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## Postcolonial Perspectives in Game Studies

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## POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES IN GAME STUDIES

# *CosmoCult Card Game:* A Methodological Tool to Understand the Hybrid and Peripheral Cultural Consumption of Young People

Wilson Roberto Bekesas, Mauro Berimbau, Renato Vercesi  
Mader, Joana Pellerano and Viviane Riegel

ESPM, São Paulo, BR

Corresponding author: Viviane Riegel ([vivianeriegel@gmail.com](mailto:vivianeriegel@gmail.com))

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This article discusses the authors' use of a specially designed card game as part of the survey 'Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil', a constituent part of the international project 'Cultures Juveniles à l'ère de la globalization', developed in France. As part of the challenges encountered in the process of applying this project in a hybrid and post-colonial context, such as that of Brazil, we experienced different manifestations of what Angela Prysthon (2002) has called 'peripheral cosmopolitanism'. We propose to present the experiences that resulted as contributory material for research on the cultural consumption of young people in such contexts, and to discuss the value of this research tool as a way to reach and understand spontaneous cultural references, within the subjects' own conceptions, without the bias that a Western-centered perspective might introduce. Concerning the card game as a research tool, it seems that only recently, and still modestly, have games been thought of in a broader sense of learning and research (Girard, Ecalle & Magnan, 2012; Calvillo Gámez et al., 2011). This moves us to consider the potential that it has for our and others' research that seeks a methodological tool that reduces cultural biases and borders. Among the examples from the 12- to 24-year-old research subjects, the narratives display their relationships with global and local elements, such as the use of a Brazilian song, 'Atoladinha', or *Harry Potter* characters, used to solve situations proposed in the game.

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## Introduction

In this article we present and discuss the creation of a card game as a social science research methodology, in order to solve some of the challenges encountered in the adaptation of an international research project in Brazil. The discussion refers to the experience of the research survey 'Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil', a constituent part of the international project 'Cultures Juveniles à l'ère de la globalization', originally developed in France and also underway in Israel, Australia, Canada and South Korea.<sup>1</sup> The project develops a comparative study of how young people construct representations of themselves and of their relationships with the world through the consumption of global or local cultural goods. We look for evidence that demonstrates whether they develop an aesthetic stance that would make it possible to construct a reflexive view of the Other – the Other being someone who does not have the same cultural codes or the same lifestyle, someone that they would consider a stranger. We intend, therefore, to understand cultural-aesthetic cosmopolitanism, by analyzing cultural consumption and experiences within a global culture, through which young people construct their criteria of judgment, knowledge and imaginary of the Other.

Cultural-aesthetic cosmopolitanism encompasses both cultural openness (cultural aspects) and on new forms of relation to media contexts (aesthetic aspects). Woodward et al. (2008) analyze the cultural aspects of cosmopolitanism, investigating it as a set of practices and outlooks that seek out and value cultural difference and openness. Cicchelli, Octobre and Riegel (2016) propose the cultural-aesthetic combination, the reality that the aesthetic dimension brings into the transformation of cultural capital in mediatic contexts, by their transferability and their articulation with other forms of capital – notably informational and relational – distinguishing and reconnecting information and knowledge, education and culture, experience and representation.

In this project, therefore, we understand cosmopolitanism from its cultural-aesthetic dimension (Cicchelli, Octobre & Riegel, 2016), through the analysis of the consumption of cultural goods and daily relations with global culture. The

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<sup>1</sup> The project's website, is available at: [www.cosmocult.com.br](http://www.cosmocult.com.br) (Last accessed 24 November 2017).

cultural-aesthetic dimension of cosmopolitanism consists more in the creation and articulation of communicative models of openness to the Other and to the world, through the consumption of cultural goods and the aesthetic experience of global culture. Within the context of this study, we find tensions between the global/local, and also the universal/particular. Although diversity is a possible result of these tensions, it is not the only one, just as it is not possible to think of a universal and central global order, especially considering the Latin American hybrid reality (Canclini, 2006).

In the Brazilian context, previous research also proposes the discussion of a peripheral cosmopolitanism (Prysthon, 2002). According to Prysthon, if modern cosmopolitanism was linked to multinational industrial capitalism, contemporary cosmopolitanism is defined by the dispersion of capital and the emergence of transnational markets, and the technological development of media and new forms of communication. Some characteristics will be extremely relevant for the consolidation of a peripheral cosmopolitanism: the valorization of diversity (mainly through multiculturalism) and the destabilization of the centralizing force of the modern metropolis, the center. If modern cosmopolitanism was defined by access to metropolitan diversity, by a center that provided and legitimized references, the periphery would then be defined as its reverse. Contemporary cosmopolitanism, though, is defined by the access to diversity that results from the contact between the 'First World' (center) and the periphery, which promotes what Prysthon (2002) calls peripheral cosmopolitanism, not legitimized, but present in several parts of the world, in the encounters between the 'Third World' and the Other. This perspective is an epistemological issue present in the challenges involved in adapting and innovating an international research project in Brazil, as presented in this article.

This peripheral perspective on cosmopolitanism has been critiqued by many postcolonial scholars, who draw attention to the Eurocentricism of its history and politics; and to the simplistic images of 'threat', on which attitudes towards boundaries (geographic and symbolic) in the debate are premised. Gurinder Bhabra (2011), in his postcolonial critique of the concept, addresses the question of whether

cosmopolitanism can be provincialized such that it becomes a useful concept for the discussion of contemporary social diversity, seen to arise from both historical and more recent migrations of peoples.

Considering the concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism when referring to the Brazilian context, with peripheral and/or central experiences, the researchers developed, in the process of adapting the research, alternative methodologies that stimulated subjects to introduce their own cultural and consumption references Bekesas et al., 2016. The goal of this article is to present and discuss the creation of one of these research instruments, a card game, as a methodology used to solve part of the challenges encountered in the process of applying an international project in a hybrid and post-colonial context, such as Brazil.

