Title: Real-time protest and governance in Catalonia

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Abstract

In 2006, a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia was approved by the 91% of the Parliament of Catalonia, with the following support of a 73,24% of the Catalan electors in a referendum. On June 28th, 2010, the Constitutional Court of Spain declared 14 out of its 277 articles to be invalid, while another 27 would require a restrictive interpretation. Following the events, the Catalan society organized a massive demonstration for July 10th, which gathered a million in the streets of Barcelona. The demonstration was communicated mainly by Twitter with a live coverage on traditional and new media. The people became the live reporters of the evening. The event was called the first 2.0 demonstration in Catalonia, but it wouldn't be the last.

In 2012, coinciding with the National Day of Catalonia, September 11th, a bigger demonstration was held again, gathering a massive crowd of almost two million under a single chant: Catalonia: Next European State. This time, the demonstration, organized through New Media channels, had a bigger impact locally and internationally. In 2013, again on the National Day of Catalonia, supporters of independence gathered to form a 400km human chain all through its coastal area. The event proved successful, as almost two million people hold hands in the chain.

An independence referendum date has been set for November 9th, 2014, for the ruling parties in the Catalan Parliament. The Spanish government, however, has vowed to block the referendum. Media polls show that 60% of Catalans would support for independence, 30% wouldn't and 10% still don't know. Interestingly, before New Media, support for independence had a narrow 40% in polls. A 20-points switch in less than a decade is certainly impressive. We maintain that New Media and its collateral effects –activism, gathering, virtual socialization, etcetera– have widely contributed to change the dormant public space in Catalonia into a heavily active one.

Catalan president Artur Mas assures that the Catalan claim has had much more of an impact during the last few years than during the past three decades. If the Catalan Parliament succeeds, Catalonia may well be called the first state born out of a social outrage catalyzed by New Media. This investigation contains both theoretical and empirical approaches to the new

relation established in Catalonia between its politics, the media and the citizens in the past few years, following the expansion of New Media and the claim of independence.

Title: Protests in Brazil: the role of social media in political action

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Abstract

Recent years have seen the world enter a new political era, one defined by changing methods of popular protest across the globe. From the Occupy movement to the Arab Spring, from the actions of online hackers Anonymous to the recent uprisings in Brazil and Venezuela, society is experiencing the concrete potential of social media to enhance political activism and participation. Yet, we need to better understand the possibilities and implications of this landscape.

It has been pointed out that forms of social interaction and reproduction which characterize social networks such as Facebook and Twitter represent a clear example of participatory culture as they allow for common values' articulation, which have found expression through social protests in different countries. Regarding their political potential, these platforms would appear as spaces where new ways of performing citizenship become visible, with a significant role to play, for instance as a counter-surveillance strategy in cases of police brutality or in contrast to the way events are presented in TV news. Nonetheless, these insights pose more questions than they answer. What are the true implications of the social media for political action? Do mobilization and political activism emerge from these spaces as unintended consequences or conscious aims? How does the social appropriation of common concerns shape the protests? How do the leadership and the online organization of protests work?

The present article presents the case of recent protests in Brazil. It analyzes the role of social platforms in the organization of the demonstrations and tries to illustrate the participatory culture beneath the different political aims which inspire the mass of participants. Sparked by a 20-cents increase in the ticket price of public transport in June 2013, the Brazilian demonstrations have grown into protests against corruption in the government, the high costs of hosting the soccer World Cup in 2014, the lack of investments in public health care and education, as well as specific demands from different social or professional categories. They have attracted over one million people and involved mainly young workers of middle class and low-income communities, often with no clear leaders and

no speeches. Reflecting on the elements that characterize the specific case of Brazil, the paper aims to study the changing face of political activism, the circulation of news and the online communication processes of mobilization from a critical perspective.

Title: Fandom and Contentious Politics: Çarşı Fan Group at Gezi Protests in Turkey

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Abstract

The Gezi Park protests of June 2013 were the most massive protests in the recent history of Turkey. Different political groups joined their forces with crowds with no prior experience of political protest and mobilization. As it has been the case in Tunisia, Arab Spring, Iceland, Spain or Occupy protests, the event cannot be comprehended without taking *leadership and the online organization of protests* into consideration. Motivations to participate to Gezi Park resistance were multilayered, including environmentalist awareness focusing on protecting the trees in the park; opposition to neoliberalization of urban space; anger against the police violence; and more general opposition to the ruling party of Tayyip Erdoğan, or to Erdoğan himself. Many observers of the resistance confirmed that football supporter groups played a crucial role in this protest wave. Especially Çarşı, the supporter group of Beşiktaş, was always at the center of resistance. Their role was especially crucial at instances of clash with police, since many members of Çarşı had been already experienced in dealing with police violence and had accumulated resentment thereof. As the protests evolved, Çarşı has become one of the symbols and leaders of resistance both in **online** and **offline** environments. On this account, the Gezi Park resistance and the role of football fans within these protests offer an invaluable opportunity to think about the link between theories of public sphere, online activism and changing forms of contentious politics.

The presentation aims to give an account of the role of Çarşı fan groups at Gezi Park protests through a specific focus on online presence (Twitter account, Facebook Page and fan blog *forzabeşiktaş*) of Çarşı both as organizer of the protests and as one of its symbols (even one of the myths). The presentation will be based on in-depth interviews with Çarşı members and virtual ethnography of fan blogs, Twitter and Facebook accounts of Çarşı supporter group. Moreover, it will try to present the joys of football brought to the Gezi Park by Çarşı, with a series of in-depth interviews with protestors, who are not member of Çarşı or any other fan group. Departing from the Gezi Park/Çarşı case, the presentation will also try to question the basic assumptions of Habermas inspired theories of public sphere and their relevance for considering cybersphere as an alternative public sphere.

Title: "Digital Platforms and the 2013 Protests in Brazil: The Contradictory Nature of Political Mobilization in the Digital Era"

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Abstract

On June and July of 2013, a wave of massive street demonstrations took place in Brazil, establishing the country's largest protest movement in more than two decades. The first demonstrations emerged in opposition to a 20 cents (about 9 cents of the US dollar) rise in public transportation fares. There was also widespread discontent with the economic and social costs of Brazil's decision to host the 2014 World Cup. These first protests faced violent police repression and were subjected to negative media coverage. Despite of this, the movement grew very quickly. According to some estimates, on 20 June 2013, in the climax of protests, more than 1.4 million people participated in rallies held in more than 140 municipalities. By then, the initial focus on public transportation fares and on the impact of mega sport events had been replaced by a much more diversified and complex agenda and set of demands.

The rise of this mass movement was a remarkable and quite unexpected development in Brazil's recent history. Among its many features, the intense use of digital platforms -- including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube - figured prominently. The paper analyzes the role and impact of social media in the emergence and development of the 2013 protests in Brazil. The analysis highlights the role of these platforms in calling and facilitating new forms of contestation in public spaces, as well as in disseminating narratives that challenge mainstream media and political actors. However, the paper also calls attention to the limits of simplistic and celebratory analyses that overemphasize the impact of social media, ignore the contradictory nature of some of its political consequences and fail to place them in relation to broader political contexts.

The paper examines key features of the political context that are essential to understand the scope and significance of the demonstrations, including Brazil's recent political history and the role of political actors, civil society organizations and the mainstream

media. It also highlights the contradictory effects of political contestation by "individualized publics" in the digital era. For example, it argues that the fragmentation of the movement's agenda was related to the structure of communication processes held within social networks and to online strategies adopted by some key players. These and other factors help explain why initial progressive and critical actors and demands that were central in the initial demonstrations became less influential as the movement grew in scope and strength.