

## Youth, social movements and protest digital networks in a time of crisis

### Juventude, movimentos sociais e redes digitais de protesto em época de crise

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**Abstract** *In recent years, we have seen in several contexts the emergence of new forms of contestation that involve the use of digital media as a resource for civic mobilization. Based on the results of a qualitative research project on youth participation in Portugal's public sphere, with special emphasis on the use of digital technologies and media, this article intends to answer a set of questions: What role does digital media have in the repertoire of action of collective actors that are part of the recent cycle of protests? What is the role of the so-called social networks and other digital tools in these protests? And, how are they used by certain collective activists and what representation does their use raise in different circumstances of "activist practices"?*

**Keywords:** *Youth; activism and social movements; Internet and digital networks.*

**Resumo** *Temos assistido, nos últimos anos, em diversos contextos, ao aparecimento de novas formas de contestação que envolvem a utilização de mídias digitais como recursos para a mobilização cívica. Partindo dos resultados de um projeto de pesquisa qualitativa sobre participação da juventude na esfera pública em Portugal, com especial ênfase na utilização de tecnologias e mídias digitais, o presente artigo pretende dar resposta a um conjunto de questões. Que papel têm os meios digitais nos repertórios de ação dos atores coletivos presentes no recente*

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*ciclo de protestos? Qual o papel das chamadas redes sociais e de outras ferramentas digitais nesses protestos? Como são utilizadas por determinados coletivos ativistas e que representações suscita o seu uso em diferentes circunstâncias do “trabalho ativista”?*

**Palavras-chave:** *Juventude; ativismo e movimentos sociais; internet e redes digitais.*

## **1. Introduction: youth, digital media and the new protest cycle**

In the last few years, as a result of the political instability and the financial crisis affecting several countries, we have seen strong waves of collective mobilization that have taken on a certain innovative character. Among the aspects to be pointed out is the use of digital media as a resource for mobilization and civic participation. These devices have been fundamental in expressing demands and organizing protest, which favor the emergence of informal political and civic action. These are practices where young people, socialized in a digital era (BANAJI; BUCKINGHAM, 2013), have played a relevant, but not exclusive, role as a visible face of widespread dissatisfaction.

However, the causes of greater participation of young people are deeper. Austerity policies in Portugal seem to have particularly affected this cohort, with a decrease in social support from the state and an increase in unemployment and job insecurity (CARMO et al., 2014). In this context, it is worthwhile highlighting the March 12, 2011, protest of the *Geração à Rasca* (“Desperate Generation”), which had young people as protagonists and anti-austerity demands as its principle cause. This protest can be traced to a wider cycle of protest that gained strength during 2012, with the bailout that led to the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission (EC) – commonly known as “Troika” – culminating in the first half of 2013, and then suffering a progressive decline that intensified during 2014. During this period, we witnessed various protest actions under the general cause of “fighting against austerity measures,” generating new collective actors that can be seen as the “newest social movements” (FEIXA et al., 2009). This was a cycle characterized by large protests, marches, assemblies and the occupation of public spaces, among other forms of action.

Given the weak tradition of political involvement and civic participation of the Portuguese population (CABRAL, 2014), previous protests marked a turning point in what has been referred to as the “new protest

cycle” (BAUMGARTEN, 2013; ACCORNERO; PINTO, 2014). However, we cannot discard the close relation between these phenomena and the waves of protests that occurred internationally, notably in Tunisia and Egypt, in the USA (Occupy movement), in Spain (Los Indignados – “the indignant ones”) in 2011 (DAHLGREN, 2013; FEIXA; NOFRE, 2013), and in Brazil (the “free-fare” and “anti-world-cup” movements) in 2013 and 2014 (RECUERO et al., 2015).