In discussing the card game, we propose to approach the particularities of the use of games as a research methodology and an educational tool, and to discuss the value of this research instrument as a way to spontaneously understand the cultural references of individual subjects, without any previous definition of what may be considered a cultural product. *CosmoCult Card Game* was played with 170 young people between 12- and 24-years-old in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, in 2016. We present the experiences that have resulted as contributory material for research into youth cultural consumption in such peripheral contexts.

## **1. Games as Research Methodology**

The field of education already has studies that explain the benefits of games in the education process. Games are a way for children and teenagers to understand and learn about the world around them, therefore some studies aim to understand the impact of game playing on instruction, learning and knowledge transfer (Girard, Ecalle & Magnan, 2012; Huizinga et al., 2009; Shute & Ventura, 2013; Steinkuehler, Squire & Barab, 2012).

As Girard, Ecalle and Magnan (2012) define, there are games called 'serious games', which have a useful purpose. The authors examine the effectiveness of these games on learning and on engaging younger publics in different educational practices. Based on this perspective, we contribute to the discussion of the use of

games for research purposes with a similar age group, considering in particular the possibility of engagement and expression through game playing.

Only very recently, and modestly, have games been thought of as a research instrument (Calvillo-Gómez et al., 2011). Games vary in terms of the processes they attempt to study and the constraints, rules and procedures that are employed. Using games as a research tool also involves assessing internal and external validity for the operationalization of objectives and data analysis within the research. Regarding internal validity, the use of games designed for research goals allows for the creation of a specific context. The setting of the research experiment defined entirely within the game context and gives the researcher a high degree of control. Moreover, games also motivate individuals to participate in a controlled experiment.

Using games as a methodological tool for social science research is also one way to answer the need for renewing interest in methodological innovation, mixed methods and critical reflection (Savage & Burrows, 2007). Such an endeavor does not involve sole reliance on narratives but seeks to link narratives, experiences, numbers and images in ways that engage with and critique the transactional analyses that dominate social science research.

Although Gordon Calleja (2011) does not refer to games as research methodology, he highlights that 'the performance of a game occurs in two, often simultaneous, domains: the player's subjective experience, and the visible practice of playing' (2011: 8). Through the experience of the players and the observation of game playing, the use of games as a research tool can bring both contact with the research subject and the possibility of observing him/her in an immersive environment of involvement; according to Calleja (2011), involvement with games can be kinesthetic, spatial, shared, narrative, affective and ludic.

We understand that it is possible to use games as a research tool based on the concepts of ludology and game design: ludology as the study of the forms of narrative created by games (Frasca, 2003), and game design as the study of games' production and structure (Koster, 2005). We divide this argument into four aspects: 1) the entertainment that games can create; 2) the role of games as media; 3) games as a different kind of media; and 4) the role of the game designer as an author who

uses various tools for the construction of narratives. These are the aspects that we consider fundamental as the first step towards a greater discussion of games and for progress in this area.

The first aspect we present is the entertainment that games can create, and how this can be a motivation for participation and engagement in a task (Koster, 2005), such as answering research questions. Koster (2005) seeks to understand why games entertain people. For this purpose, he looks at neuroscience to develop the following reasoning: humans are biologically constructed to value the security of predictability, constantly seeking it in life as a natural, biologically programmed, self-preservation strategy. At the same time, predictability is 'unengaging' – as Calleja (2011) classifies it – and this is why people also look for unpredictable moments, and it is through these that they learn new things, because understanding and mastering games, in each of their challenges, is an engaging process (Koster, 2005: 40). However, as unpredictability can be dangerous, this type of experience is confined to spaces that are considered safe, such as media in general, and specifically games. This is an outsourcing of action: seeking new and strong emotions, as well as provocative experiences in stories told by the media. Games in particular allow us to experience the unpredictable in a space-time where there is no real risk. Thus, the game-playing experience is engaging because it promotes entertainment by building new and challenging situations for its players.

The second important argument is the role of games as media. Games today are a space for message transmission; they are machines that produce narratives, or as Frasca (2003: 3) names them, a 'simulation media for the masses'. This perspective fights against the prejudice that games are merely cheerful and uncompromising entertainment, only related to childishness and leisure, demonstrating how games, as narrative producers, can be used for different purposes as well, such as education and research. Games, as well as their development techniques and applications, are 'mature enough' (Frasca, 2003: 173) – since they have a professional and critical structures of producers and involved consumers – to be seen and studied as media, just like newspapers, radio, TV, etc.

The third aspect is that games are a different kind of media, whose main difference lies in what Aarseth (1997) refers to as the 'ergodic process', a process that does not change erratically or at an inconsistent rate of reading. Aarseth discusses how to construct a discourse through an electronic game, or, more precisely, a cyber text: the mechanical organization of the text demands of its reader more effort than eye movement and the arbitrary and periodic turning of pages, what he calls 'non-trivial effort'. Games tell us stories, but in a different manner to a book. In games, players need to act to get some kind of result or information. Games may have contexts and scenarios, but not necessarily a pre-established story. It is the player who, through his or her decisions and ability, whether high or low, who builds the story throughout the process. Hence, for Aarseth (1997), the main difference between a book and a digital game is that the book has a fixed narrative; i.e. its content is pre-determined by the author. In a book, possible variations of meaning are related to the interpretation of text, images and sounds, which is extensively covered by semiotics and narratology. In a game, this content is also pre-determined in a database, but is accessed according to the player's skills, abilities, decisions and any other activities. The ergodic process, then, requires this effort on the part of the reader/player, who, while interacting with the game, produces different content. Although it is possible to use semiotics as a theoretical contribution to study the possible outcomes of a player's interaction with a game, it would be practically impossible to study all these interactions.

