* of cohesion of an identity capable of establishing specific collective demands is, from my perspective, the main reason for the apparent existence of harmonious coexistence. Nevertheless, Freyre’s contribution is fundamental to giving relevance to the aspects of miscegenation and flexible interracial relations.

Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, influenced by Weberian thought, tried to understand the historical formation of Brazil in his great work *Raízes do Brasil (Roots of Brazil)* (1936). For him, Brazil was to be understood through the concept of “cordiality.” Unlike Freyre, for Buarque de Holanda what defines the Brazilian people is not miscegenation, but fundamentally cordiality. For the author, Brazil’s Iberian heritage made Brazilians think more with the heart (“*cor*” – hence cordiality), in other words, with affection rather than with reason. From this observation, Buarque de Holanda extracts the idea that Brazilian society therefore has difficulty in establishing a difference between the public and private spheres. Rather, everything ended up mixing, and what emerged was the *jeitinho*, that is, the private appropriation of the public sphere. This could be seen in minor situations, such as jumping a queue, to major processes of individual appropriation of resources such as land. Cordiality was, for the author, the expression of Brazilian society’s inability to be in the public sphere in a public way. Cordiality would therefore create difficulties for the development of liberal democracy in Brazil.

Although Buarque de Holanda’s work argues for the difficulty of constructing a public sphere in Brazil, the historical explanation that the author offers in defining the “cordial man” resorts to the myth of an Iberian identity, thereby attempting to establish a dichotomy that must be

deconstructed: that between reason and emotion. Reason itself collaborates in the organisation of the ideas of metaphorical thought that are analysed in the thesis, so both processes must be considered parallel and intertwined. Nevertheless, the notion that the author draws out about the difficulty of constructing a public sphere in Brazil is of enormous value to the thesis, although the rationale in this thesis for why this occurs is more aligned with the explanations offered by the next author to be discussed here, Caio Prado Junior. However, it should be noted that the thinking of both Freyre and Buarque de Holanda occurred at a time of modernism, of thinking about the cities, post the revolution of the 1930s and the Vargas Era. The *Estado Novo* appropriated the ideas of both authors for their interpretations of Brazil as a cordial and *mestizo* (of mixed racial or ethnic ancestry) country, in order to construct a myth of racial harmony, of joy in the mixture, and of the renunciation of race as an identifier of the working class itself. Carnival, football, and samba were strengthened under this construction, and the ensuing myth was consumed and reproduced not only by Brazilian society itself, but exported. It was a vision of the country based on emotions and ethnic-racial plurality.

In contrast to the two previous authors, Caio Prado Junior, in his extraordinary work, *The Formation of Contemporary Brazil (Formação do Brasil contemporâneo)* (1942), establishes the economy as the central aspect for understanding Brazil. For Prado, Brazil had been born as a capitalist country, but with a specific type of capitalism that was dependent on Europe, and whose only function was to supply the old continent with valuable goods and products. In defining Brazil as functionally and geopolitically configured in this way, Prado contributes to the development of a central theme of this thesis: the meaning of colonisation. In the following section, I return to this theme to associate it with metaphorical thinking, since, together with metaphorical thinking, it will form the conceptual basis of the thesis. For Prado, Brazil was not a “backward” country but had reached “modernity” in a peripheral way. Brazil’s history was founded on this capitalist end, and the country had entered Europe through a peripheral capitalism that was mainly agro-exporting, mineral-producing, and mainly slave-owning. With regard to contemporary discussions of the time on whether Brazil was a capitalist or feudal country, it should be considered a mixture of both, coordinating “the modern” with “the archaic.”

This thesis fully shares this historical interpretation of Brazil that Caio Prado Junior proposed. It offered, for the first time, a Marxist interpretation of Brazilian reality. However, to understand the Bolsonaroist phenomenon is important to add to this more orthodox thinking the ability to explain the contradictory adaptation of different segments of the society to political projects of which they were not to be beneficiaries. In the following section, I add the metaphorical dimension to Prado's account, to try to introduce a view of this apparent contradiction that deepens the richness diversity of thought in Brazil's post-colonial society. However, for the moment, the contributions to the thesis of Brazilian social thought as it develops in the later stages of the twentieth century, with its consequent transformations and intellectual concerns, must also be acknowledged here.

The work of Darcy Ribeiro is central here. Ribeiro returned to Freyre's account of miscegenation as a central point in the understanding of Brazilianness. He expanded Freyre's framework, and spoke not only of a *mestizo* Brazil, but of a *mestizo* Latin America, theorising a sub-continental identity in Freyre's terms (Ribeiro 1970). Nevertheless, Ribeiro insisted that Brazil had its own unique identity, the Brazilian People, because the society was no longer Indian, nor European, nor African, but a mixture of all of these, which, together, configured Brazilianness. Ribeiro argued that, nevertheless, this uniqueness was also a regional uniqueness, which justified the construction of solidarity and cultural ties with the rest of Latin America. These ideas were covered in several works but were finally systematised in Ribeiro's ambitious work *O Povo Brasileiro: A formação e o sentido do Brasil (The Brazilian People: the Formation and Meaning of Brazil)* (1995).

Ribeiro's reinterpretation of Freyre's work was very welcome in the thesis, as it introduced an interpretative richness to identity theory itself that offered greater credibility to the identification of miscegenation as a central element of Brazilianness, and also understood violence to be a foundational element of the colonial system that permeated the whole of contemporary Brazilian society. The book does not show in detail the process of ethnic disarticulation and re-articulation in the five centuries following the colonial invasion, a fundamental issue that has since been worked on in contemporary books such as *Brasil: uma biografia (Brazil: A Biography)* (2015) by Lilia Schwarcz and Heloisa Starling. Nevertheless,

it is very useful in this thesis to understand Brazilianness in order to explain the phenomenon of Brazilian nationalism, which, militarised and violent, constitutes a fluid metaphorical basis for *Bolsonarismo*.

The work of anthropologist Leila González is also central to the chronological journey of the great thinkers of twentieth century Brazil. Her condition as a black woman activist greatly affected the theorisation of her ideas in her two central works: *O lugar do negro (The Place of the Black)* (1982), co-authored with the Argentinian sociologist Carlos Hasenbalg, and *Festas populares (Popular Festivals)* (1989). In both texts, González highlights the experience of the black woman's body, developing a contribution on the theory of subjects that is very relevant to this thesis for understanding central questions of Bolsonarist identity, as well as its rejection of feminism and multiculturalism.

González's theory undoes the myth that the black in Brazil reproduces African cultural elements. Rather, she claims the historical experience of an African Brazil of its own in the construction of its traditions. This conception has helped the thesis to develop the complexities involved in the apparently contradictory support of segments of the population that vote for Bolsonaro in terms of a complex Brazilianness. Moreover, in the same direction, the author provided flexibility to the coloniser/colonised dichotomy, as not just the former but also the latter transmits its habits to the various social spheres. This idea of flexibility led to an understanding, important to the thesis, that the racial question was not fixed, but always changing and being re-interpreted on the basis of identity theory itself.

From a post-colonial critical perspective, the above authors are central to the study of the colonial influence on the construction of Brazilian identity, and to sociological explanations of Brazil, both of which are necessary for the study of the Bolsonarist phenomenon. Nevertheless, despite Gonzalez's intellectual relevance, the black and female presence in the Brazilian social thinking literature remains regrettably muted and whitewashed.

### **1.3. Theoretical contribution: Metaphorical colonial sense**

In this section, the theoretical bases of metaphorical thinking, as used in the thesis, are explained. I then develop Caio Prado Jr's concept of "Colonial Sense" and finally, in the third



sub-section, put both theoretical lines in dialogue to establish an analytical concept of my own that will be used in the thesis: *metaphorical colonial sense*.

### **1.3.1. Metaphorical thinking**

According to conceptual metaphor theorists such as linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson, metaphor is not just a formal aspect of language but a way of thinking that encourages the articulation of new conceptions of phenomena from other, better known ones. Metaphor permeates everyday life, not only language but also thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system in terms of which we think and act, according to these theorists, is fundamentally metaphorical. Metaphorical thinking is thus a crucial cognitive skill in that it is difficult to delimit complex concepts, so organising them around what we already know through metaphor helps us to understand, assimilate, interpret and reproduce them. The theoretical framework of this thesis understands metaphor from this perspective.

Until Lakoff and Johnson's studies, metaphor had been studied in the field of rhetoric as a literary trope. Most studies of political rhetoric did not pay much attention to metaphorical thinking, with maybe the exception of Aristotle and the rhetoricians, who recognised metaphor's persuasive force. Political rhetoric was focused instead on the traditional study of political communication as a form of literature (Moreno Lara, 2004). The revolution in metaphor studies occurred when these authors explained that metaphors were not exclusive to the aesthetic rhetoric of language, but that they actually shaped the cognitive frameworks with which we think. Metaphors acquired value from the *cognitive* schemas that each subject possessed, rather than their literacy. This meant that metaphorical statements were characterised by significant flexibility: the same metaphor could be used in different contexts, and be easily adjusted to the significance and communicative needs of anyone who used them.

Metaphor unites reason and imagination. Usually, when we think about reason we think of categorising prototypes, linking some things to others, and drawing inferences, whereas imagination consists of *seeing* one thing in terms of another. Metaphorical thinking combines the two, producing something like an "imaginative rationality." Thus, the process of categorising ideas through metaphors is essential to understanding how we function, how we move within the real or imaginary world. It is a process that is carried out automatically and

unconsciously and which leads us to characterise reality not as it appears to our senses, but as abstract entities, enemy ghosts, and shadows of fears that can encourage us to rally around reactionary projects, where metaphorical thinking can exert greater weight than material reasons. This is how various sectors of society harmed by the Bolsonarist political programme, can nevertheless form part of the support for this “historic bloc,” because metaphorical thinking will respond to the appeal of strict order that is associated with *Bolsonarismo*, but which is not necessarily related to the Bolsonarist programmes. A vote for Bolsonaro, then, may be produced in a metaphorical key rather than in terms of material interests.

Lakoff and Johnson classify cognitive metaphors into three types, according to the nature of what they call the “source domain” – the field of thought that has already been defined and theoretically established and which provides the metaphor to be applied: *structural* metaphors; *conceptual/ontological* metaphors and *orientational* metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This typology was later refined by Lakoff and Turner (1989), who renamed structural metaphors as *image schema* metaphors, and introduced a fourth type: that of *image* metaphor. All these types, however, start from the central insight that all metaphors start from a specific, existing, model of the world (the domain of origin or DO), in order to conceptualise an abstract, less-known or unfamiliar one (the domain of destination or DD). Moreover, the image or schematic structure (Rivano, 1999) central to this conceptualisation of the abstract domain of destination demonstrates the human capacity to schematise and recognise abstract situations in concrete ones.

The types of cognitive metaphors could be described as follows:

1) *Structural* metaphors classify those in which the dominance of one concept is established in terms of another. They are based on systemic correlations that occur in experience. An example of this type of metaphor could be “My party is Brazil” in which the similarity of a political party (DO) = Brazil (DD) would be realised. In this way, the term “Brazil” would be used metaphorically to extend the term “Political Party” to a broad, non-partisan, and transcendental interpretation. Another example could be “A Good Bandit is a Dead Bandit, where a Good Bandit (DO) = a Dead Bandit (DD), thus metaphorically linking the term “dead” to “good” to explain the natural condition of a bandit, who should be dead if he wants to produce any good

for society, thereby justifying the use of violence against him. It happens in a particular way, but similar in its essence, with the metaphor “Our flag will never be red,” where Flag (DO) ≠ Red (DO). Here, the term Red represents the colour of communism, as well as the colour of blood, thus associating communism with violence. Against this metaphorical image, the values of the green, blue and yellow Brazilian flag could be seen as opposite, and therefore not endorsing the supposed moral depravation of the left.

2) *Conceptual or ontological* metaphors allow the conceptualising of non-physical but abstract entities, such as events, emotions, or activities as if they were objects, and vice versa. An example would be “Put order in the house,” where order (DD), an abstract concept with diverse interpretations, is represented through a known object: the house. The house would represent a type of model of coexistence built on historical traditions, as well as being a private space, limited to certain members. It is through this object that the abstract idea of order is explained and can be understood.

3) *Oriental* metaphors are those related to spatial concepts such as inside/outside and up/down). An example of this would be the traditional metaphor “Brazil above everything, God above everyone”, in which both Brazil and God, as origin domains, would be associated with the positive value of up in “above” (DD). Up and down are orientations that make up a binomial in which up is generally associated with positivity and down with negativity, overlaying “above” so that, as a domain, it becomes associated with the construction of hierarchy of social order in which it has a positive value in opposition to “down,” which would be a negative value. God would be in the sky, that place that is orientationally above, being hierarchically superior to the rest of things and normalising a project of theocratic traits. Brazil would be “down” of God so everything in Brazil would be subjected to divine rule. However, Brazil is also “above” not only the Brazilian people but above the entire global and ecosystemic society. Therefore, in the name of Brazil, which is hierarchically elevated, necessary actions on the world would be justified, subject only to the evaluation of God. It is a powerful metaphor in that Brazil is on control of its destiny in the world and subject only to the higher power of God, not the world order.

The metaphor “Fora PT” (Outside PT or Outside the Workers’ Party) is another example of an orientational metaphor, in which the binomial “outside” (negative) is formed in opposition to “inside” (positive). To be outside would be the DD, and the PT (Workers’ Party) would be the DO. “Outside” here is understood as a place in which the individual has no influence, where exile and stigma are produced, to where one might be banished. “Inside,” in opposition, is the place where management of the common good and social coexistence is exercised. In this way, this metaphor, wielded by the anti-campaign activists, tries to signify the criminalisation of the Workers’ Party’s actions through the use of spatial references: The PT should be “outside” the sphere of influence, while “inside” Brazil and its spaces of power should be the “Us,” the people who object to all the values represented by the PT, which should not be given a legitimate right to govern.

The thesis, however, seeks to move beyond these long-standing categorisations, which have been covered by other authors such as Ruiz de Mendoza (1997), Santibáñez (2009) and Peña (2003), and instead focus on metaphorical thought in two more fundamental aspects. The first, mainly developed in the second part of the thesis, focuses on the way in which the electoral metaphorical rhetoric of *Bolsonarismo* configures its political identity by drawing on metaphor. I analyse how the abstract thoughts that are understood and ordered, for example, in the specific model of Bolsonarist nationalism – are expressed in a metaphorical rhetoric, like “My party is Brazil.”

In this way, the deep thought of the Bolsonarist type of nationalism is metaphorically expressed as if all of Brazil is a political party that transcends any other political option, producing a semantic intersection between Brazil and political party. This intersection is reinterpreted and signified by voters according to a conceptual predisposition to organise latent abstract thought along Bolsonarist lines.

The second aspect, on the other hand, focuses on how unconscious metaphors also order *Bolsonarismo*, as observed in the deep histories of voters. For example, Bolsonarist family references tend to reproduce a complex model of the Strict Father based on traditional hierarchy and order, which is extrapolated into their ideology of life, and which can be identified more in *Bolsonarismo* than in other political proposal. Here, the work of Hochschild

(2016) and her idea of “deep stories” is fundamental. Through everyday experiences, people construct a complex framework of thought, which can be associated with metaphors of the unconscious, as I propose in the third section of the thesis.

Both approaches utilise the same interpretation of metaphor as “root metaphor” (Chilton, 1996; Moreno Lara, 2004), which serves as an expression and order of deep thought, with cultural and educational roots, especially experiential roots. The first use refers to the fact that between experience and action there is language. The second refers to how the construction of unconscious cognitive frameworks has a metaphorical form, in the sense that although they are not expressed in language, they collaborate in the organisation of experience and the ordering of ideas.

This way of understanding thought is found in the framework of analysis of an experiential gestalt, which understands that the meaning we attach to the world does not occur based on atomised elements, but that we construct complex frameworks, a systemic totality by which we organise our own experience. Thus, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) says that it is no longer possible to sustain an objectivist and universalist epistemology, but that understanding is always metaphorical (we understand one domain from another domain), and that properties are not inherent in objects or events or to actions, but always are related to how a certain agent interacts.

At this point, I can articulate metaphorical thinking with Caio Prado Junior’s concept of Colonial Sense. The following will analyse Colonial Sense and then talk about the theoretical concept created from this specifically for the analytical work for this thesis: metaphorical colonial sense.

### **1.3.2. Colonial Sense/Sense of Colonisation**

As briefly explained in the previous section, the work of the social thinker Caio Prado Junior entitled *The Formation of Contemporary Brazil (Formação do Brasil contemporâneo)* (1942) offers the history of a Brazil that sees it as organised from the beginning of the colony with a very specific purpose, to bring goods and basic products to Europe, thus showing the existence

in Brazil of peripheral capitalism. To explain this idea, in his book, the author constructs the concept of *Sentido da colonização*, translated as Colonial Sense or Sense of Colonisation.

Colonial Sense refers to this understanding of Brazil as subordinated to a mercantile capitalism operating in Europe, for which the slave system was central. This colonial period lasted approximately 300 years, from 1530 to 1822, although slavery during the independence period lasted until 1888, when it was finally abolished. Brazil was the last Latin American country to proclaim abolition. From this principle is founded the type of society that still characterises contemporary Brazil, in which the founding objective has always been external enrichment, never inward. The construction of an appropriate public sphere is part of the extractivist logic on which the colonial society was organised.

Prado was the first to use the Marxist method of historical materialism to analyse the Brazilian condition. The author sought the particularity of the “Brazilian” experience. The concept of “sense” he refers to is the process that constructs meanings based on a continuous history that connects the colonial past with contemporary times. Throughout the thesis, I will show different elements that, represented in metaphors, allude to the validity of the structures, physical and mental, of the colonial past. For now, however, some of these elements will be briefly described in order to show how they link to notions in the present time, according to Prado Junior’s work. I begin by reflecting on the role of labour in the colony, on the articulation of the hierarchical order in the patriarchal system, and on institutions such as family, race, religion, and public administration, describing the links with contemporary society in the Bolsonarist context.

In the Brazilian colony, as in the Spanish colonies, white labour was not practised as it was in certain Anglo-Saxon colonisation processes, because the Portuguese did not emigrate to work, but to command. Colonisation in Brazil, based on the division of the land into immense captaincies, generated a structure of accumulation of power that affected the motivations for which the Portuguese travelled to Brazil. Unlike other colonies in which the colonisation process took place with the peasant and working classes, as in the case of the USA, Brazil was colonised by people from the Portuguese royal court who went to the country to enrich themselves in the emerging extractivism. Slavery was produced in its own, original way. It was

not, as had happened in the ancient period, a slavery integrated into the whole of the social, material and moral life of the colony. Rather it was a resource of opportunity, the recovery of a practically abolished institution, that also normalised servile labour relations, which, during modern slavery, would become the master key of the structure of Brazil, and the foundation that would put together the pieces by which it was constituted.

The colonist went to Brazil as a leader in the production of goods of high commercial value or as a businessman, but never as a labourer or to do manual labour. In this way, the European only directed. Brazil thus founded a nationalism understood as “a company” whose natural and human resources were appropriated, exploited, and extracted for the European’s gain. From this foundation, a patrimonial sense of Brazil developed: the European only went to the tropics to rule the farms, sugar mills, and plantations. Slavery, and structural racism, allowed the small settler to feel like an owner, the head of a country he had come to govern. This *modus operandi*, which had been fanned for centuries, is reproduced in Brazil in different ways today, but the situation that best demonstrates it is the extreme inequality in the accumulation of wealth. Brazil is the second most unequal country in the world, one where a white minority accumulates most of the country’s wealth, while a black, brown, and *mulatto* majority is poor and lives in the *favelas* and peripheral urban and rural regions.<sup>1</sup> The whiter one is in Brazil, the more possibilities there are of access to strategic positions in the Brazilian state, in private companies, and in any space for the accumulation of power and wealth. In Brazil, skin colour generally determines people’s economic, social, educational, and cultural status.

Moreover, Colonial Sense reveals the scale of values on which a meritocratic society has been built, originating in the transatlantic capitalism that was facilitated in the colonial period and through the slave regime, in which everyone tried to gain access in different ways to new recognitions, mainly in terms of socio-economic status. This meritocratic individualism that originated in the exploitation of resources during the colonial period, differs utterly from the idea of constructing a “common nation.” Rather, it highlights, particularly in the Bolsonarist project, the values of a country that understands itself as a commercial enterprise. The

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<sup>1</sup> The term *mulatto* is used during the thesis as it is a regular categorization in Brazil to refer to a light-skinned Afro-Brazilian.

management of the state is not understood as the management of the commons but of the particular.

Applying this understanding to the construction of the national project that Bolsonaro's supporters defend, it is worth remembering that the essence of Brazil's formation lies in that "the country was founded to supply sugar, tobacco, some other goods; later gold and diamonds; then cotton, and then coffee, for European trade. Nothing more than that" (Prado Jr, 2011/1942). This foundation, based on the white European who speculated, went to the country to do business, and bought slave labour, has been so articulated in the society that it now permeates the Bolsonarist project.

Brazil has built its society on the basis of an almost complete absence of superstructure (Ricupero, 2011), orienting its inhabitants to live in an individualistic model, affected by the organisation of the colonial system. This could explain the subsequent decisions of the voters of the new far-right, who see their particular privileges at risk because of the various dangers that *Bolsonarismo* has propagated. Although in Brazil the category of citizen is intimately linked to the category of worker, slavery itself constructed the worker as a mere instrument of labour, allowing for a disunity if not a complete separation between the middle-class inhabitants of the Carioca apartment complexes (called *condominios*) and the lower-class workers of the *favelas*.

The patriarchal system has historically reinforced these relations of domination, initially of the rural lords but now of the middle classes, in which the lower classes have created a flexible relationship of socialisation through which they can identify with the middle classes, assuming respective positions of power and subalternity, while also internalising the desires and self-classifications of themselves as a "new middle class" that would necessarily be interested in the economic and political model of their predecessors as the authentic "owners of power." Nevertheless, servility, the only solid element of organisation that the colony possessed, remains present in the various forms of organisation in Rio de Janeiro today. The same is true of fraternity and the familialism of *mandolista* origin that Bolsonaro's supporters claim.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> *Mandolista* is the Brazilian term for *caciquism* or local chieftaincy.



self-perception of Brazilian landowners as nobility in the colonial period established psychological principles that are maintained to this day, prompting the small landowner to defend his privileges, but also seeping into the expectations of the lower classes for social ascent.

Class formation in Brazil is thus intimately linked to the agrarian structure of colonial Brazil: large properties, monoculture, and slave labour, complementing each other, constructed a society that was “artificially” articulated, and initially lacked a middle class. As part of their colonial heritage, the contemporary upper middle class, descendants of the dominant sectors of tropical colonial agriculture, have seen *Bolsonarismo* as a viable project through which to defend its spaces of privilege. Large-scale rural exploitation, mining, and agricultural extraction, as in the colonial period, remains the main basis on which the entire economic and social structure of Brazil is based. This system of labour and property organisation, with its extreme concentration of wealth, lasted until the 2018 elections. The model of authoritarian responsibility structured on hierarchical and violent authority bequeathed by the Portuguese metropolis on its colony remains in place.

During the colonial period, a set of practices and beliefs were omnipresent: individuals were born into them, and they accompanied the individual throughout their life, as they participated in the required acts of religion and ceremonies of worship. Bolsonaro’s supporters have observed the risk of a contemporary division between religious and civil life, and have called for a recovery of the traditional mixture between the two, insisting that the sphere of civil life should be steeped in Christian moral codes. In colonial society, the intervention of the church and its ministers was considerable. As a Christian colony, in addition to the general respect and ascendancy it had, the church also encompassed the recognised right to meddle in specific and particular matters. The spread of the faith of Catholicism during the colonial period, and directed towards non-white races (indigenous and African) established the pillars of a model of religious expansion that *Bolsonarismo* also seeks to recover as an element of its national project. Thus, the recovery of the white as a feature of *Bolsonarismo*’s cultural supremacy is closely linked to how the religious missions acted in the colonial period, because unlike in other colonies, in Brazil the other races were treated as a ‘participating’ element in

colonisation, as settlers and mainly as labour. Racism is thereby made more flexible because it does not expressly focus on skin (although implicit in its message it ends up achieving this), but is directed toward the annulment of the cultures and religions that make up Brazil.

The family, and specifically the marriage bond, has a sacred relationship in the Christian tradition, which nevertheless also allowed for flexibility in the extra-marital relations that the colonists maintained with the indigenous and African populations, mixing the races. Through these relationships, *Bolsonarismo* retains a sacred vision of Christian marriage as a source of respect and integral to the construction of citizenship. If in the colonial period relations were established through the “godfather” and the “godson,” *Bolsonarismo* now uses the concept of “family” to make relations, hierarchies, partisan positions and opinions, and even rights and duties more flexible.

It is the same with the origin of an administration that lacks uniformity and symmetry. Despite enormous definitional and classificatory progress, there exists in the Brazilian imagination an image of the administration as a disconnected body of particular and casuistic dehumanisations and rules that accumulate one after the other without any apparent overall plan. The Governor, more than anything else, is understood in the Bolsonarist political project as an office that directs the security forces and controls order but does not have as a project a model that integrates the various public policies, as was the case in the colonial period. The collection techniques of the colonial period, characterised by forcing the producer to pay in money the value of an appreciable part of a product not yet realised, contributed strongly to the construction of a narrative whereby “politicians” were configured as an isolated social class that collected, stole and did not invest. The existence of a state that historically collected and enlisted compulsorily and was not seen as an investor in the good of the collective has also contributed to the solidification of discredit and lack of loyalty towards it, to the extent that it is seen as legitimate to avoid complying with state rules. Moreover, the reputation of public officials as immoral and corrupt comes from the fact that Brazil does not have a unified public sphere around a national project, but that the interests of the Portuguese metropolis are fundamental to the construction of a particularised public space. For *Bolsonarismo*, civility is

not constituted by active and economic participation with the state, but by the fulfillment of a series of skills governed by other institutions, mainly religious and military.

The make-up of the armed forces in the colonial period also helps to understand part of this relationship with the rest of the state apparatus. Historically, the colonial administrations lived in a permanent situation of economic deficit, and soldiers were often seen begging in the streets. The honouring of the armed forces still does not take the form of salaries for the rank and file, and it is common for a military policeman to earn 1,200 *reais* a month for working in a *favela*.

In this way, the determining colonial period has built a society that still shares the order of the colony with the disorder of a “lack of moral nexus” (Prado Jr, 1942), strengthened and reproduced by the normalisation of the violent brutality of colonial social relations.

### **1.3.3. Conceptual contribution: metaphorical colonial sense**

The construction in any specific period of a notion of “common sense,” a concept of Gramscian origin, is fundamental in the articulation of any political project. The dispute over this notion of common sense, therefore, takes place in disputes over metaphorical hegemony. Put order in the house, Brazil above everything, God above everyone, A Good Bandit is a Dead Bandit, and My party is Brazil are the broadest metaphors through which *Bolsonarismo* tries to organise ideas and normalise the social rules of the frameworks of coexistence, as it sees them. However, for these metaphors to be interpreted and reproduced by Bolsonarist sympathisers, they must offer coherent and acceptable meanings based on this common sense. The metaphor will not work if it does not collaborate in the organisation of sensible ideas for *Bolsonarismo*.

What has been observed across many geographical and ideological spaces is that the metaphorical thinking of *Bolsonarismo* offers a type of meaning linked to social order and violence. For many people, these metaphors would be impossible to assimilate: how is it possible to say that A Good Bandit is a Dead Bandit and have this not mean various things that can fall within its logic of normality? How is it possible to give a normalised character to a project with theocratic traits that employs a metaphor that God must be above all?

Only by assuming the profoundly violent logic of Brazil's colonial origin can the everyday functioning of such metaphors be understood. It is in this way that abstract concepts of post-colonial thought can be reconciled with Bolsonarist rhetoric. As explained earlier, metaphors organise abstract concepts that are part of our deepest thoughts. Thus, my theoretical-conceptual contribution to this thesis is to define a concept that helps to explain Brazil's intimate relationship between its metaphors and its colonial past: Metaphorical colonial sense.

Metaphorical colonial sense emerges as a concept that resolves the way of approaching Bolsonarist metaphorical thought in two directions. On the one hand, the deep-rooted but broadly interpreted metaphors that organise *Bolsonarismo* (as well as part of the rest of Brazilian society) are intimately linked to Prado's idea of Colonial Sense. These function because they reflect a whole experiential framework that has accumulated through the country's history and been reproduced in the various exclusionary practices of everyday life, in which racism and inequality have been geographically localised. From this violent experience, recounted and observed, the capacity to construct a metaphorical colonial sense is understood. The metaphors have the credible basis of the colonial past that allows them to function.

On the other hand, one's own construction and ordering of these ideas would also be subject to contemporary interpretations of colonial Brazil. Thus, prejudices, stigmas, and other forms of rejection would be normalised by history itself, so that even people who want to avoid spoken metaphors that reproduce some of these forms of discrimination would also be limited by the root metaphors of their unconscious, which are difficult to modify because they are absorbed during the learning process. Metaphorical colonial sense offers an understanding of the ways the historical links of these metaphors intersect with and manifest as current colonial thinking.



## **PART ONE**

### **CONTEXT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE POLITICAL FIELD**

*This country was built on the enslavement of a folk, and that folk has colour and race.*

Marielle Franco



## Chapter 2 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
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<b>Video 2.2. Testimonies in front of Bolsonaro's house</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/slc3Zkm3k-Q">https://youtu.be/slc3Zkm3k-Q</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/DYh0B6ncI3c">https://youtu.be/DYh0B6ncI3c</a>	Section 2.2	54
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## **Chapter 2: Rio de Janeiro: The Rhetoric of *Bolsonarismo*'s Far-Right Built on the Streets**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter is an ethnographic exploration of the construction of far-right rhetoric in Brazil. The work begins with events on the day of the elections of 2018 when Jair M. Bolsonaro won the presidency. To contextualise this scene, the work analyses how far-right rhetoric was articulated in the Brazilian public sphere from 1980 until 2018, and specifically, in the State of Rio de Janeiro. The chapter then back-tracks to trace the demonstrations that began in 2013, the 2014 World Cup, the impeachment process of President Dilma Rousseff that concluded in 2016, the military intervention in the State of Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of 2018, and the crystallisation of all this rhetoric in an election campaign event. The chapter shows the importance of these specific events in the construction of what became the “Bolsonarist rhetoric” through the use of what Laclau (2005) called “chains of equivalences.”

### **2.2. Victory celebrations on the President elect's doorstep**

Sunday, October 28, 2018, was the day of the second round of presidential elections in Brazil. Over 147 million Brazilians were called out to vote, to choose if the future president of the republic would be Fernando Haddad, a stand-in for former president Lula after he became ineligible,<sup>1</sup> or Captain Jair Messias Bolsonaro (born in 1955), a retired military officer described by his adversaries as “ultra-right.” In the State of Rio de Janeiro, the elections also

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<sup>1</sup> On March 4, 2018, the former president of Brazil, Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva (“Lula”), founder of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or PT), presented himself to the Federal Police of São Paulo to be arrested. Federal Judge Sergio Moro, later Minister of Justice in the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, remanded him into custody as he was sentenced in second instance to serve twelve years and one month in prison for passive corruption and money laundering. The sentence was part of the so-called Operation Car Wash (*Operação Lava-Jato*), a set of investigations carried out by the Brazilian Federal Police from 2014 until the 2018 elections that involved more than a thousand arrest warrants for various forms of corruption, including politicians of all ranks, and various executives in the state-owned company, Petrobras. Operation Car Wash is considered the largest anti-corruption operation in Brazil's history. Lula's imprisonment and his subsequent disqualification according to the Clean File Law for his candidacy for the Presidency of the Republic were extremely controversial and widely discussed in legal and international spheres, which question the impartiality of Brazil's Supreme Court of Justice (STJ).

were to decide if the next Governor would be the federal judge Wilson Witzel, a candidate supported by Bolsonaro and unknown until a few weeks before.

A long queue ran along the sidewalks to the polling station in Rio de Janeiro, as people patiently waited for their turn to vote. The moment was characterised by tension and uncertainty, a constant in what had been an unusual campaign: the possibility that the far-right might come to govern hung over an election for the first time in the history of Brazil's young democracy. Several people in the line wore the Brazilian national soccer team's yellow and green T-shirts, while others wore clothes with slogans like "My party is Brazil." I approached those people who wore the colours of the Brazilian flag: "In Brazil we like to come to vote with the national team shirt. My party is Brazil, and my candidate is Bolsonaro," said a man waiting, a clear allusion to the patriotic and anti-partisan components of *Bolsonarismo*.<sup>2</sup> The shirt represented a type of nationalism that tried to dissociate itself from political parties, despite the fact that national symbols had been associated with Bolsonaro's project. In the preceding month, the country had become increasingly restless as the campaign produced violent polarization; that day, the voters gave the presidency of the Republic to the candidate Bolsonaro.

The climax occurred in the evening.<sup>3</sup> I was on the enormous Lúcio Costa Avenue, between the beach of the wealthy neighborhood of Barra de Tijuca and the housing apartment complex where Jair Bolsonaro lived. Thousands of people were gathered there under the coconut trees. Around 6 pm, a man shouted: "Sixteen years waiting! Brazil above everything! God above everyone! Brazil is ours." Thousands of supporters sprayed champagne in front of Bolsonaro's home: Bolsonaro had won with 55% of the valid votes (57,796,986), and his candidate for Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Judge Wilson Witzel, had won with 60% of the valid votes (4,675,355).<sup>4</sup>

The results were projected onto a huge screen; it was already official. A dark-skinned man dressed as a paratrooper told me: "100% determined: Bolsonaro is president!" Everybody

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis the concept of *Bolsonarismo* refers to the political-ideological project shared by various sectors of the population that converged around the figure of Jair Bolsonaro.

<sup>3</sup> **Video 2.1. Electoral euphoria** <https://youtu.be/1cdSH2RPOCY>

<sup>4</sup> In the first round of elections, Jair Bolsonaro received 46% of the valid votes (49,277,010 votes), while Wilson Witzel received 41% of the valid votes (3,154,771 votes). SOURCE: Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE)

started waving flags, until a remarkable moment: the crowd in yellow and green began to chant the national anthem, euphorically, without background music. They felt they had been the protagonists in a struggle. For the attendees it was the passage to a new era, sealed by singing the national anthem *a capella* under a sky coloured by fireworks. The crowd dispersed onto the huge avenue between whistles and screams. There were children, old people, black people, complete families crying and hugging each other. Sympathisers wore T-shirts, hats, and other accessories with symbols of “The Myth” (*Mito*) bought from under the umbrellas of street vendors alongside beer and popcorn.<sup>5</sup> A vendor told me, cheerfully: “In my whole life, I never sold so many Brazilian flags.” The symbolic elements representing patriotism and nationalism were evident everywhere.

Everyone waited for the new president’s acceptance speech. For security reasons, Bolsonaro, spoke through a Facebook live video, as he had been doing in recent weeks.<sup>6</sup> A woman providing sign language interpretation was beside him, as was his wife, whom he kissed on the cheek. People were shouting out all the slogans that had featured in the electoral campaign: “Oooh, the captain arriveees;” “Go out PT!” “Him, yes!” “Our flag will never be red!” (a reference to the red flag of the PT and workers); “One, two, three, four, five thousand... We have Bolsonaro president of Brazil!” and “I came for free!”<sup>7</sup> Bolsonaro’s speech was an appeal to unity after a campaign characterised by the vilification of the enemy. He showed three books: one by the author Olavo de Carvalho that was a cult book for supporters of *Bolsonarismo* which offered “[t]he minimum you need to know to avoid being an idiot;” the Bible, in homage to Christian and evangelical supporters, of great weight in the elections; and the Constitution, a reference to the “hard hand” of compliance with the law and his campaign slogan: “Put order in the house.” Besides that, the president also sought to reinforce the idea

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<sup>5</sup> The origin of this nickname for Bolsonaro is unclear. Among my interviewees, many used the term “myth” to highlight his heroic traits. Some explained that to “*mitar*” was to know how to respond to politicians using “truths.” Others were sure that the nickname came from his youth, as he himself acknowledged in an August 2018 interview with Globo News: Bolsonaro had been affectionately called *Palmito* for the white heart of palm used in Brazilian cuisine. Bolsonaro was “white as the *palmito*.” The word was later shortened to *Mito* and then transformed into “The Myth.”

<sup>6</sup> On September 6, 2018, Bolsonaro had been assaulted. He stopped attending debates and public rallies, interacting exclusively through the use of online networks and media interviews without other candidates.

<sup>7</sup> Interviewees told me in various meetings that the slogan “I came for free” referred to the allegation that “the left” had bribed participants to attend their demonstrations, specifically “a little money and a *mortadella* (sausage) sandwich.” The slogan “Him, yes!” referred to the chant “Him, no!” that had been used by feminist and progressive groups to oppose Bolsonaro.

that his government would be democratic and respect the Constitution, contrary to the frequent criticisms he had suffered that he sympathised with the Brazilian military dictatorship.

The sound of the crowd barely allowed the president's speech to be understood, but his projected image seemed to be more important than his words. Under his image, supporters organised themselves: they had been moved, different ideological currents had converged, and his image returned the illusion of a project of nation building to his voters. Bolsonaro, evoking the heroic, military, and divine functions that his mandate allegedly possessed, concluded:

What I want most is to follow the lines of God... And a mission is not chosen or discussed. It is fulfilled. We, together, will fulfil the mission of rescuing our Brazil.

I repeatedly heard people vilifying supporters of Bolsonaro's political adversary as "the enemy," a moral boundary construed during the political campaign.<sup>8</sup> For example, a man with long hair and a green cap exclaimed euphorically:

We are relieved. We have recovered Brazil. Communism ended. The Workers' Party never again, *bandidos*' party, murderers' party, vagrants' party, associated with the dictatorships of Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba...Garbage, human garbage. Humanity wants democracy. Brazil is democratic. We have recovered it, amen. We are Jesus Christ resurrecting!

A young black man who walked shirtless, stickers from the Bolsonaro campaign on his body, exclaimed: "Myth! Legend! Bolsonaro is the best president of Brazil! *Pam pampampam!*" he shouted, as he mimed with his arms shooting a machine gun. The different testimonies showed how the rhetoric of *Bolsonarismo* was articulated, combining complex and disparate elements.

Another older man told me he was a businessman and enthused:

Communism is over. We want the best for the businessman and for the employee. We want the good of the world. It doesn't matter that the right is radical; what matters is that it is a right for the people.

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<sup>8</sup> **Video 2.2. Testimonies in front of Bolsonaro's house:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/slc3Zkm3k-Q>  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/DYh0B6ncI3c>

All the people I spoke to showed hope and serenity. Among their testimonies a man shouted, “Carnival, carnival, carnival in Rio de Janeiro!” – an example of how the symbolic references of carnival were mixed with the electoral celebration. Stress and anxiety had marked the elections, so people were glad they were over. Nevertheless, walking along the rally, the atmosphere combined festivity with aggressive slogans from the campaign. Supporters danced to music that included versions of “Let It Be” by the Beatles as well as the soundtrack from the film *Elite Troop* to which people danced, pointing their arms as if they carried rifles, alluding to the main character, a policeman who used extreme violence in the *favelas* to fight corruption.<sup>9</sup> A bus appeared and a battalion of the Military Police got out, preparing to secure the house of the new president. People applauded the police, and chanted: “Military Police! Military Police!” The police moved smiling between the crowds and the Brazilian flags.

During the rally, a sign was raised saying: “Ulstra lives.” Colonel Ulstra was a notorious officer of the military dictatorship, accused of torturing ex-President Dilma Rousseff and honored by Bolsonaro during Rousseff’s impeachment. Although this placard was later taken down due to its message, smaller groups representing violent factions within the Bolsonaro coalition, joined in the celebration. Two such groups were the Templars of the Homeland, who had questioned the existence of the Brazilian military dictatorship, and the Chilean Republican Action party, led by José Antonio Kast, a defender of the regime of the general and dictator Augusto Pinochet (1915-2006): “We are a right-wing without complexes, and in 2022, Chile will join Bolsonaro to free Latin America of communism,” explained one sympathiser.

Among the music, the so-called “*proibidão* Bolsonaro” could be heard. *Proibidões* are a subgenre of Rio de Janeiro funk music that deals with the universe of criminality.<sup>10</sup> One song’s lyrics included:

I give to CUT (Workers’ Unique Central) bread with *mortadella*, and to feminists, fodder in a bowl. Right-wing girls are the most beautiful ones, while left-wing girls have more hair than bitches.

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<sup>9</sup> Based on the book *Elite Squad (Elite da tropa)*, the film, directed by José Padilha in 2007, tells the story of the Special Police Operations Battalion (BOPE) and its violent pacification of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>10</sup> For more on carioca funk, Adriana Facina, professor at the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), has published extensively on this musical sub-genre, such as his book, *Culture as a Crime, Culture as a Right* (EDUFMA, 2016).

The music offers derogatory images of feminists, against whom violence was normalised in the post-election festive space.

[People continued dancing and recording with their mobiles until late at night.](#)<sup>11</sup> A military vehicle carrying several people screaming and showing a cardboard figure of Lula in prison, went by. The passengers also carried a huge cardboard rifle, representing Bolsonaro's weapons project – a defense of the right to bear arms. Between them stood a huge *pitxuleco*, an oversized inflatable doll representing Lula dressed as a prisoner, approximately five meters tall, with the plate number 13-171.<sup>12</sup> People took “selfies” with the images. A woman kicked the doll, shouting with anger: “Lula, thief, your place is prison!”

Street vendors sold small *pitxulecos* of Lula and of ex-president Dilma Rousseff, both of the PT or Workers' Party. People used them to playfully beat each other. A doll salesman explained to me: “The doll represents *Pitxuleco*. *Pitxuleco* is the money lost in the *petrolão* (petroleum) scheme. They [the politicians involved in the corruption] didn't call it money; they called it *pitxuleco*.” A man who beat up a Dilma *pitxuleco* told me: “Today Bolsonaro won because of the PT. We can't stand it anymore. The Worker's Party only stole from the worker.”

This collection of symbols, constructed in a violent and anti-Workers' Party (PT) vocabulary, but also festive and carnival-influenced, was symptomatic of a rite of transition to a new state in which Bolsonaro's voters felt they had “regained Brazil.” The last ones to leave were the can collectors, who crushed empty beer cans with flip-flops to earn the can deposits. This event demonstrated the relationship between a euphoric celebration and the underlying violence of political polarization. National symbols were intertwined with far-right ideology in a public spectacle of defiance.

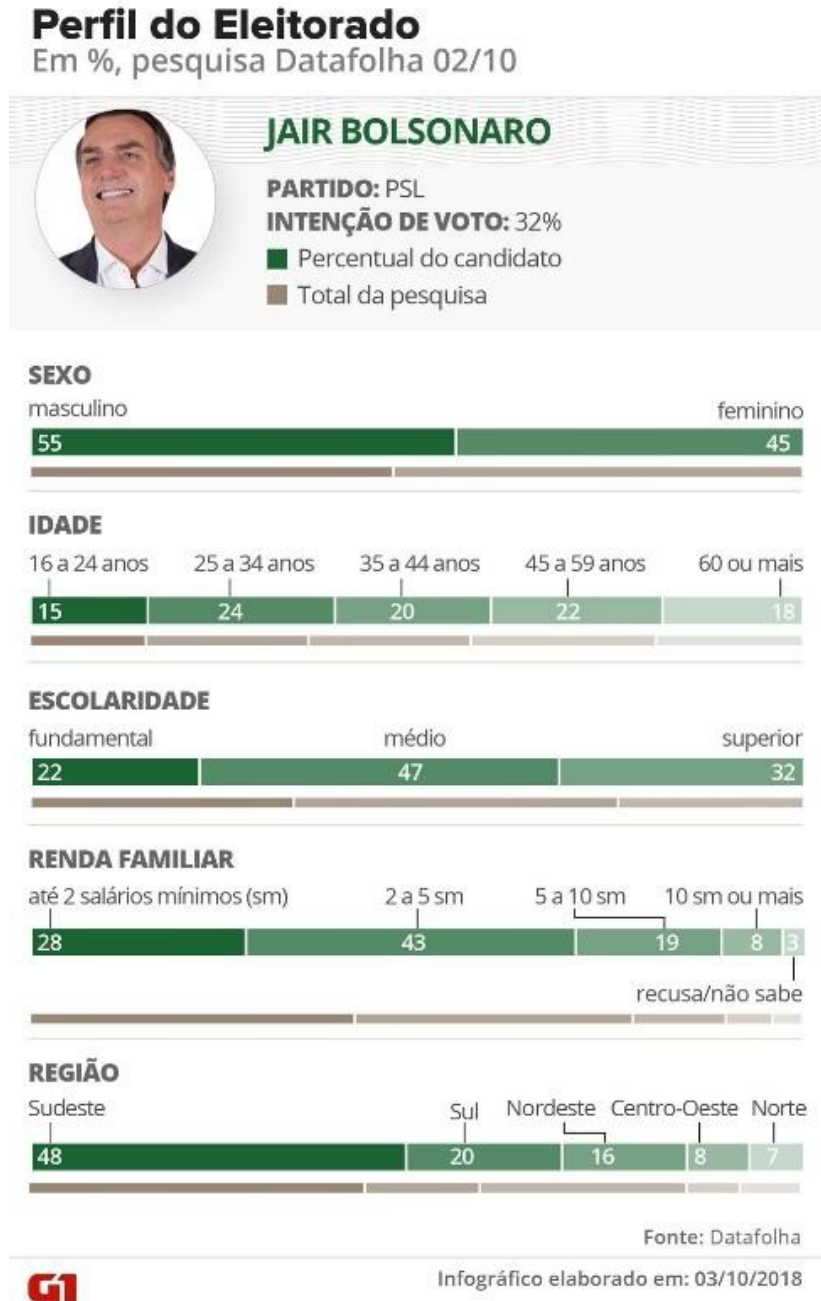
### **2.3. The official campaign**

In October 2017, the National Congress approved the electoral regulations for the 2018 elections, and the Superior Electoral Tribunal approved a calendar that set the campaign period.

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<sup>11</sup> **Video 2.3. Elements of heroism on Bolsonaro's victory day:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/5zyp5kdhmZI> Original Version <https://youtu.be/Wz1iFfa9SAw>

<sup>12</sup> The number 13 represented the PT candidate. The 171 that accompanied his plaque referred to the article of the Brazilian Penal Code prohibiting *stelionate*, that is, deceiving other people to get a personal benefit, the charge for which Lula had been imprisoned.



**Figure 2:1. Jair Bolsonaro's electoral profile** (Source: Datafolha; see footnote for translation)<sup>13</sup>

from August 6 to October 6, 2018. On October 7, elections were held for the offices of president and vice-president of the Republic, governors and vice-governors of the States, the

<sup>13</sup> Legend: *Anos* (Years); *Sexo* (Sex); *Idade* (Age); *Escolaridade* (Education); *Renda Familiar* (Family income); *Região* (Region).

Legislative Assemblies of the States, and members of the Federal Senate and National Congress. The voting process was complex, as voters had to vote for six different candidates this day. People wrote down on paper the numbers that represented their candidates, since the elections were confusing for many voters.

In this first ballot, numerous candidates representing the Bolsonarist project were elected using a previously small party, the *Partido Social-Liberal* (PSL), as a platform to present their agenda. The PSL had a large number of military candidates in its lists: fifteen times greater than the rest of the parties. The PSL increased its representation in the Congress of Deputies five times, going from eight to fifty-two deputies out of a total of 513, becoming the second-largest force in the Congress after the fifty-six deputies of the PT. In the Senate, the PSL moved from not having any representatives to placing four senators among the eighty-one seats, among them Jair Bolsonaro's son, Flavio Bolsonaro. Considering the high degree of political fragmentation in Brazil (twenty-one different political parties represented), the PSL leapt in prominence across various political spheres, from state governments to the national level.

Because no candidate for the presidency or the state governments reached the necessary thresholds in the first election (50% of the valid votes), a second period of electoral campaigning was carried out from October 8 to 27, with a runoff election on October 28 between the two most voted candidates from the first round. In the second round, Bolsonaro won the presidential elections against PT candidate Fernando Haddad, and Bolsonarist Wilson Witzel won governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

In rare cases in Brazil, election celebrations are held in front of the house of the winning candidate.<sup>14</sup> Despite his twenty-seven years as a federal deputy, Bolsonaro had successfully presented himself as an “outsider” to the political system, as a “man of the people.” The location of the celebrations was a testament to this success. Yet, for the first time in the young Brazilian democracy, a military man was the president, a former officer who had been controversial for a variety of reasons, including attacks on Afro-Brazilians, immigrants,

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<sup>14</sup> Lula's victories in 2002 and 2006 were celebrated on Paulista Avenue in the city of São Paulo. The victories of Dilma Rousseff in 2010 and 2014 were commemorated at the municipal headquarters of the Workers' Party of Belo Horizonte (State of Minas Gerais).



women, and the LGBTQI+ community.<sup>15</sup> The history of Bolsonaro's rhetoric had always been characterised by the use of violence and stigmatisation in the construction of a political enemy.

Bolsonaro had declared himself in favour of torture. During his political career, the new president of Brazil had also proposed on several occasions to close the National Congress and return political control to the military. In 1999, the then-deputy asserted that a Civil War would have to be initiated to change Brazil, since the vote did not matter, and that:

At least 30,000 will have to be killed, starting with Fernando Henrique Cardoso [the former president of Brazil for the Brazilian Social Democratic Party]. Do not have the slightest doubt, I am in favour of a dictatorship, of an exceptional regime.<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 2.2: Idyllic Image versus Violence in Rio de Janeiro** (Source: Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons).

<sup>15</sup> On October 29, 2018, after Bolsonaro's victory, the Brazilian magazine *Carta Capital* compiled some of the new president's most controversial statements. The full article can be read at the following link: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-em-25-frases-polemicas/>

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-em-25-frases-polemicas/>

Bolsonaro had aggressively defended the work of the Military Police, including after the 1992 Carandirú Massacre, when the Military Police entered Carandirú prison in São Paulo and killed 111 prisoners who had started a rebellion. On this occasion, Bolsonaro insisted that: “Few died; the police should have killed a thousand.”<sup>17</sup>

Prior to the election, Bolsonaro had been a federal deputy of the “low orders,” one of those considered peripheral but who defended an aggressive minority politics. In 2018, however, his project – a militarised state that used violence against its own citizens – had at the ballot box. According to studies by Jairo Nicolau (2020) and data-collecting and polling work carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (Ibope) and Datafolha, Bolsonaro and his circle of support were voted for by the middle and highly educated sectors of the population, beating the PT for the first time also among voters with basic education. Bolsonaro was the favourite candidate among the male electorate, with more than ten percentage points of difference with respect to the female vote. He also won 70% support among evangelical voters, and broad support in the southeast of the country.<sup>18</sup>

To understand Bolsonaro’s political ascendancy, this analysis goes back to 1980, to the post-dictatorship period, until 2013, to what his supporters called the “Brazilian Spring,” when the conservative rhetoric of “a new course for Brazil” started to be articulated.

#### **2.4. The construction of the new right since 1980**

It is essential to turn to the period since the 1980s, the period of transition from military dictatorship (1954-1985) to liberal democracy, based on the 1988 Constitution. During this period, a new right-wing project began to develop as part of a reorganisation of Brazil’s dominant classes (Casimiro, 2012), initiating a new *modus operandi* for the Brazilian right’s political-economic action.

At the beginning of this decade, collectives that formed part of Rio de Janeiro’s bourgeoisie had initiated a political strategy that was strongly influenced by the Chicago Monetarist School

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-em-25-frases-polemicas/>

<sup>18</sup> Details on gender, age, schooling, family income, and region can be found in the study conducted by Datafolha. Link: <https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/eleicao-em-numeros/noticia/2018/10/03/pesquisa-datafolha-veja-perfil-dos-eleitores-de-cada-candidato-a-presidente-por-sexo-idade-escolaridade-renda-e-regiao.ghtml>

and Anthony Fisher's Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), intending to spread liberalism. During this decade, several projects were created, including the Instituto Liberal (IL), one of the main promoters of the Forum for Freedom, the main Brazilian right-wing event held annually in Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul) and attended by liberals from all over the world.

This re-articulation was accompanied in the early 1990s by what Casimiro (2012) has called "a process of entrepreneurialisation of the social functions of the state," giving organicity to forms of collective action by using NGOs and other established associations to provide the organisational mechanisms for a new political-ideological project. Thus, various organisations began to accumulate a great deal of economic and symbolic capital as well as a consensus on the need to develop a long-term project of power to carry out neoliberal reforms while simultaneously defending a project of nationhood for the dominant classes. This project was closely linked to the institutional structure of the post-colonial Brazilian state.

The two main clusters of this project were the Atlantic Institute, based in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and the Institute of Studies for Industrial Development (Iedi), based in São Paulo. Both organisations were allied with various groups influenced by the Brazilian elite, and had naturalised a series of common values, such as the reduction of state power and influence, and the organic articulation of the Brazilian bourgeoisie. These collectives promoted the privatisation of public administration as a "modernising" proposal, while at the same time developing an educational project of "bourgeois class" awareness. Thus, in the 2000s, the discourse of the new right, although not yet introduced into the cycle of the great demonstrations that began in 2013, began to become more radical, and the force exerted by the spread of social networks was added to this. Many voices emerged to play a role in facilitating the emergence of the discourses of the new right with empathy and grassroots organisation. One such representative case was the writer and journalist Olavo de Carvalho, who, through the use of social networks, brought together the voices of right-wing activists and sympathisers who did not yet feel institutionally represented. This mixture of opportunities for the construction of a New Right discourse helped to disseminate liberal-conservative thought, mixed with revisionist narratives and fake-news, allowing hate speech that had previously been unacceptable to emerge.

The Forum for Freedom continued to be a very important space for the construction of the discourses of the new right and the inauguration of new organisations. Thus, in 2006, the Millennium Institute was launched at that year's Forum for Freedom, successfully introducing into Brazilian liberal circuits a discourse glorifying the market as a space for human fulfilment. The same Forum saw the launch in 2010 of the Instituto Mises Brasil (IMB), which represented the Austrian neoliberal doctrine of the new right. This group introduced the influence of libertarianism into the new Brazilian right, glorifying the free market economy as the only way for the individual-consumer to exercise full freedom.

Already in 2012, at this same forum, the Students for Liberty (EPL) collective was introduced. This was an organisation targeting university students that presented itself as the Brazilian version of the North American group Students for Liberty, which was linked to the mega think tank Atlas Network, and to the international North American network "libertarian militancy." The EPL was structured in relation to the Free Brazil Movement (MBL), a brand of this new right that built a discourse of attack on social movements, class hatred, and hatred of minorities.

The new right was clearly not ideologically homogeneous, drawing on Chicago monetarist currents, Austrian neo-liberalism and libertarian fundamentalism, but with a strong capital concentration and a moralist pattern that took physical form in the demonstrations, introducing its discourse into the heart of anti-PT and *Bolsonarismo*. In this way, interests that had begun to be articulated in the 1980s, promoted by the dominant classes, were transformed in the demonstrations into emotional dynamics that helped to build strong collective identities in populations that did not necessarily share these dominant class interests, but which adhered to the emerging political identity. This pattern of the new right was incorporated into the discourse of "anti-politics" and would end up being channelled through Jair Bolsonaro.

## **2.5. The giant woke up in 2013**

Between 2013 and the victory of Bolsonaro in the presidential election, some sectors of the Brazilian population (mainly young people from the upper-middle classes, but also people of various ages and socio-economic backgrounds) staged a series of demonstrations that consolidated the conservative rhetoric that Bolsonaro would mobilise during the 2018 electoral campaign. The key public events that shaped this shift were, chronologically: economic

demonstrations in June 2013, protests held during the 2014 World Cup, public demonstrations demanding the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2015, and the military intervention of 2018.

After the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985), a centre-left axis had dominated public space (Pinto, 2017), but from 2013, facilitated by expanding social networks and telephone applications (Castells 2012; Zizek 2017), conservative protestors repeatedly flooded the streets. However, what began in 2013 as a pluralist expression by various sectors soon acquired a distorted form, as gradually the discontent of the conservative sectors took shape, and was channelled into the Bolsonarist project.

A series of demonstrations broke out in several Brazilian cities in June 2013. At that time, Rio de Janeiro was seen internationally as the symbol of a cosmopolitan and welcoming Brazil (Baptista and Pujadas, 2000). Various indicators showed the world the tremendous economic growth of Brazil, a country of 209 million inhabitants. The former capital of 6.3 million inhabitants was idealised for its natural and artistic beauty. Proud of itself, the city had been fundamental in constructing Brazilian national identity and in manufacturing national stories and characters, such as heroes and tricksters (*malandros*), as well as for the colours and artistry of its *carnaval* (carnival).

The harmonious vision of Rio de Janeiro as a distinctive 'city-commodity' (Kant de Lima et al., 2010) in which to invest and to visit had been strengthened in previous years through various regional projects. In Rio, like so many other cities, the staging of mega-events was an attempt to symbolically redefine the Brazilian metropolis, transforming old and peripheral areas into landmarks of its distinctiveness on an international scale. Winning the right to host sporting events such as the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, the city saw the opportunity to renew itself, while concealing its deep conflicts and negotiations from outside scrutiny. Works such as the Growth Acceleration Plan (PAC), the Rapid Bus Transit system (BRT), the Pacifying/Peacemaker Police Units (UPPs), new museums, and new metro line investments in the structure of the city, sought to bridge long-standing social divides and redraw internal social frontlines. Through an aesthetic rhetoric that sought to redress social inequity, Rio de Janeiro's leaders highlighted at the international level its project of reincorporating abandoned spaces into the "formal city" (Cavalcanti, 2013).

Viewed from outside the country, this story of a joyful and harmonious Rio de Janeiro echoed the image of a cordial, welcoming Brazil, allegedly without racism and violence that had been promoted during the 1920s through the image of *Zé Carioca*.<sup>19</sup> This local imaginary was extrapolated abroad to apply Brazil as a whole and, by extension, to the government by the PT, led at the time by the charismatic president, Lula. This appeared to be a period of a “golden Brazil,” which, in the midst of a world economic crisis which did not seem to affect the country, had reported an increase of 7.5% of GDP in 2010.<sup>20</sup> Buoyed by a fall in poverty rates, increased investment, and enormous influence in Latin America and the world, Brazil seemed ascendant.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps because of this image abroad, the explosion of demonstrations surprised the international community. The harmonious portrait of an emerging Brazil, and Rio in particular, had camouflaged at the international level other internal stories being shaped in the local press and on social networks. These stories focused on a stubbornly high rate of violence that was increasing every year. The stories became intertwined in what Ernesto Laclau (2005) calls a “chain of equivalences,” in which a series of normally separate institutionally neglected social demands became linked in public discourse.

By 2017, the number of homicides in Brazil had risen to 63,880 annually, an increase of more than the 37.5% over 2007. By the year of the demonstrations, 2013, Brazil had an average of 175 homicides per day, and a 20% increase in the lethality of policing.<sup>22</sup> A public security crisis had for years been associated with the “*favela* problem” (Alvito and Zaluar, 2006) – the existence of urban slums – and the population had developed a general feeling of insecurity, malaise, and fear, which on numerous occasions led to calls for greater police presence and action.

Corruption scandals added to the perceptions of violence, intensified insecurity, hatred, and resentment which were directed at public institutions. These stories came with a third threat: a

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<sup>19</sup> *Zé Carioca* is a character created by Walt Disney in 1942. A parrot that introduced Donald Duck to Brazil, *Zé* offered an image of a cordial, beautiful, cheerful Brazil, where samba, *capoeira*, celebration, and *malandragem* (naughtiness) were mixed.

<sup>20</sup> Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

<sup>21</sup> In 2008, the group of so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – the latter in 2011) signed an agreement creating a block of emerging national economies as an institutionalised geopolitical strategy.

