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FGV DAPP
DEPARTMENT
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ANALYSIS

VOLUME 1



THE STATE OF MISINFORMATION

2018 ELECTIONS



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The State of Misinformation

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September 18, 2018

Executive Summary¹

1. Introduction

- The actions of **automated accounts** in the political debate **on the social networks is a reality** in the elections according to an analysis carried out by FGV DAPP with **data from August 08 to 13**;
- We identified **5,932 automated accounts** in the debate about the elections and the presidential hopefuls in the database analyzed, which **generated 19,826 publications** among tweets and retweets;
- Of these publications, **around 30% (5,790 publications) were duplicate**, reproducing the same content, an indication of coordinate actions for the dissemination of content.

2. Discourse analysis

- The **most mentioned** candidates were **Bolsonaro (PSL) and Lula (PT)**, with 7.5 thousand and 6.1 thousand mentions. They are followed by Alckmin (PSDB) and Boulos (PSOL), with 2.7 thousand and 2.2 thousand;
- The discourse analysis shows that **bots connected to Bolsonaro** approached the **themes “abortion”, “homophobia” and “racism”** to position the candidate and react to the left wing;
- In **Lula’s** case, the analysis shows the **strategy of creating visibility for the then VP candidate**, Fernando Haddad, in the “parallel debates” beside the official ones and messages supporting his freedom.

3. Bot networks

- We also identified **three automated account networks (botnets)**, which coordinated 1,589 publications in total during the period analyzed;
- The **biggest of them**, composed of **13 accounts**, made **1,053 publications** related to the electoral debate (5% of the automated publications), with content **defending Lula**;
- The **second network**, with **139 automated accounts**, was responsible for **291 publications** related to the debate (1% of the posts), **connected to the names of Lula and Boulos**;
- The **third network** was composed of **16 accounts**, which made **245 publications** related to the electoral debate (a little over 1%), **defending Bolsonaro and Amoedo**;

¹ In addition to FGV DAPP, this paper had the collaboration of Luiza Bandeira, a researcher from #ElectionWatch, a joint project of @DFRLab and Atlantic Council’s Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center.

- In the **end of August**, several days after the #DireitaAmordaçada (“gagged right wing”) movement, there was also a **mobilization** of #MeSegueNoGab (“follow me on Gab”), aiming to attract followers to the platform;
- The hashtag was mentioned in 19,315 tweets, bringing up the percentage of **Brazilian accesses** on Gab from **12,2% on August 22 to 27,3% on September 11**.

1. Introduction

The actions of automated accounts in the public debate on the social networks is already a reality in this year’s elections, as indicated by FGV DAPP’s latest studies². In this analysis, from the posts about the 2018 elections and the presidential hopefuls made by automated accounts between August 08 and 13, we observed that these interferences promoted by bots often happen in an articulated and synchronized way, from botnets³.

In the week of August 08 to 13, FGV DAPP detected the presence of **5,932 automated accounts** in the debate about the elections and the presidential hopefuls, using our own bot identification methodology⁴. These profiles generated **19,826 publications**, among tweets (10,049) and retweets (9,777). Out of those, **around 30% (5,790 publications) are duplicate**, that is, they reproduce the same textual or image content in different profiles.

Between August 08 and 13, the posts made by automated accounts mentioned 11 presidential hopefuls. The most mentioned were the PSL candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, and former president Lula (PT), with 7,5 thousand and 6,1 thousand mentions each. They were followed by Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB) and Guilherme Boulos (PSOL), with 2.7 thousand and 2.2 thousand each.

Fernando Haddad, who was then the VP candidate in Lula’s ticket, also appears in publications made by bots, with 1,096 mentions.

| Name | Amount of mentions |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Jair Bolsonaro | 7,591 |
| Lula | 6,146 |
| Ciro Gomes | 2,754 |
| Geraldo Alckmin | 1,784 |
| Guilherme Boulos | 1,478 |

² Available at: https://observa2018.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/WEBrOb%C3%B4s-redes-sociais-e-pol%C3%ADtica-no-Brasil_Volume-2_22-08-18.pdf

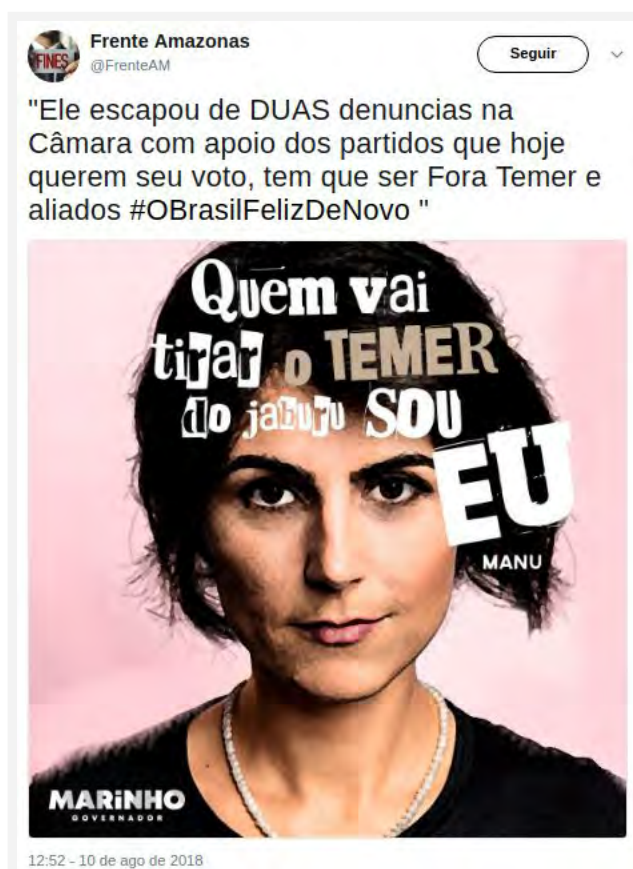
³ Groups of suspicious accounts that may constitute a network controlled by a single actor.

⁴ Available at: <https://observa2018.com.br/metodologia/>

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Cabo Daciolo | 1,439 |
| Marina Silva | 990 |
| Henrique Meirelles | 571 |
| Álvaro Dias | 311 |
| João Amoedo | 219 |
| Eymael | 15 |
| Vera Lúcia | 2 |
| Total | 23,300 ⁵ |

Source: Twitter | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

The publication that appeared the most often, with a total of 186 tweets in the period analyzed, [criticizes president Michel Temer and associates an image of congresswoman Manuela D'Ávila](#) to Luiz Marinho, a candidate for the government of São Paulo.



