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DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN CONNECTED ECONOMIES:
DISCOURSE, CONTROL, CONSUMPTION AND COLLABORATION

PLATAFORMAS DIGITAIS NA ECONOMIA CONECTADA:
DISCURSO, CONTROLO, CONSUMO E COLABORAÇÃO

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Contents | *Sumário*

Varia | *Varia* 249

Book Reviews | *Leituras* 309

Comunicação e Sociedade, vol. 39, 2021, pp. 7-14
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Digital Platforms in Connected Economy: Discourse, Control, Consumption, and Collaboration. Introductory Note

Plataformas Digitais na Economia Conectada: Discurso, Controlo, Consumo e Colaboração. Nota Introdutória

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Volume 39 of *Comunicação e Sociedade* is dedicated to a series of studies from different approaches on the use of digital platforms. These platforms, on the one hand, are interpreted as an important means of consumption and arena for the emergence of collaborative social practices. On the other hand, they are also analysed as new mechanisms for surveillance and the production of performative discourses in an increasingly connected economy.

The backdrop of the crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic has led to the use of platforms of the so-called "sharing economy" for different places. Tourism-related services and workers have experienced major financial losses, while transport and delivery platforms have risen to unprecedented prominence.

Mandatory social isolation and sanitary security measures for consumption and movement of goods have positioned digital apps that manage such services as the main adjunct for some sectors of economy, such as catering and food delivery (Buheji, 2020). They have also attracted a large number of companies, consumers and especially workers who have seen digital platforms as an opportunity to overcome the economic recession and the lack of opportunities in the conventional labour market in countries like Portugal and Brazil. This unexpected growth also exposed the labour crisis and the ethical dilemmas that the dynamics of this sharing economy were trying to hide (Chen et al., 2021).

The pandemic was yet another proof of how much the internet and its different platforms have become fundamental elements of various dimensions of our lives, both as a tool for work and income, and in a more social dimension as a meeting place, a consumption space and a communication tool. We can dare to say that never before have we experienced such an intense use of digital media as we do today as a result of the various restrictions we have been subjected to (Ricarte, 2020). This is for those of us having to stay home due to lockdowns, and for those of us having to provide essential services such as medics, caregivers, and transport workers as well. For both groups, digital platforms have become indispensable in unprecedented ways, both at home and the world over.

Through the pandemic we learn how this digital dependency backdrop can still be transformed into a scenario of vigilance and risky behaviour. Almost naturally, we bring to these spaces not only a pressing need to consume and work, but also the good and the bad in us. As such, the internet has increasingly become not a reflection of our offline life, but a continuity of life itself. As Hossain (2020) has pointed out, this intense digital way of life has also produced direct effects on the mental health of many people who relied on the sharing economy digital platforms as their main source of income.

To understand aspects of the uses we make of the multiple digital platforms that constitute the internet, this volume presents important studies that seek to understand the various interfaces of this economy and its impacts. These range from the repercussions in the field of communication, to forms of consumption, social discrimination, labour relations and the dangers of the increasingly intense commodification of our affections through big data (Saturnino, 2020).

The contributions in this volume illustrate how strongly digital media have transformed the economy and the world of work. They demonstrate how these transformations have directly affected our lifestyles and how we can envision regulatory instruments for these sectors to ensure a more balanced and sustainable future in the face of these new realities.

The first four articles in this volume focus on the use of transport and delivery apps in Brazil and Portugal from different perspectives. In the first article, Rafael Grohmann, Cláudia Nonato, Ana Flávia Marques and Camila Acosta Camargo describe, in "Media Strategies of Labor Platforms: Circulation of Meanings in Social Media of Companies in Brazil", how digital transport and delivery platforms use their own ethics through communication to try to control the meanings of the service they offer, thus undermining historical class struggles. Drawing on the pandemic context, the authors take the case of the strike of workers using transport and delivery apps to describe the conflicts between the interests of large companies and the needs of these workers.

Within the same context, but with an approach focused on the organizational strategies adopted by sharing economy companies in light of the pandemic, the article "Sharing Economy and Organizational Communication Practices in Times of Covid-19: Social Brands in Brazil and Portugal", by João Francisco Raposo and Carolina Frazon Terra helps us understand how these companies use the social brand concept to establish what they call a "brand activism". In such a relationship, social responsibility and good communication practices become key elements for companies seeking to maintain a positive reputation among their consumers. The authors also outline the challenges these brands face in a social scenario where companies are increasingly being asked to take ethical and political positions on current issues.

In the third article the authors Victor Piaia, Eurico Matos, Sabrina Almeida, Dalby Dienstbach and Polyana Barboza write, in the text the "'Breque dos Apps': A Temporal Analysis of Communities and Influencers in Online Public Debate on Twitter", about the collective action of protests of workers using delivery apps in Brazil held against the regime and working conditions during the pandemic period. By analysing the intense debate on Twitter about the precarious working conditions through apps like iFood, Rappi, Uber Eats and Loggi, the article describes how social mobilisation in digital environments takes effect when the interactions between groups involved in a cause are mediated by social groups and digital influencers.

Still on transport platform studies, Naiara Evangelo and Fátima Cristina Regis Martins de Oliveira, analyse, in "The Black Social Ranking Experience at Uber: A Racialized Reflection on Contemporary Surveillance", the impacts of worker rankings and their relation to racial issues. The authors suggest an amplified look at how Uber operates with regard to building a reputation for drivers and passengers, and how this system has become a tool for constant surveillance.

In "Sentiment Analysis: From Psychometric to Psychopolitics", Felipe Melhado and Jean-Martin Rabot examine the topic of the commodification of affections through digital platforms. From studies on the creation of big data and its relationship with contemporary surveillance, they describe how these strategies serve as a psychopolitical instrument for monitoring and producing affect as a form of subjective control.

From an international perspective, authors María Soledad Segura and Ana Bizberge discuss, in "Digital Rights During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Latin America", how the government, the private sector and civil society in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico responded to the governance challenges of new communication technologies during the pandemic and how their responses impacted on human rights regarding freedom of expression, access and privacy.

In the field of consumer studies, the volume includes two articles addressing issues related to consumption practices through digital platforms in Spain and Cuba. The paper "YouTube Preferences and Practices of Preadolescents: Findings From a Study Carried Out in Catalonia", authored by Maddalena Fedele, Sue Aran-Ramspott and Jaume Suau, reveals how the most famous video platform on the internet plays a pivotal role in the media lives of Spanish teenagers and pre-teens, becoming one of the main sources of entertainment consumption for this group of people.

Still on consumption practices, "*Paquetes* as Improvised Media: Transnationalism and Cultural Consumption in Havana-Miami Context", written by Thiago Soares and Sofia Zanforlin, explores the alternative means of access to information assets in a country where the capitalist forms of consumption are still contradictory. From an ethnographically inspired study, the authors disclose how Cuban consumers devise strategies for consuming US culture not marketed in Cuba through alternative distribution of content packages using online and offline networks.

These alternative procedures on the internet are also the subject of the article "Crowdfunding Platforms in the Political Economy of Alternative Media" by Lina Moscoso Teixeira and Ana Jorge, in which they analyse how alternative media outlets in Portugal, Spain and Brazil articulate to maintain their independent journalism through crowdfunding. The authors describe how the political economy of these media base their online presence strategies on social networks to increase the engagement of the audience not only as readers but also as funders.

The article that follows provides an interesting reflection on open access to scientific production. Tiago Lima Quintanilha and Natalia Trishchenko in their article "Open Access and Scientific Knowledge: Between the Public Interest and the Business Model. A Literature Review", consider the polarities that surface from the connection between open access and scientific knowledge. They highlight, for example, how this initiative can become a powerful catalyst for disseminating knowledge, making it not only more visible but also more accessible if we consider how this knowledge could be transferred from digital platforms. However, the authors do not overlook the negative aspects by referring to an underlying inability to tackle a parallel science economy, that is, one that uses open access and the principles of academic production to introduce capitalist dynamics by imposing fees for the publication of scientific results. According to Tiago Lima Quintanilha and Natalia Trishchenko, this approach to science management goes against the principles of open knowledge and thus favours the rise of opportunity inequalities within the scientific community.

Closing the theme in this volume, "Building Trust in Digital Platforms for Sharing Collaborative Lifestyles in Sustainable Contexts", by Raissa Karen Leitinho Sales, Ana Carla Amaro and Vania Baldi explores a set of guidelines from digital platforms that promote experiences in education projects in rural areas of Portugal. The authors seek to understand how these non-profit associations elaborate discursive strategies in sustainable contexts to promote trust building and reciprocity among their users. They conclude that such guidelines provide an ethics manual for platforms aiming to produce a digital script for best practices in lifestyle sharing among users.

In the "Varia" section, the volume also includes three texts that, while unrelated to the central theme, focus on the current state of journalism in the light of the pandemic. The authors of these three contributions provide from different perspectives the results of a study conducted in May and June 2020, which surveyed 890 journalists, in an attempt to understand the effects of the first state of emergency in journalism in Portugal during the pandemic crisis.

The first "Journalism in the Context of a Sanitary Crisis: Representations of the Job and Journalists' Expectations", by Carlos Camponez and Madalena Oliveira, describes how the work of journalists has been affected over time up to an unexpected scenario provoked by the pandemic. The text focuses on analysing the expectations of journalism professionals compared to the collective imaginary about the profession and the shock of such workers before the labour difficulties in the sector, namely with regard to the precarization of work. Camponez and Oliveira describe how the dissatisfaction with the profession was aggravated by the covid-19 pandemic and outline the reasons that still keep many professionals in the industry clinging to a certain idea of professional fulfilment.

"Journalism in State of Emergency: An Analysis of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemics on Journalists' Employment Relationships", by José Luís Garcia, José Nuno Matos and Pedro Alcântara da Silva, explains how the socio-professional condition of journalists has undergone changes influenced by the liberalisation and digitalisation of the activity. The authors analyse some implications of the policies on journalistic work before and during the pandemic to determine whether this new reality reflects a reversal of the precarization trend or, on the contrary, its acceleration.

Still on the subject, João Miranda, Joaquim Fidalgo and Paulo Martins propose the "Journalism in Time of Pandemic: New Professional Routines, New Ethical Challenges", where they map the effects of the pandemic on the practices and routines of communication professionals. The authors point out, for example, the existence, within journalistic practices, of some marks of depersonalisation of the activity due to the constraints of journalists' social isolation. These circumstances lead to deontological dilemmas that highlight the relationship between journalistic practice in the pandemic and the rigour related to the processes of investigating the news.

Finally, the volume provides two reviews: that of the book *Advanced Introduction to Platform Economics* by Elsa Costa e Silva and that of the book *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet* by Jack Linchuan Qiu.

Be they institutionalised news organisations or social media platforms, be they digital economies for light-hearted entertainment, mundane everyday livelihood activities, or collective struggles for dignity and democracy — the issues at stake in this volume of *Comunicação e Sociedade* are important, dynamic, and multifaceted. Yet, in one way or another, they all deal with the fundamental discourses, formal or informal, that undergird today's digital platforms, which must be exposed and scrutinised. They all document and question the mechanisms of control, for good or for bad, that limit agentic practices through not only computer codes but also legal codes and social norms. Digital platform economies are, undoubtedly, tools of late capitalism designed to reshape citizens into little more than atomised consumers, a process now accelerated by the covid-19 pandemic.

However, as shown by articles curated here, the unfolding public health crisis — now triggering a devastating cascade of economic, political, social, and cultural crises worldwide — is also an opportunity for progressive innovations and grassroots collaboration, both within the ivory tower and beyond. After all, platform economies are a connected economy that can, and should, be reformed through the renewal of our collaboration models and collective spirit. It is along this line of "pessimism of the intellect" and "optimism of the will" that we put together this volume in the hope for more collaboration in academic solidarity economies for better platforms in a better world.

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Thematic articles | *Artigos temáticos*

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Media Strategies of Labor Platforms: Circulation of Meanings in Social Media of Companies in Brazil

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze how ride-hailing and delivery platforms in Brazil produce their ethos on social media in the context of the first national strike of workers in the pandemic. We argue, based on the notion of circulation of meanings, how the construction of the platform's ethos is a sign element of class struggles, and a dimension of the role of communication in the platformization of labor. We conducted a content analysis on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) from two delivery (iFood and Rappi) and two ride-hailing platforms (Uber and 99), the largest of the country. The categories are: "pandemic and health" (contextual dimension in relation to the pandemic); "citizenship and diversity" (recurrent dimension in the discourse of platforms, in line with the literature in the area), "relations with brands and influencers" (visibility labor of the platforms with specific stakeholders) and "workers' representations" (as a central element of the sign dimension of the class struggles). In general, the platforms' media strategies, focused on consumers, present meanings of charity, philanthropy, citizenship and diversity, stating they are open to the demands of workers. The workers' demands are reframed from the perspective of sacrificial citizenship, self-help, entrepreneurship and resilience. The results show how the platforms' media strategies on social media play a central role in class contradictions.

Keywords

Brazil, circulation of meanings, communication, platform labor

As Estratégias de Comunicação das Plataformas de Trabalho: Circulação de Sentidos nas Mídias Sociais das Empresas no Brasil

Resumo

Este artigo tem o objetivo de analisar como as plataformas de entrega e transporte no Brasil construíram seu *ethos* nas mídias sociais, no contexto da primeira greve dos trabalhadores dessas empresas, dentro do cenário da pandemia de coronavírus. Argumentamos, a partir da noção de circulação de sentidos, como a construção do *ethos* das plataformas é um elemento sígnico da luta de classes e uma dimensão do papel da comunicação na plataformização do trabalho. Conduzimos análise do conteúdo veiculado em mídias sociais (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter e YouTube) de duas plataformas de entrega (iFood e Rappi) e duas de transporte (Uber e 99), as principais do país. As categorias de análise são: "pandemia e saúde" (dimensão contextual em relação à crise sanitária); "cidadania e diversidade" (dimensão recorrente no discurso produzido pelas plataformas, em linha com a literatura da área), "relações com marcas e influenciadores" (trabalho de visibilidade das plataformas com públicos interessados específicos) e "representações dos trabalhadores" (como elemento central da dimensão sígnica da luta de classes). Em linhas gerais, as estratégias de comunicação das plataformas, focadas nos consumidores, apresentam sentidos de caridade, filantropia, cidadania e diversidade, dizendo-se abertas às demandas dos trabalhadores. As reivindicações dos trabalhadores são ressignificadas a partir de um olhar de cidadania sacrificial, autoajuda, empreendedorismo e superação. Os resultados mostram como a comunicação das plataformas nas mídias sociais jogam um papel central nas contradições de classes.

Palavras-chave

Brasil, circulação de sentidos, comunicação, trabalho em plataformas

Introduction

Research on platform labor has emerged in recent years (Casilli, 2019; van Doorn, 2017). However, communication is still an underrepresented element in the area. On the one hand, there are studies, such as Mosco (2009) and Figaro (2018), which point out how work and communication are interconnected, but without referring exclusively to digital platforms. On the other hand, there is research on platform labor that highlights the role of social media in the organization of workers (Cant, 2019; Lazar et al., 2020) and the rhetoric behind the so-called "sharing economy" (Codagnone et al., 2016). However, there is no systematic examination about the centrality of communication for platform labor.

We argue that communication plays a central role in the platformization of labor (Casilli & Posada, 2019), as a way of organizing — in the sense of Sodré (2019) — both for the workers' control, surveillance and management, and for the organization of workers and construction of worker-owned platforms. Communication works across the entire circuit of platform labor (Qiu et al., 2014) from their infrastructures and materialities to consumption practices.

Platforms, in addition to digital infrastructures supplied by data and automated by algorithms (Srnicek, 2016; van Dijck et al., 2018), act as means of production and communication (Williams, 2005), which engender ways of work and interaction. Their materialities provide the technical bases for the organization of work (Plantin et al., 2018; Woodcock & Graham, 2019) and are designed for some interactions to the detriment of others (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Wajcman 2019). Based on their affordances, there are politics around digital platforms to dismantle communication between workers and facilitate the worker-consumer relationship (Popescu et al., 2018; Wood & Monahan, 2019).

The mechanisms of workers' surveillance, data collection and extraction (Couldry & Mejias, 2019), as well as algorithmic management, operate not only within the platforms but also through processes of consumption itself (as a communication process), either as "customer" — nomenclature commonly used by platforms — or "worker". That is, data policies and algorithmic mediations operate from communication processes.

Communication is also central to the organization of platform workers, whether in unions and associations, in emerging collectivities and solidarities or in the construction of worker-owned platforms (Scholz, 2016; Soriano & Cabañes, 2020; Wood et al., 2018), as elements of the circulation of workers' struggles (Dyer-Witheford et al., 2019; Englert et al., 2020). This shows that workers do not passively accept the production and communication contexts of the platforms but create strategies and tactics for their everyday work (Cant, 2019; Sun, 2019).

Thus, we can summarize the place of communication at platform labor from the following vantage points: (a) designs and materialities of the platforms; (b) work organization and management; (c) organization of workers, as formal and informal spaces; (d) data and algorithm policies; (e) consumption of platforms; and (f) platforms' media strategies.

Based on these elements, this article focuses on the media strategies of platforms as one of the dimensions of the role of communication in platform labor. The background is that there is a dispute over control of the meanings about what the platforms mean — including work and workers. This struggle for meanings occurs within the scope of communication throughout the circuit of labor (Qiu at al., 2014), but finds, in the platforms' discourses, a privileged place for analysis.

Thus, the article highlights the notion of "circulation of meanings" in Silverstone (1999) to investigate, in a specific way, how platforms build communication and media (therefore social and discursive) worlds about themselves. The ethos (Maingueneau, 2001) is an expression of this circulation of meanings. For example, platforms use strategies such as advertising and public relations campaigns to circulate brand meanings across different social fields. Moreover, they intend to control the meanings of the public debate regarding labor platforms. Their discourses circulate with some values and meanings to the detriment of others, as symbolic expressions of class struggles (Grohmann, 2018). This theoretical framework allows us to understand the ideological clashes and disputes around the meanings (Baccega, 1995; Voloshinov, 1973) built in the world of work (Figaro, 2018), as opposed to theoretical perspectives that start from the place of the company or the brand as neutral.

In addition, the circulation of meanings is the basis of economic support for these platforms. In other words, signs circulate as a form of capital (Goux, 1973; Marazzi, 2011; Rossi-Landi, 1973). Thus, the circulation of discourses is an indication of the role of communication in financialization (Sodré, 2019) and in the mechanisms of rentism (Sadowski, 2020).

So, media strategies of the platforms work as forms of justification, sedimentation and crystallization of positive meanings of the platforms, building imaginaries in line with a neoliberal and entrepreneurial rationality (Dardot & Laval, 2013) and with the Silicon Valley ideology (Liu, 2020; Schradie, 2015). Thus, they intend to persuade workers and consumers that they are innovative, disruptive and socially responsible companies. Expressions such as "gig economy" and "sharing economy" are also part of this circulation of meanings and are traces of a corporate platform capitalism (Frenken & Schor, 2017; Pasquale, 2016; Scholz, 2016; Srnicek, 2016). These dominant narratives also claim that platforms have no ties to workers and that they are only mediators who help workers — according to the literature on the issue (Dubal, 2019; Gibbings & Taylor, 2019; Karatzogianni & Matthews, 2020; Rosenblat, 2018). The literature on media strategies of platforms in the so-called "global south", especially Latin America, is still underrepresented. This does not mean, however, that these strategies are unique, as they are connected to a geopolitics of platforms (Graham & Anwar, 2019) and subsumed in the Silicon Valley ideology, which presents colonial features (Atanasoski & Vora, 2019; Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Liu, 2020).

This article aims to analyze how delivery and ride-hailing platforms in Brazil have built their ethos on social media, as media strategies, in the context of the first Brazilian strike of the workers within the scenario of the pandemic. The construction of the platform's ethos — and their ways of producing and circulating meanings — is a symbolic element of class struggle and, at the same time, a dimension of the role of communication in the platform labor (Grohmann, 2018; Silverstone, 1999).

We conducted a content analysis on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) — as a privileged locus of circulation of meanings — from two delivery (iFood and Rappi) and two ride-hailing platforms (Uber and 99), the main ones in Brazil. Our hypothesis considered that the communication presented by these companies prioritizes broader sectors of society (especially consumers), whereas the dialogue between platforms and their workers is rarefied, except to posit the value of the platform itself.

The analytical categories are: "pandemic and health" (contextual dimension in relation to the health crisis); "citizenship and diversity" (recurrent dimension in the discourse produced by the platforms, in line with the literature review); "relations with brands and influencers" (visibility work of the platforms with specific interested audiences); and "workers' representations" (as a central element of the sign dimension of class struggles). Platforms' media strategies, focused on consumers, present meanings of charity, philanthropy, citizenship and diversity, saying they are open to the demands of workers. The results show how the communication of platforms on social media play a central role in class contradictions as their sign dimension in the context of the platformization of labor.

Context and Methodology

The working conditions of drivers and delivery workers have similar characteristics in various parts of the world, as evidenced in the research by "Fairwork" (2019). However, countries in the global north have specificities, as they have historically had the minimum consolidation of a welfare state and regular employment (Huws, 2020). The so-called "global south" is not a deviation from the standard, but is itself what constitutes a standard and norm in global economies (Alacovska & Gill, 2019; Chen & Qiu, 2019; Graham, 2019; Sun, 2019; Wood et al., 2018). This means historically locating and contextualizing both the countries of the north and those of the south — which also have many heterogeneities among them. What the platform labor has in common in the global south are the legacy of the informal economy and the contradictions surrounding their post-colonial condition, with its revolutionary potentials and regressive pitfalls (Grohmann & Qiu, 2020).

In these terms, platform labor presents: (a) a generalization of the typical work of the peripheries of the world to the global north, with a subordination to the platform oligopolies (Abílio et al., 2020); (b) for the global south, the new is not the gig or the precarity of work, as they have historically been the norm, as a permanent way of life for the working class. The novelty is precisely the dependence on digital platforms to ensure workers' survival (Grohmann & Qiu, 2020).

Latin America also presents heterogeneities in relation to the most used platforms and regulatory issues (Cordero & Daza, 2020). Brazil is an example of this scenario of platformization of labor, presenting about 23% of the worldwide users of Uber, which arrived in the country in 2014 (Amorim & Moda, 2020). In 2019, approximately 4,000,000 Brazilians work for the main platforms in the country — Uber, 99, iFood, and Rappi (Amorim & Moda, 2020).

Delivery workers, in general, earn less than $200 a month and are typically Brazilians, blacks and young people (Aliança Bike, 2019), highlighting the intersections between class and race that are historical in the country. The pandemic has accelerated the platformization process, with increasing reliance on platforms for livelihood. In March 2020, the number of orders on food delivery platforms grew by 77% in the country, but riders are working harder and earning less, with more competition (Abílio et al., 2020). In some way, the pandemic contributed to the visibility of these workers, as they support people who are in social isolation.

In this scenario, riders and drivers are more exposed to the risks of being contaminated by covid-19. In an analysis of the policies of 123 platforms in 22 countries during the pandemic, a report from the "Fairwork" project (2020) points out a contradiction between the views of platforms and workers. Platforms say they are communicating all measures to workers, such as the distribution of personal protective equipment. However, from the viewpoint of workers, the promises did not come true. Many had to pay for personal protection products and were denied claims for sickness benefits (Howson et al., 2020). Researchers at "Fairwork" (2020) point out that, at best, platforms are slow to adopt emergency measures and, at worst, are more concerned with public relations strategies and consumers rather than workers.

In Brazil, even more precarious working conditions added to the exposure of risks and the visibility of these workers as essential workforce during the pandemic, which helped in the organization of delivery workers to mobilize two national strikes during July 2020 (1st and 25th of July). They were the biggest labor strikes in the country in the last decade, with self-organization of workers mainly by social media, in a country of continental dimensions. The main demands were increased pay, an end to unfair blockages and the scoring system, as well as adequate provision of personal protective equipment without workers having to pay for it. Riders also appealed to the solidarity of consumers, asking them not to order anything from the platforms in the days of strikes (Abílio et al., 2021).

This is the background for the analysis we conducted on media strategies of four ride-hailing and delivery platforms in Brazil. The context of a pandemic and workers' strike has placed platforms under public scrutiny when they felt compelled to intensify their media strategies, as a symbolic dimension of class struggles. According to Abílio et al. (2021), there was a change in news coverage between the first and the second strike of delivery workers. Legacy media started to use data and views of the platforms to the detriment of the workers' perspective. The context of platform labor in Brazil contradicts, on the one hand, the viewpoint of workers, according to the scenario described above, and, on the other hand, the viewpoint of platforms, which aims to control public discourse through the meanings that they circulate about themselves.

Based on this, we conducted a content analysis of communication from four platforms (Uber, 99, iFood, and Rappi) from Brazilian accounts[1] on the following social media — Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube — between June 15 and August 15, 2020, a period justified by the context of strikes and pandemics. Social media accounts were chosen because they have become spaces par excellence for visibility and circulation of meanings in the context of platformization (Leaver et al., 2020; Poell et al., 2019). That is, social media are central to the platforms' media strategies, in the sense of promoting and circulating their brands positively (Scolere et al., 2018), that is, their ethos. In addition to the specific materialities of each platform (Bucher & Helmond, 2018), we argue that ethos — and the platforms' media strategies — circulate their meanings through different social media, which are a privileged locus for the circulation of meanings. We also emphasize that the media strategies of platforms are not limited to social media and that there are other possibilities not analyzed in this research, such as journalistic pieces and official pages, for example. The corpus is introduced in Table 1.

[1] Except Uber's YouTube, whose posts are made on the company's global channel. In this case, we selected the videos in Portuguese.

Platform	Instagram	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube
Uber	Six posts About 417,000 followers	Four posts About 22,000,000 followers	60 tweets About 181,000 followers	Four videos 402,000 followers
99	16 posts About 181,000 followers	13 posts About 847,000 followers	11 tweets About 101,000 followers	Four videos
iFood	29 posts About 860,000 followers	27 posts About 1,900,000 followers	59 tweets About 270,000 followers	15 videos 504,000 followers
Rappi	Eight posts About 434,000 followers	13 posts About 976,000 followers	21 tweets About 72,000 followers	One video 32,000 followers

Table 1 *Research Corpus — Between June 15 and August 15, 2020*

At first, we observed irregularities between the different platforms and their uses of social media. Of all platforms, iFood is the one that has used social media the most. While Uber, iFood and Rappi made more posts on Twitter, 99 mainly used Instagram. This irregularity also happens temporally on each platform. iFood, for example, the biggest target of delivery strikes, intensified its publications in July, but after the first week of August, it spent weeks without any post. Rappi has not posted on August on Instagram and Uber has not updated his Facebook page since June 2020.

Of the four platforms, only Uber can be considered, from the beginning, as a global platform. Headquartered in San Francisco, it is present in 69 countries and arrived in Brazil in 2014. 99 was created in 2012 by three Brazilian entrepreneurs and, initially, intended to only mediate contact between taxi drivers and passengers. Then it became an Uber competitor. In 2018, the company was sold to the Chinese DiDi (Chen & Qiu, 2019), the world leader in the segment. In the delivery sector, iFood is a leader in Brazil, where it was founded in 2011. Currently, it has a presence in other countries in Latin America, such as Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia. Rappi was founded in 2015 in Colombia and arrived in Brazil in 2017. It promises to deliver not only food, but anything that the consumer asks for, including documents. They are the main platforms in the delivery and ride-hailing sectors in Brazil, which reveals an origin mainly in the global south, specifically in Latin America. However, this does not mean that media strategies of these platforms are very different from those based in the north, as they are shaped by colonial ideologies and linked to platforms in the United States (Atanasoski & Vora, 2019; Davis & Xiao, 2021).

Results

Media strategies of the platforms in a period are threads that present historicity, which is not a novel subject (Bakhtin, 1979). As an example, the platforms' websites — which are not in our corpus — are evidence of how the meanings of the platforms circulate, presenting themselves as citizen brands, with social responsibility and purpose. Uber (n.d.) highlights "global citizenship". 99 (n.d.), on the other hand, presents itself as a data-driven company that values diversity. Rappi claims that its "partners" work "with love" (https://www.rappi.com.br/). This attribute is also highlighted by iFood (n.d.): "passion for food and technology". In addition to these elements, corporate communication is generally focused on the consumer, for example, Rappi states "an app that is revolutionizing the way that Brazilians do their purchases" (https://www.rappi.com.br/).

Specifically, the corpus of the research reveals that the meanings of the platforms circulate through the different media simultaneously. We chose four categories from the corpus, with the circulation of meanings of platforms on social media as a backdrop. The first category — "health and pandemic" — is contextual and refers to the context of the global health crisis. The second — "citizenship and diversity" — is at the center of corporate strategies: the values of citizenship and diversity, as discursive elements of platforms with social purpose and for the common good, in line with research that analyzes narratives and entrepreneurial rationality (Casaqui & Riegel, 2016).

The last two categories involve relationships and representations with specific stakeholders. On the one hand, influencers and other brands help to circulate the values of the platforms and to circulate meanings of credibility, as a visibility work (Abidin, 2016). On the other hand, workers' representations on the platforms are part of the significant dimension of class struggles, with regimes of visibility and invisibility (Hall, 1997), in order to gain the adhesion of workers and public opinion.

Health and Pandemic

In the first category, Uber adopted the slogan "no mask, no ride". This campaign can be found similarly in other countries, with the same text in English. In Brazil, specifically, the platform incorporated the maxim "Uber security standard" to encourage the association of an imaginary that assumes the "Uber standard" as a synonym for quality standard. It extends this understanding to the security and protection that the company offers in the context of a pandemic. In a video letter published on Twitter on July 8, 2020, the company claims to be "investing more than R$250,000,000 to supply masks, cleaning services, and cleaning products for the cars of partner drivers around the world".

99 and iFood also said they were putting all their efforts together to protect workers from risks in relation to covid-19. This included disclosing that it distributed masks and alcohol gel, as well as donating races to healthcare professionals. 99 also announced car hygiene actions in media strategies focused on the consumer: "more than ever, protecting you is a priority for us. The result? 1.5 million safer races at no extra cost to you! Count on us whenever you need to feel even more secure". Rappi, meanwhile, did not comment on the pandemic between June and August 2020 in its social media accounts.

In general, the worker has no voice in the communication on pandemic and health issues, in which companies prioritize numbers and measures taken. The "Fairwork" (2020) report on covid-19 shows that media strategies on the pandemic are very similar around the world, as well as workers' claims regarding personal protective equipment, one of the central points of the strike among delivery workers in Brazil (Howson et al., 2020).

Citizenship and Diversity

During the period of analysis, platforms celebrated LGBTQIA+ pride day. Uber presented meanings against prejudice, rescuing precepts that had already been highlighted in the Brazilian carnival of the same year, when a campaign to reinforce respect was launched by Uber and, according to information from the platform's official website (Uber, 2020), aimed to disclose its code of conduct. Rappi conducted an advertising campaign in partnership with a beer brand in which the orders went with a flag of the LGBTQIA+ cause as a gift. The amounts were donated to a non-governmental organization. The campaign's slogan was: "celebrate diversity wherever you are. Decorate your window and show your pride".

Donations were also present in media strategies of 99: "we donated R$4 million in races so that governments from all over Brazil can use in the transportation of those who cannot stop in the pandemic. Our partner drivers receive 100% of the value of these races". In this case, the context of the pandemic is used to reaffirm the meanings of citizenship, in the context of austerity policies (Brown, 2016).

This scenario is also part of the ethos built by Uber, which sponsored the "Leisure Cycle Track" initiative in the city of São Paulo. In a post on Twitter on July 18, there is a photograph of a person riding a bicycle and wearing a mask. It presents the following message: "do you want to cycle again in São Paulo? Uber takes you". According to a director of the platform in Brazil, "the so-called new normal is an opportunity for all of us, who live in São Paulo, to rethink our relationship with the automobile and how it affects our city". In this way, the platform's communication presents meanings of environmental sustainability and health. This is in line with a neoliberal city model in which platforms seek to intervene in urban spaces from a business perspective (Morozov & Bria, 2018).

Another example of this private reappropriation of citizenship and the public good is iFood, which spoke through its policy director days before the delivery strike in Brazil: "delivery platforms, public authorities and riders must be co-responsible and co-creators of the new order. IFood is available". The platform promotes itself as a benefactor for society as a whole, producing meanings of social responsibility.

In relation to diversity, platform 99 has endeavored to include different racial, ethnic, gender and class profiles in the advertisements of its accounts on social media. A post, published on June 17 by the philosopher Djamila Ribeiro, caused controversy because of a sponsored post made for 99. She is known for her advocacy around the defense of black women, has 1,000,000 followers on Instagram, and was considered by BBC one of the 100 most influential women in the world. In the video, the philosopher narrates her experience in using the platform and highlights "the protection packages" that the company adopted during the pandemic and also the "social responsibility" by offering free disinfection of cars to drivers.

The sponsored post caused surprise and outrage among her followers and among activists of social and racial movements because it was done at a time when platform workers — the majority Black (Abílio et al., 2020) — were organizing themselves publicly and requesting better working conditions. In addition, it occurred in the context of racial protests in the United States over the death of George Floyd, brutally murdered by police officers.

During the video, the philosopher adopts the same expressions used by the platforms to address drivers, naming them "partner drivers" and "collaborators", a strategy used by platforms in their communication processes as evidence of the significant dimension of class struggles (Grohmann, 2018). By naming drivers as "partners" and highlighting the "social role of the company", there is an attempt at closeness that hides informal and precarious work on platforms, especially in a country like Brazil (Abílio et al., 2020). The presence of a publicly recognized figure for being on the side of minorities, such as Djamila Ribeiro, reinforces the reputation and credibility as values in circulation of the platforms. 99 wanted to strengthen the image of a socially responsible company, using in advertising a representative respected by the Black community. However, it does not recognize the working relationship with riders (Abílio et al., 2020).

The struggle against racism, verbalized by 99 with the presence of Djamila Ribeiro, was also used by Rappi. After a case of racism by a customer with a delivery worker, which took place on August 7, the platform cited its competitors, such as iFood, on Twitter:

> I believe that you must have followed the case of rider Matheus, who suffered a crime of racism. We checked and he is not registered on our platform. Can you help us find it so we can support and take action on the user?

With this, the platform reinforces the meanings of platform directed to the common good.

The meanings of citizenship and diversity are related to that of union, as stated by iFood's marketing director:

> this movement of diversity is very punctuated by the context we are in now. As a brand, we have an obligation to bring this message of unity and not of polarization. When we look more at the consumer it would end up being natural.

This statement reinforces that media strategies are directed to the consumer and with meanings of diversity. The "union", linked to social responsibility, is placed as an opposition to the "polarization", in the sense of the Brazilian political context. Thus, the platform naturalizes class struggles and sees itself as the leader of unity in society.

Relationships With Brands and Influencers

Platform partnerships with brands and influencers reinforce the place of enunciation directed at consumers. All Rappi statements, for example, about diversity are in partnerships with other brands. 99 has already invested in posts by influencers with young profiles, from different Brazilian capitals, and of various genres, which maintains between 50 and 150,000 followers on its pages, to publicize new products, such as 99

Delivery and campaigns, such as #99Mobilize. The posts are usually repeated on various social media, but the preference is on Instagram. The most constant phrase on the platform's pages is: "the starting point of 99 is people". And that motto translates into the posts, which are usually directed to consumers, treated directly by "you".

The 99 statements reinforce meanings of entrepreneurship as the best way out of the financial crisis or unemployment, in line with neoliberal rationality (Dardot & Laval, 2013) and with research on rhetoric in the platform economy (Codagnone et al., 2016). An example is the post about driver Mary Stela published simultaneously on Instagram and Twitter:

> when Mary Stela realized it was time to start over. She rented a car and went on to better days as a partner driver 99. And isn't it that it worked so well that she became a highlight in the national ranking of drivers?!

The discourse reinforces the intersection of the discourse of entrepreneurship with the meanings of overcoming and self-help, something that was already common in communication strategies of companies outside the work platform, as evidenced by Illouz (2007) and Castellano (2018).

What 99 presents as different is that autonomy and flexibility can only happen with "help" from the platform, as a relationship of trust: "it has achieved more than that: financial independence, flexibility to enjoy the family and more confidence to work with the supports that 99 has been offering in recent months". In other words, the incentive to entrepreneurship is related to social change based on working on platforms, as in the phrase "being a partner 99 is the opportunity that can change your life".

If, in the previous categories, on "health", "diversity and citizenship", the platforms' media strategies reinforce the sense of social responsibility, the posts with brands and influencers reveal the tonic in the discourse of entrepreneurship as an individual way out and towards flexibility and autonomy. There is a cross between the categories, as the entrepreneurial discourse is related to social change and confidence in the platforms.

Among the platforms analyzed, Rappi is the one with the least posts on citizenship, health and safety of workers. The platform did not make any posts about the pandemic or mention of the delivery workers' strike. Its focus is strictly on the consumer market and it is the platform with the most posts in partnerships with brands: "now you buy in one click and receive it in minutes. You find several brands of clothing, electronics, beauty, toys, and much more". One of the highlights is the videos with make-up with the following statements: "running out of mascara at the time of make-up doesn't work, right?". The platform's Twitter still features several memes circulating in Brazilian digital culture.

Workers' Representation

Rappi's media strategies in relation to workers are primarily on the YouTube channel, Rappi Entregador. The channel represents the worker either as someone in debt or as the target of citizenship and social responsibility actions, with no place for claims. Work issues remain invisible and the dominant meanings are close to what Wendy Brown (2016) calls "sacrificial citizenship". Some statements are: "how to pay your debts and how to open a claim if you do not recognize the debt", "hello delivery partner! Do you already know how to settle your debts with Rappi?". In this way, the worker is trapped in a circuit of long working hours and debts as a worker–consumer of the platform (Huws, 2014). These mechanisms have occurred in Brazil since before the platformization of labor, as shown by Abílio (2015) in the cosmetics sector.

At Uber, worker representations are complex and contradictory. First, the worker is positioned as a user of the platform's services, in a relationship between platform and consumer, just like the logic of the consumer's work stated above. In this rhetoric, on the one hand, drivers, as worker–consumers, benefit from one of the platform's products, meaning the possibility of generating income. On the other hand, the consumer of the platform benefits from the service of facilitating mobility in urban spaces. On the YouTube channel, a video to present the "Uber safety standard", lists the new rules and recommendations that both drivers and passengers must follow, dialoguing with both audiences indistinctly, as mere users of the offered digital services.

A second image positions the driver as a service provider, which reveals more clearly the ambiguity of the working relationship established in the relationship with the platform. In a post on Twitter on July 24, the page celebrates Driver's Day and presents the #EstrelaExtra campaign that elects outstanding drivers and presents their personal reports accompanied by name and photo: "tomorrow is Driver's Day [red heart emoji] Partner drivers, in addition to taking passengers to their destinations, are also protagonists of attitudes that improve other people's lives. These stories deserve to be shared: #ExtraStar #DriversDay".

Neoliberal rationality is embodied in stars as a way of ranking and classifying workers (Dardot & Laval, 2013). Workers' surveillance is translated as a meaning of improvement for the platform. The driver, victim of the impacts of the health and economic crisis, is represented as a beneficiary of charitable initiatives. In addition, the platform starts to encourage tipping as a way for consumers to achieve their individual social improvement. Thus, platforms circulate meanings of sacrificial citizenship (Brown, 2016).

iFood, in turn, represents itself as an open brand for workers and their demands, being the most active platform during the delivery workers' strike. The director of public policies at the platform said that workers earn more and feel happier at work than academic research says. He also said that "manifesting is a right for everyone, including partners", and that, therefore, there was no deactivation of delivery workers participating in the strike. The text was published in a national newspaper in Brazil and on the platform's Twitter.

Another initiative by iFood was the video "place your order on the iFood App" published on YouTube. Based on the text "you already noticed with one delivery leads to another", the platform sought to share the responsibility with consumers in relation to the demands of the delivery workers. In the ad, the platform treats the numbers centrally and highlights the 25,000,000 it has earmarked for prevention measures and which doubled each amount paid by the customer in tips. As in other statements, tipping is an indication of sacrificial citizenship, as a substitute for the best working conditions for delivery workers.

Another iFood project is "Opening the Kitchen". This expression is used as a synonym for transparency and is part of the vocabulary of restaurants that show the entire process of food preparation. This project was used by the platform as a defense of the company amid strikes by couriers in Brazil. There is even a section with frequently asked questions about the strike. Some topics are part of the agreement between the platform and the workers, for example, "how delivery workers operate via iFood" or "how the delivery value is calculated". In a post on Instagram, the platform states: "we do not block delivery workers for participating in strikes. We understand it as a right of our partners. Unfair blocking, no!". This statement presents interdiscursivity with the workers' claims against unfair blocks. The media strategy of platforms is presented as if it were on the same side as the worker sharing similarities with discourses of protests and social movements, thus the platform presents itself as sensitive to the demands of workers.

After the strikes, the platform published a new campaign called #LivingIsADelivery. The use of the hashtag indicates that the advertising campaign was produced to circulate on social media and the word "delivery" is the element of continuity in other campaigns of the platform, such as #OurDelivery. The meanings of the word "delivery" detach themselves from the figure of the worker for life, in line with the narratives about purpose and self-help (Castellano, 2018).

The campaign consists of six audiovisual pieces with different themes. They are love, sweetness, family, friendship, courage and responsibility. In the video with the theme "friendship", unlike previous campaigns, there is no image of consumers receiving food with agility and convenience. The advertising piece features two men, one Black, who plays the role of delivery worker and restaurant owner. In the sentimental conversation, they describe a food delivery scene in which one recognizes the other. They were friends from school who met at that moment. The Black man was the owner of the restaurant. The other was the delivery worker.

In addition to humanizing the company, representing it as a community of friends, the play addresses the racial issue precisely at the time when demonstrations against the genocide of the Black population were taking place in several countries. This is in line with the campaign previously analyzed from 99 with the philosopher Djamila Ribeiro. Thus, there is the reappropriation of racial and workers' meanings in favor of platforms, which represent themselves as citizens.

With the same sentimental tone, another advertising piece portrays a delivery worker who is a mother and her son is proud to see her going out to work everyday "not only to guarantee everyday bread, but to deliver food to other families". The video ends by praising the qualities of the woman: "a woman's life is never giving up and a mother's life is always surrendering". The meanings are of thanks to the platform because the character was unemployed and started working as a delivery worker to be able to pay for the financing of a motorcycle. Thus, the dominant meanings are those of thanking the platform for promoting social good and that of individual satisfaction that the delivery workers have a noble mission in relation to society as a whole and should be grateful for that. Thus, there is the re-semantization of a worker in search of the rights for a citizen who must sacrifice himself for the common good — which, in this case, means the discursive perspective of the platforms.

Therefore, workers' representations vary between someone invisible, indebted, grateful for the opportunity and who must sacrifice himself for the benefit of society. Even when the worker is the center of media strategies, his voice appears only to maintain the viewpoint of the platforms and their commercial strategies. The demands for better working conditions are represented as "polarization" and the platforms symbolize "union", shifting the word "delivery" from the worker to something abstract.

Conclusions

Media strategies of platforms in their accounts on social media are only one aspect of the communication of these companies — among other possibilities of circulation of meanings. And this discursive dimension is just a role of communication in platform labor, from design to consumption, in a circuit of labor. The platforms' discourses present historicizations and go beyond the period chosen for this corpus. Social media accounts represent a synthesis of how meanings circulate on platforms, in order to reassemble and crystallize meanings about the digital economy, consumers and workers.

The results show that, on the one hand, platforms present specificities in their designs, worker profiles and working conditions, according to Schor et al. (2020), their media strategies across different sectors, with similar narratives and discourses. The choice of two areas (ride-hailing and delivery) resulted in more similarities than differences between the discursive positions of the platforms. This is also due to the ideological circulation of platforms in various countries around the world, in line with colonial values and linked to Silicon Valley ideology. Thus, the article argues that media strategies of the platforms can meet local specificities, but their meanings tend to circulate internationally.

The analytical categories — "health and pandemic", "citizenship and diversity", "relations with brands and influencers", and "workers' representations" — proved to be less exclusive than complementary to each other. The core of the platforms' media strategies is to position themselves as citizen companies, linked to diversity, the common good, the purpose of the social good, in favor of unity and not of polarization, with social responsibility. This happens in different dimensions. Imaginaries promoted by their discourses — of citizenship, diversity, and social responsibility — place platforms as central agents for the whole well-being of society. The idea that working is an opportunity is in line with many workers' discourses in the global south (Wood et al., 2019). These meanings can be an indication, for future research, in the discourses of other platforms in the global south, with potential for generalization, given the strength of its circulation.

The discourses on health and pandemic are the context of the circulation of the meanings of the platforms — showing that platforms' initiatives are being made to mitigate the effects of covid-19 in society. The relations with brands and influencers, in turn, point to the ways in which platforms direct their discourses to consumers. From the partnerships, they show themselves as versatile companies and concerned with the practicality of consumers. It is in this context in which social and protest agendas begin to be re-signified and re-semanticized by the platforms, in order to neutralize social struggles and show themselves as leaders of a discursive universality.

In the category of "workers' representation", collective claims are reframed from the perspective of sacrificial citizenship, self-help, entrepreneurship and overcoming. At a certain moment, they can even pretend to be at the workers' side, as in the statement "unjust blocking, no". Discourses like those of a public policy director — a position aligned with neoliberal rationality and its application in urban spaces — about the platform being open to workers' demands are common in order to show themselves as reliable companies to consumers.

Workers are made invisible, represented as indebted, people with dreams, but not as workers and, mainly, as a working class. Thus, from the class composition framework (Cant, 2019), platforms aim to neutralize the political composition of the working class based on their media strategies, constructing imaginaries of what ideal workers and consumers would look like, in a circuit of platform labor. This reinforces our argument that the platforms' media strategies are a significant dimension of class struggles. If platform labor is a laboratory for class struggles, communication is at the core of these struggles.

Translation: Rafael Grohmann

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Sharing Economy and Organizational Communication Practices in Times of Covid-19: Social Brands in Brazil and Portugal

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Abstract

The paper deals with the relationship between organizations belonging to the sharing economy and their practices, behaviors and postures in organizational communication due to the pandemic of the new coronavirus. We define the sharing economy (or collaborative economy) as the goods and services provided by the digital platforms of the network through the sharing of resources and trust. We take as a premise the compulsory digitalization that many businesses have been subjected to and we started the reflection from there. Our analysis, based on bibliographic and exploratory research, was located in brands chosen intentionally, in Brazil and Portugal, seeking to reflect on the context of covid-19 and its respective communication actions in their digital properties or in their social media profiles. We illustrated strategies for exposure and communicational visibility from March until August 2020, reaching a reflection on the urgency to act actively in social demands, characterizing them as social brands. In our understanding, a social brand has a strong presence in digital, stands out with good communication practices and, above all, has a performance strategy that goes beyond its business or direct profit not only during a period of crisis, but also aware of its social role and the impact that its responsible performance generates.

Keywords
sharing economy, organizations, covid-19, organizational communication, social brands

Economia da Partilha e Práticas de Comunicação Organizacional em Tempos de Covid-19: *Social Brands* no Brasil e em Portugal

Resumo

O artigo trata da relação entre as organizações pertencentes à economia da partilha e suas práticas, comportamentos e posturas de comunicação organizacional em função da pandemia do novo coronavírus. Definimos economia da partilha (*sharing economy* ou economia colaborativa) como os bens e serviços fornecidos pelas plataformas digitais da rede por meio do compartilhamento de recursos e da confiança. Tomamos como premissa a digitalização compulsória a que muitos negócios se viram submetidos e partimos para a reflexão a partir daí. Nossa análise, pautada pela pesquisa bibliográfica e exploratória, se localizou em marcas escolhidas intencionalmente, no Brasil e em Portugal, buscando refletir sobre o contexto da covid-19 e suas respectivas ações de comunicação em suas propriedades digitais ou em seus perfis de mídias sociais. Ilustramos estratégias de exposição e visibilidade comunicacional desde março até agosto de 2020, chegando a uma reflexão sobre a urgência em atuar ativamente em demandas sociais, caracterizando-as como *social brands*. Em nosso entendimento, uma marca social tem forte presença no digital, destaca-se com boas práticas de comunicação e, acima de tudo, possui uma estratégia de atuação que vai além do seu negócio ou do lucro direto não apenas durante um período de crise, mas também consciente de seu papel social e do impacto que sua atuação responsável gera.

Palavras-chave

economia da partilha, organizações, covid-19, comunicação organizacional, *social brands*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to discuss the role of organizations in the face of the current hyper-digital scenario, which, due to the pandemic caused by the coronavirus in 2020, directly impacted actions, strategies, and branding results. We discuss their practices in crisis contexts, in the light of concepts related to the sharing economy, organizational communication and the consequent need to maintain presence and engagement in digital social media platforms because of covid-19. The predominant methodology is the bibliographic and exploratory research with examples chosen by an intentional sample of the sharing economy from Portugal and Brazil. According to Flick (1998/2009), a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on topics of interest helps in exploring new perspectives, in addition to the possibility of comparative studies. Exploratory research allowed us to build hypotheses, test insights that, in the end, could infer about organizational behaviors, in terms of communication, because of or increased by the pandemic.

By sharing economy or collaborative economy, we generally understand the goods and services provided by digital network platforms through sharing resources and trust. Gata (2016) reinforces that it consists of a new way of an old human practice: sharing, which takes place between economic agents of normally underutilized assets and is mediated today by an online platform. For the author, there is still no consensus on the concept of such practice, but it seems clear that it enables the meeting of both sides of the market — suppliers and consumers — with digitized and horizontal relationships in the form of collaborative consumption.

Saturnino (2018) believes that today brands such as Airbnb, Uber, Glovo, among others — are the biggest representatives of this economy — validating and reinventing capitalism, now in platforms (De Stefano et al., 2017; Huws, 2014). It is also called "gig economy, sharing economy, on-demand economy, next industrial revolution, surveillance economy, app economy, attention economy" (Srnicek, 2017, p. 25). They are new forms of organization, new ways of consumption, and new business models based on cooperation and reliability among unknown people. On the relationship between sharing and communication economy, Filgueiras and Antunes (2020) reinforce that they are linked by

> typical ICT [information and communication technologies] identities: 1) online contacts between producers and consumers; workers and companies; 2) use of applications or platforms for computer access or mobile communication tools; 3) comprehensive use of digital data for the organization and use of these activities; 4) relationships established by "demand" (i.e., resulting from arrangements for each product, devoid of legal certainty capable of ensuring its continuity). (p. 31)

We have idealized the term "social brands" because we understand that organizations fit today into a concept that goes beyond the practice of social responsibility, something already consolidated in literature and respected by us. Because digital has become even more central during covid-19, we idealized the concept to say that a social brand is a brand with a strong presence in the digital realm, with good communication practices and, above all, with a strategy that goes beyond business or direct profit during a period of crisis. It means being an organization that adapts to the context — especially to the coronavirus — and, consequently, seeks to modify the ecosystem in which it is inserted. Such behavior is not unique to the sharing economy brands, but we intentionally sought examples from this market to try to understand how such companies — which are directly connected to the ICT (Filgueiras & Antunes, 2020), and were on the front line during the pandemic — communicating with their stakeholders, whether consumers or the civil society in general.

As a way to support the concept, we rely on Sarkar and Kotler (2020) in the book *Brand Activism: From Purpose to Action*, which highlights that today brands no longer have the right to choose in which causes they should or can engage. And there isn't the possibility of being neutral, either. The authors point out that future consumers are taking the streets and protesting against social injustices. And the role of organizations now is to help solve and not aggravate the world's biggest problems. In the notes section to the reader, the authors also reinforce that now, whether we like it or not, we are all brand activists.

Another question that collaborates with social brands falls upon the study of Edelman (2018b), which points out that brands are currently compelled to position themselves on social causes and, often, even from other spheres such as politics:

> the study also reveals that consumers believe that businesses are a more effective force of change than the government. In Brazil, 63% of respondents say that brands can do more to solve social problems than the government, and 62% believe that it is easier to make brands solve social problems than to get the government to act. "Consumers trust companies for change", says Marcília Ursini, vice president of Marketing Engagement at Edelman. "Increasingly, companies are going beyond their traditional businesses to position themselves on issues relevant to them and their audiences, and this has occurred from consistent positioning to the defense of current issues and advocacy", she concludes. (para. 3)

Tenderich (2020), in USC's Annenberg *Relevance Report 2021*, which maps and predicts trends for communication annually, notes that more and more brands engage in purpose-based conversations, and such behavior has been enhanced by several events in 2020 such as covid-19, the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the climate crisis. For the author, "brands and organizations of any kind are increasingly taking advantage of the opportunity, but also feeling the pressure – to engage in complex conversations" (Tenderich, 2020, p. 96). In the same study, Harrington and Smith (2020) point out that such crises are transforming the way we interact with each other and our expectations about the organizations and leaders from today's society. For both, brands are today's agents of change, bringing challenges to the field of communication and also to their professionals:

> as communicators and marketers, we have an expanded license to "do the right thing" and are authorized to trigger change and help address today's inequalities by creating deeper connections with our employees, customers and stakeholders. (Harrington & Smith, 2020, p. 18)

Thus, the term "social brands" has its origin in purpose communication (Tenderich, 2020) and, in a certain way, in social responsibility, gaining new contours, needs, and obligations for organizational action also as an agent of change. Added to this, we have brand activism (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020) and public expectations about the role of organizations in taking positions and creating solutions to problems not covered by governments (Edelman, 2018a).

Back to the sharing economy, with the article magazine *CEO*, edited by PWC ("Avanços e Dúvidas no Caminho do Compartilhamento", 2016, p. 12), the segments that depend the most on sharing economy are: peer to peer[1] accommodation (such as Airbnb or WeWork), car sharing (such as Uber, 99, Cabify), audiovisual streaming (Netflix, Spotify, Prime, Soundcloud, etc.) and services such as rental, purchase/sale or deliveries, among others. For the consultancy company, by 2025, US$300,000,000,000 will be generated in new business worldwide, with a series of changes and regulations in shared models that should be 100% consolidated by then.

A study by BPI Research (Banco BPI & CaixaBank, 2018) also pointed out that the pace of growth in recent years of sharing economy has increased significantly in the world, with transactions tripling in size between 2013 and 2015, while revenues quadrupled. The research also showed that the emergence of such an economy is the joint result of the 2008 global crisis, the hyper digitization of the world — with digital platforms offering more and more services based on the information (data) of users — and the new expectations of the consumers, who are now seeking lower prices and less time to perform day-to-day tasks.

[1] Network architecture in which each of the points (or nodes) acts both as a client and as a server, allowing sharing of services and data without the need for a central server.

Kotler et al. (2010/2012) pointed out that for some time brands no longer see their audiences as mere targets. For the authors, they go far beyond a simple external packaging or ads that are now called to represent themselves and position themselves in a more authentic, true, and real-value way, because consumers are grouped in online communities where they discuss their love and hate for organizations, products, and services. Thus, the relationship between audiences and brands becomes horizontal and, in times of crisis, they are also able to offer answers and hopes to meet public expectations. They become active not only for their consumers, but for the entire social environment, changing their processes more quickly for new demands.

In the coronavirus pandemic context, it is possible to perceive how brand communication also turns to values, instead of a simple sale of products or the satisfaction of consumers' dreams. Through digital technology, they begin to see the human being in a more complex way, seeking a proposition of emotional value through interaction with audiences and the collaboration of one for many (Kotler et al., 2010/2012).

Koch (2020), based on Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli (2015) and Stoeckl (2014), shows that organizations today exercise a sort of activism behavior. The author understands that brands' activist conduct is within the universe of cultural construction, which is also part of a market strategy. That is, being an activist brand and, in our sense, present in the digital environment in a relational, well-exposed, and genuine concerns in the ecosystem to which it belongs, is part of a broader role to build organizational image and reputation.

> On the one hand, brands are increasingly forced to position themselves in relation to socioeconomic or ecological problems, thus entering a variety of political conversations. On the other hand, some brands position themselves deliberately and proactively in political contexts, becoming "activists" of some kind. (Koch, 2020, p. 601)

From the references and observations above, we outline four assumptions that support and characterize the actions of brands and organizations in the contemporary context.

First, to legitimize themselves, organizations need an organizational communication strategy, with emphasis on spontaneous media (whether online/digital or not), that evidence them. This would happen if the press and social media agents (users) generate conversations about organizational actions in a positive way.

Terra (2019) reinforces the need for organizations to have proprietary strategies for presence and engagement in the digital environment so they don not depend only on the visibility "given" by social media platforms. Faced with a massive crisis scenario, due to the pandemic of the new coronavirus, organizations had to position themselves, especially on what they are doing to minimize the situation and uncertainties that have reached not only communication, but society as a whole. And the consequence of such actions eventually leads to earned media. We will explore this scenario in our practical examples later.

Second, the organizations that are influential and remembered by the audiences are those that also use communication devices related to real time and immediacy, inherent in post-digital communication.

With regard to the immediacy applied to communication, called real time marketing, Terra (2015) signaled: "thus, demands arise for the participation of organizations in digital networks in real time. When a theme emerges, organizations are forced to find thematic 'hooks' with their brands so that they can legitimize themselves with their audiences" (p. 208).

The use of real-time content is a strategy that forces organizations to have teams, structure, and resources and, in times of crisis, the issue becomes even more latent and necessary. Terra (2018) emphasizes contextual communication and its particularities: "the use of contexts – although volatile, ephemeral – and real-life events is a form of legitimacy by organizations with their audiences, especially on social media" (p. 3).

Thus, there seems to be a need, albeit subtle, for organizations to react to the present context, transforming it into content, generating buzz for their digital properties and, mainly, actions that impact their audiences. The public seems eager for the positioning of organizations, hoping that they will play a role that was once a responsibility of the State and other traditional institutions. We see examples of companies donating financial resources, materials and services to fight the virus: all to collaborate in the scenario; to gain positive visibility and conquer the so-desired share of heart[2] of their audiences.

Third, organizations have not depended exclusively on the press to make themselves heard or appreciated. They can directly reach their audiences through their digital properties. For this, we use the concept of "deintermediation".

By deintermediation, we understand the fact that an organization/agent/entity/individual can now directly reach audiences of interest in the networked sphere. Terra and Sousa (2020) reflect on the concept, regarding to brands, and propose:

> they create and make their own media vehicles that will "speak directly" to their audiences, discursively elaborating, unmediated content. But in this case, they play the role of empowering the public with information and influencing the formation of an opinion that is in favour of their institutional or commercial interests. (p. 173)

We believe that the mediatization[3] of relationships — whether individual or corporate — also makes organizations use their own digital channels — websites, blogs, apps,

[2] Share of heart means the creation and/or maintenance of an affective bond between the organization and its stakeholders.

[3] By mediatization, we understand the expansion and omnipresence of different technical means and their interrelations with communication and sociocultural fabric.

among others — to communicate and interact with their consumers, in addition to being able to sell, without traditional media vehicles in the process. Something that brands in the sharing economy also do by combining actions in their own earned or paid media.

Terra and Sousa (2020) correlate mediatization with deintermediation:

> we also observe that the mediatization of society implies in deintermediation. That is, the fact that organizations behave as media vehicles and publishers in their sectors of activity, makes them able to directly address their audiences, no longer depending on traditional media vehicles – TV, newspaper, radio, magazines, etc. – for this function. (pp. 174-175)

The fact that brands use strategies to aid and combat coronavirus makes them also use their own channels of public dissemination, not being held hostage by legacy media to achieve earned media. It is worth remembering that, according to Lusk (2014), there are three elements of media: earned media (i.e., mentions, reviews, posts, and shares achieved on social media); paid media (characterized by ads on social media platforms, retargeting, pay-per-click ads, paid influencers and affiliate programs); owned media (represents brands digital properties: websites, blogs, email, social channels, mobile site, whose content is responsibility of the organization).

They take advantage of the direct repercussion they get on their digital channels and rely on the broadcast from there.

In the sharing economy, one of the most impacted by the pandemic and social isolation, the reinvention of the economic system through the direct supply of services or products provides a space to grow with the crisis because we are at a time of rethinking the concept of the common (in the sense of what is shared) and community. And this happens via digital media, not only by providing services and selling products, but also with the direct sharing of actions and content that may be able to contribute to the social body as a whole.

Fourth, organizations are demanded in addition to traditional sales and relationship communication activities, and organizational communication becomes even more strategic.

For Kunsch (2014), due to the constant transformations of society, isolated actions of marketing communication and public relations become insufficient and unable to stand out in new scenarios and in extremely competitive markets, especially with regard to relationships with audiences or interlocutors from various segments. The author believes that they are today very demanding and attentive, requiring responsibility from organizations and also transparent attitudes, ethical behaviors and respect for planetary preservation, among other contributions to society.

Digital connectivity turns consumers into vigilantes — who are also aware — in the networked sites, transforming, especially in a context of crisis, organizational communication into a key and strategic part for organizational actions, beyond the simple ad in a society-changing panorama. Brands belonging to the sharing economy are not excluded from this rule. On the contrary, they end up using social media platforms and their digital properties (websites, apps, and blogs) as strategic tools of reputation, interaction, and consumption.

Based on these premises, we name as social brands those organizations that make use of such stratagems — and end up playing various roles, whether charitable, supportive, or related to social transformation — to achieve positive visibility, exposure, and reputation.

Social Brands and Causes

We understand as social brands organizations that act in crisis contexts in favor not only of themselves, but also of the society to which they belong, whether by necessity, obligation or other reasons. They become proactive in a macro context and beyond simple consumption, and such actions end up shaping and reconfiguring their communication, which is the object of analysis in our article.

It has been a while since organizations have begun to pay attention to and communicate about social, economic, ethical, and even environmental purposes, being increasingly demanded over their responsibilities by hypermodern individuals (Dhanesh, 2020). But in the current context of crisis, there is a reinforcement and a great transformation in the relationship with the public, which transfers their focus from the self to the group, from a material experience to a more emotional one, and from the present to the future.

Thus, it seems clear that there is an expectation by the audiences for brands to take actions about the ecosystem to which they are and be empathic not only to them, but also to a macro context of society and culture. Whether it is a global pandemic, or any other transformative situation of the moment, audiences already have the need of having the organizations providing services to the collective as a way not only of adding value, but also of emotional connection between them. A perspective of activism that, according to Koch (2020), is more associated with consumers than with organizations. If we look at it from an organizational perspective, corporate activism can be seen as political, as we can see in the term "polity-brands" (or political brands), by the same author. Of course, there are brands that will be criticized for choosing such a path. Others will be obliged to take action on causes and positionings. In the study by Edelman (2018a), there is a highlight about the increase in the number of organizations that work beyond their traditional businesses to position themselves with relevance with their stakeholders, with actions such as the defense of current issues and cause activism.

But the big brands of sharing economy, digital natives par excellence, have been heavily criticized for their platform work policies, with little regulation, low wages and services classified outside the provisions of labor laws, since they use non-standard assets.

The "Fairwork" project (https://fair.work/), from the University of Oxford, seeks to discuss and pressure digital platforms for better working conditions, using the concept of decent work, linked to the International Labor Organization, asking for better conditions and the end of precariousness, also called "digital slavery" (Filgueiras & Antunes, 2020).

The topic is not the scope of our article, but it is impossible to make any reference today to the large organizations of the sharing economy without critically considering such aspects, still of few laws, but of growing discussion. And during the covid-19 pandemic, they are also able to humanize themselves with actions and communication further than buying and selling. Emotionally aligning with a cause can be a beneficial factor in the communication and relationship process of these organizations and their audiences, especially in a global crisis like coronavirus. We believe that their extensive work in digital communication during the pandemic may be a way to balance their reputation and image to the detriment of the issues of legislation and regulation already mentioned. On this strategy, Gata (2016) confirms that

> online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, QZone can be used as additional sources of relevant information sharing about participants' profiles, complementing the information already provided by online systems explicitly dedicated to building reputations, thus increasing the likelihood of achieving an appropriate separator balance. (p. 202)

We have listed examples below — intentionally chosen — of brand behaviors in the sharing economy of Brazil and Portugal during the coronavirus pandemic and classify them into groups according to specific characteristics. It is worth noting that the actions were not necessarily digital, but they eventually reverberated on social media platforms or online media.

The Context of Covid-19 and the Movement of "Brands of Sharing" in Brazil and Portugal

Lotto (2020) notes that, from the classification of coronavirus as a pandemic made by the World Health Organization (Who), the conversational content of digital social networks began to gain great importance. The consumption of information and the search for videos on YouTube about the subject, for example, have gained new paths and new interests. Thus, in a scenario of uncertainty, brands began to position themselves and adapt their speeches to the pandemic situation. Topics such as decreasing human contact, distribution of alcohol gel, quarantine to employees after international travel, payment via apps, and work in home office for administrative tasks have comprised a long list of measures adopted by organizations, especially those working with deliveries or transport via digital platforms (Pichonelli, 2020).

In its most recent *2020 Global Communication Report* (USC Annenberg, 2020, p. 35), the decline in confidence in politics and the lack of action by governments around the world fomented brands and organizations to assume social functions, and the digital ambience has a paramount and structuring function in this process. The report also states that such activity may be able to directly favor the reputation of those brands, making them able to obtain an important perspective on how to use their influence to bring significant social change. With the rise of increasingly conscientious and connected consumers, organizations that position themselves can also gain a greater competitive advantage.

Given the discussion above, we highlight below some communicational brand actions during the covid-19.

Communication Beyond Communication

Castro (2020) recommends that, in times of crisis, it is necessary to be strategic in terms of communication, and that consistency can be the watchword. In addition, the author reinforces that, in such a context, "to communicate means to remain present and to show itself as a socially relevant, responsible and bona fide company" (Castro, 2020, para. 6). And completes: "in the face of serious events, more than ever becomes relevant the strategic importance of communication that helps make your company present and perennial, that correctly evidences the values, mission and positioning of brands and corporations with their stakeholders" (Castro, 2020, para. 4).

In Brazil, 99, a transport app company, created a special fund of R$10.000.000 to help drivers (Pichonelli, 2020) and suspended shared cars. Its site brought measures called "99's protection package" to impact society and collaborate in the fight against covid-19 by donating masks and alcohol gel, in addition to placing protection shields in its vehicles (99, n.d.). The brand also created a special edition of their podcast *Papo de Motora* to inform 99 drivers about the pandemic of coronavirus.

In Portugal, the app company Uber announced in a statement 12,000 free trips, up to the value of €10 each, aiming to collaborate with Portuguese health professionals, in addition to offering 5,000 meals up to €15 for the National Health Service team via Uber Eats (Lusa, 2020). With this, the brand has gained visibility in local media vehicles and comments on social media platforms. That is, their cooperation actions with society eventually gained earned media. In Brazil, Uber removed its shared cars between several people with the same driver, and released, on its website, a measure of temporary suspension of accounts of users or partners of its employees, after the confirmation that they were exposed to covid-19 (Pichonelli, 2020).

