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Media activism in environmental communication processes engendered by environmentalist organizations: discussions and propositions

JANE MARCIA MAZZARINO

PhD in Communication Sciences, Vale dos Sinos University. Professor at the Graduate Program in Environment and Development and of the Undergraduate course in Communication at Centro Universitário Univates. Brazil. E-mail: janemazzarino@univates.br

KATARINI GIROLDO MIGUEL

PhD in Communication, Metodista University of São Paulo (UMESP). Professor at the Undergraduate course in Journalism and at the Graduate Program in Communication at Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS). Brazil. E-mail: katarini.miguel@ufms.br

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Abstract

The present work is a practical-conceptual essay that analyzes media activism strategies and their possibilities in the environmental communication field, based on theoretical discussions and reflections on the practices of environmental NGOs observed by the authors in previous systematic investigations. The Internet enables a renewal of language, technical resources, proposals for interaction and participation, as well as the collective construction of information and opinion. However, the analysis shows that organizations still rehearse their immersion in the cyber universe and reproduce, in their communication experience, the logic of conventional media, thus missing the opportunity to democratize and broaden the environmental discussion.

Keywords

Environmental organizations; NGOs; Environmental communication; Media Activism; Organized civil society

Introduction

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has characterized the actions of social movements in the 21st century (Castells, 2013). In the dispute over the meanings of environmental events, Organized Civil Society (OCS¹) has used ICTs to make its perspectives visible by spreading information in an attempt to promote the adherence to its proposals. In this process, conflicts, adherences, saliencies, strategies and influences are exposed.

In this paper, the environmental movement is regarded as a collective consisting of groups, organizations and representatives of civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are part of it as a reference whenever the environment becomes a topic of discussion.

NGOs, as actors in the field of social movements, have proposed new meanings to the world, designed new forms of organization and negotiation, broadened democratic settings, given visibility to conflicts, politicized subjectivities, and made identity pluralities emerge. Grounded on both the appropriation of media and the formation of networks, they have engendered new ways of mobilization that, by addressing ecological issues, combine internal and external issues related to the planet, as Melucci points out, and two policies, as Giddens states (a personal one, life policy, and a collective one, emancipatory policy). Furthermore, they have favored the reencounter with something denied by the rational thought, i.e. the subjectivity, as Touraine reminds (Melucci, 2001 e 1992; Touraine, 1992; Giddens, 1991 e 2002).

For Leff (1991, p. 132), the design of new power techniques depends on the ability to circumvent the techno-bureaucratic power and construct a new social rationality, thus creating new meanings for existence. According to the author, the environmental movement represents the invention of a new future, which includes the use of communication technologies as instruments in the struggle for human rights in a worldwide solidarity movement. Technological means thus become power instruments, which he characterizes as “weapons of the cybernetic post-modernity”. The author highlights the importance of analyzing the new instruments and practices for management and appropriation of resources by social movements, among which the communication and media resources can be found.

¹ Bobbio (1999) defined civil society in a Gramscian sense as a place of dispute, struggle and political processes involving the sphere of relationships among individuals, groups and social classes outside the power relations that characterize the state institutions. For Gramsci, civil society is always organized and keeps an intrinsic relation with the State, even acting as its ethical content, while the State is a reflection of civil society.

After the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio 92, the role of civil society in the whole world emerged and was legitimated in the search of solutions for the global socio-environmental crisis. Although the Conference was regarded as a political-economic failure due to its inability to build transnational actions for the resolution of the environmental problems, the Brazilian environmental movements expanded and consolidated, according to Viola and Leis (1995). For the authors, however, after the heat of the moment, a process of “disorientation” took hold of the Brazilian environmentalism, as a result of the quick loss of its main symbolic and organizational mark. Civil society, which had been receiving large volumes of information about the environmental problem through means of communication, was abruptly redirected to other themes, particularly the impeachment of President Fernando Collor de Mello.

