AGAINST THE COUP:

MÍDIA NINJA AND THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL

by

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Abstract

The impeachment of Brazil's former president Dilma Rousseff on August 31, 2016 points to the end of a cycle in Brazilian politics (Domingues, 2016). Many Brazilians have lost their trust in institutional politics, and no longer feel represented (Barbosa, 2015; Barbosa et al, 2016; Da Luz, 2015; Domingues, 2016; Friedman, E. J. & Hochstetler, K., 2002). In a sense, it is a clash of the new Brazil with the old (Ituassu, 2013). A series of mass demonstrations have taken the streets of Brazil since 2013, representing the tipping point of a new wave of social movements in the country (Telles, 2016). New opportunities arise for civil disobedience and experimentation, and social media has been deemed as playing a crucial role in this ongoing process — a counter-narrative to traditional, Brazilian mainstream media, and a successful venue for connecting civil society to the political sphere (Ituassu, 2013).

Among the groups that have emerged as key actors during this recent period of protests is Mídia NINJA, a reference to ancient Japanese warriors and an acronym for Independent Narratives Journalism and Action, a non-corporate, non-profit media group run by citizen journalists spread across over 100 cities in Brazil (Mídia NINJA, n.d.), with more than 2,000 collaborators. Armed with smartphones and video cameras, the group has sought to shape the news agenda by engaging millions of people online and articulating a counter-narrative to corporate media.

This research project explores how the new online media ecology, made possible by the advent of the Internet, disrupts and inaugurate new possibilities for journalism, civic engagement and social justice activism through a case study of Mídia NINJA, utilizing both computational and manual methods of data gathering and interpretation (Hermida et al., 2013).

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, João Vitor Teixeira Castro Corrêa. For all copyright figures and previously published material (text, charts, tables and maps) in this thesis, permission to use from original sources was granted to the author.

Alfred Hermida, Ph.D, associate professor at the University of British Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, and Erin Baines, Ph.D, associate professor at the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, approved this academic thesis project on April 10, 2017.

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Dedication

To my mom, for the unquestioning love and support.

To Luiz, for always being there.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> "Apesar de você,
> Amanhã há de ser,
> Outro dia"
> –Chico Buarque

After a long period of military dictatorship (1964-1985), Brazil has lived its longest democratic stability since the creation of the 1988 constitution, which outlines several civil rights such as freedom of expression. But as in many Western democracies, the challenge for Brazil has been to induce its governments to govern democratically and democratic oppositions to oppose democratically (Cameron, 2003).

Three decades after redemocratization, there is a debate over whether the current government model can sustain itself (Domingues, 2016; Martins, 2016; Telles, 2016). Corruption among politicians has become a common practice in Brazil, a model mainly based on exchanges of favours between politicians and actors from the private business sector. Brazilian citizens of all classes and differently affected by the actions of corrupted politicians have then started to question the current structures of power and legislation. They have engaged in more action-oriented responses, such as the massive protests that occurred in July 2013, from August through October 2015 and more recently (Barbosa, 2015; Bentes, 2016; Bringel, 2016; Rosenberg, 2016).

Successful social programs such as the cash transfer program Bolsa Família and the universal public health system SUS (Sistema Único de Saúde), helped many families in poor conditions move out of poverty and have become hallmarks of Brazil's social development. Conversely, such programs are subjected to a political system that takes up more money from low-income families than from the privileged (Bringel, 2016).

As a result, Bentes (2016) and others (Barbosa, 2015; Barbosa et al, 2016; Da Luz, 2015; Domingues, 2016; Friedman, E. J. & Hochstetler, K., 2002) argue that many Brazilians have lost their trust in institutional politics, and no longer feel represented. This has been described as a clash of the new Brazil with the old (Ituassu, 2013). In the 2014 presidential elections, for instance, there were a considerable number of blank and null votes, as well as abstentions, registered across the Brazilian states — Dilma Rousseff won the 2014 general election with 51.64 per cent of the votes.

It is true, though, that politicians have been deemed untrustworthy through the eyes of the largest part of Brazilians for quite some time (Ituassu, 2013; Ituassu, 2011). But this perception has grown stronger than ever, according to Bringel (2016). And it has motivated many unsatisfied Brazilians, circa 150,000 across eleven major cities (Ituassu, 2013) in 2013, to leave their houses and get to the streets to fight for their social, political and economic rights. Or as Lefebvre (1996) puts it, these people have decided to claim their right to the city.

Like in other democratic countries, there is a strong demand in Brazil for a political system capable of addressing social justice, reducing inequality and eliminating poverty (Martins, 2016). Since June 2013, left and right leaning citizens, and those in between the two extremes have taken to the streets across several Brazilian cities in hopes to put forward different agendas — against the end of corruption, against the increase in public transport fare, against social inequality etc. (Ituassu, 2013). The protests are by people with strongly opposed views, yet with a similar overall discontent with how politics has been made in the country. The demonstrations have been described as an unprecedented social upheaval (Intervozes, 2014; Gohn, 2014a; Gohn, 2014b; Gohn, 2014c; Gohn, 2015). In many ways, it is a movement stronger

than the well-known Diretas Já, which called for direct vote and the end of dictatorship in 1984 (Ituassu, 2013).

Brazil lives a moment of sociopolitical opening considered as quite unique (Ituassu, 2013; Martins, 2016; Telles, 2016) in that it has involved different sectors of society, turning the streets into places for social and political transformation, like movements in Mexico, Tunisia and United States. Ituassu (2013) points to 'a new voice' that has emerged from the huge public displays, a voice that "is attempting to constitute new concepts of political community in a context where at present there is no institutional path available." He argues that, although first rendered as multiple, complex, vague and sparse, yet if the protests are viewed in a wider context, they form a coherent set of political ideas, a new version of an old debate concerning the supply-side of public issues in Brazil. Moreover, according to Ituassu (2013), social media has been deemed as playing a crucial role in this ongoing process — a counter-narrative to traditional, mainstream media, and a successful venue for connecting civil society to the political sphere.

The scholar also argues these civic demonstrations challenge the 'old Brazil' to break its traditional, centralized social practices and structures — corruption, the lack of a genuine public conscience, secretive political institutions and a very concentrated media system (Ituassu, 2013). Additionally, these events are the result of the changes the country has seen over the last twenty years of democratic stability: relative economic prosperity, political stability and social inclusion.

Among the groups that have emerged as key actors during this recent period of protests is Mídia NINJA, a reference to ancient Japanese warriors and an acronym for Independent

Narratives Journalism and Action[1]. Mídia NINJA is a non-corporate, non-profit media group run by citizen journalists spread across over 100 cities in Brazil[2], with more than 2,000 collaborators. The group generated national attention especially after the 2013 protests when the first signs of a major national political and economic crisis emerged in the country (Bringel, 2016). Since then, Mídia NINJA has been described as a symbol of the fight for human rights and democracy through online media activism (De Souza, 2014; Mazotte, 2013; Rekow, 2014). Armed with smartphones and video cameras, over 2,000 citizens have taken on journalistic roles using social media to amplify their message and articulate a counter-narrative to corporate media[3].

As Bentes (2013) puts it, the 2013 protests were a learning experience for Mídia NINJA and other media activism groups. It was when these groups realized the powerful affective component of social media (Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira, 2012), and started to amplify their voices with their live broadcast of events, memes, photographs and posts produced either by protesters themselves and/or media activists.

These groups are part of what has been called the new ecology of Brazilian media (Fausto Neto, 2008). It is described as a horizontal media, in contrast with the hierarchical structures and supposedly impartial stance of mainstream media, disruptive by nature and declared as politically engaged. Mídia NINJA, Jornalistas Livres and Revista Forum are some examples of groups which are engaging with online audiences by offering a "different perspective," an "alternative language," as opposed to the "professional," "objective" and right-wing oriented corporate media (Bentes, 2016; Ituassu, 2011; Ituassu, 2013).

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[1] See website in English: https://ninja.oximity.com/partner/ninja/about
[2] See website in English: https://ninja.oximity.com/partner/ninja/about
[3] Read more at http://www.dw.com/en/citizen-journalists-take-on-brazils-media/a-16993946 and at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/29/brazil-ninja-reporters-stories-streets

In the era of disruptive technologies, Mídia NINJA represents what scholars frame as new journalism (Bentes et al., 2008; Ward, 2014). By experimenting with emerging communication tools, this organization has played a major role in the 2015 left-wing wave of protests against President Dilma Rousseff's oust from office that took over the streets of various cities country-wide.

People involved in Mídia NINJA straddled established lies between the role of journalist and activists, as participants and witnesses to these public displays. They streamed live the outcomes, such as the alleged abuses of power committed by police and the hate speech perpetrated by right-wing agitators and supporters of the unlawful impeachment —according to several Brazilian scholars in an open letter to the international community (Open Democracy, 2016). By engaging a growing network of individuals, scholars have argued that this group is giving voice to the voiceless and helping shape the way citizens learn about human rights violations and how they can participate, collectively, in denouncing such violations (Barbosa, 2015; Bentes, 2016; Domingues, 2016; Gohn, 2015; Lacerda et al, 2014; Pinheiro, 1998; Rekow, 2014; Rosenberg, 2016).

The process of impeachment of Brazil's former president Dilma Rousseff on August 31, 2015, has been described as a political event pointing to the end of a cycle in Brazilian politics (Domingues, 2016), which also represents the tipping point of a new wave of social movements in Brazil (Telles, 2016). With it, came new opportunities for civil disobedience and experimentation, and social media has played a major role in the documentation and making of such processes (Silva, 2014).