Glovo, a Spanish delivery company that left Brazil in 2019, but has a strong presence in Portugal, has carried out several actions that culminated in dissemination in traditional and digital Portuguese media. On the website Grande Consumo ("Visa Junta-se à Glovo Para Incentivar o Pagamento com Cartão", 2020, para. 5), for example, Glovo's country manager in Portugal, Ricardo Batista, pointed out that he has partnered with the global payment brand Visa to support the population during the confinement phase and, consequently, align with new consumption habits with payments made by cards and without human contact.

Olivetto, interviewed by Scheller (2020), brought to a close the question by reinforcing the importance of organizations becoming aware of the market communication that runs away from the traditional marketing we already know: "it is time to inform the customer, and not to persuade him to buy, to try to sell something" (para. 5).

Empathetic Brands and Digital Influencers

Some organizations took agile initiatives in relation to the pandemic and proved to be empathetic, such as the case of Brazilian digital e-commerce platform, MercadoLivre, which changed its traditional logo, known as a handshake, to a touch of elbows, the new greeting endorsed by the WHO for covid times.

On its website, in a blog focused on its partners called *Central de Vendedores*, the brand has created unique content tagged "covid-19" (https://vendedores.mercadolivre.com.br/tag/COVID-19), with tips to help them to maintain and follow up with their online stores during the pandemic. Topics ranged from good practices to receive and send packages to how to improve finances and receive the emergency aid from the Brazilian government, among others.

Magalu, one of Brazil's largest retail chains with strong digital presence, launched in late March 2020 a free sales platform for micro retailers and local self-employed professionals to maintain their business during the covid-19 crisis (*Magalu Cria Plataforma Onde Pequenas Empresas Podem Anunciar Produtos*, 2020). The initiative transformed the brand into a marketplace with characteristics of the sharing economy in order to collaborate, in an empathetic way, so that millions of Brazilians could work in the e-commerce trade, having the brand as a platform and without leaving home or taking risks during the pandemic. In *Blog da Lu* (https://missaodigital.magazineluiza.com.br/?s=COVID-19), the company produced content of interest about prevention and information of the coronavirus, which Terra (2021) classifies as an organizational activity of digital influence through unmediated content to "provide the public relevant information and influence the formation of an opinion that favors its institutional or commercial interests" (p. 70).

Organizations Concerned About Their Inner Public

In addition to reverberating customer actions, organizations are also concerned about their internal audiences. Terra (2021) points out that the employees of organizations are "the first army of dissemination of a brand and, if well stimulated, can be a valuable asset in content spreading" (p. 49), acting as a type of organizational micro influencers. Perhaps this explains today the importance of the role of the employee, not only within the corporate ecosystem, but (and especially) outside it, since he is able to directly influence the reputation and image of organizations, which are already aware of this.

The Brazilian delivery company iFood, one of the largest in the country and Latin America, created, in partnership with an insurance enterprise, the action "Seguro de Vida Covid-19" (Life Insurance Covid-19; iFood, n.d.) for the families of delivery workers who might have confirmed cases of the disease. The measure reinforces the care and protection with its "collaborators" by the organization, after protests of the category throughout Brazil requesting better working conditions, including "pandemic aid" for family members (*Entregadores de Aplicativos Fazem Manifestações Pelo País*, 2020).

The CEO of Airbnb, who was forced to make significant resignation around the world, sent his fired employees a letter explaining the brand's reasons and also offered services to help with relocations to the labor market. The open letter, available on the company's website (Airbnb, 2020), was marked as an honest and transparent attitude, even in the face of such an unpredictable situation and a major crisis not only economic, but also for the brand's image.

Brands Providing Services to the Community

Kantar presented in a study (Gambarro, 2020) that the population expects companies to be useful in the new daily life and inform what are their efforts to face the current situation, in addition to the simple announcement of products or services. The public interviewed suggested that they also expect brands to serve as an example.

Glovo has created on its Portuguese website a page containing a series of educational measures for the prevention of covid-19 for both couriers and customers. And in respect for its delivery partners, it has promised to help anyone who might be infected with the disease during the recovery period required with medical care (Glovo, n.d.).

The sharing economy has suffered huge impacts in many sectors, such as hosting, for example, but it has gained in others, such as coworkings. The CEO of Avila Spaces, Carlos Gonçalves, highlighted on its Instagram account that, as in the 2008 crisis, the

> reinvention of companies often involves changing their work model. In the current context, there are thousands of companies adopting the virtual office, not only for ration costs (from 55 Eur/month +VAT, in the centre of Lisbon), but also for efficiency and agility. (Avila Spaces, 2020)

The Portuguese company Lacs, which offers flexible workspaces and corporate experiences, used its blog to mix the context of the pandemic with its usual content, attracting the attention of potential stakeholders in its services and networking. In a post on coworking beyond startup organizations, it signaled: "the new way of working, imposed by the pandemic caused by covid-19, has revolutionized how large companies, from different areas, look at their workspaces" (Lacs, 2020, para. 1). It added:

> physical spaces for many employees and remote work combined, compliance with safety measures, hygiene and distancing, adding networking, are

> the future of normal. This way of working, driven by startups, entrepreneurs and freelancers, is spreading more and more to medium and large companies, who are beginning to realize the benefits of a shared workspace and flexible workspace. (Lacs, 2020, para. 2)

It is possible to see how brands and organizations are increasingly assuming social roles for themselves that were once attributes of government institutions. We therefore question whether there is no other option for organizations than to become social brands today. In the sharing economy, this is no different. Many have moved forward with donations and communication to position themselves as cooperative and supportive brands in relation to the current pandemic situation.

Final Considerations and Notes For the Future

We believe that adapting and taking advantages of the present scenario can be considered forms of image legitimation by brands with their audiences, especially digitally. For Kunsch (2017), organizations do not change because they want to, but by social and market pressures, and it constantly transforms the thinking, planning, and strategical execution of organizational communication on a daily task.

In the sharing economy, organizations live what Saturnino (2018) called "overvaluing of the digital reputation" through its own system that he called "bilateral review" (p. 3), creating reliability and self-regulating peer surveillance — in this case, partners and consumers of their services. Thus, we understand that actions such as social brands are also a reputational work through cooperation, sharing, in its broad sense, and network collaboration, crucial strategies in times of transparency, crisis, relationship, exposure, and visibility.

According to Lotto (2020), the time is to invest in alternatives for brands to make themselves useful to their audiences, avoiding opportunism and offering comfort and help in new demands. Organizations that adapt themselves to the context of unpredictable situations survive. During the pandemic of the new coronavirus, they were forced to use new strategies and communications in relation to their social ecosystem. Thus, we consider that these brands acted as true agents of influence through empathy, informative content, and actions for the collective.

We resume here two thoughts from Terra et al. (2019, p. 17), which we consider essential for understanding the communication of organizations in the contemporary digital sphere:

- The digital environment, especially social media platforms, is now essential in terms of skills for brands, and its domain is a new and structuring ability to make contemporary communication. In times of covid-19, it is established as central and functional, not only in the transmission of information, but also in its uses for entertainment, services and social interaction. Organizations that master its language and rules may be able to stand out, especially digital natives such as the sharing economy brands.

- During the coronavirus pandemic, due to the centrality of digital media, it is possible that more and more data have been generated on the network and digital platforms, enabling brands to use data-driven methods to (re)adapt and propagate their communication. The examples discussed in this article serve as a proof of the hypothesis that organizational communication, especially digitally, is capable of functioning in beta mode, adapting strategically and constantly to the sociocultural context — in this case, the pandemic of covid-19 — to continue its relationship work as influential agents of the community. And all of the earned media coming from these brand's actions due to the coronavirus becomes, thus, a mix of what the organizations are doing and what they need to report/disseminate/propagate for reputational objectives. We believe that this has a unique value for the sharing organizations, criticized for legal and labor issues, as already mentioned.

This said, we understand that, to be a social brand, it is necessary to have the ability to readapt, empathize, and to go beyond what is planned with agility, especially with regards to communication. Something that we believe is no longer a choice, but a must-have in a post-covid-19 world, especially for large organizations and brands from whom they are expected to play an additional role beyond advertising and sales. We also think that organizations of the future should be prepared to manage unexpected events and controversial issues, often outside their comfort or performance zones.

The sharing economy, even with all the changes in the broken world by the coronavirus — especially with regards to consumption — can be a bet for the future and its "new normal". We do not put away all their need to labor and competition regulations, whether in Brazil or Portugal, so that these companies make a commitment beyond crisis communication, especially in the pandemic. On the contrary: we believe that it should be applied to a social, ethical and cultural/organizational commitment beyond opportunism and the simple "speech of causes" at specific times, the so-called "social washing"[4].

Crises are capable of bringing threats and opportunities at the same time, and we hope that social branding may indeed be incorporated into the brands' purpose and culture — holistically and not only during the covid-19 crisis — in the search for more social transformations and more "sharing" with society in addition to capturing the attention of audiences and selling products and services. Our essay does not claim to finish the topic, reduce it, nor create a new terminology for the field of studies. We also do not seek to make predictions or futurology. We understand that the world is no longer the same, as well as the brands communication and, from what we have seen, the demands of their audiences, are increasingly rigorous and connected.

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[4] We understand this concept as the attempt of brands to report/propagate the inclusion of agendas in their strategic actions with the objective merely of promoting the public image.

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"Breque dos Apps": A Temporal Analysis of Communities and Influencers in Online Public Debate on Twitter

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the dynamics of the debate on social networking platforms from the perspective of collective identity and collective action concepts. More specifically, we seek to identify who are the central actors on Twitter in the debate about the two delivery app workers' strike against the work regime and working conditions during the pandemics (UberEats, iFood, Rappi, etc.) occurred on July 1 and 25, 2020, in Brazil. We also examined whether the most influential users played a role in the formation of communities around their interpretation of this topic. To do so, we collected 535,178 tweets published in two periods of workers' demonstrations, which occurred between June and July 2020. Based on temporal analysis of clusters, we identified the moment of entrance of each community on the debate and discussed how profiles of influencers, social movements, politicians, and celebrities on Twitter played central roles in mobilizing supporters and fostering public engagement linked to acts on the networks. The results show that social mobilization in digital environments occurs from interactions between groups with great involvement with the causes and profiles of more ephemeral performance, whose participation is fundamental for the promotion and dissemination of acts.

Keywords

collective identity, collective action, social networking platforms, Twitter, *Breque dos Apps*

"Breque dos Apps": Uma Análise Temporal de Comunidades e Influenciadores no Debate Público Online no Twitter

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é examinar a dinâmica do debate nas plataformas de redes sociais sob a perspectiva da identidade e da ação coletiva. Mais especificamente, buscamos identificar quem foram os atores centrais no Twitter em torno do debate sobre duas paralisações de entregadores de aplicativo contra o regime e as condições de trabalho durante o período da pandemia (UberEats, iFood, Rappi, etc.) ocorridas a 1 e 25 de julho de 2020 no Brasil. Examinamos, além disso, se os perfis mais influentes protagonizaram a formação de comunidades em torno de sua interpretação sobre esse tema. Para isso, coletamos um total de 535.178 tweets publicados em dois episódios de manifestações dos trabalhadores, ocorridos entre junho e julho de 2020. A partir da análise temporal de *clusters*, identificamos o momento de entrada de cada comunidade no debate sobre o tema e discutimos como perfis de influenciadores, movimentos sociais, políticos e celebridades desempenharam funções centrais na mobilização de apoiadores e no engajamento público ligado às manifestações nas redes. Os resultados mostram que a mobilização social em ambientes digitais ocorre a partir de interações entre grupos com grande envolvimento com as causas defendidas e perfis de atuação mais efêmeros, cuja participação é fundamental para a promoção e divulgação dos atos.

Palavras-chave
identidade coletiva, ação coletiva, plataformas de redes sociais, Twitter, Breque dos Apps

Introduction

The importance of social networking platforms in the contemporary public sphere is a consensus among researchers from different fields of knowledge. Social networking is a relatively old concept that has been applied in human sciences even before the rise and popularization of digital platforms. It is understood as a type of relationship between human beings characterized by a flexible structure with dynamic participants (Martino, 2015).

However, the idea of social networking gained strength when the means of communication mediated by technology began helping build social networks connected through digitally constructed environments. From a political point of view, the literature in different areas has sought to debate how these digital environments became indispensable spheres to build bridgings and articulations between political actors (Lowrance, 2016), to promote public actions (Earl & Kimport, 2011), and to provide visibility to agendas, campaigns and topics stemming from different political groups (Vergeer et al., 2011).

Between June and July 2020, in the context of the growing reports of covid-19 cases in Brazil, delivery app workers organized strikes in major capitals in the country, calling attention to the precarious work conditions of this class. This event became known as "Breque dos Apps" ("Stop the Apps"). The mobilizations went beyond national borders and garnered the support of neighbor countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Chile and

Ecuador, with strong media coverage. However, the forms of organization, coordination and political action engendered in digital environments defined the focus of the debate and the visibility of the movement. The #BrequeDosApps reached the trending topics on Twitter and saw the participation of app users, artists, actors of traditional politics and digital influencers, who intensified the spread and amplification of the topics and demands made by workers of that class.

This study analyzed the dynamics of the public debate about the "Breque dos Apps" in these digital environments. More specifically, we sought to examine the phenomenon based on the evolution of the debate about the topic on Twitter over two specific periods: between June 30 and July 3, when the first demonstration happened, and between July 24 and 27, when the second demonstration happened. The research questions driving the study are:

1. How did profiles and influencers join the debate, and what role did they play over the period analyzed?
2. Were these major actors in the debate protagonists in the creation of networks around their interpretation of the topic?

Our hypothesis is that actors from different groups (activists, political actors, influencers, media companies) joined the debate at different times, which influenced the role they played.

In addition to this introduction, the article is divided as follows: we will begin with a theoretical discussion about the role of digital communication and, more specifically, of social networking platforms in the formation of collective identity and collective action. We seek to discuss the dynamics of coordination, mobilization and political action through the idea of connective action in digital social networks. Afterwards, we will present the study's methodological process, which includes data collection, cluster analysis and an analysis of the most influential profiles in the debate about the "Breque dos Apps" on Twitter. Lastly, we will discuss the research results, alluding to research topics within the scope of communication, mobilization and digital actions.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the role of communication and social media in today's dynamics of coordination, mobilization and political action requires focusing on the environment in which social groups and movements organize themselves and spread and amplify their causes. The communicative process starts to play a major role in creating interpersonal networks from group identity and collective action, transforming the organization structure traditionally based on the assumptions of collective action. The defining characteristics of digital mediation determine these new dynamics through more personalized networks, which are often larger and have a high capacity to grow, and "this makes highly personalized and socially mediated communication processes structuring elements in the organization of many forms of connective action" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 749).

The internet — and, more specifically, digital social networks — offers individuals the opportunity to identify and interact with members outside of their network, consequently increasing their chances of bridging as a way to produce social capital (Ellison et al., 2010). The structure and construction of these bridgings between individuals are characteristic of connective action and have an influence on political movements; therefore, the concept of collective action in the context of the increasing relevance of social media in political manifestations follows the understanding of the role of the collective identity and its creation process, built in these environments (Ellison et al., 2010; Milan, 2015). However, the association of these mobilizations and contemporary manifestations with the identity politics typical of social movements is still unclear. Milan (2015) argues that, particularly for the logic of social media, there is an expansion and reformulation of the processes through which a collective identity is created, reproduced and maintained, which also affect the processes of collective action.

The transformations brought about by these "channels of information spread and social mobilization" (Ruediger et al., 2014) reinforce the relevance of a deeper analysis of their potentialities. This includes determining the elements that distinguish the large mobilizations in the past from contemporary massive manifestations. Social media and its affordances[1] institutes unprecedented facets of political dispute, enables the appearance of "new actors", and demonstrates "the distancing process between State and society, the delegitimization of intermediaries established by the redemocratization process as representatives and interlocutors of society, and the widening and renewal of the public sphere" (Ruediger et al., 2014, p. 208).

Considering the Brazilian context, the "Jornadas de Junho" (June Journeys, a series of mass protests in major Brazilian cities in June 2013) marked this inflection point in political expressiveness and action mediated by social media, inaugurating a cycle of several other protests and mobilizations that overlapped in the online and offline environments. As protests are a political resource (Lipsky, 1968) that is strongly conditioned by other resources (for instance, socio-economic resources), it is important to investigate how social media expanded the structures for political opportunities for contestation activities.

To understand the thread that starts with digital mobilizations and ends with protest actions, we must raise and discuss a few specific aspects of communication and interaction on social media. According to Bennett and Segerberg (2012), the logic of connective action (that is, familiarity with the different practices of communication and organization) provides a repertoire that is useful for action, which is enabled by social networks. Therefore, the uses (which are often daily and widely shared on social media) distinguish manifestations from collective action.

Traditionally, collective action depends on shared understandings and identities, connective structures stemming from interpersonal networks, and trust and cooperation developed among the individuals composing these arrangements (Tarrow, 2011). Social media reinforce these elements of identity and belonging, connecting people and

[1] For more information on the concept of "affordance", please see Bucher and Helmond (2017).

narratives, and assigning sense and meaning to their actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Ellison et al., 2010; Milan, 2015).

Gerbaudo (2012) highlights the interposition of these channels in the communication and organization of contemporary social movements, which he calls the "choreography of assembly"[2] (p. 4) — in other words, the creation of a shape for what individuals have in common. Indeed, Ellison et al. (2010) state that the logic of digital media is capable of reformulating interpersonal networks, and from this derives the social capital of the members of a given social network. In this context, Gerbaudo (2012), in reference to Granovetter (1974), argues that the relationships established in digital environments are predominantly formed by "weak ties" and strong collective identities are a rare exception.

Nevertheless, the absence of more structured identities and organizations is not incompatible with collective action; the attributions of communication and communicators, which are characteristic of digital environments, would be to define the scenario that enables action. In this sense, the appearance of opinion leaders, particularly digital influencers, becomes a key factor.

> The organization carried out by contemporary activists through the use of social networks does not automatically mean an elimination of leadership. On the contrary, the adoption of social media among activists is accompanied by the appearance of subtle and emotional forms of leadership, which are often indirect and invisible, but still effective in providing collection action with a certain measure of coherence and a sense of direction. This is the type of subtle and dialogical leadership that the term "choreography" attempts to describe. (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 157)

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) point out the fact that the frame of action does not appear or spread automatically, and that it is necessary to appropriate it and then spread it over personalized sharing networks. According to the authors, the forms of collective action facilitated by social media may also reflect increasingly complex actions and mechanisms, especially because they are strongly permeated by contextual elements that are constantly transforming.

The next empirical steps of the study will focus on the importance of digital communication in the action dynamics of groups, how they organize and how they are communicated to the public — specifically on Twitter, a platform with wide political mobilization from the organization of movements until their spread (often in real time; Gerbaudo, 2012). This section sought to emphasize the importance of digital communication in political organization and action, as well as the role of weak ties and bridging, focusing on personalized communication and on digital influencers as opinion leaders, and the reformulation of collective identity and collection action enabled by connective action.

This study belongs to a field whose goal is to investigate the contemporary work relationships in platforms (Filgueiras & Antunes, 2020; Grohmann & Qiu, 2020),

[2] "They are means not simply to convey abstract opinions, but also to give a shape to the way in which people come together and act together" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 4).

contributing to the analysis of a series of demonstrations organized by delivery service workers known as "Breque dos Apps". More specifically, the strikes involved the organization and participation of thousands of bikers and cyclists who are delivery app workers (in apps such as iFood, Rappi, Uber Eats, and Loggi) and were denouncing precarious work conditions. The demands of this class were an increase in the minimum delivery fees and in the fees per kilometer traveled, ending unjustified blocks and the scoring system (which some apps utilize), as well as demands for health and accident insurance and distribution of personal protective equipment. The demonstrations happened in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, which made the demands even more apparent and serious, also considering the increase in the number of individuals interested in this form of income (Abílio et al., 2020; Peres, 2020). The first delivery worker strike happened on July 1, 2020, in the country's major capital cities. Publications about the mobilization were strongly circulated on social networks and also covered by traditional media outlets. On the day of the demonstration, users were also encouraged to boycott the apps as a way to support the action, by not ordering food on that date and leaving negative reviews of the apps in their download platforms. The second national strike happened on July 25, 2020, and obtained higher adhesion, which was reflected on the volume of data analyzed.

Methodology

To develop the investigation proposed in this study, we first collected and classified a corpus composed of public posts made on Twitter in two different periods. This data collection involved the elaboration of linguistic instructions — a sequence of values articulating terms and phraseologies through logical operators — and the execution of these instructions through a data collection script using the Twitter Application Programming Interface (API). The linguistic instructions used for data collection about the "Breque dos Apps" debate on Twitter were:

> precarização OR precarizado OR precarizados OR precarizada OR precarizadas OR entregadores OR greve OR grevista OR grevistas OR breque OR paralisação OR paralização OR subprofissao OR subprofissoes OR subemprego OR subempregos OR motoboys OR subtrabalho OR subtrabalhos OR #brequedosapp OR #brequedosapps OR #grevedosapp OR #grevedosapps OR #1diasemapp OR #1diasemapps OR #apoiobrequedosapp OR #apoiobrequedosapps OR #grevedosentregadores OR #entregadores OR #entregadoresantifascistas OR #euapoiobrequedosapps OR #euapoiobrequedosapp OR #amanhatembrequedosapps OR #amanhatembrequedosapp OR #amanhãtembrequedosapps OR #amanhãtembrequedosapp OR #euapoioobrequedosapps OR #euapoioobrequedosapp OR #apoieobrequedosapps OR #apoieobrequedosapp OR #idiasemapp OR #entregadoresemetroviariosunidos OR #brequenosapps OR #grevenosapps OR #entregador.

To elaborate the linguistic instructions, we considered terms and phraseologies that could represent, to some extent, the topic in question — in this case, the "Breque dos Apps". We prioritized hashtags, which are keywords indexed by the graphic sign # (hash; for instance, #brequedosapps). In the context of new social media, hashtags are recurring components with high visibility, especially on Twitter. As linguistic items, these components translate discursive strategies whose roles may include, among other things, (a) cataloguing the post, since they can indicate the topic to which the post might belong (or, in a strict sense, its semantic and pragmatic field), or (b) an inter-subjective function, since they may also trigger affiliation processes (to a person, a group or a cause, for example; Zappavigna, 2015). In this sense, hashtags, like keywords, work as markers of the interpretations, meanings and positions of individuals in digital environments. The appropriation of this discursive tool that is characteristic of online environments enables new strategies for political communication in the digital sphere[3].

The application of linguistic instructions using the Twitter API helped us collect two different corpora: (a) one corpus about the demonstration on July 1, with posts that corresponded to the linguistic instructions and were made between June 30 and July 3, 2020; and (b) another corpus about the demonstration on July 25, with posts made between July 24 and 27, 2020. To ensure an accurate contextualization for the analysis, the temporal section for both collections included the day of each demonstration and the previous day for both of them, recording the moments when the movement was being organized and the calls for support, as well as 2 days after the demonstrations, when the mentions gradually started to lose force. Therefore, the first corpus in this study is composed of 432,430 posts, and the second corpus is composed of 102,748 posts, for a total of 535,178 messages published on Twitter in the two periods analyzed. The collections about the first demonstration were carried out retroactively from July 2 to July 8. For the data on the second demonstration, we used a script capable of collecting Twitter messages in real time[4].

We elaborated a map of interactions for each corpora based on the posts collected. Each interaction considered when elaborating each map corresponds to one retweet. On Twitter, a retweet is the forwarding or sharing of a post between two user profiles on the network: one profile, from which the interaction begins, retweets (or shares), and another profile, where the interaction arrives, is retweeted. Maps of interactions are represented as graphs (for instance, Recuero, 2017), which are sociograms whose nodes correspond to the profiles of the interactions and whose edges correspond to the interactions between them, meaning the retweets.

For this analysis, the visualization of the graphs was generated through the free application Gephi (https://gephi.org/; Gephi Consortium). This tool enables identifying

[3] The conflict between different interpretation of political facts, events and phenomena is approached by some authors from a contraposition of programs, anti-programs and the effort of neutrality when employing key words adopted by actors of the public debate. For more information, please see Rogers (2017).

[4] These two methods of data collection from Twitter are provided for in the API of the platform used for this study (v.1.1). For more information, please refer to https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/twitter-api/v1

the formation of communities based on the relationships established between profiles, acting as a bridge between this relationship and the content shared or retweeted. To that end, we use the Louvain algorithm (Blondel et al., 2008) as a method to detect communities, seeking to maximize modularity, a metric whose calculation compares the amount of edges inside and among communities, measuring the density of the cluster. For this study, we considered communities to be prominent when they concentrate 5% or more of the profiles participating in the debate, which resulted in eight communities in the first period. To enable the comparison between the two periods, we chose to keep the same amount of groups when observing the formation of clusters in the second period analyzed. In addition, we assessed the degree of importance of the actors composing the network, seeking to determine whether they constitute a network of profiles around them, sharing their content and their interpretation of the debated topic.

Afterwards, each corpus comprising a period of 4 days (or 96 hours) was segmented into 16 sub-corpora, each composed of posts made every 6 hours. Therefore, in addition to the graphs with the total number of interactions in each corpus, we generated graphs with the interactions in each sub-period of 6 hours. This segmentation of the interactions inside the temporal plane allowed us to monitor the appearance of new profiles in the debate, as well as the evolution of the respective interactions among them, over each period analyzed.

Results Analysis

With data collected from the Twitter API through the search based on the linguistic instructions described previously, we analyzed a total of 535,178 tweets on the network made in the two distinct periods of the demonstrations of delivery app workers (Figure 1). For the demonstrations on July 1, we collected tweets published between June 29 and July 3, which includes: (a) the day before the demonstration, when the movement was being organized and support was being called; (b) the day of the street demonstration, when the tweets expressed support as well as criticism against the protests; and (c) the days after the demonstration, when the number of messages mentioning the movement started to decrease.

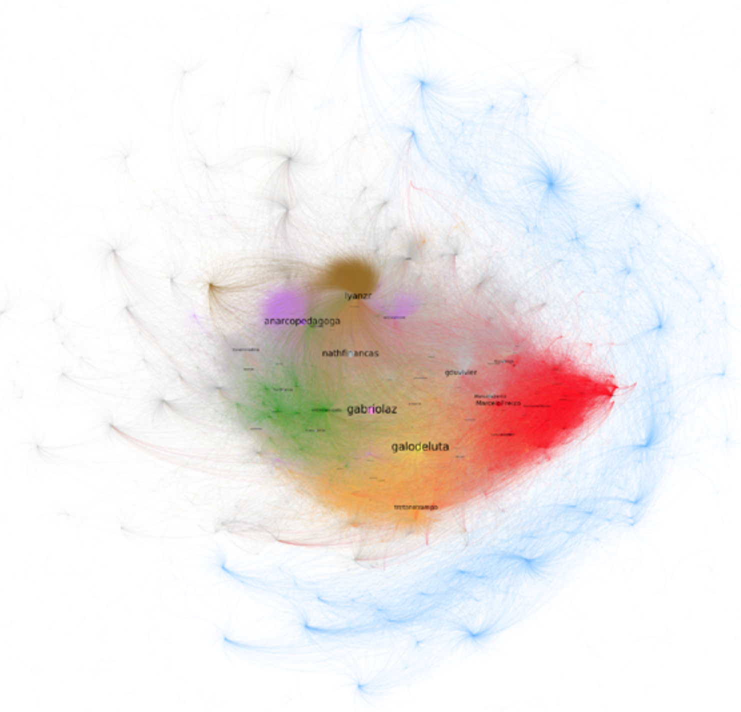

Figure 1 *Complete Graph of Interactions About the "Breque dos Apps" (Data Collected Between June 30 and July 3)*

In quantitative terms, this first moment of debate about the "Breque dos Apps" on Twitter mobilized 180,985 profiles and 432,430 tweets, of which 350,562 were retweets (81.06%). From these tweets, we carried out analyzes about the network of interactions engaged by them, that is, the communities formed around the retweets, which always involve two profiles — the one retweeting and the one being retweeted.

Using the Louvain method (Blondel et al., 2008), we detected eight communities that stood out in the debate about the "Breque dos Apps" in this period. The community with the largest number of profiles, represented in the figure above in red, mobilized 16,721 distinct profiles, or 10.8% of the users participating in the debate. This community is composed of profiles of political actors and organizations at the left side of the ideological spectrum, such as the politicians @MarceloFreixo, @samiabomfim and @GuilhermeBoulos, the representation of the Worker's Party at the Chamber of Deputies (@PTnaCamara), as well as social leaders or movements with progressive agendas (@J_LIVRES and @LeonelRadde). In terms of the number of interactions, this cluster garnered more than 60,000 retweets, which corresponds to 19.6% of the sample of interactions among the most prominent clusters according to the Louvain method.

The orange cluster also stood out with 8% of the profiles participating in the debate (N = 12,338). Although it is a prominent community, this cluster is strongly centered around the profile @tretanotrampo, one of the profiles responsible for the organization of the demonstrations. In terms of content, during the period analyzed, this profile focused on publishing and commenting on videos published by the delivery workers during the street demonstration. Other single profiles that stood out in the formation of communities were the activists @gabriolaz and @anarcopedagoga in the pink and lilac clusters, respectively. Together, the communities formed around these two activists aggregated 13.2% of the users participating in the debate about the "Breque dos Apps".

Another activist profile assuming a central role in the debate about the demonstrations on Twitter was @galodeluta. This profile composed the yellow cluster, which is formed by 8,970 profiles, representing 5.8% of the users participating in the debate. Although the number of participants involved in this community is lower than in the other communities, it is important to highlight that these publications mobilized 7.6% of the interactions mapped in this study, which is higher than the interactions mobilized by the lilac cluster, for instance.

Lastly, a community was formed around profiles that participated in a scattered way, around the central part of the network formed by more prominent actors in the debate. This community is represented in blue and is formed by 9,711 profiles, or 6.4% of the users participating in the debate on Twitter. Although there were no prominent profiles like in the other clusters, the participation of these profiles was decentralized and focused mainly on criticizing the demands made by the demonstrators, the effects of the strike and the illegitimacy of the movement. Here are some examples of messages criticizing the movement: "a strike of self-employed workers is like living alone and running away from home"[5] (@CorrupcaoMemes), "Brazil is the country where the 'antifascist', self-employed delivery boy goes on 'strike' to get the fascist labor laws"[6] (@Ilisp_org) and "a strike of self-employed workers is as effective as riding an armored car with the windows down"[7] (@spinellirio). In general, these types of publication represent only 4% of interactions in the form of retweets, which means a relatively low number compared to the total interactions in the other clusters expressing support for the demonstrations.

The communities represented in brown and green are formed by supporters of the demonstration and converge in terms of the users composing them. The brown cluster is structured around messages supporting the demonstration published by the artist @lyanzr, which obtained more than 8,476 retweets. This community obtained the lowest number of interactions in the first demonstration (3.3%). In turn, the green cluster has a more scattered structure in terms of the distribution of the importance of each profile. This community represents 5.1% of the users who published about the topic.

Lastly, still regarding the first demonstration, the profiles of the comedian @gduvivier and of the financial education content creator @nathfinancas were also important. Although these profiles were important on the network due to the number of retweets they obtained, they are part of a group of profiles that formed communities with no significant interactions with the major clusters identified in the debate, according to the modularity index used in this study. That does not mean that these profiles were less

[5] Retrieved from https://twitter.com/CorrupcaoMemes/status/1278380178469801986

[6] Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Ilisp_org/status/1278492844144156673

[7] Retrieved from https://twitter.com/spinellirio/status/1278357171516964866

important in the debate about the "Breque dos Apps", but that the communities formed around these tweets had a lower density than the other clusters, representing less than 5% of the profiles participating in the discussion about the topic. Figure 2 represents the relationship between the number of retweets received and the number of profiles composing each of the clusters that generated tweets about the first demonstration of delivery app workers.

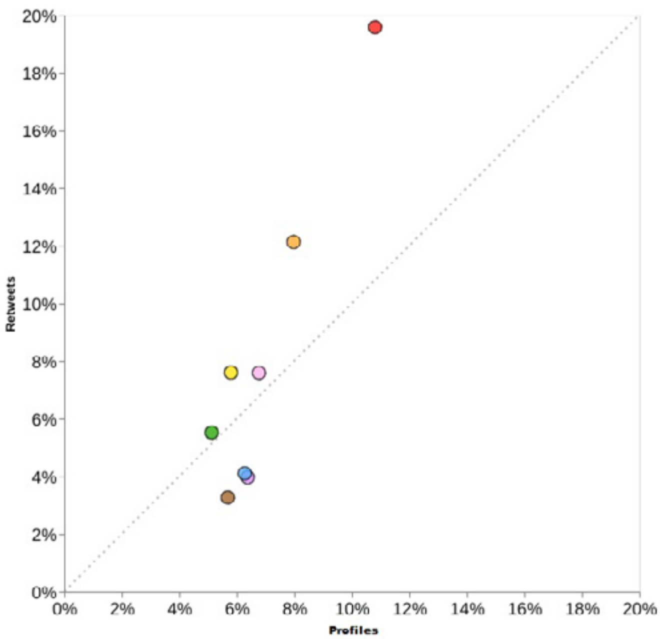

Figure 2 *Percentage of Profiles per Percentage of Retweets for Each Community in the First Demonstration*

The data collection for the second demonstration, which happened on July 25, 2020, followed the same pattern as the first one, including on the day before and on the 2 days after the protest. Figure 3 represents the map of interactions about the "Breque dos Apps" between July 24 and 27, 2020. Compared to the first demonstration, the second period analyzed had a drop of 70.6% in the number of profiles involved, and of 80.8% in the number of interactions about the topic on Twitter, mobilizing 55,039 profiles and 102,748 tweets (of which 67,451 are retweets). The decrease in the volume of debate is graphically represented in the density of clusters, which presented more transparency and space between the nodes.

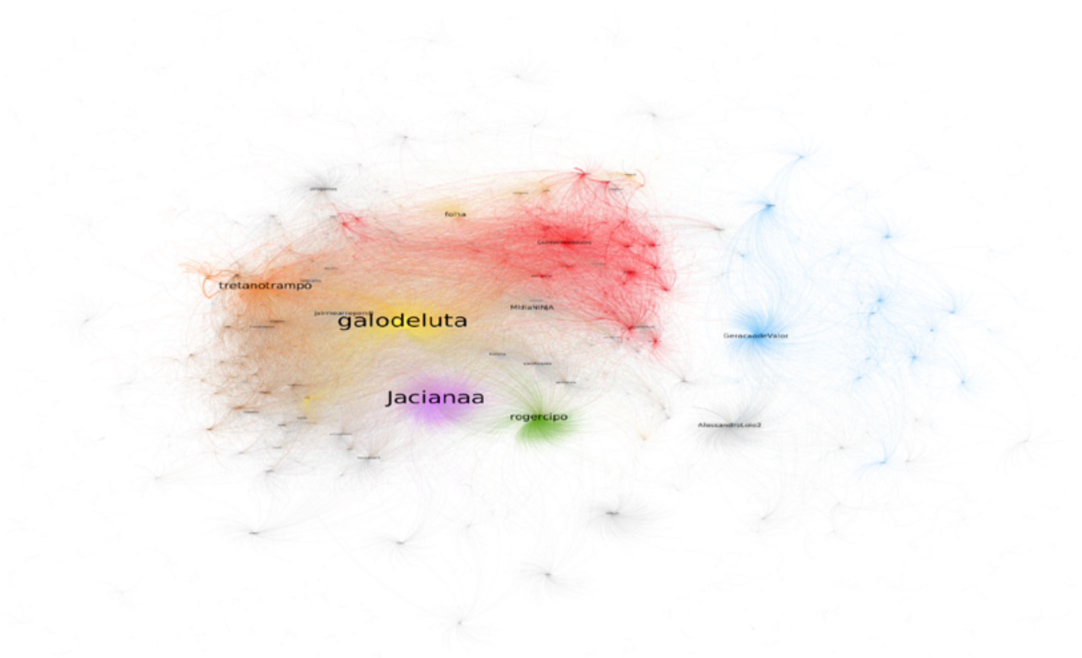

Figure 3 *Complete Graph of Interactions About the "Breque dos Apps" (Data Collected Between July 24 and 27)*

However, there are a series of similarities between the two protests. Firstly, the profiles of the delivery workers @galodeluta and @tretanotrampo were central in the debate and figured among the major mobilizers in both events, becoming articulators of debate and leaders of the movement. The two profiles were at the center of the yellow and orange clusters, which obtained 9.2% and 9% of the interactions, respectively, making these groups the second and third clusters with the most interactions in the second cycle of demonstrations. The red cluster, which was composed of actors of institutional politics, garnered the highest number of interactions in both protests (14.8%). These were the social groups with the most diverse participation during the entire demonstration, with tweets calling for action, recommendations, justifications and stories about the protests. Figure 4 represents the relationship between the number of retweets received and the number of profiles composing each of the communities in the debate about the second demonstration of delivery app workers.

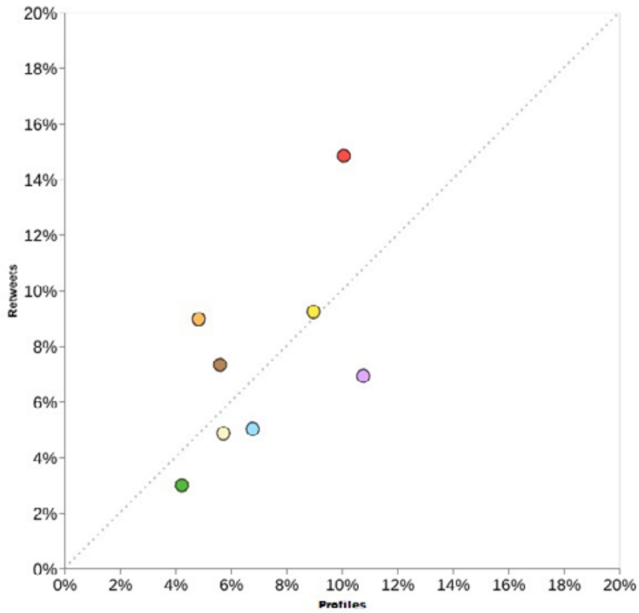

Figure 4 *Percentage of Profiles per Percentage of Retweets for Each Community in the Second Demonstration*

As in the first protest, the dynamics of mobilization also included communities formed around viral tweets made by profiles that are not so closely related to the movement. For instance, that is the case of the purple and green clusters, which mobilized around calls to action made by the profiles @jacianaa and @rogercipo, who shared the message "DO NOT ORDER DELIVERY FOOD TODAY"[8]. These two clusters had a star-shaped format and were concentrated around isolated profiles, with no formation of a more spread-out set of nodes. Unlike the first protest, a small cluster was formed composed of profiles of media outlets.

While in the first demonstration the cluster criticizing the movement (in blue) was formed by comic profiles joking about the demonstration's demands for rights for self-employed workers, the second demonstration saw a larger presence of profiles connected to institutional politics, especially profiles related to parties of liberal orientation, such as the Partido Novo and the Democratas. These profiles commented on a public opinion survey indicating that 70% of the delivery workers preferred to work as self-employed, while only 30% fought for fixed and exclusive labor ties with the app platforms (Sena, 2020).

Compared to the first protest, there was a larger presence of artists and celebrities among the profiles mobilized. Another relevant decrease was the number of profiles connected to the Black movement, which had spread over different groups and even formed a majority cluster in the first protest. Profiles such as @jacianaa and @rogercipo stood out, but only in isolated clusters due to viral tweets, and not by forming a network like in the first protest. The lower participation of these groups in the second protest may lead to the elaboration of hypotheses about the relationship between these groups and the size of the delivery workers' demonstrations, either regarding the thematic and political

[8] Retrieved from https://twitter.com/Jacianaa/status/1287084235363418114

approximation between workers' social movements and the Black movement or regarding the amplitude and reach of the debate, a factor to which artists and celebrities contribute when they spread the topic for publics less interested in the debate.

Temporal Analysis

The temporal analysis of the maps of interactions shows how the formation of the networks happened over time during the periods analyzed. In the first demonstration (Figure 5), which happened between June 30 and July 3, we found that the first community was formed around the publication of the artist @lyanzr, in which he called his followers to participate in the boycott of delivery platforms.

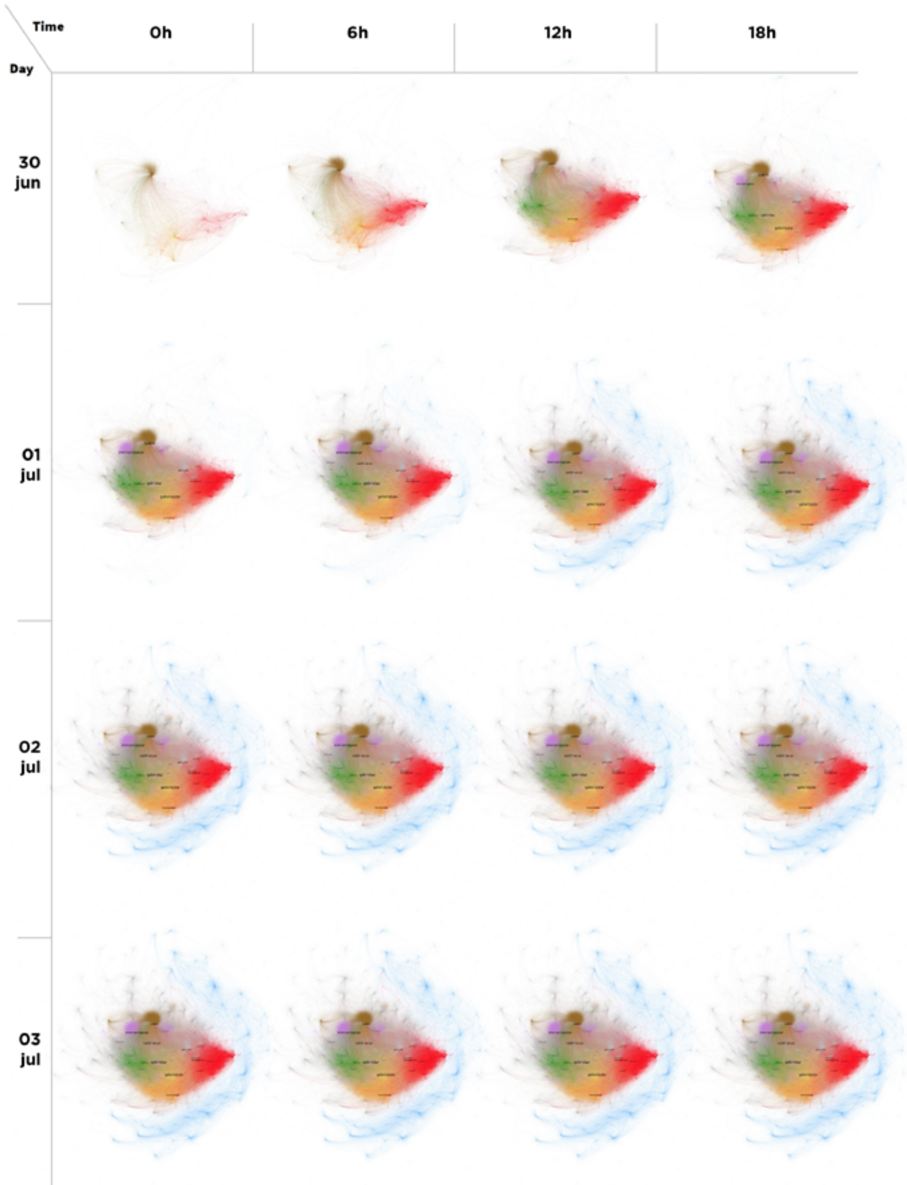

Figure 5 *Map of Interactions During the First Demonstration (Data Collected Between June 30 and July 3)*

Early in the day before the mobilization, the red and yellow clusters started to stand out as relevant actors of the debate. To a large extent, they contained tweets about the acts on the streets and requests for app users not to use delivery services as a way to support the demonstration. During the morning on June 30, the group represented in green started to stand out, especially due to its articulation with the brown cluster, as we mentioned previously. A fourth community appeared in the afternoon of that same day, represented in lilac and led by a publication of the activist @anarcopedadoga. What stood out the most in this first day was the growth and predominance of the red cluster, composed primarily of profiles associated with institutional politics, such as the congressmen @MarceloFreixo and @samiabonfim, the candidate for mayor of São Paulo @GuilhermeBoulos and the former president @LulaOficial. This demonstrates how the actors of institutional politics connected to the left-wing sought to support the delivery workers' movement since it was called.

On the day of the demonstration, the communities mentioned previously were maintained and intensified their activity on the networks, with the publication of videos and stories about strikes in several Brazilian capitals. Some highlights at that point include the participation of profiles such as @tretanotrampo and @galodeluta, who focused on publishing content they received from delivery workers who participated in the street demonstrations that day.

There was also the appearance and increasing activity of profiles criticizing the demands raised by the delivery workers. These profiles, located inside the blue cluster, began posting messages opposing the movement in the early hours of the day, and their participation intensified until the end of July 1. In the 2 days after the demonstration, that was one of the few groups still growing, focusing on commenting negatively about the acts and their supporters on the networks.

Figure 6 shows the evolution in the number of retweeted publications about the delivery workers' strike in quantitative terms over the period analyzed. The highest increase in the number of retweets happened in the morning of the demonstration day. The figure below shows that 60.18% of the retweets about the "Breque dos Apps" happened between 6 a.m. and midday on July 1. Between midday and the end of the afternoon, the number of retweets dropped significantly, and continued to fall until the end of the period analyzed.

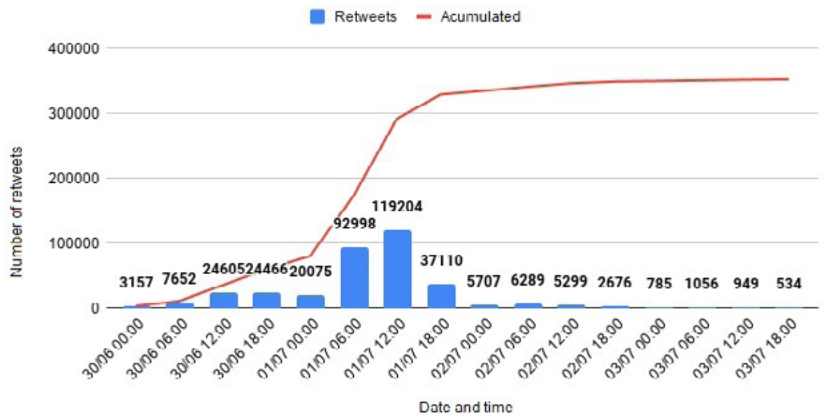

Figure 6 *Evolution of the Number of Retweets During the First Demonstration (Data Collected Between June 30 and July 4)*

The second demonstration happened on July 25. The temporal analysis of the map of interactions for that demonstration shows a few aspects that stand out when compared to the first demonstration (Figure 6). Like in the first cycle of mobilizations, the profiles who started the debate were distributed among the clusters composed primarily of delivery workers' movements and actors of institutional politics. However, there is an important difference regarding the moment the clusters were formed. Unlike the first protest, when the major clusters were well established since 6 p.m. the day before the demonstration, in the second protest, the formation of the major clusters started only at midday of the protest day, which means the movement was already under way. The last clusters to join the debate (green and purple) were formed around viral tweets made by influencers connected to the Black movement. This highlights the potential for engagement around mobilizations overlapping the two causes, and contributes with another evidence of the hypothesis that the lower participation of profiles connected to the Black movement could explain the decrease in the debate about the second demonstration.

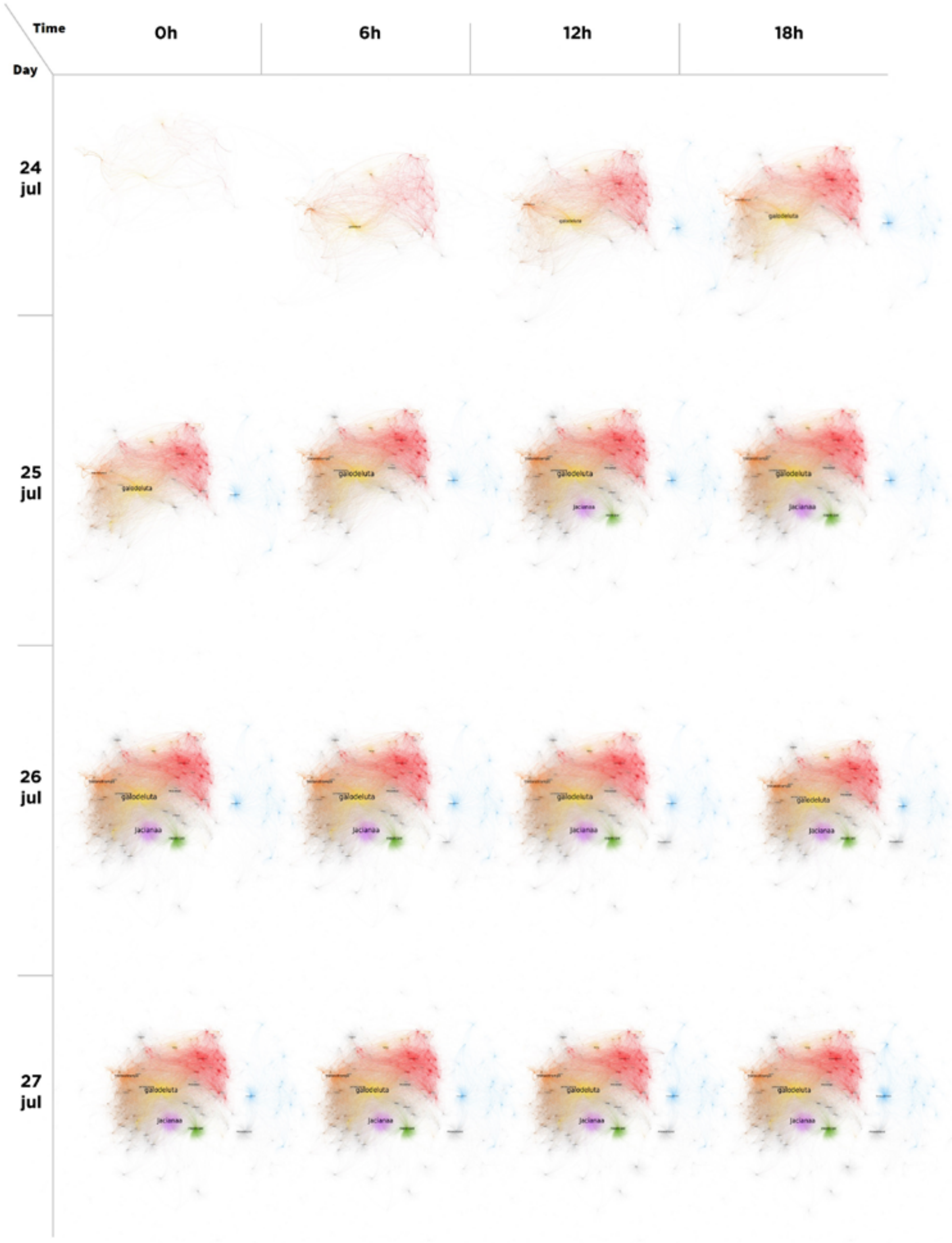

Figure 7 *Map of Interactions During the Second Demonstration (Data Collected Between July 24 and 27)*

The debate in the 2 days after the second demonstrations did not change much compared to the first protest but increased slightly after July 27. This increase is related to the growth in the number of interactions in the blue clusters, formed by politicians and profiles of liberal orientation who criticized the delivery workers' mobilization. This critical reaction may indicate the beginning of a stronger narrative regarding the protests, which appeared in the blue cluster as a reaction to the two demonstrations. In the second event, it gained a less ironic nature, incorporating arguments to discuss the demands made by the delivery workers. This characteristic is an evidence of the disputed nature of the movement. Although it was mostly connected to sectors aligned with the left side of the political spectrum, it started being incorporated into the liberal discourse of parties aligned with the right wing through narratives of freedom, competition and deregulation.

Regarding the evolution in the number of retweets during the second period analyzed, we saw once again that the day of the actual demonstration accumulated a significant majority of the publications about the topic: almost half of the volume occurred until the end of the morning on the 25th (Figure 8).

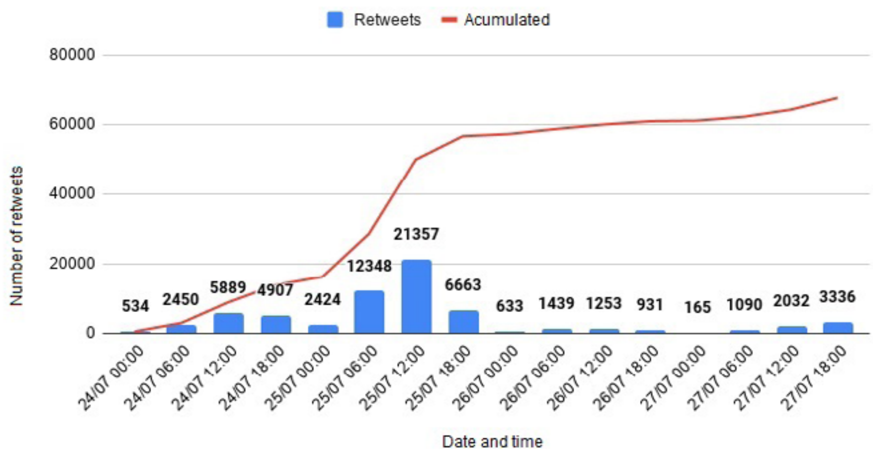

Figure 8 *Evolution of the Number of Retweets During the Second Demonstration (Data Collected Between July 24 and 27)*

However, contrary to what we observed in the first demonstration analyzed, there was an increase in the number of publications in the last day of the period. A possible explanation for that could be the decentralized participation of right-wing groups, who focused on criticizing the issues raised by the movement. One example of that is a tweet published at 3:24 p.m. on July 27 by the entrepreneur Flávio Augusto (@GeraçãoDeValor), who said:

> APP delivery workers have given up labor laws. This movement now is to open their own cooperative and compete with iFood. Some time from now, they'll realize there's no magic and that they stopped working for an evil entrepreneur and started working for a crooked syndicalist.[9]

In summary, in this section, we examined the evolution of the debate about the demonstration of the "Breque dos Apps" over two different periods of the protest. We found that supporters of the issues raised by the movement are predominant in the publications about the topic on Twitter. In the two events analyzed, there was the participation of different communities formed by groups of supporters in different sides. This suggests that the "Breque dos Apps" mobilized actors with different types of political,

[9] Retrieved from https://twitter.com/GeracaodeValor/status/1287816165318959104

cultural and institutional capital. However, it is important to mention that profiles criticizing the demonstration also expressed their opinion in a decentralized and scattered way. Having examined the role of communities in the debate about the "Breque dos Apps", in the next section we will focus on the participation of the most influential profiles inside the debate in general.

Analysis of the Most Influential Profiles

After analyzing the social groups that engaged in mobilizing the delivery workers' protests on Twitter, we will begin an investigation into the behavior of the main influencers of the debate in each of the demonstrations, seeking to identify the permanence of profiles in the discussion, profiles that joined it, and their roles. Our reference was the 200 profiles with the highest number of retweets for each period analyzed. These profiles represented 78.3% and 84.6% of the messages retweeted in each demonstration, respectively.

Regarding the presence and role of these profiles in each of the events, we can distinguish three behaviors that help us to understand the process of building a discussion about delivery workers on Twitter. We start from the understanding that, due to the platform's characteristics, Twitter amplifies heterogeneous compositions of social actors that tend to connect in an ephemeral way in favor of specific causes, while certain groups and actors use the space to build a more clearly defined common identity.

Profiles That Participated in Both Demonstrations

The profiles of individuals and organizations among the 200 most retweeted users in the first demonstration and remained in this group in the mobilization cycle for the second act constitute potential actors for the construction of a collective identity around the fight for better work conditions of delivery workers. Of the 200 major influencers in the first protest, 121 remained active in the second, which represents a permanence level of around 60%. Of these, 61 remained among the 200 major influencers in the two demonstrations.

Among the major groups that composed the debate, there are profiles linked to institutional politics. Most of the profiles were linked to left-wing parties, such as the Worker's Party, the Socialism and Liberty Party and the Democratic Labor Party, including the 2018 presidential candidates, Ciro Gomes (@cirogomes) and Guilherme Boulos (@GuilhermeBoulos), and the Worker's Party's candidate for vice-president, Manuela D'Ávila (@ManuelaDavila). In addition, the presence of communication companies (@folha, @bbcbrasil, @UOLNoticias), activists linked to the Black movement (@gabriolaz, @andrezadelgado) and alternative media vehicles (@MidiaNINJA, @J_LIVRES, @brasildefato) stood out.

It is important to highlight the permanence of the profiles @galodeluta and @ tretanotrampo, which established themselves as the most important profiles linked specifically to the delivery workers' movement, becoming the leaders and the more defined expression of the demonstrators' identity. Between the start of data collection for the first protest and the last day of data collection for the second, the profile @galodeluta obtained a 26.8% increase in the number of followers, with 9.2% in the 4 days of the first protest alone. There was also an increase in the number of followers of the profile @tretanotrampo, who grew by 13.8% over the entire period analyzed, with 5.4% in the first cycle of demonstrations alone.

In addition to the profiles among the 200 with the most retweets in both demonstrations, there were also 60 profiles that remained in the debate in the second protest, but left the group of the 200 most retweeted. There are no major differences in terms of topic or social composition between these two groups. As in the first group, there is a presence of institutional political actors (especially from left-wing parties), artists and social movement activists.

A qualitative analysis of the intensity of engagement of these profiles in the second protest can help explain the difference in the impact they obtained compared to the first. Examples of reduced engagement can be seen in profiles such as the financial education content creator @nathfinancas, who had 10 interactions (four tweets and six retweets) in support of the campaign in the first demonstration, but only one retweet in the second, as well as the comic character @startupdareal, who criticizes entrepreneurial thinking and decreased from 12 interactions in the first demonstration (five tweets and seven retweets) to only one retweet in the second. Artists such as the singer @emicida and the actress @patriciapillar obtained significant engagement in the first protest, with only one tweet in support of the cause, but did not reach the same projection in the second, when they only retweeted messages from other profiles. Lastly, other highlights include institutional political actors who did not take action in the second protest, but were brought into the debate due to retweets of the posts they made in the first act; that was the case of the former president of Brazil @LulaOficial and the congressman @MarceloFreixo.

In addition to the analysis of the profiles among the 200 most retweeted in the first protest, there are 101 profiles that were not in this group in the first protest, but became part of it in the second. With a social composition similar to that of the previous groups, 71 of the 101 profiles in this group obtained an increase in retweets between the first and the second protests, indicating that their rise to the group of the 200 most retweeted did not happen only due to the lower engagement or departure of influential profiles, but also due to the greater capacity of mobilization around these profiles. This element is important because it indicates the strengthening of ties between these profiles and the delivery workers' cause.

Profiles That Participated in the First Demonstration Only

Among the 200 most retweeted profiles in the first protest, 79 did not engage in the second demonstration, which represents a drop of almost 40% in permanence. These profiles were responsible for 22.1% of the retweets in the first demonstration and garnered approximately 26,900,000 followers between June 29 and July 3. Among these profiles, artists such as the comedians José Simão (@jose_simão), Marcelo Adnet (@MarceloAdnet) and Gregório Duvivier (@gduvivier) stood out, with 5,200,000, 3,300,000 and 1,400,000 followers, respectively. The same can be said about political leaders such as the former president Dilma Rousseff (@dilmabr), the former minister Marina Silva (@MarinaSilva), and the congressman and president of the Workers' Party, Gleisi Hoffmann (@gleisi).

The discontinuity of the engagement of these profiles in the delivery workers' demonstrations indicates a weak tie with the cause, but it also shows how even weak ties are capable of boosting engagement in social causes in the digital environment, amplifying the reasons for mobilization and the coordination of actions such as boycotts and promotion of hashtags.

New Participants

Lastly, among the 200 profiles with the most retweets in the second demonstration, 39 were new actors, meaning they did not participate in the first demonstration and became prominent users in the second. This group has several profiles that helped composed the blue cluster, which was the group of users criticizing the July 25 demonstration. The highlights among them include the profile of the businessman Flávio Augusto (@geracaodevalor), with more than 500,000 followers, and profiles linked to the liberal party Partido Novo, such as the presidential candidate in 2018, João Amoedo (@joaoamoedonovo), the party's official profile (@ partidonovo30), the congressman Paulo Ganime (@pauloganime), and the congressman for São Paulo, Daniel José (@ danieljosebr). The appearance of influencers in the liberal institutional political debate after the second demonstration corroborates the hypothesis that protests became the object of dispute, especially regarding the issues associated with the establishment of labor ties between delivery workers and application platforms.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamics of the public debate on Twitter about the delivery app workers' strike from the perspective of collective identity and collective action. To do so, we collected two corpora composed of 535,178 tweets published during the two episodes of workers' demonstrations, which happened between June and July 2020. We performed a temporal analysis of the maps of interaction, seeking to identify the formation of clusters over the duration of the periods of demonstration. In addition, the study also proposed an analysis of the most influential profiles during the two episodes analyzed, seeking to identify the behavior of the main actors who participated in the debate about the "Breque dos Apps".

In general, the research found that most of the profiles that participated in the debate on Twitter about the delivery workers' strike originate from communities formed by supporters of the topics demanded by the protesters. The organizers of the demonstration, actors of institutional politics and activists from different social movements were among the main protagonists of the debate about the "Breque dos Apps" in the two periods analyzed. In addition to the formation of communities around the profiles of the delivery workers who articulated and disseminated the movement's message in the Twitter environment, the role of left-wing actors of institutional politics was present in all stages of mobilization and predominated in terms of engagement and reach. Critical and right-wing profiles were also present in both episodes. However, it is clear from this temporal assessment that there was an inflection of behavior, which was previously merely disapproval of the movement but became an ideological (and, to an extent, partisan) dispute between conflicting fields of discourse. The findings indicate that the notions of identity and collective action, (re)formulated and enabled by connective action, necessarily permeate the role of political parties in their own construction and maintenance. It is a challenge to understand the extent to which bridgings and shared meanings are effectively established to structure mobilization and political action through social media, especially since Twitter commonly allows for weak ties.

We emphasize that the mobilization around the rights of delivery workers is still ongoing, having established itself as a research topic that should more deeply incorporate the weight and role of social networks in the process of mobilization and internal organization of delivery workers, as well as in their relationships with actors such as platforms, State agents and institutions, and a wide variety of social movements with progressive agendas or that defend agendas such as the deregulation of work, the reduction of the role of the State and the de-bureaucratization of the public sector.

Translation: Lucas Peixoto

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The Black Social Ranking Experience at Uber: A Racialized Reflection on Contemporary Surveillance

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Abstract

This study analyzes the social ranking experience of Black users and drivers of the private transportation company Uber in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. With the attention turned to the experience and evaluation system of the company, it is observed how they appear in the contemporary logic of surveillance. Based on discussions and observations carried out in exploratory research, the study asks: with data surveillance mechanisms in operation, how are Black people experiencing the social logic of ranking in Uber's environment? Cartography was the methodology chosen for the study, considering the possibility of monitoring processes and their commitment to experimentation — with flexible data production procedures — as well as its research-intervention nature (Escóssia et al., 2009). Thus, the main objective of the research was to investigate this experience in order to broaden the analysis of contemporary surveillance with a racialized approach; and among the specific objectives, we aim at breaking the silencing and invisibility of Black theoretical perspectives (Ribeiro, 2017). The theoretical framework of the study will be divided into two study axes: race relations and surveillance. It is therefore realized that, in the era of big data, discrimination can appear in a hidden way as technologies perform a false neutrality that accelerates and deepens it (Benjamin, 2019).

Keywords
social ranking, Uber, racism, surveillance

A Experiência Negra de Ranqueamento Social na Uber: Uma Reflexão Racializada da Vigilância Contemporânea

Resumo

Este estudo analisa a experiência de ranqueamento social de usuários e motoristas negros da empresa de transporte privado Uber, na cidade do Rio de janeiro, Brasil. Com os olhares voltados para a vivência e para o sistema de avaliação da empresa, observa-se como a experiência aparece na lógica contemporânea da vigilância. A partir de discussões e observações realizadas em pesquisa exploratória, o estudo questiona: na ambiência da Uber, com mecanismos de vigilância de dados em operação, de que modo os negros estão vivenciando a lógica social de ranqueamento? A cartografia foi a metodologia escolhida para o estudo, considerando a possibilidade de acompanhar processos e sua aposta na experimentação, com procedimentos flexíveis de produção de dados, bem como o seu caráter pesquisa-intervenção (Escóssia et al., 2009). Assim, o objetivo principal da pesquisa é investigar essa vivência com o intuito de ampliar a análise da vigilância contemporânea com um recorte racializado e entre os objetivos específicos pretende-se romper com o silenciamento e a invisibilidade de perspectivas teóricas negras (Ribeiro, 2017). O arcabouço teórico do estudo será dividido em dois eixos: estudo das relações raciais e os estudos de vigilância. Percebemos, assim, que na era do *big data* a discriminação pode aparecer de forma oculta, pois as tecnologias performam uma falsa neutralidade, o que acelera e cria discriminações ainda mais profundas (Benjamin, 2019).

Palavras-chave
ranqueamento social, Uber, racismo, vigilância

"Dude, That Is So Black Mirror"

Jack, rating 3.7; Chester, rating 3.1; Ethan, rating 4.1. Who are these people? What do they have in common? They are characters of a society whose social interactions are mediated by a social network with a ranking system in which the members can rate each other from one to five stars. In this context, this trio is far close to an average of 4.5, which would segment them as premium users, the social elite of that ambience. If you watched the first episode of the third season of the British series *Black Mirror*[1], "Nosedive" (Wright, 2016), you may not have even paid attention to these characters. They are the three out of four Black characters who have outstanding ratings. In a critical tone, they occupy positions on the margins of a society woven throughout the episode with an air of dystopia and futurism.

For Uber drivers and users, this reality may sound somewhat familiar. Created in 2009 by Travis Kalanick and Garret Camp in California, the American private car transportation service company started to become popular in Brazil in 2014, with Rio de Janeiro being the first city to receive the service, followed by São Paulo and Belo Horizonte ("Serviço de caronas remuneradas Uber inicia operações no Brasil", 2014). Currently, Uber is present in more than 60 countries and more than 900 cities, with the United States and Brazil being the countries with the most cities served by it (Ghedin, 2019).