This analysis is based on a research project carried out between 2014 and 2015, which sought to articulate the use of digital media in forms of activism and public participation of young people in Portugal.<sup>3</sup> Methodologically, a qualitative approach was adopted, articulating online (analysis of digital platforms) and offline research (in-depth interviews, observation of events and documental collection). The empirical basis for the thoughts presented is focused on the analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with activists of different profiles.<sup>4</sup>

Which actors have emerged and affirmed themselves in the recent protests in Portugal? What role has digital media played in these actors’ repertoires of action? In addition to this more general characterization, we also intend to focus on the role that certain platforms play in what we can call “activist practices” – particularly, what is the role of so-called social networks (such as Facebook or Twitter) and other digital tools in recent protests? How are they used within certain activist collectives, and what representations does their use raise in different circumstances of activist practices?

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<sup>4</sup> A total of 36 in-depth interviews were conducted with activists from different movements, groups and collectives, mobilized around different causes (political, social, ecological, LGBT, etc. – see Table 1’s caption) between March and November, 2014. In addition to causes, the selection criteria for respondents included age (youth and young adults between 20 and 35 years of old were interviewed – with the exception of two in their 40s, since they were leaders and activists who had belonged to the collectives in question for a long time) and the type of involvement in activist practices. In the latter criteria, both leaders of movements and “anonymous” activists with significant and diversified trajectories of civic implications were considered.

## 2. Social movements and activism in Portugal: actors and tensions

The project developed sought to contribute to the re-evaluation of participation in the public sphere, looking at non-traditional forms of political and civic involvement. That is why a broad meaning of activism was adopted, including different forms of participation in the public sphere, motivated by strictly political causes as well as demands that can be placed on a symbolic and cultural level (DAHLGREN, 2009). Contemporary youth has been portrayed as politically non-participative. This situation is, in some way, related to an apparent crisis of the democratic system, which has led to a gradual disbelief in the system and its institutions. However, in opposition to this somewhat pessimistic view, unconventional public participation through non-institutional channels – or that is not usually associated with traditional political activity – must be taken into account (LOADER, 2007; OLSSON; DAHLGREN, 2010). Digital media represent a fundamental tool in this context, as confirmed by our respondents.

Through observation and the reports gained through the interviews, six types of collective actors involved in activist practices were identified. Although it is possible to say that most of them have a “pre-austerity existence,” since they defend more general and overlapping causes, all of them are associated in some way to the recent public protests that have taken place in Portuguese society. On the other hand, even though these collective actors are neither exclusively nor predominantly constituted by young people, their presence is very relevant, a fact reinforced by the presented demands.

The first category can be described as *new anti-austerity social movements*, resulting from the economic and financial crisis, which had the fight against austerity measures implemented by the government as their main cause. The non-hierarchical, organic, non-institutional aspects and, therefore, distant from what can be considered institutionalized political activity, constitute some of the movements’ main characteristics. The Indignados Lisboa (“Indignant ones, Lisbon”) movement, or

the *Que se Lixe a Troika* (“Fuck the Troika”) movement, are two good examples of this type.

A second category concerns so-called *alter-globalization movements* that can be regarded as a kind of “predecessor” to the new social movements constituted around anti-austerity demands. There is a clear affinity between global demands against the socio-economic consequences of neoliberal capitalism and the causes that motivate the so-called anti-austerity movements. In addition to the specificity of the context in which they emerge and the global reach of motivations, several fundamental issues remain identical and maintain their presence in the new cycle of national protest.

The third type of collective actors considered falls within the category of the so-called *new “classical” social movements*, associated with cultural and identity causes. The political impact of these movements depends to a great extent on what is understood as political, since strictly political motivations are somewhat missing from the point of view of demands. Associations and environmental, animal rights, anti-discrimination groups (ethnic, sexual, gender, etc.) were included in this category.

A fourth set corresponds to the so-called “*radical*” movements. This category includes collective actors who are explicitly “against the system,” such as anarchist groups and others who are characterized by alternative practices, practices of resistance or that oppose the dominant values of society. The best example of these types of movements could be represented by *Okupas* (squatters) linked to the occupation of empty urban spaces. In the Portuguese case, the importance of these groups is residual, considering recent housing occupation experiences (BAUMGARTEN, 2013).

