NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN MEDIA:
MARGINAL OR MARGINALIZED NARRATIVES?
THE VIEW OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

New social movements emerge in Portugal as relevant actors in democratic decision-making processes. As more democratic, young and urban, new social movements engage in a relevant change in the processes of negotiation (Santos 2008, 2001; Schemmeling 2009; Swyngedouw 2010; Touraine 2002, 1994), publicizing marginal claims and minority flags (Guerra 2006; Henriques 2007; Picolotto 2007; Alonso 2009).

So, this article aims to discover: "How to define today's narratives of the New Social Movements in Portuguese media, in the view of young people?". The methodological resources used are documentary research and inquiry to a nonprobabilistic sample survey by voluntary system.

The most significant results found about new activism are: a) journalistic pieces are evaluated, by youth, as partial, superficial and controversial; b) the respondents associate some advantages to the new activism: flexibility, new technologies, and the perception of helping the world; c) and, finally, the respondents associate disadvantages to the new activism: extremism, violence, controversy.

Keywords: New Social Movements; Activism; Media.

RESUMO

Os novos movimentos sociais surgem em Portugal como atores relevantes nos processos democráticos de tomada de decisão. À medida que se tornam cada vez mais democráticos, jovens e urbanos, os novos movimentos sociais operam uma não menos importante mudança nos processos de negociação coletiva (Santos 2008, 2001; Schemmeling 2009; Swyngedouw 2010; Touraine 2002, 1994), divulgando, não raro, reivindicações marginais e bandeiras minoritárias (Guerra 2006; Henriques 2007; Picolotto 2007; Alonso 2009).

Nesse contexto, visa o presente artigo responder à questão de partida que aqui se propõe: "Como se definem, nos media portugueses, as narrativas dos Novos Movimentos Sociais, na perspetiva dos mais jovens?". Os recursos metodológicos utilizados neste trabalho são a pesquisa documental e o inquérito via questionário, administrado a uma amostra não-probabilística por sistema de voluntariado.

Os resultados preliminares do estudo apontam para o facto de: a) as peças jornalísticas serem avaliadas, pelos jovens, como parciais, superficiais e controversas; b) os inquiridos associarem algumas vantagens ao novo ativismo, como a flexibilidade, a associação às novas tecnologias, e a perceção altruísta do novo ativismo; c) e, finalmente, os inquiridos associarem também desvantagens inequívocas aos novos movimentos sociais, a saber, o extremismo, a violência, e a controvérsia.

Introduction

The original purpose of this work was stated in the original question: "How to define today's narratives of New Social Movement in Portuguese media?" In the course of the research, it became more relevant to change the initial question, adding a new challenge, by focussing on how new generations see activism. The question was this rephrased to "How to define today's narratives of New Social Movements, in Portuguese media, in the view of young people?". This change is justified by the emphasis on the effect that the new type of activism has on young people, since they are, for several reasons, excluded from the traditional forms of association. In this respect, it is important to observe different approaches that have highlighted the role of young people in the organization of social movements, and their participation in "dense social networks" (Garcia & Martin 2010; Sanchez 2011 *apud* Lima & Artiles 2014: 143). In that sense, Estanque states that the dynamics and social tensions of today are taken by the role of the middle class and youth (Estanque 2014: 53). As suggested by Lima and Artiles, there is a bigger capacity from new social movements to attract young people, once as traditional groups have "difficulty to organize: unemployed, precarious workers and young people in general" (2014: 143). This work has three central objectives: first, it aims to analyse the image that new social movements have in Portuguese society, through media, especially in the view of new generations; it aims to understand, secondly, how some of these movements have developed over the years; and, finally, it intends to apprehend social, cultural, economic and political contexts, in which that projection takes place.

The theoretical framework of this text refers to the classic authors of the new social movements and other perspectives that reflect about the field.

1. New type of activism: contexts

The emergence of social conflicts and its connection to the information mechanisms was always a relevant subject; nevertheless, there are few publications in which the link between communication and the new social movements is evident. In Portugal, some traditional studies link the topic to Sociology (Santos 1995; Costa 1997; Estanque 1999, 2005; Ferreira 2001; Silva 2002, 2007), Marketing (Montargil 2008; Almeida 2009), Journalism

