

Public Sphere and Collective Action. the Portuguese Movement of the “15th September”

Isabel Babo

(Ph.D) Professor, Dean of the University Lusófona of Porto, Portugal
isabel.babo.ibl@gmail.com

Célia Taborda Silva

(Ph.D) Professor at the University Lusófona of Porto, Portugal
celilsilva@sapo.pt

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n6s5p425

Abstract

Considering the social events and collective protests that have emerged in the international and national public sphere and more specifically the movement “To hell with the Troika! We want our lives!” – a social movement that started in June, 2012, against the Troika and the measures of the Portuguese Government, and which was responsible for the organization of the demonstration of the 15th September 2012, in Portugal, as well as in other cities in the country and in Europe, spreading in social digital networks and leading to subsequent public demonstrations, we propose a study concerning the current protest movements and the new forms of public mobilization, once activism has increased in electronic links (net activism) and on the street. Revisiting the conceptions of public sphere as a common space related to the notion of living-together, as publicity and visibility (Arendt), as a form and an event (Quéré) and as a space of meeting, accessibility and movement (Joseph), we, thus, intend to discuss the following issues: the public space as a place of collective action (Cefaï) and civic mobilization (Rouet); the importance of digital social networks in the new forms of communication – in relation with the modern public space (Habermas) - and the analysis of the movement of the 15th September in the light of Tilly’s perspective on social movements. It is also our aim to understand whether these new forms of organization, mobilization and acting in public are distant, or not, from traditional social movements and if we are facing the emergence of new public spaces.

Keywords: public sphere, social movements, collective mobilizations, digital networks

1. Introduction

In the past few years, social movements have displayed a set of characteristics that are different from the conventional patterns of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ collective action movements. The discussion around social movements started in the nineteenth century, with the formation of the labor movement. Protests lost their spontaneity and depoliticized character, typical of pre-industrial societies, and became organized and politicized – there were planned and politicized demonstrations and strikes, claiming for economic, social and even political benefits. In the mid-twentieth century there were movements based on universal values, such as the environment, autonomy, identity and peace; the focus of protest was no longer centered on labor and materialistic issues. Though these movements had no party affiliation, they had political objectives, trying to sensitize public opinion.

The right to protest has been recognized throughout contemporary European history, allowing citizens to use new forms of mobilization to claim rights or simply to express their opinion in the public space. If collective action movements such as strikes and demonstrations were once banned and seen as public disorder, over time they have become granted rights, leading to the emergence of new forms of contestation in the public sphere. Inversely, since the beginning of the twentieth century, parties and trade unions have been losing their leading role as far as the organization of demonstrations and strikes is concerned. Scheduled collective actions, conducted by specific actors, have been replaced by new forms of social action that use social networks (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) as a means of mobilization and they often have no leaders, organization or headquarters. These social movements do not claim more rights; they defend the existing ones, so that full citizenship, freedom of expression and the right of participation in political, economic, social and educational life remain granted rights.

The Portuguese movement of the 15th September 2012 – “To hell with the Troika! We want our lives!” – clearly illustrates this new form of protest, motivated by the dissatisfaction of Portuguese citizens. This movement joined

thousands of people, protesting against the government's policies and claiming a new political, economic and social model. In several cities across the country, the Portuguese, as citizens, while people belonging to a community, intervened in the public sphere and expressed themselves on issues that concerned them, such as the crisis, unemployment and exploitation.

This movement has led us to reflect on the current protest movements and new forms of collective action and public mobilization, at a time when activism is done in electronic links (net activism) and on the street. We will, thus, start with the presentation of this movement, we will look at the public space as a place of collective action and civic mobilization, we will try to understand if we are facing new forms of mobilization and acting in public and whether these are distant or not from traditional social movements and, finally, we will look at the importance of social digital networks in new communication methods and new forms of activism and public protest.

2. The Movement "To Hell with the Troika! We Want Our lives!"

On the 15th September 2012, there was a major demonstration in Portugal. The protest occurred simultaneously in about forty Portuguese cities and also in Paris, Berlin, London, Brussels and Barcelona. This movement was organized by a group of citizens as a reaction against the crisis the country was facing as well as against the measures politicians were taking to solve it.