Therefore, for this research, games should be understood as discursive operations that have particularities compared to other media. In game structure, there are four central elements (Aarseth & Calleja, 2015): 1) **Signs** and the system of signification studied by narratology theory and semiotics, present in various forms of communication; 2) A **mechanical system**, a machine, consisting of sequences of operations that alter the processes of the players. In game design, it is common to use the term 'mechanics' to refer to these operations. These mechanics operate 'behind' the layer of signs that the player interprets, constantly changing as their interaction with the system occurs and, consequently, altering the game's states and the

production of meaning; 3) A **material media** that the player accesses: the joystick of a videogame or the materiality of board and card games (as in the case of *CosmoCult Card Game*); and 4) The **player**, which relates to the other three elements to form the object 'cybermedia'. Their decisions, actions and interactions with the machine are based on their *competence* to act and react to the mechanics through the material media, interpreting the signs generated at each moment of the 'current state of play', what Frasca (2007) calls 'playformance'. Hence we can understand that the game provides a platform through which several players can build meaning while playing, interpreting the conditions of the game and, at the same time, the actions of other players. Just as a speaker constructs meaning through speech, a player builds meaning from his/her decisions, shaping his/her discursive *ethos* (Campos Junior & Campos, 2016). This can even be strategically adopted by players when, by observing the skills of cooperative playmates or other competitors, they make risky decisions, bluff or decide to take leadership, for example. These actions and reactions to the system and its states are also important for the research process in regards to *CosmoCult Card Game*, since they are relevant productions of meaning within the game.

This is why Frasca (2003) argues that games do not contain narratives, but are machines to produce narratives. They require the input of data by the player, as well as reactions to the outputs offered by the system, in order to make sense. The course of this exchange with the system is not merely reflexive, but a communication process that produces meaning on two main levels: the semiotic, which involves the interpretation of signs, and the ergodic – without the effort of the player, the production of meaning is considerably limited. Due to the necessary involvement of the player, games are a more immersive medium in the process of outsourcing action and consequently of having fun, because we, as players, are responsible for our own success, in a constant process of learning, trial and error within the game. The fourth argument concerns the role of the game designer as an author who uses the various tools at his or her disposal in the construction of a proposal of narrative. As shown in the research project Values at Play (VAP) (Belman, Flanagan & Nissenbaum, 2009),

game designers have the ability to put different values, either moral, social or political, into their games, intentionally or otherwise. The authors argue that it is important to discuss this specific role of the game designer and the ways players may interpret those values in game design studies.

Frasca (2003) discusses this in relation to the computer game *The Sims*, in which it is possible to direct an avatar to have a relationship with another avatar of the same sex. In the game code this possibility has been programmed and is not a glitch of the system. Thus, the game designer decided to give certain permissions to players on top of his or her values, beliefs and education. That is, the game designer is an author, and uses the aesthetics and logic of the rules to convey possibilities to the player. While an author may build exciting experiences, such as roller coaster rides, or the struggle of good versus evil, there is also the possibility of him or her being a critical, reflexive, provocative author. Production tools are no longer fully concentrated in the hands of experts and large corporations. Rather, they are diffused throughout the gaming experience: the player can 'author' the gaming experience. This is what the recent indie games movement has come to present, and for some time now the field of education has sought to use games to improve learning techniques, games which are based on contextual goals other than entertainment only.

Not coincidentally, classrooms have increasingly become territories where students experience practical activities, with the teacher as a guide, or as a tutor. Students, placed in a situation of controlled risk (a simulation, like a game) need to solve a certain problem. How to teach them, without interrupting their core activity; what can or can't they do? How to keep a player/student motivated to keep trying? After all, it is in this process of trial and error that we learn.

The role of games as a mediator that enforces rules, imposes limits, suggests goals, delivers activities, and distributes prizes and punishments is not exclusive to contemporary video games. Huizinga (2007) claims that we are *Homo Ludens*, with civilizations and social structures based on games and rituals, including the academic sphere. The field of education already studies the benefits of playing and gaming in the educational process, but it seems that only recently, and still very

modestly, have industrial and digital games been thought of in the broader sense of learning and research. Perhaps because they are closely related to fun, uncompromising entertainment, they can thwart the expectations of teachers and students seeking to use this method in class. It is not by chance that many authors worry about using the word 'game', instead seeking to re-signify it through the use of terms such as 'simulation'.

There are many possibilities created by games that go beyond the consumption of goods aimed at entertainment and fantasy. We understand that games are a medium structured as a machine that allows the user to produce his or her own stories. Such participation turns out to be engaging, as explained by Calleja (2011), while it enables learning and expression throughout the process, stimulated by the various possibilities that the game generates. This process is guided by an author, the game designer, who uses the tools at his or her disposal (mechanics, aesthetics, interface, etc.) to convey his or her worldview and stimulate certain responses or behaviors on the player. In the case of our research, the intention was to stimulate the voluntary participation of individuals who would reveal aspects of their own cultural repertoire, thus converging with the objectives of our project.

To test the applications of the game as a research tool, *CosmoCult Card Game* was applied with groups of youngsters aged between 12- and 24-years-old. To accord with the scope of the research project 'Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil', the game allowed a dialogue with the subjects in a way that was playful and interesting for all, giving researchers the chance to interact with the cultural repertoire that is present in subjects' daily lives.

## **2. CosmoCult Card Game**

Due to the development of the international project 'Cultures Juveniles à l'ère de la globalization' in different countries, a number of epistemological and methodological issues appeared in the process of adaptation to the local reality of each participating nation. These issues become even more relevant in the face of differences between core and peripheral countries, as well as their territorial and demographic divisions.

The research tools developed by the international research group took the form of a questionnaire and an interview guide, both divided into three parts: cultural consumption (practices and uses of vernacular and vehicular languages; consumption

of films, television, music, comics, books, press, radio, websites/blogs, social networks and frequency of the shows), global culture (covering topics relevant to global society, international interest, and travel and international knowledge, such as monuments, natural places, political/historical characters, scientists/inventors/explorers, artists, sportsmen and cultural sites, in order to understand local/international identification), and socio-demographic and educational data.