<sup>22</sup> Data obtained from the *Brazilian Public Security Annual 2018*.

supposed project of cultural domination by the advancing left that was feared by conservatives. In recent years, Brazilians had revised their notion of the Brazilian “national,” incorporating the grammar of multiculturalism into their political and public agenda. The 1988 Federal Constitution had introduced legal recognition of traditional identities and communities. These progressive social changes left the dominant class fearing that their remaining rights from the aristocratic, hierarchical, and colonial past were at risk. All of these four developments, although still compartmentalised, were beginning to coalesce in the streets and on social networks into a collective view that Brazil was falling into a generalised political and institutional crisis.

In June 2013, a cycle of demonstrations that seemed to be led by left-wing organisations spread to Brazil’s major cities. Begun a few months earlier in the city of Porto Alegre, the demonstrations at first focused on the Free Pass Movement (MPL), a protest that was calling on the residents of the larger cities to demonstrate against a twenty-cent increase in the price of public transportation. Brazil was not directly affected by the global economic crisis at the time,<sup>23</sup> and the leaders of the MPL tried to maintain a non-partisan movement specifically calling for a reduction in the price of public transport, demanding a “zero fare.” However, partisan actors began to appropriate the demonstrations, with both the PT government and its critics seeking to use the MPL. In the process, the MPL struggle became associated with protests against the PT government, with later protests taking on explicit *anti-petism* (anti-PT-ism). Seeing the diversion of their movement, once they had achieved a reduction in the price of public transport, the MPL withdrew from the streets, leaving an enormous discursive void (Pinto, 2017).

This rhetorical vacuum allowed the Brazilian media to differentiate between “vandals,” a category used mainly to refer to members of the Black Blocs, and “good citizens,” who demonstrated peacefully. The Black Blocs had originated in the 1980s in Germany. Members dressed in black and covered their faces to protect themselves from police. They called themselves anarchists, engaged in violence, and used demonstrations as a stage to confront

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<sup>23</sup> Brazil's economic recession began in mid-2014, when the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell from one year to the next by 3.8%, and in 2015 by 3.6%. By 2017, more than 14 million Brazilians, or 13.7% of the population, were unemployed (Source: IBGE)

capitalism and its symbols.<sup>24</sup> The movement took centre stage in Brazil at the 2013 demonstrations, often protesting violently against capitalism and its symbols by vandalising franchises of international companies.

However, unlike the Black Bloc, most protestors were young, with high levels of education and no previous partisan experience (Chauí, 2013). They were motivated to participate in demonstrations by anger about corruption and concerns about health, education, public security, and the fight against violence.<sup>25</sup> These collectives rejected political parties, a position reflected, as it would continue until the election, in the use of T-shirts and posters declaring: “My party is Brazil.” Other messages in this vein included: “People together do not need a party,” “Stop the robbery or we stop Brazil,” or the trenchant slogan, “The giant woke up.” These slogans were intended to transcend partisanship and allow people with diverse political affiliations to protest together against problems that transcended partisan loyalties.

The corruption scandal called *mensalão* had left the Workers’ Party profoundly exhausted and numerically depleted, as representatives resigned or were removed.<sup>26</sup> The PT was condemned for payments that they had made to congressional representatives from other parties in order to approve bills in the chamber. The demonstrations showed how the PT struggled to meet public demands or mobilise its militant bases. Instead, the *mensalão* scandal stained the party with the mark of corruption; the media continued to reinforce the direct association between corruption and the Workers’ Party, without focusing equally on the corruption of other political parties. The PT failed to present a persuasive argument in the protests, and the popularity of President Rousseff suffered, falling from 65% to 30% in just three months.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the rhetorical raw material emerged in 2013 that would be deployed in protests in subsequent years. These resentments and frustrations did not immediately coalesce into a

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<sup>24</sup> Esther Solano, a professor at the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp), has done numerous studies on the Black Bloc collective and its manifestations in Brazil, such as her book *Masked: The True Story of the Black Bloc Supporters* (2014).

<sup>25</sup> Data obtained from research conducted on June 20, 2013, on the profile of demonstrators in various cities by the company Kantar Ibope Media, until 2018 known as Ibope (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics).

<sup>26</sup> Starting in 2005, a series of investigations were carried out into payments that the PT made to other congressmen, called by the media the *mensalão*, a neologism from the word for ‘monthly payment.’ In 2012, investigations concluded with the condemnation by the Federal Supreme Court of some of the leadership of the PT.

<sup>27</sup> SOURCE: Datafolha Research Institute (2016).



coherent ideology despite a strong anti-establishment rhetoric, because the protestors expressed, interpreted, and signified their anger in a multitude of ways. The demonstrators were still developing their complaints and were not yet a coherent movement.

## 2.6. The World Cup, 2014

In the *favela* of Santa Marta, south of Rio de Janeiro, children played football barefoot in February 2014, with a stuffed plastic bag: “Uncle, buy me a ball,” they shouted.<sup>28</sup> The children trained enthusiastically. The tournament had been organised by the Popular Committee of the World Cup and the Olympic Games of Rio de Janeiro, a non-governmental organisation which sought to defend those affected by major sporting events. The tournament was part of a series of events held to protest the world championship that took place later in June. The organisation was critical of how the federal government, in collaboration with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), had made huge investments in stadium construction throughout Brazil.<sup>29</sup> Irregularities in the financing of the works began to be linked, as the World Cup became increasingly derided as “the most expensive event in history.”<sup>30</sup>

The Brazilian public also felt alienated by the high ticket prices announced for the event. Several other incidents, widely reported in the media, added to criticisms of the World Cup: in 2006, a group of *Tupinambá* indigenous people in Rio de Janeiro had occupied an area called the *Aldeia Maracanã* (Maracanã Village), around Maracanã, the iconic football stadium. As the opening of the World Cup drew near, the state government removed the residents, strengthening the impression that the construction and repair of the stadiums was linked to the commercialisation and gentrification of the city but mainly affected its lower classes (Freire, 2013). Mega sporting events, especially the World Cup, had already come to be considered synonymous with corruption, mismanagement, and elitism. FIFA justified demolitions such as that of the *Aldeia Maracanã*, as necessary to building infrastructure that would be useful

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<sup>28</sup> Information extracted from ethnographic research carried out for my Master of Science at the Federal University of Fluminense (UFF- 2013-2015).

<sup>29</sup> SOURCE: Globoesporte.com

<sup>30</sup> The Rio de Janeiro State Court of Audit detected irregularities in the financing of the Maracanã Stadium works. The denunciations were subsequently extended to other stadium projects, implicating the main concessionaire company, the multinational Odebrecht, in a broad corruption scheme that was linked to “Operation Car Wash”(Operação Lava-Jato).

after the event, but many people felt that the historical and cultural heritage of Brazilian cities was at risk.<sup>31</sup>



**Figure 2.3: Graffiti in the city of São Paulo criticising the expenses associated with the World Cup.**  
Artist: Paulo Ito (Source: Flickr/Creative Commons).

These events demonstrated once again the existing discontent with the material challenges of the country and the war against the “cultural elites” represented in the political class itself. Unlike in 2013, where discontent did not produce a coherent unifying criticism, in 2014, public anger crystallised around a concrete signifier: the World Cup. A new chain of rhetorical equivalences was constructed: to speak of the Cup was to also refer to the corruption and mismanagement of the PT government. This chain of equivalences was used by two opposing ideological factions, one on the extreme left and the other a more conservative *Anti-Petism* (Anti-PT). Social networks created diverse collectives that spread political discussion, principally on Facebook and Twitter. The best-known groups were the Popular Committee of Those Affected by the Cup, the Popular Committee of the Cup, and the group There’s Not Going to Be a Cup. This last group successfully articulated an attack on the social policies of the PT government, broadening their targets from the Cup to other PT policies, especially the

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<sup>31</sup> The pressure exerted by the residents of *Aldeia Maracanã*, as well as other collectives, managed to prevent the demolition of the Indian Museum building, as well as extract a promise to transform the building into an indigenous Culture Reference Center for the start of the 2016 Olympic Games. By the middle of 2019, this promise was still unfulfilled.

popular housing project “My house, my life” (*Minha casa, minha vida*), and other welfare programs of financial assistance to poor families such as the Family Grant (*Bolsa família*).<sup>32</sup> One of the most interesting dimensions of this political rhetoric was the apparent disconnection from, or conversion of their demands: mobilised initially by resentments of the World Cup preparations, discontent shifted to focus on the social programs of the PT.

The criticism of the PT converged to form *Anti-Petism*, a political movement which later became the backbone of *Bolsonarismo*. This anti-PT rhetoric reminded even the left-wing sections of the population of their disappointments with a government that had not achieved the transformations it had promised, with the hierarchisation and professionalisation of the party, and with agreements and compromises that the PT had made to maintain government, against the will of its supporters. Added to the resentment of the PT's clientelism was anger about the case of *mensalão* corruption, greatly aggravated by new cases of corruption in 2014 around the national oil company, Petrobras, and Operation Car Wash (*Operação Lava-Jato*), the largest anti-corruption operation in Brazilian history. Dogged by repeated corruption scandals, the PT tried to insist that it was being victimised by the national press, the judiciary, and the increasingly organised right wing. However, groups to the left of the PT also attacked the party, depriving it of its strong base of support and of important allies. Criticisms and defections also weakened the party's structures, undermining attempts to counter the emerging conservative rhetoric.

In this context, inspired by the demonstrations of 2013, protests were staged against the World Cup in 2014. Although not as numerous as those in the previous year, these protests were still fundamental in articulating an anti-PT rhetoric, linked to the management of the Cup. On June 12, 2014, as Jardim Pinto (2017) argues, the conservative rhetoric that characterised the following years emerged. In the first match of the World Cup, the Brazilian national team played Croatia at Itaquero Stadium in São Paulo. When President Dilma Rousseff's name was announced, the stadium filled with thousands of whistles against her. Public expressions of anger continued with insults during the match and only stopped during the singing of the Brazilian national anthem, reflecting union around the anthem and the accusation of anti-

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<sup>32</sup> These projects were more representative of the social policies promoted by PT governments than the international sporting events that were the initial catalyst for the group's formation.

patriotism against the president. That widespread rejection, broadcast across the country at the start of the World Cup when public attention was high, cemented the image of President Rousseff as a symbol of political corruption and mismanagement. Arguably, it was the first obvious seed of popular rejection that would grow until, a year later, she was impeached.

The rhetoric of the contemporary Brazilian right was born in opposition to the PT, and the World Cup had organised its signs. Here was articulated a right-wing discourse that trivialised government violence, deployed aggressive symbols such as the former president's naked image, sexualised political debate, and used violent terms such images of garbage and cleanliness to call for a sanitising of the PT from the country. The tactics of the right included circulating memes, and dominating spaces through sound: screams, whistles, and banging pots and pans marked the *Anti-Petist* response to any manifestation of the PT, mainly embodied in Dilma and Lula.

Protestors took to the streets in several cities, expressions of a new *Anti-Petist* militant coalition that continued to develop during the 2014 presidential elections. Although Rousseff was narrowly re-elected over conservative candidate Aécio Neves, Brazil experienced a new type of militant, active in public space and across social networks. This militant was conservative, upper-middle class, and used an *Anti-Petist* rhetoric honed with the criticism of the World Cup.<sup>33</sup>

## **2.7. The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff – the year 2015**

Following the 2014 elections, the country was deeply divided. Brazil's national flag began to be explicitly associated with the *Anti-Petist* right. Despite its victory in the elections, the PT did not control public debate. *Anti-Petism* dominated the key channels of public discussion, such as the powerful television networks and social media. It did not control parliamentary politics, but many people considered the PT government illegitimate because they believed the accusations of fraud at the polls.

As public outrage over the alleged fraud increased, more Brazilians demanded the impeachment of President Rousseff. Public anger only needed a legitimate charge to force

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<sup>33</sup> The classification of the lower, middle, emerging middle, and upper classes was carried out according to the indicators established by the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV).

through the change of government, which was obtained through the allegation in Congress of “dodgy accounting.”<sup>34</sup> In March 2015, massive demonstrations began again throughout the country. This time, the message was clear and unified: protestors called for Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment.

The first difference I perceived in the streets in 2015 in contrast to previous years, was that the demonstrators were wearing the colours of the national flag: green and yellow. Their slogans and chants were well formed, and in the demonstrations, no trace remained of the non-conservative collectives that had participated in demonstrations in previous years, like the left-wing groups critical of the PT and the Black Blocs. These demonstrations institutionalised *Anti-Petism*, not only as a political rhetoric, but as a collective social practice of the right. The language used in this context was warlike, aggressive, and designed to strengthen the boundaries of political identification. Despite the liberal economic positions of the organisers and moral-religious concepts from evangelical activists, *Anti-Petism* anchored the identity of the “new right.” The protests showed its power to mobilise people who did not identify with the left or progressivism (Solano et al. 2016).

The 2015 demonstrations were spatially decentralised, moving from the historical zones and central urban precincts where the protests had occurred in 2013, to upper-middle-class neighbourhoods, bringing the demonstrations closer to the groups that attended. This dynamic continued until the 2018 elections, when the political gatherings of Bolsonaro’s supporters in Rio de Janeiro concentrated on Copacabana and Barra da Tijuca, high-status upper-middle-class neighbourhoods, rather than the city’s older downtown area.

The 2015 and 2016 demonstrations included a cultural project, constructing symbolic associations and chains of rhetorical equivalences that underpinned *Anti-Petism*. For this project, the image of “The struggle against communism” was revived. In the demonstrations for impeachment, posters proclaimed: “Our flag will never be red,”<sup>35</sup> “Stop the Marxist doctrine,” and “Brazil will never be Cuba” This theme was related to other long-standing

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<sup>34</sup> In September 2015, the president of the Federal Chamber, Luiz Eduardo Cunha from the *Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* or Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), a member of Dilma Rousseff’s coalition, accepted the formal accusation of the crime of fiscal irresponsibility that ended the impeachment of the president. A year later, Cunha was disqualified from the post.

<sup>35</sup> The flag of the PT was red and its symbol a star.

cultural projects that preceded the demonstrations, such as the liberal right-wing groups Brazil Free Movement (*Movimento Brasil Livre* or MBL) and Come to the Street Movement (*Movimento Vem Para Rua*). These groups had hung on to key concepts such as the danger of becoming a communist country like Venezuela, and a fear of Bolivarism, represented by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

The narrative forged in the *Anti-Petism* movement called for the intervention of the military in Congress to, as one slogan demanded, “put order in the house.” *Anti-Petitists* insisted that the PT had broken the social contract of democracy and that the army was the best actor to re-establish order and restore democracy. Older images of the Brazilian army and anti-communism were explicitly represented in these demonstrations, and slogans emerged linking the demonstrators with soldiers in a divine crusade, with slogans such as, “We are going with the strength of God,” a theme that resonated especially with the expanding community of evangelical Christians. These symbolic links contributed a Christian moral substance to *Anti-Petism* and clearly defined an enemy: the PT was synonymous with corruption that was not just political, but also moral and even theological.

Rousseff was finally impeached and replaced by Michelle Temer in April 2016.<sup>36</sup> In the elite neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro, her departure was loudly celebrated. In Congress, Bolsonaro, then a deputy, voted in favour of impeaching and dedicated his vote to the officer who had tortured Rousseff during the military dictatorship, pronouncing: “In memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ulstra, Dilma Rousseff’s nightmare, my vote is yes!” From their homes, the *Anti-Petitists* watched Bolsonaro’s political movements with interest. Until that time, the *Anti-Petist* movement had a clear enemy and a cultural project, but they lacked a charismatic leader capable of channelling their demands, representing them, and presenting himself (or herself) as a unifying voice capable of confronting the *petistas* and the new PT leader, former President Lula. Bolsonaro emerged as a candidate to assume this role.

The impeachment process was a major victory for *Anti-Petism*. Nevertheless, the organisers who had been shaping the right and center-right rhetoric knew that the PT was not the only

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<sup>36</sup> Michelle Temer was part of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB). Despite voting in favour of impeachment, he had until that time been the vice-president under Dilma Rousseff, as they were part of the same coalition.

party implicated in the spectacular corruption cases. A deep resentment, transformed into hatred, was directed towards the political class in a general way.<sup>37</sup> The government of the new president Michelle Temer was quickly undermined by several cases of corruption, leading critics to assert through social networks and in public debate that “no politician serves.”

The political crisis was compounded by an economic crisis that Brazil had been facing since 2014, and that hit especially hard in 2016. The economic downturn strengthened the rhetoric of *Anti-Petism*, which aligned with the liberal right and added economic arguments for a minimal state and more open market, which protestors insisted would also resolve the problem of political corruption. The privatization of public services became one of the primary demands of the *Anti-Petist* movement. Critics demanded “non-intervention” in the national economy, insisting that intervention was synonymous with corruption (Telles, 2017). However, the *Anti-Petists*, as was historically the pattern in the Brazilian right, simultaneously defended state intervention in private social behaviour. These social intervention policies aligned with the concerns of evangelicals to produce the moral agenda of *Anti-Petism*: this project defended state intervention to prohibit abortion, marijuana use, and gay marriage. A “cultural war” had been declared by *Anti-Petism* along the lines of a traditional Brazilian right-wing social movement (Solano et al., 2017).

Most of these activists understood poverty as an individual issue, so meritocratic ideology related to personal effort was also strengthened (Almeida, 2001). The *Anti-Petists* opposed state intervention policies that promoted greater equality, social inclusion, income redistribution, and expansion of the rights of vulnerable groups (which had been strongly represented in Brazilian affirmative policies), as well as gender policies. *Anti-Petists* argued that policies such as the *Bolsa familia* made the poor “lazier” (Telles, 2017). In this explanation of poverty, the inhabitants of Brazil’s *favelas* were responsible for their own living conditions, and poverty and violence were separate problems.

## **2.8. Militarization before the 2018 elections**

Although a defence of military intervention was part of most demonstrations, militarism became especially pronounced after February 16, 2018, when President Temer declared a

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<sup>37</sup> Concrete figures are available from research by Esther Solano, Pablo Ortellado, and Marcio Moretto for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in *Brasil: 2006: O ano da polarização?*(2017).

military intervention in the State of Rio de Janeiro. The public perception that the city was spiralling out of control led the Federal Government to take extreme measures to counteract violence in Rio de Janeiro. The president compared organised crime in the city with a cancer spreading throughout the country, so he decreed that public security institutions be headed by a military general.

These Federal strategies, including the use of the army, undermined the local and international reputation of the city: rather than Rio de Janeiro being the Marvelous City, capable of hosting mega sports events, the declaration suggested that Rio's streets had descended into chaos. The declaration crystallised a broader rhetoric of fear. Although this image already existed, the declaration meant that the fear of interpersonal violence acquired federal institutional legitimacy. The declaration allowed the right-wing to openly express its preference for severe order, and normalised the violence of its rhetoric in support, without reservation, of a harsher, militarised state.

Previously reluctant to remind people of its association with historical dictatorships, the renewed right could now openly defend militarism because of the perception that Rio de Janeiro was a city out of control. The *Anti-Petist* movement expressed a nostalgia for the order of the past, reinterpreting the period of military dictatorship as one of prosperity and security, in which people remembered having lived according to the motto on the Brazilian flag: in a regime of Order and Progress. The new right's sympathisers expressed gratitude to the military for this period of prosperity, rejecting the importance of the human rights violations that had been denounced during the military regime. The perception that society was growing disorderly and dangerous, especially in Rio de Janeiro, allowed the new right to reinterpret the period of military rule and call for a return to repressive policies that seem to promise greater personal safety.

This veneration for the military also allowed sectors of the population less loyal to democratic principles, often organised through social networks, to defend, if necessary, military intervention in the National Congress, press censorship, interference in the unions, and the prevention of public demonstrations of the left, and especially by the PT. All this came together under one repeated theme: the need to "put order in the house." The metaphor of the house suggested that Brazil was an enormous, unruly family, that required a paternal-authoritarian



figure capable of putting it in order. Given the militarism and nostalgia for the dictatorship emerging in the imaginary of the right, this figure would also be military.

Although, as has been indicated, the military element had already become increasingly relevant in the construction of the rhetoric of the far-right, this event represented a crystallisation in the public discourse. The militarization of the city of Rio de Janeiro was accompanied by the consolidation of a media story in which the violent elements were legitimised as a form of conflict resolution in the Marvelous City. It was from this moment that a militarised discourse, capable of bringing together the various sectors of society, began to be consolidated. The military discourse, channelled through Bolsonaro, had not had any material consequences in the events previously mentioned, such as in Rousseff's impeachment or in the various mobilizations since 2013. This key event, however, gave militarism a central place in the Bolsonarist rhetoric.

## **2.9. Crystallisation of *Bolsonarismo*'s block of power**

The crystallisation of the different axes of *Bolsonarismo* became evident on Sunday, October 21, 2018, just days before the final elections of the second round.<sup>38</sup> On this day, a series of demonstrations took place all over the country under the slogans “In the streets with Bolsonaro,” “No PT,” “against corruption,” “for morality,” and “for the good customs of the country.” The demonstrations were supra-partisan and were organised and called through social networks by the *Vem para a Rua* movement, the *Movimento Brasil Livre* (MBL), the *Nas Ruas* movement, the *Mamãe falei* movement, religious collectives, and the *Avança Brasil* movement, among others. The biggest demonstration of *Bolsonarismo*'s organisation took place on Atlântica Avenue in Copacabana. It was a demonstration in which the various groups supporting the project wanted to show the strength of their now unified discourse. The day was blue, and a huge Brazilian flag was passing through the crowd, to be signed by the participants and sent to Brasilia a week before the second round of federal elections.

The demonstration filled the immense avenue, which stretched to the beach through the coconut trees. Various floats representing the structure of *Bolsonarismo* travelled along with the rally. The rally began at 2:20pm, opening with the Brazilian anthem and the recitation of

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<sup>38</sup> **Video 2.4. The crystallisation of discourses in Copacabana:** Spanish Version [https://youtu.be/qC\\_eUF43ANQ](https://youtu.be/qC_eUF43ANQ) Original Version <https://youtu.be/kN2SvhSvC1c>

the Lord's Prayer. I approached the various floats, to observe the staging of the actors representing the main axes of the Brazilian far-right. Although mixed and influenced by each other, libertarianism, religious fundamentalism, and anti-communism were present as ideological axes.

### **2.9.1. Libertarianism**

The first float, despite the various symbols referring to religious fundamentalism, evidenced the libertarian axis of the Bolsonarist project. It displayed an imperial Brazilian flag, defended by the Monarchist Brazil Movement, and a banner reading *Phenix Brasil* in reference to the process of "rebirth" of Brazil that Bolsonaro represented as a revolutionary hero who would bring about a new social order. The phoenix mimicked the Christian symbol of Christ's resurrection, and a military man from the paratrooper brigade tied the flag tightly, declaring:

Let's make our agribusiness grow, let's make our companies not suffer from bureaucracy, not suffer from high taxes. Let's make it so that you don't have difficulties in contracting, in having a signed portfolio! Jair Messias Bolsonaro proposes to strengthen companies, cut red tape, simplify taxes, strengthen the industry, strengthen agribusiness. We are a strong and solid nation.

The discourse was influenced by libertarian ideology, itself descended from the aforementioned Austrian economic school, which advocated a smaller state and greater market self-regulation. Rights would be reduced to private property and labour contracts "freely established" (Miguel, 2018) by companies. Thus, a discourse that defended "freedom" in opposition to the coercive impositions of the state issued from the float. From this float, a universe with a specific meaning was configured, in which the left, coercion, and equality made up its own sense, while freedom, the market, and the right made up another (Miguel, 2018).

The libertarian doctrine that *Bolsonarismo* reflected might have been unpopular, as the ideology of market superiority seemed unable to articulate with the widespread understanding that some obligations and services should be collective. In the interviews conducted by Solano and her colleagues, more than 95 percent of the new right protesters agreed that education and health should be free public services (Solano et al., 2017; Solano, 2018). To understand this paradox of defending free services while promoting a libertarian ideology, it is essential to articulate both with religious fundamentalism and anti-communism, which acted as links in the

ideological construction of *Bolsonarismo*. The chains of equivalence present in the symbolism of the floats presented a map of the actors of *Bolsonarismo*, which in the case of this float ranged from libertarianism to religious fundamentalism.

### **2.9.2. Religious fundamentalism**

The next float represented the religious fundamentalism and anti-communism that was part of *Bolsonarismo*. The float was draped in various Brazilian flags, and a sign with the face of Judge Sergio Moro said: “*Lava Jato*: pride of Brazil.” The speech broadcast from the float read:

Eighty million elementary school students are daily poisoned by ideologies of countries that never admitted freedom. Today, they condemn capitalism, the free market, and private property, and extol socialism as the remedy for all ills.

A woman took the microphone and began to quote:

Family, project, order, morality, strength, education... that is the seed. And they are talking about torture? We have been living torture for thirteen years, torture with the thirteen million unemployed, torture with the dead in the hospitals, torture with policemen being killed. We live the torture of drugs, and we live the torture of our teenage children changing sex and deviating from the path of light. No one deserves what we are experiencing. But we have a true envoy, an envoy of God to our country, so I would like everyone to shout with me: “I came for free!” and “it’s 17!”

The “17” was in reference to the electoral number used by Bolsonaro. The crowd waved a giant flag chanting those hymns, and the woman continued:

[O]ur captain is light and he came to save us! He is a godsend to save us from that satanic, Machiavellian party [referring to the PT]. And I want you to understand the following: the torture that we are living through has no comparison with some little things that happened in 1964 [in reference to the beginning of the military dictatorship], my family did not suffer torture, nobody suffered torture, you did not suffer torture either, whoever suffered torture was the one who deserved it! If you were on the right path, there was no torture! I

spoke to my son, and I told him, walk on the straight path and you will not be tortured! But if you go on the left path, smoking marijuana and disrespecting people, you will be tortured. Do you know why? Because our Brazil is about honor, it is about morals, it is about ethics. Our honor will return, our education will return, our faculty will return because we are a country honored by God. Holy Land and Holy Cross. Thank you.

The libertarian component of *Bolsonarismo*, in its defence of individual autonomy, could have led *Bolsonarismo* to acquire advanced positions on individual rights such as drug consumption, sexual freedom, or reproductive rights. However, the testimony described above reveals such an articulation was established, in the universe of meanings of *Bolsonarismo* whose actors were also defenders of economic libertarianism, by defenders of religious fundamentalism. From 1990 onwards, the neo-Pentecostal churches had pursued a project of rapprochement with institutional politics through the election of their pastors, and religious fundamentalism had become a relevant political force in Brazil. The woman's discourse revealed the fundamentalist perception that there was a "truth" that overrode any possibility of debate. During the campaign, *Bolsonarismo* extended this premise to all other issues, constructing a disciplined discourse that immunised its supporters from any ideological negotiation.

The reinterpretation of the military dictatorship also present in the woman's discourse ranged from denial ("some little things happened") to acceptance and defence ("those who suffered torture deserved it"), demonstrating the transversality that religious fundamentalism can acquire because, despite talking about the military period, the woman sustained the strength of her discourse in the supposed "truth" that annulled the possibility of debate.

The discourse of the woman speaking from the float reproduced the conservative moral agenda being constructed in the various media outlets close to religious fundamentalism, and which was shaped by the political action of its actors in Congress and the Senate: opposition to the right to abortion, opposition to policies to combat homophobia (extended to an alleged ideologisation of schools, universities, and popular festivals, such as the carnival), and the reinforcement of the traditional family (a structuring element) as compensation for the decline of the state in the tasks of social protection, and as a project of conventional sexual morality.

### 2.9.3. Anti-communism and anti-PT

The float of the *Vem para Rua* movement reflected the phenomenon of *Anti-Petism* described above. This movement had said that it did not support any candidate, but had organised the rally against the PT, which they described as a “criminal organisation.” However, the demonstration mixed supra-partisan issues with explicit support for the candidate Jair Bolsonaro, as he represented the same anti-politics that the supra-partisan movements also defended. Moreover, in front of this float, a crowd carrying flags began to chant “1,2,3,4,5,1000... we want Bolsonaro president of Brazil!.” A huge banner read “Who loves the nation does not vote for a thief.” Among the handmade signs, people chanted “*Vem para Rua*” in the phrase “*ole*, come to the *Rua* [street] to defeat PT!” demonstrating the alignment between the discourse of this collective and its anti-PT component.

This float represented the third strand of the new right: anti-communism. Communism had gained a semantic dimension of threat in Brazil as a result of the progressive governments in Latin America, the greatest exponent being the so-called Venezuelan Bolivarianism. In Brazil, the Workers’ Party had come to be understood as the representative of communism in the country, so the phenomena of anti-PT and anti-communism had come to overlap, one concept not being able to generate its own autonomy with respect to the other for *Bolsonarismo* sympathisers. Asking the demonstrators what communism meant, they explained that there was a “PT plan to establish Socialism in Brazil,” that “the PT and the leftists want[ed] to bring Marxism,” or that “the communist Gramscists want[ed] to turn Brazil into Venezuela.”

Thus, this day was key to reflecting the three ideological currents that made up the road-map of Bolsonarist actors: economic libertarianism, religious fundamentalism, and anti-communism (inseparable from the working phenomenon of anti-PT). These three axes, as seen above, were presented on the floats in an inseparable way, not compartmentalised, but intertwined and connected in their symbols and discourses. As well, the militaristic elements invaded the aesthetics and the harsh and violent performance of the whole event, permeating everything.. The construction of the enemy and the defence of a sanitisation project against this enemy were elements that served to connect these actors and these ideological axes, collaborating in their assimilation. In this way, a policy that based its communication on

strengthening the emotions of fear and hatred served to articulate the actors that made up *Bolsonarismo*'s forces.

With the convergence of public rhetoric on the right, the ground finally was laid for Jair Bolsonaro. He was ideally positioned to capitalise on the symbolic rhetoric that had emerged, and to run for the presidency of Brazil, with retired General Hamilton Mourão as his vice-presidential candidate.

### **2.10. Conclusions: The chain of equivalences in *Bolsonarismo***

The events studied above served as key moments in which the demands of a new political identity block were built. This does not mean that the process of construction of the *Bolsonarist* rhetoric was not influenced by diverse spaces, including virtual ones. Nevertheless, these events demonstrate key moments in the collective disaffection that led to the consolidation of *Bolsonarist* rhetoric.

These key moments generated a chain of equivalences of the shared demands between the different sectors. Since they were potentially incompatible demands between the material interests of each of the sectors, *Bolsonarismo* began to crystallise the language. The nomination of demands in the public space allowed for the signification of concepts, situations, the construction of metaphors and myths that were forged over the years and that acquired their own logic in the particular chain of equivalences that I have been breaking down in order to show its parts. This chain constructed a collective identity, crystallised during the electoral period around the figure of Bolsonaro. This is the mythical foundation of *Bolsonarismo*, which acquired in the nomination of Bolsonaro in the public space the necessary element to build a phenomenon of mass political identity.

### Chapter 3 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 3.1. “Each one of you is Jair Bolsonaro”</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/ltJkLyq_1jg">https://youtu.be/ltJkLyq_1jg</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/3LEyf5ZxiBM">https://youtu.be/3LEyf5ZxiBM</a>	Section 3.2.1	86
<b>Video 3.2. “Lula camp” in front of his prison in Curitiba</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/hLF8Da1us_Y">https://youtu.be/hLF8Da1us_Y</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/0lZtIJq0R7Q">https://youtu.be/0lZtIJq0R7Q</a>	Section 3.2.2	93
<b>Video 3.3. Marielle Franco: The rupture of her plaque and her figure as a symbol of resistance:</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Q7IHQuQPU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Q7IHQuQPU</a> Original Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4_o_x3c3I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4_o_x3c3I</a>	Section 3.2.3	97

## **Chapter 3: THE CONSTRUCTION OF HEROES IN THE BRAZILIAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The electoral campaign for the federal elections in Brazil started in the context of a huge political polarization and radicalization of anti-establishment discourse. The formal start date was set for August 6, 2018, with a first round of voting on October 7 and a second round of voting on October 28, 2018. Between these dates, several key political events occurred in Brazil. Strategic political alliances were built, options for expression were opened up in both public and virtual spaces, the spaces in which demonstrations and elections were taking place were re-signified, and the boundaries of political identification between different voters were reinforced, creating the category of “enemy.” Emotions of various kinds emerged: hatred, fear, hope. The candidates established their agendas in public and family debates, articulating specific rhetoric and, as I analyse in this chapter, building the stories of national heroes to represent political identities.

The analysis draws on fieldwork undertaken during the presidential elections. In the words of the different voters, “these elections [were] a major campaign for Brazil” in which three national heroes were detected: Jair Messias Bolsonaro, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (“Lula”) and Marielle Franco.<sup>1</sup> This period of high dramatization allowed the most relevant political figures to be attacked and defended as representatives of specific projects, highlighting their attributes of fame and celebrity. These three characters symbolised the struggles of the various actors and served to articulate under their image the various disputes.

The chapter begins with an explanation of the main categories and theoretical framework used in the analysis. It is followed by a description and ethnographic analysis of the character of these three political figures. The narrative elements present in the construction of the “heroes” is explained through the theoretical framework and these ethnographic cases. The chapter concludes by explaining that these charismatic heroes fulfilled a symbolic function: they were

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to these figures in the same way they are colloquially called in Brazil: Bolsonaro, Lula and Marielle.



“characters” that enabled voters to make their problems explicit, through diverse diagnoses that had not been formulated before the beginning of the electoral campaign.



**Figure 3.1:** From left to right: **Jair Bolsonaro, Lula da Silva, and Marielle Franco** (Source: Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons)

The 2019 *Annual Review of Anthropology* suggests that, although there is no “anthropology of populism” as a discipline, anthropology has been actively working on the phenomenon of populism, but using different categories to refer to specific features of populism (Mazzarella, 2019). From this perspective, this chapter uses some categories worked on in the broader studies of populism, specifically in the study of political personalism, such as charisma, leadership, and heroism. Nevertheless, the chapter does not use the term “populism” in order not to confuse the reader: what I try to show is how the main political leaders reproduced elements of the heroes of the folklore stories as part of the construction of their charisma. Whether or not this is part of a larger populist phenomenon would be the subject of another research.

This is a very specific approach to analysing the leaders of Brazilian politics in 2018, using ethnography as a methodological tool and inductively extracting representations of “heroism” and the stories articulated around it. There are, of course, multiple approaches that could be taken to analyse an electoral period, such as through nationalism, symbolic constructions, or

populist theory. The approach taken here was chosen specifically to show the representations of the diverse “heroic” journeys that the main political leaders constructed for themselves – some in a personal way, others by adapting themselves to the environment – and went through. To do this, this chapter analyses three highly dramatic ethnographic moments through the analytical categories of “time of politics,” “Charisma” and “Hero,” linking them together.

***Time of Politics.***

This electoral period was characterised as an exceptional time, a ritual time in which the rules of coexistence and the exaltation of discourse were reopened for re-signification and re-articulation. In the words of anthropologist Moacir Palmeira, it was a “time of politics” (Palmeira, 1991). In this period of high dramatization, the most violent elements of contemporary Brazilian society came to light. In this chapter, I present the main heroes who made up this time of politics in Brazil, arguing that in this exceptional time, political identification occurred in two ways: the leader embodied values and ideas among society; and sympathisers embodied the leader.

The category of time of politics, as defined Palmeira, has been highly influenced by the studies of anthropology and ritual developed at the National Museum (UFRJ) by Mariza Peirano, as well as by the anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah. The reinterpretation of Van Gennep’s concept of liminality made by Victor Turner (2017/1967) is also central to the understanding of a time of politics as being a period of transition: a period *before* elections in which social norms are altered and politics takes on a central role in people’s informational universe. This is why the moments of high dramatization and ritualization in the electoral period are so significant.

The concept of a time of politics also explains the use of somewhat more risky categories like “magic objects,” “magic thinking,” “hope,” and “fair.” In all these cases, I am referring to a special interpretation that can only be made during the electoral period, since logic then has new ways of appropriating objects in narrative terms. For example, “normal” people can become heroes and villains. Many accusations of villainy occur in an electoral rhythm where there is no time to justify arguments based on empirical data, and violence itself can be trivialised because it is a time when the different, the magic, is justified.

***Charisma.***

For some academics, the moments of high dramatization and personalistic exaltation such as can occur during the period before the elections would be catalogued as populist moments. However, the thesis avoids that analytical category in order to focus on the intersection to be explained between time of politics-Charisma-Hero. In this way, I avoid the breadth of approaches to the theories of populism, in order to focus on the construction of the stories during a specific time, when a political figure acquires traits of heroism through his/her actions and rhetoric, which gives him/her a particular charisma that he or she is unable to produce or reproduce outside this specific time of liminality. Of the various ways of approaching the literature on personalism, supremacy, and populism, I therefore use a specific approach to the concept of charisma: the construction of charisma from the perspective of the imaginary of the stories, using characters found in the cosmology of Brazilian literature. For this, in addition to Weber (1922), the work developed by Roberto Da Matta, which I explain below, has been indispensable.

***Hero.***

The formal time of politics began on August 6, and with it, the dispute over the construction of the heroic stories of the election – the series of tales that sanctify the characters, giving their figures a religious aspect. As in popular tales, the heroes of the time of politics are constructed as characters in a story. Ethnographic accounts of this phenomenon show how people assume that the candidates have to perform narrative representations, and the candidates themselves assume that function with their speeches. The work of folklorist Propp (1928), has been helpful in extracting some of the elements of these heroic stories, making explicit common structures that could be identified in the electoral campaign.

Throughout the chapter, I break down the construction of the heroes who drew up the campaigns of the time of politics, unveiling the existence of recurring characters in each of the campaigns, as well as goals that were often related to the morphology of the folkloric narrative. In Brazilian social thought, the significance of relationships is, as in countless cultures, strongly affected by the way stories have been historically constructed. Narrative relationships, observed through the television, books and social networks of the culture industry, are

extrapolated to real life. Thus, complex ideas about human relations are ordered in the form of metaphorical narratives (Lakoff, 2002). Heroic figures acquire relevance as representatives of particular models of nationalism, in historical formation, which reveal the plural configuration of identities in coexistence, and which finds in the heroic figures the mediation between order and disorder in the social sphere. In the model of the Brazilian Hero as defined by anthropologist Roberto Da Matta (1983), for example, heroism ranges from the figure of the *malandro* (who is not attached to work and achieves his goals with less effort), to the *caxias* (who is compliant with the laws, and, regardless of whether or not he is a worker, forces others to work) to the *saint-resigner* (who leaves everything and goes to work for a greater cause).

## **3.2. Ethnographic cases of study**

### **3.2.1. “Each of you is Jair Bolsonaro”**

It was Thursday, September 6, 2018, the electoral campaign had begun exactly one month ago, and I was at the Rio de Janeiro Yacht Club, where various political figures who had their boats anchored there to sail in the Guanabara Bay were frequently in circulation. Two men were drinking pure *cachaça*, the Brazilian national drink and basic ingredient of the famous cocktail *Caipirinha*, the country’s iconic symbol. “Lula never drank old *cachaça*,” they exclaimed, laughing, referring to the poverty of the former president, who they also classified as an alcoholic. The men then spoke about the candidate Jair Bolsonaro. Suddenly the men got up running and a crowd approached the club’s television. Something had happened. Jair Messias Bolsonaro had just been stabbed during a campaign event in Juiz de Fora in the State of Minas Gerais.

People gathered around the television. The images showed the candidate waving to the crowd in the middle of the event when a knife appeared from the crowd and pierced his stomach. Many of the viewers belonged to the Bolsonaro voter profile, upper-middle-class whites, and watched in horror, thinking their leader might have been killed. The candidate’s actual diagnosis was not yet known, as he had been taken to a hospital for urgent surgery, but the news reported that the candidate was alive. Little by little, the state of shock was overcome, and people began to dare to issue their first opinions: “the stabber is incompetent, otherwise Bolsonaro would have become Kennedy, a national victim,” said one. Soon, speculation began

about who the assailant would be: would they be mentally ill; did they work for some government organization? None of them seemed to believe Bolsonaro had organised his own attack, an idea that would later gain strength in the conspiracy theories being constructed throughout the campaign by all the political actors. As it turned out, the assailant had been affiliated with the leftist *Partido Socialismo e Liberdade* (PSOL or Socialism and Freedom Party), a connection that was sufficiently convincing to create an alternative conspiracy story: that the left had tried to kill Jair Bolsonaro.

People commented on Bolsonaro's son, Flavio, who had tweeted asking everyone to pray for his father. "He's going to come out of this, he's a strong man," exclaimed one grieving man. "If God wants, he will come out, the perforation has reached his intestine and liver, but he has everything on his side," another man said hopefully. People explained that the attack had probably occurred because the current government was afraid that Bolsonaro would rule with an iron hand against corruption, and had ordered the attack. While they were explaining these ideas, the television showed various photos of the dimensions of the dagger that had been used. Asked why a gun was not used, the answer was "this is Brazil" as if everything could be explained with that justification. Then they clarified: "a stab wound can kill you more easily than a shot, you have to give several stabs and have good aim."

Everyone agreed the attack would greatly increase Bolsonaro's chances of winning the elections, although they could not explain exactly why.<sup>2</sup> A few days later, in the demonstration "For the life of Bolsonaro," this question was resolved: the attack had crystallised Bolsonaro into a hero who faced the dangers of Brazil, and who, for his country and his people, was capable of facing death. For now, the hero had to rest, but Bolsonaro had stopped being a simple person: he had become an idea. "Each of you is Jair Bolsonaro," Flavio Bolsonaro (a candidate for the Senate) began the event in Copacabana. The event had been announced on several social networks, and the slogan was "In favor of Bolsonaro's life." Hundreds of Brazilian flags shone all over Nossa Senhora de Copacabana Avenue, in a gigantic exhibition of national symbols and of the construction of Bolsonaro's patriotism. Volunteers painted faces

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<sup>2</sup> **Video 3.1. "Each one of you is Jair Bolsonaro":** Spanish Version [https://youtu.be/ltJkLyq\\_ljg](https://youtu.be/ltJkLyq_ljg) Original Version <https://youtu.be/3LEyf5ZxiBM>

with the colors green and yellow, which flooded the event, and handed out *santinhos* (political information pamphlets) and stickers with images supporting the candidates of the Social Liberal Party (PSL).



Figure 3.2 T-shirts representing the heroicity of Bolsonaro (Source: Bayarri).

Supporters of Bolsonaro’s project gathered to show their support for the leader, who was still hospitalised, and the phrase that they kept repeating was “I was also stabbed,” a key idea to understand the process of building the messianic figure of Bolsonaro. Encapsulated in the metaphor “we are all Jair Bolsonaro” was an exercise of integration in which the heroism of candidate Bolsonaro as an ambivalent figure was defined, with messianic strokes, as simultaneously human and superhuman, weak and strong, close and distant (Adorno, 1950). The metaphor this was about the representation of Bolsonaro as a “Little Big Man,” the one who presented himself as superior, a strong man, capable of carrying out a crusade for traditional values, with God above all, and who recovered the nostalgia of the military past but, at the same time, weak as any of his followers: “Bolsonaro is sincere,” “Bolsonaro is

transparent,” “Bolsonaro is like everyone else,” were some of the expressions used about the leader, who had positioned himself as a representation of the people. Bolsonaro was submitted to the redemptions of a paternal authority, which in his case would be a service much superior to himself, of the representation of a collectivity of all the sons gathered around his project. Bolsonaro would be the envoy in charge of superior service, a messiah who would place “Brazil above everything and God above everyone” in a clear reference to an historical crusade for the hegemony of Christian values.

The manifestation showed a political project whose collective power would provide emotional compensation for the weakness of each individual. In this way, an identity built and influenced by its opposite in Lula, began to articulate that “Bolsonaro is all of us,” “we are his soldiers” and that “each one of us is Bolsonaro.” The essence of Bolsonaro as the Little Big Man would be distributed in all the people contributing to this discourse, leading to their crystallisation and passage from being a Bolsonaro’s sympathiser to a Bolsonaro activist who would be the bearer on behalf of the leader of the Bolsonaro project, fulfilling the service of “taking Bolsonaro to every house, every family, every place.”

The stabbing attack against the future president thus strengthened both aspects of the Little Big Man, since it demonstrated the fragility of a man of flesh and blood, while at the same time insisting that his destiny would give him the strength to continue his crusade. As a result of this event, the representation of the leader was strengthened among his sympathisers, who embodied the attack each time they reproduced the phrase: “I was also stabbed.” The attack also allowed the leader to focus on himself as everyman, positioning himself as one more affected by the “violence,” a victim, so that those who heard him from then on did not perceive that Bolsonaro was not discussing the programmatic issues that might interest them, but his qualifications as a leader: by admitting his weaknesses in emphasising his powers, he conveyed to his followers that they too, to a lesser extent, could become strong, that they “were Jair Bolsonaro,” and that it was enough for them to hand over their private motivations to the public movement (Carone, 2002). During the demonstration, attendees put on stickers and wore clothes and hats with different memes of the candidate. This was both a process of activism and an incorporatisation of the candidate as part of that process of “being Bolsonaro,” of the

collective division of the messianic act and the construction of identity in movement. The incarnation of the leader was in each of the sympathisers, who from that moment on needed only to follow the path of their hero, the Little Big Man (Ross, 1950).

The attack against Bolsonaro however, was also a difficulty that the candidate had to overcome in the construction of his heroic story. Around the construction of his figure of the charismatic hero, the different testimonies demonstrated that the sympathisers detected in their explanations, characteristic forms of folklore narrative (Propp, 1928): Bolsonaro was obliged to perform the race for the presidency as a mission entrusted to him, in which a series of evildoers such as the traditional media, communism, corruption, and violence incarnate – all also the enemies of the Brazilian people - pursued the hero. The people, the church, his family, and the Constitution were required to act as auxiliaries who guided the hero in his mission, helping him in difficult moments, as has been indicated in this section, when the hero experienced near-death, and all the supporters “took Bolsonaro to each of their homes.” The presidential institution acted as the prize of the adventure, since the true hero would be recognised with respect to the false heroes of the campaign, and would be rewarded in an investiture ritual in which he would be constituted as the true charismatic hero.

### **3.2.2. Lula: “A little bird came to visit me”**

Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, (born October 27, 1945) had been the president of Brazil for the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers’ Party or PT) between January 1, 2003, and December 31, 2010. In the 2018 elections, Lula tried to stand again as a presidential candidate, but was disqualified according to the *Lei da Ficha Limpa* (Clean Sheet Law) by the Supreme Court of Justice. On March 4, 2018, he had gone to the Federal Police of São Paulo to hand himself over to the authorities. At the time, the former president pronounced a key sentence: “Lula is not a person, Lula is an idea.” This sentence disassociated the former president from his own person, and, as in the process of the messianic embodiment described for Bolsonaro, allowed his name to be placed as a signifier that people could use as a flag to describe various political projects brought together in his name.

On Thursday, November 1, 2018, I went to the *Lula Livre* (Free Lula) camp in front of the Federal Police building in the city of Curitiba in the State of Paraná, where the legendary



former president of Brazil had been imprisoned for more than 200 days after being sentenced in the second instance in Operation *Lava-Jato* to twelve years and one month in prison.<sup>3</sup> The camp, now modest, had some months before, housed more than a thousand people camped in front of their leader's prison. On the date I arrived, Bolsonaro had won the elections, so the camp organisers were trying to rethink their camp as a form of resistance to the new Bolsonaro administration. It was a small space, surrounded by various flags representing the popular unity of the Workers' Party, with stands selling flags, T-shirts, and masks of Lula's face. Among its symbols were numerous references to the *Movimento Sem Terra* (the Landless Workers' Movement or MST). The MST was a Brazilian social movement, influenced by Marxism, that sought to combat extreme poverty through agrarian reform. It had more than 1.5 million informal members at the time. Bolsonaro considered it a terrorist organization.

The central base of the camp was linked to a number of other nearby locations, which formed the most visible political and moral support bases for former President Lula. In the vicinity, there were several workers' centers such as the Metallurgists' Union, and the *Espaço Marielle* (Marielle Place), revealing the sympathies and connections between both collectivising projects. In the *Espaço Marielle*, the walls had been painted with a series of characters that had inspired Lula's political struggle. Thus, there were images of Marielle Franco, of Fidel Castro, of Hugo Chávez, of Karl Marx, of Antonio Gramsci and of Pope Francisco, among others. Donations were used to rent the land on which Camp Lula stood, and for this purpose, the group offered lunches and dinners, demonstrating the union in the progressive field of the figures of Lula and Marielle Franco.

The day of my visit was a special day since Judge Sergio Moro had been proposed by President Bolsonaro to occupy the position of Minister of Justice and Public Security,<sup>4</sup> in a clear symbolic reference to the main task that Judge Moro had carried out in leading Operation *Lava*

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<sup>3</sup> Lula was released on November 8, 2019, a day after the Supreme Court found the arrest in a second instance unconstitutional. The resolution established that the execution of a sentence can only take place after all the appeals have been assessed. Lula is currently a defendant in eight lawsuits, but none of them is currently with all the resources exhausted. The former president is at liberty, but with his assets blocked.

<sup>4</sup> On April 24, 2020 Sergio Moro resigned from his position as minister. His public motives were the conflicts that existed between him and President Bolsonaro, whom he accused of interfering in the appointment of the direction of the Federal Police. On 22 March 2021, the Supreme Federal Court (TSF) concluded by majority that Judge Moro was impartial in the trial of Lula, in the framework of Operation *Lava Jato*.

*Jato*, which had led to the judge himself sending Lula to prison. Public figures such as the President of the Workers' Party, Senator Gleisse Hoffman, had therefore moved into Camp Lula to demonstrate their opposition to Moro's appointment. In our interview, the Senator told me:

Judge Moro's proposal as Minister of Justice confirms what we were saying: Lula is the victim of a political trial. The judge who investigated and condemned him now also becomes the executor of the sentence as Minister of Justice of the next government. It is regrettable that it happens, it is a world scandal.

The idea of this being a "world scandal" became relevant as a synonym for the legitimacy of the processes of "authentic meaning," and the relevance of the "democratic losses" that according to the PT, Brazil was suffering after the imprisonment of their leader. For Lula's supporters, by accepting the position, Judge Moro was demonstrating that his legal decisions had been influenced by political expectations. For the anti-PT sectors (the people opposed to the Workers' Party), on the other hand, Judge Moro represented the figure of a hero who deserved to be rewarded for the good deed of putting an end to corruption in Brazil by condemning Lula, the major representative of corruption.

By their actions, both groups, PT supporters and anti-PT, demonstrated that Lula was a fundamental part of the maintenance of social order. For the anti-PT group, detaining Lula was the exemplification of a new social order, while for the *Lulo-petistas* (Lulistas-PT supporters) the figure of Lula represented a type of social order that would be affected by his imprisonment.<sup>5</sup> Both visions understood the relevance of justice as an element in the construction of social order, and both were aware of the influence of Lula, a figure who had become an icon, a leader who represented certain ideals of the Brazilian nation.

The messianic trait of the former president was latent in the way Camp Lula was organised. On a small board, the organization wrote down the visits of public figures and activities that

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<sup>5</sup> *Lulo-petistas* was a concept devised by political scientist André Singer (2009) to refer to the unification of political demands under the charismatic figure of Lula as president.

would take place during the day. Every day, the supporters gave the “greeting to the president” in the morning, which consisted of saying “Good morning, President Lula” by pointing the finger in the form of an L and turning the arm, representing in that gesture the motto of *Lula Livre*. The ritual was repeated thirteen times, the electoral number that first Lula, and then Haddad, his substitute candidate, had used during the campaign. This same ritual was repeated at lunchtime and at night, changing the “Good morning” for “Good afternoon” and finally concluding between songs of support for the president, “Good night, President Lula,” after which people dispersed until the next day. The event was repeated seven days a week, serving to strengthen the relationships of the most faithful bases and, in the words of the participants: “to raise the spirits of our President Lula.” The participants were convinced that the ex-president could hear their voices from the window of his cell, making an emotional compensation, in which the individual put his time and energy into supporting a president who had made him identify politically with a collective.

Among the various conversations I had at the Camp, my interview with an old lady who came every day to greet the president was especially relevant. She told me a story that went around the camp:

Every day, President Lula receives a little sparrow in the window of his cell. The jailers respect our president very much, and they transmit their messages to us when they leave. The jailers told us that President Lula thinks that the sparrow is the Holy Spirit, that he goes every day to visit him, and we believe it too.

This story, as well as the studied image of Jair Bolsonaro, reflects the messianic character taken on by former President Lula, who would be visited daily by the Holy Spirit to remind him that he was an innocent hero, that he was the bearer of The Truth. This character also presented the features of the great Little Man, human and superhuman at the same time, fragile enough to grow old in prison while illuminated by a divine force that would remind him daily, along with his bases, that he was an innocent hero, and that he should have the strength to endure in order to fulfill a mission greater than himself. This mission related his heroic figure to a Brazilian

patriotism that he shared with his antithesis Bolsonaro: both were to be the saviours of the homeland for their supporters.

According to research carried out by Ortellado and Solano (2016), Lula was considered by his voters to be close to the people: he was charismatic, different from politicians, honest. Many people interviewed during the demonstrations had voted for Lula, but were now going to vote for Bolsonaro since Lula appeared to have betrayed them, while Bolsonaro was the true, honest representative, different from the political caste (Ortellado and Solano, 2016). Often it did not seem to matter that Bolsonaro and Lula had opposing political projects: what was important was the trust that the figure transmitted to their supporters that accorded with the paternal figure that in Brazilian political culture was not only accepted but internalised and expected.

The day ended with the participants of Lula's camp singing the song: "Alert, awake, there is still room to dream."<sup>6</sup> Despite the hope conveyed by the lyrics, there was a feeling of sadness and abandonment, represented in the hugs and tears, and the decreasing attendance of supporters at the camp. It was as if the time of politics that had characterised the electoral ritual had ended after Bolsonaro's victory, and now it could only be resisted. The emotional appeals to the relationship between ex-President Lula and his bases were constant, and the discourse was one of resistance, a resistance that seemed to have to be reciprocated: by the bases of support for Lula, as well as by Lula, the representative of the bases, for Lula had been known for many years as a "son of Brazil."

Lula's imprisonment meant that the time of electoral politics had begun with particularity in the construction of its hero, when analysed, again, in terms of folklore narrative, according to the testimonies found. The charismatic hero Lula began his mission as a victim-hero, a character who was being put to the test by being deprived of his freedom, and who would have to fight the evildoers, represented by *Bolsonarismo*, from prison. The first weeks of his campaign had encouraged this idea that Lula would be the hero who would compete in the elections in spite of his imprisonment, but on August 31, 2018, the Superior Court of Justice disqualified as a candidate. At the same time, the construction of the character of Haddad

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<sup>6</sup> Video 3.2. "Lula camp" in front of his prison in Curitiba: Spanish Version [https://youtu.be/hLF8Da1us\\_Y](https://youtu.be/hLF8Da1us_Y)  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/0lZtIJq0R7Q>

began, at first as an auxiliary character whose mission was to transport the voice of the powerful hero, Lula, into the presidential race, by transmitting the message: “Haddad is Lula and Lula is Haddad.” However, bad prognoses in the surveys and poor results after the first round gave a twist to the construction of these characters. Their campaign turned to striving to build an independent heroism in the character Haddad.

However, Haddad the hero was unable to free himself from the charismatic figure of the hero, Lula, because of the strength of Lula’s story as a former president of the Brazilian people. Haddad was relegated to a subaltern image of the ex-president, who cast a shadow of enormous dimension over Haddad so that his function in the constructed story did not manage to outline the features of his heroism. This limited Haddad to the role of an auxiliary of the omnipresent Lula. As a result, the campaign of the PT failed to disassociate itself from Lula, whom they were also unable to advance in the story, so that voters had difficulty feeling represented by the figure of Haddad. Haddad’s story continued to be shaped by the story of the hero, Lula, by his supposedly unjust condemnation and imprisonment, by the cries of “Free Lula,” and by all the evildoers who had finally prevented the victim-hero from fulfilling his mission to save Brazil, even though the charisma of the former president had been strongly compromised by the failure of his story.

### **3.2.3. Marielle Street**

Thursday, October 4, 2018, started with sad news. It was the middle time of the electoral campaign, and several people had, that day, broken the plaque on Marielle Franco Street, that commemorated the councilwoman, Marielle Franco, who had been shot dead on March 14 of the same year, along with her driver, Anderson Gomes. The perpetrators had even taken pictures of themselves with the remains of the broken plaque.

Marielle had been a thirty-eight-year-old black lesbian, *favela* resident, a feminist, activist, and defender of human rights. She had been one of the most popular councilwomen in the city, and at the proposal of the party to which she had belonged, the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), the Municipal Secretariat of Culture of Rio de Janeiro had placed her name on a small street near the Municipal Chamber of Floriano Square, popularly known as *Cinelândia*, denouncing the murder for which they were not responsible, despite indications of paramilitary

militia groups. Marielle's plaque read: "Marielle Franco Street – (1979-2018) Councilwoman, defender of human rights and minorities, cowardly murdered on March 14, 2018."

In one of her last tweets, Councilwoman Franco, critical of the federal military intervention in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, had asked: "How many more have to die for this war to end?" Marielle represented all those collectives that were being systematically criminalised by the Bolsonaro project, and had legitimised the voice of the peripheries in her popular mandate, demanding the demilitarisation of the police (Franco, 2014). Whenever she met another woman "daughter" of the *favela*, she always said "Negra, fight for you and yours, I fight from here, and together we fight for the *favela*." Her figure overflowed each of the demands of these groups during the electoral campaign, becoming the symbol of the defense of vulnerable populations, a figure that reformulated the progressive field.

Shortly after the broken plaque incident, the identities of the people who had broken the tribute were revealed as the candidate for State Deputy, Rodrigo Amorim; the candidate for Federal Deputy, Daniel Silveira; and the candidate for the Presidency of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Wilson Witzel. All were representatives of the Bolsonaro Project. These candidates seemed to have assumed that Brazil was in a particular period, the time of politics, that had altered the meaning of sociable relations, and they expressed through this symbolic act, the construction of a new country project. The candidates allowed themselves the freedom to express the most violent facets that permeated their political project, which they attempted to legitimise through a symbolic warmongering which constructed Marielle Franco as representative of the enemy.

In this fluid time, violent passions were exalted, which resorted to a symbolic war over the construction of public space, through the naming of its streets, and through struggles between diverse projects of power. Marielle became the representative of a model of life opposed to *Bolsonarismo*, surpassing in a series of demands the "son of Brazil," Lula. An often-heard phrase that represented the dimensions of this symbolic figure was: "Who ordered the killing of Bolsonaro?" This phrase began to be used after the attack on Bolsonaro, and represented the opposition that the figure of Marielle had acquired for the Bolsonarist project since they were

deliberately altering a slogan that had begun to be mythical in relation to the progressive sectors: “who ordered the killing of Marielle?”

At the climax of this period of struggle, the candidates who were part of the destruction of the plaque were all subsequently elected to their respective posts.<sup>7</sup> Congressman Rodrigo Amorim, once in office, hung the broken plaque of Marielle, the murdered black woman, on the wall of his new office in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro (ALERJ), as if it was a hunting trophy. At the same time, the actor and film director Wagner Moura photographed himself with a reproduction of Marielle’s plaque at the Berlin Film Festival, comparing Marielle to Marighella, the historical character in the film he had just directed, saying:

Marighella was a black man, a revolutionary, who was killed by state forces in 1969 in his car and, fifty years later, a black councilwoman died in the same way in the hands, probably, of state agents.

Soon after, the supporters of the Bolsonaro project that I had come to know through my fieldwork began calling Moura in the closed groups of WhatsApp: “shit, frustrated, liar” and “terrorist.”