On the 6th April 2011, the Portuguese government, headed by the former Prime Minister José Socrates, asked for external help to solve the country's financial crisis. The failure to pay the public debt, to lower the public deficit, and the need to obtain funds to inject into public companies that were technically bankrupt led the country to sign a memorandum of understanding with the *Troika* (the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission). Since then, both the economic difficulties and political instability increased and it was necessary to carry out early elections.

In the elections of the 5th June 2011, the Socialist Party (PS) was defeated. The Social Democratic Party (PSD) won, but without a majority in parliament. The elected Prime Minister, unable to govern in such adverse circumstances, made a governance agreement with the Popular Party (CDS-PP). The new Portuguese government decided to strictly follow the terms of the bailout program defined by the *Troika*, which led to great austerity measures. The fiscal restraint led to a general increase in taxes, contradicting the electoral promises. There were cuts to social benefits, salaries, pensions, subsidies and tax benefits, and there was an increase in VAT, rising the prices both of essential and superfluous goods, and consequently causing great economic difficulties for the population.

This context of difficulties and the widespread dissatisfaction led to the creation of the platform "To Hell with the *Troika!* We want our lives!". It was a spontaneous, horizontal movement, with no political affiliation, which quickly disseminated in social networks as a movement of ordinary citizens, from distinct areas and political persuasions. Its purpose was to channel popular discontent, while organizing a major national demonstration of democratic citizenship, so that the Portuguese could protest against the severe austerity measures.

In their manifesto they claimed:

"We must do something extraordinary. We must take the streets and squares of the cities and our fields. We must join the voices, hands... We must do something against submission and resignation, against the bottleneck of ideas, against the dying of the collective will. We must call upon the voices, arms and legs of all people who know that the present and the future are decided on the streets. (...) The sacking (loan, help, rescue, names that are given to it, depending on the lie that they want to tell us) came together with the application of devastating political measures... The austerity imposed on us destroys our dignity and our life, it does not work and destroys democracy. We must overcome the fear that has been skillfully widespread and, once and for all, realize that we have almost nothing to lose and that the day will come when we will have lost everything because we have shut up and given up. (...) They divided us to oppress us. Let us join together to free ourselves!" (queselixaTroikablogspot.pt 15th September 2014)

Despite the fact that the 29 subscribers of the movement presented themselves on the internet as a group that was not organizational nor had any party affiliation, the original idea for the movement seems to have come from inside the organization "Inflexible Precarious" (IP). According to Rui Marçal, Marco Marques, Myriam Zaluar, Magda Alves and Tiago Mota Saraiva, all activists of the IP (Tiago Saraiva is also a member of the PCP), were the mentors of this movement. The plan of these activists was to "mix people with a profile of activists with anonymous activists in order to mobilize more people" (vice.com/ptauthorruimarçal - August 8, 2013). The role of these four elements was to gather people, ordinary citizens, not embedded in organizations, who shared the same goals, in order to achieve a consistent group of anonymous protesters. This initiative was carried out outside the IP and the first meeting, which occurred in mid-

June, took place at the home of one of the activists. The Prime Minister himself would give the demonstration proponents the idea that would serve as a motto to convene the protest. In July of that year (two months before the local elections), the Prime Minister used the phrase "to hell with the elections" in a speech, during a dinner of his parliamentary group (PSD) at the Assembly of the Republic. This same sentence was reused to create the slogan "To hell with the *Troika!* We want our lives!", which would turn against the government.

The group meetings were intensified and, in mid-August, João Camargo, a member of the IP and the leader of the party *Bloco de Esquerda*¹, joined them to coordinate the movement (vice.com/ptauthorruimarçal). The main worry was to increase the number of subscribers and to prepare the protest, expecting the logistical support of the IP. The date for the public mobilization was set, considering the moment when "the social divide" would be at its maximum, close to the presentation of the first package of the austerity measures. This way, and according to João Camargo, a "moment of rupture" would be created (vice.com/ptauthorruimarçal). A large demonstration took place on the 15th September 2012, as the group had planned. On that day, about a million Portuguese were on the streets of their cities to demonstrate themselves. It was the biggest protest that occurred in the country after the revolution of the 25th April².