Authors that have focused on social movements acknowledge that they occur inside a hegemonic system, so that they never totally disconnect from it and show continuities and discontinuities. Their contradictory ways of acting become explicit in their uses of ICTs, by means of which they aim to involve the society in their actions. This is what has been conventionally called media activism – activism engendered in media settings.

Activism, [...] has met two premises of the social movements: to mobilize individuals and give visibility to their actions. The visibility desired by the movements, besides justifying their cause by legitimating it, provides support to their action, thus enabling us to understand visibility not as a basic premise of social movements, but rather as a way for institutional legitimation (Pinto & Fossá, 2012, p. 9).

The cyberspace is a favorable environment to media activism, although media activism existed even before the emergence of the internet by the use of traditional means of communication by SCO. The word is new, but historically, as Castells (2013) recalls, social movements have used publications such as pamphlets and newspapers. The 21st-century movements are characterized by the use of ICTs, which enable action deriving from rapid and viral disclosure of images and ideas (Castells, 2013). Digital social networks have materialized the experience of communication and mobilization more intensively. “The technology and morphology of these communication networks shape the process of mobilization, and thus social change, both as a process and an outcome” (Castells, 2013, p. 158).

Part of the strategies of network communication and mobilization is characterized as cyberactivism, which for Ugarte (2007) is a form of empowerment mediated by technologies by means of discourses, tools and visibility, and it is instrumentalized through media activism. According to Sodré (2010), contemporary

activism should be understood from the perspective of technologies as reality-generating devices. Social participation and media interactivity are combined into a direct technical network that converts communication into an agent that produces the activist event and is no longer a simple product. The author warns that it is necessary to be cautious with a resource that often transforms the social and political discussion in a merely imagistic performance by prioritizing images as generators of illusory, but quite instantaneous and persuasive scenarios (Sodré, 2010).

ICTs still challenge environmental organizations in the use of a range of possible resources to spread their discourses, information, ways of expression, narratives and positions related to environmental events. Limitations are not restricted to only technical and narrative aspects, since the possibilities of interactivity, collaboration and mediation enabled by new technologies are also underused.

Therefore, we intend to discuss the possibilities of media activism and refer to the theoretical basis of those who have addressed this theme and the practices of social movements. By supporting the reflections with investigations, observations and surveys carried out by the authors in the context of environmental organizations, we attempt to identify this phenomenon, reflect on it and suggest some hypotheses. The main criterion for analysis is the appropriation of ICTs by environmental organizations.

Concept and practice of media activism

The communication sphere created by post-massive media potentiates the political action, the re-creation of community systems, as well as the imagery of free, democratic, global communication (Lemos, 2009).

By exploring the possibilities for media activism in environmental communication processes engendered by environmental organizations, we can seek for an approximation to journalism theories (Traquina, 2001) and immediately find that the organization has autonomy to decide what should or should not cross the gates that lead to visibility in the media setting; hence, it acts as a gatekeeper. Therefore, the selected events, as well as the perspectives, are autonomously determined in accordance with its values; the view defined by the organization must prevail, as the organizational theory assumes. The organization has freedom of choice to shape the news by means of free selection of agendas, sources and frameworks to be offered to the audiences with which it has chosen to interact. The organization itself is the primary definer of events. While persuading news

producers in traditional media, the organization does not have as much freedom as in the process of self-mediatization. This kind of work is situated in the organization's worldview, which characterizes its process of environmental communication.

The audiences of the media pieces of such organizations know what they will find when searching for them as sources of information: information with opinion, position and criticism. They resort to these vehicles, establish their agendas in accordance with them and end up replicating meanings to their own audiences in social networks, thus generating an endless reverberation that broadens, relativizes the topics and, occasionally, bases the traditional, commercial media. This ability to change the information flow through autonomous communication, reinforced with the use of digital communication technologies, significantly highlights the autonomy of society in relation to the established powers (Castells, 2006, p. 231).

Despite all of those possibilities of spreading environmental messages (freedom, technical apparatuses, symbolic elements etc.), the mediatization process of some environmental NGOs is timid if compared to media activism produced by groups like Mídia Ninja. Obviously, this social group has some specificities as it poses media as a central element of its social action, so much so, the ways of using ICTs are inspiring for contemporary media activism, which may help us devise possibilities for environmental organizations.