"He escaped TWO reports at the Chamber with the support of parties that want your vote today, we need to say Out Temer and his allies "BrazilHappyAgain"

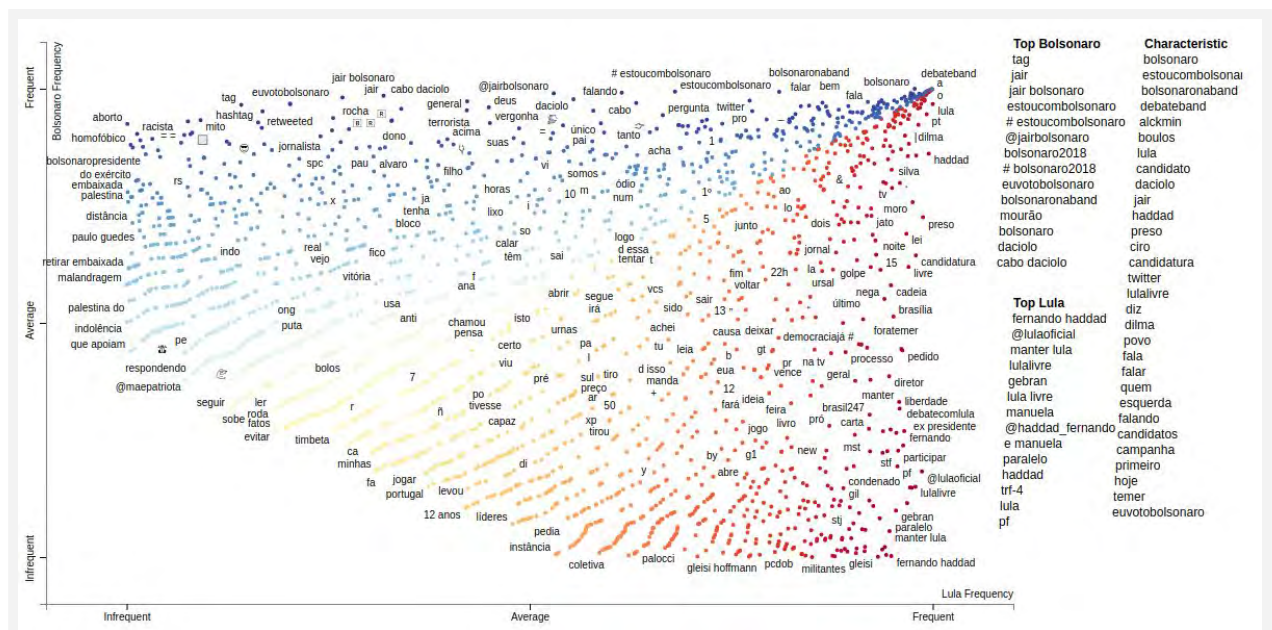
⁵ Tweets may belong to more than one category.

2. Discourse analysis

From the following visualization, it is possible to assess which **words coming from automated accounts** relate the most to Lula and/or Bolsonaro. The **horizontal axis x** indicates the frequency of words in posts mentioning Lula, while the **vertical axis y** corresponds to the frequency of words in posts mentioning Bolsonaro. That is, if a word was not often used in tweets referring to Lula, but very often used in tweets referring to Bolsonaro, the word will be at the top (closer to the vertical axis) and to the left. Otherwise, the word will be at the bottom (closer to the horizontal axis) and to the right. Words used in tweets referring to both of them will be far from either axis and to the right, and words that appear few times referring to the two candidates will be closer to the origin (point 0,0 in the graph) and, therefore, closer to both axes.

By analyzing posts about the elections and the presidential hopefuls made by automated accounts, we noticed that the words “lula”, “debateband” and “bolsonaro” appear very often in tweets mentioning both candidates. This indicates that there was a strong presence of bots in posts mentioning, at the same time, Lula, Bolsonaro and the debate broadcast by Band, the first one with the presidential candidates in the 2018 elections. That is, there was a strong presence of automated actions aiming to intervene in the discussion about the presidential debate.

Mentions to the terms associated the most with the candidates in the debate prompted by bots



Source: Twitter | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

2.1. Bolsonaro category

In turn, the term “**abortion**” appears highly associated with Jair Bolsonaro and not very associated with former president Lula. That is, the automated accounts talking about Bolsonaro articulate the term when referencing the congressman, while the automated accounts talking about Lula do not mention the term. In general, the bots mobilized “abortion” in a positive way regarding Bolsonaro, emphasizing a criminal nature of the act, supporting the candidate’s opposition to the theme and criticizing other actors, such as Marina Silva, for not sharing their position on topic.

The words “**racist**” and “**homophobic**” also often appeared in relation to Bolsonaro, both alluding to Boulos’ statement during the debate in which he accused the congressman of being racist and homophobic and due to racism accusations directed towards General Mourão – the VP candidate in Bolsonaro’s ticket. However, a small number of automated tweets use the term to criticize the congressman and praise Boulos.

The word “**raise**” also has a predominance on tweets made by automated accounts referring to Jair Bolsonaro, aiming to encourage users to use the hashtag #DebateBandBolsonaro.

2.2. Lula category

Among the words that appeared the most in messages coming from automated profiles referencing Lula, but not Bolsonaro, there was a highlight for “**fernando haddad**”, “**manuela**” and “**gleisi**”. The term “**parallel**”, also a highlight, was articulated to talk about the debate organized by the PT on Facebook during the Band broadcast in response to Lula’s absence.

“**Keep lula**” and “**free lula**” were also prominent. While “**free lula**” was more positively associated with the former president, emphasizing the illegal nature of his imprisonment and pressing for his release, the use of “**keep lula**” was more diffuse. The expression was articulated both by tweets demonstrating support for the former president, which talked about how the opposition seeks to “**keep lula imprisoned**”, and by critical users, who talked about how the opposition wants to “**keep lula a candidate**”.

