

Social movements, virtual networks and alternative media in June when “the giant awakened” (?)¹

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Abstract

This study is about the large Brazilian civil demonstrations which began in June 2013, with the aim of identifying the main aspects that characterize them, and to understand the presence of social networks and alternative communication in the process. This is a first approach based on literature research and unsystematic observation of manifestations as they happened, and through virtual networks as well as the tracking of media coverage of conventional and alternative media. We conclude that civil society has shown its strength, and exposed the existence of a universe of communication larger than the mainstream media.

Keywords: Social Movements, mobilization, communication, virtual networks, alternative media.

Introduction

The theme of this article is quite encompassing and has complex connections to be summarized, and it deals with a subject still in flux, which allows us to say that we have no intention of completely tackling it, but just to raise some aspects and weave approximations regarding the question of communication in the context of the huge public protests that erupted in Brazil in June 2013.

The initial question asks if virtual networks really were responsible for the organization of the urban protests that led hundreds of thousands of people to the streets. After all, this kind of view was repeated by analysts from the press and

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universities as explanation for the phenomenon that was trying to be understood. The objectives of identifying the main aspects that characterize the huge public protests that started in June 2013 in Brazil and understanding the presence of social networks and alternative communication in the process. It's a first approach based on bibliographic research and the real-time and virtual follow-up of protests, as well as the follow-up of coverage of conventional press and the alternative communication vehicles.

The collective manifestations of protest to which this article refers to had their apex in São Paulo on the 17th and 18th of June, 2013, in their 4th and 5th protests, which started pacifically, but that ended in violence, from both the police as to adept participants of radical action. It is estimated that on the 17th approximately 100 thousand people have stopped the capital (A REVOLTA..., 2013, p.A14), moment in which the flags of struggle and the configuration of participants had expanded beyond the reduction of fares for public transportation that originally caused the first protests. The first, with unpretentious and pacific characteristics, led by *Movimento Passe Livre (Free Pass Movement, MPL)*, happened on the 6th of June, in front of the capital's City Hall, and counted with 150 people, according to the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*. It was harshly reprimanded by the Military Police. The next day a second protest happened, and on the 11th and 13th there were others, always repressed with violence, even with help of the Shock Troops, which would have contributed to the escalation of reactions, now also fighting for the right to freedom of assembly and protesting. It followed with the refusal of reduction of fares, simultaneously, to the increase of popular participation and the flags of struggle. Returning to the 18th, it marked the most violent night on the city, with the plundering and destruction of part of City Hall and setting fire to a television truck. The protests marched on and spread throughout the country, reaching 400 cities³ and 12 capitals⁴, some quite strongly, as in Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Brasília (DF). Protests marched on the streets throughout the country and in São Paulo, despite the reversal of the increase in fares for public transportation on the capital – on June 19th – by governor Geral Alckmin (subway) and by mayor

³ Bava (2013, p.5)

⁴ ATOS..., (2013, p.C1).

Fernando Haddad (bus). The same decision was replicated by governors in other cities and 5 capitals⁵. On June 21st, it made the news on Jornal Nacional, from Rede Globo, that 1.2 million people were part of these protests in Brazilian cities. That was when an attack happened against the Itamaraty building, where the Ministry of International Relations is, with closure of traffic in highways and important avenues, pillaging and destruction of organizations that symbolized the capital. On June 21st, the *Movimento Passe Livre* announced the end of its rallies in São Paulo. But the protests continued during the months of June and July⁶, though with lesser participation, maybe because of the changed perspective due to the interference in direct action groups (presence of the Black Bloc). From August to October, there were more sporadic protests with more specific themes, especially in Rio de Janeiro.

1. First word regarding social movements

A first approach to be conducted deals with the concept of social movements. At first sight, this question may seem unnecessary given the idea that they are of public domain. In this way, it would be said: social movements are articulations of civil society constituted of segments of the population that recognize themselves as carriers of rights and organize themselves to claim them. However, the question may lead to other answers when looking the phenomenon more closely – the social movements – which can assume several configurations depending on its motivations, place, historical time and environment in which they are set. Due to this, it's best not to confuse collectives, non-governmental organizations, groups, associations etc., or even any form of collective manifestation, with social movement or people's movement, in the most rigorous sense of the word. On the other hand, there are differences between social movement – which is more ample – from popular movement, which is organic to the

⁵ Cuiabá, Recife, João Pessoa, Porto Alegre e Aracajú.