(Correia, Marques, Fidalgo, Bento, Camilo, Ferreira & Serra 2002; Mendes & Seixas 2005; Cabo 2008; Moretti-Pires, Júnior, Vieira, & Moscheta 2016), but, specifically, it is less common to connect youth and perception of new activism in research, not only because it is a recent occurrence, but also because young people usually have different connections with activism. In this sense, bibliographic review favours a Sociology approach to this text, crossing several areas: a) globalization, as a process with economic, social, political and cultural effects; b) changes in the role of the nation-state, as socio-political transitions occur; c) and, of course, the rise of new social movements, seen as a corollary of the phenomena previously indicated. In addition, it is important to comprehend changes in the cultural, social and political fields, which are taking place today, being materialized in ephemeral relationships between individuals, and the acceleration of collective life. It is also fundamental to set those factors in a particular frame, a specific society, that some define as individualistic (Touraine 1994, 2002), other, as risk society (Beck 1992; Giddens 2000), and that cannot be disassociated from the principles of uncertainty. As Hespanha and Carapinheiro (2001: 14) refer, today there are great difficulties in the way individuals relate themselves to the institutions, to the extent that the uncertainty that accompanies their decisions has grown greatly. In this scenario, new social movements appear in general contexts that bring out some specific aspects of space, time and circumstance. One might think that the space is marked by a new representation of a hedonistic and a pleasure society (Lash 1984), time is set by the urgency and by different temporalities, sometimes brief, others extended; and circumstance is defined by new movements arising with new themes of fight (Silva 2007; Santos 2008), new claims (Reis 2009), new demands in everyday life. In political terms there are new dynamics occurring, reshaping political culture based on the traditional image of nation-state and readjusting the power of other economic, social and political actors, both national and international. The nation-state has lost much of the authority, being acquiescent to multinationals, or to supranational economic agencies such as the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization, as suggested by Santos (2001a: 36-37), stating that the power of selfdetermination of the nation-state isset by economic agents. Despite that, other visions identify an exception to the most powerful nation-states, saying that some of them, rather than demonstrating a loss of hegemony, keep the domain and the orchestration of those changes (Reis 1996). Still in the political field, there has been an exclusion of citizens from the power centres, which generates new

forms of opposition born out of the people. In this regard, relevant are the words of Guerra (2006) when she points out that those movements make the political actor more visible, giving the community more co-responsibility in regarding problems and solutions "and appealing to mediators, of various types" (Guerra 2006: 42). In fact, real policy is no longer held by traditional parties, by members and/or by the State, but "under political field" – where the citizen can compensate the absence of compromise of conventional political organizations by activism. In the same sense, Lima and Artiles synthesize it like this:

> The trends confirm, in large part, the prevailing idea [...] that social protest mobilizations may not only be understood as an expression of the worsening economic and social conditions, but above all as an expression of metapolicies motivations related to the degree of dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and the absence of responses of the political system to economic and social problems (Lima & Artiles 2014: 108).

In terms of economic issues, some factors are associated with the multinationalization and a triad of Economics (Reis 2001: 120), placing the world under three Capitalisms: European, Japanese and North American (Santos 2001a). In addition to the development of global alliances and the intensification of global economic relationships, and related to a transnationalization of capital and consumption, there is an absorption of power, from multinationals, which are under the world's largest 100 financial enterprises, resulting in 50 percent of multinational companies leading 70% of world trade business, carried out by only 500 multinational companies (Santos 2001a: 36). On the rise of new social actors, the third item mentioned before, will be defined more profoundly in the following subject.

2. New social movements

When someone refers to the issue of the new social movements there is a different image of those that occurred in the 1960's. The truth is that this new activism is, somehow, already traditional, outlining two conflicting trends: on the one hand, a rise in a global scale of activism, combining violent practices with new social issues and various identity flags; on the other hand, showing the register of a certain accommodation/ institutionalization, which make them already old. In context, it would be necessary to distinguish two periods: a stage that elects social movements from the 1960's;

another stage that some refer to as the arising of brand-new social movements (Lima & Artiles 2014). Untying these two periods makes it possible to identify some differences, namely: a) a chronological dimension, linking the first movements to the 20th century, and the new from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new Millennium; b) a thematic shift in agenda, that tends to support individual and existentialist contents, further elaborated by new social movements; c) a change in the themes of struggle, now more individualistic, paradoxically far from and near feminism, civil rights, environmental concerns from the 1960's, bringing to the public what Inglehart, in 1977, called, "post materialist" values that were embodied in direct forms of political action, far from revolution by violence; d) a change in the ownership of social subject which points the face of the crowd to new social movements, and, to the old, a clearer leadership, supported by party-political connections; e) a change in the historical subject, which happened to have a global face, but an anonymous one, away from the usual leaders and notables (Martins & Medeiros 2001: 165); f) and, finally, one of the most important changes occurs in the connection that these brand new social movements have with media, becoming action boosters, touting new customers, disclosing events, validating the existence of the group, displaying the strength that it has over other actors (Henriques 2007: 100). Therefore, it is important to describe which values, readings, narratives, the public creates regarding these groups, comparing to the academic opinion about its strengths and weaknesses of activism. The first purpose will be answered with the survey data; the second one, will be discussed in the next item, where there is a compilation of new activism positive and negative characteristics.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of new movements

In the following summary of what has been mentioned, it is possible to read the new activism as a duplicity of virtues and defects. Within the framework of the virtues, it should be noticed that these movements have greater openness to the exercise of citizenship, giving the voice to the excluded and guaranteeing much representativeness; they are more urban, alternative, free, creative, moving by networks of solidarity, which means they become more attractive to new generations; promoting equality, places them as bastions of the rejection of authoritarianism and hierarchy. In that sense, it is still pointed out, in the virtues of the new activism, the fact that they are

places of discussion, contrary to socialism/capitalism narratives, promoting new themes, as said before, pushing for a direct unmediated action (Peruzzo 1993). Proposing a different approach, being more nonhierarchical, decentralized and fluid in action, also guided for a policy action directed to the public (Santos 2001c), the new social movements have a more immediate communicative effectiveness, as they are more quickly projected in media, given their multiple performances and their amateur formats, both intimate and creative.