Bottoni found out that Mídia Ninja both causes and covers events by producing a setting for listening to the voices of the street, where "characters, narrators and readers mix up describing and transforming reality". In the words of the group itself, "they are active participants in the events", "they cherish information instantaneity in their live coverage", "Facebook is the tool" chosen to "quickly bring information to the audience", "their productions have characteristics of mobile journalism, with the use of devices that enable live transmissions, with no edits", and their coverage is multimedia: they use videos, texts and pictures (Bottoni, 2015, p. 83-84).

According to Bottoni, there are spaces available for the receiver to be active by means of not only comments, but also contents on Facebook. The audience is encouraged to propose agendas and collaborate with the coverage of events. The production cycle of Mídia Ninja includes promoting movements, calling people to attend, covering and publicizing events collaboratively, all of which characterize practices of participatory web-journalism, civic journalism and cyberactivism. It is a network movement.

About this type of movement, Castells (2013) highlights the novelty in the use of technological platforms, including the creation of specific media, as seen in

the *Occupy Wall Street* movement in New York², which could be extended to the practice of environmental organizations.

Everybody takes pictures, makes videos, and uploads them to YouTube and to multiple social networking sites. This is the first kind of movement that tells every day its own story in its multiple voices, in a way that transcends both time and space, projecting itself in history and reaching out to the global visions and voices of our world (Castells, 2013, p. 137).

The Ninjas, like the *Occupy Wall Street* movement, make use of media as a space to spread information about the demonstrations, a strategy that could be further explored by NGOs in their environmental communications. Public debates in NGO's web environments, for instance, lack the use of equipment that would allow for the exploration of events in loco, live and showing images with a dynamic language (with the use of digital cameras, tablets, devices available on mobile phones), which may directly draw both their own audiences and traditional media's. Therefore, the opportunity to democratize the environmental debate is lost.

A case that reveals the exploration of multimedia in the coverage of environmental topics is Greenpeace Brazil. Miguel (2014), in a systematic observation in 2012, identified widely filled media spaces, original content and use of different media, but little attention to interactivity resources. Updates on websites and networks happened more than once a day. In the web portal, 40 percent of the publications were multi and hypermedia, showing text, picture, video and hyperlinks to previous news or related documents. Zero Deforestation campaign, for example, was structured with the use of texts, news, videos, documents, virtual game, artists' testimonies, and drawings, as it can be seen in its calendar and T-shirt, with every means exhibiting and reaffirming part of the problem. However, the followers' participation was limited to signing and replicating petitions, and sharing news from a previously conceived framework that did not fit the conception of cyberactivism on web 2.0, which requires "the construction of conjoint proposals, and additions to the available information; there was not even a debate mediation or direct answers to questions made in the networks and portal" (Miguel, 2014, p. 200). The author examined posts on Facebook with up to 2 thousand comments, for example, showing just a few and punctual answers that did not either generate debates or collect proposals.

For Ugarte (2007), the activist knot of the web is an authentic repository of methods of individual and collective struggles that makes use of jokes, posters, and slogans to gather followers around a common purpose. In this sense, there is a

² Protest held in the financial district of New York, United States, in 2011, against social and economic inequality. Its strategy was to occupy Wall Street.

communicative tendency, also identified by Castells in his investigation of social networking movements. "Imaginative slogans, rich discourses, punchy terms, meaningful words and poetic expressions constitute a language ecosystem expressive of new subjectivities" (Castells, 2013, p. 99).