⁶ On July 11th, for instance, there was a protest called by the Workers' Union and Union Hubs (Central Única dos Trabalhadores, Central dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras do Brasil, União Geral dos Trabalhadores and Nova Central Sindical) on Paulista Avenue on the capital of São Paulo and in other cities.

people's classes, best described as subordinate, and that carry emancipatory content. In these perspectives, protests, mutinies, revolts, among others, do not necessarily constitute in social movement. For instance, *Black Bloc*, whose members in general act in groups and use masks, have been pointed as actors in violent acts that end up in vandalism of public and private property. The Black Bloc is a tactic, not an organization or social movement. The bloc is formed occasionally and temporarily, articulating itself from virtual social networks and, from what we have witnessed so far, taking advantage of events or infiltrating themselves into public protests of social movements⁷ for their referred protest acts. They act on the basis of the so called "direct action", a violent tactic of protest, against capitalism, the state and other forces that represent economic powers and other forms of organization. They can disappear as fast as they appear. It depends on political context. According to Saul Newman (in LOCATELLI, VIEIRA, 2013, p.25), they are "a temporary force, with no identity, in which individuals may not even know who is standing beside them."

Direct action of that kind started in Germany in the 1980s and in defense of protestors in struggles against environmental risks due to nuclear power plants. In 1999 they left their mark in Seattle (USA) due to the meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), "when protests ended in vandalism of companies like Starbucks", as pointed by Pablo Ortellado⁸, and from that time on, they acquired "more aesthetic, spectacular and urban interventionist traits" (in LOCATELLI, VIEIRA, 2013, p.24).

A social movement assumes the existence of a process of collective organization and is characterized by the consistency of ties, shared identities, a certain durability and

⁷That is also the reason why they find rejection even within other social movements, which do not bet on violence because they undermine organizational processes or pacific demonstrations for change. That is the case of *Occupy Wall Street*, from New York (USA), as says one of the activists, Chris Hedges (in LOCATELLI, VIEIRA, 2013, p.26), *Black Bloc* was the "cancer that put out the movement, successful up to that point, in debating the tyranny of financial capitalism".

In São Paulo, the acts of violence on the streets of the capital right after the first June 2013 protests resulted in strategic withdrawals of the *Movimento Passe Livre*, which in the beginning represented the power of recruitment.

⁸ Researcher of the theme

clarity not only in the use of tactics (mobilizing, communicative, civil-judiciary etc.), but also in the strategies, like those involving a wide project of society, or at least, projects for certain sectors. The women's movement, for instance, has very clear goals on both medium and long term: gender equality and conquering all the right of citizenship.

The second necessary approach is in regards to the recognition of the diversity that exists in the world of social movements, as much in political and ideological lineage as in the kinds of movements, which points to the differences in the origins, reasons, means of expression employed, and as to who the actors are, that is, their protagonists. In Brazil, social movements have always existed, with different hues. In the perspective of the last decades, since the post-dictatorship era – in the end of the 1970s and subsequent decades – these could be grouped in categories from factors that motivated or oriented their *raison d'être*, as follows:

- a) Movements associated to work conditions payment (teachers' movements and other professional categories).
- b) Those who defend human rights related to social segments from determined characteristics of human nature (gender, age, race and color – as, for example, women's movements, of Indians, black, homosexuals, children etc. – Examples: Movimento de Mulheres, Meninos e Meninas de Rua etc.).
- c) Those geared to solving problems resulting from inequalities that affect great populations (movements for transportation, housing, land ownership, health, leisure, environment, Peace, against violence, animal defense etc. – Examples: Movimento Nacional pela Moradia, Movimento Passe Livre and Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra). Some are helped by institutions that support or house them, like the church, political party, school and universities, like the Pastoral da terra and the Movimento Fé e Política.

- d) Political-ideological movements (fights for political participation, protests by political antagonism, demands for democracy, change of regime etc.) (PERUZZO, 2013, p.163).

According to Maria da Glória Gohn (2004, p.268-271), political-ideological movements are constituted as a result of political insurrections, revolts, mutinies, revolutions etc.), as well as those that appeared from ideologies – although the ideology pervades any movement – such as anarchism and Marxism. However, the way we see it, since they demonstrate great public demonstrations around the world in the last few years, these could happen not only in moments of extreme political struggle, but also in situations of protests and demands for change, but without profoundly interfering in their established order.

2. June: an unpredictable movement, but expected in Brazil

Protests that marked several countries, from the Arab world to Europe and the United States, actually took long to erupt in Brazil, but they finally arrived, in June of 2013, to change the political colors through some sort of direct democracy: us for ourselves. It's the population that goes to the great avenues in protests, without leaders of organizations that could assume protagonism. Conformism seemed more profound than it was thought to be possible, given a history of a country that since the end of the military dictatorship had mobilized and organized in the entrails of "alleys and corners", in the city and the country, and knew even how to impeach a president. However, such protests were not recruited or led by traditional forces of political representation, like unions and political parties. It's a different kind of movement, as we'll see later on.



