

**ON THE DUAL AND PARADOXICAL ROLE OF MEDIA:
CONVEYORS OF THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY
AND VEHICLES OF DISRUPTIVE SPEECH**

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Abstract

This article aims to evaluate the dual function exercised by traditional *media* - TV, radio and press – as a place of ideological production, assuming the power of communication as a method of naturalization, and as a place of confrontation, giving voice to alternative projects. First, the function of ideological production, in regards to the national and international media coverage of the financial crisis in Portugal, warrants consideration. Furthermore, the role of media confrontation is illuminated by the coverage of protests in Portugal and Brazil. Concluding, if traditional *media* convey dominant norms and hierarchies, notwithstanding the pressure on social networks, this mode indicates a deviation, thus contributing, even if indirectly, to a redefinition of people and culture.

Keywords:

Naturalization, power/anti-power, dissent, crisis, Cultural Studies

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1. Introduction

On December 16, 2001, António Guterres presented his resignation as prime minister of Portugal, on the pretext that the country "was in a quagmire." Durão Barroso, his successor, wasted no time in drawing the public's attention to the difficulties of the country that according to him was "on the rocks."

The crisis with national boundaries, therefore, requires a national solution. Later, Prime Minister José Sócrates, implemented a solution for the development of significant public works capable of invigorating, upstream and downstream, a productive Portuguese structure. Except, suddenly, the Lehman-Brothers group went bankrupt, the North American financial system tottered and, rapidly, the storm reached Europe.

At this moment, a remarkable reversal of discourse occurred: great entrepreneurs, businessmen, bankers, the heralds of an unbridled liberalism - who preached the virtues of the market and vehemently resisted (revolted against) state control - considered an obstacle to development - demanded, immediately, state intervention.

"The cohort of the mighty," wrote Alain Badiou in *Le Monde* on October 17, 2008, "the firemen of the monetary blaze, Sarkozy, Paulson, Merkel, Brown and Trichet plunge into the central pit of billions to implore: 'Save the banks'." Moreover, Badiou ironically resumed, "This noble humanist and democratic cry gushed from the chests of all politicians and media outlets."

In Portugal, the politicians quickly embraced the hypothesis of the international origin of the crisis and followed the same path: save the banks and revive the economy by accelerating public investment. Billions of euros flowed into the empty Portuguese Bank of Business (BPN) coffers. In an extreme application of old Keynesian theory, projects of transport networks modernization multiplied: the motorways rending deserted fields; vital implementation of the high-speed train (TGV); construction of the new airport that can no longer be postponed.

The euphoria, however, did not last more than two years. It remained only for the moment in which, in European forums, the apparent lack of revenue followed: the external State debt continuously increased and family indebtedness exceeded acceptable limits.



Also changes of direction: a ruthless recession replaced the unbridled expansion that affected, in particular, the weaker economies of southern Europe.

In Portugal, the "Stability and Growth Programs" emerged: the PEC 1, PEC2, PEC3, and the PEC4 signifying sacrifices and more sacrifices; taxes and more taxes, cuts and more cuts. This program befell on the public witnessing the plundering of their meager savings and, likewise, before a political class that, taking advantage of unpopular measures, revealed the possibility of returning to power.

The PSD/CDS returned, in June 2011, in the form of a center-right coalition.

The change of government left policies unchanged. Contrary to the promise, the austerity remained and increased. The new leaders declared that knowledge of the *dossiers* indicated that the crisis in the country was even worse than they thought. Why was the crisis worse?

Was this due to the global crisis?

No, it was not.

The international origin subtly replaced by a national reason. The fault no longer resided abroad but on the errors that the previous government and the Portuguese people living beyond their means for decades. Not a single reference to the earlier voracious advertising campaigns that offered next day credit.

No, it is not.

The Portuguese have been enticed by consumerism and, now, the time had come to pay the bill. It was a heavy bill, and as confirmation, came the announcements of more taxes, more cuts, and more unemployment.