For example, hundreds of thousands have gathered at Avenida Paulista in São Paulo on September 7, 2016, Brazil's Independence Day, to express indignation at the decision to impeach

Rousseff. On this day, Mídia NINJA documented the police brutality that marked the event, highlighting concerns about the conservative measures that have been taken by the new government (Mídia NINJA, n.d.).

All in all, the media is a battlefield where oftentimes voices compete with one another to be heard (Callison and Hermida, 2016). Considering these are trying times for journalism, in the case of Brazil the narratives produced by Mídia NINJA illustrate the emergence of digital and social media as a contested space (Callison and Hermida, 2015) —more democratic and engaged, according to Antoun and Malini (2013). This media challenges the hegemonic discourse that has tended to dominate mainstream media and is more open to citizen participation in the construction of social discourse (Ituassu, 2011).

Brazil has one of the biggest illiteracy rates per capita, with a single dominant, privately-owned corporate media organization — Rede Globo. Mídia NÍNJA is therefore seen as part of a movement towards the democratization of information, fueled by the use of disruptive technologies capable of empowering people to engage in conversations through horizontal channels (Domingues, 2016; Telles, 2016).

According to Bentes (2013), Mídia NINJA seeks to give visibility to the individual voices, bringing in diversity of opinions and enriching the debate. This research examines the impact of media activism on politics in Brazil and consider how such forms of journalism line up against established and long-held journalistic norms and practices. It analyzes Mídia NINJA's Facebook page, in the form of a quantitative/qualitative content analysis. We will apply methods similar to those applied by Callison and Hermida (2015) when they analyzed the #IdleNoMore movement in Canada, utilizing both computational and manual methods of data gathering and interpretation (Hermida et al., 2013).

Chapter 2: A Review of Literature

2.1 Brazil: history and context

Since June 2013, Brazil has witnessed the rise in political radicalization and polarization (Bringel, 2016). In understanding this process, it is essential to consider the new political actors, the new display of political groups and their discourse (Cameron, 2003), and the impacts street demonstrations have had overall (Telles, 2016).

It is an obvious statement that left and right leaning citizens have distinct agendas for Brazilian society. Yet, they are part of the same sociopolitical opening the country has witnessed (Gohn, 2014b). How they've organized, the use of technology adopted by them to engage their audiences, and most importantly, their capacity to set a new media agenda (Malini and Antoun, 2013).

A diverse range of individuals and social groups took part in the 2013 protests, which started in April and ended in July. Over 438 Brazilian cities showed street demonstrations on June 20 (Correio Braziliense, 2013), as well as at least 27 cities across the globe.

The demonstrations were triggered by a 20-cent hike in the bus fare in São Paulo that spread a wave of rallies against the government of several other cities across the country. This first wave of demonstrations was led mainly by Movimento Passe Livre - MPL (or the Free Fare Movement). Students of various ages, largely affected by the 20-cent hike, took to the streets of São Paulo on June 13 to protest against the measure (BBC, 2013; Jacob, 2013). This day was marked by alleged police brutality against demonstrators (Conectas Direitos Humanos, 2013), which is said to have encouraged thousands of other unsatisfied Brazilians, not only students, to take to the streets four days later. As a matter of context, the MPL movement gained form at the 2005 World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, but its history goes back to street demonstrations

against the increase in public transportation fares in Salvador in 2003, and Florianópolis in 2004. (EBC, 2013).

Initially about the hike in bus fares, the protests widened to include other issues such as deficits in the education and health systems. There were questions over the Brazilian government spending billions of dollars in public funds to host social events like the World Cup in 2014 and the 2016 Olympics instead of addressing what were seen as more essential needs (Domingues, 2016; G1, 2015; Talles, 2016).

Bringel (2016) gives a thorough summary of what was involved in such movements, while acknowledging the practicalities of the social processes that have led to them. The scholar notes that "although the locus of action of the demonstrations were public territories and spaces (through the massive occupation of squares and streets) there was a practical and symbolic connection with other scales of action and significations, whether national or global, resonating across movements and subjectivities, as well as dynamics of diffusion and feedback loops."

Both left and right leaning citizens made the streets their stages for political and social engagement (Gohn, 2014a). The most important aspect of June 2013 and the movements that followed that period, though, was the national reach thanks to social media (Maricato, 2013). In common with Occupy movement in New York City and the Arab spring in the Middle East, these movements "literally show the enactment of democratic sentiments in the form of bustling bodies physically clamoring for rights and recognition in the face of power" (Davis and Raman, 2013, p. 60).

The aftermath of June 2013 varied within Brazil. In some places such as Rio de Janeiro, for example, continuous mobilizations and strikes (public school teachers and city sweepers, for

instance) took off, ending on the eve of the World Cup in 2014 and resulting in the arrest of 23 activists (Bringel, 2016).

That's why is important to understand June 2013 as a key turning point in Brazilian politics. Amid an economic crisis and the surge of the right-wing against former president Dilma Rousseff, these social movements have fought not only for the maintenance of the democratic system, but they've disputed the collective social consciousness, fighting to be recognized as legitimate civil and political actors (Observatório da Imprensa, 2013c; Observatório da Imprensa, 2013f; Owen, 2015; Porto, 2012).

As much as they are part of the same historic moment, these movements capture different social and cultural expressions, and can't be defined as equal. A series of repertories can be distinguished among the mass demonstrations — the left, the right, those undecided, and those who are still trying to understand the logic of the demonstrations but declare themselves non-partisan (Bringel, 2016). Since then, the social gathering in the same public space has been gradually substituted with calls for more specific demands. 2014 was the year of elections in Brazil, and the lead up to the vote was defined by further polarization. Despite the criticism against the Workers' Party (PT) and political parties in general, the 2014 elections mobilized Brazilians, with some even defending the incumbent party as "the lesser evil". Dilma's win by a slim margin generated a climate of instability that was constantly fueled by sectors from the opposition in hopes of impeaching the president (Bringel, 2016).

Important to note in this process is the distinction seen on the streets of who's affiliated with a political party, and who is marching as "unsatisfied citizens" — it all speaks to the general dissatisfaction of such citizens with the political system and, by consequence, with political parties of any leaning (Bentes, 2016; Bringel 2016). Ultimately, Talles (2016) argues, this leads

to a general political apathy and a movement towards empowering citizens to speak up. At the same time, these recent mobilizations have served to either strengthen or weaken parties, unions, social movements and NGOs. This process of elaboration of social experience led these organized groups to rethink their strategies — their outreach, their political strength and their ideology (Ituassu, 2011 and 2013; Saad-Filho, 2013; Scherer-Warren, 2014).

Social media has emerged as a turnkey technology, equipping these movements with new mechanisms of activism. At the same time, new media is shaping the capacity of citizens to frame human rights and/or raise concerns about human rights violations. Scholars point to a new logic of mobilizations based on connective action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012).

Mídia NINJA is a leading example of such processes. Compared to previous pro-democracy and civil rights movements during the 1970s and 1980s, what has taken place in Brazil is more associated with the developments of the country and the struggle to keep up with the goals set in areas such as culture, economy and international integration (Bringel, 2016).

In this context, Mídia NINJA emerges as one of several other organized voices rallying against the status quo (Bentes, 2013). They are disputing the framing and agenda of the mainstream media by articulating a counter-narrative that is more inclusive of grassroots voices. They argue they are going where mainstream media either can't or won't go, laying a claim to visibility and truth-telling while making use of streaming technology via social media. Mídia NINJA brings to check what Bringel (2016) likes to call the "social overflow." In other words, when a wide spectrum of society is mobilized by a diffuse indignation, containing diverse perspectives and grievances which coexist in the same physical space and sometimes even under the same slogans (against corruption or against the government), although their constructions and horizons might be distinct from each other and disputed (Bringel, 2016). Before a more in-depth

discussion on the role of social media activism in times of political instabilities and how human agency is changing and changed by disruptive technologies, it is necessary to first situate the context in which such technologies emerge.

2.2   New technologies and social media

Zigmunt Bauman provides essential clues about the dynamics in which contemporary society finds itself. According to the scholar, we live in a *sui generis* moment of homo sapiens, in which our historical, social and cultural existence has hardly been so detached. More than ever, we now live to exchange. His perspective on modern fluidity then translates into the current social reality, especially the relations maintained in online environments.

Bauman (2001) also discusses the unstable dynamics that space and time accomplish in this announced modernity, in which power relations are established through new channels and methods, something Castells (2013) discusses in depth when examining the power of communication in society. Today, power becomes "truly extraterritorial, no longer limited, not even decelerated, by the resistance of space"[4] (Bauman, 2001, p.18). Bauman then provides an example that demonstrates this new configuration: "the advent of the cell phone serves as a symbolic 'stroke of mercy' in dependence on time and space: access to a telephone itself is no longer necessary for an order to be given"[5] (p. 18).

Others (Lévy 1993, 1996; Santaella 2007, 2010) discuss this new configuration to place it at the heart of the discussion about the contemporary "communicational architecture," marked by

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[4] Free translation from Portuguese.
[5] Free translation from Portuguese.

the mobility and ubiquity typical of so-called virtual spaces. In this way, the scholars explore the time-space relationship within the context of new communication technologies, which, given their characteristics, will inaugurate new places for circulation of discourses (Fausto Neto, 2010a), often characterized by non-linearity, new temporalities and the absence of materiality. The way society has organized and operated is linked to the media phenomenon (Fausto Neto, 2008; Hjarvard, 2012; Verón, 1997). Therefore, the actions of groups and individuals, as well as their visibility vis-à-vis other social orders, are negotiated to some extent by the articulated work of this phenomenon, first embodied in mass media — radio and television — and today experienced in the so-called new media, especially online.