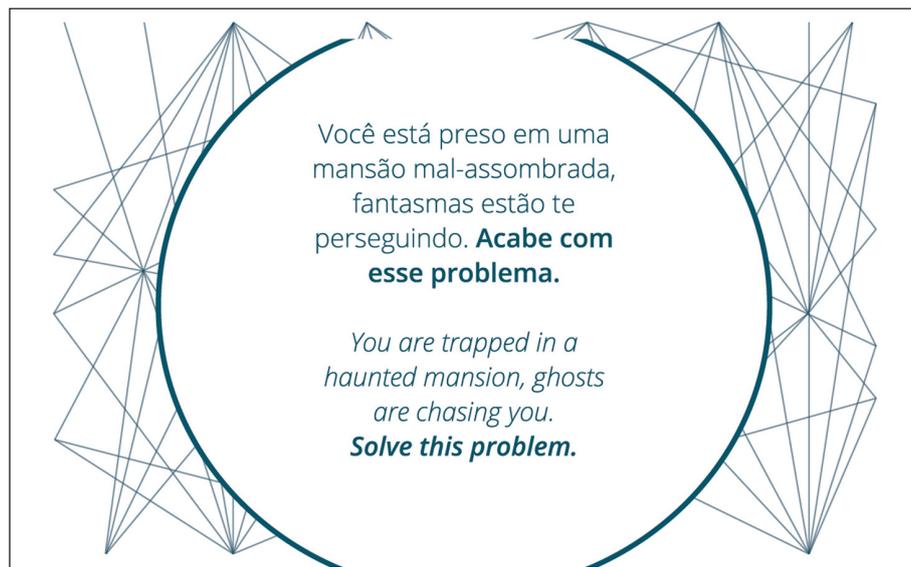
During the adaptation of those instruments for the application of the research to Brazil, we faced certain challenges. We included discussions about the consumption and uses of multimedia (cultural and communication) – since mediations are increasingly present in contemporary cultural consumption, especially for young people – and we also added new groups of cultural consumption involving elements of contact with other cultures, which are close to contemporary daily life (such as ethnic/regional foods, global brands and celebrities).

However, even with those adaptations made by the Brazilian researchers, at the time of the distribution of the questionnaire, many young people stated that they did not know many of the references, and this fact was due either to the fact that they did not know the names of a number of popular culture references, such as The Louvre museum or Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg (they are not used to reading or hearing these names, only to seeing pictures of these references) or to a local perspective (pizza is not considered a foreign food, but a Brazilian one, since it is present in everyday life). Besides the centrality of European references in the original research, there were also a number of traditional references, more familiar to an older generation (i.e. the age of the researchers and not the young subjects of the research). Solutions were then sought to enable Brazilian young people to bring their own references.

The research team went to ESPM's GameLab (São Paulo, Brazil) in order to discuss and create a new data collection technique for the project, which would allow subjects to reveal more aspects of their cultural and consumption repertoire through varied stimuli. It was not enough to know if the respondent likes rock music, for example; what are the associations that he or she makes with this music genre, with a specific example, and in what contexts? The research required an understanding of the

different meanings that each individual brings to a particular element from his or her cultural repertoire. GameLab's mission was therefore to develop a game that allowed the player to expose their preferences and the meanings they ascribe to these elements.

GameLab developed *CosmoCult Card Game*, a card game for three to six players, including a 'master' of the game who guides the match and reinforces the ludic attitude (Suits, 1978; Juul, 2011), as well as encouraging participants to respond to the research questions. The game consists of cards with situations that need to be solved by the players (**Figure 1**), cards with themes from the research that guide players in the solution of the situation (**Figure 2**), and cards with graphic icons of objects that help to improve the narrative of the solution and connect to elements of players' daily lives (**Figure 3**). It is a game of reasoning and creativity, in which players must tell the best possible story in order to solve the fictional situation. In order to achieve this goal, they use the icon cards (from 1 to 3) they have in their hands, and insert an element from the theme of the round, picked by the master of the game. In terms of the research goals, the element connected to the theme is the important content provided by the game.