In April 2013, the figures relating to the budget implementation revealed government discouragement. Despite the exacerbation of austerity measures, all the predictions failed regarding the public debt, the budget deficit, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth, and others.

The dance continued and the pundits reverted blame, again, to the international crisis arguing that the sluggish Portuguese economy resulted from the European crisis, which prevented the absorption of Portuguese exports...

The months passed and, behold, as if by magic, "signs of improvement" appeared: a slight reduction in the unemployment rate, an increase in exports, and the descent of GDP slowing. The official discourse revealed the "signs", adding, however that the indications should be interpreted with caution. Prudence faded as the elections for the European Parliament approached.

By March 2014, precautions were no longer necessary. Officially, the "crisis" becomes ascribed to the past. However, do the Portuguese live worse? Does it matter? What is certain is that, according to the government sources, the country "was saved from bankruptcy." The message that the country is better off ignores the problem that the Portuguese people are worse off. Some voices abroad, salute "the tremendous effort of the Portuguese population" and the "remarkable results" thus obtained. With the emergence of spring, the sound of drums and trumpets proclaim the end of the "protectorate" regime. Portugal must be the master of its destiny, affirmed in spheres of power.



Rapidly recalling some facts that marked the political, economic, and financial history in Portugal in recent years, allows:

1. The introduction of fundamental concepts, such as public problem and occurrence.
2. Measure the role of the *media* in the relationship between public issues and episode as well as the responsibility held by the processes of massification, the institutionalization of public problems and events.

2. The media as a place of ideological production

According to Gusfield, cited by Louis Quéréé during a prominent conference at Porto in February 1999 and published in a special issue of the magazine *Speech - Language, Culture and Society*, from the Open University (Quere, 2001: 97-113), the verification of a public problem implies:

1. That it is assumed as a problem, by society as a whole.
2. That it arouses a contradictory and conflicting debate.
3. That it is linked to a public action aimed at resolution.

Nevertheless, the public contribution to the definition of the problem is much smaller than assumed. In other words, the institution of an issue as a problem is, mainly, external for most. Often, the strategies supporting collective assumptions for the purpose of placing them at the center of debates are exterior to society, as are the public actions, or the simulation of actions, which are proposed for resolution.

Ordinary life consists of endless twisting or a zigzagging between problems. Societal problems of unemployment, insecurity, lack of housing, and crisis loom large. However, not all problems are societal problems. "Societal problems" exist to the extent they affect the public directly, the true entities. They are not "societal problems" to the extent that the origin is external. These are assumed problems that follow a process of naturalization. It is precisely this naturalization process that causes a loss of the idea of externality, which makes the public unaware of the agenda that, if not imposed is at least insinuated. This unawareness creates, following Pierre Bourdieu, a kind of complicity between dominant and dominated, establishing by means of which the dominated, neglecting the dominated condition, "forgets and ignores himself, submitting to (the dominant) in the same way that contributes, recognizes, and incorporates it" (Bourdieu, 1982: 119).

The media outlets - newspapers, radio stations, and television - are at the core of this naturalization processes by manufacturing accessions or forging consensus. This process is not the Kantian "common consensus," but hidden strategies that Antonio Gramsci considers "hegemonic." Consensus, or citing Jacques Ranciere, pseudo-consensus, from the March 2010 conference at the University of Lille titled "*Y a-t-il des crises politiques?*", means imposed agreements, monopolies of meaning exercised by oligarchies of specialists.

Imperceptibly, the main media outlets convert a fragmented history, according to interests and opportunities, sometimes monstrously, like an incessant continuity of disguised mutations. This conversion creates a specious "indivisible unity", using the



concept of Edmund Husserl, which occurs without interruptions, without gaps. There is a form of consented unity with a sense between "what has happened" and "what will happen" (Rebelo, 2006: 20).

In the beginning, the crisis was Portuguese, later, international. Subsequently, the crisis became Portuguese again and then, again, international. To, finally, delve into the realm of things past, and resolved.

Who will believe such variation?