The breaking of the plaque was a symbolic example of the exaltation of this time of politics, of the struggles between diverse projects for power and over the dominion of space itself, but the act also indicated the symbolic force that Marielle’s image had acquired, as a charismatic hero representing diverse demands. On October 14, ten days after the Marielle Franco plaque had been broken, thousands of people gathered in the same square, carrying more than a thousand copies of the street plaque obtained through a crowdfunding project. “Here we are, thousands of Marielles,” shouted a woman, raising her plaque high. This event offered a snapshot of the different collectives and spaces that had been articulated under Marielle’s image into a struggle of “the poor” against “the oligarchies.” Unlike Lula, although without

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<sup>7</sup> However, on June 11, 2020, The Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro impeached the governor of that Brazilian state, Wilson Witzel, on suspicion of committing crimes of responsibility linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Witzel was removed from the chair for a maximum of 180 days, during which a so-called *Tribunal Processante* of eleven members – legislators and magistrates – were to decide whether to remove him permanently.

losing the matrix of poverty, the figure of Marielle had always strongly incorporated the struggle of the identity policies that had characterised the new demands of citizenship after the military dictatorship had ended, representing Brazilian feminism, the racial question, and LGBTQI+ collectives. Marielle's campaigns since 2016 had been strongly influenced by African-American philosopher and activist Angela Davis, author of the book *Women, Race and Class* (1981): her electoral slogan was "Woman-Race." After her murder, Davis stated at a conference at Princeton University, that: "Marielle's black feminism was about changing the world."<sup>8</sup> During the demonstrations for *Ele Nao!* ("Not him!"),<sup>9</sup> which represented the feminist struggle against *Bolsonarismo*, the figure of Marielle Franco was used to represent these collectives.

On this day, October 14, Cinelândia Square hosted the symbolic dispute of space and representation of the murdered councilwoman.<sup>10</sup> It was an act against Marielle's attack, in the same square where her coffin had been paraded and a memorial had been held, and against the breaking of her plaque, which added, with her name and her history, new meanings to the symbolic construction of this Square, reinforced by the time of politics. Patiently, several hundreds of people lined up that day waiting to pick up their plaques, which embodied for those present the model of a democratic and pluralistic life, which in addition to being murdered, could be humiliated and torn out. The breaking of the plaque was understood as an insult to the memory of the councilwoman, so the offense had to be repaired in the same space where it occurred, and the people attending expressed grief and anger amidst tears and hugs. Two women who were waiting for their plaques, explained:

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<sup>8</sup> Source: HuffPost Brasil. [https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/entry/angela-davis-marielle-franco\\_br\\_5c8c0031e4b0d7f6b0f351df?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAKEHpY\\_6umV8OseWUG4Ax1lAsVlrzWuJnwTfpbw1CDMFkqMx3407wDbdHbbTOowZ4gUg43lT5K8LWVWjdEL96HWQYs76s4ssYXpglYS\\_GSXzgx8aYqRYt0WT7e1zt2VGOXmOglfZsbEKXJDgbsBGcDNVKTxk-2itCK2BhmOKJpSo](https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/entry/angela-davis-marielle-franco_br_5c8c0031e4b0d7f6b0f351df?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAKEHpY_6umV8OseWUG4Ax1lAsVlrzWuJnwTfpbw1CDMFkqMx3407wDbdHbbTOowZ4gUg43lT5K8LWVWjdEL96HWQYs76s4ssYXpglYS_GSXzgx8aYqRYt0WT7e1zt2VGOXmOglfZsbEKXJDgbsBGcDNVKTxk-2itCK2BhmOKJpSo).

<sup>9</sup> The slogan was in reference to Jair M. Bolsonaro, but without explicitly citing his name.

<sup>10</sup> **Video 3.3. Marielle Franco: The rupture of her plaque and her figure as a symbol of resistance:**

**Spanish Version** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Q7IHQuQPU> Original Version

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4\\_o\\_x3c3I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4_o_x3c3I)



We are here to honor Marielle, the councilwoman who was brutally murdered, it's been seven months without a response, today we are all here to honor Marielle and against the dictator Bolsonaro.

Continuing through the line, many people wore purple T-shirts, representing the feminist struggle that was being strongly highlighted during the campaign. The *Lula Livre* T-shirt was also recurrent, and badges saying “*Ele Não*” were pinned to them. Among the messages that were embodied in clothing and flags, people explained their reasons for attending the event. A young black man said:

I am here because I believe that Marielle represents everything that is hidden in Brazil: the relationship with the women, the black people, the slum dwellers... this Brazil is about hiding under the rug, a Brazil that does not want to be recognised, but that is the real Brazil, the Brazil that represents us. Marielle represents that synthesis, the one of a Brazil that is denied, hidden, it is a taboo... in spite of everything, I see a lot of hope, in spite of the growth of fascism I see an insurgency, and even if it is not as big as the culture of hate that has been installed I see hope.

In the square were, in the words of another assistant, “thousands of Marielles” orienting their plaques in different directions, shaking them fast in the wind, and then stopping them.



**Figure 3.3: Marielle Plaques.** At left: MP Marcelo Freixo (Source: Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons)

Everyone demanded to know who had been responsible for Marielle's death. "Justice is slow, but God's justice is not," said a hot dog vendor. Everyone shouted: "*Quem mexeu com a Marielle atçou o formiguero*" ("Whoever touched Marielle removed the anthill"); "*Ninguém vai calar a fala de uma mulher eleita!*" ("Nobody is going to silence the voice of a chosen woman"); "*Ele não, ele nunca*" ("not him, never him"). Then they repeated: "Marielle, present, today and forever!" People mixed together the words "fascists," "male chauvinists," and "racists." to accompany them with a strong "they will not pass," and "dictatorship never again!" From above, a drone photographed the square. Excited by their struggle: thousands of little ants raised their plaques to the sky, trying to organise themselves to design the letters of Marielle's name, mixed among the colors of their carnival-influenced posters, of their street vendors, and of a huge cardboard sign that read "*Ele não!*"

The event ended with a speech by Monica Benicio, an activist and Marielle's widow, who had distributed a thousand plaques and who now placed a temporary plaque where Marielle Franco Street had been torn down as a protest. Her speech was repeated sentence by sentence by each of the attendees:

We are closing the tribute to Marielle Franco. Today is seven months since they tried to interrupt Marielle.<sup>11</sup> We are here to give the message that she will not be interrupted. Let's leave here safely because violence only generates more violence, and that is not the society we want. Let's show at the polls that love always wins, keep the plates in the envelope. Let's go from here together and together directly to a safe place (in reference to the danger the organization felt from being seen with the plaques in the climate of electoral violence). The plaques should not be placed on top of other plaques in the streets. Keep as a memory, as a resistance, you are Marielle's legacy!

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<sup>11</sup> The phrase "They tried to interrupt Marielle" refers to the various occasions when Councilwoman Marielle Franco tried to speak at the ALERJ (Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro) and was interrupted as part of the harassment of her racial, economic, sexual and political status. In the following link, there is the video of Marielle's last speech before her murder, in which she says "I will not be interrupted, I am an elected woman:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PwJHGBoxTM>

As with the previous candidates, I have analysed the construction of Marielle Franco's heroism through folklore narrative according to the testimonies of people who were present. Marielle's heroic story was consecrated by her death. Around her symbol, a network of characters articulated her story in the time of politics. Marielle's death was not metaphorical, but real, and her image was so powerful that the Bolsonarist candidates broke her symbols trying to hurt her heroism, but at the same time consecrated her as a living character of the time of politics. Marielle began her electoral narrative journey induced by diverse movements that defended civil rights and that sent her towards her mission: to defend all these collectives, such as the feminist movement, LGBTQI+, and the anti-racist movements, against what they called "fascism" winning the elections.

The wrongdoers of this electoral story were the enemies of these collectives, represented mainly in *Bolsonarismo*, who caused violent damage to their symbols, and with them the collectives they represented as the reincarnation of the woman-race. The mission of Marielle's electoral story was frustrated by Bolsonaro's victory, however, the strength of the discourse she represented consecrated her image as a heroine defender of civil rights, renewing and reinterpreting her figure as a representative of these collectives, and taking on some of the charisma that had been monopolised by the hero, Lula, during the last decade.

### **3.3. Conclusions: The construction of heroes**

The collectives that expressed themselves through the figure of Marielle Franco were often not distinguishable from those that expressed themselves through the figure of Lula, and both symbols personified the progressive project opposed to the *Bolsonarismo* project. In this way, the construction of a political identity can be analysed in terms of confrontation: *Bolsonarismo* (represented in Jair Messias Bolsonaro) against "progressivism" (represented in Lula and Marielle Franco). The time of politics was configured as a battlefield constituted by this duality. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that behind these character-figures, there were specific and rational agendas supported by various actual actors. The heroes did not walk alone but defended specific interests, such as the case of Bolsonaro and the defense of an ultra-liberal economic project, independent of violent rhetoric.

People interpreted this electoral time in terms of stories, defining characters based on the cosmological universe of Brazilian folklore. The candidates, aware of this, tried to strengthen specific features of their leadership. To achieve this, they, as heroes, also had to go through a series of prescribed actions throughout their projected stories, with an introduction to the campaign consisting of their life trajectories and their projects at risk. The three heroes performed as if they had received a divine call to adventure: in the case of Bolsonaro, to put “order in the house” with respect to a series of dangers that had been built into the collective imagination. In the case of Lula and Marielle, the call to adventure would have been provoked by another trigger: the candidacy of Bolsonaro himself. The difference between Marielle and both Bolsonaro and Lula was that she had not voluntarily sought to build her heroism: it was imposed upon her as, after her death, people reconfigured her as an heroic symbol to bring their demands together. Lula and Bolsonaro, on the other hand, were well aware of how their heroic journey was taking shape since they had a hand in it.

Nevertheless, each of these heroes went through a dangerous journey, in which any one of them could have experienced death or prison. However, each hero began election day in a different way since their stories had been affected in a decisive way by their previous biographies. In the case of Bolsonaro, in March 2018, months before his official registration from deputy, he had asked for a vote to form what he had called “the machine gun block,”<sup>12</sup> and in August he had conducted his first official campaign activity in a maximum-security theater, showing his bulletproof vest, and thus denouncing the danger of being attacked by the *Movimento Sem Terra* (Landless Workers’ Movement), with whom he associated the PT, while at the same time preparing for it. Lula was a hero who presented himself as a prisoner in the middle of his campaign, but generated a story in which he explained that prison would be one of the many difficulties that any savior-hero had to overcome as part of their greater call: the mission that was above himself. Marielle had already lost her life, but her symbolic strength allowed the feminist movement to use her image as a hero who would overcome adversity and stand for an end in which the danger of fascism would be defeated.

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<sup>12</sup>Source: El País. [https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/03/08/politica/1520481606\\_121225.html](https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/03/08/politica/1520481606_121225.html)

After this first call to adventure, in a second act, the heroes had to untangle the knots of a series of intrigues that were spectacularised in a hard day of campaigns, television debates and physical and verbal attacks, overcoming the adversities with a greater objective than themselves: to win the elections. The heroes had to experience the dangers, to see death or deprivation of freedom coming. Bolsonaro suffered the assault that was describe in earlier in the present chapter, Lula was shot at during his caravan and was subsequently imprisoned. Marielle herself suffered death, although her disembodiment did not mean her failure, but rather an imposing mark of the struggle for the campaign of the collectives she represented.

Finally, in a third dramatic act in which the rhetoric of the campaign was severely intensified, the political debate was placed into the categories of opposites: dictatorship against democracy; order against chaos. As in a musical escalation in crescendo, Lula and Marielle were to defend democracy against the enemy: the dictatorship. In Bolsonaro's case, he had to re-establish the lost order, the nostalgia of the past, to end the chaos represented by the PT government and the enemies of the nation.

Thus, in the climax of these campaign narratives, Bolsonaro fulfilled the mission entrusted to him, though not without difficulties and stories of injustice that supposedly went as far as electoral fraud, to finally be crowned as a savior. He was configured as a semi-human hero, who with the help of the Bible, the Constitution, and the army had saved Brazil, re-signifying the symbols of its spaces and establishing some warlike parallels in the confrontation of its allies against its enemies. He could safely return to his home and celebrate the salvation of Brazil at the entrance of his house. As hero, he had learned on the way, and was returning with scars that made him worthy of the mission he had achieved. Even though the story ended at this point with his election, the reality of Bolsonaro's political management had yet to begin. However, at the time, nobody seemed to think of that: the power of the story of his heroic journey during the campaign had seduced the population, who had accompanied him day by day in his social networks, in his interviews, in his electoral events.

Charismatic heroes offer the people a cure for their ills (Hochschild, 2016). The hero integrates the sympathiser into a structure that reconciles the sympathiser's passivity with heroic activity and overflow. In this complementarity arises the cure for the country's disease. Hero and

sympathiser establish a system of passages from one to the other, creating a coherence of the psychic-narrative universe between the two, which allows the hero to embody the carnality of the sympathiser, as well as the sympathiser to embody the divine traits of the charismatic hero. This system of affectivities generates a concrete projection of the social universe: it allows the creation of desires and expectations.

Bolsonaro, Lula, and Marielle were heroes who brought to the plane of their sympathisers' collective consciousness the reasons for their individual anguish. They expressed them in form, creating new fears and associations in the process of becoming aware, embodying them as enemies of their stories. The myths that each hero formulated may or may not have been experienced by supporters, such as the case representing violence for the Bolsonarists, or intolerance or hunger for the progressive field. The myth of Brazil was not produced by the supporters, but co-produced by its heroes, who provided the myth, the discourse, and the interpretation, while the supporters actively carried out the indicated operations. The heroes articulated a magical thinking that collaborated to explain the goals of their divine characters, such as the salvation of Brazil, that helped people to understand the origin of the country's problems. In short, the charismatic heroes fulfilled a symbolic function: they were *characters* in a drama who helped voters to explain their problems, through various diagnoses that had not been formulated until the beginning of the electoral campaign.



## **PART TWO**

### **METAPHORS AND DEEP THINKING IN CANDIDATES' RHETORIC**

*You say that racism does not exist, but slavery is in force.*

Slam Poetry





## Chapter 4 Video Links

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## Chapter 4: JAIR MESSIAS BOLSONARO – “BRAZIL ABOVE EVERYTHING, GOD ABOVE EVERYONE”

### Religion and emotion in the metaphors of *Bolsonarismo*

#### Ethnographic timeline: Jair Bolsonaro’s electoral campaign 2018

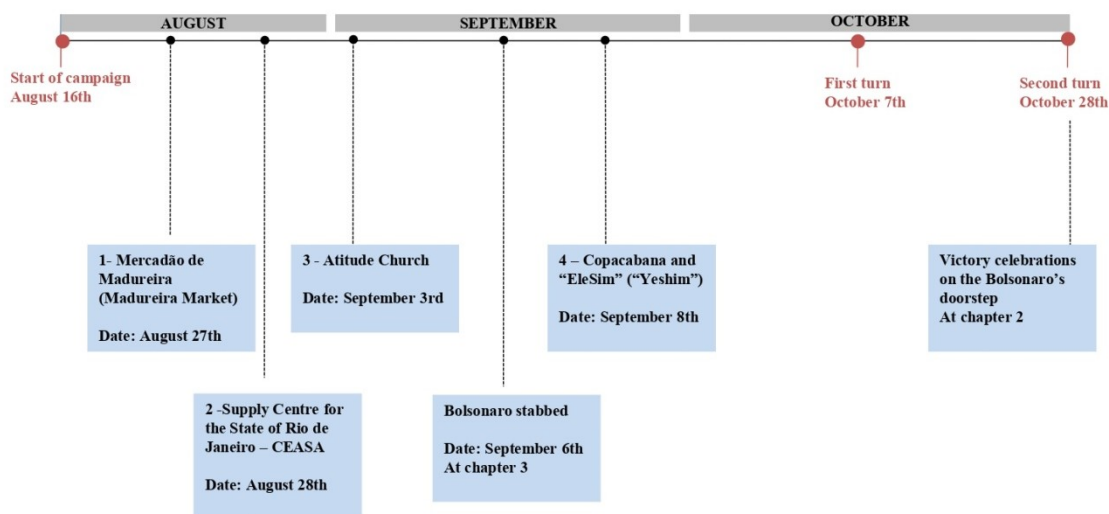


Figure 4.1: Ethnographic timeline: Jair Bolsonaro’s electoral Campaign 2018 (Source: Bayarri)

### 4.1. Jair Bolsonaro and the Religious Universe

Despite the historical trajectory of the link between political and religious discourse in Brazil, the 2018 Brazilian elections were characterised by the strengthening of these links, being, for authors such as Lacerda, the main element in the cohering of diverse sectors around *Bolsonarismo* and what Lacerda calls the “conservative wave” (Lacerda, 2017). Since the period of Brazil’s re-democratisation, a Christian current, generically referred to as evangelical, has been potentially growing. According to the Brazilian Index of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in the last twenty years the population declaring itself evangelical has

doubled in Brazil, with a 40% increase in membership of the so-called *Frente Parlamentar Evangélico* (Evangelical Parliamentary Front), from 70 deputies to 199.

In general terms, the Brazilian evangelical universe is divided between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. The non-Pentecostals are made up of Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others. The Pentecostals are divided into classical Pentecostalism (represented in the Assembly of God Church, the Christian Congregation of Brazil, the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the Church of God is Love) and the so-called neo-Pentecostalism (represented in the Universal Church, *Sara Nossa Terra*, the International of the Grace of God or the World Church of the Power of God, among others), which emerged in the 1970s based on the Theology of Prosperity (Almeida, 2017).

The Neo-Pentecostal segment was the fastest-growing religious segment in the last census conducted in Brazil (2010). According to Moreira (2018), in recent years, arguments have been constructed in the Neo-Pentecostal base that have supported the discourse of evangelisation/liberation concerning the “devil cults” represented mainly in the religions of African descent (generally represented in the imaginary of *Candomblé* and *Umbanda*). In the television debates before the elections, therefore, as well as in the various electoral events, the thirteen candidates for the presidency of the republic all made religion a part of the political-moral project they were offering, constructing frontlines of political identification between “good” and “evil” and consolidating faith as a political value to be considered in the election of the candidate. This inclusion of a religious agenda in the political campaigns led to a re-articulation of pre-electoral alliances. Research conducted by Ibope (the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics) in March 2018 showed that, for four out of five Brazilians, it was important for the presidential candidate to believe in God. The research indicated that the voter did not give relevance to the candidate’s specific religion (in a country with 64.63% Catholics, 22.16% Evangelicals, and 12.37% of other religions, mainly of African descent), but to his or her “divine faith.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: IBOPE - Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics

According to authors such as João Decio Passos (2017), one expressive element that was novel in the evangelical world adopted by politics as a strategy of action, was the neo-conservative rhetoric that established a dichotomy between the progressive sector (defined as defenders of civil rights and secularism) and the new right (where the separation between religion and state was not contemplated). Although this dichotomy did not imply a new religious cycle, it revealed the new right's intention to create a dispute with the progressive sector in order to introduce the acceptance of religious values within the framework of so-called "modernity."

Thus, strengthened by the political, economic, and social uncertainties (especially the high levels of violence) that the country was experiencing, religion was revealed in the 2018 campaign as a structuring element of the guarantees of order and progress, the capitalisation of which was disputed by the various candidates. Among the candidates, the political project of the about-to-be elected president of the republic, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, stood out. He presented his political project in terms of re-conquest, entitling it 'Brazil above everything, God above everyone,' gaining the explicit support of broad evangelical sectors. Despite having only recently been baptised by a pastor in Israel, and then declaring himself a Catholic, the support of representatives of the evangelical sectors such as Pastor Silas Malafaia, Pastor Edir Macedo (founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), and Congressman Marco Feliciano, was decisive in the eyes of Bolsonaro's evangelical voter base, with more than 70% of them supporting him.

In this chapter, I describe the electoral events in support of the candidate Jair Messias Bolsonaro, and discuss the universe of the divine and sacred in the Bolsonarist project, the creation of the theocratic project of *Bolsonarismo*, and the metaphor of "Brazil above everything, God above everyone." Throughout the campaign, the presidential candidate participated in various activities that brought him closer to Christian religiosity, appealed to his recent baptism in Israel, and frequently attended mass. His speeches mythologised his work as a divine task, theocratising his function. This made Jair Bolsonaro an ideal figure through which to study the religious element in a rhetorical approach to political change. *Bolsonarismo* configured a field from which one (Bolsonaro) spoke, and a collective subject followed that speech, which was composed of chants, public symbols, and the construction of a series of

rituals that were repeated in different locations by different people. These rituals acquired a high degree of significance in these processes of the logical construction of Bolsonaroist subjects, who thereby delegated part of their logical reasoning to a collective Bolsonaroist subject, to its arguments and positions in the field of politics, and especially in the religious cosmology.

“Joint Speech” is the identical use of words or songs by different people at the same time (Cummins, 2019). Ethnography studies Joint Speech as an empirical object. The premise on which this is based is that there is a collective identity within Joint Speech to be deciphered. The field of the divine-religious was fundamental in the articulation of the Joint Speech and emotions of the Bolsonaroist subject. In this chapter, through a number of locations and events, I observed how this conception of the divine-religious was articulated in cognitive terms through the construction of religious Joint Speech.



Figure 4.2: Ethnographic map: Jair Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018 (Source: Bayarri).

The first occasion was a visit to the *Mercadão de Madureira* (the Market of Madureira) early in the campaign, where Bolsonaro presented the seeds of a Joint Speech in which the world of the sacred, where a supposed equality was said to exist because all were “Sons of God,” simultaneously operated hierarchical structures of sanctity. The second occasion was a visit to the Supply Centre for the State of Rio de Janeiro, where Bolsonaro gave a speech in which it was possible to analyse the structure of call and response in this Joint Speech, and its liturgical component. The third was a visit to the *Atitude* Church, where through Joint Speech, the collective Bolsonarist identity was clearly established. Finally, an event in Copacabana with Christian women is reviewed, and I discuss the existence of the religious common ground on which *Bolsonarismo* moved and which could be explained in part through the function of metaphorical thinking.

#### **4.2. Mercadão de Madureira: Joint speech and the hierarchical religious order**

On August 27, 2018, Waldir Ferraz, responsible for Jair Messias Bolsonaro’s national agenda, told me that Jair Bolsonaro’s first act in the State of Rio de Janeiro would take place in the so-called *Mercadão de Madureira* or Market of Madureira, where he would give an interview to the media. Madureira was a popular neighbourhood located in the north of Rio de Janeiro, close to Avenida Brasil, and in the middle of the jungle of *favelas* that characterise this region. The old *mercadão*, dating back to 1914, had been a characteristically huge space where street vending had coexisted with stalls selling amulets and other objects used in the rituals of African-based religions. Fruit, utensils, and objects of all varieties were also offered alongside live animals, which were often used as sacrificial offerings to the *orixás* (spirits). This market burned down in 2000, and a new market had been built. The renovated *mercadão* was more organised, and offered only remnants of that original chaotic and disorderly space, with only two shops selling religious instruments of African origin, and a number of stalls selling food, hamburgers, and a variety of other items. The entrance maintained an active street vending trade, and the *botecos* (Brazilian bars) alternated with shops selling more *macumbas* (religious) items such as scalps and ram’s horns, than inside the market itself. Despite the strong influence of Afro-Brazilian religions, Bolsonaro intended to contest his Christian project in this space against the so-called “emerging middle classes” living in the region.

It was 3:30pm when I arrived, and the entrance to the market was in motion. A small mass of people, approximately one hundred, waited for the leader to make his appearance. Bolsonaro came out of a room, together with his security team, and people began chanting around him “Mito” or “president,” accompanying him throughout the market. The atmosphere was charged with symbols such as banners with the Brazilian flag and its insignia of “order and progress.” People followed the leader through the market. Finally, he exclaimed: “Brazil above everything, God above everyone!” Raising their hands in unison, people chanted the anthems, phrases, and chants, constructing a collective identity that opposed the “other,” the enemy of Brazil, the anti-Christ. The appropriation of faith unified all those as if under the same God. In the union of its shared sounds and gestures, *Bolsonarismo* created a sense of communality, ordering various domains of behaviours and collaborating in the construction of a specific collective one.

Bolsonaro entered another room, and as the crowd waited at the entrance I took the opportunity to talk to some people about this phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> I approached two people, a man and a woman, both about thirty years of age. They were black, and were wearing T-shirts in the colours of the Brazilian flag. They said they were part of a group known as the *Templarios da Patria* (Templars of the Homeland), a collective they claimed to have founded to defend Brazil’s values, mainly its sacred religious values. “We don’t want Brazil, the best country in the world, to become a communist country in Latin America, or to be invaded by Islamists, as has happened in Europe,” they explained. They believed that “many people from the *favela* will vote for Bolsonaro,” and they told me that:

Bolsonaro works with blacks, Indians, Northeasterners... It is a fallacy to say that he is racist. Nowadays, values and respect have been lost, and people are no longer orderly as they used to be.

They explained that in the past, people were better dressed and groomed, but today, everyone went around as they pleased. The couple also reproduced the Bolsonarist discourse on the legalisation of the carrying of weapons, abortion, the traditional family, the quota system, and

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<sup>2</sup> **Video 4.1. Bolsonaro’s visit to the Madureira market:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/78CDC0wclcg>  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/uaUNEPdWwIA>



affirmative policies. This discourse showed the main elements of the sacred universe that was being constructed by Bolsonaro, in which the various elements constituted metaphorical thinking based on the morality of the Christian order.

The Christian morality defended by *Bolsonarismo* constantly appealed to a supposed loss of values and the search for a concrete, hierarchical social order. This idea was reflected in various testimonies throughout the market. A girl, black and a member of the Templars of the Homeland, explained that Bolsonaro was the candidate who most reflected the feelings of a revolted population that saw the traditional family under attack, and gender ideology entering their homes:

They have the right to defend their children, and to bear arms to defend them. Rio de Janeiro, as a risk area, deserves to have guns, and I want to be the one to guide my children. On Public Security, the PM [Military Police] will be given more freedom, and you can't lose a PM in every fight. Because of human rights, we lose PMs here. We have already lost count, they are black, white, and Indian PMs. Are black PMs minorities?

She went on to say:

Thank God we never voted for the PT. On paper, socialism is very nice, but we defend meritocracy, you have to grow up, give basic education, and if you are a good student you go to university without a quota, no one is better than anyone else. The left created a spoilt, misguided youth. Values, duties, rights were lost. Here it seems that what is wrong is normal, and what is wrong should not be normal. If this doesn't improve we are going to starve and this will be Venezuela. The State is very bloated, it is a paternal State. It should be a father who says 'go on, I gave you school and security and then you go on,' not so much *Bolsa Familia* [a family grant created by the PT government], which although there are people who need it, it is an expense that should be used for education. Too much welfare creates dependency, creates vices. Bolsonaro's proposal is to investigate the frauds of the *Bolsa Familia*, to "close the tap."

We have to believe again, people must believe in themselves again, not in assistance. Here we have the *Bolsa Familia* industry. We have to start walking with our [own] legs. Less *Brasilia* and more Brazil.

This discourse reflected the morality on which *Bolsonarismo* built its critique of state welfare, which insisted that people and communities should be the source of support. Assistance had to come from others, from prayer and effort, in line with the theology of prosperity, which was on the rise in evangelicalism during these elections.

Bolsonaro finally left his meeting and was once again cornered by his followers and the press, which took photographs and surrounded and accompanied him to the door, where a car awaited him. Particular rhetoric was produced: a rhythm characterised by an accelerated beat, a loud voice, gestures related to the expression of masculinity and aggressive emotions, fury, and hatred, which represented the most performative part of *Bolsonarismo*'s violent project. Walking around the market, the feeling was that the people who were part of the campaign had already left, and nothing remained of the movement that the messianic leader was attempting to raise, not even in the conversations of the people strolling around the stalls. However, a solitary man bade me farewell to the day with a sample of the emotions of *Bolsonarismo* that were not based on any data, but on faith itself: "We are certain that [Bolsonaro] is going to win, the media are liars, leftists, communists, but he already has a voting intention of 80%."

What had begun in 2013 as improvised, constituent expressions of rage, hatred or frustration, began to take shape with *Bolsonarismo* as a political subject, so that during the campaign it was already being presented as a formalised ritual, designed and perfected, repeated in an invariable way in different places by different people. By consolidating this, a series of discursive fields created a consensus, a common point of approach to share objectives of collective action: putting God above all else, in a demonstration of the search for a hierarchical order, which assumed the verticalised logic of social organisation. In this defence of the world of the sacred, equality of opportunity supposedly operated, for all were said to be "Sons of God," but at the same time, there were hierarchical structures of sanctity.

### 4.3. Supply Centre for the State of Rio de Janeiro – CEASA: The liturgy of speech

On August 28, Waldir Ferraz informed me of a meeting at CEASA, the Central Supply Centre in Rio de Janeiro. Also in a suburban area close to Brasil Avenue, the CEASA, with mixed capital, like all the others in the country, was in charge of promoting, developing, regulating, encouraging and organising the commercialisation of horticultural products. Bolsonaro wanted to use this space to connect his campaign with the actors of the business and industrial sectors, to convey his message of support for entrepreneurs, while the grassroots workers loaded crates of goods.



Figure 4.3: Supply Centre for the State of Rio de Janeiro (CEASA) (Source: Bayarri).

CEASA is like a small town through which people transport carts loaded with vegetables, and drive trucks with pallets, Tons of fruits and vegetables are loaded and unloaded constantly. Various companies are located in the CEASA, and male workers organise the products under the command of the bosses, starting before seven in the morning, and working without stopping until lunch, when they gobble down plates of beans weighing more than half a kilo. There are

no women, only men of all ages. By the humble clothing and the colour of their skin, they are probably mainly from favelas and poor neighbourhoods.

At the entrance to the CEASA there was a small gathering of about a hundred supporters waiting for Bolsonaro to arrive to hold a press conference with the president of the organisation, who openly supported his candidacy. A 22-year-old white man let me photograph his Bolsonaro T-shirt. He told me that he had made it himself, and that “the *petistas* charge for wearing T-shirts, unlike me.”

Journalists were waiting in a room for Jair and his son Flavio Bolsonaro to speak, together with the president of the organisation, as well as some Bolsonaro supporters who had entered the room. The president of CEASA introduced Jair and Flavio Bolsonaro, and also introduced the president of a Christian association, in an allusion to a political bloc that united the businessman with Christianity. Flavio Bolsonaro began to talk about his father, and said that he was the only candidate “who carries God in his heart.” From behind, supporters violently shouted “Myth, myth, myth, myth!” Despite the allusions to God and the presence of representatives of Christian institutions, Bolsonaro’s speech was loaded with violence, justifying a crusade whereby violence was necessary to establish peace.



**Figure 4.4: Bolsonaro gives a speech at CEASA (Source: Bayarri).**

Bolsonaro began to speak, saying “who wants a son like that?” and everyone laughed. He added: “it’s also true that who wouldn’t want to have a father like the one he has?” Everyone

burst out laughing.<sup>3</sup> Bolsonaro seemed funny, close to the people, with rhetoric that, to defend good families, Christian families, violence had to be used. Bolsonaro said affectionately that he was surrounded by love. He said that being honest was not a virtue, it was an obligation, that Brazil needed someone who was patriotic, who supported the police, who helped agribusiness, merging the environment with agriculture. Bolsonaro concluded, with everyone applauding: "Brazil above everything, God above everyone."

Bolsonaro concluded the package of proposals he was making by closing with his usual phrase, linking divinity to his discourse, and legitimising violence, and justifying various demands for acquiring some kind of order. He demonstrated how voice could be used as a way of bringing together feelings and aspirations, of constructing the "Bolsonarist subject." From *Bolsonarismo*'s chants, as was often the case with the rhetoric of the electoral period, one could not expect to find arguments or deep political discussion. This is not to say, though, that the numerous examples of Bolsonaro's Joint Speech meant that the rhetoric was a degenerated form of rational language. Rather, it was another form of communication that *affectively* constituted the collective subject, in which the divine appeal was central.

During the rest of the conference, various ideas were expressed in which the magnitude of the thinking that was not justified by facts, but by beliefs, became clear. "There is a gigantic pro-*Bolsonarismo* effect throughout the country," Bolsonaro assured listeners.

The candidate took the floor again and began to talk about a supposed communist project in Brazil, and the thirteenth salary and holidays that prisoners were supposed to receive. The mobilisation of an aggressive Joint Speech did not prevent Bolsonaro from capitalising on the Christian vote and morals. On the contrary, the aggressive discourse allowed him to get closer to Christianity by suggesting a full-throated defence of it. In his capitalising on Christian morality, for example, Bolsonaro told the story of a child, whom he called Joaozinho. "Does anyone want to come home now and see his son playing with a doll because of school?" he asked, and everyone shouted "NOoooooooo!" Then he said that he had discovered "that gay

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<sup>3</sup> **Video 4.2. Influences of the theologising discourse:** Spanish Version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8kB5AXJPS4> Original Version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oytRTv0mA0>

kit," a supposed collection of didactic material distributed in public schools. He exclaimed in outrage:

It showed in the books young girls kissing each other, to then pass to the children. It is also a door to paedophilia. If I find that a child is being abused by a bearded scoundrel, be sure that I will solve it at the moment. If you find a man sticking his penis into a three-year-old child nowadays you can't call the police, you have to take that man to the psychiatric hospital and do tests!

In the background, people shouted "Beat him up!" Bolsonaro continued: "Let's put an end to the antics of those who want to sexualise our children. Nothing against Gay, whoever wants to be with a bearded man can do it." People laughed and pointed at each other. Bolsonaro went on to talk about abortion and the change in the law that was needed, to nods from the Christian staff. "We are conservatives, we believe in the family and God," he said amid whistles of support. He went on:

We don't want anyone to say anything in the ear to our six-year-old children, the child has a four-finger *Piu piu* [a reference to the size of the penis; Bolsonaro uses his fingers to show it], but nowadays, when he is twelve years old he is to decide if he wants to be a man or not! Let's put an end to that!

The defence of children and Christian heterosexual morality leads Bolsonaro to justify the use of violence:

If the homeless man breaks into your house and you defend yourself, he will be prosecuted for housebreaking, and you for murder. The homeless man will be on the street while you are in prison. We have to change the criminal code. In the USA the policeman is commemorated, in Brazil, he is prosecuted. As far as I'm concerned you can walk down the street with a point forty to protect yourselves, it's your right. It will drastically reduce the number of carjackings.

He continued, now full voice:

Who hasn't had a relative or friend executed? A friend who was raped? How are we going to diminish that? The vagrant commits the crime, goes to jail and nobody says anything, nobody goes to torture anybody. So the prison is full of vagrants and the cemetery is full of innocent people. I prefer the prison with vagrants.

People applauded loudly and shouted "Myth!" Bolsonaro then pointed to an ethnic Japanese man in the room and said:

In Japan, they have the death penalty, they have fat Japanese there. There was one about eight *arrobas* or so who was caught putting sarin gas in the underground. He was executed last year.<sup>4</sup>

In the background, a woman calls out: "that's right! that's right!" Bolsonaro finishes with: "The *bandido* man was hit and was executed. In Brazil, you can't."

The people in the room then prayed to God that Bolsonaro would win, and Bolsonaro concluded the meeting by saying: "Do we now have any Catholic or evangelical ministers in the Supreme Court? No, even though we are 90% of the population." People dispersed, and I approached an elderly voter, who told me "I don't understand politics, but I can tell you about the word of God."

In this event, there was a division of responsibility between the caller and the crowd, making this exchange a more sophisticated linguistic behaviour than the previous examples, capable of constructing the mass as active, capable of generating a dialogue with the political leader. As was usual in *Bolsonarismo*, it was accompanied by a liturgical form, such as a prayer or the national anthem.

This call and response structure, so characteristic of a religious service, was observed in various Bolsonarist events. The very limitation of the capacity for memorisation forced this type of

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<sup>4</sup> An *arrobas* is a unit of mass used in agriculture, such as for measuring the weight of livestock. Bolsonaro had previously used this measure in a racist way to refer to the weight of the *quilombola* populations, comparing them with animals. *Quilombala* were Afro-Brazilian residents of *quilombo* settlements first established by escaped slaves in Brazil. In this speech he uses the term to refer to fat Asians.

event to consist of a few sentences, with refrains and repetitions, making the complexity of the argument difficult, but facilitating the construction of emotional bonds for the Bolsonarist subject. Thus, Bolsonarist events tended to combine symmetrical chanting with asymmetrical interventions by the leaders, who, with the use of the microphone, were able to establish this relationship of caller and crowd, transforming the press conferences into political campaign events. In the rallies attended during the fieldwork, much of the music was initiated by one individual and followed by the rest. The level of following of the music was practically total, demonstrating the degree of adherence of the participants in the rallies.

Despite the break with the traditional ways of holding press conferences, such as the singing of the anthem, there was still a certain sense of order. The belief in the political framing that Bolsonaro explained so simply was always collectively reinforced. In turn, the crystallisation of this Bolsonarist collective helped the internal moral consolidation of the Bolsonarist subject himself.

#### **4.4. *Attitude Church: Building religious community through Joint Speech***

The final step in this account of the events leading to the simultaneous construction of the collective and the individual Bolsonarist identity through Joint Speech, is the establishment of this collective identity within the church. The site was *Attitude Church*. This was an evangelical church, frequented by Bolsonaro’s wife, Michelle. The church organised various weekly events that addresses issues ranging from entrepreneurship to the role of men in the family from its moral stance. On September 3, Federal Prosecutor Deltan Dallagnol, who had coordinated the task force of *Operation Lava-Jato* that had investigating corruption crimes in Petrobras and other state-owned companies, was speaking. During the election campaign, Christian action was repeatedly being associated with the anti-corruption discourse. Deltan, a Protestant from the Batista Church, had ties of belief close to those of the *Attitude Church*. Deltan was there to explain the hopes for the fight against corruption that he believed the *Lava-Jato* operation had brought. During this event, Deltan led the shaping of what he called the “ten measures against corruption,” in an allusion to the Ten Commandments.



The prayer space was a modern temple, with a variety of lighting effects and seating for perhaps a thousand people. On the platform, as on a musical stage, the instruments with which the worship that was to begin Deltan’s lecture stood prepared. The *Attitude* Church aimed to recapture the principles of the early church through performances of readings from biblical stories. People began the event by praying standing up, singing words that appeared on a huge screen, accompanied by musicians and singers in the audience. Speeches about values such as love were repeated in the lyrics, and went for about twenty minutes between the chanting and the clapping of hands to the rhythm of the drums. The musical performance was impressive, with spotlights illuminating the stage in various colours. The screens offered an image of a renewed church that had been able to adapt to the new demands of believers.

The Church and its pastors constituted a fundamental space for attracting votes. It was not uncommon in Brazil to hear a voter exclaim “I will vote for whoever my pastor tells me to,” leaving the choice to God’s representative (who better than God to choose who should govern?) Thus, the setting of events with political-electoral content in churches was fundamental, insofar as they became voter attractors, and it was the politicians who preached their values who won the approval of the pastors, who recommend voting in their masses through the transmission of values and other indirect messages. In this case, the promotion of Operation *Lava Jato* and its anti-corruption discourse was how this church supported the candidature of Jair Bolsonaro.

Deltan spoke of the vicious circle of politics, in which only the corrupt survived.<sup>5</sup> He even equated the Brazilian political system with a basket of rotten apples, in which the problem was not the individual apple, but the basket as a whole, suggesting structural corruption. He explained the unevenness that existed in the democratic game in the financing of campaigns with public money, giving several examples of candidates who had received millions of dollars more than others: “There was a politician who said he won the lottery six times because God blessed him.” In this way, among other jokes and anecdotes, Deltan explained his concrete project to combat corruption, through legislation and without impunity. He explained the impotence he felt when he presented his project of ten measures to the Congress, backed by

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<sup>5</sup> **Video 4.3. Political discourse in the Evangelical Church:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/M4tIiYH0qWE>  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/BZZn2IfRKps>

two million signatures in the form of a Popular Initiative Law (people applaud), and found that "it was gutted," pointing out that "what they did was to bury the hopes of millions of Brazilians, attacking the reforms that millions of Brazilians wanted." He then listed the measures in a new document called "New measures against Corruption," which consisted of punishing corruption, de-bureaucratisation, and the elimination of privileges.

The central moment of the event came when Deltan asked everyone to repeat aloud the three requirements that the candidate they chose must have, declaring that he would indicate who such a candidate might be on his website. The first requirement was that the candidate "must have a clean past." The second was a "commitment to democracy." The third was they must "support the anti-corruption package." A woman sitting in the seat in front said to her friend: "Of course, if you don't accept the package, there must be something wrong." In this way, without knowing the package in-depth, there was already a belief in it and an automatic discrediting of anyone who questioned it. Deltan spoke again: "We need to strengthen ourselves as a stronger society and a weaker state," and he again appealed to his listeners to make sure their chosen candidates met the three requirements mentioned:

For those who still say they are pessimistic: I understand you, but let's do an exercise: think about the person you love most on earth, and the doctor tells you that he or she is going to die. So what do you do? You fight back and forth to find the best doctors to save them.

People stood and clapped. A woman continued the anti-corruption event: "Have you already knelt thinking about how to end corruption? Who cares about the Brazil that you are going to leave to your family?" and asked people to kneel to pray against corruption.

The construction of this Bolsonarist Christian identity also involved the reproduction of facial gestures, with the hands, the legs, the position of the spine... the corporal part being part of the very militant behaviour that built the Christian collective. As Greg Downey indicates:

[R]esearch on prayer reveals that private religious practice often provides emotional succor in distressing situations and that religiosity may protect physical and mental health (Downey, 2015).

Family, God, and corruption were connected in this event as a cycle of understanding morality in a certain way. The woman talked about concrete measures against corruption, linking these principles with religion: “What do I do to help Brazil? After all, God is love, and love is love.” She talked about corruption in schools, about the culture of confrontation as the root of later corruption.

The woman explained to the audience the importance of strengthening these values of honesty, justice, responsibility, citizenship, ethics and respect, and curbing the “evil side” of human beings. She used woollen dolls to explain these values. In her view, upholding ethics was the greatest fight against corruption. Thus, in this talk, the factor of corruption became extendable, going beyond public institutions to families themselves, threatening their children, making it an absolute risk to the morality of the good citizen, thereby making it the epicentre of the Christian political arena:

You are not here by chance, you are responsible for this message, and God will reward you for what you do now for Brazil against corruption, for your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. And so serve *Abraão* [Abraham].

She went on to discuss various ways of financing the campaign. She said that she asked God to tell her how to help, and this movement had appeared – a movement “of serious people, of serious, committed people.” She said she “ask[ed] God to touch our hearts and that we don’t act only with words, but with actions.” She asked new churchgoers to stand up, and for the rest to applaud them. This was how the recruitment of new faithful worked.

Before the event concluded, the pastor asked everyone to stand up. He said: “Thank you to Dr. Beltán, thank you for *Lava-Jato*’s action.” Everyone prayed. Then the pastor dismissed the assembly, saying:

As citizens, we must choose candidates allied with God, who want to extirpate any form of corruption. The change is in your hands. In the name of Jesus, Amen. Let us go in peace.

It was a powerful speech, with an almost musical rhythm. The crowd left the hall through various doors. At the entrance, pamphlets for financial contributions to the church were offered, as well as some with explanations of upcoming events.

In this event, the prayers, chanting, and listening demanded a kind of submission from the individual to the collective that he or she represented in the church. The crowd reproduced the prayers, with the priority not being personal thoughts, but the instrumentalisation of the voice as an element that unified the collective as one. Offering an appeal to anti-corruption was one of the more provocative ways of establishing a collective identity within the Church, but the *we/them* used in the songs and rhetoric acted as a tool for formulating the subjects. The tone of voice in the speeches also determined a kind of transcendental interaction, which went beyond reason, requiring the use of prayer and myth to generate collective demands.

To understand the relevance of this process of assimilation of the collective pattern, it is worth noting the approach adopted, whereby the separate notions of individual and collective were questioned, as well as those of nature and culture. Only by understanding an approach beyond the current post-enlightenment Christian tradition is it possible to understand how processes of assimilation of collective ideas occurred as part of the development of the Bolsonarist identity in which metaphor is central. These would not be, according to this approach, individual autonomous bodies, but self-perceptions that would vary according to context and experience between individual voices and collective voices, with the individual no longer feeling just as one, but feeling that he or she was part of a group.

#### **4.5. Copacabana and the Bolsonarist Christian woman: The construction of a religious common ground**

In this section, I discuss the existence of the religious common ground on which *Bolsonarismo* moved and which explains part of its metaphorical functioning. The event consists of a function at the Othon Palace Hotel in Copacaban, outside of which there were later marches of Bolsonarist women, called “feminine marches,” in opposition to the *Ele Nao!* (“Not Him!”) demonstrations mobilised mostly by the feminist movement.

On Saturday 8 September, the Othon Palace Hotel in Copacabana had hosted the II National Forum of the Christ the King League, where the main representatives of Brazilian Catholicism met to discuss how to defend the faith in Brazil. The high cost of admission billed the event as an exclusive space for a Christian elite. Security was present. In the afternoon, T-shirts bearing "For the right to life" slogans, a project actively defended by Bolsonaro, were being handed out. However, the people entering were dressed elegantly, the women in long skirts. The colours were dark, with everyone smiling and talking slowly. There were books offered for sale at the entrance. These offered a representation of the organic intellectuality of Christianity in Brazil, and especially in the electoral period, were aimed at building a directly Bolsonarist intellectuality. One table offered books such as the New Testament in Latin, reinforcing the idea of the exclusivity of access to knowledge in an exclusive event. Another table offered titles such as: *Deconstructing Paulo Freire*; *Gender – a Tool for Deconstructing Identity*; and *Gender Ideology – Neo-Totalitarianism and the Death of the Family*. Most of these books related to the role of women in the traditional Christian family project. These offerings were attempts to intellectualise a conservative movement that was structured among diverse collectives in which Christian women were central, and which converged with a populist right-wing based on superficial premises. This superficiality had the approval of its leaders, since the loss of reason was understood as something positive, insofar as Bolsonaro's supporters considered themselves "bearers of the sole and exclusive truth."

At the conference, women speakers gave meritocratic talks on the idea of faith, based on their own experiences. Their speeches each told the story of a woman's quest to fulfil her dreams, and that to do so, she had had to listen to God, be enterprising, and to have faith. Cases were presented of women who had fulfilled their dreams by selling *coxinhas*, Brazilian pies stuffed with chicken, from businesses that had started small and grown to a larger scale. The women talked about femininity (never about feminism), and constructed a dream-seeking narrative in which men bore no responsibility for the inequality in families. The message was that the woman who strived and listened to God would be a winner in the prosperity theology aligned to *Bolsonarismo*, while culturally positioned as a subaltern family figure.

However, Copacabana was also the epicentre of the “feminine marches,” where Bolsonaroist women were linked to the Christian faith. The Bolsonaroists had also chosen this site as a way of paying homage to and connecting with the diverse marches that had taken place there since June 2013. *Ele Nao* (“Not Him”) marches against candidate Bolsonaro were being organised for September 29 throughout the country, with a strong mobilisation by the feminist movement. To counter this movement there was also to be pro-Bolsonaro mobilisations. The atmosphere was, at this point, one of high tension, as Jair Bolsonaro had already been stabbed, and was recovering in hospital. This tension was reflected in the networks, where there were multiple fake news announcement, some with falsified photos of the marches, using images 2012, and violent comments, such as Bolsonaro supporters cheering “One less!” at the Special Police Operations Battalion (BOPE) execution of a black man.

The role of women was to be the key issue of the day, thought to be capable of dragging along other movements. Bolsonaro’s supporters had organised the event in Copacabana, called “Women with Bolsonaro,” to occur before the feminist marches. The huge Atlântica Avenue was filled with floats, Brazilian flags, and pink colours. Opposition to the feminist movement could be seen in the constant dichotomies: feminine pink against the feminist purple; the vindication of the “feminine” against the term “feminist;” against the slogan *Ele Não!* the slogan *Ele Sim!* (“Yes Him!”); against the term “*coxinha*,” the term “*mortadella*.” Through these dichotomies, the Christian morality of the “good woman” was vindicated, complete with a traditional role in the family, plus the meritocratic features of a theological project of prosperity.

At the event, there was a float on which various people were speaking. The float was decorated with pink banners and explicit support for Bolsonaro. The candidate had been attacked on several occasions for his sexist comments, such as when he said that he gave his wife “*flack*” for having a daughter, instead of one last boy. However, the “Women with Bolsonaro” discourse was a rather residual discourse: it consisted of downplaying Bolsonaro’s comments with explanations such as that it was “part of his sincerity,” and that when he said he was not in favour of policies to support women in the workplace, or stated that women were “more

expensive for the employer,” he was explaining the situation objectively. In essence, what he really wanted was equality for all, “not fragmenting society, which is what the left wants.”

This event and its location again shows the construction of a series of unfounded narratives, in which reason or sources of factual information were not important to building political opinion and activism. Several women at the march said that the *Ele Nao*'s movements had no following, an argument that was also put forward by people speaking from the float. They also said “almost all,” even “90%” of the people who attended *Ele Nao* demonstrations received money from the Workers' Party to turn out. The next day, these women told me the exact amount: 30 reais. They knew this “thanks to the internet.” They also said that the demonstrators received free “*mortadella* sandwiches,” which is where the metaphor calling “left-wing” people *mortadella* arose as a counter-attack to the metaphor in which the Bolsonaro women were being called *coxinhas*, the chicken pies that were sold in Chinese shops and that were eaten by policemen during their working day. According to the metaphor, this devalued the image of the policeman as someone who was like American policemen who ate doughnuts – not doing his job.

Among the aggressive messages, the music of The Beatles' “Let It Be,” adapted to lyrics about Bolsonaro's victory, began to play, reinforcing the construction of an identity based on nostalgia, an example of a strongly hereditarian model of thinking. This kind of thinking is idealistic, and the experience of the past is considered real, material, and unaffected by one's perception.

The women from the float began to call out:

We have come for free, for love. We want our children and grandchildren to live as we lived in the past. I could stay in the street playing. As good people, we want a Brazil of order, progress, prosperity, harmony, our children being taught and not educated in Marxist and communist doctrines, but with God.

Another woman said that Bolsonaro did not divide people, and used not only the example of women but also of blacks and animal rights activists. She said that Bolsonaro, being against

abortion, was for peace, and animals and their life.<sup>6</sup> "No to abortion!" said another woman speaker:

When the sperm fertilises an egg it is already a human being, it is science. It is a divine creation. No abortion in Brazil! Abortion is murder! We will not allow them to kill our children! A special message to the feminists who defend women: they don't defend them because according to statistics the highest number of births are female, so when they abort they are killing women. Feminists don't defend women, they defend filth, they have no heart. Last week I was doing a pro-life demonstration and a *Bonitinha* [cutey] came up to me and said "my dear, I have a brain, I am pro-abortion" and I told her "my dear, I have a brain and I have a heart, here in Brazil abortion is not allowed!"

A man in his fifties approached the microphone:

I'm gay, I'm gay, I'm Bolsonaro! People shout. For twenty-seven years I organised the gay movement. I am not ashamed to say that I am Bolsonaro, because gay is not what is on the street. My sexual condition says about me: I have the rights that any man has because he defends the family, the country, God. I have my rights in my bed, outside, I want to have the same rights as all of you. People shout a lot. I am very proud to be gay, and even more proud to be Bolsonaro!

"Bolsonaro 17 and God in the heart!" concluded another woman effusively. A man then announced two pieces of news. The first: "God has been merciful, and our president has just been released from the hospital!" The second: "The people shout 1,2,3,4,5,000, we want Bolsonaro president of Brazil!"

*Bolsonarismo* defends the monolithic creation in modernity of the individual as its own body, its own morality, its own desires, and individual accountability in the form of a neoliberal political project in which, as part of modernity, taxation and remuneration are established

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<sup>6</sup> **Video 4.4. The violent Christianity of the "feminine marches with Bolsonaro"**: Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/uWTUeN-Nvkg>. Original Version [https://youtu.be/1AclMRA1O\\_U](https://youtu.be/1AclMRA1O_U)



around the meritocracy of this supposedly autonomous unit. However, this creation of modernity is a construction, and this fact is reflected in the construction of the collective Bolsonarist identity in the electoral rituals enacted through the rallies. The success of these pre-election rallies demonstrates, as explained in the first chapter, that the construction of the Bolsonarist subject's discursive rhetoric is a process that can be explained through history and its recent context, and shows how when the elections arrived, there was a common ground on which the Bolsonarist moved, a *sensu stricto* that was not modified during the campaign because there was a single constructed truth, an eternal truth, in which the religious component was the shaper of a collective moral identity.

#### **4.6. Conclusions: Joint religious speech and the emotional brain in metaphorical thinking**

According to Cummins' studies (2019), in Joint Speech, such as when a Bolsonarist speaks, not as a speaker speaking to a listener, but as a participant in the collective activity of *Bolsonarismo*, the asymmetrical distribution of activity in the brain looks rather different. For example, chanting together produces a signature of a distinction between self and other, explaining the normalisation of religious discourse in chants and messages.

Scholars such as Downey (2015) and LeDoux (1998) have shown how the brain processes emotional stimuli to produce an emotional response. In the stimulus-response sequence, the stimulation of emotions such as fear, hate, joy, sadness, produces the specific feeling for each of these emotions. The stimulus produces the response on the one hand, and the feeling on the other. Religious Bolsonarist rhetoric, with its loaded symbols, aimed at emotional responses rather than reflexive responses. It is not a question of posing an opposition between two complementary elements such as reason-emotion, but of giving relevance to the lack of reflection, since the emotional rhetoric of the divine element does not require the justification of rational thought. In this way, emotion comes to control thought, and in ritual moments of collective catharsis, such as the religious-electoral processes described, individual emotion is transformed into collective affect.

In its religious rhetoric, *Bolsonarismo* also articulated a chain of equivalences of primary emotions through which the appeal to the divine is presented as the solution to uncertainties.

The fear of the criminal, of being assaulted, reinforces and creates new stimuli that generate new fears. Thus, people who have never experienced violence are frightened by the rhetoric that makes them imagine experiencing it because the rhetoric activates fears specifically in the brain’s amygdalas, where rapid responses to dangerous situations are triggered. Rapid responses conceptualise danger, quickly giving it form and tangibility, as happens when an enemy is embodied in which fears are articulated. The amygdala allows a plan to be formulated quickly, and to react to it. It is an instinctive response, in which the collective affections build a group response, accompanied by a rapid reaction, which generates serotonin, and with it, satisfaction, security, and confidence. This is how religious rhetoric is constituted in the brain during election time. Thus, *Bolsonarismo* develops a “Learned Fear” (LeDoux, 1998), in pre-cognitive emotional processing.

This account of the construction of emotions shows how neurology has evolved. It presents the possibility that the brain and emotions are not separate dimensions, but that the activation of emotions raised, as here, in the political field of *Bolsonarismo*, goes through brain reaction and modification, specifically in the amygdala. This is a functional and biological dimension that can be related to the cultural framework of political communication, and in this chapter, provides an explanation of the impact of religious metaphorical thinking in the Bolsonaro phenomenon.

The religious metaphorical thinking in *Bolsonarismo* is a representative example of how the emotional unconscious is formulated, where fear, a reaction to the environment of danger, generate a defensive response in people that is channelled into faith in a collective space of worship. Defence allows for more than openness and creativity: it requires courage, an opposite of fear, permanence, closure of ranks and interests, and in general, belief in the conservative metaphors of habits, which can guarantee survival.

Thus, the representative metaphor of “Brazil above everything, God above everyone” functions as metaphorical thinking. In the process of categorising the metaphor “Brazil above everything, God above everyone,” the concepts of “Brazil” and “God” act as domains of origin (DO), that is, these terms have specific meanings that, when articulated in the metaphorical phrase, provide meaning to abstract domain of destiny (DD). The functioning of this metaphor is due

to a specific metaphorical colonial sense: the historical construction of the concepts of Brazil and God are associated with positive values: "above" and "down" compose a binomial in which "above" is associated with the construction of a type of hierarchy of social order with respect to "down," which has a negative value. God is up in the sky, that place that is orientationally above, being hierarchically superior to the rest of things, and normalising the theocratic traits that *Bolsonarismo* defends. Brazil would be "down," below God so that everything Brazil does is subject to divine approval. But Brazil is also "above" not only in Brazilian but also global and eco-systemic terms. In the name of Brazil, which is hierarchically elevated, necessary actions are therefore justified, and need only be evaluated in the eyes of God. The metaphor, and therefore Bolsonaro, then acquires power and adherence thanks to religious Joint Speech that resorts to metaphorical colonial sense: the metaphor might not have had such adherence without a context in which secularity was grounded in liberal democratic culture, which allowed its features and meanings to be produced.

*Bolsonarismo* resorts to the configuration of emotional memory, to a collective historical memory of recurring nostalgia for times of order, such as the military dictatorship. It is a form of conditioning fear, to which recipients react with a search for an hierarchical order. That is why *Bolsonarismo* pays so much attention to what meaning should be given to such an order, loading it with the specific contents of a religious moral order. Fear is thus activated in a stimulus-feeling relationship as *Bolsonarismo* used its religious rhetoric to construct common citizens who are transformed into connoisseurs of their "I," being aware of themselves and their problems, as represented in the "ideal I" of the common citizen, as well as of their relationship with their environment. When this awareness of the "I" is constructed, the faculty of having feelings such as fear, hatred, or anger is activated, so that Bolsonaroists can observe the rhetoric and their environment from an emotional experience, a conscious experience that is reflected in faith, that is, in believers becoming aware of themselves as individuals, of their capacity to feel, and in the face of this feeling, are motivated to action. This action was to vote for Bolsonaro.

## Chapter 5 Video Links

<b>Video Titles and URL links</b>	<b>Relevant Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Video 5.1. The concept of family for Bolsonarism</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/cRQ8fg1Dj_4">https://youtu.be/cRQ8fg1Dj_4</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/oWuG4PvOQCw">https://youtu.be/oWuG4PvOQCw</a>	Section 5.2.2	142
<b>Video 5.2. Independence Day. Speeches under the flag</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/wNvXR_sZk8Y">https://youtu.be/wNvXR_sZk8Y</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/LH7NqBZijrI">https://youtu.be/LH7NqBZijrI</a>	Section 5.4.1	153
<b>Video 5.3. Motorist Rally in Copacabana</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7BP6hlfWAE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7BP6hlfWAE</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/humTBAjEL3Q">https://youtu.be/humTBAjEL3Q</a>	Section 5.4.2	158

## Chapter 5: FLAVIO BOLSONARO – “MY PARTY IS BRAZIL”

### Imagined community and the deep values of the nationalist metaphor

#### Ethnographic timeline: Flavio Bolsonaro’s electoral campaign 2018

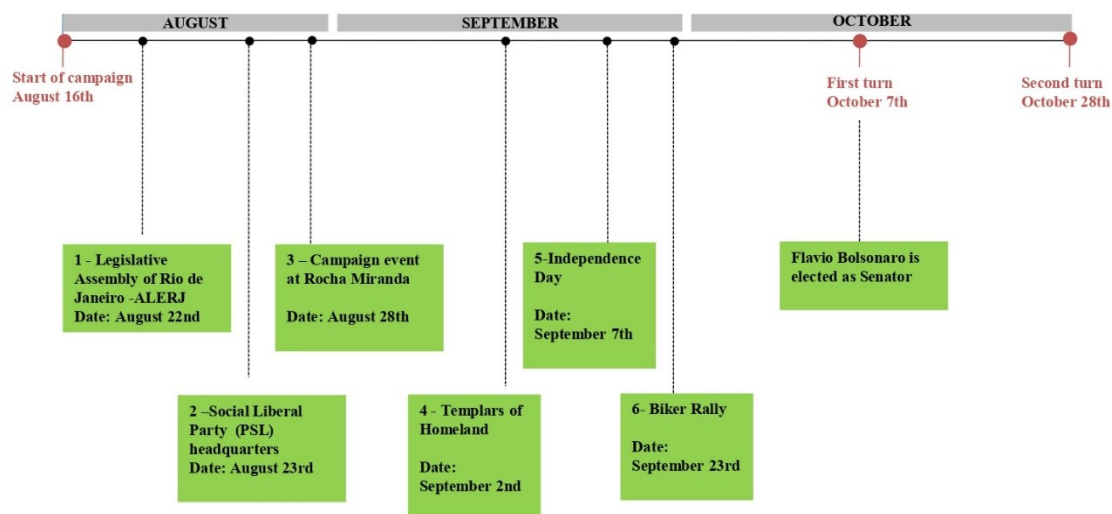


Figure 5.1: Ethnographic timeline: Flavio Bolsonaro’s electoral Campaign 2018 (Source: Bayarri).