For this reason, it is also possible to witness a transition in the communicative field, which is one of the essential parts of the new social movements. Because of the themes, the values and the culture involved, it is no longer possible to make a coherent planning of the created actions, since many of them are being performed at the same time events happen. There are too many issues, diverse causes that operate on short time and for which there is no possibility of a prior planning. Seen also as an inadequacy, not only a virtue, this fact presents other incapacities of new social movements, by the observation of theoretical studies, defined as follows: a) new social movements are ephemeral movements, less planned, and without immediate social transformation capacity; b) they do not have an institutional reality, are in the economy, have no continuous activity of goods and services production; c) they are guided by the requests of selfish nature (Candler 1999), trampling traditional mechanisms of democracy; d) they break the rules of the game, defining non-negotiable goals, and challenging the legitimacy of power (Melluci 1996: 24); and e) they are heterogeneous movements with a fractured identity, being impossible to quickly identify the history actor (Santos 2001b: 179). Considering the characteristics pointed out previously, the the empirical study will be presented, looking for the peculiarities illustrated before, reflected on, or not, in the way youth visualize new activism.

4. Methodology

This study is part of a methodological triangulation which combines the advantages of quantitative methods with the benefits of some qualitative analysis techniques, proposing the presentation of the results through the appliance of a survey to a nonprobabilistic sample for a voluntary system, using social media, and employing documentary research, with visual analysis of the pages of the most important social movements in Portugal of the last five years. Through the process of sampling selected for the purposes of

investigation, 102 valid cases were considered for analysis. Linked to the advantages of the more objective aspects of the relationship with a certain portion of the population, obtained by the survey's data, examining the digital domains of new movements, expressed before was also the aim of this study.

5. Results

Although it is not possible to generalize the conclusions taken by surveys data, once the sample was a non-probabilistic one, some of the results are assumed as relevant, since they represent some trends in the youth's way of viewing new social movements. In the research, three groups of issues that this study aims to identify were defined: a) a demographic profile of respondents; b) the relationship of young people with the new type of activism; c) and the youth acquaintance with how the media cover new social movements.

In the demographic draw of the study, the predominant age group of the work was between 16 and 21 years of age, as the survey was applied mainly to graduation students (chart Nr. 1).
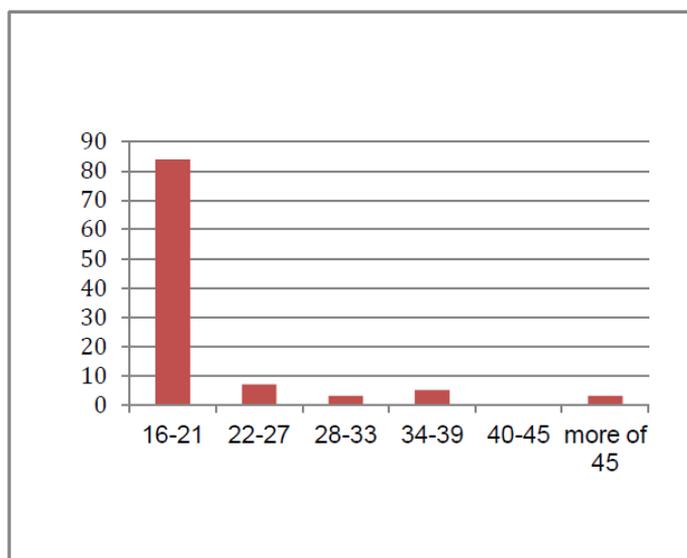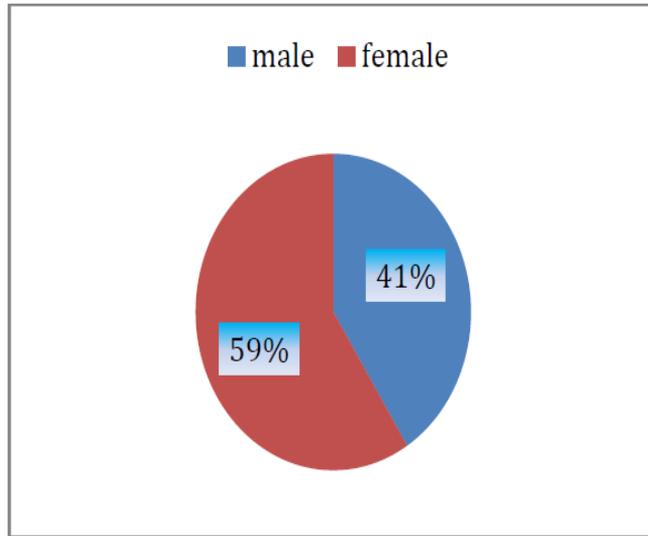
chart 1 age of respondents