**Figure 1:** Situation card from *CosmoCult Card Game*. Source: Authors.

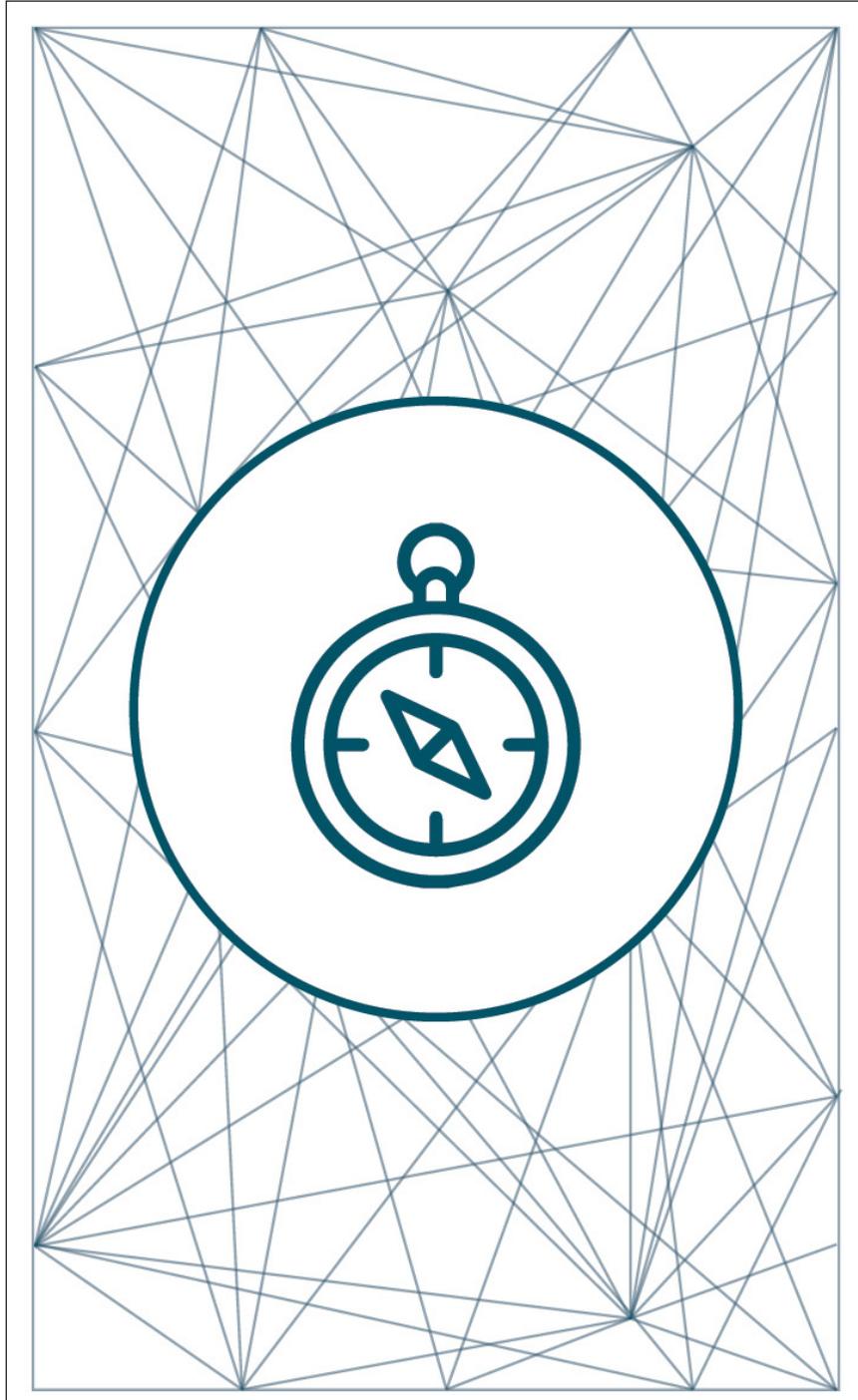


**Figure 2:** Theme card from *CosmoCult Card Game*. Source: Authors.

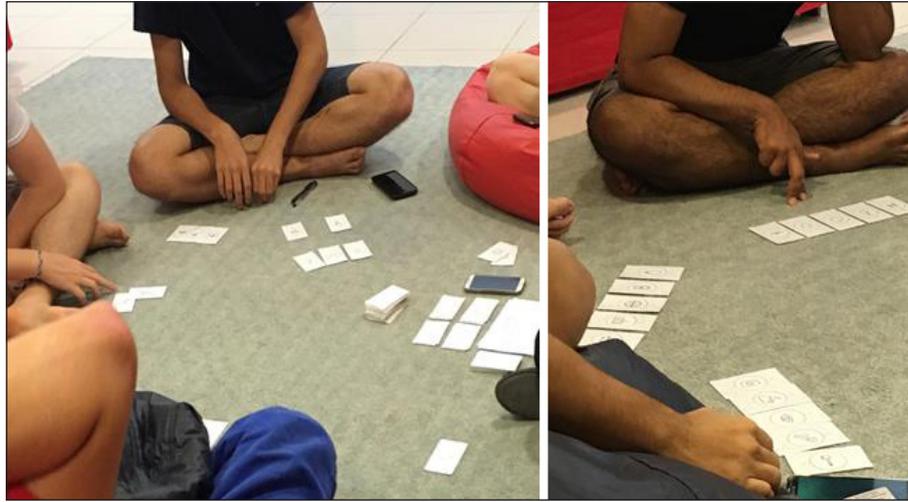
Each match consists of six rounds and lasts about 30 minutes (**Figure 4**). The master of the game distributes five cards with graphic icons to each player, and sets the situation and theme that will inspire the participants' stories. In random order, players tell their solutions to the situation, choosing between one and three icon cards and using them as part of their story, which needs to be consistent with the images in the cards, and inserting an element of the theme.

Thus, in a hypothetical round in which the situation is a zombie invasion and the theme is 'moving pictures', a player using the icons that represent an eye, a bag and a turtle, could tell the following story:

*I was cornered, when the Ninja Turtles appeared. They made their way among the zombies, but soon the great villain of the story appeared: Sauron's giant eye from The Lord of the Rings! I used my magic bag which I got from Hermione, from the Harry Potter movies, which contained a magic wand. I cast a spell and got everyone out of there.*



**Figure 3:** Graphic icon card from *CosmoCult Card Game*. Source: Authors.



**Figure 4:** Images of a *CosmoCult Card Game* match. Photos: Joana Pellerano (23 May 2017). Reproduced with permission of the photographer.

The player met all criteria, being able to build a story with a moving picture repertoire and using three cards, so they score points.<sup>2</sup>

The game was inspired by the classic Brazilian children's game *Stop!*, in which players test their repertoires within various pre-established themes. Other important references were *Dixit* (Roubira, 2008); *Aye, Dark Overlord!* (Bonifacio et al., 2005); *Cards Against Humanity* (Dillon et al., 2009) and *Rory's Story Cubes* (O'Connor, 2005). All these games encourage the player to use their creativity and repertoire to tell stories and display their knowledge.

In *CosmoCult Card Game*, the fantastic situations provide creative stimuli for the player. The limitations on resources and possibilities stimulate the player to rise to the challenge, to search for a solution to the problem that is imposed by the master of the game. The solution that the player brings to the ludic problem tends

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<sup>2</sup> We tested other forms of point scoring and new incentive mechanics, depending on the audience that played the game. Part of these strategies involve some incentives for the player who has more difficulty, with stimuli for exchanging cards during the match, or giving points to complement a story that has already been told. The process of developing a game requires a lot of testing, and it is normal for a game to be tested with a hundred players to reach an ideal balance between rules, players and aesthetics.

to reveal aspects of his or her cultural repertoire, which is the goal of the game as a research tool. The situations used in the game include fun and scary stories, such as the invention of a bionic transport machine that can take players anywhere in time and space, an invisibility spell cast by an evil witch, or the arrival of a destructive dragon in the town, among other examples. The game proved to be extremely versatile and successful, and encouraged researchers to make thematic adaptations throughout the practice of the research. It became possible not only to work on the categories related to the cultural consumption research topic (films, series and other television programs, music, games, comics, books and social networks), as initially planned, but also with themes from the global culture topic (by introducing monuments, natural and cultural sites, political/historical figures, scientists/inventors, artists, sportsmen, celebrities, brands, and food). In the following, we present some of the experiences from the research.