### 5.1. Flavio Bolsonaro and Brazilian nationalism

Through the metaphor *Meu partido é o Brasil* (“My party is Brazil”), *Bolsonarismo* appeals to the founding myth of Brazil as homeland and nation through the need to defend this “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983), thus uniting diverse bodies according to a common narrative, and creating a sense of belonging. The moral crusade itself is an imagined battle that acquires tangible consequences. Bolsonarist nationalism thus is born in the appeal to the emotions produced by symbols that reinforce the love of the homeland. *Bolsonarismo*’s national imagination also establishes a close link with Christian morality. It is a theocratic model in which the community is built geographically and spiritually.

Authors such as Anderson have questioned the traditional approach whereby nationalism always comes before nationhood. In the Brazilian case, the colonial empire came first and then Brazilianness. *Bolsonarismo* tries to reconfigure that Brazilianness, suppressing the harmonic elements and strengthening the authoritarian elements that characteristic of a strict family model (Lakoff, 1996). Thus, Brazilian nationalism unites the colonial dimension by acquiring another degree of complexity concerning Eurocentric nationalism.

The construction of this imagined community of Bolsonarist nationalism is based on the sharing of a violent language. By sharing it, along with its metaphors, narratives, and expressions, the Bolsonarists confine their imagined communities, fragmented between a physical presentation and an online presence, like centaurs that construct their mixed identity between both spaces. Nationalism encourages a deep sentimental legitimacy, whereby *Bolsonarismo*, which prioritises the nation, is willing to support authoritarian models of political management if certain emotions about Brazil are upheld in return.

In this chapter I analyse how the campaign of Senate candidate Flavio Bolsonaro exalted a specific model of nationalism, a Bolsonarist nationalism that, as an imagined community, re-signified, reconstructed, and reinterpreted the concepts of “order,” “family,” “militarism,” “race” and “class” as primordial concepts through diverse expressions and symbolic and rhetorical actions that appealed to a specific model of nationalism. The figure of Flavio is relevant because, throughout the campaign, he represented a diversity of moments linked to the construction of a specific nationalism in his personal rhetoric as well as in his performance as candidate: he was strong, young, white, blue-eyed, attractive, and expressive, making him an ideal model to study in the construction of Bolsonarist nationalism.

This nationalist thinking was based on Brazil’s colonial and military past, constructing a series of affections and concrete emotions of the Bolsonarist project, which was evidenced in the metaphor “My party is Brazil.” These concepts brought together in the metaphor are constituted as elementary political appeals of the coexistence that *Bolsonarismo* constructs. The chapter develops chronologically the campaign of Flavio Bolsonaro until he is elected Senator, through the various events and interviews that accompanied it.

For this purpose, the chapter is divided in four sections: in the second section I discuss how Bolsonarist nationalism constructs its rhetoric based on an imagined community of post-colonial origin with a hierarchical order, that conceives the family as a *fluid* structure of political support and flexible traits, cutting across blood lineage. In the third section, I discuss how Bolsonarist nationalism constructs its particular articulation with the racial question and social class. In the fourth section, I discuss how Bolsonarist nationalism constructs its particular articulation with military values stemming from the colonial period. Finally, in the conclusion, I reflect on the imagined community of Bolsonarist nationalism in metaphorical thinking.

## 5.2. Nationalism of order and family within the Bolsonarist campaign

In this section I discuss how Bolsonarist nationalism constructs its rhetoric based on an imagined community of post-colonial origin with a hierarchical order that conceives the family as a fluid structure of political support and flexible traits, cutting across blood lineage.

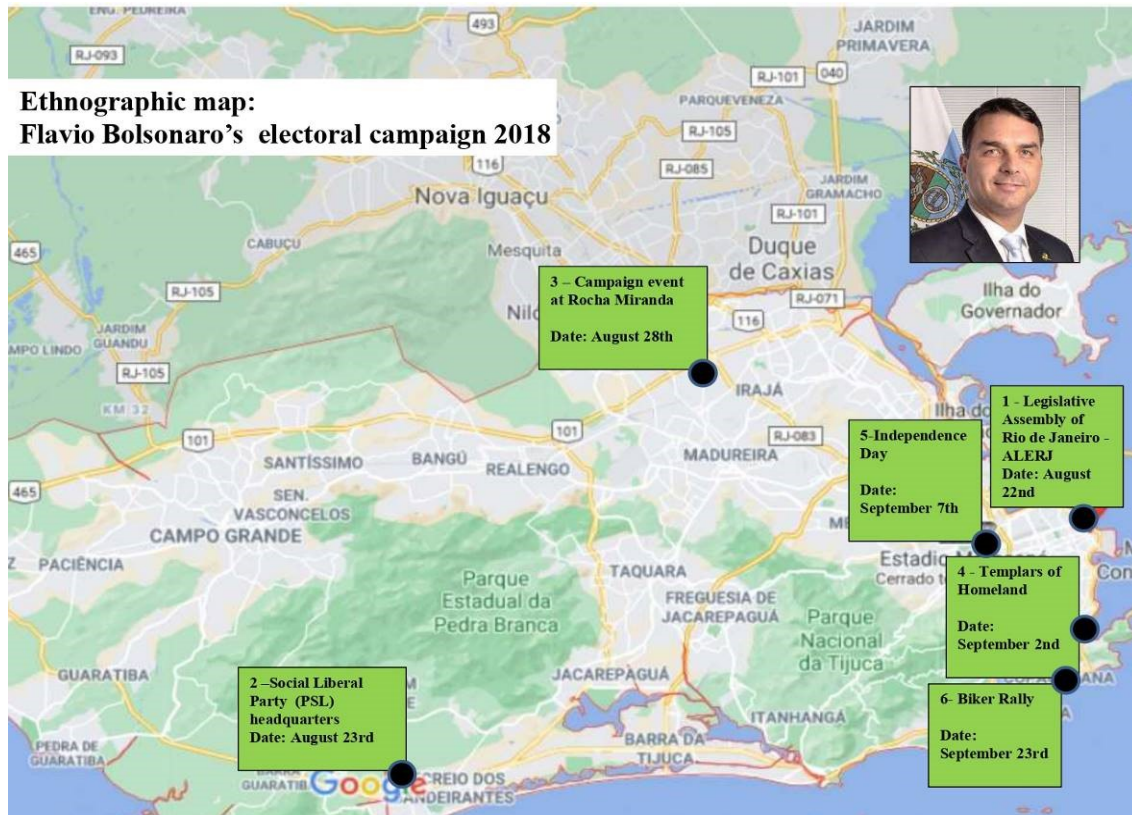


Figure 5.2: Ethnographic map: Flavio Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018 (Source: Bayarri).

### 5.2.1. ALERJ: Nationalism built on hierarchical order

The campaign of Jair Messias Bolsonaro’s son, the handsome young Flavio Bolsonaro (born in 1981), was just starting. Until then the Senate candidate had been a State Deputy in the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro (ALERJ). On August 22, 2018, I went to the ALERJ, in the historic XV Square. Several buildings and museums around created a stately atmosphere for the institution of state legislation. This event would be revealing of the ways in which the Bolsonarist *oficialismo* defended traditional social hierarchical relations.

The door of the advisory team of the still state deputy Flavio Bolsonaro displayed various posters, including some declaring: “The clowning is over;” “Brasil above everything, God above everyone;” the hashtag *todososmosbolsonaro* (we are all Bolsonaro); and “Gun ownership, I support. For the approval of PL 3722” (the number of the legislative proposal).



Figure 5.3: Flavio Bolsonaro’s ALERJ office (Source: Bayarri).



From the first approach to this space, the use of symbols such as phrases and stickers reinforced and defended a specific national model, sharing elements of the nationalism promoted by various parties but standing out for those that differentiated it.

I waited in the room for the vice-president of the party in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Glauber de Medeiros Braga, to meet me. In the room, there were more posters, as well as a container of water covered with the words Bolsomito (“Bolsomyth”), suggesting the idea that drinking Bolsonaro’s water was synonymous with truth, thus appealing to the Catholic belief that consuming the contents of the chalice at mass brought about a transformation. Drink this water, and you too could “Be Bolsonaro.” The Bolsonarist nationalist project encompassed these implied details, in which the conception of the charismatic leader as representative of the national project was reinforced. This was also reflected in a large banner that read *Meu Partido é o Brasil* (“My Party is Brazil”). However, the most significant elements that were present in the room were those referring to how the so-called “Brazilian dilemma” was understood by the campaign leaders themselves.

Vice-President Braga was a man with a trimmed beard and white hair, approximately fifty to sixty years old. He explained that: “We are a conservative, right-wing party, but beyond that, our party is Brazil.” Braga thus showed *Bolsonarismo*’s vocation to overcome traditional partisan notions by appealing to Brazil as a whole as the ultimate interest of the project. Braga reproduced the discourses presented in the media used, as does his own collective. However, the idea of appealing to Brazil as the supra-partisan defence came up against Braga’s contradictions: the appeal to unity through exclusionary policies that reflected the basic rule of the Brazilian hierarchical universe, coupled with the expression of a type of equality that did not imply the association of the people in the decision-making process, that is, the premise of being “different people, but together” (Da Matta, 1983). In this way, a particularity of the Brazilian universe was understood as the capacity for egalitarian and non-discriminatory coexistence within a tremendously authoritarian and stratified context.

Over the next half hour, Braga provided an overview of the Bolsonaro project, touching on the economy, the family, public safety, voting intentions, innovation, and research in Brazil. He explained that everything had to work on the merit of the people, justifying everything from

not supporting affirmative policies to privatisation and the reduction of most of the services offered by the current public administration. Braga explained that Bolsonaro's economic project was neo-liberal, influenced by thinkers of the 1940s. He recognised that a pro-Bolsonaran government was likely to maintain an ideological line on the economy that was not known or shared by the entire voter base. Braga thus presented a society faced with a dilemma, whose main emotion was the fear of losing the social position they currently enjoyed. This helped to explain the support for Bolsonaro of the white middle classes, as well as that of collectives with class consciousness, without reducing the particularities of each political adherence, but pointing to some of the basic networks that made up the Brazilian dilemma.

Braga continued by raising a series of direct questions that he again went on to answer himself, outlining the failures of other political-economic models in the world: "Socialism! Do you know of any country where that has worked? It doesn't exist!" He connected this idea to the question of media manipulation and the power he believed the left had accumulated across the globe. Braga considered the leaders of the global left to have been compromised by the left's usage of them. He pointed to the figure of Ernesto Che Guevara, and the people who wore T-shirts bearing his image and name:

Che Guevara was a murderer. The people who wear his T-shirts don't know that he executed pregnant women. Once, among his prisoners, everything was full of shit, and he came to a pregnant woman and shot her in the belly.

Braga's discourse pointed out that his conception of the nation was based on an identity-differentiated community, which, with its links, mobilised a shared sense of belonging and a loyalty rooted in traditional thinking and common beliefs, which he summarised again in the phrase: "My party is Brazil." Braga's arguments with their expressions of a violent project, reflected a type of nationalism that assumed a hierarchical and authoritarian society in Brazil. The loss of position in a hierarchical society such as Brazil's was seen as having a consequent effect of prompting a search for recognition or belonging in a category that had, until recently, been emptied of content. Thus, the metaphor of "my party is Brazil" revealed the depoliticization that was characteristic of a country that had historically avoided conflict between its classes. Paradoxically, Bolsonaro's project provoked conflict in order to achieve a

return to this “order and harmony.” In this way, the new expressions of Bolsonarist patriotism were linked more to the defence of a social hierarchy that could be encompassed within the principle of the “good citizen,” which articulated a series of traditional values that were related to the aristocratic principle of such a hierarchy.

### **5.2.2. The bureaucratic work of the campaign: the nationalism built into the Bolsonaro family.**

The next day, August 23, 2018, I visited the Social Liberal Party’s (PSL) headquarters in the *Recreio* neighbourhood, which was in the suburbs around thirty kilometres west from the city centre. The headquarters was made up of two small offices, where staff received the various materials to be distributed throughout the day during the campaign. The walls were white and there was only a single decoration of the *Bolsomito* on the water container. In the first room, I met Andrea, who was in charge of the bureaucratic-administrative management of the campaign in the State of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>1</sup> Andrea talked about “The Bolsonaro Family,” and uses terms such as “acceptance as part of the family.” She also referred to members of this family as “brothers.” This term was used throughout the campaign, expanding its meaning.

Andrea provided a layout of the campaign’s organisational chart: the campaign was composed in the form of a kite with a closed core that belonged to the owners or the “family” of the Bolsonaro project. Here the importance of the concept of “the family” as a way of managing political power ties became clear. Surrounding this core was a second circle of associated people who participated in disputes of general interest, and who, as they acquired trust (as occurred in the historical form of approximation and exchange in the Brazilian political system) would be referred to by the core as also part of the family, although without them assuming decision-making positions in the core, since, in the final analysis, membership in the core depended on the blood ties in the project.

Bolsonaro’s blood family consisted of Jair (future president of the republic), Flávio (future senator of the republic), Carlos (a City Councillor in Rio de Janeiro), Eduardo (a federal deputy), and Renan (a twenty-three year old just starting on a political career). All were white

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for private persons in this section.

men, and all were in political positions. Bolsonaro's daughter, Laura (born in 2010), was considered by Jair to be his *fraquejada* (his "weakness"). Although, according to Andrea, no Bolsonaro son made decisions without Jair's approval, and everyone always listened to Jair, and despite its similarities to the oligarchical Italian-American mafia, whose nucleus of union and construction of political, business, economic, social and moral power was also the family, the Bolsonaro family had been able to resignify this political favouritism by blood, by speaking of family unity as something positive in politics, a space where the family could help to achieve greatness, a family that other people could join as part of the collective project.

To understand this structure, it is important to turn to the concept of "family" that the Bolsonarist project defended, and which, on Andrea's account, ended up being reproduced internally. The rhetoric of the family was one of the main elements of the Bolsonarist moral nexus. It referred to the traditional union of a married man and woman with their legitimate children. Such a conception was in response to the religious morality, explained in the previous chapter, that, for the Bolsonarists, determined what was family and what was not family. This particular model had its origins in the historical make-up of the Brazilian family institution, since the colonial legacy did not lay a solid foundation for a nuclear family model, but rather the "family" was a concept made more flexible by the patriarchal relations that orbited around the dominant classes. It was thus understood that when the Bolsonarists called themselves "family," they were claiming a *moral* nexus united them that did not require blood ties. "Being of the family" was understood in the colonial period as a concept of honour and superiority. *Bolsonarismo* built on this understanding in its cultural and religious supremacism, with people being heard to say, "the most important thing is the family" or "we must protect our families," without specifying Bolsonaro's project to build a "real family."

The organisational structure of the campaign can also be understood by drawing on the historical organisation known as the patriarchal clan. This was the unit around which the population was grouped in much of colonial Brazil. It was an economic, social, administrative, and religious unit that was characteristic of Brazilian society. It was strongly present in *Bolsonarismo*. This makes it essential to understanding the concept of family used by *Bolsonarismo* to refer not only to elements of the Christian tradition, but also to the colonial

period's configuration of the patriarchal institution. In a context where public authority was almost non-existent, there was a normalised delegation of authority to the rural lord. This also points to a certain lack of state presence that is also present in *Bolsonarismo*, which calls for autonomy “to defend the family” by extolling projects such as the bearing of arms *against* a state that was not functioning appropriately.

The family was also to be defended because traditional values, including the heterosexual family, were being lost. Andrea claimed that in the old days there had been a set of values in the family that had been lost. These included respect for elders: if you didn't like what they said, you didn't answer them back, appreciating the family hierarchy in their words as a source of order and respect. Andrea thought that these values had been lost and that young people answered back to their elders, opening up a fundamental question here about tradition and the way the institution of the family was being articulated in defence of policies associated with the traditional family that Bolsonaro supported.

While Andrea talked, I watched a man called Ronaldo fixing power sockets in the room. Ronaldo was a member of the paratrooper brigade and a candidate for state deputy, but he had no problem fixing these room himself. “We are the poor, our Party is Brazil,” Andrea exclaimed. Thus, Andrea reproduced the differentiation between *Bolsonarismo*, which would be Brazil's cross-party representation, and the Brazilian family. Ronaldo tried to explain the logic of thinking in Brazil: “people who are not centred, who like *vagunça* [disorder], vote for the left.” This phrase, reproduced by a number of different people, revealed the idea that the right is the defender of order, and therefore of the capacity to return to Brazil “its values, its order, its progress.” Ronaldo ended by explaining: “I was also adopted by the family.” *Bolsonarismo*'s family model was used as the basic charter of *Bolsonarismo*'s moral loyalty, as with the performance of support tasks at any level that was observed in Andrea and Ronaldo. If, in the colonial period, relations were established through the *padrinho* (“godfather”) and the *afilhado* (“godson”), *Bolsonarismo* used the concept of family to make relations, hierarchies, party positions and opinions, and even rights and duties more flexible.

The flexible use of the category of family was evident on August 25, 2018, when I met Fernanda, the president of the Social Liberal Party (PSL) in the State of Rio de Janeiro, and

very close to Bolsonaro’s blood family. We were to go to the suburb of Rocha Miranda, where Flavio Bolsonaro was to participate in a campaign event. Fernanda was a woman in her fifties, *mulatta*, short-haired and energetic. Her family was made up of eight siblings, plus several adopted by her mother, making a total of thirty-two, because, according to Fernanda, every time her mother went to the northeast of the country, she came back with a child who had been living on the streets.

In the car was Fernanda’s blood brother Alex, a sergeant in the Military Police, who had been born in a small *favela*, and Alex’s seventeen-year-old son, who also wanted to be a policeman.<sup>2</sup>

All of Fernanda’s brothers were policemen, and they all used to vote for the Workers’ Party (PT). However, they all felt cheated by the PT when the crisis erupted, and the various corruption cases came out. “Being a policeman in Rio de Janeiro is very dangerous, very dangerous,” exclaimed Fernanda’s brother: “We catch a thief and in a few months, he’s back on the street. Justice is another problem!” He went on to say that a fourteen-year-old child was old enough to change sex, but the same person, when he picked up a gun, was not old enough to be imprisoned: “It’s a difficult contradiction. Our hope is for a better country, to be patriots,” he concluded. These words showed again the concern generated regarding a conception of family that has lost its traditional traits. Furthermore, Fernanda said that all the brothers collaborated informally in the Bolsonaro family project, helping with management and security tasks:

The Bolsonaro family represents change, innovation, hope. I am with them daily, and I always get excited when I hear the people say, “I came for free,” “My Party is Brazil.” Unlike the others, we do our campaign for free, no other politician does that.

Fernanda’s words demonstrated the altruism that came with being part of the Bolsonaro family, as well as the joy of “having Brazil” as one’s party. She described the personal efforts of the people involved in the campaign, and the pride she felt in it. She talked about Bolsonaro’s sons, proud that they were all politicians. “We believe in them,” she said. The Bolognasos came to

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<sup>2</sup> **Video 5.1. The concept of family for Bolsonarism:** Spanish Version [https://youtu.be/cRQ8fg1Dj\\_4](https://youtu.be/cRQ8fg1Dj_4) Original Version <https://youtu.be/oWuG4PvOQCw>

her family's birthdays, which showed Fernanda that they were simple, talkative people who approached everyone equally.

Asked about the concept of family, Fernanda and her brother answer:

They are our family. Today we can say that PT put communism in our country. Now you arrive at a school and you are neither a girl nor a boy, is what the child wants. Where are God's values? If you are born a boy you are a boy. If you are born a girl you are a girl. It's gender ideology to confuse the people. The people don't need that.

About the other parties and the idea of family, Fernanda said that the others did not take seriously the concept of family, the military doctrine, the father, and the mother:

We don't want to be moralists, but the family is the basis of everything. If we leave it to the others we will see the destruction of the family in a few years. We don't condemn gays, but if all children are gay in one hundred years it will be over. Where the left said that a gay can adopt children, we support it. But where are the boy and the girl getting married? If we are born gay, no problem, but not because the teacher tells us what we are. So we have to save the Brazilian family and the family of the world because Jair wants to go beyond Brazil.

Thus, the family as a concept and as an institution was made more flexible, so that every Bolsonaroist wanted to be a part a part of it. For this, they needed to show conviction and defend the values of the institution. The blood tradition, present in the traditional family model, acquired plasticity, allowing new members to join the blood family nucleus by respecting the established hierarchy.

The different testimonies therefore show that the Bolsonaroist family model encompassed a hierarchical and heteronormative project of power, authority and traditions, which was defended as a legitimate and complete project in the phrase: "My party is Brazil." This use of the category of family then takes on the features of what Celso Castro (1990), and later Chinelli

(2018), explain as a “military family,” a category that the army had naturalised as a way of constructing affective bonds that went beyond the institutional order. The influence of the military in *Bolsonarismo* is once again evidenced in the appropriation of the idea of family as a category that includes the flexibilisation of the relations of the proximate.

### **5.3. Race and class**

In this section, I discuss how Bolsonarist nationalism constructs its particular articulation with the racial question and social class through an event in Rocha Miranda featuring Flavio Bolsonaro.

#### **5.3.1. Rocha Miranda**

Returning to August 25, 2018, I turn to the event in which Flavio Bolsonaro was to speak in the Rocha Miranda neighbourhood. This was where the particular articulation of *Bolsonarismo* around race and class became apparent. The event took place at the Rocha Miranda police battalion headquarters. My companions told me that it had been a very working-class neighbourhood, but now working-class neighbourhoods were supporting the right-wing; they no longer voted for the left anymore, and they could no longer support the situation in the country as it was. Many people who used to vote for the Workers’ Party were now voting for Bolsonaro.

In Rocha Miranda, there were lively bars, music, and people in a festive atmosphere moving through the streets. On parked cars, there were stickers with pro-Bolsonaro messages such as “your weapon is your vote.” Nearby was a football pitch where Flávio Bolsonaro had been playing for a while before we arrived. Several people were wearing Social Liberal Party and Bolsonaro family T-shirts, stickers, and other election materials.

Flavio Bolsonaro was wearing a Brazilian national football team shirt that read: “My party is Brazil.” Next to him was a tall, strong, black man who was often photographed and filmed in the media: *Bolsonarismo* showed him off as an example that it was not a racist phenomenon. However, the presence of this person also demonstrated the ability of two normally opposing styles to coexist through the capacity to exercise the most lively cordiality with their peers as well as with those considered inferior to them and in a relationship of subordination to them.



The place where Flavio spoke was a large space, with a steakhouse and a small bar where a popular Brazilian music band was preparing to play. There were several white plastic chairs facing the stall where Flavio was to appear together with other candidates. The event began, and the war rhetoric was evident from the very first moment. Terms such as corruption, family, violence and thief recurred, with the speeches ending to the applause of an audience made up mostly of men, many of them from the poor neighbourhood of Rocha Miranda, and many of them black. The event ended with Flavio saying that “the thief should be in jail or under the ground,” and the audience cheering. The candidate repeated the slogans “Brazil above everything, God above everyone” and “My party is Brazil,” and asked the audience to please help with the distribution of election flyers.



Figure 5.4: Meeting de Flavio Bolsonaro en Rocha Miranda (Source: Bayarri).

At this point, I considered how a model of nationalism was configured in which black people, historically repressed and more often imprisoned and murdered than any other group, took on the repressive-punitive logic of Bolsonarist nationalism. To answer this question, it is essential to study the space that race occupied in Bolsonarist nationalism.

Despite the racism exposed by the various critiques of the Bolsonarist project, the phrase “Brazil above everything, God above everyone” demonstrates that the construction of Bolsonarist nationalism was based more on a unity of *belief* than on the racial unity of blood.

The propagation of the faith of Catholicism among the non-white races (indigenous and African) during the colonial period, had established the pillars of a model of religious expansion that *Bolsonarismo* recovered as an element of its national project. Thus, the recovery of the white as a feature of *Bolsonarismo*'s racial supremacy was closely linked to how the religious missions acted in the colonial period: unlike other colonies, in Brazil, the other races were treated as a *participating* element of colonisation, as settlers, albeit mainly as labour. Bolsonarist nationalism understood that the most remarkable aspect of Brazil's ethnic formation was the deep miscegenation of the so-called "three races" that had entered into the country's composition. This meant that the supremacy of the Bolsonarist project could be reinforced, not by being directed towards the visual aspect of the race, but through its religious and cultural aspects. Thus, many blacks and minority groups came to also feel integrated into this project, and did not consider that Bolsonaro's racist comments should be classified as such. Rather, his aim was to maintain the essential characteristics of the colonial civilisation that had populated Brazil, that is, a Western Catholic culture. Racial relations in Brazil had a plasticity that allowed the cultural and religious supremacism that *Bolsonarismo* sought to be implanted, but not by blood. This meant that, unlike other projects of the so-called international far right, black people did not reject voting for Bolsonaro on the basis of their skin colour. This could be readily seen in the support the Bolsonaros received at the Rocha Miranda event, where most of the attendees had dark skin.

In Brazil, the ethnic classification of the individual is much more a function of his or her social position; therefore, race is more a function of social position than of somatic characteristics. This accounted for the plasticity of *Bolsonarismo*'s racial and cultural project. Despite this, the racial prejudice of *Bolsonarismo* was evident, but with sufficiently open spaces of interpretation so that anyone could appreciate their blackness (in a country of generalised miscegenation) as compatible with their Bolsonarist vote, voting more in other terms, such as in support of public security or in order to reconstruct their social position.

The treatment of the racial question in the Bolsonarist nationalist project was therefore linked to colonial management, strong structural inequalities, and the fear of a loss of rights in favour of affirmative policies and social inclusion. The new middle class felt that their position of

privilege was in jeopardy, mainly because, as small landowners, they felt fear and danger, or as partial participants in a democratic system, they had encountered shortcomings and abuses. Even though the self-designation of the individual allowed many black people to feel middle class rather than black, and compatibility existed, although it was not numerous, blacks made up 75% of the poorest, while whites made up 70% of the richest, with a parallelism of the chromatic and social scale (white, higher social class).<sup>3</sup>

The event ended and the live music began. People danced and drank beer. It was a political ritual in which the climax was the (political) participation of the leader-candidate in celebrating the event with music, alcohol, and dancing.

### 5.3.2. Templars of the Homeland

On September 2, 2018, I met members of *Templários da Pátria* (Templars of the Homeland) in the Flamengo Park metro station. They were to accompany me at an event that would also serves as an example of the relationship between race and class in the Bolsonaroist project.



Figure 5.5: Representation of the Templars of the Homeland (Source: Templars of the Homeland)

<sup>3</sup> Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics- IBGE

The Templars officially started in July 2018, so it was a recent movement, born, for the most part, in support of the moral values of *Bolsonarismo*. Specifically, the Templars articulated the defence of what they called “God, Homeland, and Family.” This was their slogan.

One of the *Templarios* was a young black man wearing a T-shirt with the image of Bolsonaro. The other wore a T-shirt promoting the World League of Christians, with letters in Portuguese and Arabic. The event was about giving visibility to the first meeting of the Templars of the Homeland through a march running from Flamengo, around the Aterro to the Museum of Modern Art (MAM). Marching in front of a crowded beach on a sunny Sunday was expected to give visibility to the movement. The group were going to be taking photos, handing out flyers, and displaying a banner about the movement, in addition to issuing various slogans representing the political project of the movement.

The group I accompanied was made up of different profiles. Christian was a young man of about thirty-five, who mixed an aggressive discourse with cold rationality that calculated data, political-economic theories, and historical knowledge. Manolo was a young black man studying mechanical engineering at UFRJ. Eduardo Oliveira was a candidate for deputy at the ALERJ in the State of Rio de Janeiro, supporting Bolsonaro from his regional candidature. We made up a group of ten, gathered between Brazilian flags and some microphones. Eduardo told me to approach the circle, and gave me a big hug, exclaiming: “we are all welcome here!” We started the march. Christian told me that the Spanish Ultra-South group, Real Madrid Ultra-fans who were linked to Spanish neo-Nazi groups, had contacted him after seeing internet videos of the Templars carrying out violent acts in demonstrations against people on the left. However, Christian said he politely told them that although they could maintain a network of sympathy, the Templar project in Brazil was a different one to theirs. The same thing happened when he was contacted by a US neo-Nazi groups. Angelo said he told them that in Brazil the Templars didn’t have the slightest problem with blacks, that they are a mixture of Iberians, Indians, and Africans and each race contributed distinctively to today’s Brazilian culture, but that there was no racism like in the US: “Our law never discriminated against the black,” he explained. However, Christian was not commenting on the racist practices of institutions, only on legislation.

Christian’s testimony is fundamental to explaining the paradox of *Bolsonarismo*, as it explicitly showed the coexistence of racial cordiality and structural subordination. Bolsonarist nationalism had put together an “ethnic project” whereby Brazilian ethnicity would come about through an annulment of the ethnic identifications of Indians, Africans, and Europeans. Thus, a Brazilian could discard from his rhetoric any racist comment, for, in his view, the Brazilian nation would be composed of a single ethnicity around which only its subalterns would orbit. Racial flexibility and cultural supremacism thus coexisted in *Bolsonarismo* in this “new people” (Ribeiro et al., 1970), which emerged as a national ethnicity culturally differentiated from its formative matrices, strongly *mestizo*, energised by a syncretic culture, and singularised by the redefinition of cultural traits native to them. These “new people” had founded a socio-economic organisation based on a type of renewal of slavery and continued servility to the world market (Ribeiro, 1995), and *Bolsonarismo* gave it shape through its symbols. The *Templarios de la Patria*, in their testimonies, in their flags, phrases and violence, demonstrated this specific form of nationalism.

Christian said he agreed with Flavio Bolsonaro, with his project for the country, although he knew it was not perfect. He was somewhat reticent about the project of economic liberalism, mainly privatisations, that Paulo Guedes had said he would implement in the country, as he thought that only some things should be privatised, not others. Christian’s comments demonstrated the way that *Bolsonarismo* tried to articulate a neo-liberal political project with the cultural elements of neo-conservatism through its nationalism. Christian cited Friedman and Thomas as ideological references, and spoke of fascism as: “one more ideology that tried to defend the country’s internal resources.” He said he would have voted “easy” for Marine Le Pen, France’s far-right National Front candidate, and believed that France today was not what it used to be. He believed that people might call them fascists as an insult, but that he was not that: fascism was just another ideology. In the discourse of the *Templarios* there is greater consensus on the nationalist project from its racial perspective than from its economic perspective, where there is a varied ideological arc that oscillates between protectionism and neoliberalism.

Christian's discourse also cuts across the problem of immigration, which in Europe is intertwined with racism. In Brazil, he could use the example of Venezuelan refugees in the state of Roraima as an example to talk about immigration, the difficulty of providing services to other people in a country that had a lot of internal poverty itself, establishing a hierarchy regarding the idea of who should be attended to first, and trying to deconstruct the refugee phenomenon. He believed that a refugee camp should be set up in the north of Brazil, which was where he was sure that weapons and drugs also entered the country, suggesting the beginning of stigmatisation of immigrants through the fear and danger that they represented. However, he also believed that Brazil should help the Venezuelans in Brazil to defend their country from Nicolás Maduro, the president of Venezuela.

In this discourse, the influence of European migrant racism was much more clearly defined than the forms of discrimination and internal racism of Bolsonarist nationalism. Christian claimed that the refugee phenomenon in Europe was designed so that European “madams” could have their houses cleaned by people who would not have to be formally employed, thus saving themselves money. He claimed that it was the upper class that was abusive, and that the refugees were victims, although he stressed that refugees should be staying and protecting their country rather than fleeing. Christian also talked about the abolition of privileges, an issue the Templars considered necessary, and which was echoed by all of them, indicating that *Bolsonarismo's* official economic project has not yet been assimilated by the grassroots.

Walking around the beach, the atmosphere was hostile. We met a group of people supporting Workers' Party (PT) and the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) candidates who were shouting slogans about the freedom of Lula, whose candidacy had been disqualified the day before. The Templars were looking for conflict and started shouting “Lula in prison!” “Daddy is now in prison!” or chanting “long live Sergio Moro!” in reference to the judge who had convicted Lula in the first instance. Using the microphone, the exchange of slogans continued. Some members of each group approached each other, shouting at close range, talking about dictatorship, an issue that had become relevant in the political arena and in the imaginations of many people. The Templars unfurled a banner near the beach. It had their three main values

written on it: God, Homeland, and Family. They shouted: “Our party is Brazil,” encapsulating in that phrase the concepts and arguments they sought to defend.

The group arrived near the Museum, where the soldiers of Brazil who fell in WWII were commemorated with a monument. Manolo, the young black man, did not allow himself to be filmed, stating that he was “not the best example” of the group. His comment revealed his self-perception of the relationship between race and *Bolsonarismo* and showed the tensions between his racial status and political positioning. Manolo was not the only black man I encounter in the group, but he went on to explain that his father was a “left-wing trade unionist,” and that at home this sometimes “raised the tone,” suggesting this caused friction in the home. Manolo said that when he entered high school, he began to have his own ideas, however, his support for Bolsonaro was not something he went around exposing publicly except when asked, in which case he didn’t deny it.

Despite the historical confluence of the formative matrices, Brazilian society was not composed as a multi-ethnic society, with different allegiances. Rather, a spirit of Brazil was constructed that, although multiple and complex, had not been differentiated into antagonistic racial minorities. It was, therefore, easier to understand why the cultural supremacism of *Bolsonarismo* was not primarily racist, being flexible in its acceptance of the races in the project. Rather, it was a question of class, as prioritised and defended by the *Templarios*. For *Bolsonarismo* there was also a particular Brazilian ethnicity, with minor demands being a blemish, an error in the national project that would first be stigmatised and then annihilated. In the meantime, *Bolsonarismo* succeeded in its rhetoric in bringing out what was common in Brazil with respect to the multiple influences that differentiated it, even though testimonies such as Manolo’s showed an awareness of racial tensions.

*Bolsonarismo* reflected and claimed a nationalism that based cultural supremacy on historical ethnic transfiguration, whereby the de-Indianisation of the Indians and the de-Africanisation of the blacks that it defended necessarily meant collaborating in the construction of a new ethnicity that would encompass the previous ones. This new ethnicity would nevertheless maintain the tutelage and supremacy of the culture of the dominant classes, which were mostly white and of European origin, although of course affected on different scales by the processes

of miscegenation. This was the concept of “being Brazilian” that *Bolsonarismo* defended in its national project, and which it promoted as a means of electoral composition of the various sectors and collectives, building political gains at the same time as the Bolsonarist identity expanded, by demanding “One Brazil,” through the constantly repeated phrase heard throughout these days: “My party is Brazil.”

The formation of colonial Brazil was characterised by the fact that it was a baroque project in its assimilation of its ethnic groups and cultures. The conflictive coexistence, reproduced in this event as in those times, had to be achieved by reigning over the bodies and souls of those who were different, who were constituted as enemies, in a civilising project with “Brazil above everything.” The testimonies of the Templars who disavowed racism were a representation of the belief that the Brazilian people-nation was to be inwardly de-Indian, de-African, and also de-European. This process would constitute the solid roots of its own people, a Brazilianness that *Bolsonarismo* worked on, and which explained the racial flexibility with which other collectives are absorbed, always requiring them to renounce their differentiated cultures. Blacks such as Markus were to be forced to put aside the blackness built on Africanism in order to be “the best example.” The same was to happen with the Indians. Each ethnic-racial collective attacked by *Bolsonarismo* was not to be interpreted by individual Bolsonarist sympathisers who belonged to that collective as a personal appeal or a differentiated psychological relationship. Rather, the different individual was to identify and prioritise elements such as class or the demand for a specific type of public security, over their own identity condition when voting for Bolsonaro. In this way, the cultural Africanness that survived in the form of rhythms, music, flavours, and religiosity was to be castrated by *Bolsonarismo*, which sought to annul any trait of African culture that had not already been assimilated and identified as Brazilian. Nevertheless, *Bolsonarismo* assumed and accepted that the Black, along with the Indian, was a fundamental element of the uniqueness of the Brazilian people. A person’s rise in *Bolsonarismo* happened insofar as the person denied their blackness and renounced Africanism in a form of assimilationist nationalism, as indicated by the different profiles and discourses of the *Templarios*, and reflected in the phrase “My party is Brazil.”



## 5.4. Military Homeland

In this section, I discuss how Bolsonarist nationalism constructed a particular articulation with military values stemming from the colonial period. This following event will serve to represent how such military values came to be expressed in *Bolsonarismo*.

### 5.4.1. Flags of Brazil: Independence Day<sup>4</sup>

Brazil's Independence Day is historically celebrated on September 7 with civil-military parades in the country's major capitals. Unlike the configuration of militarism in other Latin American nations, the Brazilian army had never been Jacobin, an enemy of the oligarchy, but had started from the construction of the colony with a specific function: to control the country. This is reflected in the various military dictatorships, the most recent being the dictatorship of 1964-1985. This historical vocation, reaffirmed in the various moments of the anti-democratic military uprising, exemplified the reason for the explicit positioning of the army within *Bolsonarismo*. Militarism was an inherent structure that ran through the core of the political phenomenon (Faoro, 1958). The armed forces were to keep their identity in the structure of the state, in a series of corporate values that *Bolsonarismo* blurred through its warlike and militarised rhetoric, reconstructing and resignifying the principles of military organisation and morale in order for them to be assimilated into the learning process of sympathisers as a result of the process of socialisation that was to occur during the campaign.

A Bolsonarist rally had been organised to coincide with the Independence Day celebrations. The rally departed from Presidente Vargas Avenue. It was a sunny day, and the atmosphere was festive. Among the active supporters of Bolsonaro in the rally were people from the Monarchist Brazil movement and the Conservative Brazil Movement, as well as ordinary citizens. These self-defined conservative and/or right-wing movements were present in the parade, appealing in their interventions to military pride.

A boy was wearing a T-shirt featuring an image of Bolsonaro in sunglasses. He said:

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<sup>4</sup> **Video 5.2. Independence Day. Speeches under the flag:** Spanish Version [https://youtu.be/wNvXR\\_sZk8Y](https://youtu.be/wNvXR_sZk8Y)  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/LH7NqBZijrI>

Bolsonaro comes to rescue the love for the homeland, people today come here with the same ideal, green and yellow. Rio de Janeiro is very violent, and we have to give a change to our country. Bolsonaro brings the rescue of family values, the question of gender ideology in schools against indoctrination. We have nothing against homosexuals, everyone does what they want in four walls, in their privacy.

A deputy candidate in the parade declared:

The values of God, Country, and Family are essential. There are only vagrant politicians in our country. About the use of weapons: today in Brazil the policeman kills a *bandido* and goes to jail, but the *bandido* is a victim of society. We live in a country where the *bandido* is in the first place, and that has to end.

Another person stated: “We have to do away with the ministry of human rights and create right humans!” A black male paratrooper kissed the flag as he passed. The exaltation of this national symbolism was evident on this day, showing its contradictions, its demands, and the political project of the Bolsonarist nation in the election period. People applauded as tanks passed by. A young man exclaimed:

Bolsonaro is the face, he is not corrupt, he is patriotic, he is against gender ideology. He defends the family. The disarmament statute disarmed the population and armed the *bandido*. Better to have a gun than a broomstick.

The exaltation in these testimonies reflected support for Bolsonaro’s plan for the armed forces to be an active political category, charged with a sense of national responsibility. The phrases used demonstrated support for the historically warlike and punitive-repressive behaviour of the army in its vocation to act for Brazil, and defend its security and traditional values. Thus, *Bolsonarismo* built on the historical role of the military as an intermediary between the country and order, administering emerging conflicts with an iron fist, and allowing the filtration of violence and legal discretionally. This discretion would be justified in *Bolsonarismo* through the divine figure of God: it would therefore go beyond the legal codes themselves to moral codes, without questioning the law, since the law would be allowed to go beyond legislation.

It is from this idea that the justification of violence emanated. Violence was to serve the recovery of “order and progress,” words written on the Brazilian flag. The army was the most legitimised historical institution for this responsibility. Thus, Bolsonarist rhetoric institutionalised its religious and military components, defining the role of both institutions in relation to *Bolsonarismo* itself.

To this end, various symbols that collaborated in this construction were deployed at the rally. A man with a cape flag said:

There is no Caesar, no savior, but we are talking about the love of country. In my time we sang the national anthem. It was a gift to be chosen to jostle the flag because if you had the flag at school you got a kiss from the best girl in the school. It was an incentive that existed. Today it no longer exists. I am not affiliated with a party; I am a Brazilian citizen and my Party is Brazil. We have to teach our children to love the country.

Militarism was evidenced not only in the normalisation of violence but also in the military corporealisation of the sympathiser. The Bolsonarist proposals were an element of hybridisation. They aimed to transform the citizen into an armed citizen, a *cidadão de farad*, a “citizen with a uniform,” a native category that represented this hybridisation, reaffirming the military’s position in society and corporatising national honour. Thus, in a gesture of recognition of their national heroism, parents asked to take pictures of the Bope patrols, known for their aggressiveness in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, with their children. Under Bolsonarism, citizens were also to play an active role in the defence of Brazil, being required to carry weapons like the Bope patrols, to guarantee not only their personal security, but also to serve public order and peace. This honourable element was fundamental in the construction of the native category of “good citizen” and in the categorisation of his opposite, the *bandido*.

I talked to the founder of the recently formed Conservative Brazil Movement, which defended militarism as a way of defending conservative values and national security. He explained that:

With the support of Flavio Bolsonaro, our movement defends that the Brazilian is conservative. I am the founder of the Conservative Brazil Movement. Our

movement wants to bring awareness. Today is a day that represents the independence of Brazil from Portugal with Dom Pedro II in 1822. Tanks and military institutions show order and are the ones that transmit the most security. The judiciary, the congress, the politicians... they are not trusted, but the military and the Catholic Church generate trust.

I then spoke to members of the Monarchist Brazil Movement. The militarisation of the political sphere was also defended by this group, but through the figure of the monarch, again showing confidence in the military institution and the absence of any conflict over the hierarchical structures that the monarchy entails:

We defend traditional values, the rescue of a Brazil of the past, bringing the good part back. The monarch as head of state, debureaucratization and decentralization. The monarch is better because he has no partisan relationship. He is a moral reserve for the country. He rules for the whole nation. The monarch has no power ties, no party defends him, although some monarchists are entering the parties to propose removals. Bolsonaro does not have unanimity in the monarchist movement. We want the king to be the head of the armed forces. The king, in a country that was born as an empire, would serve as a mediator between the forces.

Another man with a flag around his body said Bolsonaro was the best candidate:

First because he believes in God, second because he is a patriot, third because he fights for the family. He is against gender ideology, Marxism, communism, socialism, which is a plague, a disgrace. There is nothing in the world that is good with socialism. We want order and progress in this country, as there was in the country. Bolsonaro is the only one who can rid Brazil of communism. There is no right-wing in Brazil, the right-wing in Brazil is Bolsonaro, the rest is all communist... The armed forces are one of the few institutions committed to Brazil. I voted five times for Lula. Lula is a devil, a thief, cynical, demagogue, but the house is silent, he is in prison. My party is Brazil.

People organised themselves, watching the parade leaning on the restraining barriers, or strolling along the cut-off road and sitting on bleachers similar to those at the *sambadrome*.



**Figure 5.6: Military rallies around Brazil** (Source: Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons).

Everyone applauded as the various military groups passed by the artillery, the fire brigade (which in Brazil is part of the army), and the armies of land, air, and sea. Carrying the flag, continued to be a frequent act, reinforcing in the public space those traditional values that the right-wing and conservatives defended in the absence of any opposing flags representing alternative values. This military exposition was thus also an act that symbolically vindicated those values around which the Brazilian right-wing had structured itself: God, Family, Homeland. Their militarised project of public security fitted the parade like a glove.

The existence of a state that historically collected and enlisted compulsorily and was not interpreted as an investor had also contributed to the solidification of disrepute and lack of loyalty towards it, to the extent that it was considered legitimate to avoid complying with the

rules of the state. For *Bolsonarismo*, civility was not to be constituted by active and economic participation in the state, but by the fulfilment of a series of skills governed by other institutions, principally the religious and the military. The state, according to the testimonies heard at this rally, had failed to achieve order. The negative effects of the state’s expansion would therefore be greater than any positive effects, and insecurity would always be the rule (Prado Jr, 1942). However, the army was understood in these testimonies as an institution that was independent of the rest of the state apparatus, driven by an honest and heroic logic. These Bolsonaro supporters did not see themselves as members of a Bolsonaro party, but rather, as members of the party of Brazil, as in the slogan “My Party is Brazil.” The interests of the army coincided completely with this metaphor, in the view of these testimonies.

#### **5.4.2. Biker rally in favour of Flavio Bolsonaro<sup>5</sup>**

The morning of September 23, 2018 began with a gathering of motorcyclists at Copacabana post six. Copacabana seemed to have become a reference point for Bolsonaro campaigns, because of the number of events held there. This gathering was an ideal event through which to analyse the hierarchical, Christian and military values of *Bolsonarismo*.

The day was cheerful and sunny. The bikers were all men, most of them retired army soldiers, and all members of the Rio de Janeiro State Motorbike Club Association. They were aggressively dressed. There were leather waistcoats decorated with a variety of flames and skulls. There were some with headscarves, piercings, and beards; other showed an “on the road” style that was strongly influenced by the North American “easy rider” custom, although with campaign elements such as pro-Bolsonaro T-shirts and flags. The president of the Club was an evangelical pastor. He spoke to the gathering from a platform:

These last few days we have been on our knees begging for the recovery of our president, who, though walking in the valley of the shadow of death, was never afraid. The psalm makes that clear: the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want... the still waters, the wings of the Lord that will give us victory and the

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<sup>5</sup> **Video 5.3. Motorist Rally in Copacabana:** Spanish Version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7BP6hlfWAE> Original Version <https://youtu.be/humTBAjEL3Q>

certainty that we will be victorious on the 13th. That is what we are looking for through the bikers' demonstration today. Repeat: if God is with us, who will be against us?

Afterward, the pastor explained to me that most of the members of his movement were retired military personnel. The pastor's waistcoat had several patches on it, reading "Jesús liberates," "100% Jesus alliance," a Brazilian flag, and a Bolsonaro sticker. On the back was a huge picture of a lion, with the caption "Lion of Judas." He told me that Bolsonaro, like the bikers, preached a set of values that represented them. He explained about the "biker family," and talked about taking care of society:

Our intention is to unite people who have the principles of motorcycling: respect, honor, and discipline. And the Bolsonaro family candidates have those principles: ethics, respect, order. And we seek that for our government and our country. We want our Christian ethical and moral principles. So, bringing together motorcyclists, from clubs, independents, motorbike workers, motorbike oxen, and motorbike taxis, we unite to fight for traffic, health, education... but mainly for our principles. There is a view that motorcyclists are rebels, anarchists. In the world, there are good and bad sides. We want to show that we can all look for a good way. I am a pastor, so I carry the gospel. We need to look for basic, primitive patterns of love. God's word says that if bad things multiply, love will grow cold, and we don't want love to grow cold, because love, sharing, is what a motorist does, if he sees a brother, like a relative, stopped on the road, he will stop, and we also want to exercise this in politics.

The bikers, by defending Christianity from their military background, integrated the armed force into a higher law, which vindicated the constitution, but mainly vindicated God as an element of justification for military actions. In their eyes, Bolsonaro, to fulfil the mission inherited from the colonists and the period of military dictatorship, had to fulfil the supreme task of the white military man, destined by God to unite all Brazilians in a single Christianity (Ribeiro, 1995). The bikers' ethical codes reproduced the military traits of their backgrounds:

obedience, hierarchy, loyalty, making it easy for them to assimilate the “captain’s” discourse: it was the discourse of God, the patriotic discourse.



Figure 5.7: Pro-Bolsonaro biker rally at Copacabana (Source: Bayarri).

From a *ranchera* car, Flavio Bolsonaro gave a brief speech, then ordered the motorbikes to roar, while everyone repeated “each of us is Jair Bolsonaro, we will take Bolsonaro to our homes, to the social networks” and “Our Party is Brazil.” People shouted “Myth, Myth, Myth,” and “Come on motorcyclists, let’s show that Rio de Janeiro is with Bolsonaro!” The motorbikes started-up, honking. Among them there were several bicycles carrying flags, led by men carrying their wives on their shoulders. A man fastened a skull mask under his helmet. The traditional values and the appeal to love espoused by this collective were seemingly contradictorily, permeated as they were by an aggressive and violent nationalist aesthetic. The bikers reflect how militarism is a trait adaptable to different grassroots organisations, as violence and hierarchy are traits shared by *Bolsonarismo*, despite the fact that they express themselves in the public space through a multiplicity of performances.



### **5.5. Conclusions: The imagined community of Bolsonarist nationalism in metaphorical thinking**

This chapter has presented an analysis of the main elements of senatorial candidate Flavio Bolsonaro's campaign, around which Bolsonarist nationalism was configured, and which articulated a particular image as an imagined community. The elements highlighted came from the Brazilian social structure itself: hierarchy and social order, militarism, Christianity, and race-nation. These elements, which emerge frequently in Brazilian culture, justified the functioning of the metaphor "My party is Brazil," which was present in all the events involving Flavio Bolsonaro. As a slogan, the metaphor was often repeated in the testimonies as an argument in itself, or as a way of bringing together the ideas that the individual had previously developed. This metaphor drew a similarity between the political party (origin domain) and Brazil (destination domain). In this way, the term "Brazil" was used metaphorically to extend the term "political party" into a broad, non-partisan, and transcendental collectivity. In the metaphorical colonial sense, the use of Brazil as a political party relates to a specific way of understanding Bolsonarist nationalism, a nationalism in which Brazil would be a political party that transcended the interests of the rest of the political options.

This is a nationalism of order, authority, and tradition, contrary to multiculturalism, and militarised. *Bolsonarismo* strengthens the most violent characterisation of Brazilianness, militarising its behaviour and expanding the consciousness of "being Brazilian" by linking it to "being Bolsonarist," thereby excluding all those who did not identify themselves in the same way as people *outside* the homeland. Identification with the collective thus occurs as an opposition to alternative collectives, which become the enemy. Without this enemy, *Bolsonarismo* would have no nourishment for the existence of its rhetoric. This is why it concentrates on it. As Darcy Ribeiro argues, more than a simple ethnic group, Brazil feels itself to be a national ethnic group (Ribeiro, 1995), a people-nation settled in a territory of its own. *Bolsonarismo* can be understood as a nationalist project in which the protagonist is this "Brazilian being," who is to be constructed in opposition to the "bandit." Such a protagonist would be a good and hard-working citizen, who paid observance to the privileged classes,

which would have achieved their position based on a theology of prosperity and meritocracy, rather than on structural inequality.

This uniform national unity, constructed from the historical processes of Brazil's actual formation, did not imply that a lack of contradictions and antagonisms would be constructed through this violent process of political and identity unification by the dominant classes. It was simply to be a type of social stratification in which the dominant classes would not allow any alteration to the existing order. Just as the white colonial oligarchy had developed a strong nationalist sentiment against the Portuguese authorities in the nineteenth century, this nationalist sentiment was now to be *Anti-Petista*, anti-communist, anti-Marxist, and anti-LGBTQI+ – an exclusionary, Christian nationalism, which was shaped in opposition to the other. It was a struggle against multicultural nationalism that was to be introduced as public policy in the coming years.

The Latin American independence process, and specifically the Brazilian case, had not been in the hands of intellectuals, but of landowners. The lower classes had not been introduced into a national project but rather built as a repressive force of the elite (Anderson, 1983). The context of post-colonialism with a Latin American style in which *Bolsonarismo* was configured was influenced by this way of constructing the imagined community. Invented liberal ideas were also important in the construction of a nationalism that prioritised individual rights over collective rights. As authors such as Pedreira (2014), Arns (1985), and Arão Reis (2010) have indicated, this network of factual interests was strengthened and crystallised during the period of the military dictatorship (see). The construction of nationalism with military elements owed its rise to the pre-dictatorial period and the authoritarianism of Getulio Vargas, when a series of propagandistic elements were used in the construction of an imagined community that strengthened the enormous Brazilian borders. Here was where Brazilian racial harmony was founded, the “Brazilian being” as a national being. Yet *Bolsonarismo* reflects a violent nationalism. The elements of Italian fascism that Vargas used are evident in the foundation of a shared idea, which is that the Brazilian would have a specific character. Faced with this reality, *Bolsonarismo* qualifies raciality in geographical space: it is not the same to be from the north as from the south of Brazil.

*Bolsonarismo* appeals to feelings to take advantage of the national concept in the terms explained. In the process of homogenising racial harmony, it is a matter, in terms of psychological domination, of making the Afro-Brazilian and Indian community think that they were fit to feel part of the nation, despite the fact that in material terms they were the same population that had always been impoverished and exploited since the beginning of invasion in the sixteenth century. In contrast to *Bolsonarismo*'s discourse that nationalism involves love and sacrifice to other sectors, the Bolsonaroist project is seen as a promoter of hatred and violent patriotism.

The decay of the nation-state model itself in the neoliberal context is also seen in the Bolsonaroist project of nationalism, which offers a neoliberal theocratic nationalism in which the influences of the Christian morality of evangelicalism and economic elites outweigh the bureaucratic-state model itself. In any case, the metaphor of "My party is Brazil" thus shows the cultural intricacies latent in Bolsonaroist nationalism as an imagined community structured in metaphorical thought. The figure of Flavio Bolsonaro has been useful in bringing out the emergence of these elements through his electoral trajectory.

## Chapter 6 Video Links

<b>Video Titles and URL links</b>	<b>Relevant Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Video 6.1. Violent Proto-Bolsonarismo</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIRbstJp8sc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIRbstJp8sc</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/B-R2pl2Fjn0">https://youtu.be/B-R2pl2Fjn0</a>	Section 6.2	171
<b>Video 6.2. Professionalised violence</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/EMGeDObRmZM">https://youtu.be/EMGeDObRmZM</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/Vzf2WNS1b0k">https://youtu.be/Vzf2WNS1b0k</a>	Section 6.3	175
<b>Video 6.3. Witzel, the violent righteous</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/SSR4qR2uPIU">https://youtu.be/SSR4qR2uPIU</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/sIPu60lpDpg">https://youtu.be/sIPu60lpDpg</a>	Section 6.4	181

## Chapter 6: WILSON WITZEL: GOOD BANDIT/DEAD BANDIT

### The normalisation of violence in the metaphor of the enemy

#### Ethnographic timeline: Wilson Witzel's electoral campaign 2018

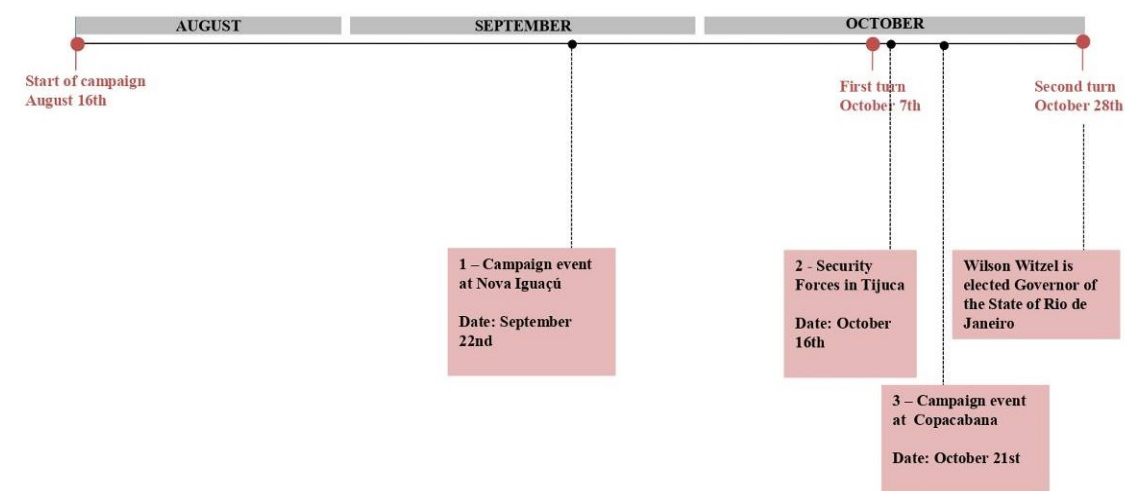


Figure 6.1: Ethnographic timeline: Wilson Witzel's electoral Campaign 2018 (Source: Bayarri)

### 6.1. Wilson Witzel and the universe of violence

Through the metaphor *bandido bom é bandido morto* (“a good bandit is a dead bandit”), *Bolsonarismo* appealed to the justification of violence that produced a greater end. The metaphor was based on the root metaphor of a Just War, this time against Brazil's enemies. In this chapter the elements of deep culture latent in this metaphor are analysed and linked to Brazil's historical structural violence, through the electoral trajectory of the candidate for Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, federal judge Wilson Witzel.

Judge Witzel was a representation of the *Bolsonarismo* “miracle,” as he appeared at the beginning of the electoral campaign without being a public figure and with only a 1% vote expectation. However, his approach to *Bolsonarismo* and his openly punitive discourse against

crime and corruption made Witzel the Governor in just a few weeks. I analyse this trajectory through various electoral events marked by his violent discourse. From the beginning of the campaign, the various violent acts carried out by Witzel, such as the breaking of the commemorative plaque of the murdered councillor, Marielle Franco, as well as the use of dehumanising phrases, allowed him to present himself as an iron hand in the State of Rio de Janeiro. Reports of further violent actions involving Witzel, such as the celebrations over the so-called *bandidos* killed in police actions, and his participation in a rifle assault from a helicopter over a *favela*, were corroborated after the elections.

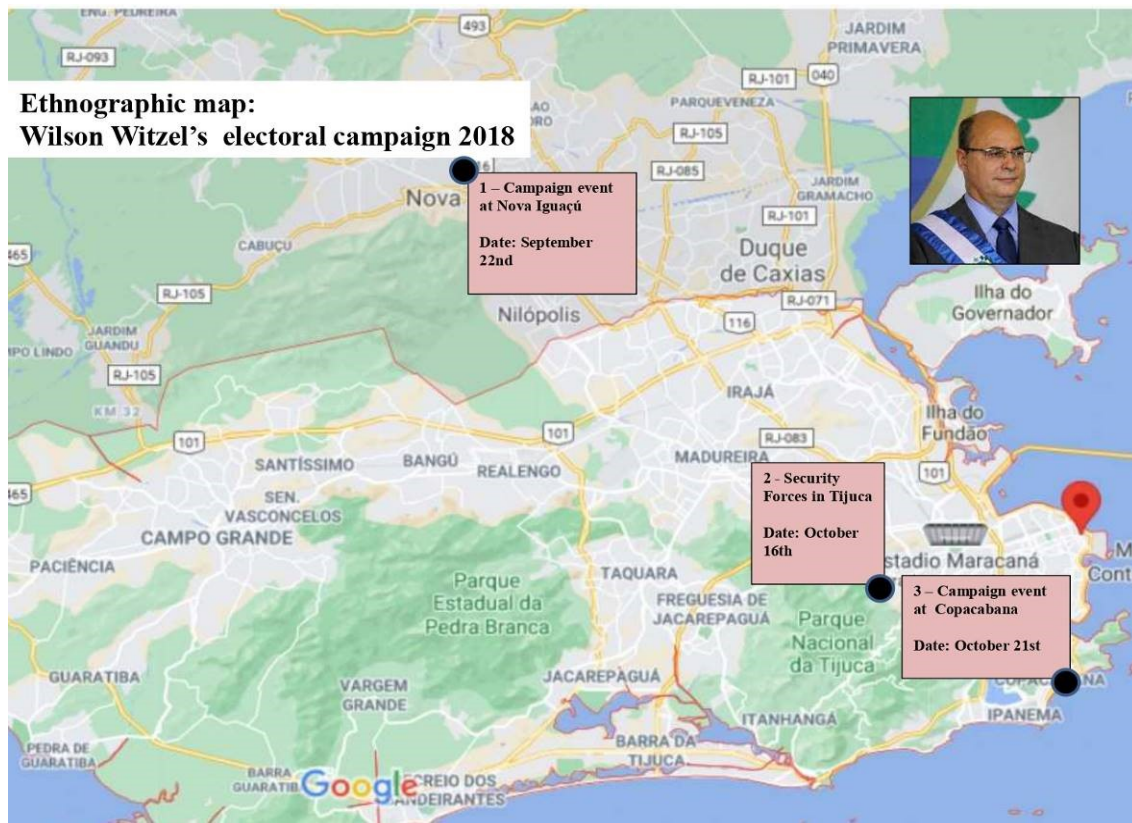


Figure 6.2: Ethnographic map: Wilson Witzel's electoral Campaign 2018 (Source: Bayarri).