Various scholars have described such phenomenon as *mediatization* to explain how societal dynamics are crossed by the logic of media. This project explores how the new online media ecology, made possible by the advent of the Internet, disrupts and inaugurate new possibilities for journalism, civic engagement and social justice activism through a case study of Mídia NINJA.

2.2.1 Santaella's five technological revolutions

Communication theory has to be considered in relation to the exponential growth of communication technologies, especially those that lead to the creation of digital, networked environments. To understand the determinants and affordances of new media, it is first necessary to comprehend the evolution of media, specifically in the context of Western societies. Media exists because of the historical efforts of social actors to communicate with each other —from the Greek agora, going through the Gutenberg era to the present day. In this perspective, "it is

because society decides to trigger technologies in an interactional sense that they develop"[6] (Braga, 2012b, p.6).

Santaella (2007) developed a theoretical-methodological systematization of the five technological revolutions that marked society from the beginning of industrialization. We chose to use this theoretical model in our research because it describes the evolution of technology from a semiotics perspective, accounting for both human and technologic factors (in interaction) when examining the relationships between language, technology and human behaviour. For the scholar, the five technological revolutions that characterized, in a short span of time, the modern and postmodern history of society "increase the human capacity for language production, therefore, communicative technologies or mass media" (p. 195).

2.2.1.1   Technologies of the reproducible (first technological generation)[7]

This technological generation refers to the era of technical reproducibility, during the boom of industrialization, the beginning of the mechanization of life and the growth of urban centers. Technologies of this generation are typically electromechanical. Fashion, advertising and the spectacularization of everyday life emerged in this period (from the 19th century through the 20th century). Technologies of this moment in time have made society more aware of its own dynamics. For Santaella, print was the exponent of the period, a medium that could already be considered a hybrid of languages. Photography and cinema also stood out.

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[6] Free translation from Portuguese
[7] Free translation from Portuguese

2.2.1.2   Technologies of diffusion (second technological generation)[8]

These refer to electro-electronic technologies (mass media such as TV and radio) which quickly spread throughout the world. For the purposes of this research project, it is not necessary to enter the great universe that is the study of mass media. The intention is to give enough perspective to show which direction society is taking now when it comes to this incessant technological boom.

2.2.1.3   Technologies of availability (third technological generation)[9]

These are gadgets that have emerged to either meet specific needs or create new needs. Walkman, video recorder, car stereo, etc. These technologies are "small, [...] made to meet the most segmented and personalized needs of reception of signs of diverse origins, of varied cultural strata"[10] (Santaella, 2007, p.197). Such technologies differ from mass media and digital media, but they are still devices of language production and, therefore, part of the technological revolutions that the world has witnessed.

2.2.1.4   Technologies of access (fourth technological generation)[11]

In this generation, several inventions appear in social space, but one stands out: The Internet. In parallel comes the emergence of the computer, software, mouse, etc. But it is on the Internet that humans will come across this completely new language, the cyberspace (Gibson, 1984, as cited in Santaella, 2007). At this point of discussion, it is worth pointing out that the

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[8] Free translation from Portuguese.
[9] Free translation from Portuguese.
[10] Free translation from Portuguese.
[11] Free translation from Portuguese.

technological revolutions that have been presented here, according to Santaella (2007), do not

separate linearly and mechanically. They overlap, they coexist. The scholar signals to the traits

that such technologies are leaving. Moreover, "they are intelligence technologies that completely

change the traditional forms of storage, manipulation and dialogue with information" (p. 199).

2.2.1.5   Technologies of continuous connection (fifth technological generation)[12]

The current generation are technologies of mobility, of pervasive access. Society is now

immersed in a network of connections that is affecting the social space in various ways. These

technologies, according to Santaella (2007), "create social, cultural, technical and cognitive

effects whose level of effectiveness and penetration depends on the nature and scope of

technology implementation in each culture" (p. 201).

2.3   Mediatization

The convergence of socio-technological factors, disseminated in society according to

logics of offers and social uses has produced, in the last three decades, profound and complex

changes in how individuals interact.

Many studies —Fausto Neto (2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2008b; 2008a; 2010a; 2010b; 2013),

Braga (2006a; 2006b; 2012a; 2012b; 2014), Hjarvard (2012), Sanchotene and Fausto Neto

(2009) and Verón (1997; 2004; 2014) —have sought to reflect on the ways society increasingly

interacts according to media logics. Or, from a sociological perspective, how social fields have

been, on an exponential scale, crossed by a media framing. In the first studies of mediatization,

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[12] Free translation from Portuguese.

attention was given to the field of media and its processes, and in how such processes have gone (historically, starting with the mass media boom) to orient the relationships established between institutions.

According to Braga (2012a), media logics refer to social practices derived from the emergence of radio and television. Consequently, "these practices have been experimented and established in various angles and spaces (economic, political, institutional, informational, professional, interactional) to generate patterns of behaviour."[13] In a mediatized society, Braga (2014) shows that there's a "quantitative expansion of the space of mediated interactions, both public and private." Hence, mediatization becomes the *"interactional process of reference"* of society (italics in original, p. 25-28).

2.4   Digital interactions

Simmel (1983), Goffman (2009 [1959]), Braga (2006; 2007; 2011), Braga (2012a), Sternberg (2012) and Postman (1994) have defined social interactions in many contexts, both offline and online. As a starting point, this study considers digital interactions through an ecological perspective. The so-called media ecology has much to offer when it comes to interactions observed in online environments.

Erving Goffman was one of the first sociologists to reflect on micro-interactions. What characterizes social beings as belonging to a collective is their interactional capacity. The scholar analyses the individual as a being of expression whose expressiveness takes place in two ways: in both a transmitted and emitted form. "The first covers the verbal symbols [...] that he uses

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[13] Free translation from Portuguese.

intentionally and only to convey information that he and others know to be linked to these symbols"[14] (Goffman, 2009 [1959], p. 8). The second is characterized by multiple actions that can not necessarily be controlled by the actor (gestures, facial expressions, movement of hands, feet, head, look etc.).

Goffman's contributions to the field of communication are numerous. His detailed reflections on how individuals present the self, how they interact, can easily be applied to digital interactions. Equally important are the contributions of Neil Postman to the role of technology in our social existence: "new technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think about. They alter the character of our symbols: the things we think with. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which thoughts develop." (Postman, 2009, p. 20).

This research project analyzes digital interactions occurring on a single Facebook page of a specific group, situating such interactions within a networked framing and gatekeeping theoretical framework (Meraz and Papacharissi, 2016). The next section discusses the affordances and the affective component of social media considering the abovementioned theoretical framework. It considers how new media and new technology equip citizens to experiment with new forms of activism, offering alternative platforms of public communication (Lewis, Zanith and Hermida, 2013).

2.5   Social media and online activism

Owen (2015) and others (Chadwick, 2014; Chadwick, 2013) argue that the changed media landscape represents a shift in agency and power from the state and corporate broadcast

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[14] Free translation from Portuguese.

institutions of the twenty-first century to a new network of people and organizations. This section seeks to identify and explore the affordances of social media in relation to the growth of online social movements. This will further help inform the analysis of a case study of a media activism group in Brazil (Mídia NINJA, n.d.).

While institutions such as governments and media have traditionally held significant sway over information flows to citizens, new media has the potential to disrupt such power and alter such flows. In a networked society, "power comes from the connections made by individuals across diverse networks that enable them to combine resources to contest hierarchical power" (Hermida, 2015). Social media platforms are seen as at the forefront of this new power dynamics.

The 2011 Arab Spring protests in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Iran, and Lebanon offer valuable insights for the study of technology and the use of dissemination tools in times of political instability (Cottle, 2011; Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011; Giusseppe, 2013;). In Brazil, social media has been used by activist groups to contest mainstream media narratives, which are often right-partisan. These groups are challenging dismissive media coverage when they construct and amplify a counter-narrative on social media platforms (Callison and Hermida, 2015). Important to note in this process is that "social movements are not only organized in a digital space, but in a "composite of the space of flows and the space of places existing through networks, face-to-face interactions, and traditional media" (Castells, 2011, p. 8). Additionally, journalism practices and standards are the result of historical and social development. Informed by new media technology, such norms and practices are taking a new form to meet current social circumstances (Hermida et al., 2010).

In this perspective, social media has enabled groups identifying as independent media to craft, disseminate and amplify new narratives, new formats and new ways of storytelling by making use of the diverse set of technological tools available on social networking sites (Castells, 2013; Callison and Hermida, 2015). According to Josephi (2016), "social media provides platforms where deviances can be reported to the wider public in a matter of seconds, usually with visual material to back up claims. More intricate stories tend to need the help of a trained journalist, but a vigilant public today far outshines newsroom-bound journalists" (p. 16).

Boyd and Ellison define social networking sites (SNS) as: "web-based services that allow individuals to: (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and; (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (2007, p. 211 as cited in Castells, 2013).

For Castells (2013), SNS are part of what he has called the rise of mass self-communication — mass self-communication defined as "the process of interactive communication that can potentially reach a mass audience, but in which the production of the message is self-generated, the retrieval of messages is self-directed, and the reception and remixing of content from electronic communication networks is self-selected." (p. 1). Examining several case studies, he argues that SNS inaugurate new avenues for socio-political change because such platforms challenge the practice of power in a number of social and institutional dimensions.