Photo: Daniel Teixeira/Estadão-06.17.2013 (Largo da Batata, São Paulo)

Source: <http://agenciat1.com.br/protesto-em-sao-paulo-reune-30-mil-pessoas-diz-pm/movimento-passe-livre/>

The recente great public manifestations in Brazil are political in nature, in a general sense, since they expressed themselves as protests and demand for change in vital areas of national life, and by public policies of social interest. Crowds added to more than a million people in a day, June 20th. State security forces acted with violent repression, showing at times the inability in dealing with this kind of manifestation by the people.

In order to understand these political manifestations, there is a need for flexibility and revision of already consolidated categories, however, without destroying them, since, on one side, the new movements express, among others, also old fights of social movements of the people and, on the other hand, don't annul others, like community movements, the women's, the Movimento de Luta por Moradia, the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST), and so on. However, one should note new characteristics that present themselves, over which we attempt to weave some approximations after this.

Unity in diversity

They express a fraying in the character of class. It's not only about a left-wing movement, even less so only about traditional sectors of political representation. Even disavowing left-wing political parties caught the attention at times. Overall, there was a mix of class segments and political-ideological ideas: left-wing, liberal, conservative, groups with anarchist connotation, people who want to change Brazil, people who only appeared and participated, but without knowing exactly why or, as noted by Chauí (2013), only did so to leave the house. Summing up, the June 2013 protests – moments when there was higher attendance – expressed heterogeneity. However, it's better to explain that we refer only to said protests, and not to the whole of class relations in society. On the contrary, division of class is as clear as ever, with reflections in contradictions and social, economic and political inequalities. The improvement in wealth distribution is still far from representing economic democracy and an equalitarian society. Another aspect of such diversity is the strong presence of youth, without recognizing that there was people of all generations. Such youth helped to recruit and attended protests throughout Brazilian cities. They manifested their indignation and communicated in different ways, from cellphone to the Internet (millions of views and likes on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), of symbols used (Guy Fawkes' mask from the movie "V for Vendetta") to hand-written posters in hand. These are different ways of participating, spread messages and gain visibility in conventional television and other means of communication.

New forms of connection

The use of Internet, media and virtual social networks⁹ and cellphones constitute an important change for the great new social movement that touched the country, and

⁹ Despite possible distinctions between media and virtual networks, we opted to use them indistinctly in this article.

with the visions about it. Virtual social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) constitute channels of information, in communicational environments, in meeting points, finally in networks and, at times, even in communities, which facilitated relationships (among those connected), the articulation between people and conjugated actions (figuring day, place and time for encounters in person). They obviously serve as arenas for debate, spread, access and exchange of information. All of this, in what refers to the internal environment in cyberspace and what concerns the process of mobilization that ends up spilling on the streets of the main cities of the country. In what concerns the communication of the concrete movement, that is, from the streets into society, which we will speak of later on.

Information in text and subtext

The meanings of mobilizations that took over the public urban space, in general term, have flowed together into the expression of discontent of the form of protest and demanding due to the conditions of suffering and needs that affect a great part of the Brazilian population. They represented a cry for change, coming from the hard condition of everyday living from poorer classes, of the disenchantment with politics and with governments, and subtly (and not in a major way) with the capitalist means of production themselves. A mixture of motivations appeared in signs and the speech of individuals¹⁰, like denouncement regarding the high price of rent, urban despoilment, corruption, the need for political reform, improvement in public health (lack of investment and policies), complaint against PEC 37 (the removal of power of criminal investigation by the Public Ministry), against FIFA and the impact caused by the

¹⁰ Blurbs that reporters tried to capture for TV, newspaper, radio, web portals etc. reports. But, by the way, the social

movement did not have leaders or coordinators. It was merely a collective of great proportions that moved due the circumstances and conditions around it (Police force, direct action of Black Bloc etc.) and shouted watchword against violence.

construction of projects due to the 2014 World Cup, the increase in price of public transportation in São Paulo, complaints against political figures in the spotlight at the time, against the discrimination of homosexuals, against vehicles of communication, among others.

In the same ways that happened in Spain, in Brazil phrases of ephemeral support were also used.

These poetic formulations (slogans) informed (produced information producing forms), worked as true levers that threw the words spent of the common political language to unknown lexical fields. Revolution, people, citizen, democracy, representation... (LABRADOR MÉNDEZ, 2013, p.44).