In Lisbon, more than 500 thousand people joined the movement. The concentration started at the *Praça José Fontana* and ended at the *Praça de Espanha*. There were thousands of people at the square, the music was echoing and was interrupted now and then by the speeches delivered by some of the participants. At five o'clock, the protesters followed the planned path, with their clenched fists in the air and bearing the national flag, or posters, in which one could read the phrases that expressed their emotions: "thieves"; "the people united will never be defeated"³ (*Diário de Notícias* [DN] 15/09/2012). Along the way, they passed by iconic locations such as *Saldanha* and the *Praça da República*. The fact that the movement ended at the *Praça de Espanha* was not occasional. Besides being an area with considerable dimensions, allowing to safely accommodate the many people who were there, therein lies the official residence of the Spanish ambassador, the country where protests against austerity would occur synchronously. On the 12th, in the text with the itinerary that had been published on Facebook, the group had referred to that they wanted the movement to be an "Iberian protest". In the city of Porto, the *Avenida dos Aliados* was also full of people who shouted slogans against austerity. In other adhering cities, the scenery and action were identical.

At a press conference in Porto, on the same day of the demonstration and just before the protests, the organizers reinforced the fact that the movement was spontaneous and nonpartisan. João Lima, one of the demonstration subscribers, stated that they did not want a protest with protagonists of political parties, trade unions or other organizations. The goal was to unite the Portuguese so that they would say "Stop!" to the austerity measures announced by the Prime Minister (*Jornal de Notícias* [JN] 15/09/2012). These people believed that the political inflexibility was "sinking" the country and that other measures should be taken. Therefore, they proposed solutions such as:

The renegotiation of the Portuguese debt, the negotiation between the Government and the oil companies for dropping the prices to stimulate the economy and ease the wallet of the population, increasing the rigor in terms of public asset management. (JN, 15/09/2012).

The indignation of about one million people was not totally ignored by the Government. The contribution to social security⁴, one of the most controversial measures of the executive, turned out to be reviewed.

The movement did not end with this demonstration of the 15th September 2012. In 2013, there were two other major demonstrations: one on the 2nd March, under the motto: "To hell with the *Troika!* – the people have the power"⁵; the other on the 26th October "To hell with the *Troika!* – there are no dead ends". The repertoire of social criticism intensified, as well as the demands for the solution of the economic and social problems.

This movement has raised many issues, namely the perception that if we are facing new ways of mobilization and acting in public, we must consider the repercussions these will have in the context of the contemporary public space.

3. Public Space, Collective Action and Civic Mobilizations

In modernity, the public space was understood as a place of communication, discussion, a place of dissemination in the

¹ Left-wing political party, founded in Portugal, in 2000, by the merger of some political parties and other movements.

² The Portuguese revolution of the 25th April 1974 marked the end of the fascist regime and the establishment of democracy in the country.

³ A slogan that marked the period around the 25th April revolution.

⁴ It is a body set up by the Portuguese State that is constituted by the Providential System and the System for the Social Protection and Citizenship.

⁵ This slogan also marked the period around the 25th April revolution.

sense of *making public*. According to Habermas (1962), practical, moral and political issues are discussed in the public space, according to a communicative rationality, aiming at a mutual understanding; the public discussion follows the *principle of publicity*, which is a normative principle. It is in the public space that the democratic communication, the public opinion and the collective will are formed.

With the invasion of the modern public space by the mass media (press, radio, television), mass culture and cultural industries, the public space has expanded and has become democratized and massified. This resulted in a degradation of the debate and discussion of ideas in public places, as Habermas argued (1962); nevertheless, the forms of the *public* have been reactivated through collective and civic mobilizations, movements and forms of association (feminism, environmentalism, or gay, students, counter culture, and alternative movements, etc.) that occurred during the twentieth century and have marked the first decades of the twenty-first century. The public space has been multiplied or fragmented in plural public spaces, especially since the 90s, partly because of the new communication and information technologies. Habermas (1992) argues that the unitary and deliberative figure of the modern public space has been replaced by a fragile network of plural and unfinished public spaces, with permeating borders, places of discursive production of meanings, identities, productions and dissemination of convictions and ideas.