3. Networks of automated accounts (*botnets*)

Still from the database, we identified **three automated account networks** (botnets), which coordinated 1,589 publications in total during the period analyzed;

3.1. Botnet 1

The biggest of them, composed of **13 accounts**, made **1,053 publications** related to the electoral debate, that is, **5%** of the automated publications identified. Since the creation of these accounts in March, 2017, until today, they made a total of **147,819 publications**, with profile @FineBS accounting for 39% (58,770 thousand) of the total volume of posts. The following chart highlights the **ten most reproduced publications** in the period.

| Tweet | Text | Frequency |
|---|--|-----------|
| http://twitter.com/FrenteAM/statuses/1028006202683392000 | "He escaped TWO reports at the Chamber with the support of parties that want your vote today, we need to say Out Temer and..." | 186 |
| http://twitter.com/FrenteMaranhao/statuses/1028687195480186880 | "These are the people who will stop the salary raises of judges and prosecutors and guarantee the distribution..." | 178 |
| http://twitter.com/jpaulotimbeta/statuses/1027768983565553664 | #BoulosNaMand was awesome with 50 shades of temer, but #Lula2018! #LulaPresidente #13 #PT #OBrasilFelizDeNovo WE WANT LU... | 125 |
| http://twitter.com/kaylontim/statuses/1027767793310162944 | After the #DebateBand we concluded that we have candidates that are 50 Shades Of Temer. And all of them agree Lula is the best president | 124 |
| http://twitter.com/FrenteSP2/statuses/1028637790983086080 | "The ticket is formed. It's the Hope Trio, hope for the Brazilian people to see Brazil Happy Again. It's LulaOficia..." | 78 |
| http://twitter.com/FrenteSP2/statuses/1028637778794426368 | "Together we will regain hope and make São Paulo a more humane state, with the participation of the people and opportuni..." | 65 |
| http://twitter.com/PedroJLima/statuses/1027612005514072064 | @jairbolsonaro And please, do not use quotation marks when you talk about homophobia. Do not try to belittle a problem that KILLS... | 55 |
| http://twitter.com/FinesRO/statuses/1027656268713025536 | "Fight like a girl and remove Temer yourself ManuelaDavila while luizmarinhopt ends 24 years of government..." | 39 |
| http://twitter.com/ClubeFollowBack/statuses/1028089376209743872 | "He will make any deal to obtain votes", says João Amoêdo about Ciro Gomes | 29 |
| http://twitter.com/shinelabo/statuses/1027612098115846147 | Did you know the Marina Silva's VP supports abortion, marijuana legalization and criminalization of "homophobia"? | 28 |

Source: Twitter and Facebook | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

The investigation of the profiles reveals many characteristics that indicate that the accounts are bot profiles:

3.1.1. Same date of creation. Of the 13 accounts analyzed, nine were created on March 15, 2017.



Frente Amazonas
@FrenteAM

8.404 Tweets 446 Seguindo 501 Seguidores 360 Curtidas

Tweets **Tweets e respostas** **Mídia**

Tweet Fixado
Frente Amazonas @FrenteAM · 11 de ago
 A chapa está formada. É o Trio Esperança, esperança do povo brasileiro de ver o Brasil Feliz de Novo. É @LulaOficial @ManuelaDavila @Haddad_Fernando . Esse time ninguém segura. #LulaPresidente #TrioEsperança via @luizmarinhopt



Frente Maranhão
@FrenteMaranhao

7.234 Tweets 327 Seguindo 492 Seguidores 127 Curtidas

Tweets **Tweets e respostas** **Mídia**

Tweet Fixado
Frente Maranhão @FrenteMaranhao · 12 de ago
 "Estas são as pessoas que vão barrar os aumentos de salários dos juizes e dos promotores e garantir a distribuição de renda no país via luizmarinhopt #OBrasilFelizDeNovo "



Frente Para
@FrentePA

9.061 Tweets 393 Seguindo 243 Seguidores 65 Curtidas

Tweets **Tweets e respostas** **Mídia**

Tweet Fixado
Frente Para @FrentePA · 4 de jun de 2017
 Para que a Eleição seja Livre e Direta, a PEC 67 precisa do seu apoio vote SIM aqui www12.senado.leg.br/ecidania/vis...

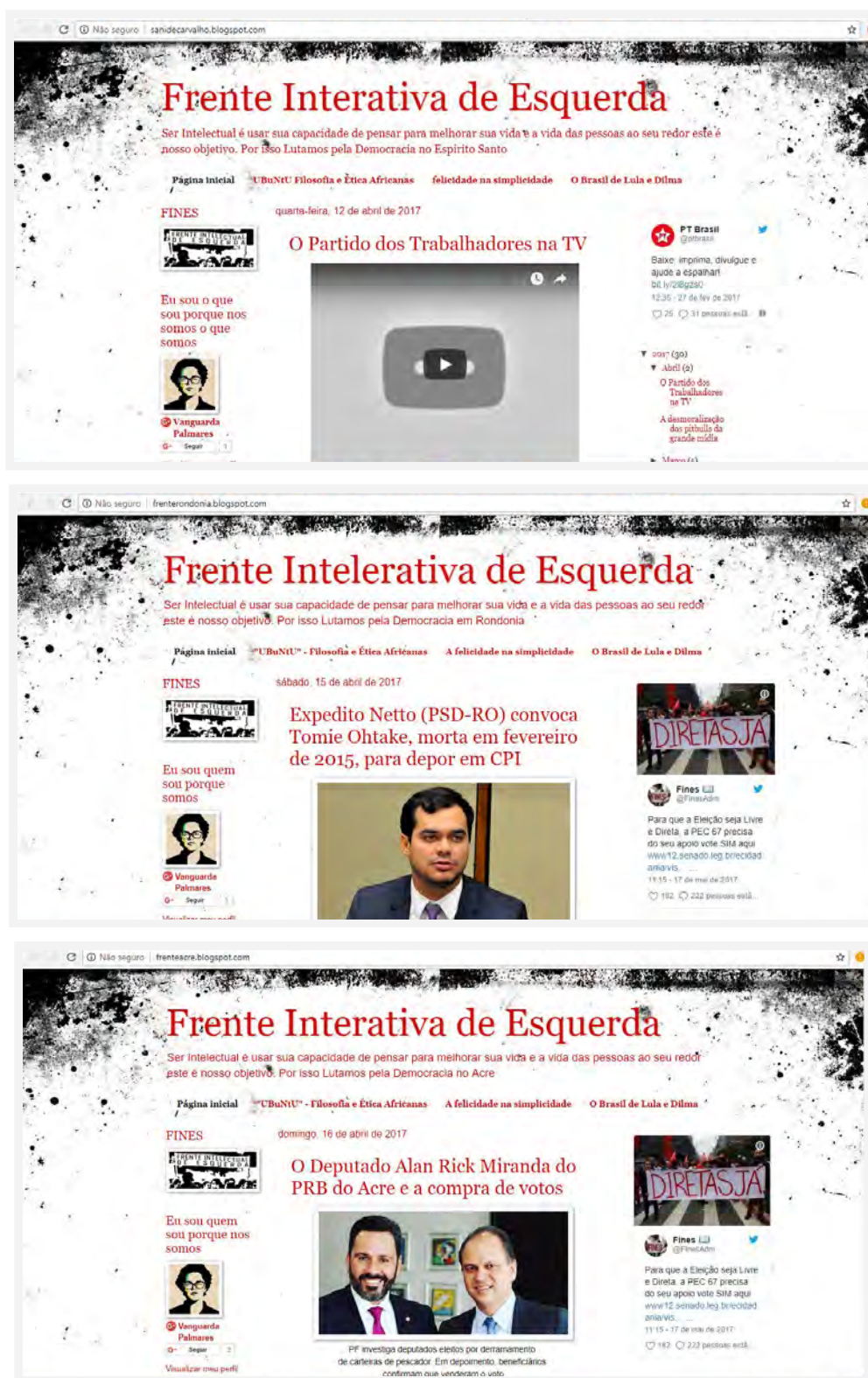
3.1.2. Publications at the same date and time. Tweets with the same text and image were posted inside an interval of a few minutes by the account group.