The initial proposal of the company was to offer transportation in luxury cars — performing the same function of taxis; it was boosted with the mediation of the service request application, which contributed to the project becoming one of the pioneers of the category named as e-hailing. E-hailing is the possibility to request a service through an electronic device, such as a smartphone or tablet (FutureBridge, 2020). Among its distinguishing features are the possibility of electronic payment, real-time location using a geolocation tool and the low cost of the service, considering that its maintenance is lower. In the context of Uber, the service request platform is an application, in which, at the end of the ride, both the passenger and the driver rate each other from one to five stars.

[1] Created by screenwriter Charlie Brooker, *Black Mirror* was launched in 2011, in the United Kingdom, and broadcasted on Channel 4. Four years later, the streaming service Netflix bought the series, which became popular all over the world with a sci-fi plot built in a tone of dystopia, with emphasis on the interaction between humans and technologies. The series has episodes with independent narratives, as well as cast and characters (Plunkett, 2015).

"What is your Uber score?" In the week I watched the episode "Nosedive", I found this question in an article that was circulating on the social network Facebook, in 2017. Here, first-person positioning is necessary to explain the motivational triggers of this research. At the time, the rating given to drivers was highlighted at the end of the ride, but most users were unaware that they were also rated by drivers. It took a long step-by-step procedure within Uber's application in order to access the passenger rating. When checking my rating, I was surprised by my 4.85 score and questioned what criteria the drivers used for this assessment. So, at the suggestion of my then master's advisor Robson Braga, we decided to study the mechanisms of immediate surveillance and punishment within a logic of daily surveillance, which resulted in a first mapping of this experience, systematized and described in the article "Meeoo, isso é muito Black Mirror: A nota da Uber como punição do comportamento social na sociedade da vigilância distribuída" (Dude, That Is So Black Mirror: The Uber Ranking as Punishment for Social Behavior in the Distributed Surveillance Society; Braga & Evangelo, 2017).

In the first exploratory study, the racial issue did not appear in a decisive manner; however, as Almeida (2018) emphasizes, "contemporary society cannot be understood without the concepts of race and racism (...). Racism is always structural, that is, it is an element that integrates the economic and political organization of a society" (p. 15). In view of the interest in expanding the perception of this experience, the continuity of this research will deal with the reality that Black Brazilians experience daily in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and that will be explored from Uber's logic in order to create a magnifying glass that could be used to look at other Black experiences within the current context of surveillance.

That said, the main objective of this study is to continue mapping this experience with the intention of expanding the analysis of contemporary surveillance from a racialized perspective on the subject. Uber's experience from this perspective, which is mediated by the assessment system of the company, can stimulate reflection on contemporary monitoring and social control mechanisms and current surveillance models, and initiate a cartography of a society anchored in a ranking logic, one that appears when it is necessary to classify the collected data, as we will explore throughout the study.

Methodology: Cartography

How did cartography appear as a fruitful methodology? We understood as researchers Escóssia et al. (2009) that this methodology proposes to monitor processes and it bets on experimentation. "This is the meaning of cartography: path monitoring, production processes involvement, networks or rhizomes connection" (Escóssia et al., 2009, p. 10). Among the main references for systematizing the method are its founders Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; concepts like networks and rhizomes already point to the roots of the methodology. Kastrup (2008) emphasizes that the method was created to study the production of subjectivity, that is, it says about its procedural dimension.

> Every cartography seeks to draw a certain rhizome, consisting of heterogeneous vectors: economic, political, social, technological, linguistic, ecological, etc. According to Deleuze and Guatarri, cartography is one of the operating principles of the rhizome. The map is always a map of a rhizome, which is a kind of an open whole in constant motion, composed of multiple heterogeneous lines, whose connections can be altered and broken (...). Making a map is then capturing lines, movements, a plane of forces. (Kastrup, 2008, p. 469)

It is worth mentioning that we are facing an unusual field. The analyzed field experience takes place within a private urban transportation, is mediated by an application, involves a ranking practice, among other issues; thus, being an unconventional field to be accessed. Part of the studied experience is constantly lived by drivers and, in the case of users, the other part is sporadic. In this way, experimenting is necessary. By not proposing specific procedures, cartography is revealed as a method compatible with experiences that escape from traditional research elements. "Several procedures can be adopted with regard to interview techniques, data analysis, and qualitative or quantitative strategies'' (Kastrup et al., 2014, p. 9).

Therefore, for the present study, three data production procedures were used:

- Literature review: focused on the theoretical fields of racial relations and surveillance studies.
- Participant observation in Uber rides: conversations with drivers and observation of personal experience with Uber rides.
- Questionnaires for Uber drivers and Black users in the city of Rio de Janeiro: they were distributed in the first half of 2020, initially on the Facebook group "Uber - Motoristas (APP) RJ" (Uber - Drivers [APP] Rio de Janeiro), a group with more than 78.000 members. I have been following this group since 2017, and, in its beginning, it used to deal with issues about Uber experiences but has now become an advertisement space, with cars, insurance and leases sales and offers. In that group, I found a Whatsapp group called "A grande família Uber/99" (The big Uber/99 family), with 68 drivers, in which I also distributed the questionnaire. Users began to be called on personal networks and the distribution also occurred on Facebook groups engaged with racial issues, among them: "Afrocentricidade" (Afrocentricity) with 6,400 members in January 2021, "RAP – Redes de Afro Profissionais" (Afro Professional Networks) with 13,500 members in January 2021, and "Mulheres Negras" (Black Women) with 12,700 thousand members in January 2021.

We are before a combination of stages, which aims to look at the research object from different angles, in its complexity and multiplicity. In this study, the analysis will be presented together with the consolidation of data done in a descriptive way, which will be distributed throughout the text in dialogue with the theoretical framework. The effort to merge data, analysis and framework is based on the understanding that field practice is not done in isolation; there is mutual interference between field and study practices and, thus, the text accompanies the fluidity of both.

Those interacting with the research questionnaires were called collaborators, considering the role of collaboration with the mapping of the studied experience. Collaborators is also the way Uber calls its drivers, in a new logic of working relationship. Their identities will be preserved, being presented using numbers, the role in the experience, their rating, and how they declare themselves according to racial criteria. Here, I highlight that self-declaration was not requested in the questionnaire according to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) parameters; the question was asked in an open way so that interactants could define themselves according to the way they call their racial origin — an attempt to also observe how collaborators relate to racial discussion. In the first questionnaire distribution, we obtained 33 responses, of which 31 were users and two were drivers. Their experiences will be cited throughout the text according to the following identifications:

- Collaborator 1 (Uber user; 4.57 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 2 (Uber user; 4.72 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 3 (Uber user; 4.79 rating; self-declared mixed race man);
- Collaborator 4 (Uber user, 3 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 5 (Uber user; 4.75 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 6 (Uber user; 4.77 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 7 (Uber user; 4.92 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 8 (Uber user; 4.81 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 9 (Uber user; 4.89 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 10 (Uber user; 4.83 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 11 (Uber user; 4.96 rating, self-declared White woman);
- Collaborator 12 (Uber user; 4.89 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 13 (Uber user; 4.75 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 14 (Uber user; 5 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 15 (Uber user; 4.76 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 16 (Uber user; 4.77 rating; self-declared White woman);
- Collaborator 17 (Uber user; 0 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 18 (Uber user; 4.93 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 19 (Uber user; 4.72 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 20 (Uber user; 4.87 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 21 (Uber user; 4 rating; self-declared mixed race man);
- Collaborator 22 (Uber user; 4.97 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 23 (Uber user; 4.92 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 24 (Uber user; 4.87 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 25 (Uber user; 4 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 26 (Uber user; 4.9 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 27 (Uber user; 4.77 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 28 (Uber user; 4.95 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 29 (Uber user; disregarded rating; self-declared Black woman);

- Collaborator 30 (Uber user; 4.81 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 31 (Uber user; 4.67 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 32 (Uber driver; 4.4 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 33 (Uber driver; 4 rating; self-declared Black man).

Surveillance Origins

> Drivers are often indifferent when they see a black woman waiting for an Uber ride; they often ignore the fact that it is me there waiting for the service and drive straight past me even though I have my cell phone in hand and have sent a message informing my exact localization. (Collaborator 6)

We are experiencing every day a more remarkable presence of digital communication technologies in daily practices. In this scenario, Uber consolidated itself with its e-hailing system in the private transportation segment, with a service request application, the possibility to pay with a credit card and a service evaluation system. The impact of the company on urban mobility in the more than 900 cities in which it is present is notable. With more affordable prices, it has made the use of private transportation services — traditionally made by taxis — more democratic; however, for historically subordinated groups, it may not be as democratic as that, as we can see from the introductory account.

Collaborator 6 is part of the 15 of the 33 Uber users and drivers (31 users and two drivers) who interacted with the questionnaire of the present research and who perceive the influence of their racial origin in the Uber experience in Rio de Janeiro. Her account opens the subject, and we observed that the user was often not recognized as a possible passenger by company drivers. She interprets the experiences with the eyes of gender and racial oppression present in society. With the report, we also observed that, for some Uber drivers, she is invisible. This type of situation is a clear reproduction of racism, insofar as she is not recognized as a possible consumer of the service due to her characteristics. But, how has racism been reproduced in a consumer experience mediated by communication technology?

In order to think about the issue, it is important to map the origin of the mechanisms that we are going to deal with in this study, such as ranking, segmenting, personalizing, punishing, and even excluding, which are part of the innovative logic of the service and experience of Uber drivers and users. These actions can be observed in digital environments based on surveillance models, which operate according to the interest of the institution that structures it, be it public or private.

In this way, we start from the analysis of surveillance practices made by Michel Foucault (1975/2014) regarding the society he calls "disciplinary". It is characterized by the continuous passage of people through confinement means: from family to school, to factories, and, in eventual cases, to hospitals and prisons (Deleuze, 2013). In this context, Bentham's panopticon appears as a symbolic architectural figure. "The principle is known: on the periphery a ring construction; in the center, a tower (...). The panoptic device organizes space units that allow you to see without stopping and recognize immediately" (Foucault, 1975/2014, p. 194). It appears that this surveillance model is of the order of visibility and that it has an automatic power, as it is not possible to verify who is being observed and if it is actually happening. According to the philosopher, the model induces a conscious state of constant visibility.

But for what? In disciplinary society, situated in the 18th and 19th centuries and which reached its peak in the 20th century, order prevailed; for this, one of its practices was punishment, whose main purpose is to be normalizing. In Foucault's words, it "traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all others, the external limit of the abnormal" (Foucault, 1975/2014, p. 179). In this logic, the disciplinary penalty is directed to deviations from pre-established social rules. As practical examples, in school and in the army, micropenalities of time are commonplace, such as delays and absences. Punishments could be subtle, such as deprivation or even humiliation.

It is worth mentioning that one of the most important objects in his analysis of disciplinary society is prison, which in countries such as Brazil and the United States (country of origin of the platform that makes up the object of this study) mass incarcerates the Black population[2]. Prisons that were born between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century mark the passage from torture punishment to incarceration.

In a revisit to Foucault's analysis, Gilles Deleuze (2013) states that disciplinary societies collapsed after the Second World War, considering the crises in the confinement means analyzed by Foucault. Disciplinary societies have been replaced by control societies, in which closed systems are overcome by ultra-fast forms of outdoor control.

> In disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in societies of control one is never finished with anything, the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation. (Deleuze, 2013, p. 226)

It is important to highlight here that Foucault's social analysis of disciplinary power, to which mechanisms of surveillance and punishment have been devoted in modern times, leads us to revisit it in a non-transitory and not completely overcome way. By looking at the evaluation system mechanism of Uber, for example, it is possible to make a clear analogy to the docilization of disciplinary society and also the logic of the ultra-fast forms of outdoor surveillance of the "society of control". The ratings given to drivers and

[2] "The prison, as we understand it today, emerges as a correction space; however, it distorts more than it corrects. In fact, we could ask ourselves: has it ever corrected? And corrected for what? The remnants of torture, as a penalty, remain; although, according to tradition, deprivation of liberty is what would be the punitive focus. This process is entangled as follows: 64% of the prison population is black (Infopen, 2016), while this group makes up 53% of the Brazilian population (IBGE, 2014). In other words, two out of three prisoners in Brazil are black" (Borges, 2019, p. 19).

users are nothing more than a way to constantly keep track of good behavior; otherwise, you can be excluded from the platform usage, which for drivers can mean losing their means of sustenance and for users the access to the service.

Big Data Surveillance: The Light Under Democratic Aspects

> For now, know that Every borders cross, every purchase you make, every call you dial, every cellphone tower you pass, friend you keep, site you visit and subject line you type is in the hands of a system whose reach is unlimited, but whose safeguards are not.
>
> Edward Snowden to Laura Poitras, 2013 (Lyon, 2015, p. 1)

In June 2013, the world had access to detailed information on mass surveillance mechanisms. There is a consensus among contemporary researchers that Edward Snowden's revelations are another watershed to think about. As Bruno (2013) recalls, the documents revealed the operation of the PRISM program. This allowed the American Security Agency to have access to servers of large internet companies, being able to mass monitor citizens (such as search history, emails, photos exchange, and videos, for example), as well as espionage practices by the American government, in which Brazil was also a target (Bruno, 2013). Lyon explains that Snowden's revelations were very significant, as they exposed the conditions of the 21st century surveillance specific type, and also stimulated fundamental questions about the legal, ethical and democratic limits of it.

> Under the visible flow of exchanges and social conversations, an immense, distributed and versatile system of tracking and categorizing personal data is constituted, which in turn feeds advertising strategies, security, development of services and applications, inside and outside these platforms. To cross this process, companies and governments specialize themselves in monitoring and collecting traces generated by users' Internet browsing, building databases and profile composition techniques that guide commercial, political, insurance, and administrative actions. (Bruno, 2013, p. 9)

Today we are, therefore, in the context of big data[3]. For Fernando Amaral (2016), big data is not just a type of mechanism that generates a gigantic volume of data, but a social and cultural change that shapes a new stage of the industrial revolution. "The size of the social, cultural and business impact is still uncertain, but we can already say that it will change the world as we know it today" (Amaral, 2016, p. 9). Shoshana Zuboff (2018) believes that big data configures a new logic of accumulation, which she calls

[3] "Big data is the phenomenon in which data is produced in various formats and stored by a large number of devices and equipment (...). The cheapness, miniaturization, and increased processing capacity lead to the dissemination of equipment, devices and processes capable of producing and storing data, virtualization, cloud computing, and the internet. Thus, we have Big Data"(Amaral, 2016, p. 7).

"surveillance capitalism" (p. 18), and that would be a new model of information capitalism whose main characteristic is to predict and change human behavior in order to produce revenue and control the market. Also looking at this scenario, Lyon (2015) names the current moment as "big data surveillance" (p. 76).

And what are the possible interests of a company such as Uber to mine user data in more than 66 countries, including 900 cities? Mahmoudi et al. (2016) created a metaphor to explain the context of big data, which helps us to think about how companies follow the same colonizer-colony logic, seeking to acquire resources through data in order to generate economic value for it. In this scenario, big data is a commodity and there is an asymmetrical relationship of power in which people are daily stripped of all the data they produce on the most diverse platforms. Researchers name as "data colonialism" (Mahmoudi et al., 2016, p. 4) the process of capitalist accumulation through expropriation and colonization, which turns everyday life into goods in a way never seen before.

For Mahmoudi et al. (2016), this new way of generating data has fallen into normality, in an asymmetry in which large technology companies colonize life in exchange for a quantification of their users' daily lives, providing pleasant experiences and having their lives ordered by algorithms. They cite, as an example, restaurants' offers based on geolocation and sexual partners on dating apps. Big data thus works in a colonial logic that, instead of opening markets, becomes subject to them (Mahmoudi et al., 2016).

Resuming Snowden's revelations to *The Guardian*, for Lyon (2015), in addition to the analyst showing the world that we are immersed in a scenario of global mass surveillance, also through them, it was possible to analyze how surveillance decisively affects minorities. An example explored by the Canadian sociologist is the story of Faisal Gill, an American lawyer who served in the navy and was a senior member of the Department of Homeland Security in the George W. Bush administration. The American Security Agency secretly monitored his emails within the terrorist and foreign spy segmentation. Why did an American patriot, republican, lawyer, with children in Catholic schools, become a monitored target of the American government? Because he was a Muslim, explains Lyon. This became the reality for several Americans after the September 11 attacks in the United States, who lost their right to privacy (Lyon, 2015, p. 91).

Based on Lyon's observation that minorities would also have their experience curtailed in the context of contemporary surveillance, the research seeks an analysis focused on studies of race relations.

A Racialized Analysis of Contemporary Surveillance

> The experiences of these groups, socially located in a hierarchical and non-humanized way, means that intellectual productions, knowledge and voices are treated in an equally subordinate manner, in addition to social conditions keeping them in a structurally silenced place. This in no way means

> that these groups do not create tools to face these institutional silences; on the contrary, there are various forms of political, cultural and intellectual organization. The point is that these social conditions hinder the visibility and legitimacy of these productions. A simple question that helps us to reflect is: how many black authors and readers, who attended college, read or had access to graduation? How many black teachers did they have? How many black journalists, of both sexes, are there in the main newsrooms of the country or even in the so-called alternative media? (Ribeiro, 2017, p. 65)

Among the questionnaire interactants in the present study, 54.5% did not perceive the influence of racial origin in the Uber experience and consequently affirm that they did not experience any situation that they consider to be racist. In the words of collaborator 12, "you left me inculcated. I had never stopped to think about it. Any driver declining a ride or assessing me based on my color. In general, apparently, I had no problems of this nature".

Yet, when analyzing the response of other research interactants, it is clear that it is urgent to think of racism as a structure, considering the normalization of reported episodes. "Despite not having suffered from racist acts, I realize that, with black people, drivers are less friendly, and for that reason, I rate them with two stars or less", said collaborator 13. Collaborator 19 also stated that she had never been in a racist situation; however, she says: "I am always asked if my disembarking point is in the slums or downtown".

Being treated less cordially and linking someone's characteristics to specific territories are racist experiences. It is clear that there is an urgent need to expand the theoretical framework for the investigation of the Black experience at Uber, because, until we break Black silencing, symbolic violence will not be faced socially. Foucault's founding analysis of surveillance studies does not explore the racial perspective. As it has already been pointed out, it cannot be ignored any more, since not racializing any social experience is making racist acts invisible and/or imperceptible, even for Black people, allowing their normalization.

> Race is one of the raw materials with which difference and surplus are produced, that is, a kind of life that can be wasted or spent without reserve. It matters little that it does not exist as such, and not only because of the extraordinary genetic homogeneity of human beings. It continues to produce mutilation effects, because, originally, it is and will always be that in whose name censorship operates within society, warlike relations are established, colonial relations are regulated, and people — whose lives and presence are considered symptoms of a limit condition and whose belonging is contested because they come, in the current classifications, from surplus — are distributed and imprisoned. (Mbembe, 2013/2018, p. 73)

This production of difference highlighted by Mbembe (2013/2018), a legacy of the colonial period, is the basis for racism, which, for Kilomba (2008/2019), is the combination of prejudice and power. She classifies the practice of oppression in three forms of dynamics: structural racism, institutional racism, and everyday racism. The first is characterized by the exclusion of Black people from social and political structures, that is, dominant ones, which privilege White people. Institutional racism operates within the scope of educational agendas, the labor market and criminal justice — in which there is clearly an unequal treatment — and, finally, daily racism, characterized by a focus on vocabulary, speeches, images, gestures, actions, and looks.

> The term "daily" refers to the fact that these experiences are not one-off. Daily racism is not a "single attack" or a "discrete event", but rather a "constellation of life experiences", a "constant exposure to danger", a "continuous pattern of abuse" that is repeated over and over again throughout someone's biography – on the bus, at the supermarket, at a party, at dinner, in the family. (Kilomba, 2008/2019, p. 80)

In the context of the present object of study, it is possible to perceive the combination of racist dynamics, which begins at a structural level, passes through the institution and reaches the tip of everyday experience. On Uber's official website, the company presents itself in the "About Us" section with the following phrase: "we ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion. When people can move, anything is possible. Opportunities arise, doors are opened and dreams come true" (Uber, n.d., "Criamos Oportunidades ao Colocar" section). Collaborator 19 reported in the questionnaire that, thanks to the company's service, she was able to develop dance works, which, due to the lack of night transportation previously, she was unable to do. Collaborator 7 makes also a positive assessment of the application usage:

> my experiences were generally good, as the application offers a cheaper price, and the driver is usually a professional. Anyway, I see Uber as an efficient transportation alternative, safer and cheaper than a taxi, which improves the life of workers and students.

Considered as innovative in the area of urban mobility, Uber's service has reduced the cost of private transportation, which used to have taxis as its protagonists, aiming to be more democratic and plural. "Our goal is to create an inclusive workplace that represents the diversity of the cities we serve. We want people to be themselves and the authenticity of each one to be a source of pride", it continues in its presentation (Uber, n.d., "Compromisso com a Diversidade" section).

Through studies that cross technologies and race, Simone Browne (2015) and Ruha Benjamin (2019) help to think how the diversity policy of a technology company needs to be connected with an entire structural review of society and the company itself; and, in this context, understanding surveillance practices also from a racial perspective is urgent.

After mapping different analyses, which consider and disregard the classic architectural model of the panoptic in surveillance studies, Browne (2015) presents the roots of Black body monitoring and control, in her words, to demonstrate that surveillance is not something new for the group and that this perspective was neglected in classical analyses. The notorious example comes from the colonial period, in which she points to the architecture of slave ships as a structural model of surveillance, as opposed to the panopticon. In them, Black bodies were huddled in the cellars, with no light, hygiene or movement, as they were attached to chains. Control affected the body; there, disease, hunger, thirst, and death circulated. The author classifies slave ships as a contemporary antecedent of surveillance technologies, whose characteristic of violence regulated Black bodies.

The image of the British slave vessel, which became publicly known only in the 18th century and which showed the inhumanity of how enslaved people were transported, is the architectural model of how discipline was combined with racial surveillance in the slave system. In it, men and women were categorized and, as we can see, the mechanism of categorizing seems central to racial surveillance. Men, women and children were transported in a segregated manner, the provision of accommodation for the enslaved produced gender subjectivities. The men were shackled around the ankles, two by two, with the right leg of one chained to the left leg of another, and also with the hands shackled in the same way. In turn, women and children were not shackled, but were transported close to the captains' cabins. The form of transportation showed that the only feared insurrections were the masculine ones.

When considering the two models of surveillance, we were able to establish a major difference when we racialize the debate from Browne's (2015) reinterpretation about the architectural model of surveillance. While the Foucaultian panopticon analyzes how surveillance mechanisms create docile bodies through a strategy of constant sensation of visibility, the Canadian researcher demonstrates how the slave ships preceding prisons are an exemplary symbol of racial surveillance and how they created the subjectivity of dehumanized Black bodies. With Browne (2015), we were able to perceive a vigilance that already creates categorization, by segregating what they considered violent bodies, in the figure of Black men imprisoned by chains, and of women, close to White men, with the maintenance of not only physical but also symbolic violence.

In this sense, the perspective of the drivers who answered the questionnaire is central to understanding why the experience studied is much closer to the model defended by Browne (2015) rather than to the Foucaultian one. In relation to Uber's experience, only two collaborators reveal how race and gender are crossed. Collaborator 33 affirms that many users hid their bags when they got into the car and showed concern about arriving at their final destination. We clearly see the stereotype of danger, in which the skin color of the male driver is criminalized; the construction of the violent Black man is perceived symbolically from the chains on the slave ships. As with the driver, the experience is also lived by users. Collaborator 21 reported: "I have felt embarrassed a few times before, when I had to take an Uber at night and the driver [started to] comment on thefts/robberies as soon as I got in".

In turn, collaborator 32 sees racism in the assessment and interaction with men:

> a white man thought that because I was a black woman and a driver, I could also provide sexual services; he made several insinuations during the ride, embarrassing and harassing me. I didn't leave him in the middle of the road because it was a good ride; I needed the money that day because the requests for the service were really low.

While the Black male body is criminalized, the Black female body is objectified. The collaborator also affirms that her rating drops with rides for White people, who make comments about her being a woman driving. Here, it is possible to perceive the intersection of sexism and racism. Akotirene (2019) points out Kimberlé Crenshaw as the founder of the term "intersectionality" to talk about the consequences of the interaction of three or more axes of oppression and/or subordination, such as racism, patriarchy, and class oppression.

Ruha Benjamin (2019) states that the surveillance feeling is not new in her life and its origin comes long before the big data scenario. She reports that, as a Black woman, living in the suburbs of Los Angeles, most of her childhood memories involve the police: when she came back from school and saw the policemen watching her and her friends in the rearview mirror, seeing schoolmates being searched, and even the sound of police helicopters passing so close to the roof of her house that it was impossible to ignore the noise. Some territories in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as well as Benjamin's neighborhood, are symbolically excluded from circulation according to some reports by the collaborators. Collaborator 17 shared the maximum punishment experience of the application. He was expelled from using the platform when requesting a ride to Morro do São Carlos, in Estácio neighborhood. Resident of Copacabana neighborhood, he affirms that during Carnival he was on a ride with his girlfriend, also Black, and after about a minute, as soon as the driver noticed where they were going, he expelled them from the car and said that Uber would notify the reason for that situation.

> When the driver saw my destination and two black people in the car, he stopped and told us to get off right there, without explaining the reason. He said that the next day Uber would inform me. I had a 4.8 rating and I was banned from Uber that Carnival, in a 0.5km ride, in which I remained a minute inside the car. I was in Largo da Prainha going to Morro do São Carlos in Estácio, when the Uber driver noticed the destination, stopped the car and told us to get off, claiming to Uber sexual activity in less than a minute in the car. The next day, I had my account permanently disabled from the app. According to Uber, there was an act of a sexual nature, that in a 0.5km ride lasting one minute! (Collaborator 17)

Uber could easily analyze if an act of a sexual nature would possibly happen or not in a 0.5 km ride; however, the collaborator suffered the maximum punishment of the application based on the prejudiced analysis of the company's driver, in which territory and ethnicity cross. The episode illustrates Benjamin's (2019) concept, which will be essential for the research: "the new Jim code".

> I grew up with a keen of being watched. Family, friends, and neighbors — all of us caught up in a carceral web, in which Other people's safety and freedom are predicated on our containment. Now, in the age of big data, many of us continue to be monitored and measured, but without the audible rumble of helicopters to which we can point. This doesn't mean we no longer feel what it's like to be a problem. We do. (Benjamin, 2019, preface)

Just as the study Benjamin (2019) explores in the context of everyday activities, how looking for a job, in the origin of names or even when shopping, technologies, seen as objective and scientific, can reinforce racism and create other forms of iniquity. Through the concept of new Jim code, she points out that, in the era of big data, discrimination can, beyond all, appear in a hidden way, as these technologies, in her view, perform a false neutrality that also accelerates and deepens discrimination. "I call it the New Jim Code: the use of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequalities, but which are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory system of an earlier era" (Benjamin, 2019, p. 5).

The researcher identifies that coding based on racial origin was born as a tool for social control. She reports that, in an audit of the California gang database, Blacks and Latinos are 87% of those listed, some of them babies under the age of 1, described as individuals who could be part of a gang. How can a database state the criminal potential of a baby? Benjamin (2019) replies that the predictability of these technologies is at the crossroads of territory and race that encodes the name of someone who can offer social risk. She denounces that, once the name is included in similar databases, the person is exposed to more surveillance and to the risk of losing more rights.

And here, with the dialogue between Browne's reinterpretation (2015) about the Foucaltian panopticon and Benjamin's (2019) analysis, the question arises again: what is the racial origin of the people who occupy the prisons studied by Foucault in countries such as Brazil and the United States? Benjamin (2019) explains that she designed the new Jim code inspired by Michele Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. The book shows how the American prison system produces a caste system by arresting people based on a "color blind ideology", labeling stigmatized groups as criminals in a state legalized manner. The Jim Crow laws, which were in effect in some southern American states, have been known to impose racial segregation between the late 19th century and the mid-20th century and show how racism was institutionalized in the United States. Benjamin (2019) is emphatic in stating that, today, "criminal" is the code for blackness and also for the poor, immigrant, disposable, and undesirable individuals (Benjamin, 2019, p. 9).

Final Considerations

From the reports shared by the interactants of this study, it is possible to perceive that the technologies present in our daily lives have a forged concept of neutrality and mediate environments and new modes of racial oppression, as demonstrated by the concept of Benjamin (2019), the new Jim code. Thus, reviewing how surveillance practices emerge in the Foucaultian context of modernity, in the logic of the panopticon, made us realize loopholes in the racial perspective and, therefore, that it is necessary to broaden the debate to reach a more democratic social vision.

In this sense, Browne (2015) takes us to the architectural model of slave ships and shows how surveillance has historically affected Black bodies, as well as created specific subjectivities for men and women who were enslaved in the colonial period. This leads us to understand that oppressions overlap and need to be looked at intersectionally, instigating us to seek theoretical contributions from Black thinkers, such as Djamila Ribeiro, Grada Kilomba, Silvio Almeida, Ruja Benjamin, and Simone Browne.

The remains of the Brazilian colonial period still appear in the logic of daily racism; so, it is essential to see through a critical eye for an everyday experience cut by raciality in the context of contemporary surveillance. In this sense, the study shows how the social mediation of new technologies creates new outlines for the surveillance experience and also of racism; and Uber is an example to think about this scenario, as it uses the big data produced by its users and drivers to create a consumption experience that hierarchizes, differentiates, segments, and excludes.

If surveillance practices were socially structured with a central disciplinary objective, it is possible to see how the capital appropriates them for commercial purposes. And, in the context of the capital, racial minorities suffer daily violence and, as we have seen, from some reports, they are often not perceived by the oppressed themselves.

Hence, this analysis intends to move towards mapping the experience and raising the question: how can companies contribute to a anti-racist experience? Based on the case of Uber's experience from a racial perspective, it is possible to problematize how communication technologies reinforce and create new experiences of racism and, consequently, think of strategies for democratic experiences.

Translation: Nilen Cohen

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Sentiment Analysis: From Psychometrics to Psychopolitics

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Abstract

The data about our affects, the so-called emotional data, constitute nowadays a valuable commodity, collected and marketed by digital communication platforms. Among the interested in obtaining it are financial and political corporations that base their decisions on information about network user's affects. There are different ways to generate emotional data, one of which is the sentiment analysis. This article addresses some characteristics of this tool, clarifying its operation and the psychometric knowledges that constitute it. Sentiment analysis is understood not only as a tool for detecting affects, but also for emotional production. It is in this sense that it is possible to outline it — beyond a psychometric instrument — as a psychopolitical apparatus, a technique that operates by instrumentalizing emotions for a capitalization beyond the individual. In this sense, concepts such as "control society" (Deleuze, 1992), "confessional society" (Bauman, 2012/2014), and the very notion of "psychopolitics" (Han, 2014/2014b), are useful to understand aspects of emotional production based on new communication technologies. This article, therefore, aims to contribute to the understanding of an important factor which is still somewhat neglected in studies on big data and surveillance: the monitoring and production of affects as a form of subjective control.

Keywords
emotions, sentiment analysis, psychopolitics, big data, surveillance

Análise de Sentimentos: Da Psicométrica à Psicopolítica

Resumo

Os dados sobre nossas emoções, os chamados *emotional data*, constituem hoje uma valiosa *commodity* coletada e comercializada por plataformas de comunicação digital. Entre os maiores interessados em obtê-la estão corporações financeiras e políticas que, entre outros usos, baseiam suas decisões em informações sobre os afetos dos usuários das redes. Existem diferentes formas de se gerar *emotional data*, e uma delas é a análise de sentimentos. Este artigo aborda algumas características dessa ferramenta, investigando o seu funcionamento e os saberes psicométricos que a constituem. A análise de sentimentos é entendida não apenas como uma ferramenta de detecção de afetos, mas também de produção emocional, uma técnica que opera instrumentalizando as emoções para uma capitalização alheia ao indivíduo. É dessa maneira que é possível delineá-la — para além de um instrumento psicométrico — como um aparato psicopolítico. Neste sentido, conceitos como "sociedade de controle" (Deleuze, 1992), "sociedade confessional" (Bauman, 2012/2014), além da própria noção de "psicopolítica" (Han, 2014/2014b), são úteis para compreendermos aspectos da produção emocional assentes nas novas tecnologias da comunicação. Este artigo, portanto, pretende contribuir para o entendimento de um fator importante, mas ainda algo negligenciado nos estudos sobre *big data* e vigilância: o monitoramento e a produção de afetos como forma de controle subjetivo.

Palavras-chave
emoções, análise de sentimentos, psicopolítica, *big data*, vigilância

How does sentiment analysis detect and classify new communication technologies users' emotions? Beyond that: how it also contributes to the production of those affects? To introduce an answer to these problems is this article's main objective. Being one of the most developed and applied emotional surveillance tools in the present, sentiment analysis is constituted as a complex research object, which could be deployed in countless useful investigations to better understand, among other themes, contemporary subjectivation processes. This article focus, therefore, on the theme of surveillance, control, and the production of affects through a theoretical-critical appreciation of the problem.

The method developed for this study was the attentive and relatively exhaustive analysis of technical mechanisms that constitute sentiment analysis, as well as the taxonomies used by this tool in its affective classification processes. This sort of information was obtained, above all, in articles published in the field of computer sciences, generally written by sentiment analysis algorithms developers themselves. In examining these technical elaborations, we had two basic questions in mind: what knowledge's are involved in detecting emotions? What consequences can they have to affective production?

Throughout the study, these technoaffective knowledge proper to algorithms creators, as well as their practical applications, could be understood in a renewed way by the light of a series of concepts, such as "control society" (Deleuze, 1992) and "confessional society" (Bauman, 2012/2014). The assemblages between technical knowledge and conceptual considerations allowed us to conclude that, in fact, sentiment analysis works not only as a psychometric tool — for detecting, identifying or measuring emotions — but also as a psychopolitical apparatus, which enables control and production of affects through two strategies: their registration in communication platforms design and the use of algorithmic-semiotic procedures for directing content (microtargeting).

"You Are Not Alone. Wanna Talk?"

Someone who frequently posts sad comments about his own life on Twitter could suddenly be surprised by a message like "you are not alone. wanna talk?" on his computer or smartphone screen. If he attended the empathic and mysterious call, he would then be directed to a private chat, in which he could exchange messages with a volunteer trained to dialogue with subjects in extreme situations and to remove them from their potentially suicidal affections.

In a general way, this is the approaching method of Code of Hope, a program implemented in 2019 by the Spanish Twitter in partnership with Teléfono de la Esperanza, a non-governmental organization that presents itself as specialized in intervening in "emotional crisis situations" (https://www.telefonodelaesperanza.org). A publicity video released by the two organizations explains the Code of Hope a little better:

> young people with depression constantly post signs of their emotional states before taking desperate actions. Signs that humans can barely notice. But if humans don't notice them, who could do it? Code of Hope – the artificial intelligence that detects suicidal behavior. (Reason Why, 2019, 00:00:33)

According to the video, when analyzing a database composed of posts from users who actually committed suicide, an emotional pattern was identified. This made it possible to create an algorithm that detects this same pattern in active profiles, so that, afterwards, these users can become objects of affective intervention. According to what was disclosed, even after starting the dialogue with volunteers, Twitter users continue to have their posts monitored by the algorithm, which then starts to "report emotional changes". If no significant improvement is detected on the affects tracked by the platform, Code of Hope then calls Teléfono de la Esperanza, so that the non-governmental organization can perform other measures, presumably more invasive ones.

The emotional surveillance over Twitter users could, in common sense, be understood as "well intended". After all, the social network would be working to protect lonely internet users, in psychological distress, about to commit a definitive act against their own lives. But this hasty moral judgement overshadows an unsettling question: why did a media company, like Twitter, provided itself with the ability to monitor and regulate our emotions? Without any embarrassment in disclosing the existence of the algorithm that oversees what we feel, Code of Hope was, on the contrary, used with marketing functions. The initiative was even awarded at "El Sol", an Ibero-American advertising festival (Marques, 2019). It was naturally accepted that Twitter had developed a system to detect emotions that, at least in the past, we tended to consider as absolutely personal and subjective — and, for that reason, of exclusively intimate interest. No analyst was surprised by the fact that the company had implemented a series of procedures to actually change users' emotions, and even to monitor whether these changes were taking place or not.

The moral imperative that obliges us to show sensitivity to the suffering of others may have minimized this sort of critical reflection — Twitter was taking care of its users, and that was the idea that the company wanted to highlight. But the naturalness with which the initiative was received may also have to do with a notion, increasingly widespread among specialists, that monitoring users' emotions is part of the routine work performed by social networks. For those who follow the emerging trends on this field, what Twitter accomplished was not surprising at all. More controversial episodes, more easily questionable from an ethical point of view, were displayed by Facebook a few years earlier, for example. In one of them, which took place in May 2017, a journalist from *The Australian* published details of a leaked document, in which two Australian Facebook representatives stated, to a potential advertiser, that the social network was able to identify profiles from teenagers who felt "insecure", "worthless" and needing "a confidence boost" (Levin, 2017, para. 1). According to the document, Facebook would be able to monitor, in real time, image and text posts to identify when young people were feeling "stressed", "defeated", "overwhelmed", "anxious", "nervous", "stupid", "silly", "useless" and a "failure" — exactly in this terms (Levin, 2017, para. 2). These precarious emotional states were available in "internal data", not accessible to the general public. The document did not clarify how this sensitive data could be exploited in a practical way by advertisers. But the fact that they were offered by top Facebook executives to a major banking institution does not leave much room for imagination.

The data about our emotions — *emotional data*, in technocratic jargon — has become a relevant commodity in the market of digital communication[1]. At the limit, this commodification of emotions[2], as sociologist Luke Stark (2018) points out, would have already outlined a big business, explored by countless companies and other organizations.

> Facebook is by no means the only digital actor turning to mood tracking as part of a broader effort to collect behavioral and psychological data about users. Exemplified by a number of converging trends in human-computer interaction design, applied psychology, data science and advertising, the extraction, collection and analysis of data regarding human emotion is a bigger and bigger business. (Stark, 2018, p. 208)

This commodity's value lies on the fact that the supposed numeric precision provided by emotional data enables to inform, for example, companies' and political parties' strategic decisions. It is constituted, therefore, as a sort of emotional capital that, to be generated depends on technological tools that have been rapidly developed by specialized knowledge. These tools strive to capture and measure the expression of individual emotions, forming sets of metadata about the collective psyche. Facial expressions identification in photographs shared online; the recording of information about our sleep, blood pressure, movements and mood carried out by sensors and health applications on smartphones — emotional surveillance becomes more and more extensive as the

[1] The term "emotional data" is commonly used in computer sciences articles to refer, in a generic way, to any data related to emotions (Fathullah & Willis, 2018; Luo et al., 2017; Matsumae et al., 2020). It is important to note, however, that there are no purely emotional data, but information that is algorithmically interpreted in its affective quality. For example: the frequency of a heartbeat can be used to assess one's health condition, but, in another context, this same information can be interpreted in its emotional valence, indicating states of anxiety, fear or stress. This is how emotional data can be generated from the most varied sources: texts, videos, audios, physiological signals, among others.

[2] Not restricted to the scope of new technologies, sociologist Eva Illouz (2018) has created an interesting neologism to refer to the product of emotional commodification: "emmodity" (p. 8).

devices to which we connect daily, and sometimes 24 hours a day, are equipped with these and other techniques for capturing and classifying emotional data.

According to computer scientist Bing Liu (2012), among these techniques, the so-called sentiment analysis has caught most of the developers' attention.

> Since early 2000, sentiment analysis has grown to be one of the most active research areas in natural language processing. It is also widely studied in data mining, web mining, and text mining. In fact, it has spread from computer science to management sciences and social sciences due to its importance to business and society as a whole. In recent years, industrial activities surrounding sentiment analysis have also thrived. Numerous startups have emerged. Many large corporations have built their own in-house capabilities. Sentiment analysis systems have found their applications in almost every business and social domain. (Liu, 2012, p. 5)

In the USA alone, and just until the year 2012, there were about 60 startups dedicated to sentiment analysis, and giants such as Google, Microsoft and Hewllet-Packard had already created their own divisions for their development and application (Liu, 2012, p. 9). This expansion and technical development took place as the culture of big data — the processing of data on a gigantic scale — was spreading, being consensually understood as relevant to business and political decision-making.

As one of its enthusiastic researchers states, exhaustive affective monitoring on the internet can generate "very valuable information", both for companies that can "better promote" their products, and for political organizations[3] interested in "clarifying their strategy" (Gomes, 2012, p. 10). According to him, in the web competitive landscape,

> knowing what customers think about the organization or what happens daily on the internet is a challenge that everyone has in the fight for their survival in the market. Bearing in mind that decision making is a process that results from previous research and data analysis, it is essential to obtain qualitative information that contains high added value, in order to create differentiation. This situation is only possible if there is a constant monitoring of reality, which will always have to be done using automated processes, since the amount of data generated [online] is, every second, gigantic. It is in this particular way that Text Mining (TM), in special Sentiment Analysis (SA), has gained great interest in recent years, since it allows to treat

[3] When mentioning political organizations, we basically refer to parties, movements, associations and other public sphere agents — and, in the case of sentiment analysis, especially to candidates running for democratic elections. There are several companies that provide sentiment analysis services to political figures in electoral dispute, one of the most recognized being Majoritas, whose portfolio includes politicians from countries such as Brazil, USA, France, Congo, Indonesia, among others (Moise, 2017). Experts on the subject debate how sentiment analysis can even be effective in predicting election results (Ceron et al., 2015). Attesting the dissemination of sentiment analysis for electoral purposes, some authors go so far as to affirm that "it can be expected that sentiment analysis will be part of every campaign in the future" (Ringsquandl & Petkovic, 2013, p. 40).

> and analyze large volumes of unstructured data in an automated way and, hence, generate knowledge. (Gomes, 2012, p. 10)

In general, sentiment analysis refers to a series of computational procedures used to identify affective states presented on texts. These textual databases can be formed, for example, by sets of posts on social networks, forums and blogs, comments on news, reviews posted on websites specialized in cinema, gastronomy, tourism, among others. In any digital situation in which the user is encouraged to express himself emotionally through texts, sentiment analysis finds a promising field to exercise its affective surveillance.

The first operational procedure performed by sentiment analysis is precisely the collection of textual data that will be further analyzed in its emotional valence, and the component that captures those texts is commonly called "crawler" (Malheiros, 2014, p. 64). Companies like Twitter and Facebook offer crawler services, selling posts published on their social networks and even pre-screening texts according to the client's interests. After this stage, captured texts usually go through an automated "cleaning" stage, in which messages are reformatted, variations and misspellings are standardized, and other patterns are applied to make them readable by the next component, usually called sentiment classifier.

An essential stage of the analysis, sentiment classifier works based on supervised machine learning or, as an alternative, based on lexicons. In the first case, it starts with a database composed of texts that have already been labeled (usually by human beings) according to the emotional states apparent on them — and then what the machine does is simply to categorize new messages based on this initial labeling. In its turn, when the sentiment classifier is based on lexicons, it starts from a database which is similar to a dictionary, where different words are labeled according to their emotional content. In this linguistic-affective index, curses and verbs like "hate" or "cry" are generally attributed to emotions understood as negative, while words like "fascinating" or verbs like "love" and "worship" are linked to positive affects, and so on. Detecting the appearance of indexed words on messages, the classifier performs calculations to define which emotions they refer to.

Superficially, these are the technical steps that allow digital platforms to scan, on a large scale, their users' emotions. From the results of a hypothetical sentiment analysis, if a percentage X of users from a social network presents the emotion "sadness" in relation to a certain topic, an interested company can target specific niche ads that promise, in some way, to solve the problem through the consumption of its products. Likewise, if a percentage Y of users demonstrates the emotion of "joy" in relation to a public event, interested powers can direct them advertising messages that link this affect to the achievements of a particular political party, for example. Microtargeting — the microscopic targeting of advertising messages, made possible through algorithms — is the technique that most perfectly complements sentiment analysis. Their combination allows them to direct, modulate and capitalize on emotions. It is even possible to try modifying them through not only advertisements, but also hiring digital influencers or the so-called opinion spammers — undeclared emotional operators, who by emitting messages loaded with affects, seek to influence the emotions of their "friends", "followers", or circumstantial public.

A Psychometric

It is very clear that sentiment analysis, as a tool for emotional detection, has technical limitations. Specialists point, for example, to a certain algorithmic difficulty in evaluating the emotional valence of ironic, sarcastic or semantically ambiguous texts (Deng et al., 2017; Ferrara & Yang, 2015). Other studies also report reduced levels of accuracy in some affective rating systems (Islam & Zibran, 2017; Khoo & Johnkhan, 2018). These and other operational problems are subject of studies by algorithm developers, who have been working to overcome or minimize them (Bosco et al., 2013; Hernández-Farías et al., 2015). It is therefore plausible to imagine that sentiment analysis technical procedures tend to be sophisticated over time, gaining accuracy and including other factors to support emotional data collection and classification. However, in order to understand the phenomenon, it is interesting paying attention not only to its technical characteristics, but also to the emotional taxonomy used in its analysis — that is, the categories in which our affects are framed, the ways in which those interested in our emotions classify them on their charts and diagrams.

In this sense, it seems possible to invent and apply the most varied classification schemes, according, certainly, to the purposes of each sentiment analysis operation. Many of these schemes are freely inspired by academic knowledge, originally produced in psychology. One of them, called POMS-ex (Bollen et al., 2011), used for sentiment analysis on Twitter posts, is based on an emotional scale entitled *Profile of Mood States*, which was developed in the 1970s by North American researchers (McNair et al., 1971). Its adaptation to emotional surveillance on social network frames users' emotions in six categories: tension, depression, anger, vigour, fatigue and confusion. Also used on Twitter, in its turn, PANAS-t (Gonçalves et al., 2012) is based on the *Positive Affect Negative Affect Scale*, created in the 1980s also by researchers from the USA (Watson & Clark, 1994). It classifies posts into 11 emotional categories: joviality, self-confidence, serenity, surprise, fear, sadness, guilt, hostility, shyness, fatigue and attention. In the case of Code of Hope, the anti-suicide algorithm, the scale is potentially more thorough, adopting for classification the 32 emotions described by evolutionary psychologist Robert Plutchik in 1980 (Plutchik, 1980).

It is curious to notice that, in these three examples, developers apparently adapted the emotional taxonomy from the original scales not worrying about the methodological and theoretical contexts in which they were created. Emotional scales adopted in POMS-ex and PANAS-t, for example, were originally designed to be detected through extensive questionnaires applied individually, and not through the massive analysis of small texts like those on Twitter. The 32 emotions proposed by Plutchik (1980), similarly, are part of an elaborate psychoevolutionary theory of affects, which is certainly disregarded on the schematic application performed by sentiment analysis. Not to mention the noise that cultural, historical and linguistic differences can cause when carrying out these transitions that, at first sight, seem to be poorly reflected.

However, it would be a mistake to think of these conceptual and methodological gaps as some kind of intellectual carelessness on the developers' part. In reality, the original epistemological contexts in which these emotional scales were developed do not interest algorithm creators. The purpose of sentiment analysis is not to create a theoretically consistent representation of a group of people's emotional life, but to provide the financial and political powers with useful information that enable them to take decisions. The aim of the contemporary emotional surveillance is to generate metadata with which it is possible to establish correlations and define strategic positions — in the experts' vocabulary, to generate actionable results, that is, results whose ultimate purpose is action. As Mark Andrejevic (2011) writes, "sentiment analysis pushes beyond the goal of representing or modelling the populace. The goal is not to describe but to affect and effect – to stimulate word of mouth, to promote engagement and, in some cases to thwart it" (p. 616). The tool would thus participate in a common conception nowadays, according to which "qualitative contexts were increasingly unnecessary; uncontextualized correlations emerging from the 'raw' data would be sufficient to produce actionable results" (Stark, 2018, p. 216).

Sentiment analysis, thus, does not necessarily deal with scrupulous emotional discretions, nor with considerations at the level of an individual subjective ecology. The singularity of what we feel, the idiosyncratic content of our affections, is not among the primary objects of its measurements. For this reason too, there is generally no reason why digitally monitored emotions should be framed in very specific markers, or that emotional taxonomy should be composed of numerous and complexly described categories. In fact, most sentiment analysis operations classify our affections in a ternary numerical scheme: *negative* (-1), *neutral* (0) or *positive* (1) emotions. In countless cases, for the marketing *intelligentsia* practical reason, it is enough to describe the polarity of an emotion in relation to a given product, be it an item of daily consumption or a political figure in an electoral dispute. The somewhat coarse ordering of our emotions already seems to be sufficient for the effectiveness of affective monitoring and controling[4].

[4] Without mentioning affective control directly, some studies may suggest interesting ways to counter the subjective domination exercised through algorithms. Tiqqun proposes, for example, that subjects objectified by cybernetic systems should produce noise as a way to confuse the devices that try to capture them (Tiqqun, 2020). This is what researchers Matteo Pasquinelli and Vladan Joler (2020) also seem to suggest when describing the so-called "adversarial attacks": "the traditional techniques of obfuscation against surveillance immediately acquire a mathematical dimension in the age of machine learning. For example, the artist and researcher Adam Harvey has invented a camouflage textile called HyperFace that fools computer vision algorithms to see multiple human faces where there is none" (p. 15). A similar tactic in the area of emotional detection and control is the one used by artist Ben Grosser and described by sociologist Luke Stark (2018). Grosser is the creator of Go Random, "a web browser extension that randomly chooses an icon for the user to post and thereby obfuscates a user from the site's collection of emotional data" (Stark, 2018, p. 229).

It is with this pragmatic characteristic that sentiment analysis is established as one of the most celebrated contemporary psychometric techniques. Traditionally, psychometrics is defined as a branch from psychology dedicated to constitute and apply subjectivity measuring mechanisms. This field's origin seems to be located at the end of the 19th century, especially after the investigations made by Francis Galton and James McKeen Cattell. From an early age, psychometrics approached mathematical sciences, especially statistics. In fact, there are those who define it not so much as a branch of psychology, but of statistics itself (Pasquali, 2017). The development of this kind of knowledge, a psycho-mathematical hybrid, has endowed researchers with the ability to represent various subjective elements, including emotions, through numbers. But as we have noticed, on sentiment analysis, the computational version of psychometrics moves towards an atrophy of its representative quality at the expense of a specific practical purpose: to inform decisions in a neoliberal society, in which capitalistic and political interests converge to subjectivity control.

In this scenario, the psychometric project performed by sentiment analysis is not so much concerned with unveiling the subject's truth — rather, it is interested in producing subjectivities according to categories established by itself. As Luke Stark (2018) notes,

> a lack of accurate descriptive power does not mean the applied psychological techniques within digital systems lack a standardizing, prescriptive or even proscriptive power; it is precisely the constructed and performative nature of "descriptive" models which produces those effects. (p. 222)

In other words, even if one does not agree with sentiment analysis' reduced emotional taxonomy, or even if one doubts its relatively fragile methods or remains skeptical about the results obtained by the technique — still, the practical application of those same results will productively act over him.

This contemporary subjective production does not happen only through semiotic tactics, used in messages that assault us with microtargeting precision. The platforms' design itself encourages the production of specific emotions that are able to be capitalized. In this sense, what is expected is that the users' affects present a clear, readable, easily identifiable quality, so that it can be located in an emotional diagram as polarized as possible. An authentic, elusive affect, irreducible into a negativity or a positivity, is not so useful for those interested in capitalizing on our emotions. How could a political organization, for example, benefit from an ambiguous, singular affect that does not obey a polarizable logic? Perhaps this is why social networks encourage users to be affected according to a previously established taxonomy. The "reactions" available on Facebook interface are a clear example of this. In all posts viewed, we are encouraged to affect ourselves in one of six possible manners: to like, to love, to laugh ("haha"), to be surprised ("wow"), to be sad or to hate ("grr"). It is not vetoed to demonstrate other affects: it is always possible to resort to texts, images or other media to generate more complex emotional data — the contemporary production of subjectivities does not work so much through interdictions, prohibitions, but through encouragements.

On this subjection strategy, we are encouraged to feel, and to express what we feel, according to the affective categories that can be better instrumentalized by platforms and their corporate partners. At the social networks' design, these categories are "then represented back to individual users as a norm against which they should perform" (Stark, 2018, p. 214). The ideal user, thus, is the one that has his affects produced in line with the subjective program implemented by the developers. Over time, he becomes "fluent in the emotional expressions, behaviors and gestures aligned with a platform's models" (Stark, 2018, p. 214).

Because of this logic, we can understand sentiment analysis not so much as a representational tool or even as an apparatus for affect detection, but as a technique developed for emotional production, a computational mechanism whose purpose is an active control over emotions, beyond mere surveillance. The tendency is that, with its effective application, users' subjection results in an affective standardization. In an ideal scenario, one starts to feel nothing beyond a *clear positivity* (1) or nothing less than a *dark negativity* (-1), while the platform is able to capitalize on both affects. In this scenario where every emotion is disposable, even a *gray neutral value* (0) is approached by the subjectivating powers as a transient emotional state, which should be directed to one of the poles as soon as possible — and never as a singular, intractable chromatic difference, unusable to algorithmic appeals.

A Psychopolitic

As a contemporary psychometric technique, sentiment analysis differs from its predecessors because it is not based on surveys or other psychological tests, but on a collection of data which is generated on communicative processes. When posting, social network users are not fully aware that their emotions are being monitored and modulated. After all, they imagine to be just communicating, and not being scrutinized on psychic indicators. Off guard, they are encouraged to express themselves as much and as emotionally as possible — but never coerced, forced to do so. The subjection strategy put into practice on digital media is not essentially oppressive or repressive, it does not oblige to say and only punctually censors what is said[5]. For it to work, users must believe

[5] Censorship on digital platforms is a widely debated phenomenon that has already yielded several interesting studies (Heins, 2013; Hintz, 2015; Silveira, 2015). But perceiving this issue from a psychopolitical perspective implies understanding that, despite the existence of censorship mechanisms, digital media were not created with the primary purpose of preventing communication between subjects (as in the case of disciplinary society institutions, like prison). On the contrary: in general, these communication technologies are gratuitous, seek to attract and engage users and encourage them to interact and share as much content as possible. After all, their profit and expansion are based on the exploitation of large amounts of data provided by users. That is why communication, and not censorship, is its fundamental mode of operation. In this sense, digital media seem to follow the cybernetic principle in which control becomes viable due to communicative processes themselves: "cybernetics intends that the control of a system is obtained by the optimum degree of communication between its parts" (Tiqqun, 2020, p. 53).

that they are acting freely. That is why it encourages the freedom of an excess, and only occasionally constrains a punitive contingency: the more numerous and affected the speeches produced, the more it is possible to capitalize on them. That is the reason why sentiment analysis benefits from an environment in which individuals feel motivated to expose themselves. In contemporary times, the "confessional society", as Zygmunt Bauman (2012/2014) calls it, is part of the subjection mechanism in which sentiment analysis functions as a component.

> Adolescents equipped with portable electronic confessionals are nothing more than apprentices training (and being trained in) the art of living in a confessional society; a society that stands out for eliminating the frontier that previously separated the private from the public, for making public exposure of the private a virtue. (Bauman, 2012/2014, p. 25)

Voluntary emotional display, which accrues from this sort of contemporary confessional desire, is fundamental for affective control. In this context, subjectivity monitoring and production are not carried out through restriction on freedom, but only possible through their exercise. Control becomes possible precisely where expressions are freely exposed. Bauman (2012/2014) characterizes this current surveillance form as post-panoptic. By this, he refers to a change in the panoptic paradigm, as it was idealized by Jeremy Bentham (1791/2019) and analyzed by Michel Foucault (1975/2014). In this classic conception, individuals are ostensibly watched over by a central, oppressive and identifiable power, which subjects them to total scrutiny regardless of their will. According to Bauman (2012/2014), this subjection strategy is not widely disseminated on contemporary society, but restricted to its "unmanageable" parts, such as prisons, confinement camps and psychiatric hospitals. At these institutions, individuals would continue to be subjected to a form of control based on their lack of freedom. On the other hand, in a broader social scenario, control would be configured in the post-panoptic mode — on this sophisticated arrangement of massive control, individuals have the feeling to be exercising unlimited freedom and, therefore, they actively cooperate for their own subjection, happily providing a multitude of information to the very systems that subject them. "With the old panoptical nightmare ('I'm never alone') now transformed into the hope of 'I'll never be alone again' (abandoned, ignored and scorned, banned and excluded), the fear of exposure was drowned out by the joy of being noticed" (Bauman, 2012/2014, p. 21).

As the philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2012/2014a) accurately observes, control society works precisely when

> its subject is stripped out not by external coercion, but by virtue of a need generated in himself, that is: when the fear of having to renounce his private and intimate sphere gives way to the need of showing off shameless. (p. 67)

"If I don't expose myself enough, I'll become socially isolated" – today, this is the impression that encourages us to communicate without rest everything we are doing, thinking or feeling. It is in free communication that surveillance and subjective production are established. And it is through communication, for example, that sentiment analysis detects our affects to simultaneously produce them.

> Unlimited freedom and communication become total control and surveillance. (...) At the moment we have just freed ourselves from the disciplinary panoptic, we have entered into another, new and even more effective one. The inmates of the Benthaminian panoptic were isolated for disciplinary purposes and were not allowed to speak to each other. Residents of the digital panoptic, on the other hand, communicate intensively with each other and expose themselves on their own initiative. They actively participate in the construction of the digital panoptic. (...) Thus, data transmission does not occur due to coercion, but because of an inner need. (Han, 2014/2014b, p. 17)

Operating as a technical component of this subtle control mechanism, sentiment analysis is configured not only as a psychometric tool (for measuring) but also as psychopolitical apparatus (for subjection). The concept of psychopolitics, as proposed by Han (2014/2014b), concerns control strategies aimed at instrumentalizing individuals' psyche. Their goal is not to dominate them through an oppressive negativity of the body, for example, but through a positive production of subjectivity elements, which includes emotions. Thus, psychopolitical control operations do not happen to establish mandatory permanence and coercive institutions, but creating communication platforms in which individuals wish to participate. In this sense, the success of digital media, especially social networks, leads to an unprecedented effectiveness of psychopolitical methods.

> We are on the way to a digital psychopolitics era. We are advancing on the path that leads from passive surveillance to active control. (...) Big data is an extremely effective psychopolitical tool that allows to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics inherent to communication society. It is a domination knowledge, which allows to intervene in the psyche and condition it to a pre-reflexive level. (Han, 2014/2014b, p. 21)

This subjective psychopolitical conditioning is carried out based on computational data, information about ourselves that we generate when using digital communication devices in an unrestricted way. By acting inadvertently, we generate a *data double* — a duplicate of ourselves that becomes available to information system managers (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000). At this numerical representation, it is possible to detect elements of our subjectivity that often escapes our own consciousness. It is a sort of a digital unconscious upon which is possible to act programmatically. Part of this data double is constituted by affects, emotions that often go unnoticed even by users themselves, but which are identifiable in the form of emotional data. It is in this sense that psychopowers seek to access and condition not our conscious opinions, rational thoughts or reflected affiliations — psychopolitics is a practice of power that operates in a pre-reflexive environment, in the unconscious emotional territory, in what Félix Guatarri had already called an "infrapersonal dimension" (Rolnik & Guattari, 1986, p. 27).

Psychopolitic subjective assemblages become possible at a historical period when Bentham's (1971/2019) panoptic model gives way to Bauman's (2012/2014) post-panotic model. In a broader conceptual perspective, we could also talk about a transition from "disciplinary society", as described by Michel Foucault (1975/2014), to "control society", as indicated by Gilles Deleuze since the 1990s (Deleuze, 1992). While disciplinary society would be defined by an ordering of bodies in various normative and confinement spaces, control society would take place in an open environment, occupied by flows and connective networks. "At this context, the panopticon model, as a power diagram, is replaced by the network model, which is located beyond institutional boundaries and is marked by continuous connections and disconnections" (Hur, 2013, p. 209). As noted by Byung-Chul Han (2014/2014b), it was essential for disciplinary society to govern populations through biopolitics, which was concerned with regulating bodies through norms of health, hygiene, birth, among others. But in contemporary control society, powers would act mainly in the subjectivity field, through psychopolitics. With this change, subjection mechanism attention would shift from the body to the psyche:

> Biopolitics, which is based on population statistics, has no access to the psyche. It does not provide any material for the population's psychoprogram. Demography is not a psychography. It does not explore the psyche. This is where resides the difference between statistics and big data. From big data, it is possible to construct not only an individual psychoprogram, but also the collective psychoprogram, or even, perhaps, the unconscious psychoprogram. In this sense, it would be possible to illuminate and explore the psyche down to the level of the unconscious. (Han, 2014/2014b, p. 30)

As a psychopolitical apparatus, sentiment analysis enables to exercise control over this unconscious emotional latitude. Emotions even seem more intrumentalizable if individuals are not fully aware of their existence. After all, in this way they can be driven to action without further resistance. As the Brazilian philosopher Charles Feitosa (2018) states, psychopolitics can be precisely understood as the "control and management of actions through affective conditioning" (para. 2). In other words, on the horizon of psychopolitical operations resides the production of subjects who act — who consume a certain product, who engage in a specific demonstration, who vote for a stipulated candidate, and so forth. The psychopolitical trick is to move individuals to action not through reasonable arguments, explicit explanations or convincing tactics. What psychopolitics promotes is an emotional mobilization: the individual acts obeying an affect that crosses his subjectivity, propelling him towards that movement.

> Emotions are performative insofar as they evoque determined actions. Emotions, as inclinations, represent the energetic and even sensory basis for action. They are regulated by the limbic system, which is also the

> impulses' headquarters. They constitute a pre-reflective, semi-conscious, bodily instinctive level of action, of which we are not explicitly aware. Neoliberal psychopolitics captures emotions to influence actions through this pre-reflexive level. It reaches the bottom of individual through emotion. Thus, emotion represents an extremely efficient mean of individuals' psychopolitical control. (Han, 2014/2014b, p. 57)

Final Considerations

With this pragmatic subtlety, sentiment analysis is characterized as a psychometric technique, but with psychopolitical purposes. It is based on affective surveillance and control, and can be directed even at an unconscious level. The ultimate goal of its operations is to induce individual to perform emotionally informed actions. This emotional production, aimed at actions, is carried out both through microtargeting semiotic tactics and affective conditioning programmed in communication platforms — the emotional design, so fashionable in contemporary times, that frames the user as a reproducer of the emotions stipulated by the system.

In this context, emotion as a practice of freedom is explored without our conscience. "Acting according to one's emotions" becomes a risky imperative, since we can hardly know if our affects are really authentic, originating from an ungovernable singularity, or the results of a program that instrumentalizes them, directing emotions to some kind of capitalization. As Baruch Spinoza (2014) wrote, if a stone hurled into the air suddenly gained consciousness, it would certainly imagine that it was exercising the freedom to fly. Likewise, in the contemporary world, the practical exercise of emotions can be a programmed movement, originated somewhere alien to our conscious will.

Therefore, the theme of emotions in contemporary times needs to be inserted in a broader scenario, in which it seems urgent to rethink the way freedom is exercised on the open circuits of control society, reevaluating, for example, if "the emergence of participatory forms of interactivity has coincided with dramatic forms of economic or political empowerment" (Andrejevic, 2011, p. 620). As Gilles Deleuze (1992) observed, in control society, it is up to new generations "to discover that they are being led to serve, just as their predecessors discovered, not without pain, the purpose of disciplines" (p. 226)[6].

Translation: Felipe Melhado

[6] Detecting or inventing ways to resist affective control seems to be one of the many urgent tasks for researchers on digital humanities. This article is restricted to introduce an understanding about sentiment analysis as an emotional control and production mechanism, but the authors are currently developing an investigation in which the resistance dimension has a privileged place for reflection. This research, carried out within the scope of Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS) and the PhD in Communication Sciences at University of Minho, is conducted by Felipe Melhado under the supervision of Jean-Martin Rabot and co-supervision by Moisés de Lemos Martins and Norval Baitello. The project investigates how the concept of "anthropophagy" (as formulated by the poet and philosopher Oswald de Andrade, 1928/2017, and other authors) can be useful as a counter-affection tactic in the context of new communication technologies.

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Digital Rights During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Latin America

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Abstract

This article discusses digital rights during covid-19 pandemic. It offers a comparative analysis of the measures that affected digital rights to freedom of expression, access and privacy implemented by governments and private companies (internet service providers and internet intermediaries) between March and August 2020 in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. It also studies reactions from civil society and international organizations. The theoretical framework draws on human rights provisions about progressive and regressive policy making. The central questions are: how are digital rights of freedom of expression, access and privacy affected by companies and governments during the period under consideration in the three countries studied? How have civil society organizations and international organizations position themselves with regards to these digital rights? It is based on a comparative analysis of how government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders have responded to the information and communications technology governance challenges created by the pandemic, and how their governance responses have impacted human rights in the areas of freedom of expression, access, and privacy. Answering these questions is relevant to identify and understand the precedent that these strategies — developed in an exceptional context — could set for the post-crisis scenario, which exceeds the scope of this article. Conclusions show that public policies adopted during covid-19 varied in the three countries. However, in the three, both progressive and regressive measures can be identified. The companies developed regressive strategies, implemented some progressive but exceptional measures; while civil society and international organizations promoted progressive and long-term solutions.

Keywords
digital rights, internet, covid-19, lockdown, Latin America

Direitos Digitais Durante a Pandemia de Covid-19 na América Latina

Resumo

Este artigo discute os direitos digitais durante a pandemia de covid-19. Propõe uma análise comparativa das medidas que afetaram os direitos digitais à liberdade de expressão, acesso e privacidade implementadas por governos e empresas privadas (fornecedores de serviço de internet e intermediários de internet) entre março e agosto de 2020 na Argentina, Brasil e México.

Também estuda reações da sociedade civil e de organizações internacionais. A estrutura teórica baseia-se em disposições de direitos humanos sobre a formulação de políticas progressivas e regressivas. As questões centrais são: como os direitos digitais de liberdade de expressão, acesso e privacidade foram afetados por empresas e governos durante o período considerado nos três países estudados? Como as organizações da sociedade civil e as organizações internacionais se posicionam em relação a esses direitos digitais? É baseado em uma análise comparativa de como o governo, o setor privado e as partes interessadas da sociedade civil responderam aos desafios de governança de tecnologias da informação e comunicação criados pela pandemia, e como suas respostas de governança impactaram os direitos humanos nas áreas de liberdade de expressão, acesso e privacidade. Responder a estas questões é relevante para identificar e compreender o precedente que estas estratégias — desenvolvidas num contexto excepcional — podem abrir para o cenário pós-crise, que extrapola o âmbito deste artigo. As conclusões mostram que as políticas públicas adotadas durante a covid-19 variaram nos três países. No entanto, tanto medidas progressivas quanto regressivas podem ser identificadas nos três. As empresas desenvolveram estratégias regressivas, implementaram também algumas medidas progressivas, mas excepcionais; enquanto a sociedade civil e as organizações internacionais promoveram soluções progressivas e de longo prazo.