He also argues that the communication sphere is shaped by the multiple inputs it receives from a diversity of sources, as well as by their interaction. Communication then becomes more of a driver of social change when these inputs become larger and broader, and the speed of

interactions increase. "The communication realm is the social sphere where values and interests of conflicting actors are engaged in struggle and debate to reproduce the social order, to subvert it, or to accommodate new forms resulting from the interaction between the old and the new" (p. 5).

For this research, Mídia NINJA is considered as an example of one of the emergent horizontal networks of communication spread worldwide that are integrative of the "local/global communication systems [that] have profoundly modified the practice of power in a number of social and institutional dimensions, increasing the influence from civil society and non-institutional socio-political actors in the form and dynamics of power relationships" (p. 24).

The group has gained social adhesion by advancing, among others, a human rights agenda, highlighting human rights violations committed by police both during the 2013 protests and more recent street demonstrations (Bentes, 2013; Bentes, 2014). The next section discusses how the human rights agenda was addressed during Brazil's protests, and how groups such as Mídia NINJA, which identify as journalists and activists fighting for the maintenance of democracy and the free expression of individuals[15], are helping shape the way citizens learn about, and respond to, human rights violations.

2.6   Brazil's protests: a human rights approach

On June 18, 2013 Conectas Direitos Humanos[16], a non-profit dedicated to promoting and advancing human rights in Brazil wrote an open letter[17] to the UN's Special Procedures of the

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[15] See Mídia NINJA website: https://ninja.oximity.com
[16] See website (English version): http://www.conectas.org/en
[17] See letter (in Portuguese): http://www.conectas.org/arquivos-site/URGENT%20APPEAL%20_violência%20policial%2018%2006%202013_FL_JK%20(3)%20(1).pdf

Human Rights Council[18] denouncing a series of human rights violations committed by São Paulo State's Military Police during the bus fare protests of June 13, 2013[19]. The letter stated that the repeated truculent, repressing acts by police against journalists and demonstrators clearly violated articles 3, 5, 8, 9, 13, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[20] which outlines rights such as access to law, personal security, protection against torture and arbitrary detention, among others. The police have reportedly used lethal and non-lethal weapons to disperse demonstrators in such occasions, making use of violence to intimidate protesters, as per reports by Human Rights Watch and Conectas Direitos Humanos mentioned above. This form of intimidation conducted by the Military Police continued to be seen in other mass demonstrations, according to a separate report[21].

International news media such as The Economist[22], BBC Brasil[23], Los Angeles Times[24], The Wall Street Journal[25], Vice News[26] and CNN[27] reported the violence on the streets of cities across Brazil. On the streets, young activist journalists, the so-called "Ninjas," used cameras and smartphones to record live the police brutality that was unfolding. The reporting is raw and unedited reports, documenting unfolding interactions between law enforcement and citizens

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[18] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx
[19] One of the most brutally repressed demonstrations, according to Conectas Direitos Humanos: http://www.conectas.org/en/actions/justice/news/reports-suggest-that-police-encircled-demonstrators-marching-on-june-13-in-sao-paulo. For context, see a Human Rights Watch statement on violence during protests in Brazil: https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/18/brazil-investigate-use-violence-against-protesters
[20] http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/
[21] http://www.conectas.org/en/actions/justice/news/24186-world-cup-continues-democracy-backslides
[22] http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2013/06/protests-brazil
[23] http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2013/06/130604_protestos_saopaulo_mdb_dt
[24] http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jun/18/world/la-fg-wn-brazil-protests-sao-paulo-20130618
[25] https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324188604578543683873774390
[26] https://news.vice.com/article/scars-of-police-brutality-in-brazilian-protests-haunt-world-cup-kickoff
[27] http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/14/world/americas/brazil-fare-protests/

(Bentes, 2013; Mídia NINJA, 2014; Rekow, 2014)[28]. In a video published on Mídia NINJA's Facebook page and cited in a Washington Post article[29], a man is beaten by police before being arrested. The video soundtrack has citizens screaming "record this" in Portuguese while the man is forced into a police car. In a second video from a protest in the city of Belém, capital of the Amazon state of Para, a police officer appears to fire a rubber bullet at the head of a protester (Washington Post, 2016).

At the time of the 2013 protests, Mídia NINJA argued Brazil was experiencing the emergence of a counter-power emerging from the streets. "Political power bowed down before the streets, changing its approach and discourse completely in response to the desires bringing millions together in an instant, via the social networks. Hundreds of mayors revoked the rise in bus fares, and the President herself, Dilma Rousseff, in a rare U-turn on the part of the political Left establishment, made an unprecedented announcement on national TV acknowledging the legitimacy of the street movements, and announcing the prospect of a referendum on political reform" (Mídia NINJA, 2014). Indeed, former President Dilma Rousseff praised the protests of 2013 and promised political reform at the time[30].

Live streaming via social media has become a common practice among activist groups to provide instant and direct access to live events, unfiltered and unedited (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014). As De Souza (2014) contends, "insofar as the digital age increases the possibilities of horizontal communication among citizens, its networks also offer background for movements of

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[28] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/29/brazil-ninja-reporters-stories-streets; also: http://multiplejournalism.org/case/ma-dia-ninja-2
[29] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/09/05/watch-brazilian-police-attack-anti-impeachment-protesters/?utm_term=.7d6c03dd7cce
[30] http://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-protests-rousseff-idUSBRE95H0TV20130618

contraposition of information, solidarity and mobilization, especially in reference to street protests" (p. 226). Therefore, the "live coverage provided by the group highlighted concerns about police misconduct besides inhibiting illegal behaviours, which go against the rights of free expression and free assembly" (p. 226).

Bentes (2013) argues that Mídia NINJA's mandate is to question the monopoly of violence by the state, and to guarantee the maintenance of democracy and the equal access to information to all Brazilians by challenging the power of the state with the use of new media technology. According to the NINJA's website[31], "our work is where the fight for social justice, and cultural, political, economic and environmental change takes place." The group calls for collective action, while acknowledging the networked society we live in, thanks to the affordances of the Internet: "We live in a peer--to--peer culture that allows people to share information without traditional mediators. New technologies and new forms of using technology have opened the way for new sharing spaces, in which people do not only passively absorb information, but produce and exchange information."

In this context, Mídia NINJA emerges as an example of how activism groups are making use of both the affective and transformative component of social media (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012) to advance a human rights agenda, and to challenge practices of witnessing and documenting of events. Herman (1992, p. 210), as cited in Hackett & Rolston (2009), when discussing the importance of storytelling for societal change, invite us to reflect on the power of shared responsibility: "when others bear witness to the testimony of a crime, others share the responsibility for restoring justice." Moreover, Owen

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[31] https://ninja.oximity.com/partner/ninja/about

(2015) suggests there is a level of uncertainty that crosses online and offline civil disobedience when it comes to legal boundaries arising from individual decisions made by citizens. "In both offline and online formulations of civil disobedience there is a tension between the moral and ethical judgement of citizens and the legal constraints imposed on them by government" (Owen, 2015, p. 65).

Mídia NINJA can be defined as a group aimed to foster a grassroots approach towards empowering citizenship and social action. It is based on a commitment to an agenda of social and civil rights reporting which is at odds with traditional Western journalistic norms of objectivity and impartiality. The group, rather, fits within the definition of alternative media, taking a subjective, left-centered approach to journalism, exploring and claiming a space in Brazil's media sphere often silenced and/or neglected by corporate media (Bentes, 2013; Multiple Journalism, n.d.; Suzano, 2013; Ward, 2008). In this sense, digital technology is appropriated by this group to "challenge the control held by the intersections of state and corporate interests that have long shaped the media narrative" (Owen, 2015, p. 113). The next chapter addresses the methods of analysis to further explore the media narratives articulated by Mídia NINJA.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1   Introduction

This research project sought to examine the impact of media activism on politics in Brazil and considered how such forms of journalism line up against established and long-held journalistic norms and practices. It also examined the role of social media in equipping citizens with new mechanisms of activism, and how new media is shaping the capacity of groups to challenge ideologies of power and domination over a group to another.

The study analyzed digital interactions occurring on a single Facebook page of a specific group, situating such interactions within a networked framing and gatekeeping theoretical framework (Meraz and Papacharissi, 2016). Such framework allows for an emphasis on discovery, description and understanding of meanings constructed by interactions occurring in a social stock of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), while accounting for the researcher's subjectivity and intentionality.

3.2   The Mídia NINJA case: rationale for methods

3.2.1   Introduction

Content analysis has been extensively used by researchers in the social sciences to analyze how we communicate to each other (Schwartz and Ungar, 2015). In online environments, social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter offer a range of possibilities for researchers who want to explore and understand the nuances of digital interactions (Braga and Rodrigues, 2014). Particularly on Facebook, now a platform used by more than 1 billion of the

world's 7 billion people[32], people have access to enormous samples of data. It is not new that big

data is changing the way researchers choose to conduct their analysis (Schwartz and Ungar,

2015). When choosing Facebook for our case study, we considered the affordances of the

platform when it comes to content dissemination and influence (Caers et. al, 2013). Facebook

offers a solid research design because it allows for data-driven exploration of both numerical and

non-numerical samples (Zimmer, 2010). It offers both quantitative (likes, shares and engagement

figures) and qualitative data (status updates, posts) at micro and large scales, allowing

researchers to choose from several traditional methods of analysis (Schwartz and Ungar, 2015).