A fifth type involves *movements directly linked to digital activism*. That is, movements, platforms, groups or organizations that mainly act online or use the Internet and other technologies as the main resource or cause (for example, Anonymous, the Free Software movement and the Pirate Party movement). This is a broad and heterogeneous category composed of distinct collectives that have in common the particularity

of using digital technology in a more sophisticated and prolific way than other groups.

Finally, *traditional political actors* were also considered, namely political parties and trade unions. They maintain a relation of ambivalence and complicity with some activist movements. First of all, because several activist groups' members have a trajectory marked by connection to some political party. The prominence of trade unions is also evident, especially the main central trade unions in the country, CGTP (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers) and UGT (General Union of Workers), which have great capacity for mobilization and intervention.

This brief description of the main collective actors involved in activist practices, especially in recent protests, reveals a heterogeneous field marked by the confluence of multiple actors in a varied public arena. Figure 1 seeks to represent these various actors by positioning them on two main axes, as well as a third axis that cuts across the two. That is, an axis related to demands surrounding the fight against austerity, and another axis that stipulates the different degrees of institutionalization involved in the forms of organization of these collectives.

We can, for this reason, interpret the six types of collective actors described according to certain tensions.

The first of these tensions concerns the process of institutionalization. On the side of institutionalization there are political parties and trade unions, but also, on another level, movements that organize themselves as cultural or identity associations. By contrast, there are non-institutional collectives, some only representing networks of shared interests, whilst others are against any form of institutionalization, promoting informality, horizontality and participation. Some of the current movements and platforms were created to promote specific events of an ephemeral nature (protests, the occupation of space) and others do not have the opportunity to institutionalize as they did not continue their activities.

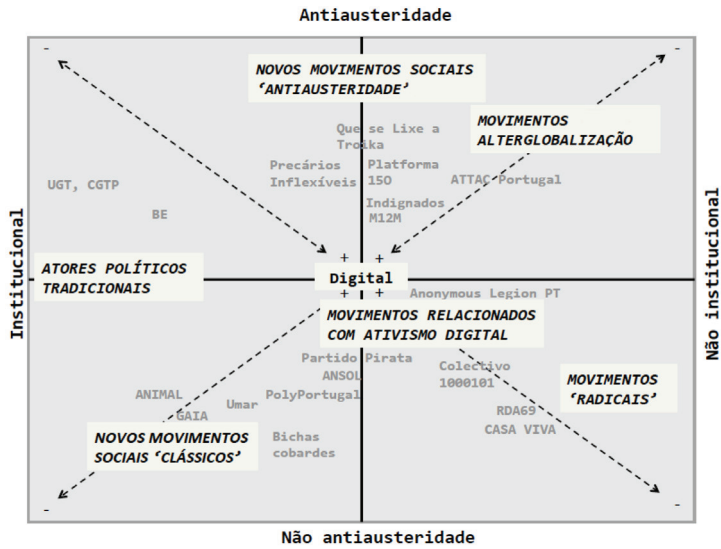


Figure 1. Collective actors involved in activism according to two main axes (non-institutional vs. institutional; anti-austerity claims vs. non-anti-austerity demands) and a third one (digital vs. non-digital).