chart 2: gender of respondents

In terms of gender, more women (59%) than men (41%) responded to this survey, as seen in chart Nr. 2. In terms of location, it is possible to identify the prevalence of individuals from the North of the country, as well as the supremacy of *student*, as the profession chosen more often, as pointed in charts Nrs. 3 and 4.
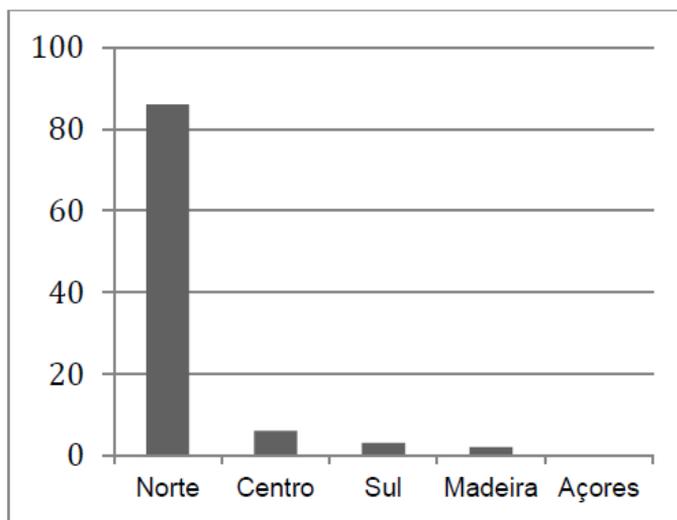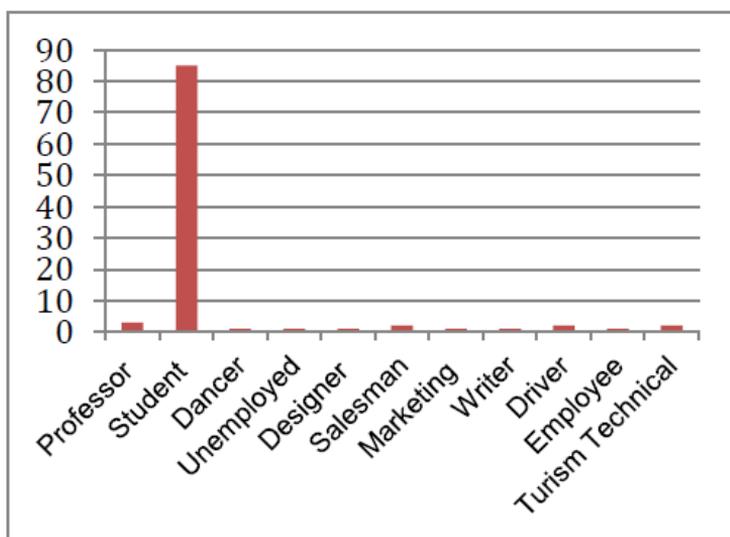

chart 3: location of respondents

chart 4: profession of respondents

On how individuals are related to activism, it is important to observe some of the data. With regard to the direct question "*do you know what the word activism means?*", almost half (45.5%) of the respondents consider knowing the meaning of the word, as seen in the chart Nr. 5. Notwithstanding, the value is *high*, with a percentage of people who replied *maybe* (31.7%), expressing some uncertainty on how to define this concept.
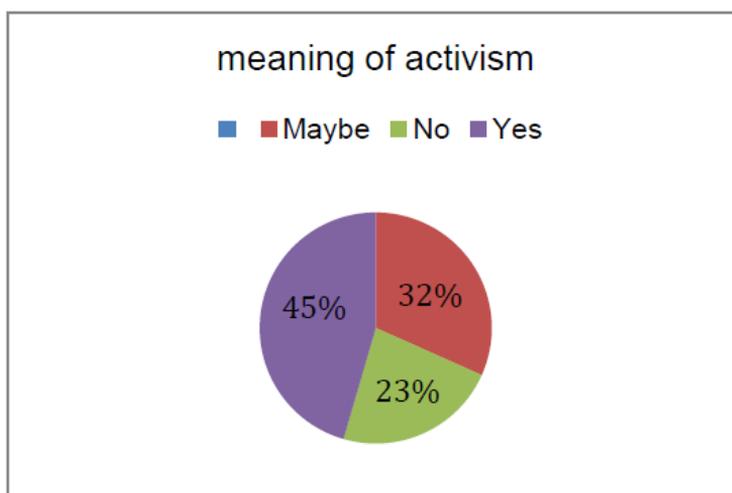
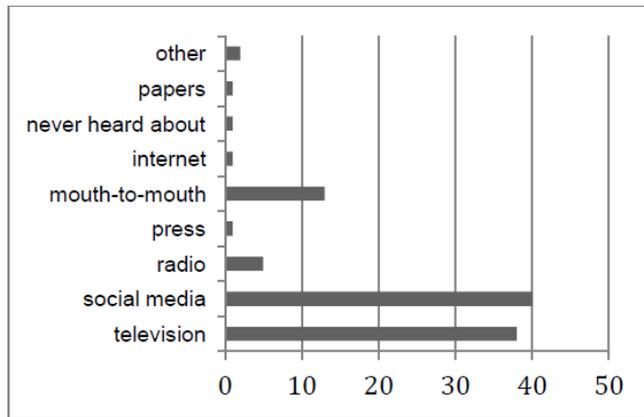

