MATRIZes

Partnership networks and mobilization

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Abstract

This review of the book *@internet e #rua: ciberativismo e mobilização das redes sociais (The Internet and the Street: Cyber Activism and Mobilization in Social Networks)*, written by Fábio Malini and Henrique Antoun, exposes some of the main subjects approached in the text that develops over a historical background of the internet and the digital communication and information technologies. This brief tour of the two researchers' work attempts to approximate the analysis of collaboration and partnership networks with the most recent practices of production, circulation and consumption of content in the context of the mobilizations that went from the social networks to the streets from Brazil.

Keywords: partnership networks, mobilization, collaboration, media.

Partnership is a frequent word in the book this review is about, as well as in the academic trajectory of its authors. *@internet e #rua: ciberativismo e mobilização nas redes sociais (The Internet and the Street: Cyber Activism and Mobilization in Social Networks)* (Editora Sulina, 2013) is the weaving of a web of texts that is being formed since Fábio Malini's doctorate, under the advisory of Henrique Antoun, in Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Through works presented in conferences and articles published in journals of communication, the partnership between them was built not only through the academic ties but also through the affinities in terms of activism, explicitly declared by both. These affinities permeate their arguments with transparency and openness. Since it is self-declared, such engagement does not evoke any doubts in those who read their writings, for the reader gets to the texts knowing for sure that the partiality accepted by the authors supports them in building the research paths that took them to certain conclusions.

The amount of studies accrued by Malini and Antoun for the past ten years

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became not only extensive but of high value to the investigation, under various biases, about how the popular mobilizations and the use and appropriation of internet relate, therefore demanding a publication to transform into dialogue the multiple discussed approaches. The spread of popular uprisings in the last few years – from the Seattle movement to the Arab Spring, recalled in several moments in the book – made even more latent the need for reflection over a set of technological, social, cultural, political and economic elements that compose the global framework of transformations on the communication practices, currently defined by the collective engagement, collaboration, participation and a series of words and expressions that transit on Malini and Antoun's work. The authors express the complexity of a new communication model, defined by the cognitive capitalism, leaded by the new media and strongly opposed by the corporate media.

The history of the internet and the partnership networks serves as the base for the seam that @*internet e #rua* makes of a series of facts and stories that ever since the initial development of the *hacker* culture, the BBS e the Usenet are sowing the field of struggles around information in which will take place the clashes between the corporate and the free media. This dispute over the narratives permeates the concepts of *cyberwar* and *netwar*, which belong to the field of *infowar*, created by Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1993), and recurrently cited by Malini and Antoun in the discussion about the tensioning among different actors that are currently around in the media field. Those looking for an overview of notes confined to common sense, such as dull attempts to answer the repeated questioning about what has been going on in the world, will have more success going for the specialists' analysis in television or weekly magazines interviews. What @*internet e #rua* presents is not a closed answer to the acts and claims of those engaged in the various struggles against dictatorial governments and political and economic abuses, but an archeology of a culture still in formation, defined by the technological appropriation as an instrument of liberation, emancipation and the advocacy of rights and warranties of multiple natures. Using a writing style that combines a literary tone, marked by the passion of the engagement in the fighting and with scientific data, Malini e Antoun recover the history of internet and of freedom of speech and access to information that constitute its foundation to present the birth and

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growth of a culture of collaboration. This culture is moved by the action of social movements that fades through the networks and streets and gets stronger and amplified in the communication networks that branch in different formats, engaging people and causes through uses, diversions and technological adaptations that, although dependent on the connection governed by the logic of capital and retained by the control of governments and corporations, still finds communication ways, forms and channels that are able to overthrow dictatorships and subvert the logic of production, circulation and consumption of media content. From the differentiation, exposed right from the start, between the free media practices and the cyber activism, it is clear that the political economy of the media permeate all of the authors' work.

> Both claim another political economy of media, in which the propriety of the media must be common, namely, that the cooperation in the social production of media content is governed by a collective decision-making structure of civil society and by a copyright that allows the content to circulate freely through the society and not only become a patent collecting machine (MALINI E ANTOUN, 2013, P. 22).

The book is divided into four chapters and composed by an extensive hypertext network of subtitles that present a narrative that comes and goes in the history of the social movements and the internet, recovering facts, data, laws and situations that could not be ignored in the web of events that lead to the current technological, social, political, cultural and economic juncture. The vastness of the digital culture does not appear much in the lines of @*internet e #rua*, if compared to what composes it. This makes indispensable to know about, albeit basically, the roots of cyberspace to which Malini and Antoun refer when citing authors such as Gibson (2003); the stories of the birth of opens source *software* and companies like Apple, IBM and Microsoft; and the emblematic court disputes about copyright battled between large corporations and the P2P systems. To equip oneself of such previous knowledge enriches the reading of pages that approach both the mobilizations that went from the networks to the streets and, perhaps especially, the evolutions of systems of content publication and sharing that have given to the movements and activists the reconfiguration of their forms of organization and communication among themselves around their actions. These

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publishing and sharing systems and tools, based on P2P networks, collaboration and interactions are what the authors use to outline a detailed historic about how the technological possibilities can leverage networks, from small groups to vast crowds. The same networks that simultaneously present themselves to governments and media corporations as a target of monitoring and surveillance, under attempts of control and even censorship, in a time in which the spreading (JENKINS, FORD AND GREEN, 2013) deals with enabling the flow of information in different ways. The collective ability of broadcasting a content, broadening its reach through the connected *multimediality*, according to the authors, the invisibility with the visibility, due to this network spread. This diversity of formats is enhanced through various examples that illustrate how the power of irradiated mass media is put in check by the distributed crowd media.