It is the shuttle of news and commentaries, or the supposed news and the alleged commentaries. Today, the pages of the newspapers, the radio shows, and television broadcasts abound in a version, insatiably repeated, presented as indisputable, and unquestionable. Tomorrow, this same version begins to languish until disappearing and replaced by another, equally incontestable and equally indisputable, all without outcome. Without the passage, the moment of qualitative change, or the *Kairos* moment as stated by Louis Marin, during the seminar about *Semantique des Systemes Representatifs* at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, in the academic year 1990/1991, is captured by the reader, the listener, or by the viewer.

It seems like the media narrative never ends, because, regardless of the version, the interpretation will invest systematically, as Jean-Pierre Esquenazi (2002: 78) underlines, in a triple scheme:

- A device of institutionalization that is reflected in the operations of classification, ordering, and typification of experiences that loses, thus, originality in order to dissolve within paradigms exterior to the subject.
- A device of rationalizing an explanation, linked to a normative vision, in an attempt to impose a particular social order, to the reproduction of existing hierarchies.
- A device of repetition. "Through repetition", notes Pierre Moscovici, "the idea disassociates from its author; transforms into evidence regardless of the time, the place and the person; ceases to be the expression of the originator and becomes the expression of the thing that speaks." (1981: 198-199)

Each media outlet, by its scenographic space, (Goffman, 1991: 134) builds, thus, a discursive identity, generating, in turn, a social fantasy that it hopes to convey to the mass of recipients.

In 2013, Irina Fresco Veríssimo presented her Master's thesis in Intercultural Relations, at the *Universidade Aberta* (Lisbon, Portugal), with the title "Representation of the Portuguese in the European media discourse: the news about the financial crisis". This argument analyzed the way in which some European newspapers identified the crisis in Portugal. The assessed *corpus*, composed of 25 articles published in *El País*, *Le Figaro*, *The Times*, *Irish Independent*, and in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* from Poland, from March 23rd to July 10th, 2011, occurred, specifically, between the resignation of Prime Minister José Sócrates and the presentation of the "budgetary adjustment" by the then Minister of Finance, Vítor Gaspar.

The thematic categories attributed or associated with Portugal stood out, in order of importance: "Despair/Apathy," "Overspending/Debt," "Political Instability," "Stubborn," "Lack of Rigor/Disorganization/Dishonesty," "Ineffective Justice /Corruption," "Lazy,"



"Uncompetitive Labor Market," "Mismanagement of Public Bodies," "Inadequate Real Estate Market."

Veríssimo noted that the categories were rarely paired to a particular case. The statements were based, rather, on general considerations, in boldness that dispenses reasoning. In other words, something to the effect: It is said, and, because it is said, it is true. Additionally, the author identified that, "on the assumption that Portuguese people are melancholy, journalists continually employed expressions such as 'drama', 'unhappy fate', 'agony', or 'without hope'." However, in only two of the analyzed articles, the Portuguese people were provided an opportunity to express their feelings about the situation. "The remaining portrayals of the mood of the Portuguese population" Veríssimo continues, "are made from the very perception of journalists." For example, in *Le Figaro* on 25 March:

"All eyes are now turning to Lisbon, where the drama continues to unfold."

The same can be said for "Laziness," a characteristic that, in four of the analyzed articles, lacked a justifiable socio-economic indicator. In this regard, the following portion from the Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza* on April 16th opined:

"The Greeks who demonstrate in the streets or the members of the opposition in the Portuguese parliament are fully aware of the fact that without EU membership their lives would be even worse. The anger behind these protests was caused by a deterioration of the situation due to the fact that the European funding will cease to flow freely, at a time when young people are being called on to work more and pay for the laziness of their parents' generation, which ignored the need to save for a better future."

The despondent and lethargic Portuguese people, who do not try to change, became entangled in a web of consumerism. These liabilities are the main reason for the crisis according to *El País* on April 24th:

"Debt is the word that best fits the enigma of a socio-economic country. More than 2.4 million Portuguese owe approximately €120 billion in mortgage loans, as a result of the social model promoted in recent years aspiring to: a new house, new car, cheap credit, and late modernization. The crisis abruptly ended the mirage (...)."