Captions: Traditional political actors: the BE (Bloco de Esquerda – Left Bloc) party; the CGTP (Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses – General Confederation of Portuguese Workers) trade union; UGT (União Geral de Trabalhadores – General Union of Workers) trade union; new anti-austerity social movements: Indignados movement; M12M (Movimento 12 de Março – March 12 Movement); Que se Lixe a Troika platform; Plataforma 150 (Plataforma 15 de Outubro – October 15 Platform); Precários inflexíveis (Precarious Inflexibles) association; movements linked to digital activism: Anonymous Legion PT (Portugal); ANSOL (Associação Nacional para o Software Livre – National Association for Free Software; Colectivo 1000101 (Collective 1000101); Pirate Party movement, Portugal; alter-globalization movements: ATTAC Portugal (Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l’Action Citoyenne – Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Citizen Action); “radical” movements: Casa Viva (Occupied House) Porto; RDA69 (Regueirão dos Anjos 69) Lisbon; new “classical” social movements: Animal (Associação Nortenha de Intervenção no Mundo Animal – Northern Association of Intervention in the Animal World); Bichas Cobardes (Cowardly Fagots) association; GAIA (Grupo de Ação e Intervenção Ambiental – Environmental Action and Intervention Group); PolyPortugal (Associação Poliamor – Polyamory Association); UMAR (União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta – Women’s Association Alternative and Response).

Source: Youth Network Activism Project. Prepared by the authors



A second tension concerns the underlying causes of collective actors. In some cases, anti-austerity demands are evident, constituting their identifying and aggregating element; in other cases, this concern does not exist or is diffusely present, associated with other specific demands (for example, new “classical” social movements). In any case, and even considering anti-austerity movements, their concerns are sometimes broader and more diverse, from appeals for greater democratic and civic participation to cultural demands.

A third and final tension allows us to consider digital and non-digital organization of activist practices. Together with “street dynamics,” strong mobilization through the Internet and the use of digital equipment, should also be highlighted, which reflects a tension between the online and offline. The Internet not only presents itself as a complementary space to exchange information, communicate and create networks, but can also be thought of as an arena for public intervention, constituting a territory for activist struggle and causes. The so-called digital movements directly reflect this dynamic, in the same way that other movements relate to the digital mainly as a tool used for different purposes and with variable degrees of sophistication.

### **3. Digital media, protest and activism: between the streets and the Internet**

The importance of digital media in political and civic participation has become more pronounced in recent years, particularly as the use of the Internet has become mobile and ubiquitous. In a certain way, the space of contemporary protest is a hybrid space, where the Internet and the streets are interconnected in various ways (CASTELLS, 2012). However, the role of digital networks as a tool for democratization and participation has been interpreted in different ways (DAHLGREN, 2013). An optimistic perspective tends to emphasize its democratizing and emancipating role (CASTELLS, 2012). A critical perspective calls into question the capability of the Internet and digital technologies to generate more participation (FUCHS, 2011). These polarized positions

are particularly evident in relation to social media platforms (such as Facebook or Twitter), which either raise apologetic discourses, underlining their importance in creating alternative channels of participation, or derogatory discourses, emphasizing the temporary and inconsistent nature of these social media, and equally warn about the risk of monitoring and electronic surveillance by companies and authorities (LOVINK, 2011).

In addition to the general use of digital technology tools in political activities, its use for varied interests and causes can be considered in a more complex way (POSTILL, 2014). This issue leads us to a distinction about the different ways of using digital technology in political participation and activism. On the one hand, digital technologies appear as tools to be employed by social movements, allowing communication, the dissemination of content and the construction of alternatives using the Internet (ATTON, 2004). On the other hand, digital technologies themselves become the cause of contestation (RAYMOND, 1999). In this sense, one can observe movements for which the use of such technological resources is relatively secondary as they develop activities mainly offline, as well as movements for which the use of these resources plays a crucial role, where the “virtual” space constitutes an important territory for exercising activism.

As in other recent contexts of mobilization and protest (FERNANDEZ-PLANELLIS et al., 2015; JURIS, 2012; POSTILL, 2014; RECUERO et al., 2015), the use of the Internet and different digital tools for practicing activism has become naturalized among Portuguese activists, showing their progressive integration with daily life (CAMPOS et al., 2016). Although they fulfill different functions, it is their enormous capacity for communication that stands out in the different uses that are conferred to them.