In Brazil, the signs and banners also brought rich information about the meanings brought by the masses: “We left Facebook!!! Who said it was impossible?”; “Come to the Street”; “Brazil has woken up”; “We want FIFA-standard hospitals”; “I ain’t bacon to die burnt” (against violence); “Against PEC 37”; “Feliciano, we haven’t forgotten!!! We are fixing one shit at a time”; “FIFA go home”; “Youth that dares to fight constructs the people’s power”; “Alckmin go home”; “Dilma go home, Cabral go home. PT=Purloiners and Traitors”; “SOS Education”; “No party represents me”; “Free pass”; “The giant has awakened”, “We are sons of the revolution: Believe it, it’s not because of 20 cents”; “We are the social network”... and so much more. The cries of war: “Against violence”, “Look how cool, Brazil has stopped and it isn’t even carnival” and “World Cup I can live without, I want money for health and education” were also repeated in the chorus.

All of this in the midst of the demand for the reduction for fares¹¹ (of R\$0.20 – twenty cents) and for free fares that were the spark for the first protests, raised by the *Movimento Passe Livre*, early in the month, but that didn’t take long to shed the spotlight

¹¹ This same kind of demand also was part of the movement in other cities in and out of São Paulo, having a similar outcome.

to others, like those above mentioned. However, it's important to note that in the years of 2006, 2010, 2011 etc. there was also denouncement and protest in the same way, started by this movement, but that, first had limited attendance – which was also the case in the beginning of this one in June – secondly, there was no victory on previous years as to the annulment of the rate hike as it happened in 2013. This is yet another indicator to evaluate the importance of virtual networks and from the Internet in the mobilization of people, taking into consideration the presence and learning curve from constant use of it in people's lives.

Governments and media questioned

This social movement in June 2013 in Brazil has put in check governments, public services, politics, communication vehicles, and later on and through transversal paths, capitalism itself¹². According to Silvio CacciaBava (2013, p.5), the protests questioned the privateering urbanism that transformed everything into a commodity. The great motivation for the protests is the fight against urban despoilment and all the suffering that it imposes to workers. The lack of priority and investment in public policies punishes all who need public transportation, housing, health services, education, social services, retirement funds and security, policies guaranteed by the Constitution. The people's participation is the mobilization of citizenship for the democratization of governments and life in society, for the improvement of life in cities.

However, the first reaction of government “representatives”, party politics and communication vehicles was not to recognize the demands as legitimate, but disqualifying the movement. Suspicions were raising about manipulation through political-partisan bias, terms employed included vandals, troublemakers, promoters of destruction, as part of a derogatory vocabulary used by interviewees as by the media discourse.

Consented police violence justified by the state, news coverage and the editing of content to emphasize the grotesque side or to evaluate it using a conservative or

¹² In the case of vandalism of banks, car dealerships etc.

authoritarian bias, or at very least, uninformed, bothered protesters. But the streets also sent a message insisting in the right to protest, and voiced its discontentment to the media by burning a TV station car (on June 18th), criticizing journalists and not allowing the filming of protests¹³ from within.

The second reaction, due to the pressure of crowds on the streets, was the fulfillment of the demands, like the repeal of the increase in transportation fares, as mentioned earlier. Other responses by public powers didn't come much later, this time by the federal government: the promise of political reform (which was undermined by partisan forces and by the Supreme Court), investment in public safety, mobility, education and health. The latter was contemplated with the *MaisMédicos*¹⁴ program, the most concrete display so far, which in and of itself found great corporate resistance from the sector. There was also an increase in the respect of the forces of the street, as was the case of the Brazilian president, DilmaRousseff, by declaring in a statement through television networks that they heard the clamor of the protests, that they got the message and considered the demands valid. Another immediate reaction that the protests led to was the archival of PEC 37 (Projeto de EmendaConstitucionalnúmero 37/2011¹⁵) by the House of Representative, on June 25th 2013.

Another communication in the debate arena

Another communication makes itself noted. The protestors used their own ways to communicate: simple cellphones or smartphones and iPhones, virtual networks and the alternative audiovisual served as ammunition to the society with real-time information of what happened on the streets by the viewpoint of new sources, as will be

¹³ CacoBarcelos, from TV Globo, “was expelled by the crowd with cries of ‘Globo go home’”(MELLO, 2013, p.C9).

¹⁴ Consisting in the hiring of Brazilian and foreign doctors to offer their services of medical treatment at the poorest and worst serviced regions covered by public health.

¹⁵ PEC-37, also known as PEC of Impunity, proposed to remove criminal investigation powers from State Public Ministries (MPU), authored by the state representative and chief of police LourivalMentes, of the PT do B party from the state ofMaranhão (PRESSIONADOS..., 2013, p.1).

seen the last part of this text. These have become, also, sources for the mass media, which found itself lost and confused, unsure of what to do, because the happenings went beyond the traditional scheme of journalistic assignment and coverage. These favor the exercise of freedom of expression, without gatekeepers, and in an immeasurable proportion due to the effect of replication of virtual networks. This was so strong that the contrast was made evident between autonomous transmissions of people and activist groups – by Internet-enabled cellphones and handheld cameras between the crowds. For instance, even the heaviest Mídia Ninja gear was transported on wheelbarrows.