This network of public spheres may also be analyzed through the prism of contemporary historiography (Fraser, 2003), with its critique of the bourgeois model for the modern public space, considering that it is based on exclusions (of gender, or in training processes of social classes). Contemporary historiography understands that there are competing public spaces, non-liberal and non-bourgeois, alternative public spaces that are propitious to the plural and heterogeneous publics or "counter-publics", which have challenged the norms of the bourgeois public space, developing new lifestyles and political behaviors and new forms of public discussion.

Considering the 15th September movement, we believe that the current fragmentation of the public space coexists, almost paradoxically, with mobilizations that occur at an international level, and that may reach planetary proportions, displaying diversity and heterogeneity in terms of actors and publics. Therefore, it becomes relevant to understand whether the creation of a collective action of protest around a problematic situation was at the origin of this movement, establishing a public space that is not only global or universal⁶, but unique and diverse at the same time, with new forms of collective mobilization and acting in public. It is, thus, important to analyze the notion of collective action.

Collective action can be understood as the set of coordinated conducts of a group in order to achieve common interests. Its collective nature results from the fact that it is developed by collective actors that are the subject of such actions (associations, trade unions, committees of citizens, opinion movements, fans of sports clubs, strikers...). In the scope of the analysis of the construction of public problems, Gusfield (1981) considers that the collective action is a way to treat, solve or modify problematic situations, and that the public action is one of its modalities. Public action is the collective action of public powers, institutions or social movements that is developed in public arenas (publicizing places of events or problems: the media, the courts, etc.) or in public scenes (places of visibility and exercise of public action by collective actors – citizens, associations, institutions, commissions, etc.) in response to problematic situations. In that sense, certain problems, in terms of their construction as public problems (Gusfield, 1981), follow the mobilization and participation in public actions (demonstrations, strikes, petitions, vigils, etc.) or the social movements. This is the case of the movement "To hell with the *Troika!*" that comes as a response to determined social and political issues, which have created a certain problematic situation and a field of collective action and public mobilization, fostered by a common interest - the Portuguese government's austerity policy - which, and as we have seen, has lasted in time.

The demonstration "To hell with the Troika! We want our lives!" aims to lead the Portuguese to say "Stop!" to the "the austerity measures announced by the Prime Minister" (JN, 15/09/2012);

The signatories of the protest have said that today's event aims to be the "beginning of a peaceful popular uprising against the "criminal and the sacking" policies and an opportunity for everyone to say "Stop!" (DN, 15/09 / 2012);

The demonstration ("To hell with the Troika! There are no dead ends!", of the 26th October 2013, which preceded the approval of the state budget] intends to demonstrate, "once more" that the Portuguese "do not agree with the intervention of the Troika, with the measures adopted by the Government and the State Budget for 2014", as referred to by Joana Campos, one of the promoters of the protest, to Lusa Agency (RENAISSANCE online 26/10/2013 9:53).

Sharing this interest, which won intelligibility and visibility with the manifesto "To hell with the *Troika!* We want our lives!", the subscribers and people who protested on the streets for the first time⁷, together with other people with

⁶ Habermas, who considers modernity as an unfinished project, argues that plural public spaces refer to a universal public space.

⁷ "We have received many contacts of people saying that it is the first time they attend a demonstration, in some cases with their family". (PÚBLICO, 15/09/2012).

affiliation to political parties and trade unions (like the CGTP), social actors and diverse publics, of different ages and social political and cultural backgrounds, demonstrated as a unified group. Actually, the organizers of the movement insisted in clarifying that the mobilization was not linked to organizations and that there was plurality and heterogeneity in terms of participation.

However, there was the creation of a "common space", which is a condition of the public, according to Hannah Arendt (*The condition of modern man*, 1958). That is, the common space of "living together", according to the author, is the sensitive medium and the space of visibility where the actions and words, the agents and the events accede to their existence, acquire the traits that identify them and open themselves to public judgment. The public domain is, thus, the place of what is "common", of what appears and is visible; as Arendt proclaimed, it is the place where everything should appear because "being and appearing coincide" (1988: 89). The public space is a "public scene of apparition", where things are seen and heard, it is the space where everything "appears in public and can be seen and heard by everyone".

The demonstration involves the act of becoming public: it involves visibility and publicity. From the moment it started, the movement "To hell with the *Troika!*" had huge visibility and publicity due to the unusually high number of participants, to the new technological mediations, which were used in the mobilization of the actors, and to the traditional media (press, radio and television), which reported the news.