The way digital tools (technologies, digital platforms and the Internet) are conceived and applied to activist practice is associated with the different attributes of the resources used as well as the procedures of activist practice. Given the importance of identifying activist practices for a correct evaluation of the impact of digital technology on activism, a

typology with essentially descriptive objectives was developed. Although these practices predate the advent of digital media, they can also be thought and put into practice through these tools. Based on the analysis performed, eight fundamental dimensions were identified (CAMPOS et al., 2016)<sup>5</sup>:

- a. “debate and reflection” – internal activities (aimed at activists belonging to a certain group) that seek to promote sharing and reflection about the causes defended;
- b. “organization and logistics” – backstage work in organizing events or developing certain initiatives;
- c. “mobilization” – actions that aim to encourage participation and adherence to the cause of a particular movement/group, mobilizing not only the supporters of the movement but also a wider audience;
- d. “communication” – communication actions and dissemination of a varied set of messages directed to various audiences, from those who support the cause to a wider and indefinite audience;
- e. “recruitment” – actions aimed at recruiting new people to the cause;
- f. “advertising and public representation of the collective” – processes of ideological communication and creation of different expressions of the collective’s public image;
- g. “social networks” – processes of creation, preservation or perpetuation of networks with national or international actors (both individual and collective);
- h. “events” (protests, meetings, etc.) – public initiatives organized by the collective or places where they are represented, aiming at a series of strategic objectives (protest, dissemination of the cause, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> Which are obviously interconnected and, in many cases, overlapping; however, from an analytical point of view, it makes sense to distinguish them, allowing the role of different digital media in activism to be assessed.

The importance and centrality of digital devices varies depending on the activities developed and the ways online and offline processes are articulated. Certain digital tools (for example, email) are preferably intended for internal communication, while others (for example, blogs and websites) are destined to the implementation of broader processes; moreover, there are others that fulfill both functions (for example, Facebook). There are, therefore, practices and situations involving activist activities in which the use of certain devices is essential, since they simplify processes and ensure greater effectiveness. Thus, it is possible to affirm that there is a pragmatic and strategic evaluation of the devices, referring to the strengths and weaknesses of their use, their effectiveness or reach. In reality, there was an integration of these new resources with established procedures and forms of action, mainly taking into account the articulation between activism outside and inside the Internet.

#### **4. Activism and protest digital networks: uses and representations**

Among the most used tools in activist practices are platforms associated with social media. In most cases, social media is synonymous with using the Internet and digital equipment in activist practices. There are several examples that could be evoked here, from the protests arranged through Facebook to the direct reports of demonstrations through Twitter.

How is the use of social media characterized in the context of practices and discourses of the activists interviewed? To answer this question, it is necessary to consider not only the dimensions of uses raised before, but also the individual variations when using them. This question points to an important distinction between what can be considered individual uses, related to personal interests and private networks, and what can be considered institutional and public uses, directly associated with collectives. This boundary is not always clear in activists' daily practices, as their individual interests blend with their own connection to particular collectives and causes. The very attributes of existing social media contribute to blurring between the public and the private, to the extent that

the contexts of networked audiences collapse, combining contacts from different social spheres (MARWICK; BOYD, 2011).

Facebook stands out as the most used platform. This preponderance is essentially due to three reasons: firstly, the dissemination of this platform on a large scale; secondly, the ease with which it is used and integrated with a wide range of everyday practices, including private uses; and finally, its versatility, being a tool with multiple facets that can be used for different purposes and in the most varied circumstances.

It is possible to add to the previous reasons the effectiveness of these tools in the development of previously offline activities, with greater investment of resources. Therefore, there is a communication paradigm in which online activities seem to gain importance in relation to street activities, with which they combine but also seem to remain somewhat autonomous. The advantages of this new communication paradigm in activist and civic action are recognized by different individuals and emerging collective actors as well as by traditional actors, who do not dispense with them. Nevertheless, this is an area of informal communication that seems to benefit mainly those working in the extra-institutional sphere, looking for channels where they can express "their voice," contributing to their own "empowerment." This latter function is particularly relevant in relation to minority causes, which are marginalized by the dominant discourse and, therefore, hardly reach the traditional media.