3.1.3. Similar amount of tweets, profiles followed, followers and likes. The accounts posted 7 thousand tweets on average and follow around 300 profiles.



3.1.4. Similar URL. In their biographies, the profiles indicate the URL of the blog Left-Wing Interactive Front (Frente Interativa de Esquerda). Although the URLs are different, the structure and style of the blog is almost identical.



3.1.5. The generator All the publications in the FGV DAPP database made by the 13 accounts use the same automation platform called IFTTT (if this, then that). Using the Gnip⁶ interface,

⁶ Available at: "http://support.gnip.com/sources/twitter/data_format.html", accessed on July 28, 2018.

the official data provider of the Twitter platform, it is possible to identify the name of the generator used for the creation of the publication. The IFTTT provides generic or commercial solutions for automated publication on Twitter through triggers, and can be used by several political fields.

In a content analysis of the publications, we observed that the network copies and publishes messages support the Lula-Haddad ticket and the "Free Lula" (Lula Livre) movement.



Tweets:

RT brasil247: "Why Haddad and Manuela will win" defends André Forastieri

RT LulaOficial: Haddad_Fernando and ManuelaDavila have a message for you. We are going to register Lula's candidacy in Brasília on August 15.

RT sandraselmader: On August 15, come defend the voting system and your rights as we register Lula's candidacy at the TSE.

The network also mentions a tweet mobilization on August 09; however, the event did not have strong participation. In the period analyzed, we collected 107 posts with the hashtag *tuitaço* (tweet mobilization) made by 59 automated accounts. Of this total, 39 posts were made by the 13 accounts on the network, around three publications per profile.



"RT alexandrecct: TUITAÇO #DebateComLula (TWEET MOBILIZATION debate with Lula)
Live on Lula's networks: Access at 10 p.m.

3.2. Botnet 2

A second network of **139 automated accounts** was responsible for coordinating and synchronizing **291 publications** related to the electoral debate, which represents 1% of the automated accounts identified in the period. From their creation in May, 2011 until now, the accounts made a total of **625,090 publications**, and more than 90% of the accounts (126) were created after 2014.

The tweets published the most often by this network mention the expression “50 Shades of Temer” used by the PSOL presidential candidate, Guilherme Boulos, during the broadcast of the first presidential debate of the 2018 elections by the Bandeirantes Network.



After the #DebateBand we concluded that we have candidates that are 50 Shades Of Temer. And all of them agree LULA is the best president of Brazil. WE WANT LULA FOR PRESIDENT % CIRO GOMES VICE PRESIDENT

#BoulosNaMand was awesome with 50 shades of temer, but #Lula2018!

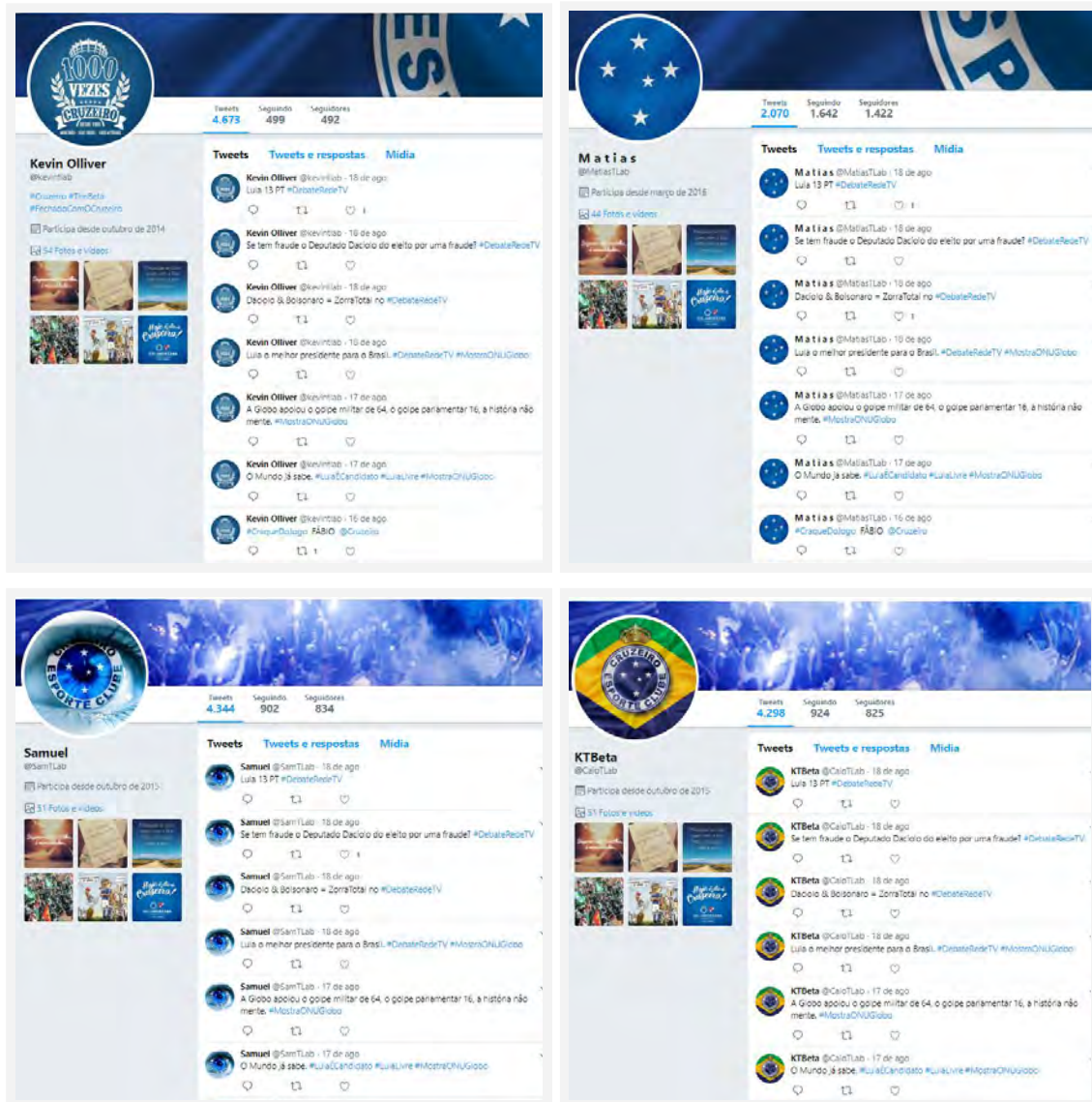
The following chart highlights the **ten most reproduced publications** in the period.