Which networks?

According to Gohn’s perspective previously mentioned, which perceives the political manifestations as a result of political conjecture, and taking as foundation the great protests that took place in other country – from the Arab Spring all the way to Europe, especially the 15-M (*Movimiento 15-M*), or the “Democracia Real Ya, Toma la Calle”, widely known as *Los Indignados* (a name given by the press), from 2011 in Spain, the *Yo Soy 132* from Mexico in 2012, it can be said that these kind of movements can be spontaneous – they are born of some important event¹⁶– or happen from the mobilizing action of previously existing organization and social movements, as we’ll see below. Due to this, it may be a hurried cop out to attribute the capacity of organization of the June protests and those that followed in Brazil to the Internet and/or virtual networks. Media and virtual networks are important channels and communicational environments for articulation, but technology only favors mobilizations if their ends are linked to wider social struggle, that is, related to the organizations with the people, communities, social movements and others as their foundation – extra cyberspace or existing in it – though carriers of consistent and lasting links. But its potential as meeting space, discussion arena and place for the confrontation of identities and interests is undeniable. The power to create viral effects,

¹⁶ In Mexico, there was the protest against Peña Nieto, then-candidate for presidente, in a visit to the Universidadelberoamericana, by students who shouted cries of “Ibero No TeQuiere”.

or multiplication of repercussion and attendance, is undeniable. Though high numbers of “likes” are not necessarily signs of true engagement. Sometimes they are just cordial acts. In other situations, they create clouds, like crickets that soon get comfortable. Only when there are strong identities and wills can be mobilized (TORO, WERNECK, 2004) chances for cohesion appear.

It is also important to alert to the existence of tricks that can disguise seeming attendance in the form of fake profiles in networks or in artificial replication, as in the case of Twitter, in which there was forgery of phantom data and flows.

Let’s go back to the organization issues. From what we have seen, in this kind of protests there are networks, interest communities, non-profit civil society organizations, social movements and similar ones – with personal attendance or virtual – which come before or simultaneously with the urban outbreak in person and/or imply processes of action and articulation that extrapolate the spaces in the Internet.

The personal attendance moment as part of the process can be seen, for instance, in the *Yo Soy 132* movement, that despite being characterized as a movement with a strong “Internetic” connection, it did not forego personal attendance. Jesús Galindo Cáceres and José I. González-Acosta (2013, p,84, 146, 147) show how Mexican students mobilized to create a video as answer to the accusations of partisan and media forces connected to Peña Nieto, creating commissions for the production of the video “131 Estudiantes de la Ibero Responden”, as well as the creation of “general assemblies to propose, vote and accept or reject actions taken by the movement [Yo Soy 132] and under its name, like marches, releases, political positioning, strategies [...]”, happened under the coordination of the General Council composed of representatives of universities that participated in the movement¹⁷.

In Spain there was also the appearance of commissions, themed and neighborhood committees, important meetings and general and neighborhood assemblies, with the intent of organizing the 15-M protests (CASTELLS,

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The movement had the attendance of students from other universities as well, beyond those from Ibero.

2012;ROITMAN, 2012; LIMA, 2013). In the words of Roitman Rosenmann(2012, p.47),

Open commissions of economy, judicial, gender, long-term, education, culture and communication problems were created, among others. Within them, conclusions are approved and presented, be it in neighborhood assemblies or in the general one at the *Puertadel Sol* in Madrid. With this procedure one can extrapolate the Spanish state, according to the experience in the different autonomous communities, neighborhoods, cities where 15-M was present, the method fit the circumstances. [...] In this manner, a few days before the 15-M march, [...] the first big consensus of Acampadasol, the 16 points considered the ‘manifest of foundation’.

Among the 16 points of the manifest are: demand for the change in the electoral law; more attention to basic and fundamental rights from the Constitution (dignified housing; free and universal public health; reinforcement of public and secular education; tax reform that is favorable to low-income families; reform of work conditions for politicians (end of lifetime pension etc.); condemnation of corruption; direct and participative democracy; reduction of military spending; and total transparency of political parties accountancy (ROITMAN ROSENMANN, 2012, p.47-49).