Schwartz and Ungar make the case that the complexity of Facebook —through its status

updates and other online personal discourse, has made researchers begin to leverage these data

for different purposes such as monitoring health outbreaks (McGough, Brownstein, Hawkins &

Santillana, 2017), predicting the stock market and understanding sentiment about people. We

were interested in the latter when we considered a case study of an independent media group in

Brazil.

If anything, language reveals who we are — our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behaviours

and personality ties (Schwartz and Ungar, 2015). When analyzing digital interactions, one must

consider the ethical concerns that may arise from such analysis (Zimmer, 2010), knowing that

data-driven content analysis of social media is unprompted (Schwartz and Ungar, 2015). In this

sense, our analysis looked at a particular Facebook page of an independent media group in Brazil

to gain insights on the group's partisan political stances by measuring their reach (shares and

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[32] See http://newsroom.fb.com/

likes), their influence (engagement, comments) and analyzing posts to understand their communication strategy.

3.2.2   The case

According to the Mídia NINJA website, a week after the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff on August 31, 2016, the group surpassed Brazilian mainstream media such as conservative magazine Veja and newspapers Folha de S. Paulo, Estado de S. Paulo and O Globo newspaper in engagement figures (400,000 in total compared with Veja figures) on Facebook. Figure 1, with data written in Portuguese, shows a comparison of Mídia NINJA's Facebook page with others in likes (first column) and engagement (fourth column).

Página			Total de curtidas r	desde a semana p	Publicações esta	ENGAJAMENTO	
1		Catraca Livre	7,8m	▲0,2%	250	1,1m	
2	veja	VEJA	6,7m	▲0,2%	249	1,4m	
3	FOLHA	Folha de S.Paulo	5,7m	▲0,1%	250	951,8K	
4	O GLOBO	O Globo	4,9m	▲0,2%	250	296,2K	
5		Estadão	3,3m	▲0,3%	250	390,3K	
6	CartaCapital	CartaCapital	1,8m	▲0,3%	231	567,2K	
7		Vem Pra Rua Brasil	1,4m	▲0,5%	116	1,4m	
8	Revolution News	Revolution News	1,1m	0%	53	31,9K	
VOCÊ 9		Mídia Ninja	1,1m	▲5,7%	239	1,8m	
10	P	Pragmatismo Político	1m	▲0,6%	39	472,5K	

Figure 1 Mídia NINJA's Facebook page engagement figures (Credit: Mídia NINJA)

On Facebook, engagement refers to the total number of likes, comments and shares on a given page over a certain period. According to Mídia NINJA, their page reach and engagement rates together accounted for 90 million people in June 2016 —contributors in various cities constantly post and engage with people on Facebook, as well as on Twitter (Figure 2).
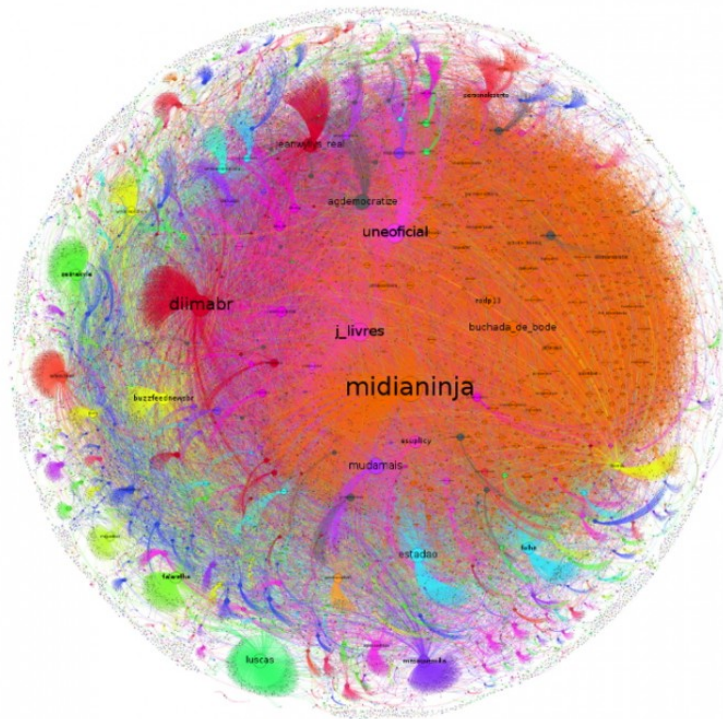
Figure 2 Graphic shows influence of Twitter profiles using the hashtag #ForaTemer (Credit: Mídia NINJA)

This case study analyzed Facebook posts by Mídia NINJA related to the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff posted between August 15 and August 30, 2016 (the lead-up to the announcement of the impeachment), on August 31, 2016 (the day the impeachment was announced), and between September 1 and September 15, 2016 (the aftermath of the

impeachment). We chose this period because it was when Mídia NINJA registered higher

engagement on its Facebook page (Figure 3).
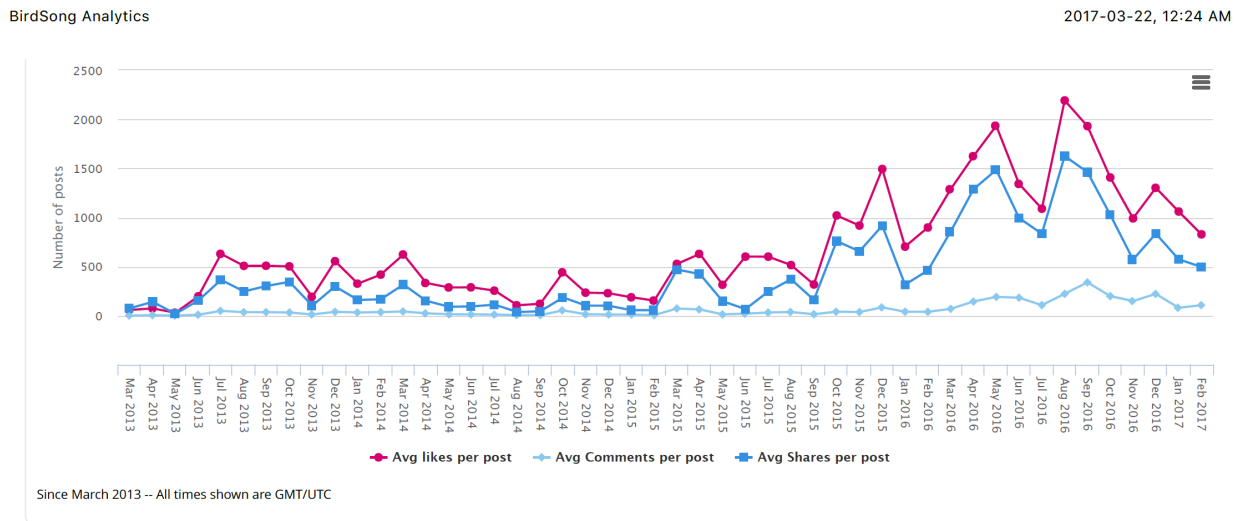
Figure 3 Screenshot of BirdSong Analytics (Credit: BirdSong Analytics)

BirdSong Analytics was used to collect our data. It is a web-based social media service

offered on a "pay as you go" basis. It provides in-depth reports for analysis of audience and

activity, for Facebook and other social media platforms, with the option to export the data for

offline purposes.[33] Golding (2016) used BirdSong analytics to monitor how patients are turning

to social media, especially Facebook, to obtain health care information. The study analyzed the

connections between radiologists and potential posts on a given Facebook page to investigate

how social media can be used to create value and establish credibility among communities. For

our study, a paid report was downloaded on Mídia NINJA's Facebook page on February 3, 2017.

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[33] http://www.birdsonganalytics.com/us

Because the page profile is public, BirdSong Analytics could scrape all posts, tracking and compiling them in a spreadsheet from back when the page was created in 2013. BirdSong Analytics was selected as it presents robust and comprehensive data in a detailed and organized way. Posts are presented by date, type (video, photo, status, etc.), content and URL in a spreadsheet, and the service also provides a summary of the data in graphics and tables (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Such data covers the variables needed for this study, in terms of a qualitative/quantitative analysis.
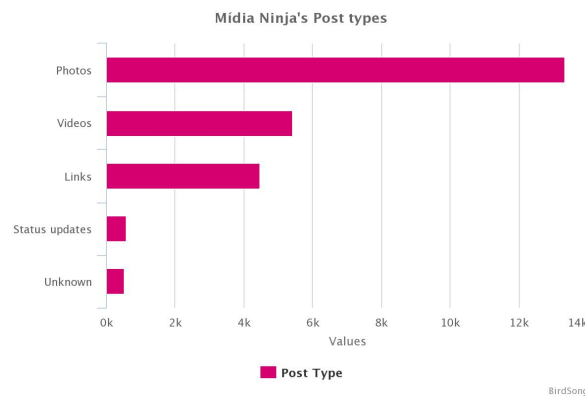
Figure 4 Screenshot of BirdSong Analytics (Credit: BirdSong Analytics)
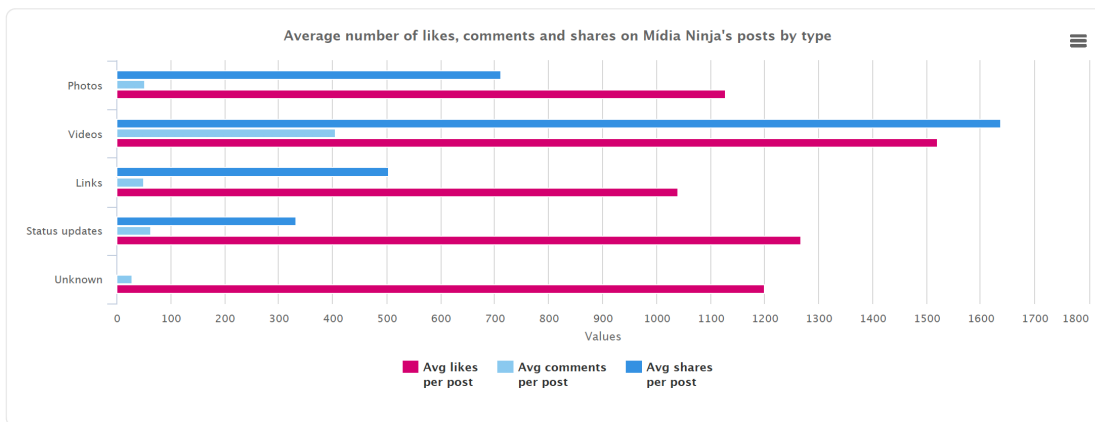
Figure 5 Screenshot of BirdSong Analytics (Credit: BirdSong Analytics)