### 3. Game Experiences and Possible Discussions for Research

The practical research with *CosmoCult Card Game* took place in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, during 2016. The game was tested with 170 young people aged between 12- and 24-years-old. For the purposes of this article, we present some of the most relevant discussions that came up during the matches.

The themes that were used are presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1:** Themes by research topic.

Research topic	Themes	
Cultural consumption	Moving pictures	TV series
	Music	Games
	Books	Social networks
	Comics	TV programs
Global culture	Natural sites	Celebrities
	Scientists and inventors	Artists (actors, musicians, dancers, visual artists)
	Brands	Food

When the game was introduced, the young subjects of the research, divided into groups of five or six and accompanied by a researcher/master of the game, were a little shy and reluctant to start. Usually, they used only one card in the first round, and took more time to formulate a story. But after the first round, they would break loose, and from then on, more cards were employed and the icons were seen with a little more abstraction.

One example is: the card with the icon of a bowler hat and a mustache helped a young player, inspired by the theme 'moving pictures', to solve the situation of a witch stealing his voice – he remembered Charlie Chaplin and silent movies, and said he would do signs with his hands to indicate that he was under a spell. There were many examples of creativity connected to abstraction of the cards with icons: the image of a pair of round glasses served as reference to remember Hogwarts, the school from the *Harry Potter* movies and books; the icon of a heart pierced by a sword turned into chicken hearts on a skewer when the theme was 'food'; a paintbrush turned into a reference to Revlon hair dye when the theme was 'brands'; and the image of a snake eating its own tail, according to one of the young players, 'may be a snake, a ring, an earring, a bracelet; this one has several utilities!'

The themes allowed the researchers to acknowledge the young subjects' cultural repertoires, based on the stories created by them, and consequently to broaden the discussion to involve all research topics.

### ***3.1. Cultural consumption: A more complex body of references found in São Paulo***

Elements of cultural consumption, connected to the cultural consumption research topic, are part of the main objective of the game. Within the players' narratives we are able to learn more specifically about their cultural repertoires, and analyze the complexities of reference that are available to young people living in São Paulo. Some examples of narratives and elements of cultural consumption are described below.

In the situation involving the bionic transport machine that could take them anywhere, one of the players said that he would visit Marty McFly (from the movie

*Back to the Future*), while a young girl wanted to go to Neverland to meet Peter Pan. One player did not know what to do with the umbrella card, so another asked 'have you ever seen that movie with the nanny that flies with an umbrella?' (referring to *Mary Poppins*). In another situation, with a dinosaur invading the city, and with the theme 'music', a young man used the icon card of a telephone and sang: 'Piririm piririm piririm, alguém ligou pra mim' ['Ring ring, someone called me', from the popular Brazilian song 'Atoladinha'], then said 'I'm going to prank call the dinosaur and save the city'. When the situation involved having won the lottery and the theme was 'TV series', a young woman used a card depicting the moon and said she would do a remake of the TV series *Friends* up there. In order to survive in the forest, a young man said that he would take 'a pie chart to analyze my chances of survival as they do in these shows about business [ . . . ] and a cap to keep me from the heat like that in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*'.

When the theme was books, many of the young subjects said they did not know any and did not like to read anything. But once involved in the game, and in order to face the challenge of finding a solution for the situation in the round, they usually remembered some titles: an example was a young woman who said she never reads, but when responding to the situation of a journey with the bionic transport machine, she said she was going back to Shakespeare's time to change the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*: 'instead of letting them drink poison I would stick a knife in them [ . . . ] and I would leave a letter to the families to pretend it was suicide'; when the researcher asked if she was going to change the classic suicide to a covert murder, the player replied that 'it's going to be something like Capitu and Bentinho<sup>3</sup> [characters from the Brazilian book *Dom Casmurro*] – was it murder or suicide?' The young woman was positively surprised when the researcher pointed out that she had used the plot of not just one, but of two books, even though she said she did not read at all.

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<sup>3</sup> Capitu and Bentinho are the main characters of *Dom Casmurro*, by Machado de Assis, an important work of Brazilian literature, written at the end of the nineteenth century. The story of the book revolves around Bentinho's doubts about the fidelity of his wife, Capitu.

Local references were very common during the matches, and not only when the subject was cultural products, as with the examples of the song 'Atoladinha' and the book *Dom Casmurro*. When the situation was that the players would leave everything, and go to live into the wild, and they could take only one thing, one of the players said he would go to the Amazon forest, and bring binoculars to do some birdwatching. Brazilian celebrities were also remembered: the situation of the bionic machine and the theme 'brands' inspired a young man to go to the 90s to give Head & Shoulders shampoo to the singer-songwriter Tim Maia, the TV personality Elke Maravilha and the singer Cumpadi Washington, all known for their distinctive hair. Local brands and food were also present, as we discuss in the following section.

Fan culture appeared as a recurring theme. The British TV series *Doctor Who*, a phenomenon among young audiences, appeared in different rounds of the same match, which shows that the group was comprised of fans. In the situation involving the bionic transport machine, a player said that a man stepped out of the machine, reached out and invited him to travel wherever he wanted. The young man said that he went to the moon, and another asked: 'was that the Tardis?' (the spaceship from *Doctor Who*, that travels in space and time). In another round, when the situation was about going into the wild and the theme was 'celebrities', another young man said he would take his blue box (as the Tardis is known to fans) and would call David Tennant or Matt Smith (actors who played *Doctor Who*) to carry the machine. Another player said that the man who reached out to him from inside the machine was Albert Einstein, and another boy joked, 'Albert Einstein invented the Tardis!' The rounds of this *Doctor Who* super-fan match also showed how celebrities are embedded in everyday culture: famous people from very different backgrounds are considered celebrities; actors and scientists can coexist in this category.