In Brazil, the eruption of the first great public protests in June 2013 in São Paulo and in other cities in the country, as was emphasized earlier, was connected to the complaint about the fare increase in public transportation and the demand for the free fare, with its biggest actor being the *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL), but soon grew and gained unexpected proportions. However, MPL was created in 2005 during the World Social Forum. It is organized in some capitals and it articulated in national territory through National Workgroups (GTNs). According to its self-identification, “it is a

Brazilian social movement that fights for true free public transportation, outside of private companies. One of the main demands of the movement is the migration of the private transportation system to the public system, guaranteeing universal access through free fare to all layers of the population” (SOBRE..., s/d, p.1). In it is also noted, therefore, that it existed prior to June 2013 as a movement, beyond the personal attendance part that always had an important role in the process of organization of it, as much in preparation for recruitment as during the phase of public manifestation. It promoted, among other things, an assembly in the campus of the Universidade de São Paulo, at the height of the protests, to discuss the paths to take regarding the violence that infiltrated those, which extrapolate the paths decided so far. It ended up opting for a strategic withdrawal, because it did not want responsibility for violence that stole the scene during protests that were meant to be pacific.

On the other hand, it is important to understand that it had an important role, but was not the protagonist of the movement that ended up reaching over a million people in protests in Brazilian cities, like on June 20th 2013¹⁸. The *Movimento Passe Livre* itself recognizes that it merely served as “a more immediate spark for the revolt that reached national dimension in June, which embraced [...] [their] demands and expanded on it” (PERSEGUIÇÃO..., 2013).

Going beyond the struggle for transportation, the explicit protest was made evident against the distortions that have been noted due to the organization of the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in 2014. Watchwords were explicit in protests. But, since it coincided with the FIFA Confederations Cup, there were protests specifically against FIFA in front of the soccer stadiums, as in Salvador (Arena Fonte Nova), in Belo Horizonte (Mineirão), Rio de Janeiro (Maracanã) and in Brasília (Mané Garrincha), harshly reprimanded by the police and exhaustively shown on TV.

The protests relating to the World Cup were not happenstance, there is a social movement organized in the form of committees in the 12 cities in which 2014 World Cup games will take place. These committees – composed by members of the homeless,

¹⁸ Information broadcast by the Jornal Nacional of TV Globo that day.

black, women, children, free fare, Catholic church movements, among others, are working on the awareness and mobilization of populations affected by the great events to guarantee the constitutional rights that are threatened due to the sporting mega-events taking place around the country, as well as the actions of politicians with public authorities and other instances. The problems go from breaking laws, removal of populations from their place of living, changes in school calendars, all the way to demanded public investment for the demolition and construction of buildings according to FIFA demands, among others. There was the formation, among other things, of the *Articulação dos Comitês Populares da Copa* (*Articulation of the People's Committees for the World Cup*, ANCOP) which articulates and represents the committees of relations with instances of power, as well as with the United Nations (UN), which even sent a mission to analyze complaints about problems mentioned above. The committees have existed for some years. The first to be formed was the one from Rio de Janeiro in 2007, and the ones from Curitiba, Porto Alegre and Fortaleza were created in 2010¹⁹, with the remaining ones following suit.

One should note that the fact that Brazil has a praxis history of social movements of the people, with activists helping compose great public protests, which can be observed by the level and quality of certain demands like those expressed in watchwords indicated. The kinds of movements highlighted in the beginning of this article, as well as hundreds of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other types of organizations from the Third Sector (sometimes with the help of public authorities), the Catholic Church, sectors of universities etc. are examples of these forms of social organization that make the difference in the context of the great contradictions that affect the country. In the end, there are thousands of initiatives (community movements, women's movements, ecologic movement, black movement, hip-hop, movements displaced by dams, by land, by housing, by health, education, by public transportation, against violence etc.) led by people that come together to face the concrete problems in the city or in the country and, as such, develop a level of

¹⁹ See <http://www.portalpopulardacopa.org.br>

conscience capable of sensitizing themselves by the participation in a social movement of political persuasion. The hypothesis here is that the social strength show in the June 2013 has much to do with the process of awareness that has existed for decades in Brazilian society. However, it should be recognized that the protests united a variety of people, beyond militants and those with left-wing tendencies, as we noted before.

In other words, many phrases expressed during the protests indicate the political meaning of the movement and the involvement of protestors in organization and social movements, since they show messages that have been shown by them for a long time.



Photo:Fábio Motta/Estadão – 06.17.2013

Source:<http://www.dp6.com.br/protestos-e-manifestacoes-redes-sociais-x-midias-tradicionais/>

Manuel Castells (2012) has also observed that networks are not limited to virtual ones, by analyzing the protests in Europe and other countries. He (2012, p.212-213), mentions that

the use of Internet and mobile communication networks is essential, but the forms of network connection is multimodal. This connection includes online and offline social networks as well as pre-existing social networks as well as others formed during the acts of the movement. The networks are within the movement, with other movements of world, in the blogosphere, in communication vehicles and in society in general.