This discursive field, typical of cyberactivism, is present in media spaces of environmental NGOs in Brazil. In previous works by the authors of this paper, we found out the prevalence of images (pictures, illustrations, montages with animals and landscapes) to both contextualize campaigns and protestations, and guarantee increased involvement with the messages. On Greenpeace Brazil Facebook page, for instance, all 2012 posts showed an image or a video, which reinforced the imagistic proposal (Miguel, 2014). In terms of creative investment, one of the authors noticed the use of slogans and playful or even childish expressions in Greenpeace campaigns to summarize (or simplify) projects and actions, such as: "Immediate Zero Deforestation", "Sign for Zero Deforestation", "Turn off this chainsaw", "League of the Forest", "Heroes of the Forest", "I, polar bear, need your help for my home to be safe", "Join us", "Take part in this challenge" (Miguel, 2014). Such communication strategies certainly minimize the complexity of environmental problems, but they can publicize the issues to different audiences that are highly influenced by the multidimensionality of the digital networks.

Mazzarino (2014), investigating patterns of mediatization of Greenpeace Brazil, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Brazil, SOS Atlantic Forest and Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), found out a common pattern related to the facility of navigability, the only exception being the Greenpeace website for it invested in campaigns. Likewise, she noticed a pattern of adaptation of news from the site to Facebook, which was influenced by the characteristics of the social networking platform. Concerning the quantification of relationships and depth of the news coverage, the analysis evidenced variation among NGOs, with a tendency to informative coverage. As to the images, there was a variety of types in use: videos, illustrations, pictures, montages or maps.

On comparing the same NGOs regarding the way they addressed the problem of water on the World Water Day (March), considering the publications on their sites and Facebook, Mazzarino (2016) found out that, in general, the four NGOs published one or two reports about water per week. In these publications, with the exception of WWF, all the others explored the use of images. In terms of sources, ISA evidenced the widest quantitative and qualitative diversity. SOS and Greenpeace used themselves as sources, besides data made available by official sources. WWF used itself and its partners as sources. In common, all of them included themselves as the main sources of their publications. Regarding genres,

only SOS did not use a report, which points to a mediatization that is less interested in deepening the approach of events. ISA and WWF evenly explored report and news genres, and Greenpeace used a report only once. Anyway, although a recurrent pattern was not found, it was possible to notice that the NGOs referred to themselves as sources and did not delve into the themes they approached.

Mazzarino (2016) states that punctual mediatization has a low interpretative potential and barely stimulates civic conversations and public communication. Analyses of approaches to the water issue did not show perspectives comprehending the multiple dimensions of the problem, even when the water crisis in Sao Paulo was already noticeable. Citizen-community interest, a noticeability criterion proposed by Mazzarino, was not evidenced. In her study, the author addressed agendas linked to social demands that had citizens as co-responsible for the issues under debate. In this sense, the comparison to commercial media showed that NGOs have similar practices, including their preference for the use of few, usually official sources, which are the NGOs themselves. As the news did not provide enough information for a public debate, the author concluded that NGOs did not position themselves as agents for construction of social-environmental communication capital, but rather restricted their role to mediators of environmental information.

In order to attract citizens to the environmental debate, it would be necessary to qualify the mediatization process by including some elements: expansion of themes and their dimensions in terms of perspectives; juxtaposition of information from different sources and vehicles, with the constitution of a data basis about the themes and the use of links and multimedia tools; exploration of possibilities of interactivity; use of research and investigation in order to contextualize, relate and explain the events; available time for a deep coverage; attempt to understand the information demands of the audiences to meet them; exploration of continuing updating (Mazzarino, 2016, p. 87).

Other studies by the authors of this paper have pointed out that NGOs tend to perform strongly institutionalized, little interactive coverage, with few innovations, often following the agenda of the conventional media. Miguel and Mazzarino (2015) analyzed the way in which environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace Brazil, WWF Brazil, SOS Atlantic Forest and Socio-Environmental Institute mediatized the water crisis in Sao Paulo in their fan pages: "NGOs keep a pattern of noticeability criteria predominantly represented by the offer of posts about institutional actions (campaigns for commemorative dates, events, mobilizations and demonstrations) and laws" (Miguel & Mazzarino, 2015, p. 14). The subject emerges the same way it appears in daily life, in which the massive

media has often intervened, without a proactive approach. They resort to an inter-agenda and share contents with one another.