Palavras-chave
direitos digitais, internet, covid-19, confinamento, América Latina

Introduction

The new needs and problems posed by the advance of the first global pandemic of coronavirus (covid-19) and the exceptional measures of isolation of the population adopted in many countries of the world have reignited public debates on digital rights. Besides, they have moved from the narrow circle of specialists to the broader realm of social, media and political discussion. These new challenges go beyond national borders as a result of the scope of the virus circulation and of the policies adopted to face it, as well as of the global structure of the internet network and the transnational nature of the service providers. However, they have taken on specific features in each region and country.

This paper analyzes strategies, debates and disputes about digital rights during the advance of the pandemic and the various measures of isolation taken in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. The timeframe under analysis is March 13, 2020, — the date when Uruguay established a quarantine, the first country in the region to do so — until August 31, 2020, the closing date of this article. The central questions are: how are digital rights of freedom of expression, access and privacy affected by companies and governments during the period under consideration in the three countries studied? How have civil society organizations and international organizations position themselves with regards to these digital rights? In other words, this is a review of information and communication technology (ICT) policymaking in the face of the covid-19 pandemic. It is based on a comparative analysis of how government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders have responded to the ICT governance challenges created by the pandemic, and how their governance responses have impacted human rights in the areas of freedom of expression, access, and privacy. It presents the policy dilemmas and its stakeholders' responses in the region. Answering these questions is relevant to identify and understand the precedent that these strategies — developed in an exceptional context — could set for the post-crisis scenario, which exceeds the scope of this article.

These questions are approached from the theoretical perspective of communication as a fundamental human right, as well as from the approach of communication policies as the field of disputes of meanings within a certain configuration of the relationships of social forces. The methodological approach is a theoretical-normative comparative analysis on the progression or regression of the measures adopted as regards human rights.

The argument is that the debate dealing with the internet during the pandemic and isolation in Latin America involves three types of digital rights: access, privacy, and freedom of expression. Each of these rights is affected by various kinds of problems caused by the action of governments and/or internet companies: connectivity, critical content for a fee, patient geolocation, content removal, promotion of self-censorship, disinformation. State policies included regressive as well as progressive measures. Sometimes, the latter were adopted in association with civil society. At a global level, companies developed regressive strategies which they had to reverse in certain cases, and some progressive but exceptional measures, while the civil society in each country and multilateral organizations promoted progressive and long-term solutions.

First, the theoretical and methodological approach is presented. Then, the strategies and disputes that developed around digital rights to freedom of expression, access and privacy in each country are comparatively analyzed. Finally, conclusions are offered.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

In order to account for the process of developing and implementing policies in the context of a health emergency, public policy is understood as the response of the state — either by action or by omission — to a problem that takes on a public dimension (Oszlak & O'Donnell, 1976). Therefore, it implies disputes of meanings within a certain configuration of power relationships (Castells, 2009). In particular, communication policies refer to the setting of general goals for the organization of the media system through regulation (either formal, such as laws or administrative acts, or informal, such as voluntary agreements), which develops from the interaction of different types of actors who use formal and informal mechanisms to influence the configuration of the sector (Freedman, 2008; McQuail, 2010). With regard to the internet, the term "governance" — rather than policies — is increasingly used to highlight a change in the decision-making process: the shift from the classic decision-making process that places the state as a central actor to new forms of a regulatory and non-hierarchical structure where the actors involved make decisions as stakeholders as legitimately as other actors, and take on the role of regulators together with those regulated (Iosifidis, 2011).

Thus, for the study of the policies that affect the exercise of digital rights, it is important to analyze not only the behavior of the states in the region, but also the social discussion of these issues, the positioning of civil society organizations, and the actions of companies, especially internet intermediaries as enablers or inhibitors of the exercise of rights online.

Civil society is not a unified whole; it is complex, conflictive, and heterogeneous. It is not a homogeneous or pure sphere, a seat of freedom facing state oppression, and of altruism facing market domination. On the contrary, it has a relatively autonomous relationship with both state and market (Sorj, 2010). In particular, digital rights activism is a form of collective action that promotes more egalitarian access and management of technology and data, engages in new forms of information and knowledge production, and questions dominant concepts on digitization of information and connectivity (Milan & van der Velden, 2016).

Meanwhile, large digital platforms are currently contributing to the emergence of new forms of capture of public policies by elites (Schiffrin, 2017). This was also acknowledged by international organizations that have impact on the Latin American system: considering that the access and use of internet is a human right (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2011, 2019a), they recognize its potential for the circulation of ideas but, at the same time, they warn about the challenges generated by internet intermediaries who, on account of their size and position, exercise "private control" over the access and circulation of content on the internet (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2013, 2017, 2019a; Unesco, 2019; United Nations, 2018).

Digital rights imply the protection and realization of existing rights, such as the right to privacy, access to information, or freedom of expression in the context of new digital and connectivity technologies. They are the rights to access, use, create, and publish by digital means as well as access, use, manufacture, and manage electronic devices and telecommunications networks. In particular, the rights to freedom of expression and access to information on the internet take up the tradition of the human right to communication based on the principles of access, plurality, diversity, participation, and equity (International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, 1980), which refer both to the access and use of digitization technologies and connectivity themselves and to the production, access and management of private and public data as well. The right to communicate includes and exceeds those to freedom of expression (no censorship or inducing self-censorship) and to access to public information. When such rights are applied to new technologies, they face new challenges that call for redefinition, clarification, and extension. One of them is the principle of net neutrality, according to which all content that circulates on the internet must receive the same treatment and cannot be discriminated against based on its origin, use or application (Wu, 2003). Free access — as long as there is acknowledgment of copyright compatible with free access — and the kind of collaborative production that technology allows (Jenkins, 2006; Katzenbach, 2012; Lessig, 2004) are especially promoted. Civil rights to privacy are also retaken against the control of states and the use of private data for commercial purposes: digital surveillance is linked to the cost-free use of behavioral data, partly to improve products or services, but also to anticipate what people will do in the future (Zuboff, 2019).

The definitions of "freedom of expression", "access" and "privacy" as human rights used here are those of multilateral organizations, specially the Organization of American States and United Nations. International human rights standards overcome the statist and mercantilist approaches, because they seek to curb both the power of the market and the state (Segura & Waisbord, 2016).

The principle of progressiveness for the protection of human rights is enshrined in the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), as well as in documents of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos) of the Organization of American States. This principle establishes that states must guarantee, at the national and international level, the exercise of the rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. The American Convention of Human Rights of 1969 (Article 26) and the Protocol of San Salvador (1988) link the progressiveness principle to economic, social, and cultural rights. These instruments point out that states must adopt measures to progressively achieve the effectiveness of these rights and account for it through periodic reports. For its part, the statute of creation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights establishes among its functions the formulation of recommendations to governments for the adoption of progressive measures in favor of human rights (Estatuto de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 1979, Article 18.b.). Likewise, the commission set a series of guidelines for the elaboration of progress indicators in the area of economic, social and cultural rights that allow monitoring the application of public policies for the progressive realization of rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2008). To sum up, the principle of progressiveness refers to the adoption of measures to promote the full exercise of human rights progressively and implies its opposite, non-regressiveness, which prevents states from adopting measures that worsen the situation of rights enjoyed by the population.

At the methodological level, a comparative analysis of the measures that affected digital rights implemented by governments and companies, and the positions and alternative developments of civil society and international organizations during the advance of the pandemic of covid-19 and the policies of isolation adopted between March and August 2020 in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico were carried out.

The comparative method is a qualitative approach that serves to study similarities and differences between a moderate number of cases — as proposed in this article — for which in-depth knowledge of each one is important (Ragin, 1994/2007). Although formally case study and comparative methods are presented as distinctive approaches, there is consensus over their complementarity because their boundaries become blurry (George & Bennett, 2004; Lijphart, 1971). The comparative approach allows the joint analysis of different cases and phenomena to find explanatory factors, explore diversity, interpret the cultural or historical relevance of an event, and advance the theory (Ragin, 1994/2007). Comparative studies help understand how parallel processes of change play out differently according to the context (Collier, 1993). Thus, the comparison proposed in this article is not limited to the description of similarities and differences in the measures adopted by different types of players in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, but also brings a framework of understanding to evaluate them based on the progressiveness/regressiveness of rights in accordance with international standards.

A widespread argument around comparative research is the need to consider a diversity of contexts or environments in which these complex objects are situated. Within the broad spectrum of comparative studies, we work on a specific variant, trans-contextual studies and, specifically, one of its two typical forms: cross-national studies. Cross-national research, although not free from philosophical and methodological problems, is facilitated because the modern idea of the nation-state, exported and imposed from western Europe, has been in a sense stabilized and consolidated globally. Beyond the criticisms that can be made about the circumstances in which these historical processes took place, it seems clear that there are certain properties that make states comparable to each other. In any case, it is necessary to take into account the current context of globalization in which the meaning of national states is in question and new configurations emerge between the national, the supranational, the transnational, the local, and the global (Piovani & Krawczyk, 2017). In our work, this is observable in the tensions between the various multilateral, transnational, national, and local stakeholders.

The selection criteria for the cases under analysis are as follows:

- These are the countries with the largest territorial extension, the largest number of inhabitants (together with Colombia), and the largest nominal gross domestic product in Latin America. Therefore, they have relevant political and economic influence in the region (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos et al., 2019).
- Their governments have different political orientations: rightist in Brazil, progressive from traditional parties in Argentina and Mexico (Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica, 2020).
- Their national governments' political communication strategies regarding the advance of the pandemic were different: in Argentina the problem was quickly acknowledged while in Brazil it was denied, and in Mexico it was initially minimized and then confronted (Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica, 2020).
- The measures adopted to contain the spread of the virus include various levels of restriction: they have been very restrictive with mandatory isolation throughout the country in Argentina since March 20. In Brazil and Mexico, measures have been moderately restrictive: lockdowns are recommended at the national level and mandatory only in some states as from March 17 and 30, respectively (*Coronavirus: El mapa interactivo que muestra las medidas o distintos tipos de cuarentena que adoptaron los países de América Latina*, 2020).
- The states developed different strategies to address the new needs and problems connected with digital rights that emerged during the advance of the pandemic.

For the comparative analysis, a theoretical-normative approach to the implications — in terms of progression or regression of rights according with the international standards above mentioned — of public policies and business strategies adopted as well as of civil society and multilateral organizations positioning and alternative developments is carried out.

The analytical dimensions are: governments, private sector, civil society and alternative experiences and international organizations measures and positions that affected freedom of expression, access and privacy in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico during the covid-19 pandemic. The causal factors that explain the responses offered by the diverse stakeholders to the policy dilemmas presented in this context are not analyzed here. They are comparatively studied in Bizberge and Segura (2020).

The study is based on different sources such as public documents, regulations (resolutions, decrees, etc.), declarations and recommendations from international organizations, articles from the mass and specialized press.

Freedom of Expression

With regard to freedom of expression, three types of problems are identified: the spread of disinformation by companies and governments, the automatic censorship of social media platforms, and the promotion of self-censorship by governments.

Spread of Disinformation

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization (WHO), warned about the risks of "infodemic" — the spread of disinformation about the pandemic —, and said that "the evolution of the coronavirus outbreak will depend on the extent to which the correct information is delivered to the people who need it" (Ghebreyesus & NG, 2020, para. 11). The UN, the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe rapporteurs on freedom of expression, through both joint and separate statements, urged governments to promote and protect the access to, and free circulation of, information during the pandemic, and to provide accurate information on the nature of the threat posed by covid-19 (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020c; United Nations, 2020). They also entreated internet companies to address the problem of false information about the pandemic with reliable information (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020c; United Nations, 2020). In this regard, Unesco contributed with the creation of a Covid-19 Response Resource Center that includes materials on disinformation, freedom of expression, journalists' safety and interrelated human rights, access to information and knowledge, and digital technologies (Unesco, n.d.). In addition, it produced statements (for example, International Bioethics Committee & World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, 2020) and policy documents (such as Posetti & Bontcheva, 2020a, 2020b) that also address the use of digital technologies and disinformation.

Along the same lines, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights published recommendations urging governments and companies to address the pandemic from a human rights perspective on freedom of expression on the internet, combat disinformation, and ensure access to public information, among others (Bizberge, 2020a; Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020a). The Pan American Health Organization also expressed its concern and provided material to combat disinformation about health risk (Organización Panamericana da la Salud, n.d.).

Disinformation — understood as false, misleading or unverifiable information deliberately distributed to promote ignorance with certain interests (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2019b) — is produced and circulated by mass media, journalists and communicators, political leaders, religious leaders, intellectuals and others who have influence on public opinion. Its spread through the social networks can be easy, net-like, instantaneous and massive, which is particularly problematic (Amnistía Internacional, 2018). Multiple pseudoscientific or anti-scientific, denialist and conspiratorial discourses as diverse as some astrological, warmongering, vegan or mystical ones have been spread about the new type of coronavirus. Examples of this at governmental level were the assertions of Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, who on March 24 defined the disease as "a little flu or a cold" (*'Gripezinha ou resfriadinho' e outras 7 frases controversas de líderes mundiais sobre o coronavirus*, 2020). Initially, the president of Mexico, Antonio Manuel López Obrador, also minimized the health threat and asked people, as he did on March 22, "not to stop going out" or take "exaggerated" measures ("Pese a coronavirus pide AMLO 'no dejar de salir' ni tomar medidas 'exageradas'", 2020, paras. 1–2). However, the Mexican federal government later changed its position in accordance with the measures that some regional authorities were already adopting and followed the advice of specialists such as the undersecretary for Prevention and Health Promotion, Hugo López-Gatell. Thus, López-Gatell leads the daily press conferences broadcast simultaneously by all federal public media and by social media in which he provides profuse accurate information on the health emergency. In Argentina, unlike what has been said about Brazil, examples of disinformation appeared at the media level. Viviana Canosa, a well-known communicator, drank chlorine dioxide on TV. Ten days later, a 5-year old child died as a result of poisoning with that substance, which his parents gave to him to prevent covid-19. Canosa was reported for illegal practice of medicine.

In view of the claims regarding the spread of disinformation that put thousands of people's health around the world at risk, social media corporations were forced to take action. Twitter modified its content moderation policies and deleted tweets that go against health recommendations or encourage the use of harmful treatments ("Twitter adapta sus normas para atajar la desinformación y el contenido engañoso por el coronavirus", 2020). WhatsApp, in turn, limited the possibilities of forwarding messages to one at a time, which, according to the company, resulted in a 70% reduction in message forwarding (Agencia Europa Press, 2020).

Similarly, more than 90 social data verification organizations around the world have been working since January 2020 on a collaborative project coordinated by the International Fact-Checking Network to refute disinformation related to coronavirus. In Latin America, since April of 2020, 22 media from the region and Spain have joined forces in the "Latam Chequea" network, a collaborative project to verify information about coronavirus and fight the "infodemic" (Fundación Gabo, 2020). In addition, local data verification organizations such as Argentina's Chequeado also offer specific checks of information on covid-19 in each country.

At the governmental level, the Argentine state news agency, Télam, launched the information-checking platform Confiar "to confront false information about coronavirus" (*Télam lanza Confiar, una plataforma para enfrentar la información falsa sobre coronavírus*, 2020). This constitutes an unprecedented experience of the use of a state managed platform for the verification of public discourse. In addition, a group of researchers of the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (National Research Council) has refuted more than 100 fake news about coronavirus in the "Ciencia Anti Fake News" (Science Anti Fake News) project (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, 2020). Besides, to combat disinformation, the Argentine and Mexican governments have published paid announcements on Google so that every time someone searches for anything related to covid-19, the first result will be the official information provided by each country's health agency. This implies large amounts of money for the platform, but it seems to be an effective way to provide reliable information to the population.

Private Censorship

During the global health crisis, the use of artificial intelligence by social networks shows renewed limitations to freedom of expression, since a large number of cases of content removal for alleged violations of their policies have been reported. Even though they have not been exactly prior censorship, the problem is the lack of transparency and accountability of these practices. One of the most known cases was that of Twitter's content removal of Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's messages where he challenged the WHO's recommendations related to covid-19 and discouraged isolation. Regardless of the value judgment on the content, what happened was a clear example of non-transparent practices for content moderation.

The rapporteurs on freedom of expression warned that this automatic and non-transparent censorship "may lead to the limitation of access to important information on public health and should only be carried out when the rules of necessity and proportionality are met" (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020c, para. 7) and the UN rapporteur stated that companies should avoid relying exclusively on automated moderation (United Nations, 2020). The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020a) also recommended that companies guarantee access to content and avoid blocking media sites, platforms, or particular internet accounts.

Latin American organizations such as Intervozes of Brazil, Article 19 and Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales of Mexico, ADC (Asociación por los Derechos Civiles) of Argentina, Datos Protegidos of Chile and the regional Derechos Digitales, among others, have long demanded platform transparency and accountability through more or less formal regulatory mechanisms. Therefore, in this context, some of them such as the regional Observatorio Latinoamericano de Regulación de Medios y Convergencia and

Fundación Karisma of Colombia have launched initiatives to document cases of blockades, content deletion or censorship of any kind during the advance of covid-19 (Rangel & Martínez, 2020).

Government Promotion of Self-Censorship

On April 8, the Argentine minister of security, Sabina Frederic, announced that, in the context of pandemic and isolation, they were carrying out "cyber-patrolling" of information publicly available on social networks in order to monitor "the social mood" (*Frederic habló de "ciberpatrullaje para medir humor social" y desató otra polémica*, 2020, para. 1). The announcement sparked a strong controversy. In addition, at least five people were reported to have been arrested in connection with their expressions on social networks just during April, as a result of this open source intelligence practice. As noted by numerous experts, international organizations such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020b) and civic organizations such as the Iniciativa Ciudadana para el Control del Sistema de Inteligencia whose members are the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, Fundación Vía Libre and the Instituto Latinoamericano de Seguridad y Democracia, this violates the presumption of innocence, the expectation of privacy for conversations, even those held in public, and turns the security forces into observers of public discourse (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, 2020; Iniciativa Ciudadana para el Control del Sistema de Inteligencia, 2020). Therefore, it threatens freedom of expression, promotes self-censorship, reduces citizen participation and poses a problem for democracy.

Rulers have other ways to promote self-censorship. Reporters Without Borders has denounced that nine Latin American countries have not respected the right to freedom of expression during the covid-19 pandemic. In Brazil, president Jair Bolsonaro harassed the media (Reporteros Sin Fronteras, 2020b): backed by his family, some ministers and very active supporters on social media, he insults, discredits, stigmatizes and ridicules journalists who publish information that goes against the government's interests or their own, in order to undermine their credibility, create a common enemy, and avoid answering their questions (Reporteros Sin Fronteras, 2020a).

Summarizing, the data verification initiatives of civic organizations in the region and that of the Argentine state news agency, together with measures taken globally by social media platforms in order to reduce the risks of massive spread of disinformation, contribute to the access to accurate information on covid-19 and are therefore progressive in terms of human rights. On the other hand, the spread of disinformation registered in Brazil and initially in Mexico, the measures to promote self-censorship by the Argentine government, the Brazilian president's attacks on the press, and the excessive use of artificial intelligence for content moderation by global platforms are regressive.

Access

During the pandemic outbreak and the mandatory or recommended social isolation measures implemented by governments, two types of problems surfaced related to access: to connectivity and to content. Different actions were taken in order to deal with them.

Access to Connectivity

In Latin America, the use of the internet network increased on average by 25% during the first week of the pandemic (Bertolini, 2020) as a result of online learning, teleworking, personal communications, entertainment and e-commerce. The massive migration to teleworking strained the capacity of Wi-Fi routers due to the increase in work in the cloud (80% increase in upload traffic) and videoconferences (Ookla/Speedtest, 2020, as cited in Agudelo et al., 2020). For example, in Chile and Ecuador there was a decrease in fixed broadband speed (-3% and -19.6%, respectively) as well as an increase in broadband latency in different countries of the region such as Brazil (11.7%), Chile (19%), Ecuador (11.8%) and Mexico (7.4%; Ookla/Speedtest, 2020, as cited in Agudelo et al., 2020).

This set off the alarm for a potential "collapse" of the network. However, local experts, as well as global organizations such as Internet Society have argued that the internet infrastructure is resilient by design (Canabarro, 2020; Sullivan, 2020) and in normal conditions it adapts to peaks of high demand (for example, during the holiday season or during sports events such as the Olympic games). Nonetheless, the problem in the region is the last mile infrastructure and the existence of providers for end users who were not prepared to cope with the surge of bandwidth in the homes.

Besides, in Latin America, 33% of the people lack connectivity (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020). In 11 countries in the region, between 60% and 85% of the homes do not have internet access (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020). These indicators show inequalities related to social class, age and location: at least half of the poor, rural, young and elderly people have no connectivity (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020). Between 50% and 60% of the homes in the two poorest quintiles, 77% of rural homes, 42% of people under 25 years old and 54% of people over 65 years old do not have internet access at home (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its office of the special rapporteur on freedom of expression made a call to states to accelerate universal internet access policies during the covid-19 pandemic and recognized the actions taken so far in that respect because it is "crucial for the exercise of civil, political, economic, and cultural rights" (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020c, para. 2).

The Latin American governments have tried to mitigate the effects of the increasing traffic through various measures that include declaring telecommunications, information and communication technologies and even broadcasting to be essential services;

video traffic management practices; and campaigns to promote the responsible use of networks by the population. According to Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020), the governments in the region have implemented measures to guarantee the accessibility, availability and affordability of telecommunication services, manage traffic to improve the efficiency of networks and allow free access to certain applications and websites, as well as measures related to consumer protection and preservation of service quality.

In Mexico, the continuity of telecommunication services has been guaranteed as part of the measures to prevent and mitigate the risks of the pandemic (ACUERDO por el que se establecen las medidas preventivas que se deberán implementar para la mitigación y control de los riesgos para la salud que implica la enfermedad por el virus SARS-CoV2, 2020), and the regulatory agency, Federal Institute of Communications, has urged federal, state and local authorities to maintain the effective provision of telecommunication and broadcasting services (Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones, 2020b).

Brazil established that telecommunication services and access to the internet are essential and must be guaranteed during the pandemic (Decreto nº 10.282, 2020). The Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações (2020a), the National Telecommunications Agency, signed agreements with different companies to "hold Brazil connected", which include continuity of services, priority attention to health and public security institutions, and to keep the population informed, among other issues. However, neither the government nor Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações has taken any measures to prohibit the disconnection of unpaid services, and the Federal Regional Court of Region 3 determined that it is possible to do so (Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações, 2020d; Valente, 2020).

In Argentina, fixed and mobile services, access to internet and pay TV (cable and satellite) have been declared "essential services" since the beginning of the pandemic and suspension and disconnection of these services for lack of payment has been banned for 180 days until August 31, 2020. Then, taking a step further, the president decreed that the internet, mobile phone services and pay TV are "public services in competition" and enabled the regulatory agency, Ente Nacional de Comunicaciones (National Telecommunications Agency), to regulate prices and control the quality of the services (Decreto 690/2020, 2020). The decree also suspended the increase in the prices of services to end consumers until December 31, 2020. The official decision was met with adverse reactions from the opposition, telecom big players — who issued and op-ed on August 25 — as well as some coops and small and medium enterprises, who argued that it threatens competition and innovation and brings uncertainty to consumers. Instead, the academia and civil society organizations committed to communication rights have applauded the presidential decision (Bizberge, 2020b; Cámara Argentina de Internet, 2020; *COLSECOR se expresó respecto al DNU 690*, 2020; Federación Argentina de Carreras de Comunicación Social, 2020; Red de Carreras de Comunicácion Social y Periodismo, 2020).

To strengthen connectivity during the pandemic, the regulatory agency allocated $41.000.000 from the Universal Service Fund to increase the capacity of the fiber optic backbone network (Resolución 867/2020, 2020) in slums and underserved areas, and to broaden access to mobile communications so as to bring connectivity to road corridors.

Other measures have involved public and private agreements. In Argentina, Ente Nacional de Comunicaciones, the state-owned company Arsat and commercial private providers Claro, Dato, Movistar, and Telecom agreed to provide each other with cross support to face potential significant increases in traffic on their wholesale networks. Nevertheless, micro and small and medium enterprises retailers that provide home connection in most parts of the country acknowledge difficulties responding to the increasing traffic due to the obsolescence of networks, and have demanded palliative measures from the government.

Ente Nacional de Comunicaciones also agreed with Netflix and YouTube to lower the quality of its videos in the country so as to avoid overloading the networks. Similarly, in Brazil, Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações received a letter of commitment from broadcasters and internet audiovisual service providers stating that they are implementing voluntary technical measures to minimize the impact on the network caused by the use of digital services (Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações, 2020b).

In this scenario, organizations that promote community internet networks in rural or marginal urban areas, like Altermundi and Atalaya Sur in Argentina, Redes por la Diversidad, la Equidad y la Sustentabilidad A.C. and Rizhomática in México, and Artigo 19 in Brazil, have repositioned their proposal as an option to extend connectivity in areas that are not reached by private or state providers, or are served with low quality and/or high prices (Prato et al., 2020; Roca, 2020). The Association for Progressive Communications recommends that "rapid improvement of community networks" policies is needed to respond to the pandemic (Asociación para el Progreso de las Comunicaciones, 2020, para. 11). In Argentina, for instance, Altermundi — which already has an agreement for a free point to point link with the Córdoba National University network operation center — reiterated its request to the provincial electric power company for establishing a link to its fiber network so as to optimize the quality of service in this context.

Zero-Rating Content

Measures were adopted to promote free access to educational content, health information and entertainment. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its office of the special rapporteur for freedom of expression recognized these measures and pointed that even "if sustained over time could be problematic in terms of pluralism, [however they appear] to be adequate and proportional during an emergency such as that of the covid-19" (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2020, para. 11).

In Argentina, the Ministry of Education and national universities agreed with private providers (Claro, Movistar, and Telefónica) to grant free access to content hosted on domains edu.ar. Besides, public universities offered connectivity grants to low-income students so that they could pay for mobile data or loan devices, and the Ministry of Education offered teachers credits for the purchase of computers through the Banco de la

Nación Argentina (Argentine National Bank). It also implemented the program "Seguimos Educando" (We Keep Teaching), which has a website to access different educational resources as well as radio and TV programs from public and community stations. It also distributes printed study guides with classes for different educational levels. At the same time, the National Ministry of Education launched the federal plan "Juana Manso", which focuses on granting teachers and students from elementary and high school levels access to virtual classrooms and to a repository of free and open content, providing connectivity to schools, as well as equipment (computers) and training for teachers.

To promote free access to official content about coronavirus, the Mexican Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (Federal Institute of Telecommunications) made an agreement with mobile operators AT&T, Telefónica, Telcel (América Móvil), and Alban Redes (Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones, 2020a). Likewise, in Brazil, the use of the app Coronavírus-SUS to monitor the pandemic does not consume data.

Private operators allow free data access to government applications and the main communication media in Brazil (Agudelo et al., 2020). For instance, Claro, the main provider of mobile and pay TV services in the country, voluntarily took measures to provide free wi-fi in public places and airports, grant its pre-paid costumers free access to messages from the Ministry of Health for 1 hour, free access to TV signals for limited time, and free access to books, music and games for its clients. Other companies such as Vivo, Tim and Oi adopted similar measures. In Argentina, Cablevision gave all its customers free access to its video on demand app Flow.

Around the world, libraries, publishers, academic publications, museums and e-commerce platforms of cultural products opened its access — at different levels and timeframes — to part of its content related to the pandemic, culture, and entertainment. Likewise, some websites that offered materials released from copyright, out-of-print or hard-to-find publications but recent material as well, increased their activity, sparking heated debates in Argentina on copyright and intellectual property (Fundación Vía Libre, 2020). At a global level, Creative Commons made a call on March 25, 2020, for open access policies to be accelerated around the world in the context of the pandemic, stating that it is necessary to have rapid, unrestricted access in the most open terms possible to scientific research and educational materials on covid-19 (Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales, 2020a). More than a dozen companies, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, and IBM, among others, announced their adherence to the "Open Covid" initiative promoted by Creative Commons and have released their patents in order to facilitate research on covid-19 (Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales, 2020b). These measures imply progress, but they are of exceptional nature, and it is likely that companies will return to their practices of restricted and paid access to content once the health crisis has been overcome. However, they have put the cultural rights of access to content up for debate.

In summary, public policies in association with those of private providers' of guaranteeing access to connectivity and to health, educational and entertainment contents online have proved to be progressive in terms of human rights in the three countries studied. However, there are important differences between the countries in terms of degree, depth and scope. Argentina adopted a more interventionist approach than Mexico and Brazil, with a strong presence of the state both in ruling and allocating public funds. In Brazil, the adoption of rules to promote access faced limitations in its implementation when the judiciary ended up allowing the cutting off of services. In the three countries, there were public and private initiatives for cooperation that not only included continuity of access to the internet but also zero-rating practices for accessing different types of content. If this type of measures is usually considered a threat to net neutrality, in this exceptional context they are considered appropriate and proportionate.

Privacy

As SARS-CoV-2 advances in Latin America, there are discussions concerning the use of personal data for surveillance and population control in order to monitor the transmission of the virus, as well as the appropriation and sale of personal data for commercial purposes.

State Surveillance

In Latin America, as in other counties of the world, governments have adopted measures to use information from mobile phones and its apps to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2, despite the fact that fundamental individual rights are not always protected to a reasonable extent. Besides, the covid-apps usefulness and effectiveness are not proved. In addition, there are doubts as to whether they are absolutely necessary or cannot be replaced by less intrusive methodologies. Moreover, it is not clear whether these measures can be discontinued once the exceptional situation has been overcome.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020), the apps implemented nationally by the governments of Argentina (Cuidar), Brazil (Coronavírus-SUS) and Mexico (COVID-19MX) include features such as information to prevent contagions, news, information on health premises, and auto-test systems. The Mexican and Brazilian apps also share official data of the covid-19 situation in the country. Distinctive features of the Argentina app are the provision of instructions during quarantine and the permission to circulate.

The national application implemented in Argentina for self-assessment of covid-19 symptoms and, at the beginning of the pandemic, for monitoring compliance with the mandatory quarantine for those who arrived in the country from abroad, includes geolocation with the express informed consent of the user. Besides, the WhatsApp number provided by the Argentine government to receive inquiries and facilitate self-examination allows at the same time identifying telephone numbers and, in this way, people who are requesting that information (Lara, 2020). The updated version of the app allows the user to obtain permission to circulate for authorized activities. Digital rights organizations argued that the purpose of the application was not clear, since it generated uncertainty as to what other functions it might include in the future. At first, the code was private. Therefore, concerns were raised on how the use of personal data, especially geolocation, could endanger the privacy of the population (Muro, 2020). The government was receptive to critics and implemented adjustments on the app such as opening the source code, making geolocation optional and restricting the storing of the data to the duration of the pandemic (*Coronavirus en Argentina: El Gobierno modificará la app CuidAR para reforzar la protección de los datos personales*, 2020).

The Brazilian corona-app received criticism from civil society organizations that raised issues of transparency and security, and to a lesser extent, of consent (Gomes et al., 2020). President Bolsonaro has rescinded an agreement between telecommunications companies and the Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovation and Communication that was intended to provide information on mobile phones related to geographic location and mobilization. The decision was more connected with a reckless policy regarding the pandemic than to the protection of personal data. However, state authorities have the power to implement them (Lara, 2020).

This case shows that governments in the region face significant opposition when launching and maintaining massive digital surveillance apparatuses to contain the pandemic, not because of a firm official commitment to protecting personal data or to balancing public health objectives and democratic rights, but because of poor reach and limited effectiveness of digital and mobile technologies as well as state problems of governance and the provision of health services in the region (Segura & Waisbord, 2019; Waisbord & Segura, 2021)

Government administrations are not monolithic. Once the Brazilian press released information on projects for the collection and digital processing of mobility data of users of telecommunications services for health and security purposes, Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações (2020c) warned that this must be subject to current legislation and, above all, to the Federal Constitution. It pointed out as well that "the balance of protection between health and privacy is at the highest level of our normative hierarchy"; and that even in the current crisis, "reconciling both legal rights" is possible (Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações, 2020c, para. 3). The agency also argued that, since individual rights can be affected, the "proportionality" of the judgment, the cost-benefit relationship, the possibility of less invasive alternatives and individual consensus must be observed (Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações, 2020c, para. 3).

> The culture of privacy protection, although growing, is still in its early stages in Brazil. In a scenario in which there is specific awareness of the subject on the part of individuals, it is the public power's duty to protect them in dimensions whose consequences can be much more permanent than the current crisis. (Agência Nacional de Telecomunicações, 2020c, para. 3)

Finally, Brazil — like most of the countries in the region, except Peru and Uruguay — did not implement the application that informs of possible contacts with infected people (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, 2020).

In this scenario, civic and academic initiatives offered their expertise. Besides, surveillance technology companies such as the NSO Group, however, saw a huge business opportunity. As was recently revealed in Mexico and Guatemala, the company used these technologies in the region to spy on journalists and activists (Rodriguez, 2018).

The rapporteurs for freedom of expression of the UN, the Organization of American States and the European Union asked governments to limit the use of surveillance technologies to track the spread of the virus. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2020a) also recommended guaranteeing the right to privacy and the processing of personal data of patients and individuals who are examined during the pandemic.

In addition, the coalition of Latin American civil society organizations Al Sur and more than 100 organizations around the world urged governments to ensure that the development of digital technologies that use sensitive and location information in this context respects human rights. Such organizations also alerted about the possible irreversibility of measures implemented during the pandemic. The regional organization Derechos Digitales warns that the use of these technologies poses countless doubts:

> how the information will be anonymized and aggregated so as not to identify individuals, who has access to the information, how it will be used (and in contrast to what other data), for how long and under what conditions it will be stored, etc… (while) its usefulness in relation to its penetration levels, meanwhile, are still a mystery. (Lara, 2020, para. 4)

Nonetheless, these digital technologies have a weak impact. Initially, specialists set that, to provide significant results, they should be adopted by, at least, 60% of the population (Cerrato et al., 2020). Until October 2020, 7 months after the pandemic has reached Latin America, the most popular digital applications of covid-19 in the region were the Brazilian and the Argentine ones, downloaded by more than 5,000,000 people, followed by the Colombian one downloaded by more than 3,000,000 people (Pasquali, 2020). Then, the apps from Peru, Mexico and Ecuador were downloaded by less than 1,000,000 people, and the others, by less than only 100,000 people (Pasquali, 2020). If we compare the downloads of these apps and the number of cell phones available in each country, the Argentine app is the most used by just 14% of cell phones owners, followed by the Colombian (5%), and the Brazilian Coronavírus-SUS (4%; Segura, 2020). Given that the penetration of these apps is not significant, its usefulness to control the pandemic is extremely limited (Segura, 2020).

Trade of Personal Data

The appropriation and sale of personal data for commercial purposes was also debated when the sale of data to Facebook carried out globally by the Zoom videoconferencing platform became known. Zoom was forced to give explanations because of public opinion pressure. Even if the harvesting of personal data as a result of increased virtual activity during the pandemic is a topic unto itself, the aim of this mention is just to make a reference to the context where civil society organizations of a Latin American country proposed an option to avoid the big platforms. In this scenario, social organizations that develop free software in Argentina partnered with the national state and installed Jitsi in the servers of the state-owned company Arsat to offer a free option, free of charge, without information leakage and backed by sufficient infrastructure capacity to support many simultaneous massive video-conferences for health institutions. Besides, several national universities adopted Jitsi for teaching and meetings online.

Summarizing, the unusual expansion of digital technologies for state surveillance and control through digital technologies to monitor the possible transmission of the virus would imply a significant regression in human rights that would be difficult to reverse in the post-pandemic scenario. Even though this regressive impact was limited because they have not been massively adopted, it clearly increases the amount of information that states have of their populations in centralized databases. Another human rights regression happens with the appropriation of personal data and its commercial sale by e-learning and teleworking platforms.

Conclusions

There were three types of digital rights under discussion during the pandemic and isolation in Latin America: access, privacy, and freedom of expression. Each one of these rights is affected by various types of problems caused by governments and/or by the internet and telecommunications companies: connectivity, patient geolocation, content removal, disinformation.

Public policies have included some regressive measures such as the official spread of disinformation, the promotion of self-censorship, and surveillance, but it also introduced some progressive measures, sometimes in association with civil society organizations, such as those aimed at guaranteeing access to connectivity and to online content (zero rating offers).

As we stated in Bizberge and Segura (2020), the different approach in each country is associated with the political orientation of its rulers, as well as the targeted public policies implemented for covid-19 and the existing power relations between the players involved: highly concentrated internet service providers and internet intermediaries; governments with little margins to attain balance between politics and economy, and a civil society that, despite being heterogeneous, manages to make its public voice heard in the debates.

Internet companies developed regressive strategies globally which, in certain cases — such as the spread of fake news, automatic censorship, or the sale of personal data from videoconferencing platforms —, they had to reverse, offer explanations or provide alternative solutions.

In relation to connectivity companies (internet service providers), they formed alliances with governments and adopted courses of action that contributed to the expansion of rights with temporary measures such as enabling access to zero rating content and the establishment of minimum service plans to maintain the conditions of access to information services and communication.

The civil society in each country tried to influence governments so that they would promote progressive solutions and, in some cases, it was able to offer alternative solutions, such as data verification, community internet networks, free software videoconferencing platforms, and open access agreements.

In situations of risk, exceptional measures are taken that can set adverse precedents, such as surveillance practices, public and private censorship. However, they also bring the opportunity to build progressive, viable and sustainable alternatives such as exceptional zero rating practices to guarantee access to tele-education, community internet solutions, or free software.

The crisis is also fertile ground for debating digital rights from a multistakeholder approach that considers inputs from all the players involved with a much broader social scope. It is up to social activism, private companies' cooperation, and state decisions to transform this adverse situation into a window of opportunity to guarantee and exercise more and better rights.

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YouTube Preferences and Practices of Preadolescents: Findings From a Study Carried Out in Catalonia

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Abstract

Recent data confirm the central role that YouTube plays in the media life of young people in the west, and especially in the media practices of adolescents and preadolescents. This article presents a study on tweens' YouTube preferences and media practices. The study was based on the uses and gratification theory and applied a quantitative-qualitative approach: a questionnaire was administered to 1,406 preadolescents (x = 12, 11 years-old) from 41 secondary schools, and three focus groups with six participants (three girls and three boys) each were carried out in three schools. The results reveal that the tweens participating in the study consider YouTube as a social media and a video catalogue. They especially like YouTube's content, in particular entertainment (music and humour) and self-learning (tutorials); however, they generally dislike its interactive functions (e.g., sharing and commenting). Moreover, their media practices on YouTube reveal that tweens incorporate YouTube into their everyday media life within other social media, although they use it predominantly to consume media content in a "traditional"/"non-interactive" way, similar to traditional television use. Despite this they do not consider it as a "new" television. Finally, tweens in our study use YouTube especially for entertainment, and, on a second level, for self-learning and socialising functions. Further studies need to be carried out to go deeper into the prosumption possibilities for tweens' both on YouTube and other social media.

Keywords

YouTube, media practices, preadolescents, tweens, media uses

Preferências e Práticas dos Pré-Adolescentes no YouTube: Resultados de um Estudo Realizado na Catalunha

Resumo

Dados recentes confirmam o papel central que o YouTube desempenha na vida mediática dos jovens ocidentais e, em especial, nas práticas mediáticas dos adolescentes e pré-adolescentes. O presente estudo pretende analisar as práticas mediáticas e os usos preferenciais que os pré-adolescentes dão ao YouTube. Apoiada na teoria dos usos e gratificações, a investigação aplica métodos de análise qualitativos e quantitativos. Através de um questionário subministrado a 1.406 pré-adolescentes (*x* = 12, 11 anos de idade) oriundos de 41 escolas secundárias e de três grupos-focais levados a cabo em três escolas distintas com seis participantes cada um (três raparigas e três rapazes), o presente estudo mostra que para estes jovens o YouTube é considerado simultaneamente como uma rede social e como um arquivo de material audiovisual. O estudo também revela que os jovens gostam do conteúdo disponível no YouTube e, em particular, dos vídeos de música e de humor (entretenimento) e de tutoriais (auto-aprendizagem). Em geral, os jovens sentem menor apelo pelas funções interativas (por exemplo, partilhas e comentários). O uso que fazem do YouTube revela que o incorporaram às suas vidas quotidianas e que o usam predominantemente para consumir conteúdos mediáticos de uma forma "tradicional" e "não interativa", semelhante ao uso que se faz tradicionalmente da televisão. Apesar disso, não o consideram uma "nova" televisão. Os pré-adolescentes objeto deste estudo usam o YouTube principalmente como fonte de entretenimento e, secundariamente, como fonte de auto-aprendizagem e de socialização. Estudos futuros terão de ser levados a cabo no sentido de aprofundar o conhecimento sobre as possibilidades que o YouTube e outras redes sociais oferecem aos pré-adolescentes para que estes sejam prosumidores.

Palavras-chave
YouTube, práticas mediáticas, pré-adolescentes, adolescentes, usos mediáticos

Introduction

Multi-screen media consumption and practices are clearly rooted in society, especially amongst the current generation of young people, and the phenomenon is predicted to become more widespread. This is the scenario that some authors describe as a "(new) media ecology" (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2017), others as a "new media environment" with its own features that are different to those of the past (Jenkins et al., 2013; Press & Williams, 2010), and others as "the media life of audiences" (Deuze, 2011; Manovich, 2009), who live "across" different media (Lomborg & Mortensen, 2017).

Whatever description we might refer to, this online environment is the natural one for the so-called "generation Z", that is, the current adolescents and young people. Following the digital natives (Prensky, 2001) or millennials (generation Y), who represent a consumer generation "who exhibits a 'networked hypersociality' and a 'participatory exhibitionism'" (Serazio, 2013, p. 599), the current generation Z can be considered the first true digital generation, since it refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2012, and who have grown up "with a highly sophisticated media and computer environment" (Schroer, 2008, p. 9). Fernández-Cruz and Fernández-Díaz (2016) summarise the main characteristics of generation Z as the following: "1) expert understanding of technology; 2) multi-taskers; 3) socially open through the use of technologies; 4) fast and impatient; 5) interactive; and 6) resilient" (p. 98).

Thus, current digital media, the so-called social media, including YouTube, play an important role in the very conceptualisation of the current youth identity and youth culture, as well as being a socialisation and learning tool for the youngest, as traditional media have been (Aran-Ramspott et al., 2018). In particular, recent data confirm the central role YouTube plays in the media life of young people in the west. For example, according to the Pew Research Center (Anderson et al., 2018), YouTube is the most popular platform among US teenagers, since 85% of them say they use it. More than 80% of US parents let their children watch content on YouTube, while children's content and videos featuring children have become more and more popular (van Kessel, 2019). According to Ofcom (2019), 89% of UK tweens use YouTube, especially to watch funny videos or pranks and music content. Moreover, nearly 50% of them prefer watching content on YouTube than on television. In Spain, YouTube is the most highly rated network after WhatsApp, and its usage is growing among the Spanish population (IAB Spain, 2019). Around 70% of Spanish teens (14–17 years old) prefer YouTube (after Facebook) among social media (Pérez-Torres et al., 2018, p. 62). In a multinational study carried out in Spain, Portugal and Italy, teenagers rated "watching YouTube channels" above other media practices and attitudes (Pereira et al., 2018).

Papacharissi (2015) puts forward the idea that all media (both the so-called "old" or traditional mass media and the "new" or internet-based media) are social, because of their "social character (...) as they develop within the context of societies and everyday life" (p. 1). Therefore, it is of great interest to analyse how YouTube, the largest social media in the world together with Facebook, with almost 2.000.000 monthly users in 2019 (YouTube, n.d.), is actually developing its social potential, especially in young people's everyday life. The three main characteristics that are fundamental in defining this "social" nature of some digital media platforms, according to Bechman and Lomborg (2013), and which are very relevant in the case of YouTube, are:

- Communication is de-institutionalized: social media allow users to contribute to and filter the content that they consider relevant, sharing it with audiences of their choice.
- Users of these sites are intrinsically considered as producers of different kinds of content, depending on the nature of the sites (photographs, short messages, video, audio, text files, etc.).
- Communication is interactive and networked, with users constantly shifting from production to reception modes, as they wish.

Traditional media, such as television, can be attributed several social functions, such as entertainment, narrative, and socialisation functions, which include personal identity building, learning about reality, sharing and commenting with the peer group, and identification with characters, among others (Fedele, 2011). Internet-based media can also carry out these social functions in young people's everyday life. For instance, adolescents can use YouTube for similar reasons that they watch television, and also as "a channel to express themselves and a space for cultural empowerment" (García-Jiménez et al., 2016, p. 60).

Arthurs et al. (2018) highlight that there is a recent multidisciplinary research field that focuses on YouTube, relating the platform to digital culture and society. Most previous studies have centred on middle and late teenagers (e.g., García-Jiménez et al., 2016; Pereira et al., 2018; Pereira et al., 2019; Pires et al., 2019), or university students (e.g., Klobas et al., 2018), and to a much lesser extent on early adolescents, those known as preadolescents or tweens (9 to 13 years old), who are neither children nor adults (Linn, 2005), but "between human being and becoming" (La Rocca & Fedele, 2015, p. 19). Tweens are, in fact, a "transitional age group undergoing deep physical and psychological transformations" (Quelhas-Brito, 2012, p. 580). In this sense, Buckingham et al. (2005) point out that, between middle childhood and early adolescence (that is, 9 and 12 years-old), children are increasingly bringing more general social understandings to bear in their judgment of media. However, it is not until the age of about 11 or 12 that children may begin to speculate about the ideological impact of media, their potential effects or the processes of stereotyping. In addition, as Moreno Hernández (2009, p. 61) points out, it is between the ages of 7 and 12 that the child begins to be more sensitive to the diversity of people's opinions beyond their immediate environment, by progressively adopting a social perspective, according to Selman's (1980) theory of social role taking. Therefore, tweens can be especially sensitive to social media content and uses. This paper focuses precisely on this *particularly* vulnerable segment of the population, preadolescents or tweens, analysing their preferences, practices and uses related to YouTube.

Adolescents' Uses and Practices Related to Social Media

Pereira et al. (2020) point out that several studies about young people, children and media have been carried out, especially in the last 2 decades, focused on different aspects of young people's media life. As Subrahmanyam et al. (2015) indicate, research suggests that young people are using digital tools to extend their networks with people they know "in general to connect with friends, as well as to look for support or cultivate emotional links" (p. 118). There is a whole line of research into the self-representation of young people on social media which indicates that the youngest adolescents present a more multifaceted sense of themselves in their profiles (Livingstone, 2008), and in particular that they communicate their personal, social and gender identity through their photos (Salimkhan et al., 2010).

Uses and gratifications theory, in particular, makes it possible to identify users' motivations for employing social media, since it can allow "the study of this convergent media environment" (Papacharissi, 2008, p. 144). According to this approach (e.g., Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2002), audiences are considered active and able to use media to seek different kinds of gratifications or functions, since "individuals select media and content to fulfil felt needs or wants" (Papacharissi, 2008, p. 137). Both this theoretical approach and cultural studies have highlighted the uses, practices, and social functions that audiences give to traditional media, such as television. These include entertainment, emotional experience, knowledge about the world, social learning, identity building, social relationships, socialisation, and relationship with the characters, including parasocial relationships (e.g., Livingstone, 1988; Lull, 1980; McQuail, 1997; McQuail et al., 1972). As for social media, Whiting and Williams (2013) identify 10 uses and gratifications: social interaction, information seeking, passing the time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others. Igartua and Rodríguez-De-Dios (2016, p. 109) point out that social media enable users to obtain gratifications similar to those already recognized in traditional media, such as those based on content (e.g., information, entertainment), on the experience of using the media (e.g., playing with the technology), and, due to the interactive dimension, markedly social and communicative aspects, such as communicating with friends and extending one's network of acquaintances (e.g., Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010; Joinson, 2008). Igartua and Rodríguez-De-Dios (2016) propose a motivational model to describe the motives for using Facebook based on seven categories: entertainment, virtual community, maintaining relationships, coolness, companionship, and self-expression.

Specifically in relation to YouTube, Ito et al. (2010) identify three macro-categories of participation genres, which are related to three types of uses: "hanging out" (which can be considered as an erratic use), "messing around" (explorative use) and "geeking out" (expert use).

The "Transmedia Literacy" project, a European study carried out in the same period as the present study, determined five uses that teenagers can make specifically of YouTube: radiophonic (e.g. listening or downloading music), televisual (e.g. watching entertainment content or following YouTubers), social (e.g. commenting or co-viewing), productive (i.e., creating or managing personal content) and educative (e.g. learning something new or solving problems; Pires et al., 2019), including informal learning (Pereira et al., 2019).

In Spain, one of the first studies about young people's motivations for using social networks was carried out in Andalusia (Colás-Bravo et al., 2013), with a sample similar to that used in our research. That study found no significant differences in the frequency of use of social networks between boys and girls; however, it did note differences in motivations: boys had more emotional motivations, whereas girls had more relational motivations. Another study about adolescents' media diet, carried out in Catalonia, recognized some mainly relational and socialising functions in information technologies in the lives of adolescents (Fedele et al., 2015), which is more marked in girls. However, another study, carried out in the Basque country, showed the "opposed male/female patterns in the way young people consume, create and diffuse leisure content" (Fernández-de-Arroyabe-Olaortua et al., 2018, p. 61). The authors found that video games were "the central backbone of male consumption and creation" and girls preferred to use social networks (Fernández-de-Arroyabe-Olaortua et al., 2018, p. 61). This study also showed that "creating and sharing audio-visual content does not seem to be a widespread activity among young people" (p. 66), which could be related to a mostly passive use of YouTube among young users, which was pointed out by Pérez-Torres et al. (2018, p. 63).

A more recent ethnographic study on media practices carried out in Madrid with children and preadolescents under 14 years old (de la Fuente-Prieto et al., 2020), revealed that "social media practices enable youth to connect their online and offline activities with their interests" (p. 21), as well as take advantages of collaborative learning tools, among other conclusions. In the same line, another applied study carried out in Catalonia (Villacampa et al., 2020) concluded that adolescents' prosumption on YouTube, that is, the creation of their own content, can be a useful tool for approaching the topic of gender violence.

Objectives and Methodology

The general aim of this study is to analyse tweens' preferences and media practices and uses in YouTube, through the following sub-objectives:

- To understand how tweens define and see YouTube among the rest of social media.
- To analyse what tweens like best or dislike in YouTube (technical features, contents, interactive functions) and why.
- To identify the uses or social functions tweens attribute to YouTube (e.g., entertainment, self-learning, socialisation functions).
- To detect whether there is any kind of prosumption in tweens' practices on YouTube.
- To determine whether there is a gender bias in tweens' YouTube preferences and practices.

To achieve the research objectives, the study applied a quantitative phase consisting of administering a questionnaire to 1,406 preadolescents (11 and 12 year-olds) in 41 secondary schools in Catalonia, and a qualitative phase consisting of three focus groups, with six tween participants each (three girls and three boys).

We contacted all the schools listed in the Education Department of the Government via email, asking them to participate in our study, and giving them instructions about how to administer the questionnaire. A total of 41 schools freely agreed to participate.

The final questionnaire, preceded by a pilot test carried out in November 2016 (Fedele et al., 2018), was administered online during the period December 2016–January 2017, with the presence of a teacher or a tutor.

The online questionnaire, which had a simple and attractive visual appearance, consisted of two parts:

- five questions for socio-demographical purposes, respecting the anonymity of the respondent (e.g., age, sex, school);
- eight questions focused on the research topics: one open question and the rest with closed responses (some multiple choice and others using a five-point Likert scale).

In the second part, four out of eight questions focused on YouTube practices, uses and preferences. In particular, respondents were asked:

- Q2: What is YouTube?
- Q5/Q6: What do you like/dislike about YouTube?
- Q4: What do you use it for?

In Q2, respondents could select up to three of the following options: a social media, a video catalogue, a content platform, a "new" television. These are the options that coincide most closely with the observations made by McCosker (2014, p. 203), who asserted that "in its early iterations at least, YouTube's important generative function has emerged from its multiple roles 'as a high-volume website, a broadcastplatform, a media archive and a social network' (Burgess and Green, 2009, p. 5)".

In Q5 and Q6 the participants were asked, respectively, what they liked best about YouTube and what they did not like about it. The respondents were given a series of items related to YouTube, which were grouped into three categories:

- technical characteristics (speed/slowness, usability, video quality);
- content (music, television programs, tutorials, memes/jokes);
- interactive functions (uploading videos, sharing videos, writing comments, liking or disliking material).

The content categories were based on a literature review, which identified the main types of YouTube channels (Bärtl, 2018; Williams et al., 2014[1]).

Participants could also indicate other features in an open option category, whose results were coded *a posteriori*.

Q4 was designed as a set of five-point Likert scale questions and asked respondents to rate 10 specific reasons for using YouTube, on a scale from 1 (*very little*) to 5 (*a lot*). They also had the option of responding 0 (*none*). A value of three is considered the midpoint or neutral response (neither too much nor too little). According to the uses and gratification theory, "people are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to recognize them when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation" (Katz et al., 1973, p. 511). Therefore, based on our theoretical framework, we combined different categories of uses and motivations from previous studies related to social media (Igartua & Rodríguez-De-Dios, 2016; Ito et al., 2010) to define specific reasons for using YouTube (Table 1, 3rd Column). We asked the participants to rate these categories from one to five.

[1] We also consulted https://creatoracademy.youtube.com/page/home

Ito et al.'s (2010) use modalities	Igartua and Rodríguez-De-Dios's- (2016) motivational model	Specific reasons for using YouTube (items)
Erratic use	Entertainment	Pass the time
		Have fun
	Companionship	Not feel alone
Exploration use	Maintain relationships	Stay in touch with my friends
	Virtual community	Follow what people are doing
	Coolness	It's awesome
		It's in fashion
	Self-expression	Upload things
Expert use	Self-learning*	Learn things
		Test myself

Table 1 *Models of Practices and Uses of YouTube*

Note. Own adaptation of Ito et al. (2010), and Igartua and Rodríguez-de-Díos (2016)

To identify these categories of uses/practices, we combined (Table 1):

- the motivational model of Igartua and Rodríguez-De-Dios (2016) on the uses of Facebook, considering that both the categories "maintain relationships" and "virtual community" can be related to a socialisation function;
- the participation genres identified by Ito et al. (2010);
- the self-learning function (marked with an asterisk in Table 1), a category created ad hoc following the contributions of other researchers who recognize that the new technologies provide new opportunities for self-learning (e.g., Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

Descriptive and bi-variant analyses were carried out with SPSS software, using frequency tables and descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, and standard deviation) for the descriptive analysis, and chi-square, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests (depending on the type of variable) for the bi-variant analysis (level of significance set at $p < 0.05$).

The focus groups were held in January, February and March 2017 in three of the 41 participating educational institutions. They were led by pairs of moderators who followed an interview guide based on semi-structured questions. The focus groups were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

The transcriptions were analysed following the thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), with the support of the Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software and the collaboration of an external researcher who is a certified Atlas.ti trainer.

The coding process was carried out by four researchers working as a group. They agreed on 21 categories, which include, for the purposes of this article, the following:

- notion of social media and definition of YouTube;
- preferences with regard to content selected on YouTube (music, entertainment, learning/education, etc.);
- reasons for liking/disliking YouTube and functions attributed to it (based on categories of uses/practices in Table 1). In particular, the category "virtual community" includes comments such as

"to follow what people are doing" and "to like", but there are no contributions referring to making comments or keeping in contact with offline friends.

In the results section the focus group interventions are identified in the following way: focus group number (FG1, FG2 or FG3) + participant (boy/girl) + participant number (by order of intervention).

Results

Description of the Sample

A total of 1,406 students in the first year of secondary school at 41 secondary schools throughout Catalonia participated in the survey: 716 girls (50.9%) and 690 boys (49.1%). A total of 87.1% (n = 1,224) of the participants were 12 years old, with an average age of x = 12.11 (median = 12, mode = 12). In the focus groups there were 18 students from three of the schools that had participated in the previous phase: nine girls and nine boys.

What is YouTube?

When defining YouTube, two thirds of the students (66%, n = 928) only chose one of the options from the four available, 26.8% (n = 377) chose two options and 7.2% (n = 101) chose three options (x = 1.41).

No option was chosen by a majority of participants, who generally consider YouTube to be, in decreasing order, a social media (43.5%, N = 611), a content platform (41.7%, N = 587) and a video catalogue (40.8%, N = 574), and much less as a "new" television (15.1%, N = 213), although they do use it, as is noted below, in a way which is fairly similar to "traditional" television according to the televisual use identified by Pires et al. (2019). However, the focus groups revealed the variety of criteria used by pre-adolescents to identify what constitutes social media and what kinds of social media they use. They mainly mention Instagram, and, in second place, other media or applications like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Musical.ly and WhatsApp, even though participants said that they rarely used certain networks, such as Facebook, Twitter or even Snapchat, or did not use them at all.

It should be pointed out that the focus group participants did not discriminate between social media and messaging services, such as WhatsApp, as for the majority, social media are "the applications we use to communicate with each other" (FG3Girl2), as can also be seen in this fragment from FG1:

> Moderator: What are social networks for you?
>
> FG1Boy1: Yes, Instagram.
>
> FG1Girl1: Instagram.
>
> FG1Boy3: Mainly Instagram.
>
> (...)
>
> Moderator: You said that YouTube wasn't a social network. Why?

> FG1Boy1: Yes, it is a social network.
> FG1Girl1: Yes, it is, but I don't use it as a social network.
> FG1Boy3: Well, it's supposed to be, but nobody uses it. It's more to see things that interest you.
> FG1Girl1: Yes, a video, a song, whatever. For example, now I want to see (...) an episode (of a series/program). Or you put on this YouTuber (...). Or this film... people post things, I dunno, and explain what they think and so on and then you look at them. After you watch the video you can say what you think...

In the questionnaire, there were significant differences between responses made by girls and those made by boys:

- More girls than boys consider YouTube to be a social media ($p < 0.001$), exactly 48.2% ($n = 345$) of girls, compared to 38.6% ($n = 366$) of boys.
- More boys than girls consider YouTube to be a content platform ($p = 0.027$), exactly 44.8% ($n = 309$) of boys compared to 38.8% ($n = 278$) of girls, or a new television ($p = 0.005$), 18% ($n = 124$) of boys compared to 12.4% ($n = 89$) of girls.

These differences can be related to their preferences, which, as we will see below, show that boys tend to rate the technical characteristics more highly than girls, and girls tend to evaluate music content and self-learning more highly than boys.

Tweens' YouTube Preferences

In the three groups of features that the participants like best, video content was rated highest, while the interactive functions were rated lowest (Figure 1). In particular, genuine YouTube content, such as memes/jokes and tutorials, was more highly valued than content proceeding from traditional media, like television programs.

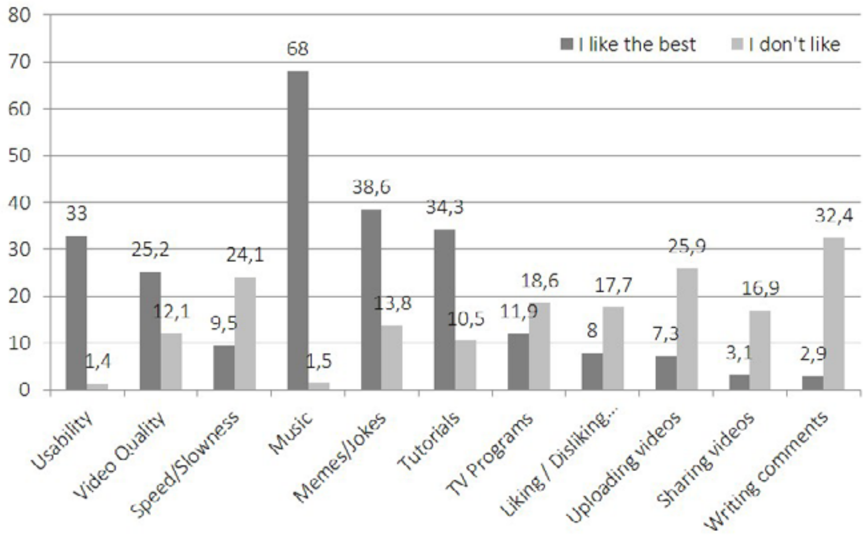

Figure 1 *What I Like the Best and What I Don't Like About YouTube* (%)

The most highly-rated content is related to the most recurrent uses of YouTube, which are presented in the next section: entertainment (music and humour) and self-learning (tutorials).

A total of 67% (n = 940) of the sample chose three options (x = 2.51, mode and median = 3), which indicates that there was considerable variety in participants' preferences.

A total of 9.5% (n = 133) of participants also specified other options, which were coded subsequently in the following categories:

- watching videos (1.4%, n = 19), namely the "essence" of YouTube, a category which can be related to the entertainment function and to the conception of YouTube as a video catalogue and a content platform;
- humorous content (1.4%, n = 19), also related to entertainment;
- specific video content (4.4%, n = 61) not included in other categories, such as blogs and videoblogs, film trailers, videos of challenges, and horror, and, above all, content linked to videogames, gamers, and gameplays (2.3%, n = 32), a range of subject matter which evidences the participants' varied interests;
- following YouTubers or other famous people (1.9%, n = 27), an item which could be related to the functions of coolness and virtual community;
- learning and information (0.4%, n = 6), clearly related to (self-)learning functions;
- creation of own channel (0.1%, n = 1), the only category linked to self-expression and very much in the minority.

Although the bi-variant analysis detected significant differences in the gender variable in almost all the items researched, it is in the group of variables relating to content where the differences are most noteworthy. In terms of content, girls chose music (p < 0.001), tutorials (p < 0.001) and television programs (p < 0.001) more, while boys chose videos of memes/jokes (p < 0.001). This result was supported by the difference detected in the open response option (p < 0.001), as more boys indicated entertainment or videogame content.

In addition, with regard to the technical characteristics of YouTube, only usability obtains a homogeneous distribution with regard to gender, whilst more boys than girls appreciate the quality (p < 0.001) and the speed (p = 0.008) of the videos. Lastly, with regard to YouTube's interactive characteristics there are significant differences in "uploading videos" (p < 0.001), linked to self-expression, which was selected by more boys than girls.

In the focus groups there was no spontaneous reference to any technical characteristic or function of YouTube, only content. The comments on content coincided with the quantitative results, because the majority were about preferences for music and tutorials and, to a lesser extent, about video games and memes/jokes.

What is different however about the participants' preferences is their evaluation of what they do not like about YouTube. While the results about what they do not like mirror the responses to the question about what they like most in the questionnaire (Figure 1), the majority of participants only chose one or two options (61.3%, n = 859; x = 1.86, mode = 1 and median = 2), which indicates there are more things that they like than things they do not like.

In particular, what they like least about YouTube is its interactive characteristics, above all "writing comments" and "uploading videos", options linked to self-expression. The bi-variant analysis by gender also confirms in an almost identical way the results of the previous question. In particular, significant differences were detected in two interactive characteristics of YouTube, "writing comments" ($p = 0.02$) and "sharing videos" ($p = 0.01$), which girls dislike more than boys.

Lastly, 10.9% ($n = 153$) of participants indicated other options, which were grouped as follows:

- functional characteristics of YouTube (3.5%, $n = 49$), such as recommendations, the bell, the click-bait, the difficulty of finding certain content (such as television series), the amount of internet data needed, and, above all, the advertisements (1.4%, $n = 20$), and the possible dangers for minors (0.4%, $n = 6$), particularly in the use of their images or the danger of becoming "hooked". These responses indicate a certain understanding of the media functioning of YouTube, what we could perhaps define as a sort of YouTube media literacy;
- specific content (0.4%, $n = 6$), such as jokes and "nonsense", and the "lack of netiquette and unsuitable content" (5.5%, $n = 77$), in other words, inappropriate or offensive comments, insults, haters, in general anything which might be likely to cause conflict and is seen as a lack of manners as well as male chauvinist, racist, homophobic, irresponsible and adult content and content showing the abuse of animals. This also includes youtubers (specified or not), above all for their inappropriate and provocative behaviour and language. These categories demonstrate knowledge of politically correct behaviour on the internet (netiquette) and are therefore connected to the digital literacy of minors, beyond their sensitivity as citizens and human beings.

The focus groups also revealed participants' YouTube media literacy and gave a vision of participants' dislike of humorous content that could be offensive or discriminatory. Firstly, some participants mentioned situations and youtubers who they say have made comments or behaved in a way that is inappropriate or even immoral: "I don't like Wismischu and AuronPlay very much, for the language they use" (FG3Girl2). In contrast they do express that they like youtubers who are respectful, particularly towards their followers: "[I like] a [youtuber] to be nice, yes. There's one called Yuya, who you could say respects her followers more" (FG3P1).

Secondly, the participants express considerable knowledge of economic interests, sponsorship and, in general, the commercial aspect of YouTube in particular and social networks in general:

> FG1Girl3: It's recorded when you've seen something. Because it says so below, how many views, you know. Somebody knows that you've been connected.
> (...)
> FG3Boy3: [PewDiePie] has a lot of subscribers, 50.000.000 [statistic checked: 55,883,047 subscribers on 27 June 2017].
> FG3Girl1: 50.000.000 and a bit...
> FG3Boy2: Just over 50.000.000...
> FG3Boy3: I suppose he's paid. Paid money for the video.
> FG3Boy2: Because he's paid the monetisation.
> FG3Girl2: He's paid.

Moderator: Who pays?
Some: "YouTube", "the YouTube company".
FG3Boy1: He's sponsored, for example...
FG3Girl2: Google!
FG3Boy3: And Google pays YouTube...it's like that.
FG3Boy1: And if there are advertisements, they pay you even more...
FG3Boy2: Obviously!
Moderator: Ok, ok... Did you work on that in class?
Everybody: No, no. We just know.
FG3Girl1: It's just normally the YouTubers say so.

The conversation above clearly demonstrates the knowledge of the tweens in our sample about certain media mechanisms, such as marketing strategies, a knowledge they have picked up outside formal educational institutions.

Tweens' Uses and Practices on YouTube

The quantitative data revealed that entertainment is the most highly-rated use (Table 2), which ties in with the results presented in the previous section.