### ***3.2. Global culture: Imaginaries of the global that connect to the local***

Elements of global culture (consumption products, places and famous people), connected to the global culture research topic, were also part of the game, specifically connected to consumption products, through brands and food. These

elements are part of these individuals' lives and are responsible for partly forming their imaginaries of the global. Yet these imaginaries are also connected to their local culture and environment, as we can analyze from the examples found in the narratives of young people from São Paulo.

There are interesting examples that connect specifically to other themes of the global culture research topic. For example, when the theme was 'brands', one player referred to Jequití's products, a Brazilian cosmetics brand, and everyone in the group started to recite the brand's slogan, 'Não existe mulher feia, existe mulher que não conhece os produtos Jequití' ['There is no ugly woman, there are only women who do not know Jequití's products']. This shows how the company and its advertising campaigns are present in the imaginations of these young people, perhaps because of the connection between the brand and the television channel SBT, both owned by businessman and TV presenter Silvio Santos. In another match, a brief social hierarchy appeared in relation to car brands: a young man said the Camaro is a cool car, while the original Volkswagen Beetle, known in Brazil as *Fusca*, is a 'semi-cool' car.

When the theme was 'food', and players had to tell what they would do with the profits from their lottery win, a young man said he was going to a restaurant to eat rice and beans, a staple combo in the Brazilian diet. The researcher asked: 'You are a millionaire and you are going to the restaurant to eat rice and beans? You can, you're a millionaire and you can do what you want.' The young man replied, 'Yes, it's the traditional food'. On another occasion, young people from different parts of Brazil engaged in a spontaneous discussion about how hot dogs are prepared in their hometowns, showing that even within the country there are differences in a supposedly standardized dish.

### ***3.3. Youths' daily lives: A hybrid reality***

Besides showing young people's relationships with elements of cultural and global consumption, the game also opened a window into players' daily lives (**Table 2**). Amid the stories invented by the players, certain everyday elements appeared in a spontaneous way, which not only helped to create more interesting scenarios

**Table 2:** Elements of daily life introduced by players during the matches.

<b>Elements of daily life</b>	
Media	Personal background
Foreign languages	Foreign countries

during the game, but also showed contexts in which these elements participate in the players' lives. It is important to point out that the reality of their lives show the hybridity, not only of the encounter of cultures (the global and the local), but also of the mediations they have in their social practices, between physical and virtual environments.

The presence of different media in the routines of the young players was frequently described in the game. Computers, smartphones and Wi-Fi icons generally entered the stories as tools used to search for a solution, which shows how these elements are immersed in players' daily lives. One of the young men, with cards that showed a computer and an antenna, said: 'I was at home online, and the Internet went down', to which his friend said, 'it's a sad moment in a man's life'. When 'games' was the theme, smartphone games also appeared frequently: a young woman said she was going to play *Angry Birds* with real birds to save the city from dragons, for example.

Different types of social media also appeared frequently. A young man threatened by dinosaurs contacted one of them via the messenger app for smartphones, WhatsApp (which he called 'Whats') and befriended it, while another player said he would add some ghosts to his social networks to distract them: 'I can do it, they would like my photos and release the Wi-Fi password', he explained. Another young man said he texted his grandmother asking for her special pasta recipe, so he could distract the ghosts with a tasty dish.

One example of personal background introduced during one of the matches was related to family life. When the situation involved finding the bionic transport machine, one player said that he would go back to the past to find his mother while she was walking hand-in-hand with his father, and would explain that they are now

separated. This young man used an icon card with a flower to offer to his mother, and all the players said it was an adorable story.

Contact and/or curiosity about other cultures also appeared spontaneously. Foreign languages, for example, came into the stories from time to time. In one story, a young man said he had found a giant robot fish from Google that spoke English, which began to speak Portuguese with the help of Google's translator. He then discovered that the fish had been sent by the United States to save people from an earthquake that, according to the fantastic situation, was destroying the city of São Paulo. 'Strange, right? But it happens', the player joked. Foreign countries also entered the stories: in the situation in which everyone had won the lottery, a young man said he was going to Japan to eat sushi, and, inspired by the dish, decided to buy half of the country; another girl used a dog's icon to say she was going to China to taste that exotic delicacy.

### **3.4. *CosmoCult Card Game and Research Objectives***

The examples described above show that *CosmoCult Card Game* proved extremely fruitful for this research, with information both for the research topics, as well as for the contexts of these individuals' daily lives. It is, therefore, important to highlight that the game promotes interaction and spontaneous engagement, enabling data collection directly from the context of these youngsters' lives, regarding their age range, but also the different socioeconomic backgrounds they live in – considering that São Paulo is a metropolis with a high social divide.

In analyzing the research tool, as Calvillo-Gómez et al. (2011) propose, we verified both its internal and external validities. The internal validity of *CosmoCult Card Game* to the research can be explained both by the connection to the project's goals and the themes used in the game, as well as by the creation of a specific context with the game's fantastic situations, connected to elements of cultural consumption and global culture, using objects, images and imaginaries that players bring from their daily lives.

Concerning external validity, the experimental setting of the application of *CosmoCult Card Game* is defined within the game context, in the situations proposed

and in the solutions created, including the elements connected to the research topics and the players' daily lives. With a high degree of control of the context around the game, it is possible to analyze the data collected from the matches, connecting them to the main categories discovered in the survey and narrated in the interviews.