Witzel's profile as a judge, as well as his Christian activism, made him a candidate who was quickly valued by the state's factual powers, especially by the security forces, who saw in him the option of fulfilling, beyond the law, a violent salvationist mission against the enemy. The figure of Witzel helps to show how Bolsonaroist rhetoric used the dichotomy of the good citizen versus the *bandido* to normalise and justify violence and consolidate the metaphor *Bandido*

*bom é bandido morto* (a good bandit is a dead bandit) , based on its structural elements. The use of the term *bandido* acquire a central role in Bolsonarist rhetoric, not only in the construction of an opposite to the good citizen, but also as a particular concept, specific to Bolsonarist rhetoric. The *bandido* (bandit) is not the same as a *ladrão* or “thief.” In the Bolsonarist universe the term acquires importance as a symbol, the embodiment of evil and violence and a physical form of moral depravity, that condenses the different fears and hatreds in the imaginations of Bolsonarist sympathisers. Fears become embodied in the bandit, who takes on the form of the politician, the poor black *favela* inhabitant or the street dweller. The negative perception of the bandit opens a space for him not to be the bearer of the rights possessed by the rest of the citizenry. These rights of citizens are restricted to those who occupy the productive process, and in the moral perception of these people. The bandit would therefore not be treated with an egalitarian juridical logic, but would be subject to a punishment that was proportional to that of the crime committed.

Witzel presented this punitive logic in a context of a high public perception of violence. In 2017, for instance, Brazil had registered 63,880 violent deaths, the highest number of homicides in the country’s recent history. The data indicate that 175 people were murdered per day, and there had been a 20% increase in deaths in police interventions compared to the previous year. In addition, there had been 8% more rapes, a deficit in prison infrastructure, and more than 80,000 persons listed as missing persons that year.<sup>1</sup> The State of Rio de Janeiro was one of the most affected by violence, according to this data. The failure of the Pacifying/Peacemaker Police Units (UPPs), the federal military intervention by the army in the *favelas*, and an increase to forty violent deaths per one hundred thousand inhabitants (the highest since 2009) had created an environment of extreme insecurity that was ripe for such logic.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the harmonised image of a peaceful Brazil, the colonial experience had normalised a violent sociology that maintained a chronic state of war between its classes. This allowed *Bolsonarismo* to strongly define the figure of the enemy in reference to vulnerable groups,

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Brazilian Forum for Public Security

<sup>2</sup> Source: Institute of Public Security

especially the Afro-Brazilian collective, while also resorting to historical generalisations from the colonial period such as the idea that the Indian would be lazy and a bad worker. The justification for the use of violence as a way of administering social order was therefore already closely linked in Brazil's colonial origins, which had structured a violent society and legitimised the repressive-punitive practices of the armed forces that had, for centuries, served as the armed wing of the various forces of state order.

Brazil had also always been understood as a business that privileged and ennobled. This understanding saw violence as a tool of social stratification whereby the "Brazil project" in the popular imagination had been designed since the colonial period to enrich a seigniorial class. Present relations between these classes continued to be permeated by these same values, and allowed the dehumanisation of the violence of labour relations that *Bolsonarismo* aimed to manage. Once this dehumanisation had been normalised under the Bolsonarists, it was expected that some people would agree that it was justified to kill homeless people or that the only good criminal was a dead criminal, and none of the principles of structural social stratification that made this possible would be called into question. The dehumanisation of labour relations, a legacy of slavery, is therefore key to understanding the normalisation of the various forms of violence that were accepted in the Bolsonarist project. By demanding better working conditions and greater impunity for the Military Police, the Bolsonarist project was also deepening the colonial logic that allowed for arbitrary treatment of the lower classes by authorities, to show that they treat these classes differently to the dominant classes. This was behaviour could be assimilated and reproduced.

As has already been indicated in the thesis, *Bolsonarismo* had various ways of legitimising violence, most notably through the idea of a "war against the enemy," which normatively articulated its military, economic and religious traits. However, another form of legitimisation of such violence was the use of humour as a mechanism that codified violent practices in terms that *Bolsonarismo* thought would allow its use. The most tender gentleness and the most atrocious cruelty are combined in Brazilian historical memory, and by extension in its practices, which makes the Brazilian people a heartfelt and long-suffering people, while at the same time being able to exercise insensitive and brutal functions. It was in its engagement with



the latter, the legitimate construction of violence, that the *Bolsonarismo* influence showed its militarised traits.

Together with the metaphor of the reconquest, the means of producing this end is necessarily configured as the just war. If reconquest is the source of Bolsonarist illusion and project, the just war is the justification for these ends. On the campaign level, the just war was embodied mainly by the military in their war against drug trafficking, since the good citizen should obviously defeat the bandit in this case, if necessary by arming himself and acting violently. This evangelisation of Brazil in the form of a crusade fed back into the discourse of the just war, giving violence a theological dignity in the Bolsonarist project, as well as the moral dignity of the whole model that has been described. Theological rhetoric strengthens the biblical tradition that a messiah will save the pagan children of Eve expelled from Paradise. Salvationism thus acquires a sacred and supreme character in *Bolsonarismo*, so that people are encouraged to put aside their “business” (their own political projects) and “join *Bolsonarismo* or fall into eternal sin and punishment,” although this punishment was explicitly earthly in the case of military violence.

In the Bolsonarist cosmology, the army was required to bring *order to the house*. In addition to the army, which was to treat bandits *as they deserves*, other sympathisers of this discourse were to also look favourably on extra-legal justice, the organisation of parallel security squads, and the possession of weapons. The chapter develops this idea of the militarisation of Brazil, and how it was to be achieved through the opposition created between these bandits, who were to be treated as harmful individuals to be pursued by the law, and the *good citizen*, who possessed worthy moral substance (Carvalho, 2002; Kant de Lima, 2010; Cardoso de Oliveira, 2008; Mota, 2012) as the one who works. In practice, the division between “people” and “individuals” was strongly related to social class, and therefore to the geographical space where one lived. In this way, criminalisation occurred towards people living in peripheral areas, where the army could act *with the full force of the law*. The discussion of the figure of justice is therefore important in this chapter, typified by Wilson Witzel appearing with a judge’s hammer, as if he was coming to mete out justice against individuals.

The chapter is divided into five sections: in the next section I show how the violent proto-Bolsonarist identity was expressed in the classification of the good citizen against the bandit. In the third section, I analyse the trivialisation of violence made by the security forces. In the fourth section, I analyse how the figure of Witzel constructed a logic of punitive justice. In a fifth section, I show the classification of *Bolsonarismo*'s enemy category through a specific case study of Wilson Witzel's WhatsApp groups, conducted in collaboration with Fernández Villanueva. In conclusion, the chapter will reflect on the normalisation of violence in metaphorical thinking and how violence can be structured through the collective imagination.

### 6.2. Nova Iguaçu: proto-*Bolsonarismo* and the violence of the good citizen.

The event to be described below took place in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, in the north of the State of Rio de Janeiro, on September 22, 2018. It demonstrates the construction of the violent proto-Bolsonarist identity as the good citizen as opposed to the category of enemy, reinforced by Wilson Witzel's use of the term "vagabond" or *bandido*.



Figure 6.3: Different forms of campaign at Nova Iguaçu (Source: Bayarri)

A huge crowd had gathered at Praça Rui Barbosa, waiting for the arrival of the candidate for State Governor, Wilson Witzel, the candidate for the Senate, Flavio Bolsonaro, and the candidate for Federal Deputy, Clébio Lópes Jacaré.<sup>3</sup> It was an event with an enormous amount of spectacle. Brazilian flags shone out all over the square: there was a gigantic display of the flags on the float for the candidates, and people had painted their faces with the Brazilian flag and were handing out political pamphlets and stickers of the candidates. Supporters wore T-shirts with various memes. There was a festive and proud atmosphere.



Figure 6.4: Campaign at Nova Iguazú (Source: Bayarri)

On the float, a mediator was passing the floor to the various candidates. The speakers made attacks on the PT and the *bandidos* and praise the importance of the armed forces. They listed all the branches of the armed forces, and asked people to buy T-shirts, and pointed to a sign

<sup>3</sup> Video 6.1. Violent Proto-Bolsonarismo: Spanish Version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIRbstJp8sc>  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/B-R2pl2Fjn0>

saying: “The humiliated will be exalted.” The adopted jingle “Captain, stand up!” was heard on several occasions, as were various key phrases, in particular: “A *bandido* should be treated as a *bandido*; he should end up in jail or the cemetery.”

As in the other political mobilizations during the electoral campaign, the event showed again how *Bolsonarismo* needed collective representations of its political identity rather than individuals because in this way they could be assumed to be co-participants. This explained the need for symbolic exaltation that was present at the event. In this period of *Bolsonarismo*'s formation, in its “Proto-*Bolsonarismo*” phase, the construction of a credible symbolic system was indispensable to recognising the peculiarities of the Bolsonarist project. The cohesion of the Bolsonarist identity depended not only on the construction of a cultural and social level of identification, but also an emotional level that integrated the members into a unitary entity, through the organising power of three main emotions, fear, hatred, and rage. As well as articulating pride, illusion, and hope.

These emotions were all promoted in this event, which was characterised by the deployment of violent rhetoric. All the elements observed on this day were aimed at clarifying and reinforcing the figure of “the enemy of Brazil.” The most relevant symbolic construction was the dichotomy between the good citizen and the enemy, the *bandido*. As Roberto Da Matta (1983) has pointed out, there is a very big difference between “person” (with moral substance) and “individual” (who has no substance at all).<sup>4</sup> Thus, to be considered a good citizen, a boundary of identification must be constructed between the working person/student as functional and contributory, as opposed to the unemployed individual as clearly dysfunctional, useless, dangerous, deviant, a potential generator of conflict and disorder, and therefore, to whom arbitrariness can be applied in various fields, such as the judiciary or in the management of conflicts. Such a working relationship, together with Christian moral codes, constituted the elements of a worthy moral substance for *Bolsonarismo*. All these traits would turn the good citizen into an activist, evoked to “Save Brazil” as part of a salvationist project.

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<sup>4</sup> This point has been further developed in Kant de Lima (1995) and Tiscornia (2004),

Witzel's presence reinforced this process of violent moral construction. He appeared before the rally, making the symbol gesture of shooting with a machine gun. He wore a huge Brazilian flag as a cape. Surrounding him were several cardboard signs printed with judicial hammers, symbolically representing his quest for justice. Witzel sang the national anthem at the top of his lungs. He then took the microphone and began by defending the police and armed forces in their efforts to fight *bandidos*. He explained that his education project would consist of turning state schools into military schools. He called this his Military Schools Programme: secondary education would be focused on raising military vocations. He talked about the importance of combating organised crime, said he would eliminate the security secretariat and he coordinate public security through a cabinet:

From 2019 the armed forces will be part of our policy. We are going to invest in the fight against money laundering. I judged processes in which executives set up companies to launder money from drug trafficking and give that money to the Colombian, Bolivian and Paraguayan cartels. I was a federal criminal judge.

Finally, Witzel asked for a round of applause for Sergio Moro. In this act, Witzel, new to *Bolsonarismo*, tried to generate an affinity with *Bolsonarismo* as a whole, and specifically, an association with Judge Moro, because, as a judge, he too would fight crime and the enemies of the homeland, who should be exterminated. Witzel thereby offered to the supporters a project to generate their identification. In this sense, the first Bolsonarist generation generated this proto-*Bolsonarismo*, which legitimated and justified punishment. The construction of the enemy that Witzel was drawing through this appeal acquired theological features, the project being presented as “the battle of good against evil,” of God and the Church against the Devil and hell. This rhetoric recalled the historical memory of the struggles against the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, which generated narratives that strengthened this dichotomy. “The Devil” was subject to public reprobation, symbolic excommunication, and the removal from those of worthy moral substance as the enemy of *Bolsonarismo* that Witzel referred to at the event.

The violent symbolic display of this day was a widely used strategy to generate hegemony in the public space, creating a perception of power and domination of space directly related to the

candidate's strength and perception of victory of his campaign, adding, like a snowball, to all the people who perceived such strength around him. Some girls volunteered paint faces with the Brazilian flag. The people started out on a huge parade, led by the candidates, all of whom had present themselves as superheroes who had to defeat evil. By the boardwalk, the parade spread out, flooding the street and not allowing the presence of any other candidate, despite it being a sunny Sunday with a huge presence of other parties. With overwhelming power, the people between the flags chanted: "1,2,3,4,5, a thousand, we want Bolsonaro president of Brazil."

A group of people was heard chanting: "Lula *cachaçero*, give back my money." A man carried a loudspeaker inside a rubbish bin, and stickers of Bolsonaro's candidacy. During the journey, at various times supporters tried to put stickers on me. The parade was a process of activism and corporalisation under the candidates, which excluded the possibility of sharing symbols with antagonistic political projects, again showed the authoritarianism and violence in the Bolsonarist project:

A woman who had a sticker kiosk in support of Lula explained to me that her flag was also green. The woman sensed the misappropriation of citizenship that *Bolsonarismo* was using to try to consolidate the construction of the enemy through the symbolic use of the flag. The woman then ran to show me that in her kiosk of PT stickers she also had a Brazilian flag. She discovered that the Bolsonarists had stuck Bolsonaro stickers on her flag, encroaching on her claim to a broad flag. At that moment, indignant, the woman said: "this flag belongs to the whole country." Subsequently, silenced by the pro-Bolsonarist crowd, the woman defiantly showed Lula's face.

People at the rally wore different clothes, stickers and hats. It was simultaneously an act of pride and exclusive recognition. They walked with confidence, with the assurance that they represented the most powerful of the existing movements in the electoral context, and in the fight against what everyone called the *bandidos*, in this assimilation of the violent Bolsonarist identity. This model of citizenship was a model of social order in which marginality and diversity were criminalised, and work was positively valued as a way of maintaining the hegemonic social order. The criminalisation of the various groups was articulated through the

construction of the “criminal subject” (Misse, 2010), a process that began with the preventive incrimination of anyone who did not fit into the ideological typology of *Bolsonarismo*. Thus, people campaigning for other candidates were attacked and booed, the music itself demonstrated attacks on minorities and progressive ideologies, and the discourse of candidates such as Judge Witzel, promoted the legitimisation of violence against this so-called criminal subject, who was none other than any person who did not identify with *Bolsonarismo*. The event was the crystallisation of the proto-Bolsonarist identity, which was violent and discriminatory, but which consolidated the violence of the collective in the public space.

### **6.3. The Security Forces in Tijuca: the trivialisation of violence**

Witzel announced that he would meet with all representatives of public security in Tijuca neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro, on Tuesday, October 16, 2018, to resolve any doubts that the various bodies might have had about his programme. This was a clear statement of the priority that the candidate wanted to give to public security and the fight against crime. In this section, I analyse the process of trivialisation of violence in the security forces, that is, the way in which security agents received the approval of the future governor to execute a repressive-punitive policy.

Witzel’s meeting took place at the Tijuca Municipal Club, which normally operated as the headquarters of the neighbourhood’s Residents’ Association.<sup>5</sup> The candidate lived in this neighbourhood, and had stated that he would not move to the official house, the Guanabara Palace, when elected governor, a display of his rhetoric against the political class and excessive privileges. Men placed a sticker with the message “Wilson 20” on my shirt. This was a reference to the candidate’s electoral number to be marked on the ballot box on election day. At the entrance, various groups of military personnel gathered. They were distinguished by their tall, black boots.

The room was filling up. Witzel’s very rapid rise in the polls, from 1% to more than 40% of first round of votes, meant that he had only recently become a revered public figure. People

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<sup>5</sup> **Video 6.2. Professionalised violence:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/EMGeDObRmZM> Original Version <https://youtu.be/Vzf2WNS1b0k>

from the various public security collectives were in disarray, trying to work out how to position themselves. Banners from various military collectives that supported Witzel, displaying his electoral number hung from the ceiling. Despite being a different party, the *Partido Social Cristão* (Christian Social Party), Witzel was related to Bolsonaro and exploited this natural relationship.

People were wearing Bolsonaro T-shirts, so it was clear that there was a direct vote transfer from Bolsonaro himself to candidate Witzel. Stickers were also worn, and the atmosphere mixed the solemnity of an enclosed space where high-ranking public security officials were present with the festivity of the grassroots. I spoke to a man sitting next to me. He explained that Witzel and Bolsonaro represented change, but didn't seem to make a big deal out of the event, instead talking about political moves as healthy and commonplace. Nonetheless, his discourse, though soft-spoken, had normalised many of violent demands that Bolsonaro advocated. For example, when I asked him about the death penalty, he replied: "if a man kills a child, does he deserve to die?" At my silence, he went on: "I think so. A good *bandido* is a dead *bandido*." This person's affirmation was not strange in the electoral context. Violent actions were easily legitimised using such hierarchical structures, especially in relation to the future governor's legitimising discourse on the armed forces.

Witzel appeared, making a firm military salute to both sides, holding his hand outstretched to his forehead as he passed in front of the security forces, showing respect and associating himself with the security forces through his performance. Everyone was on their feet, applauding him. It took a long time for people to sit down for the event to begin.

The meeting finally started with the presentation of all the public security groups, such as the Civil Police, security forces, Military Police, firemen, penitentiary agents, Federal Police, and Federal Road Police. It had been their idea to invite Witzel, indicating that the public security groups already had a predisposition to the ostensive and repressive-punitive project of *Bolsonarismo*. New city councillors, mayors and writers, were also presented, turning this day into a real congress, mixing the festive atmosphere with the much more serious and professional tone of Witzel himself.



Witzel was presented as the central figure of the event. He was dressed in a suit on which he had pasted two stickers, one with his face and the other with his voting number, 20. He began to speak, reminding everyone that nothing could be decided until the 28<sup>th</sup>, and that until the elections on that day, he would be out on the streets, talking to the people, showing them his proposals, and trying to convince the voter that he was “the 1% candidate,” to laughter from the audience. He continued:

After the 28th there will be no party and commemoration, the transition begins.

The message I want to convey to you is that the State of Rio de Janeiro needs a credible governor.

The speech began formally, technically, explaining the state’s debt levels, which in a campaign that is characterised by sensationalism and superficiality was striking and unexpected for some of the people present who were waiting for the meeting’s moment of agitation. Nonetheless, Witzel conveyed an image of solvency to senior public security officials, knowing how to adapt his discourse to suit the recipient during the campaign. He used clear, technical, and serious language. He knew he was addressing an audience that he needed to seduce with the depth of his proposals in the flagship area of his government, public security since his image as a candidate was built around the reincarnation of Bolsonaro (along with his children and others who were chosen as part of the “family”), and the social prestige of a judge. Witzel was called “doctor.” The *santinhos* (political pamphlets) that were handed out were in the shape of a judicial hammer. The figure of the hammer was fundamental to Witzel’s campaign: represented justice in the face of corruption, the withering blow, the hard hand with which he could be expected to act, respect for the law, and the one responsible for “bringing order” (in the house).

The audience was overwhelmingly male, in number and form. At the main table over which Witzel presided there were only men. The political project was clearly masculine, the shout was almost warlike, the salute military. Thus, a series of symbols and gestures decorate this masculinised and violent *mise-en-scène*. In a show of exercising respect and authority, as well as negotiating flexibility, Witzel said that, just as the collectives were asking him to do, he too,

in giving in, will demand results from these concessions. He recalled that he too was a former military man, who was in the reserve.

Witzel then spoke about the fake news that had recently been linked to public security, denying that he would privatise the prison system, but admitting that he would study how to establish public-private partnerships (PPPs) in other sectors as well. He also denied that he would privatise military pensions, but said that each professional category would be discussed on its own merits. People applauded again. Witzel then began to defend the military police against the stigma he says is attached to “those who work decently.” People applauded heartily. He proposed eliminating the Secretariat of Public Security and directing the issue first-hand, in constant direct contact with the representatives of the collectives at a negotiating table. He proposed the creation of a University of Public Security to better train professionals, as well as to integrate and coordinate the various functions of public security.

Questions from the leaders of each professional category of public security to the candidate for governor began. Witzel said that he would end the mysticism that the municipal guard should not be armed:

It is the will of more than three million people [there is applause]. Every good citizen who can carry a weapon to fight crime should be able to carry a weapon, not just the municipal police. People must be able to carry weapons. The person who can't be armed on the street is the vagrant, he can't.

The audience were ignited and shouted: “Wilson Witzel.” Satisfied, the representatives of the Municipal Guard continued: “He has to be a vagrant, not an armed cadet,” exclaims one. “We really want there to be interaction so that we can safeguard the population from the vagrants who are roaming around!” People stood up and, with raised fist, shouted “Wilson, Wilson, Wilson!” in a violent, masculine, and military performance. The representatives of the various security bodies made it clear that each of them would drag in thousands of votes for the future governor.

The armed forces gradually exalted their violent component and their punitive vocation, as they observed the support they would have to carry out these tasks from the future governor.

This idea is reminiscent of the principle elaborated by Hannah Arendt (1999; 2008), based on her observation that hierarchical compliance can make normal people commit monstrous acts for no good reason, but also without any elaborate rationalisation. In the same way, the various security forces of the Brazilian State also justified violent actions, both historically and as actions governed by the work order, producing a trivialisation of violence as violence was incorporated into the practices necessary for the full performance of work tasks. The authoritarian responsibility of the Portuguese metropolis towards its colony went beyond the sovereignty it brought to the model, building after its independence a model structured on the hierarchical and violent authority that had been in place for so long. Violent authoritarianism, of colonial origin, was clearly present in the Bolsonarist project, which gave militarism the monarchical authority to save the homeland by incorporating violence and the authority of its colonial origin into Bolsonarist nationalism.

The representatives of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro commented that their work system operated on a 24/48 hour rotation (a 24-hour continuous working day with a 48-hour rest day), which they considered slavery. They ask Witzel to regulate the scale to 24/72 hours. The future governor responded that he would put thousands of cameras around the State of Rio de Janeiro. Monitoring the streets of the state with thousands of cameras would reduce the presence of military policemen on the street. He also talked about hiring more police and talked again about Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). He said that he thought that set of measures would be more likely to reduce the scale of work. What was clear in this discussion was that a public security model based on ostentation and vigilance against poor neighbours, who were all potential criminals, was being constructed. People applauded with less effusion as they looked for commitments from Witzel that exceeded such reformist models, as part of the charismatic relationship he had begun to build.

The military firefighters asked excitedly whether Witzel would give a secretariat to the firefighters. Witzel gave answers that generated hope while maintaining a level of realism and a technical component that generates security and seriousness in the candidate. He relied on his strong legal knowledge and ethos. The Federal Police said that the structure of the police in Brazil was *jabuticaba* – the term referred to the name of a Brazilian fruit that was used as a

popular expression of something that could only happen in Brazil. Witzel talked about borders, expertise... the atmosphere was aggressive, festive, and serious all at the same time. The Federal Highway Police told how they have just gone to the funeral of a member of their corps who had been murdered. They said that “Rio de Janeiro doesn’t manufacture guns or cocaine, but they come in through the border.” They talked about the importance of reinforcing the federal forces.

The various testimonies of the representatives of the security forces showed that the punitive-repressive logic was a logic that had been historically acquired in their institutions and was reproduced in their daily practices. Acting against the enemy was presented as an opportunity to apply knowledge, to reproduce the practices observed by other members, to stop being a neophyte, to acquire the knowledge and recognition of the various security bodies. The demands of these forces consisted of demands to be able to carry out their work with the same institutional violence as always, but with the political and legal backing of the new governor. Moreover, they said they would only look to Witzel to legitimise their practices. The discussion of violence as a professional, legal, and institutionalised procedure avoided the public security actors entering into a discussion on moral terms. The individual law enforcement officers would continue doing their job, while their representatives would look to Witzel to legitimise their practices.

Witzel responded by standing with his arms behind him, maintaining a military gesture of respect for the groups present and concluded, saying:

To all the men who wear the uniform and the State flag ... if I had to go to a funeral, as Governor, I will cry with the family.

The model of public security defended by Witzel justified the elimination of certain criminals (Garland, 2008). In talking about concrete subjects, it became clear that the punishment would not be produced around the crime, but around the subject. This position encouraged the concretisation of police arbitrariness, establishing violence as a working tool. Evil would be implicit in the criminal subject, which would not be recoverable, and the security forces would

be repressors of visible deviations in the face of institutionalised fears, monsters, and hatreds, invisible and imagined in metaphors.

#### **6.4. The *Justiciero* (righteous) in Copacabana: Violence and Justice<sup>6</sup>**

On Sunday October 21, 2018, days before the final elections of the second round, a series of demonstrations of broad support for *Bolsonarismo* took place all over Brazil. [On Atlântica Avenue in Copacabana, there was a huge demonstration of support for candidate Witzel for State Governor.](#) In this section, I analyse how, at this event, the figure of Witzel constructed a logic of punitive justice, with semantics of hatred and revenge. Testimonies collected at the end constantly repeated the issue of corruption, and then violence. They all tended to be in that order: first corruption, then violence, as if the latter naturally followed the former.

Witzel spoke from the float of the Free Brazil Movement (MBL). The speech from this float is fundamental to understanding the figure of Witzel in the construction of the politics of hatred and fear that sought justice against the enemy in the Bolsonarist project:

Good morning, Copacabana! my heart is a heart that thirsts for this Nation, for this Rio de Janeiro. It is with great emotion, with great joy, that I see today the hearts united in a single purpose in this election: the renewal of Brazilian politics. And I am proud to say that I am a soldier who here in Rio de Janeiro will contribute to the policy of renewal and cleanliness. A soldier of our president, I am not ashamed to say, Jair Messias Bolsonaro!

People chanted the words “Myth” and “A good bandit is a dead bandit.” They carried cardboard hammers representing the instrument that Judge Wilson Witzel would use to deliver justice if elected governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro. The future governor raised his fist, declaring:

Here is full of good men and women, who are now coming together in a walk of faith, families coming together, dignity back to the chair of president and governor.

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<sup>6</sup> **Video 6.3. Witzel, the violent righteous:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/SSR4qR2uPIU> Original Version <https://youtu.be/sIPu60lpDpg>

Wilson Witzel, as Federal Judge and a candidate for Governor, was proposing to carry out the proposed sanitisation project through the use of justice. Unlike the day when he felt obliged to present a more technical character to the security forces in Tijuca, it was clear that he now thought he could speak differently. He chose a tough, loud, emotional tone to continue: “I thank all the *farda* [military uniformed] brothers and sisters because after the military intervention, crime rates have been reduced... we will clean up the political sludge of our State.”

A huge poster on the float depicted the figure of the judge, dressed as a superhero and holding a hammer in his hand, and read: “Against corruption, vote 20.” On the cape of the figure, as if propelling the hero, was a portrait of Jair Bolsonaro. The message of this float was mainly directed at public security actors, the defence of their working conditions, and the construction of the enemy: the criminal, the vagrant, the slum-dweller, the trafficker, the establishment politician versus the good citizen. The candidate concluded his speech by exclaiming:

We are going to teach the children to be citizens in schools... we are going to begin a new era in our democracy. God bless our families.

Witzel’s discourse appealed to the punitive sense of justice. Justice could also be applied unequally. This characteristic was typical of colonial societies, where differences in judicial treatment were imposed as a founding model. Justice under Witzel would again be applied according to privilege. By saying that the *lixo* (“garbage”) had to be cleansed, Witzel was dehumanising that part of the population that would not deserve judicial treatment comparable to that for the good citizen. Furthermore, the current difference in treatment in the administration of conflicts was a sign of how the more privileged classes in Brazil were once again feeling the danger of the advance of egalitarian rights. In the face of this advance, Witzel proposed “putting the house in order,” that is, recovering the previous order, the one in which privileges were not at risk. To do so, though, it would be necessary to act violently.

The construction of this idea of justice was very present in the campaign. Bolsonaro would be the person who brought justice against the corrupt, and a judge would represent him in Rio, with a hammer. In his speech, Witzel also declared that justice had to be toughened up, firstly

in the penal code because punishments were too light, but also by arming people. This principle of the self-administration of justice had already encouraged initiatives such as the *Justicieros* (“the Righteous”), self-organised public security groups in the neighbourhoods. It was also to be applied to the ballot boxes, for which a voluntary group called “Prosecutors for Democracy” was being organised. Bolsonaro’s voters, besides being the bearers of truth, were also to be the bearers of justice against criminals.

The event showed the rhetoric of Witzel and *Bolsonarismo* in relation to their way of doing justice, a way that delegated to security forces the use of violence as a strategy to generate equality between the security forces and the criminal, without analysing the implications of a reaction to criminal activities that was answered with violence by the State.

When the speeches were over, the song *Chora Bandido (Cry Bandit)* was played. This was a version of the song sung during the *Chora Petista (Cry Petist)* campaign, but with lyrics dedicated to the construction of the bandit. Everyone sang while simulating with their hands the shape of a gun. The float allowed the audience to collectively construct defence mechanisms against the fears that *Bolsonarismo* itself fomented. The lyrics read: *Chora bandido, meliante. Com uma arma eu te pego no flagrante. Olé olé, eu quero uma arma para poder me defender* – “Cry bandit, thug. With a gun I’ll catch you in the act. Olé, I want a gun so I can defend myself.”

Under *Bolsonarismo*, criminals were to be understood as privileged people against whom one must act with the same measure received. An arbitrary justice would be imposed in a balanced reciprocity. In the words of an attendee at the rally: “if someone has killed, someone has to die.” In the face of stigmatised groups, Witzel’s justice would come to put “order in the house” with a metaphor that was equivalent to establishing a type of social order to prevent potential deviance, since any stigmatised person would potentially be an enemy likely to cause social chaos in the face of historically demarcated hierarchies.

### 6.5. The WhatsApp of Witzel’s supporters: violence in the classification of the enemy.

In this section, *Bolsonarismo*’s enemy category is classified through a specific case study: Wilson Witzel’s WhatsApp groups. The choice of this specific element arose because in October 2019, the company WhatsApp publicly recognised that mass messages had been sent through contracts with companies in the 2018 election campaign. The Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* investigated the matter. It demonstrated the relationships between the owners of these companies and the candidates. At the end of 2019, though, the High Electoral Court (TSE) refused to initiate proceedings to investigate the mass messages sent via WhatsApp.



Figure 6.5: WhatsApp memes from Wilson Witzel’s WhatsApp supporter group (Source: Bayarri).

Nevertheless, it is clear that Wilson Witzel had a powerful network in place for the distribution of images and information. Studies by Datafolha consider that 81% of *Bolsonarismo* electors



were contacted by the social media, mainly through WhatsApp. In a country with more telephones than people, but where only 60% of the population has access to the internet, WhatsApp had become one of the main sources of information during the Brazilian election campaign of 2018. In addition, that year 97% of smartphones included WhatsApp as a zero tariff application. In other words, consumers had unlimited use of the application, even though they did not have unlimited data. Without internet connection, or with their data plans exhausted, many people only had access to information directly shared by WhatsApp, without being able to open the links on the internet to qualify the information or check it against other news.

In his book *Memes in Digital Culture* (2014), Shifman defines internet memes as deliberately created units of digital content with common features, which many users disseminate, imitate and transform via the internet. Examples of humour as a code that can normalise violence take place through a complex network of discursive logic in which the weak boundary between offence and humour is manifested in a relationship of constant tension. Two highly political operations occur when sending memes. The first is the conversion into humour of a devastating critique of political figures, thus minimising it. Second is the establishment of ridicule when faced with criticism, which will be interpreted as a lack of humour with respect to a message that would have had friendly components, given the sender. To those who send memes, sarcastic criticism, satire and even the metaphorical dehumanisation of individual persons such as celebrities, and the obscene sexualisation of messages, are all humorous.

This section is partly supported by a case study that was conducted in collaboration with Concepcion Fernandez Villanueva (see Fernández-Villanueva and Bayarri, 2021). This case study showed the main memes that had contributed, in the election campaign, to the construction of the *Bolsonarismo* story on WhatsApp, and to the trivialisation and legitimisation of its violent project. It specifically following the main groups of Wilson Witzel sympathisers on WhatsApp during the election campaign. One hundred and thirty-seven memes were systematised and classified in this study. The study showed that the category of enemy could be broken down in memetic communication into the following elements: the category was constructed as a contrast between the heroism of the leading characters

(Bolsonaro supporters) and the devaluation, stereotyping and dehumanisation of the enemies; attacks against feminism and LGBTQI+ groups; racism against Afro-Brazilians (and indigenous Brazilians) through the criminalisation of poverty; anti-intellectualism; and scatological language with respect to the political opposition.

The objective of the study was to reveal the influence of humour and irony specifically in the memes in the construction of political violence and the construction of the enemy in the phenomenon of *Bolsonarismo*. Humour is a type of language with its own codes, which are interpreted in a determined way in specific communities. The incongruent relationship between the various elements of a meme, such as within the image itself, or between the image and the text, obliges the viewer to fill in the gaps, to “resolve the puzzle” (Shifman, 2014: 941). This allows the argument underlying the meme and its humour to be understood as an effect related to the resolution of the incongruity. Thus, in the process of constructing an understanding of violence, for instance, the humour and its implicit violence will appear to take precedence over a process of reflection by the recipient of the memes regarding the legitimacy of the actual source of information that the meme transmits. It will satisfy pleasure and the desire for domination and supremacy over the enemy (as a category that has been deconstructed) rather than the need to determine the level of truth of either the meme or the source.

Humorous memes constructed on a violent ideological basis are legitimised in the process of collective recognition that is produced when sharing them. The grounds through which the humoristic rhetoric of the memes provides a normalisation of a violent ideology are linked to the space of meaning occupied by humour in the public sphere. Humour is understood as something that should not be taken seriously, highlighting the comic, ridiculous or funny side of a context. However, the *Bolsonarismo* memes showed an intense use of violence against the opposition and those who were not supporters. Beneath the comedy lay insults, disdain, prejudice, stereotyping, devaluation, degradation and dehumanisation (Fernández-Villanueva and Bayarri, 2021).

## 6.6. Conclusions – The normalisation of violence in metaphorical thinking

Throughout the chapter, the values latent in the metaphor of *Bandido bom é bandido morto* (“A good bandit is a dead bandit”) have been broken down. The main element that made this metaphor so functional was the structural violence that ran through the collective imagination that shared a colonial history that itself structured violence.

The metaphor “a good bandit is dead bandit” establishes the dominance of one concept in terms of another: a “good” bandit (origin domain) = a dead bandit (destiny domain), thus metaphorically employing the term “dead” to specify the only natural condition available to a bandit who might want to be considered good or productive of some kind of good for the society. The metaphor thereby justifies the use of violence against bandits. The normalisation of, and adherence to this metaphor are understood through a metaphorical colonial sense. In a society that was founded on the appropriation of human beings, there is already a violent structure in institutions that facilitates the historical normalisation of violence, so that the violence of Bolsonarist rhetoric is not necessarily decoded as a negative element, but as a factor in combating violence itself, a more natural element to be resorted to in order to achieve certain ends. In the case of *Bolsonarismo*, this involves pacifying the country by ridding the good citizens of their enemies. Like the colonial invasions, *Bolsonarismo* speaks of the collectives it classifies as enemies as a mob that must be subjugated for the honour of God and Christian prosperity, although updating the classifications by calling them “bums,” “vagabonds” and other adjectives that stigmatise vulnerable populations and help to construct the good citizen versus the bandit frontline, thus reinforcing that these bandit populations have been gaining too many rights.

The political project of *Bolsonarismo* thus constructs a reality in which “We” and “the Others” are completely opposed in their representation and social value. The “We” is accompanied by the description of brave intellectual heroes (always white), supported by religion; while “the Others” are associated with stereotyped, depraved, degraded and dehumanised features. Dehumanisation is based on images of animalisation, privation of intelligence and sociability, and on connotations of danger, degradation and repulsion that coincide with various of the

connotations of what is now the classic concept of dehumanisation of Haslam (2006). Degradation leads to the conversion of the opponents into waste and excrement.

What *Bolsonarismo* also shows, though, is that this legitimisation of violence does not prevent the hegemony of power by conservative sectors, but rather its opposite: fears of the weakness of the social order in a systemic crisis that could affect the forms of management and distribution of privileges drives it. The salvationist concept, which justifies violence in the face of such activated fear and terror, is what allows these actors to organise themselves as the hegemonic power, demonstrating how emotional forces can organise a hierarchical political project that reaches down to the grassroots.

Part of the claim of the good citizen that *Bolsonarismo* articulates is constructed on the basis of this citizen as a *national* being, that, in opposition to minority groups, must be vindicated. *Bolsonarismo* succeeds with these elements in dignifying a violent conquering action, as well as normalising such violence as part of the logic necessary for the reconstruction of its social order articulated mainly by the upper classes. The trivialisation of violence is central to this logic, through which people normalise acts, establish identities opposed to human rights, justifying any action. In this project, beggars, blacks, and transvestites can be killed. The project of sanitising the city begins by classifying them as *bandidos*. This also fits into an aesthetic project of society with supremacist traits that does not allow the existence of inharmonious elements, such as these disordered groups.

Historical negation acts as a form of Bolsonarist vindication and legitimisation. In this way, *Bolsonarismo* denies the genocide and ethnocide that began in the colonial period, saying, in the case of influencer Olavo de Carvalho, that it was the Africans themselves who colonised each other, and that the Europeans ended up liberating them. Something similar happens with the denial of the military dictatorships, since the Bolsonarist identity uses militarism to articulate its chain of equivalences so that it denies the torture and violence committed during that period, or, in some cases, accepts and legitimises them, normalising violence once again.

Finally, the humour in the Bolsonarist project is noteworthy here, as it further allows any resistance to such violence to be naturalised, as well as providing legitimate outlets for the

Bolsonarist to issue sexist, homophobic, racist, or ultra-religious messages without entailing social punishment, making these humorous codes that present the structural violence of the Bolsonarist project more flexible in constructing them.

Through the monitoring of the electoral events of the gubernatorial candidate Wilson Witzel, it can be observed how the metaphor of the bandit acquired credibility and a following by adhering to the imaginary, and configuring emotional beliefs of profoundly historical origin in which the war against evil justifies the use of violence, which, in turn, becomes normalised in this metaphorical thinking.



**PART THREE**

**DEEP STORIES OF THE BOLSONARIST VOTER**

*Don't let history go out.*

Slam Poetry





## Chapter 7 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 7.1. “Put order and clean the house.” The universe of a humble pro-Bolsonarist family</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/0AQGqtD84Ao">https://youtu.be/0AQGqtD84Ao</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/mK74LikJnNU">https://youtu.be/mK74LikJnNU</a>	Section 7.3	205

## Chapter 7: A BUS BETWEEN TWO UNIVERSES

### Intersecting life stories: The shared metaphor of different social classes

#### 7.1. Introduction – Class Voting and Metaphorical Voting

While in the second part of the thesis I studied how *Bolsonarismo*, in its electoral campaigns, articulated metaphors that appealed to deep thought. I now discuss how these metaphors were introduced into people's imagination and experiences, that is, how the metaphors of Bolsonarist rhetoric had an impact on people. In addition to the participant observation of the events analysed earlier in the thesis, during the electoral campaign I was also able to gather several life stories in-depth, to help further my understanding of the complexities and environments that were part of people's everyday lives.

Thus, this chapter presents an analysis of the universe of two families, a lower working-class family and an upper-middle-class family, with whom I lived daily for three months, trying to understand the various "deep stories" (Hochschild, 2016) that enabled an upper-middle-class person to share the voting intentions of a lower-class person.<sup>1</sup> Only through the sum of the votes of both these social classes could the victory of Bolsonaro be assured. Jairo Nicolau's book, *O Brasil dobrou a direita (Brazil has bent to the right)* (2020), based on an in-depth quantitative study of the socio-economic profiles of the Bolsonaro voter in 2018 using education as an indicator of economic condition, states that for the first time since the Workers' Party's victory in 2002, people with basic and intermediate levels of education both voted in the majority for Bolsonaro, except in the north-eastern region of the country. The study had divided voters according to whether they had a basic, intermediate, or higher levels of education. Bolsonaro was the candidate most voted for by all three educational levels. This was the paradox this thesis has sought to understand.

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<sup>1</sup> The specification of class here is according to income, however, it will become apparent through the discussion that the same classification could have been made across a number of planes. The categorisation according to income levels can be found in the introduction to the thesis.

The argument is that beyond the social class perspective, these people shared foundational metaphors that Bolsonaro was able to tap into to make him the most interesting candidate for them, even though in material terms, he was promoting a model of privatisation and neoliberal exaltation that could hardly be positive for the labour rights of the working classes. The thesis has been arguing that the vote was not cast in terms of class, but through shared motivations and emotions that are revealed in the take up of the metaphors used in the Bolsonaro campaign and that were shared among the various segments of the population. Some were more relevant to one segment rather than another, but most could agree on basic premises such as the need for “order in the house.”

Arlie Hochschild’s concept of “Deep Stories” (2016) form the theoretical basis of the chapter. Deep Stories is understood as the life stories that people construct, around which their logical system of values, beliefs, and attributions of meaning revolves. These are the stories that people believe about themselves, and about the society in which they live. In relation to the topic of this chapter, the premise is that people can vote against their economic needs if they can be persuaded to vote according to their “emotional needs” (Hochschild, 2016). Bolsonaro offers answers to these needs embedded in deep stories through the metaphors that shape the belief and value systems of different individuals, and that many of them share.

The biographical method outlined by Pujadas (1992) is of particular importance here, as it describes a method of systematisation of information from life histories, understanding them as case studies, but also alerting researchers to the difficulties in representing them. Thus, it is not a question of understanding a sample of the voter, but of analysing the interactions and construction of the metaphorical logics of the ethnography carried out. Pujadas distinguishes the study of life stories according to parallel narrative or cross-narrative methods. In this chapter, I present a cross-over narrative. In this way, I hope to show how metaphors can converge.

To achieve this, the chapter is organised as follows: in the second part, “A bus between two universes,” I cross the stories of the two families to understand their different motivations. In the third part, “The universe of a humble pro-Bolsonarist family,” and in the fourth part, “The universe of an upper-middle-class family with different opinions,” I marshal the different ways

of expressing a deep thought linked to social order. As I argue in the conclusion, each lies in the deep metaphor of “putting order in the house.”

## **7.2. A bus between two universes**

In this section I tell the stories of a cleaner from a poor neighbourhood and the family of the house where she works. All of them are Bolsonaro supporters; however, different motivations can be observed in their life-stories.<sup>2</sup> This section relates the life stories. In the following sections the explanations that each of these people had for voting for Bolsonaro’s project are discussed.

The story begins with a bus that travels daily between a poor neighbourhood and a high-level-class apartment complex. The bus crosses the peripheral neighbourhoods, the *favelas*, and the large constructions that characterise the chaos of the working class areas of Rio de Janeiro. It finally arrives at the wealthy apartment complex of Barra da Tijuca, Bolsonaro’s neighbourhood, where a woman gets off: a cleaning worker called Roberta. She transits between two worlds, in both of which she is told who to vote for: Bolsonaro and the candidates supported by him. She has a military son and doesn’t care about politics; her disaffection and discrediting are high. She doesn’t think politicians will solve her problems. Roberta starts the campaign period without knowing who she will vote for, she listens to her boss in the Barra neighbourhood, Firenze, who does not want to vote for Bolsonaro. Her boss’s husband, however, is clear that he will vote for Bolsonaro. Firenze is an upper-middle-class retired man from a humbler background than hers. Firenze likes Roberta as a person and as a worker and has enormous affection and respect for her. Many people say that Bolsonaro is against women and the poor. She is a woman and poor, but her boss respects her.

Roberta’s husband, Gustavo, is also a humble man, an ambulance driver. Both live in a small house in a poor neighbourhood, trying to preach generosity,

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used in this chapter.

humility, honesty, and joy. Both voted for Lula a long time ago. This time, however, the whole family will vote for Bolsonaro. Roberta will vote for whom Gustavo has told her, as she does not like politics, but she trusts her husband blindly, as he effectively manages many other decisions at home, not necessarily related to politics. Roberta's son is in the military, and will also vote for Bolsonaro, although his wife will not. Roberta's daughter-in-law posts messages on the networks saying that Bolsonaro is a chauvinist, and Roberta feels a little offended, but quickly smiles and continues cleaning in a good mood.

Roberta, like many millions of people in the State of Rio de Janeiro, does not feel any approach to politics, she has enough to do with cooking, working, and taking care of her house and family. When questioned about Bolsonaro's ideas she says she does not know his proposals, but she has heard from her husband and other family members that he will be a great president. Gustavo assumes that Bolsonaro is not perfect, that he may have made mistakes, but he is in favour of some issues, such as more protection for his class. He voted for Lula on other occasions and does not think of Bolsonaro as a danger, but as a dignification of his class, a military man, who after all means order, who will help him and his family feel safer to live in a humble neighbourhood.

Gustavo's cousin, Pedro, will also vote for Bolsonaro. He is a humble man, has worked in various places, and helps his community: in collaboration with the church and with a personal Jiu-Jitsu project that he organises altruistically to help humble people to integrate into the community. Pedro's partner is a black woman, who will also vote for Bolsonaro, and is outraged by the theft she believes has taken place by the PT. Her neighbourhood is a blue-collar neighbourhood, people spend long hours a day in transit and get up extremely early to get to their jobs, earning a small wage to survive on. The traffic on the bus is unbearable for many, but it can be managed with patience. Many do not make it. Firenze himself, who lives in the wealthy neighbourhood of Barra da

Tijuca, has suffered the bus daily for the past 30 years. The traffic jam seems to be a space for class reconstruction. Regardless of your origin, whether you leave from Barra or Rocha, Avenida das Américas makes sure that all *carioca* neighbours are equal. At home, people are not accustomed to these waits, as they constantly resort to family support and favours to obtain small everyday privileges: from food to a small glass of water, these are details that show how hierarchies are built in homes and families that later, when the traffic jam arrives, turn them upside down, like in a carnival, and rebuild relations of equality.

Bolsonaro often reminds us that he will help to improve the efficiency of the administration, as he calls it, de-bureaucratising any kind of process. This seems to be of the utmost importance, as the queues involved are tiring for Firenze, who often prefers to opt for private alternatives that facilitate and speed up his dealings.

Firenze gradually stopped believing in the State, that superior being that people treated as a divine personality, although in his opinion there was nothing divine about it, quite the contrary: the State should disappear. Firenze's comforts would then be greatly improved. The State has shown in recent years that it is not only useless, but also mismanages, and even worse: it steals. This is when Firenze becomes indignant: how is it possible that the State, which is supposed to protect us, steals my money? Firenze claims that all his years of work he has been a born taxpayer, a good citizen, despite having had to send his daughters to public schools, and has always paid privately for his health and travel insurance. Firenze, at first, would have wanted the State to improve, in a dream to be like the northern European countries that tout their welfare system worldwide. But Brazil is not Norway, nor Sweden, nor Finland, nor Denmark... Brazil is the country of chaos, of the *malandro*, of the *bandido*, who is everywhere. The *bandido* is beginning to be everywhere, as Bolsonaro, who is the only one with the courage to point the finger at him, is already pointing out.

And there are so many *bandidos* in Brazil that even the president is always a *bandido*. It seems that the Brazilian has this distinction in his blood. Firenze then says he feels rage and impotence, with the contradictions of his hatred for the state that makes his life difficult and the passions that make him fall in love with his country: Firenze is a great guitarist of *chourinho*, proudly Brazilian music, which represents the beauty that can be produced from the mixture of cultures and traditions. Firenze reads poetry, although recently, perhaps because of the fervour of his environment, he has started to read Olavo de Carvalho, which has helped him to clear some of his contradictions.

Thanks to these readings, Firenze is beginning to unveil and organise his ideas: he has felt for a few years now, perhaps since 2013, that his voice is not an individual one, that many people think like him, and this gives him confidence. Firenze, who spoke well of President Dilma in 2010, took after part in the *caceroladas* (protests with pots and pans) in favour of Dilma's impeachment. Being active makes him feel more of a citizen, that is to say, with more rights and capacity to think, to say, to shout, and to convince. Firenze also has a Twitter account where he is gaining a lot of followers, and where he can reaffirm certain ideas. It is very curious to note the difference in Firenze's vocabulary when he writes on his account and when he speaks. Firenze is a person of extremely good manners: he is polite, smiles, listens, and gives his opinion with harmony and musicality. However, when he writes on Twitter, a flame is lit, and he insults and shouts at his enemies, who are also Brazil's enemies.

Firenze also finds other contradictions: he likes to attend the demonstrations, a place where democracy and freshness are in the air, but he returns home, where he has to hide his firm positions, having to listen to those of the rest of his family, wife, and daughters, all of whom are opposed to his political position. Firenze thinks they are wrong. There has been a huge exercise in the manipulation of the masses, and this infuriates Firenze, because it makes him

think that every time he has to convince his family he is also having to fight, in his own home, against these manipulators.

Firenze is clear: who are these manipulators? When he was born, he could walk around his neighbourhood of Jacarepaguá, he felt at ease. Life was humble, but there were not so many problems, and people thought about working and helping their families, as he often did when he started earning money. However, time went by and everything became more complicated. Many people indeed called that period Dictatorship, and Firenze has been hearing that term for many years. At first, he assumed it as part of how history is told, but little by little he began to wake up: why do they call it a dictatorship? Didn't we live better in that period? As far as he knows anyone around him suffered any evil or torture, so isn't all this a paranoid invention of a sector of society that wants them to be divided between those who think it was a good time and those who don't?

From these reflections, Firenze reaches his answers: there was no such period of dictatorship, as Firenze has begun to read authors who deny it. It is a conspiracy to divide people. Besides, what is wrong with the military? Didn't they help control crime and corruption? In a way, they brought order to the house, and although they could be authoritarian, they were good people. Firenze remembers looking down on the military with hatred when he was young and feels he was naïve. He thinks that the military did not know how to use the right clothes to convey more warmth and closeness to the population, but perhaps that was at the same time something important, because certain standards had to be maintained, something that in Brazil if it is not the military, seems difficult to achieve.

Thus, Firenze began to understand that many other countries were falling into the hands of bad people, being run by corrupt people, taking away the value of the democracy he defended. In this sense, Firenze has a very interesting idea: if the corrupt have arrived in Brazil, and have destroyed democracy, only by



allowing the army to regain control can “order in the house” be restored, and clean democracy be restored once again.

Among the contradictions in which he lives, Firenze loves Rio de Janeiro, but he cannot stand what is happening to his beautiful city, the city where he grew up, earned money, made his family, and gained status and reputation. Little by little, Rio has become overrun with criminal areas, people can't go out at night, only indoors can people feel safe. The city is spoiling, it is dirty, and it is terrible to see poverty sleeping in the streets. Who is responsible for this situation? Obviously, the people who control the State. Even the only possibility to feel safe, which would be with the police, is being made difficult because now the human rights defenders do not allow the police to take care of your family in such a dangerous city.

So the *bandidos* are taking over the country and in the name of what? Of supposedly good ideas, of equality, of solidarity... Firenze is convinced that behind these values there is something that he has been hearing for some time, a larger project, articulated between different countries, which aims to align people's minds so that they can steal at will, to divide their society into thousands of factions, between gays and straights, between feminists and men, between blacks and whites... and the leaders talk of revolution, of many other countries where revolutions have been made. These revolutions must always have been carried out in the name of communism, Marxism... there are many ways of calling the enemy, but they are all “leftists.” Firenze says he is not racist at all, he lives with the blacks who work in his apartment complex and with many others in his daily life in the city. He has no problem with women either, as he respects and listens to them, and not only that, but he has helped with his education and wages to help his family get ahead. But communism is putting an end to this: annoyingly, Firenze was forced to constantly justify himself, to explain that he has no problem with anyone. So he's had enough, and all that accumulated rage has come out from inside him, and he's made it

public, he's built himself a Twitter account, he's bought books, he's taken to the streets. He wants to recover his country for his people, a country he loves, a country he is proud of because it is the country of his parents, from whom he learned a series of values that he holds in high esteem, such as hard work.

Firenze must at the same time deal with the contradictions of the women in his house, those he loves as a father and husband, but with whom he does not agree at all. It is very violent to constantly receive their messages, all of them against him, bad-mouthing his candidate, who represents an honest and sincere way of doing politics, who has generously taken a step to contribute against the problems that Brazil is experiencing because of its *bandidos*. His wife and daughters think that Bolsonaro is a chauvinist, a racist, and a homophobe and that therefore, anyone who votes for him is somehow also a chauvinist by supporting his ideas. However, Firenze is convinced that his leader's views have an honest purpose, which can often be cruder than he would like, but is part of his honesty and sincerity. Deep down, he thinks that he needs to be understood and that many people will be too contaminated by the communist conspiracy against Bolsonaro, which has all the visible powers against him, such as the media.

In the Firenze neighborhood many people would go to vote for Bolsonaro, many good citizens who understood the situation and would proudly wear their Brazilian football national team T-shirt on voting days. Some thought that Bolsonaro and his family represented an unrefined project for what they might expect from a serious conservative project, but in the end, their sincerity and ability to speak plainly, representing everyone's problems, outweighed their prejudices towards the candidate.

Firenze recently saw how his leader was attacked, and it made him feel as if he had been stabbed. How could such evil be possible? So he understood that the enemy was willing to do anything to destroy his country and to break it apart. His candidate had barely enough money to run a campaign, he had been stabbed

and had no space on television, and on top of that, he had to watch his wife and daughters attend feminist marches against Bolsonaro?

Gustavo, Pedro, and Pedro's wife also shared this unease, as they had high expectations of Bolsonaro to improve the situation. In the case of this family, they were all aligned with the Bolsonaro project. Some of its members did not know much about his project, like Roberta or his daughter, but the husband, the son, and his cousin were very well informed, and in their house, "everyone goes together," so they were proud to keep the family project together by representing it in the unity of their vote.

After two hours by bus and two connections, Roberta finally arrives at Barra's house at dawn. Firenze and his family joke with her, invite her for coffee, and treat her with great affection while she cleans their house.



**Figure 7.1: Condominium and Rocha Miranda neighbourhood** (Source: Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons).

In this intersecting universe can be seen how life histories provide a unique perspective of analysis, since the accounts achieved can be understood as the accumulated results of the network of interactions of these people. Thus, as authors such as Ferrarotti (1988) have pointed out, through every day the small practices, the person's metaphorical thinking can be observed. In the following sections, these interconnected universes are broken down.

### 7.3. The universe of a humble pro-Bolsonarist family

In this section, I show the universe of Roberta's family, a humble Bolsonarist family. Through her family's stories, I identify the main shared metaphor as: "Put order in the house."

Roberta and Gustavo's neighbourhood was located in Campo Grande, a working class neighbourhood in the west of Rio de Janeiro. It was made up of small, low houses with their courtyards. Roberta's street seemed quiet. Several people gathered in nearby boats and chatted. Interactions were close, and from what they tell us, everyone knew each other. "No one would do anything to my daughter, everyone knows Gustavinho," exclaimed Roberta's husband, who weighed more than 125 kg.

Gustavinho had a ponytail and a trimmed beard, wandered shirtless through his garden and wore a gold cross around his neck. We entered the garden through a small gate. Roberta had prepared a meal for us consisting of hot dogs in sauce, *aipim* with butter and lemon mousse, and Swiss lemonade. I am ashamed to tell her that I don't eat meat, to which she replied "sausage was not meat!" Roberta put huge amounts of sugar in the coffee, and I remembered reading Hochschild, who had described how "politicians even want to tell us what to eat." In a way, the type of food that was customary in the working-class neighbourhoods was also a political positioning, of affections towards a model of life that cut across the social and economic divide. The quantity of food on the table was basic. The woman as the cook was also traditional. The area outside the house was where the man was in charge. There Gustavinho was building an area to rent out for birthday parties, and while he was at work he raised chickens and collected their eggs, which his wife did not eat. Gustavinho ran the *churrasqueira* (Brazilian barbeque) and was about to buy some ribs for our arrival. The sugar and rice must be white, for whole foods were regarded with suspicion, as was our vegetarianism, which was almost threatening to their principles.

Gustavinho had a photo with his son, who was in the Amazonia region as a military rifleman, and wanted to be promoted: "The conflicts in the streets of Rio are coffee with milk [an expression meaning "very easy"] in comparison with the training we receive," Gustavinho said his son had said. A chihuahua puppy accompanied Gustavinho, giving a comical image,

although he admitted to having a pit bull mixed with a boxer tethered inside the house, which he usually let loose to protect the courtyard. Gustavinho thought the area was relatively safe, but it was his seniority in the neighbourhood and his large family living nearby that really made him feel safe. He also felt safe knowing that he had a gun inside the house, and explained that following the criminal's rules if someone entered his house he would kill and bury them: "just like they do."

Gustavinho explained his life trajectory at length. He couldn't say whether he was left-wing or right-wing, but he defined himself as poor and explained various situations in which he had lived with violence. As with other people I had interviewed, he shared the idea that it was necessary to put an end to privileges, and in the face of privatisation, he said that the state should regulate the maximum profits earned by a businessman who took over a company that used to be state-owned. It seems that, in this sense, he did see the point of the state, unlike Firenze.

Gustavinho voted for Lula in his two terms in office, and acknowledged that during the Lula government he was able to buy things he didn't have before, such as a car or a fridge. However, the various corruption cases had made him decide to vote for Bolsonaro. He provided several examples to explain what the country needed: the country does not need a *mamãe* ("a mama," referring to what would be more integration-based policies) but a *papãe* ("daddy"), and he added that Brazil needed someone to "put order in the house." Naturalised machismo permeated Gustavinho's entire discourse, and through this metaphor Gustavinho showed that, from his point of view, Brazil was disordered, in an abnormal state that required a masculinised, violent toughness capable of restoring the lost order. Another metaphor Gustavinho used was that of the dog (representing the people) that approaches the master (Lula) and receives, on the one hand, a piece of *mortadella* (social improvements and aid) and on the other *a tapa* (a slap, in reference to corruption): "And yet the people continue to vote for him," he exclaimed. Gustavinho, like many people of his socio-economic status, had access to the PT's developmentalist project, gaining purchasing power and being able to participate as an active consumer in the market. However, corruption, violence and the moral values of

*Lulismo* (actors who configured Lula's political and ideological project) had made him decide to support Bolsonaro.

Regarding Bolsonaro's values, Gustavinho did not seem to have listened to the trio of God, Homeland and Family. However, defining God as the creator of everything, he believed that Bolsonaro did not follow the word of God, as the ten commandments said: "Thou shalt not kill." Homeland was the defence of values, to which he believed that one could also be a left-wing patriot (contradicting the discourse of one of the Templars I had interviewed), and about the family as the nucleus of everything, and even more so these days. In this way, Gustavinho reaffirmed the point that in the face of the helplessness of the state, people turned to institutions such as God, the family, and the homeland. Gustavinho, speaking of the family, believed that it was made up of a man and a woman. He gave an example that stigmatised other ways of understanding sexuality: "if you like to eat poo it's your thing... if you like to give your ass to a guy, it's your thing." In this way he compared such practices to homosexuality, denigrating it while denying such denigration. He said he did not agree with adoption by gay couples but accepted it. About the media, he admitted that they told many lies and that he did not watch TV. His main source of information was Facebook and WhatsApp. His testimony showed that the different ways of understanding Brazil from a plurality were synonymous with the disorder of traditions, which could be stigmatised and in the face of which the "order of the house" had to be recovered, that is, lost values had to be defended.

We ate together. Both Roberta and Gustavinho repeated several times that the family would "go all together," reflecting pride in the thought that a family would all vote for the same candidate, as a form of family unity and loyalty. Thus, they offered to take me to meet their cousin, Pedro, who lived in a house next to theirs, and who was like a brother to Gustavinho. Pedro also intended to vote for Bolsonaro as part of the family, so I said goodbye and headed to this relative's house several days later.