A point of view, such as this, is not easy to eradicate. Boggled, *the Times* on June 5th stated that, in spite of the crisis and austerity measures, people still "go to the cinema, eat breakfast in town, go to the theater."



How can Portugal abate the crisis? There is only one way, the international rescue. However, the Portuguese Prime Minister hesitated. Peremptorily, *Le Figaro* lectured on March 25th:

"Two days of EU summit meetings in Brussels, under constant market pressure, was not sufficient to convince the Prime Minister José Sócrates to seek official aid from the EU and the IMF. (...) The money is there to help Portugal, the political will too, but for now, Europe can only watch, arms crossed, the Portuguese descent into hell, threatened with bankruptcy, if they fail to appeal for the international rescue."

This hesitation before the inexorability of redemption, however, was of little value. In fact, and as pointed out by the *Gazeta Wyborcza* on April 11:

"(...) the creditors had to fight for a long time with the Portuguese government of José Socrates to accept the extended hand."

The image is strange: creditors extended a hand to help and the political leader of the indebted country hesitant to accept the aid. It is no wonder, therefore, that the prime minister received the epithet "stubborn."

The conclusion of the process appeared in *The Times* on April 7th:

"Portugal, land of melancholic songs of fado, accepted its unfortunate destiny last night: they will have to swallow their pride and accept an aid package. There is no alternative."

Are public bodies so badly managed? Is justice ineffective? Still, *the Times*, on June 5th, anticipated the solution: "A center-right government will be well received by investors, who have lost faith in Portugal." For *the Times*, a new government is the solution to the lack of labor market competitiveness such as the inadequacy of the real estate market.

Likewise, the overwhelming majority of the articles, and especially when the opinions came from newspapers published in countries less affected by the crisis, like England and France, presented the Portuguese, Irish, Greek and Spanish situation indiscriminately. There were plenty of expressions, even pejorative acronyms - the "PIGS" – used to classify southern European countries, which, in Angela Merkel's opinion, according to the *Gazeta Wyborcza* on June 2nd, deserved no assistance as



long as they enjoy "a lot of holidays" or never stop "passing the time."¹

Naturally, each of the countries included in the constructed amalgam, sought distance from the other. The resolution appeared simpler when demonstrating that the origins of the crisis were different in nature and exhibited diverse levels of severity. An almost fratricidal strategy of denouncing commenced, where states in a worse condition received condemnation from the others. On March 25, *the Irish Independent*, the most widely read newspaper in Ireland, speculated:

"Portugal has significant problems - high levels of indebtedness, anemic growth and a challenge of immediate liquidity".

Three weeks later, the same newspaper unloaded, now in a more explicit manner, associating Portugal and Greece:

"(...) that wasted millions of dollars on cronies' projects and local electoral promises."

Nonetheless, the explanatory framework that permeates the evoked international coverage conjugates, in large measure, the discourse that, at the same time with the same theme, dominated the Portuguese press with the uppermost expression. The Portuguese media replicated many of stereotypes used in the international press. Regarding the root causes of the crisis, the Portuguese media often referred to a collective entity - a "we" – as ultimately responsible for the debt. The Portuguese media also generated attempts of demarcation, especially in relation to the Greeks. The destabilization of Greek society by new and increased debilitating austerity programs became a consistent theme, supported by images of street violence, bank robberies, and looted supermarkets in the main Greek cities. In contrast, the Portuguese population was presented as calm and understanding, committed to overcoming a period viewed as provisional.