chart 5: recognition of the term activism

chart 6: contact location with the term activism

When questioned about where this relationship was established, most respondents took contact with the word in social networks, soon followed by television, as can be confirmed by chart Nr. 6.

Regarding how individuals conceptualize the word activism, through the choice of three words-synonyms, the vast majority of respondents associate activism with *audacity, controversy, freedom*, as revealed by the chart that follows:
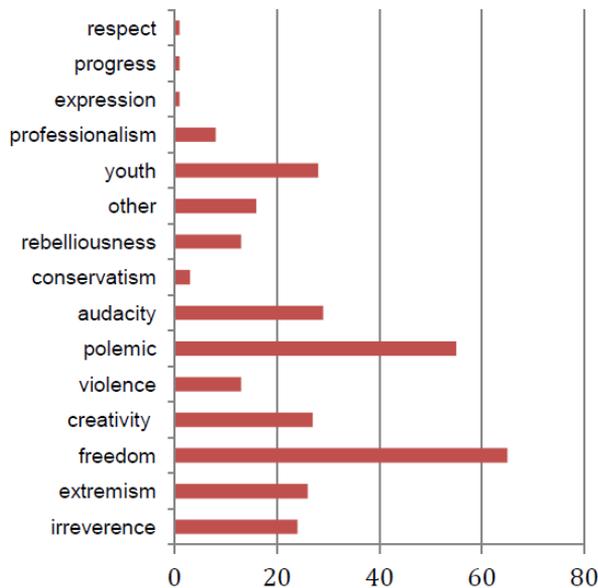
chart 7: 3 characteristics that define actual activism

When the respondents were questioned about the best-known activist groups, the following answers were registered:
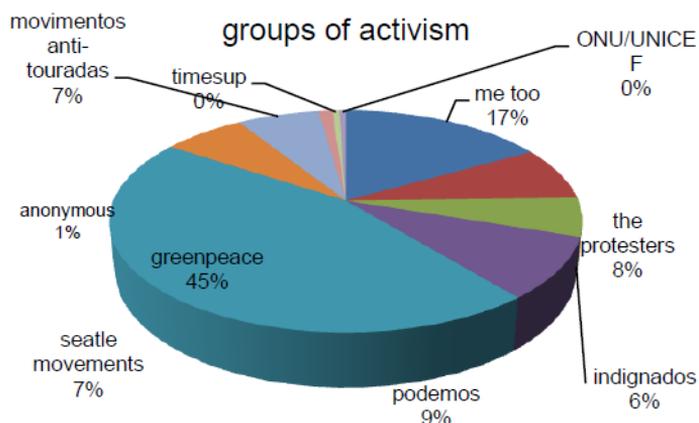

chart 8: best-known groups, in the perception of the respondents

According to the data, the environmental movement Greenpeace (45%) presents a greater recognition, better than any other group, being the only environmental movement pointed out by respondents. Secondly, there is a percentage that identifies the group *#me too*, with 17% of the values and the anti bullfighting movement, which has a large group of followers among young people in Portugal, claimed (7%).

Despite the projected data, when the question to know which group would have impressed more the respondent changed, there were changes in the answers, showing LGBT movements in the first place, the women's movement in second place and the *Protesto da geração à rasca*, in third place. This question was an open response; hence, there is great variety in the figures presented in the chart.
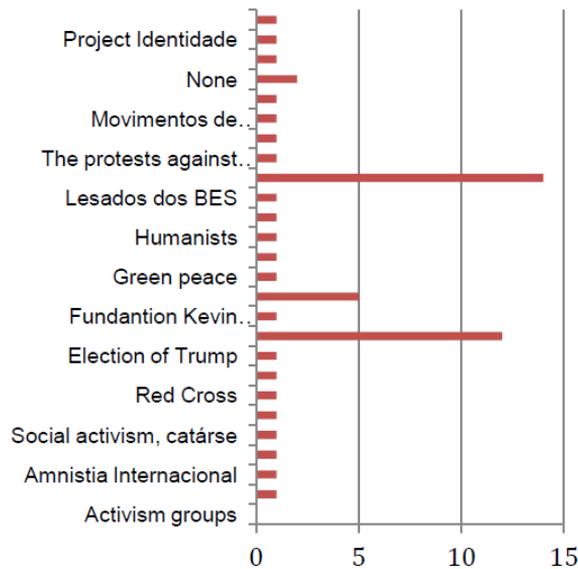
chart 9: the most striking movement for respondents