On the other hand, the category of visibility in the urban public space is bound to interactions and interpersonal relationships, as rituals and topological realities. As Isaac Joseph (1995, 1999) sees it, the urban public space has structural characteristics of mobility, accessibility and impersonality, and the mobility and visibility exist in the spaces that are accessible to anyone (street, park, railway station, shopping arcade, market, etc.).

Public spaces are subject to experience, representation and action regimens; they are places of physical co-presence, mutual visibility ("visibility arrangements"), meetings, circulation, communication, language, vision, observation and perception. Joseph argues that the urban culture is a dramatic culture, in which the scenographic dimension of the urban spaces is important (1999: 24). As in other public mobilizations, these were characteristics which marked the demonstrations of the 15th September: streets and squares were occupied by bodies, movements, displacements, "visibility arrangements", languages, rituals, staging; people were there to be seen and heard.

The essence of the events and of what is lived in the public space is emphasized with the demonstrations, and it is in the public space that the configuration of the actions takes place, acquiring form and meaning. Quéré (1995) refers to the public space as "form and event," or "*mise-en-forme*", "*mise-en-sens*" and "*mise-en-scène*" of the social. To that extent, we may consider that it is in the public space that the civic mobilizations and demonstrations emerge, acquiring repertoires of action and discourse. However, we must understand whether these new forms of mobilization and acting in public are distant, or not, from the traditional social movements.

4. The 15th September 2012: a Social Movement or a New Way of Mobilization and Acting in Public?

During the twentieth century there were different theories related to social movements, in which the analysis of collective action was polarized around the classic paradigms of the Chicago School, the theory of Resource Mobilization and the theories of the New Social Movements (Gohn, 1997).

Charles Tilly (1981) assumed that social movements require historical understanding and tried to interpret them within the convergence between sociology and history, following Braudel's concept of "*longue durée*", to capture their permanence or change, immobility or innovation. His diachronic study of these phenomena, since 1750, led him to introduce the concept of "contention repertoire" (1977). According to Tilly, a "repertoire" is a "set of forms of action" (Tilly, 1978: 156); each epoch has its own structures of mobilization and action, often forged from the oldest actions (1995: 27-28), and the modification of political and social structures results in a change of the "repertoire" (Tilly, 1995: 35).

First we must reflect on the concept of movement. Tilly argued that a social movement was associated with the collective action process of a particular social group and the way this same group, through public demonstrations, acquired consciousness and power (Tilly, 1978); hence the relation of the concept to the industrial society of the West and the rise of the labor movement (it was organized, it had a program and a context). However, Eric Hobsbawm (1978) showed that there were pre-industrial social movements, which he designated as "archaic" or "primitive" movements, because they were spontaneous, sporadic, localized and apolitical⁸. These forms of action were limited to the constraints of the historical moment. There were changes in the forms of collective action, but only in the nineteenth century, with the great economic and social changes that occurred during the industrialization.

Due to these permanent mutations and proliferation of collective actions in the turn of the twentieth century to the

⁸ We also find "pre-industrial" movements in Portugal in the nineteenth century. (Silva, 2013).

twenty-first century, Tilly considered it necessary to clarify that not every collective action corresponds to a social movement. The social movement is a kind of protest that goes beyond the mere occasional protest. Thus, in his work *Social Movements: 1768 - 2004*, he concluded that only a movement that displays a combination of certain elements, which result in a certain "formula", can be considered a social movement.

This formula combines three elements: 1) Campaigns, collective claims directed to target authorities; 2) Repertoires of action, which include a set of claiming performances such as demonstrations, public meetings, marches, petitions, statements to the media, etc.; 3) Demonstrations of WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment), that is, concerted public representations to demonstrate respectability, unity, numbers and commitment on the part of the elements of the movement, members and/or followers of the cause in question.