Pedro was a man of about seventy years old.<sup>3</sup> He was a *Jiu-Jitsu* teacher and had worked in the army and as a craftsman. His house mixed elements of a neighbourhood bar, a cultural space,

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<sup>3</sup> **Video 7.1. "Put order and clean the house." The universe of a humble pro-Bolsonarist family:** Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/OAQGqtD84Ao> Original Version <https://youtu.be/mK74LikJnNU>

and, next to it, a sports space. Pedro also participated in a church, where he performed a social function through sport. Approximately eighty children were involved in the project: “We have seen everything, children who have been raped, abandoned....” explained Pedro.

We began by talking about his life trajectory, and then turned to violence. Pedro had emigrated as a child from Portugal so that his family could build the embankment of the Aterro do Flamengo neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro. He told me that life today was much worse than it used to be, that you can be held up with a gun while driving: “I’ve worked with security many times,” Pedro said, pulling his shirt aside and showing me the scar of a gunshot wound on his shoulder, while he pointed:

A .357 Magnum had already come in here. This was from a mugging, with a handgun, but nowadays they use 7.92 x 57 mm calibres, which are machine guns of war.

Pedro believed that violence was increasing, that buying a gun costs 50 or 60 reais: “Brazil was in a war,” he explained, and said we had to respond by “cleaning the house.” Pedro’s testimony also used the metaphor of the “house” as the Brazil that needed to be reorganised, tidied up or cleaned up. Neighbours passed by on the street, and greeted him warmly from the window, to which he replied: “God bless you.”

Pedro defended a military intervention in Congress and said that there was never a dictatorship in Brazil and that he “super-supported” Bolsonaro. He thought that for things to improve it was necessary for the army to “take control” and from there “clean the house” and organise elections. He criticised the drift of the military police:

The military police no longer exist; you don’t know whether you die for being a *bandido* or for being a policeman. The militia works like this: there are just policemen who are in active service and policemen who have been expelled. It was a mafia. The policeman steals because they earn little, and that’s how they get corrupted.

Pedro thought that more than 70% of policemen were corrupt: “They knock on your door and you don’t know if it’s a policeman or a militiaman.” Bolsonaro represented the attempt to fight crime with guns, not poetry:

If they come with two rifles, you have to go with twenty. No human rights, no nuns, no priests, no pastors, they’re going to blow you up anyway. Some politicians say that we have to improve with more education; I agree, but now it works that either you die or you take the gun.

Pedro says he supported the army because he had experienced it first-hand:

It starts from a belief in an institution that refers to a set of morally correct values. Bolsonaro can improve things, in the economy too, but it won’t happen in 4 or 8 years. But only from him will it get better, and the *bandidos* know it. It is clear that Brazil is at war, and that many people will die when Bolsonaro wins; however, these deaths will have a purpose, and not like now, when people die for no reason. Bolsonaro offers international confidence. We must replace guns with books, but little by little.

Pedro says Bolsonaro had to help to clean the house as much as he can. “That’s how you clean the filth, little by little.” Pedro frequently resorted to this metaphor of the house, mainly to refer to the problems linked to violence, a violence that had worsened and needed to be answered through state violence.

Accounts of such universes, as Passerini (1987) notes, combine real and imaginary elements, such as unconfirmed data mixed with personal lived experiences. These informants spoke of “putting things in order” in reference to a supposedly better past, which, however, there was no evidence of ever having existed.. Thus, the informants’ memory can be understood as a production of meanings and interpretations. In a metaphorical sense, the subjects, in their various accounts, all appealed to the concept of order, linking this concept mainly to the control of violence and retrieval of traditional values. In resorting to the metaphor of “putting the house in order” and “cleaning the house,” Brazil was understood as a house that needed to recover another form of coexistence.



#### **7.4. The universe of an upper-middle-class family with different opinions**

In this section, I show the universe of Firenze's family, an upper-middle-class family with differing opinions. Through this family's accounts, I identify the main metaphor shared among the Bolsonarist members of his family, that of "putting the house in order," but introduced into this metaphor were other, new meanings not apparent with the previous subjects. In this case, macroeconomics was a relevant element that coexisted with the concern about violence and loss of traditional values that had monopolised the concern of the previous testimonies.

Camila, Firenze's wife, had a very different political stance from that of her husband. She told me her life story: she had been born in Jacarepaguá, a humble, but not a poor neighbourhood in Rio. Throughout her life, she said she had worked in IT, studied literature, and had become a primary school teacher. Today she was retired, having taken early retirement at the age of fifty, which she combined with doing spiritual work in faith centres. Camila said she believed in spiritualism. Her family consisted of a Catholic mother and a Protestant father who had converted to Umbanda as a saint's father because of his spiritual connection abilities, which Camila shared.

Camila's spirituality affected her way of understanding the world, and specifically politics. She defined herself as a "centre-left" person, as she believed that people should have public basic services at their disposal, such as education and health, which she associated with a left-wing project, but that once these were in place, they should be allowed to grow on their own. She called this meritocracy, and related it to a "centre" project.

Camila thought that she had helped improve her living conditions, although her husband, Firenze, had managed to develop a fuller professional life because she took care of their daughters. She considered that her husband wanted a traditional (conservative) family, however, before getting married, Firenze wanted a separation of property, which she related to a liberal mind. Although this separation of property was not consummated, it was understood from the beginning of their relationship that the money from their salaries should be managed by each of them, and not in a shared way. In this way, Camila, once caring for her daughters, became more dependent on her husband's money, as it was not considered a shared resource.

This system of “economic loans” generated in her a gift that she ended up having to satisfy in various day-to-day tasks at home, generally associated with cleaning and food. Her daughter considered that her father’s vote for Bolsonaro, who claimed to defend gender equality, was based on hypocrisy, as he would not have supported such egalitarian practices in his own home.

On violence, Camila described a traumatic experience when she was living in another apartment in the same neighbourhood of Barra da Tijuca. She said that assailants had broken into her house, and planted guns on her and her husband. All she could think of at the time was to call the police. Camila did not think that the police were racist, nor that they acted differently against the poor than against the rich. However, Camila did not want the army to have a presence on the streets: she considered it aggressive and violent. Regarding Bolsonaro, she believed that he would be terrible for Brazil, given the situation he lived in concerning violence. She considered that there was a great contradiction in the discourse of support for military intervention: the army in the military period had created Statal companies, and yet Bolsonaro, using the army as a saviour, was saying that now they must be privatised. Regarding the values of God, Homeland and Family, Camila believed that Bolsonaro was trying to appropriate these terms for electoral gain. Moreover, using God in his speech was a way of saying that he was a messiah to whom God transmitted messages about how Brazil should be managed, and Camila felt anger at this idea, since he was not God’s representative, given the hate speech he preached. She said that God must be felt by everyone; it wasn’t up to Bolsonaro to explain it to the rest. She did not believe that he would be a more honest politician. She thought that if Bolsonaro won the elections it would be a tremendous disgrace, and joked about emigrating from the country. Given the possibility of the PT winning, Camila said she thought the army would intervene in Brazil.

In the afternoon she was to meet with the family of Firenze’s brother, Luiz, and his wife, Miriam. They were a couple in their sixties who intended to vote for Bolsonaro. Luiz worked in the engineering sector but had become unemployed a couple of years ago, according to them, as a result of the corruption crisis at Petrobras. Several outsourced companies were forced to break their contracts and had to close down and lay off workers. However, Luiz advocated for

greater market flexibilisation, which would probably allow for similar dismissal processes. Miriam studied literature and was a primary school teacher.

Both admitted that they had been PT voters and that when they were young they would never have seen themselves voting for a candidate like Bolsonaro. However, “the country can’t support anymore,” and both intended voting for Bolsonaro. They said they fully agreed with his project. They accepted the possibility that he may have received tips in his long political career. However, they recognised that “he says what we want to hear.”

In this family conversation, at first only the men spoke, and they mixed up the various problems they considered the country had, concluding by saying that they would support the army entering the congress to “put order in the house” and then hold democratic elections. Firenze had been encouraged to find family members with whom he could share his views. They believed that the country was not in a position to hold clean elections, and for this, they blamed structural corruption and Venezuela. They thought that the Brazilian electronic voting system was managed through a Venezuelan company, and was already facilitating the discrediting of the results of October 2018, and the media. One issue on the public agenda was the printed ballot as legitimate for Brazilian democracy.

The men thought that there should be no affirmative action policies, no help for women because they thought that all these classifications were created by the left to break the social order. The solution would be objective education. The women, however, disagreed with this idea, even though Camila remained rather silent. On countless occasions Luiz repeated phrases such as “put order,” “put order in the house,” and “respect.” The way in which the family conversation used the metaphor of “putting the house in order” cut across violence, traditions, economics and corruption, in the face of which the army would be legitimised to intervene and then withdraw, once “putting the house in order.” Luiz thought that it was necessary to recover the respect that had existed during the military regime, that the military was well educated, and that the university was lowering its standards. From there he went on to say that in schools, students mistreated teachers, and were also educated in what they called “gender ideology,” although Miriam, a schoolteacher, acknowledged that she had not seen any of this, but thought that in higher grades “it must be happening.”

For Luiz, the Bolsonaro project was respectful, despite the various verbal aggressions for which Bolsonaro was accused. Luiz was not against more investment in the public sector, but was against the corruption and inefficiency of the administration in the proper management of public money. Faced with this idea, privatization had emerged as a saviour. These testimonies showed that “putting the house in order” need not necessarily be a neoliberal economic project, but they could not tolerate the idea that political corruption could benefit from their contributions as taxpayers.

As the elections approached, Firenze and Camila’s family relations in the house had become strained. The politicised environment in terms of enemies meant that their metaphors constantly collided. Firenze said that he felt misunderstood, that his family was being manipulated. Adding to this tension was his daughter Rebeca’s statement that Firenze had gone too far when using the derogatory term “kit gay” to refer to the policies of sexual acceptance adopted in Brazil, and had decided to tell her parents that she was bisexual, hoping to make Firenze see that he would be voting for a candidate who spoke ill of his own daughter. Firenze told her that she was very misinformed: Firenze thought that he was privy to “the truth” and that there was a huge conspiracy that had affected his family, and that he had to be sensible.

In this apartment complex of Barra da Tijuca, many people intended to vote for Bolsonaro, although they often repeated that the candidate was “crude” and could be “more sophisticated.” Some, like Firenze himself, hoped that after four years there would be a more sophisticated candidate to continue his policies. The systemic crisis was reflected in these comments, as the conservative camp was brought together through a figure who, as theorised in the introduction of the thesis, could be a “great little man,” reflecting the Bonapartist moment we are living through, which allowed the fragility of the social order to be expressed through the birth of grotesque political figures. At this point in time, however, it seemed that the conservative camp only had one option, an option that unified the various visions in the face of lost privileges, in a candidate who historically would have been rejected for his profile by the conservative camp itself.

Delving into this family’s world of values, representations, and subjectivities (Ferrarotti, 1988), it could be seen that Firenze and the Bolsonarist members of his family had assimilated

the metaphor of putting “order in the house,” and resorted to it again and again, linking it to their perceptions of violence, the economy and loss of traditional values, thus finding in Bolsonaro a figure willing to set up the punitive system that they believed would be effective in addressing these problems. In a more accentuated way, this family prioritised the economic project of *Bolsonarismo*, revealing the Bolsonarist rhetoric of capable of activating a fear of the loss of privilege. The family’s concepts and argumentative structures intermingled original, home-grown ideas with numerous reproductions of campaign discourses, such as the recent danger of perversion in schools, the privatisations of strategic sectors or the leading role acquired in major corruption cases. Nevertheless, particularities were reflected according to the life stories, allowing some ideas to enter more easily into the imaginary than others. For example, evangelical defence did not seem to have made a relevant impact on family opinions.

### **7.5. Conclusions – Deep History: Put order in the house – I**

The elections were a moment that revealed “deep stories,” because they were a moment in which symbolic mediations in communication were intensified so that people did not so much reproduce reality but the rhetorical symbols that were present during the campaign. However, these symbols were enormously revealing of the deep thoughts that allowed particular metaphors to work, mainly through their appeal to emotions (Hochschild, 2016).

Both families shared the metaphor of “put order in the house.” This metaphor presented Brazil as a house that needed to be put in order; empty signifier was the concept of order, which was interpreted with different nuances by each family. Thus, in the humble family’s vision of order, *Bolsonarismo* was mainly to bring the order of traditions and the control of violence and corruption, as well as family fidelity in voting. This narrative, shared by the upper-class family, incorporated the element of loss of privilege in economic terms. Both families also reproduced the same “enemy” in Brazil, and pointed to similar abuses. The metaphor implied a Brazil that was supposedly in chaos, and various sectors of society, in class terms, had to be willing to vote for Captain Bolsonaro to put “order in the house.”

In the metaphor, the expression “put order” (domain of origin) was an abstract concept with diverse interpretations, but it was represented through an object: the house. The house

represented a model of coexistence built on historical traditions, as well as being a private space limited to members. Through this object, the abstract idea of order was explained. Thus, through this metaphor, two sectors of society with very different economic interests opted for the same political project, as they were not voting in terms of social class, but rather identifying their interests in a new Bolsonarist collective identity capable of integrating both sectors in metaphorical thought. Furthermore, the stories demonstrated how, in the family nucleus, politics was understood as a space of tension, of building authority, negotiation, and consensus (Marques, 2002), and where the metaphor of “put order in the house” also acquired a relevance for the family organisation and its internal links.

Thus, deep stories enable reflection on the social through personal narratives, and investigation into the motivational desires, pride, and fears that were closely linked to the metaphorical colonial thinking implicit in the construction of social values, starting from the insight that the oral expression of metaphors was a reflection of how language itself was complicit in the construction of identity, subjectivity, and, ultimately, pro-Bolsonarist political positioning.



## Chapter 8 Video Links

<b>Video Titles and URL links</b>	<b>Relevant Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Video 8.1. The paradoxical vote</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/IJw25EDGS2c">https://youtu.be/IJw25EDGS2c</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/3pnWzGzxBI">https://youtu.be/3pnWzGzxBI</a>	Chapter	215



## Chapter 8: THE PARADOXICAL VOTE<sup>1</sup>

### Life stories of collectives attacked by *Bolsonarismo* and Bolsonaro supporters

#### 8.1. Introduction: Identity voting and Metaphorical Voting

Throughout the months of research, I had several discussions with people who were part of what I call the “paradoxical” group, that is, people who in economic, but mainly in identity terms, should not have seen their vote for Bolsonaro as beneficial. In this chapter, I relate their life stories. That they were sufficiently open to allow an understanding of their “deep” stories indicated a high level of trust.

The electoral climate made it possible to observe the exultation of this paradoxical group at various moments in the public space. Like an expressionist painting, Rio de Janeiro showed these contradictions in conversations on the street. Thus, one day I talked to a man, who was accompanied by his mother. The man told me that he would vote for Bolsonaro, and began to explain the Operation Car Wash process. The son explained that his mother didn’t like him to say it, but he was gay. He told me that Bolsonaro was not homophobic: he had had the opportunity to talk for half an hour with him, and was satisfied that he was not. This man intended to vote for a candidate who had publicly made several homophobic attacks, and yet he was able to disavow Bolsonaro’s homophobia.

Another day I talked to a doorman, black and poor, in a building of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He too intended to vote for Bolsonaro. The man’s great-grandmother had been a slave, one of the last generations before abolition. The man said he had always voted for Lula, who he would have continued to vote for had he had the chance, but this time he intended to “play Russian roulette,” a dangerous gamble, as he wanted to support a different candidate. The man said he would vote for Bolsonaro to end corruption, for his transparency, and for being against everyone else. However, he was against all the policies that Bolsonaro was proposing, such as the carrying of guns, more police rights, ending racial quotas, and

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<sup>1</sup> Video 8.1. The paradoxical vote: Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/IJw25EDGS2c> Original Version <https://youtu.be/3pnWzGzxB1I>

privatisations. Nevertheless, he would still vote for Bolsonaro, saying that “he probably won’t get any of those things done.”

A young black man who sold fruit said that he liked Bolsonaro’s music, the electronic versions like *Capitão Levántate* (Captain, Stand Up), but that he intended to vote for Bolsonaro because of his military project, even though this mainly criminalised his collective. The young man said that a military dictatorship would be good, as he would rather “give the military the ID than the wallet to the *bandido*,” without considering that, as a poor, black, *favela*-ridden person, he would be treated as a potential bandit under Bolsonaro.

Another young black man doing political propaganda for the candidate Marina Da Silva, told me day that he was angry about the rights advances of the Afro-Brazilians (to which he belonged). He complained that:

In the last two, three years everything has changed. Before I could call my friends *negão* (“nigger”) or *zapatona* (“lesbian”) with affection, but there are many ignorant people and nowadays you can’t. You have to know how to speak.

The young man seemed to feel alienated from these claims that could have benefited him in terms of recognition and access to citizenship rights. Instead, he intended to vote for Bolsonaro.

The examples above are representative, and have prompted the question that arises in this chapter: how was it possible that individuals belonging to groups attacked by *Bolsonarismo* could vote for Bolsonaro? In his political career, Bolsonaro had expressed several messages considered by many to be sexist, racist, and homophobic, such as his response in 2014 to Congresswoman Maria do Rosario (PT) (“I would never rape you because you don’t deserve it”), his 2014 comments against labour rights during pregnancy and maternity, or saying in 2017 that by having a female daughter he had a *fraquejada* (“weakness”). The same happened towards LGBTQI+ groups. For example, in 2011 he stated that he would prefer his son to die than to be homosexual, and that he would be incapable of loving him. He made countless derogatory comments towards the group, saying that 90% of them died in places of drug use and prostitution, or killed by their own partners. Messages of dehumanisation had also been

directed at Afro-Brazilian and indigenous collectives, such as when he claimed in 2017 that in the *quilombola* reservations, blacks were so overweight that they measured their weight in *arrobas*, a form of measurement used during slavery, and for the weighing of cattle. When criticising the demarcation of indigenous lands in 2018, Bolsonaro had declared that Indians should eat *capim* (grass) to recover their origins, adding: “If I get there, there won’t be a single centimetre demarcated for an indigenous reserve or *quilombola*.” He also said at various times that he would never go on a plane flown by a *cotista*,<sup>2</sup> nor would he let a *cotista* doctor operate on him.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I analyse a series of life stories in a parallel narrative (Pujadas, 1992) in that the subjects share the Bolsonarist vote, and were apparently people who would be negatively affected by *Bolsonarismo*, as they were all part of the collectives attacked in the construction of the enemy: women, blacks and LGBTQI+ collectives. In the previous chapter, the focus was on a comparison of the class perspective. This chapter examines identity politics in relation to the collectives considered “vulnerable,” insofar as they have been instrumental in the demands for affirmative policies in Brazil.

Drawing again on the work of Jairo Nicolau (2020), the Bolsonarist vote was predominantly male (64% of the male voter voted for him). However, despite Bolsonaro’s various criticisms of women’s rights as represented in the feminist movement, Bolsonaro was also the candidate most voted for by women. Fifty-four percent of women voted for Bolsonaro, mainly middle-class women, and with a strong predominance of women over 45 years of age. Bolsonaro was also the candidate most voted for by the sector of the population self-recognised as black or brown (approximately 47% compared to 41% for the candidate Haddad) and of other races and colours (approximately 52% compared to 39%).<sup>4</sup> However, *rejection* from Afro-Brazilian and Afro-indigenous religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda, as well as spiritualism itself, increased to almost 60%, compared to the evangelist vote, which reached 70% support for Bolsonaro. Religion affected the vote of all sectors of the population, but those closest to the

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<sup>2</sup> Person who accessed higher education through the affirmative policy system.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-em-25-frases-polemicas/>

<sup>4</sup> IBOPE- [Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics](https://www.ibopec.com.br/)

historical African and indigenous culture showed greater resistance. However, in total data, as can be seen, the black, brown, and indigenous population voted overwhelmingly for Bolsonaro.

In the second section of the chapter, I show the different life stories and deep thinking of some black Bolsonaroist voters. In the third section, I do the same in relation to the Bolsonaroist women's vote. In the conclusion, I return to the metaphor of "put order in the house" because, although through different notions of order, these collectives both prioritised social order over demands associated with their race and gender identities.

## **8.2. A Bolsonaroist woman's vote**

This section presents several life stories of women who intend to vote for Bolsonaro. Again, the intention is to be able to understand their deep histories in order to explain what appears to be a contradiction.<sup>5</sup>

Bruna was approximately 35-40 years old. She was white, blonde with blue eyes. According to her life story, she had lived in different places, which she thought had helped her to be more understanding. Bruna had studied Social Sciences at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, where it would be rare to find "conservative people."

Her political positioning was not linked to her family, as they did not support Bolsonaro. Rather, it was based on her business experience, which were linked to public security and had helped her understand the values that she described. Bruna believed that life used to be much better in the old days. In the 1980s: "Rio was the best city to live in [in the world]." She talked about the music, and the security, and how all that had started to fragment. She attributed the dismantling of this well-being to impunity, mainly for corruption, but also for violence. She thought that police officers should be given more rights and talked about their values, which she listed as: seriousness; rectitude; knowing how to act stably in stressful situations; and in general, bringing order. Bruna thought that Bolsonaro was a created figure, but that behind this figure there was a military man, and that these were the values that he would defend. Bruna thought that the military should occupy strategic positions, as this was the only way to achieve

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<sup>5</sup> Pseudonyms are used in this chapter

a better organisation, given the situation Brazil was in. She trusted that the military would cooperate with the democratic state, which she considered strong enough to prevent any kind of coup, but stressed the importance of the military intelligence.

Bruna's testimony indicated that her condition as a woman did not affect her vote: she intended to vote in terms of order and security, notions that *Bolsonarismo* had linked to electoral success. Bruna had a daughter, whom she cited as an argument for her necessary commitment to public security. When asked how Bolsonaro would contribute to public security she talked about ending impunity. This was formula that Bruna saw as necessary and that Bolsonaro offered.

Regarding other issues that Bolsonaro proposed, some she supported and others she did not. Like the other interviewees, Bruna did not support affirmative policies: neither racial nor gender. She too resorted to the argument that the concentration of *cotistas* lowered the class level and also did not include poor white people. Bruna's argument demonstrated once again the failure to construct a collective project that understood, from the perspective of a historical memory, the social debt owed African and indigenous cultures, as well as to women. Bruna also believed that African influences were not so evident anymore: they were mixed in all Brazilians, and African origin or gender should not be a justification for the existence of affirmative policies.

About being a woman, Bruna said that women have to be feminine. She saw feminism as radical. She then explained that women and men were different, that attention was directed at different points and concreteness. She then talked about the care that as a woman she would like to receive from a man. Bruna valued feeling protected and the feeling that a man would defend her, and that he would "pay for the first dinner." This was a discourse of comfort, with the predictability of roles and attitudes in a fluid society in which various uncertainties were constantly present. Underlying this discourse, though, lies a dispute between the reproduction of women's habits and the transformation of the feminist project, which reaches all areas of society. In a way, *Bolsonarismo* offered the defence of an attitude to which women themselves were accustomed, had assumed and had internalised. Bruna's motivations also appealed to the question of order, understood as security and anti-corruption, but allowing a space for a slight

vindication of femininity in affective relations. Affirmative policies were a sign of the disorder of trying to artificially modify “natural” roles, and Bolsonaro’s voice allowed for the open defence of this traditionality between men and women.

To complement this understanding of the Bolsonarist vote from a gender perspective, I go to Copacabana, where I meet a family of *gaúchos* from the Rio Grande do Sul who had emigrated to Rio de Janeiro fifteen years ago, and who invited me to their home. For months I had been listening to this family’s conversations. The family consisted of Mariza, Ricardo, and their mother. Mariza was an administrative assistant at the Bank of Brazil; Ricardo was a biologist, but worked as a caretaker in a school, and was trying to pass a competitive entrance examination for the Ministry of Fisheries. His mother was retired. All three defined themselves as conservative, although Mariza, a 39-year-old woman, said she “hates Bolsonaro, but will vote for him.” She said that as a woman she can only hate him and that she was not against abortion, but said that, nevertheless, Bolsonaro was “her last hope.” She also acknowledged that she intended to vote for him because of his older brother’s influence.

Mariza’s testimony showed her recognition of Bolsonaro’s machismo; she recognised that in the face of his speeches, which attack her gender, she could only hate him. However, the hatred that his words promoted against her gender was not enough to prevent her from voting for him because her motivation in voting for was conditioned by another set of issues: family affection, anti-PT hatred, and public safety.

The family was very politicised: they considered themselves very close to the Progressive Party (PP), a party that they defined as liberal and that cared for traditional values. They were from the south, of German and Swiss descent. They tried to maintain these identity traits faithfully: they appeared in the way they talked about the family, the nostalgia for the *Gaúcho* lands, the love of meat, and the space for social interaction made up of *churrasco* (steak) and beer. Owing to their German origins, of which they spoke with great enthusiasm, they also practiced German, and were Protestants in the Lutheran Church. However, despite this belief also having an evangelical branch, the family made an effort not to be identified as Brazilian evangelicals, trying to make, in essence, a cultural and class distinction with respect to popular churches such as The Assembly of God and other similar ones frequented by the masses. The family’s

identification with the Bolsonaro story was telling: the family's testimonies reflected that Bolsonaro, in his ways, was close to them: he also ate meat and defended a southern regionalism in his habits. This made them feel less abandoned by politics.

In their regionalist claims, there was also a principle of race supremacy. Although they reaffirmed equality for all, since they had also suffered preconceptions for being white with blue eyes as well as insults during their years in Bahia, a territory with a majority Afro-Brazilian population. The family, however, vindicated its position in the face of any kind of affirmative policy or differentiated treatment. A nostalgia for the glorious past of their way of life was present, and in the face of this sense of loss was the advance of differentiated policies that made the family feel victimised, racially and culturally. Mariza said Bolsonaro was going to "clean" the city of beggars, and that she did not care what he did with them, even sending the police to kill them. The important thing was to "put order in the house," and that "she is not for human rights" (a phrase she repeats twice in this interview). This phrase legitimised any discourse in the Brazilian population, so that no further explanation of her opinion was thought to be required. She nevertheless explained that these people earned more state aid than her own salary as a civil servant serving the public at the Bank of Brazil, and that they were also thieves. She said that the music they listened to was horrible. She related a neighbour who listened to Funk to a beggar in a *favela*, and compared both individuals to parasites or *bandidos*. Mariza's testimony here indicates that this family felt more victimised than the people who received the differentiated benefits, and this was provoking a conflict between these middle classes and the lower classes. Mariza's status as a woman also mobilised her negative opinion of Bolsonaro, but his hygienist security policy was more useful to her than the gender-quota benefits she might receive.

Mariza also said that Bolsonaro wanted to privatise the Bank of Brazil where she worked, which could mean that her job security might decrease. "And yet I will do it" she said. In her imagination is the idea that they could raise her salary, however, she will vote for Bolsonaro because of other impulses and motivations linked to her moral belief system and the narrative of a Brazil in decline that needed a "Tough Hand" to put "Order in the House" – for which "Bolsonaro is my last hope." Mariza brought out an inflatable dummy of Lula in prison garb,

a *pitxuleco* with only four fingers. She hit the *pitxuleco*, saying that Lula had cut off his finger to benefit from social assistance, which she said he still received. Social benefits were a problem for this family, who spoke of them with contempt as part of the structural corruption, and of course, as part of the project of affirmative policies that left aside the good citizen with whom they identified.

Mariza first tried to reinforce that as a woman she had no other option “but to hate Bolsonaro.” She recognised that in gender terms she could not benefit from a candidate she recognised as a macho man. However, Mariza’s vote carried other priorities, such as family loyalty, in this case to her brother, anger and hatred towards the PT, and insecurity, which in the electoral context allowed her to dare to explicitly support the violent ways in which the city had to be “cleaned up.” Order was again articulated, in particular an order related to cleanliness for which the dehumanisation of the enemy was necessary. It was a politically incorrect discourse that was employed, with hate and fury, as a challenge to a supposedly unjust order that defended those who did not deserve it.

### **8.3. A Bolsonaroist black vote**

Below are the life stories of several self-described black and brown people who intended to vote for Bolsonaro. Through their stories, I sought to understand what it was in their deep histories that explained the apparent contradiction.

Pedro, who is related to Roberta and Gustavinho, introduced me to his wife, Marcia: she was about 50 years old, a black woman. Marcia and her whole family also support Bolsonaro. She said that she did not think Bolsonaro was a chauvinist, but that he was brave because he dared to say what he thought. She also believes that his public opinions were manipulated by editing after the interviews. They cited the case of the congresswoman to whom Bolsonaro had supposedly said: “I wouldn’t rape you, you’re too ugly.” They said that this was taken out of context. The woman also didn’t think Bolsonaro was racist, and she didn’t support affirmative policies for blacks. She says, imitating black people:



My father was the colour of a Pedro shoe, I have white brothers and black brothers, and they never became *coitados* [“poor sap”]. In Brazil, black people do a lot the *coitado*: ‘oh! I didn’t get that, and that!’

Her critique of racial quotas came from a meritocratic liberal mindset, which understood personal effort as the way to access privileges in society. She thought that the quotas degraded black people, and considered them hypocritical:

Who enslaved the blacks? It was the blacks themselves! The slave ships used to come, and now they are asking for quotas? And for what? To show whether the black or the Indian is less qualified to enter university.

Her testimony coincided with that of many other black Bolsonaro voters, who believed that equal rights should not come about through affirmative policies, but through personal effort. Their testimonies went so far as to demonstrate anger towards their own collective, as they saw themselves as individuals being treated as hypo-successful citizens, incapable of achieving personal successes without the help of the state. Marcia, as many others, wanted to get out of this stigma of victim to which they were appealing when they received any kind of help because of their racial condition. This opinion showed that in Brazil blackness was diluted in a complex identity and that it was not isolated in affirmative claims, as had happened in the case of South Africa, the USA and other countries that had suffered from explicit apartheid.

Marcia did not think of such affirmative policies as the means for the historical claims of Afro-Brazilian culture to mitigate the effects of colonisation: “Is a black person less intelligent and therefore needs help?” she asked. Marcia thought that everyone should be able to study equally in order to achieve certain objectives (such as university studies), without considering the differentiated difficulties that Afro-Brazilian people faced to reach these spaces, difficulties ratified by various studies that showed how little representation these groups had in the decisive spaces of society such as in the political, executive, legislative, judicial and economic institutions of power. As a woman, too, she did not seem to feel that she was a victim of this reality. On the contrary, she rejected the condition that: “to be a woman or to be black is to be

a victim.” Once again, this is a representation of how problems are understood through the prism of an individual and not through the structural difficulties of the collective.

The same happened with regard to the LGBTQI+ collective, which Marcia also perceived through this prism of the abuse of difference. Marcia criticised the showing of gay kisses in soap operas. For her, the differentiated rights of different groups were constantly understood in terms of “victimisation” or “abuse,” and she considered that the behaviour of these groups was causing an imbalance in the order of traditional values. Moreover, like many others, Marcia believed that the communist ideology, which she thought characterised the Workers’ Party, was basically a desire to generate disorder by bringing diverse collectives into conflict with affirmative policies and putting the traditional social order at risk. The link between affirmative policies and communism was central to Bolsonarist propaganda where communism was understood as an ideology that wanted to cause social disorder, against which the moral order of God, the homeland and the traditional family had to be defended. About the family, both Marcia and Pedro defended a Christian morality and the heterosexual family, and believed that the family would be at risk due to the advance of affirmative policies that allowed homosexuality to spread in schools.

Nevertheless, they said that if their son or daughter were homosexual: “they would be disappointed, but they would accept it.” Asked about this disappointment, Pedro explained that when a person had a son or daughter, he or she expected behaviour in accordance with that sex. He cited several examples where there could be a conspiracy against the traditional family to introduce such values as homosexuality, such as the supposed use of dolls with penises, and schools promoting homosexuality. They pointed again to the social disorder that the left and communism wanted to inculcate. Furthermore, Marcia added that it contradicted the word of God, who had commanded one particular sex, to turn it into another. Pedro said that from what he understood, the government was trying to encourage people who were young and wanted to be of another sex to be able to be so, when he thought it was ridiculous to think that this was possible.

Marcia was an evangelical. She said that in the end there was hardly any difference between the Gospel and Catholicism, and said that Bolsonaro, like her, was a Christian and that if he

kept God's word, he would not be able to steal or do anything that the Bible prevented him from doing. She said that she would "put her hand in the fire for Bolsonaro." Marcia's perception of affirmative policies as an attack on her individual capacities was supported by her evangelical religion, where prosperity theory was specifically encouraging a belief in the individual over collective entitlement. Marcia's motivations in supporting Bolsonaro were more for these reasons than for self-identification with the political categories of "left" or "right." I asked them whether they defined themselves as "left-wing or right-wing" or "conservative or progressive." They told me that they were neither left nor right, although both constantly refer to "the left." They hesitated to say that they were conservatives, because although they defended traditional values they thought that they were more open to homosexuality than a conservative might be. Pedro added: "honestly, I have no idea what left or right means." On the distinction between fascist and far-right, they simply thought that Bolsonaro was correct and normal and that he should "put order in the house," and clean it up.

The implications of the metaphor of "order in the house" were evident in Marcia's account. She felt genuine hatred towards the policies of the PT, and anger towards the policies of quotas.. Her account was outside the personal interests defined in traditional social class theories. Her motivations were in a moral key, in a sum of identifications (Villar, 2021) that came together in the metaphor of order, as a way of understanding the importance of effort and punishment in the face of anti-civic acts. Among these anti-civic acts was the abuse that her own collective committed by using affirmative policies.

Once again, the configuration of a specifically Brazilian negritude was made explicit. As already explained, the historical past did not create a black movement capable of articulating its demands, as in other regions of the world. It created a weak and distorted movement, where the role of blackness within the Brazilian identity was in dispute in the elections.

In addition to this couple, throughout the campaign I developed a network of contacts through whom to understand these apparent contradictions. Leandro's case below also helps to explain the articulation of these apparent contradictions, and why black people voted for a candidate who publicly made racist and sexist comments.

Leandro told me that he came from a very humble family. He only had a mother, and had already changed his family. Leandro was black, 41 years old, and lived in a *favela*. He had studied graphic design at a private university, and was an artist and a sportsman. He said he always liked being good, working, going home, not bothering anyone. As a child he spent all day painting, and the police could hardly say anything to him because the way he acted already gave away that he was a good citizen who obeyed the law, except for his use of marijuana, an issue that he insisted should be legalised.

Leandro was an evangelical. He attended mass every Sunday at his church in the Flamengo neighbourhood. He thought that the police acted in a violent manner, and that Rio de Janeiro used to be less violent. He also thought that the solution to all problems was to invest in education, and that the problem of violence came from corruption. Leandro questioned the racism of the police, which he qualified by saying that the police paid attention to the way people acted, more than to their colour, although he also acknowledged attention to the latter. He spoke of inequality, although he mixed a project of personal meritocracy (which he considered necessary) with the structural inequality of the *favelas*, where opportunities were fewer. However, he still thought it depended on oneself not to participate in the drug trafficking for which the *favelas* were being policed.

Like Marcia, Leandro's testimony showed a belief in individual actions and decisions. In his case, he spoke of the physical form of positioning oneself in public space. His testimony showed an awareness that the criminalisation of black people did occur, but nevertheless, he thought that black people could control the way they appeared in order to avoid conflict with state authorities. Leandro said that he had already experienced situations very close to violence, and that he had already lost friends because the war of drugs present in the *favelas*. However, he did not like the *jeito carioca* (the performance style characteristic of Rio de Janeiro), which he related to abuse and to a historical past that consisted of filling Brazil "with pirates and corsairs." He thought that this was the origin of the Brazilian's abusive behaviour, which Leandro really detested.

Despite this testimony, which again showed a perception that the individual could decide part of his destiny, Leandro also believed that education modified the social structure, and that no

mother liked to see her son having to work for armed trafficking in a *favela*. He did not define policemen as heroes: he thought that “the vast majority” of them stole. However, he defended giving them more freedom to tackle violence. Leandro did not seem to feel the danger of the police. He acknowledged unequal treatment, saying that in a wealthy area a white neighbour would not be stopped by the police, but he thought that human rights were what “defended the *bandido*,” and that they were promoted by the United Nations. Nevertheless, Leandro thought that prisoners should live better in prisons, perhaps through the privatisation of prisons, but should be made to work inside. He criticised what he called *bandido* aid, which would give monthly money to the family of a bandit, and not to the family of the victim.

Leandro showed in these statements the recurrent perception that differentiated treatment should not be justified under human rights. Again, this question referred to the specific project that had been taking shape in Brazil, as historically, a racial consciousness linked to the social class of the post-slavery context had not been developed. Despite being black, *favelado*, an artist, a smoker of marijuana, and wanting to support public investment in education, he intended to vote for Bolsonaro. He did not find a contradiction in this because he thought that a shock had to be given to “put order in the house.” Leandro felt more offended by corruption than by Bolsonaro’s supposed racism, which he didn’t believe in, anyway. Rather, he thought that Bolsonaro was “transparent,” and that was just the way he spoke: it did not make him a racist. Leandro’s racial status was secondary to his status as a taxpayer, as his major concern was that the state would be corrupt and steal his money. Putting racial status on a secondary plane was again evidenced by his lack of interest in the news that the Ku Klux Klan had explicitly indicated its support for Bolsonaro. Despite this support indicating the existence of an idea of racial supremacy in his political project. Leandro simply replied: “there is a lot of crazy people in the world.”

Leandro did not mobilise his vote with illusion, because he did not believe that Bolsonaro would be the best, but because of fear. Leandro said that a good citizen was one who paid his taxes, went to work, and did no harm to anyone. He said he believed he was a good citizen. Leandro was not euphoric about whatever would come next, but if Bolsonaro won he hoped that violence and corruption would decrease. Similar to the previous case, Leandro would be

voting not based on his black identity or on his desires, but on his fear of a violent, corrupted, and bureaucratised society. In this sense, Leandro represents how *Bolsonarismo* has entailed a multiplicity of ruptures (Villar, 2021) to the principle that the most vulnerable groups must be defended in the public discourse. Leandro was relieved to be able to vote for a candidate who did not organise his policies around the question of affirmative action. Leandro would also be voting in another key, not in the key of race or poverty that seemed the apparent one for him, but in the key of the desire to put “order in the house” against the thugs who would disrupt a decent Brazil.

#### **8.4. Conclusions – Deep History: Put order in the house – II**

The study of these life stories shows how metaphorical thinking reveals the logic, not governed by gender or race, but by other deep stories that are given priority that supports a vote for a project that cannot benefit them in other ways. Again, the metaphor of “putting order in the house” was central as a deep story, as violence and the treatment of the good citizen should be ordered, and thus the very meaning of actions, in this case, the action of the Bolsonarist vote, becomes endowed with metaphorical thought. Also worth highlighting is the importance in these narratives of the treatment of meritocracy as both an appeal to supposed equality, based on which everyone, regardless of gender or class, could have the possibilities and opportunities for advancement in life, as well as relegation. In this sense, for these collectives, “putting order in the house” also meant valuing effort over identity, eliminating what many Bolsonaros voters referred to as *coitadismo*, that is, the supposedly constant criticism by these collectives of their condition of vulnerability. Effort and good work was to be the basis for the construction of a new order in the Brazilian house, and they would vote more in terms of the fight against violence and equality (understood from a supposed universalisation of rights) than in terms of the fight against racism, machismo, homophobia or inequality. *Bolsonarismo* sees this individualist logic as a normalisation of common sense, of individual progress. It is a process of erosion of traditional collective entities, mainly the class identity claimed by the Workers’ Party, towards a new political identity in which the metaphor of “putting order in the house” acts as a communicating and articulating vessel for the demands of the various collectives.

Responsibilities would be individual, and rights universalised in a supposed origin, which, as in a race, would allow individual morality to establish the effort-success or failure of each individual, at least partly removing the guilt from structural inequality, which would not be the cause of the individual's wrong decisions. If the individual was a *bandido*, it would be because he or she was morally wrong, not because of a lack of opportunity.

Moreover, people were aware of Bolsonaro's racist and sexist comments but did not seem to give them too much importance, instead, appealing to his humour or sincerity as symptoms of these spontaneous, sometimes unfortunate comments, but always showing that he was not corrupt, but a person of the people, a good person. In a society marked by the colonial past and in which the harmony of coexistence has been a founding myth, the articulation of black or feminist identity was still in the process of construction, allowing many actors to decide to vote in different ways to the imperatives of gender or racial identity interests that had seemed so apparent as a priority in the defence of the interests of these collectives.





## Chapter 9 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
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## Chapter 9: THE OBVIOUS VOTE<sup>1</sup>

### 9.1. Introduction: Obvious voting and metaphorical voting

The previous two chapters presented an analysis of the life stories of people according to class, race, and gender. This chapter focuses on the life stories of the “obvious” vote, that is, the profile of what was the overwhelming majority vote for *Bolsonarismo* according to the studies by Solano and her colleagues: the white, male, with a full higher education. According to Nicolau (2020), 64% of the male vote went to Bolsonaro in 2018. This would include the informants from the urban areas that I accompanied throughout the campaign and who, in one way or another, had military ties or had acknowledged explicit support for militarism. Their stories are also included in the chapter.

It is relevant to note, in contrast to the Brazilian vote, that the support for the so-called far-right in European elections has mainly been made up of the white working classes. The conservative upper classes have not opted for the populist option of the far-right, but, instead, have opted for candidates from the traditional establishment, capable of offering a regime order in the face of the rupture and new orders proposed by organisations such as *Bolsonarismo*. France is a representative case of this difference. According to IPSOS studies, more than 30% of managers, those in strategic positions, and people with higher education voted for the moderate establishment candidate Emmanuel Macron, while the far-right Marine Le Penn, of the Front National, was supported by 37% of the working class. The US, on the other hand, showed a reality similar to Brazil’s when Donald Trump won the presidency through the massive support of high-income whites.

There are various interpretations of this phenomenon in comparative terms. The most original is the one that argues that *Bolsonarismo*, like Trumpism, is part of a moment of crisis: a rupture of the hegemony of neoliberalism. In this context, the dominant classes have to accept openings offered through this obscene kind of candidate, because their popular traits allow them to be massively supported by other sectors of the society. This phenomenon coincides with Gramsci’s

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<sup>1</sup> **Video 9.1. The obvious vote:** Spanish Version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28kioWIH0TU> Original Version <https://youtu.be/umX4C15OmLk>

definition of *Bonapartism* (1978;1921). Thus, it was common to hear among the upper classes the idea that Bolsonaro was *tosco* (“rugged”). An explanation along these lines was offered by Marcio Pochmann, who sees these classes as a sector of the population with a self-perception of constant abandonment and constant threat (Chauí, 2013).

Both the US and Brazil, as post-colonial societies, have seen the country’s foundational accumulation of wealth put at risk by the rise of other groups’ rights, such as affirmative policies, and the rise of multiculturalism. Faced with a sense of loss of privilege, the ruling classes have decided to opt for candidates who can help maintain this hegemony. Therefore, Bolsonaro and Trump could be considered the product of the crisis of neoliberal hegemony itself. In this interpretation, it is important to highlight that the transition to democracy in Brazil was carried out by the same army and the same elites that had supported the dictatorships, establishing systems of control that differentiated them. Perhaps the 1988 Brazilian Constitution was extremely important in the advancement of various social and differentiated rights, leaving the elites weakened, and seeing the moment of political disaffection as an opportunity to launch an attack on a passive revolution. The constitution was a mediating instance, which incorporated new collectives such as Afro-Brazilians, into a new order, still dominated by the privileged sectors. The European case might follow the same rhetoric, but its basis would be different, as the crisis of hegemony of neoliberalism would not be exacerbated by the structural inequalities of a post-colonial society, so the upper classes would not yet see their privileges at risk, and could continue to vote for establishment candidates.

In the light of this interpretation, this chapter aims to incorporate metaphorical thinking, mainly through the theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), to explain the conclusions to be drawn from the deep history that runs through these people, and which, as was seen in the paradoxical cases of the vote for *Bolsonarismo*, were not based on material terms, but in terms of emotional needs. However, the elements around which these three stories revolve to articulate a larger metaphor of Just War are: the gun, the war and the epic. In this way, the second section of the chapter shows how metaphors are also constructed and grounded in personal experiences, and specifically, the experience of the firearm. In a third section, I explain how *Bolsonarismo*’s metaphorical conceptual system is articulated in terms of war. In the fourth section, I show the

justifications of the representative of the Monarchist Movement based on an historical metaphor of epic and greatness, which provide emotion for the adherence to this hierarchical metaphor. In the conclusions I show how a deep history is shared when a Just War is based on a “strict father” family model (Lakoff, 2002).

## **9.2. An armed business candidate**

Metaphors emerge from our concrete and delineated experiences, and allow us to construct highly abstract and elaborate concepts such as that of an argument. In this way, complex concepts are distilled into simpler concepts, which allow one domain to be experienced in terms of another. This is exemplified in the case of carrying a firearm at an electoral event in Saens Penha square, in the old neighbourhood of Tijuca. Carrying a firearm is a concrete representation of a much more abstract concept, such as the fight against violence, justice by one’s own hand, or the public security project.

The square is part of the northern area of the city where there is a constant flow of people, making it a popular place for a physical presence in the election campaign. There is a tent for the candidate for state deputy, Alexandre Knoploch. Several people surrounding the tent have banners and are handing out cards with the candidate’s contact details to passers-by, as well as talking to them to explain the project.

Knoploch is 35-40 years old, white, and defines himself as a businessman and father of two daughters. He had never previously thought of entering political life, but said that there came a point when it was necessary to achieve a move that would not come from the people in power. Alexandre had detected three very serious situations in Rio de Janeiro: young people from the lower classes had very few opportunities, starting with education; there was a lack of support for the police, who were facing criminality without resources or support; and there was a judiciary that was very complacent about violence, punished little, and released criminals from prisons who returned to committing crimes in the street. Knoploch said that violence was present all the time: assaults, robberies, thefts. Every *carioca* has gone through stress caused by criminality. He thought that the military police were heroes:

It's not easy to be a policeman here. Many say, 'there are bad policemen', there are bad doctors, bad journalists, even bad dogs. There are all kinds of bad guys. But in general, the Rio de Janeiro Military Police is made up of heroes, who don't know if they'll go home or if they'll be killed.

Knoploch has no problem saying that human rights should not be equal for all, but should prioritise "good, hard-working people who work for their community." He believed that rights should only be given to those who deserved them – an example of how *Bolsonarismo* has allowed a demand for differentiated treatment before the justice system to be made explicit. Knoploch did not believe that the Military Police treated the poor differently from the rich. He points out that most of the traffickers were in *favelas*, where 80-90% of the people were good people, and those good people also wanted the police to act. And since, unfortunately, the criminals lived in those places, the police must act there. The police did not act against the rich, "because in the high-rise buildings I don't remember ever seeing rich people with guns," said Knoploch, in further proof of his opinion that trafficking would not be structured from the rich areas. He believed that, although differently, the police did take action against the rich, and this was visible in the fact that they had imprisoned presidents and governors: the police take action against those who commit crimes.

Here again, Knoploch's testimony understands individual responsibility and behaviour as the basis for the construction of citizenship. In his testimony, there was no criticism of the unequal structure and differentiated treatment by state authorities, but rather that exercising violence was an individual decision, which the security forces must act upon. Knoploch believed that the Bolsonaro project would reduce violence, although it would not put an end to it. He believed that violence had to be brought down to more acceptable levels by toughening the laws so that anyone who committed a crime knew that they could die. To this end, the role of the military was essential to "put order in the house." The army had a much higher hierarchy and discipline than a civilian, but the important thing was that they were on the side of the people, of the good citizen. He explained that military values were excellent: they included patriotism, hierarchy, and respect, values that were lacking in society in general.

Knoploch believe that Brazilian society was fully qualified to have guns at home and in the street, that technical and psychological examinations should be carried out, and that there should be no criminal record, but that if *bandidos* had guns, so should good people. He believe that when the state tried to protect people in everything, it was treating them as a child:

I have a gun right here, I have a gun at home, I have my gun carry. I recommend everyone to have a gun, with the legal registration. It's a difficult process, 90% of the people who try it don't manage to carry a gun on the street. But it is a right of the good society. The weapon is never for attacking, but for defense. Nobody does martial arts for attacking, but for defense, and weapons are the same, it is a right. If you use the weapon to attack you will pay for it.

The symbolism that Knoploch expressed by carrying a firearm was related to a reason: the firearm represented the violence with which the state and the individual must act to “put order in the house.” It represented how to achieve this metaphorical end: to put Brazil and God above everything and everyone, and to establish the *bandido* “under the earth.” Although Knoploch's discourse traversed several points, they were all highly polluted by the central concept of violence and its punitive form of combat.

The weapon is a metaphor in itself, a concrete representation of an abstract system of understanding the social order. It represents force and authority, the iron fist, which suggests the head-on collision between the parties, with no room for negotiation in the resolution of the conflict. With the gun, it also establishes the representation of danger, and that justice must be done not by a division of powers, but that it was up to the bearer of the gun to do justice, that is, by shooting at the enemy. The authoritarian line in *Bolsonarismo* is exposed here because justice is not independent of executive power. It also legitimises the death penalty/capital punishment, the ultimate annihilation of the person, as a political proposal for conflict resolution. Death, through the gun, is justice. It represents to the *bandido*, that because of the actions committed, they do not possess the moral substance worthy of remaining in the world of the living.

### 9.3. A Military Policeman

This section shows how *Bolsonarismo*'s metaphorical conceptual system is articulated in terms of "Brazil being at war" and "justice must be done." This analysis is based on the account of David, a military policeman who had worked in the Pacifying/Peacemaker Police Unit (UPP) in the *favela* of Santa Marta, the so-called "model *favela*," which was promoted as an example of the pacification of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, and whose overall project has failed. David was a 34-year-old with two children. He had just been transferred to another UPP, after five years working in Santa Marta, where the neighbours respected him and counted on him as a mediator in new conflicts they saw with the police.

David explained to me that the economic crisis affected all States, directly influencing violence. He thought that the UPPs did not work because they were not well managed, because all the parallel services that should have been implemented, such as schools or family clinics, were not implemented. David considered that the trafficking had become hostile again, with the stressful situation that this generated for the police, pointing to a recent case in which a young man from a *favela* was shot by the police, who thought his umbrella was a weapon. David believes: "The climate is one of war, of an undeclared civil war, Brazil is at war." He provides data on shootings in Santa Marta. From 2007 to 2015 there had been only one shooting, and that was a child who had taken his father's gun and played with it, and hit a friend's foot. There were no deaths. However, since 2016 there had been dozens of shootings, and the deaths of three young people. In spite of this, the number of UPP staff had been reduced so people arrive demotivated, and this ended up affecting the very functioning of the UPP. David also explained that among the complexities of the UPP was that each commander had a profile, and that when assigning them one, the profile was taken into account. Nowadays the police work in the UPPs because they are paid an extra 1000 reais.

A few days ago, the president of the Santa Marta Residents' Association called David because a resident had denounced the theft of his money by the police, who were entering the houses. These incursions were taking place through the so-called "tacit group" of the Federal Intervention, who rotated in the *favelas* and intervened in them daily. David acted as a mediator in the face of such complaints, which put him at a disadvantage compared to his colleagues. In

the past, he would not have wanted to move out of this UPP, but today he was grateful for it. I told him that tourism had fallen by more than 80%: he said there's more than that. He thought that the space was "theirs," that there are *bocas de fumo* (drug selling points, explained in a colloquial expression) in areas close to the "asphalt,"<sup>2</sup> and that all this was because there were economic interests on top of it, which made it not work. Political relations within the *favela* were lost: "They didn't want it to be true. Violence is in the interests of many people: colonels, public security companies....," he exclaims. In David's opinion, the Intervention, as well as the UPPs, operated "for the gringo to see" and to strengthen a system of enrichment of owners and builders in the real estate sector and tourism at big events like the World Cup and the Olympics.

Despite his strong advocacy for a community policing model, when asked about his vote, he said that he would vote for Bolsonaro for president and Wilson Witzel for governor. He intended voting for military candidates, as he believed they were able to better represent the interests of his union. He agreed that in this war, in which there are three or four parallel states, policemen must have certain backing, that many of them were afraid and this ended up affecting the way they performed. Nevertheless, he did not believe that there should be absolute power, nor should there be a goal of killing people. David reinforces this conversation with the concept of war, where there are things to win and things to lose. Although David opted for pacification, believe that drug trafficking had to be fought, and he intended to vote for candidates who showed a more punitive position. As opposed to pacification, war was imposed here as a metaphorical conceptual system: the construction of the metaphor of war generated a network of implications: militarism was justified, armed violence was normalised and an enemy was constructed as a threat to national security, because alongside the metaphor of war, a struggle for the hegemonic control in public space was being articulated.

In saying goodbye, David summed up how other UPP police officers were doing. Most of them, despite defending the UPP as a supposed community project, intended to vote for the Bolsonarist project. These members of a policing institution will opt for the punitive-repressive

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<sup>2</sup> That is, close to areas that are not *favelas*. In the language of the police and *favela* residents, there is a distinction between *arena* ("Sand"), which is the *favela*, and *asfalto* ("asphalt"), where there is planned urbanisation and State control.



model of their military training. *Bolsonarismo*'s metaphor of war allows policing in the *favelas* to be understood in warlike terms, that is, in the frontal attack against the population. The metaphor gives public security a central role. The acceptance of the reality of this metaphor is implicit in the position of the Military Police, as the violent ethos created by the institution around this metaphor is accepted. This is an experiential gestalt, as police practice will be responsible for helping to assimilate and impose the metaphor of war, motivating David in his policing practices and in the direction of his vote, as Bolsonaro will also claim that Brazil was at war.

#### **9.4. A monarchist and candidate**

In this last section, I show the justifications of a representative of the Monarchist Brazil Movement based on an historical metaphor of epic and greatness, which provides the emotional force for the adherence to this hierarchical metaphor.

André Miranda was a candidate for state deputy for the PSL, and the secretary-general of the Monarchist Brazil Movement in Rio de Janeiro. He opened the doors of his office to me himself. Dressed in elegant clothes, he was a man of about forty, white and bearded. He was based in Rio de Janeiro, although he was originally from Bahia. He was a lawyer. Unlike on other days we had met, he was not carrying those more aggressive symbols that had characterised the marches during the election campaigns. He was very polite and helpful.

Miranda had been a monarchist since 1992 when he realised that he wanted to restore the value of the historical monarchy. Before that, he was a member of a Catholic and traditionalist movement, from where he got to know the monarchist youth. He took part in the 1993 plebiscite on the kind of government Brazil was to establish on its redemocratisation, which was lost for monarchists, and which made him think that there was no further possibility of raising public debate about monarchy.<sup>3</sup> However, in 2013 he saw the movement begin to

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<sup>3</sup> After the redemocratisation of Brazil, an amendment to the new 1988 Constitution mandated a plebiscite to decide whether the country should have a republican or a monarchist form of government, and whether the system of government would be presidential or parliamentary. The majority of voters, the 86,6%, voted for the republican regime and the presidential system, the manner in which the country had been governed since the Proclamation of the Republic 104 years earlier. Only 13.4% of voters voted in favour of establishing a monarchical system.

resurface. He wanted the return of the monarchy, and he returned to the group to participate in demonstrations and social networks after the arrival of Dilma Rousseff, as he was very disappointed with the PT, a party he had voted for in the first Lula government in the name of political renewal. Already in 2017 he had definitively assumed organic functions in the monarchist movement, entered the movement head-first, and starting with a group in the Baixada Fluminense, attracted the attention of State leaders. He became a State leader and then participated in the national sphere. Originally, the monarchist movement was organised in municipal assemblies, and they attended to requests from the old institution of the imperial house, carrying out association and community work. Monarchist militancy now took place on the streets, integrating into various conservative and Christian movements, as well as in social networks: “I am a leader in the movement, and we have a presence in twenty-two of the twenty-six States,” he exclaimed. Miranda used his role as a lawyer to help with the movement’s legal and ideological issues.

Miranda sees violence in Brazil as enormous and endemic, a very serious problem that was not caused by a single factor. It was caused by several factors, most importantly, the lack of a lantern, a symbol that served the Brazilian people as a guide. Another factor he cited was the power structure that favoured corruption, which ended up generating consequences such as an increase in crime. Power was centralised and there were no democratic mechanisms to remove untouchable candidates.

Miranda used historical terms to justify an epic in police violence that *Bolsonarismo* defended: “The institution of the PM [Military Police] was created in 1909, it is a secular institution, with its methods, and not everything can be condemned because of specific acts.” Miranda was in favour of a militarised police force that was not soft and that could confront the *bandido*. He described the work of the Military Police by explaining what the *favelas* were like, where there were small houses with small streets where the construction was irregular, and in this type of complex space it was difficult to evaluate the strategy because whoever was on top of the *favela* had the advantage. He compared it to medieval castles, which were also built on the *favelas*: “The PM goes up to the *favela* and does not know how the trafficker is going to be dressed, so he cannot be condemned for shooting.”

Miranda's epic comparison between the *favela* raids and the Medieval Wars was one of the first examples of his war and Just War interpretations of present-day Brazil. His perception, as can be seen below, was highly influenced by the construction of an epic historical narrative, in which Brazil had traits of imperial greatness that now needed to be reconstructed. In this sense, *Bolsonarismo* is an opportunity for the recovery of nostalgia, not lived in experience, but imagined in its narrative.

Faced with Bolsonarists who support military centralisation, Miranda said that Brazil had begun with a centralised government not an absolutist one, as some history professors claimed. To justify the monarchy, as well as some of its values, Miranda resorted to Brazil's historical narrative, questioning official versions that would have the aim of generating a constant feeling of guilt: "From 1822 onwards, Brazil had a Brazilian monarch, not an absolutist, Dom Pedro I, and the constitution of 1824, the most liberal we had ever had." At certain moments power had indeed been centralised, but Miranda believed that Brazilians had already been born with a constitutional monarchy:

The problem with the 1889 republic is that it was taken over by positivist military men, from Freemasonry. That thinking was very much introduced in the army, of centralisation of power, interventionist, and that can still be seen. But other political forces think differently.

Faced with this situation, Miranda defended a monarchy associated with a process of decentralisation. For him, the monarchy represented a stable and continuous power structure, which did not go through ruptures as the republic did, where, depending on the model, every four years there was a possibility of a rupture of the state. In both parliamentary and presidential republics, there was a rupture of the state when the president changed. Miranda argued that state policy in a monarchy would be continuous, stable, unlike the current model. He believed that a Bolsonaro government would be able to provide stable ideas from the monarchist movement itself: opening a constituent process; changing the type of federalism; giving autonomy to the municipalities as a principle of subsidiarity; the principle of monarchy and de-bureaucratisation of the system. Thanks to the monarchists of the PSL, the party had absorbed these ideas.

Miranda knew Bolsonaro was not perfect, but he was committed to the most important thing in Brazil: changing the power structures. Everything else was less important. If the power structures were changed, everything else would change. He claimed that today Brazilians lived in a secular State. The monarchist movement itself defended the secular State, although he saw no problem in being confessional, that is, following a religion:

I don't feel offended to see Buddhists, but I understand that Brazil was born Catholic because Pedro Álvares Cabral did not go on a commercial expedition, but Cabral carried the cross on his caravels, it was a religious expedition, they wanted to carry the word of Christ, and along with him the word.<sup>4</sup>

Brazil was born Catholic, according to Miranda, and that could not be disassociated:

People must have the notion that there is something greater than people, it is difficult for an atheist, who thinks that after death there is nothing, but it is a fundamental figure for the construction of our limits and our self-reflection.

Regarding homeland, Miranda explained that if you didn't have a homeland, you didn't have an identity, which was why the sense of patriotism, of pride in history, of wanting to build and contribute to the country and its progress was fundamental. He exclaims indignantly:

In Brazil, in 123 years of republican process, pride in our history has been destroyed. How can we be patriotic? The left says the following: We are like this because we were colonised by the Portuguese, this was a punitive colony, we killed the Indians, we enslaved the blacks, we had a cowardly king, a crazy queen, a womanising emperor, and another who was an old man. That's how we know our history, and we were discovered by chance.