ActiBistas is a collective for bisexual visibility. . . . I joined them at that time and it is a very informal collective, which works in a Facebook group with many things online and punctual interventions. (Activist from ActiBistas and Polyportugal)

The hegemony of this platform is only called into question by individuals and activist collectives who have digital technology as their cause or area of intervention area and are, therefore, mobilized to create alternative networks to Facebook itself, such as the advocates for free software:

At the Association level, in social media that are implemented with free software. Of course they have a small problem, they have a lot less and reach fewer people . . . . Such as the Status Net network . . . the great core of social media is to be distributed and federated, not centralized in a single website. Because this happened, a few weeks ago it became public, for example, that Facebook along with the United States Department of Defense created a massive situation, without people knowing, by manipulating the newsfeed that people receive. (Activist from ANSOL)

It is a surprising fact, compared to what happened recently in other protest contexts (Spain, Brazil, etc.), that Twitter was of little importance:

Twitter, despite being a social media with potential, reaches a very restricted audience in Portugal. It is different from what happens in Spain. In Spain or England Twitter is widely used. In Portugal it is not. Facebook is the one that is extensively used in Portugal and it is where most people are discussing and sharing poorly informed opinions or announcing things . . . . It is mostly journalist who are active on Twitter. (Activist from Precários Inflexíveis and May Day)

Blogs, which have also been recurrently referred to, cannot be ignored. They emerge in the interviews as a kind of antithesis of contemporary digital participation. Blogs are referred to basically because they marked a certain historical period and have lost importance in favor of Facebook. The Facebook-blog duality (see Table 1) is the reflection of a set of tensions. On the one hand, blogs are associated with the “long term,” that is, a conception of civic and political activity that requires a more in-depth, informed and long-run exercise of reflection. By contrast, besides its popularity, Facebook is more associated with a “short-term” paradigm and instantaneous and ephemeral culture, functioning through simplified processes of communication that do not stimulate reflection or reasoned debate. Consequently, it promotes the development of “viral” episodes, rapid mobilization, and instant indignation.

Facebook is a very instant thing for rapid response and the dissemination of text, song or video. Blogs have functions, such as having more structured and longer texts and making achieves, which Facebook does not have. (Activist and leader of a student association)

	Facebook	Blogs	Twitter
Attributes and uses	Heavily disseminated and used Easy way of disseminating/accessing information Creation /reinforcement of networks and mobilization and creation of events Individual and collective use; “mixture” of public and private	Less used Loss of importance in favor of other tools Good source of information Public individual and collective use	Little used or referred to Rapid and immediate dissemination of information Individual and collective use
Representations	“Short-term” paradigm Fragmented/superficial information Emotional responses Associated with viral episodes of instant indignation	“Long-term” paradigm Reflection and in-depth debate Rational responses Weighted/less immediate responses	“Short-term” paradigm Viral episodes and rapid deployment

Table 1 - Comparison of specific tools in activist practices

Source: Youth Network Activism Project. Prepared by the authors.

Although the different digital platforms fulfill a participatory, emancipatory and democratic function, activists identified a set of negative aspects that create certain challenges. The representations mentioned in the table above express some of these challenges that can be systematized around three main aspects.

The first of these challenges concerns the difficulty in maintaining the balance between new and traditional forms of mobilization and digital activism associated with offline practices. The overvaluation of the former to the detriment of the latter is a risk, since various digital practices are inconsequential and poorly committed, is, above all, not accompanied by offline mobilization and participation. These less committed practices have been termed “couch activism” or “click activism,” because of the context in which they occur as well as the connotation of passivity. In this sense, the streets are still the par excellence symbolic space for activist combat.