The official discourse, amplified by the media, not sparing efforts to press this transitory idea, indicated the widespread desire to correct mistakes of the past. Hence, a considerable investment was made in the creation of euphemisms hiding drastic measures directed against broad and the poorest sectors of the population. Indeed, terms and expressions, loaded with ideology, were insistently repeated in Portuguese media, a kind of media litany or rhetorical chorus (Derrida, 2004: 134). Subject to the process of naturalization, these terms and expressions crept up gradually, in the

¹ In an article published in *Le Monde*, on November 12, 2012, Ulrich Beck refers to Angela Merkel in this way: "There are many who see the German Chancellor as the queen without a crown of Europe. When it is a matter of knowing where the power comes from, it is referred to one of the characteristics that best defines a Machiavellian ability." The sociologist and German philosopher continues: "Merkel prefers - and here lies the whole Machiavellian irony of her posture - the provision of Germany to grant credit depends on the acceptance, by indebted countries, of the imposed conditions of German stability policy. It is the first principle of Machiavelli: when it comes to helping indebted countries with German money, the Angela Merkel's position is neither an honest yes nor a categorical no, but a 'yeno' between the two".



language of everyday life, instilling Orwellian newspeak.

Examples:

- Lead the Constitutional Court (which, in practice, corresponds to overburdening the Constitutional Court with the consequences of the decision regarding the clearly unconstitutional government qualifications);
- Return to the markets (given as an example of the success of government policy in the financial sector);
- Adjustments (signifying civil servant wage cuts and, in general, expenditure reductions in education, health, and social assistance).
- Convergence measures (which translates into professional status realignment in the public and private sector, always in the direction of lower status);
- Oversized state (designating the alleged unjustified or overspending in operating the state apparatus, officially attributed to the previous government, obviously the other political party);
- Extraordinary Contribution to Solidarity and sustainability rate (reductions in pensions);
- User fees (which affects access to emergency services in public hospitals);
- Professional requalification (removal of a job and dismissal of the worker);
- Impairments (referring to fraud committed by particularly significant financial groups);
- Flexibility (amendments to labor laws that facilitate redundancies and respect term contracts);
- Untruths (misrepresentation);
- Budgetary Consolidation (tax increases).

From November 2007 to September 2009, the word "crisis" appeared on 1252 news programs from Portuguese public television channels (Andringa, 2009: 81-88). The continual statements - the "CRISIS" this and the "CRISIS" that - in all its anaphoric dimensions, avoided questions about the genesis and consequences of the crisis. This is a "CRISIS" that the public embodies and uses to explicate everything that surrounds society. The "CRISIS" which, Jacques Rancière argues, "functions, in the media space, as an interpretative mechanism that is part of the dominant discourse."

It is the duty of critical sociology, in the Habermasian sense of the term, to deconstruct this fusion of media versions that seamlessly succeed one another, each time imposing a "truth"; the "truth." Its purpose is to dismantle this palimpsest. Denounce assumed evidence. Oppose apparently neutral logic, according to which the event updates the public problem (the closure of a factory, for example, strengthens the idea of the crisis) and, conversely, the public problem is the explanatory framework of the event (it is because of the crisis that the factory closed).

3. The media as a place of confrontation

To deconstruct, to disassemble, to denounce, and to counter: all objectives of the proposed model of critical sociology. The model of critical sociology, applied to the media, can go further, reflecting profoundly on the media's role in structuring public opinion.



That is if the *media* constitute a central device for the naturalization/socialization of the ideas and projects of a hegemonic inclination, as advocated. Likewise, the *media* also represent a decisive factor for the spread of ideas and projects against hegemons.

On the basis of Cultural Studies initiated at Birmingham, England in the 1980s by social scientists like Hoggart and Stuart Hall; evidently the *media* field sometimes lacks coherence, harmony, and perfect articulation. More than the expression of a dominant class, the *media* reflect short-term alliances between class factions that can neutralize or open gaps, divisions.

Conversely, the *media* are not just mere technological expedients for the transmission of events: firstly, because the occurrence does not exist *de per si* (in isolation), and secondly because the *media* are, simultaneously, subject and object of their environmental surroundings.

Let us consider in detail the fundamental importance of each aspect of the sociology of the *media*.