| Link | Text | Frequency |
|---|--|-----------|
| http://twitter.com/ipaulotimbeta/statuses/102776898356553664 | #BoulosNaMand was awesome with 50 shades of temer, but #Lula2018! #LulaPresidente #13 #PT #OBrazilFelizDeNovo WE WANT LU... | 125 |
| http://twitter.com/kaylontim/statuses/1027767793310162944 | After the #DebateBand we concluded that we have candidates that are 50 Shades Of Temer. And all of them agree Lula is the best president | 124 |
| http://twitter.com/izaquetimbeta03/statuses/1027901651510681600 | Polls will have to include Lula's name | 3 |
| http://twitter.com/desouzabetalab/statuses/1027031337180393473 | For Bolsonaro, "indolence" means "the ability to forgive" | 1 |
| http://twitter.com/TimBetaLabDete/statuses/1027819117506490368 | Bolsonaro wins debate on the internet | 1 |
| http://twitter.com/desouzabetalab/statuses/1027856093538476032 | Haddad does not exist | 1 |
| http://twitter.com/AgnaldoBeta/statuses/1027861661959553024 | Should Lula appear in the polls? | 1 |
| http://twitter.com/desouzabetalab/statuses/1027871692285042688 | The Daciolo feeling | 1 |
| http://twitter.com/desouzabetalab/statuses/1027905422655598593 | Alvaro Dias, Sergio Moro and a question | 1 |
| http://twitter.com/apcbeta/statuses/1027970602622054400 | Access to the Fishermen's Marina of Arraial do Cabo is debated in public hearing - Daily Click... | 1 |

Source: Twitter and Facebook | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

The investigation of the profiles reveals many characteristics that indicate that the accounts are bot profiles:

3.2.1. Publications at the same date and time. Tweets with the same text and image were posted inside an interval of a few minutes by the account group.



3.2.2. Similar cover picture. Some of the accounts have the same cover photo.



3.2.3. Similar profile picture. Some of the accounts have the same profile picture.



3.2.4. Pattern in name construction. Of the 125 accounts identified, 66 accounts have the term “TLab” inside their names, a potential reference to Tim Beta, a program of the mobile operator Tim to test Beta versions of services and receive feedback from users based on social games. Joining the program is through a Facebook invitation from a user that is already a member. To progress in the program’s data plans, clients are encouraged to use the social networks and accumulate points through tweets, retweets and obtaining followers.



This gamification ends up generating an automation of the user network. Explanation: to optimize point acquisition, participants create re-share networks through softwares specialized in coordinating social network accounts such as “umrei”, “masterfollow” or “toolz”. These social network management applications receive authorization from the user to operate the account and are then able to share, follow users or post messages. Hashtags such as #timbeta, #betaajudabeta (beta helps beta) or #timbetalab are used to identify the participants of the network, who do not necessarily share content related to the political debate, as observed in the network of 139 accounts analyzed here.

3.2.5. Images of Mexican actors as profile picture. At least eight accounts use Mexican soap opera actors as their profile picture.



According to Google’s reverse image methodology, all the pictures were obtained from a Mexican page called “Las Estrellas”.⁷⁸⁹¹⁰

⁷<https://www.lasestrellas.tv/telenovelas/la-doble-vida-de-estela-carrillo/imagenes/resumen-semana-12>

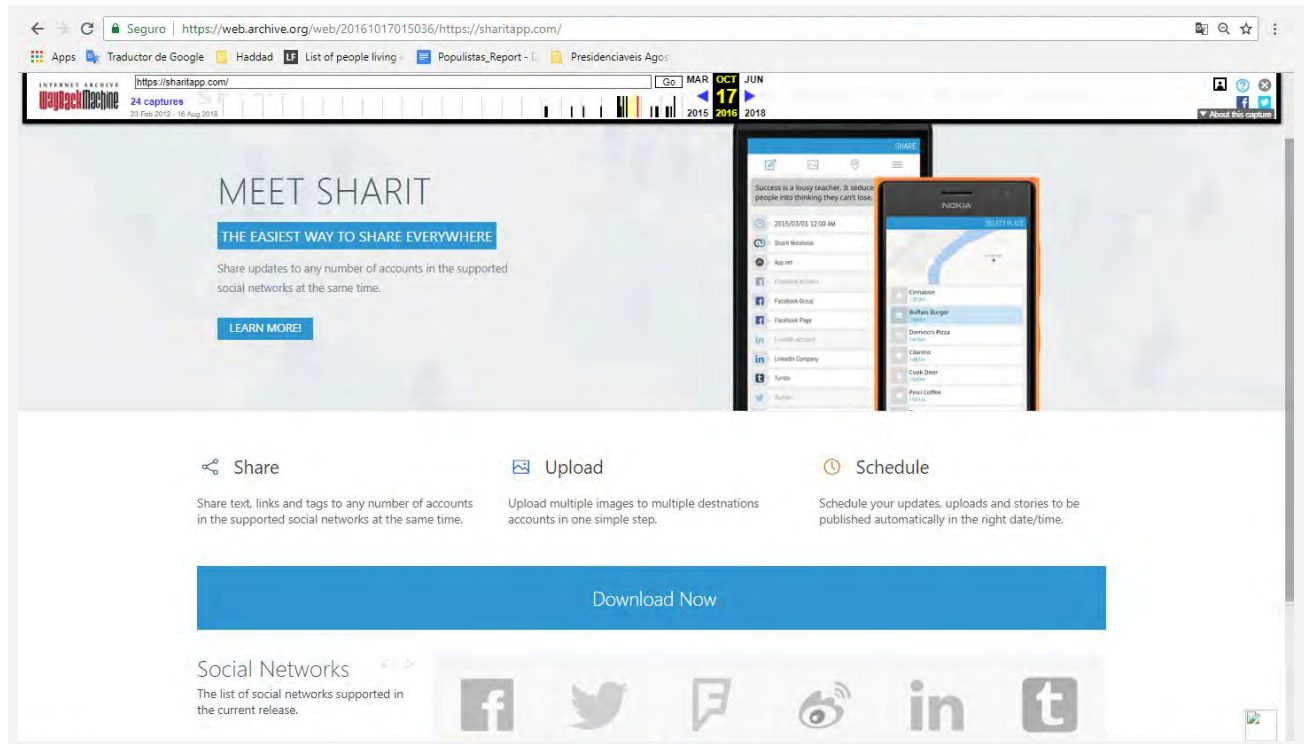
⁸ <https://www.lasestrellas.tv/telenovelas/el-bienamado/personajes/melissa>