Considering, finally, the third group of issues, mainly the relationship of the individual with the way media portrays the new social movements, the results showed that the younger generation see that news coverage produced on the new type of activism is mostly controversial, partial and stereotyped, as can be seen in graph Nr. 10.
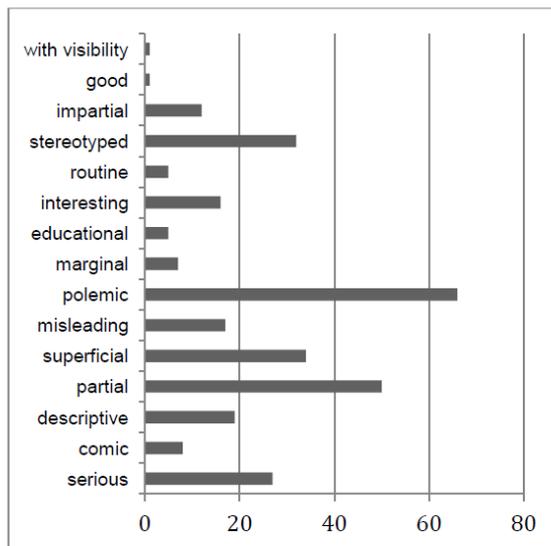
chart 10: perceptions about the way media treat new activism

About the less pointed values, connected with the news coverage on new activism, definitions are mostly related to *educational*, *good* and *fair*, especially when confronted with most rated conflicting values. Responses are the responsibility of the respondents, since it was an open question.

In reference to the global perception of new activism performances, respondents show a positive opinion, observing the fact that values are located between *reasonable* and *good*, as can be seen in the chart Nr. 11.
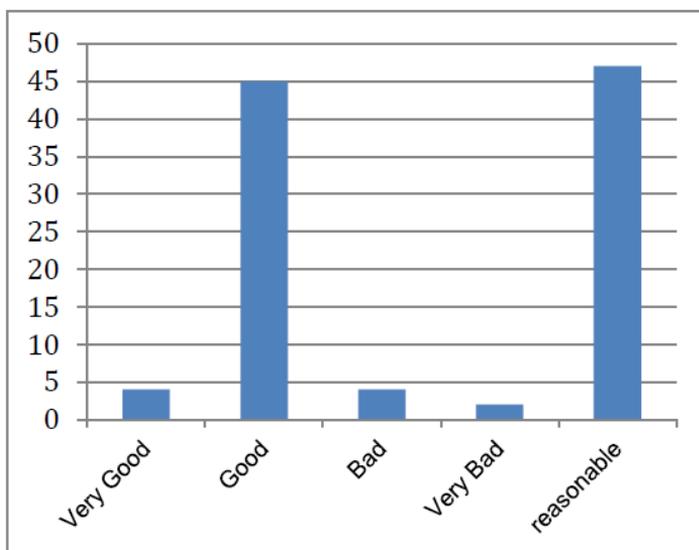
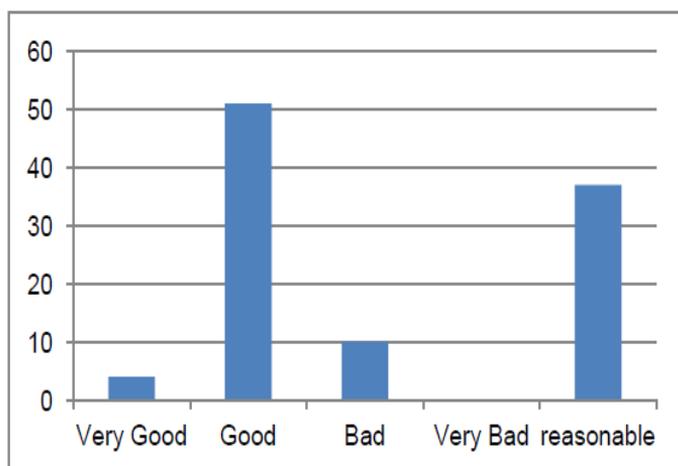chart 11: perception about new movements performance

chart 12: perception about new movements influence power

When the question was to see reaction of the subjects about the influence of these social actors, the results differ slightly, as noted in the chart Nr. 12.