In the case of organizations with more local actions, the resources are even less explored. In a recent piece of research with that scope carried out by Miguel and Vilar (2016), the authors noticed that Ecoa and SOS Pantanal Institute, with 30 and 7 years of action in the Pantanal region, respectively, both with professionals hired to work in the communication area, published less than 20 percent of original content on their fan pages throughout 2015. The organizations limited themselves to sharing and editing contents taken from other parties, with poor engagement: less than one comment per post. The publications followed the conventional structure of picture and text. The authors suggested that the organizations should foment the interaction with the audience,

[...] not just aiming at mere popularity, but rather to establish a closer relationship with the audiences, in terms of associative bonds to generate interest in the environment issue, attract more supporters and volunteers, and legitimate themselves in the environmental movement (Miguel & Vilar, 2016, p. 14).

Therefore, we can see that the web offers possibilities that have not always been well explored for an effective configuration of the communication scenery, such as the new format of consumption, production and circulation that allows addition of contents and collaboration (Lemos, 2009). The cyberspace appears as a place for quick and easy links (Musso, 2006) that enables exchanges and meetings, a possible place for a strengthened social body (Di Felice; Torres; Yanaze, 2012), reticular communication and formatting (Musso, 2006), by linking government agencies, NGOs and subjects that are available and willing to interact.

In this new conversational sphere, the means of communication perform post-massive functions because they are not control neither by the emitter nor by the state; rather, they have a world connection and free distribution. Internet itself “[...] as a communication arrangement of digital networks, has a logical architecture that is inclined to social practices of disintermediation” (Silveira, 2009, p. 70). Maybe that is why Lemos (2009) believes that the communication sphere created with post-massive media potentiates the political action, the re-creation of community forms, as well as the imagery of free, democratic, global communication. Post-massive media have emphasized their potential for communication, dialogue and conversation, which requires exchanges, creating the opportunity for us to think about “the position of the user as a mere spectator-consumer”. According to Lemos (2009, p. 27), “the conversation occurs in the very

action of the media, in the electronic spaces of the cyberspace”, thus increasing the social capital.

As Silveira (2009, p. 82) states, “the network tends to broaden the debate, rather than the opposite”. The author believes that citizens experience a unique opportunity to produce, share and exchange contents through the social networks. Individuals and collectives may draw more attention than large media corporations may, without having to pass through them, according to Silveira (2009). Referring to the media autonomy, Castells (2013) conceived the concept of mass self-communication. Mass because it processes information from many to many, and reaches a multiplicity of receivers, but in an individualized, horizontal way, hard to be controlled by governments and companies, besides being multimodal and capable of being remixed, re-elaborated, and reinvented. “Mass self-communication provides the technological platform for the construction of the autonomy of the social actor, be it individual or collective, vis-à-vis the institutions of society” (Castells, 2013, p. 12).

Therefore, post-massive media enable mutual interaction, in a continuing and contextualized dynamics of the agents involved, but it is not limited to technical possibilities.

[...] characterized by interdependent relations and negotiation processes, in which each element participates in the inventive, cooperative construction of a relationship by mutually affecting it [...] The mutual interactions present a procedurality that is characterized by the interconnection of the subsystems involved [...] (Primo, 2011, p. 57 e 101).

With the use of post-massive media, the environmental organizations would be favoring the appearance of sociabilities mediated by the environmental interest. This does not occur when the mediation spaces are closed, since their media are limited to inform in the traditional way, as commercial media do, with limited interaction mechanisms. Hence, alternatives for construction of sociabilities mediated by environmental interest are reduced. This is not a naïve or unilateral view of technologies and the cyberspace; rather, we should acknowledge the existence of alternatives to the media control, proposals for autonomization of the communication subject, spaces for the civil society to both expand the visibility of its causes and claims and establish new forms of action. Nevertheless, technologies may also favor anonymities and impunities, challenge privacy, encourage individualism, and become limited to those who have access to that variety of tools and ability to work with them.