The recognition of the importance and participation in networks of personal attendance social movement networks in protests and demands of this time in Brazil does not mean that we do not recognize the contribution of virtual networks (Facebook, Twitter etc.) for the public protests in Brazil. What we emphasize is that the movement did not start on the Internet, in the Brazilian case, despite it being fundamental for the debate and the mobilization that made possible the connected actions which culminated in the presence of thousands of people on the streets in several cities.

On the other hand, one should recognize that there isn't a single standard that explains all protests that have shaken the world in the last few years. In Egypt, in Tunisia and in Arab countries, according to Castells (2012, p.108), most of the revolts "started with organization, debate and recruitment for protests on the Internet, and continued and formed itself in urban space. The Internet networks offered, thus, an autonomous space in which appeared some movements with distinct forms and results, depending on its social context". In Mexico, the *Yo Soy 132* movement (GALINDO CÁCERES; GONZÁLEZ-ACOSTA, 2013), starting from a motive that happened in the space of a university, as we demonstrated, has articulated through the Internet, despite not foregoing the personal attendance space for its continuity.

Retaking the urban space

Another issue that deserves attention is the fact that great protests only materialize in the urban space. "Articulations seem to start in social networks of the Internet, *converting themselves in movements when occupying the urban space*. Be it

through the permanent [prolonged] occupation of public spaces or by continuing protests” (CASTELLS, 2012, p.212). Castells (2012, p.213) also reinforces the idea that the movement “is always made through interacting between the space of flux of the Internet and the wireless communication networks, the spaces of places occupied and symbolic buildings, objective of the protests”. That means that the cyberspace plus urban space create, according to the author (2012, p.213), a third space: the “space of autonomy, the new spatial form of the networks social movements”. This situation is more obvious in countries with totalitarian political regimes.

However, in our view, they aren’t untouchable spaces. Conventional media, while extracting views from them, penetrates with its own views, since it forms opinions in the whole of society. Not all of those who participated in the protests are in virtual networks, even more so because the level of access to the Internet by Brazilians still isn’t universal. Therefore, the coverage of events by the media is also a factor of mobilization (and de-mobilization) because there are always shared identities. The emphasis in coverage that judge and disqualify protests have its flipside, that of adhering to conservative segments that approve of that, be it part of the populace or the police itself, to justify the aggressions, in general violent and indiscriminate.

In the midst of the media “war”, the great vehicles do not operate by themselves, despite the power of influence and reach they have. More than ever, personal media (cellphones, smartphones and iPhones) and the cameras of protestors of alternative media participated in the spread of information, posting in photos, videos and texts in blogs, sites, virtual networks, YouTube etc. Each person with a connected phone can record, interpret and spread, even in real-time, what happened in the public space. This counter-information is fundamental in the process of mobilization and awareness of the population. It all indicates that these channels were widely used to post and access information. Anna Carolina Rapp and Camilo Rocha (2013, p.A19) show that monitoring by Scup revealed that “publications regarding the protests impacted more than 136 million people in social networks. Between June 13 and 21 [of 2013], there were more than 2 million mentions on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google. [...]”,

with monitoring realized with keywords like the hashtags #passelivre, #vemprarua and #ogiganteacordou. However, that is data implied also in the reproduction of media discourse and by friends, as well as possibly reproduced by viral effect.

3. Community communication and alternative media

These forms of communication germinate in the context of the people's movement or in collectives involved in the dynamics of transformation of societies, which justifies their inclusion in this article, even if in passing. They re-elaborate themselves in the historical process, that is, the social movements and communities incorporate information technology and communication of its time. They go from personal attendance to the virtual world, of community movement of neighborhoods to the virtual communities of their choosing, from the speaker to the webradio, from street TV to community TV on Cable, from the printed newspaper to the collaborative platform of the Internet... there is a continued effort of incorporating what is new, sometimes slow-paced, but that little by little also subscribes to the blogosphere and there position themselves through blogs, sites, virtual networks, television, videos, platforms etc. However, traditional forms of communication persist, given the diversity that characterizes Brazil. Sometimes it is still face-to-face communication, speakers, community radio that "better speak" for some segments of the population.

There is also a multiplicity of experiences of such communication, which have, therefore different features, whose appropriations of technologies are made with diverse goals. But what is popular, communitarian, alternative as expressions of another communication are also imprecise and controversial terms, in which meaning we won't tackle in this article, but that have proximity in its roots, despite of distinct characteristics.