We identified and pre-analyzed 2,027 posts between August 15 and September 15, 2016, out of all posts collected by the service dating back to 2013. We chose this period because it was when Mídia NINJA registered higher engagement on their Facebook page, as our BirdSong Analytics report shows. To single out the posts from the period chosen, we initially used basic Microsoft Excel filter and scrapping tools. Considering not all 2,027 posts were related to the subject of our analysis, we used NVivo[34] to conduct a qualitative analysis of the posts by identifying key themes from the "content" section of the spreadsheet generated by BirdSong Analytics (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Screenshot of spreadsheet generated by BirdSong Analytics

NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that help researchers organize and analyze non-numerical data. It's been used for different research methods, including grounded theory and thematic analysis (Zamawe, 2015). We used NVivo to run a text search query on the content section of our spreadsheet, which contains all text from all posts from the period chosen. This

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[34] http://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-product

research query allowed us to identify themes by searching for keywords and phrases (Figure 7). We've identified three main themes based on relevance and prominence within the data gathered (or topics of discussion generated by the posts which registered higher engagement): protest(s), impeachment and the new government (mainly using the hashtag #ForaTemer, or "Temer out" in a reference to the former vice president, now president of Brazil, Michel Temer). Additionally, we ran a word frequency query to match the results with the text search query. This way we could compare and contrast our results and confirm the most prominent themes. We also applied filters to the original spreadsheet on Excel to compare results. We applied filters to the "content" and "post type" columns of our spreadsheet to single out the posts related to the thematic areas identified using NVivo and analyze them.
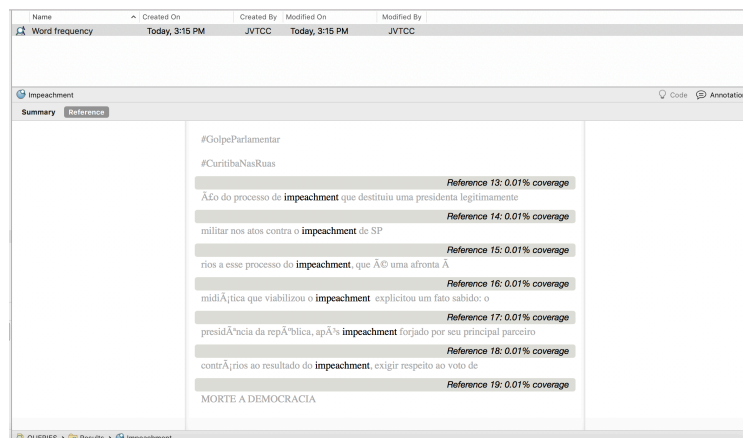
Figure 7 Screenshot of NVivo software – text search query (Credit: NVivo)

Word frequency

▼ Word Frequency Criteria

Search in: **All Sources** | Selected Items ▾ | Items in Selected Folders ▾

Finding matches: ◉ Exact match only (e.g. "talk")
○ Include stemmed words (e.g. "talking")

With minimum length: 3

Summary | Word Cloud

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage ˅
que	3	1,529	1.77%
para	4	672	0.78%
com	3	651	0.75%
#foratemer	10	610	0.71%
dia	3	598	0.69%
dos	3	535	0.62%
contra	6	465	0.54%
foto	4	435	0.50%
temer	5	435	0.50%
uma	3	433	0.50%
ninja	5	431	0.50%
por	3	426	0.49%
golpe	5	425	0.49%
rio	3	375	0.43%
ato	3	358	0.41%
mais	4	352	0.41%
brasil	6	338	0.39%

Figure 8 Screenshot of NVivo software - word frequency query (Credit: NVivo)

This approach certainly aligns with a thematic analysis. Such form of analysis seeks to identify, analyze and report patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We applied methods similar to those applied by Callison and Hermida (2015), utilizing both computational and manual methods of data gathering and interpretation (Hermida et al., 2013). We chose such method because it accounts for both the precision of the research tools used (BirdSong Analytics and NVivo), and the context-sensitive, subjective decisions of the researcher regarding the sample chosen and the type of data gathered.

3.2.3   Limitations and opportunities

After validating and cross-referencing the data collected, we filtered by specific words to obtain the sample most relevant to our study, following similar choices made by Callison and Hermida (2015) and Lewis, Zamith and Hermida (2013). The decision to sample only posts within a limited timeframe reflects the limitations of human coding. Our computer-assisted

approach helped us collect the data that would further be dissected by a human-driven content analysis (Lewis, Zamith and Hermida, 2013).

As David Karpf (2012) puts it, there are limitations to researching in "Internet time," and the best way to advance research is to acknowledge the deficiencies of the data and the propriety of the algorithms utilized for the search.

BirdSong Analytics proved efficient in organizing the data in categories and generating a detailed spreadsheet containing both numerical and text-based data. One limitation arose when we looked at the "comment" section of the spreadsheet — the service does not take account of comment threads, but only single comments in a page, or the first comment of a thread. Nevertheless, this did not compromise our research because our focus was to identify prominent themes within a period and observe the phenomenon in perspective, rather than identifying specific, individual changes within a sample. There is potential for further work in this area but it was outside of the scope of this study.

Comparing our findings on NVivo helped us further our classification and coding. Features such as word frequency and text search queries advanced the results obtained from filtering through the original spreadsheet. This way, the software helped reduce coder error by providing a system of classification superior to that of Excel. Finally, NVivo "facilitated the ability of the researcher to monitor and review the work of the coders [or nodes, in NVivo terms]" (Lewis, Zamith and Hermida, 2013).

Altogether, having at disposal three tools for quantitative and qualitative analysis proved to be more effective and reliable, rather than having only one tool, and therefore relying much more on human validation and verification of data. However, we attest to the need for a human-driven approach when performing such analysis, especially considering the contextual sensitivity

our subject manifests. Ultimately, "there are trade-offs when applying manual content analysis to

Big Data—either a reduction in sample, or an increase in human coders—just as there has always

been with traditional content analysis of mass communication" (Holsti, 1969).

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Quantitative analysis

When we downloaded the report from BirdSong Analytics on February 14, the Mídia NINJA Facebook page had 1,262,732 fans, with an engagement rate of roughly 30 per cent (Figure 9). Moreover, as a page listed in the Non-Profit Organization category defined by Facebook, the web service identified that circa 380,000 more people are talking about Mídia NINJA on Facebook, when compared to the Non-Profit Organization category average.

	Fans	Talking about	Engagement
Mídia Ninja https://ninja.oximity.com/ midianinja@gmail.com https://ninja.oximity.com/	**1,269,732**	**382,661**	**30.14%**

Mídia Ninja is listed in the **Non-Profit Organization** category
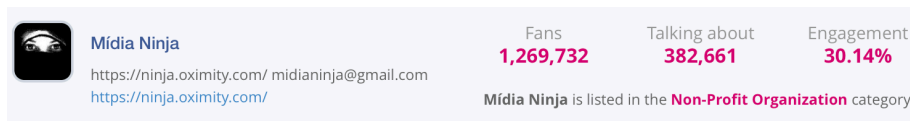
Figure 9 Screenshot of BirdSong Analytics (Credit: BirdSong Analytics)

The first level of analysis we conducted was by prominence of themes within the data selected using both Microsoft Excel and NVivo. NVivo's text search and word frequency queries helped us identify the following from Mídia NINJA posts between August 15 and September 15, 2016, which we cross-referenced with Microsoft Excel: 1) Protests (118 posts); 2) Impeachment (78 posts); 3) The new government —under the hashtag #ForaTemer (588 posts).

Table 1 shows the theme by quantity and type. For clarification, "status" refers to a post containing only text, whereas "link" refers to a post containing a text description and a URL directing the post to a website page; "video" contains either an uploaded video or a recorded live video, followed by a text description; finally, a "photo" post contains an uploaded image followed by a text description. The search also found posts classified as "unknown" by BirdSong Analytics. These posts refer to Facebook events shared on the page, but we decided to focus on

the first four types of post abovementioned, given the scope of this research project. Our results indicate a significant number of video and photo posts, and a higher number of likes and shares associated with them (Table 2 and Table 3).