*CosmoCult Card Game* becomes, as Frasca (2003) explains, a machine to produce narratives, and through the situations, themes and icons, the game constructs a proposal, and the young subjects interact with it, offering their own narratives in return. This game is a methodological innovation and enables researchers to mix methods, with the integration of narratives, experiences and images, which makes a contribution to a social research project, answering the call from Savage and Burrows (2007).

Not less importantly, *CosmoCult Card Game* also proved itself to be a pleasant activity not only for the researchers, but for the young players, confirming playfulness as an important element of interaction with individuals, as explained by Huizinga (2007). At the end of the matches, when asked if they enjoyed the experience, the subjects of the research said it had been fun and that they would love to keep playing. On one occasion a young woman said she was glad she was there on the day of the research, and another asked whether the game could be bought somewhere, because she would like to play it again.

#### **4. Final Considerations**

Studies of cosmopolitanism, centered mainly on European countries, propose questions for the understanding of the reflexive vision of the Other, based on the reality of contemporary global flow. However, in peripheral regions and in hybrid realities, such as those that are part of our context in the research project 'Youth Cosmopolitanism in Brazil', this exercise demands a problematization of different access possibilities and of the differentiated forms of global culture, formed from the local, which are not central or hegemonic. This exercise justifies both the adaptations and the epistemological and methodological innovations made for the research with young Brazilians.

As a result of the development of this project in Brazil, *CosmoCult Card Game* was born as a research tool that can be used for different themes and discussions. The contextualization provided by the game has created a playful, intense and immersive way of investigating cultural consumption and global elements in the players' lives. Evidence of cultural consumption and global symbols rapidly emerged in the game situations applied by the researchers. Thus, the methodological tool of the game proves itself extremely appropriate.

When working with this age group (young people), and with groups from different social contexts and educational backgrounds, it was possible to create a conversation about themes considered 'serious', such as culture, without generating embarrassment, providing involvement and focus on the activity. The focus on participating in the game transforms the narrative process about cultural products into a playful expression, and allows a pedagogical exploration of this tool as a way of discussing issues that are relevant, but often not considered entertaining or interesting possibilities for young people.

We can affirm that the application of the game has surpassed expectations as a methodological tool, providing rich material for analysis, available in audio, video and photographic records, and, in addition, becoming a gateway to connect to, interact with and engage young people in the proposed discussion.

The card game's contribution to our research goals was mainly the possibility of openness to these young individuals' cultural repertoires. But as a complementary result, the game enabled researchers to get involved with the research subjects, using a format that is close to their own way of thinking and expression. The game had the characteristics that Calleja (2011) explains, of games as way for individuals to share their experiences, create narratives and be embedded in a ludic environment. This ludic impact is also connected to what Koster (2005) describes as the entertainment that games can create and how it can be a motivation for participation and engagement in a task. In a way, our game was a different kind of media, as Aarseth (1997) points out in his study, that allowed us to have access to these youths' cultural repertoires, through the input of data by the players, as well as the reactions to the outputs of the group.

Hence, in answer to our main thesis – understanding cultural-aesthetic cosmopolitanism by analyzing cultural consumption and experiences with a global culture through which young people construct their criteria of judgment, knowledge and imaginary of the Other – the game contributes examples and narratives of these individuals' daily lives and the possibilities of connection to other cultures.

Cultural-aesthetic cosmopolitanism, as explained by Cicchelli, Octobre and Riegel (2016), can be understood through the consumption of cultural goods and the aesthetic experience of global culture. With detailed examples and connections of these goods and experiences with young people's daily lives, we can find possibilities of openness to the Other and to the world. It is also important to highlight that the game helped to understand the cultural repertoires of these individuals, which may or may not be part of the legitimized media or cultural products. As Prysthon (2002) explains, peripheral cosmopolitanism is present in several parts of the world, in the encounters of the 'Third World' with the Other, and through the examples of this game we can show Brazilian youths' particular perspective of the world, either central or peripheral. In adding this new contextual perspective, of an empirical challenge in the study of cosmopolitanism, we also address the challenge proposed by Bhabra (2011) of whether cosmopolitanism can become a useful concept for the discussion of contemporary social diversity. With the results we have gathered and the methodological innovations we have applied in order to understand diversity more deeply, we believe cosmopolitanism can also be an important concept in our reality.

Analyzing the dimensions of cosmopolitanism among the examples produced by these young individuals, we can understand first the importance of hybridity – as a cultural manifestation, in the mixture between local, regional, national and global, as well as a mediation, in the convergence between digital and physical environments – and the centrality of media contexts as an aesthetic format and as a means of consumption and daily practice.

Beyond our research goals and context, we believe that this game can become an inspiration for other researchers and educators, developing their own projects and activities, using the game with themes related to their specific interest or the themes

we used,<sup>4</sup> or creating new games as research and pedagogical tools. *CosmoCult Card Game* can be used in other countries, in different contexts, since it enables individuals to express themselves in their own language,<sup>5</sup> with references from their own cultural repertoire, no matter what socioeconomic or cultural background they belong to. The game was created for our research project, but we also aim to share it with other countries participating in the international comparative study. In the future it may allow a dialogue between the different perspectives and possibilities of individuals' cultural repertoires, hence enriching the comparison of each context.

There are some limitations of the research, since the game can only be used to analyze specific repertoires, and therefore has to be contextualized to the group that is playing it. *CosmoCult Card Game* can, then, be used as a means of producing narratives, as a way to connect to the contexts of elements of consumption elements, from a qualitative perspective, as a complement to other methodological tools. When the groups of individuals had already had previous contact with each other, the process of sharing narratives was more fluid and the ludic involvement more intense. A digital version of the game was also created and tested, but currently it only enables individual playing, displaying the knowledge of each person. Our goal is to keep developing this digital tool, in order to include interactions among individuals, with the exchange of repertoires from different contexts, and to continue development of the game's database, with the addition of the elements brought by different players.

## Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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<sup>4</sup> The game can be downloaded from the project website: [www.cosmocult.com.br](http://www.cosmocult.com.br).

<sup>5</sup> The situations and theme cards are written in both Portuguese and English.

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