Possibilities of mobilization

The media pieces used by organized civil society can more radically perform the role given to the media in general in contemporary life. As Rudiger (2011) explains, this occurs because the information technologies are part of the historical context in which life is articulated. In this sense, Orozco Gómez (2006) refers to the coexistence of complex communication ecosystems formed by old and new media generating convergences or not. For Rudiger (2011, p. 25), "every medium stimulates a form of social relationship: the mutation derived from the digital medium has led us to a less standardized and more democratic age", enabling more engagement in public life. However, the author problematizes the romantic view of technologies by quoting Stallabras, who suggested that, in view of the abundance of information and lack of time, we celebrate the "emancipatory potential of the fragmented thought, the hypertextual experiences, and the merely tactic use of media in merely transitory situations" (Rudiger, 2011, p. 38). Despite that, Rudiger believes that the cyberculture reveals the revolutionary potential of technologies in daily life, when the apparatuses can be used for people to participate in local and world political and social movements.

For Maia, Marques e Mendonça (2008), computer-mediated communication creates conditions for denser and complex communication interactions in a transnational scale and enables the participation of citizens and the disclosure of their ideas. This pluralizes the public debate and transforms everyday interactions in communicative power, which can alter the present interpretative patterns and influence decision-making, also generating democratic effects on civil society and political system. Martin-Barbero (2006, p. 70) also thinks that technologies "constitute new ways of building public opinion and new kinds of citizenship, i.e. new conditions in which politics is expressed and made". This new setting may escape the state control and it challenges the elites (journalists, politicians, scholars, etc.), as it gives more room to the audiences as actors that can be more active in the construction of social and political meaning by regarding media as a place to carry out processes of political communication (Cardoso, 2007).

Unlike traditional media, the network may be seen as an open, "immoral" information territory, a space of innovation and expression. This "periphery", this new place out of "the city walls" is a space that can be used to question institutions (Di Felice; Torres; Yanaze, 2012). Therefore, the media used by organized civil society may play the role given to general media in contemporary life more

radically: being an actor and protagonist of the processes of opinion making. Di Felice wrote that the media and the networks can draw attention to themes and events, “[...] and concomitantly be a resonance box and articulate contents” (Di Felice, 2008, p. 31). Resonance and articulation capability may be useful and profitable in cases involving and requiring social engagement and participation. The network, as it is multifaceted and comprehends different, countless links, enlarges the universe of possibilities, as well as the number of people reached that can potentially re-signify its agendas.

Di Felice, Torres and Yanaze (2012) have identified a close relationship between the digital communication culture and the contemporary spread of a generalized ecologic sensitivity. For the authors, such sensitivity will expand if the possibilities of horizontality of information in post-massive space are explored, with democratic opportunities of developing social capital.

On addressing the inter-relation between communication and social capital, Matos (2009, p. 28) coined the concept of communication capital, defined as “the intersubjective potential of inter-comprehension and reciprocal negotiation of understandings and points of view in a situation requiring coordinated action to solve impasses and problems”. Based on Matos, Mazzarino (2012) claims that the communication capital constructed by means of civic conversations about socio-environmental problems determines a specific kind of communication capital, i.e. the socio-environmental capital. For the author, when a civil society organization takes over a public function directed to the common welfare of society and uses its media to encourage the participation of citizens as receivers, with in-depth coverage of socio-environmental themes, it potentiates the construction of the socio-environmental communication capital. This requires an approach to environmental themes in their complexity, with perspectives that escape from sameness, and narratives recreated by a communicator-observer positioned as a citizen involved in the event by means of an interpretative coverage. For the author,

The debate about socio-environmental themes is powerful to trigger the creation of social capital due to the nature of its problem: it reaches every citizen in a global way. The public debate on these themes may lead to sharing values related to environmental citizenship, perception of the interdependence between all the forms of life, formation of bonds among people and between them and the environment, and establishment of common goals for better socio-environmental conditions (Mazzarino, 2012, p. 92).