Ito et al.'s (2010) use modalities	Igartua and Rodríguez-De-Dios's (2016) motivational model	Specific reasons for using YouTube	Mean	Median	Mode	Standar deviation
Erratic use	Entertainment	Pass the time	3.24	3	4	1.492
		Have fun	3.51	4	5	1.484
	Companionship	Not feel alone	0.65	0	0	1.295
Exploration use	Maintain relationships	Stay in touch with my friends	0.67	0	0	1.229
	Virtual community	Follow what people are doing	1.72	1	0	1.654
	Coolness	It's awesome	2.96	3	5	1.787
		It's in fashion	1.53	1	0	1.775
	Self-expression	Upload things	0.5	0	0	1.209
Expert use	Self-learning*	Learn things	2.37	2	3	1.641
		Test myself	1.04	0	0	1.484

Table 2 *Results: Uses of YouTube*

It is surprising that, despite more than 40% of the survey respondents defining YouTube as a social media, they scarcely use it at all to follow what people are doing, to be in contact with friends or to post things.

The quantitative analysis showed significant gender differences in almost all YouTube practices, except in "learning things" ($p = 0.638$) and "not feeling alone" ($p = 0.068$). Boys tend to give higher ratings than girls to the items presented. In particular, the only two uses that are rated higher than neutral (3), "passing the time" ($p < 0.001$) and "having fun" ($p < 0.001$), are rated, respectively, four and six tenths higher by boys. In addition, boys rate the coolness item "because it's awesome" ($p < 0.001$) slightly higher than average, while girls rate it lower.

In the qualitative data, and in line with the quantitative data, "entertainment" receives 31% of mentions and is one of the most frequently mentioned categories, together with "virtual community", which received 16% of mentions. Also in line with the quantitative results presented in the previous section, the entertainment category is often related to specific content, especially music:

> FG2Girl2: I watch music videos [on YouTube], mainly music.
> (...)
> FG1Boy3: [YouTube] it's supposed to be social, I think, but I use it more for entertainment.
> Various participants: Yes.
> (...)
> FG1Girl2: [We watch TV series on YouTube] but they are series that aren't on television anymore normally.

(Self)-learning (36% of mentions) was also noted in the qualitative phase, but in the focus groups it refers both to informal learning — above all in tutorials — and to a lesser extent the more formal learning provided by teachers in the classroom.

Informal learning tends to come from tutorial or do it yourself (DIY) content:

> FG1Boy2: Last year I made some slippers for secret Santa, and I sewed them, I got it from a YouTube tutorial.
> Moderator: A tutorial about "how to sew slippers"?
> FG1Boy3: "How to make a gift".
> FG1Boy2: Exactly. I looked for that and there was a video about slippers.

On the other hand, the combination of humour and academic content found on YouTube can be a useful tool in the classroom:

> FG3Boy3: The best is the maths one... "Troncho and Moncho".
> FG3Girl1: In Maths, we always get shown the videos by "Troncho and Moncho". As our teacher always tells us we haven't understood anything he looks for one and he knows we like YouTube a lot, so he puts it on and we concentrate better and we "get" things better.

The cross-referencing of quantitative and qualitative data suggests that YouTube is one of the main social media related to the home (97%, n = 1,343 of those surveyed, use YouTube at home), and to a lesser extent at school, to increase their knowledge. Even so, the focus groups reveal that use is mainly individual and only occasionally in the company of friends and siblings, although they do talk with their peers about YouTube contents.

Conclusions

The purpose of this quantitative and qualitative study was to analyse current Catalan tweens' YouTube preferences, practices and uses, and to identify any gender bias that might exist. We also aimed to detect some kind of prosumption in the uses preadolescents make of YouTube, following the uses and gratification theory and previous scholars' contributions on social media uses (Igartua & Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2006; Ito et al., 2010; Katz et al., 1973; Papacharissi, 2008; Pereira et al., 2018; Pires et al., 2019; Rubin, 2002; Whiting & Williams, 2013, among others).

To start with, participants in this study consider YouTube to be above all a social media, and secondly a video catalogue or content platform, demonstrating that they know the various possibilities, including interactive ones, even though they do not use them. In fact, they recognize that a social media is an application that allows them to remain in contact and communicate: they use the word "application" as a broad umbrella term, which also includes messaging services such as WhatsApp. In terms of gender, it should be noted that girls tend to consider YouTube more as a social media while boys see it more as a content platform, which reflects girls' more social and relational attitudes and boys' greater interest in technology, a difference which is also shown in their YouTube preferences and ratings.

Thus girls rate content on YouTube higher than boys, while boys rate the technical characteristics higher. Despite this, entertainment and (self-)learning content is what our participants like most. This is the very "essence" of YouTube, which offers an enormous number of videos and is, therefore, better adapted to more "traditional" consumption, such as television consumption, which contributes to shaping the audiences' "media life". On the other hand, although the participants are aware that YouTube is a social media that offers the chance to interact, what participants, and particularly girls, like least, are the interactive functions, especially those linked to content production (sharing their own videos) or interaction (writing comments and engaging with other users), in other words, self-expression. That is, although tweens consider YouTube to be a social media rather than a "new television", the definition of YouTube made by most of our research participants seems to be at odds with their favourite "instrumental use" (term suggested by Steele & Brown, 1995) of YouTube, that is, watching content, especially content linked to entertainment (music and humour videos). Or, referring to the categories in Pires et al. (2019), they prefer radiophonic and televisual uses, which are those more connected to "old" media practices.

Therefore, we can see that, in line with the model of uses developed by Ito et al. (2010), erratic use — linked to "hanging out" and entertainment — is the dominant practice, but there is also a large presence of exploratory use (coolness) and "messing around" — linked to coolness and the virtual community (Igartua & Rodríguez-De-Dios, 2016) — and even, expert use – linked to "geeking out" and self-learning (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016) or educative use (Pires et al., 2019). Almost completely ignored, however, are practices linked to self-expression (Igartua & Rodríguez-De-Dios, 2016), self-representation (Livingstone, 2008; Salimkhan et al., 2010), and the extension of social networks (Subrahmanyam et al., 2015), which are more connected to the social and productive uses found by Pires et al. (2019). However, YouTube does fulfil the function of sharing with the peer group (Fedele, 2011), as young people discuss the content and characters (youtubers) in conversations with friends. We could say that tweens in our study use YouTube (online interactions with the content) to feed conversations of offline interactions with peers. Hence, YouTube is involved in developing relationships amongst tweens (Colás-Bravo et al., 2013; Fedele et al., 2015), but not through the platform itself. This is more accentuated in the case of girls and is similar to the way traditional media, in particular television, is used.

YouTube is thus an integral part of the interconnected ecology (Scolari & Fraticelli, 2017), media life (Deuze, 2011; Manovich, 2009) and transmedia life of tweens in our study, who integrate YouTube into their wider multimedia practices in a "natural" way. It does not, however, seem the most important medium for socialisation, self-representation or self-expression, at least in this age range. Preadolescents in this study seem to prefer Instagram as their favourite social media for uploading original content and engaging in interaction with others. In other words, on YouTube tweens in our study are not the prosumers predicted for the new media environment, at least not at this age stage or in this platform.

Nevertheless, tweens in our study do show several of the generation Z's characteristics indicated by Fernández-Cruz and Fernández-Díaz (2016), since they appear to be quite expert in understanding the technology (what we have referred to as a sort of YouTube media literacy), they are multi-taskers, socially open, and fast in the use of technology tools such as YouTube.

Although YouTube has unquestionably made it easier for users to publish their own audio-visual content, it is also true, as our study points out, that while for the vast majority of tweens verbal comments between peers and sharing are important components in the sense of active and creative participation, content production and publication on this platform are not media practices that are of interest to them. The general picture shown in our findings is that tweens use YouTube to consume media content in a traditional manner, rather than in a more interactive way, although YouTube does form part of tweens' transmedia life.

To understand how those in this age range respond to the possibilities offered by the new media ecosystem as places for prosumption, it seems suitable to focus future research on other social media that have emerged in this study, above all Instagram. It would be interesting to apply more participatory approaches, such as the ethnographic approach used to carry out workshops with children (de la Fuente-Prieto et al., 2020) and adolescents (Villacampa et al., 2020).

To conclude, we would like to highlight the relevant informal knowledge of YouTube that the tweens have shown. We believe that this opens a window of opportunity to promote more deeply the educational and cultural potential of social media within the framework of media literacy. As one example, the fact that our research participants, despite being very young, are fully aware of the marketing elements incorporated in YouTube or in youtubers' content and strategies, shows us the level of understanding that these young generations already have about online environments.

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Paquetes as Improvised Media: Transnationalism and Cultural Consumption in Havana-Miami Context

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Abstract

Mediatic gambiarras are alternative and improvised forms of media consumption. They emerge in adverse or restrictive contexts. Signal the need for connection on the part of those who use them. In the island of Cuba, *paquetes*, sets of files containing pop culture content, music, series, US blockbusters, among others, not shown in Cuban media systems, are the most established cultural form of mediatic gambiarra on the socialist island. The article presents the result of a research project carried out between the years 2015 and 2017, based on an ethnographic-inspired methodology, with field interviews and participant observation in the city of Havana, with the purpose of debating different uses of the *paquetes* by consumers and fans of pop culture in the Cuban context. Contradictions about the practices of *paqueteros* — subjects who sell *paquetes* in online and offline network creations — are mapped from the emergence of traces of capitalism in Cuba that pass through the always conflicting relationship between residents in Havana and migrants in Miami in symbolic disputes on the island. The questions raised in the field signal for different matrixes around transnationalism in Latin America, geopolitical issues and point to understandings about the singularities and challenges of contemporary Cuba.

Keywords
cultural consumption, transnationalism, media, Cuba, Latin America

Paquetes Como Gambiarras Midiáticas: Transnacionalismo e Consumo Cultural no Contexto Havana-Miami

Resumo

Gambiarras midiáticas são formas alternativas e improvisadas de consumo de mídia. Emergem em contextos adversos ou restritivos. Sinalizam a necessidade de conexão por parte de quem as utiliza. Em Cuba, os *paquetes*, conjuntos de arquivos contendo conteúdos de cultura pop, música, séries, blockbusters norte-americanos, entre outros, não exibidos nos sistemas de mídia cubanos, são a forma cultural mais consagrada de gambiarra midiática na ilha socialista. O artigo apresenta o resultado de um projeto de pesquisa executado entre os anos de 2015 e 2017, a partir de uma metodologia de inspiração etnográfica, com entrevistas de campo e observação participante na cidade de Havana, com a finalidade de debater os diferentes usos dos *paquetes* por consumidores e fãs de cultura pop no contexto cubano. Mapeiam-se as contradições sobre as práticas dos *paqueteros* — sujeitos que vendem os *paquetes* em criações de redes online e offline — a partir da emergência de traços do capitalismo em Cuba que passam pela relação sempre conflituosa entre residentes em Havana e migrantes em Miami em disputas simbólicas na ilha. As questões levantadas em campo sinalizam para diferentes matrizes em torno do transnacionalismo na América Latina, questões geopolíticas e apontam para os entendimentos sobre as singularidades e desafios de Cuba na contemporaneidade.

Palavras-chave
consumo cultural, transnacionalismo, mídia, Cuba, América Latina

Introduction

Behind the high wall of a white two-story house with a balcony and wide porch in the Miramar neighborhood of Havana (Cuba), an area filled with mansions and luxury hotels, the researcher[1] and the informant arrive to put in an order for digital files to watch highly successful series like *Game of Thrones* or popular television programs like *The Voice*. These entertainment attractions are not aired on Cuban[2] state television channels, yet end up being widely watched in private through digital files (*paquetes*) downloaded at *oficinas digitales* (the equivalent of lan houses) and sold at *disquerías* (stores that sell records and DVDs) in Cuba's big cities (such as Havana, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba) or through direct sale by *paqueteros* who, through door-to-door sales or by positioning themselves in areas with heavy foot traffic and high visibility in smaller cities, offer a wide variety of digital files with entertainment content. The *paquete digital* or *paquete semanal* business moves $2,000,000 to $4,000,000 per year, according to a report by BBC International (San Pedro, 2015), making it one of the most lucrative private economic activities since the Cuban government opened up the economy to private businesses in 2010, giving rise to *cuentapropistas* (self-employed business owners) who have started opening restaurants and B&Bs in private homes and have now extended their reach to the entertainment industry.

In his field research on the intersections of anthropology and economy, Roberto Armengol (2013) highlights that self-employed private business activity has always been present in Cuba, ever since the introduction of the socialist political and economic regime in 1959. *Cuentapropismo* (with this nomenclature) has been regulated since the

[1] In the field research that contributed to this article, one of the authors, Thiago Soares, went to one of the places where *paquetes* are sold in Havana in May 2017, as part of a survey of 16 spaces that were previously visited during 1 month of field research to collect data and interview the social actors involved in the practices of selling and distributing the *paquetes digitales* in Cuba. The field research is a part of the project "Pop Music in Cuba: Political and Media Confrontations".

[2] In 2017, the television system in Cuba consisted of six Cuban and two international TV channels. All the channels are public-access and are regulated by the Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión (ICRT). The channels are: Cubavisión, Canal Habana, Canal Educativo, Canal Educativo 2, Multivisión and Tele Rebelde. They air entertainment, cultural and educational programs, transmissions of political sessions, and sports events. They also air films, Cuban and international series and soap operas (there are Brazilian, Colombian, and Turkish *telenovelas*). The international channels — TeleSUR, from Venezuela, and TV Marti, headquartered in Miami (United States of America) — are also public-access, and both are expanding their coverage in the Cuban territory after a government agreement. Since 2016, the Cuban television networks have broadcasted using a digital signal.

1990s; when the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc fell, the Caribbean island needed to rethink its economic vocation that was centered on government activities and start to include private business activities as well. Official data from the Cuban Ministry of Labor from 2016 registered 579,415 autonomous workers on the island (Agência EFE, 2017), the most common activity, with 61,301 licenses granted, was the "food production and sale" category, which includes *paladares* — restaurants in private homes. The second and third most popular categories were "cargo and passenger transportation" (57,911 licenses) and "renting and leasing houses and spaces" (39,442 licenses). The *paqueteros digitales* fall into the category of "telecommunications agents" (24,736 licenses issued), since the business owner is granted the right to sell top-ups for prepaid phone plans and internet connections and to collect phone bills. The direct contact with the Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba (Etecsa) gives the Cuban entrepreneurs the understanding of how the country's phone networks and related legal codes work.

Jared Genova (2012) attests that one of the socio-economic impacts of private sector activities in Cuba is the formation of a middle class with access to capital, durable goods, and consumption capacity. Though he does not recognize profound changes to the socialist economy, the author indicates in his study that *cuentapropismo* results in a process of legalizing the "informal" economic activities on the island in order to pay fees and taxes to the State. The *paquetes digitales* market adds to this debate the fact that, even with the legalization of these activities, other unforeseen economic practices emerge that demand a closer look at their regulation. In the field research and the innumerable questions about the *paqueteros*' appropriateness and honesty, a moral dimension to the private activities in Cuba appears, insofar as the *paquetes digitales* dealer is also associated with privileges and the formation of informal norms of control and market strategies that work without the knowledge of the State.

During the 2 years spent on the project "Pop Music in Cuba: Political and Media Confrontations", which debated the dynamics of the consumption of pop culture attractions on the island of Cuba, different stages of understanding the dynamics of the phenomenon of the *paquetes digitales* were proposed, as all the studied phenomena addressed the dynamic of the consumption of the *paquetes*.

In the first investigation (Soares, 2016c), beginning with the relation of a Cuban drag queen who is a fan of the singer Lady Gaga to the context of both the gay scene in Havana and the dynamics of gender present in the policies of gender and sexuality at the Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual, the *paquetes digitales* appeared as a means through which both the drag queen in question and the fans of English pop music in Cuba and DJs at clubs and show houses are in contact with American and Latin music on the singles charts around the world. Albums, music videos, and recordings of live performances not just of Lady Gaga, but of other pop music artists as well, are offered and sought out via the *paquetes digitales*.

In the second investigation (Soares & Lima, 2018), some pop music fans showed resistance to the *paquetes*. Through three in-depth interviews with the main fan of the American singer Madonna on the island, who is also responsible for the Facebook page

"Madonna Cuba", the way that the generational aspect modulated the relations of consumption of the *paquetes* was discussed. With young Cuban fans of Lady Gaga, ages 15 to 22 years old, there was no mention or criticism of the quality of the available material; in the case of the Madonna fans (older, in the age range of 30 to 40 years old), the *paquetes* were rejected for the low quality definition of some files (especially video files) and for the fact that the songs are not in order according to their listing on the albums, but instead are collections of the artist's top hits, in the form of singles and without the "logic" that the artist had decided. The quality of the *paquetes* is highlighted as an element of distinction among the *paqueteros* and the process of loyalty to them, as found by investigating the consumption of series and blockbuster films in the Cuban context (Soares, 2016b), spawning recommendation networks that cause significant differentiations both with the *paqueteros* and with those who take the *paquetes* door-to-door.

It is not only the consumption and circulation of American or highly successful pop culture products that the *paquetes digitales* serve. Reguetón — a music genre that is highly controversial in the context of Cuba due to its glorification of consumerism, luxury cars, women, and a life of capitalist values — has also become central to the success of the *paquetes*. One incident involving the censorship of a reguetón music video by the Instituto Cubano de Rádio y Televisión (ICRT) on public television in Cuba and its wide circulation on *paquetes digitales* (Pereira & Soares, 2017) demonstrates that Cuban music, which is outside of the standards enshrined by the State while facing circulation difficulties in the official media systems, gains an important place in the dissemination of the *paquetes*.

Even when artists have shows in Cuba (in the case of the performances that celebrated the return of the relations between Cuba and the United States and the visit of then-president Barack Obama to the socialist island in 2016, with shows by Major Lazer and the Rolling Stones), producers need to make albums and songs by the artist available on the *paquetes digitales* with the purpose of popularizing the artists among younger listeners. This was highlighted in an article about the popularization of the group Major Lazer at the time of their Havana show in March 2016 at the Tribuna Antiimperialista, in front of the then-newly reopened Embassy of the United States (Soares, 2016a).

From this set of inferences about the dynamics of the *paquetes digitales*, the premise emerges that in the face of a media system supported by the State, Cuban citizens overcome restrictions on international pop culture products by developing alternative methods of media consumption. The *paquetes*, packages of files downloaded from the internet and sold through *oficinas digitales* in Havana and distributed throughout the island, are the principal mechanism of two types of media strategies, understanding these "strategies" on the basis of Braga's report (2006) that debates the uses, incorporations, attributions, and alternatives of social actors in the face of media offerings in socio-historical periods. Media strategies in contexts of asymmetrical power and social inequalities are gestures that point to alternative consumption of media. It is in this direction that we consider the *paquetes* to be "MacGyvered" or improvised media, since it calls to mind improvised constructions, deviation, and illicit purposes. The debate about media improvisations lies in the recognition of precariousness and improvisation as characteristics of this framework and "can be understood as conceptual vectors that are able to boost the capacity of understanding the technical phenomena and their political and aesthetic repercussions" (Messias & Mussa, 2020, p. 174). However, the improvisation has "the potential to express deviations and contingencies with both the sophisticated and the more precarious technologies; or, more precisely, to show just how precarious and uncertain the connections or links (Sodré, 2014) that bring these technologies together" (Messias & Mussa, 2020, p. 175).

Understanding the *paquete semanal* as a media improvisation points to more than its uses in internet consumption on the island of Cuba. The dynamics of production and circulation of these *paquetes* reveal a network that extends to the relation between Cuban migrants in Miami (United States) and residents in Havana (Cuba), private businesses on the island and business models that demonstrate the transversal ways that advertising is inserted into the socialist context of Cuba.

Paqueteros in the Balance Between Fascination and Suspicion

The debate about the *paquetes digitales* in academic articles within the project "Pop Music in Cuba: Political and Media Confrontations" always arises from reports of interviewees' experiences or from individuals referring to the way that they acquire their pop culture products through consulting *paqueteros*. In a field research visit to Havana in May of 2017, the researcher used participant observation as the research method on the trip to an appointment with the intent to acquire a *paquete* and interview the owner of the *oficina digital*. The participant observation was an appropriate method for the investigation of the *paquetes* because the topic is not openly discussed by individuals that practice the activity, which also brings up aspects linked to the clandestine nature and ethical debates of the individuals.

In the beginning of the investigation, the researcher considered using in-depth interviews with *paqueteros* in the city of Havana, however, the interview would present a set of statements and practices that could hide the clandestine dimension that exists in the daily activities. The first stage was to form a network of Cuban informants to get in contact with a *paquetero*. In all of the investigations carried out throughout the 2 years of research, Cuban informants were fundamental to forming complex pictures of the relations of consumption of cultural products on the socialist island.

Through the network of informants established in 2016 during the prior investigation about the consumption of pop music, D. P.[3], a nightclub frequenter, was added as a "friend" on the social network Facebook. Between the two trips to Havana, there were around 10 months of interaction between members of the research project in Brazil and the informant, who was a journalism student at the University of Habana at the time.

[3] Due to the sensitive nature of the topics and based on the recommendations of the Committee of Research Ethics of Applied Social Sciences at the Federal University of Pernambuco and of the editors of this publication, all the names of the individuals and locations are fictitious in order to protect the identities of the members of this investigation.

Based on their recommendation, we were introduced to P. A., one of the largest and most famous *oficinas digitales* in the Miramar neighborhood that also serves the Playa neighborhood, in Havana. It is a two-story residence, and in the living room the *paquetero* F., 23 years old, helps clients who come in from the neighborhood or via cellphone or landline phone. A sign that says "please confirm what was copied because we do not accept returns or copies" hangs over a barred window where requests are made to F., who is assisted by another "employee", his 16-year-old brother P. Both work at a desk beside the barred window in a type of improvised office in the living room of their house. Beneath the window on the left is a small side table with four folders on it. In these folders there are lists of available titles, sorted by genre. The content of the *paquetes* is so extensive and diverse that it has been called the "Cuban YouTube"[4].

Through the process of obtaining the *paquete*, a link between the client and the *paquetero* is developed, establishing the recommendation networks. This type of relationship was noticeable when the *paquetero* F. saw D. and informed them that all the episodes of *La Voz Kids* or *The Voice Kids – Brasil* had arrived. F. was surprised by the presence of D.'s friend, then still unknown. F. asked who they were and said that, if they wanted to become a regular client, he would give them episodes of the series *The Walking Dead* for free. An informal system of word-of-mouth recommendations and client loyalty is evident, but D. explained that they were Brazilian researchers who would be in Havana for only 1 month doing research on the *paquetes*.

D. was fundamental to mediating the relationships established with the group of *paqueteros*. The *paquetero's* trust allowed him to transfer access, data, and dialogue about the practices. The presence of the researcher in the environment sparked both curiosity and suspicion. Details of the research were not given, and the explanation was limited to saying that the investigation was to watch pop culture products "like Cubans watch them". This line had, in principle, placed the researcher outside the investigated group, but at the same time showed that they were interested in the enacted dynamics of consumption.

F. was interested in knowing what would be said about the *paquetes* since the Cuban government, according to them, "criminalizes the activity". The *paquetero* said that they needed to be paid to appear in the study, but it was explained that funding for this was not available and that it was not the purpose of the research. We expressed the importance of understanding the ways that Cubans connect with global pop culture products, their dynamics of consumption, and political and aesthetic implications.

We chose P. A. as the focus of the field research about the *paquetes* in Havana because of its centrality in an area considered to be for "rich people" in the Cuban capital. Contrary to popular imagination and confirmed by Genova (2012), there are social classes in Cuba and neighborhoods made up of government workers, *cuentapropistas* (local entrepreneurs), and residents of the island who receive foreign currency (money) from relatives who live abroad. In informal conversations with various interviewees, F. was always mentioned as an important *paquetero* because of his ample catalogue of

[4] Cubans' preference for the *paquete* can be seen in NoticiasCubanet Cuba (2017).

products and also for being a chic *paquete*. We came to understand that "chic" refers to his house, which is quite an imposing residence even by the more well-to-do standards of a neighborhood like Miramar. F.'s appearance also stood out: he is a good-looking man who dresses well and is very polite. Though he garners compliments, F. is also the target of suspicions, especially regarding how his business has grown to such a wide range of operations.

In 2017, F. fulfilled an average of 30 orders of *paquetes* per day, generating a profit of €150 per day and a total of approximately €4,500 per month[5]. This is a large amount of money for any European country, and even more so in Cuba, where services like education and healthcare are free and inclusive and private business activity needs to be State-sanctioned. Included in this amount are commissions for the *paqueteros* who do door-to-door business and payments to security guards who, according to the informant, need to "guard the territory" — he was referring to the practice of keeping the area where they do business free of competition. Security guards and the "eyes" report on the activities of other *paqueteros*, creating precedent for the formation of socio-technical networks based on informal frameworks of control, loyalty, and fidelity in a market that gives rise to micropolitics that regulate specific actions by groups of capital holders in the city of Havana.

Acting within a network and monitoring *paqueteros* like F. in neighborhoods in Havana raises hypotheses and the suspicions of residents and consumers of the *paquetes* about the methods and origins of the materials[6]. The materiality of the networks and their connections spark communicational flows that unfold in:

- the way that the *paqueteros* have internet access in Cuba, a country that suffers from a double embargo (economic and also the digital implications) — from pirating networks and reconfiguring the materialities of media, creating "MacGyvered media", or improvised artifacts for the consumption and circulation of media;
- the online and offline networks established among the extremely popular and well-recognized *paqueteros* of Havana with the media businesses of migrants in Miami, forming a system that reproduces the agency of the United States in the media trends of Latin America and demonstrating the recurrence and even the incentive of media activities that damage the sovereignty of Cuba.

The connections among *paquetes*, *paqueteros*, and the consumption of contemporary cultural products by Cuban residents, stemming from the relationships with Cuban migrants in the United States, lies in the particularities and inflections that the concept of transnationalism has in the Latin American context. Transnationalism is understood as the involvement of migrants, their networks of social relations established in a territory or between communication flows on the internet and the local and international institutions that support these relationships developed beyond the borders of cities or states (Portes et al., 1999; Schiller et al., 1992; Vertovec, 2009). Transnationalism

[5] These are the gross amounts and it is estimated that the *cuentapropista* fees paid to the State are around 70% of this amount. Informally, there are many ways of getting around the full payment.

[6] Paqueteros such as F. receive attractions extremely quickly. For example, the 2017 Grammy Awards, even though not broadcast on Cuban television stations, was already available for sale 1 hour after its closing when shown on worldwide television.

includes actions that range from the remittance of money between countries — in which the communication exchanges via information and communication technology (ICT) support the flow both with money and information — to the movement of goods and people necessary to carry out these exchanges. Transnationalism consequently includes the flow of cultural goods that inevitably circulate among these networks, whose aim is to subvert the limitations imposed by the precarious conditions of life and to combine strategies that allow for the transit and the cultural consumption entailed.

For Portes et al. (1999), the study of the web of transactions employed in transnational flows must start with understanding the stories and activities of individuals, thus, from data collection and individual interviews. This makes it possible to outline the networks that facilitate transnational migration, as well as to identify the elements that make up the networks, such as the chosen forms of communication whether via internet or telephone, the methods of exchanging goods or payments, and the routes and the movements involved. We highlight that by "transnational routes" we mean a constant exchange of information and experiences between the country of origin and the new place where the migrant lives. This exchange happens through ICT that, in turn, makes a double local experience: from the daily life of those who stayed and with the lives of those who remain in transit (Zanforlin, 2015).

If, for Castells (1996), the new technologies are the epicenter of contemporary transnational networks, the *paquetes* can be seen as artifacts that realize the desire to belong to the global capitalist system materialized by the consumption of cultural products produced by an industry that is blocked from Cuba and reinforces Cuba's exclusion from this same system. In this sense, Appadurai (1996/2004) understands that migrations and diasporas, together with communication technologies, represent the essential distinctions of contemporaneity, with the experience of the consumption of globalized culture being a signifier of the changes found in the framework of identity and spaciality. For the author, the complexity of global cultural flows can be better understood using the concept of "scapes": a *mediascape* is what most approximates the experience of the *paqueteros* and the *paquetes* in Cuba. From this perspective, the *mediascapes* depict an experience of cultural consumption that goes beyond the locality or the Nation-State, confirming that the *paqueteros'* experience of diaspora can be viewed from the transnational paradigm that brings together information, human mobility, and cultural consumption from the cultural flows that are amplified by globalization.

On the other hand, in an attempt to make a critical revision of the concept of transnationalism, Feldman-Bianco and Schiller (2011) point out the need to be attentive to the continual restructuring of capital and its nucleus as a matrix of social relations in progress and in dispute. In other words, it is necessary to situate the studies about transnationalism from the point of view of a world that is connected by multiple networks of unequal power, where the interests of national elites overlay state institutional ties, to world financial institutions and imperial powers with actors in the social, political, and economic conditions that compose the profile of migration, its radicalization and the transnational connection. This is to say that, in the scope of the studies about transnationalism, there is an urgent need to reapproach the political economy and social relations in order to set a direction that is opposed to the studies that celebrate the "trips, tourism, consumption, and movements of capital, people and signs in a world without borders" (Feldman-Bianco & Schiller, 2011, p. 36). The authors point out that different case studies reveal that the transnational social camps of migrants take shape and are part of the restructuring, connection, and global repositioning of the particular places and institutions among them, which would include reclaiming the use of the term "imperialism". Having said this, we point to the structure of the flows of migrants and cultural goods between the United States and Cuba as a sign to notice forms of a diffuse, yet potent, presence of desires, ways of life, and consumption styles as a connection of the relation between cultural consumption, migrations and strategies of the sovereignty between Nation-States. The authors believe that the idea of thinking of migrants as uprooted from their states of origin is mistaken, and that actually in the current context of capitalist restructuring, the migrants become active agents in contemporary transformations on the local, national, and global scale through their transnational connections.

We will now turn our discussion to unpacking the communicational flows (internal and external) with the purpose of making observations about political and aesthetic disputes between exiled and current Cuban residents in the circulation of media products on the socialist island.

Internet Access and Network Piracy

Though the focus of the investigation from the experiential point of view has been the F. *paquete* in Miramar, in the scope of this study we visited 16 locations that sell *paquetes digitales* in the city of Havana: six in Vedado, four in Havana Vieja, four in Miramar/Playa, and two in Centro Havana. In all of them, the mediator introduced the researcher, who then asked questions to the owners or employees working at the locations. The questions tried to clarify the main point of doubt about the procedures of downloading the *paquete* files, since the internet across the island of Cuba is unstable and expensive, making it difficult to download large files. It was apparent that all the interviewees felt uncomfortable talking about this subject. However, two *paqueteros*, who remained anonymous, decided to reveal how they access high speed internet in the city of Havana, bypassing the public-access internet system regulated by the Etecsa.

According to one of them, since 2001, Cuban technophiles have set up offline networks that span across all of Havana. Through a combination of Wi-Fi antennas and cables hidden along the tops of houses and buildings, it links up around 9,000 computers just in the Cuban capital (Payão, 2015). The result of these antennas and cables is a network called "Snet" ("streetnet"). The main reason for the construction of this network is trading information, file sharing (especially the files in the *paquetes*), and playing online games. There are rules of behavior and etiquette on the Snet: pornography is expressly prohibited, as is spreading anti-government political content.

In parallel to the formation of offline networks, public Wi-Fi has been offered across Cuba since 2015. In September of 2017, there were 317 connection points in the main cities. With the arrival of the internet in smaller cities like Gaspar, a city of 7,500 residents situated on the east side of the country, engineers and youth created an internal network called Gaspar Social that is like a type of local Facebook with an educational intent (Agência France Press, 2017). Since 2015, with the significant increase in the number of cellular devices on the island, another system of mobile networks to share entertainment content has become extremely popular among Cuban youth: Bluetooth (Marreiro, 2013). Due to the high cost to connect, Cubans share their main entertainment through offline systems. It is, however, from the offline networks like Snet and bluetooth connection that the information and content that form the *paquetes* is spread.

Home internet connection in Cuba is reserved for scientists, military members, doctors, and journalists, which who are considered strategic areas by the Cuban government to work in strategic areas. There is network piracy for private use in these sectors mainly to download material for the principle Cuban *paqueteros*. The two *paqueteros* who were interviewed agreed to explain how their businesses have high-speed connections: it comes from sharing the internet from individuals who are part of the privileged groups with internet access on the island.

The collection of videos, songs, photos, and text files is compiled by the *paqueteros* and circulated around the island person-to-person, spreading rapidly from Havana to more distant places in less than a week, "forming what is known in tech lingo as a sneakernet: a network that transmits data via the soles of a shoe, bus, horse, or any other form of content transportation" (Martínez, 2017, para. 14).

There is a two-pronged debate in Cuba about why government sectors "turn a blind eye" to the digital practices of the youth. The first thesis, naturally, is that access to the internet is limited on the island mainly because of the economic embargo imposed by the United States, whose restrictions make purchasing electronic equipment extremely expensive. In this way, young Cubans can "feel" the effects of the embargo on their cultural pleasures and entertainment when they do not have internet access. The second theory is that allowing youths' apolitical digital practices to happen dampens the urge that young Cubans may have to leave the island. Allowing these practices to exist without damaging the wider norms of media regulation in the country is one way to create a favorable environment for Cuban youth to identify with the socialist government. It is important to point out that, in fact, the question of internet access in Cuba has faced difficulties, especially political difficulties, in its expansion. As the main companies linked to the digital culture sectors, for example, Facebook and Google, are American, there are political obstacles in the ways that digital environments are constructed on the island.

> Be it from an imprudent program from the American agency of international cooperation, USAid, that sought to weaken Fidel Castro's regime through the service ZunZuneo - a type of "Cuban Twitter" that used

> counterrevolutionary text messages - or from a wider perception of social media as a tool of dissidents, the authorities have traditionally been cautious in relation to the internet. (Grant, 2017, para. 30)

In 2017, Google reached an agreement with Etcsa about storing the online content of sites like YouTube and Gmail on servers in Cuba to improve local access. However, there is still a lack of trust from the Cuban authorities towards unrestricted access to the internet, both for companies from the United States and for Cuban citizens.

Between Miami and Havana

F. browses through the *paquete* and saves the indicated files onto an external hard drive made in China — this is the content of the *paquete* digital of the week. Inside each file directory there is a selection of image and video ads alongside the real content. A Cuban user may accidentally open the ads while browsing the files, and the *paquete* makes a profit with the ads. Each *paquetero* mixes in advertising content with the content, charging according to the reach of the number of their clients. Incorporating ad content into the *paquetes* is the clearest connection between the *paqueteros* in Havana, like F., and digital content agencies located in Miami (United States), the stronghold of the largest Cuban community outside of the socialist island, a large part of whom have family and connections with people still living in Cuba.

The content is downloaded through the pirated internet on the island and circulated through both the *paquetes* and offline networks. According to countless *paqueteros*, there are clients interested in both the attractions of the *paquete* (*novelas*, films, series) and the classified ads (car sales, jobs, clothes, animals, electronics) for sale or trade — something that is not published in traditional Cuban media. One of the most famous ad content listings is Revolico (https://www.revolico.com/), a Cuban version of Craigslist[7] ("O efeito da lista de Craig", 2016), a site that publishes short ads to sell or trade different types of goods and services: cars, jobs, clothes, animals, electronics, among others. The problem is that people need to have internet access to browse Revolico, which is expensive and difficult on the island. Thus a "downloaded" version of Revolico is loaded onto the *paquete* like an ad listing that can be viewed offline.

The perspective of having content produced in Miami that is also counterrevolutionary generated even more distrust of the *paquete* in the eyes of the Cuban government. Besides being "out of control" and promoting American culture, the artistic and intellectual level of the *paquetes* is frequently attacked as being "low" since it is full of American blockbusters and Mexican *novelas*. There is not a consensus about the legality of selling individual *paquetes*, but stories of youths going to jail for selling *paquetes*

[7] Craigslist is a network of online communities that publishes free announcements of various types to users: from job offers to erotic content. The service was started in 1995 by Craig Newmark, in San Francisco, California, and has expanded to over 450 cities around the world.

are constantly passed around[8]. Cuban authorities tried to create a direct rival to the paquetes called "maletín" or "mochila" (briefcase or backpack). Instead of blockbusters, it had classic films, traditional music, and educational material. Nicknamed the "anti-paquete", it is considered a failure, as this type of content is already widely available on Cuban television.

Final Considerations

From the cultural consumption practices of pop culture products by Cuban individuals, we propose recognizing the existence of media improvisations. In other words, the act of creating an improvised media solution, from the apparatus of material culture, is an alternative intervention that can also be defined as a "technique" or "reappropriation of material" that is adopted in a context of restriction. Media improvisations are symptoms of possible adjustments to access media through proposed adaptations inside of technical horizons. Boufleur (2006) views such behavior as immediate projective thinking, determined by the momentary circumstance. As a process, the improvisation can be considered an alternative form of design and political relation to the restrictive contexts.

Along this path, the concept of transnationalism stresses that migrant practices can be seen both as potentials of resistance and as an imperialist reaffirmation (Feldman-Bianco & Schiller, 2011), from investigating links among groups with multiple economic, cultural, political, and family connections, and the disputes of the national imagination in progress. In a context of a real and symbolic dispute like the one on screen between Cuba and the United States, the transnational practices materialized in the *paquetes* can be viewed as more subtle ways of exerting influence by mobilizing feelings and imagination via the cultural consumption of lifestyles that celebrate consumption and capitalism. The migrants and the *paquetes* can be seen as intermediaries since, in an ambiguous relationship on the one hand, they allow Cubans to partake in the global experience of pop culture consumption, and on the other hand they also confront the reality of the embargo and the limitations on circulation imposed by Cuba. Beyond identifying the transnational practice of cultural consumption, ideas of "everyday cosmopolitanism" or "tactical cosmopolitanism" are evoked (Vertovec, 2009, p. 32), to consider ways of acting and being cosmopolitan in the presented context, that is, the notion of cultural competency acquired by the transnational migrant in the way they get around and transit through limitations. The notion of cultural competency is linked to the social capital that the migrant strengthens through contact networks that are reworked in their own migratory experience and through the possibilities that this experience redefines in their relation to the local culture. Thus, F. represents the returned migrant from the relations constructed during his migratory experience in Miami, expanding to his activity in the local Cuban "cultural market" sustained by transnational living. The association with the concept of "cosmopolitanism" appears, then, not from the classic definition of "an

[8] One of the *paqueteros* said that they were detained for selling pornographic content, which is, in fact, illegal in Cuba.

opening for difference and otherness" (Zanforlin, 2018, p. 34), but as an acquired cultural competency — an ability to deal with a particular system of meanings and prepare for managing the consumption of "imported" cultural goods, in the analyzed case.

We propose, then, that media improvisations have a history in the Cuban context. From residential satellite dishes with the goal of capturing radio and TV signals from Florida (United States), to sharing TV signals also captured by satellite dishes, the alternative ways of consuming pop culture products in Cuba involves the relation of citizens and migrants to media improvisations. In the era of digital culture, new media improvisations are created: from digital network piracy to sharing signals, the *paquete semanal* is the most established media improvisation in Cuba. Though it faces strong resistance from the government and the most intellectual spheres of Cuban society, it continues to be the main form of consumption and entertainment in the country.

Translation: Alisa Rae Wilhelm

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Crowdfunding Platforms in the Political Economy of Alternative Media

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Abstract

Alternative media appeared in the digital environment, taking advantage of the low distribution costs and the potential for public participation. Increasingly, they use crowdfunding or collective financing platforms as a model for maintaining activities. This article maps how alternative media from Portugal, Spain and Brazil articulate crowdfunding platforms with their financing strategies, on the one hand, and with social media platforms, on the other. The study aims to discuss the possibilities and limitations of the different crowdfunding platforms for these means. The methodological design includes personal interviews, online observation about alternative media and a content analysis about their financing and specifically the digital financing platforms. Alternative media articulate their use of crowdfunding platforms with those of social networks, in a constant work of demonstrating the relevance of the type of journalism they practice and their social contribution in search of public involvement as a funder.

Keywords

crowdfunding, alternative media, sustainability, political economy

Plataformas de Financiamento Coletivo na Economia Política dos Média Alternativos

Resumo

Os média alternativos abordam assuntos que não são tratados pelos meios de comunicação tradicionais e dão enfoque a temáticas voltadas à defesa dos direitos humanos. Surgidos no ambiente digital, tiram partido dos baixos custos de distribuição e das potencialidades de participação do público. De forma crescente, os média alternativos utilizam plataformas de crowdfunding ou financiamento coletivo como modelo de manutenção das atividades. Estas plataformas que permitem o patronato não alojam nem publicam conteúdo, mas estão inseridas num ecossistema com outras plataformas que visam obter dados e transformá-los em valor económico. O presente artigo mapeia a forma como média alternativos de Portugal, Espanha e Brasil articulam as plataformas de crowdfunding com as suas estratégias de financiamento, por um lado, e com as plataformas de redes sociais, por outro. O estudo pretende debater as possibilidades e limitações das diferentes plataformas de financiamento coletivo para estes meios. O desenho metodológico inclui entrevistas pessoais, observação online sobre os média alternativos e uma análise de conteúdo sobre o seu financiamento e concretamente as plataformas digitais de financiamento. Os média alternativos articulam o seu uso de plataformas de crowdfunding com as de redes sociais, num trabalho constante de demonstração da relevância do tipo de jornalismo que praticam e do seu contributo social em busca do envolvimento do público enquanto financiador.

Palavras-chave
crowdfunding, média alternativos, sustentabilidade, economia política

Introduction

The advancement of digital communication, in combination with changes in commercial communication, has caused the collapse of the classic revenue models of mainstream media. This contemporary environment of communication, however, has represented an opportunity for the emergence of alternative digital media, which were thought in the current molds of journalistic production with reduced teams, content suitable for the virtual environment, collaborative and participative production of contents and use of digital technologies for distribution and dissemination. Funding is one of the distinctive aspects of alternative media as non-profit and independent structures: its source of income is mainly the public, through crowdfunding and subscriptions. By definition, crowdfunding consists of financing projects through cash donations on online platforms. The public's involvement in voluntary funding is decisive for the production of information that they believe is essential.

Thus, this article studies the use of crowdfunding platforms as a model for maintaining alternative media activities. Specifically, it intends to map the funding strategies through crowdfunding platforms undertaken by alternative media from Portugal, Spain and Brazil, in its articulation with broader funding strategies, as well as in articulation with other social media platforms. This mapping will allow us to discuss: what are the possibilities and limitations of the different crowdfunding platforms for alternative media. To this end, the methodological design includes interviews, online observation and content analysis on the funding of alternative media and specifically on digital financing platforms. The article, therefore, begins by tracing the background of alternative media in relation to their political economy, then going on to a review of the literature on digital platforms, in particular funding and the relationship with news media.

The Political Economy of Alternative and Independent Media

Alternative media are crucial in offering democratic communication media to the excluded groups (Atton, 2002). These media have to do with an organization that enables participation and reflexivity. Williams (1980) highlights three aspects of democratic communication that we could consider as the focus for this realignment: decapitalization, deprofessionalization, and deinstitutionalization. Alternative media propose interactivity between the public and producers — in this case, non-professionals — collective production, and interest for everyday life.

With regard to content, alternative media seek to assert themselves as independent vis-à-vis companies as well as vis-à-vis governments. They proclaim themselves as alternatives to commercial media, and even to public media, to get closer to communities. Alternative vehicles can therefore be defined in their structure as "media production that challenge, at least implicitly, actual concentrations of media power, whatever form those concentrations may take in different locations" (Couldry & Curran, 2003, p. 7). Independent media are "media forms that are on a smaller scale, more accessible and participatory, and less constrained by bureaucracy or commercial interests than the mainstream media and often in some way in explicit opposition to them" (Cover et al., 2007, p. 1).

Since alternative media are often directed at communities, they address topics aimed at defending human rights and issues that are not addressed by mainstream media, such as the agenda of people with disabilities, the homeless, the LGBTQI+ community, minority ethnic groups, and women. The representativeness of subjects and communities which find less space in mainstream media appears as necessary for greater participation and social change. "New media systems do not just deliver content; people must actively use them to do something, i.e., search, share, recommend, link, argue, and so on" (Lievrouw, 2011, pp. 13–14). These media flourished with the expansion of global protest movements over the past decade, from demonstrations against social repression and censorship such as the "Arab Spring" in 2010, to protests in the aftermath of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, such as "Occupy Wall Street" (2011), in the United States; "Los Indignados" (2011), in Spain; "Jornadas de Junho" (2013), in Brazil; and "Geração à Rasca (2011)", in Portugal (Gerbaudo, 2012). Global protest movements responded to government austerity policies, and helped to create new political discourses in the pursuit of social well-being. These actions opened spaces for discussion and political action to propose democratic and social agendas that ended up favoring the emergence of some alternative digital media, such as Mídia NINJA, which emerged during the "Jornadas de Junho", in 2013.

Digital technologies have come to facilitate alternative media models both at the level of production, and at the levels of distribution and publication of content. New technologies are tools for creating networks for the distribution and circulation of content from alternative media, in addition to creating links with a plethora of social sectors (Peschanski, 2007). However, the use of digital technologies contradicts the principles of independence, free culture and combating privatization advocated by alternative media. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) were created in the context of industrialized countries, profit-oriented, based on new business models that use user data to sell advertising (Seoane & Hornidge, 2020). In fact, the alternative media distribution model is allied with the free market ideology, based on the theoretical support of the belief in the emancipatory potential of technologies.

Thus, these media face a dilemma at the level of political economy: on the one hand, by choosing the self-management model that makes them more independent from the interests of large corporations; on the other, they "confront the power of the monopolies and oligopolies of media, as well as the problem of mobilizing resources without State support and publicity" (Fuchs & Sandoval, 2015, p. 173), which often leads them to a shortage of revenue. Therefore, the independence of alternative media at the level of content has implications for their funding, shifting the basis of its financial sustainability to the public or the third sector. As critical political economy notes, the financing of media production (and of other cultural organizations) has tangible consequences for the range of public domain discourses and representations and for the public access to them (Golding & Murdock, 1991) and, in view of this, "for the quality of democratic systems" (Sousa, 2008, p. 5). Noting that there is widespread commodification in society, which the communication sector does not escape, it is pointed out how news companies yield to the interests, if not of individuals, of the market as a whole, producing, above all, "saleable" content. The unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources cannot but be problematic insofar as it has an "impact upon the capacity to determine or influence the contents of the media products and meaning carried by them", Natalie Fenton argues (2007, p. 12).

Alternative digital media have facilitated the access to media production and supported the possibilities of participation, made it possible to open information to various audiences (Sousa, 2008) and allowed the circulation of content more divergent from mercantilist logic, positioned as counter-narratives to what is offered by traditional media. At the same time, the exponential growth of free productions has put heavy pressure on the financing base of traditional media industries, which also invested on the digital network; therefore, changes in the ways in which revenues are obtained do not correspond to any real change in power relations in societies (Sousa, 2008).

It is in this context that alternative media seek to offer investigative journalism with responsibility and quality standards, practising public interest journalism alongside traditional news organizations, increasingly using crowdfunding (Carvajal et al., 2012). They use platforms to request funds to carry out their daily and extraordinary journalistic activities. This shift to crowdfunding was heralded as a way of putting the public in a position of power, as "a producer and an investor in the news" (Hunter, 2015, p. 273). However, Hunter (2015) identifies the several questions this poses: "what sort of control does the audience have in shaping the news? How does the role and identity of the professional journalist change when giving up some control of the news process?" (p. 273).

Carvajal et al. (2012) argue that crowdfunding deepens the connection between producers and audiences: "it is not just a matter of distributing, sharing and linking content; instead, crowdfunding is about giving money to people who are providing a service for the community" (p. 646). From this perspective, crowdfunding is not a donation, but it is also not an investment. The relationship between creators and supporters is a new one and deeply embedded in the economies of social networking sites. Sponsors always receive something in return for the projects they fund; each of them receives rewards in exchange for the money provided (Carvajal et al., 2012).

Individual monthly or annual subscriptions are also modalities used by both traditional and independent or alternative media, for the maintenance of their activities that make it possible for the public to be involved as a funder for the news media. Subscribing to a digital medium means access to all content. Regarding the results of subscriptions, Spagnuolo (2016) considers this a difficult funding model for small projects. Nevertheless, subscriptions decrease or eliminate "reliance on advertising and other forms of revenue generation such as 'native advertising' or sponsored links, and increase content independence" (Spagnuolo, 2016, para. 2).

Crowdfunding Platforms

Funding mechanisms through the public cannot be understood outside a communication landscape increasingly dominated by the platform model. According to Gillespie (2013), the concept of platform was discursively invested by the players behind what were initially known as "social networking sites", notably Facebook and YouTube. These speeches projected the platforms as more than a technological infrastructure, with a computational basis, to position them also as an economic model and a political project, based on the idea that they sustain and foster a culture of participation (Gillespie, 2013).

Helmond (2015) speaks of *platformization*, which corresponds to "the rise of the platform as the dominant infrastructural and economic model of the social web" (p. 1). This process is supported by a double logic, in which "social media platforms provide a technological framework for others to build on, geared toward connecting to and thriving on other websites, apps and their data", which are, in turn, "central to the economic model of social media platforms" (p. 8). In this logic, the notions of democratization and empowerment of users have served as a strategic rhetoric for technological players, while the economic component has gained a strong prevalence. This "platform society", which penetrates more and more spheres of social life, poses serious problems to issues of representativeness of cultures and world views, and of civic values (van Dijck et al., 2018), since the tech giants impose and shape the infrastructure to their private interests maintained in oligopolistic structures.

Acknowledging the indisputable place of platforms in social life, critics, such as Schor and Attwood-Charles (2017), point out that the former are harmful to public life and to the autonomy of individuals, they commodify social relations previously outside the exchange relationships. Consequently, these authors note that the platform management models would not necessarily have to accumulate capital through unequal exploitation, but could instead work through cooperative models, for example. Others claim for a search of alternatives for the commercial management of platforms or for regulation (Poell, 2020), or even a radical reform in digital infrastructures (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Swords (2020) points out that crowdfunding sites, such as Patreon or Subbable, cannot be understood without looking at the ecosystem of digital platforms in which they operate. Crowdfunding websites allow employers and do not "host, publish or distribute content" (Swords, 2020, p. 530) and, thus, they are "co-constitutive, enabled and constrained by interpenetration with other platforms" (p. 524). To that extent, even though their function may be to support independent and alternative production of cultural and artistic creation, crowdfunding platforms are involved in a system that aims to obtain data and extract economic value from it, notes Swords. This implication is built through the level of technical integration between these types of platforms and those of social networks, for example, facilitating the registration of users from accounts on the latter.

Methods

This article analyzes the role of crowdfunding platforms in alternative journalism projects, mapping their use within the framework of their funding and sustainability strategies, and in conjunction with other types of social media platforms, as well as the way in which these strategies are communicated to the public. It aims to discuss the possibilities and limitations of different platforms for collective funding for alternative media.

This inquiry is made comparatively between media objects from the Portuguese, Spanish and Brazilian contexts. The geographical proximity between Portugal and Spain, on the one hand, and the historical ties of colonial links between Portugal and Brazil, on the other, justify the relevance of the comparison. The choice of media outlets with different profiles and which have different production and distribution formats enriches the research, as it makes it possible to perceive the funding model of independent media in different economic, political and cultural contexts. So, an additional question of the study is: what patterns and differences are detected between alternative media from different countries.

The media selected for this study are two for each country, namely: Fumaça and Guilhotina.info, from Portugal; Mídia NINJA and Jornalistas Livres, from Brazil; and *El Salto Diario* and *Contexto y Acción*, from Spain. Fumaça is a Portuguese independent, calling itself progressive and dissident journalism project, that was created in 2018 by journalists working in traditional media (https://fumaca.pt/). Guilhotina.info is an independent information collective born on September 15, 2013, composed of "anti-capitalist revolutionaries" (https://guilhotina.info/). Mídia NINJA (Independent Narratives, Journalism and Action), founded in 2013, in Brazil, is an alternative medium constituted by a decentralized network of leftist activist communication (https://midianinja.org/). Jornalistas Livres is an alternative Brazilian medium created on March 12, 2015, which constitutes itself as a network of collectives originating from freelance journalism professionals or who were linked to large media corporations (https://www.facebook.com/jornalistaslivres). *El Salto* is a monthly digital and print magazine published in Spain, founded in 2017 (https://www.elsaltodiario.com). *Contexto y Acción (Ctxt)* is a general news newspaper founded in January 2015 that seeks to exercise free journalism (https://ctxt.es/).

The study is part of a more comprehensive project on alternative media, in which interviews with producers and non-participant observation were conducted — and the data collected through these techniques is mobilized in this article. For the specific questions in this article, a content analysis was also carried out on alternative media in relation to their financing and specifically to digital financing platforms. The interviews were directed to those responsible for the media (Raíssa Galvão, from Mídia NINJA, on September 3, 2018; Laura Capriglione, from Jornalistas Livres, on September 1, 2018; Ricardo Ribeiro and Pedro Santos, from Fumaça, on September 4, 2020; and Miguel Mora, from *Ctxt,* on July 30, 2020; and Pedro Nemrod, from Guilhotina.info, on January 30, 2020). The observation refers to the monitoring and research in alternative media's own media (on their websites and Facebook pages) since 2015. Content analysis on the funding of alternative media, in their own outlets or other journalistic media, through search engines, refers to the time period that has elapsed since the foundation of each media organization until August 2020.

The presentation of the analysis of the various types of data was organized to answer the research questions listed above. After a contextualization of the funding strategies, with attention to the use of crowdfunding platforms, we outline the intersection of the resource of funding platforms with other social media platforms, and reconstitute the framework that the media make of their strategies of crowdfunding. Finally, the article analyzes the patterns and differences between media from different countries, and the possibilities and limitations of different platforms for collective funding for alternative media.

Crowdfunding in Funding Strategies

Alternative media are classified as independent by the way they conduct the management and production model of journalistic activities.

Regarding content production, activism is a defining characteristic of the left alternative (digital) media. Criticism usually focuses on right-wing policies, whether it be parties, government officials, politicians, members of the legislature or candidates. Mídia NINJA and Jornalistas Livres practice left-wing media activism, a position that generally constitutes a critique of the political measures of right-wing governments and support for human rights, using an emphatic tone and politically positioned content. Mídia NINJA and Jornalistas Livres practice a model of production and distribution of content with a deliberate intention of seeking audiences with leftist ideals or one that does not fit on the sides of polarization. As the interviews with media co-founders demonstrate:

> we have always made our position and our editorial line very clear, our posts, all the content produced goes according to this side that we take. This side we say is on the side of the progressive field, of the social movements, including with the parties of the left. (Raíssa Galvão, co-founder of Mídia NINJA)

"Jornalistas Livres is a left-wing medium, but not a partisan one. (...) So this independence from the parties for us is fundamental" (Laura Capriglione, co-founder and producer of Jornalistas Livres).

The Spanish *Ctxt* and *El Salto* and the Portuguese Fumaça are activists, but they practice traditional journalism, producing longer and more in-depth texts. *Ctxt* is left-wing feminist; it is a means of combat, as revealed by Miguel Mora, producer and co-founder: "we are a combative medium in the sense that we are not connected to politicians, we are totally independent". *El Salto* defends ethical funding, internal democracy and journalistic quality. Fumaça is progressive and, therefore, works on addressing political issues on the basis of human rights. Pedro Santos, editor of the latter medium, declares:

> we are not so interested in talking about changes in party leaders, about government decisions that are political and tactical decisions. We are more interested in looking at the policies themselves and how they may or may not condition the fulfillment and guarantee of human rights and human dignity.

In turn, Guilhotina.info's denouncing texts indicate its radical and anti-capitalist left position. Concerned with the precepts of traditional journalism, this medium works at its own pace, due to the lack of financial and human resources, which are just voluntary members.

> We do not present ourselves as a medium of a certain political orientation, because uniformity goes to a certain point within the group, but we present ourselves as a medium on the left, a medium that stands for workers' rights, that stands for minorities' rights, that stands for women's rights as well. (Pedro Nemrod, producer of Guilhotina.info)

Alternative media typically use crowdfunding platforms to maintain content production and distribution. The formats, the choice of platforms and the maintenance time of crowdfunding campaigns vary between the analyzed media.

The form of sustainability, as the accumulation of several types of funding or just one, can also be different among the media. Table 1 summarizes the type of financing of the alternative media in our study.

Alternative medium	Crowdfunding			Subscription	Advertising
	Permanent	**For creation**	**For a specific project/temporary**		
Fumaça (Portugal)	On Patreon		On PPL	Newsletter subscription	
Guilhotina.info (Portugal)				Newsletter subscription	
Mídia NINJA (Brazil)	On Catarse				
Jornalistas Livres (Brazil)		On Catarse			
El Salto (Spain)				On the website	On the website
Contexto y Acción (Spain)		On Verkami	On Goteo	On the website	On the website

Table 1 *Types of Collective Financing of Alternative Media (Data Collection in August 2020)*

Alternative media usually adopt between three main forms of financing: advertising, subscriptions and crowdfunding campaigns (permanent or temporary). With regard to the use of advertising, only the Spanish *El Salto* and *Ctxt* adopt this type of funding, through which they allow advertisements for companies on the website, arguing that they are private initiatives that do not violate human, social, environmental, and labor rights.

Ctxt receives sponsorships from large companies to conduct training courses on feminism, climate change, among others. The director and co-founder of this medium, Miguel Mora, says that "sponsorship is painful when information is mediated. When we dedicate sponsorship to education, it has no side effects".

As for crowdfunding campaigns, *F*umaça, Mídia NINJA, Jornalistas Livres and *Ctxt* use or have used them, in a permanent or temporary fashion, with the purpose of either establishing the communication medium, maintaining daily activities or funding journalistic coverage and other projects. Fumaça, which belongs to the non-profit association Verdes Memórias (a legal entity made up of members of Divergente), has a fixed campaign of donations by Patreon on three levels ($3, $10 or $25 per month). In March 2019, the "Dá-lhe Gás" (Speed It Up) funding campaign was also created in Patreon, a series of reports with four episodes about an oil company that plans to drill, in Aljubarrota and Bajouca, in search of natural gas[1]. In August 2020, more than 600 people had contributed monthly to maintain the activities of Fumaça[2]. The resource model in this medium is intended for donations to pay the salaries of journalists who work full-time in the newsroom — and supporters already pay two of those salaries.

[1] See https://fumaca.pt/category/series/da-lhe-gas/

[2] See https://fumaca.pt/sobre/#transparencia

In addition, this medium has resorted to crowdfunding for new jobs since March 2020. It launched, for example, on July 9, 2020 and for 1 month, the crowdfunding campaign "Help Us to Investigate"[3] through the Portuguese platform PPL, to finance three investigations: "Mulheres Esquecidas. Um Ar Que Se Lhes deu" ("Forgotten Women. An Air That Was Given to Them"), "Presos e Prisões. Com Que Direito?" ("Prisoners and Prisons. With What right?"), and "Bairros Perdidos" ("Lost Neighborhoods").

In turn, Mídia NINJA uses the permanent subscription funding platform Catarse for public donations, which helps to maintain the day-to-day activities and some cultural projects. This medium manages to raise approximately R$6,000 per month with this channel. Catarse is a platform for fixed donations (R$10, R$20, R$50, R$100 or R$500 per month) and works as a subscription to have access to workshops, priority in calls for tenders opened by Mídia NINJA or to have your name published as a funder. On September 7, 2020, 217 people had signed up[4].

Contexto y Acción (*Ctxt*) does not use the crowdfunding model through digital platforms, but it has already launched three crowdfunding campaigns: the first for the foundation of the medium in 2015, when it raised €25,400[5]; then, to maintain journalistic activities, paying the first 3 months of work for employees, in 2016, having raised €72,883[6]; finally, in January 2020, *Ctxt* managed to finance a documentary entitled *Billy. El Documental* (Billy. The Documentary), by obtaining €61,658 out of crowdfunding[7].

In turn, Jornalistas Livres does not have a campaign for donations from the public or a subscription offer. In 2015, this medium launched a crowdfunding campaign called "Be Free Journalist", in Catarse, which raised R$132,755 from 1,327 supporters, for its foundation[8]. The crowdfunding campaign lasted 45 days and obtained the largest amount of donations via crowdfunding in Brazilian journalism (Souza, 2017).

Journalists working in this medium are volunteers. The amount collected in the crowdfunding campaign is also used to pay for travel, subsistence and financing of the data package. This fund served, in part, to secure a headquarters for Jornalistas Livres through leasing, but the space was closed in 2018. Therefore, producers today work from their homes.

Guilhotina.info does not use crowdfunding platforms.

As for subscriptions, they are to Fumaça the most efficient way of maintaining production. Subscriptions can be made through the website. To keep donors, Fumaça has created "communities" that discuss topics that will be addressed by the medium, through the Slack application, commercial communication platform developed by Slack

[3] See https://fumaca.pt/crowdfunding/

[4] See https://www.catarse.me/midianinja

[5] See https://www.verkami.com/projects/10753-ctxt

[6] See https://en.goteo.org/project/ctxt

[7] See https://www.goteo.org/discover?q=CTXT

[8] See https://www.catarse.me/jornalistaslivre

Technologies that offers chat rooms, private groups and direct messages in internet relay chat (IRC) style, allowing the participation of subscribers in media production. In addition, Fumaça makes use of the transparency of its expenses and revenues to keep funders and other readers informed about the investment path they have made. There is also a newsletter sent to subscribers that also works as a way of getting closer to supporters. In the newsletter there are Fumaça publications and more texts and articles.

Ever since it implemented marketing mechanisms, Fumaça has seen an increase in the number of people who contribute. At the beginning of 2019, this alternative medium had 100 donors and received approximately between €400 and €500 per month; at the end of that year, it already had 400 people as donors and raised around €2,000 per month. In August 2020, they raised €4,500. In August 2020, monthly expenses amounted to €14,000[9]. The total collected amount in 2020 through Patreon was approximately €1,499 per month, with 408 patrons.

Spanish medium *El Salto* does not use funding platforms nor crowdfunding campaigns, but offers options for subscribing to both paper and digital editions or both. The process of payment and sending data for the subscription is done on its website. The digital edition is worth €3 per month or €36 per year; the paper version is €6 a month and €78 a year; and the two editions cost €10 a month and €120 a year. Through subscriptions, the reader can access the digital and paper versions of *El Salto*, the entire media library, videos and books to download online, as well as participate in sweepstakes. It is possible, on the same site, to support the production of radio, audiovisual and ecological projects with any amount[10].

El Salto is a project made up of about 200 people and approximately 7,000 members. This communication medium is collectively owned, directed by the journal *Diagonal*. Editorial decisions are made through assemblies. In *El Salto,* 70% funding comes from subscriptions.

The most significant revenues of *Ctxt* come from subscriptions, which can be made on the website of the media — the most basic costs €60 per month and the most complete €90 per month[11].

There are nine people working in *Ctxt*'s newsroom, and 120 occasional employees, more or less fixed. The wording of *Contexto y Acción* is reduced, which allows the environment to survive on donations, which cover 60% of expenses.

Guilhotina.info does not use the subscription model to maintain its activities.

Alternative media consider other forms of sustainability than those mentioned above. Fumaça, for example, has partnerships, one of which is with two visual artists who create illustrations that are sold online (www.umacausapordia.com). The amounts collected are intended to support Fumaça's activities. In addition, this medium has received

[9] See https://fumaca.pt/

[10] See https://www.elsaltodiario.com/suscribirse/formulario

[11] See https://agora.ctxt.es/suscripciones/

independent journalism grants: two from the Open Society Foundation, one of $100,000 and the other $200,000, in 2018 and 2019, respectively, which guaranteed the maintenance of activities until May 2020, according to Ricardo Ribeiro, co-founder of Fumaça. This medium has also received a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in 2018, of €10,000, to carry out an investigation and another from the Rosa de Luxembourg Foundation, in 2019, of €10,000.

Mídia NINJA receives funding from organizations, entities, artists and individuals that help subsidize specific actions that would already be carried out without support, that is, projects with themes of interest to funders. For example, Mídia NINJA produces documentaries, festivals, events, courses, discussion tables, debates, congresses and others with the support of social movements and other collectives, organizations or associations.

However, there is a structure that maintains Mídia NINJA, which is Fora do Eixo, the financial base of the means of communication and which constitutes itself as a network of communication, culture and behavior in the area of cultural production. The organization of Mídia NINJA is composed of collective houses, where producers live in exclusive dedication, through a collective cashier. As in the case of Guilhotina.info, production is carried out by volunteer employees. Thus, another way of maintaining the medium is the collaborative economy, that is, through the exchange of services with social movements, for example. Therefore, the public can collaborate with Mídia NINJA, as volunteers with a specific competence. There is still another way to obtain resources, which is the sale of merchandise with the brand of Mídia NINJA, through a virtual store on the Facebook page.

At *Ctxt* there is a virtual merchandise store, with products such as cups, sweatshirts, books, ebooks, bags, among others, to give work to journalists who have been excluded from the system. In addition, the media has a small publisher to edit the books of the collaborating authors who help in the maintenance of *Ctxt*. This medium has also received a research grant that helped maintain the activities for 2 years.

In this way, all the alternative media manage to maintain their activities, although some, such as Guilhotina.info and the Jornalistas Livres, depend on the availability and resources of the producers themselves — something which restricts the periodicity of publications of these media. Fumaça has managed to remain self-sustaining, despite having announced, in the first half of 2020, that it would stop activities if it did not receive more donations and the crowdfunding campaigns were not successful[12]. The Mídia NINJA, as it has a diversified series of support, not only from donors, but also from organizations and individuals, guarantees the production work to be carried out. Spaniards *El Salto* and *Ctxt* live off subscriptions and advertising and are able to continue with journalistic activities.

[12] See https://fumaca.pt/salvar-os-media-nao-partira-de-quem-tem-poder/

In Between Platforms

As we have seen, alternative media normally use crowdfunding to finance their activities and to make work sustainable. Crowdfunding through digital platforms is a practical, inexpensive and often successful option for independent media. In addition, the financing model is well suited to the production and distribution culture used by these media, supported by the use of other digital platforms. Another advantage of crowdfunding is the approach to the public by making participation effective, which is one of the pillars of independent journalism.

The platforms used by the media Fumaça, Jornalistas Livres, Mídia NINJA and *Ctxt* are, as reconstituted in the previous section, Catarse, Patreon, PPL, Goteo, and Verkame. The media seem to align the choices of crowdfunding platforms with the national economy, insofar as they use national websites.

Crowdfunding platforms work through campaigns, which alternative media activate on a project basis or on an ongoing basis (contribute to the medium at any time). The media launch requests for funding to carry out investigations/reports or projects (documentaries, courses, conferences, etc.). The media need to create descriptions of the project or activity and a video with testimonials and define the rewards, if any, to compose the campaign.