It is important to note that some of the themes (or keywords) chosen overlapped in some posts, as our compared search queries in NVivo showed. The intention with this sample was to find evidence of the influence of Mídia NINJA on Facebook by measuring quantitative data related to their post reach. With the qualitative part of our analysis, we gained insights into the Mídia NINJA's focus on Facebook, as well as into the language and tone used by the group to disseminate and engage their messages by breaking down the themes chosen. This is further explored in the next section.

THEME	NUMBER OF POSTS	TYPE OF POST
IMPEACHMENT	21	VIDEO
IMPEACHMENT	32	PHOTO
IMPEACHMENT	22	LINK
IMPEACHMENT	3	STATUS
PROTESTS	35	VIDEO
PROTESTS	65	PHOTO
PROTESTS	15	LINK
PROTESTS	2	STATUS
#FORATEMER	191	VIDEO
#FORATEMER	324	PHOTO
#FORATEMER	41	LINK
#FORATEMER	12	STATUS

Table 1 Themes figures (number and type of post) - August 15 to September 15, 2016

THEME	TOTAL LIKES	TOTAL COMMENTS	TOTAL SHARES
Impeachment	151,830	35,844	205,112
Protests	220,500	29,551	159,101
#ForaTemer	1,381,735	166,720	1,191,147

Table 2 Themes (total shares, likes and comments) – August 15 to September 15, 2016

THEME	LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES	POST TYPE
#ForaTemer	474,570	133,635	626,382	VIDEO
#ForaTemer	698,725	25,515	478,937	PHOTO
#ForaTemer	145,486	5,537	82,299	LINK
#ForaTemer	21,853	820	3,520	STATUS
Protests	82,274	23,135	80,992	VIDEO
Protests	107,789	4,922	62,657	PHOTO
Protests	28,511	1,290	13,973	LINK
Protests	1,630	200	1,479	STATUS
Impeachment	6,7101	30,674	166,335	VIDEO
Impeachment	40715	3489	20672	PHOTO
Impeachment	42067	1495	17876	LINK
Impeachment	1947	186	229	STATUS

Table 3 Themes (likes, comments, shares) by post type - August 15 to September 15, 2016

We also conducted a word frequency query on NVivo to identify the prominence of words within the period chosen. Words such as "golpista" (coup plotter), "golpe" (coup), "democracia" (democracy), "fora" (out) and hashtags #ForaTemer (Temer out) and

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#PelaDemocracia (for democracy) were among the most used words in posts during the period

chosen (Figure 10 and Table 4). This research query helped inform the qualitative analysis

explored in the next section.

Figure 10 NVivo Word cloud (Credit: NVivo)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
que	3	1529	1.77%
para	4	672	0.78%
com	3	651	0.75%
#foratemer[35]	10	610	0.71%
dia	3	598	0.69%
dos	3	535	0.62%
contra	6	465	0.54%
temer	5	435	0.50%
foto	4	435	0.50%
uma	3	433	0.50%
ninja	5	431	0.50%
por	3	426	0.49%
golpe[36]	5	425	0.49%
rio	3	375	0.43%
ato	3	358	0.41%
mais	4	352	0.41%
brasil	6	338	0.39%
está	4	329	0.38%
paulo	5	313	0.36%
pela	4	298	0.35%
http	4	282	0.33%
foi	3	280	0.32%
democracia[37]	10	265	0.31%

Table 4 NVivo Word frequency table (Credit: NVivo)

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Our word frequency query was crucial in informing this second part of our analysis. Based on the findings, we could measure and analyze language and tone within the posts related to the three most prominent themes discussed earlier. We chose one word out of our query to conduct our analysis. Words such as "golpe" (coup), "golpistas" (coup plotters) and hashtags such as #ForaTemer (Temer out) have contributed largely to determine the tone and language employed by Mídia NINJA on Facebook, giving us insights on their political partisan stances

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[35] "Temer out"
[36] "Coup"
[37] "Democracy"

and their overall interpretation and reaction to political events. We analyzed several words

identified in our word search query. Below, we showcase the prominence of the word "Golpe"

(coup) in posts. We analyzed three posts (by type —video, photo and link) containing the word.

We considered posts by their prominence and influence (based on the number of shares and

likes); secondly, we analyzed them in terms of language and tone.

4.2.1   Golpe

	Total posts	Total likes	Total comments	Total shares
	395	847,167	73,987	551,665
VIDEO	101	193,685	48,773	193,724
PHOTO	220	472,001	18,303	269,433
LINK	54	140,310	5,821	83,636

Table 5 Engagement figures, word "golpe" / August 15 to September 15, 2016

4.2.1.1   Videos

On August 30, 2016 (a day before the Impeachment was voted and announced in

congress), Mídia NINJA shared a short video of journalist Glenn Greenwald from The Intercept

(Figure 11). In it, the journalist talks about the right-wing agenda planned for Brazil and how the

impeachment was put forward, illegally, to conform such agenda. "The most powerful people in

this country want this right-wing agenda and they know they can't make it happen through the

ballot box, and so they're making it happen through brutal force, which is exactly what's taking place," Greenwald says in the video[38].

Figure 11 Screenshot of Mídia NINJA's Facebook page (Credit: Mídia NINJA)

The text written by Mídia NINJA to accompany the video reads "Glenn Greenwald, one of the world's top journalists, hits the bull's eye when notes the real motive behind the coup: everything for the implementation of the right-wing agenda, which has been defeated in the ballot box for years! #OMundoÉContraOGolpe (the world is against the coup) #IstoÉUmaFarsa (this is a farce) #BarremOGolpe (stop the coup)."[39]

By calling the impeachment a "coup" and using hashtags such as "stop the coup," Mídia NINJA puts forward an activist agenda. In a sense, the post scrutinizes the process of impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff, pointing to its allegedly ulterior motive (a "coup" perpetrated by the Right, as defended by Mídia NINJA and Glenn Greenwald). The

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[38] https://www.facebook.com/MidiaNINJA/videos/vb.164188247072662/709698309188317/?type=2&theater
[39] Free translation from Portuguese

blurred lines between journalism and activism become clearer, showcasing how the group is using social media to both inform and engage audiences, inviting people to the political debate. The post was shared 22,921 times, totaling 11,035 likes and generating 454 comments (threads not accounted for).

4.2.1.2   Photos

In a photo post from August 19, 2016 (Figure 12) Mídia NINJA claims that interim president Michel Temer at the time (former vice-president and now president) and his ministers are part of the coup plot that brought Michel Temer to power. The photo is a composite of text and image. The text reads "The Minister of Labour who defends less labour rights; the Minister of Justice who praises more violence against violence; the Minister of Health who wants to reduce the Public Health System (SUS) services; the Minister of Foreign Affairs who does not dialogue with those who disagree with him. You don't need to be in favour of Dilma to be against Temer, you just need to be in favour of Brazil."[40] In total, the photo post was shared 22,167 times, with 9,939 likes and 167 comments.

This post provides an example of how social streams on Facebook and social media platforms in general reflect a new set of "news values" that differ from those of traditional media (Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2013 as cited in Owen, 2015). Such values are more centered on instantaneity, solidarity and information from trusted elites (p. 117). By adopting new news values and engaging audiences through an alternative venue with an equally alternative discourse, Mídia NINJA represents this movement seen on social networks towards the

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[40] Free translation from Portuguese

"development of a rapidly evolving new set of journalistic practices and values that are reinventing how the news is relayed." (Owen, 2015, p. 116). Similarly, it also points to a new era of content curation and dissemination, in which individuals in a social network have the power to decentralize information and practice civil disobedience (in the case of the Mídia NINJA, citizen journalism) through new mechanisms enabled by new technology (pp. 64-65). In this sense, "this digital communications Hydra provides a unique platform for millions of people to proclaim, in voices and actions heard around the world, that they are "as mad as hell and they aren't going to take it anymore" (Joseph, 2012, p. 188).
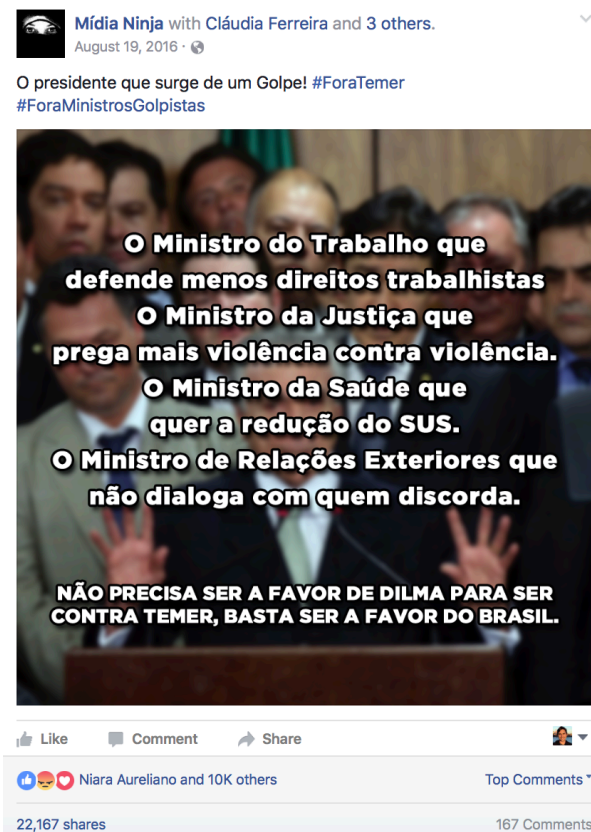
Figure 12 Screenshot of Mídia NINJA's Facebook page (Credit: Mídia NINJA)

4.2.1.3 Links

This post (Figure 13 and Figure 14) from September 13, 2016 discusses the conservative measures right-leaning governments usually take, in this case the privatization of companies and natural resources. Mídia NINJA discusses the privatization of the Guarani Aquifer, the world's largest fresh water reservoir shared by four countries (Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina). According to the post, the Temer government wants to privatize the Aquifer because "water is a natural resource with economic value, and not a fundamental human right as social movements defend."