When individuals were questioned about the benefits associated with the new type of activism, it was found that most of them indicated the "access to social networks" as an advantage of the new activism, soon followed by a confusing response in context: "I don't know", "help change the world" and "Union of people", as can be seen in the chart below:

advantages of new activism

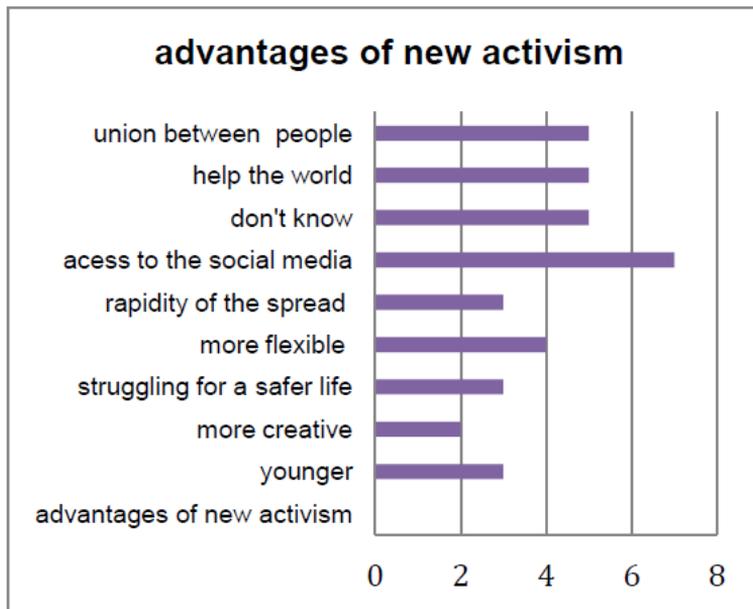| Category	Value
union between people	
help the world	
don't know	
acess to the social media	
rapidity of the spread	
more flexible	
struggling for a safer life	
more creative	
younger	
advantages of new activism	

0 2 4 6 8

chart 13: advantages that individuals associate to the new activism

In the opposite direction, was also asked to what extent it would be possible to associate a set of disadvantages to the new activism, according to new generations. The answers have varied between "violence", "extremism" and "I cannot answer", as is shown in the following chart:
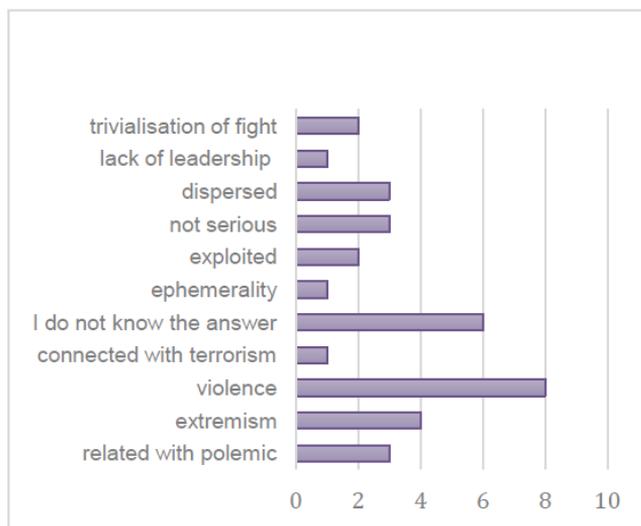
chart 14: disadvantages of new activism

Questioned about the reasons that would lead someone to be an activist, the majority of the respondents voted for "struggling for a safer life", "defend the rights of other people" and, interestingly, also "improving my curriculum", as presented in chart Nr.15. This particular last sentence reveals the selfish motivations previously pointed out by theoretical perspectives.
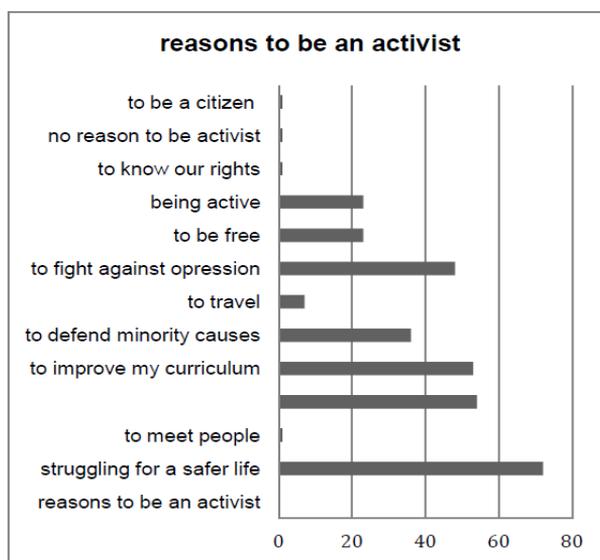

chart 15: reasons not to be an activist, according to the respondents

When questioned about the reasons for not being an activist, people responded as follows:
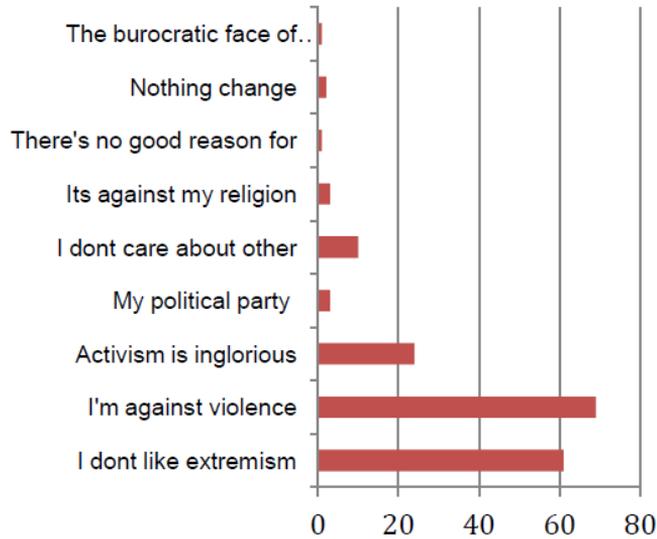