Regarding the specifics of each platform, in Patreon, patrons have a page on the platform's website where it is possible to contribute with a fixed monthly amount or each time new content is launched. Patrons set a revenue target and can set a collection limit per month.

PPL works in two ways: to promote a solidary cause in which support is transferred at the end of the term, even if the objective is not achieved; or crowdfunding for any other type of project, in which modality the support is returned in case the promoter does not reach the stipulated goal. The same happens with Verkami and Catarse. The latter is focused on creative ideas, where people and companies finance their projects through the union of collaborators. Thus, the platform is a showcase for projects. Goteo, in turn, allows contributions in the form of donations in cash or in the form of collaborative tasks with projects.

The advantages of using crowdfunding platforms for funding are the dissemination of journalistic activities through the platform itself, maintaining a fixed support base through which everyone can donate any amount. The limitations have to do with the fact that they are temporary investments, in the case of projects, and unstable, in the case of continuous funding. In addition, most platforms charge hosting fees for campaigns and in some it is only possible to receive contributions if the goal is reached.

The funding modalities used by Fumaça seem to gradually support the media's objective of creating the first Portuguese journalism project fully funded by people[13]. Fumaça's journalism is accessible to all people, without premiums or paywalls — since its creation, the model has been to open content to the public, regardless of whether people could pay or not. However, the media wants people to pay for journalism.

[13] See https://expresso.pt/economia/2019-12-03-A-filantropia-pode-ser-a-solucao-para-os-media--E-so-um-dos-caminhos

> I don't want people to have to pay for journalism, but I want to be sustainable through the money that people give us. We tell people that if they can afford it then pay it because it is the only way for us to stay here. (Fumaça co-founder, Ricardo Ribeiro)[14]

This financing model allows Fumaça to do journalism in which the journalists themselves decide what they want to produce, and not the large financing companies through advertising. Fumaça opposes the use of sponsored content and questions the production of journalism made with corporations financing[15].

Regarding the model that Fumaça chose to maintain its activities, Ricardo Ribeiro says that crowdfunding is the most ethical way to achieve the monetization of journalistic content:

> journalism must have a sustainability model. I don't like the word business, but it must have a sustainability model. That was my dream. It was Fumaça to be sustainable through the people who listen to us and follow us. That would be ethical. [16]

In this sustainability model, however, crowdfunding is not, to Ricardo Ribeiro, a sufficiently efficient way to fund Fumaça: "it is like the grants, at some point it ends. I think the only way to support ourselves is through many small monthly contributions. So that's where we try to go". However, the time when crowdfunding campaign was taking place was also the moment when Fumaça received more contributions, that is, at the same time that they raised money for productions, there were also a number of people who either got to know the communication medium or learned that it was necessary to contribute to maintain it.

The use of the financing platform Catarse by Mídia NINJA intends to obtain financing so that the medium can expand and fund new projects.

Ever since its creation in 2013, Mídia NINJA has been thinking about maintaining itself with the support of the public — public money, but not state money[17]. The foundation project to pay the initial costs, such as the server and the development of the digital platform, was to launch a crowdfunding campaign in Catarse. At the time of the appearance of Mídia NINJA, the journalist Bruno Torturra, founder of the medium who is no longer part of the team, spoke about the financing model of the medium. Torturra believed that the key to the group's sustainability was the support received "on the networks and on the streets"[18]. Following this, the medium devised and implemented

[14] See https://fumaca.pt/salvar-os-media-nao-partira-de-quem-tem-poder/

[15] See https://www.reporteresemconstrucao.pt/2019/10/06/sustentabilidade-jornalismo/

[16] See https://www.reporteresemconstrucao.pt/2019/10/06/sustentabilidade-jornalismo/

[17] See http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/monitor-da-imprensa/_ed757_jornalistas_independentes_da_midia_ninja_ganham_atencao/

[18] See http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/monitor-da-imprensa/_ed757_jornalistas_independentes_da_midia_ninja_ganham_atencao/

an innovative combination of several financing models, including subscriptions, micro-payments for employees, money from foundations and "cowies" (small donations) for specific reports[19].

In an interview conducted in 2013, Rafael Vilela, a journalist and member of Mídia NINJA, stated: "the idea of Catarse is linked to the trust and legitimacy that you generate. Being a source of information that inspires confidence, being journalistically sustainable, you end up being financially" sustainable[20]. Quality and ethical journalism is a necessary public good, especially in times of proliferation of fake news. Therefore, the public pays to have content that works with the truth, even if the production and distribution of information is done on digital platforms.

The case of Jornalistas Livres is different. This is a digital journalistic initiative founded with resources acquired through crowdfunding in Catarse. Jornalistas Livres started its activities on March 15, 2015 due to the desire that professionals who were freelancers or even linked to large media groups but who wanted to do independent journalism (Souza, 2017).

Another level of articulation that alternative media practice is between the crowdfunding platform(s) and the social media platforms, in order to direct the public to donations. The configuration of the social media pages is organized to publicize crowdfunding and subscription campaigns through data sharing and advertising. For example, Mídia NINJA uses a video from Catarse as a Facebook cover image that directly links to the said platform. The Facebook posts about the request for support for the Mídia NINJA appeal to the media coverage that has already been carried out by the medium, such as a photograph of the Rio de Janeiro Carnival that denounced the lack of investment by the city mayor for the Carnival[21].

Jornalistas Livres made use of publications to advertise its crowdfunding campaign in 2015. The appeal was for the public to be part of the network[22]. Fumaça, besides using the image of the crowdfunding campaign as a banner on the Facebook page, provides clarifications to the public about the results of financing requests, thanks the donors and makes notices about the deadlines[23]. The posts on Instagram and Twitter are the same as those posted on Facebook.

Spaniards *El Salto* and *Ctxt* use the Facebook cover banner as a fixed advertisement for subscriptions. *El Salto* makes frequent publications asking the public to subscribe to the contents[24] and also price promotions (reduction of values, inclusion of more items

[19] See http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/monitor-da-imprensa/_ed757_jornalistas_independentes_da_midia_ninja_ganham_atencao/

[20] See http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/monitor-da-imprensa/_ed757_jornalistas_independentes_da_midia_ninja_ganham_atencao/

[21] See https://www.facebook.com/MidiaNINJA/posts/1078088615682616

[22] See https://www.facebook.com/jornalistaslivres/photos/a.292153227575228/303407789783105

[23] See https://www.facebook.com/fumacapt/photos/a.1545407729102532/2358187711157859/

[24] See https://www.facebook.com/ElSaltoDiario/posts/10157676881570469

or receipt of extra gifts in the rewards)[25]. On Instagram, this medium maintains the link to subscriptions in the presentation of the page and also broadcasts content about subscriptions on a regular basis, and on Twitter there are also posts about subscriptions.

Contexto y Acción asks for financial support[26] on Instagram, Facebook and the website. This medium keeps advertising signatures in the stories and on Instagram timeline. On Twitter, the cover of the media is advertising financing through subscriptions and there are also posts on the topic.

Therefore, alternative media operate their campaigns, be it crowdfunding or subscriptions, through the continuous advertising that consists of directing the public to the funding platforms, showing banners or other images also with referrals, and privileging publications with phrases of appeal and arguments regarding the credibility of the type of journalism practiced. The campaigns shed light not only on requests for financial support, but also on journalistic production, becoming yet another tool for dissemination.

Conclusions

This article has mapped the ways in which digital platforms — both specific to obtain funding and those of social networks — are used by alternative media to support their journalistic activities. If crowdfunding platforms make it easier to collect revenue directly from the public, social media platforms are essential for hosting, producing and distributing content, since they are media that do not have a regular flow of financial resources. The work of the platforms is, therefore, better understood when viewed as an ecosystem that articulates with each other, commanded by the objectives of each medium.

Seeking to discuss the possibilities and limitations of the use of crowdfunding platforms for alternative media, we can point out in the former group the flexibility and dynamics so that these media adapt resources and objectives by mobilizing the public. In the latter group, however, we include the precariousness of the financing model to depend largely on the availability of the public (in addition to sponsors or prizes), making it, therefore, an uncertain way of obtaining resources. And if the choice is for platforms in the "all or nothing" format (the project only receives if it reaches the stipulated goal), such as the PPL, it becomes even more difficult to be able to maintain regular activities of journalistic production only with funds acquired from crowdfunding campaigns. In addition, crowdfunding campaigns are temporary and the amount collected is limited. To ensure more stable forms of sustainability, most alternative media use the mixed funding model (permanent and/or temporary crowdfunding campaigns, subscriptions and advertising).

For this reason, alternative media are obliged to constantly demonstrate the relevance of the type of journalism they practice and their social, cultural and political

[25] See https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1988377371462964

[26] See https://www.facebook.com/redcontexto/posts/1693584454115180

contribution. These media outlets are continuously working on social networking sites to engage the public, in order to obtain subscribers and support for their funding campaigns. However, the case of Fumaça indicates that the advertising of crowdfunding campaigns indirectly contributes to reinforce subscriptions, through the reinforcement of notoriety.

However, in the face of the financial crisis, due to the loss of advertisers, from mainstream media, from the transfer of paid advertising spaces (print newspapers and television) to unpaid ones (internet sites), alternative media, which have emerged in this model, manage to maintain their activities, even with difficulty, and seem to have mastered the way of obtaining the audiences; and the practices of dissemination and articulation online.

Because alternative media, by adopting political and ideological positions, usually have audiences looking for content with equivalent alignment, it is within these audiences that they can find anyone who is willing to pay to have the information and to maintain alternative media. In other words, it is crucial that they broaden the public spectrum to guarantee their sustainability. In addition, they may be pressured to define their campaign agenda according to themes that, although effectively less visible in the media, have more potential to obtain investment — of attention and properly financial — from the public.

Comparing the alternative media of Brazil, Spain and Portugal, we found that the values collected by Mídia NINJA in Catarse are higher than those of Fumaça, in Patreon, and Spaniards, through subscriptions, due initially to the culture of "crowd media", that is, the search by Mídia NINJA for large audiences; secondly, the number of followers and the most intense investments in dissemination. The differences in the number of followers of the Brazilian, Portuguese and Spanish media are thus related not only to the scale of the respective countries[27], but also to the investment in marketing and the stage of the alternative media market itself.

We were also able to see a pattern related to the fact that the media seem to be close to platforms developed in their respective countries. This may be due to the fact that these platforms are recognized by the public, to a motivation to help the national economy, or perhaps because such a strategy is more favorable in terms of financial transactions. In fact, there is little transparency on the part of the crowdfunding platforms on the required margins, which may have conflict with the transparency advocated by alternative media — or explain why some choose to use their websites to collect funds. Regarding the differences between the funding methods used in the three countries, Spaniards invest more in subscriptions, carry out only temporary crowdfunding campaigns and use company advertising on their websites. The Portuguese and the Brazilians have fixed (which are the subscriptions) or temporary campaigns, but do not allow advertising. As Miguel Mora, from *Ctxt*, indicated, it is necessary that there is a "subscription culture"

[27] Brazil has 212 million inhabitants, while Spain has 45 million and Portugal, approximately 11 million ("Lista de países por população", 2020).

and — we may add — a donation culture among the public, something that the emerging alternative media themselves educate society on.

Translation: Ana Jorge

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Open Access and Scientific Knowledge: Between the Public Interest and the Business Model. A Literature Review

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Abstract

The discussion on what open access can give to science has become polarized in recent years. On the one hand, the first decade of the new millennium brought us an enthusiasm that one can consider as quite comprehensive in the scientific community, regarding the great potential of open access in the dissemination of knowledge, its sharing and the mechanisms of citizen participation in the scientific process. On the other hand, the last few years have brought us a new debate that addresses and criticizes the derivation of open access to a new business model. By supporting this article with an extensive review of the literature on a topic that is still residual in studies that intersect the areas of science communication and the field of the economics of science, we propose to summarize the main reasons evoked by a side and the other. Among the positive points, we highlight the potential of open access in the dissemination of knowledge, the increased visibility of this knowledge, the involvement of society and professionals in the scientific process through civic participation logics, greater efficiency and interaction with benefits for the research projects themselves, the retention of publication rights by the authors, the redistribution of resources, and the greater transparency of a more scrutinizing model. Among the negative points, we can essentially highlight the inability to combat a kind of parallel science economy, which takes advantage of open access and the logic of academic overproduction, to establish the so-called "article processing charges" with little transparency and with publication rates often in excess of several thousand euros, which violate the principles of open science and generate inequalities in opportunities within the scientific community itself.

Keywords
open access, scientific knowledge, public interest, business model

Acesso Aberto e Conhecimento Científico: Entre a *Res Publica* e o Modelo de Negócio. Uma Revisão da Literatura

Resumo

A discussão sobre aquilo que o acesso aberto pode dar à ciência polarizou-se nos últimos anos. Se, por um lado, a primeira década do novo milénio nos trouxe um entusiasmo que poderemos considerar como bastante abrangente na comunidade científica, relativamente às grandes potencialidades de abertura do conhecimento, da sua comunicação e partilha, e dos mecanismos de participação cidadã no processo científico, os últimos anos trouxeram-nos um novo debate que aborda a derivação do acesso aberto para um novo modelo de negócio. Ao sustentarmos o presente artigo numa extensa revisão da literatura de um tema que é, ainda hoje, residual nos estudos que intersectam as áreas da comunicação de ciência e da economia da ciência, propusemo-nos sintetizar as principais razões evocadas de um lado e do outro. Entre os pontos positivos destacados na relação entre acesso aberto e conhecimento científico, destacam-se o potencial difusor do acesso aberto na disseminação de conhecimento, o aumento da visibilidade desse conhecimento produzido, o envolvimento da sociedade e dos profissionais no processo científico, através de lógicas de participação cívica e interpares, a maior eficiência e interação com benefícios para os próprios projetos de investigação, a retenção dos direitos de publicação pelos autores, a redistribuição de recursos, e a maior transparência de um modelo de natureza mais escrutinadora. Entre os pontos negativos, destaca-se essencialmente a incapacidade de combater uma espécie de economia da ciência paralela que tira proveito do acesso aberto e das lógicas de sofreguidão da produção académica para instituir as designadas *article processing charges*, pouco transparentes e com valores e taxas de publicação muitas vezes superiores aos vários milhares de euros, que atentam contra os princípios da ciência aberta e que são geradoras de desigualdades de oportunidades dentro da própria comunidade científica.

Palavras-chave
acesso aberto, conhecimento científico, interesse público, modelo de negócio

Introduction

The most enthusiastic vision of the internet as a technological artefact positions it as a panacea for the problems of a closed world (Hindman, 2018; Quintanilha, 2019b), in the sense that its primary goal is said to entail doing away with the hierarchies of both the communicational process and the exchanges of information that occur in a disparate and asymmetrical fashion in the closed, monopolistic and hierarchical environments that predated the ubiquitous internet ecosystem (Quintanilha, 2019b).

Even if some authors (e.g., Hindman, 2018) believe this generalised perception of the elimination of hierarchies in the communicational process and information exchanges could lead to a partly wayward understanding of the internet's positive potential and what it has to offer, in which it is normally the decentralised and horizontal peer production and participation markets that take the lead, several others place themselves on a more techno-determinist level and enthusiastically celebrate what they describe as a magical fair of full competition.

This is the view of those who define the power of the internet as a form of techno-social system per se, with the ability to exponentially amplify and consolidate important social, participative and deliberative movements (Castells, 2012; Dahlberg, 2007), but it is also the perspective of those who see the internet and information technologies as the last opportunity to respond to four fundamental problems faced by a science that is secretive, closed-access, traditionalist, and in a certain sense obsolete: the problems of distrust in science, the democratic deficit in science, the slowdown in productivity growth, and replications (Mirowski, 2018).

The ubiquity of technology and the internet thus led to a dramatic change in the ecosystem of available information, and one of the largest changes took place in the scientific context (Skarlatidou et al., 2019), with the appearance of the open access model as one of the most emblematic events of that transformation in access to science. A model which Castells (2004) quickly reckoned to be a true social movement that was flowering within the scientific community. A fruit of a new communicational context which, following the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities of 22 October 2003, meant that the dissemination of scientific knowledge would involve making it available on a large scale, based on principles of democratised access, and taking advantage of the information technologies and network architectures with the capacity to promote collaborative research (Quintanilha, 2019a).

However, almost 2 decades after the Berlin Declaration, the reconfiguration of the discussion about open access in the dissemination, communication and sharing of scientific knowledge requires us to brave an incursion into the dialectic that is currently flourishing at the intersection between science communication and the economics of science. A discursive dialectic in which the defence of open access as a *res publica* is meeting significant opposition from a vision that sees open access as a paradoxical business model.

The opening question in this essay is thus: what does the available literature tell us about: (a) the primary advantages which the open access model offers for the spread, communication and sharing of scientific knowledge; and (b) the main derivations of a model that is increasingly oriented towards business and the mercantilisation of scientific knowledge?

In seeking to situate and respond to these two questions, we also want to contribute to the communication field — namely science communication — itself, in the sense that open access is not only, by definition, a movement which argues that all information of an academic nature (such as scientific publications and other data) should be free of charge and open to everyone, but is also inherently consolidating itself into a movement that is strongly oriented towards the communication of everything that fits within the sphere of academic production.

Literature Review

Open Access as *Res Publica*

The movement in favour of open access to science has grown in parallel with a new wave of enthusiasm associated with that which the internet could give to humanity. The vision of open access as a public service model originated in that prerequisite, and has been imbued with the spirit of freedom and the desire to both provide and guarantee the common good, using the resources made available by the new communicational environments underpinned by network architectures.

On the subject of the expectations of the scientific community, we should begin by mentioning two documents that are important to the open access movement: the

Budapest Open Access Initiative, and the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities. Together with an unprecedented idea of a "public good", the former brought with it the open access function as a tool for democratising science with the goal of overcoming information inequality in the scientific community: extinguishing barriers to access to knowledge would tend to speed up research, enrich education, and empower knowledge-sharing in a more egalitarian way, establishing the bases for uniting humanity around a common intellectual principle of searching for knowledge that belongs to and is for everyone (Trishchenko, 2019). The Berlin Declaration expanded that principle by promoting the internet as a functional instrument or a new infrastructure with the ability to serve as a basis for global scientific knowledge (Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, 2003).

Proponents of the idealism associated with the possible role that open access might play in the transformation of the scientific communication system sought to promote the development of solutions to specific problems generated by the traditional scientific publication system, including distrust, the oligopolistic position of the publishers, and a rigid hierarchical system supported by the international scientometric databases (Mirowski, 2018). As a result, the means replaced the end and academic "journals become the gatekeepers of academic power" (Whitworth & Friedman, 2009, Section The Role of Research). The internet created the conditions needed for it to be possible to overcome the problems that had accumulated within the system for nearly a century, in the search for a way to sustain a new science communication system which could become an open ecosystem outside the pure business spectrum that characterised the large corporations and scientific publishing houses. In this regard, Whitworth and Friedman (2009) observed that paradoxically, while academia can be successful in business, it will always be those commercial goals that make academia itself fail. Paraphrasing those authors, when an academic system turns into a business system, it loses both its academic value and its business value, and when the business goals are ranked higher than the academic goals, both tend to fail.

However, in the last 2 decades, the dream of open access has taken on some quite formalised outlines that are accepted not just by academics, but also by the publishing community. The OpenAIRE (n.d.) report, for example, designed a fair open access model based on the following principles:

1. Academic journals must be owned by their editorial boards.
2. Copyright to an article must be held by its author(s), based on a CC-BY licence.
3. All articles must be published in open access.
4. Article processing charges (APCs) must be low (max. €1,000), transparent, justified, and proportionate in relation to the work done by editorial boards.
5. No author may be responsible for paying APCs, and library consortia, such as the Open Library of the Humanities, must be the ones to ensure the funding for these necessary expenses.

Although the seminal approach at the heart of these principles is very practical, the following set of guiding values do stand out: control over the dissemination of scientific knowledge must return to the scientific community; authors must be recognised to be entitled to the results of their work; information must be open and available to all those with access to the internet; publishers play a public-service role, and must thus decline to be the owners of all knowledge.

Specialists divide the positive aspects of the impact that open access has on the scientific community into various categories, in which one can place both all the main advantages of the transition to a new model, and the impact on the democratisation of the scientific process (Trishchenko, 2019). Among the main positive effects, it is possible to highlight the spread of information and the increase in its visibility, the involvement of society and professionals in the scientific process, efficiency and interaction, the fact that authors retain rights, and the redistribution of resources. It is in accordance with these categories that open access is seen as a public service.

One of the most obvious benefits of open access is the speed with which a reader can gain access to an article, be it via deposited preprints, or by resorting to new open access platforms containing peer-reviewed articles once they are published. For example, in most cases, an article submitted for publication on a platform through Open Research Central will become available 1 week after its submission.

Another important benefit is that articles become more visible. Since the beginning of the 2000s, researchers have become interested in the way in which open access tends to affect how citations are counted. Over the course of 2 decades, many studies have been conducted for various scientific disciplines, and the majority of them have been dependent on the hypothesis that open access has a positive effect on citation dynamics, despite the fact that the data collected in this respect differ significantly from one scientific field to another (Antelman, 2004, 2017; Donovan et al., 2015; Hajjem et al., 2006; Harnad & Brody, 2004; Kousha & Abdoli, 2010; Makeenko & Trishchenko, 2018; McCabe & Snyder, 2015; Norris et al., 2008; Schultz, 2017; Wohlrabe & Birkmeier, 2014; Xu et al., 2011; Zhang, 2006).

One of the most wide-reaching studies on this topic is based on a sample of tens of millions of articles and suggests that, on average, open access articles receive 30% more citations (Piwowar et al., 2017). The situation with regard to monographs appears to be similar (Snijder, 2016).

Several studies are also devoted to the question of how open access positively affects the dissemination and impact of research results.

As Chang (2006) observes, open access publication allows results to spread more widely and permits greater advances in science. An article published in *Nature Communications* illustrates how open access articles are viewed 3.26 more times than articles consulted under subscription, and their citation rates on social media are 1.37 times higher (Wang et al., 2015). The American Psychological Society's academic journals presented similar results: during the first year, articles that were available free of charge were read in full 2.19 times more often than those available by subscription, and PDF versions were downloaded 61% more frequently (Davis, 2010).

By constituting itself in accordance with the principles that guide any public service, open access also enables researchers to choose between a wide variety of relevant articles and not just from the limited collection to which organisations like universities have access. This means citations are potentially distributed more fairly, inasmuch as recognition is mainly achieved by the quality of the articles themselves, regardless of the classification of the academic journals in which they appear.

Moreover, open access greatly simplifies the process of searching for relevant scientific contents, given that huge investments in the development of specific search-support functionalities mean that search mechanisms such as Google Scholar are much more efficient for research purposes than academic instruments specialising in that kind of search. Those mechanisms can effectively index the content that is openly consultable, but simultaneously ensure access to everything that is open on the internet, thereby offering scientists a much greater variety of sources. For example, Google Scholar exceeds Web of Science and Scopus in coverage, at least in the social and human sciences (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). The main language of both scientometric databases is English, which seriously diminishes their ability to cover regional literature, and negatively influences the criterion of plurality, although in many countries, including Russia, Japan and China, the scientific community mostly uses their native language to exchange scientific information (Obuhova et al., 2011). At the same time, it is extremely hard for non-English sources to gain entry to international scientometric databases, and this creates a serious shortfall in both information and visibility among scientists from a variety of countries.

Additionally, open access allows more people to be involved in the scientific process, including scientists from organisations that do not enjoy the conditions — namely financial ones — to register with or even try more expensive academic journals, which generally possess high impact factors. Students are another group who more frequently find it difficult to consult information — a problem that open access helps overcome (Pisoschi & Pisoschi, 2016). In other words, more people with different levels of experience create the basis for more effective participative collaboration, discoveries and innovations (Pöyhönen, 2017).

In short, the scientific community is not the only beneficiary of open access. Professionals and civil science representatives also gain access to participation in the scientific process, and this, in turn, helps science enrich itself with different perspectives and instruments, forge closer bonds with society, and thus overcome the crisis of trust in scientists and science (Papadopoulos, 2014).

This citizen science thus makes a significant contribution to scientific development by restoring the public's trust in science, reorienting science in such a way as to deal with the complexity of the most pressing problems, such as environmental issues, and installing democratic governance within science itself (Bäckstrand, 2003). What is more, this citizen — or civic — science ties science's vast potential to the civic capacities of different communities, in ways that revitalise the democratic purposes of science in terms of the public good (Garlick & Levine, 2017).

Open access also increases the chances that an article will be cited on Wikipedia by 47% (Teplitskiy et al., 2017) — a Wikipedia that often becomes the "point of entry" to a given topic (Scaffidi et al., 2017).

At the end of the day, the tendency for science to open up to society goes far beyond simply allowing someone to get to know the results of scientific research. As such, open access defines a much more significant tendency — the reorientation of the scientific community and its closed interests and values towards the interests and values of the whole of society, which results in a kind of ethical transposition of science itself, which truly places itself in the service of society (Brüggemann et al., 2020).

The results of adopting open access as a publication model also include the development of a new type of entrepreneurial publishing — open access academic mega-journals that increase efficiency and interaction. These mega-journals offer more opportunities for interdisciplinary research, but one of this model's great achievements is its ability to allow the publication of articles that may seem quite useless to the editor/publisher of a typical academic journal, but are of significant importance to the scientific community. Additionally, academic mega-journals introduced a new procedural quality verification model — the so-called "peer review", which is tendentially blind. The reviewer, who also tends not to know who wrote the article they are reviewing, only considers the work's scientific validity and the exactitude of its methodology, in a process which, according to Erfanmanesh (2019), contributes to the publication of contents that offer genuine methodological/scientific guarantees. The blind peer review is joined by one of the most innovative approaches, which consists of an open peer review — a process that is fundamentally opposite to the blind peer review, which is accepted almost without any controversy in the scientific community and is deemed the guarantor of the objectivity and impartiality of assessments/reviews. Open peer reviews can take many different shapes (Ross-Hellauer, 2017), but in any case help provide readers with more information than that disclosed by traditional peer review procedures. The advantages of an open peer review are linked to the fact that neither editors/publishers nor reviewers can prevent the author from publishing an article that is a work-in-progress, which means that every work becomes available. An open peer review also ensures that any citizen has the opportunity to witness or even take part in a scientific discussion, and is also a good opportunity for students and untrained readers to familiarise themselves with new material in an embryonic phase of their own projects. This model's value added thus involves both broader access to scientific results, and the democratisation of the process of discussing and publishing results (Velasquez, 2016).

Another way of expanding access by developing open access entails giving access to data, which is essential in many scientific fields (mainly the life sciences), even though some authors believe that open data access may augment problems linked to privacy issues — "privacy and open science are on a collision course" (Dennis et al., 2019, p. 1845).

The significant benefits of data-sharing include the ability to reuse data for other research — in other disciplines, for example — which helps save a substantial amount of research time and make the research process more transparent (Patel, 2016). Moreover, with Creative Commons licences, on condition that they cite their sources, authors can use text charts, tables and other material taken from open access academic journals, thereby also contributing to a more efficient use of projects' funding and time. The fact is that statistics on the reuse of datasets indicate that they are in high demand in the scientific community. Conservative estimates suggest at least 20% of datasets are reused within 5 to 10 years after publication (Piwowar & Vision, 2013).

In addition, authors are sometimes afraid to publish their article in open access because they think that transferring rights to such a large extent increases the risk of plagiarism. However, the reality appears to be exactly the opposite. Open licences subject the use of works to certain rules. The danger of someone improperly using a text published in open access is much smaller, because the search mechanisms will index the article that was published first along with its author's name (Trishchenko, 2019). What is more, with an open licence, the author only transmits non-exclusive rights to an undefined circle of people and continues to own the material — something that is generally impossible under the traditional approach, when all the exclusive rights belong to the publisher.

The use of open licences thus creates a unique situation for the scientific community, with no obstacles to the subsequent use of the information. Although this aspect is often undervalued, the advances in artificial intelligence technologies mean the questions of authors' rights become especially relevant.

Moreover, the change in the legal status of scientific works also helps prevent traditional publishers from acquiring exclusive rights and continuing to maintain any form of monopoly.

At the same time, the results of a study on the impact factor's influence on the citation count of articles published in open access academic journals suggest that the community's response to publication in them is less dependent on that factor than it is in the case of subscription-based publications (Chua et al., 2017). Open access thus democratises the market for scientific significance, and reduces dependence on the traditional indicators and measurers of scientific results — the so-called "dictatorship" or "tyranny of metrics and quartiles" (Muller, 2018). A dictatorship of metrics (Muller, 2018) that was addressed among others by Eugene Garfield (2006) — the father of the term "impact factor" (Garfield, 1955) — who, at the beginning of the century and with regard to the question of scientific significance via dependency on scientific measurers, coined the neologism "scientometry" in order to define the moment of scientific production.

In short, the expansion of the open access model over time tends to contribute to the appearance of new elements in science communication that will ensure the assessment of all scientific contributions, including the content on platforms and in periodicals which, for one reason or another, do not fulfil the criteria employed by the international scientometry of databases, but do publish high-quality content.

The fact is that various attempts have already been made to change the current situation. One of the most prominent initiatives in this area was the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (2012), which proclaims we should reject the principle of using metrics (such as the impact factor) to assess the research quality per se as well as their importance in deciding how to allocate grants for projects, hiring researchers, and so on.

The declaration was signed by various organisations, including PLOS, eLife, PeerJ, and the European Association of Science Editors. However, the initiative has been the object of much criticism due to contradictions in the document, imprecise terminology, and other reasons (Kiermer, 2016). This is why some people think that the use of alternative metrics could be a significant step towards the openness of science (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, 2012). The manifesto signed by the group of scientists behind the San Francisco initiative includes a statement that alternative metrics can become a peer review tool, collecting information on both the discussion presented in the article and its references, and taking the context into consideration. This method would significantly speed up the process of checking the results of scientific activities and would promote the development of new platforms for science — something that will only be possible when scientific knowledge really opens up.

Open Access as a Business Model

As explained earlier, open access made an unrivalled contribution to the impetus towards the democratisation of produced knowledge, be it scientific, intellectual, or performative in nature. It also seems evident to us that the opening up of the channels for the dissemination, communication and sharing of knowledge, on the basis of horizontal and decentralised peer collaboration philosophies, means that new opportunities are beginning to present themselves in the fight against the duplication of knowledge, to the extent that the latter is being more quickly exposed to a model that is openly reflexive and, in a certain sense, refractory.

Having said that, the voraciousness of the production of knowledge, which seeks to offer a response to the principles of academic reward (Quintanilha, 2019a), enhances the so-called "episodes of deregulation and loss of control" associated with mass, almost industrialised production, in which both researchers and research centres desperately try to respond to the dictatorships of scientific metrics (Muller, 2018) by producing outputs in a manner that can sometimes be totally hectic and primarily aims to achieve quick visibility and recognition. Yeoh et al. (2017) called it the challenge of the greed of academic production, which drives the so-called saturated markets, where the demand for shorter submission/publication times (Beall, 2012) not only incentivises the appearance of predatory journals whose sole objective is to (quickly) publish the largest possible number of articles in exchange for a given APC — something that has an important impact on scientific culture and agency themselves — but also makes a considerable number of editorial teams feel that, in the light of the demand for publication slots, it is possible to take financial advantage of an activity which should in principle be oriented not just towards the principle of the democratisation of access to knowledge, but also towards the democratisation of publication itself.

It is in this sense that one can talk about a derivation from the historically enthusiastic debate associated with open access and what it can do for science and knowledge, to a more polarised one in which, in addition to the positive points, participants are also starting to discuss the model's major negative implications. We are talking about a growing tendency to take economic advantage of the model, based on the capture and dilution of its social function (*res publica*), which is gradually succumbing to the market exchanges where knowledge, produced and disseminated through open access mechanisms, is mercantilised, often in the form of pseudo-sciences and pseudo-knowledge, in the so-called "predatory journals" (which constitute quite a complex topic in their own right).

As Whitworth and Friedman (2009) point out, there is an accumulation of problems within the science communication system that often have their roots in a commercialisation domain that rarely ensures a good service either to the scientific community, or to society as a whole.

Quintanilha (2019a) develops a typology of challenges imposed on the open science model and discusses the challenges of the (dis)accreditation of produced knowledge, the informality of assessment and validation structures, the commodification/mercantilisation of knowledge, and the predation of the open access model. He emphasises that instead of becoming truly free and free of charge, produced knowledge has once again come to be seen as merchandise, as it is in the structures of the traditional scientific dissemination models, in a tendency that once again retrieves the scientific reification mechanisms in which knowledge is above all seen as a thing that is saleable or capable of generating income in some form — a commodity like any other.

For Quintanilha (2019a), this mercantilisation is clearly present throughout the process of producing and disseminating articles in a myriad of academic journals which, in an initial phase, upheld the ideal of open science, lay outside the power of the A-lists and the four largest publishers (Sage, Elsevier, Willey, and Routledge) and began working in accordance with the essence of the open science model. However, they have since branched into a model underlain by APCs that are antagonistic to the once celebrated democratisation and procedural facilitation of forms of publication. The author concludes by saying that:

> the extent of the more-or-less premeditated monetisation strategies is thus once again transforming the scientific panorama, contributing to the biasing of an academic system which, since the beginning of the millennium and as imagined by its participants, had seemed to want to move towards the openness and democratisation of scientific knowledge. (Quintanilha, 2019a, p. 207)

Only 50 of the first 500 academic journals in the 2019 Scimago/Scopus ranking (which was only published in the second half of 2020; SCImago, n.d.) can be characterised as open access. Of those 50 open access journals, which could be said to comply with the two main principles of open science (democratisation of the publication of knowledge, without barriers, and democratisation of access to that knowledge), only 11 stipulate that publication is free; the guidelines of seven are unclear as to whether or not payment for publication is obligatory; while 37 (74%) establish APC fees, which can range from $600 to $5,000 per article, all of which must be fully covered by the authors.

Most of these academic reviews are situated within the spectrum of the natural sciences — the so-called "hard sciences". However, analysis of the first 50 open access academic journals in the social sciences shows that a similar majority also opt to apply APCs.

Outside the spectrum of journals indexed on the Scimago Journal and Country Rank, one of the most instructive cases is that of the large MDPI group which, with its 259 thematic academic journals, publishing in open access, but imposing APCs amounting to hundreds of Swiss francs. The group's activity was allegedly investigated by specialists who look at the quality of academic journals, with the result that it was included on Beall's list[1], in a process that included a legal action in which MDPI explained its position and demanded to be taken off the list of journals classified as predatory (MDPI, 2017).

In summary, one can ask the following questions: what types of service can justify a publication fee of $1,000, $2,000, $3,000, $4,000 or $5,000 per article? What are these services, how are they calculated and justified, and how are they presented in the guidelines of journals of an academic nature? Why do their amounts vary so much from one journal to another, and what influence does a journal's metric or classification (quartiles) have when it comes to setting those amounts?

The strategy of the journals that operate an open access model and charge their authors the so-called APCs primarily entails getting the idea across that maintaining and operating an open access journal has costs, and that these should be borne by the authors who decide to publish in the journal.

Example 1:

> Article Publishing Charge
>
> As an open access journal with no subscription charges, a fee (Article Publishing Charge, APC) is payable by the author or research funder to cover the costs associated with publication. This ensures your article will be immediately and permanently free to access by everyone. The Article Publishing Charge for this journal is USD 1390, excluding taxes. (Elsevier, n.d., Section Article Publishing Charge)

Example 2: "open access publishing is not without costs. *Genome Biology* therefore levies an article-processing charge of £3380/€4040/$4990 for each article accepted for publication. Short Reports have an article-processing charge of £2,540/€3,035/$3,745 for each accepted article" (BMC, n.d., para. 1).

[1] Over the years, Beall's list (https://beallslist.net/), which was compiled by Jeffrey Beall, positioned itself as a reference list for looking up potentially predatory journals. Although with the passage of time this list has been complemented by other equally exhaustive ones, such as Cabell's blacklist (https://www2.cabells.com/), Beall's list is still seen as a key work in the search to identify predatory journals.

Example 3:

> article processing charges (APC)
>
> Through the end of 2019, *Transgender Health* is a fully open access journal. (Beginning January 1, 2020, it will become a hybrid subscription-based model, with Open Access options.) The cost of maintaining and publishing the journal through 2019 are covered by Article Processing Charges (APC). (Mary Ann Liebert, n.d.)

In contrast, journals that pursue a double open access policy — that is, both open publication and open access to produced knowledge — tend to underline the idea that it is feasible to keep an academic journal free of charge to authors, strictly with the purpose of contributing to the advance of science and the democratisation of knowledge.

Example 4:

> this "Open Access" enables authors to obtain the maximum possible exposure for their work. The web makes the free dissemination of research feasible, and the free availability of sophisticated editorial software makes the cost of operating a peer-reviewed journal minimal. Open Access to research is thus socially efficient. (Econometric Society, n.d., para. 1)

Example 5: "we ensure open access so that everyone can consult the important new research in chemistry. We pay all article processing costs (APCs) so that there are no barriers to publishing and sharing any work" (Royal Society of Chemistry, n.d.).

Example 6:

> starting January 1, 2020, all items published in LLT are under an Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs Creative Commons license, or CC-BY-NC-ND, which permits users to download and share the original work. Authors are not charged article processing charges (APC) for submitting articles or for publication of their accepted articles. (National Foreign Language Resource Center, n.d., Section Permissions)

It should also be noted that some journals adopt a hybrid strategy when they institute APCs, but also take care to ensure that those charges are reduced or waived for authors who are unable to cover the costs associated with the open access publication of an article.

Example 7:

> *Cultural Anthropology* does not use article processing charges (APCs) to support the cost of publication. Members of the Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA) support the journal through their membership dues. Authors who are members of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), but not of the SCA, must join the SCA before their manuscripts will be reviewed.

> Authors who are not members of the AAA may pay a submission fee of $25 in lieu of becoming a member of the AAA and SCA. Authors can pay the fee with a credit card (MasterCard, Visa, or American Express) using the AAA's secure payment system; select the option "Manuscript Processing Fee - SCA Nonmember." The editorial office will be notified once the charge has been paid and will proceed with the review of your manuscript. (Society for Cultural Anthropology, n.d., ASection rticle Processing and Submission Charges)

Example 8:

> the Carnegie Corporation of New York grant has sponsored open access APCs for *R&P* authors from January 2016 to May 2018. Any articles published in the journal will continue to benefit from the current APC waiver as a result of this sponsorship. In future, an APC will be set at a level appropriate to the discipline, with an appropriate waiver and discount policy available for those authors who do not have the means to cover the APC. (Sage Publishing, n.d., Section 2. Article Processing Charges)

In short, bearing in mind all the characteristics that surround an academic reward process focused on the hyperproduction of articles, open access creates clear opportunities for academic journals to revise their publication criteria, bringing in new ways of revenue generation through more-or-less vague criteria that are unable to justify the amounts in question.

This goes against the wishes expressed during the initial discussions about the need to democratise knowledge in both production and dissemination — fundamental pillars of the idea of open access to science.

Russell (2019) argues that the essential roots of the transformation of open access into a business model lie in the fact that initiatives intended to promote open access to scientific knowledge have been epiphenomena that have been both dispersed and with too much time between each one. This has led to a lack of general awareness among researchers and other authors about the long-term sustainability of the open model, thereby favouring the appearance of parallel business models like the one sustained by APCs, which are quite opaque, take unfair advantage of authors, and unable to offer grounds for the exorbitant amounts charged.

Russel (2019) goes on to say that there is still a significant lack of knowledge about what open access actually is, or what it means within the research community, particularly in the social and human sciences. Even among the fringes of researchers where that knowledge is more substantial, authors face a dilemma derived from the fierce drive to publish, in which the tyranny exercised by metrics (Muller, 2018) means that closed access journals, which normally belong or are attached to large publishing groups, are the ones that attain the best rankings and have the most impact on the research resource allocation process: should they publish in a totally open journal, or in a closed one to which access is dependent on subscriptions and payments, but enjoys a high degree of recognition in the academic world? In a study by Schroter and Tite (2006) involving 468 researchers who were authors of articles, only 10% reported that they had submitted works to an academic journal that imposed APCs at the time.

Moreover, the question of APCs as a business model — not exclusive to, but more frequent in academic journals that are open access — generates problems with regard to the transparency of prices and the redistribution of resources. According to some (Siler et al., 2018), the transition to open access can be a cruel joke for developing countries, whose researchers will have access to all the scientific literature, but will be excluded from the international scientific communication process, inasmuch as they are unable to pay the so-called APCs required to publish in the leading periodicals (the same problem was also stated in the Open AIRE, n.d., report mentioned above).

The results of this study on publication preferences with regard to open access academic journals confirmed that authors from universities with a low classification are more likely to publish in academic journals to which access is closed (subject to payment) but are free of charge for the authors of articles, thereby opting not to choose open access journals that require authors to pay APCs, which exceed €1,000 per publication in the great majority of cases (Siler et al., 2018).

Conclusions

In this article we sought to look at the state of the art concerning the subject of open access and scientific knowledge. We found that the discussion about the benefits and obstacles derived from the open access model has become polarised in recent years. The first phase of the discussion as to what open access can bring to scientific knowledge, which started at the beginning of the millennium, was positive and marked by an enthusiastic tone in relation to what the model can give to science, namely: greater civic participation and the resulting scrutiny, in pursuit of a common good linked to the desire to place science in the service of society, opening up scientific knowledge and combating the centralised, hermetic and rigid structures of the more traditional publication model controlled by editorial oligopolies.

Among its most feted characteristics, we observed arguments for the democratisation and dissemination of knowledge, the transparency of produced knowledge, the increase in the visibility of the scientific product, the greater efficiency and redistribution of resources associated with both the scientific process and scientific agency. These tend to be the aspects celebrated the most by authors who look at the topic and at how this open access can be brought close to a *res publica*.

However, the lack of regulatory stimuli and the sparse, unstructured debate on the parallel/shadow structures that have come to feed off that same open access model made it impossible to stem the dangers of a parallel science economy. Suffocated by deadlines and driven to present constant results (articles, book chapters, etc.), researchers started competing within an academic reward model built on the hyperproduction of articles, in which the race to publish in journals of an academic nature in order to formalise and legitimise produced knowledge leads many editorial teams at many journals sustained by open access to choose to take maximum economic advantage of a saturated market. It is in this work-saturated environment that open access began to act, at least in part, leading stakeholders to seize the business opportunity and narrow the principles that govern the open science model, instituting high publication fees that are unsustainable for authors and researchers stuck in a loop in which they must publish as fast as possible.

More than contributing to a meta-analysis of what is being or has been written about the main pros and cons of the open science model, this article's primary goal is to launch the bases for a broader discussion that ought to underpin a more solid regulatory framework, which, for example, would make it mandatory for the policy governing publication prices to become more transparent and properly justified.

Translation: Richard Rogers

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Building Trust in Digital Platforms for Sharing Collaborative Lifestyles in Sustainable Contexts

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Abstract

The term "sharing economy" is intended to identify a set of social relations, digitally mediated, based on the principles of reciprocity and trust. However, such principles must result from the technological and design requirements of the platforms used where users deposit their personal data, insert information about interests and daily practices, communicate with strangers and, in this way, create personal bonds. The study hereby presented aims to identify a set of guidelines for building trust in the context of digitally mediated sharing of collaborative lifestyles, on platforms that promote the sharing of experiences in sustainable contexts. Within the scope of this study, sharing collaborative lifestyles means a non-monetary social exchange of knowledge, skills, accommodation, and food. The analyzed platforms — Volunteers Base, The Poosh, and WWOOF Portugal — are non-commercial organizations that promote experiences in educational projects in eco villages, natural construction projects in rural areas, permaculture projects on farms, among others. A multi-case and documentary study of the terms and policies published by these digital platforms was carried out. These regulatory documents were submitted to content analysis, using the Iramuteq and MAXQDA software. From this analysis, 20 guidelines emerged, in three categories: "practices and conduct", "conditions" and "security and privacy", which can guide users and platforms in the construction of digitally mediated sharing relationships in a transparent and reliable way.

Keywords
digital platforms, sharing, collaborative lifestyles, trust, sustainable

Construindo Confiança em Plataformas Digitais Para Partilhar Estilos de Vida Colaborativos em Contextos Sustentáveis

Resumo

A designação de "economia de partilha" pretende identificar um conjunto de relações sociais, digitalmente mediadas, baseadas nos princípios da reciprocidade e confiança. Todavia, tais princípios devem resultar dos requisitos tecnológicos e de design das plataformas utilizadas onde os utilizadores depositam os seus dados pessoais, inserem informações sobre interesses e práticas quotidianas, comunicam com desconhecidos e, desta forma, criam vínculos pessoais. Este estudo tem como objetivo identificar um conjunto de diretrizes para a construção da confiança na partilha de estilos de vida colaborativos mediada digitalmente por plataformas que promovem partilha de experiências em contextos sustentáveis. Neste estudo, a partilha de estilos de vida colaborativos é compreendida como uma troca social não monetária de conhecimentos, habilidades, acomodação e alimentação. As plataformas analisadas, Volunteers Base, The Poosh e WWOOF Portugal, são organizações não comerciais que promovem experiências em projetos de educação em ecovilas, de construção natural em zonas rurais, de permacultura em quintas, entre outros. Realizou-se, portanto, um estudo multicasos e documental dos termos e políticas divulgados por estas plataformas digitais. Estes documentos reguladores foram submetidos a uma análise de conteúdo com auxílio dos softwares Iramuteq e MAXQDA. Desta análise emergiram 20 diretrizes, em três categorias: “práticas e condutas”; “condições”; e “segurança e privacidade”, que podem orientar os utilizadores e as plataformas na intenção de construir relações de partilha mediadas digitalmente de forma transparente e confiável.

Palavras-chave
plataformas digitais, partilha, estilos de vida colaborativos, confiança, sustentável

Introduction

Digital environments have specific strategies to provide confidence in digital services — interface design, filters, data protection, and privacy mechanisms, among others. However, in addition, they also need to assist in the emergence of mutual trust between users.

The cognitive and affective experience of trust is one of the most important requirements of social life. Some studies address this socio-anthropological component, in the digital system, as a relevant element to establish the quality of man–screen–network interaction (Adali et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2013; Cheshire, 2011; Hang et al., 2009; Igarashi et al., 2008; Jiang et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016; Zhang & Wang, 2013). In this approach, for example, Fogg’s (2003) research on persuasive technology stands out, emphasizing trust as a central element of credibility in web service experiences.

On the other hand, in a classic sociological approach, trust also plays a significant role in the quality of interpersonal relationships built in different social spaces. Luhmann (1979/2005) treats the trust as a diminisher of complexity and considers communication as the basis of social interaction. The possibilities of interaction between individuals and the organization of the social order itself imply different ways of experiencing this complexity. As a result, there is a need to simplify and make relationships somewhat expected, given the diversity of potentially unpredictable or trivialized behaviors (Bauman, 2003/2004).

In the sharing economy transactions, trust between strangers who exchange needs and resources appears as a way to understand the relationship between peers, as explained by Rachel Botsman in the communications published by the YouTube Channels Stern Strategy Group (2015) and TED (2016). The sharing economy encompasses a social system based on personal relationships and ancient principles, including trust. However, the trust that directly affects the intention to share is also challenging in the face of the obstacle of being built among strangers.

The sharing of collaborative lifestyles understood in this study is digitally mediated and involves a non-monetary social exchange of knowledge, skills, accommodation, and food. Digital platforms are, therefore, fundamental tools for information and communication between volunteers (users who offer to participate, without monetary remuneration, in exchange for contexts where they can acquire certain skills) and hosts (users who make their knowledge available free of charge and a social space where this learning can happen).

The study hereby presented aims to identify a set of guidelines for building trust in the context of digitally mediated sharing of collaborative lifestyles, on platforms that promote the sharing of experiences in sustainable contexts.

The analyzed platforms — Volunteers Base (https://www.volunteersbase.com/), World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, Portugal (WWOOF Portugal; https://wwoof.pt/) and The Poosh[1] — are non-commercial organizations based on a network for sharing collaborative lifestyles. In this type of sharing we are interested in sustainable contexts, such as educational projects in eco villages, natural construction projects in rural areas, permaculture on farms, among others.

These projects enhance sustainable development, offering productive diversity through natural resources and a more nature-integrated lifestyle. A study about the sustainable context, in rural and intermediate areas, is also justified by the territorial importance of these regions in the European Union. In addition, the low economic and social development of these areas shows that there is still a lot to explore and to value (Europe Union, 2018).

In fact, rural regions cover 44% of the European Union's territory, while intermediate regions account for 44% and urban regions represent only 12% of the territory (European Union, 2018). This territorial importance is even more significant in Ireland, Finland, Estonia, Portugal and Austria, where the predominantly rural regions represent around 80% (Europe Union, 2018).

According to the presented scenario, a multi-case and documentary study of the terms and conditions published by Volunteers Base, The Poosh, and WWOOF Portugal was carried out. These regulatory documents were subjected to content analysis, using the Iramuteq and MAXQDA software. From these analyzes, 20 guidelines emerged that can guide users and platforms in building digitally mediated sharing relationships in a transparent and reliable way.

[1] The Poosh website worked until 2020. The data analyzed in this research was retrieved from https://www.theposh.org/. Other records about the platform can be accessed on Facebook pages and blogs available on the web.

Collaborative Lifestyle in Sharing Economy

The sharing of lifestyles comprises a convivial and "onlife" (Floridi, 2015) experience, potentiating collective consequences. The construction of relationships takes place through digital platforms on which users deposit personal data, insert daily information, communicate with strangers, and, above all, collect bonds.

In this perspective, according to Botsman and Rogers (2010/2011, p. 146) and Shirky (2010/2011), a product or place belonging to a subject (a car, a house, a farm, etc.) becomes part of a "shared context" when added to a digital platform, and function as an "anchor of commonality".

A sense of community, as McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue, is capable of nurture a feeling of belonging and influence among users, the sharing of stories and experiences, and the satisfaction of meeting needs through participation in the collectivity.

At first sight, a sense of community can be perceived on many digital platforms of the sharing economy, in different contexts or approaches — on the Olio (http://olioex.com/) and ShareWaste (http://sharewaste.com/) platforms, from food sharing or from the donation of recyclable objects accumulated in domestic waste, forming a network to fight waste or functioning as a chain of the circular economy.

However, the sense of community can be more complex. Some platforms also involve coexistence and exchange in a living space (Chan & Zhang, 2018), which can be, for example, the home of a farmer willing to accommodate a volunteer who wants to learn and work on organic farming projects. Private spaces, previously closed, open as environments for the exchange of knowledge, skills, and also values.

Botsman and Rogers (2010/2011) explain that, in a social space, the intimacy between peers creates a feeling of greater unity and trust, like what happens in virtual communities where there is an ideal of organization. This ideal leads users to a feeling of mutuality, giving them a reason for collective creation (Botsman & Rogers, 2010/2011, p. 146).

The collaborative lifestyle can, therefore, be an enhancer of collective movements and capable of contributing to development in several sectors. Digital platforms within this logic also take on more complex challenges, based on the goal of supporting reciprocal and reliable bonds. In this context, ensuring the security and transparency of the experiences they promote through policies and regulations is of great importance.

Trust That Platform Resources and Policies Inspire

The establishment of trust is initially associated with the users' observations and perceptions about the characteristics of the platforms, reflecting the users' needs and the quality of the system, information, and services. Within the scope of the sharing economy, a set of aspects assume great relevance, namely, those related to the technologies used, the quality of information, the communication resources, the security and privacy tools, and the documents that regulate the use and participation in the experiences.

Kamal and Chen (2016) investigated the trust factors that affect people's willingness to participate in the sharing economy and pointed out two main conclusions. The design of these platforms is the first of these factors, in addition to using current and reliable technologies. These conclusions are corroborated by Lee et al. (2018), who refer to: (a) system quality, due to the need to explore the advantages of good usability, the convenience of access, ease of use and other aspects; and (b) information quality (or informativeness), due to the need for a set of information that brings value to the user's perception.

In this way, and also according to Kamal and Chen (2016), the platforms should provide the user with the most consistent and necessary information. Not knowing the host name or the location of the accommodation, for example, can be crucial for the volunteer to classify the platform as unreliable.

On the other hand, the familiarity between the user and the system can have an impact on building trust. For Santos and Prates (2018), this familiarity is a consequence of the signification system adopted by the designer in the interface. In other words, the visual environment of the platforms that promote collaborative lifestyle experiences is undoubtedly relevant in building trust.

Another topic of great relevance and also studied is the security and privacy of users. Lutz et al. (2018) developed a model based on privacy concerns, highlighting that sharing transactions usually raise privacy and security concerns, which extend from virtual environments to physical ones.

Before enjoying the benefits of collaboration, such as living with new people and the established compensations, users expose their personal data and exchange information with strangers on digital platforms (Chuang et al., 2018; Lutz et al., 2018), which implies the need for security and protection mechanisms on the platforms.

Corroborating this, Yang et al. (2016) identified three general indicators: (a) security and privacy; (b) information technology quality, and; (c) platform traits. Other authors (e.g., Kamal & Chen, 2016; Lee et al., 2018; Santos & Prates, 2018) extend this contribution, including new indicators that can determine the construction of trust.

In the personal dimension, Santos and Prates (2018) included indicators that respond to a concern for the safety of users, namely: (a) data, referring to the personal information provided in the sharing economy systems; (b) authentication, referring to the verification carried out by the system in relation to the users themselves or their data; and (c) privacy, referring to the level of privacy defined by the user when using the sharing economy system.

Concerns about security and privacy should, therefore, be of paramount importance for digital platforms in the context under study. It can also be argued that, as far as trust is concerned, the adoption of security and privacy resources and tools by the platforms is strategic and can potentially help them to be perceived as more reliable and ethical.

However, some authors consider that the platforms themselves access the data in an abusive way and use, store or transfer it in ways that question the rights of protection and security of users. Lee et al. (2018) mention the possibility of malicious use of user data by the platforms, such as the sale or disclosure of personal data, in addition to the potential (physical) damage that the experience promoted by the platform can cause to the user.

As protection measures, a platform can offer tools and services that ensure users' experiences (Kamal & Chen, 2016; Santos & Prates, 2018): criminal background check, basic user information, security certificate, video chat, and insurance assistance.

As far as verification is concerned, some platforms carry out a screening and investigation service for users, monitoring violations of regulations, terrorism, and sanctions, in addition to criminal background checks. These initiatives can be seen as another security method, although they do not prevent adverse situations.

It is a fact that any experience has its share of risk and, therefore, it becomes a challenge to avoid all threatening events (either from the user or the platform). But being thoughtful and taking action towards online and offline security are concerns that must remain at the heart of discussions about the sharing economy.

Although the sharing economy platforms should prioritize information organization, along with security and privacy tools, they also need to consider the political and social issues behind their services, as community culture and rules can also raise quite complex issues. Regulations, terms, manuals, campaigns, and other documents can be considered in order to institutionalize an ethical culture among members of the community.

Ye et al. (2017) have a more humanized view: the ideological and ethical nature of the attitudes of members of the sharing communities has a strong relationship with the platform's reputation. These authors developed a research model to describe the stages of trust development between users. In this model, reputation comes from the degree of emotion perceived by users when reading personal information, assessments, or recommendations on a platform. In other studies, reputation is also cited as relevant in building trust (Kamal & Chen, 2016; Tian et al., 2017; Ye et al., 2017; Yoon & Lee, 2017).

Also, Wu et al. (2017) concluded that users infer reliability from photos (present in users' profiles, albums, or comments). In the photos, the user identifies elements with which he identifies, developing a feeling of empathy. This study highlights that photos are, therefore, important information elements for the construction of trust.

These observations reveal that the information shared by users exposes their behaviors and influences the perception and decisions of others, as well as reinforces a platform's community identity.

In turn, the conduct of users when using the platforms is outlined by the rules and standards that these platforms develop and promote. It is therefore relevant to analyze these recommendations.

Method

This multi-case and qualitative study aimed at a documentary and descriptive analysis (Gray, 2014; Stake, 2006) of the deontological apparatus, such as the terms and conditions, used by online platforms that promote collaborative lifestyles experienced in sustainable contexts — educational projects in eco villages, rural construction, permaculture on farms, among others.

As such, three platforms — Volunteers Base, The Poosh, and WWOOF Portugal — were selected, using the following criteria: being a non-commercial organization, involving non-monetary social exchange, and promoting experiences in Portugal. Volunteers Base promotes this type of sharing in several contexts, including sustainable ones. The Poosh focuses exclusively on sustainable construction, while WWOOF Portugal promotes experiences on organic farms.

Data collected on these platforms were treated and analyzed in two phases: the first with the aid of the Iramuteq software and the second with the MAXQDA software. In the first moment of analysis, textual statistics were used, to infer the occurrence and association between words, in order to understand the discourses promoted by the platforms through the regulatory documents (terms and conditions).

A total of six regulatory documents, from The Poosh (terms of service), Volunteers Base (terms of use and policies for volunteers and hosts) and WWOOF Portugal (terms and conditions of use and privacy policy), separated into 231 text segments (ST), were analyzed with the aid of the Iramuteq software. A set of 8,236 words emerged from these documents, with 1,499 distinct terms (without derivations or similarities with any other identified terms) and 758 with a single record, that is, they appeared only once in these documents.

This content was subject to two types of textual statistics: correspondence factorial analysis and analysis of similarities. In both cases, the software uses the Reinert method for a statistical formulation of repetition and the relationship between the words used in the different speeches (http://www.iramuteq.org/). The factorial correspondence analysis allowed us to classify the quantity and repetitions of words, identifying and comparing the speeches of the platforms; in turn, the similarity analysis allowed us to represent the association between the words used in the documents and to infer the construction structure and the themes that arose from the platforms' speeches.

The same documents were then subjected to content analysis, in order to deepen the treatment and generate a descriptive codification (Bardin, 1977/2011). Data were processed using the MAXQDA software. This analysis phase resulted in what we call guidelines, which emerged from the analyzed corpus, also considering the theoretical framework studied and the references raised in previous publications (Sales et al., 2020).

This second phase of analysis resulted in 20 guidelines, separated into three sets: "practices and conducts", "conditions", and "security and privacy". The treatment and analysis of the data through two distinct, but complementary techniques, and the visual tools of the two used software allowed the cross-validation of the results for the discussions, resulting in a more reliable and productive study.

Words Counted in Terms and Conditions: An Analysis

Through the factorial correspondence analysis (AFC) it was possible to verify the occurrence and make comparisons between the different words used by the platforms in the regulatory documents. The different representations that platforms have of the objectives and the promotion of sharing experiences stand out.

Volunteers Base most frequently used the words[2]: "volunteer", "project", "host", "contact", and "potential" (shown in green in Figure 1); The Poosh highlighted: "service", "org", "thepoosh", "information", and "user" (shown in red in Figure 1); and WWOOF: "data", "site", "wwoof", "provide", and "policy" (shown in blue in Figure 1). From this, differences in the platforms' speeches can be observed, although there are also intersections. In addition, no record of the word "trust" or derivatives has been identified.

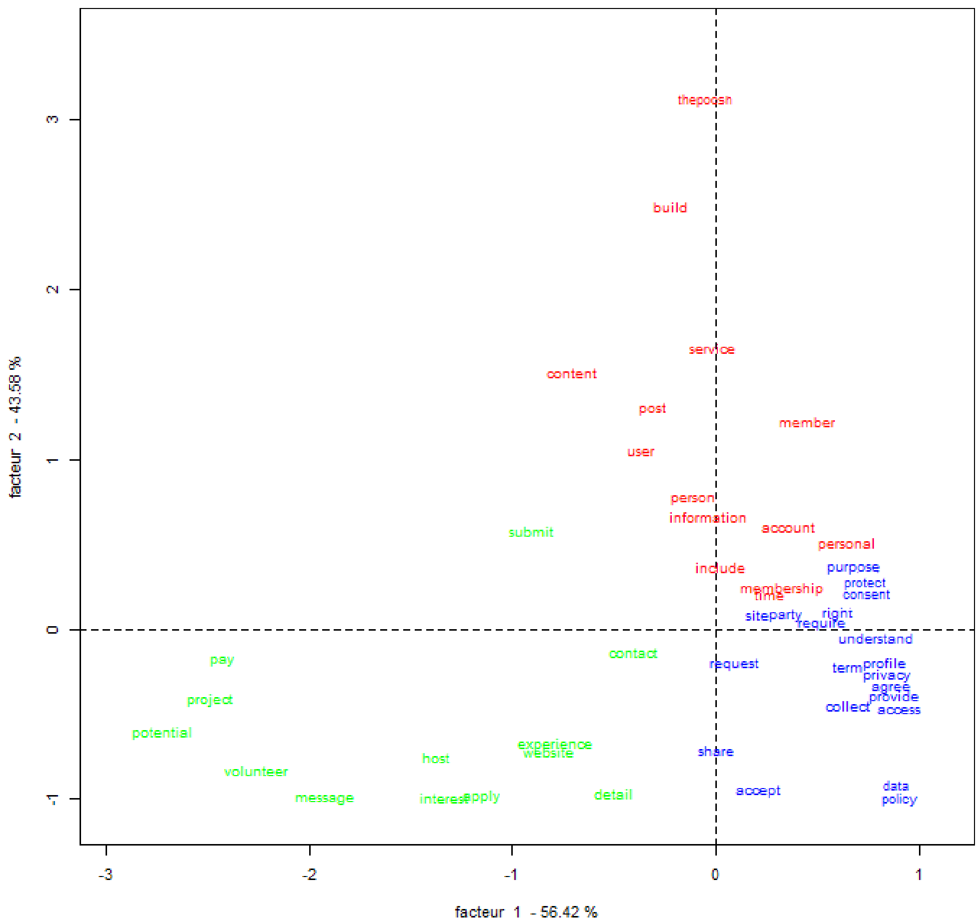

Figure 1 *Results From the AFC Classification*

[2] The analyzed pages were in English.

The use of these words in the platforms' speeches was also analyzed. Volunteers Base is attentive to users and experiences, emphasizing the projects and activities that are necessary and that are decent to be offered among users. Based on this, there is a greater focus on experience and information on the projects published on this platform, as well as on the fulfillment of the commitments between volunteers and hosts.

The Poosh presents a speech more focused on the relationship between users and the organization and between users themselves. In this way, there is a concern with delimiting the platform's services, as well as describing the possible services to be provided among users. Another aspect of The Poosh's speech is focused on the treatment of content (as well as data) by the platform, in order to also emphasize how users should treat and disseminate this content.

In turn, WWOOF Portugal demonstrates that user data is at the heart of the platform's concerns, using the word "data" to clarify how the user data processing works. The name of the organization, WWOOF, was used most of the time to declare the intentions and the way of acting of the platform, as well as the responsibilities and policies of the organization, with emphasis on the privacy policy.

Comparing the platforms, the speeches that come closest are those of The Poosh and WWOOF platforms, with proximity in terms of occurrence for the words: "information" and "person" (Figure 1). This can be explained by the fact that these platforms' speeches are both focused on the responsibility of them and the users and on the treatment of data and content, according to the accounted words.

There is, however, no common word of great significance that strongly correlates the speeches of the three platforms under study. On the contrary, the cartesian representation demonstrates that the most frequent words are dispersed, indicating that there are differences in the contents of the regulatory documents.

The observation of occurrences between words and their related ones led to the identification of intersections, that is, a structure of related contents in the general textual corpus of the regulatory documents under study. In fact, five words stand out in the speeches: "data", "site", "information", "host", and "volunteer". They branch out from others that have significant expression, such as: "personal", "right", "service", "user", "privacy", "policy", "contact", and "project" (Figure 2).

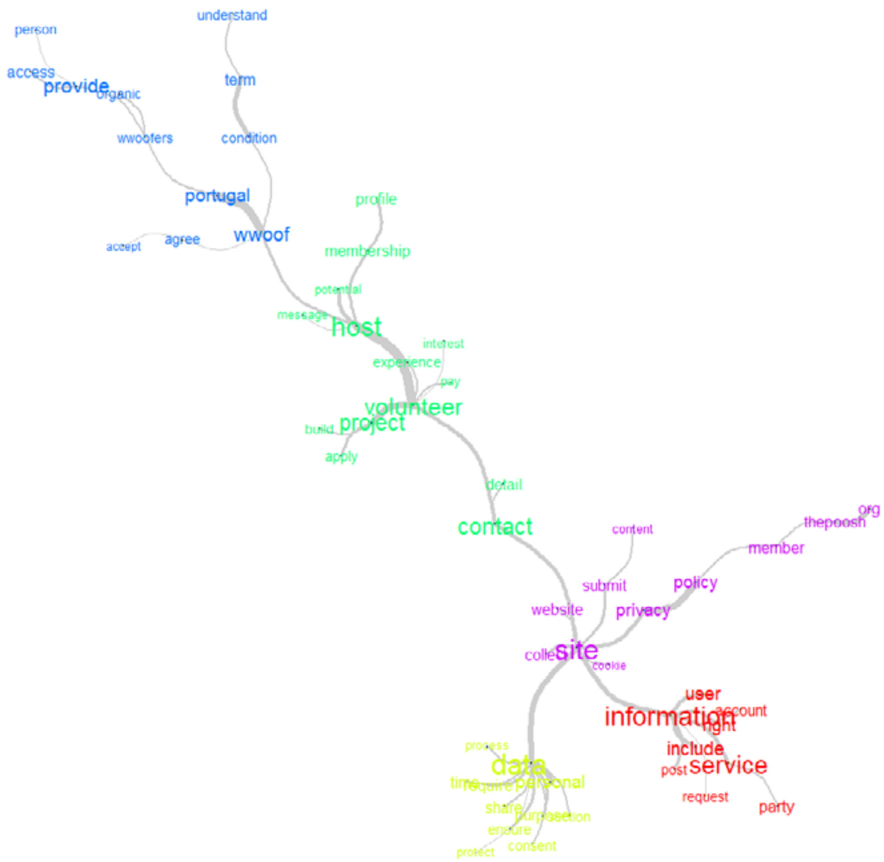

Figure 2 *Results From the Analysis of Similarity*

From what is observed, it is possible to conclude that, in general, the speeches of the platforms present typical references of any document whose content is related to the security and privacy of users, with the culture and rules of these communities, and with the quality of technology and information on these platforms, corroborating the studied theoretical framework (Chuang et al., 2018; Kamal & Chen, 2016; Lee et al., 2018; Lutz et al., 2018; Santos & Prates, 2018).

The analysis of similarity also allows the interpretation of the platform's speeches through the association of and the relationship between the most frequent words (Figure 3).