Before effectively approaching the multimedia practices and formats adopted by citizens and activists in the movements' routines, the authors set the current scenario of fights as from concepts like cyber-communism, cognitive capitalism and *bio power*, reflecting about the political and economic juncture of the history of media. This immediately generates questionings concerning the current media demonstrations undertaken by media collectives such as *Mídia Ninja (Ninja Media)*, in covering the protests in Brazil as of June 2013. In this sense, Malini and Antoun's contributions enrich the academic field dedicated to the subject and entice the reasoning of the social movements and the media collectives on the task of reinventing the political economy of communication through new models of financing and new ways of generating value for its immaterial work.

The law of the pairs gets ample space in the second chapter, which exposes the trajectory of the P2P systems, thus highlighting the importance of sharing in the mediation interfaces and in the networks of network war. Crowds, swarming and mediation are the watchwords in this part of the text that problematizes copyright, the relations between labor and technology and partnership networks. Models, network logic and the operation of various file exchange *software* that marked an era in the internet's trajectory serve as inspiration to think about the current configuration of collaboration networks engaged in producing and spreading content committed to the

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truth of the facts and decoupled from the mass media production, which is defined by corporative interests and linked to political interests and games. Malini and Antoun recover an Arquilla and Ronfeldt's method to analyze, at the organizational level, the networks of network war and highlight the narrative level of such method as being now crucial in understanding the reality of the network. The motivation that determines the permanence of an individual in the network is what drives the narrative level of analysis in the networks of network war, bringing once again forward in the argument the collision between the old mass media, which used to be the exclusive holder of the storytelling, and the new media, that yanks the leading role from the former, spraying it in countless voices that spread across the networks.

From the networks to swapping files, the authors open space for the debate about network collaborative publishing, tensing the debate on journalism in this environment characterized by the liberation of the emitting nucleus (LEMOS, 1997). They delimit a readjustment of forces within the contemporary media scope due to the fragmentation of media attention and the detachment of the news fact of one single version. By exposing and questioning some practices of participative journalism in traditional media groups, Malini and Antoun (2013, p. 124) indicate the existence of numerous experiences of independent media that give visibility to stories that do not appear in major newspapers. That is when they get to blogs, as a prominent format within this independent production, many times local, as carriers of practices based on informal writing and conversation: "the blogosphere differs from the mass communication precisely for building itself from the discourses that are glued to the way of expressing each singularity". The birth of the free media is then approached from the creation of the *Independent Media Center (IMC),* during the Battle of Seattle, thus altering the course not only of the movement but also of journalism itself.

In the third chapter, the practices of organization and communication between and about the movements are discussed based on the social action, the mobilization and the engagement that potentiate through cyber activism. The data monitoring, the information leakage and the possibilities of anonymity are pointed out as the topics of the chapter that justifies much of the work's title. It is when Malini and Antoun (2013, p. 157) lean over "the process of collective narrative of public events", seen as the

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laboratory of the disputes between the old and new media, between the government and the corporations and the movements, activists and citizens. As a result, "the new multitudinous narratives will make the transition from the informational model of media, which focuses on the quantitative accumulation of products as a priority to the multimedia communication model, which emphasizes the coordination of the collective action of the movements."

The *bio power* returns to the text, when the annotation of a new arte of governing the individuals' freedom. Regarding the freedom of autonomous production versus the reduction of that freedom from controlled systems of information, the authors point the current economic configuration of the internet as the vehicle of an ideology of deregulated freedom, but that actually is subjected to protocols and architecture that maintain their culture over determined by a *bio power* that stimulates, or has the ability to stimulate, the creation of subjectivities. Moreover, this creation of subjectivities influences in the decision-making. For this reason, it is what ends up being subject of dispute between the media. In contraposition to the media *bio power* on the internet, the authors point out the *bio politics* as the resistance and the counter-insurgent by those who do not allow themselves to be captures by the control and claim an economy of cooperation. Multimedia and the crowds' organization around the *hashtags* demonstrate the organization and mobilization potential generated by the use and the appropriation of the new media, making way for the closure of the chapter that also interposes the information leakage as a form of resistance to censorship imposed by the governments and finishes clamoring the same ones to give back the candor to the youth, the same candor that defines the action of those in demanding honesty and transparency in governance.

Malini and Antoun reserve the last chapter to recall how static homepages of news portals used to define de media agenda in web 1.0 and how the actions started to derive from profile's timelines instead of pages filled with content and closed to the participation and the sharing. The conversation emerges in web 2.0 as the engine of the network mobilizations, gaining the streets from the interactive possibilities of various tools. The emblematic #15M e #12M emerge as a Spanish laboratory, in the last few pages of *#internet e @rua*, next to the demonstrations in the Brazilian state of Espírito

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Santo, in 2011, that exemplify new forms of activism and narrative.

Never denying the marks of activism and the passion for fighting, Malini and Antoun structured in this book the basis of the thought on the partnership network logic, foundations of the constitution of movements and mobilizations that see in the use of technology and its action routines the force and the power of communication. As dynamic as the story that it counts and problematizes, *@internet e #rua* unfolds on multiple nodes of collective actions and researches about the subject that will still travel the streets and the networks, in a future that is already building itself in our daily lives.

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