However, besides the political aspects of citizenship, the media culture offers material for phantasy and dream by shaping thoughts, behaviors and identities

(Kellner, 2006, p. 119). The media culture, with its identification standards and vibrant images of style, fashion and conduct, as discussed by Kellner, is incorporated by organizations such as Greenpeace Brazil, which makes use of attractive images, differentiated products, well-known characters, and cinema and television celebrities, in an attempt to generate the necessary interest for citizens to acknowledge the problem and give their support. In "Turn off this chainsaw", one of the campaigns against changes in the Forest Code, Greenpeace Brazil hired celebrities such as Rodrigo Santoro, Regina Casé and Marcos Palmeira. Furthermore, it encouraged internet users to send pictures with the campaign avatar to make them available on Facebook, thus enabling them to integrate into the media culture (Miguel, 2013). Another example of creative narratives concatenated with the media culture that established a direct relationship with the audience's daily life and interest is the international campaign "Detox My Fashion", developed by Greenpeace Brazil in 2013 and based on an investigation that found harmful chemical products in fashion brands. As world's largest fashion retailer, with the most critical results, Zara was the target of the "Detox Zara" campaign, which in five days obtained almost 400 thousand signatures, causing the company to officially manifest and adhere to the guidelines of clean fashion under the seal "Zara accepts to detox...". The campaign used videos, photographic essays, petitions, hotspots and infographics, with a persuasive language and images acting as a simulacrum of fashion advertisements. The pictures showed squalid models, slim bodies and concept fashion, following the glamorous standard of the fashion world to denounce the problems (Miguel, 2013).

Therefore, by means of its multiple social, political, ethical, esthetical and economical involvements, internet is a wide, diversified social space, as Castells states.

The information age is our age. It is a historical period characterized by a technological revolution centered on information and communication technologies, concomitantly, but not its causer, with the emergence of a social networking structure, in all the spheres of human activity, and with the global interdependence on this activity. It is a process of multidimensional transformation that both includes and excludes according to the prevailing values and interests in every process, country and social organization (Castells, 2006, p. 225).

Communication certainly performs a fundamental role in the action of social movements, particularly those focused on the environmental issue. In the case of environmental NGOs, it has become apparent that they found their way to the cyberspace, but have underused its resources. The practices adopted by media activism could be strategically explored. The organizations rely on both media spaces and experts in the field, establish their own noticeability criteria, have the

chance to directly interact with their audiences and foment a sociability based on socio-environmental interests. However, they persist in using conventional communication practices that neglect interactivity, and collaboration resources that not only could narrow bonds with the collaborators, but also broaden and democratize the environmental debate. Studies by Peres & Cortez (2009), Rodrigues & Sinal (2011), Cortez & Roque (2012), Barreto (2008), and Cunha (2006), among others, have pointed out limitations of environmental organizations in the use of media.

Cardoso (2007, p. 325) notices that the access to new media by the social movements enables them to take their proposals to “the populations or recreate new bonds with the traditional symbolic spaces for citizenship mediation”. Moreover, the internet favors the procurement of support, the organization of protests and mobilizations, as well as the obtainment of information. The author highlights, however, that the action and its objective should reach the audience, but also the political agenda. Pinto & Fossá (2012), Santos & Aguiar (2012a and 2012b), Mascarenhas, Azevedo & Tavares (2009) have also pointed out possibilities to be strategically explored in the appropriation of ICTs by environmental organizations.

Greenpeace media, for instance, are more able to meet the cyberculture dynamics, as they make use of different languages, cultural references, petitions for political and judicial charges, but they keep a vertical structure that opposes the participatory proposals of collaborative construction. In general, the NGOs observed by the authors in their research over the last 10 years have not been proactive, have not anticipated problems, have not substantiated the activist events, have not performed real time coverage, and have not been collaborative. Therefore, in most cases, they reproduce the conventional pattern of text and picture.

The complex, contradictory, intense, multilinear movements that characterize the use of information and communication technologies in contemporary society, with novelties emerging all the time, prevent us from drawing conclusions, under the risk of soon becoming anachronistic. However, we believe that networking movements should appropriate media in a more empowered way, aiming at guaranteeing a social change and cultural transformation by taking part in the cyber/media activism phenomenon while it is in progress. There is no way to ignore it.

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