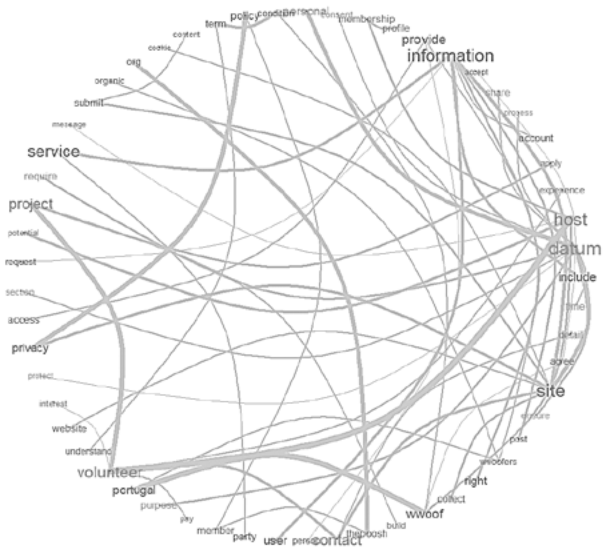

Figure 3 *Classification Result by the Reinert Method — Analysis of Similarity and Coherence in Speech*

It can be inferred that the word "information" appears, in the platforms' speeches, associated with "user", or, more specifically, with the way the information should be used by the platforms and their users. Another association, between the words "privacy" and "site", also explains other things about the use of their sites, reinforcing that platforms are concerned with clarifying the use of their sites. "Information", in turn, also has a strong connection with the word "service", a fact that also confirms the platforms' intention to determine the services being promoted.

The word "data" appears associated with the word "personal", referring to the treatment of user information. The users, in turn, play the roles of volunteer and host, and these two words appear strongly associated, demonstrating a significant relationship that must exist between these users. Finally, the association of the words "volunteer" and "project" points to a need to describe and detail the projects, in order to clarify users about the experiences (or experience proposals) that are promoted on the platforms.

Textual statistics and a more focused look at the platforms' speeches also reveal potential aspects for a broader understanding of the trust-building process. Among them are: (a) the relationship that the platforms understand to exist between the processing of personal data and the recognition of users' rights; (b) the concern to clarify the functionalities of their sites to users, as well as informing them about the services they may (or may not) find on these sites; (c) the recognition of the need for users to protect their personal data, such as telephone contacts, emails, addresses; and (d) the fact that they give relevance to the relationship between users (volunteers and hosts).

These aspects are discussed below, identifying the text passages taken from the regulatory documents that confirm these observations.

The Emergence of Trust-Building Guidelines

The guidelines identified in this analysis phase were organized into three categories: "practices and conducts", "conditions" and "security and privacy" (Table 1).

Practices and conducts	Conditions	Security and privacy
1. Principle for sustainable practices 2. Principle of transparency 3. Principle for sharing and exchange 4. Financial and commercial principle 5. Principle of respect and human rights 6. Responsibility of the platform 7. Platform disclaimer 8. Platform's law obligation duty 9. User responsibility 10. Platform's info-communicational commitment 11. User info-communicational commitment	12. Platform autonomy rights 13. User's consent commitment to the platform 14. Users' commitment to renounce to legal rights 15. Commitment to an automatic or associated agreement 16. Agreement commitment as prerequisite for use	17. Security measure for platform users 18. Data protection measure on the platform 19. Responsibility for data use by the platform 20. User responsibility for data

Table 1 *Categories and Guidelines*

The first category includes 11 guidelines concerning the principles, responsibilities, commitments, and duties of the individuals in the experiences of sharing collaborative lifestyles in sustainable contexts, more specifically, users and platforms.

Under the "conditions" category are guidelines that reflect users' rights listed by the platforms and three commitments that permeate the participation of users. The third category added four guidelines: two responsibilities, and two measures on the use, protection, and security of data and users' privacy.

In a general comparison between the platforms' regulatory documents, the most significant category is "practices and conducts", with the largest number of guidelines and text segments. In this category, a no-less-important guideline, but which is not highlighted in the individual analysis, is the "responsibility of the platform", with more text segments in the documents of WWOOF Portugal.

This platform seems to be concerned with assuming its responsibilities and intentions when it states, for example:

> we will not, however, send you any unsolicited marketing or spam and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that. We fully protect your rights and comply with Our obligations (...). In any event, We will conduct an annual review to ascertain whether we need to keep your data. Your data will be deleted if we no longer need it. Any reports of harassment between a host and WWOOFer will be investigated by WWOOF Portugal, and may be cause for membership being revoked.[3]

[3] See https://wwoof.pt/privacy-policy and https://wwoof.pt/how-it-works/terms-and-conditions

The "conditions" category has the lowest number of segments per guideline, making it the participation deontological category of less significance. The most relevant guideline in this context is the "user's consent commitment to the platform", a fact that allows us to state that all the three platforms ask, in some way, the users' permission to use personal data and published content.

Also, in the "conditions" category, there are three other guidelines with few segments, namely, "platform autonomy rights", in which the platform is authorized to modify the published regulatory documents at any time, "users' commitment to renounce to legal rights", in which the platform imposes on the users a commitment to renounce to their legal rights, as in the case of legal proceedings against the platform or third parties connected to it, and "commitment to an automatic or associated agreement", implying that, by agreeing to one term, the users are agreeing with the others terms and conditions associeted. These last two are quite questionable, since they are an imposition of platforms and can be legally questioned.

Through the connection analysis between codifications, two relevant relationships were found in the category "practices and conducts", one more positive than the other. The guideline "user info-communicational commitment" has a connection with the "principle of transparency" and the "user responsibility" guideline has a connection with the "platform disclaimer" guideline (Figure 4).

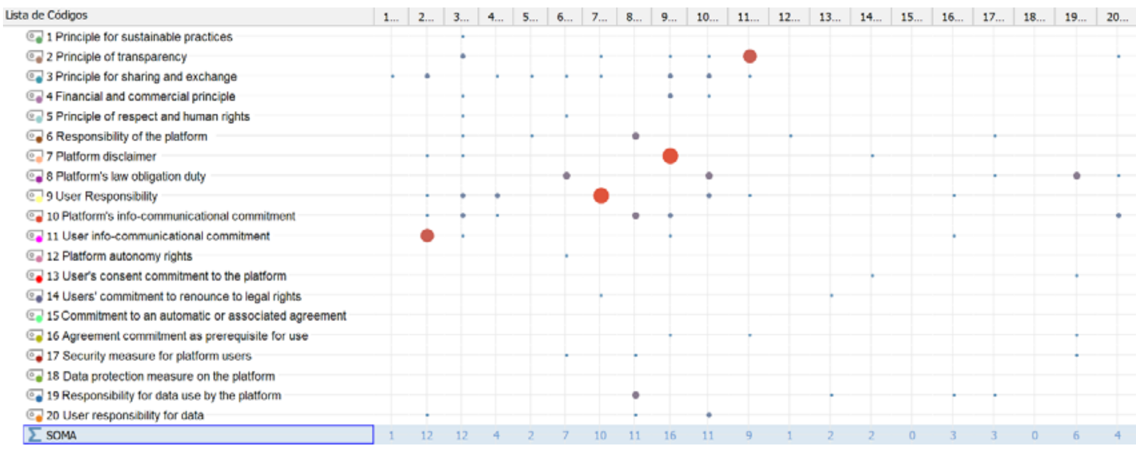

Figure 4 *Connection Table Between Codifications*

The first connection becomes clear, for example, in segments such as: "we encourage Hosts and Volunteers to communicate extensively and to clear up all doubts before making any agreement" or "is not a bad idea to share any of your proles in sites like BeWelcome or CouchSurfing where potential hosts can see references and comments that people wrote about you"[4].

[4] See https://www.volunteersbase.com/hosts-p27#info and https://www.volunteersbase.com/volunteers-p28

The incentive for the user to inform and communicate with others appears along with the relevance of being clear and reliable. The platform, therefore, demonstrates a concern to guide users towards transparent conduct, providing information, and communicating.

In the second connection, however, the concern with users seems to lose importance, because in the platforms' documents the users' responsibilities have a connection with the platforms' disclaimers.

The following segment, for example, establishes limits for the organization's responsibility, transferring responsibility to the user and explaining the platform's activities as follows: "is limited to providing a means of contact between Hosts and WWOOFers, and that the arrangements I make with volunteers are entirely my own responsibility"[5].

When platforms state that "the content of this website is entirely submitted by users"[6], it seems to be important to emphasize that the content is the users' sole responsibility, once again exempting the platform from any control or compromise.

An Individualized Analysis of the Guidelines, by Platform

In a more individualized analysis of the codifications, by platform, through the single segment model processed in MAXQDA, it is possible to better understand the guidelines identified in each document, which clarify the philosophy of each of the platforms analyzed.

Volunteers Base emanates the greatest number of guidelines through the following: "principle for sharing and exchange", "users' info-communicational commitment", "principle of transparency" and "user responsibility". Volunteers Base provides recommendations on commitments that must be made by users with respect to information and communication, informational transparency between users, and users' commitments regarding their responsibilities to themselves and others. The guidelines and the respective number of segments can be seen in Figure 5.

[5] See https://wwoof.pt/how-it-works/terms-and-conditions

[6] See https://www.volunteersbase.com/terms-p37

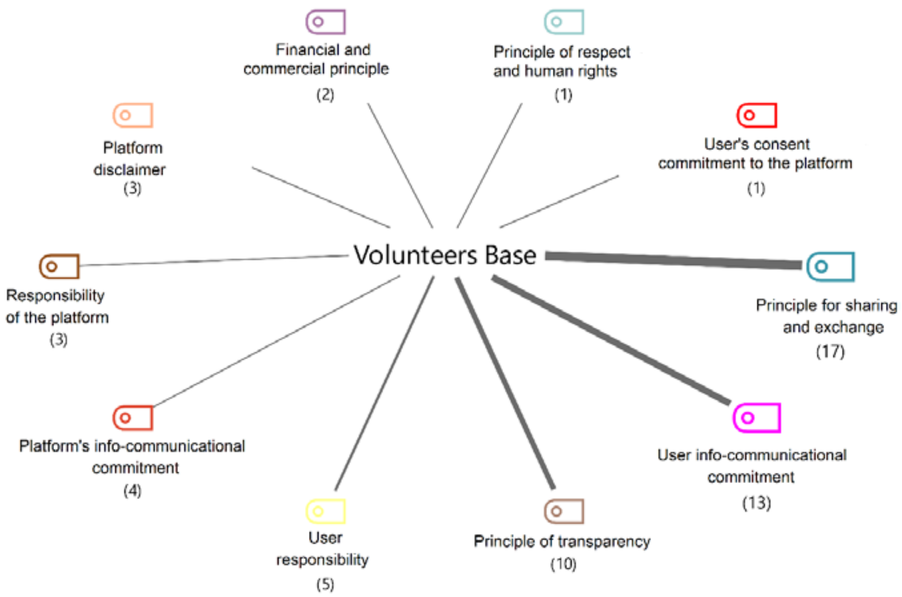

Figure 5 *Segments Encoded in Volunteers Base Documents*

In these guidelines Volunteers Base mentions, respectively: "both parties will be participating in a moneyless volunteering network"; "to get positive answers, you should write a nice and friendly message, including information about yourself and telling your potential Host why do you want to join his/her project"; "note: many projects are run in very low budget, if you can't provide food for example, please make it clear in you description"; "the deals made between Hosts and Volunteers are totally private and this site doesn't take any part in it"[7].

The platform maintains, in general, a concern with the users' commitments and conduct, being enlightening and often a kind of advisor.

On the other hand, Volunteers Base does not include eight of the guidelines identified in other platforms' documents, being, in this perspective, the platform that most differs. The "platform's law obligation duty", for example, the most referenced guideline in WWOOF Portugal documents, was not considered by Volunteers Base, that is, Volunteers Base does not recognize and mention a law to which it is obligatorily submitted.

In The Poosh's individual analysis, it is possible to recognize the priority given, in its regulatory documents, to the guidelines "user responsibility, platform's disclaimer" and "principle of respect and human rights" (Figure 6). This observation is consistent with what was verified in textual statistics.

[7] See https://www.volunteersbase.com/terms-p37, https://www.volunteersbase.com/hosts-p27#info and https://www.volunteersbase.com/volunteers-p28

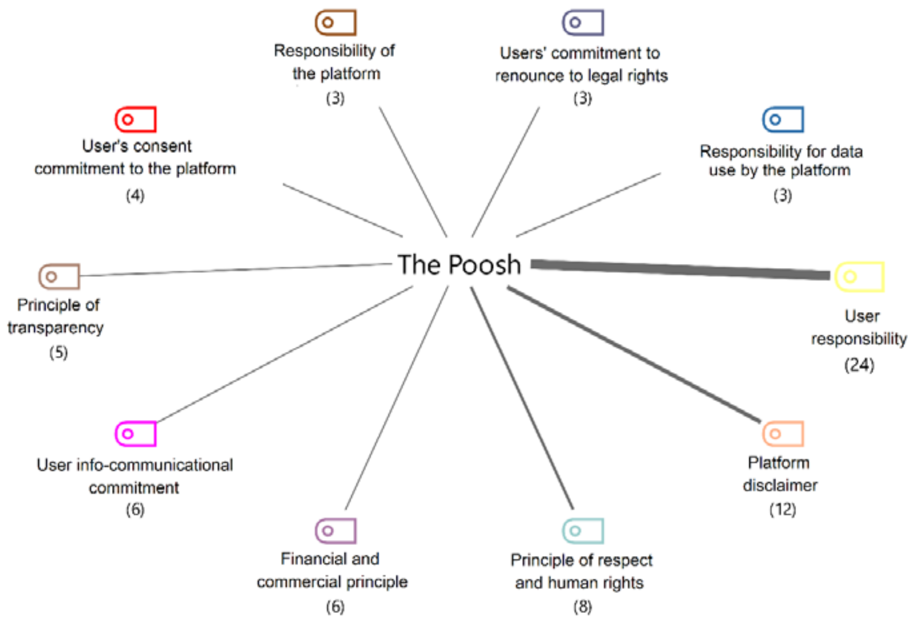

Figure 6 *Segments Encoded in The Poosh Documents*

The platform requests a commitment from users regarding their responsibilities to themselves and others (physical and mental security, actions, guarantee initiatives — insurance, visas, and other paid services), similarly to Volunteers Base. Regarding this matter, phrases such as "in your use of our Services, you must act responsibly and exercise good judgment"[8] are highlighted in the documents.

The Poosh also uses these documents to clarify the limits of its services and to exempt itself from certain responsibilities: "we do not investigate any user's reputation, conduct, morality, criminal background, or verify the information such user may submit to the Site"[9].

Identity verification is a feature available on other platforms, and, from the way The Poosh addresses this issue, it seems like a justification for being exempt from any charges in this regard. In addition, in the sentence following this statement, the platform addresses the user as follows: "we encourage you to communicate directly with potential hosts and guests through the tools available on the Site and to take the same precautions you would normally take when meeting a stranger in person for the first time"[10].

Another guideline identified in The Poosh (and Volunteers Base) documents, but with less representation, is the "financial and commercial principle". Also having limits' establishment in mind, the platform uses this principle for stating the prohibition of using the platform's services for commercial purposes, demand any payment from volunteers, and provide a platform link to a commercial website.

[8] See http://thepoosh.org/termsofservice/

[9] See http://thepoosh.org/termsofservice/

[10] See http://thepoosh.org/termsofservice/

Something that should be positively emphasized in The Poosh documents is the appreciation of the "principle of respect and human rights", which defines a set of guidelines for anti-harassment, anti-discrimination, and against any behavior that violates the law.

The platform establishes, for example, that the user cannot send any content that: (a) is defamatory; (b) contains nudity or sexually explicit content; (c) can denigrate any ethnic, racial, sexual or religious group by stereotyped representation or otherwise; (d) explore images of individuals under the age of 18; (e) represents the use of illicit drugs; (f) make use of offensive language or images; and (g) characterize violence as acceptable, fascinating or desirable.

On the other hand, The Poosh does not include five guidelines, all included in the terms and conditions of WWOOF Portugal, namely, "principle for sharing and exchange", "platform's law obligation duty", "commitment to an automatic or associated agreement", "security measure for platform users", and "data protection measure on the platform".

Of these guidelines, the last two stand out, which are in the "security and privacy" category and which refer, respectively, to the fact that the platform informs that it verifies the identity of users and that the platform specifies the technologies used and the procedures adopted to ensure the privacy of user data.

It is also worth noting that some of the guidelines in the "security and privacy" category are present in all platforms' documents, but the guidelines "security measure for platform users" and "data protection measure on the platform" are not among the main concerns of the platforms, according to the analyzed documents. In fact, these two guidelines are among the least representative, as far as the number of identified segments is concerned.

Another guideline in the "security and privacy" category that does not assume a leading role is "user responsibility for data". This guideline establishes that users are responsible for controlling and protecting their data, as well as respecting the other users' data and the platform, and are not authorized to reproduce this data.

Under WWOOF Portugal's terms and conditions, the main guidelines are: "platform's info-communicational commitment", "responsibility for data use by the platform" and "platform's law obligation duty" (Figure 7).

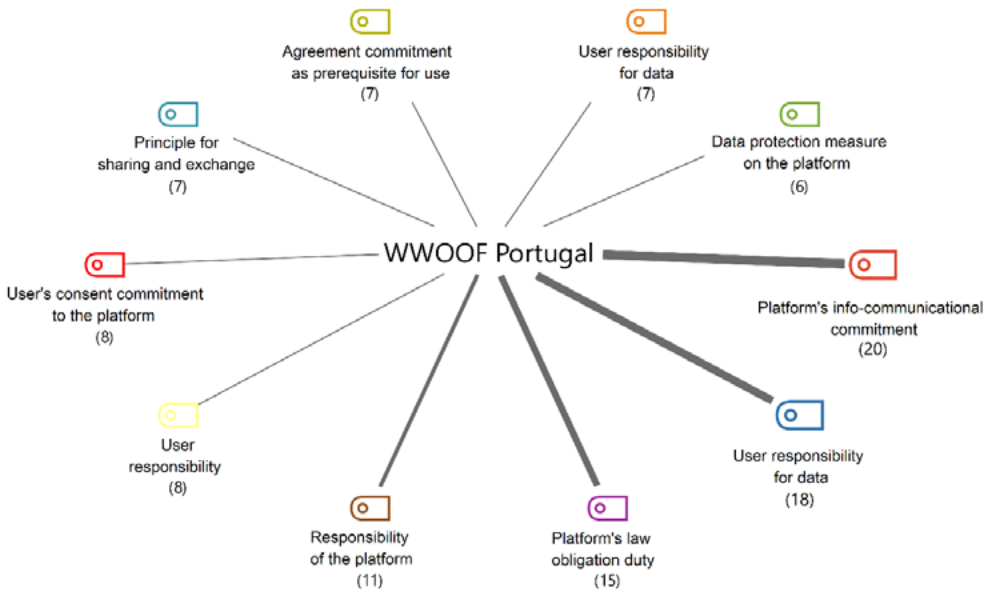

Figure 7 *Segments Encoded in WWOOF Portugal Documents*

In the segments coded under the guideline "platform's info-communicational commitment", WWOOF Portugal is committed and is available to inform and communicate transparently about its activities, features, and changes, for example: "our data protection officer is (name of the manager) who can be contacted via the Contact Us form"; "to enforce any of the foregoing rights or if you have any other questions about Our Site or this Privacy Policy, please contact Us using the details set out in section 14 below"; "we've provided additional details about the information we collect and how we use that information. We've also explained your choices and the control you have over your information"[11].

Responsibility for the use of data is also constantly referenced in this platform's regulatory documents, which assumes and informs about the treatment (use, handling, storage, or transfer) of the users' data. In the segments coded under this guideline, there are statements such as "all personal data is stored securely in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) (GDPR)"; "with your permission and/or where permitted by law, We may also use your data for marketing purposes which may include contacting you by email AND/OR telephone AND/OR post with information, news and offers on Our services"[12].

WWOOF Portugal recognizes its obligations by law in several parts of the regulatory documents, especially regarding the GDPR, valid in Europe: "under GDPR we will ensure that your personal data is processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently, without adversely affecting your rights"[13].

[11] See https://wwoof.pt/privacy-policy and https://wwoof.pt/how-it-works/terms-and-conditions

[12] See https://wwoof.pt/privacy-policy

[13] See https://wwoof.pt/privacy-policy

WWOOF Portugal is the only platform that includes all the guidelines of the "security and privacy" category. The platform shows more concern regarding the specification of technologies and procedures used to ensure the security, privacy, and treatment of user data, ensure user accountability to control and protect their data, as well as to respect other users' data and the platform.

Intersections and Distinctions Between Platforms

Comparing WWOOF Portugal and The Poosh (Figure 8), five guidelines are commonly considered by these platforms, even if with different preponderances if we consider the segments coded. In this way, the disparity in the guideline "platform's info-communicational commitment" can be highlighted, with 20 segments encoded in WWOOF Portugal documents and only one encoded in The Poosh.

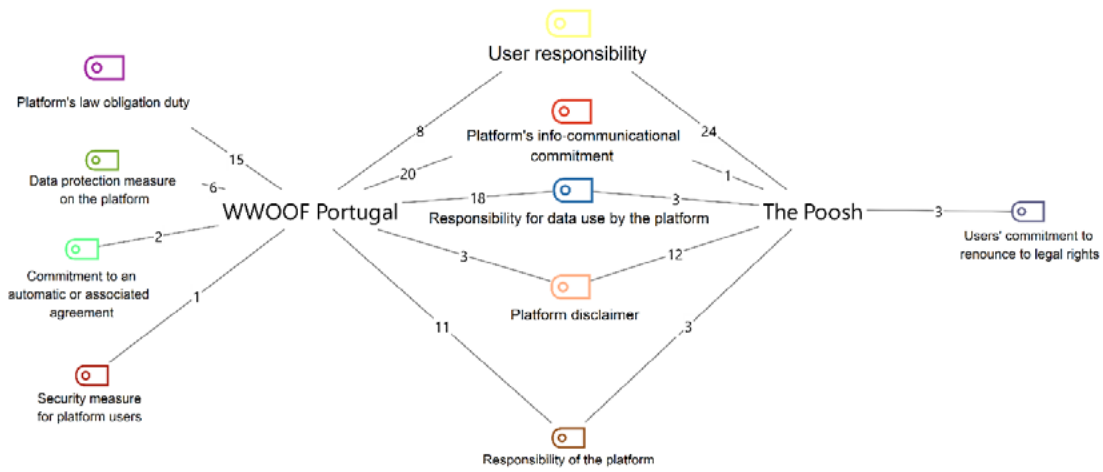

Figure 8 *Comparative Model With Two Cases: WWOOF Portugal and The Poosh*

The guideline "platform's law obligation duty" is also among those that encode the largest number of segments in WWOOF Portugal documents, with 15 encodings, not being considered at all by The Poosh. Another surprise found in this comparison is the absence of the "principle for sustainable practices", concerning the platforms' presentation of fundamentals relating the experiences with the environmentally sustainable practices promoted.

This could be a more explored guideline to ensure users' involvement in a common good. After all, these platforms are dedicated to exclusively promoting experiences of sharing collaborative lifestyles in sustainable contexts. This guideline appeared in three segments in the documents of WWOOF Portugal and only once in The Poosh's terms and conditions, which is why it did not receive any emphasis on the analyzes.

The only guideline not covered by WWOOF Portugal was the "users' commitment to renounce to legal rights", a very questionable guideline, identified in The Poosh documents (Figure 8). This guideline aims to impose on the users the commitment to renounce to their legal rights, as in the case of legal proceedings against the platform or third parties connected to it The Poosh raises this question when it states, for example, the following: "you agree that you will not seek damages of any kind from thePOOSH.org, or the principals of thePOOSH.org, or from other members of thePOOSH.org"[14].

Comparing WWOOF Portugal and Volunteers Base, the discrepancies are less pronounced (Figure 9). However, there are a greater number of guidelines not mentioned by Volunteers Base. Two of these guidelines are relevant in WWOOF Portugal documents, namely "responsibility for data use by the platform" and "platform's law obligation duty". The importance of this last guideline was previously clarified, being only relevant to emphasize the omission of the guideline "responsibility for data use by the platform" by Volunteers Base.

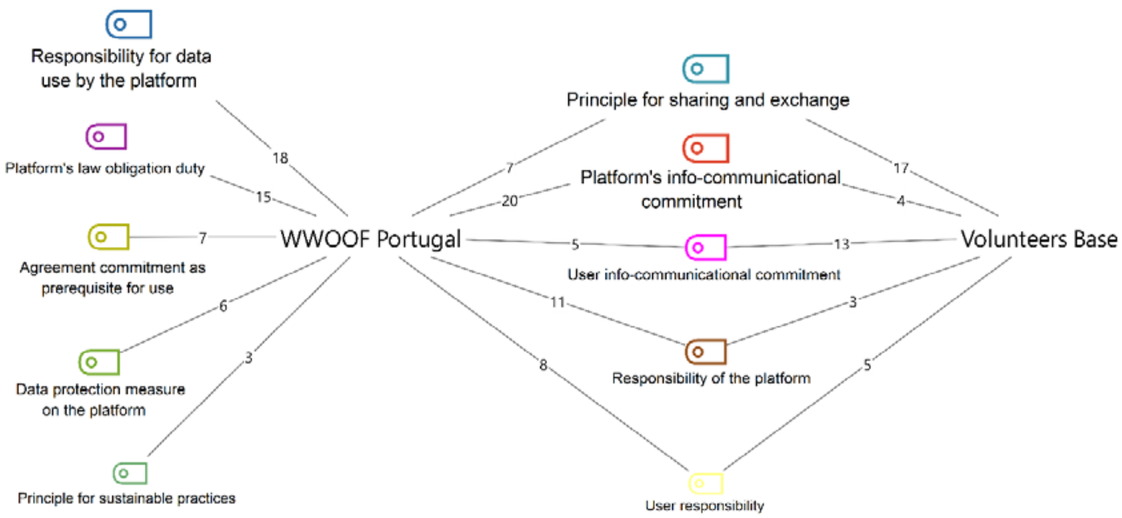

Figure 9 *Comparative Model With Two Cases: WWOOF Portugal and Volunteers Base*

Volunteers Base does not assume or inform the user about data processing, which is relevant considering that all countries are concerned with data protection and security regulation on the internet. Moreover, being an organization that uses a digital platform to mediate experiences sharing.

Conclusions

To identify a set of guidelines for building trust in the sharing of collaborative lifestyles digitally mediated by platforms that promote experiences in sustainable contexts, this study identified 20 guidelines, in three categories: "practices and conducts", "conditions", and "security and privacy". These guidelines can guide users and platforms in the construction of digitally mediated sharing relationships transparently and reliably.

[14] See http://thepoosh.org/termsofservice/

The construction of trust, from the perspective of this analysis, involves issues related to the treatment of users' data, the functionalities of the sites, the relationships built between users, and the importance of platforms' responsibilities as mediators. These topics are guiding the creation of a set of practices and conducts, based on building trust between users and platforms.

Besides, the debate about regulatory documents, and their adequacy, must be constant, since it is necessary to elaborate or improve users' recommendations. Only half of the identified guidelines were used by all platforms, being the following common to all the three: "principle of transparency", "financial and commercial principle", "principle of respect and human rights", "responsibility of the platform", "platform disclaimer", "platform info-communication commitment", "user info-communicational commitment", "platform autonomy rights", "user's consent commitment to the platform", and "user responsibility for data".

According to the guidelines identified in platforms' documents, user data processing is an issue with a great impact on trust-building. In fact, this is a recurring issue that has been driving governance and legislation for the internet in all countries. It is commendable to note that two of the platforms studied seek to fulfill the obligations imposed by law.

However, it is necessary to emphasize that only one of the platforms mentions the existence of an official document of this kind (such as the GDPR, in Europe). Therefore, there is a lack of recognition of a legal document aimed at guaranteeing the rights of users and the duties of platforms.

The recognition of the obligations and the law to which platforms are subject can bring greater credibility and confidence. That way, users will perceive platforms as more transparent and serious and will have a better understanding of the legal security and protection framework to which the platform is linked.

In general, the carried-out analysis corroborates the idea that digital platforms for collaborative lifestyles in sustainable contexts recognize the importance of having recommendations to promote a reliable relationship with their users and among their users. However, this does not mean that the guidelines recommended by these platforms are complied with and monitored.

This study can also be useful to platforms' managers and governmental institutions. The development of a good practice code between platforms and users of the sharing economy, would consolidate the sharing of collaborative lifestyles and, consequently, support platforms acting.

In governmental management, this study can be considered in a possible future revision of the legislation by competent institutions and for the elaboration of governance instruments that assist in the fulfillment of the rights and obligations of users and platforms.

For future studies can be assessed the degree of importance of these guidelines in the perception of managers and platform users. It is also possible to apply the same methodology to investigate the reality of other platforms and contexts.

Translation: Ana Carla Amaro

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Journalism in the Context of a Sanitary Crisis: Representations of the Job and Journalists' Expectations

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Abstract

The economic difficulties of media companies, ethical-deontological lapses, technological progress and the globalisation of information flows have been seen as the main factors of the contemporary crisis in journalism. With repercussions on working conditions and the public image of journalists, these variables are, however, only the most visible face of threats to an activity that, according to Nelson Traquina (2002), has a symbiotic relationship with democracy. Beyond these economic, social and cultural circumstances are also the expectations of the professionals themselves. In an occupation so often described as passionate, the professional situation seems to be less and less rewarding, not only due to the decrease in job opportunities, with newsrooms increasingly empty, but also due to the lack of perspective on career progression. This is one of the results of the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic", conducted between May and June 2020. With a particular focus on reading journalists' expectations, in this article we analyse the symbolic representations of a job that founded its social legitimacy on an idea of public service. Based on studies about the profession and its representations, we tried to find answers to understand why the acceptance of precariousness and abandonment of the profession can still be understood as places of resistance.

Keywords
representations, expectations, journalism, crisis, media economy

Jornalismo em Contexto de Crise Sanitária: Representações da Profissão e Expectativas dos Jornalistas

Resumo

As dificuldades económicas das empresas mediáticas, as derrapagens ético-deontológicas, o progresso tecnológico e a globalização dos fluxos de informação têm sido encarados como os principais fatores da crise contemporânea do jornalismo. Com repercussões nas condições de trabalho e na imagem pública dos jornalistas, estas variáveis são, no entanto, apenas a face mais visível das ameaças a uma atividade que tem, segundo Nelson Traquina (2002), uma relação simbiótica com a democracia. Na extensão destas circunstâncias económicas, sociais e culturais estão também as expectativas dos próprios profissionais. Numa ocupação tantas vezes descrita como apaixonante, a situação profissional parece ser cada vez menos gratificante, não só pela diminuição das oportunidades de trabalho, com redações cada vez mais esvaziadas, mas também pela falta de perspetiva de progressão na carreira. Este é um dos resultados do "Estudo Sobre os Efeitos do Estado de Emergência no Jornalismo no Contexto da Pandemia Covid-19", realizado entre maio e junho de 2020. Com um enfoque particular na leitura das expectativas dos jornalistas, neste artigo analisamos as representações simbólicas de uma profissão que fundou a sua legitimidade social numa ideia de serviço público. A partir de estudos acerca da profissão e das suas representações, procurámos encontrar respostas para compreender a razão pela qual a aceitação da precarização e o abandono da profissão podem ser entendidos, ainda assim, como lugares de resistência.

Palavras-chave
representações, expectativas, jornalismo, crise, economia dos média

Introduction

Journalism studies, which, actually, predate the formalisation of the field of communication sciences that currently comprises them, have produced a diversity of views on journalism and journalists, focused on production practices, discourses, narrative genres and strategies, effects of the news, professional profiles, and matters of ethical and deontological regulation. Marked by the recognition that journalism is a complex activity — intellectual, and creative, which, according to Nelson Traquina (2002), "goes largely beyond the mastery of journalistic techniques" (p. 11) — with great social responsibilities, studies on journalism, however, have been relegating to a second place the reflection on journalists' representations, expectations, and experiences in the profession. The fact that it is a subjective dimension, sometimes even mystifying, about journalism's representations, might justify this belittlement. Besides, the study of this dimension implies differentiated, lengthy methodological approaches which, some of the times, present uncertain results, when compared to other more objectifying analyses of the social-professional status of journalists.

Despite not being specifically its goal, the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic", carried out between May and June 2020, within the Inter-University Network for Studies on Journalists, sought to understand what were journalists' perceptions and expectations about their professional future. In spite of focusing on the impact caused by a particular moment of crisis, which has also affected media companies, results showed, however, that the feeling of dissatisfaction is not new and that the covid-19 pandemic only aggravated a pre-existing feeling of a professional group which has long lived under stress and threat.

The results of this study, answered by 13.3% of the 6,678 journalists registered, at that time, at the Comissão da Carteira Profissional de Jornalista (Journalists' Professional License Committee), make us wonder what it could mean for journalism to turn into an activity with no perspectives of career progression and distant from the motivations that once made many choose it in hopes of feeling fulfilled, to the point of considering abandoning it. That is why the path we set out to follow was to find out what representations mean to journalists and how they are being submerged under economic concerns, increasingly more present in the media and newsrooms, which are looked at as places of (un)fulfilment. When it comes to journalism, an occupation whose professional ideology became one of its main points of social legitimacy, reflecting about journalists' perceptions might allow to "unveil" one of the hidden faces of what is known as journalism crisis... or why it presents itself as constantly in crisis — of legitimacy, identity, credibility, and trust (Fidalgo, 2004, p. 64).

Journalism's Ethical and Sacralised Representations

The study of journalists' representations and expectations regarding their profession constitutes a place of confrontation between the ideologies of people who have chosen journalism in order to feel professionally fulfilled and the way this actually works out. However, these ideologies cannot be understood as merely subjective looks: they are part of social representations, which, in the case of journalism, establish a social pact of communication between professionals, companies, public and social institutions; they are the expression of normative principles of the profession and social expectations that constitute a materialised communicational pact, namely into ethical codes, style books, laws, some of them of constitutional nature. A large part of public debates on journalism, as well as the emergence of new individual and collective representations, depend on the daily updating of that communicational pact.

The perception on the power of the ways of social representation in professions is present in the concerns of sociology's founders. Examples of this are Weber and Durkheim's studies on religious traditions and the importance of ethical and moral representations in professions and in the world of economy. By resuming these studies, as well as more recent sociological approaches about the sacred origins of professional knowledge, Broddason (1994) sought to emphasise the importance of the symbolic dimension of social representations on professions, applying them, namely, to journalism. Broddason argues that some professions, in industrialised societies, retain a sacred dimension, of power and service, which emanated from the role of the clergy in ancient societies, as are the cases of journalism and medicine, particular objects of his study (Broddason, 1994, p. 231). The profession's "vital need" for society, a sense of service, self-sacrifice, abnegation or the voluntarism of professionals, are evocative of certain aspects of this sacred representation of professions and, when it comes to journalism, it is translated into the idea that journalists are always on duty, like priests or doctors (Broddason, 1994, p. 239). He writes:

> journalists, much like priests and doctors, have to endure long and irregular hours and their work never seems to leave them (...). The fact that it can

> be extremely dangerous is demonstrated by the fate of those who paid with their lives the effort to expose corruption or tyranny. Therefore, there seems to be little doubt that many journalists render a "selfless service" and also show noble self-sacrifice. (Broddason, 1994, pp. 239–240)

Analysing the French case, as much as it differs from Broddason's approach, it is interesting to notice how Gilles Feyel (2003) considers that the ethical discourse about journalism was already so consolidated during the French Revolution that, according to him, it is legitimate to wonder whether it was "the true cornerstone on which journalism rests" (pp. 75–76). To the author, the idea of "journalists' social function", which gives the profession "dignity and societal esteem", is based on this ethical dimension (Feyel, 2003, pp. 75–76). Within an interview with the author of *La Place du Discours sur l'Éthique Dans la Construction de l'Espace et de l'Identité Professionnel des Journalistes* (The Place of Discourse on the Ethics in the Construction of Journalists' Professional Identity), Feyel notices how in the "long history of journalism" ethical questions are repeatedly raised, and according to him, for an essential reason: because ethics is "the only 'legitimate' basis for the function of the *gazetier* of the journalist" (Prodhomme, 2005, p. 62). Jane Singer (2014) shares a similar idea, given that she advocates that "ethical principles are used not only to suggest how journalists should behave, but also to define what they are" (p. 49).

Similarly, Otto Groth (1960/2011), who identified, in the Netherlands of the 18th century, the first traces of journalism as a profession, through a "news press", states that journalism, either in Germany, or the other American-European culture countries, was not able to develop a knowledge and "professional *ethos* whose concepts and requirements were not based merely on the social" (p. 329). Even so, Groth recalls the words of publicist Leo Woerl, in 1881, to whom journalism was part of the "most essential crafts", like those "that move outside the social organism as in the old days the priest, the blacksmith, dentists, gypsies and actors" (Groth, 1960/2011, p. 406).

The Public as a Legitimising Force

The anchoring of journalism's professional legitimacy in its social function is greatly connected to the notion of public service. Journalism as a needed service in democratic societies is one of the cornerstones of journalism's ideology and of how it presents itself symbolically, inside and out of the profession. The idea of public service pervades many of journalism's deontological codes, which are considered to be one of the tools of affirmation of its values and professional nature. *Journalist's Creed*, a document written by Walter Williams, the first dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, founded in 1908, mentions public service, in the very first few lines, pointing it out as one of the cornerstones of the profession:

> I believe in the profession of journalism. I believe that the public journal is a public trust; that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their

> responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of lesser service than the public service is a betrayal of this trust. (Farrar, 1998, p. 203)

Ferenczi (1996), Ruellan (1997) and Delporte's (1999) studies on journalism professionals in France show how the legitimisation and the institutionalisation of the profession, in the first half of the 20th century, were always anchored in the idea of journalists and journalism as public trustees, public opinion guides, servants of the truth and justice, and public interest advocates. According to Denis Ruellan (1997), journalists seem to have kept two essential aspects of their professional identity on behalf of those values: "a creative profession, notwithstanding its paid condition; an activity necessarily free, in the name of collective interest" (p. 98). That is probably why, to the author, journalism is "more than an activity: it is a group" (Ruellan, 2004, p. 9).

These representations of journalism are also documented in Portugal, through references to discourses and texts by journalists from the first and early second half of the 20th century. By using expressions such as "priesthood", "mystique", "spirit of service and mission" (Sobreira, 2003, pp. 123–126), these mentions make this profession something more than an activity where one earns a salary (Sousa, 2011, p. 14).

Certainly, these statements reflect the context of an "elite" of journalists committed to the affirmation and acknowledgement of the profession, not always in sync with the situation and awareness of most anonymous professionals. Well, journalists are not necessarily known for their good reputation (Groth, 1960/2011). The history of journalism is also full of unflattering references to journalists (Oliveira, 2016). Balzac (1843/1998) spoke of journalists as scribblers. José Agostinho Macedo (1821) called them "periodiqueiros" (small-time reporters). And Gustav Freytag (1852/1988) exposed them as a professional group that used to lean to either side, according to their best interest. In Portuguese literature, Eça de Queiroz (1900) recognised journalists as promoters of frivolous value judgements, vanity, and intolerance — three social sins, which, according to the novelist, kill society from a moral point of view.

Journalists' image is also not immune to the erosion of credibility caused by successive slippages, even as a result of media transformations (Meyer, 2004/2007; Ruellan, 2011; Woodrow, 1991/1996). Nevertheless, Broddason still emphasises that even these cases are seen as the expression of deviant ways of practicing the profession (Broddason, 1994, p. 240), a situation that reflects how professional elites are able to influence representation, both inside the newsrooms and publicly (Rieffel, 1984; Santos-Sainz, 2006). This ambivalent dimension of hero and villain in the representations about journalism and its social status is quite evident in Max Weber's (1946/1982) expression when he refers to journalists as a sort of "pariah caste" (p. 117).

Seeking to clarify the true scope of Max Weber's expression, Gilles Bastin (2013) points out the fact that the concept expresses a dimension far more complex than mere social segregation. According to Bastin, the figure of the pariah, in Weber, is constituted by a double and paradoxical dimension. On the one hand, it is a personality split between its social status and its convictions, capable, therefore, of self-consciously embrace certain ethical values, regardless of the daily pressures to conform to a "rationalised" and "disenchanted" world, to use Weberian terms (Bastin, 2013, p. 221). On the other hand, it is also a personality capable of, socially, and as a result of their experience of injustice, contributing to the rediscovery/re-enchantment of the meaning of one's actions, in a rationalised context (Bastin, 2013, pp. 221–222). According to Márcia Santos (2017), the split caused by the pariah status "also expresses the condition of an ethical resistance to the loss of 'personality' faced with the daily pressure in a rationalised world", making journalists able to play "an important role in questioning the world as it seems to be" (pp. 443–444). In this sense, it might be important to go back to Weber's (1946/1982) words, according to which he seems to state a certain admiration about journalists:

> it is no small matter that one must express oneself promptly and convincingly about this and that, on all conceivable problems of life, whatever the "market" happens to demand, and this without becoming absolutely shallow and above all without losing one's dignity by baring oneself, a thing which has merciless results. It is not astonishing that there are many journalists who have become human failures and worthless men. Rather, it is astonishing that, despite all this, this very stratum includes such a great number of valuable and quite genuine men, a fact that outsiders would not easily guess. (p. 120)

Weber's statement refers us to the ambivalent nature of the profession of journalist, symbolically endowed with autonomy and an ethos directed towards public responsibility, but predominantly carried on by employees of companies operating in the market. According to Jay Rosen (2000), this double dimension was for a long time sealed by a contract between journalists and entrepreneurs. Journalists' autonomy would be based on a commitment of objectivity in the handling of news, with these refraining from interfering by using their own political convictions and, in return, getting from entrepreneurs all the independence necessary to carry out the news coverage of events. Another usual way to represent this contract is through the idea of a dividing wall between media administrations and newsrooms. But, as Meyer (2004/2007), and Blanchot and Padioleau (2003) have demonstrated, this balance was deeply changed with the end of the "large families independent capitalism", in the last decades of the 19th century, and the emergence of a "technostructure managerial capitalism", as well as new logics of media "funding" (Miranda, 2018, p. 127). These new logics seem to raise new challenges for journalism, with its ways of representation on the brink of myth, of a "false awareness", which confronts naïve ideals with the reality of daily routines (Deuze, 2007; Evetts, 2014).

Journalists' Economic Conditions, Work, Representations, and Expectations

We mentioned earlier the importance of journalism's representations in its historical process of social acknowledgement and building of its professional status. Now, we intend to reflect on the strength of those representations, in a context where media's economic decisions have been having a decisive role in the *deprofessionalisation* and proletarianisation of journalism, reducing more and more the space for autonomy and personal fulfilment of journalists within the newsrooms.

Resuming a study by Morris Janowitz on the military career, Tunstall (1971) draws a parallel with journalists, by trying to demonstrate how both professions attract people who reject daily routines and follow idealist causes. Despite this, according to the author, both journalists and the military end up being submerged by reality and, although idealism does not disappear altogether, it tends to take the form of sentimentalism. Although they consider themselves "above basic commercialism", their views on the profession end up resenting it due to what they "consider to be a low wage and high level of insecurity", elements that weaken professionals' traditional ideology when they are confronted with the reality of their occupations (Tunstall, 1971, pp. 72–73).

Tunstall's observation reflects the condition of British journalists in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, the consecutive studies on journalists carried out in the US, over the past decades, also show that the economic and working conditions have been taking on a growing place in their concerns. In fact, as the media business shifted, journalists started valuing even more economic conditions in the assessment of their level of satisfaction with the profession, to the detriment of closer aspects to what Tunstall identifies as ideological elements, related to professional autonomy in the production of information.

D. H. Heaver and G. C. Wilhot (1996) point out that the early 1980s mark "the beginning of the end of a romantic vision of the profession" (p. 90), a situation that can already be seen in the 1990s, a time when the level of satisfaction, among American journalists, was lower than in other professions. In this study, employment security or low wages are identified as threatening elements to journalists' autonomy, as they are left more vulnerable to financial temptation from politicians (Heaver & Wilhot, 1996, pp. 99–101). Editorial and media management policies, low wages and the lack of opportunities of career progression are seen as the main factors to determine journalists' level of dissatisfaction concerning their profession (Heaver & Wilhot, 1996, p. 105). This situation contrasts with previous surveys (1971, 1981, 1992) in which journalists' satisfaction with the profession had more to do with editorial policies and topics connected to professional autonomy, information treatment, and remains a constant in the 20th century (Heaver et al., 2007; Willnat & Weaver, 2014).

Comparing the kind of reasons cited by journalists as determinant to their professional satisfaction, it is verified that they changed significantly in three decades of studies (1971, 1981, 1992). The element that stands out is wages. This is only not so visible when it comes to press journalists, where news treatment is still identified as the most sensitive element (Heaver & Wilhot, 1996, p. 107). A low morale and employment satisfaction tend to go hand in hand with continued news about cuts and layoffs identified by the economic downturn, as noted years later by Heaver et al. (2007).

By 2013, the tendency of dissatisfaction with the profession continued to be confirmed and 59.7% of journalists considered that the profession was going down on the wrong path, identifying the fall in profits, online media, cuts and the emptying of newsrooms, the crisis of the business model, as well as rushed news, as the main threats to the future of journalism (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). These conclusions, however, should be nuanced when thought on a global scale. In this regard, the study by Willnat and Heaver (2012, p. 534), which analysed 22 countries around the world, refers that the levels of satisfaction with the profession vary greatly, as do the determining factors for this satisfaction.

Expectations in Times of Pandemic

As we pointed out before, the history of journalism has faced some ambiguities in terms of social representations. If, on the one hand, the activity is recognised as necessary for guaranteeing the universal right to access good quality information, on the other hand, it is viewed with a certain disdain. Even though journalism is associated with the noble purpose of divulging events, researching and analysing matters of public interest, the media have been a relatively poorly recognised sector and little protected from the effects of the globalisation of information flows. Made worse by the economic crisis media companies, in general, are facing, the framework in which journalists operate has also not benefitted from conditions that favour a forward-looking perspective for professionals.

The pandemic crisis which began in February/March 2020 stirred a growing interest of the public for journalistic contents. However, the impact of new working conditions and the loss of revenue of media groups did not provide journalists with good prospects. On the contrary, it worsened their already frail professional situation, with negative repercussions on short and medium-term expectations. Not feeling very confident they will be able to advance in their careers, Portuguese journalists admit today the possibility of abandoning the profession as more likely. For an activity which can be best characterised by its spirit of resilience and sense of mission, the perceptions disclosed in the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic" are alarming signals for a sector which will hardly continue to be the best trade in the world.

In a profession that is usually so desired, recognising "you can change life" may be an indicator that you will not keep it at "any price". Although journalism is not merely a job, rather a work associated with a calling and a certain commitment to the public, the conditions for carrying it out will have a significant impact on the sense of service which, with some romanticism, is usually attributed to journalists. It is bearing this assumption in mind that one interprets the results of the section "expectations" of the survey answered by 890 Portuguese journalists, 799 of which still active in journalism (as a permanent or secondary activity). Even if the data do not allow for interpretations, it would not be unreasonable to guess some rapport between the way the future is viewed and the level of trust one can get from working conditions (changed), if not in direct terms of pay or loss of employment, at least in terms of routines.

Considering that this study's questions were based on two moments — before and after the state of emergency declaration (SED; in March 2020) —, it is understandable that the abrupt changes, which hit also media companies at the pandemic crisis, may have resulted as a reality shock and increased the awareness of the frailties of the profession in Portugal. This may perhaps be the reason why the possibility of abandoning the activity became likely or very likely for 45% of the respondents, which represents an increase of about 20% when comparing the two periods (Table 1)[1]. With no significant variations between male and female or between different age groups (although with greater evidence among younger people), the possibility of a change in profession is slightly more pronounced in journalists working in the press than in other media, and also more evident among journalists working in regional media, where the number of professionals who began to consider likely or very likely leaving the activity practically doubled. Also journalists with more precarious ties (such as trainees and service providers, therefore without a contract) are amongst the less confident, with photographers and image reporters, more than copywriters or reporters, as those who seem to regard this outcome as likely or very likely.

	Before the SED		After the SED	
	n	%	*n*	%
Very likely	28	3.5	114	14.3
Likely	189	23.7	245	30.7
Not very likely	347	43.4	300	37.5
Unlikely	217	27.2	107	13.4
Does not know / does not answer	18	2.3	33	4.1
Total	799	100%	799	100%

Table 1 *Comparison of the Perceptions on the Likelihood of Abandoning the Profession Before and After the SED*

[1] Although the questionnaire was answered by 890 journalists, in the tables of this article *n* sums up 799, which corresponds to the total number of respondents who declared to have journalism as main or secondary activity.

In a "poor paid" professional — most half the journalists declared earning less than € 1,000 gross — it is also relevant their fear of losing their jobs. The data show that the number of professionals that reported the possibility of losing their jobs as high or very high has increased fivefold (Table 2). These data are indifferent to the gender variable, but appear more manifestly among younger people and especially the age group between 41 and 50, that is, those who are in the fullest of their active life. If this perception is transversal to all media, even though with a particular preponderance among press professionals, regional media were once again the ones that recorded the widest variation of answers, which comes to prove that this must be the most economically vulnerable sector.

	Before the SED		After the SED	
	n	%	*n*	%
Very high	7	0.9	93	11.6
High	36	4.5	123	15.4
Medium	148	27.4	208	18.4
Low	219	35.7	147	14.4
Very low	285	18.5	115	26.0
Does not know / does not answer	13	1.6	37	4.6
Does not apply	91	11.4	76	9.5
Total	799	100%	799	100%

Table 2 *Comparison of the Perceptions on the Probability of Losing Their Job as Journalists in the Short Term, Before and After the SED*

The possibility of losing their job becomes even more dramatic when one assesses their perception of being able to find another job in the activity. Well, with the declaration of the first state of emergency, the percentage of journalists who recognised as low or very low the possibility of a new opportunity in this sector, after losing their job, increased to 83.5% (Table 3). In this respect, women are more pessimistic than men, as are professionals in the age group of 41 to 50; the number of younger journalists (under 30) with little prospect of new employment in journalism has almost doubled. Despite, again, regional media seemed to inspire greater concern, with more expressive variations in both periods regarding new job opportunities, the professionals who most doubt the possibility of returning to work as journalists in case they lose their jobs are those working in national media. In a more detailed analysis based on working condition, pessimism is clearly transversal, in spite of affecting more visibly reporters, editors/coordinators and editors-in-chief/managing editors, groups in which more than 86% of the professionals consider the possibility of finding a new job after being fired to be low or very low.

	Before the SED		After the SED	
	n	%	*n*	%
Very high	13	1.6	9	1.1
High	59	7.4	15	1.9
Medium	232	29	69	8.6
Low	291	36.4	162	20.3
Very low	181	22.7	505	63.2
Does not know / does not answer	23	2.9	39	4.9
Total	799	100%	799	100%

Table 3 *Comparison of Perceptions on the Probability of Finding a New Job in Journalism While Being Unemployed Before and After the SED*

Even if phenomena such as deprofessionalisation do not help to make journalism a strongly structured career and that public recognition is not absolutely dependent on the position one occupies, the lack of confidence in progression is also symptomatic of the lack of future prospects. Even though expectations of improving one's professional situation were not that expressive before the state of emergency declaration, they got far worse in the beginning of the pandemic crisis, with 77.6% of journalists considering progress in the career not very likely or unlikely (Table 4). The worsening of this perception hits men and women equally, but has a major impact on younger professionals and on those who work for the press and at regional media. Except for trainees, to whom expectations of progress are still relatively high — which can be understood by the fact that remaining in the activity depends on the transition from internship to a consolidated professional condition — when it comes to all the other categories more than half of the journalists seem sceptical about the possibility of professional advancement.

	Before the SED		After the SED	
	n	%	*n*	%
Very likely	48	6.0	22	2.6
Likely	229	28.6	122	15.3
Not very likely	332	41.5	337	42.2
Unlikely	171	21.4	283	35.4

Does not know / does not answer	19	2.4	35	4.4
Total	799	100%	799	100%

Table 4 *Comparison of Perceptions on the Probability of Advancing in the Career of Journalist Before and After the SED*

Overall, the results from the carried out survey (see also Garcia et al., 2021; Miranda et al., 2021), which aimed to analyse the situation of Portuguese journalists during a critical moment for media companies, have a dramatic component that results from the first state of emergency in Portugal, as consequence of the covid-19 pandemic. If we ignore this particular circumstance, they reaffirm, roughly speaking, the results of previous surveys (Crespo et al., 2017; Pacheco & Freitas, 2014). This trend is also in line with the concerns felt both in Portugal and in Europe, since the 1990s (Camponez, 2012, pp. 388–390). The levels of satisfaction with the profession have decreased among the Portuguese journalists (Crespo et al., 2017, p. 34). The deterioration of work relationships, namely more precarious and uncertain labour ties, low wages, the lack of perspective on career progression, stress conditions at work, and overwork with repercussions on the personal and family lives of journalists are elements of disappointment and disenchantment with the profession which make them consider abandoning it (Crespo et al., 2017, pp. 25–26; Pacheco & Freitas, 2014, p. 31).

Between representations and reality, it is legitimate to ask ourselves — as states a journalist in Nuno Matos' (2020) study among former journalists on the causes for abandoning the profession — who abandons what: are journalists who abandon the profession or is it the profession that abandons journalists?

Conclusion

The changes of the business model and the conditions for producing the news, which took place in the last decades of the 20th century, may call into question the definition of the Bureau International du Travail (1928, as cited in Jones, 1980) when, in 1928, it stated, in defence of the intellectual status of journalists' work, that, "more than the economic crises, crises which take place in the field of ideas cruelly hit journalists in their livelihood" (pp.12–13). On the contrary, the scenario presented to us in the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency in Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic", and in the researches and surveys that we have gathered in this regard seems to show that the new reality of the current business models and of production of information in the media impose themselves in order to submerge the symbolic dimension and the intellectual values of the profession. Precariousness, low wages and underpaid work, the absence of the notion of career or the possibility of career advancement, the impossibility of finding employment alternatives in the labour market, trap journalism between the hammer and the anvil: between increasingly bureaucratic and poorly paid work, as a result of the rationalisation of work and the so-called media business model crisis; and social responsibility resulting from a(n) (alleged) commitment of the profession with values of public service and democracy.

Journalism's symbolic and ideological dimension as public service cannot be seen as mere subjectivity or false socio-professional awareness. Surely this dimension should not be neglected. However, and regardless of what we think about it, journalism's representations are more than mere subjectivities: they are reflected in codes of ethics, in regulations and legal documents, central to democratic systems. It is, therefore, justified that journalism crises can also be felt as part of democracy's crises. In Portugal, the economic crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic — with consequences not yet fully understood — added to 2008 and 2011 world crises, weakening the media, launching them into restructuring programmes, redundancies and even precipitating the closure of a few.

Although journalism crises are far from being a contemporary phenomenon, journalists' livelihood may not have had such impact on journalism ideals as today, creating a "disorientation mood", capable of changing its ethos (Garcia & Meireles, 2017, pp. 165–167).

Our study on the Portuguese case shows the importance of deepening and systematising the dimension of representations and expectations in researches about journalists in Portugal, especially in a profession that finds in its symbolic aspects an important way of justifying itself socially and politically. In this sense, the analysis of socio-professional expectations or their obliteration may be understood as the confrontation between being and must be, between the commitment on which journalism bases its legitimacy and the socio-professional conditions of its realisation. This confrontation can provide us with answers for the root causes of the current crisis in journalism or why journalism is in a constant internal crisis.

Journalism is one of the professions with the particularity of performing publicly while playing its own social role, in the media, reinforcing its symbolic power and the ability of drawing in young populations. This dimension will explain why approaches individually committed to the profession allow that the journalism of the future may be "invented" by new "pariah castes", in the Weberian sense, which, regardless of the working conditions, insist on making of this profession "a passion project" (Deuze & Witschge, 2020, pp. 4–5). Nevertheless, in a situation of growing non-conformity between professional representations of journalism and reality, it is no wonder that, for many, the abandonment of the profession is also the ultimate place of resistance.

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Journalism in State of Emergency: An Analysis of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemics on Journalists' Employment Relationships

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Abstract

The socio-professional condition of journalists has undergone profound changes over the past few decades. These result from a succession of crises that have affected the media in the context of a combined process of liberalization and digitalization. In addition to changes in production routines, newsrooms underwent restructuring operations, responsible for the recomposition of their workforce. Between collective redundancies, increased unemployment, fixed-term contracts, "green receipts", discontinuous and intermittent forms of work, low wages, free work and low cost of interns, precariousness began, step by step, to characterize the journalistic condition. Based on the results of the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of Pandemic Covid-19", this article aims to analyse the implications of these policies on journalists' employment relations. The main objective is to understand to what extent media companies' response to this new reality represents a setback of the logic behind precariousness or, on the contrary, its acceleration. The study aims, firstly, to produce a diagnosis on employment relationships before the state of emergency declaration (SED) — between March and April 2020 —, namely the incidence of temporary modalities and their relationship with factors such as gender or age. At a second step, the consequences of SED at this level will be analysed, mainly with regard to the use of temporary contracts, dismissals or lay-offs.

Keywords

unemployment, journalism, lay-off, pandemic covid-19, precariousness

Jornalismo em Estado de Emergência: Uma Análise dos Efeitos da Pandemia Covid-19 nas Relações de Emprego dos Jornalistas

Resumo

A condição socioprofissional dos jornalistas tem sofrido profundas transformações ao longo das últimas décadas. Estas têm origem numa sucessão de crises que afetam a comunicação social no contexto de um processo combinado de liberalização e digitalização. Além de mudanças nas rotinas de produção, as redações jornalísticas sofreram operações de reestruturação, responsáveis pela recomposição da sua força de trabalho. Entre despedimentos coletivos, aumento do desemprego, contratos a prazo, "recibos verdes", formas descontínuas e intermitentes de trabalho, baixos salários, trabalho gratuito e a reduzido custo de estagiários, a precariedade passou, aos poucos, a caracterizar a condição jornalística. A partir dos resultados do "Estudo Sobre os Efeitos do Estado de Emergência no Jornalismo no Contexto da Pandemia Covid-19", este artigo pretende analisar as implicações destas políticas nas relações de emprego dos jornalistas. O objetivo principal é compreender em que medida é que a resposta das empresas de comunicação social a esta nova realidade representa uma reversão da lógica de precarização ou, pelo contrário, a sua aceleração. O estudo pretende, em primeiro lugar, realizar um diagnóstico das relações de emprego antes da declaração de estado de emergência (DEE) — entre março e abril de 2020 — nomeadamente a incidência de vínculos temporários e a sua relação com fatores como o género ou a idade. Num segundo momento, analisar-se-á os efeitos da DEE a este nível, principalmente no que respeita ao recurso a contratos temporários, a despedimentos ou ao *lay-off*.

Palavras-chave
desemprego, jornalismo, *lay-off*, pandemia covid-19, precariedade

Introduction

The intersection between the processes of economic liberalisation and the processes of digitalisation in recent decades has led to an ongoing disorganisation and reorganisation of the media, with far-reaching consequences for journalism and its professionals. On the one hand, deregulation and privatisation policies, alongside the transformations in the information processes resulting from the digital turn, have undermined or shattered the economic viability of traditional media organisations whose revenue came from advertising and sales. On the other hand, computer networks and the internet have eroded journalists' prerogative to select, process and disseminate information. Journalism and journalists have come under a permanent state of disruption caused by the shift in objectives and the system of resources and rules that defined both the old and the new media organisations, the former facing hardship or a slow disintegration and the latter constrained by a mere conformity with the technological processes and market opportunities afforded by the digital world.

Digital capitalism has become the economic force that drives and guides the media, constraining journalists and journalistic activity. Against this background, here but briefly sketched, the "normal" socio-professional condition of journalists — normal in the sense of customary — is characterised by collective redundancies, rising unemployment, fixed-term contracts, discontinuous and intermittent forms of work, low wages, unpaid or low-paid work for interns, in short, by the trappings of precarity. What effects did the covid-19 epidemic have, during the 6 weeks under the state of emergency declaration (hereafter SED), between March and April 2020, in Portugal, on the precarity "epidemic"? Did it bring about a new wave of unemployed journalists? Did it affect new sectors of journalism professionals? Did the lay-off measures make journalists even more destitute? These were the guiding questions for the present article, dictating the structure for the sections that follow.

We begin by outlining the key elements, both theoretical and empirical, that enable us to understand the trend towards precarity among journalists.

We then interpret the data on the socio-professional condition of journalists collected through a questionnaire designed in the context of the "Research of the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic". The analytical plan is structured so as to compare the data for the period prior to the March 2020 DEE with those that emerged in its wake, and thus register the changes that took place in this period. We thus seek to grasp the full meaning of the statistical data available, as framed by the confluence of the covid-19 epidemic and the precarity epidemic.

Media, Digital Capitalism and Precarity Among Journalists

For at least the past 2 centuries, the work of journalists has been carried out within institutions known as "the media" (Schmidt, 2020). All institutions are situated at an intermediate level between the major social, economic and political trends and the concrete behaviours and experiences that take place in such institutions. They have rules and procedures embedded in organisational, financial and professional resource structures that seek to achieve pre-established goals and which condition the profiles, forms of labour and practices of their workers. The media are institutions that belong both to the world of culture and to the world of the economy: they are part of culture because they create symbolic and cultural forms of organising society's experience; of the economy inasmuch as they seek to earn profit in the market. The macro trends of liberalisation and digitalisation have contributed to the reconfiguration, at the meso level, of the media regime and its institutions, and at the micro level, of journalistic practices. The major trends of liberalisation and digitalisation, together but also in mutual tension, have contributed to a new venture of capital: the exploitation of all the economic potential of digitalisation, as part and parcel of a global capitalism that has been asserting itself since the last quarter of the 20th century.

What we might call digital capitalism is the manifestation of a kind of economic rationality that seeks profit by freeing it from all possible constraints across all spheres of knowledge, information, entertainment and any other field amenable to digital conversion. The growth of journalistic and informational content (or a mixture of both) as commodities, on the one hand, and the growth of the consumption of such products, on the other, have thus become the constituent ground for communication companies in the new media regime. Any value judgement is merely quantitative and applied indiscriminately across all levels of the information process, ruling out any notion of limitations. Driven by this kind of economic rationality and by the attendant technological innovations in the digital field, former media companies and institutions have been brought to ruin, while others tried to recreate themselves while new media and information agents came to the fore. Labour precarity is one of its cornerstones.

The concept of precarity has been the subject of a variety of theoretical approaches. Although these may not necessarily express antagonistic views, their different angles have contributed to the lack of a univocal meaning of the term. Alongside an ontological and existential notion, tied to the inherently contingent nature of the human condition, the term is commonly associated with the proliferation of new forms of temporary contracts as a result of the deregulation of labour laws, which includes simplified dismissal procedures, wage cuts and an increase in working hours. Without necessarily contradicting this diagnosis, some studies address the strategic slant of this process, that is to say, they see precarity not as the exception but rather as one of the foundations of the economy, one which global capital has been laying since the last decades of the 20th century. Seen in this light, to maintain a framework of risk and uncertainty can be considered not only as a way of adapting the labour force to the circumstances of the labour market, but as an orientation intrinsic to an effective and productivist labour force governance (Lorey, 2015). From another angle, this means that workers have become "entrepreneurs", and the worker's inner life is permeated by entrepreneurial discourse in order to change his or her know-how and place them entirely at the service of production, which in turn leads to a fragmentation and individualization of the labour force. Other analyses have focused on the emergence of a political subject, the *precariat*, which manifests itself in new forms of mobilisation and collective action (Armano et al., 2017). In the present investigation, the concept of *precarity* refers, somewhat more narrowly, to the articulation between the increase and diversification of journalists under temporary contracts, redundancies, rising unemployment and low wages.

The crisis in the print press since the beginning of the millennium, reflected in the downward trend in the number of copies sold (Fidalgo, 2008), is one of the results of the information *dumping* caused by the growth in digital editions (not all of which are news outlets) and exacerbated by the 2008 global economic crisis and the 2011 sovereign debt crisis and the consequent implementation, in Portugal, of a structural adjustment plan devised by the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, European Central Bank). The bankruptcy of some media organisations and the development of corporate restructuring processes are the outcome of revenue losses associated with the drop in domestic consumption and the crisis in other sectors, particularly banking and advertising (Silva, 2015; Sousa & Santos, 2014). The new regime, with its attendant economic horizon, continuous technological innovation, changes in business model and a whole new framework in terms of the modes of production, publishing and dissemination of information, has plunged the media into a state of turbulence. The latter has heightened the tendency towards a commercial view of the press and the urge to take advantage of the emergent opportunities offered by digitalisation (Garcia et al., 2020). The profession of journalist, which has always been embedded in the media, cannot remain unscathed by these processes, and the same goes for its practices.

In Portugal, against the background we have just outlined, journalism has undergone major changes, among them those that affect socio-professional and employment conditions, shaped by the trends that have generated the phenomenon of precarity. Its effects mean there is a growing percentage of journalists under temporary contracts, since collective dismissals tend to target professionals with established careers and higher wages (Baptista, 2012).

An Outline of Precarity Among Portuguese Journalists

In 1982, the "I Congresso dos Jornalistas Portugueses" (I Congress of Portuguese Journalists) mentions in its conclusions the need to counter "companies' systematic recourse to collaborators, which restricts access of new candidates to the profession as well as the access of professional journalists to jobs", as well as to "fixed-term contracts and other more or less disguised forms of exploitation of journalists, namely those that require the provision of services incompatible with legally established professional functions" (I Congresso dos Jornalistas, 1982, pp. 19–20). This statement stems from the increased use of this new contractual arithmetic which, according to figures released at the time by the Journalists' Union (Sindicato dos Jornalistas; SJ), regulated the labour condition of around 10% of the editorial staff (Sindicato dos Jornalistas, 1981).

The first survey of journalists, in 1990, confirmed a scenario close to the SJ had presented a few years earlier. Although most journalists found themselves in a stable professional situation, framed by collective labour contracts (45.5%) and work agreements (27.7%), a smaller but still significant proportion was under individual contracts (19.4%), and most of these under fixed-term contracts, while some had no contract at all (7.3%; Garcia & Castro, 1993, p. 106). The figures also pointed to a profession stratified along age and gender lines. Women and younger people were primarily in a position of aspiring to a career or taking their first steps in it, earning lower wages, up to 90,.000 *escudos* (€450). On the opposite pole, older, male journalists tended to hold higher paid leadership and management positions (Garcia & Castro, 1993, pp. 107–108).