Does the 15th September movement display the elements that constitute a social movement? The "campaign" presupposes everything that precedes the action, which allows to sustain the motivations of the movement, giving it consistency. Within this context, we must consider all mobilization actions of the group responsible for the manifesto against the *Troika*, which circulated in social networks, as well as in traditional media, through the interviews of the movement subscribers. The protest had a very specific goal: to end the austerity that the government had imposed on the Portuguese people, by accepting the presence of a supranational entity - the *Troika*. All actions of this campaign eventually establish a relationship between the group of proponents, the group of demonstrators and the government, which resulted in the acceptance of the demands of the protest – the review of the single social tax.

Regarding the "repertoire", or action strategies, there were public meetings, demonstrations, and statements to the media. The movement did not end on the 15th September; other events were held throughout the year 2013, including participations in other events organized at national and international levels, which shows that there were claiming performances within the movement "To hell with the *Troika*". As for the "demonstration" WUNC, the respectability of the actors was ensured by the heterogeneity of the people who participated in the movement, in terms of age, social class and ideology, showing intergenerational and motivational cohesion. In addition, there were nonpartisan subscribers with recognized public merit, as the composer António Pinho Vargas or the actress San José Lapa. There was an impressive number of protesters. One million people on the streets can only mean unity and identification with a cause. The commitment was certified in subsequent actions. On the 13th October 2012, promoters and demonstrators of the 15th September movement integrated the international protest *Global Noise*. In 2013, they promoted two major demonstrations, one on the 2nd March and another one on the 26th October, they attended the trade union (CGTP) demonstration on the 4th July, they organized small actions, such as the protest at the residence of the Prime Minister and boycotts during official government acts, singing emblematic songs of the 1974 revolution, which shows a continuity plan and the responsibility of the activists.

It seems that the movement "To hell with the *Troika*" gathers all elements of Tilly's formula and also what Tarow (1998) and then Tilly (2004) named as modular character. The adoption of strategies and the innovation and the sharing elements that were seen in other movements and contexts were transposed into the Portuguese reality, with no loss in terms of national uniqueness.

This movement was similar to other international movements, sharing the same type of innovations, including network mobilization, horizontal organization and the role of the "collective". However, these features that correspond to new forms of mobilization and acting in public can also constitute an obstacle in terms of the effectiveness of the social movements themselves. Cefai (2005: 135) argues that the coordination between these different "collectives" is problematic. He considers that as they are very heterogeneous in their forms and resources, organizations, strategies and ideas, they are also too dispersed to maintain a focused goal and countervailing centers, and they often do not have other ambition than to inform, report and claim. According to Gohn (2014: 13), the "collectives" are based on various sources, depending on the group they belong to, and therefore there is not an ideological or utopian hegemony, they are motivated by a sense of dissatisfaction, disenchantment and indignation against the economic and political context.

We can conclude that the movement of the 15th September maintains some characteristics of former social movements, but it also incorporates new "repertoires", considering the form of mobilization and collective action, and is fostered by the will to change⁹. We must recognize the importance of social digital networks in the new communication methods and new forms of activism and public protest, both in the case of the 15th September movement and in other civic mobilizations of the twenty-first century. The new technological mediations widened the dimensions of visibility and communication.

⁹ As Gusfield mentioned, (1994: 108) social movements "more or less deliberately, try to produce changes in political or institutional aspects of society. On the other hand, they are signs that indicate that an aspect of the social life is being analyzed and that there are other alternatives".

5. Social Networks and New Ways of Activism and Public Protest

With the new social digital media, there is a multiplication of mediated contacts and the connections intervene as elements of immediacy, expansion and unlimited diffusion. The public sphere is pierced by technological mediations and becomes a borderless networking space, considered as a "space of flux" (Castells, 1999), despacialized, deterritorialized, fluctuating, "suspended", "out of soil" (Paquot, 2009: 106), anchored in speed and time (Virilio, 1988, 2004). "It's time - warns Paquot - that now ensures the 'public' the quality of this 'space' of virtual democracy" (idem, ibidem). On the Internet there are different relations in terms of space and time. There is simultaneity, immediacy and real-time communication that blurs the distances and simulates proximity.

On the Internet and other mobile connection devices (tablets, smartphones, notebooks etc.), the possibilities of expression and exposure of words and images, mobilization, dissemination of messages and adhesion have expanded almost limitlessly and are used for new civic mobilizations of protest. These can be initiated online, be extended to any other territory, go to the street with direct transmission of images, sounds and speeches, and be reported in real time. That is what happened on the 15th September:

"Today, the slogan was not to stay at home. The protest that happened around the country, which has spread to other parts of the world, was convened on Facebook and on Blogger under the motto "Demonstration: To hell with the Troika! We want our lives!"