Miranda was sad to think that the history of Brazil, a history that he said was very beautiful, was neglected, sometimes forgotten, and sometimes deliberately extinguished: "We are a country that was born multicultural, born in the three races: whites from Europe, blacks from Africa, and Indians from here. Our culture is our history." He thought that the project of

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<sup>4</sup> 1467-1520. Explorer of the Portuguese empire, considered the first European to arrive in Brazil in 1500 AD.

bringing the court to Brazil was older than the Napoleonic period, and it was a great strategy, changing the capital of the empire and the whole territory of the State:

Dom Pedro is acclaimed in Portugal, he was created in an absolutist *berço* (“cradle”) and with the fall of the absolutist monarchy he proved to be a liberal person, and he based a lot of legislation on the USA and José Bonifacio model. He fought a lot for the continental structure, created a national identity, built a union of the people, and could only end slavery because of the economic structure.

Miranda laughed that people thought that this king was an absolutist, when he was a liberal:

Dom Pedro II was already one of the best in the world, perhaps compared to Marcus Aurelius. Even the republicans and even Rui Barbosa considered his fall a mistake. We owe Brazil’s unity and national identity to him.

The historical epic with which Miranda reflected the grandiose past of monarchical Brazil fitted with the same sense of grief and loss stimulated by *Bolsonarismo* towards a past of glory, a past that could be recovered but was being deprived of action.

Miranda also thought that family and traditions should be rescued, and he gathered his ideas again around the monarch as a moral and political reservoir. He thought that the symbol to look to was fundamental: “starting with our parents, our first heroes, and the monarch has a bit of that. When we are in crisis and there is nowhere to look, the monarch helps,” he concluded.

Miranda’s account was original in that it added the monarchical aspect to *Bolsonarismo*, which underlay his belief in a disciplined, militarised social order based on social hierarchy. The way in which Miranda justified the metaphorical thinking of seeing the king as synonymous with order cut across the various aspects of metaphorical thinking: Miranda used metaphorical terms such as comparing the interventions of the Military Police in the *favelas* to the epic attacks of soldiers on medieval castles, where they would lead to unequal conditions, as they would see less than from above. Miranda’s metaphorical vision showed the positive side of monarchy and hid the question of structural inequality or the ethical problems regarding the genetic inheritance of political power.

The last element of Miranda's construction of monarchical metaphorical thinking draws on the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999): the idea that reason is imaginative, metaphorical, and committed to new experiences. In this sense, as Miranda went through various moments of adherence to his monarchical project, the level of commitment to the monarchy grew in intensity according to the mobilisations of 2013, and the various personal experiences he recounted.

### **9.5. Conclusions – Strict father and Just War metaphor**

These stories all show how violence, through concrete representations, should be combated in the eyes of the storyteller. In Knopoch's case, the weapon itself represented such a major struggle; in David's case, being at war justified a more punitive policy; in Miranda's case, the epic monarchic and imperial past should be recovered in order to put an end to violence.

These justifications explain more deeply that, in Brazil, according to these accounts, there was a type of social order that had to be defended, an historical order of colonial origin that was in danger. As Jorge Da Silva explains, the imaginary of the Brazilian social order finds in the army a series of keys through which to represent that order. The army would be the representation in the imagination of that order that would be sought for the rest of Brazilian society, a society whose discipline and hierarchy would be, in an idealised model, militarised. Da Silva calls this an "ideological militarisation" (1996), which coincides with the type of order defended by the informants. Reinforcing this idea, Piero Leiner points out that the projection of military life affects the various spheres of life in Brazil, and this military life, which Leiner calls "a field or system of war" (Leiner, 2009), has been transferred into the collective imaginary of Bolsonarismo.

These narratives also show the different "frames" of these people (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), that is, the different ways in which these people observed and justified the world their world. Framing is a metaphor for a way of shaping and order phenomenon, and thus the knowledge, belief systems, values and actions regarding that phenomenon through language. The stories showed a universe of their own with respect to the treatment of violence. Each of the three stories focused its justification of the use of violence on a concrete element that could be

derived in the justification of the use of violence on an abstract level: the weapon, the war and the epic of the past. Despite the use of different elements, the three stories also share a metaphor of a larger life, of a struggle against evil, a just war for the defence of traditional morality. The informants symbolised these concepts through their life stories: they saw themselves as good citizens who could only re-establish moral order through weapons, war or heroic victory. This is a generalised change of frame that automatically affects the demand for a conservative social change with military features, a deepening of the world view marked by the perception of violence, and the response in which the hero must act on his own account.

Through these war frameworks, the informants established their thinking, their reasons and their justification of violence. Political reason, besides being literal, is metaphorical and imaginative, and informants resorted to concretisations such as the carrying of weapons, the war in the favelas and the epic of the castles to creatively design their arguments. It is an emotionally engaging reason mainly constructed in the interviewees according to a military framework.

The defence of a punitive and authoritarian model of justice is linked to what Lakoff calls the morality of the “Strict Father” (Lakoff, 1996), that is, the association of the worldview with a family model characterised by authoritarianism. The stories share a worldview that specifies that in order to succeed one must be disciplined, strong and competitive. This is a masculinised universe that fits with the authoritarian and punitive vision that Bolsonaro was offering. These informants perceived the world as a violent and dangerous place, as a place where exercising authority and obedience form part of the moral justification. To survive in this world, it was necessary to be armed, to participate in war, and to return the country to its glorious imperial past.

In the view of the interviewees, evil “runs loose in the world,” conspiring, and Good had to demonstrate that it was strong enough to destroy it, calling for punishment and revenge. Therein lies an advantage of the conservative camp, for even though justice (but not revenge) was demanded by the opposing parties, the conservatives were able to reconstruct this principle, normalising the idea that punishment is justice, as can be clearly seen in the defence of the three informants of a punitive-repressive policy.

As the Strict Father, Bolsonaro offered a War against corruption and violence, the defence of traditional values, and proposed himself as a hero in the metaphor that he himself had constructed and presented: the metaphor of the Just War. The informants all participated in this metaphor, in this narrative universe that justified their own positions.





## **PART FOUR**

### **THE ANTI-CAMPAIGN: VOICES FOR DEMOCRACY**

*If there was justice our children wouldn't have their schools shut down because of stray bullets. If there was justice we'd have a lot more black people in our universities, time to take care of our own, and mental health wouldn't be just for the elite. I want to see black people, lots of black people. Black people not just known for football, but for completing our studies.*

Slam Poetry



## Chapter 10 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 10.1. Anti-Bolsonarist rhetoric in Public Spaces</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/QUzXeMXiMZc">https://youtu.be/QUzXeMXiMZc</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/0E4_DUdgWYE">https://youtu.be/0E4_DUdgWYE</a>	Chapter	249

## Chapter 10: ANTI-BOLSONARIST RHETORIC IN PUBLIC SPACES<sup>1</sup>

### 10.0. Introduction – Brazil on fire

The 2018 election campaign showed a dramatisation in the public space of the structural conflicts that were running through the country. The extreme polarisation and violent climate were further dramatically represented when a fire broke out at the National Museum in September 2018, destroying priceless historical archives and causing irreparable damage. The proportions of the fire were immense: the buildings were destroyed and 90% of the Museum's collections were burnt. The National Museum was 200 years old, with more than 200,000 priceless objects, such as thousands of utensils of Amerindian civilisations from the pre-Columbian era, recordings of songs and the speech of indigenous languages, and ethnological and archaeological references on indigenous peoples since the sixteenth century, losing forever the voice of many peoples, since today 80% of whose languages have disappeared.

The fire at the National Museum represented, as in a *mise-en-scene*, that Brazil and its memory were in flames, and that more than a political mandate was at risk. The museum reinforced the progressive field's fear that culture and democracy could also burn.



Figure 10.1: Fire at the National Museum, in Rio de Janeiro, on September 2, 2018 (Photo: Felipe Milanez – Wikipedia: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inc%C3%AAndio\\_no\\_Museu\\_Nacional\\_do\\_Rio\\_de\\_Janeiro#/media/Ficheiro:Fire\\_at\\_Museu\\_Nacional\\_05.jpg](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inc%C3%AAndio_no_Museu_Nacional_do_Rio_de_Janeiro#/media/Ficheiro:Fire_at_Museu_Nacional_05.jpg))

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<sup>1</sup> Video 10.1. Anti-Bolsonarist rhetoric in Public Spaces: Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/QUzXeMXiMZc>  
Original Version [https://youtu.be/0E4\\_DUdgWYE](https://youtu.be/0E4_DUdgWYE)

So far, the thesis has shown how the metaphors of *Bolsonarismo* and its supporters functioned to generate support for the Bolsonarist project. This chapter focuses on showing the campaign of those in opposition to this project, grouped loosely as the “progressive field” in order to show the complexity of the *Bolsonarismo* campaign as a dispute between opposites. The chapter shows the events during the electoral campaign of this so-called progressive field that took place in two representative spaces for this political grouping in the city of Rio de Janeiro: Cinelandia square and the Lapa neighbourhood. It compares the logics of the construction of a hegemonic dispute with *Bolsonarismo* over the political field, through the narratives and metaphors used, reinforced by the symbolic geography of the public spaces where the events took place. Thus, the chapter aims to show how this dispute was conditioned by the construction of a political-affective identification, capable of mobilising and identifying the subject in an imagined collective, giving special relevance to the symbolic construction of spaces and focusing on the keys that can be extract about *Bolsonarismo* through an ethnography of the progressive field.

The chapter is divided into two parts according to two significant spaces: Cinelandia Square and the neighbourhood of Lapa. In the first part, I show the events that took place in the representative Cinelandia Square, and explain how this square was charged with historical meanings that constructed the memory of the space. I then show how the massive *Ele Não!* marches were also a sign of how both sides delimited a boundary of political identification between “Us” and “Them.” Carnival-influenced events are described to demonstrate the construction of an alternative imagination. In the second part of the chapter, I show the events that took place in another representative space of the progressive field: the neighbourhood of Lapa, the spatial meanings of this neighbourhood and the type of narrative it projected. Here can be seen how the progressive field tried to articulate a larger metaphor against the articulated metaphors of *Bolsonarismo*: the metaphor of a battle between dictatorship and democracy, that I call dictatorship versus democracy. Finally, a poetry event by young Afro-Brazilians from the *favelas* in Lapa shows how political identity goes through the prior construction of a political-affective identification that mobilises emotions, for which art is a powerful tool.

In addition to metaphor theory, the theory of hegemony influences this chapter, as it attempts to respond to the new movements of civil and identity demands that classical Marxism could render obsolete. These include feminism, the environmental movement, anti-racist struggles, and struggles against discrimination against homosexuals. As has been shown repeatedly so far in the thesis, the forms of contestation at stake in this election campaign could not be understood exclusively in terms of class, at the risk of taking an essentialist view, or by any of the above on their own, but by discursively articulating the construction of identities based on metaphorical thinking and deep histories.

## **10.1. PART 1 – CINELANDIA SQUARE**

### **10.1.1. The construction of the story of Cinelandia Square**

To understand the relevance of the symbolic construction of this space, a brief look at its recent history is necessary. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the square was transformed from a deserted sandy area, into a central place which gradually painted its landscape of small cafés and pastry shops to represent the *Belle Epoque* of Rio de Janeiro, and of its drive for the urban and cultural modernisation of life in the countryside. Cinelândia Square acquired the Frenchified features so desired by the recent Brazilian Republic, which had tried to reflect the old capital as a *Tropical Paris* through the aesthetic and hygienist reforms of Mayor Pereira Passos (1902-1906). As recently freed slaves from the coffee, sugar, and cotton plantations arrived in the city centre, the Square acquired a cosmopolitan personality with its Municipal Theatre, the National School of Fine Arts, the now demolished Monroe Palace, the National Library, and the Municipal Chamber.

Literary writers, dandies, and Bohemians populated the surrounding area, and their daily chronicles built into their writings the characters that walked the Square, its muses, its *malandros* (“thugs”), and its carnival heroes or *capoeristas*. In short, authors such as Machado de Assis, João do Rio or Lima Barreto built a model of the *Carioca* people, friendly, cordial, expert and warm, who crossed borders, transmitting to the world an image of a harmonised Brazil, free of conflict and violence.



Figure 10.2: Cinelandia Square in the 1920s (Source: Flickr/Creative Commons).

During the 1920s, encouraged by the business sector, Tropical Paris began to look to New York's Broadway as a model of leisure, business, and culture to replicate in the centre. Cinelândia began to be provide with cinemas and theatres, hotels, restaurants and nightclubs. The arrival of the Hot Dog in the Square was revolutionary, the high point of access of North American cultural influences after the Second World War to *Carioca* life. Rio de Janeiro Brazilianised its elements, introducing ingredients such as quail eggs and mashed potatoes, and composing carnival marches in homage to it that crystallised its influence in Cinelândia's interactions, epitomised in the "Our "cachorro quente" [hot dog] is carioca da gema," exclaimed by a street vendor at the rally for Marielle.<sup>2</sup> After this period, the stories of the new violence of the *carioca* night, of its brothels and police conflicts, explain the transition of this Cultural Pole from the centre to the South Zone.

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<sup>2</sup> *Carioca da gema* literally means "carioca from the egg yolk," and is an expression to refer to things or people who are natives of Rio de Janeiro.



This framework of influences is fundamental to understand how Cinelândia has constructed a soul of its own in the public sphere that enables a sense of the essence of being Brazilian. This facilitates the use of this Square as an historical space for the construction of demands, as a stage that hosted demonstrations in support of the allied bloc led by the USA during the Second World War, for National Oil sovereignty under the slogan “The oil is ours,” of the Hundred Thousand Walk against the military dictatorship, and even the recent feminist and *Ele Não* demonstrations. During the election campaign, the feminist movement organised itself in the Square, from which it advanced towards the rest of the historic neighbourhoods of the centre. The Square was named after Marielle herself, and became the symbol of the women’s rally against *Bolsonarismo*.

### **10.1.2. *Ele Não* – Frontlines of political identification**

In this section I show an expression of what for *Bolsonarismo* would be the “anti-folk” (Errejón and Mouffe, 2015) in order to analyse the importance of affect in the construction of a border of political identification between the two sides, between an “Us” and a “Them.” The event that featured this construction was the *Ele Não!* (“Not Him!”) marches. The narratives of the progressive field show the details of this demarcation of the political (Errejón and Mouffe, 2015), understanding with greater complexity the construction of this identifying line than *Bolsonarismo* itself. This demarcation was a fundamental element in articulating a larger metaphor that represented the dangers of the political enemy.

On September 29, 2018, marches against *Bolsonarismo* took place all over the country. The feminist movement was central in the organisation of these events, incorporating the guidelines of the various collectives that, together with women, were feeling attacked by *Bolsonarismo*. The marches were called *Ele Não* (“not him”), a slogan that centralised the anti-Bolsonarist discourse on the figure of Jair Bolsonaro, without having to explicitly pronounce and publicise his name. To counteract this movement, Bolsonarist supporters had been organising public events in representative spaces since 2013, calling them *Ele Sim* (“Yes him”) and “Women with Bolsonaro,” praising their leader, positioning themselves as “feminine” as opposed to “feminists,” and representing the geographical dichotomy in the construction of metaphors in

public spaces, mainly in Copacabana. The political atmosphere was of enormous tension between the two spaces.

The march that began in Cinelandia Square was one of the largest in the country. The demonstration was to go through the centre of Rio de Janeiro, to the historic *Praça XV* (Square XV), in front of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro (ALERJ). Cinelandia was packed. *Cariocas* were painted and costumed, stickers were piled up, and diverse speeches were intertwined under the *Ele Não* banner.



Figure 10.3: Images from the *Ele Não* event (Source: Bayarri).

Some young people had secured a space to perform a *capoeira roda*. At the same time, a huge *batucada* passed by, accustomed to brightening up costume parties. Messages flooded the bodies, paintings, and tattoos, hats, and capes. Various insignias were chanted. Candidates from PSOL, PT, and various others were taking advantage of the occasion to campaign.

The event was massive. People moved around chanting various songs and shouts that always introduced the slogan *Ele Não*. The people I interviewed asking “Why *Ele Não*? ” repeated a series of adjectives against Bolsonaro in the same order: “*Ele Não* because he’s a chauvinist, racist, misogynist...” The discursive spectrum of the left ranged from short phrases that could be reproduced in an orderly and superficial manner to more intellectualised and extensive dissertations. Some of these discourses are reproduced below to show the construction of the frontline of political identification of anti-*Bolsonarismo* as a phenomenon that ended up being complementary to *Bolsonarismo* itself, and therefore subaltern to an increasingly dominant *Bolsonarismo*.

“*Ele Não* because he does not respect women, differences, we cannot have a president who preaches hatred, misogyny. *Ele .....Não!*,” said a woman. “*Ele Não* because he is sexist, racist, homophobic, he does not respect democracy,” chorused another. “Bolsonaro represents fascism, he is against minorities, women, blacks, homosexuals!” exclaimed another. “*Ele Não* because women’s rights are always at risk, and he is against the rights of democracy, so he is against women’s rights at the same time,” reasoned another woman.

A couple of women explained at more length:

*Ele Não* because he is a man with a hate speech, and he won’t be able to implement what he says without the support of Congress, the problem is the speech, followed by many people who see him as a leader.

The testimonies show that, like the testimonies of *Bolsonarismo*, the opposition of the political project was established in moral terms, and the opponent was considered by each sector as an “anti-folk,” incapable of representing the interests and the collective will. Bolsonaro was considered anti-folk by these people because he was a misogynist, a fascist, a person with hatred, and all of this incapacitated the presidential candidate. In the same way, *Bolsonarismo* considered as anti-folk any project capable of jeopardising moral traditions. Thus, what was decisive in the political construction of “folk” is presented as an anti-folk, considered illegitimate to comply with a constructed truth about what would be the will of Brazil. The

anti-Bolsonarist testimonies showed this interpretation, where Brazil would have a will made up of diverse collectives, which was very different from the Bolsonarist will.

The testimonies showed that there existed in the electoral process what Errejón and Mouffe (2015) call a “constitutive outside,” that is, a direct clash that defines an “Us/Them,” a mobilised affect. The anti-Bolsonarists displayed all the categories that would constitute Bolsonaro as political opposition, and even as an enemy. In a parallel way, *Bolsonarismo* clumps together in this frontline all the actors that articulate the fear of loss: fear of the loss of cultural hegemony, of political hegemony, and economic hegemony. Both anti-*Bolsonarismo* and *Bolsonarismo*, assumed that naming the pains of Brazil was the best way to construct rhetoric that defined this frontline, and that introduced these issues into the public agenda, so that the attack on the enemy would be recurrent throughout this electoral campaign.

The testimonies coincided with those expressed at other events of the progressive sectors, such as the Gay Pride marches or the opening of the PT campaign in Cinelandia, demonstrating that the metaphors and rhetoric articulated in the progressive field were articulated beyond this event, and that there were profound ideas linked to the demands of affirmative policies and social rights that were in dispute.

The expressiveness of the event, in its symbols that were clearly characteristic of and differentiated from *Bolsonarismo*, was a reflection of a city, a country, a society that was in a state of alert, of defining the spaces for demands and the form of coexistence through metaphors. The anti-Bolsonarist rhetoric was characterised by defining Bolsonaro as a danger to democracy and minorities, marking in this discourse the border of political identification.

In the construction of an “Us/Them,” as observed in the various testimonies, the affective dimension and the appeal to personal identity were fundamental. Both political camps articulated a powerful affective dimension in their rhetoric, mobilising emotions that acquired a common dimension. During the campaign, these emotions, by acquiring a collective dimension, collaborated in the construction of a generalised feeling, and with it, of an anti-Bolsonarist or pro-Bolsonarist identification. The change in these frontlines of political identification reorganised the political field itself and its balance of forces. *Bolsonarismo*

rearticulated and took centre stage in the political arena. It was a new vote in terms of patriotism and a situation of exceptionality, of a dispute for meaning that did not confront order in its terms. The perception of the kidnapping of the system that Bolsonaro's supporters expressed allowed these lines of identity construction to be modified along a new frontline: good citizen versus *bandido*. Transforming this rhetoric made it difficult for rival political collectives to control these terms, discrediting them on their own discursive frontline. This frontline was limited to the reproduction of a series of arguments unified in the *Ele Não*, of the dangers that *Bolsonarismo* represented, such as fascism, violence and machismo, but without constructing an alternative creative discursive framework, leaving *Bolsonarismo* in the lead.

### **10.1.3. *Palhaçata*- Carnival as an imaginative political event**

The progressive field organised events influenced by a carnival logic, a plebeian logic, associated with the recognition of Brazil as a diverse country. Faced with a crisis of political imagination, of the country's founding myths, and the functioning of institutions, creative forms of expression in the public space arose to confront *Bolsonarismo*. If the Bolsonarist phenomenon had arisen as an effect of this crisis, the *palhaçata* (clown demonstration), organized on October 26, 2018, was an attempt to dispute this impending cultural hegemony through artistic creativity.

The day was organised in Cinelândia as a huge carnival-style demonstration against *Bolsonarismo*. It was designed to welcome all the collectives that were being attacked, called "clowns," and to use humour and music as elements of an anti-Bolsonarist political campaign. The event had been coordinated by *Bloco Honk*, a group inspired by and composed of *fanfarra*, street music groups with blowing and percussion instruments.<sup>3</sup> The participants wanted to show that music and art could be used to change society. The *palhaçata* on October 26 brought together different meetings which happened simultaneously. The *palhaçata* shows a weapon of the progressive sectors in political activism: music, dance, carnival. People dressed up as clowns, wore wigs and red rubber noses, painted their faces, went up on stilts, and played instruments such as trumpets, saxophones, clarinets, and various forms of percussion. These

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<sup>3</sup> *Bloco Honk* or carnival blocs are street bands that mobilise crowds in the streets and are the main popular expression of the Brazilian carnival.

were all carnival elements. To these were added the interspersed shouts of *Ele Não!*, along with other slogans, tattoos, stickers, and posters decorated like in the *blocos*. The carnival culture was filtered with political activism and created a space of fusion that generated joy, emotion, and hope.

The *palhaçata* was a representative event of how social collectives can try to accumulate discontent, but express it through joy and imagination, ridicule and musicality. Both the musicians and activists of this event, as well as Bolsonarist supporters, had become active actors in the construction of social myths and in the articulation of myth with history. Fantasies were constructed and fears, dreams, and desires were introduced. In a social context of spectacle, the *palhaçata* tried to theatricalise this mythology in the public space in a way that vindicated joy in the face of hatred and violence. The public space was transformed into a place of dispute and discussion of the different myths, which were preferred to reality itself.

The *bloco*, which started in Cinelandia in front of the Camara de Vereadores, grew in size and occupied the whole of Rio Branco Avenue, stretching for several kilometres. People joined the *palhaçata*, dancing, drinking, chatting happily. There were plaques of Marielle, a few shouts in favour of the murdered *capoeirista* Moa Katende, and many feminist slogans and slogans against authoritarianism. The *bloco* was dynamic: two clowns gave a funny testimony about why they were there, ending up in an embrace. The idea was that they were there to defend democracy with art. Humour in the *palhaçata* was presented as the element that articulated the demonstration.

The event showed how the progressive field also tried to construct, with imagination and artistic creativity, a collective will capable of bringing together different sectors, recognising and understanding that music and costume, as foundational carnival elements, could act as signifiers of the political discourse itself, forming public opinion. The *palhaçata* served as a unifying device for a progressive political sentiment, which mobilised the emotions of illusion, hope and joy through music, costume and dance. Through the imagination, an attempt was made to dispute with *Bolsonarismo* a notion of the common good, that is, understanding the elections as a constitutive moment of a type of Brazilian people.

## 10.2. PART 2: LAPA

### 10.2.1. The construction of the Lapa narrative

The *Centro* (Centre) region and Lapa hosted relevant and unopposed elections of candidates from the progressive field during the electoral period, intensifying from the first round of elections, in an effort to create in the space the narrative of a democratic front with respect to the dictatorial threat that was claimed Bolsonaro represented. Among the arches, voices were raised in favour of the unity of the PT presidential candidate Fernando Haddad, who, faced with the disqualification of Lula's candidacy, had to take on the double task of channelling the vote of the "Son of Brazil," while also learning how to generate a charismatic personality of his own. Other voices were also present, such as that of PSOL candidate Guilherme Boulos, a representative of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto* (MTST or Homeless Workers' Movement), criminalised by Bolsonaro, and MP Marcelo Freixo, one of the relevant voices of Brazilian progressivism and a party colleague of Marielle Franco.



**Figure 10.4: Lapa arches** (Source: Fuente: Flickr/Creative Commons).

The neighbourhood of Lapa was born as a bourgeois neighbourhood in the colonial Rio de Janeiro of the Empire. The monumental aqueduct was baptised in the seventeenth century as "The Arches of Lapa," transporting water from the Carioca River to the city centre. In the

twentieth century, as part of the reforms that took place in the entire *Centro* area, Lapa began to house brothels and cabarets that gave a new dimension to the neighbourhood. The aqueduct was transformed into a viaduct through which crossed the iconic *bondinho* (tramway) of Santa Tereza, a bohemian neighbourhood whose imaginary had begun to blur. Lapa began to be called the *Montmatre Carioca*: intellectuals, musicians, and writers such as Jorge Amado, the actress Carmen Miranda, and the poet and writer Machado de Assis came to live in its houses, transforming the European artistic influences into their own national style, and the bohemian *carioca* night was born, with live music by local authors and *chope gelado* (frozen beer) as a fundamental element for interacting in the life of the neighbourhood. The well-known *capoeirista* Madame Satã, born into a family of slaves from Pernambuco in 1900, became a revolutionary icon of the country's slums. Legends about his life in Lapa crossed the nation. It was said that he used to cross-dress at carnivals, defended the prostitutes in the cabarets, had confrontations with the police, and defended the blacks and homosexuals who, like him, lived in the bohemian neighbourhood. All of this led various sectors of the most traditional and conservative society to try to destroy and stigmatise the libertine moral form that Lapa had come to represent as a "space of sin."

The restrictive policies of Getulio Vargas' *Estado Novo* period led to a decline in the fervour of the neighbourhood's life from the 1940s onwards, until the 1980s when this space was used to resume the construction of an artistic and bohemian style that characterised the *carioca* nightlife in a process of urban-cultural revitalisation of the *Centro* area. To this end, artistic collectives took over the *Progresso* Foundation, which they transformed into an important cultural centre. The so-called *Circo Voador* (Flying Circus) was installed next to the arches, a performance venue that served a fundamental social function by allowing the city's artists to use it as a stage for their performances, reinforcing the presence of art in the construction of the *carioca* identity.

The revival of the neighbourhood was accompanied by a process of vindication of the neighbourhood as a space for the construction of the *carioca*, where the most characteristic elements of Brazilian culture were embraced, with Samba being particularly strong in its development in the neighbourhood. Lavradio Street became the space for the *rodas de samba*



par excellence,<sup>4</sup> and poets and musicians such as João Bosco and Gilberto Gil were regulars in its narrow streets, also giving space to local artistic formats such as *Bossa Nova*, *chourinho* and *forró*, which would be known more broadly as *Musica Popular Brasileira* (MPB, Popular Brazilian Music).

All these influences, on the one hand in the defence of the Brazilian identity in its artistic expressions, and on the other in the construction of local heroes and thugs who defended the rights of the poor, blacks, and homosexuals, had turned Lapa into a neighbourhood with a progressive vocation, where several manifestations took place during the last century to prove it. Lapa became a pivotal space in the progressive field's 2018 political campaign.

### **10.2.2. The Structural Metaphor of the Progressive field: Dictatorship against Democracy**

In this section, I show how the progressive field tried to dispute the political and cultural hegemony that *Bolsonarismo* was achieving towards the end of the campaign. The progressives tried to realise this dispute through the construction of a metaphor repeated in the various events and testimonies in Lapa: “dictatorship versus democracy” – the possibility of losing the battle for democracy and returning to a military dictatorship and a fascist regime. Events in Lapa called “against fascism” and “for democracy” were central in the articulation of this metaphor. On October 11, 2018, an event was held in Lapa featuring for the first time in the campaign all progressive political forces united “against fascism.” The event aimed to call for the unity of the progressive field and was attended by representatives of the diverse progressive political parties that believed it was necessary to unite in the face of the danger of “fascism,” a native category that acquired relevance and that entered, along with other messages that will be deciphered, in the elaboration of a coordinated discursive order between the various parties. Thus, repetitions crystallised the construction of this order. The representatives followed one after the other, launching a warlike discourse, although they often hinted at fear, sadness, and pessimism, and in which they officially called for a vote for Haddad.

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<sup>4</sup> The *rodas de sambas* are a type of social gathering usually bringing together a large number of people who sing and dance around a table, where musicians play the instruments and sing without a microphone.

The various collectives that came together through different forms, demanded rights channelled into the left with slogans such as the “*capoeiristas* for the democracy” and “*Capoeira Angola*.” The greetings were in the key of struggle, and under the arches there was talk of comrades, of fighters, of the electoral dispute as a civilising tie, with democracy and humanism against fascism and hatred, being at stake.

All the participants in the event used language that shaped this metaphor, as the dispute was not only presented as an electoral dispute, but as a civilisational project: “We won democracy with a lot of struggle, and we are going to fight to keep it,” exclaimed Tarcisio Mota, who, with the PSOL, had recently lost the candidature for governor. This message was reinforced in the various speeches: people spoke about the memory against the dictatorship, against the murdered. This discourse seeped through strongly as a discursive line. People used the term “People’s fight to defeat fascism,” thus saying that the people were a signifier that included all good people, a type of good that was resignified against the good citizen of *Bolsonarismo*, a good citizen who defended democracy in the face of dictatorship.

Tarcisio said that democracy in the *favelas* was less and that putting more people in power and not less would be the way. Bolsonaro and Witzel represented the opposite. The metaphor of dictatorship against democracy was strengthened from that day on, and had its maximum expression in Lapa on October 23. On that day there was another big event in Lapa that presented the unity of the various collectives and parties in the face of fascism. As a great solemn act, the event was massively announced on social networks. The main protagonist of the event was Fernando Haddad, who was trying to disembodiment himself from Lula, whose immense shadow was over his figure, and various public voices, activists and musicians were also present to reinforce the message.

The representatives followed one after the other on the stage, each one pointing out in their speech the different elements that made up the metaphor of dictatorship versus democracy. Among the most representative phrases in the construction of this metaphor were the following. The PSOL presidential candidate, Guilherme Boulos, exclaimed: “What is at stake is a project of democracy and a project of dictatorship...We have a memory of dark times, times of torture and dictatorship...” Another candidate exclaimed:

We have to prevent the reactive pits of the colonial matrix from taking over our democracy. It is 518 years of struggle, of resistance, and we do not accept any more imposition, the voice of colonialism or the dictatorship's pattern...

Pastor Henrique Vieira added:

Jesus was a victim of torture, and we cannot support those who pay homage to torturers. Jesus asked people to love each other, not to arm each other. Bolsonaro's words and practices would kill Jesus today!

Comedian Gregorio Duvivier declared:

If Haddad wins we will make opposition against him in our TV programmes, because humour is made in opposition. In dictatorship there is no opposition and therefore no humour. That is why we need democracy, to have humour.

And finally, Haddad closed the event by saying that Bolsonaro had left him with two options: prison or exile.

The progressive field were trying to articulate the discourse of these actors around the metaphor of dictatorship against democracy. *Bolsonarismo* appeared as an 'assault' (Gramsci, 1971) against the advances of progressive rights. However, the construction of the Bolsonarist social map was a historical struggle for the meaning of Brazil, changing scenarios, integrating itself into the parliamentary logic of coalitions when it was favourable and discarding it in the face of conjunctural windows of opportunity. The progressive field was quick to articulate this metaphor, but *Bolsonarismo* had successfully negotiated its own contradictions with the various sectors. It was a strategy of dis-articulation and re-articulation of collective interests in the organisation of the Bolsonarist common good, in the face of a uncomposed progressive field, appealing for unity and the rapid construction of a metaphor capable of mobilising fears, such as the return of the military dictatorship. Unlike other events that opted for joy, such as the carnivals these events reinforced and expressed this metaphor by appealing to fear as a mobiliser of emotions.

Although it was not a metaphor that, in grammatical terms, could correspond to a situation, I have considered the construction of the dichotomy of dictatorship versus democracy to be metaphorical in nature. This is because under the concepts of dictatorship and democracy, representations of everyday life were established that mobilised people in their political actions. Moreover, one word could not be understood without the other, constructing an indispensable relationship of meaning, comparable to “Good” versus “Evil,” “God” versus “The Devil” and many other representations that have been analysed as metaphorical ways of referring to imaginaries built on opposing concepts.

### **10.2.3. Slam Poetry – Art and Emotions in the Political Arena**

Artistic expressions were fundamental in the construction of a political-affective identification for the progressive field. To show this, I start from the idea that the social bond is libidinal (Mouffe, 2007), that is, libidinal affective ties are fundamental in the processes of collective identification, in which music, as an artistic expression, has a unifying function. Affections cement an “us” that is organisational in the field of political identification concerning a “them-enemy.” To analyse this identification, I appeal to the event on October 15, 2018, the Rio Final of the Slam Poetry championship at the *Circo de Lapa*. The event represented a re-evaluation of sung poetry, with the influence of highly stigmatised funk music. The young people at this event were fully aware of the political dimension of affections.

The space of performance was a big tent, with LGBTQI+ flags. The tent was filling up with young people, mainly black and *mulatto*, and from the periphery, where this practice had settled. The young people were the first generation of university graduates, and this could be clearly perceived in the enormous talent for memory and creativity in the poetry and raps that were presented.

The rules were explained: the poet had three minutes to make his authorial poem, without musical accompaniment, which interfered with the jury’s note. The political atmosphere was very tense, evident in the way the event began by asking for a vote “for whoever is not going to kill us.” The space had the symbolic and discursive aggressiveness of the resistance of the black collective, a collective discursively constructed in the last decades as a result of Lula’s quota policies, not of their parents, probably of *favelas*, because black consciousness had been

constructed in the universities, but unlike other countries with an explicit apartheid system, it had not been constructed in collective memory, but in false harmony, making it difficult to collectivise consciousness.

The presenter asked for silence and from that moment on, different poems were presented. Several people sang, always dealing with the issue of police attacks, racism, machismo and structural inequality in Brazil. Some fragments serve to show how they felt victims of the criminalisation of Bolsonarism:

I did not suffer the witches who were burned, I am one of the slaves who were raped and suffered miscegenation, and it is unforgivable...;

If there were justice we would have many more blacks in our universities, time to take care of our own, mental health would not be only for those who live for leisure...;

I want to see black people, lots of black people. Black people not only known for football, but for completing our studies;

The potential of the Poetry Slam to attract young people from the peripheries was enormous, and demonstrated how art can mobilise emotions. In addition, the messages of the young people were a response to how Bolsonaro's supporters had stimulated fear and hatred in its rhetoric as affective engines, being able to justify violence and punishment as a form of vengeance against criminalised collectives. This was political fear, which is a particular kind of fear because it articulates, on the one hand, the complacent process of giving order to hidden ideas, such as racist and classist ideas, and on the other hand, it is a fear that provokes a sense of threat through the production of myths. One of the myths was the one in which the poor black man was identified as a criminal enemy. The young people described with their music all the injustices that such emotions provoked in their collective, seeking to mobilise another set of anti-Bolsonarist emotions.

### 10.3. Conclusions – The construction of political-affective identification

Just as in the study of Bolsonarist metaphorical thought, the main structural metaphors that made up their thinking and gave rise to their actions were elucidated, in this chapter, the process of identity construction of the progressive field was subject to the same forms of action, and guided the motivation of the grassroots in a structural metaphor that, at the same time, made evident the political dichotomy: democracy versus dictatorship. This binary classification, based on the “Us/Them” border of political identification, was the same as in *Bolsonarismo*. Both camps shared a metaphorical imaginary in which good (themselves) had to defeat evil (the other), represented in various figures, spaces, and situations (Barreira, 1998). In this sense, Christian Dunker explains that Brazilian society has not developed a culture that sees difference as a value. Rather it “is perceived as a danger, a threat, a risk to identities” (Dunker, 2015). In these conclusions, I focus on the keys that we can extract about *Bolsonarismo* through the ethnography of the progressive field.

The chapter shows how, through events, the progressive field tried to respond to the advance of *Bolsonarismo*, appealing to and mobilising emotions and understanding the public space as a space that established metaphors and collaborated in the consolidation of anti-Bolsonarist rhetoric. From the progressive field, it was being understood that the articulation of the Bolsonarist project managed to present itself as innovative and seductive for broad sectors of the population, showing as fragile positions, aesthetics, and grammars that were thought to be robust, such as the defence of minorities in a multicultural discourse, women, and academic freedom. *Bolsonarismo* had built a project that navigated between illusion and plebeian rage: illusion for what was to come, rage after the crusade of revenge on the enemy. These events were a reaction to this advantage in the electoral dispute that had criminalised the collectives that made it up.

From the perspective of the sociology of the emotions, it is understood that certain ones, such as fear, hatred, and illusion, generate mental justification processes that are different from those that normally operate. If a certain degree of argumentative depth is normally required, that is, a kind of game of reason constitutes a legitimised truth. In the case of these emotions, the truth is legitimised superficially, not requiring deep reasons to give solidity to the conviction. Thus,

when anti-*Bolsonarismo* was asked about Bolsonaro, the answer was always that Bolsonaro was a racist, a sexist, a misogynist, or a fascist. Similarly, when Bolsonarists were asked about the traffickers in the *favelas*, the response triggered, in terms of fear, hatred, and revenge was that the police should punish or even kill them. Trying to reach a deeper level of these explanations, when asked about structural differences, the tendency was to repeat the first idea. Such repetition is more characteristic of moments of collective mobilisation (public events, demonstrations) than of in-depth interviews, where a private space and another tempo allow reason as a mechanism for justifying the truth to be put back on the table.

However, these passions exacerbated in collective moments such as demonstrations have a constitutive rhetorical character. At these events, participants reaffirm their political position, as the testimonies of *Ele Não* and the events in Lapa showed. Emotionality expressed in public events was, through concrete rhetoric, constitutive of one's own Bolsonarist and anti-Bolsonarist political identification.

*Bolsonarismo* and anti-*Bolsonarismo* built collective loyalties against the opposition, that is, between good citizens versus *bandidos* (in the case of *Bolsonarismo*) or fascist versus democrats (in the case of anti-*Bolsonarismo*), categories that made up the worthy moral substance necessary for any individual to trust and give part of their strength to the movement and its individuals: it is a tool that goes beyond a concrete electoral programme.

In the events, there was a recognition in the progressive field that the right had recovered the affections and the joy of sharing identification. *Bolsonarismo* recovered the construction of an idea-force of community in a moment of uncertainty. Bolsonarists did not need to be friends personally to feel part of the same thing, as they had ceased to be orphans. In this dislocation and rupture of traditional identities, Bolsonaro had articulate the anger, while politicians of different ideologies were understood as a blurred set of interests opposed to the people and in coalition. The risk that the progressive field pronounced in these events was real, and it was felt, as the elections were close. *Bolsonarismo* was marking the public agenda and the imaginary.

*Bolsonarismo* disarticulated the rhetorical power of the progressive field and rearticulated it with rhetoric that succeeded in the explained conjuncture. It was an assault on the fly, insofar as the electoral strategy was organised quickly, but it was also a war of trenches and marriages, that is, a cultural battle, in the medium term, which was where the common sense of responsibility and patriotism, of “saving Brazil,” was built. It was in the nature of the chain of equivalences that the construction of a project of folk, apparently disarticulated, were united by these affections to a central project. A disarticulation-rearticulation was produced by the hegemonic struggle in the use of conceptual systems. *Bolsonarismo* constructed new terms and also reconstructed existing ones, and the progressive field did not manage in this process to rearticulate its ideas outside the orbit of *Bolsonarismo*. Certain words were strongly sedimented by a certain previous meaning, such as the terms democracy, dictatorship, people, sovereignty, nation, homeland, violence, fascism, and order. In the elections, there was tension in the meaning of these terms between the two political positions. *Bolsonarismo* articulated a diversity of heterogeneous demands that not only did not necessarily converge, but also united them with others that may have conflicted, such as militarisation and democracy, united by the thread of affection that appealed to order and control.

The mobilisation of *Bolsonarismo* was the result of this emotional perception, of placing the “I-us” as a relevant actor of substantial changes. *Bolsonarismo* offered in its rhetoric, substantial changes in the face of increasingly amorphous representatives, increasingly similar to each other, and less and less clear to those represented. Faced with the disappearance of projects and the strengthening of corruption, resignation, disaffection and the crisis of representation were on the rise. *Bolsonarismo* detected that there was an order perceived as unjust, and dared to name and challenge it. *Bolsonarismo* built the space of collective affections that had been left vacant, and had also achieved the hegemonisation of national identification. They have constructed an idea of country and homeland that was not able to be articulated effectively from the progressive space, despite efforts to rapidly try to rearticulate it. But *Bolsonarismo* has built a hegemony around national identification in the medium term, and the actors in the progressive field cannot manage to set their own agenda. Rather, all their electoral symbolism is now aimed at being a subaltern reality, subjected to the logic of *Bolsonarismo*.



This idea is present in the very way of pointing to Bolsonaro as the danger, the *Ele Não*, and all the nominal forms because at the epicentre of the left is also *Bolsonarismo*.

## Chapter 11 Video Links

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## Chapter 11: VOICES FOR DEMOCRACY<sup>1</sup>

### The construction of deep narratives

#### 11.1. Introduction – Deep narratives constructed in anti-Bolsonarist voices

This chapter presents the voices of various actors from the progressive field, who try to reflect on the Bolsonarist phenomenon. Unlike the previous chapter, where I focused on showing the construction of a political identification crystallised in electoral time, this chapter shows the more leisurely reflections of various actors, whose voices were constitutive of the discourse and metaphors that their community or group, belonging to the progressive field, adopted. These actors were activists and political leaders interviewed during the election campaign. The interviewees recounted the deeper and more structural discourse of their explanation of the Bolsonarist phenomenon. Thus, this chapter approaches the deep imaginary of these people and the way in which these narratives were constituted as alternative truths.

The chapter also approaches the discourse of human rights in the *favelas*, which narrates how *Bolsonarismo* is a violent expression of Brazilian structural racism. It shows the counter-hegemonic discourse of the security forces of the progressive field, since, faced with the security forces as one of the main support bases of the Bolsonarist camp, these actors claimed a differentiated discourse, not very widespread in Brazil, on how to build an integrated public security policy in a complex system. The fourth section of the chapter shows the profound arguments of an intellectualised progressive field about the Bolsonarist phenomenon, and the various reasons they provide to explain it. Finally, fragments of various meetings held with political representatives of the progressive field are shown, in which they articulate the narrative of the coup and the metaphor of dictatorship versus democracy that was expressed in the public spaces discussed in the previous chapter, and which sought to construct a universal common good.

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<sup>1</sup> Video 11.1. The articulation of anti-Bolsonarist thought: Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/qDsxT5Sa4s0>  
Original Version <https://youtu.be/flSCsoT2qQQ>

## 11.2. Human Rights in the *favelas* – A tale of structural racism

Botafogo is a neighbourhood of nobility in decline, which was surrounded by *favelas* and a network of cables that brought the light. The *favela* of Santa Marta, “the model *favela*,” “the one that gave certainty,” and the one visited by Michael Jackson and Hilary Clinton and that initiated the project of the Pacifying/Peacemaker Police Units (UPP), had been abandoned again. The military intervention of the army had changed the approach to the *favelas*, and Santa Marta, which had been living off tourism in recent years, had once again seen armed drug trafficking made explicit, and the military police once again routinely abusing the rights of the locals. The president of the Residents’ Association explained that everything had changed, that the UPP no longer existed, and that “rotten policemen” had been introduced among the policemen who used to work there: “Our relationship [with the police] has degraded, of course. Everything has changed, with militarisation, in the whole State of Rio de Janeiro.” The president said that election candidates appeared in the *favela* unannounced to ask for votes, and at the end of some events.

Down among the *becos*, the narrow, short streets, sometimes dead-ends and not very suitable for traffic that are characteristic of *favelas*, I talked to Elias, a neighbour of the *favela*, about forty years old, and one of Santa Marta’s tourist agents, who was showing tourists around the *favela*. Elias was saddened by the current situation in Santa Marta. He said that the police were invading the houses every day, a situation he had never seen before. Elias said that politicians were the worst thing that existed. They appeared now because they were looking for their vote, but it was because of politics that Santa Marta was going through the worst moment in its history: “No politician gives continuity to Public Security.” About Bolsonaro, Elias said that he wanted to carry out a policy of terror and murder. He explained:

If Bolsonaro wins there are only two possibilities: One would be that he totally ignores the *favela*, that he forgets about us. The other is that he comes in to kill us.

In their stories, the residents of Santa Marta showed the direct effects of the policy of military intervention in the State of Rio de Janeiro, and an indication of how violence was the way

*Bolsonarismo* designed to manage conflicts. The perception of *Bolsonarismo*'s violent project was acute and built on the experience of the militarisation that the *favela* had suffered in recent times. Neighbours linked the Bolsonarist project to a punitive project for the *favela*, which would criminalise the neighbours and legitimise the repressive practices of the police.

To learn more about the anti-Bolsonarist discourse being built in the *favelas*, I visited the Federation of *Favela* Associations of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAFERJ). The headquarters was located in an old building opposite Praça da República, where the Republic of Brazil had been proclaimed. The FAFERJ building was decorated with a strong political orientation: pictures of the *favelas* were depicted as colourful little houses that lit up Rio, and in painted phrases, they explained that the FAFERJ were there to help *favela* dwellers with any kind of problems.



Figure 11.1: Headquarters of the Federation of Favela Associations of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAFERJ) (Source: Bayarri).

Filipe dos Anjos was the Secretary-General of FAFERJ. He was a young man, about thirty-five years old, black, a *favelado* and historian. He called himself a Marxist. He said Bolsonaro was exercising “control by fear.” In the State of Rio de Janeiro, a third of the population lived in *favelas*, and the social control that the upper classes exercised over these *favelados* was, in his opinion, violence. Thus, the *favelado* had a political understanding of class, but not of the importance of participatory processes. It all went back to the history of the coup of 1964, which was strongly present in the electoral campaign. Dos Anjos e said that Brazil was the most racist country in the world and that in Brazil one could not speak openly of fascism, because there was a false racial harmony that did not have an explicit Apartheid in its laws, as was the case in South Africa or the USA. However, in the everyday practices a country in which slavery had lasted until only 100 years ago, such racism was explicitly present to the extent that the colour of the skin determined the class of the individual.

Despite the corruption of the armed forces during the military dictatorship, a narrative of military honesty had been created and this had helped Bolsonaro. Nevertheless, the violence against *favela* residents was exposed a few days after through an event organised by the Order of Lawyers of Brazil – Rio de Janeiro (OAB-RJ). The event aimed to collect testimonies from people who had suffered human rights violations during the period of military intervention in the State of Rio de Janeiro, which was in its ninth month.

The neighbours of the different *favelas* in the State reported that there were two worlds, the world of the *favela* and the world of the asphalt. One neighbour told how he was woken up at 7 am. in his house on the *favela* of Cantagalo, to find eight police rifles in his face. He and his family were humiliated as the police entered his house and threw all his things away. Some neighbours told how they were accosted for being black; another neighbour told how the army beat him until he fainted. They told of a neighbour who was shot by the army but not killed, but nevertheless arrived dead at the hospital, hanged. Neighbours spoke of the various abuses of the BOPE, of their violent way of entering their houses, of laughing at their suffering. Cases of murder followed one after another: children, young people in bakeries, stray bullets. There were also thefts of money and telephones by the military. The president of the OAB asked people to vote for those who were not going to “gratify by killing,” an allusion to the violent

Bolsonarist project. He went on to say that the election of Bolsonaro would be terrible for the human rights of all peoples, a great tragedy: “It is a global phenomenon, but here, in the third world, the phenomenon is expressed in a more violent way.”

The narratives of activists in the *favelas* were built on strong experiences with reality, in contact with the consequences of militarised and violent politics, and their narratives explained *Bolsonarismo* as an historical phenomenon linked to post-colonial elitism, which would not allow for the demilitarisation of public space or the claiming of an egalitarian model of society or ethnic and racial multiculturalism. Underlying these discourses was the claim that Brazil would never be a racial democracy, that is, a country with racial harmony, but quite the opposite: Brazil had been founded on colonial violence as opposed to racial harmony. The black and brown populations of the *favelas* would be the most affected by the militarised and violent project with which they identified *Bolsonarismo*. In addition to the activists’ accounts, *favela* residents demonstrated this with their experiences of violent police practice, which was publicly defended in the Bolsonarist discourse.

### **11.3. Anti-*Bolsonarismo* in the Security Forces – Counter-Hegemonic Narratives**

In this section I show the counter-hegemonic discourses of the anti-Bolsonarist security forces, extracting the keys to the rhetoric of public security that was constructed from the progressive field.

The construction of a critique of military intervention transcended associationism and legal actions, and several activists met to discuss public security at the Travessa bookshop. A former chief of the Civil Police explained that “the PM’s [Military Police’s] mission is to ensure civil rights, not to kill or arrest. Daily, the PM went around lighting one here, killing another here” He explained that it was inappropriate to talk in terms of war, as it encouraged the idea that warriors were needed. He said it was not heroes that were needed, as heroes died, leaving families behind: “This story that the policeman has to be a hero is a lie. As chief of police, I used to tell them ‘I don’t want heroes, I want professionals.’” A judge was now speaking out about this. She thought that when people talked about public security they were talking about their innermost desires, asking themselves about the kind of society they wanted to live in:

When discussing public security it is crucial to keep in mind that most of the victims are poor, young, and poor. The right has been denied to the inhabitants of the peripheries and *favelas*.

She emphasised that: “The society that wants more punishment is only sensitised when there is a person of its own class affected by violence.”

Raul Santiago, a twenty-nine year-old neighbour of the Complexo de Maré, then spoke. He explained that the only policy in the *favelas* that he had seen was public security, and always understood from a military point of view. The table discussed the types of punishment that *Bolsonarismo* was proposing, such as the death penalty and the tightening of the penal code. Some speakers considered that “there must be an overcoming of the principle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth as a civilisation project.” The cross-discourses of activists and intellectuals clearly recognised that the discursive hegemony in the field of public security was in the Bolsonarist camp, in which a punitive-repressive logic against the individual and not against the structure would lead the action of the security forces. In the face of this logic, the speakers explained the need for an integrated policy, capable of encompassing various other fields, that would revise the interpretation of public security as an isolated field, as it should encompass all forms of intersection with the rest of public policies.

The *Policiais Anti-fascismo* (Anti-Fascist Police Group) made a presentation about how the metaphor of fascism was being articulated, and how a defence of rights in the most vulnerable areas was being posed through a reconstruction of the police ethos. Orlando Zaccone, now a deputy candidate, talked about how he had been a civil police delegate for eighteen years in Rio de Janeiro:

For the last three years [I have been] a member of the Anti-fascism Cops Group, a national body, made up of civil police, military, firemen, municipal guards, prison officers... all public security workers.

While Zaccone was speaking a girl approached him and said: “thank you very much for existing, we need you.” Zaccone said that the policy of the militarisation of public security was turning the police into a military vision, of confrontation, and treating the poor population as



an enemy, and also being treated by this population as an enemy. In Zaccone's opinion, this had led to the de-legitimisation of police work and several violent actions. Zaccone said that the group wanted to bring to the debate the idea that the police should serve the interests of the people, and not the interests of the power elites. Thus, Zaccone said, the group was opposed to the political project personified by the Bolsonaro family, which, although personified this way, represented a global political project of various actors whose aim was the extermination of "undesirables" so that business could prosper.



Figure 11.2: Campaign of Orlando Zaccone, from Anti-fascist Police (Source: Bayarri).

A young man with long hair, wearing a T-shirt that said *Policiais Anti-fascismo*, introduced himself as Zaraiba, a Civil Policeman for sixteen years. For him, public security was a profession, complexly connected to other issues such as education and health, and that it was “fundamental for public security to be a public service not linked to death, but to guaranteeing rights.” Regarding Bolsonaro’s public security policy, Zaraiba believed that it could not be called a policy, but rather a major upheaval. A young woman, Janaina, also from the group, said that Bolsonaro represented everything they were against. What they had now was a public policy of war on drugs, but nobody made war on things, only war on people: “So you have a

war against the poor, black, peripheral population.” The group argued that this was not a public security policy, especially when the majority of police officers were black, poor, peripheral, especially in the Military Police.

The Anti-fascist Cops group assumed fascism as a natural, living category, present in *Bolsonarismo* and in their public security institutions. Their discourse offered suggestions for the demilitarisation of public security, an integrative policy that saw the problem of violence not only as a problem of structural inequality, but also as a problem of class consciousness: the military police itself had in its narrative a false working class consciousness, which was leading it to act against its own class interests. This was a rhetoric in opposition to Bolsonarist rhetoric, disputing the hegemony Bolsonaro currently had over how a discourse on public security should be constructed in Brazil.

#### **11.4. The Activist Left – Founding Myths**

The following in-depth accounts by two activists from the progressive field linked to the PSOL, talk about the logic behind the Bolsonarist phenomenon, how it arose, and how it will allow Bolsonaro to win the elections. A note of despair can be heard in both accounts. The first could not see a path forward for the left. The second understood where the battle had to occur, but was perhaps overwhelmed by the task.

Jack must have been forty years old. He was mulatto with grey afro hair. His clothes were representative of the kind of young man typical of the South Zone, the richest region of the city, with horn-rimmed glasses, piercings, and All-Star shoes. Until Marielle Franco’s execution, Jack was a direct advisor to the City Councilwoman in PSOL.

Jack began the interview by explaining how he understood politics in Brazil:

Win-win politics created the opening for a new middle class. The crisis was historic with the *Lava Jato*, *mensalão*, Lula corruption cases. Bolsonaro presents himself as a Pop Star, people feel he is a celebrity and not just another politician, despite his trajectory.

He believed that Bolsonaro showed courage, and the population was likely to vote for him as the least-worst candidate. On the counter-narratives that the PSOL could create, Jack admitted the limited influence of the PSOL outside Rio de Janeiro. He thought that “the left, in the field of public security, was very far from creating a counter-hegemonic narrative,” to which he added that “the left does not unify the discourse.” Then, with a sigh of despair at the Brazilian situation, Jack added a paradigmatic narrative: “If 20% of the population wants to vote for Bolsonaro, it means that 20% of the population wants to kill transsexuals and gays.”

This story, according to which every Bolsonaro voter would be a fascist, was reproduced and shared at various levels of adherence. In Jack’s account, however, Bolsonarismo was a confusing phenomenon. On the one hand, its acceptance was based on the false class consciousness of a false middle class in the favelas, who were seeing their vote conditioned by their self-perception of privilege and its potential loss, as well as by other contextual concerns, such as corruption. On the other hand, and here his account constructed an essentialist logic, the people who voted for Bolsonaro would simply be homophobic and violent. In making such a claim, his narrative constructed a boundary of political identification, in which anyone voting for Bolsonaro would be devoid of worthy moral substance, as they would not defend the foundations of what Jack considered to be a democracy. Thus, his account constructed a simplification of the political blocs that supported the metaphor of a war between dictatorship (fascism) and democracy, which facilitated understanding of the phenomenon itself, an understanding based on the dichotomy of good versus evil, but without seeing a solution for the left.

The interview with Guilherme Pimentel, lawyer and human rights activist, and also a member of PSOL, with various advisory and activist positions, took place on the iconic Cinelandia Square. Guilherme thought that the Bolsonaro phenomenon was succeeding because there was a huge disillusionment with politics associated with the last years of the left-wing federal government, so the entire left was singled out as the culprit of the story:

The debate was superficial, low level and without patience. Bolsonaro was presented as the “Chuck Norris” of politics. This election becomes for many like an afternoon session of TV movies, without delving into the ideas.

Many vulnerable people also believed this story, people who Guilherme would never have imagined – close and dear people – were intending to vote for Bolsonaro. It was an irrational choice. It was not linked to the programme. It was a phenomenon that represented the negation of politics:

They build an enemy around the idea of a threat to the family, covering up the real problems. And the interests of the elites begin to persecute those who resist, and fear was activated, always fear. Communists, gay dictatorship, children will be forced to be gay... a great hysteria was created in a society of a multitude of loners, and we create the most paranoid fears that exist. It was a society that goes beyond the classic mental health classifications, such as schizophrenia, but encompasses perceptions as symptoms of illness: when a person embarks on irrationality, they don't want to debate, reason has been defeated.

As the population had been subjected to a regime of brutal violence, violence was now part of everyday language. Therefore, the denunciations of Bolsonaro that said that “he was violent” were not going to take away his support: on the contrary, Guilherme said that they just created more identification, an: “ah, at least he solves things.” So, there was something deeper than the programmatic or rational debate. It was much more a question of affection, and the problem for the left was how to build political debate around affection.

The narrative articulated by Guilherme was based on the founding myth of Brazil as a racist and elitist country, with the consequent militarised structural violence and the various expressions of social hierarchy. These were the main elements by which Guilherme explained the success of the Bolsonarist phenomenon. In his account, he also made a *mea culpa* towards the left-wing sectors, showing his belief that despite the existence of foundational issues of colonisation that were likely to give rise to *Bolsonarismo*, there was also a dispute over cultural hegemony that the left did not know how to confront. Guilherme's account called for the reconstruction of a progressive field closer to the grassroots, where there would be possibilities for building a new affection for the left, able to dispute the post-colonial hegemony.

### 11.5. Anti-Bolsonarist Political Leaders – The narrative of the common good

Throughout the electoral campaign, various actors in politics representing the progressive side talked to me about Bolsonaro: PT secretary-general Gleise Hoffman, the director of the Ethos Institute, federal deputy Jean Willys, the councillor João Batista, Babá who replaced Marielle, Senator Lindberg Farias (PT), federal deputy Chico Alencar (PSOL), deputy Marcelo Freixo (PSOL), and the senator, deputy and former governor of Rio de Janeiro, Benedita da Silva. Below are some fragments of these conversations in which the metaphor of the *coup* and the danger of a dictatorship and the arrival of fascism were discussed. For example, PSOL MP Jean Willys, known for his defence of LGBTQI+ rights, had been subjected to intense attacks by *Bolsonarismo*. He explained that what had been happening was similar to the time before the military dictatorship of 1964. On that occasion, the military never handed over power to civil society. Instead, it installed a regime of terror in which political dissidence was met with murder and torture, freedoms were repressed, and the arts were policed. He described the phenomenon of an underground right and how the social advance of minorities in popular governments had “made those fascist, extreme right-wing sectors uncomfortable.” This, he concluded, was why they had now:

[F]ound in this corrupt, incompetent, racist, misogynist, misogynist subject their spokesperson, their candidate. So this was a symptom of the extreme right: wanting to enslave the poor, wanting to see them in prison, or exterminated, or serving as employees, as slaves for them.

PT senator Lindbergh Farias wore a purple sticker reading *Ele Não*. Lindenberg said that there were paramilitary groups and militias in Rio de Janeiro that already had support to act, and had increased the number of deaths in the Brazilian *favelas*. Given this situation:

I do not doubt that they will try to go towards a military dictatorship, closing an alliance with the judiciary and about the sectors of the left: prison and assassination.

The senator believed that Brazil was at a dramatic moment in its national history, and called Bolsonaro’s possible victory an electoral *coup*. He then spoke of fascism, and explained that

in Brazil, unlike in other countries, fascism had a different, new characteristic: as well as the existence of paramilitary groups in which violence, and nationalism were practised, this new fascism was defending a radical neoliberal programme of the privatisation of everything.

MP Chico Alencar was one of the historical references of progressivism in Brazil. That day he was carrying two stickers, one yellow and one purple, both representing Marielle's face and read "Marielle lives." He explained to me:

In the historical period of Latin America's independence struggles we have already reached the light and we were not going to allow them to put us back in the dark.

In the progressive field, Chico represented a standard that was exploited by Brazilian progressives: his status as a Catholic in the struggle for LGBTQI+ and pro-abortion rights. Chico described how a small church in the mountainous region of São Pedro da Serra had recently been painted with swastikas. Nevertheless, he thought that:

Although all the ultra-right, reactionary, fascist and conservative forces have rallied around the figure of the mystifying myth Bolsonaro, he will meet with a lot of resistance, and it will be a period of chaos, struggles, and conflicts.