The segmentation we have just outlined did not suffer significant changes over the years. A second study conducted in 1997 would confirm this data, for example, a higher number of women, and more highly educated and lower-paid individuals among the younger segments of journalists (Garcia & Silva, 2009). While these conditions were often the initial stages of a progressing career, along which a greater stability would eventually be reached, the use of service contracts ("green receipts", as they are commonly referred to in Portugal) and interns became increasingly common. The "proliferation of precarious employment situations", as can be read in the resolution of the "III Congresso dos Jornalistas" (III Congress of Journalists), aims to "make effective and permanent employment relationships cheaper and more precarious" and is thus responsible for "situations of intolerable injustice and dependency for many journalists, which undermine the very principle of the Freedom of the Press" (III Congresso dos Jornalistas, 1998, p. 63). The document also denounces "the exploitation of intern labour, and we regard its regulation as a matter of urgency, a decisive step towards an effective professionalisation of the candidates" (III Congresso dos Jornalistas, 1998, p. 63).

This phenomenon would become more evident as soon as the first signs of the crisis in the news media emerged – a crisis which, as mentioned above, has worsened in recent years. In the period from 2004 to 2009, the percentage of interns in newsrooms rose from 5.4% to 9.2%, a trend that is in contrast with that of professional journalists, whose numbers are dwindling (Rebelo, 2011, p. 57). The results of a research into the condition of young journalists in Portugal confirm this trend, the aim of which appears to be far from restricted to a pedagogical sphere (Garcia et al., 2014). Virtually every respondent, all of which were under 38 years of age, completed at least one internship. A large portion of them (35%) repeated the experience, completing two or more internships. At the same time, half of the respondents were unemployed or had a precarious employment relationship — the service provision regime being the most prevalent. This, however, was not the result of a choice but reflected rather, in most cases, a difficulty in obtaining an employment contract (Garcia et al., 2014. p. 14).

Although the research focused on a younger population, the data obtained points to the media companies' systematic use of temporary contracts, which is by no means a specifically national trait. The growing precarity among journalists is a phenomenon that extends beyond national borders, part and parcel of a global transition towards a post-industrial and digital model of organisation of the profession, the aim of which is to reduce it "to a simple form of labor, where journalists (from the perspective of management) are cast as flexible, multiskilled and highly moveable newsworkers" (Deuze & Fortunati, 2010, p. 118).

More recent research, based on surveys of journalism professionals, indicates that almost 50% of the labour force is under temporary contracts and/or more than half earn a monthly salary of €1,000 or less (Cardoso & Mendonça, 2017; Miranda & Gama, 2019). Previously restricted to younger journalists, job insecurity no longer defines a specific segment but extends to other age groups and categories.

According to the data from the "Research of the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic", at the time a large portion of the population surveyed (see Table 1) had journalism as their main activity, and of these most were aged 41 or older (62%). However, one should underline the fact that there are 12.4% of respondents, generally men over 50 years of age, that combine the profession with some other type of paid activity; there are also 3% of unemployed, a figure below the national unemployment rate in March of that year, which stood at 6.2% (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2020). It is also important to note that more than half of the unemployed journalists (28% of the respondents) were between 51 and 70 years of age. Within this group, the proportion of female journalists, on the one hand, and of those without a university degree, on the other, is slightly higher than that found in the sample used in the present article.

Journalistic activity	Number of journalists in the sample	Percentage of the sample
Yes, as the main professional activity	689	77.4%
Yes, as a secondary professional activity	110	12.4%
No, I was unemployed	28	3.1%
No, I was retired	35	3.9%
No, I had another professional activity	28	3.1%
Total	890	100%

Table 1 *Journalistic activity*

Only half of the respondents, about 50% (see Table 2), had a permanent employment contract, which confirms the previously described employment relationship framework. The number of journalists under temporary contracts is also close to this figure, and among these the most prevalent are those under a provision of services regime, with and without a flat-rate monthly fee. This type of employment relationship, in turn, is at odds with its objectives on the legal plane, for example, the regulation of the status of freelancer. According to the data, 35.5% see it as a lesser evil given the difficulty of obtaining an employment contract; and 20.8% admit that, in practical terms, their employment relationship fits into the framework of a dependent employment regime[1]. Of these, more than half (63% and 52.5%) were aged between 41 and 70.

Employment relationship	Number of journalists in the sample	Percentage of the sample
Fixed-term contract as part of the internship period	15	1.9%
Fixed-term contract	84	10.5%
Undetermined duration contract	43	5.4%
Permanent contract	398	49.8%
Public service contract with flat-rate monthly fee	66	8.3%
Public service contract (with no flat-rate monthly fee)	126	15.8%
Subcontract work (work paid by a company other than the one the person works for as a journalist)	9	1.1%
Other	58	7.3%
Total	799	100%

Table 2 *Employment Relationship at the Time of the DEE of the 799 Journalists Who, in the Sample, Declared That Journalism Was Their Main or Secondary Activity*

[1] The proportion of women journalists within this group is higher (45%) than that of the sample.

The composition of the universe of precarious journalists is indicative of the scale of this type of contract. Although the proportion of professionals in the permanent staff of companies who have completed a higher education degree, around 63%, is higher than those under fixed-term contracts or service provision regimes with similar educational levels, the figures for the latter are not substantially lower — still over 50%. One should also register the fact that temporary employment relationships extend to most age categories. For example, of the 10.5% who are under fixed-term contracts, 60% are aged 41 or over, a figure which rises to around 69% for journalists under a service provision regime (with and without a flat-rate monthly fee).

The questionnaire also shows that the extension of temporary contracts is equally visible in the data concerning professional status. The results of the survey show that there are journalists holding editorial and administrative posts for a fixed or uncertain term and under service provision: 27.5% of editors and section editors and 25.6% of editors-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief. Even among the members of the editorial board — all of whom are men, in other words, there is not a single case of a female respondent in this category — 24.3% are under temporary contracts.

These data, then, call into question the definition of precarity as something exceptional or "atypical", a qualifier that emerged in the context of the first analyses of the phenomenon (Cerdeira, 2000; Kóvacs, 1999). Although perceived as the result of a process of labour segmentation within the company itself, it obeyed a rationale grounded on factors such as qualification. In this organisational model, built around a central nucleus of employees — whose fundamental role in the planning and management of work guaranteed them some degree of stability — there are also peripheral sectors, often under the employment of other sub-contracted companies, entrusted with less complex tasks and, therefore, with more precarious contracts and salary conditions. Although uneven, this model held the promise of success for those who developed the qualifications and skills necessary to gain access to the company nucleus, or core. These contractual modalities, if anything, operated as a means of professional integration for the younger members of staff, as an initial chapter in a career that would develop in a steady, step-by-step progression over the years.

The extension of precarity to the other functions and responsibilities in a company, including those carried out by the central nucleus, has rendered this model — and, by extension, the very idea of a career — obsolete. Its redefinition, under the sign of "portfolio career", is symptomatic of the increase of temporary contracts — towards the *permanent temporary* (Beck, 2000, p. 70) — and the resultant normalisation of risk and uncertainty (Lorey, 2015).

The data on wages and union membership can be interpreted as the result of this relationship. Before the DEE, as one can see from Table 3, about half of the respondents earned a wage of less than €1,000 gross per month (as shown by the research studies mentioned above), which contrasts with the 30% who earn a wage over €1,500. Crossing this data with information on the contractual relationship enables us to discern a direct correlation between the income values and the percentage of journalists on permanent contracts. Among employees earning up to €634 per month, there are only 16% of professionals on the permanent staff. However, among the journalists with an income between €1,500 and €2,000 there are 62% with a permanent contract, a figure which rises to 75% for those earning €2,001 to €2,500. Likewise, the lower the wage the greater the percentage of journalists in this kind of employment relationship.

Gross wages	Number of journalists in the sample	Percentage in the sample
No wage	58	7.3%
Up to €634	75	9.4%
Between €635 and €900	201	25.2%
Between €901 and €1,000	57	7.1%
Between €1,001 and €1,500	169	21.2%
Between €1,501 and €2,000	92	11.5%
Between €2,001 and €2,500	73	9.1%
Over €2,500	72	9.0%
Doesn't know / doesn't answer	2	0.3%
Total	799	100%

Table 3 Gross Wages at the Time of the DEE of the 799 Journalists Who, in the Sample, Declared That Journalism Was Their Main or Secondary Activity

This correlation is not so clear in the analysis by age categories. The average age of the respondents — 47 years old — means that, except for the wage bracket between €635 and €900, both wages up to €634 and those above €1,000 are mostly to be found among journalists over 41 years of age. Although there is a correlation between an increase in age and a higher income among those earning above €1,000, it is nevertheless significant that, if one considers professionals between the ages of 51 and 70, the highest percentage of them are to be found in the category of wages of up to €634 (30.7%), between €2,001 and €2,500 (41.1%) and above €2,500 (63.9%). In terms of the relation between the wage and gender factors, taking the composition of the universe of respondents as a reference point, one notices a higher proportion of women with an income between €635 and €1,500, an equivalence in the category of those earning between €1,501 and €2,000 and a lower (though not substantially so) proportion of women among professionals with wages above the latter figure, something that may be explained by the greater difficulty of accessing management positions (Lobo et al., 2017).

Finally, one should underline some results regarding membership of the Journalists' Union (see Table 4). Only 22.8% of the respondents claimed to be members, while 40% say they have no intention of joining, a higher percentage than that of those who, on the contrary, are considering joining (18.2%). The majority of union members have a permanent contract (around 60%), are over 41 years old (82.8%, with 46.8% over 51) and 72.5% earn more than €1,000 (49% of these earning more than €1,500). Among those who are no longer members and those who do not intend to join in the future, the scenario is somewhat the reverse: the percentage of journalists on temporary contracts is higher (54% and 48%), the majority earn less than €1,500 in the former (62%) and less than €1,000 in the latter (56.6%). In turn, and given the increase in this kind of contractual relationship, their age composition tends to be the same as that of the sample, with an age below 50 years old (51% and 67.7%). On the other hand, it is important to note that, among those planning to join a union, there is a greater proportion of younger journalists (53% under 40), journalists on temporary contracts (around 57%), and women (42%).

Membership of the Journalists' Union	Number of journalists in the sample	Percentage of the sample
Yes	203	22.8%
No, I am not even considering it	356	40.0%
No, but I was once unionised	164	18.4%
No, but I'm considering joining a union	162	18.2%
No, but I've since become a union member	2	0.2%
Doesn't know / doesn't answer	3	0.3%
Total	890	100%

Table 4 *Membership of the Journalists' Union at the Time of the DEE Among the Total of 890 Journalists That Answered the Questionnaire*

The data presented are partly the result of the proliferation of temporary contracts in the newsrooms. The fact that lower wages are to be found among those who have a less stable employment situation reflects the above-mentioned framework, marked by risk and uncertainty. Fostering hope in overcoming these circumstances (Kuehn & Corrigan, 2013) or simply ensuring survival dictates a compliant attitude towards the wage conditions offered by the market, especially when there are has high levels of business concentration (Silva, 2004). Besides dictating this stance, incompatible with antagonistic demands and conducive to greater competitiveness, the various types of interdependent inequalities push forward the notion that, historically, has driven a certain kind of union action: that of a class united by its common conditions and interests. This process, moreover, is not exactly recent, nor is it exclusive to journalists, judging by the reduction in unionisation rates in Portugal and other countries (Alves, 2020; Cerdeira, 1997). At the same time, however, non-union membership seems to spring from mechanisms that induce such a practice, mechanisms that play a significant role in the transformation of newsrooms into areas of non-law (Accardo, 2007), rather than being the result of a lack of faith in the union — as suggested by the number of responses signalling a desire for future membership.

The Effects of the Declaration of the State of Emergency

The March/April 2020 SED led to changes in the condition of 11.8% of the journalists surveyed, as shown in Table 5. The new situations resulted primarily from the application of the lay-off regime by the employers. Among those affected by this process, there is a predominance of women (44.9%).

Situations resulting from the DEE	Number of journalists in the sample	Percentage of the sample
Individual dismissal	3	0.4%
Collective dismissal	5	0.6%
Termination by non-renewal of contract	3	0.4%
End of collaboration	24	3.0%
Lay-off (temporary suspension of the employment contract)	89	11.1%
Not covered by any of the previous categories	668	83.6%
Doesn't know / doesn't answer	7	0.9
Total	799	100%

Tabela 5 *Situations Resulting From the DEE Among the 799 Journalists Who Declared That Journalism Was Their Main or Secondary Activity*

The new situations in journalism result, in the second place, from the end of collaboration, a solution that applies to freelance journalists. The media sector's economic response to the epidemic seems much the same as the type of measures adopted in other areas. Broadly speaking, these reproduce inequalities in terms of job security, or rather, employment vulnerability. The fact that workers under the service provision regime have a contractual relationship which, in theory, is comparable to that of a self-employed worker facilitates the termination of the contract in terms of both the speed of the process and its associated costs, since it does not require any compensation (Caldas et al., 2020). Only 29 journalists (3.8%) had access to some form of subsidy or social support, most of whom had a permanent contract (24.1%) or were service providers with no flat-rate monthly fee (65%). Most journalists under this regime were not entitled to the extraordinary support for independent workers and only 22% requested this mechanism. While this may be due to the fact that journalists continued to work under this scheme, the low number of recipients may also be tied to the eligibility criteria, applicable only to independent workers who have suffered a complete cessation of their economic activity or an income reduction of up to 40% in the 30 days prior to the request filed with the Social Security services (Caldas et al., 2020).

These eligibility criteria help to explain changes in the professional status of journalists after the DEE in 94 cases. Permanent contracts account for only 11.7% of this sample. Most of these journalists were under temporary contracts: provision of services (6.4%) and with no flat-rate monthly fee (19.1%), undetermined duration contract (6.4%) or fixed-term contract (7.4%), among others. One may therefore conclude that temporary contracts, since they reduce the costs of workers' redundancies, carry fewer risks for the employer. One should also note an increase in unemployment, which makes up 17% of new employment situations. Overall, the current composition of this population in terms of working conditions is not too different from the one that existed at the time of the DEE. In terms of income, new situations mostly affect those with lower wages, more than half of which are below €900: 11.2% have no income (internships), 28% earn up to €634 and 22.9% between €635 and €900. Salaries above €1,500 account for only 11% of new cases. Of the 11 new contracts above €2,000, only three were signed by women. This shows an increase in the number of journalists with a gross monthly income of €900 or less (47%) and, at the same time, a decrease in the number of professionals with salaries above €1,000, from 50.8% to 44.2%.

Conclusion

At the end of October 2020, Global Notícias, one of the largest media groups in Portugal, which owns publications such as *Diário de Notícias* and *Jornal de Notícias* or the TSF radio station, announced the collective dismissal of 81 employees, 17 of whom were journalists. This measure, according to a press release by the Journalists' Union, came after the media group resorted to the simplified lay-off regime (Sindicato dos Jornalistas, 2020). Although the operation is not exactly unprecedented — both in the journalist sector as a whole and in the media group itself, which resorted to similar processes in 2009 and 2014 — it reflects the worsening of media companies' economic situation, which in turn can be explained by the succession of crises in recent years.

A crisis, however, may also present a business opportunity, an opportunity, that is, for *creative destruction*, to evoke Schumpeter's (1975) infamous concept. The results of the "Research on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of Pandemic Covid-19" demonstrate the effects the restructuring and reengineering processes had on newsrooms, an effect that should be framed against the background of the structural adjustment plans dictated by the Troika. Once perceived as "atypical", the use of temporary contracts has become increasingly common, covering a wider range and number of professionals. Precarity, then, no longer affects only the young or a handful of freelance journalists: it has become the norm in the regulation of the socio-professional status of workers with careers spanning several years and even some with editorial and management positions. This widening, as argued above, has a direct impact on the workers' wages. The "€1,000" monthly salary, which was the mark of a younger generation — the thousand-euro generation, precisely, as it was sometimes called — takes on new forms and now defines the condition of several generations of journalists. However, these changes do not seem to incite collective action, at least through the union.

The so-called "new normal" caused by the covid-19 epidemic does not seem to have led to an inversion of this scenario. Against the background of the current economic crisis, containment policies are now also aimed at the financial health of companies; in other words, at cutting costs, by being applied to workers whose employment (or lack of it) allows for faster processes. The action launched by the Global Notícias group foreshadows a scenario that could play out in the near future.

This scenario will come about in a context where the economic-productive application of algorithmic digital technologies permeates a variety of fields, including the media. The emergence of automatic writing services, on the one hand, and the extension of a kind of piecemeal and temporary work (the gig economy), organised and managed through digital platforms, into all areas, regardless of qualification, on the other hand, foreshadow an automated and robot-like journalism, in which the worker performs increasingly subordinate functions, to the frenzied beat of the machine (Mosco, 2019).

The current routines of journalistic production are not far from this scenario of proletarianization. Besides the multiple and versatile roles journalists are forced to perform, the tendency is for these roles to be performed from inside the newsroom, racing against the clock and under constant quantitative audience measurement (Camponez, 2011; Garcia, et al., 2018; Waldenström et al., 2018; Witschge & Nygren, 2009). The reconfiguration brought about by teleworking does not seem to run counter to this logic at all (Miranda et al., 2021), while at the same time contributing to a greater isolation of journalists.

The degradation of employment and working conditions, according to the results of this research, ends up impacting on the perceptions of, and expectations towards, a career in journalism (Camponez & Oliveira, 2021). Once journalism becomes, gradually, a different kind of work, quite distinct from the profession one had or one might have at some point in the future — with no minimum guarantees in terms of financial stability and/or continuity — to abandon the profession becomes an increasingly viable hypothesis (Fidalgo, 2019; Matos, 2020; O'Donnell et al., 2016). In the end, faced with this dramatic shift, no journalism is better than one that is no journalism at all. To conclude, the covid-19 pandemic is accelerating pre-existing trends: rather than a return to normal, this calls for the normal itself to be put into question.

Translation: Miguel Cardoso

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Journalism in Time of Pandemic: New Professional Routines, New Ethical Challenges

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Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent process of confinement led to lines of convulsion in different sectors of society. Marked by a context of instability and uncertainty, where different manifestations of technological, economic and social transformation enhance new practices and conventions, as well as raising new and renewed deontological challenges, journalism is no exception. Based on the responses of a survey answered by 890 Portuguese journalists, this article seeks to map the effects of the March–April 2020 state of emergency on practices and routines, and on the ethical-professional precepts of an activity that calls for a revived relevance in an environment of disinformation and "infodemic". More than revealing new problems, the results obtained suggest the intensification of the pre-existing challenges and dilemmas. In terms of practices, it is indicated that the activity is relatively domiciled. This phenomenon is accompanied by marks of depersonalization of contact with sources and events, and by signs of social isolation from journalists. In the ethical-deontological field, the emergence of particular deontological issues in the context of the pandemic, where aspects related to rigour — rejection of sensationalism, a clear distinction between facts and opinion or repudiation of any form of censorship — as well as to subsequent elements underlying contact with the sources, take on a special dimension.

Keywords

deontology, news sources, newsroom, professional routines, teleworking

Jornalistas em Tempo de Pandemia: Novas Rotinas Profissionais, Novos Desafios Éticos

Resumo

A pandemia da covid-19 e o subsequente processo de confinamento conduziram a linhas de convulsão em diferentes setores da sociedade. Marcado por um contexto de instabilidade e incerteza, onde diferentes manifestações de transformação tecnológica, económica e social potenciam novas práticas e convenções, bem como suscitam novos e renovados desafios deontológicos, o jornalismo não é exceção. Com base nas respostas de um inquérito a 890 jornalistas portugueses, o presente artigo procura mapear os efeitos do estado de emergência de março a abril de 2020 nas práticas e rotinas, e nos preceitos ético-profissionais de uma atividade que avoca uma reavivada relevância num ambiente de desinformação e "infodemia". Mais do que revelarem novos problemas, os resultados sugerem uma acentuação dos desafios e dilemas pré-existentes. No plano das práticas, indicia-se uma domiciliação relativamente transversal da atividade. Este fenómeno é acompanhado por marcas de despersonalização do contacto com as fontes e eventos, e por sinais de isolamento social dos jornalistas. No campo ético-deontológico, sublinha-se a emergência de questões deontológicas particulares no contexto da pandemia, onde os aspetos relacionados com o rigor — rejeição do sensacionalismo, distinção clara entre factos e opiniões ou repúdio de quaisquer formas de censura —, assim como os elementos subjacentes ao contacto com as fontes, assumem especial dimensão.

Palavras-chave
deontologia, fontes de informação, redação, rotinas profissionais, teletrabalho

Introduction

Gathering information on the perceptions of Portuguese journalists about media and their profession was one of the purposes of the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic", carried out through a survey applied to professionals with a license to practice. Knowing that a change in routines may have an impact on the ethical-deontological field, the survey had to assess these two areas. On the one hand, it was about understanding if there were any changes of habits and work attitudes caused by the new production environment. On the other hand, it was about gathering opinions on their effect on the professional practice, especially when it came to deontology.

The section of the survey focused on professional routines gathered questions aimed at comparing the scenario before and during lockdown, mainly the aspects directly linked to standard operating patterns. There was also a question about the relative weight of topics related to covid-19 in the set of articles developed after the state of emergency declaration (SED), on March 19, 2020.

In order to ascertain if there was an increase in teleworking, also present on other professions, there were questions about journalists' primary workplace. Respondents were asked how often they were in actual contact with other fellow-journalists, as well as what were their thoughts about the possible use of new technological resources for the execution of their work during the state of emergency. In particular, they were asked to elaborate about the impact of this kind of resources in journalism's future and the profession's ethical-deontological precepts.

Concerning deontology, it focused on three aspects. In addition to a simple question about if the context that resulted from the SED raised any specific deontological issues to journalists, there was another one, requiring multiple-choice answer: which principles, values and procedures were questioned the most in media's coverage of the state of emergency? Respondents were allowed to select up to five dimensions, from a list of

10: accuracy; independence; sources of information; contact with sources or witnesses; rectification of information; professional faults; non-discrimination; methods of gathering information; identification of protagonists in news pieces; and privacy. The survey included two more questions aimed at learning if during SED the editors or directors had asked respondents to produce pieces usually called "sponsored content" (paid by entities outside the company) and if those kinds of requests were new or had happened before.

This article presents a theoretical framework on the issues related to professional routines and deontology, focusing, afterwards, on the survey's results, which are discussed in order to substantiate conclusions.

Signs of the Intensification of the Crisis

The respect for a set of ethical principles and values, materialised into deontological norms, was always a cornerstone of journalism, the main reason for its legitimisation as a public interest activity, free and responsible (Camponez, 2011; Fidalgo, 2009; McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014; Meyers, 2010; Plaisance, 2009; Ward, 2013; Wilkins & Christians, 2009). Ethics is where we always come back when everything seems to change in the global media landscape and in the concrete conditions for the practice of journalism: a sort of back to basics, which reminds us what it is a distinguishing mark comparing to other areas of communication in the public space. Its importance is, moreover, interlinked with journalists' own identity affirmation, because, as Singer (2014) points out, ethical principles "are used not only to suggest how journalists should behave, but also to define what they are" (p. 49).

Although the great ethical principles that guide journalism are still basically the same, that does not mean they should not be interpreted according to concrete conditions, circumscribed in terms of the space and time in which the activity occurs. In recent decades, marked by the great technological changes that paved the way to the digital era, the debate on the new ethical and deontological challenges faced by journalists has strongly accelerated, with growing calls for the "need of new ethics for a new media ecosystem, and a new deontology for a journalism facing new challenges" (Camponez & Christofoletti, 2019, p. 5). The contexts in which journalism is currently practiced and in which media companies work are not mere bumps in the road. On the contrary, they have brought changes and ways of doing that question some of the assumptions we used to make about this activity, being evident that today it is "hard to imagine an exclusively offline journalism" (Siapera & Veglis, 2012, p. 1).

In this new scenario, there are three major aspects we can take into consideration, each one of them with an impact on the ethical reflection on journalism's principles and practices: (a) the growing presence of digital technologies in all processes of research, elaboration, editing, and dissemination of public information about current events, with internet's ubiquity and the immediacy of news flows; (b) the end of the journalists' monopoly in the information process (Fenton, 2010; Ryfe, 2019), with the coming into the scene (made easier by the profusion of auto-editing and dissemination tools on a global scale) of new actors/agents and new communication networks — something that, by the way, promotes a culture of participation that blurs the boundaries between senders and receivers, and between professionals and non-professionals (Carlson, 2016; Carlson & Lewis, 2015); and (c) a severe economic crisis caused by the exhaustion of the old business model in which mass media thrived, with dramatic repercussions on media revenues and, consequently, on the opportunities of practicing journalism with independence, autonomy, and in the public interest.

(a) Although it might be dangerous (and misleading) to assess today's journalism only on the basis of the digital technologies that shape it (Zelizer, 2019), thus believing that they alone can overcome crises and recover lost time (Lewis & Westlund, 2016), the truth is that the new digital context brought new challenges, both in terms of professional routines and in terms of ethics (White, 2014). Several studies have been carried out to identify ethical issues or dilemmas specifically concerned with online journalism, in an environment of convergence of means, techniques, supports, and formats (Deuze, 2010), with the certainty that nowadays all journalism develops in a digital environment (Friend & Singer, 2007). There seems to be a consensus on the issues raised by the new media context (Riordan, 2014) that do not find an answer in the traditional ethical codes: the pressures of the *speed* of information, to the detriment of accuracy and the need for verification (Fenton, 2010; Martins, 2019); the prevalence of *anonymity* (or the ease of creating false identities) at multiple levels, which affects the principle of transparency; the risk of taking responsibility away from journalists when it comes to *hypertext*, an usual tool of the digital universe; the blurring of *boundaries* between what is public and what is private (especially in social media), which opens the way to confusion and abuse; the increasing porosity between *editorial* and *commercial* areas, which jeopardises the fragile credibility of journalism in the face of market demands (Pickard, 2019); the constant presence of *metrics* and immediate *feedback* of the public (likes, page-views, comments, retweets...), which increasingly conditions the autonomy of editorial decision.

(b) As said before, all this takes place in the field of public information about timely events, which is no longer a journalists' monopoly. In fact, technological innovations, accompanied by changes at social, cultural and economic levels that demand greater participation of the public in the information processes, made accessible for all what was once reserved only for some. The multiplication of cheap and technically easy auto-editing tools, together with the exponential diffusion of internet and of its access through smartphones (which made social media omnipresent), has profoundly altered the media context of our societies, again blurring of boundaries between professionals and amateurs, between producers and consumers of news, between certified information and all sorts of substitutes (Christofoletti, 2014). These deep changes, not always well digested by professionals (Singer, 2014), have brought in with them a few challenges in terms of journalists' identity (Donsbach, 2010). In the sequence, authors such as Ward (2016, 2018) have suggested that in addition to a journalism ethics for professionals, which he considered to be pre-digital, there should be an ethics for anyone involved in the news processes. Other authors, like Friend and Singer (2007), insist that one should expect journalists to have a specific ethical set of norms, which, in fact, would be the distinguishing trademark of their professional production: the

> distinction between journalism and other forms of publication rests primarily on ethics – as does, ultimately, the journalists ' professional survival. How the journalist does his or her job will be fundamental to whether that job continues to hold any value, or even to exist at all, in a world in which anyone can be a publisher – but not necessarily a journalist. (p. 23)

(c) As a background to all this commotion, we have an economic and entrepreneurial component that gets worse by the day and affects, at many levels, the exercise of journalism and its respect for good professional practices and ethical principles. The proliferation of free online informative content, in addition to the coming into the scene of big global technological companies (Google, Facebook, YouTube), which absorb the biggest share of advertising previously invested in the media, has lessened the chances of profitability of most media companies. Furthermore, the severe decrease in the number of journalists in newsrooms, added to the fierce competition among media and to the economic pressure towards greater flexibility in mixing editorial choices and commercial propositions — for instance, the so widespread "sponsored content" (Cardoso et al., 2020; Fidalgo, 2016; Ikonen et al., 2017), — was, in many cases, responsible for lower ethical demands, which eventually had an impact on journalism's quality and credibility. Actually, the attachment to ethical principles and the respect for deontological norms are not disconnected from the concrete, structural and cyclical conditions in which journalism is practiced (Mathisen, 2019).

This is the context where we should inscribe what happened to journalism and the media during the fight against the new coronavirus pandemic, whether we are talking of new work routines or of the ethical challenges they faced.

A Changing Professional Environment

Studies on journalism have been pointing out the impact caused by new digital and communication resources on reformatting the way information professionals work (Tong, 2017). One of the most obvious examples of this transformation of labour routines occurs in the relationship with the sources and events, where the emergence of new ways of communication made possible the use of remote and more depersonalised contact formulae (Berkowitz, 2019). Nevertheless, the technological progress that influenced Portuguese newsrooms more recently did not necessarily translate into the streamlining or benefitting of journalism practice — for instance, there were no clear signs of relocation of production sites or decrease in journalists' workload (Pacheco & Freitas, 2014). On the contrary, one might argue that these new ways of production, boosted mainly by changes in the media industry, have contributed to the overexploitation or bureaucratisation of journalism (Cohen, 2019; Miranda, 2019).

In different places in the world, the context introduced by the pandemic and, particularly, by different lockdown processes, has led to a disruption of journalists' everyday lives, based, first and foremost, on the domiciliation of traditional workplaces (Bernadas & Ilagan, 2020; Le Cam et al., 2020; Stănescu, 2020). Because of this, the forced generalisation of teleworking among journalists must have increased the dependence on tools for long-distance communication, which contributed to the depersonalisation of the contacts with sources, to a greater use of online information (websites or social media) and to the physical absence of scenarios where real events take place. All this opened the doors to even more "sitting down" and "second-hand" journalism (Mateus, 2019).

Another clear effect of isolation concerns the decrease in chances of collectively participating and interacting in a space for debate such as the newsroom. Considering the role workplace fraternisation plays in the socialisation of norms and common concerns (Cotter, 2010), this brings a significant consequence to journalism since it entails fewer opportunities for exchange of views and peer-to-peer accountability.

A third repercussion of teleworking and new flexible labour solutions regards the potential conflict between journalists' work and their family responsibilities, which may cause an increase in the burden of reproductive work (Power, 2020), and reinforce asymmetries and traditional gender representations (Arntz et al., 2020). In this sense, one presupposes that this phenomenon will affect particularly women and professionals with children or other dependents (Ibarra et al., 2020; International Federation of Journalists, 2020).

On the other side, the huge impact of the pandemic in everyday lives made publics more prone to absorb the most impactful things about this topic. Because it has become more difficult to keep checking information (due to new working conditions), the examples of misinformation and manipulation proliferated in the public space — either through social media and "content producers" who have little to do with journalism, or through traditional media, more pressured by the swiftness, competition and the wish to gain visibility. The damage caused to the essential trustworthy relationship between citizens and information in the public space, already going through difficult times (Fenton, 2019; Fink, 2019; Hanitzsch et al., 2017; Usher, 2018), eventually got worse. Besides fighting the pandemic, it was necessary to fight an "infodemic"[1], according to the World Health Organisation (2020), or a "misinfodemic", a concept preferred by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco, 2020) and explained in these terms: "the impacts of misinformation related to covid-19 are deadlier than misinformation on other topics, such as politics and democracy" (para. 3).

All this takes place in a context where journalists are particularly fragile, many of them with reduced worktime and pay (via lay-off), many others having been dismissed, and all of them, to a certain extent, fearful about their future (Camponez & Oliveira, 2021; Garcia et al., 2021). Precarious working conditions are a highly sensitive factor for the

[1] World Health Organisation (2020) defines the term "infodemic" as: "an overload of information and a rapid spread of news, images and videos, deceiving or fabricated. Like the virus, it is highly contagious and grows exponentially. It also makes it difficult to fight against COVID-19 pandemic" (para. 1).

development of a kind of journalism that respects the highest professional standards and ethical principles, based on independence and autonomy (Waisbord, 2019), therefore, times like these added further difficulties to an area already weakened and marked by feelings of increasing professional disenchantment (Nölleke et al., 2020). This element becomes even more relevant when it is suggested that the more precarious and younger fringes of the profession are the most exposed ones to burnouts and overwork, which accentuates a sense of dissatisfaction, disappointment or cynicism concerning the activity (Christians et al., 2020; Reinardy, 2011).

The issues, doubts and challenges journalists had to face in a context of a pandemic brought about, all over the world, the fast elaboration of guiding documents and codes of conduct for their practice, under the responsibility of trade unions, professional associations, observatories, education and research entities and the media themselves[2]. The news coverage of the pandemic also led to a sort of "state of emergency", given the awareness of how sensitive many of these topics were, of how rumours and lies got mixed up with the news and, therefore, how the lack of a suitable discipline of verification (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014) could jeopardise media's own sense of accountability. Expectations that, in this particular context, journalists showed "better care, sensitivity and greater attachment to fundamental ethical precepts", as Aidan White says (Abidi, 2020, para. 5), were certainly high. The level of commitment of many professionals in the way they faced these challenges is a motive for some hope when it comes to regaining people's trust in genuine information (Coddington & Lewis, 2020), although it is also clear that much of what is at stake here does not depend solely on journalists. Actually, some authors, like Örnebring (2019), believe that most of the expected changes must come from outside journalism — for instance, from school.

The fact is, to paraphrase the founder of the Ethical Journalism Network, Aidan White, coronavirus was also a topic that "brought people back to journalism", making them understand "how reliable and rigorous information is an essential part of our lives" (Abidi, 2020, para. 3). All the indicators show how, during these months, the search for certified information (mostly on TV and online supports for traditional media) has increased to almost forgotten levels. It means that this might also be a chance to improve the media situation and their relationship with the public (Parks, 2019). And, as we are about to show you next, learning what Portuguese journalists thought and endured in these hard times, will certainly help us through this common effort.

Journalists Further Away From Newsrooms

Both the pandemic and lockdown had an impact in the different dimensions of social organisation. In this context, it seems clear that Portuguese journalists' activity was also subjected to changes, not only in what concerns labour routines, but also in everyday issues. In this context, the answers to the survey regarding the "Study on the Effects

[2] A few examples: Brennen et al. (2020), Chowdhury (2020), Dart Center (2020), and objETHOS (2020).

of the State of Emergency in Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic" indicate a strong presence of the pandemic-related issues on media's agenda. From a total of respondents that were working as journalists during the SED (799), 39.3% mentioned that topics related to covid-19 occupied about three quarters of the work they produced after the SED, and 29% admitted that the issues related to the pandemic dominated the total of the pieces they made. This perception is more evident among respondents that usually work on international or current affairs: respectively 90% and 75% of the professionals mentioned that content regarding the new coronavirus occupied more than three quarters of their production after the SED. On the other hand, when it comes to sports or culture journalists, only 48.5% and 50.9% mentioned having devoted so much space to topics related to covid-19. Out of the 21 respondents that usually address health issues, 15 referred that topics related to the pandemic represented around 75%, or more, of the content they produced after the SED.

Although the newsroom seems to be, under normal circumstances, the regular work environment of most of the respondents, this paradigm is far from a standard (Table 1). As a matter of fact, of a total of respondents that were working as journalists on March 2020, 65.5% mentioned the newsroom as primary workplace before the SED, while 19.9% referred that they worked mainly from home. Unlike other employment relationships, most of the respondents that were working as collaborators or as freelancers during the SED (64.1%) mentioned that they did it from home, at the office or at co-working spaces. However, 23.4% of those worked in the newsroom. The hypothesis of atypical conditions for the inclusion of the most precarious fringes in the activity may be substantiated by a higher relative percentage of those who assume to be freelancers in formal terms, but in fact have a similar status of a typical employee, and worked in the newsroom: 47.5%.

Primary workplace	Before the SED		After the SED	
	n	%	*n*	%
Newsroom	523	65.5%	141	17.6%
Home	159	19.9%	533	66.7%
Personal office	32	4%	21	2.6%
Co-working space (with other journalists)	12	1.5%	8	1%
Co-working space (with professionals from other areas)	19	2.4%	4	0.5%
Other	52	6.5%	47	5.9%
Does not apply	0	0%	42	4.7%

Does not know/Does not answer	2	0.3%	3	0.4%
Total	799	100%	799	100%

Table 1 *Primary Workplace (Before and After the SED) of Journalists Whose Main or Secondary Activity Is Journalism*

Since the beginning of lockdown, there was a reconfiguration of Portuguese journalists' labour context, dictated by the migration of the different working places to their homes. If, on the one hand, there was a decrease in the number of professionals that mentioned newsrooms, personal offices, co-working spaces or other places as primary workplaces after SED, there was, on the other hand, a substantial increase in the number of respondents that worked from home (533). The crossover between the new workplace and respondents' types of employment relationship during the SED shows that those who used their own homes to work after the SED were mainly employees hired for an uncertain term (86%) and interns (80%). Respondents with an open-ended contract (25.4%) or with a fixed-term contract (21.4%) were the ones that showed a higher incidence of work in the newsroom. In terms of professional category, the vast majority of respondents that, during the SED, were working as interns (82.4%) worked from home; 24.8% of the editors/section coordinators, and 32.6% of the managing editors worked in the media's facilities. In what concerns the relationship between the different types of media and the place for journalism production after the SED, teleworking was more generalised amongst respondents predominantly connected to news agencies (88%), online exclusively media (85.7%) and press (77.6%), and less preponderant amongst respondents from the radio (48%) and television (27.5%).

This reconfiguration of the labour context, due to the lockdown process, may play a part in another significant change in respondents' professional routines, which refers to going out to cover a story. Even though the most expressive indicator concerns the variation between the number of respondents that admitted not going out to cover a story before the SED and those who mentioned not doing it after the SED (11.5% versus 33.5%), this change can also be noticed in the big decrease in the use of different means of transport, public or private (from 83.9% to 44%).

The changes in the working environment are also reflected in the gap between the number of respondents who admitted that, prior to the SED, used to contact other journalists of their media every day or almost every day (590; 66.3% of the total sample), and the number of respondents who admitted doing it after the SED (219; 24.6% of the total sample).

Close to the tendencies identified in previous studies, the average of work hours, before the SED, indicated by respondents (771) was 40 hours/week (IQR = 45–30). The average number of pieces produced every week, before the SED, referred to by respondents (697) was 10 (IQR = 20–5). The paradigm introduced by the pandemic did not bring any significant changes, being the average time spent on work indicated by the respondents (769) of 40 hours/week (IQR = 45–15), and the average of work done (703) 10 pieces/week (IQR = 25–4).

Around one third of the sample (273) admitted that, during the SED, domestic responsibilities impaired the normal exercise of the activity. Female respondents have a clearer notion of this (34.4% of the women agreed with this idea) than male journalists (28.6%). Likewise, the notion of conflict between domestic and professional burdens is more evident among respondents who reported having one or more dependents in their charge (42.8%) than among those without dependents (18.2%).

Another manifest effect of lockdown seems to be a change of practices and ways of contact with sources and with the places of events (Table 2). When respondents were asked to hierarchize the methods of contact with sources, before and after SED, a replacement of more direct and face-to-face formulae by synchronous or asynchronous distance contact models was observed. However, there was a small number of respondents (274; 34.3% of those working during the SED) who admitted having adopted new technological resources for the development of their work during lockdown. The optimism of this group of journalists about the potential effects of these new tools on the future of journalism contrasts with their opinion on the possible consequences for the ethical-professional dimension of the activity. While 67.1% of the respondents admitted a beneficial or very beneficial impact of these resources on the future of journalism, only 26.2% mentioned a similar impact on journalism's deontological values. Their opinion is, above all, unclear as to the potential effects of these solutions on principles, with 54% of these respondents having indicated an impact neither beneficial nor harmful.

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		Contact methods hierarchy (percentage values)							
		1º	2º	3º	4º	5º	Does not use	Does not know/ Does not answer	Does not apply
Face-to-face contact	Before the SED	28.7	15.5	20.4	11.8	11.6	8.9	3.1	0
	After the SED	4	1.9	3.8	8.1	34.8	26.3	6.9	14.3
Telephone contact	Before the SED	39.2	24.5	12.4	7.6	6	6	4.3	0
	After the SED	50	16	8.6	4	5.9	2.9	4.1	8.3
Contact via email	Before the SED	29.7	21.8	19.5	10	6.4	7.5	5.1	0
	After the SED	40.2	21.3	10.6	4.3	6	4.8	4.6	8.3
Contact via videoconferencing platforms	Before the SED	2.3	3.9	5.8	9.1	32.9	37.5	8.5	0
	After the SED	21.8	16.5	13.5	8.5	8	12.3	7.1	12.3
Social media	Before the SED	10.6	13.3	17.5	19.9	15	16.6	7	0
	After the SED	20.5	18.1	15.3	10.8	9.8	8.1	6.5	10.9

Table 2 *Hierarchy of Contact Methods (Before and After the SED) of Journalists Whose Main or Secondary Activity Is Journalism*

These different lines of discontinuation and change of practices and production methods cannot, of course, be disconnected from their impact on journalists' ability to respond to the ethical-professional demands of their activity. In this domain, most respondents expressed a critical opinion about the deontological implications of the work done during the SED. In fact, when questioned about whether the context resulting from the state of emergency raised particular deontological questions to the practice of journalism, 56.7% said "yes" (505). The "no" represented 40.7% (362).

In all age groups, the percentage of positive responses exceeded 50%. Nevertheless, the perception of the phenomenon is particularly high in the group of the youngest, corresponding to about two thirds: 65.9% of those under 30; 65.2% of interns and 65% of the ones who have been on the job for a shorter period — up to 2 years. Higher-paid respondents also deviate from the average: 63.9% of the journalists whose wage is over €2,500/month, clearly a minority in the analysed universe, answered "yes" to this question, as well as 61.6% of those who earn €2,001–€2,500, and 65.1% of the ones who earn €1,000–€1,500.

If we compare the answers to this question with the different types of employment relationships, the conclusion is that respondents with "open-ended contracts" show greater sensitivity to the emergence of specific deontological issues in the context of the pandemic: 59.5% have chosen "yes". Curiously enough, also the majority (58.7%) of freelance professionals — typical situation of precariousness — answered the same way.

The concerns with this issue are also present among respondents with a higher level of education: the "yes" is common to 65.9% of those in the group with incomplete higher education, and 65.3% of those who have completed master or doctoral degrees. On the other hand, almost half (49.4%) of the journalists who have only completed primary school, vocational or secondary education, do not see any effects of the SED in terms of ethics and deontology, when it comes to the exercise of the profession — in fact, the percentage of those who admitted that some questions had been raised in that sphere is lower (47.5%). Similarly, only four out of 10 of those holding the equivalent to a journalist's card and 36% of the ones holding a collaborator's card have mentioned it.

Accuracy at the Top of Ethical Concerns

Among the principles, values and procedures most questioned in the journalistic coverage of the state of emergency (Table 3[3]), "accuracy" clearly emerged as the most indicated, having gathered 80% of the respondents who considered that the SED raised deontological questions about the exercise of journalism. The reference to "accuracy" covered a number of aspects listed in the survey, namely: rejection of sensationalism; distinction between facts and opinion; repudiation of censorship; denunciation of conduct that undermines the freedom of expression; and the right to inform. Hence the particular significance of a finer reading of the results: the first mention to "accuracy" was chosen by 94.7% of the respondents over 70; by 86.2% of those under 30; by 89.1% of radio journalists, and by 88,1% of the ones that earn up to €634 a-month.

Principles, values and procedures most questioned in the journalistic coverage of the state of emergency	n	%
Accuracy	404	80%
Sources	236	46.7%
Contact with sources or witnesses	217	43%
Rectification of information	199	39.4%
Independence	163	32.3%
Privacy	139	27.5%
Professional faults	74	14.7%

[3] Respondents were allowed to choose up to five options (n=505, total of respondents who considered that the SED brought deontological questions to the exercise of journalism).

Non-discrimination	63	12.5%
Identification of protagonists	62	12.3%
Collecting methods	61	12.1%

Table 3 *Principles, Values and Procedures Which Were Questioned the Most During the Journalistic Coverage of the State of Emergency, For the 505 Journalists Who Considered That the SED Raised Deontological Questions to the Exercise of Journalism*

With a much less expressive global percentage (46.7%), the following topic was "sources of information" which took a prominent place among respondents who have journalism as their main activity (47.2%). This referred to issues such as the fight against restrictions on access to information; the hearing of parties with compelling interests; source identification as a rule; the allocation of opinions and respect for professional secrecy. In this group of professionals, less than one out of 10 (9.8%) indicated "information collection methods". This aspect, overall the less mentioned one (only 12.1%), included the inhibition of the use of illegal or unauthorised means, except for special case, as well as the duty not to hide the professional identification or the staging of situations in order to take advantage of people's good faith.

Based on the answers obtained, there is a particularity concerning news agencies' journalists. In the survey, they are the only ones for whom "accuracy" does not stand out when compared to other deontological values. In this category, "accuracy" and "sources of information" were pointed out in equal percentages (70.4%) as sensitive topics concerning journalistic coverage during the SED.

Also noteworthy is the fact that half of the journalists whose activity is carried out exclusively on online platforms have indicated "contact with sources and witnesses" as the second ethical-deontological aspect that has been questioned the most in the coverage of events. This component, mentioned by 43% of the respondents, referred to the issues raised by the contact with citizens: avoid causing humiliation, interfering with pain or exploiting the psychological, emotional or physical vulnerability and ensuring serenity, freedom and responsibility of sources or witnesses.

The issue of "privacy" — associated to the respect for that right, except in the case of contradiction between the individuals' conduct and the values and principles they advocate publicly; to the assessment of the nature of the case and condition of the person; or to the preservation of the right to intimacy and justification for exceptions in case of public interest — was mentioned by just over a quarter of the respondents (27.5%). It is evident that a higher level of education corresponds to greater attention to the issue of privacy in the journalistic practice. Actually, when it comes to the group of people that got, at most, to secondary school, only 21.3% mentioned it as one of the most questioned values in the coverage of the state of emergency, while among people with a master's, doctorate and post-graduate degrees, percentages rose to 29.8% and 32.8%, respectively.

The eventual increase in production, by journalists, of the so-called "sponsored content" was the subject of a question in the survey, which specified that it only concerned situations of content paid by external entities rather than by the company to which the professional was linked. The overwhelming majority (90.4%) of respondents that were working at the time of the SED denied having been asked by their editors, during the state of emergency, to carry out such work, hybrid products that have been developed by the media as a way of counterbalancing the decrease in revenue coming from traditional advertising.

On the other hand, 5.3% admitted that such requests were made by their superiors and only 2.4% acknowledged that it happened without them previously being informed about it. By adding up the two, it is determined that 7.7% of the respondents (61) confirmed they had already been asked to produce "sponsored content". Young people presented themselves as especially affected. In fact, more than one third (exactly 35.5%) of those who had been working for less than 5 years, about one fifth (20.5%) of those in internship and 17.2% of the ones under 30 chose one of these answers — in any case, way above the average.

An analysis of the answers according to monthly pay grades leads to similar conclusions: the ones who claimed to have received requests for "sponsored content" were the journalists that earned between €635 and €900/month (10.9%, to which we can add 3% of those who have received requests without prior information). On the opposite side, among all the journalists with monthly pay grades above €1,500, this kind of request occurred in much lower percentages — between 1.1% and 2.8%.

One last question aimed to determine whether the request for the production of "sponsored content", was something new or had already happened prior to the SED. From the 42 respondents that mentioned having been asked to do it, 37 (88.1% of the total) revealed that it had happened previously, which shows that the initiative was not a direct consequence of the state of emergency declared in the country.

Conclusion

The results of this survey, rather than revealing new problems, indicate that the issues deriving from the pandemic and lockdown tended to accentuate pre-existing challenges and dilemmas.

As far as professional routines are concerned, the data suggest that, despite technological innovation and the emergence of new dynamics of information production (Deuze & Witschge, 2020), the newsroom is still journalists' regular work environment. If, on the one hand, the group of respondents working outside the newsroom may result from more specific professional profiles (such as correspondents, collaborators or sports/parliamentary journalists), on the other hand, the amount of service providers who have the newsroom as their primary workplace presupposes specific circumstances, like "fake freelance" (Bibby, 2014) — that is, professionals with formal bonds of a freelancer, but who take on permanent positions, with defined assignments and schedules.

One of the most significant effects of lockdown in Portuguese journalists' routines translates into a relatively comprehensive tendency of domiciliation of their activity, which is assumed as a matrix factor for other changes in the daily lives of professionals — symptomizing lines of isolation, a sedentary lifestyle and the bureaucratisation of journalists and of their work.

The replacement of more face-to-face ways of interaction with sources and events by remote ways of contact (also reflected in the results of this study) is not a new or ephemeral phenomenon. Rather, it is suggested that it is a response to trends of labour reorganisation, underlying the technological and economical reorganisation of the media industry. Bearing in mind what they represent in terms of observance of professional practices related to the confrontation and validation of information, it is, nonetheless, important to stress the boundary between more synchronous and direct ways of contact (such as telephone or videoconferencing platforms), and less interactive and simultaneous means of communication (like the email or social media). This distinction is even more relevant when the impact of lockdown in the respondents' routines left not only marks of depersonalisation in the ways of interacting with sources, but also an increasing use of asynchronous contact formulae, heightening potential scenarios of "taylorisation" of journalism, "sitting down journalism" and recycling of information transmitted online.

Considering the comparison between averages regarding the number of hours devoted to the professional activity and the amount of content produced, before and after SED, it is possible to conclude that these domiciliation processes did not translate, generally speaking, into a change of volume and rhythm of journalistic production. However, one should not infer that lockdown did not affect the intensity of the work carried out by Portuguese journalists, given that one third of the sample reported that, at the time of the SED, domestic responsibilities interfered with the normal exercise of the profession. Even if the reasons for a higher evidence of this perception among the respondents with dependents may be self-explanatory, the fact of being more common among female respondents is likely to require further reflection, since it may eventually reveal a conflict between the perpetuation of traditional gender and activity roles.

In addition to the changes in the production routines of the respondents, lockdown has also entailed their social isolation, which will tend to result in their distancing or alienation from the professional community. In this context, the oscillation identified between the habit of contacting other journalists, before and after the SED, is significant, as it represents a decrease in opportunities for professional participation, for sharing common concerns or, even, for peer accountability.

When it comes to ethics, the conclusion is that more than half of the respondents agree that the context resulting from the state of emergency has brought particular deontological questions to the exercise of journalism. Nevertheless, there are slight differences between the different subgroups, with the young journalists expressing greater concerns regarding the negative effects experienced in journalism, in this period of time. In fact, the percentage of those who have referred to the emergence of specific deontological issues is over 65%, whether one takes into account the age of the respondents, the ones with the shortest time on the job or their status as trainees. On the other hand, those equated to journalists and collaborators are among the ones that least claimed to have identified new problems in this field. This is obviously connected to the fact that, in both cases, these are people whose contact — one might say, daily — with the profession is less frequent.

Regarding the attempt to better define the ethical-deontological challenges raised, one should emphasise the concern with "accuracy" of information — by far the most mentioned among the 10 proposed items in the survey, and, in a very transversal way, to all professional categories, age groups or levels of remuneration. This particular focus on accuracy cannot be unrelated to the countless examples of misinformation and manipulation seen in the news coverage of the pandemic, with well-known negative effects.

Concerning the quite current theme of "sponsored content", which is halfway between journalism and advertising, we may conclude that it does not seem to have had a particular incidence in this period, in spite of the strong decrease in media revenues. Even so, the survey data converge in the same direction: in general terms, it is again the youngest journalists, with less time in the profession, with lower salaries and more fragile job titles who tend to be asked to produce this sort of content.

In short, the work of Portuguese journalists has been affected in this period by a number of constraints, not all new, but certainly more pressing, that ask for the urgency of collective debate and the search for solutions that improve labour conditions, as well as the ability to better address the ethical requirements of the profession.

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Book Review of *Advanced Introduction to Platform Economics*

Recensão do Livro *Advanced Introduction to Platform Economics*

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Mansell, R., & Steinmueller, W. E. (2020). *Advanced introduction to platform economics.* Edward Elgar Publishing.

The book *Advanced Introduction to Platform Economics* is a useful contribution to the understanding of digital platforms, a remarkable phenomenon in contemporary societies. With a compact proposal in terms of size, but comprehensive in its scope and in the deepening of the topics, the book competes for a recurring debate on the necessary regulation of these platforms. While they contribute positively to society, by informing, educating and entertaining a wide section of the population, it is also certain that there are many harms associated with their activity.

This work presents an extended analysis of the platforms. The title may even be misleading for anyone looking for a strictly economic approach to new digital platforms and their business models. The book addresses these components, of course, but it deals with a lot more, from the legal, social and cultural implications of these platforms to the explanation of the political contexts that made them a global reality. Thus, to the neoclassical economics approach, the authors add the perspectives of institutional economy and critical political economy. The picture of these new platforms is thus more complete in terms of their benefits, costs and risks.

The authors' standpoint is to treat these platforms as a radical innovation that, due to the fundamental difference in relation to previous methods or processes, is associated with very significant changes in society, at a social, political and economic level. At their origin, two fundamental changes are identified: the connectivity powered by the world wide web and the adoption of common standards and protocols in the network architecture. In other words, these platforms are part of a wider process that has been taking place in contemporary societies: digitalization and datification (as increased capacity to collect and process data).

No one doubts that digital platforms are an unavoidable phenomenon in contemporary societies (van Djick et al., 2018), but how to grasp this new phenomenon? One of the most significant contributions of this book is the proposal of an operational definition of what these digital platforms are (Chapter 2). In other words, this work explains why we can consider that Facebook, which is a social network that connects "friends", is equivalent to Amazon, an e-commerce service. Often, we consider this group of global technological companies as a homogeneous group just because of their size and because they all operate in the internet. But there are fundamental aspects that unite them and that go beyond the environment in which they develop their activity (where, by the way, we find many other services). It is on these characteristics that Mansell and Steinmueller rely on to identify the defining elements of digital platforms: content desired by users, a business model that guarantees the sustainability of the service and data processing (collection, retention and use of data about users). There is a fourth element that may not be present in all cases, but which is, nevertheless, relevant to understanding digital platforms' platforms: the provision of auxiliary services.

Neoclassical economic analysis, argue the authors (Chapter 3), tends to be based on assumptions that are not found in real markets, the most important of which is that consumers and suppliers act on the basis of complete information. Thus, this seems to be one of the main reasons to justify regulatory interventions in the digital platforms markets since we are facing a market failure. But the problem is that these platforms operate in multisided markets, fuelled by economies of scale and scope, which leads to "natural" monopolies. The bigger the network, the greater the consumer's interest in staying on it: for example, the more friends an individual finds on Facebook, the more interested she or he is in belonging to this network. This means that competing platforms will have much higher costs to try enter this market. And while these monopolies are theoretically vulnerable to technological innovations that can offer market solutions and create new competition, the truth is that this vulnerability is not always put to the test.

The main argument for challenging a purely economic perspective about digital platforms is that the classic assumption, which assumes technological innovation as the engine of change (and, therefore, of course, new technologies would disrupt the functioning of the market, ensuring ways of fairer competition), disregard the wider conditions that allow asymmetries of power. In other words, it is not just the competitive conditions that influence the exercise of power in the markets. Institutional economy contributes to the discussion, drawing attention to the norms and rules that support public and private values and the changes in power between different social agents. Thus, asymmetries result from different sources, namely the lack of alignment between platform operations and public values. For political economy researchers, asymmetries of power must also be explained in the light of the Marxist tradition, which underline the exploitation of users by platform owners, the predominance of private capital and a business model based on advertising (Fuchs, 2017).

There are serious problems with these platforms, namely the fact that they distribute illegal and often harmful content. Although economically successful and effectively sought after by consumers (which, in the light of the neoclassic economy, would mean that they are "efficient" organizations), these platforms produce many "externalities" and side effects that threaten public values. And the problem is that these adverse effects result directly from their business model, so mitigation or resolution strategies are unlikely to be successful. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that these digital platforms are so large that it is difficult for individual states to enforce rules. There are asymmetries of power in the market, which are not being fought, and asymmetries worldwide between the countries where these platforms are located and the "others".

Thus, and since these platforms are located in the developed north, there seems to be an imperative to "digitalize" all economies, especially aimed at countries that will be left behind, those of the global south. A call for modernization and development (which recalls, in some way, the 60s and 70s) that would be achieved with technological convergence. But, as Mansell and Steinmueller (Chapter 7) advise well, technology alone (whether hardware or software) will not provide the economic development that is envisaged: it is necessary to take into account local contexts, invest in education and in digital skills, as well as increase connectivity. Fighting technological underdevelopment impacts digital inequalities and this is essential in a context in which technological means are, as they have been throughout history, means of control and of social and political influence.

The fourth chapter addresses the subject of artificial intelligence (AI) and the way in which these new technologies contribute to deepen and intensify the engagement of users with platforms. Through the analysis of large databases that provide "answers" that can imitate or reproduce human behaviour, they can target advertising using algorithms that allow, for example, Facebook to suggest "friends" or Netflix to recommend series and movies to its subscribers. Other more problematic issues may be the use of AI to predict behaviours and engagement, and the fact that discretionary power given to these arrangements can result in effective decisions and actions. On the other hand, human supervision can also result in bias or prejudice.

A solution to these situations is neither easy nor linear, but the greatest concern is related to the lack of transparency of these systems (because, often, the core of the platform's business model is at stake) which increasingly interfere with citizens' lives. The development of AI raises questions at the labour level and at the level of availability and access to journalistic information, which in turn may have implications for freedom of information and for the democratic expression of pluralism and diversity. It could be, as Helbing et al. (2019) question, that democracy will not survive AI. These vast topics are not overlooked by the authors of the *Advanced Introduction to Platform Economics* who argue that, "as commercial datification practices continue to shape the digital content industry in Western societies, the question is what the implications for public values when platforms operate with incentives to manage the attention economy" (p. 72–73).

Considering the gap between public values and private interests, one way to answer this question lies in regulatory practices (Chapter 5). But, as Mansell and Steinmueller argue, the strategy of self-regulation — used by platforms to refuse any type of external intervention — has to be demonstrated more than self-proclaimed, and there is a lack of essential information to allow the verification of these practices. The authors explore the arguments of the platforms, such as the fact that their global expansion proves that there is a value associated with their services (thus being, the market exerts its own regulation), as well as their codes of practice and the content moderation they claim to perform. The discussion on safeguarding public values continues by analysing models of operation of platforms that are an alternative to the current business model of digital platforms and to the use of users' personal data. There are some initiatives that try to deepen the existing barrier between the public and the private in the control of personal data. Other ways to circumvent ethical issues related to digital platforms are in the development of business models based on subscription or based on public funding. However, these alternatives are far from presenting themselves as true competitors to digital platforms, mainly because their reach is limited.

For this reason, the authors argue that external regulation is necessary, although it is difficult to reach a consensus on what will be the patterns of acceptable behaviour of digital platforms. There is a great uncertainty as to how this issue will evolve, even though a mix of self-regulation measures with external regulation — both from States and independent institutions — appears to be the most likely. It is clear that the field to be regulated is full of ambiguities, caution the authors, but there is room for progress — in the light of any of the three perspectives of analysis used (neoclassical economy, institutional economy or political economy).

So, while digital literacy is important in this context to empower citizens, more action is needed. There are three critical areas where more realistically, foreseen these authors, an intervention can be expected: implementation of some more conventional tools of regulation; a ban on "datification" of behaviours related to children and political issues; and, investment in alternative business models that safeguard public values. Mansell and Steinmueller's appeal is towards a reform, certain that technology is not a destination, but a means.

Translation: Elsa Costa e Silva

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Book Review of *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet*

Recensão do Livro *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet*

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Steinberg, M. (2019). *The platform economy: How Japan transformed the consumer internet*. University of Minnesota Press.

Since around mid-2010s, "platform" companies such as Google, Amazon, and Uber have come under intense criticism. These tech giants from the Silicon Valley are problematic because their business model centers on secretive data surveillance and targeted marketing. They are socially irresponsible with tax evasions and liabilities for precarious labor. Their digital media imperialism is detrimental to the world for it undermines independent innovation at the national and local levels. The question is, can it be otherwise?

Marc Steinberg, associate professor of film studies at Concordia University in Montreal, is an expert of Japanese popular culture, anime, and games. His new volume on Japanese platform economy is full of thought-provoking historical and discourse analysis (Chapters 1–3), innovative case studies and political economy inquiries (Chapters 4–6). Rigorously researched and cogently written, this book succeeds in demonstrating the productivity of a dewesternized approach in not only understanding but also reimagining the "platforms", also known as *purattofomu* in Japanese.

Besides shifting focus to Japan, Steinberg breaks new paths with his historical frame, conceptual definition, and analytical approach. The period he works with is Japan around the turn of the millennia, meaning alternatives to today's platform hegemony already existed 2 decades ago. The Japanese model of platform economy indeed has continuities with the big tech nowadays, especially the capitalist commodification of "contents" (*kontentsu*) for which NTT Docomo's i-mode — the world's first-ever commercially viable mobile internet platform — serves as the "progenitor" that influenced its followers including those in the Silicon Valley. But i-mode and its competitors also differed from today's tech giants in that their revenues did not rely on advertising and surveillance.

They took a smaller cut (9%) from each transaction on their platform (compared to 30% on iOS App Store or Android Play Store), while providing greater care for small players in their walled gardens online, training and incubating them. The result was more labor stability and chances of growth for small and medium-sized enterprises in an ecosystem of embedded capitalism. This differs remarkably from the dominant neoliberal platforms nowadays where Google and Apple hold a "survival of the fittest" attitude toward app makers the world over, most of whom suffer from high precarity.

Conceptually, Steinberg defines platforms as "(1) a layered structure often based on hardware, (2) a support for contents, and (3) a structure of mediation or enabler of financial transactions" (p. 6). While (3) is often emphasized in existing literature, there is usually much less attention to support mechanisms for (2) concerning the growth and well-being of contents creators across multiple media channels. Instead, today's digital content is treated almost by default as a tool used by the platforms, a bait, more precisely, to extract surveillance data. This is an instance how problematic industry practice confines scholarly thinking. Yet, Steinberg's conception based on the Japanese platform model highlights the multiplicity and interconnectedness of transmedia contents, the value of high-quality contents themselves rather than "behind-the-stage" data extraction, and institutionalized mechanisms to support contents creators financially as well as professionally.

Although recent literature has exhibited an "infrastructure turn" in digital media dtudies, the "layered structure often based on hardware" (p. 6) is also uniquely Japanese and East Asian. On the one hand, the platforms for contents and transactions are owned by telecom operators such as NTT, KDDI, and Softbank, which are governed as essential infrastructure companies in Japan with their public service obligations under regulatory oversight. This is very different from the likes of Uber and Apple that are private entities who play an infrastructural role but have so far largely refused to be regulated as infrastructure companies. The symbiosis between contents platforms and telecom operators means the companies generated considerable revenue from data traffic itself. They therefore did not have to depend on advertising.

On the other hand, the layered hardware structure is also reflected in the design of Japanese handsets — *keitai* — that would have physical buttons on top of its keyboard (see Figure 1) for direct access to online services (e.g., email) and dedicated corporate contents (e.g., from Yahoo! Japan). This design had major influence beyond Japan. For instance, the Taiwanese semiconductor company MTK supplied millions of mobile phone chips to thousands of low-end *shanzhai* phone makers in China. These MTK-based phones typically had five shortcut buttons on top of their keypads for online contents and services. There was direct Japanese lineage for this design that helped reduce the price of mobile phone hardware in not only China but also large market segments of the global south.

Figure 1 *A Softbank* Keitai *With Dedicated Keys for Online Contents*

Credits. Jack Linchuan Qiu

As a political economist proficient in the analysis of popular culture, Steinberg deploys an innovative approach combining institutional analysis of media industries with critical discourse analysis of Japanese materials. He draws from Maurizio Lazzarato's insight on the *mode* and *monde* of production to argue that "capitalism and language cooperate in the production of words and worlds... capitalist valorization depends on the development of words — keywords such as *contents* and *platforms*" (p. 4). Then he focuses his scrutiny, especially in the first half the book, on management and business literature around the turn of the century that encompassed computer, telecom, and creative industries as well as Toyotism and the automobile sector with "car platforms — standardized chassis that are the basis for multiple different car models" (p. 73). A platform, in this unconventional sense, "could be both an automobile chassis and a website where one clicks on" (p. 73).

In addition to analyzing business and management discourse, Steinberg examined government documents and conducted interviews with key individuals to piece together a dynamic picture in which "platforms beget contents that in turn beget platforms" (p. 11). This applies to not only i-mode and similar telecom-backed mobile internet platforms (Chapter 4), but also leading online video sites such as Niconico Video, also known as the YouTube of Japan. Although Niconico's interface has its own aesthetics, participatory culture, and business logics following i-mode, Steinberg's case study confirms that Niconico is a variant of, rather than a resistant to, the general model of platform capitalism. But his analytical approach is also cultural sensitive, for instance, in using the words of Enoki Kei'ichi, the mastermind of i-mode, in describing contents platforms as "the palm of Buddha" upon which the world sits (p. 161). This is more than a religious metaphor with Asian flavor. It helps to explain the regional development in East and Southeast Asia up to this day towards the so-called "super apps" such as KakaoTalk (South Korea), WeChat (China), Grab (Singapore and Malaysia), and Go-Jek (Indonesia) that have arguably gone beyond Silicon Valley in furthering the logics of platform capitalism.

The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet by Steinberg sets a new standard in comparative platform studies beyond the west, from a historical and regional perspective that reflects critically upon Silicon Valley. Systematically and convincingly, it demonstrates how digital platform ecosystems could have been, and have indeed been, structured differently than today's model based almost exclusively on surveillance capitalism with labor precarity as its necessary consequence. The destiny of digital capitalism is not preordained. Nor is it a single pathway under the auspices of digital Americana. While the Japanese model has its limits and downsides such as nationalist jingoism and tendencies towards capitalist and imperialist expansion, the takeaway from Steinberg's analysis is ultimately about the hubris of ahistorical, US-centric narratives surrounding the platform economy, which is now corrected through this first book-length treatment of Japanese platform economy and its regional and global ramifications.

An important pending question remains though: what can be learned about the bust of the Japanese contents-plus-platforms bubble? Capitalism consists of boom and bust cycles, globally, regionally, and in specific economic sectors. This volume has done a marvellous job examining the booming days of the Japanese model. However, critical readers interested in postcapitalism would probably demand more in-depth analysis of the Japanese demise more than a decade ago, compared with the initial signs of decline for Silicon Valley in recent years. Yet, Steinberg was limited by the management and business literature that tends to shed light only on the brighter side of the coin. As such, the strength of his discourse analysis and case studies also constitutes a weakness of his methodology.

Nevertheless, this book is a must-read for those who hope to broaden their perspectives on digital platforms geographically and historically; those who are troubled by Silicon Valley's problematic narratives and practices of surveillance capitalism; and those who seek critical understandings of platform formations in the past to inform current and future struggles toward better digital futures that are sustainable and equitable. I strongly recommend Marc Steinberg's *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet*.

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Biographical Note

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