⁹ <https://www.lasestrellas.tv/telenovelas/el-bienamado/personajes/generosa-cienfuegos-montano>

¹⁰ <https://www.lasestrellas.tv/telenovelas/el-bienamado/personajes/jordi-de-ovando>

3.2.6. The generator All the publications in the FGV DAPP database made by the 125 accounts used an automation platform called **Sharit**. Using the Gnip¹¹ interface, the official data provider of the Twitter platform, it is possible to identify the name of the generator used for the creation of the publication. The web page was out of service until the publication of this report, and for this reason it was accessed through the website archive.org, which has archived copies of web pages available. In the site that was available, Sharit was defined as:

“Sharit is a social management platform created to provide a simple way to update several social or business networks/accounts at the same time”.



¹¹ Available at: “http://support.gnip.com/sources/twitter/data_format.html”, accessed on July 28, 2018.

3.3. Botnet 3

The third network of automated accounts identified in the database is composed of **16 accounts that made 245 publications** related to the electoral debate in the period, a little over 1% of the total number of automated publications identified in the period. Since their creation in August, 2011 until now, the accounts made a total of **258,354 publications**.

The **ten tweets re-published the most** by the network mention news related mostly to Jair Bolsonaro and João Amoêdo, and criticize PT and Ciro Gomes, as illustrated in the following chart.

| Link | Text | Frequency |
|---|--|-----------|
| http://twitter.com/ClubeFollowBack/statuses/1028089145451630592 | "He will make any deal to obtain votes", says João Amoêdo about Ciro Gomes | 15 |
| http://twitter.com/AmeliaTorquato/statuses/1027106166671900672 | Nobody is really interested in knowing that you hate Bolsonaro, but it would be very interesting to promote your candidate and... | 12 |
| http://twitter.com/fator_direita/statuses/1028043700448899072 | Flávio Rocha announces support for Jair Bolsonaro | 11 |
| http://twitter.com/LaVegaAlejandro/statuses/1028010789217677313 | Ciro Gomes voters must be getting into debt until their tenth family generation, thinking that their candidate will pay their bills. | 8 |
| http://twitter.com/fator_direita/statuses/1027037966223339522 | Twitter at the service of censorship; check what the general director of Twitter Brazil has published about Lula and Maduro... | 7 |
| http://twitter.com/fator_direita/statuses/1027037971256553477 | "We do not have the right to lose the election", says Manuela D'Ávila | 6 |
| http://twitter.com/JohnnyHilarious/statuses/1027273771365818370 | Lula is in prison, but tries to manipulate the democratic process from inside his cell with the complicity of PT and their... | 5 |
| http://twitter.com/PSLnacional/statuses/1027226104510132225 | CNT/MDA releases poll: Bolsonaro leads in São Paulo | 4 |
| http://twitter.com/JohnnyHilarious/statuses/1027069917072306176 | PT wants an empty stand with Lula's name in the debate at Band VIA @CLUBEFOLLOWBACK | 3 |
| http://twitter.com/PSLnacional/statuses/1027654896034635776 | TRF-4 denies PT's request and Lula will not participate in the Band debate | 2 |
| http://twitter.com/AmeliaTorquato/statuses/1027033688263995392 | Lula is in prison because he stole. The proof of the convicted person's crimes. Video response to Gleisi Hoffmann... | 1 |

Source: Twitter and Facebook | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

The investigation of the profiles reveals the following characteristics that indicate that the accounts are bot profiles:

3.3.1. Publications at the same date and time. Tweets with the same text and image were posted at the same date and time by the account group.



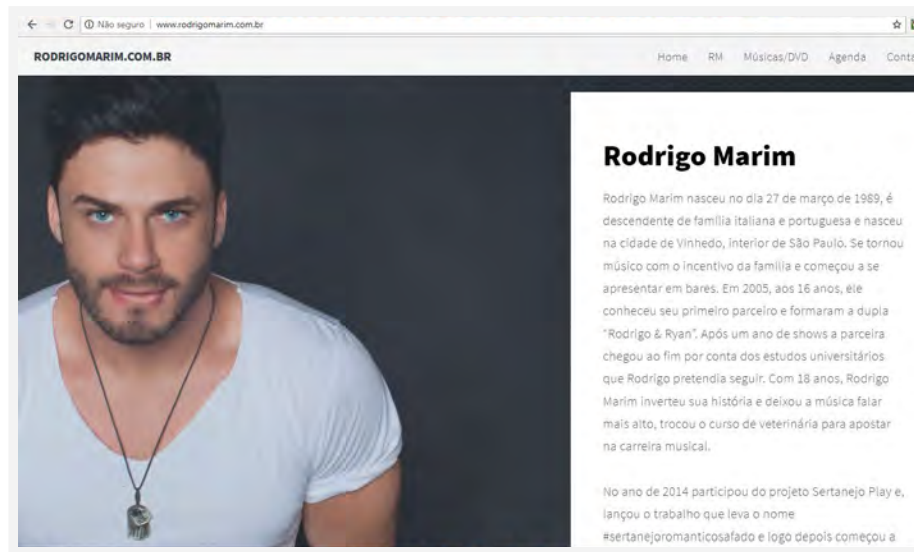
3.3.2. Profile images do not match the user's name. Many of the accounts have photos of public figures. For example, user @JohnnyHilarious uses Canadian actor and model Nicholas Kevin Stanley Yunge-Bateman's pictures for his profile and cover.