1. An event occurrence is situated at the focal point of its perception. This perception depends on the journalist's view, his *Lebenswelt*, to quote Habermas², as well as the editorial strategies of the requisite *media* organization, with which the journalist tends to develop mimetic mechanisms. Protagonist of a double relationship - the culture in which he is part and the collective work he has a part in- the journalist, thus, plays a *Gatekeeping* function, as named by David White in his famous work from 1950, by filtering the events to mediate and defining criteria which emphasize or minimize via its pagination / alignment.
2. While it is true that the *media* contribute to the ranking of discussion topics in the public space³, the fact remains that the same media are, likewise, influenced and penetrated by this public space. A kind of symbiotic relationship exists between the *media* agenda and the public agenda in which each contaminates and, at the same time, is contaminated by the other without being able to determine precisely who contaminated whom.⁴

Hence, in the *media* field, contradictory strategies sometimes erupt, whether claiming decision autonomy, infiltrating subcultures, echoing the voice of minorities or guaranteeing the cry of dissent is heard.

Organizations such as "Anonymous," "Hacktivism," "Indignados" or "Occupy Wall Street" know how to capture critical media attention on a national and transnational scale. Their efforts are renown worldwide.

Such movements, favor discursive strategies and demonstrative actions that violate the norm, and deliberately provoke the targeted individual or social / political group.

² Translated as "life-world" or "experience of the world," this concept, largely addressed by the German philosopher in *Théorie de l'act communicationnel*, is associated with that deep level of a community where root languages, standards and behaviors exist.

³ If you do not tell us how to think show us what to think, as underlined by Bernard Cohen in *The Press and Foreign Policy*, pp. 120/121.

⁴ At this point, we turn away from authors such as Becker, McCombs and McLeod who attribute the prevalence to the media agenda: "There is a relationship between the agenda of the media and the public agenda, the first one that starts the process" (Becker, McCombs and McLeod, "The Development of Political Cognitions," in *Political Communication Issues and Strategies for Research*, Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research, Vol 4, p 38; apud Enric Saperas, *The Cognitive Effects of Mass Communication*, p 56.).



Reject the polemic but gamble on satire.

The movements reject the polemic because accepting it implies legitimate recognition of the opponent, which solicits debate. On the contrary, these movements gamble on satire, assuming the devaluation of the opponent by relegating it to a lower level and, therefore, preventing a response. It is not important to overcome the opponent by argument, only to overwhelm him with ridicule.

There are the major media outlets, newspapers, radio stations, TV channels, ceding spaces and / or broadcasting times for extraordinary accounts - the unexpected, the publicity of caricature, the misshapen, and the grotesque.

Portugal experienced such situations. The draconian Economic Assistance Program, between Portugal and the European Union, the incursions of the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund triggered protests and *flash mobs* against the so-called "troika."

The challenge began with small groups associated under a self-designated platform, "*Screw The Troika*." By diffused contours, politically situated left but difficult to classify, such a platform breathed its first breath on 15 September 2012. Through social networks, petitions circulated calling for public meetings in Lisbon and other cities. The appeal spread like an oil slick, and at scheduled times, hundreds of thousands appeared to affirm indignation. To everyone's amazement, particularly the promoters, more than half a million demonstrators concentrated in the Portuguese capital. Many young and old, right and left, stripped of political label, demonstrated for the first time with one common trait: railing against government decisions, accused of reducing wages, pensions or retirement, and from creating more unemployed people. Never seen, improvised posters and loose slogans appeared spontaneously. Each protester arrived carrying handmade placards with well-prepared slogans, disavowing the national situation and ridiculing those responsible.

Even though the mobilization process started initially on the Internet, it never would have reached such a dimension without significant *media* support. For days on end, the event was announced providing details for the venue and predictions made about the eventual success of the initiative. Eventually, the contestation became naturalized. Thus, to naturalize it, is to eventually institutionalize it, by removing the burden of risk likely to distract those unaccustomed.

Then an uninterrupted series of mini confrontations commenced.