The title of the post, in capital letters, reads "This is extremely important and it should concern you too."[41] The group defines the Temer government as "coup plotters" along the post and calls for social action against the measure, arguing that the alt-right in Latin America wants only one thing: take out the country's sovereignty over its natural resources. The group also claims that the privatization of the Aquifer hasn't been on the agenda of any social institutions whatsoever, and that discussing it and stopping it from happening is crucial to the maintenance and protection of Brazil's natural resources from private companies with conflicting interests with those of Brazil's citizens. The post was shared 20,484 times and had a total of roughly 12,000 likes and 769 comments.

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[41] Free translation from Portuguese

Mídia Ninja
September 13, 2016 · 🌐

ISSO É MUITO SÉRIO E É DA SUA CONTA TAMBÉM:

Aconteceu no dia 12/09, a reunião do conselho do Programa de Parceria e Investimentos (PPI), onde será definido a privatização do Aquífero Guarani. As negociações com as multinacionais Nestlé e Coca-Cola, já vêm ocorrendo "a passos largos".

Para quem não sabe o Aquífero Guarani é a MAIOR RESERVA DE ÁGUA DOCE DO MUNDO, compartilhado entre Brasil, Uruguai, Paraguai e Argentina.
Trata-se de um reservatório colossal de águas subterrâneas, com área total de 1,2 milhões de km², ressaltando que dois terços da reserva estão em território brasileiro, no subsolo dos Estados de Goiás, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina e Rio Grande do Sul.

A importância estratégica do Aquífero para abastecer a humanidade desperta a ganância do capital de diferentes setores em todo o mundo e os golpistas justificam a privatização dizendo que "a água é como recurso natural dotado de valor econômico e não como bem comum da humanidade e direito humano fundamental, como defendem as organizações e movimentos sociais".

Todos os brasileiros devem buscar informações sobre o valor incalculável do Aquífero Guarani, sobre a sua importância para a população, sobre a riqueza que representa para o Brasil.
Este recurso capaz de abastecer indefinidamente a 360 milhões de pessoas está ameaçado pela ganância e sede de privatização dos golpistas, que enriquecem cada vez mais às custas da miséria e da desgraça alheia.

A sociedade não pode permitir mais esse ataque à soberania nacional.

Está na agenda dos golpistas privatizar as empresas públicas como Petrobrás, Eletrobrás, Correios, Caixa Econômica Federal, Banco do Brasil, BNDES (não é atoa que escolheu Maria Sílvia Bastos Marques para ser a presidente do BNDES: ela foi uma das comandantes das privatizações do governo FHC) , pré-sal (nosso maior recurso para educação e saúde), SUS, saneamento, educação, etc. Sem falar na liberação para 100% de participação do capital estrangeiro no controle de companhias aéreas brasileiras, sem falar na liberação da compra por estrangeiros de terras no país, sem falar da abertura para a iniciativa privada da construção e operação de usinas nucleares, algo que, pela nossa Constituição, é monopólio do Estado. Sem falar que...

O País fica sem soberania sobre as suas riquezas naturais e sobre o que sobrou do seu patrimônio, da era fhc.

Figure 13 Screenshot of Mídia NINJA's Facebook page (Credit: Mídia NINJA)

Os golpes de Estado aplicados pela ultradireita nos países da América Latina, e no mundo, só têm um objetivo: LEVAR DE BANDEJA A PREÇO DE BANANA OS NOSSOS MAIORES BENS PATRIMONIAIS, BEM COMO AS NOSSAS RIQUEZAS NATURAIS.

Leia este artigo (link abaixo) e veja porque o interesse da Nestlê e da Coca Cola no Aquífero Gaurani

http://www.revistamissoes.org.br/.../multinacionais-querem-p.../

Este assunto deveria estar na pauta de discussão de todas as escolas, faculdades, cursos de pós graduação e etc, por todo o País.

Multinacionais querem privatizar uso da água e Temer negocia

As negociações com os principais conglomerados transnacionais do setor, entre elas a Nestlé e a Coca-Cola, seguem "a passos largos" para a privatização do Aquífero

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

😀😠😢 12K   Top Comments ▾

20,484 shares   769 Comments

Figure 14 Screenshot of Mídia NINJA's Facebook page (Credit: Mídia NINJA)

Chapter 5: Discussion

The 2013 protests and the street demonstrations that followed up until recently in Brazil point to a new geography of Brazil's social movements. The social unrest that took the streets of various cities country-wide is linked to the advancement of a new media ecology in Brazilian media.

If yet not a movement leading to immediate change, the Brazil protests brought about the power of collective action and mobilization in times of political instabilities and critical mass discontent. A significant number of Brazilians connected via social media platforms sparked an unprecedented social uprising (Gohn, 2014b) that challenged the power of the state and right-leaning Brazilian mainstream media over what citizens should learn about the street events as they unfolded.

With Brazil's domestic sociopolitical challenges in constant and contentious negotiation (Bailey et al., 2017), street demonstrations become an avenue for political action and for social experimentation. In this process, social media tools offered a chance to be seen, heard and listened to outside the established channels for news and information (Callison and Hermida, 2015). In the case of Brazil, the strong presence of right-wing mainstream media opens new opportunities for those with opposing views to resist the dominant media narrative and framing. Moreover, the fact that Brazil does not have a strong public broadcaster contributes to the polarization of views among audiences offline and online, leaving both an opening and need for more alternative voices (Bringel, 2016; Talles, 2016).

It is important to situate Mídia NINJA within a context of social, political and economic transition. As our case study analysis indicates, Mídia NINJA emerges as a counter-voice with a clear left-wing agenda. The strength of the group relies on their use of social media to

disseminate their messages, but also on the group's capacity to demonstrate autonomy, identity and agency (Blühdorn, 2006).

Moreover, the media emerges as a battlefield where oftentimes voices must be disputed and contested to claim visibility and truth. In this sense, our case study demonstrated that the left-wing voice of Mídia NINJA contributed to the democratization of information in Brazilian media. The group claims visibility and influence by addressing social justice issues, human rights issues through different repertoires articulated across social media platforms. As Foucault (1990) argued: "Those who resist or rebel against a form of power cannot merely be content to denounce violence or criticize an institution. Nor is it enough to cast the blame on reason in general. What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake" (p. 84).

Facebook has become a platform for activist groups to widen their mechanisms of mobilization. The role of the journalist as a witness of events shapes the meaning of events both online and offline in cities across Brazil. Mídia NINJA is one of several groups that aims to contest long-standing journalism claims of objectivity and impartiality. One characteristic that distinguishes the group from other alternative voices is the group's country-wide presence. With more than 2,000 collaborators in over 100 cities, Mídia NINJA can document events as they unfold, sometimes surpassing the live coverage of TV stations, especially the coverage of violent scenes (d'Andréa and Ziller, 2016). Mídia NINJA can then be seen as a form of journalism based on a collaborative, organic approach to the communicating of events as an independent, alternative voice to Brazilian media. Mídia NINJA draws some of its credibility with its audience by identifying as both activism and journalism. Instead of addressing issues through an objective, impartial framework, they advance a progressive, social justice agenda. They define themselves

as left-leaning journalist activists committed to showing "what the conventional TV stations do not show," as Ninja Filipe Peçanha said in an interview for RioOnWatch[42].

Traditionally, governments and media together have played a major role in deciding and shaping what debates citizens are exposed to and how they are framed (Owen, 2015). Mídia NINJA and other groups come to challenge this norm and break from a traditional model of news gathering, dissemination and news agenda. And this is because the new digital media ecosystem is marked by a diversity of voices and stories (p. 116) that traditional journalism oftentimes does not allow. Most important to note is that the main challenge is less about having a voice and more about being heard – getting attention.

By choosing a subjective approach to journalism, Mídia NINJA contributes to the advancement and development of a new set of values, norms and practices of so-called citizen journalism. Our qualitative analysis revealed that the group strongly opposes the right-wing agenda of the current Brazilian government and advocates against it. This form of communication certainly differs from the objective and impartial claims made by Brazilian mainstream media.

The new media environment is less vulnerable to the political and economic challenges the world current faces, and to traditional media revenue models. It exists through a set of networks, being most certainly harder to control (Owen, 2015, p. 118). Owen reminds us, though, that counterpower is not absolute, and that social movements should be aware of the technology companies that come to dominate global communications such as Google. The clash between public and private corporations in dictating what's news, who should have access to

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[42] http://www.rioonwatch.org/?p=10884

them and how they are distributed deserves a more in-depth discussion, as an area for further research.

The findings of this study point to the emergence of Mídia NINJA as a new voice in Brazilian media. The group is indicative of an approach to journalism that responds to the social and political struggles in Brazil and serves as an alternative to a concentrated media establishment, this way increasing the likelihood of contradiction among public opinion. In conclusion, it can be argued that Mídia NINJA presents emergent and alternative avenues for Brazilian citizens to participate in the political debate, through its efforts at popular mobilization and its progressive news agenda.

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