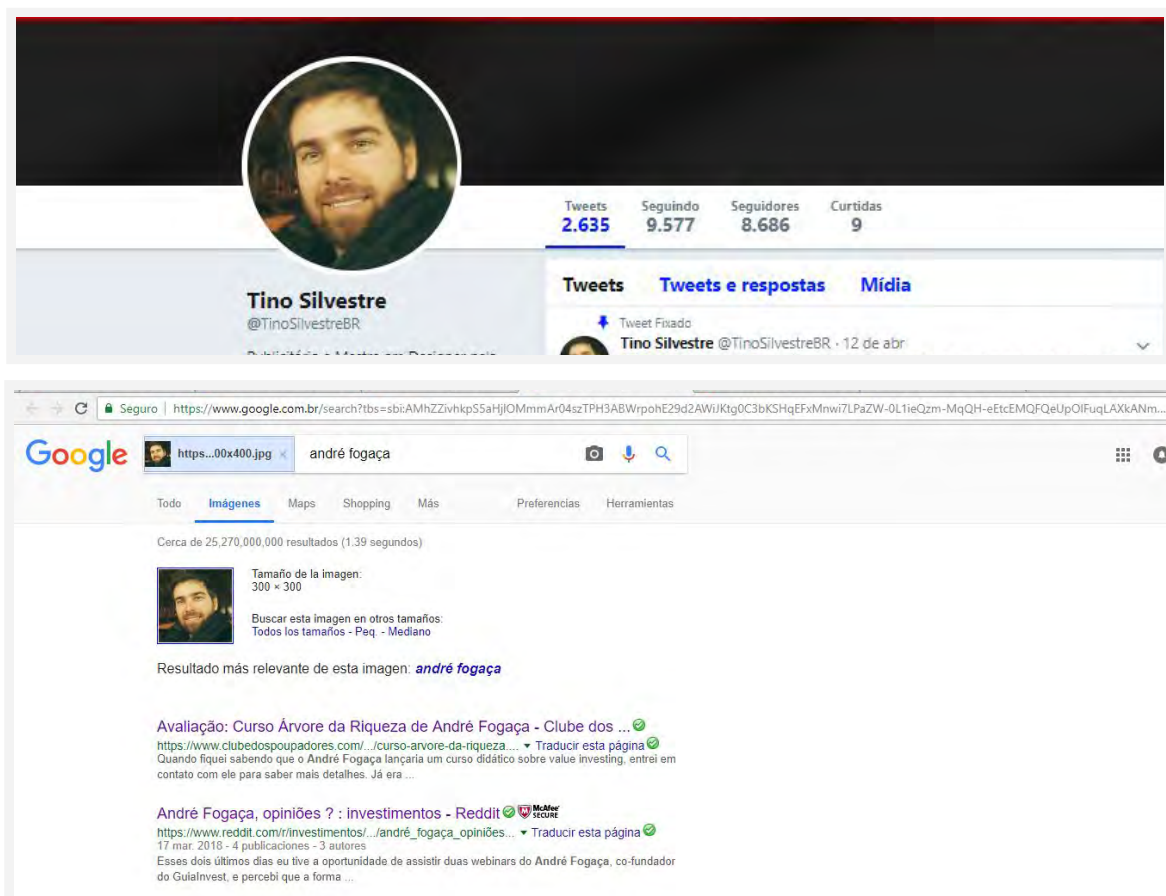
Joey got a little sister for her birthday, Keeva. She also has her own instagram account, keeva_bateman

User @RenattoMonfort, in turn, used country singer Rodrigo Marim's profile and cover pictures.





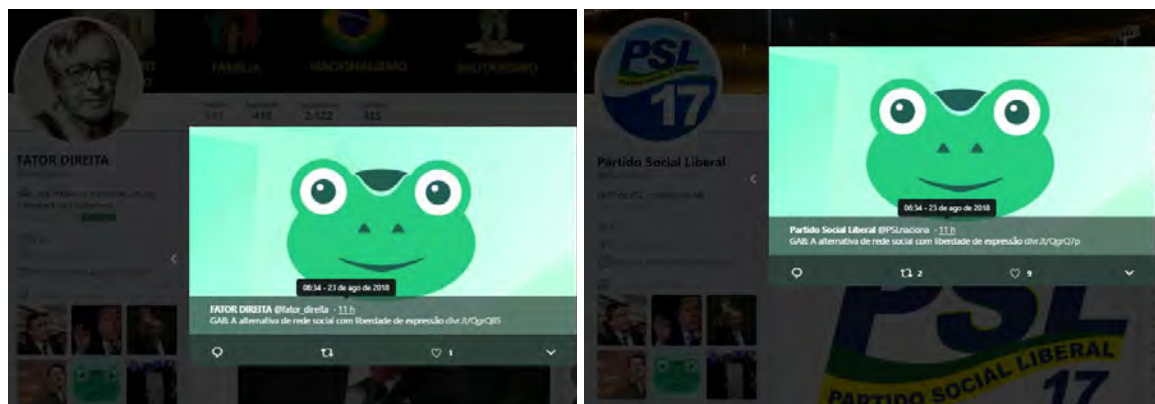
User @TinoSilvestreBR's profile picture was evaluated through a search for similar images on Google. The search engine showed the name of André Fogaça as the result.



He is supposedly the investor and co-founder of website GuilInvest, a social network of stock market investors in Brazil. We later also identified a profile in André Fogaça's name on Facebook with the same profile picture.



3.3.3. Same platform. Several accounts of the network shared their respective profiles at platform Gab.ai in the period.



Described as “an ad-free social network dedicated to preserving individual freedom, freedom of speech and free flow of information on the Internet”, the platform was created by engineer Andrew Torba, a declared supporter of American president Donald Trump. The network application is currently banned from Google Play for violating hate speech policies in the platform, and from the Apple Store for allowing the publication of pornographic content.

In the beginning of August, the #DireitaAmordaçada movement was among the trending topics on Twitter due to the accusation that accounts connected to the right wing of the political spectrum were supposedly being the target of publication restrictions in the platform. Presidential hopeful Jair Bolsonaro and council member Fernando Holiday joined the movement propelled by the hashtag.

Still in August, several days after the #DireitaAmordaçada movement, another mobilization happened, this time propelled by the hashtag #MeSegueNoGab, which also reached Twitter’s trending topics and was mentioned in 19,315 tweets. The movement aimed to attract new users for the platform Gab.ai, created in August, 2016, months before the American election that elected republican Donald Trump as president.

The percentage of Brazilian accesses on Gab grew from 12,2% in August 22 to 27,3% on September 11, an increase of 15.1 percentage points according the Alexa, an Amazon subsidiary that provides information traffic data and analyses of web site access. According to the company, Brazil is behind only the United States, with has 40,2% of the accesses to the site.

In its guidelines, Gab states that it is concerned with the freedom of speech and that it is opposed to censorship. However, it has been receiving users banned from other platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, for violating their codes of conduct. In the United States, it garners users from the so-called alt-right, the American far right wing, known for their discourse of white supremacy and anti-semitism.