'Fotos da Manif' was the Facebook page that was set up for the protesters, on the spot, to send their photos to. The photos are immediately posted and Negócios Online has compiled some of the many images that have been and are still being sent. (...)

On the wall of the same Facebook page, the German Kabelbrand Höllenfeuer, while sending photos, wrote, around 11 p.m.: "Hello. We (international people worldwide) held a solidarity action today in Berlin, opposite the Embassy of Portugal to support the resistance movement in Portugal." (15th September 2012, 20:11, Jornal de Negócios Online | negocios@negocios.pt; www.jornaldenegocios.pt/.../fotogaleria_manifestaccedilatildeo_de_15_d).

The call for the demonstration of the 15th September started in the social networks, with citizens/users inciting the mobilization in Lisbon, and immediately spread to other parts of the country, as well as it echoed in European cities and in Brazil. The media that were used and the terms of the mobilization changed.

With the net activism, which is based on a new type of action in connected digital networks (Di Felice, 2012), according to a new kind of reticular sociability that develops in social networks, there is the absence of leaders and structured social organizations to convene and coordinate the protest. But it is also the logic of the event which changes, in that the bodies, faces, spaces, words and gestures are transported to the digital platforms in real time, in the dynamics and instant of their occurrence, acquiring visibility and unlimited advertising.

Actors/users, devices, technologies, networks, databases are involved in these mobilizations, providing new ways of inhabiting the urban spaces. The *e-metropolis* ("*metrópoleletrônica*", Di Felice, 2012) is, according to the author, a meta-geographical space, livable through continuous informative and perceptive displacements, thanks to electrical circuits of networks and communicative fluxes, creating new forms of citizenship and new informative forms of appropriation, use and displacement. With the new technologies and social networks, new communication settings of sociability and collective action emerge, and each is required to maintain different roles: user, viewer, producer and receiver. Within this framework, the procedures for public mobilization are diverse, in the sense that any person may organize or join any petition or manifest online, mobilize or be mobilized to participate in a demonstration, create a solidarity action anywhere, send and receive messages and images.

6. Final Considerations

The dissemination of information and communication technologies, social networks and the emergence of transnational protest phenomena associated with the economic and financial crisis, globalization and multiculturalism have resulted in the emergence of new political practices of participation and mobilization, such as the events of 2011 – the largest spontaneous demonstration not linked to political parties called *Geração à Rasca*¹⁰, the 2011 protests in Spain, named by the Spanish media *Movimiento 15-M* – the *Indignados*, which took place in some European capitals, and the movement Occupy Wall Street. With the use of social media, new forms of occupation of public spaces are established to protest

¹⁰ *Geração à Rasca* was the name given to a series of demonstrations that occurred in Portugal and other countries, on the 12th March 2011.

against the absence of public and political rights or against economic and social inequalities (Tahrir Square, Gezi Park, Occupy Wall Street, Puerta del Sol, etc.).

Current social movements or civic mobilizations, in response to political, economic and social contexts, in which they are triggered, have incorporated new performances of operation, without losing characteristics of former movements, and have introduced various forms of interaction and communication devices, technologies and networks. Social actors and citizens have realized that democratic citizenship is not limited to the liberal view of political rights and representative democracy and have used the right to protest both online and on the street, as a way of civic participation and political claim.

In short, the economic crisis and the political institutions' legitimacy, the dissatisfaction with the austerity measures and the concern for the future have been the source of the mobilizations, and the centers of protest have been the same of the past, the squares and streets, the traditional places of solidarity and public expression. We can consider that the movement of the 15th September represents the current trends of the international protest against the harmful policies, organized by ordinary citizens who develop interactions and online protest actions and on the street. This means that even in the digital age, the protest and the collective action remain linked to the public sphere and the streets (the movements above mentioned gained visibility on the streets), but with the support of new technologies of communication and information. These movements are characterized by the use of technological mediations and net activism and, at the same time, they keep the usual scenic dimension of physical co-presence and collective action of the street protests.

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