Many members of the government were harassed by groups of young people singing "Grândola Vila Morena" during official ceremonies. The object could not have been clearer: confront government officials with the music of José Afonso symbolizing the April revolution. The practice even earned the moniker, "grandolar." More so, the reproduction, by newspapers, television channels and radio stations in countless texts and images, of the constant and disturbing "grandolar", contributed to the initiative's success.

Similarly, the Finance Minister Vitor Gaspar became a laughing stock; roars of laughter by half a dozen supporters underscored each pause during a book presentation speech he delivered. The screens of different television channels, instantly captured the event, the face of a stunned, lost minister, not knowing what to say or where to look.



Examples of these types of instances, triggered spontaneously via the net, conquer vast spaces and times in the main traditional media, and there is no shortage around the globe.

The affirmation of social networks as a mobilizing force verified, already, in February 2003, when millions of people around the world suddenly took to the streets. This act was due not to traditional partisan convocations, but the messages, appeals and petitions against US intervention in Iraq that swarmed the web, a hallmark and structuring of new social movements.

The 3rd-generation mobile phones, which appeared on the market in the late nineties, accentuated the trend. These devices undoubtedly constituted the catalyst for the *Arab Spring* captured by many news reports. The movement was followed by the "Indignant" in Madrid, the movement "Occupy Wall Street" in New York, and "Furious June" in Brazil.

Let us take a detailed look at the latter case whose size, so extraordinary and amazing, is not unrelated to the importance that the main Brazilian media outlets gave it.

It all started on June 3, 2013 when, responding to a call made through social networks, a few hundred people gathered in the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The immediate reason for the protest: The expected increase in the price of public transport. The profound reason: The malaise caused by the vast sums spent by the government preparing for the *2014 World Cup*. Two weeks later, on June 20, the number grew to 100,000 demonstrators, concentrated on Avenida Rio Branco and in Rio de Janeiro, and as many on Avenida Paulista in São Paulo.

However, 24 journalists were injured or detained by the police forces of São Paulo. One of the injured was a reporter for the influential newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*. The image of the bloodied face of the reporter became the top story on Brazilian television, and this led the newspapers to reverse judgment of the demonstrations immediately. Indeed, the same media organ that, days earlier, urged the police to stop the violence in the streets, now, accused that same of instigating gratuitous violence. To make matters worse, another image, no less impressive, of a young demonstrator hit with pepper spray, was stamped on the front page of *the New York Times*.

As stressed by Eduardo Santos, professor of International Relations at the Federal Fluminense University, in an article published in the Journal *Liinc* on "Political representation crisis in Brazil and the protests of June 2013", in addition to newspapers, radio and television information, "(...) various groups, in a diffuse manner, as it were, from the first demonstrations spread information, some in real time, and without investigating the situation in the streets, utilized tools like *YouTube* internet videos, or social networks like *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Anyone interested reported and continued to report, with an amazing collection of photos, texts and updated images available on mobile devices" (2014: 86-95).

The excitement caused by media coverage of police intervention did the rest. As recognized by Eduardo Santos, in less than a month "there were demonstrations in 438 cities in the country, with an estimated share of two million people and extensive media coverage."

The last example of the dual and paradoxical role of media, marked by the current competition between traditional media and new media, and as simultaneous voice of



power and counter-power, was the execution ceremony of Saddam Hussein. On December 31, 2006, the standard TV channels broadcasted the official images with the greatest dignity, as it was believed to have happened. In absolute silence, the executioners, modest to the extreme, even put a scarf around the neck of the condemned so the looped rope would not hurt him.

Except some, in the group of executioners, recorded the whole execution, making use of discreet phone recordings. Only hours after the execution, the illegal version circulated on *YouTube*. The televised version had been completely sanitized. Hussein and his executioners had exchanged insults and chanted revenge songs. The day after the same stations that had spread the official version did not refrain from circulating the "illegal" version.

Decidedly, like society, the media are fighting for ground. It is a place of confrontation with different projects and various strategies, conveying the dominant norm. Nevertheless, the media, too, by underscoring diversions, eventually contribute, even if indirectly, to a redefinition of people and ways of life that, peripherally, invades the center of symbolic origination.

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