In general terms, community communication is the one elaborated on the scope of communities, representing the exercise of freedom of expression and popular participation through their own channels, with the intent of spreading content that is

organic to reality itself, and as a manner of promoting informal education and community mobilization. As to the alternative press, I reinforce only that it has been recreated in the last few decades. Its historical role in the initial years of the military regime in Brazil is well known, although it disappears in that mode (combative against dictatorship and the economic model etc.). With the passing of time it reinvents itself, changes its combative character, but continues characterizing itself as independent of governments and companies and not aligning itself to the modes of operation of mass media, in its market logic and as bureaucratic system. It also maintains its non-conformist character to ideological and political interests of dominating classes. It seems to not want to overthrow governments, but to exercise its freedom of expression in favor of the public interest. Some media “specialize” themselves and seek to fuel the debate in certain subject or region, be it the environment, the Amazon issue, problems of homeless people, questions relating to Latin America, political, economic and social themes, and so on. It is the case of vehicles such as *Jornal Pessoal*, *Adital – Notícias da América Latina e Caribe*, *Revista Boca de Rua*, *O Treicheiro*, *Revista Viração*, *Voz da Periferia*, *Agência Brasil de Fato* and so many others.

Recently, when the protests erupted in June and July 2013 in Brazil, beyond the independent networks of networks of communication that formed themselves thanks to connected cellphones, an alternative media vehicle, *Mídia Ninja*, gained the spotlight do to its role during protests. By recording and transmitting “live” sound and image of happenings, it started to be regarded as a trusted channel of information capable of passing information directly from the spot, repeatedly contradicting the version aired by conventional media or bringing up facts that were ignored. It even served as a source for the latter, not only due to the complications of penetrating within the protests (which weren’t well accepted during the process²⁰), but also due to the lack of altering traditional standards of journalistic coverage. For example, Rapp e Rocha (2013, p.A19), show that on June 18th it only covered the confrontation between protesters and

²⁰ A truck from Record Channel was burned. There was also a protest against RedeGlobo, which, by the way, was recorded by *Mídia Ninja*. See http://pt.twitcasting.tv/midianinja_sp

the Shock Troop on Rua Augusta in São Paulo, with images from an iPhone. The “exclusivity was reflected in access, which amounted to 180 thousand”²¹, say the authors.

The acronym Mídia Ninja means “Independent Narratives, Journalism and Action”. It is the communication branch of Fora do Eixo²², a self-organized collective from cultural producers that promote indie music, organize festivals etc. and manages to grow due to cultural promotion, outside of the logic and ties of the traditional capitalist market. Mídia Ninja has always followed the events of the Collective itself, as well as other happenings that are related to it (court coverage etc.). But it skyrocketed in Brazil due to its actions during the protests in June broadcasting in real-time. This act during the above-mentioned protests resulted in an interview on the Roda Viva show on TV Cultura²³, favorable and unfavorable coverage – the moral almost “lynching” of the collective and its leadership, especially Pablo Capilé, its creator – by the conventional media²⁴.

According to the collective, in the interview on Roda Viva, they said they do “independent journalism”, “post-industrial journalism” because it is free of the conditioning of the companies and within the logic that the Internet represents: agility, immediacy and freedom.

Final thoughts

²¹ Mídia Ninja makes its transmissions available at www.posttv.org or <http://canalposttv.blogspot.com.br>

²² See <http://foradoeixo.org.br/>

²³ See: <http://tvcultura.cmais.com.br/rodaviva/midia-ninja>

²⁴ For Costa (2013), what happened to Fora do Eixo was “na organized action, in which agents of traditional media, supported by intellectuals not very familiarized with the digital environment, produced the moral lynching of Capilé and For a do Eixo. But everything points out that the main target isn’t the collective of cultural producers: the objective is questioning the experience derived of such initiative, the group called Mídia Ninja. What is at stake is classic journalism, which became hostage of the communication industry, the mediactivism of networks. It is not at stake the unlike hypothesis that mediactivism could replace traditional journalism, but, as in the cultural area of non-institutional collectives, to fight successfully for public money with great producers”.

Finally, all these protests in Brazil express the search for the expansion of citizenship. Society is interested in interfering, participating. It was spelled out in a watchword, but also in a cry for change. Ethics are demanded in politics. A message was sent to governing powers (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary), but also to mass media, which some refer to it as the fourth power, but in reality is just an extension of economic power, which does the suit of political and ideological. It knows how to live with the managers of the Executive even when they aren't completely sympathetic, because it is ultimately interested in the control of the state's power.

The process, in its whole, made it evident that the universe of communication is bigger than that of the great media. There is another communication in progress that has been making a difference for years, but that now gains new forms of expression and the capacity of democratizing content through empowerment of technologies that facilitate connections and the formation of new networks, the virtual ones, though it ignores other ones, the basic and the socio-political, and the face-to-face.

It's about a unique time for Brazilian society that seems to indicate to the university the necessity of rethinking, leaving its comfort zone of the framing to the interests of the market, be it from the media or the industry, and realizing that its role is to contribute to all of society, a society that clamors for change.

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