

Preface

Media, Civic Participation, Social Movements, Democracy and Populism

Different communication patterns (online and offline) may influence individuals to have specific behaviours concerning civic participation and adherence to social movements of different ideological frameworks and scopes.

As publics have the chance to channel their ideas through Internet behaviours, literature often identifies Internet as a public space that promotes collective action, and acknowledges that technology is shaping the structure and identity of social movements and ideological groups.

The analysis of direct and indirect influences of media practices on civic engagement must consider that democracy is not a static concept and that such engagement is also influenced by political institutions.

The media amplifies political discourses and this mediation socially constructs events. The ‘mediated engagement’ of citizens may enhance either civic involvement or political manipulation.

In this special issue of *Interações* we propose a reflection on Media, Civic Participation, Social Movements, Democracy and Populism. The articles in the volume present results of empirical research and/or theoretical reflection on social movements and media counter-narratives, alternative civic and media participation, media representations of activism, hegemonic discourses and narratives of a dominant ideology in the media, new forms of civic involvement and political perspective and public policies and their social impacts, among others.

The volume opens with an article by Ana Suzina on media practices during the 2013 protests in Brazil. The paper focuses on the dynamics of the 2013 manifestations, taking them as a microcosm representative of an emerging mediated culture, revealing the strongly asymmetrical nature of the Brazilian media sphere. Through the qualitative-quantitative content analysis of a case and using qualitative inter-

views with activists, the purpose of this article is to listen to the voice of the media and the actors (activists and alternative media journalists). The analysis revealed two pivotal moments of media coverage: the first is characterized by a negative approach, where demonstrators were portrayed as vandals and police repression justified; the second moment reveals predominantly neutral and positive journalistic pieces, reporting the protests in more detail and characterizing the demonstrators as citizens in protest for their rights. Ana Suzina concludes that the use of alternative communication platforms, especially social networks, was central to denouncing violence and revealing the bias of traditional media coverage. The appropriation of the digital platforms consolidated as a way to develop and make visible the alternative narratives.

Naide Muller discusses the representation of the concept of activism in public service channels in Portugal in the year 2017. Based on the analysis of news content in the information of TV channels RTP1 and RTP2, the author verified that the subjects covered and the most representative causes are related to political issues and human rights. The article also allows concluding that “the information programs of RTP1 and RTP2 do not highlight the action of the activist groups that have practised violent acts, nor do they show evidence of tabloid audiovisual coverage. On the other hand, concrete actions are favoured on the ground, whose spokespersons are ordinary citizens at the micro level”.

Anastasiya Jurkevits’ article focuses on the media narratives of the official “active longevity” discourse in Belarus in the period 2017-2018, to explore the meanings they convey in society, and what the image of the social reality they represent and construct. The analysis concludes that there is an official narrative propagated by the media that associates “active longevity” with labour productivity and utility for society. The author points out that this narrative aims to deconstruct the popular perspectives on old age, ignoring the need for the humanization of the older people and privileging an economic paradigm.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) in the daily social life of the elderly are worked in the article by José Mendes. Through a review of empirical studies, the author reflects on the phenomenon of ageing in contemporary societies and ICT as an agent facilitating daily life of older citizens. The article points out that “research on the evaluation of ICT by older people focuses more on the advantages of care and functional capacities, with more neglected aspects such as the potential of the use of ICT in everyday life of the elderly person (i.e., participation civic)”.

Preface

The article by Ignazio Tejero studies the social impact of cannabis legalization policy in Uruguay. A survey applied to inhabitants of four Uruguayan municipalities bordering Brazil reveals that one-third of the respondents were or are cannabis users through mainly informal channels. Most respondents in this study never used cannabis (68.1%), do not know the goals of the cannabis legalization law (77.4%), and only 20% believe it is a way to combat drug trafficking. The article also analysis effects and perceptions of the consumption, at several levels, always in connection with the problematic of its legalisation.

The volume ends with two essays. Henrique Vicente writes the first, entitled “Psychoanalysis and Life: Mythology and Cinema” which was the text of the inaugural speech given on November 21, 2018, at the Solemn Ceremony of Opening of the Academic Year at Instituto Superior Miguel Torga. The author develops a psychoanalytic analysis of two contemporary cinematographic productions of science fiction: the trilogies of “Star Wars” and “Back to the Future”. Henrique Vicente concludes that “cinematographic art, as a contemporary artistic language, ‘reinvents’ the myth into archetypal fiction. Psychoanalytic science provides the tools for analysing the re-updating of the mythological field in cinema, and the myth is ‘rediscovered’”.

From a marketing approach, in the second essay Gupta, Hassan, Agarwal and Bhasin equate communication strategies on vaccination campaigns, taking into account the social inclusion of the most vulnerable, hard to reach and poor. The authors propose a model called “Vaccination Communication Model” which aims to provide an approach to an immunization communication strategy that can be replicated in developing countries, giving individuals and communities capacities so that they can be trained as “enablers”.

Inês Amaral
Maria João Barata
Vasco Almeida