chart 16: reasons not to be an activist, according to the respondents

According to the chart, the majority of respondents believe that one of the most important reasons not to be an activist is *violence*, visible in the affirmation "*I am against violence*"; the second reason pointed out refers to the issue of *extremism*, being perceptible by the statement "*I don't like extremism*", and the third reason is the misconception of the work of an activist seen as "inglorious". Interestingly, attention should be focussed on the sentence "*I don't care about the others*", proving, once more, the selfishness linked with the interests of new activism. On the last question of the survey, it was suggested that respondents complete a sentence that began as follows: "I would be an activist to...".

Data should be seen in the graph Nr. 17. By reading the previous suggestion, most of the people said "*it would be to be able to fight*", followed by "*to defend causes*" and "*to change the world*", which is not divergent from the results obtained in previous questions.
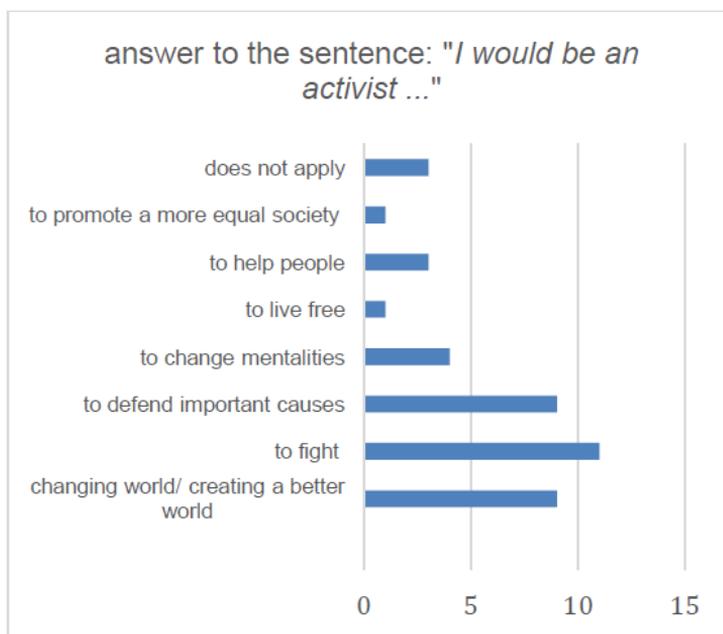
chart 17: answer to the phrase "I would be an activist"

To fight, *to change de world*, *to defend important causes* and *to help people*are the reasons why some young students would join activism; even so, in some cases, the answer was "*does not apply*", as it was someone else's problem to do that job.

Conclusions

This article started with an initial question to be answered after the survey was conducted. Responding to that question, there is a standpoint that must be considered: the way new generations are examining new movements.

In that perspective, three key issues are considered which raised more attention: a) the journalistic pieces are evaluated mostly as partial, superficial and controversial; b) the respondents associate some advantages to the new type of activism: flexibility, new technologies, and the perception of helping the world; c) finally, the respondents associate disadvantages to the new activism: extremism, violence, controversy.

It is also important to note that when people were invited to select three words to define activism, the majority choose *audacity*, *controversy* and *freedom*; despite that, when asked about the media narratives regarding new

social movements, the respondents portray these narratives as *partial*, *superficial*, *polemic* and *stereotyped*. The only repeated word is *controversial*.

In reference to the movements that respondents consider more relevant, there is a preference for the *#metoo* movement, followed by the *anti bullfighting movement* and Green Peace; however, when the question was "*what movement impressed you most in recent years*", the first to appear are the LGBT movements, followed by different feminist movements and the *Protesto da Geração à Rasca*, which makes the feminist movements be the only coincidence with the previous answer.

When faced with the advantages and disadvantages of the new social movements, through an open question, one of the second selected categories in both cases was "I don't know", indicating that young people are not aware of the importance of new activism in many cases.

Finally, when asked respondents to complete the sentence "*if I were an activist was to ….*", most of them chose responses like to change the world, fighting for a better life, to improve living conditions, to defend important causes, or to help others.

This study provided an image of what young people think about activism, although it is not possible to extend these results to the universe, since it was a non-probabilistic sample. Even so, the image of what youth think about new social movements was clarified by the research. In future studies, it would be necessary to improve survey questions, and also open the instrument to other students and universities, in a way of getting to know what university students think about new activism.

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