The conversation is about how we can mobilize people outside the Internet, because it is very good to create Facebook pages and events, but we need to be on the street in front of organizations and people and show that we are a big group and not just 300 or 3000 likes [he laughs]. (Activist from Bichas Cobardes and No Hate Ninjas)

Another of the main challenges is the difficulty in managing and filtering a large amount of information in an increasingly complex and diversified media ecosystem. This issue is associated with the proliferation of digital devices and platforms, a circumstance that produces, on the one hand, a “saturation or excess of inputs” and consequently a “fragmentation of information” and, on the other hand, difficulty in evaluating the credibility of information. In this way, a “culture of transience” has been generated that does not favor a more in-depth appreciation of information:

[T]his is another disadvantage of the Internet, the volatility of what can be hegemonic and then, in the next moment, is not – what is viral and what is not . . . . And, on the other hand, the constant creation of . . . focuses that, at some point, make people a little . . . impermeable or stop reacting,



due to the speed with which the information is reproduced. (Activist from *Precários Inflexíveis* and *Que se Lixe a Troika*)

Finally, there is the issue of control and surveillance systems implemented by public authorities and companies that can condition the organizational dynamics of movements and their actions. This is linked to a recognized ambivalence contained in digital tools: On the one hand, they are emancipatory, democratic and apparently empowering; on the other hand, they enable the monitoring and surveillance of citizens. The use of specific tools for making monitoring more difficult seems to be a concern of some activists.

There is a great need . . . to react, so to speak, to the hegemony of information control that corporations and governments have. And, thus, the only way is to create a back-up activism, away from people who dominate information and communication systems and these technologies, so as not to be watched. (Activist from *Que se Lixe a Troika*)

## 5. Conclusion

We can say without hesitation that it is impossible to think about the current forms of political and civic mobilization without considering the use of digital tools. In fact, the Internet is not only increasingly presenting itself as a complementary space for exchanging information, communicating and creating networks, but it has also been affirmed as a proper space for public participation. Use by young people has been particularly notable as they are proficient users of a whole range of digital equipment and platforms, as well as having played a role in recent protests in Europe and various parts of the world.

For the case of Portugal, the recent wave of protests has been characterized by the emergence of new collective actors and practices. Traditional collective actors join these new movements, reinforcing the complexity of the current public space of contestation. In this context, digital media has started playing an important role, as demonstrated by the project we have developed.

Thinking about the use of digital media in activist practices depends to a large extent on how this activity is conceived. Digital technology seems to be integrated into pre-digital practices and ways of undertaking activism; however, this integration has a transforming character, as new repertoires of action are being generated. It was confirmed that several platforms and resources are used, and that their employment depends on different factors (the specific characteristics of digital resources, the technological expertise of social actors, the type of collective and the nature of activist practices, etc.). It is also necessary to consider the strong connection between online and offline practices, since the street presents itself as a primary place for political and civic participation, where digital space is a kind of extension of the first.

Although there is great diversity in used digital resources, it was noticed that social media, especially Facebook, has taken a leading role. For this reason, we explored both the uses and functions assigned to it, its representations and other medias similar to it (Twitter and blogs). It was found that the representations about the potential of these tools differs. Thus, some of these devices, due to their characteristics, seem to be closely related to mobilization and protest actions, which stand out as being ephemeral, informal and horizontal in nature. These forms of mobilization depend, to a large extent, on the existence of digital networks and networks of people constantly connected, which can act quickly without the need for complex structure or logistics.

However, the inclusion of these technologies also generates some uncertainties and dilemmas. On the one hand, these tools reveal emancipatory and participatory potentialities, allowing the accomplishment of what is their democratic inclination. On the other, they raise concerns due to their withdrawal from the reality of the streets, because they either seem to generate a kind of “world apart,” with apparently easy and inconsequential participation, or they incite a wealth of information whose relevance becomes difficult to discriminate. This leads to a critical assessment of the integration of these resources with established

procedures and forms of action when considering advantages and disadvantages.

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