In January, 2018, according to a study by Zannettou et al. (2018), the most popular users on the network were names from the far right such as British journalist Milo Yiannopoulos, entrepreneur Andrew Torba, the founder of the network, and people known for spreading conspiracy theories such as Alex Jones. Among the hashtags spreaded the most in the platform are “alt-right”, “Trump”, “MAGA” (Make America Great Again), the republican candidate’s campaign slogan, “Pizzagate”, referring to a known conspiracy theory that is popular among the right wing, and “BanIslam”. Zannettou’s study also found that 5.4% of the posts on Gab have words associated with hate speech, more than double of the rate on Twitter.

In Brazil, when we observe the Twitter users who published the hashtag, we see that 5,819 are followers of presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro; 1,289 of João Amoêdo; 1,016 of Alvaro Dias.

Number of presidential hopeful followers that propelled the hashtag #MeSegueNoGab

| Presidential hopeful | Followers |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Jair Bolsonaro | 5,819 |
| João Amoêdo | 1,289 |
| Alvaro Dias | 1,016 |
| Geraldo Alckmin | 697 |
| Marina Silva | 672 |
| Henrique Meirelles | 433 |
| Lula | 369 |
| Ciro Gomes | 267 |
| Guilherme Boulos | 167 |

Source: Twitter | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

Similarly to Twitter, users on Gab can publish small posts, also called gabs, with a limit of 300 characters. Instead of Twitter's bird, GAB has a green frog similar to Pepe, which became a symbol of the American far right wing. The only rules for posting on the site are that users cannot incite violence or terrorism, post illegal pornography or reveal other users' confidential information.

In 2017, the Gab app was rejected by AppleStore and GooglePlay due to having hate speech and not complying with rules about pornographic content, but there is an alternative version available for download in Android smartphones.

With the increase of the presence of Brazilians on the platform, there are already accounts among its profiles with automation characteristics that repost content originally published on Twitter, especially by accounts of known actors such as Pope Francis, presidential hopefuls Jair Bolsonaro and Lula, as well as profiles of Brazilian soccer teams (Estadão Esporte, Gazeta Esportiva, UOL Esportiva, Esporte Interativo, Fox Sports Brazil and ESPN Brazil) and of big Brazilian news portals (Estadão, G1, Veja and UOL).

Users also do the opposite movement, replicating their Gab posts on Twitter in automated ways. This strategy, known as crosspost, makes it so that the original Gab publication is not lost, which could happen on Twitter if the account or post were suspended. Users are betting on Gab's more open policies for content, but do not miss opportunities to obtain more intense repercussion with publications also on Twitter, the network with the biggest number of users.

Between August 1st and 28, a total of 1,917 tweets about one of the 13 presidential hopefuls were identified as coming from Gab. This analysis is possible because the Twitter posts that came from Gab have metadata that allow the identification of their origin, in this case, a generator of the social network.

3.3.4. Network of followers. Different profiles on the network mention the account @CLUBEFOLLOWBACK in their biographies. The mention to the "followback" code indicates that the profiles are part of a network of followers created around the practice of "following back".



Usually, the accounts participating in these communities use softwares to automate the monitoring of their followers so as to prevent single accounts from using the code to simulate influencer status, such as a profile that follows few people and has many followers. This automated solution undoes any relationship with the accounts that were unfollowed and creates new relationships with accounts that are now being followed. Therefore, it is common to see profiles in this community with very similar numbers of followers and followed users.

3.3.5. Fake news. At least one piece of fake news was shared by the network, with identical patterns of image and text. In the period analyzed, the profile @fatimabot¹² interacted with one of **botnet 3's** profiles, which shared a publication about the supposed approval of a law in France that would enable consent for sex with children.



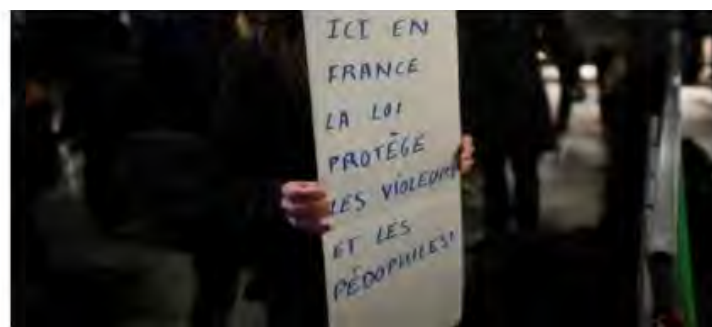
Tweet: France passes law declaring that children may consent for sex with adults

Further analysis identified that not only one, but six of the network's 16 profiles shared the same publication.

¹² @fatimabot is a bot developed by fact-checking agency Aos Fatos that interacts with posts that share fake news.



The level of engagement in the publications before the response by the @fatimabot profile was low; however, some profiles began to interact with the post soon after it. Profile @fator_direita replied to the post as follows: "I'd just like to remind you all that my profile shares the automatic feed of Conexão Política, please contact them for any questions or complaints @conexaopolitica".



03:50 - 23 de ago de 2018

2 0 0 0



Tweete sua resposta



Fátima @fatimabot · 26 de ago

Em resposta a @fator_direita

🔗 Oii! Esse link contém informações falsas sobre a legislação francesa. Espalhe a verdade aqui:



França não aprovou lei permitindo que crianças co...

A informação de que a França aprovou uma lei determinando que "crianças podem consentir em sexo com adultos" é falsa. Um texto publicado pelo site Con...

aosfatos.org

5 1 54 0



FATOR DIREITA @fator_direita · 26 de ago

Só para lembrar que meu perfil compartilha o feed automático do conexão política, qualquer dúvida ou reclamações entre em contato com eles

@conexaopolitica

0 1 0 0



Bruno Bazzoli @bruno1978 · 26 de ago

Em resposta a @fator_direita

Então não seria melhor parar de reproduzir mentiras e passar vergonha no modo automático?

0 1 0 0

Post: Hi! This link contains fake information about French legislation. Spread the truth here:
"France did not approve law enabling children to..." (in the link)

Comment:

"I'd just like to remind you all that my profile shares the automatic feed of Conexão Política, please contact them for any questions or complaints

Answer:

- Then wouldn't it be better to stop reproducing lies and embarrassing yourself in automatic mode?"

Other studies about the actions of automated accounts in the public debate on the social network will be published throughout the 2018 electoral process by FGV DAPP as part of the initiative associated with the Digital Democracy Room #observa2018.

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The analyses produced by the Room do not aim to represent any electoral poll, but to assess the social perception in the digital environment regarding themes of the public agenda, such as political actors and topics on public policies. Therefore, their use for political or partisan purposes or endorsement of particular positions is not authorized. For more information regarding this paper, see: dapp.fgv.br/observa2018/methodology.

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