He believed that there was a democratic accumulation in Brazil that would not allow this neo-fascism to take root seriously, and that there will be many conflicts, but: "LGBTQI+ people will not return to the wardrobe, black people will not accept re-enslavement, women can no longer tolerate patriarchalism," to mention some of the social categories that Chico thought Bolsonaro despised.

Senator, Deputy, and ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro, Benedita da Silva, a black woman, and representative of the oppressed classes, also thought that Brazil was:

[E]xperiencing the arrival of fascism. Fascism goes through several stages: the stage of fear, of hatred, of the victor, of the great messiah who will solve all the problems, even if he will not.

Benedita explained how this process came from before, from the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. She called for the unity of the left and said that they did not want dictatorship.

All these narratives constructed a similar larger metaphor: a *coup* was under way in Brazil, and there was a risk of a militarised fascist dictatorship. All the representatives constructed *Bolsonarismo* as evil in its attacks on minorities. In these fragments of conversation, these actors expressed the problem of building hegemony around the common good, that is, in defence of a universal value. The chosen element was the concept and imaginary of democracy as a political-ideological model at risk from *Bolsonarismo* but also the one to defeat it.

### **11.6. Conclusions – Production and justification of alternative truths**

Elections are a moment of concentration of demands and dissatisfactions, and their transition to a general will. The narratives of these actors tried to explain how demands and dissatisfactions should be articulated around a progressive pattern. The narratives appealed to structural issues, and in describing these, these actors from the progressive field used their own founding myths: colonial Brazil as a national “explanation,” the battle against dictatorship for a common good; and the use of their own conception of fascism – *neofascism* built on neoliberal principles. Although *Lulismo* was still presented as a foundational narrative of the contemporary organisation of the progressive sector, the various actors had added to and transformed this structure – necessarily, given Lula had been disqualified from the election – demonstrating what André Singer had argued in his book *The Meanings of Lulismo* (2012): that *Lulismo* was a political creation in transformation, with diverse bases of support, and that by 2018, it had been overtaken by a broader bloc, despite encountering resistance, mainly from the PT. The testimonies above referred to the unity of the progressive sector, but they did so in an open way, willing to reconstruct and assimilate a new narrative in which *Lulismo* would remain part of the project, but not a whole, as a result of the political failure of his party and Lula himself.

Instead, the founding myths had come to be often based on experiences such as the violence in the *favelas*. These had been experienced by actors such as the president of FAFERJ and the president of OAB themselves, as well as documented in the accounts of the victims of the

military intervention, and the Anti-fascist Cops group, both of whom experienced this violence daily. The founding myths of other actors, such as the intellectual left, cut across the experience of activism, as well as those of politicians. However, parallel to the acts experienced, the production of truth was also constituted by imagined acts and beliefs, such as the use of the category of fascism itself, with the historical monsters and ghosts to which it appealed, and the supposed desires and fears of Brazilian elites to regain a social control apparently lost under the advances of multiculturalism. These discourses produced what Adriana Vianna called the production of the victim in the daily struggle (Vianna, 2015). In this way, the narratives and metaphors in the rhetoric of the progressive field were composed of a combination of experience and imagination, constructing a cognitive universe of their own.

Thus, these actors constructed a rhetoric of alternative truths to those offered by *Bolsonarismo* through the discrediting of each Bolsonarist narrative, demonstrating its falsity and the veracity of the opposite one offered by the progressives. However, the fluid nature of the enemy made it difficult for either camp, Bolsonarist or progressives, to counter the opposing discourses: either way, the enemy would be discredited, it would have no worthy moral substance, and therefore its narratives would not have the necessary justification to be constructed as truths by the opposites. In this way, dialogue was incapacitated, for nothing can be subtracted from the account of a liar. The construction of the moral substance endowed both parties with opacity, as they could not interconnect or filter content, nor could they accept other people's proposals or ideas. Relatives or close friends from both political camps, united by an affective feeling, could be contaminated by the deception. In both cases, the loved ones would be confused, they would be victims of evil, of the enemy. They would not normally be bearers of unworthy moral substance, but evil would have been able to convince them of something inappropriate. This was the explanation used by both political sides to explain the diversity of thought in the *Bolsonarismo*/progressive field dichotomy, while recognising the left's inability to gain traction against *Bolsonarismo*, and make a project that could not be distorted.



## CONCLUSION

*How many more will have to die before this war on the poor ends?*

Marielle Franco

### **12.1. A Time of politics: the nature and durability of the Bolsonarist political identity**

As a ritual, an electoral period, brief and intense, establishes conquests related to popular fervour and heroism that seem concrete in their political moment but, while they may leave an impact, are often residual in the culture they permeated. However, when asked during the mobilisations for the 2018 Brazilian election about the impact of the campaign, participants seemed to endow it with the trait of subsequent and substantial endurance, with a positional hope of freezing this feeling of constant excitement. Bolsonaro did not represent a pre-existing political identity but had configured his own identity during the election campaign, as did Wilson Witzel. Bolsonaro's representation was at the same time the constitution of a political identity for his supporters. This made the electoral ritual also a ritual of the construction of a new collective political identity and order. Although asymmetrical, this representative-represented move designed, modelled and constructed both leader and supporter as political identities, expressed through their rhetorical and symbolic elements.

Although elections imply the construction of political identities in the "immediate," they can clearly also be occasions for the construction of a collective identity that could go beyond the electoral moment. Here, in the short term, the dispute between the Bolsonarists and anti-Bolsonarists, particularly in the media and social networks, acted as a producer of a "body-to-body" rhetoric, capable of responses to arguments of proximity, as well as the production of passions. In the long term, this political dispute, forged in the founding myth of the crisis of the Brazilian regime, allowed *Bolsonarismo* to unify a disparate political collective utilising a discourse of restoration and transformation, and to articulate this in an apparently credible way. At the long-term level, then, *Bolsonarismo* had succeeded in building a rhetoric that constituted a concrete intellectual, moral, cultural, and communitarian form. It was this background of the founding myth of Brazil that came to underpin the rhetoric of proximity, allowing a conciliation between the two planes of construction of a political identity. This double plane,

of electoral time overlaid on long-term time, explains how, once the electoral period had arrived, a series of concrete rhetorics could be produced that were, nevertheless, being constructed as broad demands from the past. Bolsonaro could talk about order, violence, and authoritarianism because political demands around them had already been constituted: they simply required a new, concrete path to their institutionalisation.

The durability of the Bolsonarist identity will be related to the continuing capacity of *Bolsonarismo* to build a collective will, that is, an intellectual and moral reform, based not just on symbols, music, and memes, but also on the deep issues that solidify a specific collective subject and generate a common sense of its own. In the construction of this collective subject, chains of equivalences between heterogeneous demands can be consolidated. *Bolsonarismo* has so far contained this subject and solidified these chains of demands through the rejection of a “perfect” enemy: a combination of the *bandido*, the *petista*, and the communist, thus making an electoral ritual identity of its own.

Many countries construct their political projects through the resignification and appropriation of the anthem and the flag as mobilisers of emotions and affections. This was how the Bolsonarist national identity was constructed. However, unlike in other places, the political/institutional crisis in Brazil did not come to simply reflect the exhaustion of the current system. Rather, *Bolsonarismo* reframed it in terms of a contestation over Brazil’s military past and its fundamental narrative of a Christian country. The flag thus represented both current pride and nostalgia, helping in the construction of a unique Bolsonarist national narrative that crossed time. *Bolsonarismo* also represented a qualitative leap in the union of political affections. The Bolsonaro candidacies offered an illusion, a shared passion, the perception that actions were to be taken that would make a difference, giving a perception of plebeian, anti-establishment energy. They offered a symbolic promise of success that managed to unite broad popular sectors during the electoral campaign, united by a metaphorical colonial sense that did, in the end, appeal to a (constructed) common good, which was: to Save Brazil.

The construction of this common good of Saving Brazil was crystallised during the electoral period through symbols and metaphors. Thus, this particular time of politics was characterised as a *special* time, in which people could think in a more mythological and metaphorical way,

allowing a series of deep metaphors to shape individual opinions and electoral political thinking along Bolsonarist lines. People used these metaphors to argue for their decisions, and expressed and listened to them publicly. Moreover, these metaphors articulated a series of secondary thoughts, capable of giving complexity to simple reasoning. The political time analysed showed that in this period, due to its ritualised character of transition and liminal openness of perception to discourse, the Bolsonarist metaphors were able to penetrate deeply. It is likely that the oral reproduction of these metaphors would not have had the same power in a moment of regular time, punctuated by complex reasons and more elaborate arguments mixed with the everyday of a non-electoral period, but during an electoral time of great intensity, people were receptive to accepting, absorbing and reproducing a series of metaphors that organised their own political thinking, often in ways that might have been unthinkable at another time. This could only happen because the campaign was presented as a moment of collective transformation, in which myth took centre stage over reason.

## **12.2. The main structuring metaphors of *Bolsonarismo* identified**

The different metaphorical models of *Bolsonarismo* that have been traversed through the thesis have been focus on different aspects of mental political experience. As argued, following Lakoff and Johnson's studies of conceptual metaphor, the human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical. Metaphors allow the construction of concepts about one phenomenon in terms of another, usually an unfamiliar phenomenon in terms of a more familiar one. These metaphor based concepts then structure what we perceive, how we act, and how we relate to each other. Human thought processes are therefore largely metaphorical, and human conceptual systems structured and defined metaphorically. This happens without conscious thought most of the time. However, sometimes elaborate systems of metaphorical thinking are developed for strategic purposes, as occurred in *Bolsonarismo*.

Thus, the hegemonic dispute that *Bolsonarismo* instigated using metaphorical thinking was governed by a double game that required the rearticulation of the actors (and stakes) involved based on an historical bloc that, although mainly defending the economy of the petty bourgeoisie and the elite, could only be built with the support of other sectors of society. This required the construction of a logic of motivation and collective identity formation, that was

found in the way metaphors structure common sense. Nevertheless, only by including the premise of the particularity of the ritual character of an electoral time of politics, can an explanation be found for the paradoxes explored in the thesis, whereby members of collectives that would see their interests reduced or destroyed under Bolsonaro still intended to vote for him. This special, ritualised time made it inevitable that the thinking that would take precedence would be metaphorical thinking. This was reinforced through the way the candidates continually reproduced the party's key metaphors and highlighted their specific elements in their campaign discourse.

Key metaphors that were fundamentally structuring, and which were specifically promoted by Bolsonarist candidates were *Brazil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos* (Brazil above everything, God above everyone), *Meu partido é o Brasil* (My party is Brazil), and *Bandido bom é bandido morto* (A good bandit is a dead bandit). These are briefly summarised here:

- *Brazil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos* (Brazil above everything, God above everyone) personalised Brazil, not equal to but in relation to God, for this is an *orientational* metaphor. It establishes the concept “above” as superiority, as legitimisation of the best, and therefore as a legitimisation of Brazil in a hierarchical order in which only God was above all of Brazil. The orientational metaphors of above and below allowed *Bolsonarismo* to normalise implicit concepts such as “growth,” and “merit” within a social, political, economic and moral hierarchical order. Presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro reproduced this metaphor constantly in his speeches, encouraging its use in every supporter event. Through it, he conveyed *Bolsonarismo*'s political support for a less secular and more theocratic country.
- *Meu partido é o Brasil* ( My party is Brazil) built on the previous metaphor, suggesting a way for disaffected and disinterest voters to join the developing Bolsonarist collective through a reorganisation of their systems of symbols about politics, including the flag and anthem, that tapped into and allowed them to express their support for a specific kind of nationalist patriotism: a patriotism of order that was hierarchical and exclusionary. This metaphor thus presented itself as *anti-politics*, through its suggestion of opposition to establishment politics: political institutions that were

parasitic on collective benefit; and governments that harmed rather than helped, misused citizens' money, and mismanaged resources, including in terms of security. Senate candidate Flavio Bolsonaro featured this metaphor throughout his campaign, promoting a sense of nationalism and anti-establishment patriotism especially among those who had rejected politics.

- *Bandido bom é bandido morto* (A good bandit is a dead bandit) implied that there were no good bandits, only bad bandits. Evil, although not explained, was juxtaposed to Good to justify the execution of those defined as bandits. This metaphor expressed the punitive logic of the Bolsonarist project, as well as made explicit that there were to be equal rights, but that these would be morally differentiated. The metaphor was a favourite of candidate Wilson Witzel.

In addition to these three fundamental structuring metaphors, which were linked in the thesis to each of the three Bolsonaro candidates in order to demonstrate their use, other key metaphors were also detected. Although these were not linked to specific individuals or candidates, their power to cohere disparate groups was obvious from their use and reuse in the speeches, life stories and conversations reported throughout the thesis. These include *Brasil acordou* (Brazil woke up)/*O Gigante acordou* (the Giant woke up), and the immensely powerful *Botar ordem na casa* (Putting order in the house).

*Brasil acordou* (Brazil woke up) personifies the country as a being, a giant, as in the extension *O gigante acordou* (The giant woke up). Brazil (a giant) had the brute force to transform reality. Each Brazilian was part of the giant, so legitimising their own individual strength. Brazil woke up indicates that Brazil had been asleep, as if there were only two states for Brazil: an active state and an inactive one, a duality that simplifies reality, while serving to cohere strength around the idea of taking action now that Brazil (“we”) had woken up.

*Botar ordem na casa* (Putting order in the house) is a complex metaphor, in which the abstract idea of order and the concrete object house are articulated. In the sense of house, it implies that Brazil was a house containing a “family” that had to be governed by the uses and customs of that house, and not by any aberration that would cause disorder. The metaphor (a house is

ordered) does not necessarily have to have a Strict Father in charge, but in Brazil, a patriarchal society, a strict father was implied. In this respect, Bolsonaro would be in charge of fulfilling that mission of putting order in a house (Brazil) that had become unruly, with order defined according to a combination of the military, its colonial and dictatorial past, and the Christian church. This metaphor in Bolsonaro's rhetoric was particularly appealing to the desire for someone put an end to all the problems in the house. It was repeated constantly in the testimonies described in the thesis. It does not appeal to a framework in which problems are just managed, as they must be in any usual collective project; it promises to solve them once and for all.

The implication that politics involved war also made the idea of a **Just War** a foundational metaphor, so much so that both sides of the political battle used the concept. The suggestion that Brazil was in a state of war, annuls the cooperation and compromise that normally characterised parliamentary actions such as agreements and legislation, and legitimises the use of the various forms of violence that the construction of a polarisation between the "Us" and the "Them" allows. *Bolsonarismo* did not have to resort to dialogue, as the adversary had already been classified as the enemy, and his opinion could be annulled through attack and dehumanisation. This is because the Just War metaphor has three set characters: the villain, the victim, and the hero, and follows a formulaic plot: a villain commits a crime against an innocent victim (a rape, assault, robbery, or kidnapping); there is an imbalance of forces in which the hero has to act on his own; the hero goes through a hard journey, having to cross the enemy's inhospitable spaces, where the essentially evil and monstrous villain awaits him; the hero cannot negotiate: he must defeat the villain to restore moral order and save the victim; the hero is acclaimed for his victory, for he has acted out of honour and glory. Thus, the metaphor constructs an antagonism: the hero, the representative of "Good" and the restoration of order, and the "Evil" villain, the image of the devil, immoral and vicious. This is the foundation of the Just War metaphor used in the Bolsonaro campaign, although different names were used to obtain different plots: the police and/or the army (hero), the good citizen (victim), and the trafficker (villain); Bolsonaro (hero), the good citizen (victim), and the PT (villain).

Privatisations (hero), the good citizen (victim), and the state (villain). The Judge (hero), the good citizen (victim), and the bandit/corrupt (villain).

Another way of facilitating the linkages to personal experience is through the “key” or tone of objects. *Bolsonarismo* coheres the experiences in the collective imagination, identifying and categorising them. The categorisation is metaphorical. Through ontological metaphors, *Bolsonarismo* qualifies complex ideas, identifies particular aspects of society, constructs enemies, and establishes in the social and particular logic justifications of cause and effect. This ontological mechanism makes society seem comprehensible, and that therefore “the truth” is known. Thus, in terms of the *Bolsonarismo* metaphor recipient, understanding “inside-outside” helps in their own personal construction of the frontline of political identification, and dichotomous, oppositional ideas such as “mine/alien,” even when those justify and legitimise rights linked to land, such as private property, landowner rights, the extraction of mineral resources or the division of neighbourhoods. The normalisation of these realities, and even their defence, is related to the way reality is conceived by each person around the inside-outside metaphor in *Bolsonarismo*, thus supporting the development of a more individualistic and meritocratic model of thinking.

Faced with this comprehensive metaphorical worldview, the progressives tried to articulate the counter metaphor of a just war between dictatorship and democracy, in which the progressives represented values linked to freedom, as opposed to the repression and violence linked to *Bolsonarismo*, synonymous in the metaphor with dictatorship. As a metaphor contrasting two high-level abstractions in favour of a third, freedom, the progressive campaign was proving unable to build enough traction in the face of the building support for Bolsonaro across all educational levels later investigated by Nicolau (2020), something that was leading to what was close to despair in some of the activists and candidates for the progressive side in the campaign who were interviewed.

### **12.3. The metaphorical system of the Strict Father**

The aim of the research project underpinning this thesis was to understand the metaphorical thinking that was shaping the world of the Bolsonarist unconscious from different angles: the

rhetoric in the streets, the metaphors articulated by the candidates themselves, and the deep stories that articulated the life beliefs of the Bolsonaroists themselves. In this third angle, these metaphors proved to be especially powerful when assimilated into a special ritual time, the time of electoral politics.

However, it was notable that the in-depth histories of the Bolsonaroist supporters I spent time with and came to know well throughout the fieldwork, never showed the degree of explicit violence of the campaign rhetoric, even though the campaign expedited a process of building fundamentalism and extremism, and normalising violent practices with its discourses. The people who supported Bolsonaro were agitated in their public performance at the campaign events, but were pleasant, loving, and generous during the time I was part of their lives. This supportive way of understanding personal relationships even with strangers did not seem to correspond with how they then expressed themselves as part of the Bolsonaroist collective, using the prompting metaphors that gave their thoughts a concrete order, capable of activating their deepest emotions and leading them to take action in the public space itself. Furthermore, these metaphors appeared to work into some people's way of thinking, but not in other's. The explanation for this appeared to be related to a shared unconscious deep metaphor in the susceptible: **the metaphor of the Strict Father.**

The three major candidates with whom I also spent time, Jair Bolsonaro, Flavio Bolsonaro and Wilson Witzel, all shared *and represented*, from their different particularities, the metaphorical system of the strict father. They represented metaphorically, as well as presented personally, a masculinity and moral order that included this strict system, in which punishment was the norm. *Bolsonarismo* also presented in this way: it was an ideological position in which a person could be transformed into a moral being through discipline. Discipline was what allowed both individuals and a people (Brazil) to achieve prosperity. If prosperity was lacking, it was discipline that was lacking, so all three candidates resorted to various punitive and disciplinary discourses, as would a strict father in a family.

Thus, the three candidates promoted an understanding of social assistance as something to be rejected because the beneficiaries had not have earned it. Helping them would only make them dependent and take away their ability to be self-disciplined, and with it, the ability to be moral.



This discourse justified the attacks on racial and gender quota policies and other welfare programmes represented by the PT. In this way, it was believed that those who upheld discipline and morality, were the ones capable of establishing order, and who should therefore rule. This was clearly the case with the military. Combined with the idea of the strict father putting order in the house, a hierarchy of moral order was able to be defended by all three candidates, despite the different priorities each focused on in their campaign speeches. In this shared conservative and hierarchical moral order, God was above man, and man was above nature. In the Bolsonarist rhetoric, the environment was a secondary issue and, contrary to care for the environment, prioritised use via extraction and agricultural development. Adults were also over children, Western culture over Eastern culture, and the US over other nations, representing the current idolatry of the American way of life and the Trump administration. This authoritarian form, with its false harmony, in what could be called metaphorical colonial sense-making, drew on Brazil's history of colonisation, justified by the strict conservative narrative on the basis of God's will, since God (the father) would always do what was moral.

Although this worldview was central to all three candidates, there was also a "hard" part of the project, which established another set of hierarchies that the candidates also shared: men over women (Bolsonaro had a *fraquejada* (weakness) in having a daughter rather than a son); whites over non-whites (*quilombolas* should be heavy in *arrobas*); heterosexuals over homosexuals ("having a gay son would be a disappointment"); and Christians over non-Christians (an attack on the native Afro-Brazilian religions). Even though not all Bolsonarists supported this part of the Bolsonarist project, the candidates continued to use these messages, despite them receiving the most critical attention from the progressive side, which responded to them by repeatedly attacking *Bolsonarismo* as "homophobic, racist, chauvinist, misogynist." They could get away with it because the strict father metaphor linked with metaphorical colonial sense meant that the Bolsonaro program could bring the sectors of financial capital into agreement through this strict morality. The candidates saw themselves as responsible, moral people, who had achieved prosperity through self-discipline, as had Brazil in the past.

Despite their particularities, all three candidates reproduced this familiar logic, the metaphor of the strict father. This proved capable of bringing together metaphors related to a more

authoritarian and conservative social order in the face of social changes in a way that resonated with many people. The progressive field's efforts to reinforce an idea of care for the other and a lesser hierarchy, were unable to counter this familiar logic because it was so strongly tied into the colonial experience and an historically hierarchical society.

#### **12.4. A society of facts versus a society of heroes**

The deepest and most persistent worldviews become part of one's moral identity built on experience (lived or imagined), and on this basis, information will be accepted, questioned, ignored, discredited, ridiculed, or attacked according to those worldviews. The habitual dismissal of everyday facts and data that do not conform to these moral worldviews explains why we deny issues proven by science. Brains function automatically and unconsciously, in a logic that articulates primitive built-in traits, frames, conceptual metaphors, and conceptual integration. Data matter a lot, but they must be framed in appropriate moral terms to be taken seriously.

At a time of systemic crisis, *Bolsonarismo*, as a political phenomenon produced by the crisis, established a series of metaphors that prevented the conceptual frameworks in which various facts and data were presented from resonating with the metaphorical colonial sense the metaphors created. When there is disaffection, reliability easily falls back on the primordial loyalties of the right: nation and family (Stolke, 1993). It was this fall-back that *Bolsonarismo* exploited. There was a moralisation of patterns that left the normal systems of justification of truth and belief that rationalism seeks to make hegemonic in tatters in a universe of fake news and contradictory political discourses.

The political identification established in the electoral period was, through the chain of equivalences that was configured, what Ernesto Laclau called a "populist moment" for *Bolsonarismo*. This moment was concatenated in a political project, which was legitimised by the electoral ritual itself. At a time when there appeared no fundamental differences between left and right, and their borders had become blurred in the generalised corruption, *Bolsonarismo* presented itself against the Establishment, and produced a profound crisis in the system of representation. It emerged as an apparently populist moment in the face of the state's

inability to respond to demands, the inability of the PT to introduce egalitarian instruments, fears over the integrity of the privileges of the upper classes, and an organic crisis in which the response to violence and bureaucracy was fundamental.

Historically, the individualistic perspective of liberalism had escaped the very way of working that *Bolsonarismo* adopted: the construction of collective identities through the dichotomies of friend/enemy and us/them. However, *Bolsonarismo* understood the power of conflict and antagonism in its rhetoric for the construction of a project of electoral political identification. It renounced the liberal principle of non-separation and integration in order to reinforce this antagonistic frontline. Liberalism has never understood nationalism, because it had to do with collective subjects. Thus, when the liberal sector of Brazilian democracy came to be dominated by traditional conservatives, it seemed natural for them to support the popular right, the Bolsonarist right, in a second round. The progressive field was aware of this change in political affections and tried to reinforce the same rhetorical elements focused on liberal principles, however Bolsonaro managed to build a broader national-popular bloc beyond the very elite interests he mainly represented.

*Bolsonarismo* arose through a separation between representatives and the represented, a collapse in the institutions set up to provide a rapid response to citizens' demands, and a perception of loss of privileges that made certain sectors see the PT as the cause of unrest and corruption. It proposed the construction of a type of people, exclusionary people, through chains of discursive equivalences, internalised and expressed in the emotionality of actions. It made a series of discursive groupings, unifying diverse positions and social sectors through symbolic constructions that grouped positions together. The populist moment of *Bolsonarismo*, before entering government, managed to obscure the differences between these sectors. *Bolsonarismo* had built this populist moment on antagonisms that had already been introduced into the political and institutional crisis through liberalism's multicultural demands. It added the colonial identity component to the political battle as a way of establishing a game of adversaries, mixing cultural claims with claims against the lack of state action, generalised bureaucracy and violence. Thus, the phenomenon conceived of a type of populist moment that was to be characterised by a war of position and the construction of a popular collective will

based on chains of equivalences and the mobilisation of historical passions. Bolsonaro was not asking for a vote for the right; he was asking for a patriotic vote.

The collapse of the PT narrative also bolstered the Bolsonaro strategy, causing many people who had voted for Lula to switch their vote to Bolsonaro. The PT's policies had participated in the reconstruction of relations between civil society and political society in a process of partial citizen construction, incomplete in the reform of conflict and demand administration but capable of building certainties. This process, had it been completed, would have strengthened the political relations that normally allowed a person to self-identify as a citizen and feel that they had rights that could be met at a reasonable speed. However, the state, in a deteriorating regime crisis, was incapable of granting such rights. This could be seen in the deteriorating functioning of public services such as education, health, transport, and public security.

The response to the failure of these services was more popular than institutional, that is, it was anti-establishment. The coordinates within which this process took place in Brazil were shaped by the historical features, particularly the post-colonial and military components, of Brazilian society, and specifically, of the State of Rio de Janeiro. This configuration of equivalences created a representation of the common man, the one Bolsonaro appeared to represent, a common citizen who did not represent the traditional elites, because although he participated in their spaces and privileges, his violent, rough-hewn rhetoric was the key through which he could be perceived as a citizen like them, outraged by the system, with which he apparently disagreed.

The combination of an anti-establishment sentiment and institutional ineffectiveness, along with the ritual moment of the election allowed Bolsonaro to position himself as a mediator of these conflicts, through a narrative that exploited a series of disputes and events in which he confronted death, and constructed a common name, capable of representing different sectors and issues. Bolsonaro expressed in his rhetoric the collective will of all those who felt abused by a state that they had come to perceive as synonymous with theft and corruption. Thus, in his toughness, he gave form and representation to the reasons of those he appeared to speak for, incorporating their demands into his figure in an exercise of building charisma in electoral

time. The construction of Bolsonaro's charisma was at the same time the construction of his own political identification, a relocation of the identity order under the exposed demands.

### **12.5. Contribution of the metaphorical colonial sense to far-right studies**

Throughout the thesis, I have analysed how the different communicative forms present in the electoral campaign, from the rhetoric of the events to the deep stories of the voters and candidates, were structured around foundational metaphors that structured the entire cognitive universe of *Bolsonarismo*, allowing it to intimately link into the type of society Brazil was: a post-colonial society, historically racist, hierarchical and founded on a regime of the normalisation of violence, which at the same time built its management of these dilemmas on the cordiality and flexibility of its relationships through festive expressions, such as carnivals and football. Influenced by Caio Prado Jr's (2011/1942) concept of *colonial sense*, I have called this relationship between Bolsonarist metaphorical thinking and Brazil's colonial origin a *metaphorical colonial sense*.

The concept of metaphorical colonial sense has been crucial to the testing of the hypotheses that were the starting points for this thesis. These were that the Bolsonarist phenomenon could be explained:

A) as a product of the existence of a global systemic crisis, which was economic, political, social, and environmental, and which intertwined the phenomenon with similar phenomena internationally.

B) as a product of the existence of specific elements in Brazilian culture closely linked to the colonial past that included an acceptance of hierarchies and a specific historical social order, which was perceived to be at risk from the rise of multiculturalism, small social justice policies and corruption, and had produced various reactionary responses, including the emergence of the Bolsonarist phenomenon.

C) through the category of "far-right" rather than fascism, as, although *Bolsonarismo* shared certain features of fascism, it was likely to be a complex, particular and peculiarly Brazilian phenomenon better explained by the concept of "far-right."

The fieldwork served to deepen these hypotheses through the analysis of the shared metaphors, deep histories, and political rhetoric that were in play. However, throughout the chapters and different parts of the thesis, the concept of metaphorical colonial sense helped to bring out how a metaphorical approach was able to respond to these hypotheses. The ethnographic data that had been gathered and analysed would not have been as understandable if there had not been a basis of thought capable of categorising and considering these foundational ideas as adequate. The metaphorical colonial sense helped to identify that the Brazilian far-right was projecting a metaphorical universe that was only able to function because of the deep roots of post-colonial Brazil. Although sharing some obvious traits with the international far-right phenomenon, the category “fascism” did not include the particular elements of Brazilian post-colonialism that proved so decisive in the campaign, such as the myth of racial democracy and harmony so necessary to understand the continuing acceptance of violence in Brazil. Again, the tensions of a society that had passed without explicit conflict from a colony to a republic, from slavery to abolition, and from dictatorship to democracy were also significant, and particular to Brazil. All these conditions revealed the historical difficulty that Brazil has always had towards conflict per se, so that whenever it existed it always had to be conducted in the name of “avoiding conflict,” that is, to recover order, which meant the maintenance of social hierarchies. This difficulty could be seen in the complex way in which Brazil had been constructing itself as a *modern society*.

The concept of metaphorical colonial sense also helped to make sense of the apparent contradiction in the choice of sectors that could not possibly see their natural material interests satisfied by Bolsonarist proposals, to vote for Bolsonarist candidates, regardless. The promise of Bolsonaro to bring order based on colonial hierarchies and moral codes made metaphorical common sense at a deeper level than the need to have material interests addressed. The loss of position observed in government efforts to address inequality and discrimination in a society such as Brazil that was based on hierarchy, where everyone knew their place, had, as a consequence, meant that people felt that their usual categories for recognition and belonging were being emptied of content. The offer of Brazil itself as their “party” in the slogan “My party is Brazil” was tantalising: it depoliticised a country that preferred to avoid conflict, even

if that meant enduring violence in order to achieve that situation, and offered future harmony through a common political collective. Furthermore, this novel expression of patriotism was to be linked through Bolsonaro to the defence of a social hierarchy based on the principle of the “good citizen,” which articulated a series of traditional values that were related to the aristocratic principle of this hierarchy found in the family, the church, and the neoliberal project, and which constructed a comprehensible enemy, into which any category considered not a good citizen could be put, including communism, the left, the PT, feminism, and LGBTQI+ and other diverse groups.

The strategic use of structural metaphors in the experiential bases is a field that has had limited attention. The results of the ethnography that underpins this research project and thesis show that just the perception of violence can produce the most intensely lived experience, with or without personal experiences of assaults, muggings, and robberies, or robberies of close family members. Through the perception of violence, of being in a constant state of danger, the punitive metaphors used by the Bolsonarists functioned with the logic of a colonial country in which violence was normalised in military actions and through socio-economic inequality. It also triggered other foundational ideas that could be linked to Brazil’s colonial history through Bolsonarist metaphorical thinking, such as the perception of the loss of privilege among those identified, or self-identifying, as the upper classes. These responses, too, did not need to be defined by personal experience, insofar as the people expressing these fears did not appear to have lost any of their privileges in recent years, but the fears activated by the campaign rhetoric assumed this metaphorical logic that hierarchised human relations, because it had been implicit in Brazilian social thought since its founding.





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## **Appendix**

**4.1. Ethnographic timeline: Jair Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018**

**4.2. Ethnographic map: Jair Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018**

**5.1. Ethnographic timeline: Flavio Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018**

**5.2. Ethnographic map: Flavio Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018**

**6.1. Ethnographic timeline: Wilson Witzel's electoral Campaign 2018**

**6.2. Ethnographic map: Wilson Witzel's electoral Campaign 2018**

Note: Figure Numbers refer to the smaller image in the relevant chapter



## Ethnographic timeline: Jair Bolsonaro's electoral campaign 2018

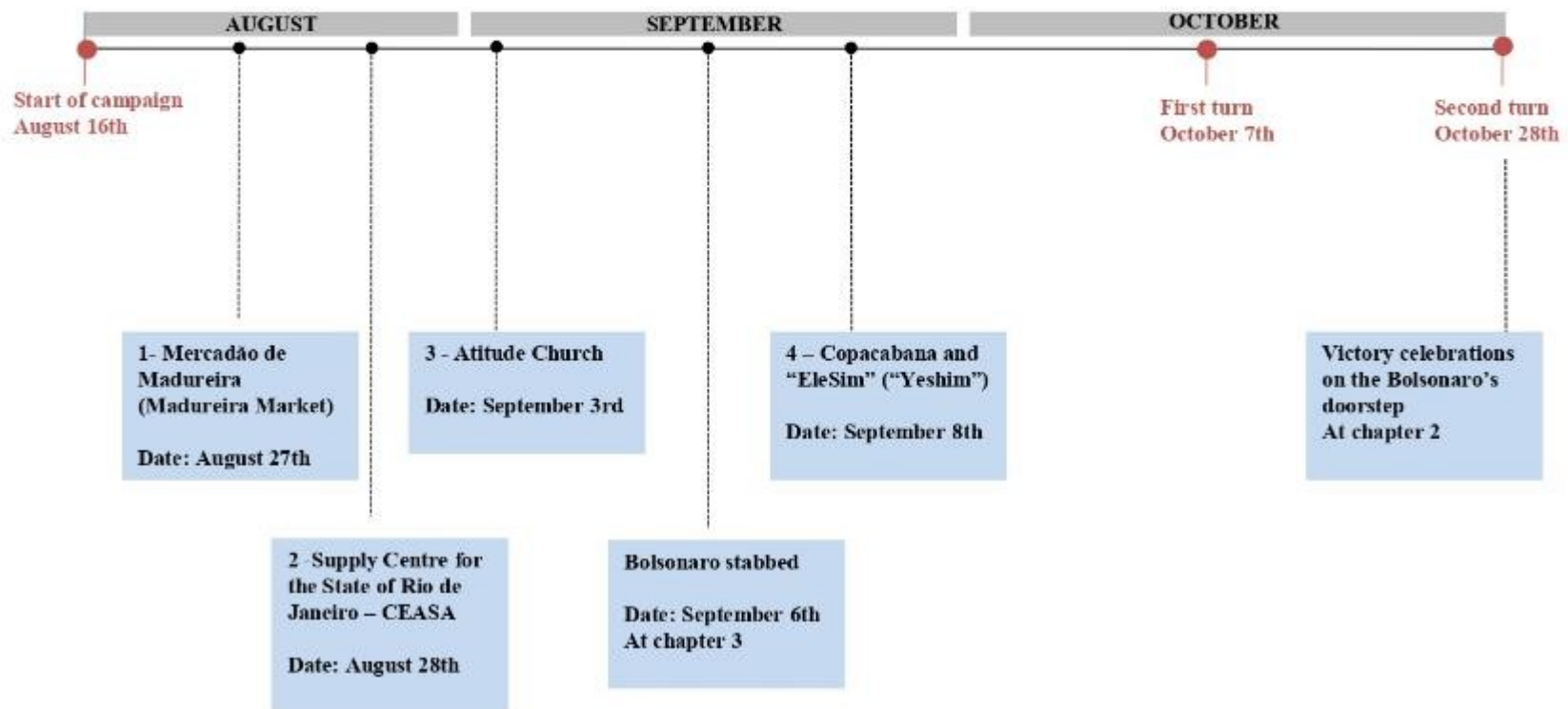


Figure 4.1: Ethnographic timeline: Jair Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018

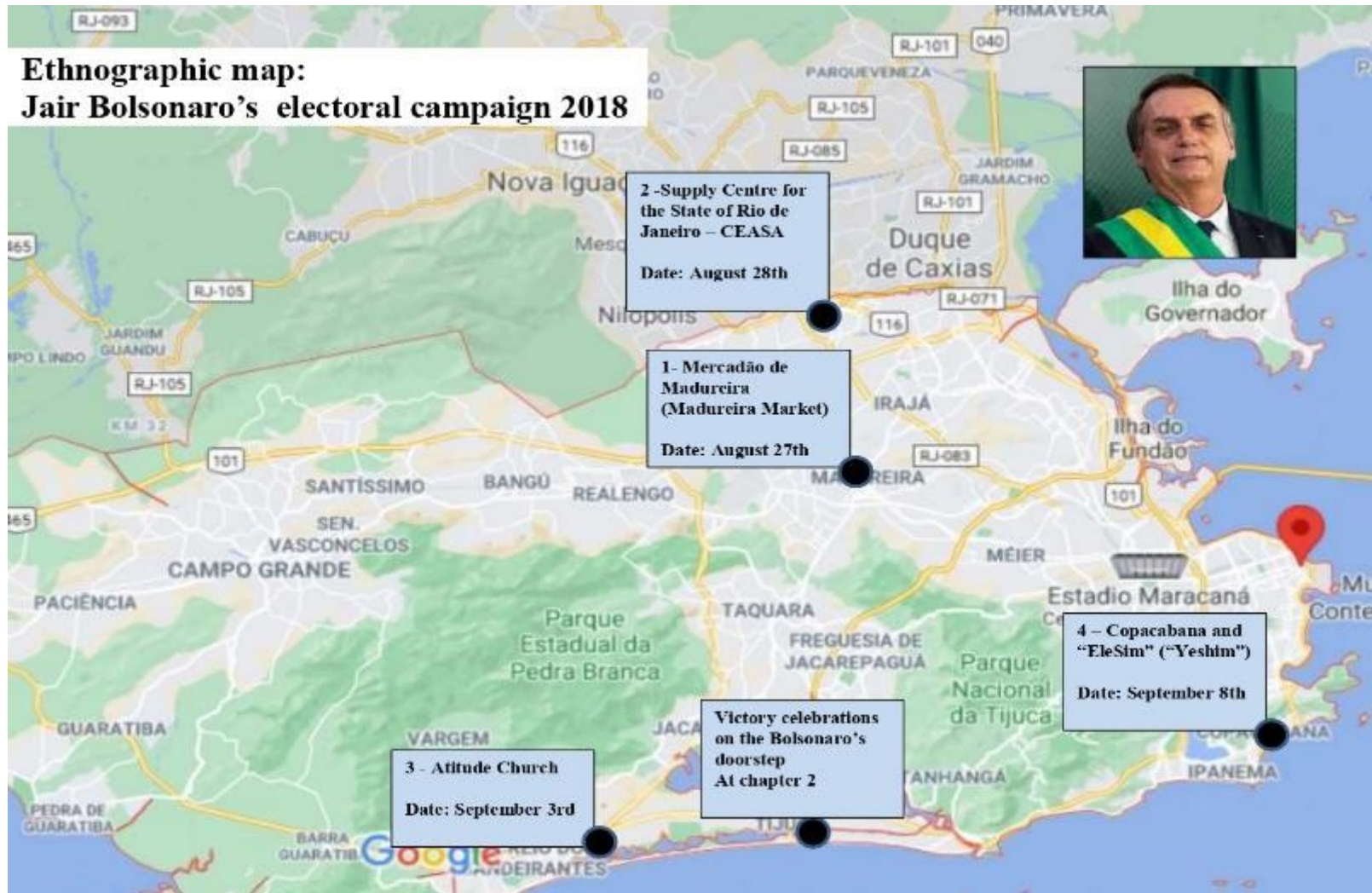


Figure 4.2: Ethnographic map: Jair Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018

## Ethnographic timeline: Flavio Bolsonaro's electoral campaign 2018

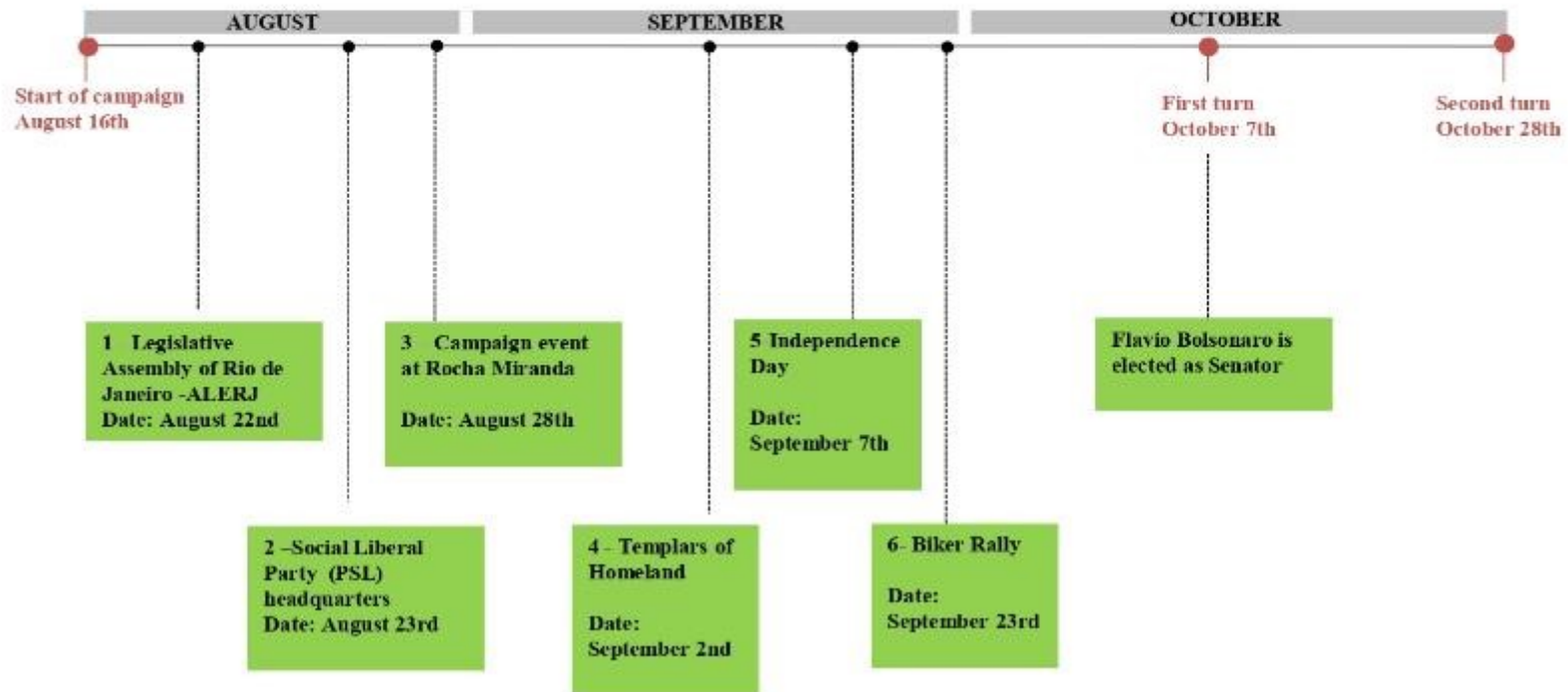


Figure 5.1: Ethnographic timeline: Flavio Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018

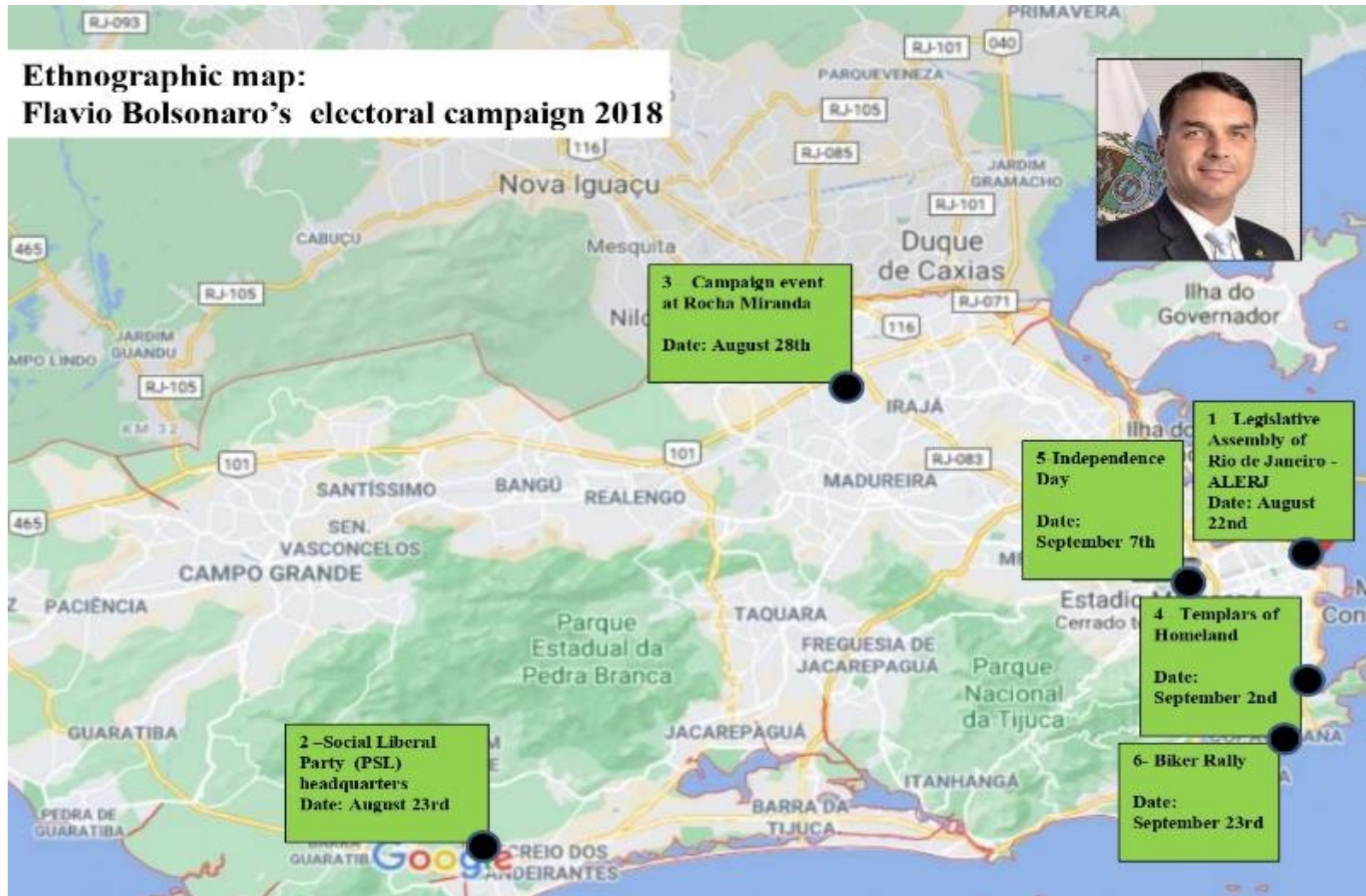


Figure 5.2: Ethnographic map: Flávio Bolsonaro's electoral Campaign 2018



## Ethnographic timeline: Wilson Witzel's electoral campaign 2018

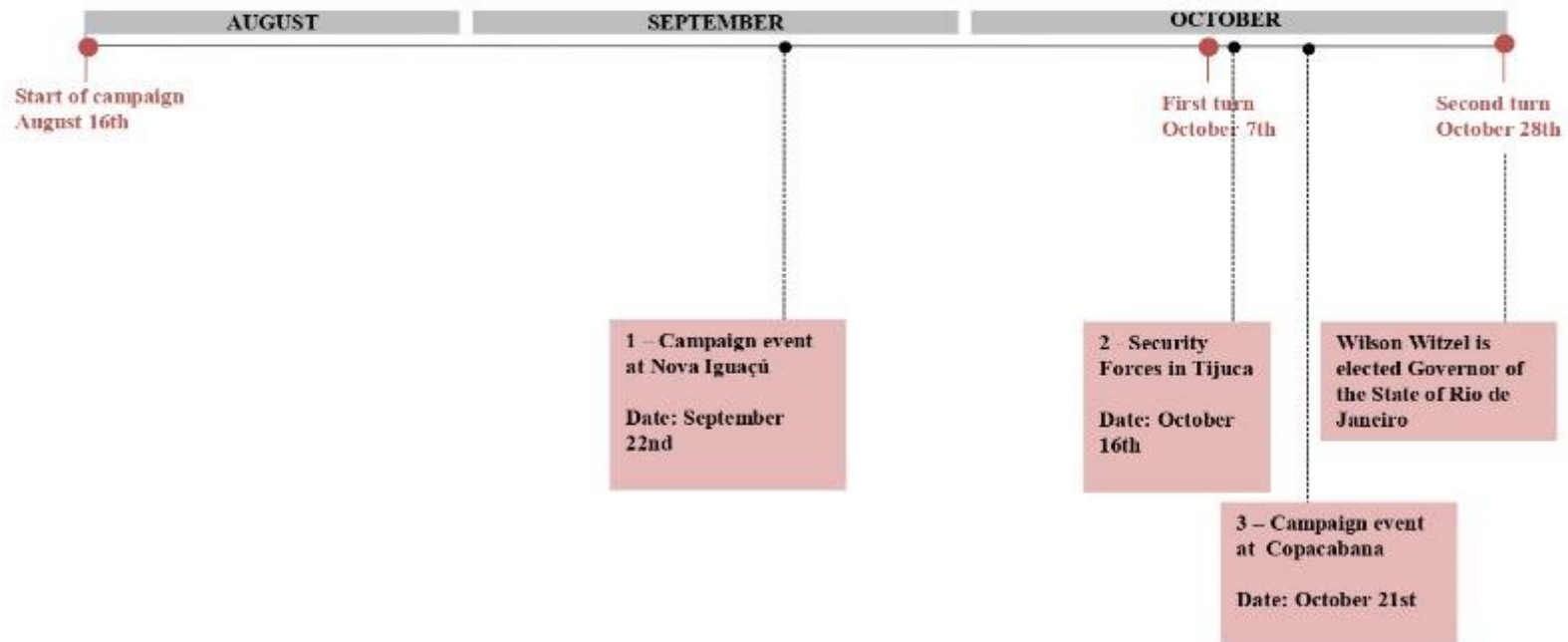


Figure 6.1: Ethnographic timeline: Wilson Witzel's electoral Campaign 2018

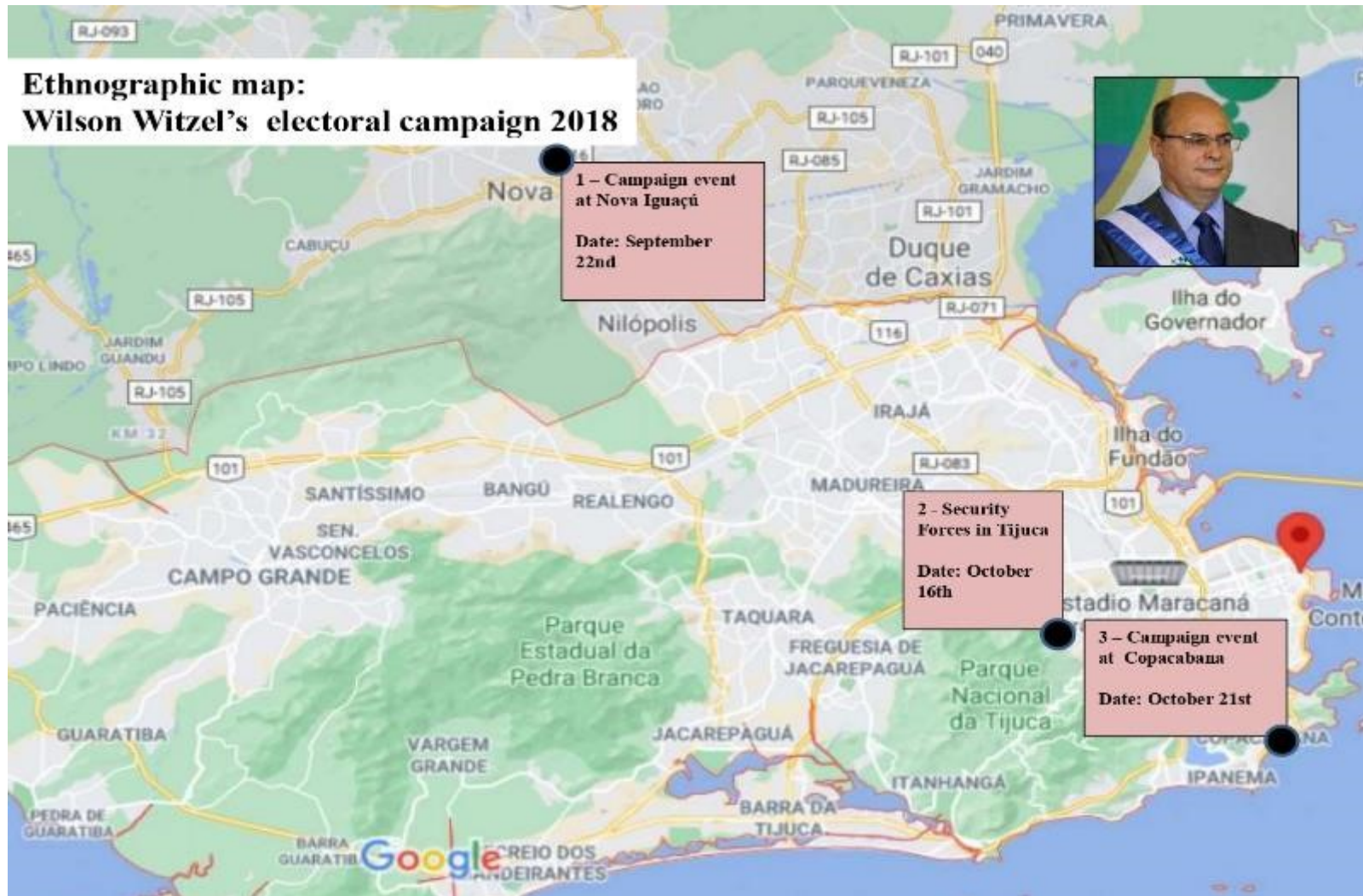


Figure 6.2: Ethnographic map: Wilson Witzel's electoral Campaign 2018

## Appendix II

### Audio-Visual Material

For each part of the thesis, an audio-visual anthropology production has been made. All the videos can be located on the following YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBVb4M5sMA2HRB9myPhkF1g/videos>

In addition, links to each of the specific videos that illustrate the relevant chapter and ideas are provided at the front of each chapter, as well as at relevant places within each chapter. They are repeated in the tables below.

### Chapter 2 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 2.1. Electoral euphoria</b> <a href="https://youtu.be/1cdSH2RPOCY">https://youtu.be/1cdSH2RPOCY</a>	Section 2.2	52
<b>Video 2.2. Testimonies in front of Bolsonaro's house</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/slc3Zkm3k-Q">https://youtu.be/slc3Zkm3k-Q</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/DYh0B6ncI3c">https://youtu.be/DYh0B6ncI3c</a>	Section 2.2	54
<b>Video 2.3. Elements of heroism on Bolsonaro's victory day</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/5zyp5kdhmZI">https://youtu.be/5zyp5kdhmZI</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/Wz1iFfa9SAw">https://youtu.be/Wz1iFfa9SAw</a>	Section 2.2	56
<b>Video 2.4. The crystallisation of discourses in Copacabana</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/qC_eUF43ANQ">https://youtu.be/qC_eUF43ANQ</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/kN2SvhSvC1c">https://youtu.be/kN2SvhSvC1c</a>	Section	75

### Chapter 3 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 3.1. : "Each one of you is Jair Bolsonaro"</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/ltJkLyq_1jg">https://youtu.be/ltJkLyq_1jg</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/3LEyf5ZxiBM">https://youtu.be/3LEyf5ZxiBM</a>	Section 3.2.1	86
<b>Video 3.2. "Lula camp" in front of his prison in Curitiba</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/hLF8Da1us_Y">https://youtu.be/hLF8Da1us_Y</a>	Section 3.2.2	93

Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/0lZtIJq0R7Q">https://youtu.be/0lZtIJq0R7Q</a>		
<b>Video 3.3. Marielle Franco: The rupture of her plaque and her figure as a symbol of resistance</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Q7IHQuQPU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3Q7IHQuQPU</a> Original Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4_o_x3c3I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS4_o_x3c3I</a>	Section 3.2.3	97

## Chapter 4 Video Links

<b>Video Titles and URL links</b>	<b>Relevant Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Video 4.1. Bolsonaro's visit to the Madureira market</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/78CDC0wclcg">https://youtu.be/78CDC0wclcg</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/uaUNEPdWw1A">https://youtu.be/uaUNEPdWw1A</a>	Section 4.2	112
<b>Video 4.2. Influences of the theologising discourse</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8kB5AXJPS4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8kB5AXJPS4</a> Original Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oytRTv0mA0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oytRTv0mA0</a>	Section 4.3	117
<b>Video 4.3. Political discourse in the Evangelical Church</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/M4tliYH0qWE">https://youtu.be/M4tliYH0qWE</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/BZZn2IfRKps">https://youtu.be/BZZn2IfRKps</a>	Section 4.4	121
<b>Video 4.4. The violent Christianity of the “feminine marches with Bolsonaro”</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/uWTUeN-Nvkg">https://youtu.be/uWTUeN-Nvkg</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/1AclMRA1O_U">https://youtu.be/1AclMRA1O_U</a>	Section 4.5	128

## Chapter 5 Video Links

<b>Video Titles and URL links</b>	<b>Relevant Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Video 5.1. The concept of family for Bolsonarism</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/cRO8fg1Dj_4">https://youtu.be/cRO8fg1Dj_4</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/oWuG4PvOQCw">https://youtu.be/oWuG4PvOQCw</a>	Section 5.2.2	142
<b>Video 5.2. Independence Day. Speeches under the flag</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/wNvXR_sZk8Y">https://youtu.be/wNvXR_sZk8Y</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/LH7NqBZjirI">https://youtu.be/LH7NqBZjirI</a>	Section 5.4.1	153
<b>Video 5.3. Motorist Rally in Copacabana</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7BP6hlfWAE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7BP6hlfWAE</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/humTBAjEL3Q">https://youtu.be/humTBAjEL3Q</a>	Section 5.4.2	158

## Chapter 6 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 6.1. Violent Proto-Bolsonarismo</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIRbstJp8sc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIRbstJp8sc</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/B-R2pl2Fjn0">https://youtu.be/B-R2pl2Fjn0</a>	Section 6.2	171
<b>Video 6.2. Professionalised violence</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/EMGeDObRmZM">https://youtu.be/EMGeDObRmZM</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/Vzf2WNS1b0k">https://youtu.be/Vzf2WNS1b0k</a>	Section 6.3	175
<b>Video 6.3. Witzel, the violent righteous</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/SSR4qR2uPIU">https://youtu.be/SSR4qR2uPIU</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/sIPu60lpDpg">https://youtu.be/sIPu60lpDpg</a>	Section 6.4	181

## Chapter 7 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 7.1. “Put order and clean the house.” The universe of a humble pro-Bolsonarist family</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/0AQGqtD84Ao">https://youtu.be/0AQGqtD84Ao</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/mK74LkJnNU">https://youtu.be/mK74LkJnNU</a>	Section 7.3	205

## Chapter 8 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 8.1. The paradoxical vote</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/lJw25EDGS2c">https://youtu.be/lJw25EDGS2c</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/3pnWzGzxBI1">https://youtu.be/3pnWzGzxBI1</a>	Chapter	215

## Chapter 9 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 9.1. The obvious vote</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/28kioWIH0TU">https://youtu.be/28kioWIH0TU</a>	Chapter	231

Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/umX4Cl5OmLk">https://youtu.be/umX4Cl5OmLk</a>		
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### Chapter 10 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 10.1. Anti-Bolsonarist rhetoric in Public Spaces</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/QUzXeMXiMZc">https://youtu.be/QUzXeMXiMZc</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/0E4_DUdgWYE">https://youtu.be/0E4_DUdgWYE</a>	Chapter	249

### Chapter 11 Video Links

Video Titles and URL links	Relevant Section	Page
<b>Video 11.1. The articulation of anti-Bolsonarist thought</b> Spanish Version <a href="https://youtu.be/qDsxT5Sa4s0">https://youtu.be/qDsxT5Sa4s0</a> Original Version <a href="https://youtu.be/flSCsoT2qQQ">https://youtu.be/flSCsoT2qQQ</a>	Chapter	271